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# Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 137**

Thursday, November 7, 2024

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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke





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Thursday, November 7, 2024

• (1605)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 137 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Before we begin the meeting, I want to remind all in-person participants to read the best practices guidelines on the cards on the table. These measures are in place to 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 on the regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways.

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

Appearing before us today, colleagues, we have, as an individual, Madame Sara Mercier-Blais, research associate at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

[*Translation*]

We welcome her, as well as her baby, Elliot, who is in the room.

[*English*]

We have, from Norfolk County, Ms. Amy Martin, mayor, by video conference. It's good to have you here with us.

Finally, from the Ontario Provincial Police, we have Sergeant Dave Moffatt, provincial marine coordinator, by video conference, and from the Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association, we have Margaret Creighton, director. Welcome to you as well.

[*Translation*]

We will begin with your presentation, Ms. Mercier-Blais. You have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais (Research Associate, Université du Québec à Montréal, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm a research officer at the Yves Prairie research lab. We work primarily on carbon in lakes, but we've also done a great deal of research on lake physics, which includes temperature patterns, con-

taminant dissipation, gases dissolved in the water, as well as the measurement of turbulence and waves on the surface of lakes.

That is why, in 2014, Memphrémagog Conservation Inc.—whose representative has already testified before this committee—and the Société de conservation du lac Lovering asked us to conduct a study on the effect of wake boat waves on the shores of Lake Memphrémagog and Lake Lovering.

Because that 300-metre distance you've been hearing about since the beginning of your study comes from our own study, I'll take the time to explain where that figure comes from and what it represents.

As part of our study, we set out a rigorous protocol, making sure that the wakes we were creating happened at different specific speeds, at different specific distances from the shore and with varying levels of ballast. I want to be clear that wake boats are the only type of vessel we studied.

Our study was investigating sediment resuspension and surface energy, and not directly investigating shoreline erosion. In the case of both lakes, we concluded that it takes a distance of 300 metres for the energy generated by and contained in waves to be dissipated when they arrive at shore and for the effect to be comparable to that of natural winds. In other words, wake boats must travel at this distance from shore for the effect of the waves they produce to be equivalent to the effect of natural waves on the shore.

Lake Memphremagog and Lake Lovering are very different. Figure 9 in our report shows that turbulence decreases according to distance. That's true for both lakes, but it presents itself quite differently. Regardless, we came up with that same 300-metre distance for the energy in the waves to dissipate and be equivalent to the energy in natural waves.

All of Quebec's lakes appeared following the withdrawal of glaciers. They have the same physical creation process. We can therefore state that these lakes are fairly similar in type.

After our lab study, I was involved in a project at Lake Tremblant. We did not take specific measurements using instruments, in this case, but we characterized the shorelines to determine whether certain areas were at risk of being more or less damaged by waves produced by the boats.

What are the shoreline characteristics that mean that the waves' effect will be more intense—or less—when they land?

First, there is the slope of the shoreline. Obviously, if the shoreline is sloped, wave energy will land at a single point, whereas if the energy touches the shoreline over a long distance, there will be less impact.

Then there's the type of sediment. The wave will not have the same effect on sand or silt as on a rock wall.

There are also riparian buffer strips. The more natural vegetation there is, the better protected the shoreline and the soil will be, which will prevent erosion.

Finally, there is the impact of normal and prevailing winds. When we compare waves from boats, we want to compare them to the natural waves experienced by the lake. For example, there will be very few waves in some bays, compared to areas exposed to the prevailing wind, where the waves will be much stronger. We also have to include storm winds, which are stronger. During storms, there's much more wind, obviously. However, given their short duration, the effect of winds generated by storms is much less significant than the effect of the frequent waves produced by the high number of boats. We took storm winds into account in our study. On the other hand, if more extreme events occur due to climate change, there will obviously be more wind. That said, even if storms are more intense, they rarely last long enough to have a greater impact than the many boat crossings on a lake.

In conclusion, although the two lakes under study were very different, we recommended a similar restriction for vessel passage. In both cases, it requires a distance of 300 metres from shore for the waves arriving at the shore to be comparable in intensity to the natural waves on those lakes. I believe that this 300-metre restriction could apply to a number of other lakes, given that, despite the major difference between the two lakes under study, their shorelines were affected in much the same way by waves produced by wake boats.

- (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Mercier-Blais.

I also want to thank you for taking the time to join us with your family.

[*English*]

Next we have Mayor Martin.

Mayor Martin, the floor is yours for your opening remarks. You have five minutes.

**Ms. Amy Martin (Mayor, Norfolk County):** Thank you very much.

I appreciate the invite from MP Lewis to attend today. I apologize that my screen is so dark. The sun is coming down in Ontario and I'm losing daylight.

Good afternoon. My name is Amy Martin. I'm the mayor of Norfolk County, and I'm pleased to be here representing our community and speaking with you about the importance of marinas and access to waterways.

Norfolk County is uniquely positioned 45 minutes southwest of Hamilton, along the shores of Lake Erie in Ontario. We are a rural,

mid-sized, single-tier municipality. It is home to 73,000 residents and is about 1,600 square kilometres of land mass, 185 kilometres of it on the shoreline of Lake Erie.

Agriculture, industrial innovation and tourism are the main drivers of the economy, with a large focus on seasonal tourism to the waterfront. Even though Norfolk County owns very little beachfront property, key to the tourism industry is that we leverage the waterfront communities and amenities we have in order to build out a viable tourism industry based on our natural features.

Of the over 185 kilometres of Lake Erie shoreline in Norfolk County, only 14.2 kilometres are publicly accessible, and of that area, 4.7 kilometres are owned by the county. We have marinas along that shoreline, with more than 13 in the area, two of which are publicly owned by Norfolk County and managed by the municipality. The others are private enterprises.

I'd like to take a couple of moments to chat with you about the publicly owned assets.

The Port Rowan Harbour Marina was a federal asset until the former township and then municipality took it over in 1970. It's home to about 40 seasonal docking slips, two transient slips and 38 water leases, and it's about 10.89 acres in size. The asset is used as much more than a marina. It's a waterfront park. It's home to countless community events, and it's woven into the fabric of this small harbourfront community.

Twenty-nine per cent of Port Rowan Harbour Marina boaters are from out of the county. The marina is currently run as a passive marina, with minimal staff resources being spent there. Slips can range from \$793 to \$881, but it's worth noting that, currently, the marina does not turn a profit to keep up with its capital requirements at present.

Port Dover is the second community I'd like to touch on. It's home to the second municipally owned marina, which is about 69 acres of property and consists of a breakwater system, service wharf structures, a floating dock and a launching ramp. It came to Norfolk County in 2007 through the federal recreational harbour divestiture program. The federal government owns lands in close proximity, and the marina is beside a federal-commercial fish basin that has a land lease for the federal harbour master.

The marina is home to 458 boat slips, with 55% of boaters coming from outside of Norfolk County. It's worth noting that 150 of those boats are too large or too deep to go elsewhere, so a properly dredged space is needed to accommodate them. Ninety boats are sailboats, with about 180 sailors in the marina. It's also home to the Port Dover sailing school, a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven organization that's been running for 15 years. It gives youth opportunities to be comfortable with the lake. It started with 50 kids, and in 2024, the summer program finished with 150.

The boat slips in the Port Dover Harbour Marina can range from \$77 to \$91 per square foot. Just for some information, Lake Erie is a great boating lake, but the average boat size is about 22 feet, just to manage the waves and the wind. Roughly, a used 22-foot boat is selling for \$20,000, and that's a conservative figure.

From recent discussions, I've averaged out that sailors spend around \$2,000 in annual maintenance on a boat; \$2,600 to \$3,200 can be spent on seasonal dry dockage and storage fees; and \$3,000 a year can be spent on boat supplies, and much more—upwards of \$10,000—if maintenance is required. While all of these estimates are conservative, if we ballpark that the average boat owner spends \$5,000 a year before operating costs, there's a contribution of \$2.6 million to the boating economy just from Norfolk County's two publicly owned marinas. This also has far-reaching impacts across Ontario and Canada. All that said, the numbers can change, but the point is that a significant amount of money is being spent on the boating and marine industry.

We have weekly racing regattas and other regattas that occur through a variety of clubs, including the Port Dover Yacht Club, whose members are not part of the municipally owned asset. These events can include anywhere from six to 50 boats, with crews of four or more, which head out every single week on the lake, with maybe 200 sailors participating.

• (1615)

Port Dover is also home to a stopover in the annual interclub sailing event that started in 1957, when sailors from the U.S. decided to stop over in Port Dover—among other areas—for a few nights to race and enjoy the community. We can't estimate what the economic spinoffs are, but we do know that this event brings repeat visitors outside of the chartered racing event. The partner clubs are the Buffalo Yacht Club, the Erie Yacht Club and Port Dover. They also make stops to Port Colborne, the Point Abino summer station and the Buffalo Canoe Club. Those visitors are coming from Ashtabula, Ohio; Erie, Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York; Dunkirk, New York and so on.

