



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

FOPO • NUMBER 046 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. I'd like to thank our guest, Monsieur Baril, for being with us today.

I assume the clerk has already advised you that we generally allow about 10 minutes for opening comments and remarks. Following that, we'll move into questions and answers. I'd ask that you try to keep your responses concise so that members can get as many questions in as possible.

Whenever you're ready, Monsieur Baril, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril (Biologist, Quebec Federation of Anglers and Hunters): Good morning.

Members of the committee, our federation would like to thank you for having taken the time to listen to our comments for your study on recreational fishing.

My name is Michel Baril and I'm a biologist with the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, the Quebec federation of anglers and hunters.

The Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs is a not-for-profit organization that was created in 1946. Our mission is to contribute to the development and perpetuation of hunting and sport angling as traditional, heritage and sporting activities.

Our general objectives are as follows: we represent the interests of sport hunters and anglers, we advocate for hunting and angling activities, and we promote them in order to ensure their continuity, we promote responsible behaviour from hunters and anglers, we cooperate with public authorities to create conservation and land management programs for the fauna, we cooperate with public authorities to establish fauna management plans that help governments reach their biological, social, and economic objectives.

Our federation now represents over 200 associations who have 125,000 members throughout Quebec. Two entities help us reach our objectives; Héritage faune and Sécurité nature.

Héritage faune is the federation's official foundation. It was created in 1980 and seeks to provide various streams of funding for land and aquatic fauna management projects, scholarships, and advocates renewal programs particularly in the field of sports angling. In 2015, it will fund 62 recreational angling renewal projects.

Sécurité nature was created in 1995. It is the federation's program for education. It offers courses for the Fauna, Safety and Conservation Education Program, also known as PESCOF, and coordinates 450 volunteer trainers who give the courses in all the regions of Quebec. It also drafts educational resources on conservation and the development of wildlife and its habitats as well as relevant open-air recreational activities. In 2014 alone, this program trained 20,000 people through the Canadian Firearms Safety Course.

Over the last few years, the federation has been involved in many sports angling development and promotion programs in Quebec. Amongst our more significant case files, there is the legalization of hunting and fishing activities. Consequently, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2010 decade, the federation worked with other organizations to protect wildlife hunting and fishing, including sports angling.

In 2002, the Government of Quebec made consequential amendments to the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife. Section 1.3 of the Act now states that: "Every person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law." Section 1.4 states: "No person may knowingly hinder a person who is lawfully carrying on an activity referred to in the first paragraph of section 1.3, including an activity preparatory to such an activity."

The federation also participates in developing sport angling, for example during our Fishing Festival, a three-day activity in June during which Quebecers can fish without a licence. With its Héritage faune foundation, the federation delivers 62 subsidies to affiliates that organize training and renewal activities during this festival.

The federation also actively participates in wildlife management in Quebec and in Canada. In Quebec, it is part of the National Wildlife Round Table and the regional wildlife round tables that were created pursuant to the Act respecting conservation and development of wildlife. At the Canadian level, the federation works with the Canadian Wildlife Service on waterfowl management.

It is also a member of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. It is also part of the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel that was created in 2013 by the federal Department of the Environment. Mr. Pierre Latraverse, our federation's president, participates in this advisory panel himself.

I would now like to say a few words on the sport fishing management framework in Quebec.

Fishing on state land is managed based on different types of land: controlled harvesting zones, land that is managed by volunteer boards; outfitter operations operated by private companies pursuant to agreements with the government; wildlife preserves managed by the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec, otherwise known as Sépaq, a government corporation; and free land with no given structure that can be freely used.

• (1110)

Together, these regions offer Quebecers a wealth of opportunities to go fishing, whether on free expeditions of a few hours or on multi-day trips to the most enchanting sites. In fact, one of the roles the federation has taken on is to highlight the importance of fishing as an economic engine.

In Quebec, as in the rest of Canada, fishing is an important factor in economic development. Each year in Quebec, roughly 565,000 fishing permits are sold. Here's an interesting fact: it was recently demonstrated that the economic impact of fishing is greater in more densely populated regions and that city centres also benefit from the economic spinoffs of recreational fishing.

