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Chair

Mr. Fabian Manning

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• (1255)

[English]

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

For those who may not be aware, we are the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans of the House of Commons. We are in the process, over the past number of months, of travelling and meeting with people across the country to study the small craft harbours program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Our purpose is to gain as much feedback as we can from people who use the facilities, so we can hopefully enhance the program not only in the financial aspect but indeed in any and all ways, knowing full well that many of the people involved with the harbour authorities throughout Canada are volunteers.

We did an east coast trip about a month ago. We're delighted to be in Richmond today. We head up to Port Hardy, I believe, tonight and will spend a couple more days here in your beautiful province. I hail from Newfoundland and Labrador, so I'm a long way from home. We have interpreters here with us who will be translating our dialect. So I will ask our witnesses to keep an eye out for that, because we have a couple of people here we have to have interpretation for.

As I said, coming from Newfoundland, sometimes I have to carry my own interpreter, but my say here today will be very limited. Each of the committees of the House of Commons has a job to do their work without their staff and people who surround them, such as our analyst here, François, our interpreters, our technicians, our people back here. We are also delighted to have our clerk, who happens to be from British Columbia and who happens to have her mom and her two brothers in the audience today. Her mom, Margaret, and Gus and Mac, who are twin brothers, have joined us. We could have a couple of budding politicians here in the audience maybe.

We're delighted to be here today. Our process is that we open up the floor to have opening presentations from our guests and then we have a question and answer period where we go around. Just to give you an idea, the committee has representation from the four parties in the House of Commons: the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc, and we bring along this guy down here from the NDP, just for moral support every now and again. We have a very good working relationship, I must say, among our committee members. Most of us represent areas that have large fishing areas, and the small craft harbours program is a very important part of our work.

With that, I would like to ask Ms. Elizabeth McLeod, from the Harbour Authority Association of British Columbia, to give her opening remarks.

Maybe before we start we will ask each of you to introduce yourselves and the organizations you represent, for the record, and then we will go back to Ms. McLeod for opening remarks.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod (President, Harbour Authority Association of British Columbia): My name is Elizabeth McLeod. I am the president of the Harbour Authority Association of B.C. and I manage the Comox Valley Harbour Authority. In addition to that, I also sit on the PRHAAC and the NHAAC.

Mr. Art Childs (Vice-President, Harbour Authority Association of British Columbia): Good afternoon. My name is Art Childs. I am the vice-president of the Harbour Authority Association of B. C., harbour manager at False Creek Harbour Authority, and also a director of the Pacific Coast Congress of Harbormasters and Port Managers.

Mr. Ben Maberley (Director, Whaler Bay Harbour Authority, Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): I'm Ben Maberley, a commercial salmon and herring fisherman. I'm president of the Whaler Bay Harbour Authority and I'm here on behalf of the Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee. I'm also the vice-chair of the national advisory committee.

Mrs. Linda Franz (Harbour Manager, Campbell River Harbour Authority, Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Good afternoon. My name is Linda Franz. I'm from Campbell River, where I manage one of your harbour authorities. I've been there since 1984. I plan to retire this year, but I'll always keep my finger in the harbour authority program. Thank you.

• (1300)

Mr. Lutz Budde (Director, Oona River Community Association, Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): My name is Lutz Budde. I'm from Oona River, British Columbia. I'm the director of the Oona River Harbour Authority and I'm a member of PRHAAC.

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: On behalf of the Harbour Authority Association, I would like to welcome you gentlemen to British Columbia. I commend you for your willingness to visit every region of Canada. And although there are huge regional differences, I think you're going to find while you're here that our communities and volunteers share a common commitment to the harbour authority program with the rest of Canada.

Throughout the history of B.C., our red-railed harbours have provided a safe haven for the working vessels that ply our coastal waters. These harbours are the infrastructure of our fishing industry, and many of our northern communities are still reliant on these harbours as a vital link in their transportation network. Our harbours are also part of the economic mainstay of many of our communities.

In B.C., we have 76 core harbours coast-wise, managed by 54 harbour authorities. Our harbours tend to be larger than those in other regions and more consolidated, the average harbour being between 100 and 200 vessels. Due to the capacity of the larger harbours, we have the ability to generate quite a lot of revenue because many of our harbours are operating with a volunteer board but professional staff. Having a permanent staff gives many of our B.C. harbours an increased ability to plan and take advantage of the economic funding opportunities as they become available in the west.

The Harbour Authority Association of B.C. is a provincially incorporated not-for-profit society. It's important to note that the HAABC is a grassroots organization developed by our harbours in 1997 in response to the needs of the harbours. Although we work very closely with small craft harbours directorate in the Pacific region, we're not a creature of the government. Of the 54 harbours in B.C., 49 are members of this organization. Our major role is to establish effective communication among harbour authorities, foster a good working relationship, exchange information, and network. The HAABC has split the province into six distinct areas, and our volunteer directors are elected to the board by each area.

Each year, the HAABC organizes an annual three-day conference to provide information and educational workshops and networking opportunities for our members as well as feedback to the board of directors. We have one quarter-time staff member to assist in our conference planning, and because of this, our organization relies heavily on our board of directors to provide hands-on administration and management services for this organization. This severely limits our ability to address the growing needs of our membership. There is an identified need to provide training, education, mentoring, and support for many of the smaller remote and less-developed facilities far beyond what we can achieve at our annual conference. Without additional resources, this will be extremely difficult for us to provide.

We've taken on some initiatives over the last few years. The first one, and very important to our harbours, was we have begun to develop a toolbox of standard documents for use in our harbours. We've completed a standard berthage licence agreement to ensure each harbour has a legally vetted document that will assist in the collection of fees and clearly lay out the terms and conditions of berthage in our harbours for our users. Through small craft harbours directorate, we intend to share this document with all the other regions in Canada.

Derelict and abandoned vessels continue to plague the harbours in B.C. This problem has resulted from the DFO licence buyback programs that have littered the coast with former working vessels that now have no purpose. Without work, they sit tied to the dock with little or no maintenance in many of our working harbours. In many cases, the owners of these vessels have simply walked away, leaving the harbours holding the bag on what is becoming an

enormous and costly problem. With buyback under way purchasing licences and not vessels, we expect this problem to continue to escalate. In response to a request from our membership, the HAABC, in conjunction with small craft harbours Pacific region, is in the process of forming a subcommittee to develop terms of reference to investigate the magnitude of this problem and explore options for dealing with the issue.

● (1305)

In addition to this, my colleague Art Childs has been working with the Pacific Coast Congress, as have Hiltje Binner, who is the harbour manager for Port McNeill, and Linda Franz, in developing educational curriculum.

The PCC has partnered with the University of Alaska Southeast in developing a distance learning program for harbours and marina personnel, focusing on common areas: structural and construction, maintenance and repair, environmental business practices, and customer service.

Some of the course development work is being done jointly with the HABC members, and the long-term goal will see a stronger partnership in the area of training and professional development. This online program will enable many of our harbours to access appropriate training for staff without the added costs of travel and accommodation. We're hoping to see this in the near future, because like everything else, we're now suffering from attrition, as more and more of us reach retirement age.

I'm going to touch on some of the common issues that are now being experienced by all of our harbours in B.C., the first and foremost in my mind being the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and its regulations, which govern our harbours. These were designed many years ago to enable the federal government to manage the harbours. No changes or updates occurred when the harbour authorities came into being, and the legislation does not facilitate or acknowledge our role in the management of these harbours. While we were required by our lease agreements to abide by all applicable government acts and regulations, we do not have the ability to enforce these regulations on our users.

We would urge DFO to review the act and regulations, as well as the standard harbour authority lease agreements, with a view to making the necessary changes to facilitate good governance in our harbours.

Increasingly, B.C. harbours are taking on a more innovative approach to increasing our capacity to recapitalize and improve our harbours. We are constantly seeking funding from other sources as well as looking for development opportunities within our harbour lands to improve our own finances.

We would like to see our partnership with small craft harbours directorate enhanced to allow strategies that will enable us to continue with the next logical steps in our creative approach to meeting the needs of our harbours.

In order for our B.C. harbours to continue to grow, we require supportive regulations to enable us to recapitalize investments, buy land, and increase services. Obtaining matching funds from outside sources is dependent on an increased flexibility in small craft harbours funding guidelines.

Finally, our harbour authorities need to work with small craft harbours directorate to become an integral part of the planning for our harbours and maximize all of our available resources. There's an ever-increasing demand on our facilities, resulting in conflict for waterfront resources evident in our province. It is important to note that the majority of our harbours are full and require increased capacity and expansion to meet the growing needs of B.C.

The Pacific coast infrastructure is also aging. While small craft harbours directorate and Pacific Region have been doing an excellent job of maintaining our assets with the limited funds available, it's evident that it's time to recapitalize our harbours. Many of the structures in our harbours are in excess of 60 years old and have reached the end of their lifespans and no longer can be maintained. They require replacements.

Adding to this problem is changing weather patterns and the increasing severity of coastal storms. These storms are resulting in wind, wave, debris, and flood damage to our facilities, which jeopardizes the safety of our vessels and our harbour users. Many of the stop-gap measures used in the past in many of our harbours, such as floating breakwaters, are no longer adequate to protect our harbour infrastructure and need to be replaced with permanent rock structures.

Dredging, as I'm sure you've heard everywhere you've come in B.C., is a major operational issue in most of our Pacific coast harbours, especially those on the Fraser River. Our larger-draft fishing vessels can only access our harbours at high tide and are unable to move while in berth, which creates a serious safety concern in our harbours. In the case of a fire at low tide, we would be unable to move these larger vessels away from the dock, resulting in disaster for our vessels and facilities.

• (1310)

Dredging is not just a problem within our water lots. Since Transport Canada ceased their dredging program the channels leading into our harbours are silting in, resulting in a major access problem that we do not have the jurisdiction or the funding to address. We feel this problem is not unique to the west coast, and we're hoping to see a national strategy put in place to address these dredging issues. It would be really nice to see one arm of the government take over the management of dredging, as Transport Canada did in the past.

Our Pacific coast harbours are also dependent on the efforts of our volunteers, and they're supported in that endeavour by our Pacific region small craft harbour staff. At a time when all of our harbours are suffering from volunteer fatigue, we found that our staff support at the small craft harbours level is stretched to the limit due to attrition, leaves, and the functional review. It's a credit to the dedication and commitment of Pacific region staff that they've managed to maintain a professional level of support to our harbours throughout this period. There's an urgent need to increase small craft harbours support to maintain and enhance the interest and capacity of harbour authority volunteers and staff if we're to continue to move forward.

