



House of Commons  
CANADA

## **Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans**

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FOPO • NUMBER 028 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Friday, April 18, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Fabian Manning**

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## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Friday, April 18, 2008

•(0830)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to welcome our witnesses here this morning.

We are the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the Parliament of Canada. We are comprised of four political parties: the Conservatives, Liberals, Bloc, and the NDP. Last fall we began a study into the small craft harbours program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. During that process last fall, we heard from many people within the department and in Ottawa. We presented an interim report to Parliament prior to the Christmas break. As part of our ongoing meetings and discussions, we decided to travel to the four Atlantic provinces—Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and P.E.I.—and we'll finish up this afternoon in Gaspé, Quebec.

What we are attempting to do now is travel and have a look at some harbour facilities, which we have done over the past few days, and also hear from harbour authorities, the people who are on the ground. Basically our process now is to hear from people who are on the ground, on the wharfs, volunteers like you, to hear your concerns about what we can do to improve the small craft harbours program—and not only the marine infrastructure itself, but the concerns you have as volunteers with regard to your organizations, any training assistance you receive, things we can put forward to improve the great work that you do on behalf of many people.

Most of us around this table represent rural ridings in Canada and have many fishing enterprises and harbour authorities in their ridings. As an example, in my own riding of Avalon in Newfoundland and Labrador I have 68 harbour authorities—it's a very large area—and many of the members around this table have also. So we're quite familiar with the work you do and the time you give, but more importantly today, we're here to listen to the concerns you may have, so we can present a report to the House, hopefully before the summer break, that would encompass all the things we have learned and so we can put forward some recommendations that would improve this program.

That's our goal, and we hope you'll be able to assist us with that today.

Everybody understands that we are being interpreted as we speak. I've learned some valuable lessons in slowing down my speech. For the benefit of those who may not speak both languages at the same time, I'd ask that you take the time in your presentations.

We'll open up the floor now. I believe Mr. Arseneau is speaking first.

The floor is yours, Mr. Arseneau.

•(0840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau (Administration portuaire de Pointe-Verte):** My name is Yvon Arseneau. I'm originally from Pointe-Verte, where I am a fisherman.

I would like to speak in French.

There are approximately 25 fishermen at our wharf, which is equivalent to some 50 direct seasonal jobs for a small village like Pointe-Verte. This is quite a significant number because, in northern New Brunswick, there are currently not many jobs.

We have had a port authority for the past 18 years approximately. I was talking about it with Réal earlier. Caraquet has had one for 20 years, and we signed an agreement with the port authority some 18 years ago. Based on the agreement we signed with the department, we took over the port authority and everything related to management, electricity and minor things, and the department was to be responsible for major issues, such as dredging, wharf repair and so on. To the great surprise of most of the port authorities, the department did not follow those recommendations. Some dredging was done approximately 18 years ago, and the rest of the wharf has greatly deteriorated. Part of the inside of the wharf has collapsed and a support wall is needed but it's not being built. Everything I'm telling you about is already in the system. We reported this in 2002 and every year we're told that it's in the system and there is no money to do the work.

Currently, we no longer have any access whatsoever to the wharf at low tide. I have some photos to prove this. May I pass them around so that you can see?

We are doing the best we can. We had to send a memo to Fisheries and Oceans Canada saying that we deny any liability in the event of any loss of life. In fact, when the weather at sea is bad, some boats can stay out and survive the gale until it calms down, but smaller boats cannot. When boats want to enter the wharf and all the boats are blocking the entrance, as has been the case over the past few years, we have a serious problem.

We reiterate our demand. Every year, we continue to call and ask the department to take care of these wharves. It is an economic driver in our region. You might think that 50 jobs is not very many, but in a village such as ours, where the population is about 700 or 800 people, it's important. Every year at this time, you can see the energy and activity generated by this little economic driver.

The fisheries are important to eastern Canada. I think that the department should get more and more involved and maintain the wharves in operating condition, because they are essential tools for us. At present, we are afraid of losing the inside of the wharf if there is a big storm. Whenever the east wind blows, we see bits of the wharf come off. In my opinion, this is completely unacceptable and it's nonsense. We no longer know what to say to the department. Ottawa is spending money, but we don't know where.

Every time we are close to getting a wharf project, one reason or another is given for it not going forward. The project has been delayed for another year. For at least the past 15 years, the Pointe-Verte port authority has not received a dime. Other port authorities are in the same situation. I think that they will also talk about this.

This is completely unacceptable. In the past few years, we have operated with the little money that we have gotten successively from the Conservatives, and the Liberals, most of the time at the beginning of an election. Important people have already come to Pointe-Verte, which means that the fishery here is important enough for them to come. Among other people, Mr. Tom Siddon came to Pointe-Verte to see the condition of the wharf. After that, we obtained funding, because he saw the truth and understood the importance, for fishermen, of having a tool to do work. If we can't come in with our boats and tie up at a wharf at different times of the day because of the tides, then something isn't working.

This situation is preventing, among other things, other sectors in our region from developing. Some people would be interested in developing the tourism industry. But what is the point of investing in a tour boat if you can only go out when the tide is right? Developing the tourism industry has to be logical and entrepreneurs need tools to do so.

That is mainly what I wanted to say. I could talk to you about the project that I drafted, but since I've already sent it approximately 20 times, it's already in the system. I could give you a copy nonetheless. You could also get it directly from officials responsible for the Small Craft Harbours Program.

We're a little tired of all this. We are volunteers. We're trying to operate with the means we have, but at any given time, we can't do our jobs anymore because of the lack of vision for any given harbour. You're going to tell me that there's no money, but that you understand. The port authority does part of the work, and then it gives up. Ten years later, it has to redo what it has already done because too many years have passed before it was able to restore the wharf properly.

For example, the last time the wharf at Pointe-Verte was dredged, the inside of the wharf was supposed to be dynamited. We had to fight with the different levels of government to dynamite the entire surface of the wharf. Ultimately, we got permission to dynamite three-quarters of the wharf. Approximately 10,000 metres of rocks

were left in the wharf, due to lack of funding. However, the money allocated by the federal government was more than enough, but the project was interrupted and the money was allocated elsewhere.

Any project should be done for a certain purpose. It needs to be completed and then moved on to the next step. A business plan has to be followed in order to obtain a tool that makes sense.

That's all I wanted to say.

● (0845)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arseneau.

I don't want to cut anybody off, but we need to hear from the witnesses so that we can begin our questions. Our plan is to spend an hour and a half with this group and an hour and a half with our next group, so it is important that we allow that time to happen. I know you have a lot to say, and hopefully we can gain some of that knowledge through our questions. So just make your points, and then we'll get to our questions.

Mr. Mallet.

● (0850)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet (Administration portuaire de Shippagan):** Good morning. My name is Camille-André Mallet and I am the Director General of the Shippagan Port Authority in New Brunswick.

To begin, I want to make clear that the port authority program is a good one. As for the implementation, Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff responsible for the Small Craft Harbours Program have given us excellent support and direction. The major problem we are facing today is the same one we faced when the program started, meaning infrastructure. In Shippagan, we have infrastructures for a total of 1,182 metres and a wharf where 2,700 metres of boat can tie up under normal conditions. When conditions deteriorate, we only have 812 metres of wharf to shelter the same number of boats in safe berths. We have a serious lack of infrastructure when the temperature drops, which is a frequent occurrence in our region.

The Shippagan Port Authority is the home port for 105 traditional and aboriginal commercial fishing boats during the crab, lobster and herring fishing seasons. During the fishing season, this represents approximately 69 65-foot-long commercial fishing boats and 46 45-foot-long inshore boats. Furthermore, the port authority rents 26 unloading sites during that season to crab buyers, two sites for unloading mackerel and four sites to unload herring. Furthermore, we rent lots big enough to hold two freezers.

According to Statistics Canada, the landing values in the gulf region are, for 2007, 114,000 metric tonnes, for a value of \$336 million. For 2007, at the Shippagan wharf, the landing statistics are 11,000 metric tonnes, for a value of \$41 million. You can see that this is extremely important for the Maritimes. In fact, this industry provides a lot of work for many people in our community.

Among other things, we have to manage the infrastructures that are almost at the end of their lifespan. In fact, they are almost all at the end of their lifespan. In 1999, following a recommendation by engineers at Public Works Canada, we had to close a section of our facilities found to be unsafe. It took us five years to complete this project, between 1999 and 2003.

In 2004, we had to close another section of our facilities following another recommendation by engineers at Public Works Canada. The reconstruction project is still on the drawing table. It is currently 2008, and the project has not yet begun. According to estimates and the budget set out by Fisheries and Oceans officials, the project will have to be done in phases, over a three-year period, meaning that each phase will take two years. If we do the math, we realize that the construction project will take six years to be completed. Yet, during that entire time, we will have to work with fewer facilities.

That's the end.

As you can see, we lack infrastructure, given the number of boats and the important volume of landings we have to manage and the poor condition of our facilities. Furthermore, reconstruction projects should be completed much faster. It is incomprehensible that the reconstruction work would take six years. We are underprivileged, even neglected, compared to other government infrastructure. I don't think that anyone would allow other facilities, such as the RCMP's, the airports or your own offices, to be treated this way. The government must invest more money so that the reconstruction projects can happen more quickly.

In closing, we mustn't forget that the port authorities are managed by volunteers. It is important not to take advantage of their patience.

Thank you very much.

•(0855)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mallet.

Mr. LeBreton.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton (Vice President, Administration portuaire du Quai de Tracadie):** I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Philippe Ferguson. We belong to the same port authority, in Tracadie.

**Mr. Philippe Ferguson (Secretary, Administration portuaire du Quai de Tracadie):** Good morning. My name is Philippe. I am a municipal alderman for the Town of Tracadie-Sheila. I have been working with the port authority for the past six years. I have no sea legs; I don't have a boat. Like others, I am a volunteer. Here, in short, is why I am speaking here today.

In the spring of 2006, the port authorities of eastern New Brunswick were invited to Miramichi. We were told about the legal aspect of the port authority and reminded that we were primarily responsible for the port authorities.

In the fall of 2006, we were invited to Moncton to take part in a meeting with all the port authorities throughout the Maritimes. During that meeting, we talked about volunteers. We wanted to know how long we could go on without wearing out our volunteers.

Time passed. In the spring of 2008, we met again in Miramichi. We were told about the importance of keeping our accounts up to date and we were told that we had responsibility for doing that. I want to make clear that our facilities are quite modest: they are used by a dozen fishermen and approximately 70 pleasure boaters. This formula works and it's quite nice.

Now that Fisheries and Oceans is telling us what to do, will we have the means to do it? We are only volunteers and we don't want to wear ourselves out. Our small facilities are extremely important for our community's vitality. We are responsible for the management and all the related duties, but we don't have the means we need.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

Ms. Payne.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Margot Payne (Secretary-Treasurer, Stonehaven Harbour Authority):** I'm going to give my presentation in English because I can speak English faster than I can French.