It's worth noting that a lot of boaters will find safe harbour in Long Point or will stay in the marina and use their boat as a floating summer cottage, technically. This creates unknown impacts in the rental market—the short-term rental market and Airbnb—in a tourism community.

The boating community has so many variables, from the size of the gas tank to the price of dockage and storage, but we know there are significant impacts on the economy in a direct economic development way and from a tourism perspective. One thing I'd like to touch on is the commercial boating industry—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, Ms. Martin, I'll have to ask you to wrap it up. You're already a minute and 20 seconds over. Perhaps you can—

• (1620)

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Oh my goodness. Okay. I will wrap it up.

**The Chair:** That's okay. I just want to be fair to members.

I'm sure you'll have a lot of time to add on during questions. I'll give you an extra 15 seconds if you have a salient point.

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Yes. I'll wrap it up. I appreciate that.

Port Dover once had the largest freshwater fishing fleet, and there are lots of commercial and industrial impacts on the waterways, the marina and so on. Within an hour and a half, you can be among 110 million Americans in an industrial and commercial market.

I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you for the extra time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mayor Martin.

Next we'll go to Sergeant Moffatt.

Sergeant Moffatt, you have five minutes for your opening remarks. The floor is yours.

**Sergeant Dave Moffatt (Provincial Marine Coordinator, Ontario Provincial Police):** Good afternoon. My name is Dave Moffatt. I'm the provincial marine coordinator for the Ontario Provincial Police. I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for this opportunity to speak to you regarding marine safety and security across the country.

I've been an OPP member for 29 years, and a marine enforcement officer and marine instructor for 24 years. I am one of the executive chairs of the Canadian enforcement marine advisers, or CEMA, which consists of over 70 marine enforcement officers across the country. In my current role as the provincial marine coordinator, I oversee everything marine within the OPP and communicate with Transport Canada regarding legislation—ideally to make marine transportation and recreational boating safer in OPP jurisdictional waterways—through my work with CEMA across the country.

I have five quick matters I'd like to address today.

Firstly, the OPP has worked diligently to inform Transport Canada about the need for legislation on the mandatory wearing of life jackets for vessels six metres and under due to Ontario's 87% fatality rate among boaters not wearing life jackets or PFDs. The OPP has authored resolutions, passed by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, supporting this issue. Legislation on the mandatory wearing of life jackets would decrease boating fatality rates across Canada.

Secondly, the OPP is in conversation with Transport Canada to enhance enforcement officers' authorities on the water. This conversation includes "blue light" authority to stop vessels when they are signalled by police, and to suspend vessel operator licences. This suspension would occur when an operator is charged with impaired operation due to alcohol or drugs, or when an operator registers a warning on an approved screening device when tested for alcohol consumption. Currently, there is no suspension authority for this. Essentially, an operator can drive their vessel after a police interaction and subsequently after a suspension of their Ontario motor vehicle driver's licence.

Thirdly, Transport Canada's marine safety inspectors, or MSIs, have a large responsibility to inspect commercial vessels across the country. They work within small reinforcement organizations to inspect vessels in their areas of responsibility, which equates to a small number of commercial vessel inspections in totality. Enforcement officers are busy day to day ensuring waterways are safe for everyone using them through education or the enforcement of legislation. This is why I bring it up today. There needs to be shared, compatible participation between the recreational vessel and commercial vessel communities to ensure a safe environment on the water.

The Contraventions Act allows enforcement officers to charge a violator using a federal act like the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, by means of a provincial offence notice. This is essentially a ticket. The charge stays with a criminal court, where it needs to be. It goes to our provincial traffic court system. Charges through the Contraventions Act can only be issued for offences identified in the contraventions regulations. These regulations are heavily geared towards the recreational vessel community. About 95% to 97% of them are for the recreational community, not the small commercial vessel community. Therefore, there is little to no proactive small commercial vessel enforcement done because of the lack of small commercial vessel charges available through the contraventions regulations.

To ensure small commercial vessel compliance on our waterways, why not use us, the patrolling and enforcement officers, who are the eyes and ears of Transport Canada, and not just the MSIs? Have the officers educate people and enforce small commercial vessel legislation proactively, especially when an accused is present on a stopped vessel. Currently, enforcement officers have to pass the file on to an MSI for a follow-up investigation, which can be very problematic, as an accused has to be located at a later time and sometimes cannot be located. An update to the contraventions regulations to include small commercial vessels is needed.

Fourthly, as a provincial marine coordinator, I rely on collision statistics to anticipate what issues need to be addressed on our waterways provincially. Due to the lack of mandated collision reporting in Canada for recreational vessels, we cannot learn the issues involving these collisions in a timely manner. A report comes out by TC, but that's seldom, and it's usually very outdated by about three to four years. I believe we need recreational collision reporting for vessels in order to learn about what is happening on our waterways annually.

My last point, which I know you've heard about, is about the flare disposal program that Transport Canada did not fund this year.

As you know, vessels are required to carry flares on board depending on their size, the size of the waterway and their proximity to land. Flares expire four years after the manufacture date, and when they expire, boaters have no way to dispose of them. Operators resort to disposing the flares improperly by putting them in landfills, setting them off illegally or leaving them in a corner of the garage and basement for years, which can lead to a fire or an explosion. Funding needs to be returned so that there's a proper and safe way for Canadian boaters to dispose of their flares.

● (1625)

Thank you very much for the opportunity and the time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Sergeant Moffatt.

Members have been advised that you need to leave at 5:30. We're going to respect your time and try to direct questions to you at the outset.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Next for opening remarks, we'll go to Ms. Creighton.

Ms. Creighton, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

**Ms. Margaret Creighton (Director, Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association):** Thank you, Chair and all committee members.

My name is Margaret Creighton. I'm a director of the Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association.

In April 2007, the federal government transferred ownership of the Port Dover Harbour Marina to Norfolk County as part of the recreational harbour divestiture program. Through the transfer, the citizens of Norfolk County gained a tremendously valuable asset. Over the years, our association has advocated to keep the marina as a publicly owned and operated facility. This is so the public may enjoy recreational boating and retain both physical and visual access to the waterfront.

Port Dover is a community with a vibrant marine heritage. We have an active commercial fishery, along with the Port Dover Harbour Marina. Both of these draw in local and tourist dollars and drive our economy.

There are 458 slips in the marina, along with 11 transient slips. They provide recreational boaters with public waterfront access to Long Point Bay. In addition, the Port Dover Yacht Club and Sailing School, which has occupied the marina for more than 15 years, teaches boating safety and sailing skills to students of all ages and abilities. Our association would like to see the marina remain a public asset to protect the public's ability to pursue recreational boating on Long Point Bay.

Port Dover is one of three safe harbours on the north shore of Lake Erie. The Canadian Coast Guard, stationed at the marina, plays a major role in search and rescue operations to keep boaters safe. Lake Erie, as the shallowest of the Great Lakes, has a tendency to produce unpredictable conditions that can result in strong winds and waves over 20 feet high. The vital role of the Canadian Coast Guard cannot be overemphasized.

Recreational boaters' access to the Port Dover Harbour and marina is critical for safe passage. Over time, when sediment builds up, dredging becomes absolutely necessary. The funding for dredging should continue to be both a municipal and federal responsibility.

The following issues are relevant to the Port Dover Harbour Marina, as well as the majority of marinas across Canada.

The first is the PCOC. As previously mentioned, at the present time, Transport Canada does not require a pleasure craft operator card for individuals who rent boats or jet skis. Rental businesses provide a temporary boating licence to those who do not have a PCOC. Given the high speeds that powerboats and jet skis can travel at, it would be most prudent if operators were well aware of safe boating rules on the water. The requirement of a PCOC would help reduce the potential for tragedies on our waterways.

Next is distress flares. Again, this was previously mentioned, but in September, Bill Jerry, commander of CanBoat Port Dover, sent a letter to Transport Canada advocating for the reinstatement of funding under the boating safety contribution program for the distress flare collection and disposal program. This program was previously administered through the Canadian Power and Sales Squadrons, now called CanBoat/NautiSavoir, across Canada. There is no other Canada-wide program, and there are only a few local disposal options left.

Many boaters are carrying the pyrotechnic distress flares required by Transport Canada and older flares that are now expired and potentially dangerous. Some of these toxic flares are ending up in landfills, while others are being lit on land. It is imperative that Transport Canada take action on this issue.

On education, our local CanBoat Port Dover still does courtesy safety equipment checks of vessels by request. A safety day may be held next year, which would include these checks. It would be of great benefit if Transport Canada produced up-to-date videos on mandated safety equipment and how to handle emergencies on the water. Perhaps CanBoat and Transport Canada could work collaboratively on this.

Our recommendations are as follows: maintain a strong presence at Canadian Coast Guard stations across Canada; support safety on our waterways by requiring boat and jet ski renters to have a PCOC; reinstate the funding under the boating safety contribution

program for the distress flare collection and disposal program; work with CanBoat to produce safety equipment videos and videos demonstrating how to handle on-water emergencies; work with municipal and private marinas to ensure that recreational boating and safety on the water are being promoted; and finally, encourage and protect the public's physical and visual access to our waterways while promoting recreational boating.

