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Chair

Mr. Fabian Manning

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC)): I want to welcome everybody here.

My name is Fabian Manning. I am the member of Parliament for the Avalon riding in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm also the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Going a little bit outside the norm here today, we'll start with the Mayor of Georgetown, Peter Llewellyn, who brings some greetings and welcomes us to the beautiful town of Georgetown.

I would just advise our witnesses that interpretation is available. You may need it later. You may not need it right now. Sometimes you need interpretation from us Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but island to island, we get along pretty well.

Mr. Llewellyn.

• (0910)

Mr. Peter Llewellyn (Mayor of Georgetown): Thank you, sir.

Members of Parliament, committee members, staff, and presenters, it is my honour to welcome you to Georgetown. I want to tell you a little bit about Georgetown, because I know that for many of you it's your first visit here.

Don't let appearances fool you. A lot of times when people come into Georgetown they miss the pizza parlours and the McDonald's—and the Tim Hortons, of course, which we all miss—and make a lot of assumptions about our little community here. I'd like to tell you that we have a thriving fishing and aquaculture industry that operates year-round. We live right on the water, so our boats are operating here all winter. We're an ice-free port.

The other thing about this community is that over 10% of the total manufactured goods coming off Prince Edward Island come through this small port, and are actually manufactured here. We manufacture deep-sea tugs for shipment all over the world. We have a seafood plant.

Also, our history as a port goes back to Confederation. We were the actual connection to the mainland when Canada was formed. It came from Georgetown to Pictou.

We have Atlantic Canada's only underwater welding college, which is just up the road here. Students come from all over the world. Again, that's tied directly to our ports. They use the wharf facilities here to do their training.

We have more jobs in Georgetown than we actually have people. Over 80% of the jobs are tied directly to our port. It is one of the most important industries in Georgetown, or actually in Kings County, which is right here.

One of the things we've had since the addition of the Confederation Bridge has been a direct connection to the mainland. As your chair said, we're both islands, but ours has a little better and more consistent connection than Newfoundland. I lived for 13 years in Newfoundland.

Actually, one thing we see for Georgetown is a potential sea connection to Newfoundland, and making a distribution point here in Georgetown. We'll be talking to some of the Newfoundland members later on today, I hope, about that.

We'd like to see Georgetown expand. It has repair facilities for coast guard. It has facilities for research here. So it has a lot of potential.

In closing, the harbour facilities in Georgetown make up one of the economic engines in P.E.I. We continue to grow and expand in a number of areas, all of them tied to our harbour facilities—underwater welding college, shipbuilding, aquaculture and fishing, recreation and tourism. We really do need this committee's help to make sure that this area of Prince Edward Island continues to grow through its ports. It is our connection to history, and it is also one of the biggest economic engines in Kings County—right here in Georgetown.

Again, welcome to Georgetown. Please don't leave here without taking a little drive around. And I do have a craft shop down on Water Street.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

We're certainly delighted to be here in Georgetown this morning. And yes, we're still disconnected, to some extent, from the rest of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador—Newfoundland anyway. Many days we like that, to be honest with you.

I live in the small fishing community of St. Bride's, on the southern tip of the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland. It's a community of less than 500 people, so I'm very comfortable in small communities.

Welcome to our witnesses. As I stated earlier, we are the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans of the Parliament of Canada. Last fall we began a study into the small craft harbours program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Needless to say, it's a very important program for many of the ridings represented by the members that you see around the table here.

In my own particular riding, I have 68 harbour authorities. It is by far the busiest file in my office. We do a tremendous amount of work with fishermen and harbour authorities and the communities at large.

The purpose of our study is to enhance that program in whatever way, shape, or form we can and to present a report to Parliament, to the House of Commons, to give the minister strength and some foundation to go forward and push for more funding for the program, and also to look at the different aspects of the harbour authorities themselves. As we understand, they're made up of volunteers, who do a lot of work above and beyond to ensure that the harbours are safe and that they're able to be used. If there are any concerns that you want to express as members of harbour authorities in relation to training, better access to funding, and so on, we'd also like to hear that.

I'd ask you to feel very comfortable. Basically we ask you to make some opening comments, let us know who you are and who you represent, and then we open up the floor for questions from around the table in more or less of an interaction, what I like to call a conversation, because from straight-talk conversation we can learn. We go to very few places that we don't learn something new, and all of that will become part of our report at the end of the day.

We did produce an interim report, which was presented to Parliament prior to Christmas to assist the minister at that time and certainly to put our feelings and our thoughts forward. We hope to present the final report before the summer recess break, or an election, whichever one comes first. But the fact is that we are doing this ongoing study now to prepare for a study to be presented before the summer recess.

With that, I once again want to welcome you all here. I think we had decided that Mr. Jenkins was going to go first. Which Mr. Jenkins, that's up to you guys.

Seriously, Mr. Bobby Jenkins, I believe, is going to start.

Once again, welcome everybody.

● (0915)

Mr. Bobby Jenkins (Chair, Annandale Harbour Authority): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the Annandale fishermen, I'd first like to offer our condolences to the families in the Maggies who lost their loved ones there a couple of weeks ago. I'd like to do that first.

I have a brief here that's been prepared for us by the Annandale fishermen, so with your permission I'll go through that.

The Chair: You can certainly go ahead, Mr. Jenkins.

We just came from two hearings in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we have the interpreter here who's interpreting what we say for our colleagues from Quebec. Sometimes we speak a little bit too fast, so if you can bring her down to about 50 kilometres, we'd appreciate

it. In Newfoundland we exceeded the speed limit many times, and they asked us to slow down, because the interpretation is going on at the same time that you speak. Just remember that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, welcome to P.E.I. I hope your visit here will allow you to appreciate the scope of the problems we face.

Second, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your group and for the opportunity to share with you the challenges we face, both from a harbour infrastructure point of view and from our community.

With the financial restrictions experienced by the federal government in the 1990s, a significant change in harbour management and maintenance was introduced. Fishermen at first were skeptical, but eventually were either urged or forced to enter into a port authority system.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

I'd like to advise our committee that three different groups will be presenting to us, so we are going to have three one-hour sessions. That's our plan. Therefore, we will do one round of questions for each group. That is just to advise you of that.

Mr. MacAulay, I believe you would like to start off, since we are in your neck of the woods.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, my honourable Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to have the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans here in Georgetown, Prince Edward Island, to learn a little bit about the needs. Sometimes when you're far removed from these things and removed from the people who actually take their lives in their hands if funds are not spent appropriately...and if the funds are not spent appropriately we can have disasters, as the presenter had indicated.

What I hope we can do with this and other groups across Quebec and eastern Canada is bring more pressure on the government to put more funding.

● (0925)

Mr. Gregory Norton (Chair, Annandale Harbour Authority): I'm kind of the bodyguard.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I'm certainly pleased to have you here, because you've been involved in the fisheries all your lives and you understand what it's all about; you understand what is at stake and what you put into it.

You mentioned a number of things, but in ten years' time you've mentioned what you might see if things are not done appropriately. What I mean by appropriately is that right now we spend less than \$100 million in the nation on wharf repair. Figures there say it should be \$500 million to \$600 million to put them back in shape. That's a large figure, but it would put the infrastructure back in place, and we know that can't happen all at once; it will not. We need it, because the mechanism probably wouldn't be in place to spend the money properly.

What I'd like you to expand on, gentlemen, is what you think needs to be done—we know we need the dollars—in order to put the wharves where they should be, or as close to where they should be, in ten years' time, as Bobby mentioned. He's very concerned about what will be in ten years' time. If we don't do what's right, what will we have in ten years' time?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you very much, Lawrence.

One of the things I mentioned in our brief is to do an in-depth look at all the harbours. That has to be done right away. Some harbours are suffering worse than others. There are very few harbours that we know of that don't need some kind of major repair. Where you guys want to start on that, I don't know, but you're going to have to start looking at each harbour individually. The big things have to start being looked after. The mandate has gone on long enough. Some of these harbours need infrastructure done right away.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: A band-aid in some cases, from my involvement with you and other fishermen, has been more or less a waste of money—just to patch. Sometimes it's washed away, or sometimes when the job is done it has to be taken out in order to do the job properly. If you'd like to expand on that a bit...

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: You're absolutely right, Lawrence.

Gregory has been instrumental in securing money for our harbour, and I have too, on occasion. We've fought for pretty well everything we've got. If it hadn't been for you, as I mentioned, with your interventions down through the years, a lot of the time we wouldn't have got it.

We don't take it lightly when we go looking for money. It's not cosmetic. We need it. Most fishermen, when they go looking for money, are not looking for cosmetics. They're looking for money to fix that facility. It has to be done. Annandale right now is looking at an east wall that has to be repaired, and it's going to cost a lot of money.

I'll turn it over to Gregory; he can give you a better idea because he talked to some of the engineers on it. It's not a band-aid.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: What I'd like Gregory to expand on, too, along with the funding we need, is how big the bill will be as we go down the road. I remember the Savage Harbour wharf. When I visited it the first time politically, about \$150,000 to \$200,000 would have fixed it. When we repaired it, it cost us close to \$3 million.

Is that where you're going with your harbour?

Mr. Gregory Norton: Yes. What we have done in the past, to try to keep the harbour where it's at, is.... The Seven Mile Road, which is the road just up a little piece here, was covered in cement. I made a deal with the provincial government to get the material from it.

Instead of having to replace our wing, what we've done is put the cement on the outside to try to hold the wood so it won't fall out.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Then as you say, when that figure goes from perhaps \$100,000 to \$500,000, the first thing you know, you're into a number of millions of dollars.

I'd like you to comment also on your harbour authority. I was around when the harbour authorities were put in place and I probably was not the biggest supporter of the move, but things did happen. I think we probably have to agree it was a good thing in the end, because it put fishermen in.... It's a good thing in the end if every party does what they're supposed to do. My concern, and I'm sure it's yours too, is that you enter the deal to have harbour authority with the promise that you would have the proper funding. Now, you knew you wouldn't have the proper funding in a day or two, or in the first year.