[English]

Tom and I represent Stonehaven Harbour Authority, which is located between Bathurst and Caraquet small harbour. Stonehaven Harbour Authority was formed and incorporated in 1996 with a 10-member board representative of the fishing industry, community, and fish buyers.

The harbour authority has been very effective in managing the day-to-day operations of the wharf, including minor repairs and improvements to the structure. Financial assistance has been forthcoming from DFO when necessary. The harbour authority has managed to secure sufficient funds through docking fees, employment programs, and in-kind contributions of wharf users.

The Stonehaven Harbour Authority is a service provider to the commercial fishing industry, fish buyers, aquaculture, native fishery, tourism, and the local community. Stonehaven is predominantly a lobster fishing port with approximately 30 fishers, but a small fleet of both home and transient vessels remains at the wharf through late fall of each year. Other species fished include herring, groundfish, scallops, mackerel, and mussel aquaculture.

While the wharf is occasionally used by recreational boaters, this is not a significant issue. The commercial fishing fleet continues to be the main priority for the Stonehaven Harbour Authority.

What benefits and improvements have we experienced since the incorporation of the Stonehaven Harbour Authority? The harbour authority is the means to garner income for improvements at the wharf that are recognized and supported by the fishermen, and this is very important. We get them to agree to the improvements and the work that we present to DFO. We have been successful in improving several areas of the wharf.

Small wharves have a voice in the process, and we appreciate that, but we also acknowledge that it is a smaller voice with less impact as compared to the larger commercial ports.

Board members feel a true sense of community and ownership for the wharf facility. They have the ability to really influence change.

The board has the ability to establish rules and regulations that improve the day-to-day activity of the wharf for all users.

We have worked closely with small craft harbours staff in order to establish business plans, safety plans, and environmental management plans that were not in place prior to the harbour authority's implementation.

What are some of the frustrations we have experienced since the incorporation of the harbour authority? A small wharf cannot generate the revenue or the interest to warrant large infrastructure improvements, as is the case with the larger commercial wharves. We have fallen prey to the requirement to play the political game. Some harbour authorities may be more adept at the game than others, and from a pure moral stance we should not need to play the game in order to generate a reaction from small craft harbours.

There is an ever-increasing administrative burden placed on harbour authorities by government—small craft harbours, CRA, etc.—that speaks to Mr. Ferguson's comments. The level of managerial and communication skills required to function within the system is increasing. There is a benefit to being technically adept—computers, Internet, etc.—when dealing with government officials and other partners, but this level of management skills may not be available within all harbour authorities.

The same individuals continue to be heavily involved, resulting in some volunteer fatigue. This can be due to a requirement for their expertise or a lack of interest by others.

We believe there could be some inherent problems with the current process in place for major works and projects. Is it possible that costs for work submitted and completed by contractors is inflated as compared to the estimated costs determined by PWGSC? Is it true that a large percentage of the budget is also dedicated to administrative costs paid to internal partners such as PWGSC? If this is the case, this results in less work for the amount of dollars allocated to the harbour authority for any particular project.

While the harbour authority recognizes their responsibility to establish rules and regulations, we also recognize that we do not have the ability to police the enforcement of these rules. With a volunteer board and no full-time presence at the wharf, it's impossible to ensure that all users respect the rules established by the board. This reality creates frustrations for those who wish the harbour authority to take action against violators.

In conclusion, we would like to bring to your attention several areas that need to be addressed in order to bring Stonehaven wharf on par with surrounding wharves in northeastern New Brunswick. Our haul-out facility, the slip, needs to be repaired. Reconstruction of the west pier is required. Dredging is required within the wharf. These projects also have been in the system for a number of years. We recognize that the completion of these projects would represent a significant financial commitment on the part of the federal

government. We will continue, however, to work closely with small craft harbours staff in the hopes of obtaining approval for these three work proposals.

On behalf of the board members of the Stonehaven Harbour Authority, we wish to express our appreciation to committee members for their time and interest. We truly appreciate this opportunity to provide input. We believe that the Stonehaven Harbour Authority is a good example of how the federal government can work closely with the volunteer sector for the benefit of the community and its people.

Thank you very much.

• (0900)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Payne.

Mr. MacAulay will lead off our questions. You have ten minutes, sir.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** I will likely be sharing my time, but thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

My first question would be slightly off the subject probably, but you talked about the mussel fishery. Are there any problems with invasive species?

**Mr. Thomas Kenny (Stonehaven Harbour Authority):** No, absolutely none in our area.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Good. That's short. Be careful; it's a big problem. We know. I'm from Prince Edward Island, and we're involved in this. It's a problem that was given to us by somebody. Nobody wants to take the blame, but it's very difficult to get the solution.

In your presentation you mentioned the cost of repairing wharves. From your involvement, I'd like you to comment on how you feel the harbour authority system works. You talk about the cost, and possible cost overruns have not been addressed. I don't know if you were involved previously—since you're so young, probably not—but you might have heard the cost is now more under control than it was before. It is better now than it was before the harbour authorities went in place. One of the reasons would be to have the fishermen involved in the actual maintenance of the harbours, which you are, of course.

Can you comment?

• (0905)

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I'll comment and then maybe Tom will add to it, because we sort of have a different opinion.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** That's what we're here for: we want to hear the different opinions.

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I've been involved with the harbour authority since it started in 1996. I believe that for the minor work, absolutely, there's an improvement, because less than \$50,000 we're allowed to administer ourselves. So we go out and we get estimates and costs and we do the work and basically hire people ourselves. Over the \$50,000, I feel those contractors recognize that they're working for the government, and I believe they inflate the price. I really do. I mean, we have work being done on our wharf right now that started in January.

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** Even before that. It started the last of November.

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** If you were running a project and you were laying cement, would you do that in the middle of winter, where you needed to plow a road about ten times this winter? You have to set up heat. The cost overrun is....

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Are you actually saying that the government can't do things as well as the private sector?

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I'm saying that occasionally the government might not do things as well as the private sector.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** I thank you very much.

Mr. Mallet, I was very interested in your presentation. I would just like you to comment a bit more.

Of course, coming from a fisheries community myself, I'm well aware of the lack of money and the problems with DFO. But DFO can only distribute what government allots. You have good public servants here, I'm sure, as we have in Prince Edward Island and across the country. I feel, and I'm sure you feel, that governments need to invest more dollars—not all that's needed right at once, but there need to be more dollars invested into the small craft harbours repair budget in order to take care of the issue right across the country.

Also, I would like you to comment on how you feel we should deal with the project itself. Should there be a long-term business plan in place for these harbours or wharves before you are allotted dollars? Should you know where you're going?

What I'm getting at is that sometimes this repair dollar spent in fact is wasted. Or that's the view we get sometimes. Perhaps if you had a long-term plan in place for your harbour, it would mean that perhaps the maintenance dollars wouldn't be put to waste and you would actually have a better bang for your buck, if you know what I mean.

[Translation]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** If you do the math, you will see that there are large sums involved. Recently, we repaired one third of our facilities. The total contract amounted to \$5.2 million. That's a lot of money, but we should remember that the useful life of these wharves is 40 years. If you divide the total amount by 40, the amount per year is not very high.

As concerns strategy, we are currently working with the public servants. We have long-term plans. We are working very hard to achieve our goals, but we always run into the same problem: a lack of money. Our facilities and their high rate of use allow us to invest a bit of the fishermen's money in the repairs. We estimate that since the implementation of the program, the Administration portuaire de

Shippagan has invested over \$100,000, which comes directly from users. However, it only allows us to carry out minor repairs, since the cost of Maritime infrastructure can be unbelievably high.

We are administered by a board of directors. Since it was founded, the same directors have been sitting on our committees. My chairman, who is part of the National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee, was unable to be here today, and I find that a shame. He is currently in Quebec City for a national meeting.

We are extremely engaged and accomplish a great deal of work. As I said at the beginning, there is excellent cooperation between the public servants and ourselves. The problem does not lie with the public servants, because they receive our requests and work on them. The problem is that the money is simply not there.

I was speaking earlier with a Quebec representative and I was telling him that the situation in Quebec simply could not be compared to the situation in New Brunswick. Quebec has extraordinary facilities. I don't know how you manage to do it, but I take my hat off to you. I don't know if it's because there are fewer wharves than in New Brunswick, but as I said our facilities are coming to the end of their useful life. We are obliged to shut them down because the engineers with Public Works Canada have ordered us to do so, because otherwise accidents could occur.

As my colleague from Tracadie said, we are responsible for our facilities, given that, when the harbour authorities were created, we were given a fine package and told to look after it. That means that we are responsible, and that's why, if an engineer tells us to shut down a wharf because there are problems that could occur, we do so.

I would just like to repeat something because it is important. During conferences and recent meetings concerning small craft harbours, we were clearly told that if a problem occurred, we were responsible. We are obliged to take out insurance policies to protect our board of directors. Don't forget that today, especially in the case of my facilities, the users all have companies that are worth millions of dollars. Therefore, if a problem occurs while these people are using our facilities, they have the means to hire lawyers and sue us. Therefore we have to work on all aspects, whether...

• (0915)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacAulay. You won't be sharing your time with anybody, because your time is up.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I can ask a question every now and again, as chair, but first I have a point of clarification. I would just let you know—you may already be aware—that we did hear from the national advisory board on harbour authorities in Ottawa. Our committee had a great meeting with them. Maybe your representative was there at that time. We had a great session with the national advisory board earlier, before Christmas.

I want to ask you a question, Mr. Mallet. You mentioned insurance, that the harbour authority would have to cover insurance on the facility. My understanding was that small craft harbours covered insurance on the infrastructure that belonged to them. Would you clarify that for me? I may have just misinterpreted what you said.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** Yes. I perhaps did not have time to go into the question.

The harbour authorities, the public servants and the harbour authority program provide us with liability insurance. If a tourist using our facilities is injured and sues us, we do have liability insurance.

But I was referring earlier to insurance that covers the decisions made by the board of directors of our harbour. As I said earlier, if something happens that affects the companies using our facilities due to a bad decision made by our board of directors, those companies can sue us. That means that we must take out insurance to protect ourselves in case the board of directors makes a bad decision.

Does that answer your question?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** No, that's fine for now. We can explore that, because that's a new one—or a new one on me, anyway. I wasn't aware of it, which is why I wanted the clarification. We can investigate that from our end now, so thank you for that.

Mr. Blais, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

To begin with, I have spent a lot of time working on the small craft harbours issue since 2000, and have been doing so as a member of Parliament since 2004. At that time, there was a budget of \$50 million for all of Canada. It was completely ridiculous: \$50 million for all wharves across Canada. It made no sense.

