



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

FOPO • NUMBER 033 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, April 23, 2012

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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1535)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP)): I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to order.

Thank you for your patience as we waited for a few members to join us. We do have another member on her way from the airport. Ms. Davidson will be joining us shortly.

I'd like to welcome our guests to the committee. We have two presentations this afternoon. We will hear from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and also from the Bluewater Anglers. We will start with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

Gentlemen, you have an allotted time for your opening remarks, and then there's a set amount of time for questions by members around the table.

I'd like to introduce Greg Farrant, manager of government affairs and policy, and Terry Quinney, provincial manager of fish and wildlife services.

Gentlemen, you have the floor. You have up to ten minutes for your opening remarks.

Mr. Greg Farrant (Manager, Government Affairs and Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters): Thank you, and good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the committee, and staff. Thank you very much for the invitation to appear before you today. It's something we've had the pleasure of doing previously, particularly on the topic of aquatic invasive species.

As the chair noted, with me is Dr. Terry Quinney, from OFAH. In addition to being responsible for fish and wildlife programs at OFAH, Dr. Quinney is an official Canadian advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. He was also the only Canadian to serve on the stakeholder advisory committee to the recent Chicago waterway study conducted by the Great Lakes cities initiative and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

The OFAH itself represents over 100,000 members, supporters, and subscribers, as well as 675 member clubs across Ontario. As such, we are the largest non-profit conservation-based organization in the province and one of the largest in the country. We are deeply concerned about the threat that aquatic invasive species pose to Canada's ecosystems, fish and wildlife populations, as well as to the socio-economic benefits that are derived from both recreational and commercial fishing on the Great Lakes.

While a great deal of progress has been made since we last appeared before this committee, I regret to say that some of the same issues we addressed back in 2003 and 2005 are still prevalent today. These include but are not limited to the need to address funding pressures, which a previous committee attempted to change but which remains.

Since 1994 the OFAH has been home to the invading species awareness program, the largest program of its type in the country and the only comprehensive program run by an NGO. Since 2003 that program has operated in full partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. We're a member of the Great Lakes panel on aquatic invasive species under the aegis of the aquatic invasive species task force, and we work with major groups such as the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the International Joint Commission, the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association, and the Ontario Commercial Fisheries Association. On the ground we also work with important fish hatcheries such as Bluewater, conservation authorities, lake and cottage associations, and bait and marina operators, who have an interest in preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species and invasive plants.

Putting modesty aside, the invading species awareness program—ISAP—has been a major success story for OFAH. Over the last decade we have participated in virtually every major exercise in the Great Lakes basin related to the monitoring, assessment, and control of aquatic invasive species, including zebra mussels, round goby, and more recently Asian carp.

As you heard during testimony by officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on April 2, the establishment and spread of aquatic invasive species represents a threat to ecosystems and to fish habitat and causes irreparable economic and environmental harm. Of the roughly 180 aquatic invasive species mentioned by Mr. Gillis in his remarks, approximately 160 have found a home in the Great Lakes. You will also recall that Mr. Gillis noted that the recreational, sport, and commercial fishery in the Great Lakes is cumulatively worth over \$7 billion annually. So it's not hard to see how the presence of aquatic invasive species that disrupt fish populations can make a significant ecological and economic impact.

The same species have a devastating impact on the 250,000 inland lakes across Ontario that support a thriving recreational sport fishery. Vital lake ecosystems are more vulnerable to impacts because of their smaller size and lower species diversity, which enable invasions to occur more rapidly and pervasively.

Public awareness and education are key to helping prevent the introduction of new species and controlling current ones. This is why we developed a national public education and outreach program, which has twice been the source of discussions at this committee. In both 2003 and 2005 the committee recommended funding for our ISAP proposal to run a national public education and awareness program together with our provincial and territorial affiliates. Unfortunately, this has not occurred.

In Canada, public outreach programs continue to be spearheaded largely by organizations like the OFAH, whose public education and awareness programs focus on pathways of introduction, monitoring, and researching impacts and control measures. Our invading species hotline receives thousands of calls each year and was indeed the vector for the first report of round goby being found in Lake Ontario.

During recent testimony by DFO officials, several members of this committee asked about the funding attached to the fight against aquatic invasive species, particularly sea lamprey. You were told that of the \$10 million spent on invasive species, \$8 million is directed towards the control of sea lamprey, with the remaining \$2 million split several ways to pay for programs across the country.

With all due respect, apportioning a relatively small amount of money to address a very large problem is by no means a function of this government alone. It is in fact an example of the chronic underfunding that stretches back to the early 1990s.

● (1540)

The shared blame for the underfunding of the invasive species strategy not only undermines the implementation and credibility of the national strategy, but leaves precious few resources to address a myriad of problems across the country and in the Great Lakes in particular. This is in direct contrast to the U.S.—recognizing the larger population base and budgets—which spends over half a billion dollars annually to address the threat posed by invasive species. In fact, the President announced \$50 million for 2012 just to address the threat posed by Asian carp on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes, so you get a sense of the problem we're facing here.

Just last week, the OFAH received a letter from Environment Canada informing us that, due to budget cuts, years two and three of a three-year, \$50,000-per-year funding agreement between that department and the invasive alien species partnership program was terminated, effective immediately. As I noted earlier, however, the limited amount of funding available to address the threat posed by aquatic invasives and the failure of successive governments to improve upon that funding envelope is not a new phenomenon. It's something we've struggled with for years.

Since 2003 the OFAH has had an memorandum of understanding with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, which provides us with roughly \$300,000 per year. We match that dollar for dollar. The recent loss of federal funding will make it harder to leverage matching contributions and will put more strain on our budget to make up the shortfall.

We've had extensive experience both with sea lamprey and with Asian carp. I'll use my remaining time to outline where we are on both of those species.

The arrival of sea lamprey in the Great Lakes was an unmitigated disaster for the recreational and commercial fishery. The annual commercial harvest fell from millions of kilograms to nearly nothing almost overnight. It is not an exaggeration to say that sea lamprey has changed a way of life in the Great Lakes basin: commercial fisheries suffered or shut down entirely, and the entire ecosystem was thrown into chaos.

The news today, I'm glad to say, is much better. In 1954 Canada and the U.S. collaborated on a plan to address the threat posed by this species. They formed the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a binational body, and charged the commission with developing and carrying out a sea lamprey control program. As a result of their work and the work done by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Province of Ontario, the fishery has been rehabilitated.

However, the rosy picture painted by DFO officials during their appearance is not entirely a reflection of reality. They would have you believe that the program has achieved a success rate of 90%, is one of the most successful programs of its kind, and is being achieved on a budget of only \$8 million annually as Canada's portion of the funding envelope.

While it's certainly technically true that the program is successful, efforts to control sea lamprey have been chronically underfunded while resources are diverted away and applied to coastal fisheries. In actual fact, the success of the program must be looked at on a lake-by-lake basis. As an in-depth assessment provided by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission shows, on all five of the Great Lakes the spawner abundance is above the target levels, with Lake Erie being the worst of the five.

Asian carp, as you know, were imported into the southern U.S. in the 1970s to keep aquaculture facilities clean and to manage fish waste. They were also imported as a food fish for aquaculture. Since that time and the floods of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in the Mississippi basin, they have spread throughout the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, reproducing in large numbers to become the predominant species in those ecosystems.

Strong dietary overlap between Asian carp and native fish means they out-compete native fish for food, because they eat up to 40% of their body weight each day. You heard from DFO officials the allusion to the silver carp, which has the nasty predilection, when disturbed, of leaping out of the water into boats and injuring people and property.

DFO has taken the lead in developing a state-of-the-art science assessment of the Asian carp risk to the Great Lakes, which should be released in the next short while. This assessment was conducted in cooperation with U.S. scientists and represents the first and only risk assessment focused entirely on the Great Lakes. It's expected to confirm and build upon the science on Asian carp, reaffirm the risk they pose to the Great Lakes, and demonstrate that the lakes will provide an ample food supply and that suitable spawning habitat exists.

In response to this threat, the U.S. has established the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, led by John Goss—who, as an aside, is known as the “carp czar”—of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. The committee coordinates the actions of a myriad of federal, state, and local agencies involved in Asian carp prevention and threat management.

You are also aware of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' electrical barrier on the Chicago canal, which prevents the movement of species between the two basins.