Another niggly little problem that we face on a daily basis is access to information on vessel ownership. If a vessel is not listed in the ships registry, we are unable to find out the ownership of that

vessel without an access to information request, even in an emergency situation, and this can have some serious consequences as well.

Our commercial fishing harbours are necessary for the survival of the fishing industry in B.C. Commercial fishing remains a viable and major economic contributor to our west coast economy. We require flexibility to change with the needs of our industry. When major changes are being planned in different areas of DFO, such as licensing that will affect the usage of our harbours, we need to be informed and consulted. What we're seeing now with the onset of quota fisheries is that an increasing number of vessels are sitting at the dock just to hold the licence and the quota, and they're not moving out during the fishing seasons as they were in the past. Also, they're creating a problem that I would call a licensed derelict, where there's not the maintenance going into these vessels that there used to be when they were out fishing.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your interest in our organization and in our harbours in B.C. We require your continued support to increase the viability of our Pacific coast commercial fishing harbours.

Thank you very much for coming out here.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McLeod.

I believe our next speaker will be Mr. Mabblerley.

Mr. Ben Mabblerley: Good afternoon, everybody. On behalf of the Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee, I would like to welcome the members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to the west coast.

When I was asked to be here today, I sat down to think about the message I hoped to convey to you. You've heard from Liz McLeod about the Harbour Authority Association of B.C. and the great work they do on behalf of all HAs in the Pacific region. I'm sure that on the rest of your trip you will see and hear of many successes and challenges from the HAs you visit. The main point to remember is that all of these organizations are run by volunteers, who are the backbone of all harbour authorities across Canada.

We have 54 harbour authorities in the Pacific region, managing 76 fishing harbours. While some of the HAs are able to have full-time paid staff, most can only afford part-time staff to assist with fee collection and secretarial duties. The rest of the work is done by volunteers. It is estimated that the 54 HAs spend an estimated 50,000 volunteer hours annually on harbour authority operations.

I would like to go over a few of the initiatives that the Pacific advisers, along with the regional advisers and small craft harbours, have been working on to assist the HAs in becoming viable and self-sufficient. The first is the formation of the Harbour Authority Corporation.

Together with our regional partners, and after many years of struggling with the issue of directors and officers' insurance and bodily insurance, we formed the Harbour Authority Corporation. This corporation, run by volunteers, makes available at a cost of \$100 per year both types of insurance to all HAs across Canada. As of today, 414 of the 579 harbour authorities in Canada belong to this corporation. With D&O costs of approximately \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year per harbour authority, the savings to the HAs are substantial. Now those funds are available to be reinvested in their facilities.

The Gislason report states that for every dollar going into harbours, there is an estimated \$50 in associated spinoff benefits. The estimated savings of the program are \$1.1 million, with a spinoff benefit of \$55 million, or approximately \$94,000 per HA community.

The advisers are also working with small craft harbours on inspection and maintenance manuals. These will allow HAs to do more of the day-to-day inspection and repairs. HAs have requested an increased contract signing authority, from \$40,000 to \$200,000. We are hoping that more harbours will be able to take on more of the smaller projects that HAs are expressing a desire to be involved with. This will ease our reliance on the Department of Public Works to get projects completed.

As you may be aware, we are also working on a new long-term vision for small craft harbours. While it's still in draft form, the vision is:

The existence of a critical, affordable, national network of safe and accessible harbours, in good working condition, that meets the principal need of the commercial fishing industry, while supporting the broader interests of coastal communities and Canada's national interest.

The harbour will be fully operated, managed and maintained by viable, professional and self-sufficient harbour authorities representing the interests of users and communities.

This vision clearly indicates the connection between our fishermen, our harbour authorities, and our coastal communities. It brings forward the desire of all of those involved to see harbour authorities evolve toward self-sufficient community-based organizations.

The point I'm trying to make is that as volunteers managing federal assets, we are working hard to provide our fishermen and our communities with safe and accessible harbours, but we can't do this alone. We need an effective partner for small craft harbours, one that is able to provide good programs and funding when necessary to allow us to provide these services and also to respond to the changes that are occurring in our fisheries and our environment.

The funding for small craft harbours has not significantly increased for eight years. In fiscal year 2000-2001, the actual spending budget for small craft harbours was \$90 million. The budget for 2008-2009 is \$91.5 million. Considering inflation and the rising costs of labour and construction, this could and should be considered a decrease in funding.

• (1315)

The fisheries committee in its last report highlighted the fact that an estimated \$400 million is needed just to bring the core harbours up to an acceptable condition. This shortfall has been put on the backs of harbour authorities, and this is unacceptable. We need a commitment from the federal government for stable, long-term

funding that takes into account all of the challenges that harbour authorities deal with daily.

I believe, based on my discussions with HAs in the Pacific region and across the country, that it is the goal of most of the HAs to become viable, professional, and self-sufficient so that decisions can be made that are in the best interests of not only the fishermen but also our communities that rely so heavily on these facilities.

We understand the challenges about revenue generation. It's not just about fee collection; it's about working together to solve financial issues such as insurance and maintenance. There will continue to be challenges, and we look forward to working with small craft harbours' excellent staff to solve them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today, and I hope you have a nice day on the west coast.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Maberley and witnesses.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

I was very keen to listen to what I thought was a very well articulated, very understanding knowledge base of the small craft harbour program, not only from what was clearly a ground point of view, but also from an administrative point of view within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Maberley, I'm going to direct my question to you, since you specifically brought up the matter of funding. You quite rightfully, in my opinion, pointed out that there has indeed been an overall funding cut within the program, given the costs of inflation. Construction inflation in particular is outpacing the consumer price index by about 7% per year, so you've come to the conclusion that we really haven't kept pace.

Collectively you represent all the harbour authorities of B.C., but you and Elizabeth in particular are chief spokespersons of that. I want to ask you, Ben, and then probably move to Elizabeth to respond as well. With that funding cut, have you noticed a substantial rust-out or decrease in the capitalization of harbours within the area? As well, with such scarce dollars, is there competition within the harbour authority family within British Columbia? Is there a certain amount of tension that gets created as you compete for capital projects for funding?

Specifically, you all had mentioned the fact that you have a very positive working relationship with the small craft harbours officials. Small craft harbours officials represent teams of technicians and engineers and people who are well aware of the program. They produce lists each and every year to forward to Ottawa for funding. Would you be very upset if you were under the understanding that local officials had developed plans for capital projects only to have those projects cut short at Ottawa, whether the funding was shifted around or diverted to other sources? Do you really think that there should be a rules base on which the funding is put in place, that local priorities are put in place, and that within the B.C. family of harbour authorities funding should be decided within B.C. and not elsewhere?

I think you got the overall tone of my questions. There are a few things in there, Ben and Elizabeth, that you may want to address, but could you just expand on some of the points you raised and sort of integrate what I just had to say?

• (1320)

Mr. Ben Mabberley: I think the way I would come at that is to say that one thing we're good at, both in B.C. and as fishermen, is being very adaptable. We realize the funding challenges now. If you look at the HAABC and the advisory groups, we've gotten together as volunteers to address those funding issues.

Is there competition in B.C. among projects? I don't see it. As one of the advisers, I don't see it. There's a common agreement that we're underfunded. I'm sitting here as one of the regional advisers, and our job is to find solutions to those problems, and that's what we've attempted to do. When you look at the harbour authority corporation that was formed, that's a direct solution to a problem. If you look at any harbour that's having to put out \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year on insurance, that money is now reinvested into the harbour. So from my point of view, I look more at solving the problems rather than trying to worry so much about what Ottawa and the regions are doing among themselves.

Absolutely, if my harbour has a project that is slated to go ahead, and it takes years to complete because funds keep getting diverted, it's disappointing. That's the same with every harbour, and you hear about that from everybody. But is there anything I can do about it? Probably not.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Is there anything you'd recommend as a solution?

Mr. Ben Mabberley: Yes, absolutely. I mean, if you look at \$90 million to \$91.5 million over eight years, I can think of a big solution and I think you guys highlighted it in your first report. We need good, long-term, stable funding. If we need \$400 million, we can't spend it tomorrow. I don't think small craft harbours could spend \$400 million tomorrow. But if we had a stable budget that took into account where we have to get to over 20 years, that's what we need to do.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Would you also agree that there really should be a B.C. budget that gets decided within B.C. as opposed to somewhere else?

Mr. Ben Mabberley: You're asking me to comment on the bureaucracy, and you know, I look at the staff we have in B.C. and they're phenomenal. And you talk to every harbour authority across the country and they talk about their staff the same way. Ottawa doesn't have a harbour authority.

• (1325)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: That's a good answer, Ben.

Elizabeth.

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: I think we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg when it comes to inflation in our costs. I think the rising fuel costs are going to hugely affect the northern harbours especially. And I think we can see a sharp increase in what our dollars are going to go for there. We're definitely not going to be able to make the repairs we should.

Concerning your question about competition between harbours, we don't see that. The small craft harbours program has an overall plan for our capital dollars in B.C., and for the most part they stick to that. So there is not a lot of infighting going on about who gets what. That's announced, based on the plans.

I would like to see a bit more of an integrated plan, planning with harbour authorities, especially those that have staff, so we know in what direction the small craft harbours program is going. And then if opportunities come up where we can assist with bringing in other funding sources to these projects, we could use that as a baseline budget.

And I think certainly our budget should be decided in B.C. Nobody knows better than the engineers in small craft harbours and the funding staff about the overall needs for capital in B.C. And I think those decisions have to be made locally.

I hope that answers your question.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, if we have any time left, I'll share it. How much time, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Two minutes and 26 seconds.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: All right.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): I have some other questions, but we'll get to those a little later.

I just want to make one quick note. It was near the end of the presentation. I think it was you, Mr. Mabberley, who talked about wanting to increase the signing authority for smaller projects. Can you give me an example of what we're talking about in your particular situation? It sounds to me as if you've been through this many times over.

Mr. Ben Mabberley: I come from a pretty small harbour, so I wouldn't say I've been through it many times over, but I've been through it a few times. You understand that a \$40,000 project is not much of a project in any harbour. And we have the desire to do our work, and at our harbour authority we do all our own work, but we have to figure out how to manage projects so they don't exceed \$40,000.