The budget is now \$100 million. The part of the work that you do and have done in a volunteer capacity can be assigned a dollar amount. According to the harbour authorities at the national level, it can be costed at approximately \$25 million. That means that, year in and year out, the budget is actually not \$100 million but \$125 million as a result of your efforts. However, the extra \$25 million does not come from the government but from you, the users, from the way you work, etc. The department itself admits that the situation is very serious since its own figures show that, in 2004, \$400 million would have been required to do all the work required on the various wharves across Canada. And I am not talking about the program to develop or significantly improve or build new wharves; I am only talking about repairs to wharves deemed to be active. Some of them are occasionally forgotten or not included. So the amount required in 2004 was \$400 million.

In 2006, it had risen to \$475 million. Today it would probably be over \$600 million. It is like a leaky roof. If it is not repaired, it will

collapse. That is what happens. Generally speaking, the situation gets worse. From what I hear and see, it may even amount to a breach of contract. When the harbour authorities were established, nobody said that the situation would deteriorate. They said that there would be cooperation and that it was a good thing. You were even threatened that you would not have any money. This is very serious.

Someone should take out insurance. The government should even do that. Would there be any possibility of going to court on the basis of irresponsible actions or breach of contract?

Mr. Mallet, thank you for your message about the Quebec harbour facilities. A wharf might look just fine, but it may be in very bad shape inside. That is unfortunately the situation in Quebec as well. In some places, it is beyond the pale! The department's solution is to put up a fence because the wharf is too dangerous to walk on or tie up a boat to. We are familiar with these situations.

People are absolutely fed up. I have heard the expression about not walking the talk. People say things, but there is no follow-through. I imagine that it becomes terribly difficult for you. You are not only tired, but frustrated. In a way, you are the ones that get criticized. Moreover, from a financial standpoint, you have to protect yourselves against civil or other types of prosecution. That is an interesting aspect, and we will surely include it in the report.

We have come to the breaking point. I have the impression that the situation is already broken, because it is not improving. A lot more money is needed.

If people are too nice, the situation will continue to deteriorate. In 10 or 15 years, there will be fewer harbour facilities. There will be only a few wharves in each region, which will cause a number of villages to disappear. A village has to have a wharf.

I would like to hear your comments on this idea that people are absolutely fed up. What is your perspective? What direction do things need to take?

● (0920)

**Mr. Philippe Ferguson:** The money needs to be better managed. A certain amount of money is provided, and it needs to be managed properly. I will explain. The hundreds of people who are brought together in Moncton to talk about volunteer efforts and sustainability have their accommodations and food covered for two days. That costs money. Once the meeting is over, everyone goes back home. We have done our work. We have been able to express our differences, but what good is that? I have no idea how much that kind of meeting costs, but I am sure that it could have met the needs of several harbour authorities.

The challenge for the harbour authorities is to manage their money better. The fishermen and the volunteers all contribute. But someone will have to help us a little more. I am talking here about the small craft harbour authorities.

Jacques LeBreton, who is here with me, spends countless hours and days each week doing volunteer work. And then there is the two-day meeting in Moncton, with all expenses paid, to discuss things.

• (0925)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

We have to move on to Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Blais, I realize it's a good question, but you were five and a half minutes asking it and that doesn't leave much time for an answer.

Mr. Stoffer.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to all of you for coming today. I appreciate being up here in this beautiful part of the country.

I have a couple of questions for you. You said, sir, something that was very poignant. You said, "We're managed by volunteers and we must not abuse their patience." We've heard before from people almost on the edge of volunteer burnout. What would happen, in your assessment, if some of the small craft harbour authorities that are there now just said, that's it, we're done, we're finished, we can't do this anymore; we're fishermen by nature, and if we're not going to get assistance from the government, then we're just going to end this once and for all?

Do you think it's possible that that may happen in this particular area? What would happen in that case? What would the cost to government be then?

[Translation]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** That is a good question.

Our harbour authority is at Shippagan. There are other nearby harbour authorities, including one in particular that is very close by. The people in charge there did exactly what was just mentioned: they just washed their hands of everything. They came to ask us to take them under our wing. I brought the request to my executive committee and they agreed. I am sure that they are not the only ones to be in that situation.

I am not a fisherman; I am an employee. And I would not want to be in the shoes of a fisherman sitting on an executive committee of a harbour authority that has to draft by-laws. As you know, not everyone is on the same wavelength. So there can be friction among the fishermen at some point if one of them is on the executive committee and establishing rules about his own wharf.

I know that this can lead to disputes. My colleague might be able to address this. When that happens, there are procedures to be followed, lawyers get involved, letters have to be sent. The harbour authorities can no longer just let things roll along. Fishermen end up fighting against their own colleagues to have the wharf rules followed, and I am sure that there is some amount of friction when they are out at sea.

That wears people down when they are volunteering on harbour authority executive committees.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Madame Payne, you remind me of a woman we met the other day down at Woods Harbour. Like you, she is very

active, very proactive, and she thoroughly enjoys what she does in the harbour authority. So thank you for that.

You talked about playing the game. Could you elaborate on that a bit, please? I know what you mean, but I just want to get it on the record, the reason being that we don't want your harbour to fight with Shippagan or with these guys over the same dollar. That, I don't think, is the purpose of what government wants to do. I don't think MPs, because of lobby efforts, should say, okay, I have this area and you have that, or I'm closer to the minister, or I could do something here in order to get it to you so that I'm happy, but these folks may not be, or vice versa.

Could you explain that a bit, please?

• (0930)

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** First of all, I want you to know that this is not what I do for a living. I am also a volunteer, but I actually work for the federal government.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I'm a manager of a Service Canada call centre here in Bathurst, for EI and ISP. My husband and my son are fishermen. I have been involved in this, and was asked to be involved, as a community rep since the very beginning.

I am so committed to that wharf that I would never walk away from it. I don't care how burned out I was; I would never walk away from this, because this is a good thing.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Who is following in your steps when the day comes?

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I don't know.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** You see, that's the concern we have. We see the people who present with us, and no offence, but they're the same age as we are. Who is the next generation to look after these wharves? If DFO is going to invest millions of dollars, who then will take over after that?

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** I don't know.

If I can speak to your question about playing the game, we've also received money, like Mr. Arseneau, and usually it's in advance of an election year. We have done everything in Stonehaven exactly the way the small craft harbours people asked us to do it. We have set up plans, we collect the docking fees, we hold the annual meetings, we keep minutes, we have agendas—we run it like a business. So we feel that we should be either...not rewarded, but at least we should receive from them what they promised to us, to help us with the administration of the wharf.

Before an election it starts, and we basically write letters and we make phone calls. I've met with executive assistants of members of Parliament personally. We play the game.

At one point, we were going to play a particular issue, because we happen to be an anglophone wharf at the entrance of the Acadian peninsula. We watch the rocks go by. We watch the construction going on in the bigger wharfs—I'll be honest, in Caraquet and Shippagan. We have said, do we need to play? Do we need to call it a language issue? What do we need to do? I don't like doing that, because I feel that we've worked with DFO, we've worked with the small craft harbours people, and we've done exactly what they want us to do. Why do I need to stoop to that level, to say that I'm going to do that? I don't want to do that. I was told: don't threaten; just do it.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Payne and Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Allen, welcome back.

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** It's good to be here, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

I have quite a number of questions, and I'll get as many of them in as I can.

Ms. Payne, when you commented on the \$50,000 contract value, plus or minus, one of the statements you made is that if it's less than \$50,000 you take care of it yourselves. Does that mean you hire the contractors and then the small craft harbours program actually pays the bill and you submit some paperwork?

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** We submit paperwork to DFO, but we're able to contract out. We have to follow the process that they've laid out. We need to go and get two or three bids. We function exactly the same way as they would, but we handle it; we pay it out. I basically bill them.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** You handle the administration on the ground.

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** Yes.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Another question I'd like to ask relates a little bit to one of the things that Mr. Mallet said about contracts and construction projects taking so long. This is a general question to the group.

If each of the small craft harbours had a multi-year plan in terms of a development plan, a maintenance plan, and an infrastructure plan...are we resource constrained? We're resource constrained in a lot of areas of the country right now when it comes to actually getting resources to do work. So when you talked about inflated costs, I kind of picked up on that. Do we have the resources here for a multi-year plan? Even if the financing is available, do we have the resources to do the work without the cost getting so inflated?

Can each of you comment based on your areas?

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** I would say that we do have the resources here. For contractors to bid on these jobs...there is no limit to those; there are always two or three contractors bidding on all the jobs. I believe the resources are there; all we need are the finances.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Okay. And it's the same in the other areas? Okay.

Mr. Arseneau, you said the last dredging you did was 18 years ago and at that time you had to do some blasting and then you didn't have the money to remove the rock.

When we had our testimony in Ottawa a lot of people commented on dredging, and you commented on it in Stonehaven again. You can

see in the picture of your wharf there that it looks like it needs dredging. Obviously 18 years is too long to wait between dredgings. Based on what you're seeing from storms and that type of thing in each of your wharves, what is the optimum time you see where dredging really is the best to do—how many years, and what is roughly the cost?

● (0935)

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** A lot of that would depend on where your wharf is situated. In our area, and maybe even the Greenpoint area, a lot of the places are rock, and if the whole thing is dredged well, you only have to dredge once every 20 years. Our wharf was dredged probably 30 years ago or more, but we only have so much silt in there because all the outside of our wharf is rock; it's not mud. There is silt and stuff that accumulates over 30 years or more, but in some places there's a lot of sand outside, and that comes in.

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** Some of them have to be dredged every year.

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** So it would vary from wharf to wharf. Some of them are more sheltered than others, so to me that would vary from wharf to wharf.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Would the other wharves that are here comment? Do you have a longer timeline because of the rock situation, or do you see more...?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** We don't really have a problem with rocks but more with silting. It is actually mud and it accumulates year by year. Dredging certainly has to be done more often than in places where there is rock.

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** We think that regular maintenance and dredging for six or seven years at Pointe-Verte would have been enough. When they came 18 years ago for the first time to dig, they had to dynamite most of the wharf. When 10,000 metres of rocks are left in the corner of the wharf from the outset, that's an indication that not everything was planned and that there was no follow-up. If a private business worked like that it would go bankrupt pretty quickly.

There has to be a little more consistency when a wharf project is undertaken and people become responsible for a wharf. We're asked to draw up business plans, but even though we send them off, there is never any follow-up to those plans. Or it takes so many years that we have to redo those business plans again and again. As we stated earlier, we're all volunteers and we're not directly involved in administration. I am a fisherman and I cannot spend all my time on the phone talking with someone in Ottawa or elsewhere. It's starting to take a lot of time. I almost need a secretary. When you think about it, we don't have the means to do this. Fortunately there are places where people do carry out those responsibilities. The amount of work is enormous.

I would like to add a point about major and smaller wharfs. What is true—and I don't mean this to be discrimination—is that major wharfs and smaller wharfs should have different budgets. And that has already been stated. I understand that situation of major wharfs. Many vessels come in. I've been to Shippagan and to Lamèque and I know that there are parts of the wharf where berthing is impossible because it's in such a state of disrepair. I understand. I also understand that all the money goes into one pot and everybody has to compete for it.

