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• (1600)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC)): I've always wanted to do this, so here we go.

Welcome to the transportation committee.

I will start by reading some of the basic introduction *en français*.

[Translation]

I apologize for the poor quality of my French.

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 135 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Before we go on, I'd like to remind all of those participating in person to read the instructions on the cards on the table in front of them. These measures are in place to protect the health and safety of all participants.

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

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

All witnesses have completed the required connection tests.

I'd now like to welcome the witnesses.

[English]

Today, from Coalition Navigation, we have Denise Cloutier and André Philippe Hébert.

From Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau, we have Constance Ramacieri and Claude Sicard.

[Translation]

We also have Raynald Collard from the Association des riverains et amis du Richelieu.

[English]

Is that right, Madam Clerk?

Madam Clerk is helping me out. It's my first time here.

Make sure you keep your earpieces away from the microphones, as that can cause feedback, which can cause significant damage to our interpreters.

We will begin with one person speaking for each group for five minutes. I will stop you once you get to about five minutes and 15 seconds, so we can make sure we have the entire time.

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for appearing today.

I thank as well our interpreters, analysts and clerk. We have the best of the best here at the House of Commons.

We will start with Coalition Navigation for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier (Vice-President, Coalition Navigation): Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee.

My name is Denise Cloutier and I'm vice-president of Coalition Navigation. I'm here today with André Philippe Hébert, director.

The Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation, which we will call Coalition Navigation, is a pan-Canadian non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that legislation on the use of motorboats protects Canada's water ecosystems and waterways.

Since 2013, the organization has developed and submitted legislative proposals to the federal government based on scientific facts in order to regulate the use of motorized boats on Canada's waters.

Our objective is to ensure that legislation is based on science and on the best scientific knowledge to protect our bodies of water and ensure their quality. We're also involved in funding research that will deepen our understanding of these issues.

We know now that navigation has an impact on bodies of water, including a major impact on drinking water intakes. As everyone knows, many bodies of water serve as drinking water intakes.

We also know that navigation has an impact on fauna and flora, including by contributing to the proliferation of invasive alien species, to the deterioration of water quality and to lake eutrophication. And as we know, eutrophication can lead to the development of cyanobacteria with toxic potential.

Moreover, navigation contributes to the breakdown not only of natural infrastructure, such as riparian strips, but also of anthropogenic infrastructure, like docks and dams.

It also has an impact on the physical and mental health of local residents and on user security.

In addition, navigation contributes to the production of greenhouse gases not only by combustion-powered navigation, but also by the eutrophication of lakes.

Everything we do is based on two scientific studies produced in Quebec. According to these studies, a wake boat with its ballasts engaged stirs up bottom sediments up to seven metres deep, which contributes to the eutrophication of the lakes. In addition, a wake boat operating within 300 metres of shore will erode that shore, since it takes at least 300 metres for the energy produced to completely dissipate. As such, this type of craft should navigate more than 300 metres from shore, and even beyond a 600-metre corridor from shore, ideally.

Navigation Coalition wants to protect water bodies and ensure that navigation is based on the bathymetry of the lakes. Bathymetry allows us to know the depth and width of waterways. We cross-reference this information with scientific studies to improve navigation practices.

We want a safe and sustainable navigation code. More specifically, we'd like to replace the current "Safe Boating Guide" with a mandatory code, similar to the traffic code, which would include a preamble emphasizing the impact of navigation on the environment. Currently, the "Safe Boating Guide" doesn't include any environmental concepts.

We also want navigators to be aware of the impact navigation has on the environment. While it is very easy to obtain a pleasure craft operator card online, the mandatory prerequisite training doesn't contain any information on the impact of navigation on the environment. We want boat card requirements to be revised, driving tests to be mandatory just as they are under the traffic code, and modules covering all the information related to sustainable and safe navigation integrated into navigation courses.

Navigation Coalition has developed a range of services to support municipalities in the complicated process of amending regulations in order to obtain navigation restrictions. We want to work with municipalities, while respecting the rules set out in the vessel operation restriction regulations. In fact, that work has already begun.

We also want to navigate towards a sustainable future. I don't know if you have our presentation in hand, ladies and gentlemen, but one of the pages shows an advertisement by boat manufacturers, where you can see a lake, a boat, and the words "unlimited playground". That isn't true, however, since lakes are not unlimited playgrounds. We want to counter these ads with an awareness campaign.

We've already built our campaign. It includes six messages, which I will now show you.

First, we talk about navigating while preserving the ecosystem. This is for people who make waves. I don't know if you can see this ad in the presentation, but it's very appealing. People can relate to it. It is designed to encourage people to pay attention to the environment.

• (1605)

Then we talk about navigating while keeping waters clear—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Could you please wrap up in 10 seconds?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: Okay, I'll quickly sum up our recommendations.

First, the act should recognize the environmental impacts of pleasure craft on our bodies of water.

Then, we should define modern legislation on recreational boating that takes into account current environmental studies.

In addition, we should define recreational boating zones based on the bathymetry of water bodies.

We also need to establish and enforce a mandatory safe and sustainable navigation code and adapt the requirements of navigation courses to this code and introduce the notions of sustainable navigation from the start.

Finally, we naturally need to lead an awareness campaign across Quebec.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much.

Next is Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Constance Ramacieri (President, Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the committee for having us.

My name is Constance Ramacieri and I'm president of the Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau. I'm here with Claude Sicard, administrator.

Incorporated in 2022, the federation is relatively young, but it already has nearly 150 members from 11 of Quebec's administrative regions. Its mission is to give a voice to associations and municipalities that are interested in navigation and the protection of water bodies in general.

It was at the insistence of our members that we participated in the last online consultation on the vessel operation restriction regulations, commonly referred to as VORR, and submitted three opinions, which were co-signed by 35 lake protection associations.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you three observations that are at the heart of our thinking and our commitment to recreational boating.

The first observation is that we must avoid a democratic deficit. I think that this is an important and central issue for any democracy. I have to say that, when we talk about the democratic deficit, we're talking about what it means for small municipalities in Quebec not to have access to federal navigation regulations. I also have to say that when I'm not the president of the federation, I'm a municipal councillor. I'm sure you'll understand that this issue is of great interest to small municipalities in Quebec.

The September 2024 Canada Gazette reported that, on average, Transport Canada receives three applications each year under the vessel operation restriction regulations. At that time, there were 1,104 municipalities in Quebec, 700 of which have fewer than 2,000 residents. There are more than 500,000 lakes in Quebec. Three applications a year will take a long time. We would never suggest that Quebec municipalities want to regulate navigation, but our young federation receives far more than three applications a year.

According to Transport Canada's 2023 impact analysis, it is estimated that local governments would need 2,380 hours to complete a single application under the regulation, at an estimated cost of \$100,000. You will understand that the vast majority of small municipalities in Quebec and Canada don't have the kind of resources it takes to make an application to the federal government. Naturally, this discourages local elected officials from availing themselves of the lake protection measures offered by these regulations.

The fact that it is next to impossible for most of Quebec's municipalities to avail themselves of a federal regulation constitutes a significant democratic deficit.

We believe it is Transport Canada's responsibility to ensure that local authorities can access the benefits of federal regulations without delay, undue hardship, or restrictive costs.

That is the first observation.

Our second observation is that threats to the environment must be recognized as the main driver of a restriction. The modernization of the vessel operation restriction regulations must be undertaken from the perspective of environmental protection. While security and peace of mind issues remain important, environmental threats and their consequences are increasingly serious. For example, several bodies of water, particularly where human activities are more intense, show signs of accelerated eutrophication, that is, accelerated aging.

Although the degradation is multifactorial, there are numerous scientific studies linking some boating activities to the significant effects observed on water quality. We talked about it, and we will continue to talk about it. We could send you the 2017 study on Lac Noir. It clearly demonstrates the link between navigation and water quality. This study is co-signed by Rosa Galvez, who in her spare time is a senator in the Parliament of Canada.

The federation believes that the updated vessel operation restriction regulations should incorporate the recognition of environmental threats as the primary driver of a restriction and that, consequently, it must be accompanied by a review of the allocation standards in order to prioritize responses to an environmental emergen-

cy. You're as familiar as we are with environmental emergencies, whether it be the risk of introducing aquatic invasive species, the frequency of cyanobacteria outbreaks or the protection of threatened or vulnerable species.

• (1610)

The third observation is that responsible government leadership is needed. We wanted to talk about the Vermont example, but it came up on Tuesday. So we decided to talk to you about the economic impact. This was also discussed on Tuesday, but we would like to share with you some economic impacts that are less recognized—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): My apologies, but could you just wrap up? We're out of time, with just 10 seconds are left.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I will go very quickly.

[Translation]

I'm talking about the economic impact on riparian property values. For example, if there are cyanobacteria in a lake, riparian properties could lose 52% of their value. You can imagine what that means for a municipal government and its tax base.

Given that the era of freight transportation—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): My apologies, you will have more time in questions.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: Thank you. I'll take advantage of it.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you for your testimony.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: Thank you very much.