I would like you to comment on how the harbour authority is performing—you're doing it for nothing, you're volunteers when you do this—and on the problem with acquiring the funding in order to make sure your ends are met.

Mr. Gregory Norton: There's a document, which is probably longer than anything you guys have ever seen, that we have to fill out in order to try to convince the small craft harbours people that it's important enough—or a safety reason. If it's not safety, they won't even consider it. That's the first thing.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Greg—not to interrupt you—we can be annoyed with small craft harbours directorate, of course, but there are people above small craft harbours who make the decision as to what dollars are available in order to do the repair. What I'm trying to do is make sure we get into the skulls of the people who really make the decisions that more funding is required. I've worked with small craft harbours directorate for almost 20 years, and they can't do something if they don't have the funds to do it.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Yes.

What's going on right now, though, is that basically the fishermen are being pitted against each other. If I'm fishing at Annandale and I have to go to North Lake to fish for the summer, because maybe the tuna's up there, I have to pay the full annual fee to tie up at that harbour. It's not the fishermen's fault, because they're trying to gather enough money to keep their harbour together. So every time you move from harbour to harbour, you have to pay the full fee there to tie up every year. It's between \$400 and \$500 a year in each harbour that you tie up in. So basically, if you're there a month, you have to pay a full year's fee. You've already paid back at your own port, so before the year is over, you could have paid as much as \$2,000 to different harbours where you've tied up.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Greg, how long would you be in a port before you would have to pay the fee?

Mr. Gregory Norton: Upon arrival, you could be approached by somebody who says you have to pay the fee.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's not a month; it could be overnight, and if you are fishing somewhere else you pay the fee again. We heard this in Newfoundland, that they had to go to a number of different areas, and with that they had to pay a number of different fees.

Mr. Gregory Norton: That's right. And basically all we're trying to do, off our own backs, is survive enough to drag out more of our own money to try to keep the harbours going, and that shouldn't be the case. The small craft harbours program should have the structure and funding in place. The fishermen shouldn't have to be paying \$2,000 a year in tie-up fees. You should have to pay at your own harbour, and for P.E.I. that should be enough. You should only have to pay one yearly fee, not four or five.

It's because of the way the small craft harbours program is set up. That's the reason it's killing us too. And it's only a band-aid. The money they get from us isn't very much, but it helps a bit, I suppose.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

I know very well the chairman is about to cut me off, so I will pass.

• (0930)

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: There's one other thing, Lawrence. This will take what Gregory was saying a little further. You were talking about money and about how the harbour authorities are set up and stuff. On two separate occasions, the Annandale fishermen backed the loan themselves at the CIBC—we're on record for that, with my signature, Harley's, and Gregory's—while waiting for money to come down the tube. We did eventually get the money, but we got the money from the bank, in order to go ahead with a couple of projects, on our own.

• (0935)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: So what you're telling me is that in your volunteer organization, you signed notes yourselves in order to make sure the harbour stayed.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's right, and we can prove it; the CIBC will tell you that.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

I understand we're joined by Mr. Bill Drost, the acting small craft harbours area chief.

Welcome, Bill. Certainly at any of our committee hearings we usually have someone from small craft harbours, so we're delighted you've joined us this morning.

Mr. Blais, the floor is yours for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, everyone. First of all, since I represent Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, I'd like to thank Mr. Jenkins for his message of solidarity for what happened to the fishermen-hunters of the Magdalen Islands. Thank you very much.

The situation in the small craft harbours file is such that it's like they have a leaky roof that isn't being fixed. There is a risk it could collapse. We're at that point, and, in some cases, it's already collapsed. That's an unhappy observation. We could blame someone, the government and so on, but, as you mentioned earlier, there isn't enough money, people virtually everywhere are dissatisfied, and everyone is running around looking for funding. That causes a division of resources.

You know the principle: division is a good method for reigning better. You've suggested some solutions, like the inventory and a five- to 10-year plan. Those are indeed good solutions, but, when there's insufficient funding, you face the present problem. On the other hand, you, as port authorities, should present your real needs. The department can do its inventory, but it will do it in accordance with its way of seeing things. A breakwater may prevent repeated dredging, year after year. It's enough to extend a jetty for it to make all the difference relative to dredging, for example. That's what I observe in particular in the Magdalen Islands or in the Gaspé Peninsula. Moreover, in Quebec, a lot of money in next year's budget will be allocated to dredging, which makes no sense because all that could eventually be eliminated through other infrastructure work.

I'd like to hear what you have to say on one point in particular. We understand why you've had enough. It angers and upsets me too. I'm disappointed in the department and even in the government, regardless of the government in power, because the wharves are a federal responsibility. They belong to the federal government. When something belongs to us, we take care of it properly. In addition, the section of the Fisheries and Oceans Canada site that concerns the Small Craft Harbours Program tells us they're striving for safe and efficient use. That's not the case. There are a lot of examples like this one.

In that sense, couldn't the fact that the volunteers are fed up and exhausted eventually mean that the only way for you and others to meet the major funding challenge would be to protest more? When I talk about protest, I know that we can inform someone, increase his awareness, but, from the moment the department has the information and is aware of the problem, if things don't move, you have to shake them up.

Don't you think we've come to the point where we have to shake things up?

• (0940)

[English]

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Do you want me to comment on that?

Yes, I would agree with an awful lot of what you said there. We probably have reached that point. Maybe we've gone beyond it in some cases.

When it comes to lobbying, fishermen are pretty good lobbyists. We can lobby pretty hard. But the problem is, as I mentioned in the brief, that a lot of the time the money is only around at election time. The money has to be there all the time, not just at election time. We'll do our part in presenting to the federal government what we need, but that money has to be there 24/7. It can't just be automatic or appear out of thin air because an election is called; it has to be there. That is where we've had the trouble down through the years. We've had to fight for the money.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: And the time we spend on all that can't be spent on anything else. It's also tiring; it's exhausting. Lastly, in some cases, the department's solution is to put up fences on certain wharves because conditions aren't safe.

My opinion, which I repeat as often as possible, is that the wharf, or the infrastructure for fishermen, for a community like Georgetown, is more than a landing site. It's nothing more or less than the heart of the village. It's the heart of a community. A lot of things happen on a wharf. It isn't just landing; a lot of things happen there. Ultimately, there's a cultural flavour to all that; there's heritage. There can also be multiple uses: tourism, commerce, fishermen. It's all that and it's also a gathering place. In my opinion, when a village loses its wharf, it loses its heart.

I'd like to hear your comments on that subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I would agree wholeheartedly with that one. For an awful lot of the stuff that happens in our community—we take in three little communities, Annandale, Little Pond, Howe Bay—the centre of that is at the Annandale wharf a lot of the time. For two lobster suppers that are held there, the lobster are donated by the fishermen. It's a fundraising event for the Catholic Church and the United Church in that community, and it has been for an awfully long time. Everybody contributes. The thing is kept going by things like that. If that wharf were not there, both of those functions would cease to exist, in my opinion.

There are too many other things to mention here today that the wharf contributes to. But you are absolutely right, it is the heart and soul of those three communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stoffer, for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's good to be back on Prince Edward Island once again. Thanks for the nice weather. I'll bring the clubs up next time.

Gentlemen, approximately how many wharves, facilities, or harbour authorities are there on Prince Edward Island, that you are aware of—a ballpark figure?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: There must be 75 to 100 there now. Pretty well every harbour we have has one.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay.

You said you look after three little communities. On Fogo Island, we heard of one group that looks after all five harbours. Is that

similar on the Island as well, where, for example, the Annandale Harbour Authority looks after four or five different harbours at the same time?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: No.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: What is the annual charge that you, as fishermen, pay to tie up at the Annandale harbour?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I'm glad you asked that question. That depends on what we're facing.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The size of the boat as well?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: No, we haven't done that yet. It's a flat fee of \$350 per year right now. That has been doubled on different occasions, depending on how much money we have to raise to do various things.

• (0945)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: So it's not a charge per foot?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Not at our harbour at this time.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: For a product that is offloaded, is there a certain charge that the harbour authority gets? For example, in Newfoundland we heard that if they're offloading, a quarter of a cent per pound goes directly to the harbour authority.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: We haven't done that yet.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Has it ever been taken into consideration?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: It has been discussed at some of our harbour authority meetings.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

In terms of relationships with small craft harbours directorate—I know the guy is sitting behind us—we've heard that the relationships are very good with the people on the ground here, but the question is getting that message above them, as Lawrence said, into Ottawa.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I'll come back and comment on that, Peter, and then Gregory or one of the other lads may want to further it here.

They have to work within a budget, and we realize that. They're trying to satisfy an awful lot of people with a certain amount of money. It's been our experience, or my experience in particular, down through the years that they've done the best they could with what they had to work with.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Does your organization share information at all with other harbour authorities, say, in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Well, we move around quite a bit during the season, and it's just talking to other fishermen. But as far as being directly involved with other harbour authorities goes, not really.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: We did an interim report, as the chair said, and we issued it in December. Have you had a chance to look at that interim report, or were you aware of it?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: No, I haven't had a chance to look at it yet.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: If it's possible at the end, give your name to our analyst, and he'll tell you where to get copies of that. It would be interesting to have your comments on that report to see how we're doing. You can always send those comments to us.

One of the concerns we've heard—and I understand it, because you're all volunteers, and fishing itself is a very difficult thing to do—is that the reality is that if government or any political party doesn't pay more attention to this particular issue, there is a possibility you might just say frig it and give it up, right? Yesterday in Newfoundland one woman asked what would happen if all the authorities said “That's it, we're done; we're not looking after this any more” and walked away from it? What would government then be faced with?

That's a very serious problem. I'd like to get your comment on that.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Well, I've thought about it. I've been doing it for 25 years, and it gets tiring. Bob has too. We've been chugging away down there for 25 years at that harbour authority. I was 18 or 19 years old when I started doing it, and I don't think we've taken five cents out of it for anything we've ever done.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I know the goal was to allow local management of those small craft harbours. That was the goal of this entire program, and in many cases we've heard great success stories about it. But there is an element of possible burnout, of trying to do too much with very little.