• (1545)

The U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission are working cooperatively on risk assessment, monitoring, and control measures.

Canada needs to take an active role in preventing the movement of carp into the Great Lakes. Recommendations 3 and 4 attached to our comments speak to further specific actions that we believe DFO should take, including imposing a national ban on the importation of live Asian carp similar to what currently exists in Ontario and several U.S. border states, and supporting the complete separation of the Great Lakes from the Mississippi watershed.

I'll conclude my remarks there. I look forward to taking your questions.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for having us here today.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Farrant.

I'd now like to introduce Jake Van Rooyen. Mr. Van Rooyen is the hatchery manager and manager of the board of directors of Bluewater Anglers.

We'll hear your presentation. You'll have up to ten minutes, and then we'll take questions from everybody.

Mr. John Van Rooyen (Hatchery Manager, Board of Directors, Bluewater Anglers): Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee, for the opportunity to present the concerns of the local fishing community.

My name really is John, but everybody calls me Jake. At present I'm the hatchery manager for the Bluewater Anglers fish culture station, which is located in Point Edward. It's part of Sarnia in Lambton County. I've been on the board of directors for the last 12 years and have been president for some time.

I also serve on the MNR's Lake Huron FMZ 13 advisory committee, so most of my comments apply to Lake Huron. That's the lake I know best. That's home.

I'm a non-professional and a dedicated fisherman.

I'll tell you a little bit about our club history and operation.

Back in 1980 a group of local sport fishermen decided they wanted to put something back into their sport. We have a current membership of 400. The initial emphasis by the club was to raise rainbow trout to enhance the local sport-fishing effort. In 1984 the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources sanctioned the stocking of chinook salmon. The club lobbied and was granted a licence to raise and stock chinooks. The club then proceeded to fund and build a full-scale, 5,000-square-foot hatchery. This was accomplished in two years. The first fish were stocked in 1986. Since inception, this hatchery has raised and stocked over five million fish, all to Lake Huron.

Along with fish stocking, the club is active in a variety of community activities to encourage youth involvement, public education, and community tourism. Our greatest support is from our host community, the village of Point Edward.

The majority of our funding is raised by the membership. We receive \$3,000 a year: \$1,000 for each species we raise. This comes from hunting and fishing licences. It's exactly the same amount of money we received in 1982. My travel expenses today will be almost equal to any funding we receive from governments. All additional funding to operate and maintain the hatchery is raised by the membership.

As fishermen, today we feel threatened, not so much in a physical sense, but in regard to the effects the invasives have had and are having on the local fisheries, and the potential total disruption of the enjoyment of the lake as we know it if the Asian carp ever arrives. Chicago is a lot closer to Sarnia than it is to Ottawa.

Over time, we have seen the devastating changes to our fishery—some good, some bad. One of the first noticeable impacts was the lamprey wounding to all of the game fish in the area. We see the wounding numbers at our annual salmon derby, where data is collected every year. It's cyclical, but it's always there—and I don't like lampreys in my boat.

The alewife is an invasive that made its way into the Great Lakes with the opening of the Welland Canal. In the 1960s it was a major problem on the lakes, with large masses of rotting carcasses on the beaches. Fortunately, the control—another exotic species, the chinook salmon—became an industry of its own, providing commercial enterprise and an exciting new sport-fishing industry.

•(1550)

By the mid-eighties the zebra mussel arrived in our area. Initially it was thought to be not so much a problem for the fisheries but more for the physical structures of the area—water lines and docks. This was not the case. It soon became evident that the mussel was depriving the bottom end of the food chain, filtering the planktons out of the water. In the early 2000s the salmon fishery started to weaken; the forage base was shrinking. By 2003 we were seeing a fish we called “swimming heads”—a 10-pound salmon in a 25-pound body. They were not getting enough forage to sustain their numbers.

Today the alewife has totally disappeared from the lower end of the lake because it was competing for the same food source as the zebra muscle and the round goby, another exotic. It was very weak going into the extremely cold winter of 2002-2003 and this year-class hatch was totally wiped out because of its weakness. It has not recovered in the lower end of the lake, and I fear we have not seen the full effect of the zebra mussel. The water in Lake Huron is too clear. When light can penetrate to depths of 50 feet, we're going to start growing things that we really don't want to ever see.

The financial effect of this is easier to see on the U.S. side of the lake, where every port had numerous charter boat operators. They had to employ security people just to control the salmon fishermen on the weekends at the boat launches. It was that attractive a sport. Along with the charter operators, the restaurants and tackle shops are gone. One report I read estimated a \$1 million loss to these small villages. The charter boats have either moved to Lake Michigan or Lake Ontario or totally shut down. At one time there were four operating out of the marinas in Sarnia. There is now one part-time between Sarnia and Grand Bend.

We've seen improvements in the salmon fishery, but we don't see the size of fish or the numbers of fish. Small food means small fish. The fish in most cases are into a three-year cycle now instead of a natural four-year spawning cycle, which gives us problems in the hatchery. We see small eggs, underdevelopment, and higher losses.

If the Asian carp gets established in our ecosystem, it will be a major competitor for the total fishery. Once again, it will be a competitor for the lower end of the food web. For the existing fish community, it's like trying to climb a ladder up the side of a building with the bottom two or three steps missing: there's nothing for the fish to get started on.

From the U.S. studies, we see that any motorized activity on the lake could create a severe hazard if the silver carp ever start to jump. If, as has happened on the lower Mississippi, 90% of the habitat is taken over by the carp, there will be no sport fishery as we know it today, and I would guess our commercial fisheries would become unproductive or totally obsolete.

Can we afford to take a several-billion-dollar hit to our Great Lakes fisheries?

We also now have the quagga mussel competing for the same territory as the zebra mussel. It goes deeper and is slightly larger. It is similar to the zebra mussel, and all of these affect the food chain.

The following are recommendations from the local fish community:

Sea lamprey control needs to be increased; \$8 million is a small number for all the Great Lakes. DFO funding for this has not changed since 2004. Fish-wounding rates are up, which we as fishermen can see. Control measures need to be intensified.

•(1555)

Close the Chicago shipping and sanitation channel. Stop the fish before they get here.

Increase enforcement on fish transport. Only allow the transport of gutted fish. If they're dead, they won't swim.

With respect to transshipping, stop the ocean freighters at the east and west coast ports. Stop bringing things into our Great Lakes. The lost dollars add up to a very large number compared to the small economic benefit of having ocean boats on the lakes. Somewhere there is a report that ocean boats generate something like \$50 million a year to our economy. Zebra mussel control is something in the order of \$700 million a year. Those are phenomenal numbers.

In terms of education, don't dispose of any live fish into waters the fish are not native to, not even into the toilet. The Ministry of Natural Resources had an experiment years ago in Thunder Bay that introduced pink salmon into the lake. The sewage treatment plant did not kill those fish, where they thought it would.

Thank you for this opportunity.

•(1600)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): Thank you, Mr. Van Rooyen.

I'd like to open it up to the committee for questions, starting with Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The issue of invasive species in the Great Lakes is very, very important to me and to my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. The biggest concern is that there seems to be so much information out there, and I just am not sure there's a process in place that agencies aren't working independently as opposed to collectively. I'm trying to get a sense of how many agencies are doing things specific to the study of invasive species in the Great Lakes.

Can we put a dollar value on the resources that are going into invasive species in the Great Lakes and whether they're being distributed appropriately? Do we have any way of ensuring that there are consistent research outcomes being shared? I'm all about sharing of information, and the efficiency of that happening, but I'm looking for some assurance that this is in fact happening. And who is ultimately in charge of that process?

Dr. Terry Quinney (Provincial Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters): Thank you very much.

I'll answer your questions, and I'll answer them not only on the basis of my knowledge gained from working for the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for some 24 years now, but also, as Mr. Farrant alluded to at the beginning of his presentation, from being an independent Canadian adviser to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. I do not get paid to do that. I'm fortunate that our organization permits me the time to provide professional advice to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

I want to highlight some of the activities of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to answer your questions, Mr. Hayes, because in my professional experience, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, which is an international body established by treaty between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States, is one of the best examples there is of a working professional agency in North America. When it is properly resourced, it gets the right job done.