Elections were being talked about earlier but that is not what is important. It's the person who knows people who knows other people who know the right people who will get the money. That is the reality. That's the only way of getting money for a wharf. If a friend, or his son knows a member of Parliament who knows the minister in Ottawa, then he stands a very good chance of getting money for his project.

That is how things work in small outfits. We have ended up acting like dogs fighting over a bone.

• (0940)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Mr. Mallet, regarding Shippagan, I'd like to clarify your comments.

You said in 1999 that you had a section closed because it was unsafe. Then in 2004 you closed another section because it was unsafe. Then you indicated that you have 1,182 metres of berthing for 2,000 metres of boat length.

In 1999 and 2004, how much space was closed and has not been reopened, or was it all closed and never reopened?

[Translation]

**M. Camille-André Mallet:** No. According to my calculations, we closed the first section for five years. The Shippagan wharf is divided into three sections, two of which were functional. We therefore had to redirect our clients to those two sections and overload them. We carried out the project and I can guarantee you that the end result was excellent. I am certain that that section will last another 30 years.

However, the wharf of the section we closed in 2004 is available for berthing vessels only. When the harbour authorities were first established, we were told by these people that they would be there to support us when repairs became necessary. One could say that they missed the boat. We now have to work with facilities that are in bad shape and it takes us an enormous amount of time to carry out projects. And all the while our users our grumbling. I should count the number of users who come knocking at my door on a daily basis. They lack space and the only thing I can tell them is that I hope I'll get enough money for the projects next year. The following year I tell them the same thing, and it's the same year after year.

As you can see, we waited from 2004 to 2008 simply to get this decision to do the project. Furthermore, we're being told it will be done in two-year stages. We've been waiting several years but we have had to keep up our activities the whole time. We can't go elsewhere. These facilities are all we have to work with.

I'll give you a simple comparison. I am chief fireman on the Shippagan volunteer fire brigade. Every year the people of the town of Shippagan make sure that our equipment and facilities are in good working order so that we can provide good service to our citizens. That's perfectly normal. Yet our engineers tell us that our port facilities are in bad condition. Mr. Blais agrees. I thought his riding's facilities were in better shape than ours but apparently they are not.

Regardless of which government is in power, they must ensure that our facilities are in a condition that allows us to pursue our work.

• (0945)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Allen, and thank you, Mr. Mallet.

Committee members, I'm going to allow a second round of questions, but I'm going to have to reduce the time to four minutes apiece because we have to prepare for our next witnesses. That includes your questions and your answers. And I will be strict on the time because I need to be ready for our next set of witnesses.

My understanding is that Mr. Simms will start this round. Mr. Simms, you have four minutes.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.):** I have so many questions and I only have a few minutes, but I want to address one thing. I'm looking for ideas more than anything else, or maybe something you can tell us that you have experienced.

When it comes to volunteer fatigue...and Ms. Payne, you said it. You run a business and you alluded to that as well. How can the Government of Canada, through DFO, through small craft harbours, from an operations point of view, help you manage your harbour as a business?

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** That is a very good question.

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** From my perspective, I don't necessarily want to change things, and maybe that's because I like the idea that we are running it like a business and it is working okay for Stonehaven. Down the road maybe there will need to be a grouping of wharves and a wharf manager who basically manages two or three wharves. Stonehaven might manage Miller Brook, Stonehaven, and Grande-Anse, hire that person on a seasonal basis, and have that person receive dollars from either the harbour authority or from the Government or Canada or somebody in order to run that like a business.

**Mr. Thomas Kenny:** The biggest frustration with the whole thing, we have found, is the financing. It is to get the finances. That seems to be the biggest thing for us anyway. We never seem to get that funding money, and there is so much pressure, year after year, to do the same thing over and over.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** As Ms. Payne stated, we have to manage our small sea port like a business. What is so exhausting is that we begin by volunteering our time and after having spent a considerable amount of time drawing up a project, when we ask for the funding the answer is always the same: there is no money, the application is being turned down. And so we start over, and submit another project.

The hours spent on volunteering with no end result are enough to exhaust those who are volunteering. There is never anything to show for it. We have to deal with managing our own small business.

**Mr. Philippe Ferguson:** I said this two years ago in Moncton. Mr. Arseneau talked about a secretary and a telephone. Could small harbour authorities not have the money—a small amount—to cover the salary of a seasonal manager who would take care of any accounting that we are currently handing over to not entirely pleasant accountants? That manager would prepare accounting statements and manage the business end. The contributions of our fisherman would thus truly serve for the purposes of facility maintenance.

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** We're talking about small ports. What is the difference between a small sea port and a major sea port.

Here we have small sea ports? Our port is viewed as a small one. The one beside us should be considered a major port, I feel.

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** I can answer your question. It is measured in metres of boat length.

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** There. I got my answer but my question was on budgets. Our needs are the same but on a different scale. As Mr. Arseneau stated earlier, different budgets are granted to small ports with less than 15 vessels. The major ports receive millions of dollars. We think it would be much more efficient to have a budget set aside specifically for small port projects and to have major ports apply for the funding of major projects. Currently all applications go into the same pot.

• (0950)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. LeBreton, and thank you, Mr. Simms. We have to hop along.

Mr. Blais, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** You're familiar with ACOA. Were you aware that in New Brunswick or elsewhere in the Maritimes, some projects could be funded under ACOA?

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** At one point, I contacted people to find out whether or not ACOA could help us. I think that the purpose of ACOA is to help develop the regions. Be that as it may, people appear to think that fishing is a special case and that some other sector will look after it. We are still waiting to find out which sector will look after us.

Earlier on, I wanted to make a comment about the administration, but I did not have an opportunity to do so. The harbour authority runs very smoothly. Our business is doing well. That is our business. We have managed to get people and fishers to understand that they have to pay wharfage and take on some responsibility for the wharf.

We signed this agreement with the department and we have done what we were to do, but we are still waiting for the department to do its bit.

As the lady and most interveners said, our biggest frustration comes from the fact that we don't have the money we need to achieve what we want to do. The wharves are becoming more and more dilapidated, to the point where we now need to spend \$600 million to restore them. In addition, you have to be lucky enough to fit into the right category. Indeed, for the past 18 years we have been told that we don't fall into the right category. And yet, more than 50 or 60 people earn their living every year by fishing from our wharf. Yet they keep being told that they do not fit the right category.

What do you have to do to fall under the right category?

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** You are the mayor of your municipality, right?

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** No, and I don't want to be. I am a fisher and I was also president of the Administration portuaire de Pointe-Verte for several years, but I got tired of this role. It is true that we are frustrated. It is a little bit difficult to set the rules when you are a fisher yourself. One president remained in the job for one year and then Mr. Léger arrived. He is tougher than the others. In fact, he has been in this position for a few years now.

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Don't you think that you should broaden the coalition?

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** In answer to your question about ACOA, I would like to ask you whether you have made an application under this program. Try it to see what happens. The number of administrative hurdles is incredible and it is discouraging. At one point, we wanted to set up a tourist project on our wharf. We were looking at a budget of \$2.2 million. We went to see the people from ACOA, but it took so much time and resources that we decided to abandon the project.

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** ACOA stands for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. This agency is supposed to develop the Atlantic area and to distribute money amongst the small economic hubs of the region, but it does not do this. It does not respect its mandate, at least not at certain levels and certainly not in the fishing sector. In Ottawa, the officials are saying that there will not be any more fishing in the eastern part of the country until the end of the century. However, fishing is not over. Every year we put our boats into the water and we fish.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arseneau, and thank you, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stoffer, you have four minutes.

• (0955)

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

Folks, in other jurisdictions we've been, we have seen different fee structures at different harbour authorities. Some charge a berthing fee. Some charge a transient fee. Some charge an off-loading fee.

Very quickly, when fish is off-loaded at your docks, in your harbours, do you charge an off-loading fee? We heard in Newfoundland that it can be up to a quarter of a cent a pound. That money goes directly into the harbour authority. Do you do that here? Do you have an off-loading fee?

[Translation]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** Yes. Our harbour authority leases 26 off-loading sites to buyers. There are charges involved. A site brings in money.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** What do you charge for an off-loading fee, sir? If you have \$100 million worth of product coming in at a quarter of a cent a pound, that's pretty good money going into the harbour authority.

[Translation]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** The mission of the harbour authorities is to manage facilities at the best possible cost for the users. We forecast how much money we need to set aside to make minor repairs, which enables us to know how much we should be billing users.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** But my question is how much do you charge for off-loading? Is it so much a pound? Or do you charge at all?

In other words, when fish comes in and it's off-loaded from a boat, do you charge the fisherman or the buyer for that off-loading?

[Translation]

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** We invoice the buyer. That may cost approximately \$1,300 per off-loading site.

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** You have to differentiate between the big wharves and the small ones. If our authority were to demand a certain amount of money to offload the fish, it would be completely ridiculous. We have 25 fishers. We weigh the lobster and the herring. They have a fleet of vessels which offload quite sizeable quantities of fish and crustaceans.

[English]

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** We actually have a fee schedule. We have a list of the traditional Stonehaven fishers, those who have fished there forever, since the implementation of the harbour authority. They pay \$12 a foot per year. We also have a separate amount for transient boats. This would include people who off-load herring or crab or whatever. If they land in Stonehaven and unload in Stonehaven, they would pay per day, per week, or per month, on that basis.

So we have a very clear schedule. We also have fee amounts that the fish buyers need to provide to us on an annual basis. That goes for anyone else who uses the wharf, whether it's for recreational facilities or whatever. We have different amounts.

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** We have the same kind of docking fees in Pointe-Verte. We don't charge per pound. You were asking how much per pound, but none of us in a small harbour would—

**Mrs. Margot Payne:** And we don't charge per pound either. The boat would be there as a transient, in and out, and they'd be charged for that.

**Mr. Philippe Ferguson:** We used to do that, but we let it go because it's administration. The fact of the matter is that there comes a time when we as volunteers just don't have the time. But we also we have to be careful; we have a small wharf, a small community. There's no double-dipping there. There's only so much the fishermen can handle there. We have to be careful with that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Calkins, you have four minutes.

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

I certainly appreciate what I have heard so far today. We always hear something new everywhere we stop, and I've heard certainly some new information here.

I have an open-ended question. Feel free to answer if you want, and if you don't want to, that's fine as well.

Basically, the way I see it, you have potentially some opportunities for change in the future. If you're thinking long term, what would you like to see happen with regard to the funding formula for small craft harbours? Obviously there's the status quo.

We could continue with the status quo, which sees the funds being competed for, and essentially we have harbour authorities that are strained, basically playing the game or begging for money to try to keep their harbours, wharves, breakwaters, and whatever they're dredging up to par.

That's one option, I guess, looking forward. We could continue with the status quo and continue to add more money. There was \$20 million a year already added to the small craft harbours budget, and we've added another \$10 million over the next two years for part of the divestiture program. So we're continuing to add money, but we're not really changing the status quo as far as how the actual program is administered is concerned.