I want to thank you very much for your comments, and if you have any further comments down the road, please don't hesitate to forward them through Lawrence or to the committee.

I thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thanks very much, Peter.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Before going to Mr. Kamp's questions, I will mention that our committee is represented by the four political parties in the House of Commons, and most of our members are representatives of fishing communities. So we're one of the few committees in the House of Commons that usually get along fairly well, because we have like-minded interests in what we're doing and discussing. That makes it a little easier for us to operate.

I have a quick question. I know that in Newfoundland and Labrador all the harbour authorities get together every fall throughout the province and have an annual general meeting to discuss ongoing concerns. As you said earlier, Bobby, when you spoke about one wharf and one community and one harbour infrastructure, the same concerns are pretty well everywhere. Do you guys get together here on an annual basis at an AGM or what do you do...? This is to follow up on Peter's question about having interactions with each other.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I'll speak to it first, and Gregory may want to comment on it too.

We're volunteers and we're involved in other things as well. If our schedule allows it, we try to do it. Sometimes we get there and sometimes we don't.

The Chair: I understand. I'm just wondering if there is a mechanism in place for that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I think there's some kind of mechanism there. I'm not sure if it's annual or not. Gregory may be a little bit further on that.

• (0950)

Mr. Gregory Norton: Do you mean for all harbour authorities?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Oh, yes. There is a harbour authority—

The Chair: So every year there's an AGM.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Yes.

The Chair: There's a provincial get-together.

Mr. Gregory Norton: It's not so much a provincial thing as it is a maritime thing. I've never actually sat down with just the provincial harbours in particular, but I've sat down several times with the main group, which is the maritimes.

The Chair: I know that the feedback I get from the harbour authorities in my own riding—as I said, I have 68—is that they get a lot of knowledge from going and having that little get-together every year. They come out with joint statements on the joint concerns they all have.

Anyway, sorry to interrupt, but I can do that when I'm chair.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Perhaps I can say one thing here, Mr. Chair, on a problem that we face.

Imagine back, if you can, to when you were just a little fella, to when you used to walk down to the store on the corner and buy something for a quarter.

A voice: A nickel.

Mr. Gregory Norton: That's right.

Well, what's happening to the ports in P.E.I. and other places in Newfoundland is the same thing that's happening to those little stores. Picture Annandale, in this particular case, as a little store. A few of us are trying to hang onto it, but it's damn hard to make a go, the way it is. You see how the big-box stores are coming in, the Wal-Marts and the Home Depots. It's no different from the big fishing companies coming in and gobbling up all the little guys.

It's not a pretty picture that's being painted right now all over Canada for fishing communities and fishermen. I'm not sure if you guys can turn it around. It's probably going to take a lot of political will and a big stick to change that, because you know the way it goes.

So that's what we're facing as fishermen with these small harbours. It's the “small store” syndrome, if I can call it that. There used to be two or three in my community. Right now you'd probably have to drive about 15 or 20 minutes to find a store that could sell you a dish of milk.

The Chair: Coming from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we're quite familiar with that story.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

I'm from British Columbia, a long way from here. I'm also the parliamentary secretary to the minister, so I like to follow these issues as closely as I can on top of my involvement on this committee.

I think you made the comment that you only see money at election time. Actually, I don't recall it coming at election time as part of any platform in recent years. I'll have to go back and look at that.

Just for information, my understanding is that on P.E.I. there are 42 harbour authorities that manage 55 harbours. Most of those are core harbours; 11 of them are non-core harbours. It's also my understanding that the harbour authority model came into play in 1987.

I'm going to split my time with my colleague from Alberta, and he can ask some more specific questions, but I'll ask this question about the period prior to 1987.

From your comments, Mr. Jenkins, I wasn't quite sure whether you were saying that the harbour authority model was one you liked or didn't like or thought was working. Prior to 1987, how did things work? Did you think it was better then?

Maybe others would like to comment as well. Do you think we have the right model with the harbour authorities?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Prior to 1987, fishermen kept the money in their back pockets, so to speak. When we entered into the agreements with the federal government on harbour authorities, we were led to believe that on the small stuff, we were to take care of it. The big problems, the infrastructure, would be taken care of by the federal government.

I've already told you that some of us had to go to the banks and put our names on loan papers to cover some of the big projects. The money wasn't coming from the federal government the way it should have come.

• (0955)

Mr. Randy Kamp: And who paid for both the major and minor costs prior to 1987?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: It was the federal government, to my knowledge.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So you weren't responsible, as fishermen, for any of those costs.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's correct.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Norton.

Mr. Greg Norton: Anything we got done.... There was a fellow I knew pretty well in the province and he was allowed to spend \$500 at a time, so if I had a little project that was worth \$1,500 he'd write me three cheques for \$500 so he wouldn't get in trouble. That's basically how we ran it. The province would help us out a little bit with trying to do little band-aid things to try to keep the thing going. Every once in a while the federal government would do something,

but Annandale was pretty well on the back burner as far as trying to get anything done.

Mr. Randy Kamp: You're talking about when?

Mr. Greg Norton: Prior to 1987. At that time, in 1987, we probably had about 27 or 28 smaller boats, and the facility that had been worked on was still okay then, but 20 years have gone by since then.

Mr. Randy Kamp: The other point I want to make before turning it over to Mr. Calkins is if you go back and look at the budget figures, say for the last 20 years or so, you will see a fair amount of fluctuation in terms of how much has been spent on small craft harbours, particularly on maintenance. In the mid-1990s, for example, there was a significant cost-cutting program in place. There was certainly no more than half as much as is being spent now, and I understand that what's spent now doesn't satisfy those who actually have to use these facilities. I'm sure that would be reflected in the condition of the facilities. It has been as high as \$150 million in a year for small craft harbours, or close to it, and as low as \$50 million in other years. Obviously that would be reflected.

Mr. Greg Norton: Maybe I could ask you a question. What would you think would be reasonable in the last 20 years to have spent on a harbour?

Mr. Randy Kamp: Any particular harbour?

Mr. Greg Norton: Like Annandale—what would be a reasonable amount of money to put into that harbour to keep it...?

Mr. Randy Kamp: I don't know the answer to that question. I think each harbour is different, and that's why we're making this trip, to find out if everyone is experiencing the same kind of thing or if there is an unevenness in the way the harbours are being treated.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Randy.

I have some questions that deal more with diversification as to ways harbour authorities can generate some revenue. I've heard from folks in Newfoundland and I've also heard from folks who have come to Ottawa to testify that from time to time it is not just fishing vessels that are showing up in these small craft harbours. There are transient vessels, people with yachts, or whatever the case might be that might want to pull in and have a place to tie up if the weather is bad or whatever the case might be.

Could you provide for the committee a breakdown of the number of boats that you would have that are fishing boats, non-fishing boats, recreational boats that are there all year round, and transient boats that come in? I'd like to get an idea of what that's like here in Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Greg Norton: Just at our harbour alone there are roughly 36 to 37 that are full-time fishermen. There are probably two or three different speedboats that come in and may stay for the summer, but where we are situated there is not a big transient bunch of vessels that come in and out. We're not in a spot where tuna would lay off or they would come in and out and change. North Lake, Naufrage, and harbours like that have a lot of vessels that come in and tie up for the summer, but Annandale doesn't have that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I just checked with our treasurer. He keeps the money. We haven't made a nickel off a transient vessel in the last five years. It's all on the backs of the fishermen.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: All right, fair enough.

We did hear in Newfoundland and Labrador that depending on which particular harbour authority, there was a fee charged for the offloading, either a quarter of a cent a pound or half a cent a pound, or whatever the case might be.

Mr. Gregory Norton: The way it has to work is that you need to have so much money in the bank. Let's say this east wall, which is a sore point with us, collapses; you have to have some money or they won't even look at you. So we've saved up \$50,000 in the bank now. We're waiting. If this east wall happens to give out, it will be an emergency to fix. If you don't have any funding saved, they won't even look at you. They want to see some initiative, that you're trying to manage the harbour and keep the thing working.

So yes, we've managed to save up \$50,000. We're waiting to do this east wall, and every year we keep the little maintenance things going.

Is that the answer to your question?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Yes, I'm looking for something along that line.

How much would you collect annually in berthage fees or offloading fees as a harbour authority?

Mr. Gregory Norton: It's roughly between \$350 and \$450 annually for each boat.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: It's about \$20,000 a year for the buyers and everybody.

Mr. Gregory Norton: In total, yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That would be your revenues, and then you add your volunteer time to that. While it doesn't show up as cash in the bank, it certainly is an asset that you depend upon in order to keep your harbours going. Would \$20,000 be about the same for...?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's about what we bring in in revenue annually. That would be our gross revenue, around \$20,000.

Mr. Gregory Norton: Then we pay our land taxes, our light bills, and everything else.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Gregory's speaking of the \$50,000 that we happen to have in the bank now. The only reason that's there now is that things have been going pretty well over the last couple of years down there, but we could have a storm surge at any time and that would be gone. That wouldn't be nearly enough to fix it.

Lawrence said there was a fix during the storm surge of 2000; they wouldn't have even looked at it for \$50,000.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

We've gone around, and as usual, I have a question I want to ask.

On the membership of the harbour authority that you're familiar with, outside of fishermen themselves, are there other people involved in the harbour authorities here? It's just fishermen around the harbour authority, is it? Okay.

I know in Newfoundland and Labrador we have other people in the community sometimes. I've never fished in my life, but I was one of the founding members of the harbour authority in my community. Sometimes they do that down home. I was just trying to find a different angle.

Mr. Gregory Norton: We find that if we get other people involved it always creates confusion, because they're not stakeholders. We put a waste oil receptacle down at the wharf, and then somehow we ended up having everybody's oil coming to the wharf. We tried garbage bins down there once, and then everybody's garbage was coming to the wharf.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: It's kind of a focal point for the three communities. We already told you that.

The Chair: Small communities, boy.

Once again, I want to thank our witnesses this morning. Certainly there was some interesting conversation.