So a project may actually have to be three separate projects to get it done. And especially in central and Arctic region, this was a real desire of theirs to be able to do their projects within their communities. You have to remember, whenever the Department of Public Works gets involved in a project, it's put out to tender. Very seldom is that work ever done by community members. All our work on our dock is done by community members. All of that stays in the community.

The ability to do larger projects.... Based on small craft engineering, we want to do the project properly, but the knowledge is there, I would say. We're not building airplanes here; we're building docks. It's not that difficult. And with the maintenance and repair modules that the small craft harbours program is designing, a lot more of the projects that need to be done could be done by small harbours employing community members. To me, it just makes sense. It's just the way to go.

Mr. Scott Simms: I agree with what you're saying, but did you give out a number increased to a certain level?

Mr. Ben Mabblerley: Absolutely. We would like the contract signing authority increased from \$40,000 to \$200,000. Ironically, the first time we made that request it was decreased. Then it was put back up to \$40,000. We're scared to ask for it again.

The Chair: Once bitten, twice shy.

Mr. Blais, I believe you're on next.

• (1330)

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon. I want to thank you for your warm welcome.

It is my turn, Mrs McLeod, to thank you for your presentation. You have given us a very good overview of the issues. When we talk about small craft harbours, aside from the fact that we are dealing here with valuable and crucial infrastructures, we always come to the conclusion that there is a lack of funding and that with more dollars things could be improved. But you are going further. You have provided evidence about the various aspects of funding and showed how essential these docking facilities are. At the same time, you raised new issues that arise today: climate change, dredging problems that become more and more difficult to manage, insurance issues and derelict ships. People are looking for solutions to all these problems.

You gave us a very well researched presentation, Mrs McLeod, and it is my understand that up to now the government is not providing any long term vision in this whole area. Indeed, it looks like they are applying a band-aid on a wooden leg. One could even say, without intending offence to anyone, this is like prescribing aspirin to somebody with cancer. There is a budget of some 100 million dollars but we know very well that things are getting worse every year. So the money is not enough.

I do not get from you any sense of exasperation or discouragement. You still are optimistic about the future of the small craft harbours program, which is commendable.

I would like to hear your views on a possible long term action plan. What would be the priorities? Some are more costly than others. It is my feeling — and you will tell me if I am wrong — that we need a long term plan based on a vision. If we had a clear vision, this would lead to actions that would allow us to meet the huge challenges we will face in the coming years.

I would like to know, Mrs McLeod, if you share my views on the need for a long term action plan.

[English]

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: I think you're quite right in saying that there is no long-term plan by government for issues such as dredging and derelict vessels. It needs to be noted that both of these things are really outside the guidelines for the small craft harbours program, so we're looking at the rest of government to pick up the ball with this. What you're seeing in B.C., in my understanding, was that when Transport Canada decided to remove the dredging program across

Canada, they were depending on industry to pick up that ball and go ahead, but because we are still dependent on government for our funding, we don't have the dollars that it's going to require to come in and dredge out the channels leading to our harbours. We don't have the money within the budget to dredge out the harbours. Again, everything that is affecting that is the increased climate change, weather patterns, and flooding on the Fraser. All of these things have an effect.

One thing we do know is that if the dredging situation is not looked at, then we are not going to have usable harbours in many of our areas. I can speak for one of my harbours, which is dependent on the channel leading up to it. If nothing changes, we're certainly going to lose that harbour as an effective portion of our network within probably the next five years because of siltation.

Derelict vessels is also another one that has never been looked at. It's not just the problem with fishing vessels, but it's a problem with other vessels as well. Not long ago in B.C. we had refugee boats from China being dumped on us. Again, there's just no venue for anybody to plan around the removal of these things. They're extremely costly. Off the top of my head, to destroy the average 35-foot fishing vessel because of the contaminated waste and everything else on board, you're probably looking at \$10,000 a vessel. And we have many of these in our harbours.

While our larger harbours are fairly effective because we have staff in moving these vessels along, they wind up in areas such as the north, in Lutz's harbour or Ben's harbour, where they don't have the staff to be on the dock saying, "Wait a minute. You can't bring that boat in here."

These are the areas I would certainly like to see government focusing on, as well as our funding issues within our program, but certainly multi-government committees perhaps, to address those two issues.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: I would also like to talk about the safety issue. You mentioned several times — and we hear this more and more often — that things are becoming less and less safe. I would like to hear your comments on this.

[English]

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: Again, I find myself, unfortunately, speaking on behalf of my harbour rather than all harbours, but I think it affects all of us. The changing weather patterns that we're seeing now are hitting our harbours with way more force—winds and waves—than they were designed to take. That is combined with 40-year-old, 50-year-old, 60-year-old infrastructure. It's not at the beginning of its lifespan, when it could withstand, perhaps, high winds or high wave values. So that actually exacerbates the problem.

Safety is our primary concern. If our vessels are damaged from storms because they're breaking away from our docks, this is a whole group of people who are out of work for that season. So these are things we do have to pay attention to.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stoffer.

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

Once again, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for appearing before us today. I always admire the professionalism and the great way you're able to present your situation very clearly to us. It's very helpful, I can assure you.

One of the questions I have for you off the top is are there any aboriginal harbour authorities in your organization? I'm thinking of small communities where there are harbours in aboriginal communities that may have an aboriginal-only authority.

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: I believe we just had the Haisla Harbour Authority join our organization, and that would be native.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: In terms of some of the work you're looking for, is there any asking for cooperation or any thought of asking the regional, municipal, or provincial governments for assistance to, for instance, remove some of the derelict vessels or assist in some sort of harbour assistance? Out east we have what is called ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Here you have the Western Diversification Fund. Is there any chance that you could look to those organizations for funding in any way?

Mrs. Linda Franz: I would like to say that on derelict or abandoned vessels, it is a situation that occurs daily. I have been privy to having to remove two derelict vessels from my harbour, and on both occasions the harbour authority itself and Environment Canada bore the cost of removing those vessels. Yes, we do look around to try to get funding and other help to get rid of those vessels.

• (1340)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: On these derelict vessels, is there no way they could be offered up to someone? Just say, "Look, if you want a fishing boat, come and take it."

Mrs. Linda Franz: That's what's happening. That's why they become derelict. These vessels lose their licences and they lose their purpose. The first guy who walks along says "Oh yeah, I'll give you \$20 for that vessel." It's somebody's dream, right? Well, poof. There's no magic.

I'm fortunate. I'm in a larger harbour. I use my little power struggle with them, and I go out and ask them to leave the harbour. But then they go to Lutz's harbour, and Lutz isn't happy with me any more. And we have to work together.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: In terms of a northern harbour, as you have in Prince Rupert, how is the working relationship with the limited staff in DFO you have? From my understanding, it's a pretty good relationship, considering the number of people who are there.

Mr. Lutz Budde: First of all, I'll speak for our harbour on the Oona River. It's a very small community just outside Prince Rupert. I know that in Prince Rupert they go in and out all the time, and they do very well. They have a lot of projects under way, and some are now completed. On the harbours, Rick Hill, the manager there, seems to have a better in than most people with the small craft harbours program.

We're getting the support. Usually we get the support, but we still need the funding for it. The reason we're concerned is that we get the projects on the books, but the problem, when it really gets down to it, is the funding.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The last question I have is on False Creek. There's an area that had a shady past a hundred years ago. Then it became Expo. I think you have one of the most unique harbours in Canada, because you're surrounded by an international cosmopolitan city with a whole bunch of expensive yachts going in and out. That must have its own challenges. I was wondering if you could share for a brief moment the challenges you have in managing a harbour authority in the middle of a major international city.

Mr. Art Childs: You definitely hit the nail on the head. We are under close inspection, whether we realize it or not, 24 hours a day. We have quite a development of condominiums all around us. Having environmental watchdogism is a real concern out here. In False Creek we obviously have a very proactive attitude toward our environmental policies. We also take a very proactive approach in the management of our harbour and its appearance. We realize that we're surrounded, and everything we do is being closely watched.

On the challenges we face, you're absolutely right. Not that many years ago, False Creek still had that rough reputation and it was....

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I kind of liked it, actually.

Mr. Art Childs: We're very aware of our location and we've tried very hard to develop a very good relationship with our neighbours. We've invited strata managers down to the harbour, introduced them to the operation, because I think most of the time they were thinking, "Those awful fish boats are down there, and we just want them to go away, because they're ruining our view."

We've taken the attitude that False Creek Harbour Authority is one of the most unique harbours in Canada, in that it's in a very urban location and actually can be a very strong community tie to bind our community together in False Creek. So we welcome the public down to our harbour and we encourage their involvement in the harbour; we encourage input from our neighbours on how we do things. It's a little different. It has many challenges, but the majority of the challenges we face have a lot to do with and are very much in common with the challenges that all of the harbour authorities on this coast face, and I'm sure all of the harbour authorities across the country face.

I'd like to step back a couple of questions to Mr. Blais' question, if I may, when he asked whether we felt there was an absence of vision. We had this very conversation this morning. As a harbour manager and a member of the Harbour Authority Association of B.C., and as a member of a larger organization that spans from California right to Alaska, I would love to be in on the long-term vision, actually, as to what the whole plan for the industry and for the whole small craft harbour program is.

As Mr. Maberley pointed out, you guys in your last report indicated the need for solid long-term funding and the very real need to take some of our harbours from an unacceptable condition now. We're still expected to operate those harbours in a viable and fiscally responsible fashion, and it can't be done. It simply cannot be done, not when you're relying on volunteers. We need a strong, committed level of financial support as well as that strong, committed level of program support from the small craft harbours directorate.

These guys are doing their damndest out here. They really are. And they work very hard to fill the needs of the harbours, but it's a tough row to hoe. I know you hear this all across the country, I'm sure.

When I look at the harbour authority program and what's going on out here in B.C., I see a very enthusiastic group of people trying to maintain and keep a program alive out here. And every time we turn around, we're running up against a roadblock. If I were sitting in your shoes, and God knows I'm glad I'm not, I would be saying this is an organization, a group of people who want to see this program survive and flourish. We should be giving them some level of support.

Everybody talks about small craft harbours as being centred around the commercial fishing industry. These harbours are not only the commercial fishing industry; they are literally the lifeblood of a lot of these coastal communities. Without them, what happens to those communities? They go away.

•(1345)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Childs. We have to move on.

Mr. Kamp.

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

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming. As you may know, I'm the only member of the committee from British Columbia. So welcome to British Columbia and to my friends here.

As you know, there are only two kinds of people: those who are from B.C. and those who wish they were. Mr. Stoffer used to be from B.C., and now he wishes he were. Anyway, thank you.