One option could be a regional harbour manager paid for by DFO. There would be a group of five or ten harbours, or whatever, in a region, and some of that money would actually pay for business management. Maybe there would be enough money to pay for a repair person or whatever. The harbour authorities could pool the money they get and put that money with some from DFO to help with that side of it. Or perhaps there's some new way of looking at this, an outside-of-the-box type of thing, a new funding formula.

For example, in the municipality I'm from, if they had a \$20 million project they wanted to do, they would use a funding formula and a debenture to borrow over 50 years. They would generate enough revenue to pay for the borrowing over a 50-year period at a fixed interest rate, or whatever the case might be. That's the way it's structured or set up. It allows the municipality to leverage the money that they get today well into the future in order to make repairs that they need today.

I'm not saying that's what it has to look like, but I'm just giving that as an example. I'm just wondering if there is some way that we could do this better and get better value for money. Right now the annual budget—and it has fluctuated—is around \$100 million a year. If you were to take a look at that and divide it on a per harbour basis, obviously some of it would go for administration, but \$90 million divided by 750 core harbours across Canada is \$120,000 each per year. If you're looking at it from that perspective, there has to be a better way of doing this.

So if somebody would like to throw in a comment, I'd like to hear it.

• (1000)

**Mr. Yvon Arseneau:** If you gave each of us \$120,000 a year, I would be really glad to get it, because for us \$100,000 would mean the refacing of the inside of the wharf in the first year. In the second year we'd go with half of the dredging. In the third year we'd go with the wall inside of the wharf. We would manage that money easily.

If that's the way, it's a really good way, because we don't see any money coming in anyway.

**The Chair:** We have time for one more answer.

**Mr. Philippe Ferguson:** We can let go of the bunching of the wharves, because we have a priest doing five churches and it doesn't work.

Give us some money for administration. Start with that, depending on the size of the harbour facilities, and then we can think of something else. Then we can have an administrator filling out the forms for APECA and anything else they can think of. But until then—

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** To come back to what you were saying —

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead very quickly, Mr. LeBreton. We need to get to our next witnesses.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** I'd like to come back to what you were saying about giving an equal share of the \$120,000 to each of the sea ports. As Mr. Arseneau said, \$120,000 would suit small craft harbours like ours, but I'm sure that for Mr. Mallet, \$120,000—

**Mr. Camille-André Mallet:** We'd need millions of dollars.

**Mr. Jacques LeBreton:** Exactly. That's what you need and it's understandable. That's the difference.

[English]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The formula I put out there was a very simple formula, and there would be a more complicated formula, but it's the idea.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but we have no choice. We need to get to our next witnesses.

I thank you for your presentation this morning. It's been interesting. We're going to break for five minutes to prepare for our next witnesses.

Thank you.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- (1010)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, colleagues.

Once again, I want to welcome our witnesses.

We are the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, for those who may not have been around for the first round. We represent the four different political parties in the House of Commons.

Last fall we began a process of doing a study into the small craft harbours program for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We presented an interim report to the House of Commons prior to the Christmas break, and we are in the process now of concluding our study and hopefully will be presenting a full report to the House of Commons before the summer break.

Part of that study last fall included hearing from people within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the regional directors of small craft harbours, the national advisory board of small craft harbours, and several other groups and organizations.

Our study continues this week. We are travelling to the four Atlantic provinces, and to Quebec this afternoon, to hear from you people who are on the ground, or on the wharf as we say, with regard to the harbour authorities themselves, the volunteers themselves.

Our process includes trying to create a foundation for the minister to take to his cabinet colleagues and others to enhance the financial side of the small craft harbours program, but also to find out from you about any concerns you have as you volunteer your time and effort in your communities, and about any assistance that harbour authorities themselves could have from the government.

We allow a few minutes for each presenter to introduce themselves and tell us a little bit about their operation. Then we open the floor up for questions. We operate on time limits here; otherwise we would end up going over our time. We ask that you take that into consideration while you're speaking.

As I said, our report will hopefully be concluded by the summer break. If, after today, you feel that you haven't had the opportunity to say everything you wanted to say, feel free to forward that to the committee, and we will include that as part of our discussions when we finalize our report.

Most of the members around the table represent rural ridings in Canada and are very familiar with the small craft harbours program and with harbour authorities themselves. I represent a rural riding in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I have 68 harbour authorities in my riding. That just gives you an example, and most members are the same. We are quite familiar with it, but at the same time, we have not made a stop yet where we have not learned something new.

We look forward to hearing from you this morning as you raise the issues and concerns that you may have.

I believe Mr. Landry will begin. The floor is yours, Mr. Landry.

•(1020)

[Translation]

**Mr. Roland Landry (Administration portuaire de Anse Bleue):** Good morning. My name is Roland Landry and I am the President of the Anse Bleue Harbour Authority. There 19 of us who are lobster, herring and mackerel fishers. In addition to that, in the summer, there are about 30 recreational boaters.

I don't quite know how to start. To begin with, we are facing serious problems: water issues, and wharf paving problems. I don't know if this is what I am supposed to be talking about, but we would like to get money to try to address the wharf excavation issues once and for all, because it is ridiculous to have to dig with shovels every year. It's never-ending. That is the purpose of my visit here today: I'm trying to have this problem fixed once and for all.

All of us do volunteer work. Every year, we have about \$12,000 with which to pave the wharf. I'm not afraid to say that we're all rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty for nothing. And people are starting to get tired of it. That's why we'd like to start getting some money so that we can continue with our harbour activities.

That's all I have to say.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Landry.

Mr. Mallet.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul-Aimé Mallet (Chair, Administration portuaire de Le Goulet):** Good morning, gentlemen.

My name is Paul-Aimé Mallet and I'm the President of the Le Goulet Harbour Authority.

The Le Goulet Harbour Authority was created in March, 1996. The wharves were a little outdated, but we still continue to work with Small Craft Harbours in order to improve them. One part of the wharf which has been the responsibility of the Le Goulet Harbour Authority since 1996 was built in the early 1960s. One part of the wharf is also used as a breakwater for the Shippagan channel.

For years we have worked hard with Small Craft Harbours in order to improve our wharf. We have 60 lobster fishing craft which dock at the wharf and about 15 to 20 vessels that come from other wharves to deliver their lobster in our wharf. We have about 10 to 15 craft which fish for other species, such as spring herring, mackerel and some groundfish, when quotas are small.

We also have between 10 and 20 native fishers fishing for snow crab. Since 1995, we've had about 12 to 15 snow crab fishers coming from other wharves to offload. In December 2006, we signed a long-term agreement with Small Craft Harbours for major repairs to the wharf costing approximately \$8 million. In early January 2008 approximately \$200,000 worth of work was almost complete.

It has become apparent that fewer and fewer fishers are attending the harbour authority's annual meetings because, according to them, the wharf is increasingly outdated. If major improvements aren't carried out in the near future, part of the wharf will have to be closed.

Where are we going to dock our boats? Will we have to go back to the old capstan system so that fishers can continue to make a living?

In light of this, I believe that the current government needs to shoulder its responsibilities and start to invest more money in wharves.

And on that note, I'd like to thank you very much, gentlemen.

•(1025)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mallet.

Mr. Larocque.

[Translation]

**Mr. Samuel Larocque (Secretary-Treasurer, Comité portuaire de Pigeon-Hill):** Good morning. My name is Samuel Larocque and I am the Secretary Treasurer of the Pigeon-Hill Harbour Authority.

There are 68 coastal fishers at the Pigeon-Hill wharf. In the fall, during the herring harvest, there are an additional 15 boats. Currently, I have seven problems with the wharves. First the problem is with dredging at Le Goulet. We dredge every year, and every year our funding applications are approved. The problem is that we always have to call Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Public Works and Government Services Canada 48 hours in advance to file an application to dredge. And they give us 40 hours of dredging time, and sometimes 30 or even 20 hours. We're asking for a maintenance contract with allocated funding.

We have the Amphibec in the Pigeon-Hill region. And we're lucky from that point of view. The Amphibec can dig a wide enough channel so that if there's a storm or big winds, even if it fills up to a width of 50 feet, it's at least 200 feet wider. So that's the extent of the dredging problem.

Then we have wharf 401 which has been closed for five years. I have a lot of trouble getting money for that wharf. We've got it closed at the moment, but fishers open it and trucks drive through. Whose responsible? The port authority is. And we don't have enough money to repair this wharf.

The third problem is the slip, where vessels enter into the water. I lodged an application three years ago and I'm still waiting for the plans and designs from PWGSC. There are 70 boats which enter the water on the slipway with what we call a float. It's really dangerous. I've also submitted an application in relation to this. We're still waiting for the plans and specifications.

Another problem is that last year, we got \$25,000 to carry out a study on future plans. I called Fisheries and Oceans Canada about this, but I didn't hear back. I called PWGSC. I got the same response, they are not aware of the issue. This is what we need to make the wharf bigger. We are still waiting.

The fifth problem is with the iron wharf. My grandfather built the iron wharf 32 years ago. It was inspected and we're going to get money to rebuild it. Fisheries and Oceans has done a lot of work on this, and I'm very pleased with this.

As you can see, there are a lot of problems at Pigeon-Hill.

The sixth problem involves floating docks. Four floating docks have degenerated. They're over 25 years old. We've continued to make requests in this regard, but there's not enough money.

The seventh problem is that Fisheries and Oceans Canada never has any money. We'd like to have a lot more money for small craft harbours. Small wharves must be treated differently to big sea ports. This problem really must be addressed.

When the government handed the sea ports over to the harbour authorities, they were in bad shape. You cannot hand something over to someone else when it's in bad shape. Had the government repaired the wharves immediately, we wouldn't be sitting at this table.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Larocque.

Mr. Paulin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Paulin (Chair, Administration portuaire de Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël):** My name is Marc Paulin and I am president of the Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël Harbour Authority.

There are approximately 30 lobster fishermen working from the wharf. We fish herring and mackerel. Sometimes, depending on the year, some boats from outside come to fish for herring in the fall. In the past, we have landed crab, but we can no longer do this because there isn't enough water at the wharf entrance. Those boats don't want to run the risk of coming in, so they are forced to go to other wharves further away.

Our biggest problem is the silting of sand. Every spring, we have to dig ourselves out in order to go fishing. We also have to dredge whenever there are winds from the northeast. The annual priority projects that we submit to Fisheries and Oceans concern dredging. I don't see why we need to ask every year for funding for dredging. Since the department is aware that Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël needs and will always need to dredge, it should set aside funding for this.

The problem is getting worse. The condition of the coast and the sand has greatly deteriorated over the past 10 years. I have made Fisheries and Oceans and Public Works and Government Services aware of this. Those departments told me that there was no funding for a study or anything else. The sand is currently moving toward the front of the wharf, in such a way that it will be even more costly to dredge that area.

The wharf has been repaired. Some parts have been paved. A slip was built, a new boat slip, but it hasn't been finished. The slip is nice, but it can only be accessed by boat. We asked for a floating dock to be installed along the slip, and we got it. It is in the field, but we don't have a ramp to install along the floating dock, along the slip. The project is not yet complete. The government is telling us that it doesn't have any money for this.