It has a very clear mandate—to kill lamprey in order to prevent the harm that lamprey cause, and continue to supply benefits, therefore, to Canadians, Americans, society, and governments. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission provides additional important roles, not only direct sea lamprey control but also funding and facilitating applied research to find better ways to control sea lamprey and better ways to manage the fishery resources of the Great Lakes cooperatively.

Off the top of my head, I can say that there are approximately nine jurisdictions who cooperatively work with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission: the Government of Canada through DFO; the Government of the United States of America through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Geological Survey of the U.S.; six U.S. states; and the Province of Ontario. All of them operate under a joint strategic plan to control sea lamprey and manage the fisheries of all of the Great Lakes. That joint plan has scientifically based targets to achieve with reference to the control of sea lamprey.

You heard Mr. Farrant refer to the fact that unfortunately, because of lack of resourcing, none of those established targets are being met today. Unfortunately there are too many lamprey out there. Instead of the \$7 billion in economic benefits that recreational fisheries provide to both side of the Great Lakes—the United States and Canada—those economic benefits are decreasing. We can increase them. Collectively we can increase them. The track record is clear.

Hopefully over time, as your study progresses, you will invite the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in front of you, and they can speak to you and give additional details. Let me just finish by saying that they are very efficient and they are very cooperative.

Mr. Hayes, you're concerned about things like redundancy and duplication. Agencies like the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, because of extended periods of constraint, have learned to become very effective, very cost-effective, but very cooperative in their approaches.

• (1605)

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Have you ever heard of the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Yes, I have.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: They made the statement that the adult sea lamprey in the St. Marys River is still at the same level it was at 40 years ago. Now, to me this would indicate that current measures of control are ineffective.

I'm challenging that statement in terms of whether it's the controls that are ineffective or whether there is a lack of human resources actually applying the controls. Or is it, as the statement was made in the opening statements about the sea lamprey, that the sea lamprey has been "chronically underfunded while resources are diverted away and applied to coastal fisheries" instead? That's a pretty bold statement. I'm hoping that these resources that are being diverted away are not part of the \$8 million that go into sea lamprey control.

Can you please elaborate on that a little bit?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Sure. To start with the last of your comments and questions, no, the \$8 million is not being diverted.

But Mr. Farrant is correct when he says that we're here today in front of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, and our concern—and it has been over an extended period of time—is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is in fact the department of ocean fisheries, not the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We are concerned with a withdrawal of resourcing, particularly with reference to fresh water and the great inland freshwater seas called the Great Lakes.

Make no mistake: we have the greatest of respect for our colleagues in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top. They're consummate professionals and they absolutely do the best job they can with the limited resources they have.

But let's just take the Great Lakes Basin as an example. Let's just take the Ontario side. You heard DFO officials say that 13 million Canadians live on our side of the Great Lakes basin. You've already heard what the benefits can be—\$7 billion for recreational fishing alone. We would say, my gosh, it could be \$10 billion; it could be \$15 billion.

We are not asking for huge increases to make sure those sea lampreys are controlled. You've already heard that unfortunately that \$8 million provided in 2004.... That represented an increase from \$6 million at the time. This commission has been operating for almost 50 years. But the point is that with this \$8 million as, at best, a flatline budget since 2005—they don't get a cost of living or inflation allowance—their budget has been decreasing for the last seven or eight years.

The proof is in the pudding. Fish—important fish, fish that are important to people and the economy—are being killed by those lamprey as a result, sir.

• (1610)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): Thank you.

Mr. Toone.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Merci.

Thank you for your presentation. It's very enlightening.

I'm interested. DFO has an important role to play, and perhaps it hasn't been playing as important a role as it should. You mentioned that it's also about competency and that jurisdiction over this matter is shared over several jurisdictions and amongst very many departments. This makes the situation all the more complicated, because there are so many different government players and also an international border.

When it comes to the Government of Ontario, I'd like to better understand that particular relationship. How much of a part to play in this does the Government of Ontario have versus DFO? How much responsibility is the Government of Ontario supposed to be taking up? I'm thinking, for instance, that agriculture probably has a part to play in this. Also, with the ministry already involved on several levels, especially as a stakeholder within the Great Lakes fisheries committee, who is represented on the Great Lakes fisheries committee specifically within Canada?

Could we talk about what role the Government of Ontario has to play in all of this? Also, who are the actual Canadian stakeholders on the Great Lakes fisheries committee? You can start with that.

Dr. Terry Quinney: I'd characterize the Great Lakes Fishery Commission as a professional collection of agencies, which includes the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and agencies from the United States—for example, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

When I say the Ministry of Natural Resources has a role, there are many committees that have evolved over time within the commission and have different functions. I've made reference to the direct sea lamprey control management function of the commission, but I've also referred to the important role they play in sponsoring and facilitating applied research, not only to improve sea lamprey control methods, but to enhance the fisheries across all the Great Lakes as well. That's just an illustration.

Again, I'm happy to speak at length with reference to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission because my experience has been that they accomplish what they've been assigned to do when they get the resources to do so. But there are others you could invite who are just as qualified to speak on the topic of the commission.

The commission plays a key role with reference to sea lamprey control in the Great Lakes, but when it comes to the wider question of other aquatic invasive species, there are all kinds of agencies involved on both sides of the border. We're all in this together. It is not only private non-profit conservation organizations, such as OFAH, but all levels of government, federal, provincial, and even local are involved as well.

You heard earlier in testimony from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans about the study the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Great Lakes Commission undertook to examine the feasibility of physically separating the Mississippi River basin and the Great Lakes basin to prevent Asian carp invasion of the Great Lakes at Chicago. That's an example of municipal action. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a coalition of mayors around the Great Lakes.

The point is that there are many agencies and bodies working collectively towards the same goals, and they're to be commended for doing so.

Mr. Philip Toone: DFO has a fairly important role to play in all this, clearly. With the fact that there's an international border involved, we especially need the federal government to be involved, and I think more so than it is now. As you correctly point out, funding has either stagnated or even dropped in some cases.

DFO has recently announced a serious cut in its funding overall, with a cut of \$79 million in its yearly budget. You're correct in saying that the funding for control of sea lamprey needs to increase. When it comes to Asian carp, our commitment has to be a lot more solid than it is now. What kind of opening has DFO given you up to now? What have your discussions with DFO amounted to? Certainly my concern is that with such serious cuts, DFO's commitment is going to be compromised. In fact, their commitment might even be reduced. I'm wondering where you are with your discussions with DFO right now.

• (1615)

Mr. Greg Farrant: I think it's fair to say that in the context of budgetary constraints, it's not just the federal government that's going to play a role here and it's not just the federal government cutbacks that are going to have some impact on invasive species in the Great Lakes, because you will be aware that recently the Ontario budget, which was tabled a couple of days before the federal budget, contained some fairly severe cuts itself. Based on what we see thus far—until you see the regulations and how those are all going to spin out, it's a little difficult to say that $a + b = c$ —there is no doubt that the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is going to suffer under that budget cut. There will probably be a minimum 7% cut to their funding—it could be more—which is a concern to us in the province of Ontario, because where are those cuts coming from?

Equally, any federal cuts to DFO in this particular circumstance could, on the ground, certainly have an impact. We don't know what those are going to be right now, so it's a little premature to speculate.

I can say to you that there are professionals at the department, certainly in the central and Arctic regions, which we work most closely with. There are an astounding number of experts there with great expertise and great commitment to invasive species and the control of invasive species. There is a national alien invasive species strategy under which the government operates and in which provinces have a role to play. They're partners in that. So there is a strategy in place.

Progress has been made in terms of things like ballast water and NOBOBs—“no ballast on board”—emissions of invasive species over the year by changes that were made by Transport Canada. So it's not all doom and gloom.

But there is no doubt at this point in time that we're concerned about where these funding cutbacks could land, what they're going to mean in terms of people, in terms of resources. When you look at international treaties and certainly when you look at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and its work on sea lamprey, the U.S. has been funding a disproportionate amount of that envelope for years, and the gap is getting a little bigger. Just to bring it back to where Canada should be would require an additional \$2.5 million per year. That does not, however, bring either Canada or the United States to the funding level they would need to be at to deliver the entire program that GLFC would like to deliver in order to have an impact on sea lamprey. That dollar value is a bit higher than the two combined values I'm talking about now.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): Thank you.

Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks very much to our presenters today. It's nice to see you.