I'll probably be splitting my time with my colleague Mr. Calkins, also from the west.

I wanted to follow up a bit on the comments you made about legislation, in particular as you referred to the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and regulations. What changes did you envision there? Are you saying that the act sort of ties your hands, or it didn't envision the regime that we now have with harbour authorities and needs to be changed to give you powers or authority that you don't have but you need to have?

I guess that's my first question. Others might want to answer this as well.

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: The answer to that is a sort of twofold answer. Certainly the legislation never took into account that there were harbour authorities and wasn't updated. We have two parallel types of programs running in B.C.; one is the port authorities and one is the harbour authorities. When the port authorities came into being, there was a whole act written to enable them to properly run the ports in B.C. The Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act actually curtails what we can do as harbour authorities, because the only people who can enforce that act are federal enforcement officers.

Also, it is so out of date. I'm not sure of the date when it was put in place, but it's probably 30- or 40-year-old legislation, and it was written around government management. A harbour manager, under the act, is a federal employee. When you're reading through, it

enables a "harbour manager" to do a whole pile of things, but that's not us; it's not the people who are running the harbours.

That can sometimes be counter-productive, if you're not an enforcement officer. I had a case in which we were taking somebody to court to try to collect some outstanding moorage, and he counter-sued us, saying that the act calls for an "enforcement officer" to tow a vehicle, and it certainly does.

So it's not enabling us to do those jobs. In some cases, it's acting to the detriment of harbour authorities, and that's why I would like to see it updated.

•(1350)

Mr. Randy Kamp: What do you want to do that you can't do now?

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: We are asked by the government to enforce the acts as they stand—the Government Property Traffic Act, every piece of legislation that has any jurisdiction over harbours—but we are unable to do it. I would like to see us enabled to operate our harbours as they should be operated.

I don't know whether that answers your question or not.

Mr. Lutz Budde: If I have an incident of a fishing boat polluting, the fisherman can just tell me to get lost, and I have no authority. I can phone the Department of Environment on some help line, a 1-800 number, and they'll say that's very nice and they'll be out in eight hours, but I have no authority. To enforce some of the regulations, I need that authority, to carry the weight and to be able to bring it to court, because all I am now is a witness to an incident.

Mr. Randy Kamp: In that case, what would you want to do, if you had the power to do it?

Mr. Lutz Budde: It's similar to those in uniform or whatever—not that I want a uniform or a gun, but we want the people to have an understanding that we have the power of enforcement. It's a matter of education of people. Bringing in the fee collection at the beginning was very difficult for many harbours. People said "Go away. Who are you?" Now we basically have brought that under control. But the other steps, of environmental standards, safety standards, and so on, need to be brought into line for harbours, so that we could educate people and say "Yes, we are the real thing; we have the authority to ask you to comply and act according to legislation." We don't have that right now.

In most cases you get voluntary compliance, but for those cases in which you don't, you would like to have that kind of power.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Let me just ask one more question, and then I'll defer to my colleague.

How does each of your harbours set berthage rates? Does the Harbour Authority Association of British Columbia provide any help by giving some sort of common approach to doing it, or is it all on an individual basis?

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: All of our harbours are autonomous when it comes to fee collection and setting revenues and all of those things. Part of the reason is that it's a supply-and-demand thing. While I'm in an area of hugely high demand, Lutz, for instance, isn't. What we do when we're setting our rates, and I think what most of the harbours do, is survey the harbours around us to see what the market rate is and set our fees based on that.

Mr. Ben Maberley: We firmly believe it's the right of every harbour authority to set its own rates. When we formed our harbour authority, we sat down to look at what our minor maintenance costs were going to be and what we needed to charge, and we set the rates accordingly, so that we were able to fulfill our part of the bargain and still put enough money away to be able to contribute to any project that needed to be done at the harbour.

Probably across this country you're going to find, when you start getting onto the topic of fee collection, that it's not one for which we feel there need be any cross-country standards. We would look and have looked, as harbour authorities and as organizations, at other streams of revenue generation. That's where you'll see the harbour authority corporation and some manuals and so on come into play.

• (1355)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you.

Linda.

Mrs. Linda Franz: I'd like to add a little bit to this. An effective tool that small craft harbours directorate in the Pacific region has encouraged harbour authorities to build is a budget, a five-year to ten-year budget. That incorporates all of our pending projects and future projects and in essence eventually helps you set your rates: you know you have to have so much money to commit to your plans.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you.

Is there anyone else?

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

I want to touch on something that was brought up earlier on: the number of derelict boats. For whatever reason, we have derelict boats. I don't want to dwell on the causes. What percentage of the dock or wharf space, roughly, is being used up? The comment I heard was that there was a shortage of space. I think one of the quickest ways to free up that space would be to get rid of the derelict vessels that are tied up.

How substantial is it? What percentage are we looking at? Is it 20% of wharf space used up by derelict vessels, or 10%, or 5%? What is it?

Mrs. Linda Franz: I think it's linked directly to licence buyback. Of course, after that happens and you give it a few years, those derelict vessels can increase on your wharf, and it's a matter of how long it takes you to manage them and get them out of your harbour. I think there's a direct link.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I understand that. I just want to know, is it 20% of the vessels that are tied up right now, or 20% of the space used up by derelict vessels or those that aren't fishing? What's the number? Can anybody give me a rough estimate?

Mr. Art Childs: I think it would depend a lot on which harbour, but to give you an example, when I came to False Creek I would

guess it was quite easily 10% of the dock space, and we house about 250 boats. So 10% of those spaces were inhabited by non-fishing, non-maintained, non-insured, non-leaving—

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Non-berthage-paying—nothing?

Mr. Ben Maberley: Well, the problem you run into is that you have derelict vessels that are paying berthage. That's the real problem. They pay berthage, and as a harbour authority, when you take the berthage because they've taken the spot, then that vessel is your problem. We have vessels that sit at our dock, pay berthage, and we keep them afloat. And we have no way to get rid of them, none whatsoever.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: What do you recommend for getting rid of them? I can't believe—

Mr. Ben Maberley: I recommend a dark, stormy night, when nobody can see you.

The Chair: I don't think you're getting legislation for that.

We need to finish as quickly as we can now.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Liz, you looked as if you wanted to talk about this. Is there anything you wanted to say?

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: I think it's very difficult to put a percentage on it, because, as I said, in our harbour and in the larger harbours we're looking at maybe 10%. But in the smaller harbours where there's no staff, sometimes 50% of their wharf space is taken up; that severely depletes their ability to raise revenues.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: So you have responsibility to maintain and look after these vessels, with no authority to remove or get rid of them?

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod: I don't know that it's a responsibility, but the last thing you want is these things sinking at your dock, because once they're down—

A voice: We have liability.

Mr. Art Childs: That's right; there's a liability there. If one of those vessels goes down and causes a spill, sure, the owner is liable, but the harbour authority is left with the cleanup.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Just as a side question—and I don't want you to read between the lines, but I know Mr. Stoffer got some great western hospitality, so I'll ask for just a couple of more minutes here.

The Chair: I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but we're finished.

Thank you very much to our witnesses. We thank you also for the written presentations; they will add greatly to our study. Thank you for your free flow of answers; they will certainly add to our interest.

We're going to break for a few minutes to prepare for our next group.

Thank you very much.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1405)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

Once again, the process is that we'll have some opening remarks and then we'll have a question and answer period.

I want to thank our guests for their presence here today. I also want to make note—I forgot earlier—that Mr. Robin Richardson, from small craft harbours directorate, DFO, is in the back. I'm sure you're quite familiar with him. He's joining us on our tour this morning and is participating in our meetings here today.

I certainly want to thank all of you for coming together this afternoon. It's a bit different from what we had planned originally, but due to time constraints we have no choice. We do certainly thank you for doing that.

I also want to thank you for our great visit this morning. It was indeed an eye-opener to sail along the harbour. We haven't done that before. We did in Nova Scotia; we went from one side to the other. It was a drop-off. But this morning was very beneficial—and I got a chance to stop at the gift store. I like to throw that in, because everybody else was waiting on the bus. My five-year-old daughter wanted a pink T-shirt from Vancouver, so she's going to get it. And Mr. Blais had to pick up a T-shirt for one of his friends in Quebec too.

I want to ask you to do what we did before: everybody introduce yourselves and the organizations you represent. Then I believe Mr. Hugh Fraser is going to start our presentations this morning. So first of all, could everybody introduce themselves?

We'll start with Mr. Williamson.

• (1410)

Mr. Gary Williamson (Director, Area E Gillnetters Association): I'm Gary Williamson, director of Area E Gillnetters Association. We spend a lifetime on the Fraser.

Mr. Mike Bennett (Member, Area E Gillnetters Association): I'm Michael Bennett. I'm a commercial fisherman, also with Area E Gillnetters, as well as several other organizations, and a resident of the lower Fraser south area—fourth generation, both sides of my family, on the lower Fraser.

Mr. Ross Holkestad (Representative, Fishing Vessel Owners Association, Steveston Harbour Authority): I'm Ross Holkestad, commercial fisherman, director of the Steveston Harbour Board Association.

Mr. Bob Baziuk (General Manager, Steveston Harbour Authority): I'm Bob Baziuk. I'm the general manager of Steveston Harbour, a proud member of the HAABC, and a member of the B.C. PRHAAC as well. My heart was with my colleagues when they were giving their presentations.

Mr. Hugh Fraser (Deputy Director, Engineering, Corporation of Delta): I'm Hugh Fraser. I'm with the Corporation of Delta. I'm the deputy director of engineering. I'm assisting the staff with the presentations and discussions today.

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford (Manager, Community Recreation Services, Corporation of Delta): My name is Nancy Cuddeford. I would be considered the program manager for the Ladner Harbour Authority. The Corporation of Delta is the Ladner Harbour Authority.

Mr. Harvey Gifford (Chair, Ladner Harbour Fishers' Committee): I'm Harvey Gifford. I chair the Ladner Harbour Fishers' Committee, which is the advisory body to Delta, which is our harbour authority.

The Chair: Thank you, everybody.

I believe Mr. Fraser is going to start our remarks this afternoon.

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Thank you very much.

In essence, what I did today was I prepared a kind of powerpoint presentation. I'd like to just step you through it and give you a bit of an overview with respect to Ladner Harbour and some of the issues the harbour faces.