Another problem has come up. Part of the wharf itself is starting to weather and soften. The crane, the excavators and the trucks loaded with herring have to drive on a soft and dangerous wharf. However, the wharf can't be blocked off because it's the only accessible area from which to dredge right to the bottom. I have advised Fisheries

and Oceans, and Public Works and Government Services undertook some studies. They know that the wharf is in bad shape. We can't wait until an accident occurs. When a transport vehicle goes through the wharf, dredging will no longer be an option. We might as well say goodbye to the wharf.

Once again, I want to come back to the issue of dredging, because it is one of our major problems. Only a small path is dredged because that's all that we have allocated. If a wider path could be dredged, it would be much more beneficial for us. Instead of taking a single storm, it would take two or three perhaps before the boats are held up by too much sand. Boats have run aground and lives have almost been lost. You can't put a price on someone's life. Despite everything, the government is refusing to give us the money.

When the port authorities were created and forced on us, we had the choice of either creating a port authority committee or closing the wharf. So the government pushed the wharves onto us.

As my colleague Samuel said, the wharves were in very bad condition, and they still are. We are only volunteers and we are doing our best to manage these wharves. The fisherman are putting pressure on us to get us to do one thing or another. We're doing our best, but without any funding, our hands are tied. That, in a nutshell, is the problem.

That is all.

• (1030)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Paulin.

Mr. Chiasson.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Aurèle Chiasson (Comité portuaire de Lamèque):** Good morning. My name is Aurèle Chiasson. I am the Manager of the Lamèque Harbour Authority Committee. In 1968, we were the first of all the wharves to create a port authority committee.

Back then, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had said that it would hand over the wharves in operating condition, meaning safe on all fronts. However, this was not the case. Every year, we had to fight that department to get repairs made to all the wharves.

Every year since 2002 we have made our demands known to each minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Since I began this job there have been four ministers of Fisheries and Oceans. With each change, we have had to reapply, since the new minister wasn't up to speed on the matter. So things never moved forward.

At one point, Minister Dhaliwal had given his approval to me for a wharf repair project. Then, the new minister, Mr. Thibault, who wasn't up to speed on the matter, talked to me about a really highly positioned project given the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' budgets. It was called a "rust proof" project. He gave me approximately \$900,000 to do repairs on the worst part of the wharf, meaning the plant side. I had the choice: agree to the project or get nothing at all. We agreed to it. The side in question and the side for which I made my application concerned that part of wharves 407 and 408 according to l'Association coopérative des pêcheurs de l'Île.

This fall, an engineering firm inspected the wharf. After the inspection, the engineer in question told me that that part of the wharves—wharves 407 and 408—were in bad shape and were not safe. I asked him up to what point it wasn't safe. He suggested that we close a portion of the wharf and to only let three-quarter tonne trucks through. We mustn't forget that all of the fishers who work on the Lamèque wharf all have one tonne or more trucks. These are all crab and shrimp fishermen.

Fifty commercial fishing boats tie up to my wharf. They aren't small boats some 40 to 45 feet long; these boats are 65 feet or longer. On the part in question, meaning wharves 407 and 408, there isn't even any room to tie up a boat safely. Although the Department of Fisheries and Oceans said from the start that it would maintain the wharves in an acceptable condition in accordance with construction safety standards, this has never been the case.

Furthermore, every year, fishing products worth \$15 million are unloaded. That's a lot of money! Some 500 jobs are generated by these fishing activities too.

I still have not received confirmation that that part of the wharf will be closed, but everything leads me to believe that it will be closed this spring. The past month people have been working on that wharf, including two aquaculturists. There is a company that buys crab; they have a freezer that needs to be moved; there are two spots for offloading, and a dozen boats have to tie up there to unload. So I have to relocate all the people on the other wharves, meaning wharves 401, 402 and 403, which are already busy.

For all those reasons, I wonder what Fisheries and Oceans is going to do this spring. Is it going to give us money for the wharf?

I am not asking today for repairs — it would take approximately a million dollars — and even under those conditions, the wharf would not be acceptable in my opinion. What we're asking for today is a new wharf, a wharf that complies with construction and safety standards.

I have drafted a document and I have made copies for everyone here. This document, with supporting photographs, shows exactly the condition of the Lamèque wharf. I am talking here about wharves 407 and 408. Just from seeing the pictures, some people will be afraid to walk on the wharves. I have letters of support from the chambers of commerce, mayors, the Coalition pour la viabilité de l'environnement de Shippagan et des Îles Lamèque et Miscou. These people all support a new wharf being built in Lamèque.

Thank you.

• (1040)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chiasson.

Mr. Savoie.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Savoie (Treasurer, Autorité portuaire de Grande-Anse):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I represent the Grande-Anse Harbour Authority Committee. We want to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing us to present our dredging project for the Grande-Anse wharf. Be it in terms of economics or tourism, the port is in many cases the heart of rural communities. We mustn't forget this.

Over the past few years, a lot of work on the port infrastructure in our community has been done, and we are very grateful for this. The previous facilities were no longer safe and no longer met the needs of inshore fishermen. These fishermen depend on these facilities to earn their living, thereby generating a lot of economic activity. The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw had announced that all the work would be done over several years. We are talking about a \$1.5 million project.

In my opinion the most important phase of the port facility modernization project is dredging the port entrance and basin. At low tide, no boats can access the wharf, since silting has not left enough water depth for boats to get through. Currently there is only one and a half feet of water approximately, which represents a quarter of the normal depth, which is six feet. The cost of the dredging project is estimated at \$417,000.

If this silting problem is not resolved, the current situation will represent a danger for fishermen as well as for pleasure boaters, because at low tide, they have to wait before they can come into the wharf. If there is a storm at low tide and someone is injured or has a heart attack, it would be impossible to access the wharf. The lives of fishermen, pleasure boaters and others will be endangered if the entrance to the wharf is not dredged. Last year, a similar situation occurred. The weather was bad and one of the boats tried to come in, the tide was not completely out. The boat got hit by the waves and almost broke up. Lives could have been lost. They weren't, but do we have to wait for that kind of accident to happen before we react?

If you look at the following pages, you will see the inside of the wharf and a beached boat. It's obvious that even inside the bay, there isn't enough water at low tide for the boats to float. I think that the photos speak for themselves. Our needs are urgent. Dredging is a necessity for us.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Savoie.

Thank you all for your presentations.

We'll now begin our round of questions, with ten minutes to the Liberal Party.

Mr. Simms.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** I'm going to be sharing my time, Mr. Chair.

Over the past few days we have been through Newfoundland and Labrador, and we've been in P.E.I., Nova Scotia, and here. One of the commonalities in all of this is that the changing face of the industry is now seeing much larger boats, bigger investments in the industry itself. It comes down to a point where a lot of your wharves are not built for these boats that are much larger. We've seen congestion problems to the point where people can't get out. And of course, as you mentioned, Mr. Savoie, there are the dredging issues. So depending upon where you are, it's either dredging or it's the actual size of the wharf, but the commonality is that our industry is seeing a much larger boat and much larger customers and more expenses when it comes to investment. Therefore, in my opinion, frustrations get that much bigger, because you don't have just a fishing enterprise; this is big business.

I would like you to comment on what problems you will face down the road, given the changing face of the industry, how it is changing. Comment on that and on how you think it's going to be a problem, given how your clients are changing the way they fish and what they fish with.

Also, there is competition. I'm starting to see some areas where it seems like harbours are pitted against each other. It's not just here; it's everywhere. But I want you to comment on why that is so. Is it more so now than it was in the past, or is it just something that was always there?

I guess I can start with who opened and go from there.

•(1045)

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul-Aimé Mallet:** On the issue of inshore fishing in the gulf, there is a policy stating that we can replace our boats only with a boat of the same length or the same tonnage. For 46 years, I have been fishing on a 40 to 45-foot boat that draws 4.5 to 5 feet of water. I don't understand why you say that boats will get bigger and bigger. That may happen in other regions, like Nova Scotia and Scotia-Fundy.

In the past 30 years, fishers have been keeping their boats at about the same length. When harbours are dug, the effects of nature must be taken into account, be it storms, erosion or sand movement. On the gulf side, from the Miramichi to Miscou point, for instance, there is sand all along the shores. In Newfoundland, it's rocks and pebbles. It's not the same thing.

We have to put ourselves in the shoes of the people asking for help. We have to know where they are, and on what kind of territory, what kind of terrain they operate.

I hope that answers your question.

**Mr. Rénaud Haché (Mayor, Ville de Lamèque):** Good morning, Mr. Simms.

My name is Rénaud Haché, and I'm the mayor of the City of Lamèque.

You said that boats are getting bigger and bigger. The Lamèque dock is a commercial fishing dock. It services inshore fishers, as well as midshore and offshore fishers. Thus, there are indeed some large

vessels in which the fishers have invested significant amounts. These are vessels worth 2 to 3 million dollars.

With regard to the shrimp fishery, those really are big boats. What worries us is the safety of the wharf when it comes to a large fleet representing massive financial investment by fishers.

You also talked about competition between wharves. I would say there is no competition right now, because every region has a fleet that takes up each wharf's activities. Even if there was competition, each wharf is totally filled by the vessels it serves. Moreover, most fishers like to use the wharves that are close to where they live. So there is an established clientele for every wharf. I would say that wharves in the region work together, in fact.

Thank you.

•(1050)

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** In our community, there is a small sea harbour and a small village with 700 to 800 people. You said that boats are too big. On our wharf, we set aside only three metres a boat for 68 boats. I remember that, 35 years ago—when I was only seven—my father fished near the coast using capstans. The boat was only 21 feet long. I remember that. Now, we have to move with the times. The federal government provided wharves that were in good condition when they were new, but now they are old and quite damaged. That's why I am saying the world has changed a lot, and now we need large boats to get the fish.

In our small community, the economic benefits amount to 7 to 8 million dollars. In a small village with 700 or so people, 7 to 8 million dollars is a lot of money for the general store, convenience store, and so on.

And when it comes to sand build up in the channel, let's see what the figures are. The main fishery is the lobster fishery. If 68 lobster boats lose one day's fishing, let's see what happens. Take 400 pounds at \$5 a pound, you get \$2,000. So if each of those 68 fishers loses \$2,000 each, the total loss is about \$200,000. In fact, it's \$140,000, but sometimes people bring in 500 pounds of lobster. So one day's lost fishing amounts to \$150,000 less for the community. That's why we have evolved. We need very efficient ports to serve us.

There was also mention of disputes among harbour authorities. There is so little money at Fisheries and Oceans that no one whose project is approved will tell anyone else how the money was obtained. That's the problem. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans often finds us very annoying—they often find me extremely annoying, because they know me quite well—but I care a great deal about the issue and I volunteer my time. I have been on the committee for eight years and I love my work, but I volunteer my time. I have other plans for the future. I'm young, and I have three sons who are 4, 7 and 11 years old. One of them will become a fisher, there is no doubt about that. We have to care, because this is our field, our livelihood. We have been raised in the fishery. That's why we want well-constructed and well-run harbours. That is my view.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, PC)):** Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We'll now go to Mr. Blais, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Thank you very much.