The compilation of the results of studies carried out recently, including the 2012 Canadian Nature Survey, showed that there are roughly 735,000 fishers spread out in all regions of the province. Of that number, 500,000 go fishing every year. For the remainder, they go fishing at least once every five years.

In 2012, fishers as a whole spent roughly 11.8 million days practising recreational fishing, which generated overall economic spinoffs of \$1.2 billion. Broadly speaking, this amount can be separated into two types of spending: current expenses such as lodging, gas, permits, food, and so on, and spending on durable goods such as boats, equipment, vehicles, camping equipment, and everything else.

Walleye and brook trout are the most highly sought-after species and those which result in the greatest economic spinoffs. These two species are ranked even higher than moose, the large game sought after by the largest number of hunters. Walleye generates spinoffs of \$360 million, while the brook trout generates spinoffs of \$340 million. These two fish species alone represent half of the spending by fishers.

In passing, I would like to say a few words about ice fishing, which is a very popular winter activity in Quebec. Each year, ice fishing enthusiasts spend roughly \$50 million on fishing certain freshwater species, particularly yellow perch, or on salt water species such as redfish.

Over the coming years, the recreational fishing sector will be faced with challenges. There is the problem of access to waterways, which is itself the result of two problems: the privatisation, for residential development purposes, of land bordering lakes, and the fact that municipalities reserve access to their waterways to their own residents. These problems are, however, difficult to resolve, and it is up to the government to demonstrate will to improve the situation.

That being said, the federation has successfully raised the awareness of the provincial government, which has committed to conducting an overview of the situation; to checking the legal component of the issue and, possibly, to producing an information

guide for municipalities. On our end, the federation has tackled the issue from a different perspective by creating an Internet application, allonspecher.com, which is an interactive map that details over 1,600 places where there is public access to lakes, to rivers and to the St. Lawrence River.

Another challenge facing the recreational fishing industry in Quebec is the training of the next generation in sufficient numbers and interest. A recent study conducted by the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec clearly shows that younger generations, those who range in age from 25 to 35 and 35 to 45, from which the next generation must be trained, do not perceive fishing in the same way as their parents. Rather, these younger generations consider fishing to be a complementary activity to be practised during vacations or outdoor excursions. As a result, even if the next generation is trained in sufficient numbers, they may not always fish as regularly as past generations. This may result in Quebec having fewer days of fishing, and therefore reduce the economic spinoffs. This decline will likely be felt in the next five years.

To address this issue as well, the federation created an online tool with the objective of putting hunters, fishers and trappers in contact with each other. This site, Mentorat chasse, pêche, piégeage, allows members of the fishing community to contact one another. To sum up, recreational fishing in Quebec is a significant economic engine, but it is also an activity that is sought after for relaxation and outdoor excursions. To maintain its full potential, this resource may need to be protected, even though it is doing quite well on the whole, but the interest of Quebecers for this activity must also be maintained.

Thank you.

• (1115)

[English]

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

We'll now go to our question and answer period. We'll start with Mr. Lapointe.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Baril.

First of all, I want to applaud all of the initiatives taken by your organization. You have wildlife redevelopment projects, some 125,000 members, you have trained 450 volunteer monitors, and I could go on.

It is truly impressive. This is in keeping with the other information that you have provided to us. Approximately 500,000 people a year come back to fish, and recreational fishing activities have direct benefits on the order of \$1.2 billion in Quebec alone. That is very important.

For all these reasons, I would like us to look together into some of the problems we are facing in order to ensure the sustainability of all of these activities.

First of all, let us talk about the fish, or the elephant in the room.

In 2014, Quebec's ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques indicated that three times fewer salmon are returning to Quebec rivers than 30 years ago. In 2015, a decision was therefore taken by the Quebec government: to impose mandatory release on 14 North Shore rivers and two in the Lower St. Lawrence. It was the ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs that took the decision.

The Quebec federation of anglers and hunters and the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation jointly signed a memorandum in 2013. This document dealt with the possibility that the federal government might add certain Atlantic salmon populations in Quebec to the species at risk list. I would like to know if in your opinion there is an imminent threat to Atlantic salmon in Quebec. What are the most significant threats? Do you have any solutions to suggest that might prevent seeing a decline in the resource in some of our rivers, or even seeing them disappear?