On the second slide, first of all, I'll give just a little bit of background with respect to that harbour and the harbour jurisdiction. I want to discuss some of the local issues and concerns with respect to the harbour and then finally some recommended improvements that you can take away and consider.

The third slide, moving on to the next page, outlines for us a bit of the history. The harbour was constructed in 1983, and then following that there was a five-year agreement signed by the corporation. It wasn't until 1998 that we signed a 20-year agreement, so the corporation has a long-term arrangement with respect to the management of the harbour.

The next slide outlines the location of the harbour. You can see we're in the delta, right near the mouth of the Fraser River, right across from the historic and main community of Ladner.

Moving on to the following page, you will see, outlined in red, the specific area that is the jurisdiction of the Ladner Harbour Authority falling under the small craft harbours program. The harbour itself is quite a bit larger. When you were out today you saw there are a couple of marinas. There are docking facilities and commercial facilities all along that Ladner Slough area, but the specific area of the jurisdiction is limited to that small area outlined in red.

Moving on to the next slide, one of the interesting things relates to the management structure of the harbour. With respect to that, there is a close relationship between the Ladner Harbour committee, which are the volunteers, and the Corporation of Delta, the professional staff that provide the support. What we have done there, in an overview way, is outlined for you the way that structure works. I understand there is some interest in that and the issue of volunteer burnout. That's not one we have specifically faced in our community because there is professional support that can be drawn on by the volunteers who are running the committee.

Moving on to the next slide, I just want to highlight and go over with you some of the local issues. First of all, there are things that are working. There are positives. We think the community development model is an excellent model, and it should be retained, maintained, and enhanced. The support from the small craft harbours program for capital improvements we think is a good model and it's working fairly well. Also, currently with the financial model in the corporation, the volunteers aren't responsible for collecting that. We have a wharfinger, and the moorage fees and the accounting is done by a private firm, with an overview by our director of finance.

Those are some really positive things that are very good, but there are areas for improvement.

Moving on to the next slide, these have already been touched on with respect to some of those things. First of all, it is extremely difficult to manage derelict boats and abandoned boats, unlike the east coast. Furthermore, we think there is a need to empower the harbour authorities to remove the vessels.

Moving on to the next page, safe harbour access is really critical, and we need, through some organization, support for sustainable funding for secondary channel dredging.

If you move down to the next sheet, in essence what we've outlined there are some of the reaches where we have significant challenges with respect to the issue of secondary dredging. The main river channel is dredged on a regular basis, and you'll see the main river channel at the top of the slide. In order to get access to the harbour, which, you'll recall, is just opposite the community, we need to ensure there is adequate depth for the vehicles to move up that channel and into the harbour area. There are also a lot of recreational and other vessels that use these reaches, and they have to be extremely careful in terms of their access to those channels.

The next slide points out some of those issues. There are float homes along there. The slide on the bottom right shows a tug that was bringing in a barge and they've run aground. They are trying to dig themselves out.

• (1415)

Moving to the next slide, there are several issues I've highlighted.

Infrastructure funding has been discussed, and obviously it's important from a boat ramp perspective as well as all the other infrastructure in the community.

Communications are very important, particularly with respect to DFO staff internally, so that we are ensuring that the fishery will be sustainable in the long term and that there are adequate funds to pay for moorage and to keep the harbours going. Also, we just want to outline that the website that is currently available for staff and the annual conference are very important tools for staff to communicate, to meet, to discuss problems, and to share ideas.

The issue of climate change and adaptation was discussed. Our harbour doesn't necessarily face the wind effects, but storm surge effects and sediment loads are very important issues for us. Overall, the desire is to ensure a sustainable, safe, viable harbour.

Moving to the last page, these are what we've summarized as what we would call some of the recommended improvements.

First of all, we would suggest there is a need for legislative changes to facilitate the removal of the abandoned and derelict vehicles. We would also suggest that there be appointment of enforcement officers for each harbour authority to assist with that, particularly in the context of the current legislation.

Regarding secondary channel dredging, we need long-term sustainable funding for that item, to ensure continuous and safe harbour access.

There's a need to maintain—and you've heard this already—and enhance funding for harbour infrastructure.

We would think there could be opportunities to improve internal communications. DFO is a very large department, with many different branches, and sometimes it appears, at least to us on the ground, that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

And assistance with local climate change adaptation measures is also needed.

In summary, I'd like to thank you for your support and for your interest in maintaining these local harbour authorities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

I believe Mr. Gifford is next.

Mr. Harvey Gifford: I'm Harvey Gifford. I met all of you this morning, but I actually didn't realize I was going to meet you again, so it's probably going to be pretty repetitious, as dredging is one of my main points here.

We have 93 vessels in our harbour, and 23 are recreational. We have a decline in the commercial boats basically due to the way the salmon fishery has gone. But we have no problem filling the harbour and are doing the municipality a service, I guess, by creating space for these recreational boats. But I will say that commercial fishing vessels have a priority, because they are what the harbour was built for.

I think our harbour is running very well under the harbour authority, as we've managed to put some money in the bank and vessels are paying their own way. We have a residence in the harbour now, which the municipality helped us get, and it's occupied 24-7 by our wharfinger. Of course, he has joint duties; he looks after the harbour for four hours a day, and then he has jobs he does for the municipality. It's good that we have him there; he keeps an eye on everything, and he's the one who collects the money for us.

We have the storage building. I think there are 16 lockers in there—or 17, as I think Simon said—which are all rented out to commercial fishermen. I don't know if you saw our pump-out station, thanks to the government, which funded it. We have that installed now to help keep the harbour a little cleaner.

I think we have a good relationship with the staff at DFO, but being one of the smaller harbours, we sometimes feel we're being put aside for larger projects and larger harbours, which may or may not be true. We would appreciate some funding for an electrical upgrade; our docks are in need of an electrical upgrade. We're badly in need of some dredging, as we have boats now that sit on the bottom at low tide. Everybody's talked about that.

Access to the harbour is another big problem. We have space at our docks for larger vessels. I think the reason we're not getting the docks filled up is that we don't have proper access to the docks. You can get in on high tide, but you can't run a business when you have to wait for high tide for your vessel to be able to leave the harbour. It's getting to the point now, as you saw, in the harbour today that some of the larger vessels need a six-foot tide to get out into the river—or into the main channel, anyhow.

There was lots of water down there today, but with the freshet running, it brings it up a couple of feet. It was a mid-tide, at 8.9 feet at 9 o'clock this morning when you were out there, so there was lots of water there. But it's too bad you couldn't see it at zero tide, with no freshet. It's getting to be a really serious problem.

I've brought a bunch of photos, with quite a few copies. There's a CD to look at when you have the time. When you're all together, maybe you could look at the CD. It is quite interesting. It's from a helicopter that took aerial photos of what's going on and how bad the situation is. There's also a map in there. It shows the reason we're having the problems we're having now. They redirected the river to keep the main arm open for freighter traffic. The main channel used to come down through Ladner, but then they blocked that off and directed it down what they call the South Arm now, and they put in all of these training walls, so that the whole flow of the river runs down. And we get the slow-moving water in which the silt settles and doesn't get swept out.

I don't know if you'd call it a map or chart, but there's a chart on which I've pencilled in red where all these training walls were put in to get that flow of the water going down the river.

• (1420)

I think I might have mentioned this morning that I'm not really too sure that it's the best thing for salmon fingerlings coming down the river, either, because—I'm not positive about this—with all that force going down the main river, they get pushed out into the salt water sooner than they should. It takes them a little while to adapt from the fresh water to the salt.

For some reason or other, there seems to be less water in the river now than there was years ago. I'm talking about maybe 30 years ago. I see it with pilings, the cut-off pilings that were cut off at low water 30 or 40 years ago. They're still there, but now, in low water, they're sticking three feet out of the water. I don't know that anybody can answer that question, but I definitely feel that there's less water in the river than there used to be. I've been playing down at that river since I was a kid.

I don't want to repeat myself too many times on the dredging. I understand that dredging all comes under what is now known as the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. We used to have three authorities: the North Fraser, the Fraser, and the Vancouver. Now they're amalgamated. I think their interests are all in shipping and trade.

I went to a presentation they had for harbour users, and nothing was shown about pleasure craft, float homes, or commercial fishing. Nothing. Everything was all about freighter traffic. I understand they're the ones who are responsible for this dredging. Well, every time a freighter comes into a river, they get paid for that. They get so much a gross ton for the freighter coming into the river. They pay their own pilotage fees, so the pilots aren't costing us any money. When they do dredge that river, they're selling the sand.

Now, I don't know how much money they're taking in from all this, but the whole dredging thing shouldn't be a direct cost to the government. They have to have some profits in there somewhere, I would assume. They're helping to pay their way selling the sand. They're talking about coming up with a dredging strategy. Maybe it will happen. I hope it will happen. I would say that we're going to be

swept underneath the carpet, because it all fits into trade and freighters and what not.

I don't know if you people can help us on that dredging issue, but I'm sure you can put pressure on the powers that be. On behalf of all river users or water users, I just hope you can do something to help us get these side channels dredged to keep the water running.

• (1425)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gifford. It's something we've heard, and not only here today. Dredging is a concern in many areas. I would say without hesitation that it will certainly be part of our report. It will deal with some of the dredging issues, not only here in British Columbia, but indeed in other parts of the country also.

Mr. Bennett, I believe you want to make a presentation to us.

Mr. Mike Bennett: Thank you very much.

I'm a commercial fisherman and long-time resident—well, as long as my life has been, anyway.

My family goes back four generations at the mouth of the Fraser River. From speaking to my grandfathers when I was young, I learned a lot of the history. My great-grandfather was a tugboat skipper on the Fraser. He named Calamity Point, up by Harrison Hot Springs. There's a lot of history.

They told me about the old route of the Fraser River. Harvey Gifford went to the archives and looked up some old maps. The very important part that Harvey touched on was the alteration of the flow of the south Fraser River. Someone in the past made the decision to make the northern part of the main river the main flow.

I live on Westham Island—you guys didn't get quite far enough down the river to have a look at it this morning—where I own an old fish cannery site. It's the first cannery site when you come up the river. Right in front of that site was the old main arm of the river, where the tugboats and the freighters used to go up. We had deep-water access for the freighters to unload their cargo, right up into Ladner Slough. The dynamite boat used to go up into Ladner Slough—I call it a slough now, but it used to be the main river—and that was in my lifetime, thirty years ago. I can plainly remember it.

Now they've taken these islands, and what used to be an island is no longer an island. They dammed off the top end of it when they built the Massey Tunnel. It stopped all that water flow from coming down into Ladner.