We'll break for five minutes and get ready for our next panel. Thank you very much.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1005)

The Chair: I call the meeting to order. If anybody wants to join us at the table, they can do so.

I would like to welcome Mr. Norman Peters, who will have a presentation for us. I don't know, Mr. Peters, whether you were here when I introduced the last session.

My name is Fabian Manning and I am the member of Parliament for the riding of Avalon in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the Parliament of Canada. We are in the process of conducting a study into the small craft harbours program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

As part of that study we're travelling around Atlantic Canada and Quebec this week to hear from people like yourselves who are on the ground. We have had the opportunity to hear from people within the department, the director general of small craft harbours and others, and this is part and parcel of a study that we hope to present to Parliament prior to the summer recess. Our purpose is to create a foundation for the minister to go forward, to find funding and other ways of enhancing the small craft harbours program.

I understand, Mr. Peters, that today is your birthday, so the committee wants to wish you happy birthday.

- (1010)

Mr. Norman Peters (Chairman, North Rustico Harbour Authority): Me and the Pope. The Pope's name is Benedict and my middle name is Benedict, so be careful.

The Chair: We're delighted with this divine intervention today, and we look forward to your remarks. Mr. Peters, the floor is yours.

Mr. Norman Peters: This is a presentation to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans regarding the small craft harbours, presented by Norman Peters, fisherman and chairman of North Rustico Harbour Authority.

First of all, I would like to extend our condolences to our friends and colleagues for the men who were lost from the Magdalen Islands. I'm chairman of the North Shore Fishermen's Association, and we extend our sympathies.

We have wharves that were built in the 1950s and 1960s that either have collapsed, as in Murray Harbour and Covehead, or are on the verge of collapse. The piles, the foundation of these facilities, are simply decaying faster than government can replace them. This problem has been left unattended for so long that we are now facing major expenses to bring them up to par.

I won't go on through the list of the woes of the various harbours, but from meeting with my colleagues and representatives from government over the years, I can assure you that this is a major economic challenge and one that would result in a major economic loss to fishermen and communities and anybody else that's involved in the fishery unless they're addressed in the near future.

On funding, I realize that wharves are a major expense and that money just doesn't grow on trees. Funding has to be the most basic and difficult challenge we face. We seem to wait for disasters to happen before we address the problems.

We are forced to hound our MPs for funding. Both Mr. MacAulay and Mr. Easter have experienced this, and without their lobbying and hard work we would get a lot less and our industry would be in worse shape. That's a true statement. I would like to thank them for their efforts. They are certainly appreciated by the fishermen of P.E.I.

•(1015)

Why then do we have to resort to begging for handouts? There have been assessments conducted over the years that do point to serious problems with our entire wharf infrastructure. There seems to be money for the assessments but no money to carry out the recommendations suggested by the assessments. Fishermen have certainly made government aware of our needs. Do we wait for an accident to happen before dealing with the problem? In most cases we are patching again a former patch-up job.

The fishing industry is worth billions of dollars and creates jobs out of the communities, as opposed to the urban centres. In fact, a lot of communities would disappear if the inshore fishery collapsed, because we do not have what they had when the cod collapsed in Newfoundland. We don't have crabs. We don't have shrimp. We don't have cod. We don't have mackerel. We have lobster, and we're looking after that as diligently as we can.

I believe the Government of Canada has a lot of issues tugging at the purse strings, and we're simply one more problem. The heart of the matter is that when the wharves are no longer functional, we cease to be able to make a living. I would challenge you to encourage your colleagues to address this situation and to provide the necessary funding to bring our harbours up to a safe and functional level so that we can all enjoy the opportunities that the sea provides.

Now to harbour authorities and fishermen. DFO over the past decade or more downloaded all kinds of tasks on fishermen. Fishermen did not ask to form harbour authorities; it was thrust upon us. We knew we were getting broken-down and deteriorating wharves and breakwaters to look after, but we were led to believe

that if we did not form harbour authorities our harbours would not be looked at for any more funding.

North Rustico was one of the first harbours to form a harbour authority. What we interpret as cohesion is continuing to go on. Just last year our fishermen who asked to maintain traditional access to the sea were approached to accept from DFO a parcel of land. Well, actually at the harbour it was three or four or five parcels of land. We wanted DFO to maintain ownership of the land. We did not want to take on the responsibility of ownership of this land because we have nothing to do with it; we don't know what to do with it.

However, we were led to believe, and I was told to my face, that if we did not choose to accept this parcel of land it would be sold to another buyer. We would be in danger of being prohibited the use of one of our traditional accesses to the sea. We live in a heavy tourist area where many people choose to stroll along the shore.

•(1020)

The Chair: Mr. Peters, thank you for your presentation. I know you put some time and effort into it.

The purpose of our visit to Atlantic Canada and Quebec during this week, as I stated earlier, is to hear from people like you, the fishermen and the people who are depending upon these facilities and these opportunities to make a living. That's why we're delighted to be here in Georgetown this morning, to hear from people like you. Once again, thank you for your presentation.

We'll go to Mr. MacAulay for ten minutes.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Norman, it's good to hear from you. I must admit that I've heard you a few times. And that's good; you understand what's going on and you understand what's needed in the fishery.

I also certainly can feel for you when you're asking not to beg. You're one of the most important segments of our society here. Without your income as inshore fishermen...and as you emphasized, you're inshore fishermen. If we lose our wharves and harbours, we don't have our inshore fishery.

You also indicated that we shouldn't wait until something happens. We do see tragedies, unfortunately, in the fishery, and then things happen.

You're asking us to encourage our colleagues to have an understanding of how important this is to the economy. Every part of this nation has different economies in it. You happen to be involved in one of the most important segments of the economy here.

●(1025)

Mr. Norman Peters: It's preventative maintenance. Our main breakwater in Rustico.... I'll tell you what they were doing for a while; they were turning over the planks. They weren't rotten underneath. They were turning over the planks and nailing them back down, because the planks were a little better underneath. There was a major storm surge, one of the major storm surges, and before that happened, I was working with Wayne—I usually work with Lawrence too—and he said, “Jesus, Norman, you've got to get those big stones from New Brunswick; that's the only thing.” I said, “Listen, I'm in the middle of everything here. How can we do that? We need support from you smart people. I'm only one little fisherman. But if we had a string of these big stones—armour rock.”

They were put there a year ago. I was head of the project, and we haven't had a problem since.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: But in the end, that saved dollars, would you say?

Mr. Norman Peters: That saved dollars.

The other thing I will tell you is that on our wharf the small craft harbours people came out; they sent the public works people out, they looked it over, and said, “Oh my God, the whole thing's got to be torn down. The whole wharf has to go.” A million and a half dollars to redo it. So we called them back out to some more meetings and said, “We want you to come and see underneath.” They said, “We haven't got time today.”

“There's no tie-backs”, they said. “It's condemned. We're going to tear it down.” They would put all stone there in the middle of the village, big high stone. That's not an option for us.

Anyway, we finally got them under the wharf. My God almighty, the tie-backs are there. This wouldn't cost a million and a half; it's only going to cost maybe \$400,000.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Norman, you're not saying the engineers could be wrong?

Mr. Norman Peters: I don't want to run down engineers. My son is one.

The point is, that just goes to show you the amount of money that would be used before the wharf even got anything. The money that goes out on studies and that is phenomenal.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I thank you. I might want to pass you on to the Newfoundlanders to see what they can do with it.

The Chair: It's up to you. You have your ten minutes. You can do what you like.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Thank you very much, Lawrence.

Let me say it's a real pleasure to be here with you in your riding and to listen to the concerns of some of your people. They are very similar concerns to what we heard in Newfoundland for two days, to be very honest with you.

Thank you for coming.

This was of great interest, your presentation. You're very well prepared. I guess you can tell the story best for us because you're a user, you're involved in it all, and that makes a lot of difference.

I just wanted to ask a question about a couple of issues you talked about. You mentioned that when harbour authorities came on the scene and it was sort of thrown in your lap, it was without training. I just want you to expand on that for the committee a bit, if you would. It seems to me there should have been some training components held with people who were going to be involved. Could you just explain that to me and the committee?

Mr. Norman Peters: We were advised that all harbours were going to become harbour authorities, and there were various meetings held around the Island. There were some harbours that said “No, we're not becoming harbour authorities.” “Fine, there won't be a bit of work on your harbour until you become a harbour authority.”

There was no training. We were incorporated in 1995. We were called a shining star. Rustico was one of the first, I think. Things were good. There was a little job to be done out there, and we called the engineers out. They came out, and this time they said it would be \$70,000 to put in a few tie-backs to hold the wharf.

●(1035)

Mr. Bill Matthews: Would you say now, even 20 or so years later, that there should be some kind of training program for those harbour authorities or for those getting involved? Do you think it would still serve a purpose? It's something we'd be interested in, as a committee, for our report.

Mr. Norman Peters: Training for what?

Mr. Bill Matthews: Well, I'm just listening to what you said, that you were given this responsibility, or took it on, but there was no kind of program or any way to help you take on those responsibilities. There was book work, I guess, and other things were involved.

I understood you to say that you were told, “You're the harbour authority, now go to it”, without any assistance or help on how to go about doing your job. That's what I thought you said, but maybe I misinterpreted you.

Mr. Norman Peters: You might have. When it first started, I think some jobs were getting done fast just to make it look like, “Hey, the harbour authorities; that's going to be the baby, that's going to save our wharves.” But then it kind of petered out. We're now back to the same thing, back to calling our politicians. There's no change.

I asked my wife the other day what change there's been since harbour authority. I had to go out the other day and take the time to try to find three companies to do a little job, to give them each a tender. It took half a day, and I didn't get a cent for it. There's no money to pay me. Harbours don't have that kind of money. There's no funding put in place to say we're going to put a certain amount of money here so that you can travel, go to other harbours, meet other fishermen, and get together. We do have a national meeting, but....

Mr. Bill Matthews: Let me just ask a quick question, because I'm sure my time is pretty much up.

You only fish lobsters, is that correct?

Mr. Norman Peters: That's all we've got.