Mr. Michel Baril: First of all, the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation deals with salmon-related issues. It is therefore an important partner with whom we often work. Furthermore, we are to table a new memorandum on the subject tomorrow. Usually, we leave the leadership on these initiatives to the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation, but nevertheless, more often than not, we support what the federation recommends.

To what degree should we be concerned by the problem of the decline in salmon? A lot of red lights are lighting up these days. However, we believe that the ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs in Quebec is currently providing adequate management.

As far as the new measure is concerned, that of mandatory release of all large salmon, our federation's position is not yet established. That is why I cannot share it with you. I believe that the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation, however, has some doubts.

● (1120)

Mr. François Lapointe: Do you think you will be able to establish your position over the course of the next few weeks?

Mr. Michel Baril: Yes, certainly. In fact, we should be supporting the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation's memorandum over the course of the next few days. Our position will therefore be established in a few weeks, if not a few days' time.

Mr. François Lapointe: As far as the other part of my question is concerned, do you have any solutions to suggest?

Mr. Michel Baril: In fact, they need to be explored. Furthermore, the new memorandum from the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation talks a lot about putting even more emphasis on research, really studying the problem, to evaluate the status of stocks over the last 30 years and trying to compare Quebec's management, river by river, with the more comprehensive management of the Maritime provinces.

However, we need to have a more accurate picture of the situation before taking further steps. In Quebec, we feel that the river-by-river management approach is the best means. One of the most important components of river-by-river management is the fact that salmon anglers visiting the rivers bring income to the river managers that can be used to contribute to the protection of the resource.

Also, the fact that we have anglers on our rivers allows us to keep an eye on those rivers. If there are no more anglers, the rivers would be left to themselves. If that were the case, we might poaching might become a concern.

In short, the fact that we have anglers on the rivers is no doubt an advantage. Currently, we advise keeping river-by-river management.

Mr. François Lapointe: Thank you, your perspective is helpful.

Many of your counterparts from other provinces have mentioned, pretty consistently, another problem that greatly concerned them. It is the important issue of invasive species, regarding which the federal government can play a truly active role. It could be, for example, better screening of pleasure crafts that cross the border from the United States.

We have heard very concerning stories of some boats not being verified at all or even cleaned before they enter our lakes. There are therefore two interesting points based on your expertise. What initiatives should be taken or improved in your opinion to prevent this kind of problem?

Currently, there are already problems with invasive species. Could you assess for us the extent of these problems in our lakes?

Mr. Michel Baril: In Quebec, the problem is still limited in our lakes, but in the seaway it is certainly a major problem. We are already working on it.

In cases like this, our federation's role is mostly to raise awareness. Through our education and awareness programs, we ask fishers mainly, but also recreational boaters, to be careful not to bring invasive aquatic species from one body of water to another.

We support the federal government in all measures it takes to limit the introduction of invasive species in Quebec.

Mr. François Lapointe: Could you explain what the federal government could improve, or suggest new measures it could put in place to prevent the introduction of invasive species?

Mr. Michel Baril: We are not experts, but to our knowledge, aquatic invasive species are brought in by boats that use waterways. There is also the problem of ballast water and all of that. Legislation could probably be improved in this regard. As it is not one of our specialties, I wouldn't want to say more on this subject.

The role of our federation is to raise awareness and educate people. We do so very actively with fishers, hunters and boaters.

Mr. François Lapointe: Thank you, Mr. Baril.

I came across a pretty detailed documentary that concluded that in Quebec, for the past 10 years or so, 75% of fishers have been over 45, and the sale of permits has been stagnant for nearly 15 years. That reflects one of your observations on the new generation you described as between 20 and 44 years of age, which does not see fishing the same way.

Mr. Michel Baril: Correct.

Mr. François Lapointe: Your observation seems very accurate. If I understand correctly, people from this new generation will not plan all of their vacations around fishing. They won't stop everything for three weeks just to go fishing. There is a potential decrease then in the use of fishing sites. Once again, do you have any solutions to suggest? If there are more people who use fishing sites for fewer days, could we maintain comparable levels of activity or are we facing a problem for which we don't yet have a solution?

