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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 134 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Before we begin the meeting, I want to remind all in-person participants to read the best practices guidelines on the cards on the table. These measures are in place to ensure the health and safety of all participants.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, September 18, 2023, the committee is commencing its study on the regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways.

All witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses, colleagues.

From the Boating Ontario Association, we have Mr. Rick Layzell, chief executive officer, joining us by video conference.

[Translation]

From Memphremagog Conservation Inc., we have Ariane Orjikh, general manager, by video conference. From the Municipalité de Lac-Simon, we have, also via video conference, Chantal Crête, councillor; Jocelyn Martel, councillor; and Benjamin Furtado, director of urban planning and environment.

We will now begin with opening remarks.

[English]

For that, I will turn it over to you, Mr. Layzell. You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Rick Layzell (Chief Executive Officer, Boating Ontario Association): Thank you very much to the chair and the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Rick Layzell. I am the CEO of the Boating Ontario Association, a non-profit association that has represented Ontario's recreational boating industry since 1967. Today, we serve the province's \$4.5-billion boating community and represent some 520 member businesses.

I am also the president of the Canadian Marine Retailers Association, which is a collaboration of all five of Canada's marine trade associations, including Boating Atlantic, Nautisme Québec, the Mid-Canada Marine and Powersports Dealers Association, Boating BC and, of course, Boating Ontario. The Canadian Marine Retailers Association, CMRA, collectively represents over 800 member companies in Canada's \$9.2-billion boating community. We generate \$4.6 billion in tax revenues for municipal, provincial and federal governments. Recreational boating is a critical and important element in Canada's tourism industry. In countless markets across rural Canada, recreational boating is the very lifeblood of the community.

We appreciate the opportunity to be here today to contribute to the analysis and regulations pertaining to recreational boating on Canada's waterways. The health, viability and growth of recreational boating in Canada, alongside our passion for healthy waterways, benefits thousands of Canadian families and communities. To that end, I would like to touch on several topics.

The first is the industry's request to receive top-line retail sales data to guide and grow Canada's recreational boating sector. Industry data is used in all sectors to effectively guide small business owners on inventory needs, parts-on-hand requirements, service shop expansions, marketing strategies and much more. As Canada's recipient of the data, Transport Canada plays a vital role in this growth strategy. The vessel registration process today requires industry and consumers to report sold and purchased boats to Transport Canada, and the data being collected represents the very data being requested by industry to move this forward.

The second is the impact of aquatic invasive species and the industry's role. Few boaters would argue that clean and healthy waterways are paramount to our passion for fishing, water sports and cruising. Those of us who make our living servicing these customers know full well the importance of clean waterways. In 2025, Boating Ontario will celebrate the 30th anniversary of our Clean Marine environmental best practices program. To be accredited the right to fly the Clean Marine flag, members must successfully pass an in-depth, in-person audit every third season. The Clean Marine audit includes analyses on many environmental best practices, including a commitment to waterways conservation.

With regard to flare recycling, Transport Canada mandates boaters to carry a select number of flares on board their vessels. These pyrotechnic devices expire after a select period of time, and for many years, Transport Canada funded a flare recovery collection program with the Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons. This program was suddenly halted in 2024, and since then, thousands of expired flares are now found beside or inside marina waste bins or are left on board customers' vessels.

The final one is the issue of mandatory PFD or life jacket wear, an issue that Transport Canada is currently consulting on. Transport Canada's recently released survey on mandatory PFD wear through Let's Talk Transportation guides respondents to replies that are only in favour of mandatory wear. To that end, we have pulled together and submitted our own written comments.

While our industry stands prepared to immediately support mandatory wear in select circumstances, we require making a more meaningful evidence-based decision. With that in mind, we would support the implementation of a three-year national law enforcement survey, inclusive of all marine enforcement agencies, to gather comprehensive data on the size and type of watercraft involved in safety incidents. This survey will provide critical insights into the relationship between vessel size and safety outcomes, enabling policy-makers to make informed, evidence-based decisions with regard to the potential extension of mandatory PFD wear requirements to different sized vessels.

As representatives of Ontario and Canada's recreational boating sector and as a key stakeholder for the interests of boaters everywhere, we appreciate this opportunity to be here today. Boating Ontario and the Canadian Marine Retailers Association are committed to advocating for policies that grow the sector and that manage the health of our waterways while protecting the rights of boaters across Canada.

• (1555)

Thank you very much, again, for this opportunity. I do look forward to receiving your questions and comments.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Layzell. Your timing was perfect. You were at five minutes on the nose. We appreciate that here.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to Ms. Orjikh for five minutes.

Ms. Ariane Orjikh (General Manager, Memphremagog Conservation Inc.): Good afternoon.

My name is Ariane Orjikh. I am a biologist and general manager of Memphrémagog Conservation Inc., also known by the acronym MCI, a non-profit organization whose mission, since 1967, has been to protect Lac Memphrémagog.

Lac Memphrémagog is the largest waterway in Estrie. It is the drinking water reservoir for more than 175,000 people, including the cities of Sherbrooke and Magog. Consequently, the quality of its water is a major public health issue for the region. The lake is 44 kilometres long and 75% of the lake lies in Canada, while the remaining 25% is located in Vermont. On the Canadian side, the

lake is surrounded by six municipalities and has more than 2,000 waterfront residences.

The lake is a major tourist attraction for swimming, fishing and recreational boating. In 2010, 4,137 permanent watercraft were recorded on the Canadian side alone. In 2021, 5,203 permanent watercraft were observed, an increase of 1,000, or 25%, in only 11 years. The types of watercraft that most increased in number were paddleboards and kayaks, as well as motorized jet skis and big wake boats, which are used in sports, such as wake surfing, that generate oversized waves. A 2021 survey of 643 Lac Memphrémagog users showed that waves that disturbed other users and threatened their safety were significant issues that could be explained by the increasing numbers of light watercraft that were forced to coexist with a growing number of boats generating oversized waves.

The environmental impact of oversized waves is well known and scientifically documented. A study by the Université du Québec à Montréal shows that sports that generate oversized waves at least 300 metres from shore cause shoreline erosion. A Université Laval study found that sports that are practised in water less than seven metres deep stir up bottom sediments. As a result, in certain areas of Lac Memphrémagog, waves from watercraft reduce water transparency, increase concentrations of nutrients and trigger harmful algal blooms, also called cyanobacteria, which can be harmful to human health. It should be noted that Lac Memphrémagog has experienced a serious proliferation of harmful algae in recent years, a problem that was the topic of a study conducted by the International Joint Commission in 2020.

We often cite the example of Lac Memphrémagog's Fitch Bay, a sector known for its aquatic bird gathering area, its spawning grounds for many fish species and the habitat of the bridle shiner, which has been designated an endangered species by the Canadian government. In addition, 17 of the total 100 or so properties are waterfront properties that have boats that generate high wakes. Fitch Bay is 3.1 metres deep with a maximum depth of only 5.8 metres. Water quality in the bay is a concern, harmful algae blooms are frequent and sports that generate oversized waves in the area cause significant problems.

Which is why, in 2016, the regional county municipality of Memphrémagog struck a committee to analyze the possibility of restricting certain boating practices in specific problem areas. Since one step in the procedure prescribed by Transport Canada was to attempt substitute solutions other than restriction, an awareness campaign was launched. Eight years later, recreational boat owners are still generating waves near the shorelines and in shallow areas. Awareness efforts require significant financial and human resources, rely on the goodwill of pleasure boat owners and must constantly be repeated for the benefit of new visitors.

Even in the event of a major environmental and safety issue, municipalities seeking to remedy the situation by regulation have no other choice but to follow a tedious and bureaucratic procedure prescribed by Transport Canada for each of their waterways. Since the environmental impact of oversized waves is well documented, Vermont has decided to regulate big wake boats on all its waterways. Consequently, to protect Canada's lakes, Memphrémagog Conservation Inc. believes it is essential that the federal government establish national standards for all of Canada's lakes based on scientific data and that it simplify the restriction application procedure that local administrations are required to follow.

Thank you.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Orjikh.

Ms. Crête, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Chantal Crête (Councillor, Municipalité de Lac-Simon): Thank you very much.

We are three representatives of the Municipalité de Lac-Simon, and we have asked the director of our urban planning service to represent us. So I'm going to turn the floor over to Benjamin Furtado.

Mr. Benjamin Furtado (Director, Urban Planning and Environment, Municipalité de Lac-Simon): Good afternoon.

Since I wasn't sure what form this was going to take, I'll just add on to what Ms. Orjikh has said, since we were all in agreement, but I'd like to begin with a little background.