Mr. Bill Matthews: How much lobster are you allowed to catch per year?

Mr. Norman Peters: We're allowed to catch whatever we can catch that's legal: two and three-quarter inches from the eye to the back of the body.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Yes, but I'm thinking about after a certain 10,000 pounds or 20,000 pounds, say. What are you allowed to catch? Is it as much as you can, or is it cut off?

Mr. Norman Peters: Well, it's within the rules, the DFO rules. You catch what you can catch. It's a very competitive business.

Mr. Bill Matthews: So it's a competitive fishery. You're not restricted to 5,000 pounds or 10,000 pounds.

Mr. Norman Peters: No, no.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Okay.

So what size of vessels are we talking about in, let's say, your harbour?

Mr. Norman Peters: Mine is 43. Some are 45, but the majority are between 43 and 45.

Mr. Bill Matthews: So you go to the lobster grounds and come back into your port. You're not in a situation that we experience in Newfoundland, where they've become more mobile and have gone to bigger vessels farther offshore. You're not in that situation.

Mr. Norman Peters: They go after crab or lobster. We don't have any crab. We get a little allocation from the minister, or the P.E.I. Fishermen's Association—

Mr. Bill Matthews: Basically what I'm asking you, or I guess suggesting, is that just comparing where we were the last few days to today is.... Your berthage space is quite predictable. What we're finding in other harbours is that because they've gone to the larger vessels, the fleets are more mobile. You're pretty much stationary, I guess. You go out and come back to your own harbour. That's the difference, is it?

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Peters, I've learned that you made photocopies of your presentation to distribute them to us. It isn't out of bad faith that they weren't distributed. According to the committee's regulations, presentations must be filed in both official languages. I'm sure they'll be distributed to us later. We note most of what you've told us, but we'll make sure to read your presentations because they were very interesting.

I have a lot of questions to ask you. I want to thank you personally for the sympathies you offered to the families of the fishermen involved in the unfortunate accident. I would like my colleague who represents those people to receive them as well.

•(1040)

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you very much, Yvon.

Thank you, Mr. Peters. I represent the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. Your message of sympathy affected me very much. I consider it a message of solidarity with what was experienced and with what we'll experience in the coming weeks and months. In that sense, I thank you very much.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I'm from the Arctic Coast, James Bay, Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay. We probably don't have the same problems as you.

Do you have a lot of port facilities that are equipped with breakwaters? Could breakwaters greatly extend the life of facilities and structures?

In the health field, it has long been said that prevention is less costly than cure. The same is true of coastal, road and other infrastructures. It has to be maintained, just like we maintain our houses. In that sense, I wonder whether breakwaters constitute preventive maintenance.

How much does dredging cost you a year? How many small craft harbours does your authority have?

You mustn't pay a lot of tax, in view of your operating costs. Perhaps you should ensure that you earn enough money to pay tax, at some point.

On that point, I turn the floor over to you.

[English]

Mr. Norman Peters: I think I got the question. I'm not used to these little fangled rigs you have here.

Actually breakwaters are the main breakwater that struts out into the sea. That's what saves our harbour right now. If that wasn't there a lot of homes would be gone. There are homes built along there. A breakwater is to break the water, and that's not in too bad shape, but it's our inner wharves where we tie the boats, inside the harbours, that we're having the problem with.

I'll give you a little example. There was another job done two weeks ago. We went around and we got three people to commit on it and one to tender. He pulled it up and did some work, but he noticed there was no back wall, so the clay would keep coming.

•(1045)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: How much money do you spend on dredging, and how often are you required to do it?

[English]

Mr. Norman Peters: Our last harbour was dredged in 1989. That's a long time ago.

Right now when we're going out of Rustico we skirt along the breakwater. You can't go too close there, and then you have to turn.

I made numerous attempts in Charlottetown to get it dredged, and all they tell me is that I have a very safe, navigable harbour. I told them we were going to run into the breakwater. They said you have a stream going through there, and that's all you need.

Listen, I said, there are seven or eight boats taking tourists out of our harbour. It's a little viable business. I do it. There's going to be a bad accident there some day, and what's going to happen? We're going to lose some people on account of no dredging.

But again I must say, it's not only our harbour. All harbours on the north side are sandy harbours, some worse than others. Ours was man-made; it was our mistake. But I won't go into that; that's a whole different kettle of fish, I know.

Lawrence is pointing at his watch. When I get into the House of Commons you'll not do that.

The Chair: There you go. Mr. MacAulay is worried now.

Mr. Stoffer, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Peters, it's good to see you again, and happy birthday.

I've heard this in private but never at a public meeting before, the fact that if you didn't form a harbour authority or harbour association then you wouldn't get any funding for that harbour. Is that correct?

Mr. Norman Peters: That's correct.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Were you told that?

Mr. Norman Peters: We were told that.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Are you aware of other authorities being told that?

Mr. Norman Peters: I would imagine, because they wanted the harbours to become harbour authorities.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Yes.

Mr. Norman Peters: We said we're taking a pile of broken-down wharves. What are we going to do with that?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I just want to be very clear. Was that in writing to you, or just told to you at a meeting?

Mr. Norman Peters: Pretty well verbally, I would say.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay.

On the second point I have, I'm concerned with what you just said about the possibility of an accident. Who is responsible for insurance, for the liability of those wharves?

Mr. Norman Peters: Right now the government, small craft harbours, are looking at us as being the custodians of the wharves, but again we have to practise due diligence. If there is a little hole and you don't see it, and somebody breaks a leg, who are they going to sue?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Right. If somebody walks on your wharf in North Rustico, breaks a leg, falls in, or has serious injuries to themselves, their family, or whoever, who do they sue? Do they sue the harbour authority, or would they sue the federal government? Who pays the insurance?

Mr. Norman Peters: If the harbour authority is practising due diligence and keeping a watch, keeping an eye, and there's a hole, put a stick in it, because the tourists are crawling all over the place. They're even going under the pipes, where they are not supposed to go.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: We have heard evidence in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland that there are some very proactive, well-formed harbour authorities. People from outside the fishing community are active here. They're very gung ho and they're very proud of what they've done. One gentleman from Bay Bulls is extremely proud of the work that he and his group have done, including getting a petroleum company to pay for a breakwater, I believe, if I'm not mistaken. They're very proactive in that regard.

Obviously, with different harbour authorities across the country in various regions, there are different aptitudes and different levels of initiative on their part.

I guess my major concern is that if something happens under these authorities—as you said, if some people get killed on a tour boat, what then happens? Who is ultimately responsible for the so-called safety of those wharves and harbours? Is it you?

Mr. Norman Peters: Well, the federal government owns the wharves right now. We're the custodians. We're to make sure that they're the best they can be. That's hard to do when there are holes all over them and you're trying to plug them up. You know what I mean?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: For your lobster boats, is there an offloading charge to the authority? In Newfoundland we heard that when they offload their product on the wharf, they get a quarter cent a pound in some areas.

When the lobsters come out, are they offloaded in your harbour?

Mr. Norman Peters: When I come in, yes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Does the buyer or the fisherman pay so much per pound to the authority?

Mr. Norman Peters: No.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: So there are no offloading costs whatsoever?

Mr. Norman Peters: No.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: What is the charge for you to have your boat at your harbour per year?

Mr. Norman Peters: For me it's about \$1,500 because I run that little deep sea fishing building.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay, but let's say for a normal lobster fisherman.

Mr. Norman Peters: A normal lobster boat is around \$650, because we hire a night watchman and we've got to put in an extra couple of hundred dollars for a night watchman.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Does that money cover the very minimal basics of small maintenance?

Mr. Norman Peters: Very minimal. We're getting down there. Our chequing account was never so low, because we took it on ourselves last year to try to do a little extra patching and this and that.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: My last question for you, sir, is this. You indicated that when you took over these harbours as an authority you were given no training whatsoever. Is that correct?

Mr. Norman Peters: That's pretty well correct.

•(1050)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Do you know of any other authorities that were given training on how to do what Mr. Matthews said, bookkeeping, what you should be charging, how you should look for repairs, that kind of stuff?

Mr. Norman Peters: There should have been money given to the harbour authorities to hire a bookkeeper. We don't have the money to hire a bookkeeper. We have a bookkeeper and we have to pay her something. But we were left with no money to do anything. We were given harbours: "Take it and go on home."

The 80-20 is still in place. If I find a project in Rustico or if they find a project in the harbour that's under \$50,000, we pay 20% and the feds will pay the difference. If it's over \$50,000, it has to go to Ottawa and it has to be....

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peters, you piqued my interest with your last comment. That's a new one on me, too, learning as we go. Are you telling me that—

A voice: You shouldn't have told him.

Mr. Norman Peters: I like things out in front.

The Chair: I don't know of anywhere that we pay 20%. That's what I'm trying to get at. So if you have a project at your facility for \$40,000, the harbour authority pays 20% toward the repairs of that and the small crafts harbours program supplies the rest.

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You get it all.

The Chair: They don't pay 20%, not that I'm aware of.

Is that a rule across the board?

Mr. Norman Peters: We know it's a rule. We try to keep it up above \$50,000. That way it goes to Ottawa and you people have to decide if it's a project then.

The Chair: So if the project is over \$50,000, you don't pay anything?

Mr. Norman Peters: That's right.

The Chair: But even projects that I'm aware of in my own riding for repairs that have to be carried out, the harbour authority doesn't pay 20%.

Mr. Norman Peters: We do.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: No, it doesn't.

Mr. Norman Peters: The cheque comes from small craft harbours. We put it in the credit union, and then we have to write a cheque for that amount plus 20% of our own.

The Chair: It's a new one on me.

I'm not supposed to be interfering in the conversation. Mr. Calkins, go ahead.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Peters, it certainly is good to hear from you. I had the pleasure of staying at Stanley Bridge last summer for a week. I think I

actually took Marvin Graham out for a day fishing and I saw...is the name of the bay London Bay?

Mr. Norman Peters: New London Bay, yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I had a good look at the breakwater there. Now, that's a creosote post breakwater there, and because the breakwater has so many gaps or holes, the current no longer keeps open the channel that the fishermen from Stanley Bridge use.