• (1125)

Mr. Michel Baril: In the world of recreational activities, a lot of people do everything they can for their own sector, be it fishing, golf or others. We could go over all of these recreational activities. But in our opinion, if we want to improve the situation, we will have to work harder on marketing. We are already working hard on that. We believe in marketing and we are convinced that we can make fishing more attractive to the younger generation to attract many new fishing enthusiasts.

We are producing video clips for that purpose. We are working very hard on promoting fishing and to make it an accessible activity. We are focusing a lot on making fishing accessible. Perhaps people should stop seeing fishing as being only an adventure lasting a couple of days in the backwoods. We have to make fishing generally more attractive to everyone. You can fish in the city. Our offices are located near Quebec City. The river is a terrific water body where all kinds of fish can be caught. We believe in promotion, we are working hard on it, and we are convinced that it is a good way to improve the situation.

Mr. François Lapointe: A bit less than three weeks ago, I took part in a fundraising dinner in my riding for the Société de gestion de la rivière Ouelle. I was sitting with several very competent people for that sector, and they all agreed that fishing was perceived as being an expensive activity, which is really not the case. For instance, a fishing licence for the Ouelle River is \$30 per family per day. So it is less expensive for a family to go fishing for an entire day than to go to the movies during one evening.

Do you agree with that assessment of the situation, as made by some of your colleagues from organizations in the rest of Quebec? We have to change this perception so that middle-income families feel they can afford recreational fishing.

Mr. Michel Baril: Yes, absolutely, and that completes in part what I was saying a few moments ago.

You often picture a fisherman as sitting at the wheel of a big truck, with a rowboat on a trailer and equipment worth \$75,000. We are going to keep that fishing niche because some enthusiasts love it. However, we also have to promote fishing as being an affordable activity.

You can do all kinds of fishing outings, for almost nothing, in the vicinity of large cities. The St. Lawrence River, which flows through Quebec City and Montreal, is a really great fishing opportunity for people who want to engage in this kind of activity. What you say is true: it is up to us to do our own marketing to reach those people and to let them know that it is possible for them to easily find great fishing at little cost.

Mr. François Lapointe: Thank you, Mr. Baril.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Lapointe.

Mr. Kamp.

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

Thank you, Mr. Baril, for appearing before us. We appreciate your presentation. You've given us a lot of helpful information and a lot of detail.

In addition to the economic contribution that recreational fisheries make in the province and the number of fishers, and so on, do you have a comment on the cultural significance of fishing in the province? I ask that because I'm from British Columbia, and out there we like to think that recreational fishing, particularly in the marine waters, is a very important cultural activity. Yes, it makes that important contribution to our GDP, but do you have that same sense in Quebec as well?

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: Yes, recreational fishing is very important in Quebec, from a cultural point of view. We often see that people are not connected enough to nature. However, we believe that recreational fishing is a wonderful gateway for people to discover nature. As soon as you start recreational fishing, you are connected with nature, with waterways, rivers, birds and wild animals. An activity like that one is often an open door into the natural world. Our ancestors lived in close contact with nature, and we would really want this contact to continue in the future.

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you very much for that. That's very well said, and we would agree with you on that. We thank you for the work you do on that behalf.

Can you elaborate a little more on how recreational fisheries are managed in the province? Is there a difference between how they're managed in salt water, for example, in marine waters, as opposed to freshwater fisheries? For example, is there a shared responsibility between the province and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: In Quebec, the provincial government is responsible for managing freshwater and migrating fish. The federal government is responsible for marine fish that can be found in the river and sometimes in the Saguenay fjord.

With regard to population management, we know that in our lakes there are many different populations of fish. This makes management easier because we can rather precisely establish population levels. This allows us to implement management measures to help the levels remain stable or even increase. Those are the advantages of managing lake fish populations.

The Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks implements precise management plans for certain species. Therefore, there is a specific management plan for salmon. There is also a specific management plan for the lake trout, and for the walleye.

We concentrate on a species, we determine its population level throughout the province and implement management measures to keep these levels stable, and in certain cases to increase them.

In Quebec, we closely and precisely manage our populations.

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you for that.

We've been hearing in some provinces that there are some concerns about the ability to monitor recreational fishing to be able to know with any kind of certainty how many fish are actually being caught. Can you tell us what the experience is in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: That is a good question.