The Municipalité de Lac Simon has many waterways, including three major bodies of water: Lac Viceroy, Lac Simon and Lac Barrière. We are a small municipality in the Outaouais region. We have a municipal public wharf, and the neighbouring municipality has a public wharf that is privately managed. Access to one of our waterways is limited to a private community, which, for the moment, somewhat limits the damage caused by the types of watercraft that Ms. Orjikh mentioned. One of those waterways is accessible via our main body, Lac Barrière. So these waterways are generally accessible through one another. We also have five shallow bays where passing watercraft may disturb sensitive species and stir up sediments.

Those are the challenges associated with our main waterways, but there are others, which I will discuss once I've provided this background.

The problems that we experience aren't solely due to pollution. They are also caused by human behaviour and certain types of

boats. We have pollution and garbage, mainly because some people throw their beverage containers into the water. Others go into those shallow bays and disembark from their boats in order to relieve themselves. It's difficult for a municipality to penalize such behaviour and legislate water-related issues because we have to act within our jurisdiction. Motorboats also stir up sediments in those bays, and that reduces water quality.

We also intended to tell you about the problems associated with wakeboarding and watercraft that cause erosion. We have managed to introduce a restriction, but it was a tedious process and took many years to implement. As Ms. Orjikh explained, it's a costly and painstaking process, but we nevertheless tried as hard as we could. We are enforcing the rule, but we can't go any further because our authority as a municipality is limited in that regard. Consequently, even though we limit motorboat speeds in the middle of the lake to 70 kilometres an hour, as Ms. Orjikh also mentioned, boats often stay within 300 metres of the shoreline and cause erosion because 70 kilometres an hour on water is still very fast.

So that's the situation. Our powers are limited by the fact that this is an area of federal jurisdiction, and that's the problem. The current federal boating regulations do not afford adequate protection for our waterways. In our humble opinion, they mainly protect user safety. They do not limit the number of boats. For example, there can be 500 boats at a single location. We can't limit that. It's very complicated. We also can't control the types of boats used. As you can see, wakeboarding is a new phenomenon, and we can't limit it in order to moderate the waves. We have no way of controlling it. I should also mention the red tape associated with the application procedure, which can regularly take between five and 10 years, from what I hear. It's very costly.

I should also mention the aircraft phenomenon. I've consulted other municipalities on this. It's also difficult to control what goes on in that area. You can control pollutants and invasive aquatic plants on boat hulls, but it's more complicated for people who have airplanes. There appears to be an administrative void in this regard where neither the provinces nor the municipalities may intervene.

• (1605)

Consequently, there is apparently a kind of gap in the responsibilities shared between federal and provincial governments regarding boating and the environment. I don't know if we can say there's an inconsistency, but it's difficult, in a municipal context, to make people respect both boating and the environment. When we manage to do so, it's as a result of long-standing efforts, after the damage has already been done to our lakes.

That's a fairly accurate summary of our situation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Furtado.

Committee members will now ask their questions.

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for this first day of this study.

I would like to direct some questions for Mr. Layzell from Boating Ontario.

You set out in your testimony some of the economic impact on the industry, including \$4.5 billion in Ontario and 520-plus members in your association. Of course, those are direct jobs and then there are indirect jobs, as we know, and \$4.6 billion in tax revenue across Canada. Of course, a point that you made very well was that recreational boating is an important economic driver and the lifeblood of many communities and parts of this country.

It's probably a three-part question. You didn't talk too much in your five minutes—which were very precise, as the chair pointed out—about the so-called luxury tax. We know the average boat owner is more middle class than luxury. There's also the impact of the carbon tax, which we saw go up 23% in April and is on its way to quadrupling. That's a bit of a double whammy to your industry from a tax policy perspective.

Maybe you can talk a bit about both of the taxes and then about the cumulative impact and what that's doing in terms of direct and indirect jobs and, as you mentioned previously, driving boats south of the border.

Mr. Rick Layzell: Excellent. Thank you very much for the question.

I guess I'll tackle this from two perspectives—the luxury tax and the carbon tax, as you outlined—and I'll touch briefly on the jobs impact.

We have been monitoring since the implementation of the luxury tax—or the family tax, as we call it, because \$250,000 does not buy a luxury yacht. It buys a small family cruiser or pontoon boat in our world now, for families' alternatives to cottages and what have you.

We've watched over a hundred jobs disappear from the industry already. I think one of the key impacts.... If I may, I'll reflect that the Parliamentary Budget Officer projected \$52 million in luxury tax receipts from the boating sector alone between September 1, 2022 and September 1, 2024. In June, the CRA reported that up to that point—21 months and one week—it had actually seen receipts of \$12 million. As we know now, the boats are not in inventory because the dealers and the industry have refused to bring the boats to Canada because the consumers have said they will not pay the tax, so it's not even possible that they collected any more than perhaps a couple of million dollars over that balance period.

There's a massive shortfall here in the PBO's projections of what the luxury tax would bring because the industry has said it's not going to bring the boats here because the consumers have said they are not paying this tax.

What we have seen as a result of the tax is an exodus of boat purchases into the United States. Many Canadian families, as we know, own homes in Florida and the southern U.S. The comments

they're making to the industry are that they'll simply buy a new boat in Florida and keep the boat there. They'll leave the old boat in Canada and let it traverse around Canadian waterways. Those new boats being bought—

• (1610)

Mr. Dan Muys: If I could, I'll interrupt there because I have a couple of minutes left and I want to delve into another area. I know some of my colleagues may have follow-up questions on that.

You indicated a number of different issues with Transport Canada that you're dealing with, such as the flares issue, the mandatory wear, vehicle registration data and invasive aquatic species.

I just wanted to give you a chance to maybe elaborate a bit more on each of those and what the pain points are that you're dealing with on those issues with Transport Canada.

Then maybe give a bit of a comparison as to how that would compare to five or 10 years ago in terms of this increasing regulatory burden and the relationship that you have with Transport Canada in actually providing input on these things.

Mr. Rick Layzell: Thank you for that question, as well.

Let's start with mandatory PFD wear. We have been at the table with Transport on this issue for several years now. I think the most challenging thing is that the survey that was released was bent toward guiding the respondent to support mandatory wear. The industry is fully prepared to support mandatory wear on human vessels for children under 12 while under way, on personal watercraft and for persons being towed. However, there are other circumstances where we do not support mandatory wear. That is a real change in how our conversations and dialogue with Transport have been going.

On the flare situation, it was utterly shocking to us when the recycling program for the power squadron was pulled back. We have seen it. I know there's another meeting later this week with John Gullick from CPS. He's going to speak about the number of flares that are piling up across the industry.

The data comment is one that has been around for a long time, MP Muys. The data is with Transport. It would help us enormously to grow this sector—in which so many Canadian families are engaged—if we could find a way to get that data. We don't want the consumer data, to be clear. What we want is the product data to help us grow this industry.

Mr. Dan Muys: There have been a lot of frustrations in your dealings with Transport Canada over the last couple of years.

Mr. Rick Layzell: Yes, tremendous....

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Muys.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses who are here today to discuss an issue that I consider particularly important. There are 41 municipalities and hundreds of lakes in the riding I represent. By the way, three witnesses from my riding are here today, and I would like to thank them for that. They are Lac-Simon councillors Chantal Crête and Jocelyn Martel, and Benjamin Furtado, director of urban planning and environment.

Mr. Furtado, in your presentation, you mentioned reserve zones and speed limits in the middle of lakes. Would you please tell us more about the restrictions you're allowed to set under the statutes established by the Department of Transport respecting speed limits along shorelines and docking?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: I'm not sure I understand your question. The restrictions you just mentioned are the ones we were able to come up with at least 10 years or so ago. If I'm not mistaken, you can travel at 25 kilometres an hour in a 70 kilometre-an-hour zone starting from the shore and at 70 kilometres an hour in the middle of the lake. But that can cause—

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I'm referring more to the 25 kilometres an hour. How did you establish speed monitoring measures? You set up signs indicating the permitted limit. How do you approach offenders, those who go too fast and who may damage shorelines?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: We hired a private security firm to monitor our lakes in the summer season, especially during peak periods. It's a service that the municipality pays for. Although the Sûreté du Québec offers the same service, as you can understand, it can't be in all places in Quebec at once. So we hired that firm to monitor our lakes pursuant to the authority we have regarding boating speed limits.

• (1615)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Ms. Crête, I have a slightly more political question for you. Complaints have come in from everywhere, from residents and others. The municipality has conducted environmental studies on water protection and invasive species. In your experience at the municipality, have you noticed any changes in that area in the past few years?