Is Stanley Bridge part of your harbour authority?

Mr. Norman Peters: No, that's a separate harbour. Each harbour has a separate harbour authority.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: So you just look after the North Rustico harbour.

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: By way of driving, when I stayed at Stanley Bridge, it was only about a 10- or 15-minute drive over from Stanley Bridge, and of course Cavendish is right there as well.

I asked this question on an earlier round. I think I went fishing out of North Rustico too, so I've actually gone around the breakwater. I know exactly what you're talking about, because he kept it very close. I think the skipper was from Bob from Bob's Deep-Sea Fishing. Anyway, we had a great time.

Mr. Norman Peters: How come you didn't come with me?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Well, it looks as if I'm going to have to come back and give it another try.

Mr. Norman Peters: You will have to come back. We'll give you a little step and a fiddle tune.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: But I went out there and took my boys fishing because I love fishing. That's why I'm passionate about fisheries right across our country. I had a really good time out there.

But I understand what you're talking about. I just wanted to say I think it's fantastic. It's a little bit off topic right now, but I've kind of done the math. If I remember correctly, you take anywhere from 13 to 14 fishermen out for a couple of hours three times a day. You don't always get the 14, or whatever the case might be.

Mr. Norman Peters: No, it varies.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I think it's a great way to supplement the income, and I certainly applaud you guys for making an effort.

Mr. Norman Peters: Just off the topic for a minute, we're in kind of a dilemma. We're hoping Minister Hearn will give the charter boats—there are only eight or nine of us—a couple of fish or something that tourists can catch. If we don't get those couple of cod and we only get a few little mackerel, I don't know if we'll be able to succeed this year.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm not sure how that quota—

Mr. Norman Peters: The scientists want everything closed down on cod completely. Quebec would like to see a little fishery, and I'm sure in Newfoundland, his own province, there will be a little fishery. What we plan to do as a group is go to you and say, "You have a quota in your back pocket for codfish, 40 tonnes there that you're not using and can't use. We'd like to buy that for two months and use that."

Mr. Blaine Calkins: My understanding is that the quota that was being used.... I don't remember which boat I asked the question on, but it was actually a quota that was purchased from a native fisher, and that's the quota that was split up among the group of fishermen running those tours. So I'm not sure how that works.

But we're a little bit off topic. I just wanted to say I really enjoyed it and I thought it was great.

I asked this question previously. When it comes to the boats that were there, I saw all the lobster boats. I didn't see any tourist boats in North Rustico or in Stanley Bridge, only people going out on the sea themselves. Local people might put in a recreational boat, but there were no yachts.

• (1055)

Mr. Norman Peters: No, we can't get them in.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Is that a problem?

Mr. Norman Peters: The sand is why we can't get them in.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I would think somebody would want to come in and spend some time there, of all of the harbours on Prince Edward Island. I mean, the national park is right there. Of course Lucy Maud is buried just down the road, and you have all those things there.

Mr. Norman Peters: No, the entrance to the harbour is impossible. We have a marina down where you went out from. That's what was given to us in divestiture. They were going to tear it down, so I asked Jim Morrissey at the time, "Give it to us and we'll repair it, because if you tear it down there will be no place for boats, and the sand is going to go out into the harbour and everything." So he gave us the \$40,000 and we fixed it up.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: There's a little museum there on the wharf as well.

Mr. Norman Peters: That was my baby.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Does that generate some revenue? Is that owned by the harbour authority?

• (1100)

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: And what does that do as far as the tourism revenue generation goes for you ?

Mr. Norman Peters: It's like everything else....

Mr. Blaine Calkins: If I remember correctly, it was a donation. There wasn't actually a fee to go in.

Mr. Norman Peters: No. There is a fee to go through the museum itself. It's only \$3, but I made you a nice no-frills lobster fishing video. You sit down, and you watch actual lobster fishing, and I explain all the things to you. I'm telling you, that's where you should have gone.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I thought I was telling you that's where I was.

Mr. Norman Peters: Did you watch the video?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I went into the museum.

Mr. Norman Peters: But you didn't watch the video.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: If it was there.... I don't know if it was or wasn't. I have little kids who were running around wanting me to buy everything in the store.

Mr. Norman Peters: It generates a bit of revenue, but it's still not keeping us out of the hole.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: From your perspective then, I'd ask this question just out of my own curiosity. I'm trying to get a feel for how much revenue each of these harbours has. What do you guys have for income there as far as your berthage fees go and all those other kinds of fees that you may charge or collect versus your expenses? What are you left with at the end of the year?

Mr. Norman Peters: The harbour itself brings in around \$12,000 revenue, with little boats, the museum, that sort of thing, but that includes a couple of government grants when you hire a couple of students. The expenses are around \$14,000. So we're not making any money.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It sounds as though you're losing money.

Mr. Norman Peters: We are losing money until we can get a good flow of people coming through.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: How many fishing boats are there at North Rustico?

Mr. Norman Peters: We have 36.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Is there room to expand there?

Mr. Norman Peters: There could be room to expand if we had a plan, but we've never really talked about it. That little marina, for example, was supposed to hold 14 boats at \$700 apiece when we first got the thing going. But there's no water in it. The water's very low in parts of it, and to dredge it.... It's black mud, and there's the problem. So we're running into lots of problems.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: And you don't really have access to the anchor stone here in Prince Edward Island as you would in Newfoundland or some place like that. These rocks have to be shipped in from somewhere else, right?

Mr. Norman Peters: They have to come from New Brunswick.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: They have to come all the way from New Brunswick.

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you. I appreciate it. I would just encourage you to keep up the good work and hopefully—

Mr. Norman Peters: My heart's in the old fishery, boys. I've been in her, and it's kind of tempting to put her up for sale by times. I'm 66, you know. Do you want to buy it?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: On that note, I'm going to hand it over to Mr. Kamp if he has any questions.

The Chair: He might be interested in buying.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp: You say you have 36 boats in your harbour. How many board members are on your harbour authority?

Mr. Norman Peters: There are seven of us.

Mr. Randy Kamp: They're all fishermen who own these boats?

Mr. Norman Peters: Yes.

Mr. Randy Kamp: What's your mechanism for deciding how much you should charge for berthage fees?

Mr. Norman Peters: It would pretty well correspond with what the other harbours charge if we didn't have night watchman fees—around \$400 or \$450—but we feel a night watchman is vital, even if he's not much good as a deterrent with the sign there and the lights on, that sort of thing. Some fishermen say no, don't bother with him, but I say I think he's a deterrent, because you get a lot of people in the summertime, and you don't know who you're going to get.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So each boat pays about \$400 a year?

Mr. Norman Peters: Each boat pays \$650.

Mr. Randy Kamp: They pay \$650 per year. And you don't employ a harbourmaster?

Mr. Norman Peters: We can't afford one. It would be great to hire someone—hey, I can help this harbour. I can get it going well for you guys, but I want a wage. I'm not doing it for nothing.

I came down here today for nothing. I don't ask to get paid. Money's too tight.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So it's just the night watchman that you hire.

Mr. Norman Peters: And there are fire dues, of course. We're charged fire dues.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Are your rates similar to those in other harbours that are close to you?

Mr. Norman Peters: They are, pretty well, but that would be without the night watchman. With the night watchman taken off, it would be pretty well in line with all the other harbours.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Thank you, Mr. Peters, for your testimony here. You're certainly speaking from the heart, and there's no doubt about your love for the fishery. We certainly thank you for coming this morning and for presenting your thoughts to us. Thank you.

Mr. Norman Peters: Thank you very much for coming to P.E.I. and listening to some of us old fishermen.

The Chair: We'll take a five-minute break to get ready for our next witness.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1105)

The Chair: I want to welcome our witnesses once again.

For those of you who may not have been around earlier, just to give you an idea, my name is Fabian Manning. I'm the member of Parliament for the riding of Avalon in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, and we are that committee.

Membership of the committee is made up of the four political parties in the House of Commons, namely the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois, and the NDP. We bring Peter Stoffer from Nova Scotia along just to make sure we fill the void.

Last fall we began a process of study of the small craft harbours program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Last fall we heard from people within the department, the regional directors throughout Canada, and we presented an interim report to the House. We are in the process now of completing that study in order to present a final report to the House of Commons prior to the summer break.

Our purpose in travelling to Atlantic Canada and Quebec this week is to hear from people like you who are on the ground, the harbour authorities themselves, about the concerns and issues you may have with regard to infrastructure, the operation of the harbour authorities themselves, training requirements, and pretty well whatever comes to mind. Consider this to be a conversation down on the wharf, a chat. Most of the members here, including me, represent rural areas of Canada and have a very great interest in our hearings and in hearing from you, so feel very comfortable.

I understand that Mr. Steele will be presenting the remarks on behalf of the harbour authority.

Mr. Steele, the floor is yours.

• (1110)

Mr. Gérard Steele (Presenter, Naufrage Harbour Authority): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, on behalf of Naufrage Harbour Authority, I'd like to extend our condolences to Mr. Raynald Blais on the loss of his constituents in the tragic accident a few weeks ago.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Gérard Steele. I'm a fisherman from the port of Naufrage, and I'll be giving the presentation this morning. With me is Darrel Lesperance, the president of the harbour authority, and Lewis Miller, vice-president of Naufrage Harbour Authority.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for making it possible for us to appear before you here today, as we feel it's important to explain the conditions and operational needs of our harbour. As I'm sure you are aware, every port has its own challenges.

Just to give you a short history of our harbour, we became a harbour authority and assumed operational management duties approximately ten years ago. Since that time our committee, which is made up of volunteer fishers, has made progress in acquiring from small craft harbours budgets to repair and upgrade some portions of the wharf and also to do dredging, which is required on an ongoing basis.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Steele.

Our next step now is to go around the table for question period.

Mr. MacAulay will be starting off our questions. You have ten minutes.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Steele, it's a pleasure to be with you today. We've done a number of things over the years. And Mr. Lesperance and Mr. Miller, it's....