Jake, thanks for coming. I hope you have better luck getting home than I had getting here. It wasn't a good day to travel.

I have certainly listened intently to what you've had to say, and I know that the Bluewater Anglers have done a great deal in our area to promote sport fishing through stocking the lake, through education, and through the role they have taken in the community for many years. So I congratulate and thank you for that.

I was certainly interested in hearing you talk about how you get your funding, how you raise your money through your membership, and how there is a lack of funding for you from other sources. When you stop and think about the work you've been doing to promote sport fishing in the Great Lakes and the lack of support you've had from government sources, I think that's something we definitely should be looking at.

Even when it comes down to education, I think that's a very important role.

We've talked about different things with the alien species, and we've talked in general about the Asian carp. I want to ask you a few questions in particular about the Asian carp. I know in the Sarnia—Lambton area there have been huge concerns raised for a long time about the possibility of the Asian carp coming in and the negative impacts it's going to have on the industry, which while not as robust as it used to be is still a very robust industry in the Great Lakes area.

Could you talk a little bit about what you see as the main issues with the Asian carp coming in? And could you talk a little bit about the education?

We've also talked about transportation of live fish and Ontario regulations. Do you see that as an issue too?

I'll start with those questions, and then we'll continue on if there is time.

• (1620)

Mr. John Van Rooyen: Well, to go back to funding, yes, we raise all of our own funds. Funding is a bigger challenge every day for all non-profits and charitable organizations, in that we're competing for

the same dollar market. As government makes cutbacks, our funding is reduced.

Sponsorship funding is the biggest thing that has hit us recently. If we need project money, we can go out and lobby one of the big companies. Usually we can generate enough of a case that we can get support, but getting the daily operating funding is very difficult.

On the education front, we typically run 30 to 40 tours a year. We do tourism from outside the area. We do schools. My tours program covers everything from day care kids to the old folks homes. When seniors come into the hatchery and recount their youth and their experiences with fishing, it's one of the most enjoyable things I have to do. It makes my job worthwhile.

I look at this education component when I go back to the kids. If we don't have fish and a fish community for the kids to work with, they're all going to be techno geeks, and we have so much of that now. To get the kids involved in the outdoors, our fish community has to be there. We run an open house every year for the hatchery. We had one just three weeks ago. We had over 2,000 people come through on two days. This is one of our major public education programs.

We run a kids' day at the end of May. Usually we have 150 booked in throughout the day, and every one of those kids will catch a rainbow trout before they leave. We have a stocked pond. They get to know how sport fish react.

If we don't stop things from coming into our Great Lakes, we will not have a sport fishery. The Asian carp is another addition. It's going to attack the existing spawning grounds. The grass carp will rip up the spawning beds we have. The existing habitat keeps disappearing. The zebra mussel has cleared so much water.... Where do the fish hide? We have the cormorant. When it can see the fish, it attacks the fish.

We've done nothing to stop these invasives from coming in. The majority have come in aboard the ocean carriers. Yes, we have started ballast water regulations, but what about the hull? Zebra mussels will come in on the hull of a boat just as easy as the villager will come in on the boat. I've seen the effects of the zebra mussel.

When I was a kid and fished, we could always catch fish. The kids don't have that opportunity today.

• (1625)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Jake, we've heard a bit this afternoon about the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the collaboration of a bunch of different groups and governments and so on. Do groups such as yours that work on the ground have interaction with the commission?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: No, not with the commission directly. We have interaction through the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and through the OFAH. The OFAH is our greatest communicator. Being that they represent so many clubs, they have a decent voice to put forth our interests. Being of small relative numbers, even though we cover a fairly large area, we have a very small voice.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: What is your main concern with the Asian carp as a group?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: What it's going to do to the fishery.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Do you see it having other negative impacts on the community as well?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: Well, if the silver gets here, for the on-surface boating activities you'll want to be outfitted in an armoured suit to be on a Sea-Doo. If you've seen the tapes that are produced.... It has now become a redneck sport of several different ilks. The one with the bows and arrows is the one that scares me the most.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): I think we're going to have to cut it there.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Okay. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Fin Donnelly): Sorry. We'll go around again.

Mr. MacAulay.

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

I'd like you to continue on the bows and arrows, or whatever....

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you for being here. I certainly appreciate what you're doing. I'm well aware of how valuable a fishing community is, coming from the east coast of this country—different, but very dependent, much more dependent, possibly, than you are.

Mr. Farrant, you were talking about the funding. As I understood from your statement, you're quite concerned about the provincial reduction and somewhat concerned about the federal reduction. What's the breakdown on who provides how much for invasive species funding? How is that broken down?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

It comes from various envelopes and various departments. Federally, the Department of the Environment has provided funding envelopes for projects on invasive species. As I said, the alien invasive species partnership program was funded until just recently by some funding from Environment Canada, which traditionally has had the lead on invasive species because it covers also terrestrial invasives. DFO does have funding envelopes for invasive species. The former minister, the Honourable Gail Shea, was at our conference a year or two ago and announced a small amount of funding from DFO for our invasive species program.

Provincially, the Ministry of Natural Resources provides us with approximately \$300,000 a year in funding, which we match. We contribute equal to what they put into it. There are various pockets, little bits, dribs and drabs, that go on throughout the year and that come from various tiny little spots. But when you look at the magnitude of the problem, the amount of funding that is provided....

Again, I must stress that this is not indicative of this particular government. This is a chronic underfunding issue. I mean, I personally have worked for the federation for 11 years, and I've been arguing for more funding for invasive species for 11 years. This issue around sea lamprey funding goes back into the nineties, the early nineties. It wasn't until 2003 that the Ministry of Natural

Resources in Ontario formally stepped up and started to provide funding towards this.

So there are various pockets from various ministries. We certainly put money where our mouth is in terms of OFAH contributing to this. I've lost track of how many biologists we employ. Dr. Quinney can probably tell you. Between aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, we probably have no less than about eight full-time people working on this issue. They are all biologists. The Ontario Invasive Plant Council is now based at OFAH head office.

We take this very seriously, and we put our own money into this every year. We work with 150 cottage associations across the province and all of the commissions you can think of. Public education and awareness has been a focus of our program from day one.

I have left with the clerk some packages just as an example of what our program actually does on the ground.

●(1630)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You mentioned that DFO was presenting a rosy picture, and I don't think you felt the picture was quite as rosy as they were presenting. I'd like you to expand on that.

In that, I would like you also to talk about the relationship between your organization and the U.S., looking at, I think, your providing less funding per capita than you were. Are you having difficulty, or more difficulty, or are Americans just deciding that they're going to take care of this issue themselves?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Do you want to speak to that? You go ahead.

Dr. Terry Quinney: Thank you.

I believe Mr. Farrant was trying to demonstrate that on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes there is a greater proportional contribution to the protection and enhancement of the Great Lakes on the fisheries side and the aquatic invasive side.

Having said that, we do want to emphasize the continued importance of partnerships, and the key role the federal Government of Canada has. The prevention, control, and management of aquatic invasive species is a perfect example of this. Federal departments, such as DFO and Environment Canada, have developed expertise that is now world-renowned. You do not want to compromise that expertise. Other agencies, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for example, have additional expertise.

The point is that partnerships also provide leveraging. We've never said that the responsibility for prevention, control, and management of all aquatic invasive species across Canada is only a federal responsibility. We've never said that. You've heard us say that we're all in this together, but we have individual contributions to make and we have individual responsibilities. There are federal responsibilities here, in our opinion, and they are clear. There are provincial responsibilities as well.

We'd be the first to admit these are very difficult financial times, but my gosh, let's keep our eye on the ball, meaning benefits to people, society, governments, economic benefits, return on investment. You've heard about the \$7 billion in the case of recreational fishing alone. What's the investment for that return? On the Canadian side, it has been \$8 million. The grand total, by the way, is about \$25 million a year, two-thirds from the Americans. For \$25 million, with reference to sea lamprey control, we're all receiving benefits in the order of \$7 billion. Surely that is an admirable rate of return on investment. But we say we can increase that return. We can increase the benefits. Please don't compromise our ability to optimize those benefits by cutting so badly that we won't recover.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Am I done?

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): You're done.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I thought that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Now we'll move to the five-minute round, and we'll start with Mr. Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Thank you for coming to testify to the committee.