They've taken Kirkland Island and built a 500-foot-long rock wall up there that stopped that flow of water from coming down into Ladner. They've built the Woodward Dam. That stopped the main flow of the river from coming down into the Ladner area.

It's hard to believe that in this day and age, someone can actually dam the Fraser River and alter the natural environment of the wetlands, but it has happened. You can see it on any map you look at. It says the name "Woodward Dam", and Deas Island was an island. It's insane how much the water flow has been altered down there.

As they've diverted 80% of the water flow away—roughly, because initially it was 80%—we were left with 20%. Over the years, as that 20% has slowed down, the siltation has increased because there's just not enough water to have the corrosive or erosive effect of the river flowing. In my life, the water in front of my dock.... I used to be able to tie up at a dead low water and have 15 feet of water. There's now eight feet of mud. This is not a small issue; it's huge.

The way it's going right now, Ladner Slough will probably fill in completely in twenty years. Once the flow stops, the sediment settles down. It comes out the main river, it backs up with a flood, and the sediment just settles down at the bottom.

As for the effect on the fingerlings, it's like Harvey said. We used to have salmon fry swimming by the dock all the time in the spring. You'd see it coming out. I don't know what the effect of it is, but probably one of the most vast areas of marshland and wetland of the Fraser Delta is in the south Fraser area.

Safety issues are just incredible. The boats tip over at the dock. We all have Dickinson oil stoves in our boats. They can tip over and cause fires, but who's going to come and put out a fire? There's no one there. The houseboats are lifting over. People have candles going. That's a fire hazard.

Right out in front of my dock, below the Woodward Dam where the old main channel used to be, it's high and dry. On the low tide, there's eight feet of mud all the way across the whole expanse of what used to be the main river. There are three training walls out there that used to keep the river flowing in the direction they wanted it to flow. They're so far in the marsh grass now that you can hardly even see them.

In terms of the channel, there's not a weekend in the summer when there's not a boat high and dry up on it and stuck for a tide. There are guys coming by the river in front of my house. They just hit that bar and they're stuck there for the day.

I don't know what can be done, but something needs to be done. Someone made a comment a while ago, and to me it seemed to hit the nail on the head. Dredging is like shovelling your driveway in a blizzard. Unless we get the flow of water going back down there to some degree, it's not going to do the job it needs to do.

●(1430)

We seem to have the great desire to bring all that deep-sea traffic up into the Fraser River and keep that one arm of the river deep. I can see that there's financial benefit to it, but is it really what the people want, to have that happen, when it's possibly a detriment and such an alteration to the wetlands out there? I'd like to see someone look into it to see what the long-term effects are going to be or how the environment is altered, because it is, and that's how it has been altered out there.

Another thing I would say, as representing fisheries, is that the guys are forever getting heck for prop-washing. I guess you probably all know what prop-washing is. When our boats go dry at the dock, we run the boats so that they don't tip over at the dock. Prop-washing—something that's not supposed to be there—shouldn't be a problem. We're silting in because the water doesn't come there any more, so we shouldn't be getting heck for doing this. I don't know

whether there should be a funding program to hire someone to do the prop-washing. We're not talking about one mile of water; we're talking about miles and miles of docks and waterways that are filling in.

Thanks for taking the time to come out here to have a look around. As Harvey said, I really wish you guys could have seen it on a low tide. I had a great big dock that's 100 feet long and 40 feet wide, which on a one-foot tide looked as though it was going to break in half, about a month ago. If you'd come down there and seen that, and the one on June 4 that we have coming—it's a minus-one-foot tide.... It very well might. It is a real, serious issue.

●(1435)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bennett. We'll consider your invitation to return.

I believe Mr. Baziuk is going to make a few comments.

Mr. Bob Baziuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've listened to my colleagues, Mr. Bennett and Mr. Gifford, and we're going to sound like broken records here. I wish you had come at a low tide as well, because Steveston is no exception to this, when you see how low the channel is from the tour today.

My presentation basically was the tour. I can't emphasize enough the need for a dredging strategy, because it really is an abysmal situation out here. I'm constantly approached by our harbour users, the big boat users such as Mr. Holkestad. He represents many of them, who ask: "What are they doing about it? What are you doing about it?" And I can only do so much.

If anything, if you leave Steveston with any sort of message, it is that we need a dredging strategy and we need funding to make it functional. We can have the prettiest harbours in B.C.—Liz and I joke around about that a lot, but we do have wonderful harbours in B.C. and we're all very proud of them—but if you can't get to them, what's the point? For the functionality and for the commerce that comes up through the Steveston channel to the unloading station, in particular where Mr. Holkestad sails up to, it's essential that they can get up there and not be restricted to tides, because the risk is as well, as other big boat owners have told me, that if they're forced to leave the harbour, all those funds that go into the local community are just lost.

We're really hopeful that something can be done about this, that some funds can materialize.

I know we're not unique in this in B.C. I know from my friends across the country and from being involved with the NAC and so on that it's not a problem unique to British Columbia; I'm aware of that. But for the matter at hand right now, in Pacific region, I can't stress it enough.

With all the other problems in Steveston, for the most part we're doing okay. It's just the functionality of getting to the harbour. So for the sake of time, my presentation was the tour, and I'd like to save the other time for any questions that may be building.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Baziuk. Certainly the tour was a fine presentation, and all the members learned much from it.

I say to all the witnesses, don't be concerned about sounding like broken records, because sometimes you have to repeat things many times before the right people hear them and understand them and see the need to have them addressed. Sometimes that's a necessity.

Before I call on my colleagues to ask questions, I'd remind people that the time allotted includes your questions and answers. I allow the witnesses a little bit of extra time to answer some questions, but I will not be allowing you any extra time to ask them. So remember that your time is your limit.

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You're very generous.

Bob, I enjoyed the visit this morning.

You're talking to members of Parliament and government, and it certainly doesn't hurt to repeat your points to that crowd; perhaps after a while they might get the message. And if you think you have a problem with repetition, we've been at this for a while, and I don't mind repetition at all, because the fact of the matter is that you have problems. But we have heard some new things along with a lot of the older problems. Your problems with abandoned vessels and those types of things are unique to your area, and certainly not something I've seen anywhere else across the country I have been. So, indeed, you do have unique problems.

I want to welcome everybody. There are a lot of problems to discuss in a small period of time.

Mr. Bennett, regarding the south Fraser, I truly believe that when you start messing around with the flow of water anywhere, you cause trouble. You've told me, and Mr. Gifford has also told me, that it's caused a major problem that can only be handled by a large amount of money for dredging or for dealing with the flow of water in the south Fraser.

Could you give us, in a capsule form, what you think should happen? What could happen in order to increase your flow of water?

Also, somebody mentioned that in front of their harbour was eight feet of mud and that boats were getting stuck in the channel. It's pretty sad if they're stuck in the channel. So I'd just like you to elaborate on that, as it's important to get it on the record.

• (1440)

Mr. Mike Bennett: I was told something interesting by one of the fellows who is quite involved, not so much with the dredging, but actually with buying the sand that comes from the dredging programs on the Fraser, who explained something I have never really grasped. He said that when they built the George Massey Tunnel, the natural dam of the Fraser River, they can only dredge so much.... Upriver from the George Massey Tunnel, it doesn't matter what they do, because it's going to be restricted by that area of the river. They've dammed off Deas Island, so they've stopped the water there. But what he said is that below what is now the main arm of the river, they've over-dredged it. He explained to me that what it's done is it's drawn the water that used to flow through the Ladner Slough and the smaller reaches into the over-dredged portion of the river.

We keep seeing—in my life, at least—the ships getting bigger and bigger. You see them on the world news, these great big container ships and car freighters. They seem to want to bring them all up the river. I think they should maybe be going somewhere else. You know, we shouldn't be digging that one arm of the river out so deeply, because that's what's drawing all the flow away from the other areas.

Yes, when you asked about the eight feet—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Just to enlighten us, they're continuing to dredge there all the time to continue the flow, is that right? They dredge there regularly?

Mr. Mike Bennett: I know one of the guys who works on the dredging, and my understanding is that they're only taking off the humps now. They have not been making the channel any deeper the last couple of years; they're just taking off the humps that build up, because as the flow meanders it does build up humps in the river.

They've taken all of the different tributaries of the river, of which there were probably about six originally, and they've made them into one big one. When you stop all that fresh flow from going down those smaller channels, they just silt in—and it is incredible. My father's place, which is just upriver from mine, used to be a big unloading platform where they unloaded the rocks to build the dikes around Westham Island, right across the river from Steveston. You couldn't get in there now on a five-foot tide; it's just mud right out front. And they'd bring the big tugs and barges in there.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: So if there is not a funding change, your wharves are going to become useless to you. You won't be able to get in to them, because we saw that this morning.

Mr. Mike Bennett: They are. At my father's place the boats are keeled right over, lying right on their sides at low tide now.

I really believe that we need to open some of the water coming back down there. You know, it's all been dammed up. It's hard to believe, as I was saying, that it's been dammed up, but it has. Harvey's maps will show you that. It's very clear where they've done that; it's right on the map.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: We're putting a report together for government, and this is why we're here, to hear what you have to say. In the end, it's you people, and unfortunately you're not listened to enough; I know that on the east coast they're not, anyway, no matter what government it is. It seems to be, sometimes, that we don't hear your view enough, and it's a pleasure to be here to hear it.

Mr. Gifford, you were of course big on the dredging issue. If you'd like to, expand on that, and on the safety issue as to what will take place if something should happen—it's just good to get it on the record—and these things are not done properly, such as a fire or something like that.

• (1445)

Mr. Harvey Gifford: Michael touched on two: when boats start going dry and list over—there are some in the photos we have here showing boats lying on their side—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: For the lack of water.

Mr. Harvey Gifford: Yes, and if they have a stove or a fridge, or... Who knows what they have inside their boats? It's the same with the float homes: they're listing too. They're eventually going to break up. They won't take it; the float homes won't. They won't take going dry, because with their structure, they'll eventually break up.

And then, there are people grounding out in their boats. When they're travelling down a river, and they get stuck out there, who knows what can happen?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

There's one thing I'm new to: prop-washing. What's that? I guess we should know. I don't know, so I'm asking.

Mr. Mike Bennett: Yes. When your boat's tied to the dock, if your boat's going dry, you run your propeller, and it kicks out the mud that's building up underneath your boat. Fisheries—the enforcement guys—seem to think that's a bad thing.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: But how can you avoid it, when the propeller is in the mud?