[English]

Five minutes go by fast.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): They do.

[Translation]

Let's go to the Association des riverains et amis du Richelieu.

[English]

Mr. Collard, you have five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Collard (Public Relations, Media and Press Officer, Association des riverains et amis du Richelieu): Hello.

I belong to an association that was created at the request of my federal member of Parliament, who noticed that there was a conflict between waterfront residents and recreational boaters, particularly where motorized vessels are concerned. A dozen of us met and we painted a picture of the situation.

Shoreline erosion is obviously a problem. The Richelieu River breaks up in the spring, but there is also a continuous break-up for six to eight months because of the waves caused by the boats. We need to understand that, over the past 20 years or so, we have seen an increase in the number of marinas and, consequently, the number of boats. In addition, the boats are larger and their engine displacement has increased, so they produce bigger waves, which accelerates shoreline destruction. So we've looked into that.

We also noticed that in the villages, many people with wharves and small boats were impacted by these excessive waves. We allowed them to have their say.

As you know, the Richelieu River is a rather extraordinary waterway. I think it is the most popular river in Quebec, if not in Canada. It is nearly 130 kilometres long. Along that river there are about 20 marinas and 800 to 1,000 private wharves. I counted them on Google Earth. This doesn't include the passage of ships from the St. Lawrence River that pass through this waterway to the Hudson River. This is not insignificant. These ships are often, of course, sailboats that sail to the Bahamas and the Caribbean.

At the same time, there has also been an extraordinary increase in water recreation over the past 20 years. These are often motorized activities such as water-skiing, inflatable boat buoys, personal watercraft, and the wakeboarding we've heard so much about. The latter activity is really terrible. How is it that this water sport can happen in a small river 200 metres wide? It should be practised in the Lachine Rapids or the Gulf of St. Lawrence, for example.

In short, when we looked at the situation, we realized that there were no regulations in place to stem this new flow of water-based recreational activities. That is why we looked into the issue.

This included mitigating wave impacts on shorelines and private and public facilities, such as docks and boat-launching ramps.

We also had to look at the situation of animal species endemic to the Richelieu. The copper redhorse is a well-known example. It breeds in the Richelieu, then leaves, and returns in the spring. Without the Richelieu, that fish would disappear completely.

We talked earlier about drinking water. Just in the Lower Richelieu, where I live, 24,000 people use that water. That is 12.6 million litres a day. There are 100,000 consumers along the length of the river. So we have a major responsibility in this regard.

The Richelieu has long had problems because of the former CIL plant, Canadian Industries Limited, and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. Recently, someone asked me if we could pump out the bottom of the Richelieu and remove all this polluted mud. I told him that it would be an impossible mission. The cost would be astronomical.

So what can be done to alleviate the problem? It's not complicated. Because it's in the mud at the bottom of the river, it's important to stop playing in that mud. So we're asking boaters to go through

the main channel. Earlier, someone provided figures on that. I think it was said that boats were stirring up the sediment to a depth of seven metres.

● (1615)

The regulatory amendment that we were able to get passed in December 2023 deals with the speed of boats based on banks and shoals—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Mr. Collard, if you could just wrap up in 10 seconds or less, that would be great.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Collard: I'll just say that we're very pleased to have had this measure adopted at the federal level. It took seven years to set up this project, and it was accepted. Now it has to be implemented. It may take a little bit of on-water monitoring to make it work.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you, Mr. Collard.

I believe we are starting with the Conservatives for a six-minute round.

Dr. Lewis, I believe you're up.

Sorry, my apologies. It's Mr. Muys.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you. Welcome.

I will ask each of the witnesses if they have any data on what the boat traffic has been in their particular area.

I know each of you represents a different portion. There's the federation of Quebec, but there's also the Richelieu, which of course is in one corner of the province, and for the coalition, I'm not sure about the geography. Is there any data on the boat traffic, say, five years ago, prepandemic, postpandemic and then this past year? Has there been an increase or a decrease? What does that look like?

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I can try to answer the question.

We are next to Lake Memphremagog. Memphremagog Conservation Inc., or MCI, whose representative appeared before this committee on Tuesday, did a survey of boats on Lake Memphremagog before, during and after the pandemic. There's no doubt that there was a considerable increase during the pandemic, but it is levelling off now. I'm sure MCI would be happy to provide you with that information on this large lake. Lake Memphremagog is 40 kilometres long, after all.

That should give you a pretty good idea of what's happening elsewhere. I know that in small lakes there have been extraordinary numbers of boats over the last few years, to the point where the issue of the lakes' carrying capacity has come up. At some point, we have to start assessing whether a lake is capable of regenerating after many boat crossings and a lot of boating activity during a season.

[English]

Mr. Dan Muys: Thank you.

Does anyone else have a comment in terms of actual data versus opinion?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: I'd like to add something about the carrying capacity of the lakes. I could give you the example of Lac des Sables, in Saint-Agathe-des-Monts. This lake has a carrying capacity of about 31 motorboats, but there are currently 650.

Also, the new boats that are coming in are all new, large boats with powerful engines and ballast tanks. Their owners are completely disregarding the depth of the water they're navigating in.

[English]

Mr. Dan Muys: I've travelled throughout the Memphremagog area. In fact, I was there in the summer of 2023 visiting friends, and I've been to the Richelieu area previously.

Obviously, all of those areas border U.S. states: New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Are there any best practices from south of the border that we should be looking at?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: The regulations in Vermont came up last Tuesday. The state has established standards based on environmental studies conducted in Quebec, in terms of the distance from shore and the depth of the water body. These standards are generally aligned with the conclusions of studies conducted in Quebec.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I would add that the Vermont regulations are in their first year of implementation. They are specifically focused on wakeboarding. Because of the standards that have been adopted, wakeboarding is limited to only 30 lakes in Vermont.

[English]

Mr. Dan Muys: Is there anything in the other states, such as New York, New Hampshire and Maine, or is it just Vermont?

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: Most probably, but unfortunately, we don't have the information right here now today.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you, Mr. Muys.

I believe we go to Mr. Lauzon from the Liberal Party for six minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

I'd like to thank all the witnesses who came here in person, as well as Mr. Collard, who joins us by video conference.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Cloutier.

In your testimony, you mentioned how the design of this type of vessel has evolved. They've modernized quite a bit over time. Earlier, in response to Mr. Muys' question about whether there were more boats or fewer boats, you answered that, according to your findings, there were more. In addition to boats with powerful engines, there are also high-performance electric boats now.

Tell me a little bit about this side of things. Did you feel that electric boats had even greater power and that this new generation of boats was generating a lot of waves?

Ms. Denise Cloutier: Allow me to digress for a moment. Since electric boats and powerful electric motors are much more expensive than combustion engines, we don't see many of them on the water yet.

However, at the last boat show, we saw 600-horsepower engines. What lake can you sail on with two 600-horsepower engines? There aren't that many lakes in Quebec that are at least 600 metres wide.

Manufacturers are building bigger, more powerful products, and there's nothing to stop those boats from being put on a lake. There may be municipal-controlled boat ramps, but once the boats are on the water, there's nothing we can do.

• (1625)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: We heard from witnesses representing boat manufacturers and retailers on Tuesday. According to them, not only have boat sales decreased, but the size of boats on our lakes has also decreased.

Ms. Ramacieri, how do you interpret these statements that there are fewer large boats being sold in Quebec and in Canada?

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I'll let Mr. Sicard answer that question, since he's looked much more closely at the issue of navigation.

Mr. Claude Sicard (Administrator, Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau): We don't have any data on boat sales. However, we do know that many environmental problems in the lakes are created by boats, wake boats in particular.

We think there should be national standards, similar to those that exist in Vermont. We can try to simplify the current forms, but if we don't create national standards to ensure that people have good practices and use the right types of boats in the right places, municipalities will always have a hard time policing navigation. In fact, both the federal government and the municipalities will be bogged down in red tape, so we have to come up with national standards. Under the Constitution, that is a federal responsibility.

The other thing that is extremely important is that we have to have an overall economic vision. Yes, boat sales are extremely important, and I'm not against that industry. However, there are also environmental costs. As soon as a lake or a river starts to have environmental problems, it can cost hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars to try to restore them to good condition. We talked about the Richelieu River earlier. In some cases, it is simply not possible. So you have to be able to weigh all of those things in an economic analysis model. Again, this is a federal responsibility.

I think we have made a lot of progress in recent years on the technical and regulatory front. Now, we need to take this to another level and have a more comprehensive vision in order to leave our children with healthy lakes and rivers. To do that, we have to have a broader economic vision.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Sicard, you mentioned the federal government's responsibility with respect to the regulations in force today. However, do you agree that this is a shared responsibility that falls to the residents and the environmental associations, as well as the municipalities, the provincial government and the federal government?

Earlier, you suggested that environmental awareness be included in the act. The Department of Transport is separate from the Department of Environment, but everyone has to work together.