Good morning, everyone.

Mr. Larocque, I find everything you have said touches me very deeply. In fact, I would say that this is at the heart of the issue, because it is a question of priorities, a question of choices. The question is not the amount of money, but how the money will be divided and shared. Canada's budget is about \$240 billion. The budget of Fisheries and Oceans is \$1.7 billion, while the department's budget for small craft harbours is \$100 million. At the beginning of this millennium, the budget was \$50 million.

These are large figures, but they show how things are now. In 2004, repairing and restoring the wharves cost \$400 million. Today, it would take over \$600 million. Things are in decline, and the facilities are deteriorating. Unfortunately, Mr. Chiasson, we are not talking about development projects, but projects to repair and restore, projects to patch up what's already there. That is the sad truth.

Mr. Larocque, the message that you have to keep repeating is that this is your way of life, this is how you earn your living, and this is how you were raised. This affects you very deeply because you feel you have been somehow betrayed, that a promise has been broken. That is exactly what has happened. You were sold the wonderful idea of the port authority system. I have nothing against the idea, but it has to work for both sides, yet obviously it does not.

The other thing I have to day—and I think we have to keep saying it—is that it's always a question of priorities. Eventually, priorities have to be the right ones. It's not a money issue. I believe the wharves are essential, and I keep saying it—they are the heart of the community. Some would even say the docks are the soul of the community. They are much more than a place where boats are loaded and unloaded. They are the place where people come together, they are a forum. No more wharves, no more unloading. No more wharves, no more life. That is also a sad truth.

I very much appreciate what you are saying, Mr. Larocque, but we have reached a point where the size of vessels is causing a number of problems. Some of them are not just longer, but also wider. There is climate change to be considered as well. Storms are much stronger than they used to be, and that has an impact too. Depending on where it is located, a wharf will become more degraded because the storms buffeting it are more powerful.

At some point, we have to find a balance, and stability. I was saying that to our first witnesses, and I would like to hear your views on it as well.

Mr. Roussel.

**Mr. Denis Roussel (Mayor, Administration portuaire de Le Goulet):** My name is Denis Roussel, and I am the mayor of the town of Le Goulet. I am on the Le Goulet Harbour Authority.

In 1996, you did not give us a wharf, you imposed it on us. That is pretty much what happened to every port authority. Generally speaking, Le Goulet and other harbour authorities received wharves that were already under repair, or that needed repair. You asked us to take ourselves in hand, and that is what we did. We established committees and did our work until very recently. In fact, it seems that the number of members is beginning to drop. That's not because we're not working, but because we are not getting government support. Existing wharves need major repairs. I am not just talking about Le Goulet, but all wharves. Lamèque needs a new wharf. There is not even any money to repair those wharves. Wharves like ours and the one in Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël, in fact all wharves represented here are on the verge of shutting down. Where will the boats go once the wharves are gone?

So I tell myself that if the government doesn't invest in them... and I'm not just talking about the current government, but also about preceding governments. Governments have not invested sufficiently in wharf infrastructure. If you are here today—and I do thank you for coming—it's to see what the situation is. I am not going to congratulate anyone today. I have some strong comments to make. If you don't immediately invest in the wharves—take that as an ultimatum, if you like—I will communicate with all port authorities, and we will gather up our books and bring them to you. We are at the end of our rope. All port authorities are at the end of their ropes.

I can promise you that, if nothing is done and if there is no investment in our wharves, I will take it upon myself to communicate with all port authorities to institute a boycott and get things moving.

Thank you.

• (1055)

**Mr. Marc Paulin:** You said that the wharf was the soul of the community. That is absolutely true, because in our community, we all live off fishing. I am in my 30s, and I expect to spend the rest of my working life fishing. That takes a lot of investment. I have been chairman of the harbour authority from the very start.

Now, we are beginning to notice that it's tough to find people to sit on the committee. They are behind us, and they see that whenever we go to DFO, DFO says it has no money, even before we open our mouths.

Our wharves are in ruins. The department imposed harbour authorities on us. I think we do some very good administrative work. We started from scratch and got where we are today. We never received the funding we were promised when these harbour authorities were imposed on us. We were told to set up committees and ask for money to implement our projects. The funding side of it was forgotten. It's funding that we lack.

That is all I have to say.

• (1100)

**Mr. Paul-Aimé Mallet:** You are absolutely right in saying that a wharf is the heart of a village or a community. I have been working for the Le Goulet port authority for so many years I've lost track. Each year, towards the end of March, retired fishers call to find out when the wharf and the road leading to it will be cleared. It is a meeting place.

There is no money to repair the infrastructure, but even less to clear the wharves come springtime. Fishers have to pay to clear the wharves. Now, I understand that we've had an exceptional winter in terms of snow. However, something is not quite right when fishers have to pay to clear the snow and remove the ice on the wharves.

We will have to rattle the cage quite a bit before things really change and so we can continue to operate. Fishers are very courageous people. And yet, they are getting discouraged and abandoning the trade. They no longer participate on the board of directors because things are at a standstill. Some even do not want to move forward.

As was said earlier, there has been a breach of contract. We signed a contract and yet more and more conditions are being imposed on us. We have to submit audited financial statements, which amounts to \$1,500 to \$2,000 over and above our other costs. Agreements were signed with Fisheries and Oceans 10 years ago. They point to a small clause in the contract and tell us we have to comply with it. We do not have the means to do so. Some fishers can no longer pay. Wharf users can no longer pay \$400, \$500 or \$600 a year. Don't expect to draw blood from a stone.

Fishers are starting to get fed up. If nothing is done, we will make do with what we have.

Thank you.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Savoie.

**Mr. Roger Savoie:** I understand that the role of standing committees, including the fisheries and oceans committee, is to influence the budget process. Given all that you have heard here, I would hope that you will convey the right message in order to obtain more money for small craft harbours. You see that there are crying needs, but it is also a matter of safety for users.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Savoie.

Mr. Stoffer.

• (1105)

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

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your presentation.

Let me just play the devil's advocate here. Obviously if a wharf is not safe, if it's shut down or closed because of safety reasons, that fisherman and his catch will go somewhere else. We have heard, very clearly, that every wharf we go to needs an investment. No one hasn't asked for money—for extensions, for dredging, for wharf repair, for new wharves, etc. That's an awful lot of money in requests.

If the future of the fishery, as we've heard from one individual, is that the industry may itself be consolidated with fewer boats—bigger boats, but fewer fishermen accessing the fish—and if that indeed is the case fifteen or twenty years from now, then why do you have to have all these wharves in these communities?

Remember, I'm just playing the devil's advocate.

If DFO comes to the point where they say, “No, we don't have the money, this wharf will end up closing because of safety reasons, those people will go somewhere else”, and so on, then do you think—I just throw this out for your thought process—that every community should have a harbour and a wharf facility? If not, should there be consolidation in the industry in order to better manage and better use the dollars? Or should every community continue having its wharf and harbour as the lifeblood—you had indicated this before—of the community?

I say that because I remember when grain elevators—the lifeblood of small rural prairie communities—started coming down in the Prairies. When the grain elevators went down, the farmers had to take their grain further distances down the road. I see that happening in the industry of fishing as well.

Please tell me I'm wrong.

**Mr. Roger Savoie:** I think your position conflicts a bit with what Mr. Simms just said. There are larger boats and fewer places, so we need to keep those harbours and improve them in order to meet fishermen's needs.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** No, but the point is that if we shut down three harbours and improve one to the point where it could handle everything, everybody would go to that one harbour.

**Mr. Roger Savoie:** You talked about grain, but grain is on the earth. If your truck breaks down, you're safe. But when you're on the water, you may have to travel for hours on a bad sea. It's not the same principle as being on the ground, on the side of the road.

There's an issue of safety in having a small craft harbour in a place where you can easily access it. If you take that away, well, you put a life in danger.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** You say there are fewer boats. I would think that each and every one of you has an office, no?

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Even more than one.

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** You have a sizable budget.

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** No.

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** Tomorrow, you all get to work in the same office. How about that? It is the same thing for us.

There are fishing conflicts among neighbours. Today, we have a conflict with our neighbours from Miscou and Pigeon-Hill. Do you think we will land there? I don't think so.

As my colleague Roger said, you work in the area of transportation safety. When you transport grain, your safety is assured. But we who work on the water are not safe. We've lost one of our colleagues from Miscou in a storm. We are in conflict with them, but we were saddened all the same. Death and safety are no laughing matters.

I think that to move from one wharf to another when the price of fuel is on the rise—it is costing us \$1 a litre and will be costing \$1.50—might lead to unexpected costs. Things are not easy.

Let's imagine that you are all in the same office tomorrow morning.

**Mr. Marc Paulin:** You talked about closing down wharves. I just had a discussion not too long ago with an employee from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who asked me why we would not close down a wharf. Don't even think about it: the wharf is the soul of the community. Wharves have been there for generations and they will remain there forever. We will not stand for any wharf being closed, be it within our community or in Lamèque. We will fight for them.

If, for example, we went to the wharf in Pigeon-Hill, which is a community close to ours, it would not be so bad. In the fishing sector, we have agreements among us, and we get along well with the people who live in that community. However, if everyone had to share the same wharf, entire communities would suffer because there would be conflicts everywhere. So the issue of closing wharves should never be raised in a meeting.

• (1110)

**Mr. Régnald Haché:** Don't forget that each regional wharf is used to full capacity. If you close one, the neighbouring wharf will not have sufficient infrastructure or space to accommodate a higher number of vessels. So closing one wharf and expanding one elsewhere is not really a solution. There are no savings to be had by doing that. I think we must opt for repairs and good wharf maintenance. We would not be in this situation if maintenance had been carried out on a regular basis. But now, major investments will have to be made to maintain the infrastructure which is indispensable for the economy of each region.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Haché.

Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Thériault, we're going to give you a couple of minutes if you want to answer Mr. Stoffer's question.

**Mr. Roméo Thériault (Autorité portuaire de Grande-Anse):** Thank you.

Mr. Stoffer, the reason I sat here is that I'm the mayor of Grande-Anse. It's a small community. Our wharf is desperately in need of dredging. Now you're talking about amalgamating the wharves together.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Remember, I started off by saying I'm playing the devil's advocate. I would not advocate this.

**Mr. Roméo Thériault:** That's right. Well, the devil's advocate a lot of times comes to be the Lord's.

This is not acceptable because of the location of each wharf. Mr. Savoie mentioned earlier the safety of the fishermen and the safety of pleasure boaters and everything.

I think the biggest problem with Fisheries and Oceans is that the people who are managing it are in the offices in Moncton. Those offices should be installed here in the north where the fisheries are, so they can see the problems every day. You talk to these people in Moncton, and there's never anything done.