You provide several pieces of advice to recreational boaters in order to prevent the spread of invasive species, such as draining ballast water or water from engines, emptying bait buckets on land and washing boats and equipment with hot water from a tap or a pressure washer.

To what extent do recreational and commercial fishermen follow your advice?

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Farrant: I'd be happy to respond to that.

For our Ontario invasive species program at OFAH, across Ontario you will see signs at marinas, whether they be at boat ramps or in marinas themselves, in hundreds of locations across Ontario. Our invasive species staff work with marine operators and bait operators to educate the public about the need to wash and spray boats and the need to not transmit boats from one water body to another and to not dump bait buckets in foreign waters where the bait didn't come from, etc.

And yes, it does have an impact. The packages we brought today and have left with the clerk contain some information about those programs that we operate with, again, the cottage associations and whatnot. These are on-the-ground programs that do not cost a lot of money but have tremendous impacts on the ground, in the lakes, and in the waters. It's the type of thing where, for very little money, you can see big dividends.

When we were before this committee in 2003 and 2005 and talking about similar issues, we proposed at that time a national public education and awareness program that would deal with

exactly those issues that you've raised, sir. At that time, and in fact still to this day, for the sum of \$1.4 million and change, we could and we can deliver a national public education and awareness program across Canada to address those very issues, the issues you raise, with boaters and with bait operators and what not. I dare say, with all due respect to the government, that there isn't a government in this country that can deliver that kind of program on the ground for that dollar value. We can do that. It doesn't take huge pots of money to make a difference.

I know it's easy to come to government. Everybody comes to government with their hands out, and I know you guys get tired of it and the province gets tired of it, and I recognize why.

We will make a recommendation that you will see attached to your package today. One of the things you can do that costs not a dollar up front is to simply amend the regulation to stop the importation of live Asian carp into Canada. That costs no money, except for perhaps increased vigilance at the border, which is already happening. But it's not like we're coming here and saying that it's going to cost you \$10 million to implement that. It costs nothing but an amendment of a regulation to expand it across the country, which will stop those fish from coming into this country over that route.

Yes, other things that we have recommended do have price tags attached to them, and we recognize that we're in a time of restraint, both provincially and federally, but for the programs you referred to with bait operators, marine operators, boaters, and people who fish on the ground, those programs have a huge impact. They work—and they don't cost a lot of money.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Thank you. You answered the question I was going to ask.

If it were mandatory to follow the advice you provide, do you believe that it would be followed to a greater extent, that things would be done more effectively?

[*English*]

Dr. Terry Quinney: My quick response is that prevention through, for example, public education wherever possible is a very effective tool for the tool box. There are many tools from the tool box that are required to successfully address this very large nationwide problem associated with both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. Use as many of those tools as possible, in the most efficient and most cost-effective manner. Public education is one; regulation is another, as Mr. Farrant referred to.

From where we sit, in the province of Ontario, it's illegal to import live Asian carp. That's very good. The federal government, in cooperation with the province, DFO, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Canadian border security services, is having success in enforcing that law at the border between Ontario and the United States. But—my gosh—these critters could be imported into Montreal and then just trucked down the road to Toronto. Hypothetically, they could come in from Winnipeg to Thunder Bay, etc. That's what Mr. Farrant is alluding to.

We understand that the federal government and DFO are currently working on perhaps those very types of regulations, so let's get on with them. But in addition, as Mr. Farrant said, this is not only about money; there are other things that particularly the Government of Canada can be doing. We have recommendations specifically with reference to Asian carp prevention. To their credit, the United States of America have a federal law that forbids the interstate movement or interstate transport of injurious harmful species. Asian carp is on the list. So why are Asian carp still reaching the Canadian border at Windsor and Sarnia? Perhaps, diplomatically speaking, the Government of Canada could ask the Government of the United States of America to fully enforce the Lacey Act.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Many thanks.

Mr. Van Rooyen, you talked about the effect of zebra mussels on the Pacific salmon fishery in Lake Huron. How have other fish species, such as rainbow trout, for example, responded to the zebra mussel?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: The rainbow trout is a much more versatile feeder. Some of the stomach studies that have been done recently in the States show a completely different pattern of what rainbow trout feed on—from ants to spiders to anything that's available for them to eat. They don't need the volume of food that a salmon requires. Salmon have a four-year life cycle under normal conditions, so they try to eat enough to get them to the fourth year.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: So the rainbow trout have not been affected by the zebra mussels at all, or have they responded positively to the clearer water?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: I don't think they have responded to the clearer water. They still look for habitat to hide in, but they're more adaptable.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: How about smallmouth bass?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: Smallmouth bass seem to be doing well. They're feeding on the round goby.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Are there smelt in Lake Huron?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: There were. We don't see many now.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That's interesting.

Mr. John Van Rooyen: There are some indications. The commercial fishermen I talk to say they're out deep. We used to see them on the shorelines this time of year, and they were great eating, but we haven't seen them.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: The smelt could be a replacement forage fish for the alewife, right? That's not happening?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: It's part of the way salmon feed. Salmon are daytime feeders and they like to feed in the "up" direction. Smelt tend to go to the bottom in the daylight hours.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: In terms of the Asian carp, given they seem to be a fish that feeds at the low trophic levels, do we know if any of those carp species consume zebra mussels at all?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: I haven't heard of them consuming zebra mussels.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Do you have any thoughts on this, Dr. Quinney?

Dr. Terry Quinney: I don't know the answer to your question, Mr. Sopuck, but I can tell you this: there's nothing good about Asian carp in the wild in North America. Without exaggerating, hopefully it's become apparent that in the 50 years it has taken to successfully manage sea lamprey by Canadians and Americans, it's cost the taxpayers of both our countries \$1.25 billion or more over a 50-year period, and we're still at it. We have to still be at it in order to get some benefits. My gosh, just think of what the potential next invader at the scale of a sea lamprey might cost us all.

• (1645)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: In terms of actual on-the-ground programming to effectively control an invasive species that's already invaded a given habitat, have there been many success stories, or any success stories, you can point to whereby an invasive species has actually been either eliminated or reduced to such a level that it's not a threat any more?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Unfortunately, the closest example I can give you is sea lamprey control: that with constant management and vigilance it can be successfully managed, but not eliminated.

So you're quite right; that's the lesson, lesson number one: can we prevent these harmful species from entering our ecosystems in the first place? That's the most effective course of action, to prevent wherever possible.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: To follow up on that, do you think that if the level of effort remains the same in terms of preventing the Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes, if that continues or increases, we'll be successful in keeping the Asian carp out? Or, and I hate to say this, is it ultimately inevitable that they'll get in?

Dr. Terry Quinney: No, it's not ultimately inevitable.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Good.

Dr. Terry Quinney: Even if, in the most unfortunate circumstance, Asian carp do move into, for example, Lake Michigan at first, we have to ask ourselves which one is potentially next and even more expensive from a societal point of view.

Again, on the topic of prevention of Asian carp, we'd invite you, as your study progresses, to invite representatives of the Great Lakes cities initiative, the Great Lakes commission, who, to their credit, invested several million dollars in a very good engineering study that has clearly shown the feasibility of physical separation of those two basins.

Is it expensive? Yes. But they've shown that it can be accomplished, and accomplished in a way that would not only prevent aquatic invasive species but would provide benefits to other segments of the economy, not only benefits to recreational fishing and commercial fishing but benefits to how goods are transported through that Chicago shipping canal system—and flood water control, for that matter.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think my time is up.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gravelle.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Mr. Farrant, in your presentation you said that you're the largest non-profit conservation-based organization in Ontario, and one of the largest in Canada. Can you tell me where you get your funding from?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Certainly. Our funding for the most part comes from our membership.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Do you get any money from any level of government, provincial or federal?

Mr. Greg Farrant: As I indicated earlier, we get approximately \$300,000 per year from the Province of Ontario, which we match. That comes from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. We get small funding envelopes from both the Department of the Environment and DFO. The Environment Canada money in the last calendar year was somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$50,000 plus a bit, and the same for DFO.

Other than that, all of the money that's spent by our organization on conservation projects is generated through membership dollars.

Dr. Terry Quinney: Sir, if I may, you've heard in this presentation how highly we value partnerships. We receive no government money for our operating budgets, but we will partner with anyone who is interested in improving the health of fish and wildlife, and conservation in this country.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Okay, fine.