Ms. Chantal Crête: Thank you for your question.

Traffic on the lake has changed in recent years. We have a lot more boats, and the types of boats that are used on the lake have also evolved. For many years now, we've seen more big wake and wake surf boats. We're also seeing more paddle boards. Consequently, we're experiencing conflicting uses.

We have children playing with pedal boats near the shore, and paddleboarding and kayaking. However, big wake boats and wake

surfers further out generate big waves, and we've had many complaints about that. Local residents tell us that, as a result of the big waves, they don't want to let their children swim along the beach because the situation is becoming dangerous and a problem. Then there are the issues that can be caused by shoreline erosion and oversized waves. We also receive a lot of complaints about broken equipment from people who tell us that, as a result of big waves, their boats wind up high and dry on the dock or else bump against it, thus damaging their hulls.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Ms. Crête.

Ms. Orjikh, I imagine that all the aspects of Ms. Crête's testimony generally apply to your area. Is that the case, or are there any differences that you can describe to the committee?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: It's very similar. We conducted a watercraft inventory; we counted and classified them. The lakeside municipalities ordered it, and the situation is exactly the same. We observed an increase in the number of small paddleboards and kayak-type craft. There has also been an increase in the number of big-wake-type craft and jet skis.

As I said earlier, we conducted a survey of more than 600 lake users and we noticed that there really is a problem with waves that inconvenience other users and that there are safety concerns. Thirty per cent of respondents said they had been afraid for their safety while boating on the lake as a result of other users. So the situations are very similar, and this is a problem that increased with the pandemic.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Among the specific measures that you discussed, you mentioned changing and improving current national standards. We heard Ms. Crête say that measures have been taken and that they have now helped make certain changes. Exactly what national standards do you think should be changed?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: I cited two studies. One that was done by the Université du Québec à Montréal shows how waves cause erosion when people engage in sports that generate oversized waves less than 300 metres from shore. We should rely on that type of study to establish standards. That's what the State of Vermont has done. It has established standards based on studies conducted in Quebec. They are standards based on sports that generate oversized waves. We need to ensure that those sports are engaged in far from shore in deeper areas.

The maximum depth in our area, in Lac Memphrémagog, is 107 metres. So there are obviously areas where those sports really cause less damage. Engaging in that kind of sport in the middle of a large body of water such as ours is therefore not a problem, but doing so in shallow bays increases the risk.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Mr. Barsalou-Duval, for six minutes.

• (1620)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks as well to the witnesses who are with us today. This is an important study for me.

I heard some witnesses complain about the time it takes to implement regulations in their municipality, whether it be Lac-Simon or Lac Memphrémagog. At home in my riding, we started working on regulations in 2017 and they were ultimately implemented this year. It took seven years to establish regulations in response to applications from the municipalities.

Ms. Orjikh, do you think it's normal for the process to take that long?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: Of course not. We have tens of thousands of lakes in Canada. If we have to go through this process every time we want to regulate practices on our lakes more effectively, it will be endless. We think national regulation would be more practical because it would mean that everyone, in their various municipalities, wouldn't have to go through the same process for their waterways.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: So you think there should be a kind of broadly applicable basic national framework. Currently, if a city or municipality doesn't apply for regulations, then there are simply no regulations. That's anarchy, the wild west. Failing an application from a municipality, there are no rules.

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: Exactly.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: In addition to the current types of applications, are there any applications that you would like to be able to make for tools that might be useful in certain regions?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: That would be for tools that would help facilitate the process. The idea is for the municipalities to simplify the regulation process. The tool exists, but it's ill suited. You have to go through a highly bureaucratic and tedious procedure involving public consultations, in particular.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Perhaps I wasn't clear in asking my question.

Representatives from various cities have told me they would have liked to ban anchoring in certain areas. However, in the appendices to the tools that they may use, the ban on anchoring didn't seem to be one of the items that the cities could request.

Some have told us that the problem isn't boat speeds in certain places, if they're necessary, but rather the waves generated by boats proceeding at that speed. However, we can regulate speed but not waves. Do you think that kind of situation makes sense? Have you experienced similar situations at the local level?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: It's definitely difficult to measure a wave. I think it's preferable, for example, to regulate practices such as sports that generate oversized waves or speed. So I think we have to rely on scientific studies in order to regulate based on existing information.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Should cities have to endure a long regulatory process in which they're somewhat coddled because they have to meet a burden of proof, or should elected municipal

representatives instead be trusted to present the application and make decisions?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: As I previously said, I think that standards based on scientific data could be applied everywhere without the municipalities even having to follow a procedure.

However, there are always cases specific to certain localities that have nothing to do with depth or distance from the shore. I'm thinking, for example, of the presence of an aquatic plant community. I really think the municipalities have to be trusted in such cases. In the case of an aquatic plant community, the evidence that the municipalities must provide doesn't have to be as strong as what Transport Canada asks of them. For example, the plant community in Fitch Bay is surrounded by wetlands. However, there are plant communities everywhere. Furthermore, the studies show that stirring up sediments in shallow areas damages the waterway. Consequently, the Fitch Bay study doesn't have to be redone, but Transport Canada requests evidence that boats are causing problems in that particular area of the bay.

So the procedure that the municipalities have to follow is too much.

• (1625)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. Sometimes, you feel you almost need a Ph.D. to implement regulations in a small municipality, when the municipalities wind up doing all the work and Transport Canada leaves them to their own devices.

Since I have some time left, I'd like to ask the representatives of the Municipalité de Lac-Simon a question.

You've managed to implement restrictions. Some municipalities told me they were somewhat surprised because, after filing their application, they realized they were the ones who had to bear the costs of all facilities, buoys, publication of the regulations, awareness campaigns and so on. They also had to pay the people who were recruited to enforce the regulations.

Would it have been practical for you to have financial support in dealing with these kinds of significant expenses?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: I'm sorry, but I wasn't working for the municipality at the time. However, our municipal councillors told us that financial support would have been welcome.

Today, if we filed a new application for restrictions, we would hope to receive support because, as you can see, this is no easy task. We also don't know if there have been any new procedures since that time because that procedure was used roughly 15 years ago and things may have changed since then.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Furtado and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

The floor is yours, sir. You have six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for being here for this study.

I'll start with some questions for Ms. Orjikh.

You mentioned in your report the recommendation around potentially measuring the pleasure boat support capacity of Lake Memphremagog. I'm interested in this idea of the carrying capacity of the lake to support pleasure boats. How would you go about measuring that sort of thing or estimating the capacity of the lake for boat traffic?

[Translation]

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: That's a good question. Many studies have been done to measure the carrying capacity of a body of water. For example, since the number of boats on Lac Memphremagog has increased 25%, can that percentage increase indefinitely? Could there one day be a limit on the number of watercraft, or even a limit by type of watercraft? If, one day, we get to 5,000 big wake boats, that will be too many.

Scientists in Europe and the United States have examined this. We're proud to have found a master's student who will look into it next year and review all existing studies on the carrying capacity of a body of water as it pertains to boating. I've also read up on this. There may be a surface area by type of watercraft. For example, if it takes so many square kilometres per given type of watercraft, that will yield the threshold number of watercraft for a body of water.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you for that.

I think built into this idea of "carrying capacity" is the idea that the impact on the environment is relative to the number of boats. I represent a huge rural riding with many lakes. On most of those lakes, you could be in your boat for hours and hours, if not days, and never see another boat. On the idea of national standards, I wonder if it could somehow accommodate the fact that Canada is very diverse and that there are huge regions of our country where there's never going to be the density of recreational boating traffic to necessitate regulations like the ones that are being contemplated.

How would you establish national standards that accommodate those different contexts in our country?

[Translation]

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: Actually, on any waterway, if a boat passes within 300 metres of the shore and generates oversized waves, it will always cause erosion. As Vermont has done, I believe it would be much easier to establish national science-based standards than to ask every municipality to implement regulations and provide evidence for each of its waterways.

In fact, the Municipalité de Nominique took seven years to regulate one of its waterways. It has practically 100 within its boundaries. It took seven years to regulate a single waterway. Some standards may be applied, perhaps not for the boat limit because that obviously depends on the body of water, but for the distance from the shore. For example, for sports generating oversized waves or maximum speed at a certain distance from the shore, that distance would ultimately be the same in any body of water.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: If such standards were put in place, which level of government would be responsible for enforcing those standards and paying for the enforcement of those standards?

[Translation]

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: That's a very good question.