Mr. Mike Bennett: Well, you can't, and unless you want your boat to go high and dry and tip over and burn up or sink, you have to do something. That's what I was alluding to. This is an unnatural process down on the south Fraser.

Also, Mr. Baziuk was talking about Steveston. Probably before his time, at the top of Steveston Island they built a rock jetty across it. They built that rock jetty because, in their thought, it would slow the water down and make it easier to dock at the docks. And they put the big wing dam up above the rock jetty.

That worked really well for the first 25 or 30 years. Then all of a sudden the water slowed down and the silt built up. If the flow were going through there, maybe it wouldn't be as easy to tie to the dock, but it wouldn't fill in as much either.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fraser, you have indicated that you have a long-term lease, is it, or a program for the harbour authority that you have. I'd like you to expand on this. We heard that on the smaller projects, if it's \$40,000 or under.... You know what I'm talking about.

What would you like to see in the long term? Would you like to see a long-term process? Would you like to be involved in the long-term process? Should this type of thing change? Should it go from \$40,000 to \$200,000, so that you wouldn't be putting one project into three different projects in order to get it into the proper funding area?

And on the need for more dollars, which we've heard, of course, overall—and we all know it needs to take place, and it's true that if you did put half a billion dollars into the small craft harbours budget we couldn't spend it anyway—if a reasonable increase every year were put in place.... I'd just like you to give the committee your view on what should take place on the change from \$40,000 to \$200,000, and what part you'd like to play in the long-term process.

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Let me put it into context. I'm not directly involved in the specific projects in the harbour. Generally our expertise is drawn on. So I'm going to defer part of the answer to Nancy.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Go ahead, and to anybody else.

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Let me just talk about, from a general perspective, the \$40,000 and the challenges it presents. The \$40,000 is pretty small, and definitely we would support that \$200,000. More project-specifically, Nancy can supplement this.

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: I would just like to say that it cost us more than \$40,000 to put in a pump-out station. It took some work, because there are all sorts of things now with environmental review process: having the engineering drawings done and then going out to the local community, as we like to. I'd love to see the increase go up to \$200,000. I think that's very reasonable.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's more efficient too.

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: Yes. I think Liz McLeod hit on some things in saying we're all working together in supporting the local authorities. When something happens and they announce they're doing something really big over there, and we get something happening, everybody's happy for each other and moving forward. That's what it's all about. It's about keeping things going, having healthy communities, having people come in to work in the economy for the fishers, but also having the pleasure craft come in from time to time, or the commercial vessels.

We'd love to see a long-term goal or vision for this program in terms of sustainability—whatever you can do in that work. I'd also love to see something to do with removing the abandoned vessels, where we could have the power of arrest.

• (1450)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I didn't get to that, but I guess we don't have enough time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Cuddeford.

I realize Mr. Simms wanted to ask some questions, but you'll have to take that up with Mr. MacAulay, who's supposed to share some time with you.

Mr. Lévesque, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I took note, Mr. Fraser, that you speak rather good French.

I am struck by the inequities I see in everything that is presented. We travelled to the East and the Centre and today we are out West. There are similarities, especially in terms of the access fees to the harbours and docks, the service costs and the power of harbour authorities to force people to pay a fair rate.

Today, we are hearing about a problem which does not exist to the same degree in the East: derelict vessels. I am wondering if it would not be useful for authorities to establish fees by order in council in order to set base rates for tying a boat to a wharf.

As far as silting is concerned, obviously there are some areas on the coast where it is more an issue than in others. In Quebec, for example, the St. Lawrence has had such low levels of water that we had to open dams in order to get the ships out, otherwise they would have been stuck. We do not have in Montreal the tides you have here. I talked this morning with Mr. Fraser about shore erosion, which might contribute to the silting up of the Fraser. I wonder if anything is done to protect the shore against erosion which contributes to silting.

I am struck by another inequity. When we toured the harbour, I asked how the dredging was working. Somebody answered that \$200,000 would be spent one year to do part of the work and that some other year there would be more funding to do another part. It seems to me that it is as if we bought ten clunkers for \$200,000 because we do not have the means to buy a new car for a million dollars. But a million dollar car, if it is well built, could last for 10, 15 or 20 years.

Has any study been done as to how one could prevent the shores from eroding, with the technologies we have available, in order to reduce silting in a river such as the Fraser?

First of all, I would like you to tell me if setting basic fees by order in council would be helpful for small craft harbours.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Fraser.

[Translation]

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

I'll address the issue with respect to erosion. The Fraser River system is a massive river system. It stretches from near Jasper over to Prince George, and then down to Delta. I don't exactly know the length offhand, but it's in the range of maybe 1,000 miles—1,600 kilometres—and probably a bit more. As well, there are many large feeder systems flowing into that river system. There are particular areas, particularly in the Cariboo Plateau, where the silts are just part of the natural system.

Since the river was first discovered, it has been known as the "muddy Fraser". It's very interesting when you see the river where it meets the Thompson River. You have the beautiful clear water of the Thompson River coming in, and 100 metres downstream from where the Thompson meets the Fraser, you can't even see that there was clear water there. It's just swallowed up.

So we see that there is a lot of sediment that comes down in the system. Stream bank erosion is just part of the natural system, and stream bank erosion protection won't resolve that.

But it is every interesting from a climate change perspective. You've probably all heard of the mountain pine beetle. That has affected a huge area in British Columbia, and it's a growing concern. We discussed that a little bit earlier in terms of how it is going to affect the runoff patterns and potentially the sediment loads. We could possibly be seeing some of those effects already in terms of the increasing rate of silt that's being brought down the river, as well as in terms of the overall hydrology and runoff patterns in the river system.

So I don't think extensive foreshore or management erosion protection work would be feasible or cost-effective.

Maybe I'll just defer the rates question to Nancy, and she can add to that.

• (1455)

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: The primary problem here is being able to say that we don't want certain vessels in our harbour any longer and that they shouldn't come in because they're not welcome. Regardless of charging any fees.... As the harbour authority's presentation referred to it, those vessels that are of a confined berthage will be more than happy to be there and let their boats go with the fine. Really, it's more the authority to say no.

We've set basic fees. We have one case in which we're charging an operator \$10,000 as a security deposit in order for him to have his vessel stay to the end of this month, because we're concerned about the state of his vessel. But as much as I like to collect revenue, if you have something catastrophic happen, it's not enough and it also affects the other vessel owners. So for that surety, we'd just as soon be able to have the power to say no and have them move out.

Mr. Hugh Fraser: As well, I think part of the intent of your question was whether fees should be put toward dredging. In that regard, it's something that would have to be discussed with the commission in terms of applying a portion of boat fees to that.

I know we heard about prop washing, and certainly the boat owners will do that. But in a longer term, it's really of no benefit unless there's a main channel to carry away and bring that sediment downstream.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Stoffer, you're on for five minutes.

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

Again, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your presentation.

The first question is for the Corporation of Delta.

Nancy, if there's a derelict car sitting on a street in Delta, the community has the authority to take that vehicle away and impound it. They can just take it off the street. Does the same thing not apply for the...? I noticed that the authority falls under the council of Delta, so would they not have the same authority to remove a vessel off the harbour?

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: No, because it's a federal jurisdiction if it has anything to do with boating.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'm glad you cleared that up.

On the big picture, I notice that there's a lot of talk in Ottawa regarding the Pacific gateway. An awful lot of funds have come to British Columbia in order to prepare that, obviously for shipping with the Orient. Has any of that money come your way in order to ascertain...? I know there's a lot of work on infrastructure on the Fraser, in that one channel, but has any of that money filtered down your way in regard to assistance in what you're talking about, the secondary channels? Have you had a chance at all to speak with someone like David Emerson, the minister who is responsible for the Pacific gateway, in order to ascertain some of those concerns?

Mr. Hugh Fraser: With respect to the Pacific gateway, there are a number of projects, as you point out. There's the port expansion, there's B.C. Rail and rail expansion, and there's the south Fraser perimeter road. Funds are generally directed toward mitigation of direct impacts. There have been no funds, as far as I'm aware, with respect to secondary channels or anything along those lines.

• (1500)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Have you asked someone like Minister Emerson?

Mr. Hugh Fraser: I haven't personally asked, but there have been letters written that have gone to different ministers in that regard with respect to secondary channel dredging. I'm not totally aware of whether or not there's a linkage with the gateway project.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: My other questions are more or less for the fishermen.

I believe everyone in Canada has a place to go to a safe worksite. Fishermen really don't have that. Once you go out onto the water, you really risk your lives for the enjoyment of others, so that we can enjoy the product you bring to us.

In terms of having a boat on a dock, having it lean over because of a lack of dredging and the fact that you have very low water, and having it create a fire hazard, I would think the fire marshal of a local community would want to say something about that. In most cities that I know, if a fire marshal says something is deemed a hazard and thou shalt not continue in this way, they can shut facilities down. They can do all kinds of things. Has your situation ever been looked at in that regard?

For the fishermen themselves, when you go away and then you come back, you want to come back to a safe and happy port in order to be able to dock your investment in a safe manner. I'm just wondering about the frustration you must have over this, because this is not the first time we've heard this. We hear it right across the country. I know there will be a major recommendation in our report coming forward. I'm just wondering if you could comment on that from your perspective, if you don't mind.

Mr. Ross Holkestad: It doesn't pertain to tying up to a dock. There were some pictures passed out by Bob a little while ago. We've had vessels in Steveston Harbour high and dry, laying right over. The same thing can happen there, with big oil spills if we're talking about larger vessels more so at Ladner and places like that. It's easier to catch fire, there's more fuel to burn, and more damage can be done in the harbour. It's definitely a problem, the same as it is with the other vessels tied to the dock, like the smaller vessels listing over at low water.

I presume everybody saw those pictures that Bob passed out, of a sailing ship that's laying way over. They just about lost that boat, and that would have been a drastic thing for Steveston, Richmond, or wherever. The other fishing boats are big ones, and they're all high and dry. They're not listing over, but they could have been. In all those pictures of the boats that you've seen, they're all in trouble.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Has the fire marshal not said anything?

Mr. Bob Baziuk: I deal with the local fire department. It has been an aspect of discussions with them, but not predominantly. It's just to make sure we have proper firefighting equipment on site. As I

mentioned on the tour today, we welcome our local fire department on site today to talk about all kinds of fire possibilities and such, and how to mitigate the risks.