I'm not sure who said it, Mr. Quinney or Mr. Farrant, but one of you said that emptying bait buckets into a lake introduces foreign species.

•(1650)

Mr. Greg Farrant: Yes.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: When I go fishing in Quebec I have to use dead bait. Have you considered introducing this in Ontario?

Mr. Greg Farrant: What?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Dead bait.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Denying the use of live bait?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Yes.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Maybe I'll let Dr. Quinney speak to that. He's the scientist.

Dr. Terry Quinney: That's a proposal the Government of Ontario is currently entertaining. That would be my short answer.

The continued use of live bait is very important in recreational fishing in Ontario. There are regulations in place in the province of Ontario. For example, it is against the law to empty your bait bucket. In other words, it's against the law to dump anything that's left alive in your bait bucket into any water body.

In addition, we have regulations in the province of Ontario that determine which species of live bait are legal and which aren't.

Last, with organizations like OFAH, the Ontario government has developed protocols whereby those who harvest the bait and those who sell the bait are trained by law to ensure that they are not introducing invasive species to our waters through the live bait industry.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Thank you, sir.

You mentioned that it is against the law to empty a bucket of live bait into a lake. Has anybody ever been charged?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Sir, I can't answer that. I don't know.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Probably not, right?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Honestly, I don't know.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Probably not; otherwise, we would have heard about it, I'm sure.

Mr. Greg Farrant: If I might respond to that, there are thousands of charges laid each year by conservation officers across Ontario from the Ministry of Natural Resources for fish and wildlife violations. I don't know that I'd want to speculate that charges of that nature have never been laid or else we would hear about it, because, as I said, the number of charges laid is in the thousands.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Maybe one more question.

I heard one of you, and I can't remember who, say that in order to prevent Asian carp from being imported into Canada, we'd have to increase border security. Is that correct?

Mr. Greg Farrant: No. What I said was that the Canada Border Services Agency is already being vigilant. There have been truckloads of what people thought were dead Asian carp, but which in fact turned out to be live Asian carp still able to be resuscitated, that have been stopped by the Canada Border Services Agency at the Ontario border. What Dr. Quinney was saying is that the U.S. needs to be more vigilant on its side. We'd like to see that extended to a nationwide ban on the importation.

Some of this has something to do with the food fish industry. Also, you might have heard DFO officials mention this when they were here, but there are some cultures that believe in the eat one, release one philosophy. There even have been Asian carp found floating live in fountains in downtown Toronto because of that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Gravelle.

Mr. Leef.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to build on that comment, does the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters get involved in education strategies that focus on the reduction of the market for that? It would seem to me that obviously transportation of live Asian carp into our country, or interprovincially, has a lot to do with there being a viable market for it. How do we go about creating an education strategy to reduce the demand for it? Is there a focus at all right now on education?

Dr. Terry Quinney: It's one question, and we're fully supportive of the intent of what you're suggesting. Quite frankly, there's only so much we can do in a given day, but that's an excellent suggestion and we'd be happy to work with whoever might want to try to pursue that.

Mr. Ryan Leef: We did hear some talk about the enforcement aspect of it. One step is to bring in regulations. It's a whole other step to have enforcement. Yet again, it's another step to have meaningful enforcement of it.

One of the comments made in past testimony when we talked about return on investment—earlier you provided an example—was that there's such an excellent return on investment in that market that it's worthwhile for people to risk getting caught, having the law imposed upon them, and losing a load and still being able to make money doing it.

I hear your suggestion. This is maybe more of a comment than a question. Support from the U.S. in enforcing the Lacey Act and stepping up enforcement initiatives and education around the market might be helpful in that regard.

Do you know what the appetite outside the province of Ontario is for the respective provincial bodies to deal with regulations around the importation of live carp? Because obviously it's the fisheries act of Ontario that has the regulation preventing it from coming in.... Or is it a different provincial body of legislation that prevents the movement of Asian carp?

• (1655)

Mr. Greg Farrant: It's the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act that prohibits it in Ontario. I can't speak to where other provinces lie with this. That's a good question. We'll certainly speak with our affiliates across the country, who we work with on a daily basis, to find out what they think the appetite in their provinces would be.

Obviously, given the fact that we sit on the crux of the Great Lakes, Ontario is one of those that is most concerned about this particular species. Perhaps it's less so in Saskatchewan than it would be in Ontario, but certainly our colleagues in Quebec, the Maritimes, and other provinces that have adjacent important water bodies should be concerned. This is why we think there is a lead role for the federal government to institute or to suggest the introduction of a national standard that would apply everywhere.

Frankly, I'd have a hard time believing that any provincial government would find it difficult to agree that the prevention of the introduction of invasive species, given the disasters they create.... Hugh MacIsaac, who is the head of the invasive species centre at the University of Windsor, I remember in testimony years ago.... I remember briefing a former prime minister's office many years ago on this, and they sat there looking at me dumbfounded when I said that just about 18 of the 160 to 180 invasive species in this country are responsible for \$11 billion to \$36 billion in damage annually. That's just a small number of that....

I think it's worth it for other jurisdictions in this country to consider coming on board with the kind of restrictive legislation that would prevent the introduction of any type of invasive, whether it be terrestrial or aquatic, into our systems here in Canada.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thanks.

You mentioned that total number. About 180 total invasive species—160, if I remember it right from looking back—are currently in the Great Lakes.

A voice: Yes.

Mr. Ryan Leef: I have two questions there.

Is absolutely every one of them negative? Are there any positives at all to any of them?

Also, if you know or could comment, when we're looking at a national strategy or federal regulations on this, are there other provinces or regions of our country that benefit from a certain portion of aquatic invasive species? Wouldn't that create some challenges for us in regard to having a national strategy if they were to say, well, this is good for the Great Lakes, but quite frankly we enjoy this aquatic invasive species here, and a national strategy would hurt us?

Dr. Terry Quinney: That's an excellent question, and here's how I'm going to answer it: let's keep our eye on the harm ball here. If there's not harm, then okay.

In fact, one man's poison may not be another man's. Smallmouth bass in different parts of Canada are a good example of this. In some parts of Canada where smallmouth bass are indigenous, are native, people love to have them in their lakes. They love to catch them. They love to eat them. In other parts of the country, northern Ontario for example, where smallmouth bass are not native, the bass have detrimentally affected some of our cold-water trout fisheries.

So I say let's use the harms test. If there's not harm, then let's keep our eye on the ball. There is a spectrum here, whether we're talking aquatics or terrestrial. Not all non-indigenous species are harmful to ecosystems, people, or society, but some are catastrophically harmful.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. MacAulay.

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

Mr. Farrant, I'd just like you to expand a bit on the education aspect. It's obvious that if you can convince people—you know, ParticipAction and everything else.... For \$1.4 million, what can you put together? You're talking about the nation.

Mr. Greg Farrant: That's correct.

We have already developed in Ontario a program that we deliver on the ground now, but our biologists, our invasive species staff, have for many years had in hand a program we could tailor to other provinces. The offer we made, going back to 2003, was that we would help develop one that was specifically tuned to each province or territory across the country that dealt with the invasives that caused them the difficulty. Of the \$1.4 million, each province would get proportionally enough funding to hire one person to deliver that program on the ground through our provincial and territorial wildlife federations, who are from coast to coast to coast.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You're dealing with billions of dollars of loss across the country, so in my view, that educational program you're talking about would be very important to put together.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Well, it is, and that's why this very same committee twice recommended in their reports that funding for that particular program go forward, recognizing the fact that public education and awareness make up one of the leading steps you can take to prevent the introduction and/or spread, or to do monitoring and/or assessment, of invasive species in this country, regardless of what that species may be.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Absolutely. If you can convince people that dumping the bucket or whatever... I mean, a lot of people just do not realize what harm they do.

Mr. Greg Farrant: That's right.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: They're not out to cause trouble.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Exactly.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: The odd one is.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Nor do a lot of people think about the fact that they pull their boat out of the water, put it on a trailer, take it home, and next weekend stick it in another lake. They don't think about that.

That's what public education is all about. That's what the ramp signs are for. That's what the huge signs that we mount at marinas are for. That's what the highway signs are for. Clean your boat, don't transfer, don't do this, don't do that: it has an impact.