What we're trying to do here is convince government how important, number one, your wharves and many other wharves across this province are to the economy of Prince Edward Island—what they mean to communities, what happens if we don't have them, what happens if they're consolidated, what happens if the fishery is.... You hear these types of words, and this is what we want to make sure does not happen, because with that we have no rural Prince Edward Island.

I want to share my time, so I don't want to say too much.

I would like to ask you, Gérard, about the extension of the wharves. You feel that this overall would save dollars in the long run, with the saving on dredging. Is that correct? And there's also the safety.

• (1120)

Mr. Gérard Steele: Yes. Right now our harbour must be dredged at least twice a year. If you look at the pictures, you can see Mr. Lesperance standing right in the centre of it. As we know, he's not all that tall, and he's standing knee-deep in water there.

So we can't even get out right now. We feel that if we had the wharf extended out to a little deeper water and equal lengths, it would prevent that sandbar from accumulating. If you look at the pictures, you can see the bar right at the end of the short wharf. It's fully exposed.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: So is Mr. Lesperance.

Mr. Gérard Steele: Basically we could fish there now with a canoe, perhaps.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: But along with that is the very serious safety issue, of course. This was taken in beautiful weather, but what happens when there's a gale on, a storm? What happens when you're out at sea and you have no other choice? That's why we want people like you here. And we feel that this type of funding would eliminate that.

To Darrell, I know that when you dredge you have a number of problems. Number one is getting the dollars. Getting the dollars is always the big job. But then, when you get the dollars, it's sometimes a major job to deal with what you dredge out, because the environmentalists can become involved.

I'm aware, as you are, but I'd like you to explain, as briefly as you can, what was done there and what an asset that would be.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance (Chairman, Naufrage Harbour Authority): We did have the inside of the basin dredged. It came out good. We worked with the environment people and everyone, and we found a spot to put all the dredged oil. That worked out very good but it took a number of years to do it.

It's good there now, but we have a problem getting to the basin now. It's major work. It seems like it takes an awful long time to get that stuff off and gone. But now we have to get to the basin.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Very good.

I'm going to let my colleagues ask a few questions.

The Chair: Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): To say that this is unique is maybe a little bit of an understatement. I don't know of anything in my area that resembles this at all. It really is quite something. At first glance I thought to myself, "Well, dredging must have an incredibly high price tag."

When was the last time you did dredging?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: The particular area we're talking about has to be done at least two to three times a year.

Mr. Scott Simms: And each time it's how much?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Right now we're looking at getting it back out of there. We have a different problem there now; we don't know if we can get the truck in to get the dredged oil out. But we're looking at between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for this area.

Mr. Scott Simms: You don't know if you can get the what...?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Our wharf's in a situation where some of the wharf has deteriorated, and we have to haul it out via truck. We don't know if we're going to be able to get the truck in there this spring, right now, to do it.

This is what we have for water right now. It's a dangerous situation.

Mr. Scott Simms: It seems to me there's quite a bit of money, if we go into this, in tandem with both infrastructure and dredging, there's no doubt about it.

With the mouth of the opening there, certainly when stormy weather happens you must have a hard time getting some of these boats in there. On a high sea, they just wouldn't be able to get in there.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: It's very, very dangerous.

Mr. Scott Simms: Have you had extensive damage as a result of it?

Mr. Gérard Steele: It's a rare boat that hasn't collided.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: We basically run the gauntlet every day. It's the wind.

Mr. Scott Simms: And obviously, given where you are, you wouldn't consider building some infrastructure outside of this map here?

Mr. Gérard Steele: That's what we'd like to see done, an extension to that, to get it wider and deeper.

Mr. Scott Simms: But doesn't that cause problems otherwise? Justify this extension to me. I'm only asking out of ignorance; it's not so much that I'm trying to pigeonhole it. The extension would do what as a benefit?

Mr. Lewis Miller (Vice-President, Naufrage Harbour Authority): It would put us out to deeper water. The Naufrage Harbour is on the front page....

Mr. Gérard Steele: Basically that long extension behaves like a snow fence. It gathers the sand behind it. It causes a problem. If we had the both of them at equal distance, then you wouldn't get that buildup.... We believe that. I mean, obviously there's got to be some engineering things there too.

•(1125)

Mr. Scott Simms: That's a good point and one I didn't take into account. That's a very good point.

How many boats did you say?

Mr. Gérard Steele: We have 76 boats all the time; they are full-time fishermen.

Mr. Scott Simms: All full-time, no recreation, no transient boats?

Mr. Gérard Steele: In the summertime, when the tuna season opens, we get boats from all over the Island—anyone with a tuna licence. We've been fortunate the last few years; the tuna have been accumulating reasonably close to our harbour, so it makes an attractive place for....

Mr. Scott Simms: How much do you charge on your fees?

Mr. Gérard Steele: So much a night, so much a week, so much a month, and then so much a year. Obviously when you get to so many weeks, it becomes an issue of whether it's profitable to pay annually. I know there are some people who pay the full annual fee in several harbours. It's kind of a graded scale.

I think it's ten bucks a night, is it, Darrell?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: It's \$10 a day, \$50 a week, or \$400 a year.

Mr. Scott Simms: And you don't charge any offloading fees or anything of that sort?

Mr. Gérard Steele: Not per se, but anybody who has a buying stand pays a fee to have that stand on the wharf, regardless of what they....

Mr. Scott Simms: I see.

Mr. Gérard Steele: I think there are 12 licensed buyers there.

Mr. Scott Simms: Now the buyers themselves would pay a fee to get on that boat?

Mr. Gérard Steele: They pay a fee to have a position on the wharf to upload.

Mr. Scott Simms: What is the average size of the vessels, all 76?

Mr. Gérard Steele: The average is 40 to 45 feet.

Mr. Scott Simms: Are they primarily lobster?

Mr. Gérard Steele: That's our main fishery, yes.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: There are 76 boats that are lobster fishing. There are 76 boats there at all times—and we're up over 100 at times.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's a great little picture, by the way. Obviously if you want to prove to the powers that be that you need dredging, this is probably one way to do it. I wouldn't put myself over there, because I'd still need a PFD or a life jacket.

Mr. Gérard Steele: Not there you wouldn't. You don't need one there.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: You're better with your ordinary pair of boots; it's 12 or 14 inches high. That's basically what we've got for water there.

Mr. Lewis Miller: That picture was taken less than two weeks ago, by the way.

Mr. Scott Simms: Less than two weeks.

Mr. Lewis Miller: It would be less than two weeks, on the last moon at the tide anyway.

Mr. Scott Simms: What is the fluctuation between high and low tide?

Mr. Lewis Miller: About four feet.

Mr. Scott Simms: There is just four feet of variance, is that it?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Really. Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Mr. Blais, you have seven minutes.

•(1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the message of sympathy you offered just before the meeting and now. Mr. Dickson, whom you know very well and who made it possible to save two sailors, is considered a hero in the Magdalen Islands. I know he is in the entire Maritime community as well. Thank you very much for that message of sympathy and solidarity.

As regards your file in particular, I think it very clearly illustrates the main challenges that we are facing and that are new. The size, length and width of boats have changed. As a result, the facilities we used to have and that we have now are inadequate. Sometimes we're forced to dock the boats in line in order to manage.

There are also climate changes. We know there are tides and waves, but, with climate change, storms are worse than they used to be. In view of your geographic situation, that can probably cause more problems. I don't think the solution—and I imagine you'll agree with me—is to move the wharf or infrastructure in question. The solution is obviously money.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about climate change, storms and boats. The boats are indeed much bigger and wider, and storms are much stronger than they used to be.

Have you noticed in recent years that your problems have become increasingly acute?

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Steele: I know that storms come up a lot faster. I don't know how many thunderstorms I was caught in just this past year, during the summer, with not a lot of wind associated with them, but sometimes you do get a lot of wind associated with them. In the fall of the year we do get severe storms.

The lack of ice cover is becoming a problem for a lot of harbours too. The ice really protects the shore, but when you don't have ice and you have a lot of wind, especially if you have wet conditions.... On this island it's only a particle of soil and it's easily eroded, and the sand is easily moved. Without ice cover, these problems stand out a lot more. We seem to have less and less ice, although you wouldn't think so looking at it today, but it seems to come later in the year. Until this year, it's been going a lot earlier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Your facilities date back to when? How long has the infrastructure been there?

[*English*]

Mr. Lewis Miller: I've been fishing since 1972, and the general infrastructure hasn't changed any. There's been some cosmetic work, like maybe a top being put on it or having it refaced in a couple of places, but the general structure hasn't changed since at least before 1972, for sure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Are the silting problems much more serious than they used to be? If that's the case, since when have they been more serious?

[*English*]

Mr. Lewis Miller: It was always bad there, and the sand always has accumulated in the same place over the years. The only thing that's making it worse today is that our boats draw more water. Certainly when I started, perhaps with a foot and a half of water we could have sailed over the bar. Mind you, that's in good weather. It was always dangerous. There have been lives lost away back and in my time. But now we require more water—some people over three feet. We're towing boats off there all the time at different times of the year. It's common to be out fishing when the wind comes up, but even with no wind we're calling ahead—we now have the advantage of VHF radios and phones—wondering what the tide is there and who hit last going in. It's just common talk on the radio throughout the season now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Your situation hasn't improved for several decades. Ultimately, one could say that it's shameful and that you'll have to manage as best you can. The boats are getting bigger and wind up getting damaged because they collide with the wharf. However, those are the two factors that enable you to arrive safely in port.

You must feel neglected, forgotten. How do you feel about that?

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Steele: I guess everyone has an opinion, but who has a choice? All we can do is complain. Somebody has to do something. We've been given an opportunity to bring this to a committee that we hope can do something with it; otherwise, who are we going to talk to?

I believe, Lewis, this sand thing is worse. We used to be able to take sand off the beach, and now there are a lot of environmental concerns. We can't take as much sand as we used to be able to take. There are a lot of other players involved here. It's a beautiful beach.

There is a mile of sand beach, and as Norman has pointed out, it's lovely to look at on a Sunday afternoon, but when your nephew is hanging off the side of his boat it's not so nice. We have to be able to see it from all sides.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your presentations.