Memphremagog Conservation Inc. is a non-profit organization that doesn't report to any level of government, be it municipal, provincial or federal. In the case of Vermont, it was the state itself that decided to get involved. Is that the best way to go about it? That's a great question.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The reason I asked the question was that I was thinking about my constituents and about the Canadian context and the fact that lakes near highly populated areas often have a lot of recreational boating traffic and pressure; therefore, there are environmental impacts, as you've mentioned. There are many lakes in many areas of Canada that have less impact and less pressure, and they have very little federal government presence.

If the federal government were charged with enforcing national standards, then that effort would predominantly take place in highly populated areas, in cottage country or in places with a lot of recreational boat traffic. The question would then be this: How do you allocate the costs of enforcement so that they're fair to all Canadians?

Of course, if Transport Canada is doing that enforcement, which is paid for by all Canadian citizens who pay taxes, then it's going to be challenging to build that fairness and equity. That's just an editorial comment on my part.

The last question I have for Ms. Orjikh is about whether she sees a role for the provinces in this regulatory process, or whether municipalities and the federal government are the two jurisdictions that should really be preoccupied with this challenge that she has laid out.

[Translation]

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: Another great question.

Could the Government of Quebec do the same thing? Municipalities are finding the process far too difficult. That's the challenge right now.

I would like to ask the people from the Municipalité de Lac-Simon to answer that question. Would they prefer that the provincial government have jurisdiction in this area? If the process were simplified for municipalities and they could easily refer to clear scientific standards, they might prefer to enforce the rules themselves.

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Bachrach's time is up. You'll be able to say more in the next round of questions.

[English]

Mr. Vis, you have five minutes. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions today will be directed towards Mr. Layzell.

At the end of your previous comments, you mentioned that the PBO reports on the luxury tax were severely short in terms of the total impact it had on the sector. You outlined that this was because Canadian consumers were not purchasing boats in United States, but were going south of the border to spend significant money on new products. Is that correct?

Mr. Rick Layzell: There's one minor adjustment. Canadian consumers are purchasing boats in the United States. They are not purchasing the boats in the luxury tax regime threshold in Canada.

Mr. Brad Vis: One of my big concerns about this tax on recreational boats is that the workers who make a living servicing the boats, doing repairs and general maintenance, might not see new business because those purchases are not being made in Canada. Do you share that concern as well?

• (1635)

Mr. Rick Layzell: Gravely... We share that concern about the people who haul boats, clean boats, do prepurchase prep work, winterize boats and store boats, yes. Those are the blue-collar jobs we know have already been lost in this sector.

Mr. Brad Vis: Do you have any idea how many jobs have been lost since this tax was implemented?

Mr. Rick Layzell: We had a survey running in the first 12 months of the tax's implementation. At that time, we were showing over 100. We have not had a current survey in 2024. Certainly it has expanded since then.

Mr. Brad Vis: Is that in Ontario or nationally?

Mr. Rick Layzell: It's across the country, representative of about 200 companies that had reported.

Mr. Brad Vis: I noticed that the tax does exempt certain types of vessels, namely for commercial fishing. What I'm concerned about—and I come from an area of the country where lots of people come from around the world to go fishing—is that it doesn't exempt boats used for tourism. In my community, that would be indigenous tourism. Has this had an impact on tourism in Ontario and the type of equipment that tourism operators and small business owners are using?

Mr. Rick Layzell: It certainly has affected the type of equipment, because what's happening is that the operators are simply not updating the vessels that are on our waterways because of the tax; so, from a type of equipment perspective, yes.

Mr. Brad Vis: I'm just going to turn to the carbon tax for a minute.

How many boat manufacturers are there in Canada?

Mr. Rick Layzell: I wouldn't have the exact number. It wouldn't be over 15 in the large scale. We have Princecraft in Quebec, Stan-

ley Boats in Ontario, Westwinn in British Columbia, and a number on Vancouver Island. It wouldn't be 20.

Mr. Brad Vis: There are only a small number of manufacturers in the country building recreational vessels that would be subject to this tax. Is that correct?

Mr. Rick Layzell: That's correct. We estimate that 96% of the boats that come into Canada come from the U.S.

Mr. Brad Vis: Why in the world do you believe the government thought it was a good idea to put this tax on Canadian workers and businesses when there is such a small manufacturing base in the country already?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're going to stop the time there. You have one minute and 20 seconds left.

Go ahead, Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair, about the relevance of this line of questioning, given that the study we're doing today has nothing to do with the luxury tax.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Come on, guys. We're talking about boating. The tax applies to boating. This could not be more relevant. This is ridiculous.

Could we please get on with the questioning?

The Chair: I'm going to let you continue with your line of questioning, Mr. Vis.

Mr. Brad Vis: Before that, I'd like to respond to the point of order raised by Ms. Koutrakis.

Actually, under the government—

The Chair: Mr. Vis, that is not a point of order. She had her point of order. I ruled. The floor is yours. You have a minute and 20 seconds left.

Mr. Brad Vis: Okay.

Well, in response to that question, why in the world would this government impose such a punitive tax on such a small number of boat manufacturers in Canada?

Mr. Rick Layzell: I wish I could truly answer that question.

What I can tell you is that the industry travelled to Ottawa repeatedly to represent and explain what the projections and forecasts were. Sadly, our forecasts are coming true. Ottawa chose not to listen.

Mr. Brad Vis: That's shameful.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Vis.

Next, we'll go to Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Iacono, the floor is yours, sir. You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

Ms. Crête, Mr. Martel and Mr. Furtado, how does the Municipalité de Lac-Simon educate boaters about protecting the environment? What do you use as reference material and what university studies in particular? Can you please provide this information?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: In terms of awareness, we have a by-law, but we also have information brochures, an info letter and an Internet page, which is easy to find and well set-out. We give brochures to users who arrive at the dock to use the ramp, so that they have all the information they need and are aware of all applicable bylaws.

Even though we don't really have the right to prohibit water sports, we at least propose areas where they can be practised. As I mentioned earlier, we also hired a private security firm to conduct water patrols. The patrols serve to raise awareness and enforce the few bylaws that the municipality is able to enforce. I think the municipality is very proactive on this issue.

We refer to a provincial policy on environmental protection, especially when it comes to shoreline erosion. I'm sure we can find studies on water quality.

• (1640)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: You have mentioned quite a few good measures which are having various impacts. Could you table documents with the committee about what you just explained to us?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: Are you talking about the work we do to raise awareness?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes.

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: Yes, I could send you some documentation on that.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Apart from hiring a security firm, what other steps have you taken to ensure bylaw compliance?

What has proven to be the most impactful?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: Do you want to know which bylaw is broken the most often?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Earlier, your colleagues talked about activities and behaviours on the waters of Lake Simon that violate your bylaws. What process does the municipality follow in cases of bylaw violations?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: We usually proceed by identifying the boaters, particularly with the help of the stickers they we issue for boats. Then, depending on what has taken place, we issue a ticket.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: What is the negative impact of these bylaw violations? What exactly are the impacts? How do they harm the environment?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: As we explained earlier, we are seeing shoreline erosion and sediment suspension in the water. As I also stated, we have to deal with certain behaviours, i.e., when people anchor in shallow bays, have a drink and then do their business in the water.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I have one last question for you: As my Conservative colleagues tried to infer earlier, does the gas tax or carbon tax have any impact on bylaws?

Mr. Benjamin Furtado: Not at all.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you now have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So far, we've talked about municipalities or other entities regulating navigation on lakes.

I would like the representatives of the Municipalité de Lac-Simon and Memphremagog Conservation Inc. to explain the requirements for obtaining a boating licence. If someone wants to get their licence to operate a boat, what do they have to do? Do you think the licence requirements are sufficiently stringent right now?

Ms. Ariane Orjikh: You have to take an online test to get your licence, but I don't think you can really fail it. Every year we have young patrollers, and we've never seen anyone fail that online test. That said, the test could include questions on the environment of the lakes. Currently, there is nothing in the test about the fact that you have to stay away from the shorelines to prevent erosion. This could be an opportunity to make boaters aware of the impact they have on the environment. That's the comment I wanted to make.

Boaters on Lake Memphremagog must have a sticker that proves they are local residents. If you don't have that sticker, you have to wash your boat before sailing on the lake, in order to avoid spreading exotic invasive species. However, a resident who has his sticker can navigate the St. Lawrence River, Lake Champlain or anywhere else and come back to Lake Memphremagog without having to wash his boat again. I should point out that the sticker is valid for the entire season.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, floor is yours. You have two and a half minutes, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask a question of Mr. Layzell about PFD regulations. I don't come at this from any particular angle other than being curious about what the data already says.