• (1630)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Creighton.

We'll begin our line of questioning today with Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Actually, we're going over to Mel.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll go to you, Mr. Arnold. You have the floor for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be here.

In full disclosure, I spent 26 years in the small boat repair business and 15 years prior to that building boats, so I'm quite familiar with recreational boating, at least in my part of the world, North Okanagan—Shuswap in British Columbia.

Mr. Moffatt, before you have to leave, can you describe how you coordinate with departments such as DFO or the Ministry of Natural Resources in patrols on the water? In my area, I find those enforcement agencies often have to pool resources to do patrols. Is it a similar situation in Ontario?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** First, as far as the DFO, office of boating safety and the MNR go, we do all the training for the MNR. We train every single one of their officers to obtain their commercial licence. That is a very strong relationship we have.

As far as the patrols go, yes, we share patrols all over the province. The relationship that each detachment has with its local MNR officer is a very strong one. There are some things that MNR officers do that we don't do and vice versa. We want to be a very proactive police force, as the MNR does, to deal with all the issues across the province.

Yes, we do have a very strong relationship.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Do each of those departments have sufficient resources for doing their work, or do they find efficiencies? Do they only have the ability to do patrols because they can pool resources?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** All of our water detachments, as we call them, have vessels and have marine officers. However, do we have enough people out there? We absolutely do not.

You can look at the size of these water bodies and the number of water bodies that each detachment has. For instance, in the Muskokas, the number of water bodies they have is huge, as is the number of people who expect to see the police on their lake. We only have a small marine presence on the big three—Lake Rosseau, Lake Joseph and Lake Muskoka—and, of course, on the 22 to 28 smaller lakes in the area.

We need more officers. We need more boats. We need better boats. We need funding for sure. When we have those difficulties, we rely on our partners to have joint patrols. The MNR works alone.

• (1635)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** It sounds like the situation is very similar to the Shuswap and the Okanagan, where officers have to pool their resources to do efficient patrols.

Next I want to switch to Ms. Creighton.

You were suggesting that renters should be required to possess pleasure craft operator cards. Can you tell me, to your knowledge, how long it takes to study for and obtain a PCOC?

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** I'm not sure exactly how long the on-line testing takes. It's been many years since I took that test. The book that Transport Canada put out about safe boating was the resource I used way back when, and I hope that it's still around. That is a really good resource for all boaters.

You're asking me directly how long it would take to study and then do the test. Is that correct?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** That's correct.

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Well, I think it would be up to the individual. If they have any on-water boating experience, the test will be a lot easier, I would think.

The other issue is the integrity involved in taking the test—if it's done by the person who's getting a PCOC or if there's someone helping them out while they're doing the test.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I'm interested in the time that would take. Would you estimate that to be one hour, two hours, four hours or eight hours?

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** I think it would probably be less than an hour. That would be a guess.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** It's less than an hour to study.

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Oh, no. That's for the written test.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** How long would it take to prep for that?

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Well, if you read the book from cover to cover, it would take you quite a while. It depends on—

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** That's my point.

Rental operators are required to go through a safety training program with all renters. Rentals are often half an hour to an hour. That's all a person wants to spend with them. I'm hearing this from rental operators where I come from. It would end their business if every person who was interested in renting needed to have a personal pleasure craft operator card.

I believe this has been looked at. The current situation, where rental operators must provide training on site on the exact vessel a person is going to be operating, has been far more effective than a PCOC.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

Next we'll go to Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

Sergeant Moffatt, I have a question for you.

Can you explain the OPP's role in enforcing navigation regulations on waterways and bodies of water?

[*English*]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** As I explained before, we have marine officers all over the province. Our role, other than responding to calls for service—which can be vast, depending on the detachment you're in—includes proactive patrol, search and rescue issues, and education. We do a lot of marina days where we educate the public on what they need in their vessels.

We do inspections too. The Canada Shipping Act has carriage requirements for every vessel. The OPP has a very vast inspection program. We're trained very well, I would say. We do about 30,000 to 35,000 vessel stops a year to inspect equipment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** You touched on it earlier, but can you tell us which regulations are the most difficult to apply and enforce?

[*English*]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** We have some regulations in a chart, but there are no warnings whatsoever. Life jackets are one, for sure. It's amazing how many people go out there and do not prepare themselves. They do not look at what's in their boat before they go out in their vessel. The licensing, the PCOC, is a big issue as well.



The one thing I'm trying to educate the people of Ontario about is shared waterways. It's about respecting each other's water and how to drive properly. You can't zoom in and out around people, especially with PWCs. We're trying to educate people on being good mariners. I find this is the hardest piece because you can't teach people that.

• (1640)

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Do you have any statistics on the number of regulations or the kind of regulations that are routinely broken and ignored?

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Yes, I do. The statistics I can give you—

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Would it be possible for our committee to see those?

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Can I share them?

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Actually, I'm asking if it's possible to send those statistics to the committee so that it can include them in its report.

You also work with other agencies to enforce those regulations. Is that correct?

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Wonderful, thank you.

Sergeant Moffatt, you are in favour of transferring the federal role to the provincial level to some extent. How do you think that should be done?

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** When it comes to marine policing, from my work with CEMA, I know enforcement officers across the country all have the same issues. It's important to make our waterways as safe as possible. When we're dealing with recreational vessels, we have many rules and many laws to address what's taking place regarding careless operation, an unsafe vessel or carriage requirements in vessels.

We're very good in the recreational world and we try to do our best. As I said before, we are very understaffed when it comes to marine policing and we need more people on the water. We need better equipment, but we have to have synergy with the commercial vessel side too.

I've been preaching this a lot. We need more powers on the water to be able to stop vessels. When we're on the highway, the lights mean you need to stop; you need to pull over. We have nothing like that on the water. We have no authority when it comes to commer-

cial vessels. One authority we lack, which I think is mind-blowing, is we can't take someone's pleasure craft licence away if they're charged with impaired operation.

We tell our people that if someone's going to drive away after being given a three-day suspension, they should go and get them again and give them a seven-day suspension, and then give them a 30-day suspension—

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** You're trying to say that when you stop somebody who's driving impaired, there's not much you can do other than give them a suspension.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** With impaired operation, we will arrest a person and take them back to the office. If someone blows a warning, which is 50 milligrams to 99 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood, that person gets their Ontario driver's licence suspended, but their boat licence doesn't get suspended. Essentially, they could drive the next day if they wanted their boat on the waterway, which is totally against what we believe.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** You favour that one should affect the other.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Sergeant Moffatt.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

I now give the floor to Mr. Barsalou-Duval for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Mercier-Blais, I'll start with you.

In your presentation, you said that the study you conducted focused in particular on wake boats. Have you studied other types of boats?

• (1645)

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** The study that was commissioned only looked at the impact of wake boats, because that was the issue for the two agencies that came to us. So the study did not look at other types of vessels.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Although you personally have not done a study on other types of vessels besides wake boats, are you comfortable relying on your scientific knowledge to tell us what precautions should be taken with other types of vessels?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** Other studies have been done on the subject, of course. I'm thinking in particular of a study conducted by some of my colleagues on the Rideau Canal in Ottawa. A number of studies have mentioned this: The closer a boat gets to shore, the greater the impact on the shore. The studies don't exactly agree on a number, because environments differ and types of boats are not exactly the same. A variable impact is observed, but it is certainly something that stands out in a number of studies.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I have another question for you.

The study you did on wake boats—I imagine that it was under circumstances involving a desire to come up with a bylaw, but they wanted to be able to rely on facts first.

From your perspective as a researcher, what would be the impact on biodiversity and on the health of our waterways if we don't regulate the use of wake boats in particular, which can sometimes be abusive?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** It's clear that if the waves have an effect on the bottom of the water body or the shoreline, there will be a resuspension of any sediments that are present. The water composition and water quality will change, as well as the visual aspect. That will also have an impact on the shoreline. So there can be consequences on all of these elements.

If it only happened for one weekend per summer, there would be no effect on the environment. You start to see more impacts when it happens over and over again. In that case, the environment is truly changed, which can obviously have consequences.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Currently, the notion of environmental issues is not really present in the regulatory process. There are people who raise the matter so those issues will be taken into consideration, but safety is the main aspect.

In your opinion—in a context of regulatory reform—should the effect that boats have on the environment be taken into account?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** It certainly should be, because it is a reality of our time. We must adapt to it and get used to taking our environment into account.

We see the consequences of climate change, but we also see consequences attributable to humans in other respects. In some sites and in certain lakes, we've seen an impact on the environment, so it should definitely be taken into account.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I'd like to discuss something else with you.

Your study set a distance of 300 metres for the lakes you studied. You said that these findings would be valid for most lakes. However, I understand that it may not apply to lakes that are completely different, such as Lac Saint-Jean. In the case of a river, for example, I assume it wouldn't apply exactly the same way either.