As far as I know, the oversight for our waterways is rather good. Many of our lakes are part of what we call structured land—part of an outfitter operation, in a controlled development area, or in a Sépaq wildlife preserve—that covers a large part of southern Quebec. This allows us to conduct relatively precise oversight on anglers. These establishments often have fishery guardians, wildlife protection officers who are in the field, or wildlife protection assistants that help them monitor what anglers do. The fact that many lakes are part of this structured land allows us to monitor what anglers do.

In the far north of Quebec, the land is open to use by all but is often inaccessible due to the distance that must be travelled to reach it. We are not aware of any current problems in the lakes in northern Quebec.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you.

Can you tell us what your organization's experience is with the recreational fisheries conservation partnership program? Has it gone well? Do you have any suggestions about how that program could be improved, if in fact you've been using it?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: Are you talking about the federal government's recreational fisheries conservation partnerships?

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Yes, that's the program.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: Our federation does not have staff and does not directly conduct land development projects. However, through our Héritage faune foundation, we grant funds to associations in order to help them carry out such projects. These associations often turn to the federal recreational fisheries conservation partnerships. Most associations are glad to have this program, but may have something to say about it. I should share one or two of their opinions.

Associations would like to have data collection projects included in the program as they are prerequisites for wildlife development projects. For example, an association that wishes to carry out any kind of development project would like data on their intended site.

This could be biological or geological data accessible to them the year before they are expecting to begin work.

There is also the issue of percentages. For a project to be eligible for funding, the total support coming from all levels of government must not go beyond 75%. If associations conducting development projects can't go beyond 75%, this implies that they have to provide the remaining 25%.

Often, they do not have the necessary resources to provide that 25%. That is why they would like to see some improvements to the federal recreational fisheries conservation partnership program, to allow the federal government to subsidize a larger part of the projects submitted to the program.

These are comments we hear on a regular basis.

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Good. Thank you for that. As I understand it, that 25% can also be a contribution in-kind.

Thank you for your suggestions. I know that the department and the minister are continuing to think about how to improve that program. It's been quite successful so far, so thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Mr. MacAulay.

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

Doctor, welcome to the committee. We're pleased to have you. It's an important study.

Your submission indicates that the redbfish, the main catch in the Saguenay, has declined a lot. You also mentioned the trout fishery in the recreational fishing area. I'd like you to comment on what measures are taking place. Do you have a handle on the stock itself, the redbfish and the trout fishery? Do you have the figures, the numbers? Does the department or anybody have any idea of what the stock is like in these areas?

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: In terms of redbfish, it's not really our role to adjust any stocks or harvests. We're more involved in promoting fishing, in promotional activities. That being said, I believe redbfish stocks are doing well. There were problems in the past, but I think that thanks to the state of harvesting and to mandatory quotas in the Saguenay Fjord, the situation has improved. However, I cannot tell you more than that.

In terms of the trout fishery in Quebec, the situation is quite good. The Ministry of Forestry, Wildlife and Parks has been doing a considerable amount of work on the trout fishery because it is very important economically. I believe that the Quebec government will be putting in place a management plan in order to have a better picture of the situation and to perhaps improve certain aspects of it.

From what we know, many outfitters make a living from the trout fishery. Things are going quite well. Where needed, stocking can be done in order to sustain the fishery and extend the fishing season. The trout stocking economy is very active in most areas. Generally speaking, the management of the Quebec trout fishery is going quite well.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

You also mentioned in your presentation the private land issue. I would suspect that is about people purchasing land on the water and then claiming rights right up to the waterway. I'd like you to explain the problems that's causing and what measures need to be put in place to have this problem dealt with or handled in some way, because it's obviously a problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: It is a significant problem. In fact, it's a political problem. In Quebec, almost all bodies of water belong to the state. Therefore, anyone can go fishing in those waters. The problem has to do with access to the water. In some cases, as I said earlier, the privatization of residential development has limited access to these lakes. Furthermore, municipalities have tended to support their residents' positions, which further limits the access of non-residents to the lakes.