We are holding consultations until November 28 on the review of the vessel operation restriction regulations. The purpose of this review is to simplify the process. For some, the process took seven years to complete, as Mr. Collard told us. However, the current regulatory process takes about four years to get started. That is still too long.

We heard from witnesses that it was possible, under the current regulations, to regulate navigation with a particular squadron. These witnesses seemed satisfied with the process, which they put in place about 10 years ago.

In your opinion, what could be done better, apart from talking to each other and facilitating enforcement of these regulations?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): You have 30 seconds to respond.

[Translation]

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: There are uneven means. You have more resources than the small associations and municipalities in Quebec.

If a municipality with 25 lakes wants to amend the regulations, it needs to make 25 separate applications. That's unreasonable. There are things you can do to ease the burden on municipalities.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: That indeed needs to be simplified.

Thank you.

• (1630)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you for the timeliness, too, and the interpretation, Mr. Lauzon.

Next up, we have the Bloc Québécois and Mr. Barsalou-Duval for six minutes.

[Translation]

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today. I'm very happy they're here. This is a study that could take much longer than the time we have, but we will take advantage of the time we have. That will already be a win.

I'd like to begin with an issue that was raised at the previous meeting, and that we discussed again today, although not quite as in depth. I'm talking about lake carrying capacity, that is, the maximum number of boats that can be on a given lake simultaneously.

Coalition Navigation seems to have found a way to measure how many boats can simultaneously navigate on a lake or river. Is there a method or formula for calculating that?

Ms. Denise Cloutier: There are studies showing those methods. I can't cite them for you now, but the methods do take into account the size of the lake, the number of boats, the amount of space they need for navigation and the social component. I actually wrote an article for Québec Yachting about the carrying capacity of lakes, and I refer to a number of studies leading to those findings.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Mr. Collard, you quickly mentioned the regulations that were introduced for the Richelieu River. I was involved in that process, in my riding. As you mentioned, it took seven years. I've talked about it as well, in previous meetings.

First, do you think it's normal that it took seven years?

Second, what was that like for you, personally? How did you feel throughout that long process?

Mr. Raynald Collard: It was a happy experience for me, I have to say. We were this great group of 12 people getting together to discuss responsible boating, water, the Richelieu River heritage and such. We worked on setting objectives. It was a good experience for me, except in relation to the pandemic.

The most important thing about the much-talked-about measures put in place in December 2023 is that they provide a model, in my view. They say the process to make regulatory changes takes about four years now. It took us seven years. That means that things can move more quickly now.

The federal government stepped in to shorten the time frame and ease the pressure on municipalities, but it could do more on that front. Municipalities are looking into implementing those regulations, including Saint-Ours, Saint-Roch-de-Richelieu and Belœil. It's coming along. I tell them that there's a model available and that they can use it. I suggest they reach out to their member of Parliament and municipal authorities—

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt, but I want to make sure I have time to ask you enough questions.

I want to ask you a question I asked witnesses at our last meeting, but they didn't really know what to say.

Requested changes to the schedules or at least the regulations include limits on speed and motor size. It seems, however, that certain changes can't be requested, such as putting restrictions on anchoring or prohibiting large waves.

Are you aware of jurisdictions in the world that allow regulatory changes that can't be requested here currently? Would it be a good idea for people making these requests to have this available to them?

Mr. Raynald Collard: Generally speaking, it is possible to use a waterway without going to a marina. In the past, I've had to warn a boater who was about to drop anchor in a protected area between Île aux Cerfs and Île de Jeannotte. It's a pretty spot, protected from waves and other boats. He thought it was fine to drop anchor there, but it's a protected area. It is home to an aquatic-grass bed that is crucial to copper redhorse. You can't drop anchor there, but you can do it next to the area. Keep in mind that the Richelieu River is 130 kilometres long. If you take away the channels and the Chambly Basin, you have 100 kilometres or so where you can cast anchor with no issues.

• (1635)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Would the representatives of Coalition Navigation or Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau like to add anything?

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I have a little bit to add.

In Great Britain, the government has conferred protection on lakes. The speed limit in those areas is 10 kilometres an hour. They're used mainly by sailboats, because the speed limit encourages motorboats to go elsewhere.

It is possible, then, to take an approach establishing that certain lakes warrant protection and thus measures to ensure that protection going forward. They could be lakes that have significant value, are ecologically important or even play a role in tourism. That is the federal government's role.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: With that in mind, do you think a specific department should be directly responsible for taking measures, say, Environment Canada or Fisheries and Oceans Canada? If the department is of the view that species are endangered—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much. I apologize, but we're out of time.

Next is Ms. Dance for six minutes, please.

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you so much to all the witnesses who have come out today to share information with us. We really appreciate it.

Something that I found the most jarring is Ms. Cloutier spoke about a lake where only 31 vessels should have been on it, but over 600 were operating on it.

I'm interested to know how the government could deal with that. What are some of the suggestions she might have, and are there any recommendations to tackle that issue moving forward?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: One of Coalition Navigation's recommendations is that the government establish broad standards based on the bathymetry of lakes, instead of having different regulations or restrictions for each lake.

Lac des Sables, for instance, has an average depth of 20 feet, just under seven metres. Wake boats should never be allowed on the lake.

Let's say the federal government established a standard based on the bathymetry of lakes to demarcate areas where certain types of boats were allowed to navigate. Municipalities could then enforce that standard. First, though, the federal government needs to say that the standard is based on bathymetric data confirmed by scientific studies and that the purpose is to protect the environment. That is the government's role.

That would be the easiest way to go about it. The government would no longer have all kinds of requests coming in for restrictions on lakes.

[English]

Ms. Leila Dance: With that in mind, would it be better if the federal government empowered municipalities to make some of these decisions?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: Municipalities operate at a very local level, as Ms. Ramacieri mentioned. In many cases, boat owners with big lake houses take over local associations working to protect the lake, so they can do what they want. The mayors of those small municipalities are not in a good position to handle issues like that.

The federal government is thinking about letting municipal governments handle these issues, but municipalities are too close to their residents to fulfill that role effectively. Coalition Navigation has always said that. Some mayors have been sued for imposing restrictions on boats.

In our view, this authority should not be given to a level of government below the regional county municipality, or RCM. They face fewer political problems and show some impartiality in enforcing regulations.

[*English*]

Ms. Leila Dance: Okay.

What's the best way for the federal government to fix these issues? Should the government shoulder the financial burden of that? What would that look like across the board, realizing that some lakes are more used, such as those in cottage country, compared with some northern areas?

• (1640)

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: Can I answer that?

Ms. Leila Dance: Certainly.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: It's just a fleeting thought, because the question was posed on Monday and I have been thinking how the government would do that.

Well, the government is the Ministry of Transport. You have roads where people go at 30 kilometres per hour. You have other roads where people go at 50 kilometres, and so on, depending on the type of road and where you are in the country. It's a shared responsibility for everyone to say, "On this type of road in front of a school, I go at 30 kilometres per hour. On this type of lake, which is fragile, I go at 10 kilometres per hour."

That's the government's responsibility. That's what we're saying. It is the government's responsibility to look forward, to look ahead and to look to the future. We are all in your hands. You are the organization that is most responsible and able to do this across the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Philippe Hébert (Director and Engineering Advisor, Coalition Navigation): If I may, I'd like to add a few things to what Ms. Ramacieri just said.

You have to be proactive and address the issue at the source. You have to educate learners young and old—those looking to obtain their pleasure craft operator cards—a bit like the system for getting a driver's licence. People can take the test online and get their card without ever doing any practical training to learn how to drive a boat. A young or not-so-young person who has never driven a boat can get in the driver's seat of a \$100,000 or \$200,000 vessel, and off they go—wherever, however. If the goal is to strengthen awareness around speeding and boating etiquette, you have to go to the source. You have to train young people properly at the start.

I also think that the Safe Boating Guide should include a section on the environment. People have to read the guide when they're learning to navigate a boat or trying to get their card. There has

been no mention of the environment in the guide thus far. It wouldn't cost much.

[*English*]

Ms. Leila Dance: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): We're just about out of time. You have 15 seconds left.

Thank you, Ms. Dance.

Next up, we'll return to the Conservatives and Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): I thank the witnesses for coming today for this very important study.

Ms. Cloutier, I would like you to expand a bit on this. You spoke about the mandatory code for licences that should be issued. Do you believe this should be issued by the federal government, and what should it include?

Ms. Denise Cloutier: Yes, it's by the federal government.

[*Translation*]

Take the Criminal Code, for example. It isn't enforced solely by the federal government. Municipal and provincial police can enforce it as well.

As Ms. Ramacieri said, it's a shared responsibility. Nevertheless, since the federal government is the one currently regulating navigation, it would be better if the federal government took the lead.

How could the government go about it? The government should introduce a mandatory code. It should also be mandatory for people to take practical training and pass a practical test to get their boating licence.

[*English*]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: You also spoke about carrying capacity. You specifically cited one lake that had over 600 boats, when the capacity was 31.