There's one interesting thing there when you talk about public safety, if I may. When that tall ship ran aground, that was somewhat embarrassing for Steveston. You had this massive Canadian tall ship leaning over in the channel and our staff were helping to bail people off. It was just "Oh, God..." Even the swans were appalled.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Kamp.

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

I bet that would never happen in Comox.

Thank you very much for coming, and thank you very much for the tour. It was remarkable, and we appreciate it a great deal. As I mentioned to some of you, my wife grew up in Ladner. We lived there for a while, and also in Steveston, so it was good to be back there.

I have just three areas of questions, and they probably won't take too long. Perhaps my colleague has some additional questions as well.

There is such a thing as the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. You're probably aware of it. I know it does dredging. It's an organization that tries to coordinate the agencies that are interested and involved both in the environmental aspect and the management aspect of the river and on the water side of the dikes. Have you had any involvement with them, and do you think they should be playing a role in any sort of secondary channel dredging? I think what we're hearing so far—and I think we knew this before—is that it appears as though nobody really has it within their mandate to dredge secondary channels. At least that's what it looks like so far, so that will be an interesting point of discussion in our report.

But do you think FREMP, as they call it, has any role to play here, Mr. Fraser?

• (1505)

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Maybe I can start by saying that FREMP is good from an overall agency coordination perspective and in looking at all of the various issues from the approvals perspective, like DFO approvals, Ministry of Environment approvals, and regional approvals. It keeps us on the straight and narrow. We have to make numerous applications there.

From a dredging management perspective, they're more of an oversight body and I don't really see them getting into the nitty-gritty of doing that activity. I think it would be more appropriate that there be better liaisons between the small harbour authorities and the larger Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. If that could be done in terms of, I don't know, maybe a separate committee—and maybe others have ideas on this perspective—there would be a larger organization that would assist with ensuring the funds were applied to address the specific problems. I know the dredges are there. The equipment's there, so it's just a matter of getting the funds to the right place.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Yes, and I think there are some discussions along that line.

Mr. Mike Bennett: When FREMP came to fruition, their mandate basically was to not touch anything that's naturally occurring, to keep the grass green. If you want to drive a new pile into the ground, you have to go through the proper steps and jump through the proper hoops. But a lot of our issues with siltation and dredging are occurring because, as man, we have altered the flow of the river. We've certainly altered Steveston and we've altered the south Fraser in the Ladner area. We've changed it, so we need to take into consideration those changes and what needs to be done with respect to them.

It's not as simple as saying these channels are going to remain clear because they have done so for hundreds and thousands of years. Mr. Lévesque said they've opened up dams in the St. Lawrence to allow the flows to go back where they were before. We need to look at things like that, because the natural flows of the water aren't going the way they used to go.

Mr. Randy Kamp: I understand the point you've made. You've referred to a chart or two, but has that been documented in terms of the rates of flow, siltation load, and so on, in terms of all these things that have been referred to? Has that been documented and is it available for us to look at? Does anyone know that?

Mr. Bob Baziuk: Mr. Richardson could probably speak to that, but I believe small craft harbours directorate has done some studies on the flow and the siltation, with some colour-coded things. The engineering department for the Pacific region may have those answers.

Mr. Hugh Fraser: Just with respect to the broader river system, the Fraser Basin Council recently coordinated a large study to look at the whole flood issue, and they also looked at the effects of dredging in terms of the flood levels. But in terms of the whole estuary, the flow regimes are very complicated, so maybe there probably is a need for further work and understanding there.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Yes, I've seen that report and it is an attempt at that.

Mr. Harvey Gifford: There are some charts available in the archives. I'm sure your brother-in-law, being the historian that he is, could tell you.

One of those things we had in the harbour the other day showed an old chart of where the river came down. It didn't show any flow, but it showed the depths of the river. The latest one we have doesn't give any depths, but I know an old-timer was telling me that at one time, just upriver from where our harbour is in Ladner, there was 60 feet of water. Now there might be 10 feet on high tide. That channel used to come right from the main river and come right through Ladner. There are maps that show it, but I don't know where you would get the water flow answer.

• (1510)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Let me just change tracks a little bit here—and I think this is probably to Nancy and Hugh.

In the model that you have in Ladner Harbour, the council takes the role of harbour authority, if I'm understanding that correctly. I'm just wondering if you can tell us a bit more about how that works. I know it's a fairly unusual arrangement, and I think we're maybe

going to see it tomorrow in Port McNeill as well. I'm wondering if you think it's a model that really is a good model, and whether we ought to consider maybe recommending it in other places across the country.

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: I'd be happy to take a stab at that.

Delta is very unique in this arrangement. From talking with other harbour managers, I think one of the most difficult challenges they have is trying to have support from the local city, the local town. I don't know that there's an appetite for those particular local charters or for those communities to enter into them. I don't know if the City of Vancouver would be interested in False Creek, and I don't know if the City of Richmond would be interested in Steveston. This has evolved because Ladner, Tsawwassen, and North Delta have been historic fishing communities, and there's great pride in that, in the heritage.

I think any community development model is a good one. You have one of the finest here with the Harbour Authority Association. If you can encourage local government to get involved, it would be a good thing, but I don't know how practical it would be with all the rest of the pressures that local governments face.

We run golf courses in some municipalities. I don't know too many.... I think maybe five are tied in with the harbour authorities in British Columbia. Some run cemeteries. There's a whole gamut of municipal services, and each one is involved for a particular reason.

Mr. Randy Kamp: What would you see as the main benefit of that kind of arrangement rather than a stand-alone harbour authority?

Ms. Nancy Cuddeford: The main benefit is that the governance of the council provides a tremendous reinforcement to staff about managing the assets of the corporation, going to bat and putting in extra time, communicating with engineering departments, the finance department, and so forth. It's like how DFO needs to have those kinds of communications with their different departments to be able to manage assets well. You know how government works. In a microcosm, the corporation does quite well, but I have dedicated time when probably a quarter of my time is spent working on harbour matters, when I also manage recreation facilities for the department, so it is a good investment for the corporation.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Fraser, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Hugh Fraser: I'd just say that what it does is provide support to the volunteers. For example, with the pump-out facilities, there's a lot of engineering. We did some unique things with respect to that particular project. There's expertise that can be drawn on from a larger organization. That's particularly beneficial. We were hearing that in other jurisdictions there's a kind of volunteer burnout. Well, understandably so. There are an awful lot of things to managing an organization, so if you can draw on experts, then it's positive.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Kamp.

That clears up the round. Due to the reorganization before we started, we ended up with a very full table. I noticed as we were going through that the gentleman in the corner didn't get an opportunity to answer any questions or to comment. Just outside our round here, then, I'm going to give Mr. Williamson a few moments to make a few closing remarks on some of the concerns he may have. We won't have time for any questions or anything, but we'll just give him an opportunity to make a few comments.

If you want to do that for three or four minutes, the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Gary Williamson: Yes, I do.

I'd like to talk about a little bit further up the Fraser, just opposite New Westminster. That's where the freighters come in. They're in behind one of these training walls. The training wall is here and they bring the freighters in behind it. They're pumping out of there constantly with a dredge. They're dredging it. I don't know if it goes on all year round, but it goes on lots.

They take it out and they pump into the river. They just spew it back into the river out here. That then comes down into the secondary channels below and silts them in. In the last five years, this silting in has been twice what it used to be.

The engineers have said this is the way to do it. Take it out there, put it back in over here, then pump it out, and then let it settle over in Ladner, Steveston Harbour, or wherever.

As far as FREMP goes, FREMP knows all about this. I couldn't bring a dredge in or a clamshell and dredge my two lots out in the middle of summer because there are fingerlings in the river. But they're dredging this stuff out of the Fraser port, dumping it back into the river, and letting it drift down the river to us. As far as I can see, there's absolutely no point to it.

In the main part of the river, all the dredging that's done there is done by a ship dredge. He picks it up down by Steveston, he takes it up further and dumps it back in the river, and a little dredge pumps some of that ashore because that's good sand. But the stuff at Fraser port is silt. Nobody wants to buy silt, so they dump it back in the river and we have to deal with it.

I used to have twelve feet at my float. Last year I came in on the eight-foot tide and ran aground ten feet outside the float. I had to sit there on bottom and wait about an hour and a half—the tide was coming up—before I could get in and tie up at the float. And I'm being charged for the foreshore that I can't get into part of the time. So on the whole issue of dredging, the complete lack of it is the problem.

Somebody mentioned \$200,000. That's a drop in the bucket compared to what needs to be here. Two million dollars might help, but unless there's some major funding and the harbour board doesn't put all the money they get into Vancouver Harbour, pretty soon you won't be able to get in at Ladner, which is where I live too. I'm already running aground in an eight-foot tide.

Anyway, I guess I'm getting a little carried away here. I wish I had time to answer some questions.

● (1515)

The Chair: Thank you. That's fine.

I certainly want to thank everybody for their presentations here today. As I said, we've travelled pretty well coast to coast in Canada now, and everywhere we go, we learn something new and something to add to our study. Certainly today's visit is no different. The circumstances here are certainly different from those in the places we have visited before, but some of the concerns are similar.

Finding a way to address those issues is certainly the purpose of our study. Our plan is to clue up this week on our travels and hopefully make the presentation of the study to the House of Commons sometime this fall.

In the meantime, if there's anything you would like to add in writing, feel free to forward it to the clerk or to the analysts. Over the next while, if there's something you remember after we pass today or that may come to mind as time goes on, we will start the process of putting our report together over the summer months, so you'll have time to make that presentation.

I want to thank everybody for their presence here today. Thank you again for the tour this morning. We're finished up now, but hopefully we'll cross paths again. Hopefully some of the information that you have provided to us today will be part and parcel of our study. Certainly some of the recommendations that will be forthcoming will be ones you would like to hear, and hopefully they will be acted upon.

With that, I'll once again say thank you.

I find that we have added on another family member. Our clerk's family has arrived. Her brother Sandy has joined us. If we had to stay around long enough we might have gotten to meet her dad, right, but he's in Ottawa.

● (1520)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, I'd like to make a point of order.

The clerk was kind enough to ensure that there was an ample supply of cookies for members of the committee and for witnesses. I understand that two individuals may have taken more than their share of cookies.

I would like to request that you, as chair, instruct your clerk to ensure that there is a greater supply of cookies.

The Chair: By the power invested in me by whoever, the cookies are okay. Mr. Simms is the person who's intimidated, because three of Julia's brothers are taller than he is.

Anyway, once again, thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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