We work with cottage associations. We go to "Canada Blooms" shows. We go to fishing shows and hunting shows. We go to cottage shows and boating shows and everything all across the province. Our staff are always there. They're always educating. Their booths are always jammed with people who want to learn more about this. We're working on things like aquarium plants: don't be dumping aquariums into our lakes and rivers.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: That's right—or your bathrooms.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Exactly. This is how these species get introduced.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Jake Van Rooyen, would that be close to what it is?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: That's close.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Well, that's good.

Thank you very much. I would certainly be recommending that the funding be put in place for that educational project, because if you can convince people that they should not do it... People are just not aware at times what harm they can cause by just dumping a little bucket.

You told the committee that 400 people in your group got together and put a hatchery together, and in essence created a salmon industry that has been more or less destroyed by the sea lamprey, is it?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: The sea lamprey, and the biggest effect was the zebra mussel and its impact on the forage fish.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Yes, that's right.

This question has been asked in a way, but what can you do in order to re-establish? What can you do to get the zebra mussel out? Is there a possibility of that happening, or is it always going to continue in Lake Huron? Like when you have the 10-pound salmon in the 25-pound body, that's what you do not want.

• (1705)

Mr. John Van Rooyen: Our salmon have recovered. We're seeing fish now that are in the 18-pound range, and I don't expect that we'll see them much bigger than that until the forage base comes back.

As far as the zebra mussel is concerned, there are localized treatments to kill zebra mussels, but it's very localized. You're not going to kill off the bottom of Lake Huron. It's just not feasible. The zebra mussel will hit a level where there isn't going to be any room for them to go any further, but it's the next one. The quagga mussel, now, he goes deeper.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: So you can prevent it from expanding, more or less.

Mr. John Van Rooyen: No, they prevent themselves.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: From where I come from we have the blue mussel, and we do have problems with invasive species in that area too. I believe that some of our bigger problems have been boats, one way or another. It could be DFO, pleasure, or whatever. Is that the bigger problem you have in the Great Lakes? Is that where your invasive species come in, or do they flow in? Which is the biggest problem you have?

You talked about cleaning boats, spraying boats, and this type of thing. Is that one of your major problems?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: The major problem, as I see it, is that the invasive species come in on the ocean boats. They come in ballast water. They come in attached to hulls.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You did mention that the hull was not clean. Is that correct?

Mr. John Van Rooyen: That's correct.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You were stating to the committee that there should be a recommendation that something be done in this area.

Mr. John Van Rooyen: That the boats be stopped and we go in to transshipping. We have the technology. We have trucks. We have rail. We have lake boats. Transship the materials and keep the ocean boats in the ocean.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I'm not sure what that would entail. I'd say a fair bit of money, but you are talking about billions of dollars on the other end.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. MacAulay; your time is up.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: You're cutting me off again, Mr. Chair. Well, this is what it is.

The Chair: Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: So hard done by.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again thank you to our presenters and our witnesses.

Mr. Quinney, I have a couple of questions. I think—and you can correct this—you mentioned the U.S. funding split for invasives is roughly about two-thirds.

Dr. Terry Quinney: For sea lamprey.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Sea lamprey only.

Where I'm going is to try to find out what the role of the United States should be. In your opinion, should it be in fact a greater role than what it currently is? The reason I say that is that I'm assuming the threat of invasive species comes from the United States. Is that the majority, or is it a 50-50 split with U.S. and Canada? What's the split that exists?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Sir, the reason I'm having difficulty with your question is that hopefully the intent of your question is to get at cause and effect. If we can identify the cause then maybe we can treat the effect more directly, or better, as opposed to placing blame here. We are all in this together, and as Mr. Van Rooyen has—

Mr. Fin Donnelly: I'm not necessarily looking for blame. It's more responsibility in terms of perhaps funding, or perhaps a greater role in resources—that kind of a focus. Yes, you're right, and certainly prevention is key.

Dr. Terry Quinney: My short answer is that when it comes to the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes basin and the St. Lawrence River, gravity is all-powerful; everything flows downhill, and that St. Lawrence River is part of that Great Lakes ecosystem. The fact of the matter is it's largely a legally shared responsibility between Canada and the United States. It was through a treaty that the two-thirds and one-third split between the U.S. and Canada was established with reference to sea lamprey.

Our organization knows that the Americans who live on the American side of the Great Lakes basin are fully engaged in this public discussion and debate with reference to invasives, particularly the threat of Asian carp. Our members are very concerned. You've heard from Mr. Van Rooyen's club as a member club; at the grassroots level those people who use the Great Lakes are very scared, quite frankly. That level of concern is very great on the U.S. side. I can assure you of that.

Can we all do more? I'd sure like to think so.

• (1710)

Mr. Greg Farrant: I would like to point out—and I'm not suggesting by pointing this out that we need to go down the same path—that I don't think a year goes by when we do not see before Congress and the Senate in the U.S. an invasive species bill brought forward in that House that is sponsored by multiple sponsors on both sides of the House there. They take it very seriously. I've lost track of how many invasive species acts they've brought forward over the last few years to try to address this kind of a problem. The lamprey got here one way. Asian carp came another way. Gobies and zebra mussels came a third way.

So it's not always coming from south of the border or north of the border, which is why you can't necessarily say more of the fault lies here, or more of the responsibility lies here than with us, because they come from different directions and through different media. We're all affected, and we all have to address this. But given the fact that President Obama just contributed \$50 million and established an

office just to deal with the Asian carp alone, and spends over half a billion a year on invasive species, I think they take the issue very seriously.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Farrant, you mentioned the chronic underfunding for the seven years you've been working for the federation. Can you give the committee an idea of the severity of the threat—for instance, seven years ago it was perhaps a serious threat and now it's a very serious threat? How would you provide some context?

Mr. Greg Farrant: It depends on which species you're talking about. Seven years ago zebra mussels were pretty well established by then. Unfortunately, gobies were reasonably well established by then. Asian carp wasn't really on the horizon very much at that point in time because they had not yet necessarily butted up against the electronic barrier in the Chicago sanitary canal to any great extent to get people excited, but over the last few years people have been seeing more of this coming.

Sea lamprey have been around forever. As Dr. Quinney alluded to, it's been 50 years or whatever since we've been dealing with that one. There's where there's a real issue, after 50 years and we're just barely holding our own, if not slipping back a little, by not meeting targets in each of these lakes. What are we learning here when you've had 50 years of experience with a particular species? That's why we're saying it's critically important when you have a chance, and with the Asian carp you've got a chance now. They are not in the Great Lakes yet. You have a chance through a whole bunch of means to prevent them ever getting in the Great Lakes. It's rare that you get an opportunity.

The zebra mussel and the gobies that came in from other locations, whether it was the Far East or they came in through sediment in the ballast water of ships and were discharged into our waters, or they came on the hulls or whatever, those are a little more insidious to try to control. But the government has moved forward, both the previous and the current government have moved forward on the ballast water regulations to try to address that, and kudos to both governments in that respect.

I'm not a scientist, and I'm not pretending to be, but we have an opportunity here where everybody is saying here's a species and you have a way of stopping this thing from ever getting into our Great Lakes and having a huge impact socially and economically. Why not take advantage of that warning for once and be able to stop something you can actually see physically sitting on the other side of the barrier?

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Allen.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for being here.

I'll pick up on the question about the \$1.4 million for a national program. You must have some kind of idea when you come up with that \$1.4 million. Is it based on some of the successes or metrics you've seen for success in Ontario, based on the money you've spent? How did you derive that \$1.4 million in the efficiencies of your existing programs?

• (1715)

Dr. Terry Quinney: Thank you for the question.

We'd be pleased to provide the committee with a copy of the entire submission to DFO. It's several pages long and has a very detailed budget. We don't take lightly our requests for taxpayers' dollars. I can assure you that all the details you wish to see are in that submission.

Mr. Mike Allen: If you could send that to the clerk, that would be appreciated.

Dr. Terry Quinney: We'd be pleased to.

Mr. Mike Allen: Thank you very much.

Also, one of the discussions we got into last time was on the northern snakehead. Of course it's starting to be seen more in the U.S. now as well. It probably originated from baitfish in some cases.