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** I'll go back to the example of Lac Saint-Jean. It's not necessarily the size of the system that matters in establishing regulations, but rather the type of shoreline and the chances that a boat will pass near the shore. Of course, in Lac Saint-Jean, it is less likely that a boat will pass by the shoreline. However, marinas are obviously close to shore. So there are places where we need to be more careful.

If different regulations are to be created, they shouldn't necessarily be based on the size of the water bodies, but rather on the type of shoreline and the type of environment. It should be determined whether it's necessary to protect the water body and whether the waves have a major impact on the shoreline. If there was ever a need to conduct a case-by-case study, those are the kinds of characteristics that would have to be checked.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** From what I understand, the factor to consider isn't necessarily the size of the water body. It's more a

question of how far the boat is from the shore. So even on a large body of water, if the boat passes close to the shore, there will still be an effect on the shore.

There's something else I'd like to discuss with you. Right now, each municipality or local government seeking to regulate a waterway has to apply for that particular waterway.

Do you think it would be more effective or preferable to have some type of basic universal regulation, based on science, so that we don't have to apply for every one of the thousands of lakes in Quebec, for example? Right now, municipalities have to submit one application after another to Transport Canada to solve the problems they're experiencing with waterways in their area.

• (1650)

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** Obviously, that's a policy or regulatory issue. Personally, I would like to protect as many water bodies as possible, because we study this environment and we want it to remain as it is.

Certainly, if the process were simplified or standardized, it would help to better protect the environment. However, it's not really up to me.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval and Ms. Mercier-Blais.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

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

Thanks to our witnesses for engaging with the committee on this.

I have some questions for Sergeant Moffatt.

You spoke at length about some of the public safety aspects of recreational boating. We've heard that this conversation on recreational boating has split into several different subtopics. One of them is about safety, and another one is about the environmental impact of certain types of recreational boats.

Regarding the discussion on policy solutions for the impacts we're hearing about from the witness who was just speaking, Ms. Mercier-Blais, I'm wondering about the enforcement perspective. If there were a nationwide regulation on wakes within 300 metres of the shore, what would the efficacy of enforcing a regulation like that be? As someone who does enforcement, what do you see as some of the challenges that would have to be overcome?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** I think the biggest challenge is that calls for service are very reactive things. We will interview the witness. We'll find out where the boat was and find the exact location, but if it's 300 metres from shore, it's going to be difficult.

As for the proactive side of things, I think that would be easier. Again, it's about having that distance. We would need instruments to measure the distance from our vessels to the shore to see whether the rule was broken.

I will tell you one thing: A very popular complaint is boat waves. It's the courtesy piece. It's the shared waterways piece, as I explained before. It is a huge issue in Ontario.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thanks for that. That's helpful.

I'm interested in your comments about PFD legislation and making PFDs mandatory on boats under six metres.

We heard previous witnesses assert that the data is inadequate. They want a long-term study done by law enforcement to prove the case for PFDs being mandatory in certain circumstances.

Do you feel that the data, both research and anecdotal experience, is sufficient to create regulations now based on what we know?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Historically, we've been trying to change this regulation since 2006, from what I remember. It was a big issue, and then it fell by the wayside.

What I know is this: People are dying on the waterways. If we look at the stats, Ontario fatalities account for about a third of all fatalities in Canada. People are dying because they're falling off vessels, or vessels are capsizing. It's not the bigger vessels, which are more stable. It's the smaller vessels. Every time I read a report that someone has lost their life, when simply wearing a life jacket would have saved their life, it takes a little piece out of me.

I think it's a very important thing. With the technology out there today, like inflatable life jackets and all the items we have now—belt life jackets for SUPs—it's crazy not to wear a life jacket. I'm a huge advocate for mandatory wear. I think I'm part of a small percentage of them in the country. I've read a lot of comments on Let's Talk Transportation, but I think if they did my job, people would change their tune.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I'll turn to the pleasure craft operator card.

My colleague asked you a few questions about this. I'm not super familiar with the process of obtaining one of these certifications.

Do you feel the process, as it currently stands, is adequate to set boaters up for success and give them the knowledge they need to operate safely on the water?

• (1655)

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** I don't. A lot of my colleagues feel the same way.

A PCOC is designed to give them some knowledge of the water, which is fantastic. To respond to Ms. Creighton's comments, the "Safe Boating Guide" that Transport Canada puts out is the bible for safe boating, I say. People should read it. If they read it, they will pass that test.

However, nothing replaces experience on the water. Having someone sit down and write an online test for an hour after they've studied for a bit.... Driving a boat is not easy. It's not like we have

stoplights, lines and roads. We constantly need to have our head on a swivel to operate a vessel safely. I would love to see a training aspect brought into the PCOC—something a little more in-depth—because what I'm seeing out there right now is not adequate.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** That's very interesting. I know that one critique of the current process—I think Ms. Creighton referenced this—is that there's nothing stopping participants from skipping reading the manual altogether and simply doing the online test while googling the answers. You're advocating for a more rigorous approach to boater operator registration and certification.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Yes. We have to take training to drive a car. I will say this every time: Driving a boat is not easy. We need better items in place to make our waterways safer, for sure. COVID put so many boats on the water. It's exploded. We have a huge population on our waterways now. We need people who are aware of that and who have been trained properly.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you once again, Sergeant Moffatt.

Next we'll go to Mr. Chambers.

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

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be on a new committee for a little while this afternoon.

Sergeant Moffatt, first, thank you very much for your service. I know it's difficult to be in your line of work these days, but I appreciate what you do for the community.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** I just want to stick with you a bit with respect to the issue of flares. You mentioned that flares will expire four years after being issued. In your experience, what are you seeing now in terms of how people are able to dispose of them?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** As I said before, landfills are huge. People think they can just throw them in the garbage, and they're disposed of. There are some toxic chemicals in flares.

What I'm really concerned about is.... We talk about the stories of people trying to get rid of these flares. We are called all the time, and people come to our detachments to drop them off. We don't have a solution for them, and it's disheartening for community members. To put these flares in a box in the corner of the garage is dangerous.

We've had flare disposal days. We've had a program with CIL where they have people come in to grab flares and dispose of them properly. Back in the day, the OPP bomb techs used to take them. We don't do that anymore. It's not their mandate. There are so many things they needed to do, so we got rid of that program. There really is no place out there the public can go to.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** You would consider it not only an environmental issue but also primarily a public safety issue, since people do not have the traditional way to dispose of flares. Is that correct?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** One hundred per cent, yes.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** My understanding is that the program didn't cost very much money, but it gave people a local depot or local collector to go to, which would make sure flares made their way to a professional disposal service. Is that what you're requesting to be reinstated?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Yes, exactly. The number of flares they got from the public, which are disposed of properly, are in the thousands at each site. What we also need, if that is reinstated, is more disposal sites across the country, because they seem to be, in Ontario, more in the southern end of Ontario. We need access in northern Ontario as well.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Thank you very much for the testimony on flares.

I'll note that my area—Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe, Lake Couchiching, the Trent-Severn Waterway—has probably one of the busiest waterways, given the number of boats, in the entire country. My office has been inundated with calls from people, mostly frustrated, trying to understand what they can do today with those flares.

Do you have any recommendation for what they can do today with expired flares?

• (1700)

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** We really don't, and that's what's so frustrating. We're trying to help people out, but we say that they can't fire them off. It's illegal under the Canada Shipping Act. They can't throw them overboard. It's environmentally irresponsible. Can they put them in a bucket of water and make them less volatile? They could do that, but we also say that they have to store them away from their property because you never know what's going to happen.

I wish I had an answer and I don't. That's frustrating.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** That's fair. As a boater and as someone who has expired flares, I share your frustration.

To go back to licensing for a moment, when I did my boater's test, I was maybe 13 or 14 years old. You had to do it in person and under supervision—physically. It was under the supervision of an licensed or predetermined, approved examiner.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** It was BOATsmart.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Yes, exactly. Would you recommend at least going back to the in-person requirement? Is that part of your recommendation?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** If there's a training piece to it as well, then yes, absolutely.

As Ms. Creighton mentioned, there's the integrity piece. There are a lot of stories out there that people had other people write their tests for them. There is supposed to be a proctor. I don't know what that means. I don't know how that works, but we definitely need a better system.

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Thank you very much for your testimony.

I want to keep us on time, for the chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chambers. We greatly appreciate that. I'd now like to invite you to join the committee permanently for being the only one who keeps it on time.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

First of all, I'd like to thank all the witnesses for joining us today.

I'm going to start with you, Sergeant Moffatt, since you have to leave the meeting soon.

I'd like to come back to the issue of the mandatory wearing of life jackets. You would like that to be included in our recommendations.

I remind you that in 1970, Ontario was the first province to require motorists to wear seat belts. At the time, it was thought that imposing such a thing was impossible. Today, wearing a seat belt has become a daily habit.

Do you think this committee should include that recommendation in its report and call on the government to mandate that all boaters wear life jackets? That measure would inconvenience them at first, but then it would become a habit.