Have you had a chance to have a cost analysis of what this extension would cost?

Mr. Lewis Miller: We had a meeting with small craft harbours people—I believe it was last fall or through the winter sometime—and I asked what it would cost for an extension. The reply I got was \$1,500 to \$2,000 a foot. That was just somebody at small craft harbours. Now, as for whether it's a little more or less, I'm not an engineer, so I can't say.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Has there been an engineering feasibility study done on it in terms of all the various government departments that need to look into this? Has that all been done?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay. So obviously that would have to be done beforehand.

In your estimation, if this isn't done, what generally will happen besides the continuous dredging and everything else? Will safety be an even higher risk, in your view?

Mr. Lewis Miller: There's no question. You can never keep any industry 100% clear of having lives lost, but there's no question that there will be lives lost if it's not done. There may even be lives lost somewhere down the road if it is, but there's no question it'll be a lot fewer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I assume it would be much cheaper than a breakwater system if you did this extension.

Mr. Lewis Miller: Absolutely.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: In previous testimony, Mr. Peters indicated to us more or less that these harbour authorities were coming, and if you didn't do them, then possibly your harbour may not receive any consideration.

Mr. Lewis Miller: We were definitely told the same thing.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Were you ever told at any time that if you didn't take them over, then private interests might?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Yes, we were.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Obviously fishermen would have a fear of that.

Mr. Lewis Miller: We were fearful of it, yes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: But you never received anything in writing on that, did you?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: How long have you yourselves been part of the authority? It's been about ten years now?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: It's been about ten years.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Have you been involved in that full-time yourself? Do you have elections on a regular basis?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Yes.

Mr. Gérard Steele: We've all been at various times.... Right now, this is the executive here. They brought me along because I talk a lot slower than everybody else does.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: That is helpful.

There was one thing we heard the other day in Newfoundland from the people who are doing it now. One woman from Fogo Island was very impressive when I asked the question, who's going to take over when you decide to leave? That's always the question. If government invests x number of dollars in a particular harbour, of course you have to figure out whether the money should go over here, over to Annandale, or to North Rustico. The last thing I'd like to see is harbour authorities, people who are friends in a competitive industry like fishing, having to fight each other for the same dollar.

• (1140)

Mr. Gérard Steele: I have two sons who would very much like to take over. Where we're located, the harbours on either side are about 20 miles away, so if you want to fish these grounds you'd almost have to be at our harbour. At Annandale, for example, they have other harbours very close to where they are, two or three miles across the river. I'm not picking on them, but we see ourselves as being a more or less essential location. The next one to us is Morell, and that is probably 17 or 18 miles away, or North Lake, which is a similar distance.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Right.

You also had indicated that Jim Morriscey—and you're right—is a really decent fellow. Who do you bring your concerns to now?

Mr. Gérard Steele: Darrell.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: This winter has been really a difficult winter, in that Jim's position hasn't been filled as of yet, and they're short-staffed in there. And there's one out on sick leave, so it does put you.... I'm 10 to 15 days away from going fishing myself, and as the president of the harbour authority, I have to make sure that everything is done, and really there aren't a lot of people to talk to.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Is it in Charlottetown or Moncton where you go to?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Charlottetown.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Have you any dealings with Moncton at all?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: We have one fellow from Moncton there right now who is filling in.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I assume that your rapport not with Jim but with other folks on the ground here locally is pretty good—your rapport with them, your ability to work with them and offer suggestions and so on. We heard in Newfoundland that the relationship between small craft harbours personnel and DFO personnel and the harbour authority for fishermen is actually pretty good.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Yes, it hasn't been too bad up until this winter, but as I said, they're short-staffed, and this is getting to be a busy time of the year now. What I'd like to see is if we do have projects on, or we do have things to do, let's get them done a month

or two previous, before we all get on the water. Your volunteers are stretched. There will be a couple of days next week that I have work to do at the harbour along with getting ready for fishing.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, gentlemen.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming. It's good to be here. I'm from British Columbia.

I'll start out. I just have a few questions, then maybe my colleague, Mr. Calkins, will have a few questions as well.

All of you are lobster fishermen, I take it. Do lobster fishermen in P.E.I. make a reasonable living these days?

Mr. Gérard Steele: Sure, we make a good living. It's a decent living.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So it's still a reasonably good living for these 76 boats.

You say you have to dredge two or three times a year. What is the process that you go through when you need to dredge? Who do you ask? I wasn't sure if I heard you say that you're always having to sort of beg to get dredging done, or whether there is a process that works.

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: First of all, if we need dredging done we go to the small craft harbours people. They have to okay the dredging. Then we have to go through a tender process and get two, three, four tenders. As volunteers, we have to get that done. We're in the process of doing that now. We have to take them back, review them, and the lowest tender always gets the job.

This time of the year is busy for us, and I'd like to see it done a little earlier so that the contractor knows what he's doing and we know what we're doing. This could fill in in two weeks and it would have to be done again.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Have you ever been turned down for dredging? Has it always been done basically when it needed to be done?

Mr. Lewis Miller: We've been delayed to the point where there have been safety concerns, for sure. We've towed boats off of there for over a week, waiting for dredging. At one point there we had a problem getting a permit from the environment people, and we felt we shouldn't have, because they know where we're taking it from every time. It's the exact same place and nothing has changed.

Mr. Randy Kamp: How do you think that process could be improved?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Extend the wharf out and we won't have the problem.

Mr. Randy Kamp: How often would you have to dredge if you extended the wharf?

Mr. Lewis Miller: We may not have to at all.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Do you know that?

Mr. Lewis Miller: Obviously there would be a one-time dredging when it was done.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Have studies been done to show that your theory is right that that will solve the dredging problem?

Mr. Lewis Miller: There's no study, but I can say that there's no engineer in the world that could come here and give any more evidence than what the three people sitting here could give. We've watched it since we were kids. If you look at the top picture in Naufrage Harbour and you look at the east pier, or the pier on the right going out, you can see that it's in the breakers and just barely at the top of the shore. It's just common sense to say that it's going to fill in; you'll have to get out farther.

In my opinion, the structure was designed wrong originally. Having a lot of experience with how sand works around currents and tides and moons and stuff, the sand travels from west to east, because the prevailing tide is going east. If the east structure was out parallel with the west structure, what would happen is the sand would go by and land east of the east structure, which is out of our way. That's common knowledge to the fellows that are there and see it all the time.

Mr. Randy Kamp: In the written presentation that I saw on the table here, near the end it says that it seems like the department is downloading its responsibilities more and more. What responsibilities are you referring to there? Can you comment further on that statement?

Mr. Darrell Lesperance: Well, as harbour manager...we have to take care of our little maintenance in the harbour. We have to take care of our electrical, our water, our phone, and our lights; we pay for all that ourselves. We've even hired a night watchman that we have to pay for now. So if anything comes up at all, we really haven't got the funding for it any more.

I had one person say to me last year that maybe we should put the harbour dues up to pay for these little projects. To me, that's not acceptable.

Mr. Randy Kamp: I guess that would be an interesting debate.

As you know, there are several purposes for the harbour authority program. I guess there are pros and cons. The pros were that users would have more say on what went on in their harbours, that the fees they collected would stay there, rather than going into a big pot and maybe never coming back. I guess the downside is that the expectation was that the harbour authorities would take care of what was called minor maintenance, whatever that means. I understand your frustration.

Mr. Calkins, if you have anything....

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'll turn it over to the chair. I think he has a comment.

The Chair: I just want to take a couple of minutes here out of our time. I've been informed that Minister Hearn has just announced an emergency dredging project for Naufrage Harbour today—just a few moments ago, as a matter of fact. Your presence here may have

helped that. It will allow fish harvesters in eastern P.E.I. to load traps and safely prepare for the spring lobster fishery. I'll read from it:

The Honourable Loyola Hearn, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, announced that the federal government is undertaking emergency dredging of the entrance channel at Naufrage harbour in Kings County.

"Fish harvesters must have enough water in the channel to safely navigate"....
"That is why we're taking swift action to dredge at Naufrage to ensure the harbour is ready in time for the opening of the lobster season."

The entrance channel at Naufrage has infilled to the point that there is not sufficient water for vessels to navigate safely when empty, much less when loaded down with lobster traps. An area between the breakwaters will be dredged to ensure fish harvesters have adequate clearance at low tide. Work will start as soon as possible and will be complete before the May 1 opening of the lobster season.

This project will be implemented by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as part of its Small Craft Harbours Program in cooperation with the Harbour Authority which manages and operates the facilities....

The Government of Canada understands the importance of small craft harbours to communities across the country. Since February 2006, the permanent annual funding for the Small Craft Harbours Program has been increased by \$20 million, with a further \$10 million commitment made in Budget 2008 over two years for repairs and environmental cleanup....

Their contact information is for Moncton, New Brunswick.

I just wanted to let you know that.

• (1145)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Darrell, as you know, you and the harbour authority were pushing for this, as I was, for a long time. You can see that if you work together and keep pressure on them, finally it can make something happen. It just shows that when you put the pressure on the government and on us, it can happen. You have made a great presentation here today. It's wonderful to get the dredging money, but we want to aim that and put the dollars where they should be—on the extension—so that we will not end up having to spend these dollars every year. If you put the extension on both sides of the wharf, then this will not be there. We will continue to push and make sure those things happen. I'll assure you that down the road they will.

Thank you very much, boys.

The Chair: I'm sure it's good news for you and everybody who's involved. I just want to thank you for your presentation here this morning and, on behalf of the committee, thank you for the time and effort that you put in as volunteers on the harbour authority, and to thank the harbour authorities throughout the province. I know there has been some discussion around the fact of harbour authorities going into place.... I remember I was one of the founding members of our harbour authority in my home community, and we were also helped. If we didn't become part of this package, we were going to be left out in the cold. So it was important to be brought in to the harbour authority model. It has proven, to be honest with you, in many cases to work out quite well, but there are always concerns and issues.

Thank you for your presentation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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