I watched a show called *Python Hunters* the other night. It was interesting. They had a program in Florida where they were encouraging people to turn in their pets, every type of reptile one could ever imagine, so that people wouldn't dump them into the Everglades and other places, which is why some of the stuff has actually come up. They were talking about some species of turtles that were being sold along the road. As long as the person said they were going to be used for educational purposes, they could sell them to the person. That's how they skirted around the law.

I understand that in a lot of places in the U.S. you can buy live baitfish. Do you know of any regulations in the U.S. that prevent that from happening? As you indicated, in Ontario there are regulations on what kind of live baitfish can be used. Are we going to continue to see that? Are the regulations in the U.S. progressing so that they can stop these kinds of live baitfish from becoming the next species, as you said?

Dr. Terry Quinney: It's an excellent question, because it illustrates inconsistencies in how the problem is handled between jurisdictions. It also illustrates how important leadership can be, whether that's in a federal agency, for example, to show an individual state the benefits of what other states might be doing. They might want to buy into, so to speak, a different management regime that would reduce the harm and levels of risk.

One of the very important things the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does in this country, associated with invasive species prevention, is its technical risk assessments. Basically, this is the harms test. Part two is the socio-economic impact as a result of those risk assessments. These are critical components. They're conducting critical components that are contributing to successful prevention, control, and management. That's just the type of thing we need to see more widespread.

Mr. Mike Allen: That is happening now in Canada. Do we have that in place in all the provinces, as they do in Ontario for live baitfish?

Dr. Terry Quinney: I'm sorry, we can't answer that question. I don't know.

Mr. Mike Allen: I notice in your presentation that you talked about a real concern about small lakes especially, where if one of these invasive species, carp or whatever, gets into it, it could be phenomenal. We're seeing a lot of that in the rivers in the U.S., of

course. Have you seen any studies or anything done with respect to the impact of these on small lakes in the system as they keep moving up through the U.S.?

Mr. Greg Farrant: I cannot speak to the sea lamprey or the Asian carp, but to give you an example, three or four years ago the potential for round goby getting into Lake Simcoe was identified. Of course Lake Simcoe in Ontario had been the focus of a lot of activity in terms of its water quality and its protection. We participated in an exercise with Pefferlaw Creek, which feeds into Lake Simcoe and was judged to be the source of where these gobies would breach the lake, so to speak.

Essentially the exercise involved several different jurisdictions and agencies. They got together, went in, and pre-fished this thing, took out as many of the normal fish species as they could, and then just bombed that particular creek. I think rotenone was used to wipe out everything in existence. It was very serious. We had the cooperation of the municipality, and the local residents had to be involved. Everybody was on the ground, knew what was happening, and was involved in it. Did it work? No.

So you take extreme measures like that—and that's an extreme measure—where you close down an entire creek body for a period and just bomb the hell out of it with a poison that kills everything that's in there that hasn't been fished out of there in the first place, and it still doesn't work. That shows you how pervasive the problem is.

I have been to bait dealers in Ontario, who just by virtue of the fact that they did not know—and this is where education is so important—if you buy sucker minnows or something like that to fish with, you see goby in the tank that look very similar to the minnows in their bait tanks. This is why it's important that we have those types of things.

The Pefferlaw example is a good example of how difficult these things are to eradicate once they get in. Going back to Mr. Donnelly's question, when Dr. Quinney refers to the risk assessment the DFO and the U.S. have done on the Asian carp, this is critically important, because they've done great work up front: DFO, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and the U.S. authorities. This is going to be released shortly, within a matter of a week or two. This risk assessment lays out where we're going with this, and what happens if this happens, and it tells you what the map is to try to deal with it. We don't often have the ability to do that. The case of a goby is one small example that shows you how difficult it is. Once they are here, they are not going away.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kamp.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing. We appreciate it, and of course we appreciate the initiative of Ms. Davidson and Mr. Hayes in bringing this issue to our attention as a committee.

First let me say we're looking forward to that study as well to see the socio-economic analysis that comes with that. I know you'll be familiar with the fairly recent report from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, which they call "Restoring the Natural Divide". I think you referred to it, Dr. Quinney, as well.

Are you of the opinion that the only good answer or permanent answer to the problem of the Asian carp making it into the Great Lakes is some kind of natural divide between the Mississippi basin and the Great Lakes?

Dr. Terry Quinney: Professionally, I agree that physical separation of those basins is the best permanent solution. That would greatly reduce the risk of carp invasion into the Great Lakes basin, for example. This is a two-way street. You've heard that there are already 150 invasives in the Great Lakes basin. We want to prevent their transfer into the Mississippi basin as well. But this is a war, so to speak, that needs to be fought on several fronts, not only in the Chicago waterway system. That's one of the fronts. It's a very important front. It might be the leading front in the war, but it's not the only front.

Your members expressed concern about the continued demand for Asian carp through the live food trade, to be consumed by people in Canada, in places such as Toronto. There's another front of this war that we have not successfully fought yet, and we need to keep fighting on that front as well.

So there are several pathways for Asian carp. Right now, Chicago is among the most important. Physical separation is absolutely necessary, as you'll see if you invite representatives from the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes cities initiative. There are feasible ways to accomplish this, but it needs to be done cooperatively. That's why, by the way, one of our recommendations is that the Government of Canada endorse this very important initiative of the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes cities initiative.

•(1725)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you for that. I think that is a good point—that there are other avenues that require both regulatory and educational initiatives as well, to be able to at least interfere with those pathways.

With regard to your comment, which has been referred to already, about whether DFO's analysis or evaluation of things was too rosy, Mr. Gillis, who was with us, said—and we were talking about sea lamprey—that with the money that was available for that program they were “able to put in place all the components of a full-blown program, everything from the understanding of the science all the way through to the mitigation and monitoring programs, and more recently the regulatory package”. That's a quote from him.

But in your comments you refer to still not being able to meet the targets, at least in some of the Great Lakes. Could you elaborate on that? What are the targets, for example? Are they percentages? How are they measured? Although we may not meet the targets, are levels declining? Are they getting better or worse?

Mr. Farrant.

Mr. Greg Farrant: I'll speak to the generalities, and then I'll let Dr. Quinney refer to the actual percentages.

If you go through them one by one, for Lake Erie, the spawner abundance estimate is nearly six times the target range, and although it's lower than the record high abundance observed during 2009, spawner abundance remains at a pre-control level. After all these years and all the efforts, it remains at pre-control level.

In Lake Huron, the abundance estimate is above the target range and has fluctuated widely since 1980.

In Lake Michigan, the abundance level is above the target range. It has declined over the past several years. There are still some specific concerns there.

In Lake Superior, the abundance level is above the target range for the fourth consecutive year. There are several sources of concern, particularly the Black Sturgeon River, due to uncertainty regarding the future of the de facto sea lamprey barrier that is in place on that river.

In Lake Ontario, the abundance level is above the target range but has been low for more than 25 years. That's the only lake of the five in which there are no known sources of concern at this moment.

Maybe Dr. Quinney would like to talk about percentages.

Dr. Terry Quinney: I'm not sure if it's necessary to get into the real details here, except to simply add to what Mr. Farrant says in this regard. A very painstaking, comprehensive, and thorough analysis is conducted by the commission to establish these targets. All of the agencies buy into these targets, and then they work on killing the lamprey so they are below those target levels. That's what they try to do.

To paraphrase what you heard DFO say, they get the results they get with the resources they have and provide. That is true. We insist, however, that returns to people, society, and a healthy ecosystem will be significantly better if the allocation from the federal government of Canada to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is increased from \$8 million to \$11.6 million.

•(1730)

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

Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Do we have an idea of when our draft copy will be returning to the committee?

The Chair: Kristen.

Ms. Kristen Courtney (Committee Researcher): I'll have it to translation for next Tuesday, May 1. They tell me they can have it back to be distributed to all of you on May 9.

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

Gentlemen, thank you very much for taking the time from your busy schedules to appear before the committee today. I apologize for my tardiness here. I want to thank Mr. Donnelly for very graciously filling in for me. We really appreciate everything you've provided to this committee today, and we certainly look forward to continuing our study on invasive species.

If you have anything further you want to add to what you've brought to the table today you can certainly send that through to the clerk's office to the attention of the committee.

Mr. Greg Farrant: People indicated they would like follow-ups on two or three things, and we will certainly get them to the clerk for all members of the committee expeditiously.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Thank you very much.

The Chair: There being no further business, this committee stands adjourned.

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