I'm sure he's familiar with some of the data around recreational boating accidents, and I wonder what his recommendations would be, based on what he knows about who drowns in recreational boating accidents. Should it be based on the size of the craft? Should it be based on propulsion? What is the recommendation thus far? I know you're recommending a fairly lengthy survey based on law enforcement, but I know there is data out there. What can the data tell us?

Mr. Rick Layzell: The data as it exists today is inconclusive, specifically when it comes to the length of the vessels involved in the incidents. That is what we have communicated with Transport Canada and our partners around the table. We desire to have the facts of the size of the boats that are causing the problem.

One of the concerns that we've seen is that, typically, when the data is presented, there's a breakout of canoes and kayaks, but then every single powerboat that's involved in an incident across Canada is lumped together. That's where we've come out collectively, in saying that we support mandatory wear for human-powered vessels, because if you pull the canoes and the kayaks together, the incidence with those is, quite frankly, higher than it is with powerboats.

What we want are meaningful solutions that still allow Canadians to go boating and enjoy the sport while being properly protected. We feel that a proper, comprehensive survey.... Right now we have the OPP who have said that they want six metres and down. We want a comprehensive survey that truly collects the data across Canada from the RCMP, the Coast Guard, Sûreté du Québec, OPP, Toronto Police and what have you, and that properly tracks the size of the boats involved in the incidents. Then, we can make evidence-based decisions.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks, Mr. Layzell.

I'm not sure if you're familiar with the study from the Drowning Prevention Research Centre done in collaboration with Transport Canada. It goes from 2008 to 2017. It compiles all of the recreational boating-related deaths by boat type. It breaks it down in terms of boats over five metres and under five metres. I just wonder if five metres is a logical cut-off or a logical threshold for analyzing data.

You work with a lot of boats. Is that a common threshold for defining small and large powerboats?

Mr. Rick Layzell: It depends on who you talk to. For many, five metres is very much a small boat. For others, a boat under 30 feet is a small boat.

I am somewhat familiar with that study. We have challenges with some of the data as collected and presented in that. That's why we have made the request for a more comprehensive survey from law enforcement.

To answer your question, again, five metres is a number that's out there. What we feel should be happening is that it's the actual size of the boats involved, not just a threshold. There's a difference between a 12-foot boat and a 16-foot boat. That's what we're talking about here. With five metres, it's basically 16 feet. There's a big, big difference between a 12-footer and a 16-footer. We're looking to secure that data.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach and Mr. Layzell.

As a watercraft operator myself, I too dream of summer that lasts forever.

Voices: Oh, oh!

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I want to thank today's first group of witnesses for their time and input.

[*English*]

Colleagues, I'll suspend for a few minutes before we welcome the next round of witnesses.

• (1650)

(Pause)

• (1655)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

We will begin with opening remarks from our next round of witnesses.

From the National Marine Manufacturers Association of Canada, we have Marie-France MacKinnon, executive director, by video conference.

[*Translation*]

Sonia Daoust, executive director of the Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska, will be testifying via video conference.

[*English*]

From Port Rowan Harbour Committee, we have Ron Bankes, by video conference.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Daoust, you will go first as you are not able to stay with us until 5:15 p.m. You have five minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Sonia Daoust (General Manager, Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska): Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone.

L'Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska was commissioned by the Yamaska committee, comprised of mayors from Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay's riding, to conduct a review of literature on the effects of wake boats and the speed of motor boats on shoreline erosion and sediment suspension in certain sections of the Yamaska River. Today, I will present the conclusions of our review that can also be applied elsewhere.

There are a few concepts to define, including eutrophication, i.e., the aging of waterways. Waterways age like humans, but they are increasingly doing so at a much faster rate. That is what is worrisome.

Next, I would like to talk about the movement and effect of waves, known as wake. When watercraft produce waves, each wave is charged with kinetic turbulence energy, and therein lies the problem. The faster a wave breaks on the shore, the more energy it discharges, not in the water, but on the shore.

Wake sports boats are designed to produce large waves of a particular shape using their ballast system. This technology is used for certain water sports such as wake boarding and wake surfing, which other witnesses have talked about.

To assess the effect of waves generated by boats, including wake boats, you have to be able to show that there is a difference between the energy of a wave resulting from wind and natural processes and that of waves produced by boats. If wave energy received on the shoreline is higher when produced by boats than in so-called natural waves, it is reasonable to believe that shorelines and riverbeds will have more damage from waves generated by boats. Then, of course, you have to show that this difference in energy will have a marked effect on erosion and sediment disturbance.

Generally speaking, boats passing at normal speed contribute little to wave energy compared to wind. On the other hand, waves generated by wake sports boats have a bigger impact on the shore. These boats generate waves that transfer more energy to the shore than wind, paddle boats, flat-bottom boats, trolling engines or high-speed boats. We're talking about four to twelve times more energy, depending on the studies we reviewed. It is therefore reasonable to say that the regular passage of boats that create big wakes accelerates shoreline erosion.

Some of those same studies also indicate a positive correlation between turbidity and suspended phosphorus. This shows that increasing wave energy generated by boats can lead to greater phosphorus concentration in water through the disturbance of various bottom sediments and the release of nutrients, which will obviously accelerate eutrophication.

Added to this is navigation speed, which is known to influence shoreline degradation. You've heard it before. Studies show a significant reduction in shoreline erosion when boats travel at low speeds, i.e., 10 kilometres an hour.

As part of our study, we also identified other impacts on ecosystems related to the passage of wake sports boats. First, there is the increased risk of invasion by alien species of the body of water. You've heard how important it is to clean boats. With the ballast system, you have to clean the inside of the boat, not just the outside, or you can run into problems. Then there is the disruption and degradation of aquatic grass beds and wildlife habitats through turbulence, as well as the disruption of bird nesting caused by noise and wave impact.

As a result, wake sports boats shouldn't get close to the shore. The distance between them and the shore, according to the studies we consulted, varies between 90 and 190 metres. Since many parts of the Yamaska, like other areas and bodies of water, aren't wide enough to provide that kind of a buffer zone, our recommendation is to prohibit this type of boat, and therefore the practice of activi-

ties such as wake boarding and surfing, and to limit the speed of boat traffic to 10 kilometres an hour.

• (1700)

We believe that with the knowledge we've gained and will gain in the future, we can provide a better framework for aquatic activities and a better way to share our waterways.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Daoust. You were right on the mark at five minutes. Well done.

I now give the floor to Marie-France MacKinnon for five minutes.

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon (Executive Director, National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the committee for the invitation.

[English]

My name is Marie-France MacKinnon. I'm the executive director of the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada.

As the leading association representing the recreational boating industry in our country, we have over 80 member companies, including renowned boat and engine manufacturers, marine accessories providers and service organizations.

The recreational boating industry is a vital component of our Canadian economy, providing over 80,000 jobs across Canada, particularly in rural areas, where these jobs can be a lifeline for local economies.

[Translation]

Our industry contributes over \$9.2 billion to Canada's gross domestic product and generates \$4.6 billion in tax revenues for municipal, provincial and federal governments.

[English]

However, this economic success is based on one fundamental principle: the right of Canadians to access their waterways.

[Translation]

The National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada advocates for a consultative process that actively involve national, regional and local recreational boating organizations. This participation is essential to ensure that the voices of recreational boaters are heard and taken into account when regulations are proposed.

[English]

We believe it's vital to prevent unnecessary regulation under the VORRs, and to seek non-regulatory, consensus-building solutions to local issues. We cannot have a situation that creates barriers to accessing our lakes, beautiful rivers and coastal areas, which all Canadians have the right to access. Regarding the upcoming regulatory changes outlined in the Canada Gazette, we're asking for a formal consultation process when local authorities request navigation restrictions on any of its waterways. We firmly believe we can find practical, non-regulatory solutions to local issues by working together—government, industry, local communities and recreational boaters. It's through collaboration and community consensus that we can enhance safety and enjoyment on all of our waterways, without a patchwork of needless red tape and restrictions.

We also need critical investment to modernize Canada's outdoor infrastructure in order to make recreational boating more accessible. Upgrading our aging marinas, boat ramps and public access points is essential for enhancing safety, promoting outdoor recreation and stimulating tourism.

[Translation]

These improvements provide a better experience for boaters, foster community and environmental management, and inspire a lasting appreciation of our natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

- (1705)

[English]

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to address a critical issue impacting our industry, the luxury tax, which you've heard about. This tax has severely affected the Canadian boating industry, leading to a crucial decline in sales of recreational boats over \$250,000. Let's be clear. This downturn threatens jobs, the livelihoods within the sector and the hard-working Canadians who are proudly building Canadian products.