How is that capacity determined?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: It's a mathematical formula based on the lake's size and depth, as well as what different types of boats need to navigate on the lake. You combine all that information for all the boats to determine that a lake's carrying capacity is x number of boats. I can't give you the exact formula off the top of my head, but I wrote an article for Québec Yachting. It refers to all the studies that have been done on a lake's carrying capacity. That's one way to determine a lake's capacity.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: I'd like to add something, if I may.

The carrying capacity of any environment is the area's capacity to repair itself, to regenerate, to protect itself in the long term. It's the environment's capacity not to die.

If the environment is under too much pressure—too many boats, too much gas, too much phosphorus—the life environment dies. The carrying capacity metric is meant to ensure that the environment's ecology can return to normal, heal and renew itself by the following year. That is the idea behind a lake's carrying capacity. It's not just the number of boats. It's also the environment's capacity to return to its natural state.

• (1645)

[English]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I was looking to see if there was more of an objective test that people could look to, to understand how to regulate and formulate. That was the nature of my question.

I also want to ask about your reference to buying boats that are too big for the lakes. What do you propose is the solution for that?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: As we said, the people who buy boats should know the environmental rules from the outset. Our coalition consistently relies on those two studies suggesting that wake boats should travel at least 300 metres from the shore in waters at least seven metres deep. Those are the boats that cause the most damage. Smaller boats or those with smaller motors cause a bit less damage. Université Laval actually did a study on the impacts of different types of boats.

Navigation standards should be based on the bathymetry of lakes. We want to see municipalities come out with best practice guides, based on this research, for every lake in their jurisdiction. That way, people would know the specific rules for that lake before taking their boat out.

[English]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I'm asking the question because I'd like to know how to regulate that. Is it that the marinas are going to say your boat is too big, that it can't operate there, or is it at the place where you're buying it? How do you operationalize this concept of ensuring that people have the right size of boat for the capacity of the lake?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: It depends.

Local residents will want to take care of their lake and protect it, to the extent they have the necessary knowledge. Most of the time, unfortunately, boaters don't know the environmental impact their boat has. If that information were in a code or guide that people were required to read before getting their pleasure craft operator card, they would be more careful.

Municipalities should still provide the necessary information to boaters who are passing through or visiting, or who can take their boat out just fine. Specifically, they need to know the navigable zones suited to the type of boat they have.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much.

I believe we have Mr. Iacono as our next questioner.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Ramacieri, your organization has consulted stakeholders in a number of sectors, energy, the environment, education and urban planning. What stood out the most from those consultations? Was it the amount of information available, the level of knowledge people had, or the authorities' or public's desire to improve the situation of lakes?

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: We did not do any such consultations. I'm not quite sure what you're referring to.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Didn't your organization conduct consultations?

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: Are you talking about consultations related to navigation?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: We didn't conduct formal consultations.

Other organizations reached out to us to participate in consultations Transport Canada was doing. We took part in Transport Canada's last three consultation processes, in conjunction with those organizations. However, we didn't engage with the public specifically for consultation purposes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: All right. I thought I read that earlier. Thank you, Ms. Ramacieri.

My next question is for Ms. Cloutier.

Your organization advocates for environmental protection, something the government is also concerned about. Do you feel that some key regulations need amending? If so, can you give us some examples?

Ms. Denise Cloutier: The vessel operation restriction regulations are the key regulations.

They cover a number of factors, including speed. One of the things municipalities can apply to restrict is speed. However, speed isn't really a critical factor when it comes to the effects caused by wake boats, for instance. A wake boat can travel 10 kilometres an hour but still cause a four-foot wave. That's pretty major.

The regulations don't seem to have kept pace with the new technologies boat manufacturers are coming out with. The regulations need to take into account not just speed, but also the impact of boats, including stirring up sediment when ballasts are engaged.

• (1650)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Stéphane Lauzon can have the rest of my time.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

Mr. Collard, you were quite compelling when you were telling us about the things you're seeing in your area—more marinas, more boats and bigger motors. You also talked about the rise in water sports.

I know you haven't been in charge of your association's public relations long, but I would like to know whether the data you provided are based on studies or a conclusion your organization came to.

Mr. Raynald Collard: We didn't do any studies on the situations you mentioned, but as people who live along the river, we are seeing those things.

Either Université du Québec à Montréal or Université de Montréal did a study on lake Memphrémagog, and we used it for our purposes. That's where the 300-metre distance from the shore comes from. However, the Richelieu River is only 200 metres wide, so people shouldn't be allowed to use their wakeboards on the river, but they do.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I understand that, Mr. Collard, but the committee would like you to send it information that really proves what you're experiencing. I'm not sure what you can do in terms of getting back to us with some documentation.

In addition, do you have any data showing the effects climate change is having in your area? Things like more storms, more wind and more shoreline erosion come to mind. Is that aspect taken into account?

Mr. Collard can answer first, followed by Ms. Cloutier and Ms. Ramacieri.

Do you have any evidence pertaining to the environment?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Please answer in 30 seconds.

Mr. Raynald Collard: The data we have are from our observations. I can give you the example of personal watercraft that frequent shoals. At home, I've seen a personal watercraft driver on several occasions having fun on the shoals, apparently to see how the buoys came out behind his watercraft. It was incredible. He was putting—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Perhaps you could wrap up there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Collard. We can see that your data come from your observations.

If it were possible to obtain studies from certain organizations, we would be grateful.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much.

We return to the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

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

At the last meeting, one of my colleagues wanted to ask a question that we didn't have time to address. I would therefore like to put it to all the organizations here today.

According to the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations, or VORR, before applying for a restriction by regulation, a non-regulatory approach must be attempted. That's one of the reasons why the process takes so long, because you also have to hold consultations and document the file.

In your experience, have there been cases where a non-regulatory approach has been so successful that it was no longer necessary to apply for a restriction afterwards?

My question is for Ms. Ramacieri first.

Ms. Constance Ramacieri: This gives me the opportunity to say that, as part of my work as a city councillor, I'm in the process of submitting an application under the VORR for Fitch Bay on Lake Memphremagog. The MCI representative probably told you about it last Tuesday. For years now, we've been trying to raise awareness so people go wakeboarding elsewhere, but it doesn't matter. We can put up all the signs—

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I don't have much time.

What about you, Ms. Cloutier?

Ms. Denise Cloutier: We've studied the process and are very familiar with it, since we're now offering municipalities assistance in moving their files forward. There is indeed—I'm sorry, I lost track. What was the question again?

• (1655)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I was asking if you know of any non-regulatory approaches that have been successful.

Ms. Denise Cloutier: In particular, we have one particular client, the Saint-Hubert borough, that has already been going through this whole process for two or three years. So we are integrating this process aimed at raising citizens' awareness. It works, but it doesn't work enough. However, we want to make the results permanent.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Collard, in your opinion, can the non-regulatory approach replace regulations?

Mr. Raynald Collard: There's the information component, of course. For months, I've been browsing Facebook pages to inform people from Sorel to Lacolle about the effects of boats on shoals and shorelines, for example. Be that as it may, I believe much more in the enforcement of regulations. Yes, oversight will be required.

I would like to add something. Earlier, we asked what could be done without it costing a fortune—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Perhaps you could wrap up there, Mr. Collard.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Collard: In fact, the model exists. That happened at the federal level in December 2023. You just have to take that model and apply it.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you, Mr. Collard.

Next is Ms. Dance for two minutes and 30 seconds.

Ms. Leila Dance: I want to go back a bit. I'm curious about the licensing.

There were talks about changing, I want to call it driver's ed, that sort of thing. Are there other jurisdictions that have the more detailed program that you guys are thinking of implementing? If so, are they seeing the results you are hoping to achieve?

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Cloutier: To my knowledge, that process doesn't exist elsewhere. All I know is that the boating industry strongly resists the fact that the pleasure craft operator card, in other words, the licence, is valid for life. They would prefer that it be limited to five years. I know that for a fact.

I don't know of any other place where a code like the one we're proposing is applied. Nevertheless, a mandatory code works for the operation of vehicles on the roads, so why wouldn't there be such a code for the operation of boats on our lakes, which need to be protected? People aren't boating on asphalt, but on a living aquatic environment. Boat drivers boat on it as if it were a paved road, but it is indeed aquatic life.

Mr. Raynald Collard: May I add something?

[English]

Ms. Leila Dance: Yes, definitely.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Collard: In the 1960s, the arrival of snowmobiles sort of set the scene for us. Do you remember that? It was total freedom. You could drive through other people's fields, smash fences or go into the forest. It was wonderful. The fact remains that, at some point, there were significant repercussions and people got angry. The owners decided that enough was enough.

I get the impression that we're experiencing the same thing now in the case of boating, which is quite recent in Quebec. Boating is a fairly new phenomenon, and we don't have a long tradition of fair play or respectful conduct of others. In the past, people couldn't afford to buy a boat. However, now they can and, as with snowmobiles, rules have to be enforced.