For example, if there is a public access point, for example, a ramp, the municipality will impose fees for local fishers or residents, but will set huge fees for non-resident fishers. We have asked the government to clean this up. We are not advocating free access to lakes for everyone, but at the very least, the fees set for access to certain lakes by fishers should be reasonable. We think that a \$10, \$15, \$20 or \$25 daily fee for access to a lake is reasonable. However, in some cases, non-residents have to pay access fees of \$50, \$100 or even \$150. That is unreasonable.

There are ramps and access points for many lakes. It's the fees that prevent people from getting to the lake. That is why it is a political problem. Awareness-raising has to be done with municipal authorities and with citizens living on these lakes in order to make them understand that Quebec's lakes belong to all citizens.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: What I understand about it is that the landowners who purchase the property handy to the water have to have access to private sector land in order to get on the lakes.

You're saying the rates are high. Who sets the rate? I would think it would be a very poor tourism promotion to be charging tourists a lot more than local people. Is it the landowners themselves? Who sets the fees and is this done in order to prevent...or do some people purchase property for their own privacy?

Is that what this is all about, to keep a lot of people out? Could you expand on that?

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: Yes. Fees appear to be set absolutely arbitrarily. The municipalities decide what fees they will set. We have seen that no one municipality sets the same fees for accessing

lakes in its area. Each municipality sets different fees and does not use a common scale.

We have asked the provincial government to set minimum and maximum fees that municipalities will have to abide by. This does not currently exist and therefore cities do not have a reference point that they can use to set those fees. They just appear to be setting the highest fees possible in order to prevent non-residents from using their lakes.

What you said is interesting. It's as if the municipalities do not see that they are depriving themselves of a certain kind of tourism by preventing people from fishing in their lakes. It is a little difficult to understand, but on the other hand, we know that residents living around the lakes are not interested in tourism. They want peace and quiet and they do not want people fishing on the lake in front of their cottage or their home. That's what is important to them. Tourism to their mind is secondary.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I would suspect then, sir, the people who own the land handy to the water have a pretty good impact on municipalities' political agenda and that is creating quite a problem for tourism. I can see where it would be a place where government would have to make some decisions for sure, and I can well understand what a negative effect it would have on tourists, as you've said.

On the catch and release program, and also the stocking of lakes, I'd like you to expand on that. Has the stocking of lakes been very successful? How has it affected the stock of native fish in the lakes? Also, if you have time, could you expand on the catch and release program? Do you have figures on the mortality rate, or how successfully this is working?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: In Quebec, the practice of stocking fish is used for many purposes and is quite useful. Often, it simply serves to support a given fishery. For example, an outfitter who stocks certain lakes with brook trout will be able to attract more customers and lengthen the fishing season. This will have a positive impact on his business and his livelihood.

In Quebec, the put-and-take approach to stocking fish is quite widespread and supports a high level of economic activity. I do not have any figures on that, but most outfitters use fish stocking one way or another.

Stocking is also useful to introduce species, or to reintroduce a species that had disappeared from lakes because of chemicals or for any other reason. In other cases, stocking ponds supports succession projects for young fishers. In Quebec, fish stocking serves many purposes.

When stocking takes place, certain problems may be detected. Provincial fish stocking guidelines allow us to properly manage the stocks. One cannot just stock any species, any way. The government monitors the state of fish farms and the way fish are farmed. The transportation and stocking of fish is managed so as to derive the greatest possible benefit. This approach allows us to avoid problems that may surface during stocking, for example introducing disease and parasites or disrupting the genetic chain of the fish population in any given lake.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Mr. Leef.

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

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Baril.

[*English*]

You mentioned in your opening remarks the memberships and the major economic impact of angling. You briefly touched on the highly populated areas in Quebec. I think what we tend to hear, and what we often assume, is that angling is very much a rural Canadian activity.

I would like you to have an opportunity to expand a little more on your comments about how important the economic value is to highly populated regions of your province and perhaps what the demographics of your membership look like in terms of city-based people participating in angling and outdoor pursuits and activities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Baril: I do not have a precise number showing how many people fish in each region, but we do indeed get the impression that fishing is mainly associated with rural regions. In fact, in any given large population, there will always be a certain percentage of sports fishing enthusiasts. Some of them for example, come from the area of Montreal, where over 3 million people live. They represent a large pool of fishers who then head to the regions to fish.