[Translation]

The Select Luxury Items Tax Act must be amended so that recreational boats are no longer subject to this unfair tax.

[English]

The repercussions of this tax extend beyond lost sales figures. They also lead to a loss of associated tax revenues for the government. CRA data from September 2022 to June 2024 show a total collection of \$12 million. That's \$40 million short of the PBO's own projection. As a result, people are buying boats in the U.S., not here in Canada. We're also losing critical tourism dollars, especially in B.C., Ontario and Quebec. This isn't a tax on luxury boats and Canada's richest. It's a tax on the middle class and on Canadian jobs that depend on this sector. It's a tax on small businesses, rural communities and local economies across this country.

[Translation]

Thank you for the invitation. We want to work together to ensure that all Canadians can access our waterways and create memories with their families on our beautiful bodies of water. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. MacKinnon.

[English]

Mr. Bankes, the floor is yours. You have five minutes for your opening remarks, sir.

Mr. Ron Bankes (Port Rowan Harbour Committee): Thank you.

My name is Ron Bankes. I live in Port Rowan, Ontario, and I've operated my business here in Port Rowan for 37 years. While operating my boat building and restoration business, I was a frequent user of the Port Rowan Harbour Marina.

Today, I'm representing the Port Rowan Harbour Committee. It's a volunteer committee, and our purpose is to work with Norfolk County to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Port Rowan Harbour Marina as a public resource that is accessible, sustainable and beautiful for the enjoyment and well-being of the community and visitors alike.

This is a very unique waterfront property in Norfolk that offers full public access while still maintaining the commercial and cultural aspects of its operations as it has for many generations. The park area of the harbour is used by the public to host a three-day Bayfest celebration, farmers markets in the fall every Friday afternoon, prayer services on Sunday mornings from May through September and the occasional concert in the park.

Norfolk County has a detailed report outlining items they feel need to be accomplished to maintain the operation of the harbour over the upcoming years. Most important is dredging of the harbour so boaters will have safe access to the marina. Improving the launch ramp and improving transient dockage would attract more boaters to the harbour, and we recognize the importance of the harbour marina facility to Port Rowan and all of Norfolk County.

In short, there is no shortage of interest, suggestions or willingness from volunteer groups such as the Lions Club and others to accomplish these goals; there is only a lack of funding for infrastructure projects.

We support Norfolk in all aspects of fundraising and offer whatever assistance this committee can while developing the policies that will ensure public ownership and access while maintaining the safe operation of this valuable resource for many generations to come.

Basically, I am just speaking about the Port Rowan Harbour and a little bit of its history.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bankes.

We'll begin our line of questioning today with Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours. You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions today will be for Ms. MacKinnon.

Ms. MacKinnon, I want to talk to you a little bit about what has happened over the last nine years and the impact that has had on your industry. Over these last nine years, we've seen an exponential increase in red tape. We've seen an exponential increase in taxation. Specifically, I'm talking about the carbon tax, which, of course, will increase the cost of fuel, which is a major cost if you own a recreational boat. We've also seen, of course, as you mentioned, the luxury tax.

Your industry is responsible for thousands of jobs. Recreational boating represents billions of dollars to our economy. Could you talk to us a little bit about how the carbon tax, the luxury tax and the increase in red tape have affected your industry?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: The luxury tax is a prime example. It's not a tax just on boats; it's a tax on the jobs that we're seeing across the country. What seems to get lost in a lot of this is the broader impact above and beyond recreational boats. It's not just about our sector; think about a marina and everything that goes around that with the tourism of people who come to boat in specific areas. The tourism impact is huge.

Mr. Layzell earlier talked about the jobs lost, but that's specific to our industry. When you think about local restaurants, marinas, shops and everything that's related, all of these taxes compiled together are a huge burden on our companies.

We have only a handful of manufacturers left in our country because it makes a lot more sense sometimes for manufacturers to go south of the border. It's the same way that now boat owners are looking to buy south of the border because of the tax burden in Canada.

The burden of all these added costs on our businesses and manufacturers who are here trying to export boats to other markets is huge. With the extra tax on recreational boat owners, if you own a boat, it's one thing to have a carbon tax and to have the luxury tax, but there are some areas where it costs you \$350 to put your boat in the water for a day to take your kid fishing. That's unreasonable. Canadians should have access to all waterways without there seeming to be privatization of specific areas.

All of these taxes are a burden, and it's taking a toll on manufacturers and businesses that are trying to grow their businesses here in Canada.

• (1710)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you, Ms. MacKinnon.

I'll just break that down on a couple of issues that you raised.

First, I'll start off with the carbon tax. The quadrupling of the carbon tax would substantially increase the cost of fuel that would be used by boat owners. I would point out that 60% of boat owners actually earn less than \$100,000. This is not the ultra-wealthy; this is the middle class.

Would the quadrupling of the carbon tax hurt or help your industry?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: It would hurt the industry. Any extra tax is hurting the industry.

When you think about owning a boat, like you said, most boat owners are not yacht owners. These are middle-class Canadians who just have a boat and take their kid fishing or take their pontoon on the water with their family on the weekend.

With the gas and everything that is added onto Canadians right now, to be out there enjoying our beautiful lake and rivers is getting hard for Canadians. We're seeing it in declined sales. We had great sales during the pandemic when our industry saved a lot of Canadians because that was the number one thing you could do to get out there and enjoy it.

All of these burdens of extra taxes now, with the carbon tax and luxury tax, are taking a toll on our sector. A lot of jobs are at stake. A lot of Canadian manufacturers and small businesses are impacted.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: We heard from both viewpoints with respect to the carbon tax and the luxury tax—that it applies to Canadians and the Canadian industry. It will affect the middle class—the workers who are out in the factories building these boats. It will affect, like you said, the mom and dad who want to take their daughter or son fishing.

Now, those folks who have yachts have an ability to get away with this because they could go to the United States.

If they bought a boat in the United States, would they have to pay the Canadian luxury tax or Canadian carbon tax?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: They just leave their boats out in the U.S. It's way easier. If you're going to buy a yacht or a boat over \$250,000 and decide to buy it in Florida, for the amount of money you're saving on the luxury tax, you can fly to Florida a lot of times or drive down. Decisions are being made.

What's also being lost here, when I talked about tourism.... I was talking to a dealer in Quebec who said he used to do 70% of his sales in Quebec and 30% across the border. He is now 70% across the border and 30% in Quebec.

What does that do? That's allowing Canadians or Quebecers to cross the border and discover other beautiful areas in northern states that are available for boating. We're losing out on that tourism aspect.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: This is a tax that hurts Canadian families and that particularly affects Quebecers.

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lawrence.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Mr Lauzon, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. MacKinnon, I'm interested in the numbers you mentioned. You say, for example, that people are encouraged to go and buy a boat in Florida. When a buyer goes to Florida to pick up their boat at a cost of \$250,000, they have to pay a 10% luxury tax, or \$25,000. You say that it makes more sense to go to the United States to buy it. However, when you cross the border to enter Canada, you have to pay customs duties on the exact value of the boat purchased in Florida. Do your figures take into account the fact that the tax would have to be repaid in another way before the vessel can be brought to Canada?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: I would say that people who buy boats in Florida leave them there. It's not just that they're buying a boat and bringing it back to Canada. The problem is that they just decide to leave the boat in the United States, because it makes more sense for them to leave it there than bring it to Canada and have to pay the taxes.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Ms. MacKinnon, we have Canadian boaters on the rivers. In my riding, there are some who travel on the Ottawa River. You can find \$400,000 or \$500,000 boats moored at the Fairmont Le Château Montebello. These people don't leave their boats in Florida to avoid \$25,000 in taxes. It doesn't make sense. My riding, Argenteuil-La Petite-Nation, has 41 municipalities and, in each of them, there are boat owners. That's all I have to say on that topic.

Ms. Daoust, I would like to know how your organization is working with the municipalities. I assume, because I'm not too familiar with your region, that there are a number of municipalities located in the Yamaska watershed. How do you work with them? How do you work with municipalities as an organization and provide information?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: It's actually a little more complex. I'll have to explain our funding model.

We are funded in part by the Government of Quebec to conduct round tables. Using the round tables, we develop a water master plan. Our mandate is to get the various water stakeholders in the region working towards the sustainable management of our wonderful water resource.

On top of this, we receive requests, particularly from the Yamaska committee. We receive grants that enable us to work on one project at a time. We don't work for free and we don't offer pro bono services, unfortunately. When we work with clients, they have to pay for our services.