You were absolutely right to make the comparison with the highway code, Ms. Cloutier. If a mandatory code can be enforced on the road, it can just as easily be enforced on the water. The speed of a boat is very easy to measure with radar. There's no miracle there. It's just a bit of electronic equipment.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): That is our time.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for providing their excellent testimony and answering all the excellent questions as well.

That concludes our first panel. Thank you very much.

We will pause now for three minutes to get the new witnesses in, and it will be three minutes, because it's important for transportation that the trains be on time.

● (1655)

(Pause)

● (1700)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): We are resuming.

We have some fabulous witnesses with us for this second hour. From Massawippi Blue we have Laurence Renaud-Langevin, general manager. The Village of Fraser Lake is represented by Sarrah Storey.

Each organization or witness will have five minutes for an opening statement. Then we will begin questioning, starting with the Conservatives and working our way all the way through our parties.

If we could start with you, Ms. Renaud-Langevin, that would be fantastic. You have five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin (General Manager, Massawippi Blue): Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for granting me the opportunity to address you today.

I am Laurence Renaud-Langevin, executive director of Massawippi Blue, a non-profit organization that has been in existence since 1968 in the province of Quebec. Our mission is to preserve and improve the health of the ecosystems of Lake Massawippi and its watershed. We work closely with various partners to achieve our goals.

I am also a scuba diving instructor and, in my role, I am responsible for the operation of a small vessel.

My remarks will be structured around two parts. I will summarize our peer-reviewed scientific article regarding the impact of navigation conduct on Lake Massawippi, and I will present a recommendation based on our studies and my experience.

In 2018, Transport Canada commissioned Massawippi Blue to study the impacts of motorized boats on southern Quebec lakes. Over two years, we monitored shoreline erosion and turbidity in Lake Massawippi, evaluating both natural and boat-induced effects to provide insights into how boating affects freshwater ecosystems and inform management practices.

We saw that phosphorus levels rise with turbidity and rainfall. The study indicated that boat waves contribute to sediment resuspension and phosphorus levels, highlighting the need for policies to minimize sediment disturbance. Leisure boating, a popular and economically significant activity, increases natural shoreline erosion by displacing soil, particularly in narrow channels. Propellers in shallow water disrupt sediment in areas up to nine metres deep, with natural factors like wind and rainfall further influencing turbidity.

Results showed correlations between boat traffic intensity, water turbidity and total phosphorus, with turbidity increasing with wind speeds and plankton levels, and decreasing with slope angle. Our results advocate for implementing or enhancing speed limit restrictions near shorelines, as demonstrated by a lake with a 10-kilometre-per-hour limit within 100 metres or 300 feet of shore. A baseline should exist for every body of water in the country.

In light of all this, and based on my work experience as a diving instructor, my recommendation to strengthen environmental safety, as well as boating safety, would be to review the process for obtaining a pleasure craft operator's licence. I find it very hypocritical that it can take nearly 12 months to go through the steps required for a car driver's licence—not to mention the additional classes for certain categories of licence—while in only three hours, a person can obtain a boating licence. People can buy, launch and operate a boat without anyone ever checking their driving skills or their knowledge. Many, if not nearly all issues related to boating and environmental safety could be resolved—or at least greatly reduced—if we approached a pleasure craft operator's licence the same way we do a car licence.

Additionally, this approach would allow for better control and a natural separation between commercial and recreational boating. We could even introduce different classes for boating licences, much like those for cars and trucks. For example, a wake boat licence could require an extra course or skills check, and a higher registration fee could be charged, as these boats cause more environmental impact than a simple 12-foot rowboat. This system could also generate funds to support environmental protection and conservation programs. It would create job opportunities as instructors would be needed to teach these skills. We would introduce all the boating and environmental safety concepts and evaluate them before allowing boat operators on the water, making it far easier to reinforce these skills and knowledge, rather than operators being made aware of them later and randomly.

We really see this as a societal project that restricts no one, but rather encourages a safe and responsible use of our waters, in addition to reinforcing environmental safety, which is directly related.

This measure could complement national regulation on recreational watercraft. It would have a baseline that could apply to all bodies of water, but the process would be simplified and alleviate

the financial burden on municipalities, enabling them to manage their lakes and rivers in their own particular way.

Thank you.

• (1705)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much for your timely statement, Ms. Renaud-Langevin.

Next, we have Ms. Storey for five minutes, please.

Ms. Sarrah Storey (Mayor, Village of Fraser Lake): Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Sarrah Storey. I'm the mayor of the Village of Fraser Lake, which is a community in north central BC.

I'm in the Lakes District, an extremely beautiful place in rural northern B.C., which is right in the centre of British Columbia. If you're looking for us, we're just west of Prince George by an hour and a half. We're on the traditional territory of the Nadleh Whut'en and Stelat'en first nations.

The three communities and the region are facing massive economic downturns in mining and forestry. We are focusing on a variety of strategies, including tourism, to encourage growth and economic development. This will help us build a sustainable economy with or without industry.

That leads us into what we are doing with the lake that we live on and what is happening in our region with a level 5 drought as well. Right now we are seeing a level 5 drought.

We wrote a resolution in 2018 to deal with the water hazard buoys and water hazard issues we were seeing with the reefs on some of the lakes in our region, Francois Lake and Fraser Lake. I live on Fraser Lake, and François Lake is about 15 minutes from me. We passed that resolution at our area association. Then it went to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, where it was passed again, and then went off to the FCM.

We have these hidden reefs within our lakes. They are unmarked and they're causing safety concerns. As you can imagine, the lake levels were considerably higher in 2018. Now with our level 5 drought, we are seeing some major issues.

Just to add context to this conversation, the dam closest to us, the Nechako Reservoir, which creates electricity, is at critically low levels right now. At the end of the summer this year, it was 6.6 metres under normal average levels, which is huge. It has come up over two metres with some heavy rain and snow lately. That's great, but it's still four metres under average levels.

When I first learned we could not put water hazard buoys on these dangerous reefs due to liability concerns, we had to do some research to learn how we could get that issue solved. Hence we built a resolution, which I'm going to read to you in case some of you do not have it. It's short, so it shouldn't take too long:

And whereas, the Village of Fraser Lake is concerned that unmarked water hazards pose a threat to health and safety of persons involved in motorized water sports on freshwater lakes and rivers in British Columbia;

And whereas, the installation and maintenance of navigational markers and buoys will improve the safety of persons involved in motorized water activities:

Therefore be it resolved that the federal government install and maintain water hazard markers on known water hazards to protect lives and property on water ways in lakes, rivers and streams.

When local residents realized they also faced liability issues, they removed any and all markers they had out on the lakes as well.

The Village of Fraser Lake has been committed to protecting residents and tourists on local lakes. With the idea of moving into more tourism on our lake, we want to make sure we are really protecting people. Unfortunately, the hazard markers and the liability they have, we necessarily can't always take that on as municipalities. The downloading that we are already facing is pretty tough. Protecting boaters with water levels that are receding each summer—hopefully that does change, but we don't know how it's going to work with climate change—should be strategized to protect lives and property, and not at the cost of local governments or private citizens. That is a strategy we would like to look at. Our ask is that the federal Government of Canada provide municipalities the means to protect lives and property on waterways without liability to them.

In Transport Canada's navigation protection program's guide, "An Owner's Guide to Private Buoys", there's a quote I'm going to share. It says, "In the event of an accident involving a private buoy, the owner(s) may be held liable for any resulting damages. This is why you should think about getting liability insurance coverage." Municipalities like mine cannot necessarily afford to take this on, and I'm not sure what the capacity is for local governments to maintain water hazard buoys on these dangerous reefs.

If anybody wants a picture, I have a few pictures that I have created over the years of some of these reefs. They're in the middle of these large lakes, and you don't know they're there. I can share those with anyone who would like to see them.

I'm going to leave it there and give some time back.

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): That's perfect.

Both of you were right on with your timing. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

We're going to start our questions with the Conservatives and Dr. Lewis for six minutes.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I want to thank the witnesses for coming here today.

My first question is for Mayor Storey.

You talked about tourism on the lake, and it seems to me that tourism is an important part of your community.

Can you give us more details about how tourism and recreational boating fit into your community?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Right at this time, with the mine and with the sawmill closure, we are actually in the midst of looking at building a marina, a roundhouse restaurant, a discovery centre and a boutique hotel and trying to get a resort hotel in. The resort hotel won't be on the lake, but the boutique hotel would be, and that would be close to the marina, which would have a rental centre.

We are having to completely diversify and change our economy. We are looking at the lake, and we have a mountain that looks like a mouse and a nice pier already, but we have to diversify with what's happening here. We are in the midst of trying to figure out how to do that and to protect the lake and the reefs and the people on them. Knowing that we're an hour and a half from Prince George and that a lot of people like to come through to the north to travel, to hunt, to fish and to recreate, we want to make sure that people are safe on the lakes, because right now there are just no safety measures in place.