[*English*]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Ideally, sir, yes. However, I'm trying to be realistic.

I'm looking at statistics from throughout Ontario and Canada, and it's not the big vessels. We know that 88% of our fatalities are on vessels six metres long and under. I'm trying to be realistic.

The big vessels we're talking about have sleeping berths. We're talking about inside cuddies. It would make way more sense in the smaller types of vessels, like canoes, kayaks, small fishing boats, pontoon boats, etc. That's where we're going with the OPP.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Thank you for clarifying that. The use of life jackets on stable boats, such as pontoon boats or pleasure craft with sleeping quarters, is not as necessary as wearing a seat belt in a car. I understand that quite well.

So you're talking about small boats, but what other guidelines would you include in the recommendation for the mandatory wearing of life jackets? For example, what size of boat and what engine power would we be talking about? Would this obligation apply to the individual practice of all water sports? We need guidelines or tools to know where to draw the line, if we want to implement such an obligation.

Do you have any recommendations on that?

• (1705)

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** There are three options, really. One is the size of the vessel. One is the time of the year. The other one is age.

I can dispel the age piece because we've kept 13 years of statistics. Our fatalities that involved children 14 years and under make up 2% of all fatalities. That's not the demographic. Is it because the parents are making these kids wear them? That's one of the big issues on Let's Talk Transportation. People want kids to wear them all the time.

When we look at those three items, it is about size. We are doing testing right now about the weather and temperature. It's not about people falling in cold water. It's about gasping. It's about entering the water involuntarily and taking in a gasp of water. It doesn't matter what the temperature is. People think it's all about cold water. They think between November and April, they'll wear life jackets. We at the OPP know Georgian Bay is cold year round.

We would like to see less stable vessels, where people are losing their lives.... We have the stats for vessels at six metres and under, which is about 19 feet and under—those vessel types. They show that 88% of fatalities are from people on vessels under six metres.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Thank you, Sergeant Moffatt.

My next question is for Elliot's mother. I must say that today is the first time I've seen a baby attend a committee meeting.

Ms. Mercier-Blais, you talked a lot about your studies on the effects of wake boats. I think you've heard the discussions on regulations that took place at the committee's last meetings. We're still discussing it today. There is a process to make regulatory changes. In the case of Lake Memphremagog, certain requests for regulatory amendments have already been made.

I know that it can take a long time to obtain the right to legislate certain waterways. Nonetheless, current regulations make it possible to set guidelines and speeds to be obeyed.

In your opinion, will the regulations we've set up prevent wake boat waves from harming shorelines and the marine environment?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** Certainly, that type of regulation is much harder to enforce. As Sergeant Moffatt mentioned, it's hard to tell exactly where the 300-metre demarcation is.

However, I think having signs onsite posting the rules that people can see will remind them to stay within the limits. They may be boating somewhat within the 300-metre zone from the shoreline, but it could still help raise awareness during the process.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lauzon. Time certainly does fly.

I now give the floor to Mr. Barsalou-Duval for two and a half minutes.

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

I'm going to continue in the same vein.

Ms. Mercier-Blais, my question is for you, but Mr. Moffatt may be able to answer as well.

In my experience, when you want to enforce a regulation, you have to post it. Mr. Moffatt, please correct me if I'm wrong. The normal approach is to post signs near boat launches or at marinas, but mostly to install buoys.

Is that correct?

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** If a regulation is in the vessel operation restriction regulations under one of the schedules, that is good enough. We talk to the municipalities and say they have to educate their people if they want them to learn and respect the rules on the water. We ask that signs be put up, but if it's in black-and-white writing, the regulation can be used.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I find that interesting. So even though notice is normally given through buoys on the surface of the water, as long as the regulation is posted on shorelines or at other points of entry, you can still enforce that regulation out on the water.

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** One of the speeding laws in Ontario says that if you're 30 metres from shore, you have to go 10 kilometres an hour. That's not posted everywhere. That is just what people know. It's the same thing with 300 metres. There has to be a huge education piece through social media, commercials, etc., to let our boating public know this law is now in place.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I have another question for you.

The police are not out on the water 24 hours a day, seven days a week, though at times an increased presence is desired. Despite the lack of police oversight, are people generally complying with existing regulations?

[*English*]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** That is a very good question.

I'm going to say yes. The majority of boaters just want to be out on the water, to be safe and to enjoy it. When we get to the small lakes, which we do seldom, the first thing we hear is, "Wow, why are you guys here? You're never here." They don't have life jackets and they don't have the carriage requirements.

We are trying to change that attitude by getting to the small lakes as much as we can. With social media, however, it gets out around the lake quickly, so it doesn't help us much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Sergeant Moffatt.

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

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

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask a quick question, and then I'll move the motion I put on notice, assuming this is my last round.

Are we going to have one more round, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** We're actually going to have two more rounds.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Okay. I'll save it for my next round, then.

Both Ms. Creighton and Sergeant Moffatt mentioned the flare program. This has become one of the topics that have received a lot of attention in this study. At a previous meeting, it was mentioned that perhaps there could be a user-pay system whereby boaters pay a deposit on flares. This creates an incentive for them to dispose of them properly and collect the deposit at the end.

I'm wondering if both of you could offer your thoughts on whether such a program would be effective. Perhaps we can start with Sergeant Moffatt.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** I watched the video on that yesterday, and I thought it was a great idea. It gives people an incentive to not get rid of them illegally. On that note, as John Gullick mentioned, there have to be bunkers to put the flares in at marinas so they can be stored until CIL can pick them up.

I think it's a great idea, but there's an implementation piece to implement it properly.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Ms. Creighton, go ahead.

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Yes, I would agree. I think the incentive is excellent.

As a note, I'm not sure if you're aware, but it was in Bill Jerry's email to Transport Canada that in the past, CIL Explosives paid for

40% of the disposal program. Looking at that and comparing it to an incentive program I think would be a good idea.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you very much.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair, and hand it back to you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bachrach. There is one more round for you. You'll be able to move your motion at that time.

Next we will go to Dr. Lewis.

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

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

My first question is for Mayor Martin.

During your testimony, you started to speak about the commercial and industrial impact of the two public marinas—Port Rowan and Port Dover—on the community. Can you elaborate on that and share with us the historical significance of those two marinas?

**Ms. Amy Martin:** The boating industry in Port Dover specifically, as I noted, had at one time the largest freshwater fishing fleet in all of Canada and it's still active today, so there are a lot of jobs and employment factors through the federal commercial fish basin.

I'd also like to touch on some of the large fleets. As an example, Norfolk County and Port Dover are home to McKeil Marine and Lower Lakes Towing, which employ hundreds of local employees. They move, throughout the waterways, heavy liquids or aggregates—throughout the world, actually.

It can all be tied back to starting off with a small commercial fishing industry. That has a lot of spinoffs through the processing and delivery of the fish and the product and through the cargo element.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis:** Can you tell us a bit about what you've heard, if anything, from the residents of Norfolk about the potential privatization of these marinas?

• (1715)

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Sure. It was actually up for consideration.

I've been on the Norfolk County Council for only six years, but through my research, I saw that the topic of whether the municipality should continue to own the marinas has come up about 15 times for discussion and debate with council.

As you can understand, it's not a core municipal service in the same way that garbage, waste management and snow removal are. While it's not the norm for a municipality to own these marinas, the community is very tied to the public retention of these assets and knowing that they'll be there for years to come.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis:** Thank you for that.

My next question is for Ms. Creighton. Thank you for being here today and thank you for your passionate advocacy of our community marinas.

I'd like you to speak to the importance of the Port Dover Harbour Marina to the Norfolk community and why you have been working so hard to keep it going.

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Thank you, Ms. Lewis.

Back in 2007, the transfer from the federal government to Norfolk County occurred, and shortly after that—actually, within a year—Norfolk County was looking at possibly leasing it to a developer, with the intention of them owning it down the road.

As I mentioned earlier, Norfolk County, particularly Port Rowan and Port Dover, has a very big and long marine history. When you see that in a community—and because our community is right on the north shore of Lake Erie, we see the water every day—the link to the water is very powerful. Protecting the marina for the public as an asset, allowing access to the marina and the waterfront, is extremely important for members of the community and for Norfolk County at large.

Just so you know, even though just over 50% of the slip renters at the marina are from outside of Norfolk County, nothing has ever been mentioned about daily rampage and seasonal rampage. These are people who use the marina to take down a small fishing boat, launch it in the morning and come back in the evening. Those statistics are not mentioned. It is one of the few public accesses to the waterfront for those people. There is a very important link to the community.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis:** I have a quick question for you, Mayor Martin. I want you to speak to whether it is financially viable to keep the marinas on the public purse rather than privatizing them.

What are the issues? What are the expenses that led to considering privatization? Why was it even put on the table?

Answer in the few minutes you have.

**Ms. Amy Martin:** It depends on what the municipality wants to charge. Do we want to make it a for-profit business?

We're up against dredging fees, we're up against the seawall and we're up against the replacement of equipment. Through the neglect of those things over the years, Port Dover, specifically, has about \$20 million in capital and outstanding assets that are under review now. We don't want to put that burden on the property taxpayers of this community.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mayor Martin and Dr. Lewis.