We enjoy an excellent working relationship with the municipalities, as well as with the region's county municipalities across the region. We can play an advisory role. We can also play a coordinating role and we can work on various projects and studies, including urban characterization projects. We can also offer our expertise when this service is required.

Obviously, we would like to expand our mandate. I know this is not part of your remit, but we would like our mandate to be broadened so as to collaborate more extensively on everything to do with waterways and the environment.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: For your information, and I say it for the benefit of this committee as well, federal funding has been provided to improve the health of Lake Massawippi. A crisis management committee was created to assess the environmental effects on the lake. This funding comes from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Massawippi Regional Park Authority. These stakeholders have been doing fantastic work together since 2021.

I would like to go back to one point. I want to talk about boats that produce large waves. You used a term that was new to me. When you were talking about these boats, you mentioned wake boats as well as high-speed boats.

A number of witnesses and yourself have spoken at length about the height of waves that have an environmental impact on the shorelines. However, you have not said much about climate change that is responsible for the excessive temperatures or winds we have today that we did not have before, and their effect on waves.

Do you take climate change into consideration in your studies?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: It's important to distinguish between wake boats and high-speed boats.

We reviewed all the literature on wake boats and high-speed boats. For high-speed boats, we didn't find any studies showing an impact. We also just reviewed the published literature, without conducting any study or analysis. I'm giving you the findings of other people's studies.

That's why, unfortunately, I can't—

• (1720)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Did you take climate change into account in the findings of your studies and in your review?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: I couldn't tell you. I was told that the authors of some of the referenced studies would be invited as witnesses. Unfortunately, I must stick to my response. I can't answer that question, because we would need to measure the strength of the wind over time. I don't know of any studies on this topic at the moment.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Over the course of your reading, you consulted extensively with municipalities, boaters and owners of large boats. How many of them talked to you about the impact of the price of gas for their small, medium or \$250,000-plus boats?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: Thank you again for your question. However, I can't give you an answer, since we consulted only the published literature.

We didn't consult people on the ground. We actually consulted a two-page list of studies on current navigation issues.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Lastly, would it be possible to send these study documents to the committee so that we can attach them to our files as part of our study?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: I'll ask the Yamaska committee, which received our summary. If we can do so, I'll submit the documents through your colleague, Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay. We would gladly do so.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Ms. Daoust. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Daoust and Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Daoust, I know that you must leave the meeting shortly. You ended your remarks by saying that you wanted a maximum speed limit of 10 km an hour on your waterway and a ban on wake surfing. I gather that you or the Yamaska committee may be submitting these recommendations.

How do you feel about the regulatory process? Do you think that any adjustments are needed, or is the current process perfectly adequate? I'm asking you because other witnesses talked to us about this.

Ms. Sonia Daoust: We gave the Yamaska committee a literature review.

Sorry, but I forgot the start of your question. Could you remind me?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I gather that you aren't responsible for the regulatory process. You simply submitted a literature review to the Yamaska committee, which takes care of it. Is that right?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: Exactly.

We also talked about banning certain activities. We're specifically focusing on certain parts of the 160-kilometre-long Yamaska River. We're talking mainly about the Saint-Césaire, Saint-Damase, Saint-Pie and Saint-Hyacinthe areas, where the river becomes much narrower.

In keeping with the comments made by the other witnesses, we made our recommendation while taking into account the width of the river and the proximity of the shoreline. Obviously, wake boats could navigate in wider areas, but in other places.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: You talked a great deal about wake boats. Could other types of boats be subject to restrictions? Should anything in your literature review be brought to the committee's attention, or was the focus just on wake boats?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: Our recommendation mainly concerned wake boats.

However, given the width of the waterway, the boat speed does affect the strength of the waves, meaning their kinetic energy, as I said. Basically, the longer it takes for a wave to reach the shore, the less force it generates. The faster it reaches the shore, the more it affects erosion and the various habitats.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Ms. MacKinnon, I don't know whether you listened to the witnesses who spoke before you, but I assume that you did. Witnesses often do so.

Ms. Daoust also spoke about wake boats. It seems that this type of boat has come up a great deal in the comments so far. Does the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada know about the potential impact of these types of products on shorelines? Is there any willingness to find ways to reduce this impact?

• (1725)

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: Absolutely. I think that we all know about this impact. Of course, in the media, we hear about certain complaints.

However, gaps remain in education, industry consultation and municipal-industry partnerships. There are provincial boating associations. In Quebec, for example, Nautisme Québec provides many ways to educate boat owners. We want to participate in educational initiatives and work with municipalities and the industry to find solutions for both manufacturers and users. That's basically our position.

We hear many negative things about wake surfing. I've been in the boating industry for barely a year. One thing that strikes me is the lack of consultation and co-operation with the industry. Instead of pointing out the things that don't work and saying that certain types of boats produce too many harmful effects, we should be looking at how we can work together. If we work together, I think that we can keep everyone a bit more satisfied and make fewer waves.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you for your response.

The Boating Ontario Association representative, who also serves as president of the Canadian Marine Retailers Association, stated earlier that he couldn't say whether a five-metre or 16-foot boat was considered big or small. To the best of your knowledge, how much would it cost in fuel to spend a day on the water with this type of boat?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: I couldn't say. I don't have any of that information.

It depends on the type of boat, the part of Canada and the day's activities. If you use a small rowboat to take your child fishing in the middle of a lake, with the engine turned off, you don't use as much fuel as when you're out on the river or at Château Montebello. Some boaters simply drop anchor and enjoy a beautiful day on the water, while others wake surf, fish or just lounge around a dock.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. MacKinnon and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next, we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm intrigued by this issue of the luxury tax on boats.

I take some of the critique of luxury taxes in general seriously. I think that is a decent point. They don't tend to raise a lot of revenue. In my view, if we're going to address issues like wealth inequality, we should make the rich actually pay their income taxes. We should prevent them from hiding their wealth in other countries. If we did that, we would raise a heck of a lot more revenue than dinging them for buying luxury boats, airplanes and those kinds of things.

I think the comment that had a lot of us looking a bit quizzical, Ms. MacKinnon, was your indicating that the luxury tax is hitting the middle class hard. We heard some comments from my friend Mr. Lawrence along the same lines. I take the point as it was intended, but I wonder about your organization's definition of "middle class" and what income level that would include.

Could you share with us what incomes would be considered middle class?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: Most people in Canada who own a boat make under \$100,000. While this tax on a boat... The \$250,000 and over may seem like a lot, but that boat lasts a family 25 to 30 years. There's longevity to a boat, you could say. If a person is making \$100,000, they're not buying the yacht. A \$250,000 boat is also not a yacht. It could just be a very nice pontoon that you take your family on. It all depends on what boat you're looking at and the impact of that.

It's hitting the middle class, because there are people working on boats. There are the marina folks. There's the service industry. There's everything around the tourism sector, where every local community has people depending on the boating industry and the boating season, which is very short in Canada. It's already a shortened amount of time. Now you're impacting that by reducing... The boat sales are going down, and the luxury tax has a massive impact on that. Again, it trickles down to the supply chain. It's not just on the boat sales per se.

• (1730)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Sure. I take the point that there are people working in the recreational boating industry who are middle-class Canadians. I think that's a fair point.

The question was specifically about people who are buying boats that cost over \$250,000, and whether those people—who are the people affected by the tax—are middle-class Canadians. I know lots of people who earn around \$100,000. It's not the highest salary in Canada. I don't know any of the folks who are buying \$250,000 boats.

If I may, Mr. Chair, the organization must collect very detailed consumer data. I wonder how many customers buying \$250,000 boats earn less than \$100,000.

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: I don't have the information on hand, but I'll make sure to follow up with the committee with that information.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's much appreciated.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach.

Next we will go to Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Ms. MacKinnon, you were speaking about individuals who buy \$250,000 boats.

Wouldn't some of these individuals have to take out a loan or a mortgage, or refinance their property, sometimes, to do this?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: Yes. It depends on the circumstances of whoever the boat owner is.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: These individuals aren't necessarily people who have \$250,000 just sitting around. Sometimes these boats are inherited from their parents.

Are they not?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: Absolutely. They are inherited. You're buying the boat on long-term financing, as well. The boat lasts you a very long time.