It was the same thing when we had the project given to us three years ago by the minister at the time, Robert Thibault. The project is only half done, and it should have been completed by now. We had

made recommendations to Fisheries and Oceans in the Moncton office, to Denis Haché, the director now instead of Charles Gaudet, that the northwest corner of the wharf be opened and the current left to enter and exit the channel. It would probably clean up a lot of this sand and prevent having to dredge, as was done in the past, thirty years ago, when that section was opened. Probably for a cost of maybe \$75,000 to \$100,000 versus \$500,000 to dredge, we could rectify the problem, or help rectify the problem.

I appreciate the time to talk to you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

Mr. Chiasson, I think you wanted to answer the question Mr. Stoffer made a comment on. If you want to do that now, you can.

[Translation]

**Mr. Aurèle Chiasson:** You're talking about small craft harbours, but in Lamèque, Shippagan and Caraquet, there basically are none. Heavy machinery cannot really be used to do that type of work on the wharves. It is much too big and heavy. Our port is designed to accommodate commercial vessels. You are talking about small craft harbours, and I know there are such harbours, but the larger ports around the Peninsula are located at Lamèque, Shippagan and Caraquet. These are commercial ports. I have nothing against the other ones, and I certainly hope they do find funding, but everyone is entitled to their fair share.

Thank you.

• (1115)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank everybody for being here today and talking about this. I appreciate all the volunteer efforts that you make. In our small rural communities there are volunteers for many types of things. Even though I don't have any small craft harbours in my riding, there are a lot of volunteer things going on in many areas.

I want to ask three questions. The first one is on revenue generation. What is the method you use in your areas to raise money for fees for the wharves? It is very clear from the testimony you've given that it is not enough. And you can't get blood from a rock; I absolutely agree with you. What are some of the mechanisms you use to raise the revenue, and what does that cover? Does it cover just the bare bones, just basically electricity and utilities?

Could I have a quick answer on that one before I get to my second question?

[Translation]

**Mr. Aurèle Chiasson:** The Lamèque Harbour Committee derives its income from electricity and mooring fees, and from renting out unloading docks. This is paid for by users. Our revenues are the same as our annual expenses. Sometimes, at the end of the year, we have a deficit of \$2,000 or \$3,000 on the books.

We then have to wait until April 1 to collect our rental fees. Then the year starts again. The port committee has never had \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$30,000 in the bank. We are being asked to fund 20% of the value of each project. So a \$5 million wharf would require us to invest one million dollars, money which we will never have.

Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul-Aimé Mallet:** In 1996, when we created the Administration portuaire de Le Goulet, we had to develop a budget which included certain fees and then we presented it to the people who would eventually be using the wharf. For instance, fishermen had to pay mooring fees and lobster trap storage fees, as well as slipway fees. Other users included those who bought licences right on the wharf. However, year after year, because of the increase in costs, we had to present a slightly bigger operational budget. We are trying to get money where we can, but it is still not enough.

The Administration portuaire de Le Goulet employs a guard, a part-time wharf manager. We have a lot of expenses, but our revenues cannot keep up. As my colleague said, we had to invest a certain percentage in each project or repairs. The situation is such that even for a project of \$5,000 or less, we are not turning to the small craft harbours program anymore. We do the repairs ourselves, especially those which are the most urgent.

Thank you.

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** You talked about increasing your revenues. I will not take up your time by talking about administration.

I know that your income has gone up each year, but we are making less money from the fishery. We are making less money on lobster every year.

If we ask the fishermen for higher fees for their vessels, they treat us like we're the devil. With 68 boats and fees ranging between \$250 and \$300, that's not a lot of money. Further, we also have to pay for waste and spent oil removal, electricity, small repairs and snow removal. That's what's hard.

• (1120)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** The question I was asking was on the revenue that you actually raise and whether you do have a shortfall. You've kind of answered my question—you can't get any more blood from a rock. I absolutely agree with that. It is very difficult, and I just wanted to understand that.

The fact that we have to spend four hours in the same room with all these guys every week would suggest that I don't want to go that way either. That's enough.

The previous group that was here talked a little bit about dollars and the ability to help our volunteers, and if there was money, it would help from an administrative standpoint to have some administrative people who could help. Then there is the other side, the infrastructure and dredging.

So I know we'd like to have everything, but if you had to focus on the areas and put more money in one place or another, which would help the volunteer fatigue more? Would it be the investment in the infrastructure and dredging, or would it be focusing more on the administration? Which would benefit the volunteers more?

I'd like to have your opinion on that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** When we are given money to repair the wharf or to undertake a major project, it certainly helps. The fishermen and volunteers on the committee are fairly happy with that. When we can complete one or two projects per year, that makes many people happy. As Mr. Chiasson said, if we have a wharf, the fishermen are happy. It's the soul of the town or village.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Thank you.

This is the next piece. I found Mr. Chiasson's comments very interesting with respect to the yearly requests that have been made since 2000, and every time there is a new minister you have to keep reformulating your request.

Then dredging seems to be a common theme with this group, to a person. Dredging is a key issue.

What process changes would you suggest we make in DFO and small craft harbours? That seems to be operational. Dredging is a constant thing that you have to do, depending upon your location. What kind of process would that be? Would you set a five-year plan to say this is what dredging we're going to do and we don't have to reformulate it every year, and then we have the capital side? What process change would you say should be made so that DFO and small craft harbours could work smarter and plan that money better?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Paulin:** On Lamèque island. We put energy into these requests, but all we really do is to change the date on the documents and send them in again to Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The people at Fisheries and Oceans and at Public Works Canada know that the dredging has to be done in our case. They already know that dredging will be needed next year at Ste-Marie and Pigeon-Hill, and it will still have to be done in 2, 5 and 10 years.

So why do they not reserve money for dredging, since it is inevitable? It is mother nature at work. As a harbour authority, we could then get our second priorities up to the top spot. As things stand now, we continually have to insist on dredging. We have no choice because it is a priority, but we have a lot of other priorities as well.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Does anybody else want to comment?

• (1125)

[Translation]

**Mr. Aurèle Chiasson:** At Lamèque, there is no dredging to be done. All we need is money for a wharf. That is all.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Okay, so a new wharf.

[Translation]

**Mr. Samuel Larocque:** Mr. Allen, we have a dredging problem every year. I have been a fisherman for 27 years. I remember dredging being done every year since then. That is 27 years. I am glad that we get funding every year for that. Even the fishermen are happy. But as my colleague has said, why do we have to re-submit our request every year? We know that the harbour silts up every year and that we need money to have the dredging done. It has to be done every year.

Dredging is a priority. In order to dock at Le Goulet, for example, the dredging has to be done. The material that has been dredged up has to be put somewhere. There needs to be one system just for dredging and another one for other projects. We have to pay to get rid of the dredged material. An environmental permit is required. There is bureaucracy to deal with. There is a cost for removing the silt, and then the storms fill up the hole again. More money has to be spent, and the hole gets filled up again. What sense does it make? Out of a \$200,000 budget for the dredging, PWGSC uses \$25,000 or \$30,000 for dredging by the end of the year. What about Fisheries and Oceans? Who do we turn to then? We go back to Fisheries and Oceans. That is how it works.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Coombs, I think you wanted to say something.

**Mr. Winston Coombs (Autorité portuaire de Grande-Anse):** Yes. I represent Grande-Anse, and I'm a fisherman myself.

I think a five-year plan would go very far toward representing the wharves and what you're up against for each one. A certain amount of money could go to the wharves every year. If DFO had five-year plans for each wharf, they could see what each wharf needed. They could issue so much money for each wharf per year. Some money is better than none at all.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

To Mr. Paulin—but anyone can answer this—earlier you said that they dredge your harbour each year just to cut a channel through. You mentioned that if they had a larger dredging project, you would be able to sustain three or four storms, or whatever the case may be.

What is the average amount of dollars spent on your dredging per year? Are you aware of the amount of the contract, ballpark figure? Has there been any effort to look at exactly what you're asking for, that being a major dredging job to alleviate some of the costs?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Paulin:** Dredging costs approximately \$200,000 per year. It always depends on the weather. Where we are, a northeast wind always results in silting. If there has not been much wind from the northeast during the fishing season, there is no problem and we

have water. But as soon as we have a northeaster, the harbour fills up.

One year there was money left over from the dredging budget. We have a breakwater, and we were able to dredge the area within the breakwater. That fixed the problem for a few weeks. Then we had some winds out of the northeast and we saw that the sand was spreading out instead of filling the hole. It is like snow. If there are four feet of snow on each side of your driveway, you shovel out the part in between. But as soon as the wind comes up, the cleared area fills up again. If a bigger area is cleared, it takes more time for it to get filled up. That is why people say that dredging needs only a small structure. Since we have \$200,000, we manage with \$200,000. But if we had more money, we could widen the opening and the approach to the wharf would be much safer.

The problem when boats come into the wharf is not just that they can hit bottom. What causes us the most difficulty is the wave action from behind. It pushes boats left and then right, and if you end up actually outside the channel it becomes particularly dangerous. It costs approximately \$200,000 per year to remove the sand. The sand is removed and put up on shore, but it gets pulled back into the harbour over time by the sea.

• (1130)

[English]

**The Chair:** In some places we have visited, we have learned that installing a breakwater—and you mention that you have one—or doing some other work would alleviate the amount of sand that gathers in and out of the harbour. I'm just wondering if for your particular harbour there has been any thought given to doing something to alleviate that continuous dredging. If you're looking at \$200,000 a year, is there a million-dollar project that could be done to alleviate that? Or is this sand always going to be a problem? Is there anything that can be done in that particular harbour?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Paulin:** There is a breakwater at the entrance to our wharf. If it continued further out to sea, where there is more water, boats could come in from several directions and go around the sand accumulating along the strand. However, the breakwater was built in two phases. It was supposed to be facing south, and another breakwater was to be built facing southeast, but while the work was underway, funding ran out. The builders abandoned the section that was suppose to be facing southeast and turned the breakwater further south.

The initial project was ultimately changed, and, as a result, we have a problem with the silting of sand. Engineers have told us that they built a breakwater to stop the sea. It's true that they stopped the sea, but the sand has created a serious problem for us. And as time goes on, the situation gets worse because the sand along the strand is now building up in front of the wharf. At some point, there won't be any water left.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm just looking at a photo of your harbour here now, thanks to technology.

Once again, I want to thank our witnesses for being here this morning. At each and every stop, we learn something new, and I'm sure my colleagues have learned something new from your time here this morning. I also want to thank you, on behalf of everybody, for the time and effort that you put into your communities as volunteers, understanding that it's not easy to deal with people who are looking for projects to be done when you cannot deliver. But certainly we applaud your efforts in that. Hopefully through the process of our

study, we can present a report that will enhance not only the program but your opportunities to provide the services to the people you represent.

Thank you very much. We hope to see you again some time.

This meeting is adjourned.

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**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

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