I noticed this in the previous session as well. If water sports are so important and injuries are a concern because people aren't paying attention to the rules.... Even the last speaker said there are people not paying attention. I have my boater's licence, but how often do you reassess and relearn what you've learned to make sure that you actually are paying attention to the rules? However, maybe we don't do that with driver's licences either. Maybe we should be doing that, but we won't get into that today.

Thanks for the question.

• (1715)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: In some of the evidence I've heard today, your approach seems to presume that you can balance environmental sustainability and protection of the lake with economic development. Is that correct?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Well, that is the goal. The goal is to actually work with Nautley and Stellako to make sure we are preserving the lake.

Some of you won't know the lakes around here, but in the Lower Mainland, the lakes are insane. On Chilliwack Lake, there are hundreds of people who go boating every day, so it's a little busy. We don't want it to be that busy, but we want it to also be protected. We need to have rules in place to make sure that all of those things are being done. It's all about balance to us. I think most things are.

Yes, it's very important. We have a lot of fish to protect as well.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Right, and in building a marina and potentially a hotel and a restaurant, those businesses would be very connected to the lake. Would it not be in your best interest to also make sure that you protect the lake while you are engaging in the economic development of the area?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Yes, and that is the goal and the plan.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Do you have any experience or have you heard of any issues pertaining to the disposal of flares in recreational boating? Has that come across your desk?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: No, we don't. We don't really have that issue up here. Because of the northern issues with the fires in B.C., you're not really allowed to have that. Nobody's setting off fireworks, and you don't see emergencies where people need to be setting off flares, hopefully. If they did, then there would obviously be a reason, so no, that's not something that we face here.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: With your plans to develop the area, have you encountered any taxes on pleasure boats or federal regulations that you anticipate may deter people from engaging in recreational boating?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: It depends on the person. Some people obviously are going to be upset with luxury taxes on boats over a certain cost or whatever it might be.

In the north, because most people are hunters or fishers, I find there's a lot of money going around with the Coastal GasLink areas. There are a lot of people in this area who have boats and who have grown up with boats. I haven't heard that to be the biggest issue we're facing right now. There are so many other issues that we're facing first.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Has your municipality applied for any changes to the vessel operation restriction regulations?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Not at this time. We do not see big boats on this lake. We rarely even see a sailboat. We don't have huge boats on the lake.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Do you know why that is?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: The biggest boats we see are typically pontoon boats. It's a lot of local traffic only right now.

Since we do not have a marina at this time, we are not seeing as many boats on the lake, and we protect our lake quite well. We are

on the highway, but people don't necessarily know the lake is there and don't know how great the lake is. We're protective of our fish, and we don't necessarily want thousands of people on the lake doing lots of damage. We want to make it a slow progress solution here to move us forward.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much. That is the time.

I'm getting heckled here by the Liberal members. They wanted to hear more, just so you know, Ms. Storey. I'm sure you'll get another opportunity.

Mr. Lauzon, go ahead for six minutes, please.

• (1720)

[Translation]

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

I'd like to thank the two witnesses for taking part in this meeting.

[English]

I will follow up with Mayor Storey.

[Translation]

From what I understood from your testimony, the luxury tax isn't a problem you have to manage in your area. However, you talked a lot about changes in water levels. You also talked about the impact of forest fires in the north and other changes that have been taking place for some time.

Do you think climate change has had an impact on the water quality of your reservoir?

[English]

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Yes, thank you for the question.

We know that climate change has had a direct impact on our water reservoir. There's never been a time when we've seen that level that I know of. It was 6.6 metres at the end of summer, which is what we were told. That means they are having to buy power in B.C. to cover what we need for energy. We've been talking about balance for a long time in the energy sector in British Columbia, and we're definitely seeing a lot of changes.

Fraser Lake is constantly in the news for wildfires all around us. We have a lot of beetle kill. We have a lot of issues with wildfire smoke, and that creates issues of its own with social isolation. We are constantly dealing with a lot of things with climate change.

If, all of sudden have, you have an atmospheric river, that also leads to lots of rain, very briefly. It will be a short amount of time. The ground is not soaking up that water quickly enough, and neither is the infrastructure that has been built. All of a sudden it creates a little bit of flooding in some of the businesses in town. We are seeing a lot of different things with climate change right now in northern B.C.

The lack of rain there has also been an issue. The water levels are also going to create algae issues and algae blooms when the water is getting warmer. That's what we're seeing as well. We're trying to find that balance. It's tough.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Climate change is important to a certain extent, and you've clearly shown us your concern in that regard.

You also talked to us about this famous guide for private boat owners and the regulations governing licencing, among other things.

Were you involved in the process that led to the possibility of amending the regulations under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, with respect to speed control on the water through the installation of beacons?

[English]

Ms. Sarrah Storey: No, we've not been approached to do that. That is a great conversation to have, though, because it is something we have seen to be a bit of a problem. As I said, with the reefs, people don't have a clue that they're right in the middle of the lake. They have no clue they're going to hit them, until they hit them.

Now, because of the water levels getting lower, we are really concerned about people speeding. There's drinking on boats. We all know that happens. Let's be honest. We are worried that someone could hurt somebody or hurt themselves. We have seen it already. We've seen dumb things happen. It happens. You can't control that.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: We could talk at length about drinking alcohol on board a boat. That's not counting the regulations on lifebelts and all the other things that are required to boat safely. I think the responsibility for that should not lie with the municipalities; it should lie with the police. We'll come back to that.

I have a—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): I'm sorry, Mr. Lauzon.

Is anyone else not getting interpretation?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: I'm not.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I'm sorry. Do we have to redo that?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Yes. I didn't get any of your comments.

You can start again at the beginning of your question, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Give me back 30 seconds, maybe.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Vance wouldn't give that to you, but I will.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I was just saying that water regulations are indeed a concern. Ms. Storey, you mentioned the beverage issue, but there are also all the regulations or laws that allow us to boat safely, whether it's wearing lifebelts or other necessary equip-

ment. It's not up to municipalities to regulate these things. The responsibility for security does lie with the local police. I hope that all organizations will work together to ensure the safety of people on the water. Often, it isn't the boat owners who are put at risk, but rather the other people. So it would be important for there to be more regulation.

Ms. Renaud-Langevin, you said that the process for obtaining a pleasure craft operator's licence needs to be reviewed. I would like to have a little more detail on that. I must say that I've supported a number of people in this process over the past 40 years, and I find the process quite exhaustive.

How could this process, which I think is simple to apply, be improved? You mentioned that we need more restrictions. Can you tell us more about that?

• (1725)

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, I'd be happy to.

From a practical standpoint, the process is indeed simple: Within three or four hours, a person can register online with an organization and take the course online, after which their pleasure craft operator card will be sent to them by mail.

I don't know if it's the same for you, but personally, I think it takes more than four hours to learn all these new concepts, whether you're a teenager or an adult. People have to read every single thing in the document more than once to learn it, especially when it comes to things that they won't encounter very often over the summer, unless they're seasoned fishers who go out on the water every morning. Normally, a boater goes out on the water on beautiful weekends, that is to say six to eight Saturdays during the summer. However, they have to remember all the information about buoys and all the rules of navigation based on the types of boats, for example.

I find it hard to believe that you can learn the content of a booklet about two inches thick in just four hours. I think a longer learning process should be put in place. Then, we would have to check the skills of—

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I don't mean to cut you off, but this guide is available online. When future drivers take a course to obtain their driver's licence, they won't take the course and take the driver's test in the same day. You say there should be more training, but there's nothing stopping a boater from downloading the guide and studying it before taking the training and writing the exam on the same day.

Could it become mandatory, based on your recommendations?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: It could become mandatory, yes.

Since the test can be done online, you can literally do the test with the guide open beside you. It's as simple as that. So a person may not learn the concepts, but would still pass their test because they can quickly look for the answers in the guide. That's why I say the path is too simple and too easy to access. If we—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you.

We'll now go to the Bloc Québécois and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[Translation]

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

I'm going to start with Massawippi Blue.

Several witnesses have told us about the need to have a basic regulatory framework, which would apply broadly everywhere and could then be changed at the local level, by municipalities, as needed.

What I would like to illustrate to the members of the committee is that, in the absence of a process undertaken by a local government, there are no regulations in place.

Do you find it normal that, in most lakes and rivers in Quebec and Canada, without a local government approach, no rules apply when someone gets on the water?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I'm not sure I understand your question, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

However, I can tell you that I don't find that normal. There's never a process to verify the skills and knowledge of a boater when they go on a body of water.

Our organization uses a boat to conduct scientific activities on the lake, such as water removal, and I myself was stopped by an RCM officer. He stopped our boat to check the equipment and so on, but he didn't even check to see if I had my lake user sticker. Even though I had the right to be on the lake, he never asked me about that, and he didn't ask me any questions about environmental rules either.

In my experience, there is no verification process of any kind when someone goes on a lake in Quebec.

• (1730)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

It's good that you mention this shortcoming, as few witnesses have talked about the theoretical and practical knowledge that should be verified before granting a navigation permit. It is important for people with relevant knowledge to raise this aspect of the issue.