I have kids in competitive sports. My payments on my boat will be great after my kids are done playing competitive hockey, because the amount of money I pay... It depends on the family and where they're putting their interest. It's where they want to spend that money at the end of the month, or during the summertime. Every family has decisions to make, and recreational boating is one of them. It's one of many opportunities for Canadians to get outside.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Many of these families sometimes spend their entire summers on the boat rather than going on a luxury vacation per se. Isn't that also correct?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: That's correct, and what's beautiful about that, as I keep coming back to, is the tourism impact that it brings. That family staying put and going... I'm in Ottawa, so if I'm going up and down the Ottawa River, I can go to a bunch of different municipalities and go dock at different marinas to have lunch or dinner, and I'm staying local.

There are great opportunities. That has an impact on all of the local communities around boating. There are different factors, but there's so much more beyond just the boating and being on the water. That in and of itself is amazing, but there's a lot more at stake about recreational boating and being on the water with your families.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: It's the economy, yes.

Mr. Bankes, I have just one quick question for you pertaining to the Port Rowan Harbour. You mentioned the lack of funding for infrastructure projects. Is it possible to maintain a safe Port Rowan Harbour without privatization?

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Bankes, you're on mute, sir. Can I get you to restart your response and unmute.

Mr. Ron Bankes: Okay. Is that better?

The Chair: That is better. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Ron Bankes: Okay.

Yes, it is possible. Norfolk County has done a detailed study that demonstrates that it can operate it, and keep it open to the public, and fund it through revenues collected.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Are you hearing from marinas that they're experiencing higher electricity, utility and operational costs? Does that have anything to do with the carbon tax?

Mr. Ron Bankes: Yes, everybody is experiencing higher costs, and are passing them on to the users. I would have to presume that part of that extra cost is the carbon tax, as we all have to pay it on fuel and many other things as well.

• (1735)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: What are some of the contributions of recreational boating and marinas to the local community in Norfolk?

Mr. Ron Bankes: It has a huge impact on tourism. People come to Port Rowan to see the harbour. They come by boat, they come by car. It has a huge impact on the tourism for the local shops and the areas of Norfolk County.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Layzell spoke a little bit about the flares issue. Do you encounter any expired flares?

Mr. Ron Bankes: Yes. Virtually all boaters have flares on their boat, and we're all in a state where we just don't know what to do with them. We just don't have a proper disposal method, at this point, since it was cancelled.

Previously, we were able to take them to the power squadron and they could dispose of them properly, and now we have no place at all to dispose of the flares.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Why are they so dangerous to dispose of yourself?

Mr. Ron Bankes: I'm not really sure, and there have been no guidelines on how to dispose of them ourselves, as far as I'm aware of.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Bankes: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Lewis.

Next we'll go to Mr. Badawey.

The floor is yours, sir. You have five minutes.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First off, congratulations and thank you, Mr. Bankes. There's no question that you have your hands full operating a municipal marina. I know, having some experience in my past life—past lives, I

should say. I owned and operated a marina in Florida on the private side, and then as the mayor of the City of Port Colborne for 14 years, I had the Sugarloaf Marina—which I'm sure you're fully aware of—in our backyard and alongside your marina, operating really well on Lake Erie. Again, I want to congratulate you on that work that you're trying to do because I know how difficult it is, from the public side, to operate a marina on the limited dollars that your municipal council affords you.

I guess my questions are going to revolve around that in terms of public versus private and in terms of the opportunities where we can actually help you from the public side and bring the capital and operational expectations to you. I do know that Norfolk's marina, for example, has its transient slips, but it also has hydro-water slips. It has mechanics on site, lift services, winter storage, pump load services, fuel and the list goes on. I notice that you don't have that. I'm sure that a lot of that has to do with the capital resources needed to put those things in place.

I'm also aware of the federal contributions that have come about in the last few years to different municipalities. I know that in my area, Niagara, we've been fortunate to receive federal funding for recreational boating through the Minister of Tourism, through the minister of federal economic development in southern Ontario—FedDev Ontario—as well as through Transport Canada.

I note that you need about \$21 million in capital to improve the marina. My question for you is this: What are some specific areas that you have found that we can partner in to invest? When I say “we”, I don't mean just the federal government, but also the provinces and the municipalities together to leverage that funding through programs such as those offered through the Minister of Tourism, through FedDev Ontario and through Transport Canada.

Mr. Ron Bankes: I'm not sure that I can actually speak to that. This is a volunteer committee, and I would have no authority through the council of Norfolk to apply or answer some of these questions directly. That's how I feel.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Bankes.

I'm not going to take my full time here because I'm not here to be political or partisan or anything like that. I'm more interested in the interests of what you need to ensure that your marina continues publicly. That's number one. Number two is that it continues to offer public access, as well as additional amenities that may attach to that public access—parks, splash pads and things like that. I know that in my community of Port Colborne, with Sugarloaf Marina, we have all of that—restaurants, repairs, opportunities to actually create revenue versus simply trying to keep afloat a marina based on the expenses we have, and it's really being a community hub. I agree that it is a tourism attractor. There's no question that the returns on the investments, regardless of who makes or helps make those investments, are a benefit to the community.

So, I'm going to offer you this: As the parliamentary secretary for transport, Mr. Bankes, I'm putting the politics and the partisanship aside. My interest—no pun intended—is in helping you keep afloat that amenity for the community. Let's touch base after this meeting—and I offer Ms. Lewis the same opportunity because I know that's her riding—to see what we can do to work and access some of those programs that may be available through the federal government, as well as through the province and municipality. Okay?

That's great.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1740)

Mr. Ron Bankes: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval now has the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. MacKinnon, I was listening to the various witnesses, including you, talk about the need for consultation. This prompted me to think about the fact that some witnesses so far have said that it might be worth implementing national navigation standards. I've put myself in your shoes and I would like to hear your perspective on these types of national standards. For example, there could be a ban on navigating within 50 metres of a shoreline at over 10 kilometres an hour, or on using a wake boat within 200 metres of a shoreline.

As things stand, every time your clients head out onto a lake or river, they must check the regulations in place. Wouldn't national standards make things easier for your clients? It would be easier for you too, when you launch new products. The associations compile the regulations and you must keep track of the situation in each municipality. Would your association benefit from having some type of basic rule to refer to?

Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon: One of your key points is the collaborative process. I don't know whether the federal or provincial government should take the lead. In the meantime, we can at least start these discussions in each province.

As a national association, we would be pleased to start this process. There are a number of provincial associations, such as the

Boating Ontario Association. You heard from Rick Layzell, the association's chief executive officer. Nautisme Québec is another example. All these organizations want to get involved and try to resolve the issues that may be bothering a few people around the lakes. We're here to work together. Regardless of whether the federal or provincial government sets up the process, we have an opportunity here to work together and collaborate—

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. I must interrupt you because I'm running out of time.

Ms. Daoust, I would like to know what you think.

Ms. Sonia Daoust: I think that working together will lead to better use of the water and more peace. The goal is for everyone to have fun and to avoid disturbing the environment as a result of these activities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Finally today we have Mr. Bachrach.

The floor is yours for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a final question for Ms. Daoust.

We heard earlier the suggestion that non-regulatory, consensus-building approaches are the best way to approach some of the impacts like the ones you're experiencing in your watershed. I'm interested in your opinion on this and whether non-regulatory approaches are going to be sufficient to address the magnitude of the impacts that you've seen and whether you've seen other jurisdictions around North America that have succeeded with non-regulatory approaches in similar contexts.

Ms. Sonia Daoust: I haven't seen it in other places in Canada because I'm here in Quebec, but you're speaking to a lawyer, so of course I'm going to tell you that it's both. You need the regulation; then you need to apply the regulation, but you first need people to understand the impact of what they're doing. If they understand the impact of what they're doing, maybe they will do it less, and maybe they're going to use other ways to do things.

You have to make people understand. People are educated and they want to know. You also need a regulation because, otherwise, you have to go on every lake, as has been said, or in every river and then adjust each and every time. Then you have great principles, a few principles, and you need people to understand them and especially understand why you need to apply that.

• (1745)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I guess my last question would be this idea of who decides and how we value different voices depending on their connection to the place that we're talking about.

In my view, if you empower municipalities, then you're giving the people who live closest to the waterway the strongest voice in regulating its use. Is that an appropriate approach in your view, or should people who travel from four hours away be given an equal voice in determining what regulations are put in place?

Ms. Sonia Daoust: I'm going to tell you that I need the environment to have a voice. I need "hurt" to have a voice. I need the birds to have a voice; so, of course, it's going to be as large as possible,

but we need to know what we're talking about. We need to know the impact.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Madame Daoust, Ms. MacKinnon and Mr. Bankes, I want to thank you on behalf of all the members for your time and for sharing your expertise today on this very important study.

With that, colleagues, this meeting is adjourned.

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