Next we have Mr. Badawey.

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

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

Leslyn, that was a perfect segue. Thank you for that.

I'll go to Mayor Martin.

Mayor Martin, I feel for you. As a former mayor of 14 years of the city of Port Colborne who took on Sugarloaf Marina, right from its inception all the way up to where it is now, I feel for you, especially with the capital costs. That can be quite challenging, which is what I want to get a bit deeper into, between you and Sergeant Moffatt.

I'm assuming, because the OPP is your choice for policing in Norfolk County, that you're fully aware of budgeting the operational side and the capital side. It's unfair for me to ask you for the numbers, because I'm sure you don't have them in front of you, but I think we share the opinion that they're quite inflated.

The cost of the marine unit, in particular, is borne by the property tax payers. Is that correct?

• (1720)

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Indirectly, yes. It's levied through property taxes.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Of course, within the police budget is the marine unit. Again, that would be picked up by the property tax payers.

In Niagara, where I sat on the police service board for over 12 years, one thing that always frustrated us was that we took on policing not just from a safety point of view, but from a border point of view, because Lake Erie is on the border. Of course, with that defaulting to the local level, it can be quite expensive in itself with no participation from the provincial or federal levels of government. It's all, once again, being borne by the property tax payers.

With that, I'm going to shift over to to Sergeant Moffatt.

Sergeant Moffatt, do you find it expensive within the service? Let me go back for a second. First of all, is there a harmonized process? I'll use that word. You are bound by the Police Services Act when it comes to adequacy standards and minimum numbers when you're on the road.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Yes, sir. I believe so.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** First, are you bound by adequacy standards and minimum numbers on the water? Second, is the cost quite expensive on the operational and capital side? Third, do you find there should be more provincial and federal participation with respect to harmonizing and with respect to financing the service you're providing on the water, thereby alleviating the pressure on property tax payers?

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** I wish I could answer those questions. A whole different part of the building does all of that.

What I can say is that, yes, we are mandated under the Police Services Act, which is now the Community Safety and Policing Act. We are talking about what effective policing means. Can we say it has to have so many boats and so many...? We're not there yet, so I cannot answer those questions for you. I'm not in that realm.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Mayor Martin, if you can get me some of that information through the police service board, that would be ideal.

What I'm trying to do here is get this into testimony for the analysts. Then we can expect recommendations to come back that say, one, there should be harmonized adequacy standards when it comes to on-water policing and, two, we should take into consideration not only safety through our policing of the waters, but also that we have an international border.

Who knows what's coming into your community, Mayor Martin, across the waterway, whether it's guns, drugs or other illegal activity? That is heavily weighted on Sergeant Moffatt and, I'm sure, the thin crew you have on the waterways versus the heavier crew that's required. Lastly is the financing so that costs do not fall on the property tax payer.

I would request, Mayor Martin, that we get that information. That way, I can add it to the testimony and the analysts can make it part of the final report.

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Badawey.

Next we'll go to Mr. Lawrence.

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

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Thank you.

I apologize. I'm just going to go over some administrative matters at the beginning of my questions.

We have a number of asks out there—requests—and I would like the status on those, Mr. Chair. We asked former transport minister Pablo Rodriguez to come to committee, and I'm wondering if he has responded to that invitation.

**The Chair:** I've just conferred with the clerk. He did respond, but he said that he was unavailable.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** We've also asked the current Minister of Transportation, Minister Anand, to attend to discuss her mandate letter. Has she responded to that invitation yet?

**The Chair:** We're awaiting a response.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Finally—and I know we'll discuss this in committee, so I'm looking specifically for the documents—we also requested documents with respect to “the big dock” from Transport Canada. Have we received them?

**The Chair:** We haven't received anything yet. It takes quite some time. We'll follow up again.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Okay.

I have one last administrative matter. I'm putting a motion on notice. I am not moving it, to be clear; I'm just putting it on notice. Before we discuss it, it will be available in both English and French. It reads:

That the committee recommend that the federal government reinstate the Safety Education and Flare Disposal Program and report this recommendation to the House.

• (1725)

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

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** I'll proceed with my questions, which will be directed to Mayor Martin.

Thank you very much for joining us today, and thank you for being so prepared. You gave us an excellent overview of the economic impact of the marinas and of boating in your municipality.

What would the impact be on your community if the amount of recreational boating, and even commercial boating, were to decline by 10%, 20% or 50%?

**Ms. Amy Martin:** It would be significant. I don't have a dollar figure to demonstrate the economic development impact, but a thousand people minimum are at the marina during peak season, dining, shopping and participating in theatre in the community. For cultural and significant event-related purposes, they're in the community of Port Rowan. All this is quite literally woven into the fabric of how the community operates, so the impact would be significant. There's also the employment factor of not only the large fleets but also the commercial industry. Truly hundreds of people from across Norfolk County and beyond are employed by three major employers.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** There's been considerable testimony—and some of it I might even say was excellent—about the environmental impact of boating on our waterways. However, this has to be weighed against the potential economic impact, the impact on tourism and the impact on communities such as yours of putting regulations in place to make it considerably more difficult or more expensive for boaters to utilize their craft, conduct tours or do otherwise—or even commercial ships. That would have a negative impact on your community, would it not?

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Absolutely.



**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** I just want to change subjects. You may not be particularly well versed on this, and that's fine, but have you heard from or talked to any of your residents, or even your own municipality, about the additional costs that have come from the increased regulation of our waterways and, second, from the carbon tax?

**Ms. Amy Martin:** I can't speak specifically to any increased costs outside of the inflationary pressures on operations and gas prices. Outside of that, I have nothing specific.

As to the carbon tax specifically, again, from the boating perspective, I can't say. However, what I can share with you is that, by 2030, if we continue the status quo, our municipal operations will increase to close to \$1 million paid in carbon tax. That's for a smaller rural municipality. As we're preparing our municipal budget—I know that's not apples to apples—we're anticipating significant transfer payments because of the carbon tax at the municipal level, and that is for status quo operations. I can only surmise that the impacts would be the same for commercial, industrial and recreational boating.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** To summarize your testimony, by 2030 your municipality will be paying \$1 million in carbon tax. Is that your evidence?

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Our estimate is just under \$1 million at status quo, yes.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** While we don't have specifics on the carbon tax with respect to boat owners, there has been a conversation about the additional costs, and perhaps that has limited these individuals. I won't put words in your mouth, but we've heard testimony from others that it has shortened the number of rides people take in their boats and has reduced the amount of boating that has gone on.

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Yes, absolutely.

Earlier in my testimony, I mentioned floating cottages. That's not by accident. A lot of boat owners can't afford to take their boat out on the lake because the costs are prohibitive. It truly is a floating asset in the marina. There are a lot of costs increasing.

That being said, the municipality will most likely be increasing costs in the marina to cover our capital assets. It's not something everyone can afford.

• (1730)

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Thank you for your testimony.

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

Next we have Monsieur Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for five minutes.

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

I want to continue along the same lines with Mayor Amy Martin.

You talked about a tax. On that note, there is a tax that is very important. I'm talking about the amount that is returned to municipalities, which amounts to about 9%.

Do you think the luxury tax should be removed?

Do you think we should also eliminate this tax, which helps municipalities with infrastructure?

[*English*]

**Ms. Amy Martin:** Without looking at the dollars associated with that, I would be making a speculative comment. Wearing my hat as a municipal mayor, I would never suggest that any tax going to the municipality should be repealed. It's very difficult to take on more and more services and manage the delivery of those services on the back of just property taxes, but that's speculative without knowing dollars and cents.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Compared to the tax that's applied, how much does your municipality receive from the gas tax for the good of its infrastructure?

[*English*]

**Ms. Amy Martin:** I apologize. I don't have that figure with me. I know that the gas tax dollars contribute to transportation in Norfolk County and to reserve contributions, but I do not have those numbers with me. I could find that out.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** If you could provide our committee with those figures, we could add them to our report.

I would now like to turn to Ms. Creighton.

Some witnesses have asked us to make the pleasure craft operator card acquisition process more complex. According to some witnesses, it is easy to do the exam online with certain documents or tools on hand, whether it be Google or ChatGPT, today's new tool. Other witnesses reiterated that today.

Can you give us some recommendations to make the exam harder?

My daughter is in the process of getting her driver's licence. She has to go through a year-long process that includes both practical and theoretical courses. Then she'll have a learners' permit for one year, during which a four-point demerit regime will apply. It's quite a process to be allowed to drive a vehicle on the road.

How is driving a boat on the water different from driving a vehicle on the road?

What recommendations would you make to the committee in that regard?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** I did not have interpretation. I'm sorry that I didn't understand everything.

[*Translation*]

I haven't had the opportunity to speak French in quite some time. I apologize.

[*English*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** It's very important to have interpretation.

**The Chair:** It's an important question.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Is the interpretation working now?