In your opinion, it is not normal for there to be no verification. What would be the simplest solution to that?

Should the regulatory process be simplified? At the moment, there are no speed limits on bodies of water or limits on the size of boats. That's not what we want.

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, basic rules should be put in place that would apply just as much to lakes located in the north as to small lakes or rivers located in the south, near major centres. Problems are emerging from all the studies that are common to all types of lakes and rivers where recreational boating takes place.

Simplifying the process is required, but not necessarily in terms of its length. A good job has been done to make the task easier for municipalities. In fact, I want to thank all the stakeholders who helped get this process shortened from seven years to four years.

In my opinion, financial relief could also help municipalities, as they could certainly help facilitate the process.

So we would have to adopt common regulations. RCMs should also be able to make regulations for the management of their bodies of water and the determination of the types of boats that can navigate the lakes, without necessarily doing it for each lake.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: There is a federal grant that local organizations or other groups can apply for to do prevention or awareness related to boating, for example. However, there is no source of funding for buoy installation, among other things. We know that installing buoys is a one-time operation, when regulations are implemented, for example.

In your opinion, should the federal government contribute financially to help cities and towns absorb these costs, which are often significant?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, I completely agree with you.

At Massawippi Blue, we're fortunate that we've been able to access that federal funding. We carried out a beautiful two-year project called Intelligent Boating. So we've done a lot of awareness raising. That project has been completed, so we are focusing our awareness-raising activities on enforcement.

A buoy costs \$200 to \$600, not including the cost of labour. Organizations like ours don't have the money in their coffers to put dozens of buoys on lakes, and I doubt that the RCMs have the financial capacity to do that overnight.

Government funding programs would certainly be welcome.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): You have one minute.

[Translation]

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

According to witnesses, there should be a rule based on science, such as a rule that would require a minimum distance of 300 metres from the shorelines for wakeboats. However, little has been said about a rule that should apply to other types of vessels.

For example, for a regular boat, so to speak, what would be considered reasonable or acceptable in terms of distance and speed in order to prevent wave damage to the shorelines? I think there's some confusion. People understood that the 300-metre shoreline rule was to apply to all boats.

What would be reasonable for a vessel other than a wakeboat?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: According to the study we conducted at the request of Transport Canada, regardless of the vessel, when its speed is greater than 10 kilometres an hour, it will generate a wave over a distance of 100 metres. At this distance from the shoreline, a wave can cause shoreline degradation and promote the erosion of riparian lands. In addition, the turbulence caused by the wave will increase turbidity by stirring up bottom sediments.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: At 3 metres of depth, regardless of the type of vessel, you should not be within 100 metres of shore or travel at a speed above 10 kilometres an hour.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you so much.

We're moving on to the New Democratic Party and Ms. Dance, who I must say is a marked improvement over the usual NDP representative.

I'm just teasing.

• (1735)

Ms. Leila Dance: Thank you to both witnesses for coming out. I really appreciate it.

Mayor Storey, Mr. Bachrach couldn't be here. Hopefully I can do him justice. We appreciate your being here.

I want to go back a bit and talk about some of the difficulties you were having with Transport Canada when you were talking about the buoys. You talked a bit about the Village of Fraser Lake passing a resolution.

I'd like you to talk about the process, whether you got the buoys installed, whereabouts you are in that and what it looked like throughout that process.

Ms. Sarrah Storey: The FCM takes only one resolution forward in Canada a year. I got a call when Garth Frizzell was the president, and they said, "Yeah, that one isn't going to make it. It was close." Then there was nothing. I've heard nothing since.

I just came down to Ottawa for a conference. I came and visited Taylor. MP Bachrach is my MP, so that was easy. He took me around and I met a few people and had conversations about this resolution we built in 2018.

It's been quite a long time since we built this resolution, and there's been no growth. Nothing has happened with it. Something needs to happen because, again, the water levels are going down and it's just been getting worse from 2018 to now. You can stand on these reefs. Nothing has happened.

Ms. Leila Dance: Did you have any contact with Transport Canada, or because it only takes so many a year...?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: No. Nothing has happened. I don't know why or how that works, but that's just how it's been.

Again, I don't know how the process works with those resolutions once they go forward. I'll continue to work on that now I'm the third vice-president of the UBCM, which is helpful, because I can push resolutions from the federal side as much as from the provincial side, which is something we haven't really done as much.

Ms. Leila Dance: That's perfect.

The other witness talked about funding. Did you know about any of that funding? Is that something you would be interested in accessing, especially since you'd be looking for more buoys?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Yes. There are a couple of parts here that I'd like to touch on.

It's one thing for us, as a small municipality, when we have limited staff. One of our staff members is the new economic development officer. He worked for the federal government and the provincial government. We have only two real staff members who do a lot of the grant applications. It is time-consuming.

Capacity is a huge thing, especially when you have a \$1.675-million deficit coming with the loss of industry. All of a sudden, we have less capacity. Looking at the funding, maintenance and then removal, maybe in the winter, of those buoys, there are certain things that go along with that.

Our municipality doesn't own a boat, and the RCMP... I heard something a little while ago about how the local police should be monitoring speeds. The RCMP does not do that in Fraser Lake. It doesn't have a boat either. Unless there's an emergency, we have to call the search and rescue team in. There are no boats monitoring the lake unless there's a major complaint with a child in the water whom a boat almost hit, and then they'll go and do an investigation. The RCMP doesn't have the capacity to monitor some of this either, so that would mean more work.

Ms. Leila Dance: One of the questions I asked the last few witnesses was about licensing. We've talked a bit about that. Do you think some of that would help? What expanded programs do you think...?

I'm sorry. This might be more for Ms. Renaud-Langevin. Do you think any of that licensing or those changes...? Do we know about any other jurisdictions that have a more detailed process that might be able to work here in Canada?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: If we're not refreshing ourselves, we forget things. It's the same with a driver's licence. I think it might actually help, even if you have to do a 20-minute refresher when you get your boating licence, because you do forget things.

She is correct in that if you're not going out every day and you're not on the waterways every day, you might not even know what those buoys stand for. You have to figure it out. I've heard of people losing their entire propeller because they didn't understand the navigational buoys, so they need refreshers. People need to remember that they're not going to remember it.

There could be work done on that. It is people's responsibility, however, to do that work before they get in a boat. It is based around education. You have to remind people, "This is your responsibility. Go and learn." I'm noticing that with everything, so it's not just one thing.

• (1740)

Ms. Leila Dance: Ms. Renaud-Langevin, do you want to add anything about that?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I feel the same as Ms. Storey said.

[*Translation*]

The measures in place for obtaining a pleasure craft licence really need to be changed, or they need to be strengthened.

People who don't work in navigation won't know where the new buoys are, which tend to appear overnight. There needs to be a lot of awareness raising.

In my experience, if we don't establish from the outset that the rules are necessary and that they must be complied with, people will simply take the easiest and fastest route. They're going to be dismissive of the measures that are in place.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): There are only 10 seconds left, Ms. Dance.

Ms. Leila Dance: That's it. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much.

We've completed a successful first round of questioning. We're on to the second round.

We will begin with the Conservative Party and Mr. Muys.

Mr. Dan Muys: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses on this second panel.

Let me start with Massawippi Blue.

I've been to the lake, but not on a boat, I would point out. It's a beautiful corner of Quebec. You're not too far from the Vermont and New Hampshire border.

You cited in your testimony some of the scientific research and projects that you've done. I'm wondering if your organization has had any interaction with similar organizations over the border. The watershed would, I think, include areas of those particular states.

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I have not directly had encounters with organizations in Vermont, New York or Maine.

One of my friends was here on Tuesday, Ariane Orjikh from the MCI Memphrémagog. We work closely because we're 15 minutes apart from each other's lake. She works closely with Vermont and whenever she gets information, she gives it to us.

To my knowledge and to answer a question that was asked on Tuesday, Vermont has a new policy. Maine also has a new policy with 300 feet and 10 kilometres. New York is looking into it as well.

Mr. Dan Muys: We've asked this of other witnesses. What, in your view, would be the right balance between recreational boating and the health of the lake? Where does that balance lie?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I really think that water is for everybody to access. It belongs to everyone. I think that if we use the lake carefully, responsibly and safely, which includes how many boats get on the lake, you get the environment and safety that everybody is looking for.

Earlier, there was someone talking about the capacity of the lake. By introducing that with technology already in use on how many boats are in the lake, you can cross-reference and have your capacity right there in your hand through technology.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mayor Storey, I want to follow up on previous questions.

You talked about the very urgent need to transition the local economy from forestry and mining to tourism. Having lived and worked in Alberta and travelled a lot in B.C. and the Okanagan, and all the boating that happens there, I've seen that. I haven't been to your part of the world, but I'm sure it's beautiful.

What percentage of the current economy in your region is tourism? Where would you hope that to be?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: Northern B.C. isn't known for being the biggest tourism spot, so I don't have those numbers off the top of my head.