Many Montreal fishers will fish near Montreal because the river is a beautiful spot to fish. However, many of them leave the big cities to go fish in the country. The Montreal area has a population of over 3 million residents, of whom a few hundred thousand are fishers. When these people are getting ready to go fishing, they buy a truck, a boat or fishing equipment. Often, they will do that in their own area. Fishing-related purchases will therefore take place in Longueuil, Brossard and Laval. Fishing has a beneficial economic impact on the cities.

Following that, fishers will head out into the regions where they will spend even more money on lodging, meals and gas. So these other regions will also benefit economically from fishing.

As you can see, big cities also benefit from hunting and fishing. Quebec's biggest hunting and fishing stores are located in Quebec and Montreal, both major cities.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

You also mentioned that there's a projected future decline in the angling population. I think you were alluding to the fact that education is very important to make sure we don't lose a generation of people on the streams who can be our stewards of the land, observe the conservation efforts that are needed, prevent poaching. If you had a recommendation...?

How important is it, and what suggestion would you have, for provincial and federal governments to partner with associations like yours to improve and expand upon the necessary education to make sure we don't see a decline in the very important stewards we have out there on our lakes and rivers?

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Baril: We are convinced that this is still a marketing issue. The advisory committee on hunting and angling, of which our federation's president is a member, comes to mind. That committee was created in 2013 and came up with a few recommendations. One recommendation involved requesting that the federal government create major programs to promote the wildlife harvesting activities of hunting and fishing.

In Quebec, we work closely with the government to create certain programs that promote fishing. Doubtless, it would be useful for the advisory committee on hunting and angling to follow up on that recommendation and work with us on a promotion plan in order to reach out to fishers and convince the next generation to continue to fish and to embrace fishing as an outdoor activity.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

You've been at this business a long time and have been a major part of this. Do you recall a time in your past when provincial and federal governments have put so much attention on outdoor and angling pursuits with hunting and angling advisory panels? How important do you feel this is, that you and groups like your association have an opportunity to present your position to the federal government?

Is it just nice to have, or is it, in your mind, an essential opportunity for hunting and angling communities?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Baril: In fact, we're honoured to be able to continue to work closely with the federal government on improving recreational fishing conditions in Canada. Our president, Mr. Latraverse, is a proud participant of the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel. He is also happy to have the opportunity to communicate with the federal government to share the points of view and expectations of our federation, in addition to those of the fishers that we represent.

The opportunity to work with your government is important to us. It allows us to have direct contact with the federal government. We are convinced that, if the government follows up on the recommendations, it would quite simply improve the situation of the recreational fishing sector.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

You have a biology background. I'm just wondering what threats there are from your point of view in the province of Quebec or anywhere else in Canada that we need to be aware of from a biological perspective, and what opportunities we have. What benefits are we seeing from the point of view of biology that will allow growth in recreational angling opportunities in Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: Could you please make your question a little bit more specific?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Do you see any specific threat to fish species or habitat right now that the federal government needs to focus on, and are there biological benefits that we could maximize?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Baril: There are threats, it's true, and they are raised by everyone. Despite this, we shouldn't sound the alarm too much. As the saying goes, nature abhors a vacuum. Sometimes, certain species are harmed by urban development, industrial development, climate change, and other things. While some species are harmed, others may flourish. We should maybe take advantage of this situation.

It seems to me that the development of our societies changes our natural environment, be it aquatic or land-based. Of course, there are some changes in wildlife communities, and we must learn to deal with that. That's perhaps most obvious in the case of game. In Quebec, for example, our new star game is the wild turkey, which has been benefiting from milder winters. We need to take advantage of this new resource. However, it's certain that other animals will suffer from the development of our society.

In my opinion, we must remain vigilant. To sum things up, our society does good work with respect to remaining vigilant and protecting species at risk. I don't want to be too alarmist, and I think that we need to benefit from the new opportunities that are arising.

● (1200)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

[English]

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

Dr. Baril, thank you very much on behalf of the committee for appearing before our committee today and taking the time to answer questions and provide us with your comments as well. We certainly appreciate it.

We'll suspend for a few moments to prepare for our next witnesses.

● (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1205)

The Chair: Unfortunately, we'll have to break now as the bells are ringing.

This meeting is adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>