**The Chair:** Hold on, Monsieur Lauzon. What's important is whether Ms. Creighton can hear us.

[*Translation*]

I'll just say a few words in French to confirm that you can hear the interpretation. Is it working on your end, Ms. Creighton?

[*English*]

Did you get any of that in English, Ms. Creighton?

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** No.

**The Chair:** I'm thinking it might be what you've selected on your screen. I'm going to ask the clerk to work with you quickly to make sure that you've selected the appropriate channel on your device so that Monsieur Lauzon can ask you his question.

Colleagues, we'll suspend as the clerk sorts out the audiovisual issues with Ms. Creighton.

• (1730) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1735)

**The Chair:** I'll call this meeting back to order.

Thank you, Ms. Creighton, as well as our other witnesses, for your patience. I think we've sorted everything out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, your time is starting over.

The floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Okay. I have to remember my question.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, Ms. Creighton.

As I explained earlier, some witnesses, when making recommendations to the committee, said that the process for obtaining the pleasure craft operator card needed to be more complex in order to ensure the safety of those living along shores.

Witnesses told us that it was easy to do the exam online and that there was no need to study. Some witnesses told us that it could be done as an open-book exam. Others told us that tools like Google could be used. I would add that people could now use ChatGPT.

What recommendations would you make to our committee to improve the process and make it harder to obtain the pleasure craft operator card?

Earlier, I compared it with obtaining a driver's licence for vehicles. The first step is the learners' permit. The learner must be accompanied by an experienced driver. The number of allowable demerit points is also lower for the learner. There is a demerit point system based on the type of licence. Driving courses are also mandatory, both theoretical and practical. Altogether, the process to get a learners' permit takes about 12 months—14 months if you start taking courses before you turn 16.

I don't want to go that far, but would you recommend requiring in-person or online driving courses and better supervision for exams, in addition to some other elements to improve the process? Could you speak to that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** That's an excellent question, and it's one I've thought about for a long time.

I really like what Sergeant Moffatt said. His recommendation is to step up the whole process. Writing the PCOC should be in person, and Transport Canada should continue to publish their safe boating brochure. Ideally, it would be great to have on-water experience included in that test. Can you imagine writing a driver's test and not actually getting out on the road, practising and learning with someone?

When you think about the number of fatalities that Sergeant Moffatt mentioned, from a moral perspective and not just a safety perspective, we have to take action and set the bar higher for boaters on the water. That will not only protect boaters, but also swimmers in the water and other boaters.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** I would like to share an experience I had. This summer, I went to a reservoir. Marine enforcement officers suddenly appeared and inspected the entire vessel, its compliance, as well as the life jackets. It was all done with mutual respect. They told me that there were six transgressors that same day.

The regulations are in place. Do you think that, in addition to the current regulations, adding personnel could improve boating safety?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margaret Creighton:** Education is absolutely critical. That's why I mentioned the videos. Hopefully, some new videos are coming from Transport Canada.

I don't know if this has been done, but I was checking online and didn't see animated videos that target a younger audience. They could say to their mom and dad, "I think you just passed on the wrong side." Children are very smart. Having some kind of animated video for them, and for teenagers and adults, would be a good idea.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Thank you very much, Ms. Creighton.

[*English*]

Sergeant Moffatt, I have a quick question for you.

[Translation]

We're looking for specific recommendations to strengthen the regulations. I am pleased that you are aware that we cannot go too far when it comes to imposing the wearing of life jackets.

Is it possible to send the committee a list of your recommendations? We could study them and, if there is consensus, include them among the recommendations in our report.

[English]

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Do you want a yes or no, or can I explain myself?

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** You can speak for 10 seconds. My colleagues have big smiles.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** I see that red card.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I appreciate a man who follows the rules, Mr. Moffatt.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We'd appreciate your response, sir. You have 15 seconds.

**Sgt Dave Moffatt:** Thank you.

For one, on the highways, we have a lot of regulations police can act on. We don't have the same thing on the water. There has to be something available on the water that we can use. For instance, through the Canada Shipping Act, if there's a breach of right-of-way laws, it goes to criminal court.

We need a better ability to move all of those charges back into the contraventions regulations so that we as enforcement officers can use them to help educate people and enforce the laws on the water. We don't have that right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Sergeant Moffatt.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

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

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

I will take this opportunity to say that Mr. Moffatt's comments are very interesting. What he just said is consistent with what I myself have repeated on a number of occasions, but words always have greater weight when they come from witnesses.

Ms. Mercier-Blais, if memory serves, you published your study on the effects of wake boats in 2014, about 10 years ago. I imagine that, since then, a number of people have spoken to you about it. By the way, one of the reasons you're here today is that I ended up hearing about it myself.

How have people reacted, in general? How has your study been received?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** First, the two associations concerned were very pleased to see that our findings were the same for both lakes.

To our great surprise, our study covered a lot of ground afterwards and was passed around between associations. That proves that there was a lack of scientific data on the subject. Because our study provided specific figures for Quebec, people wanted to use it, even though they subsequently ran into some regulatory limitations. Be that as it may, people talk to us a lot about our study and are very happy that we did this work. It's nice to see that, as a result of our study, organizations have developed a will to place restrictions on their own bodies of water.

● (1745)

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** We often hear that there aren't enough studies or data to determine the most appropriate regulatory measures. Some witnesses talked about that as well.

Would you agree or disagree with that?

**Ms. Sara Mercier-Blais:** In a perfect world, studies would be conducted on all bodies of water where problems have been noted, but that's not possible.

That said, there are studies showing that there are consequences, so it's a matter of finding out how we can use the specific figures in those studies and transpose them into regulations.

Of course, we don't have to harmonize the two, but there are certainly a number of studies that prove that wake boats and other types of boats have an impact on sediment suspension, on shorelines and on shoreline erosion.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you very much.

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

[English]

Last for today is Mr. Bachrach.

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

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

As I mentioned before, I'm going to use my time in this round to move my motion, which has been put on notice. I'd like to move the following:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study regarding community safety and emergency preparedness as they relate to the transport of dangerous goods by rail, with a particular focus on rural communities; that the study include at least 12 hours of testimony; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

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

For the discussion, I'll have Mr. Lawrence, followed by Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** I understand that it is the practice of this committee to accept nearly any type of study, and this one seems as reasonable as any. There's only one amendment I would like to see, but at this point, I won't move it. It seems that 12 hours might be a bit much, and I believe that would be six meetings, if my math is correct. I would like to move that down to four meetings, as the time is limited.

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

Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Since it was moved by Mr. Bachrach and supported by Mr. Lawrence, I think—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** When in Rome, right?

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Barsalou-Duval and then Mr. Bachrach.

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

I assume it will be the study that will be proposed by the NDP, as part of this rotation to which the committee has agreed. If that's the direction the committee wants to take, I don't see a problem with it.

That said, we're talking about 12 hours of testimony, aren't we? I would like some clarification as to how the 12 hours are interpreted. If I suggest two witnesses and the committee invites them both to appear in the same hour, will that count as two hours of testimony?

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

[*English*]

There are lots of questions for you, Mr. Bachrach, as well as comments.

The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** To my colleague Mr. Barsalou-Duval's question, my understanding is that it's the total hours of testimony, not person hours, but it's a good point.

On the length of the study, I think we could spend 20 meetings talking about this topic. It's fairly technical. There are a lot of different stakeholders—certainly municipalities and first nations. People can speak to the environmental impacts. The fire departments are very involved in emergency response too.

The 12 hours or six meetings were in keeping with the approximate length of the studies that we've been conducting as a committee. Perhaps I can ask the clerk for a reference point on the length of studies. I don't want to be greedy and dominate the committee's time, but it is a very important topic and I'd like to see us do a thorough job.

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

If the committee is in agreement, out of respect for the time given by our witnesses, who have been so generous with us this evening, is it okay if I ask the witnesses to log off?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Witnesses, I want to thank you very much for contributing to this very important study and for giving us your time so generously.

Those of you joining online can now log off.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mercier-Blais, thank you again for your time. You're welcome to stay if you like. Otherwise, you can leave with your family, including little Elliot.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Lawrence, I'll turn the floor over to you.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** As a compromise, I propose that we set the study at four meetings, with the ability to extend it to six if the majority of the committee believes it's necessary.

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

I don't see hands up, so I'll turn it back over to you, Mr. Bachrach.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I appreciate the comments.

I think six has been our standard as a committee. The Conservative Party did, I believe, back-to-back studies with two meetings for Lake Erie and four for airline competition. We did a Liberal study of six meetings on rural airlines. The six meetings are in keeping with that and with the spirit of fairness that this committee is so well known for.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Mr. Bachrach, you and I are friends, and I feel like I'm being taken advantage of here, but we have a study coming up—we'll be following you—and we hope that this courtesy will be extended there. We are good with the last answer.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

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

I won't object to there being six meetings this time, but I would like to point out to committee members that none of the studies proposed so far by the Bloc Québécois to this committee have been granted six meetings. In the future, I would be most grateful to benefit from the same generosity shown to other members of the committee.