You're welcome to come to visit.

We are working on northern B.C. tourism more and more. There's the port of Prince Rupert, and we're trying to get cruise ships to come through the north a bit more. There are a lot of people who drive through here on their way to Alaska. We want to get them to stop or even go for staycations from Prince George. A lot of people stay at the Pomeroy in Prince George. We have no idea why. There are two water slides there. They will literally leave their house and go and do that.

That's happening. People are looking for places to go where they don't have to travel as far. When we talk about emissions, maybe that's a great thing. They're staying within their region, and they're not flying to Hawaii. We want to keep them within the north or within our province, so that might be a good thing.

I'm sorry that I don't have those numbers, but there's a lot of traffic going through our communities because of the growth.

• (1745)

Mr. Dan Muys: Right, the Yellowhead Highway is right there.

What is the time horizon for the building of the hotels and the restaurants, etc.?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: We were hoping to be ahead of the game before the sawmill closed, if it ever did. Unfortunately, it closed in May. Then Canfor closed at the end of the year in December, which was about 50 other high-paying jobs in our region.

We lost 300 with the mine, another couple of hundred—I would say it was probably 300—with the sawmill over the last couple of years and then another 50. That's 650 high-paying jobs that have gone, so we need this as soon as possible. We need to move on things.

Again, we're grant dependent. We have only 1,000 people who live in the community, and we can't tax them.... We have a \$100-million infrastructure deficit. We can't tax them to death. Unfortunately, there's just not enough funding.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Thank you very much.

Mr. Lauzon, you're up for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Storey, you spoke a number of times about the importance of making people aware of buoy regulations.

Is the Village of Fraser Lake supported by an organization in terms of awareness campaigns or studies?

[*English*]

Ms. Sarrah Storey: No. I'll make that answer really short. There's no one else.

There have just been concerns from local residents on both lakes that are close to me. Then we talk at Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako as well about the safety of the lake. There's no one really working on this that I know of. It's just become an awareness strategy to protect people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I boat mainly on Quebec waterways, but I also boat in Ontario. I will be sailing on the Ottawa River, located on the border of Quebec and Ontario, and on Lac des Deux Montagnes, in the Montreal area.

I can tell you that the lake associations we work with do incredible work in my riding. There are 41 municipalities in my riding, and many of them are supported by lake protection organizations or associations. They are doing a great job.

Do you think it would be a good idea to encourage citizens or people living along the lakes in the Village of Fraser Lake to join in such an organization or to create one?

[*English*]

Ms. Sarrah Storey: I truly think that is a great idea.

I'm not going to say “unfortunately”, but I'm just going to say that the capacity of volunteers seems to have waned. It seems to be the same five people who do everything in my community, and I'm one of them.

I think it's a great idea and if I can make that happen, I think I would. Yes, I like that idea. That's a great idea. I will host a meeting. I'll invite you to come, too.

There we go. You're all invited.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I used to be a city councillor, and I was involved in my community also.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Renaud-Langevin, you're familiar with the Intelligent Boating project in your region, right?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, I'm familiar with it.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: You did sign on to that program. You've received nearly \$260,000 in federal funding. Also, Massawippi Lake has been a Canadian model for swimming, and your organization has been researching boating safety since 2017.

Can you explain to us how government funding has benefited your organization, based on the studies you've done?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I'll try to summarize.

It enabled us to actively educate the people who were going onto the lake. We would talk to them about how to behave on the lake, regardless of the type of vessel used. It could be a motorized boat, a rowboat, a kayak or a wakeboat.

It also enabled us to install buoys, create navigation corridors and design an interactive map, together with the municipality. Users were given information on how to act on the lake, and we encouraged them to adopt best practices.

• (1750)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

There is something in your answer that is important for my colleague Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Some federal programs provide funding to install buoys, conduct awareness campaigns, assess the condition of banks and riverbeds, and ensure the protection of aquatic life.

I know that your organization is sensitive to the environment and that this is a priority for you. However, do you also care about the well-being of users, vessel speed and water safety?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, that's absolutely the case. We've been working on that.

As part of one of the components of the Intelligent Boating grant, we surveyed users to see if they were comfortable sailing on the lake and if they felt safe.

We found that almost 35% of them felt unsafe on the lake for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Was it under that same project that you studied the increased presence of zebra mussels in the lake since 2021, which has an impact on the lake bottom?

I think that's actually another grant.

Can you tell us a bit about it?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: Yes, it is another grant.

We were lucky because our projects were all interconnected. You can never apply for a second grant for the same project. You have to constantly reinvent yourself for every grant. For a project that is to last 10 years, we have to find ways to make new applications for other complementary projects, if we want to do what was originally planned.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Can we then say thank you to the government?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: We can certainly do that. Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: You're welcome.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): That's what you get for being a nice guy.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, go ahead for three minutes, because I was generous to Mr. Lauzon.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: First, I think my colleague Mr. Lauzon misunderstood what I said when I mentioned that it was impossible to get funding to install buoys. I was talking about the posting of regulations. There is funding for prevention and awareness raising, but unfortunately, there is no funding to make it easier to post the regulations. That's a big problem.

My next questions are once again for the Massawippi Blue representative.

Ms. Renaud-Langevin, I'm sure you're happy to have received funding, but I'm also sure you would have liked to have quite a bit more. The funding needs are much greater than what is currently available.

That said, many witnesses have told us they were disappointed with the regulatory process. There is a very long period between the time a regulatory process is undertaken and the time the regulations are implemented. They're finding it difficult.

What do you think could be considered a reasonable time frame for the process? Would it be one year, five years, 10 years, two years, six months?

Of course, municipal elections sometimes have to be considered, as well. What amount of time would be acceptable to avoid discouraging Canadians?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: I will answer you based on my experience as a human resources manager. I've also worked on many cases on the ground.

Based on the discussions we've had with municipal representatives, I think the ideal time frame for a regulatory project is three years. Beyond that, the process is too lengthy. Four years is a very long time. After seven years, everyone has had time to change roles and, ultimately, you have to start all over again.

So I think three years or less is reasonable. Beyond that period, it seems to me that we are straying from the reality of municipalities or organizations.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): You have one minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: In closing, if you had to choose a single priority, a single change to make at Transport Canada to the regulatory process, what would it be?

You talked a lot about boating licenses, and you made that point well. However, in your opinion, is there another irritant that should be prioritized for change?

Ms. Laurence Renaud-Langevin: As a priority, I think direct access to funding should be given to municipalities, or at least to RCMs. This could make it easier for them to manage the process and ease their financial burden. As an organization, we can support them in doing some of the work, such as in the context of public consultations, but there are things we can't do and for which our scope is limited.

I think the priority should be to simplify the process and shorten it some more.

• (1755)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you.

[English]

Our final questioner is Ms. Dance.

Ms. Leila Dance: Perfect.

Can you remind me how much time I have? Is it three minutes?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): Yes, you have three minutes. I apologize.

Ms. Leila Dance: Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask Mayor Storey something.

You talked about a resort they're looking to build to try to increase tourism in the community, and how important that is. We've heard some of the concerns that some of the busier lakes and areas have. Although the government talked about all of this funding, I know there isn't something available for all of the lakes across our country.

I'd like you to talk a bit about some of the environmental impacts you're scared of, ones that will come with this extra tourism, as well as some of the enforcement issues you might have. Although it's supposed to be the federal government's responsibility, it largely falls on local municipalities.

What impact will that have on the resort and such?

Ms. Sarrah Storey: That is a really good question, because there is a lake foreshore study that has been done saying there is an issue with the shore. That just came out. University students were doing that. We haven't gotten into the details of that whole study.

There are issues like enforcement and protecting the lake, as well as speed regulations. Who is going to manage these things? These are constant questions, and capacity is always an issue. There are so many lakes in Canada. How do we manage all of these things? How do we work together for the common good and for strategies that are actually going to work?

I think it's great to create jobs. Let's just say that means there's another RCMP officer that needs to be hired and trained. There's a boat that needs to come with that. All of these things cost money. Sometimes we just don't have the people, and we're already short RCMP officers in our area.

It does come down to long-term planning. You can't just turn around and say that this is what we're doing, and it's all going to work out. As a municipality, especially in our shoes, we're going to have to plan this out and make sure we're doing it the right way, and that it's not going to impact the lake in a negative way.

That's why it's also so important that we work with the local first nations communities that live on either side of the lake. We live in the middle; they're on either side. We need to make sure they're happy and everyone is happy with it. We're not building a marina for a city. We're building a marina that is small and, hopefully, we'll push for more local flavour in a way, too. We'll see how that goes.

Ms. Leila Dance: That's great. I wish you all the best. I hope it works out. I hope that the Canadian government is able to support some of those things. If you could ask for one pie in the sky, that one thing that could happen—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): There are 10 seconds left here.

Ms. Leila Dance: Thank you very much.

Good luck.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Philip Lawrence): That will bring us to an end.

Thank you very much to the witnesses and members. It was an excellent job by all.

The meeting is adjourned.

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