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

Mr. Lauzon, you have the last word on this.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I would like to move a motion.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We have to deal with Mr. Bachrach's motion first.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** I think we've resolved that, haven't we?

**The Chair:** No, it hasn't been formally dealt with.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Officially, I think we're all in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is there an objection to the motion put forward by Mr. Bachrach?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you now have the floor.

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

Here is the motion I'm proposing in both official languages. It's on a topic that we've been discussing recently, that is very important:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Government of Canada made a commitment to prioritize Indigenous relations and reconciliation, and following the discussions of reports of the Fort Chipewyan Metis Nation and the contaminated Transport Canada Dock, the committee invite the following witnesses:

- (a) Transport Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada officials;
- (b) Members of the Athabasca Chipewyan Métis Nation; and
- (c) Toxicology experts and the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

That the committee hold at minimum two meetings and report its findings to the House.

You will receive the English and French versions of the motion by email.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

I think there was a discussion about not doing a full report but doing a letter, because there are only two meetings.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gosselin, can you explain the difference between the two and give us an idea of what that would look like?

**Ms. Geneviève Gosselin (Committee Researcher):** Well, there are other possibilities besides a report. To draft a report, you always have to follow a process. Because this committee conducts numerous studies, sometimes there's a bit of a lag between the end of a study and the publication of the report.

There are various options that other committees use quite regularly.

For example, the chair can write a letter on behalf of the committee.

Another option is to produce what's called a mini-report. It is published on the committee's website. There are several examples of this. This type of report—which has the same value as a normal report, but is only about one page long—summarizes what the committee heard and makes two or three recommendations, at most. Parties can also submit dissenting reports. Since mini-reports are much shorter, the time frames are too, as there's no need to wait for all the testimony to be translated. This type of report can therefore

be submitted within one to two weeks of the last meeting on the study.

● (1755)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Gosselin.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Thank you to the committee analysts.

Personally, I would encourage moving quickly. After all, it's two meetings, not six. We could draft a mini-report, but I would prefer a formal letter. It would be published on our site, so it would be publicly available at the same time. That would allow us to react quickly to the situation.

**The Chair:** Just so you know, this will not alter the normal rotation for studies.

[*English*]

This will take place after the rotation that we currently have is concluded, which means that Mr. Bachrach's study will go next, and this will come after that.

Are there any questions or comments, colleagues?

Go ahead, Mr. Lawrence.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** I think the Conservatives have been exceedingly accommodating, so I come at this with a bit of frustration. I can understand agreeing to take on the study, but to have an issue of this significance and not include the ministers would be an embarrassment, quite frankly. We would need, at a minimum, to include the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

This is a significant issue. We're happy to get to it quickly because we realize that it's important. We're pushing back our own study to make this one happen. We're more than willing to do that because Conservatives see this as incredibly important and something we need to get to the bottom of.

I cannot, in good conscience, be anywhere near supporting this, quite frankly. To have ministry officials there, who might say, "This isn't our call; this is a political call", and not have the ministers is beyond the pale and ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

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

I agree with my colleague, Mr. Lawrence, that this is a really important study. There are a few things I want to say.

First of all, there has been some discussion about whether this belongs at the environment committee or at transport. It feels like we're coming around to the idea of transport being the home for this study. I'm in agreement with that.

There are some other versions of this motion floating around out there. A version that I'm looking at involves some edits that would make the witnesses more specific and would change the wording slightly. I'm happy to propose an amendment accordingly.

I want to deal with the matter that Mr. Lawrence brought up. In reflecting on it, I think this is going to be a study of the committee, not a study put forward by any party. It's one we would take on outside of our usual rotation. That reflects its importance.

Given that Mr. Lawrence was so generous in agreeing to six meetings for the study I proposed, I would be in agreement with moving this two-meeting study up as soon as possible so that we can deal with it immediately following the study on recreational boating.

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

Are there any thoughts or comments on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon has the floor.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** When I moved this motion, my intention was to follow the planned order. I don't want to undermine my colleagues who were here before me and who worked to move motions.

The analysts and the clerk can confirm this, but as far I understand, a motion has already been moved by the Liberals, and we have to debate it before speaking to this motion.

According to the list of motions, one has already been moved, right?

**The Chair:** If you're talking about the Liberal motion, it concerns a study on tourism, if I'm not mistaken.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Yes, that's right.

So we have a motion for a tourism study to consider before mine. So we'll have to wait another round before we can come back to my motion.

I maintain that the main players who should testify as part of this short study are toxicology experts and representatives from the department that is responsible for environmental and climate change issues. I think they are the key players who will be able to answer all of our questions properly, not to mention the members of the Métis nation, who are directly affected by this.

The list in the motion already includes the main players. I think we should stick to those witnesses. I don't see what a minister could add to our data, for the good of this committee.

• (1800)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

I now give the floor to Mr. Badawey.

[*English*]

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** If I understand correctly, we have only so many hours to deal with this. What are the agreed-upon hours?

**The Chair:** It's two meetings, four hours.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Is it four hours in total?

**The Chair:** Yes. That's what the motion says. We haven't adopted anything yet.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Then the second part is the amendment by Mr. Lawrence to bring in the ministers.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** The problem I have, having gone through this in my former life when it came to contaminated areas—and I say this with all due respect—is that I don't want to waste my time with ministers. I want some time with the technical people, because I've gone through this in the past with my community. We dealt with contaminated soils, phytotoxicology reports, reports on human health, risk assessments having to do with habitat and risk assessments having to do with the community. How are these contaminants affecting or adding risk to the community, in all aspects? That's my first point.

My second point is that once you find that out, you have to align it with the established parts per million levels. What's acceptable? Most times when provinces or territories put a PPM level in place, it's not based on anything because there's no science to back it up. It's not until you put the science and the process to establish that science in place that you have a better handle on what the PPM levels should be based on the assessments of risk.

The third point is about remediation. How are you going to remediate the site, and based on those risk assessments, what PPM level are you going to remediate it to?

The fourth point is about cost.

Quite frankly, there are many more points to this; I'm just trying to be quick. Ultimately, the point I'm trying to make is that getting all that done in four hours is next to impossible.

If we want to do this right, let's not waste time with ministers. Let's take the valuable time of the people who actually know about this and can answer the questions we're going to ask and give testimony that's pertinent to this very serious situation. I would suggest that we concentrate those four hours on individuals who are in the business versus playing politics with two ministers who are going to be here adding really no value to the discussion that we're going to embark on.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Badawey.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

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

First, there's one thing I don't understand in the debate we're having right now. Everyone is saying that this is an important issue, and everyone seems to be saying that we need to deal with it quickly. So I don't understand why we don't want to move on to this study quickly, in the order of studies. Instead, we seem to want to put this study at the end, after all the other studies already on the list. However, that would mean that we would carry out the study in a year. If this is an important and high-priority topic, I think it would be preferable to conduct the study sooner rather than later.

Second, I must say that this is a subject that I have not really explored much. It must be said that the dock in question is not in Quebec. However, given what I'm hearing from people around the table, I'm wondering whether two meetings will be enough. Would we need to add meetings, to be able to satisfy everyone?

Those are the two points I wanted to raise.

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

I think Mr. Bachrach even suggested pushing back his own study so that this one could move ahead.

[English]

Next is Mr. Lawrence, followed by Mr. Bachrach.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** First of all, thank you, Mr. Bachrach. I'm not at all surprised to see you—knowing the importance of this study—putting the NDP's interest behind indigenous issues. Given your character, I'm not surprised at all.

Mr. Badawey, I agree with you that it's incredibly important to get technical information. Having now been around Parliament for five years, I've sat through a lot of testimony from officials. That testimony is often enlightening and critically important, but officials can only go so far. If you do not have the ministers, you never get the full story. There's always a policy element. Our civil servants work very hard, but they have a limited box they can operate in. If you want to get the full story, you need a minister.

I am interested in Mr. Bachrach's amendments and what his motion would look like. For Conservatives, the bare minimum would be to have three ministers, because this touches on a number of different files. It is, of course, about Transport Canada, so we need the Minister of Transport. It has a significant environmental impact, so we need the Minister of Environment. Finally, this is primarily an indigenous issue, so we need the Minister of Indigenous Services here as well. For Conservatives, that's the baseline.

The other part I would point out is that it says a minimum of two meetings. Of course, we are the masters of our own process, so we can, if we need to, extend the study if the evidence shows it merits additional discussion. I can't think of many things more important than the health of indigenous children who are swimming in potentially contaminated water, and perhaps knowingly so. At least, those are some of the allegations that have come out in the media.

Let's do this right. Let's get the full story. Let's get the ministers here, even if it's just for an hour apiece. We can zip through that pretty quickly to get the full story so we can at least do our small part on the walk towards reconciliation.

I'm not sure if Mr. Bachrach wants to move his amendment, but I'd be very interested in hearing it.

• (1805)

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Bachrach, followed by Mr. Badawey.

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

It seems to me that, if we have two meetings, we'll get four hours of testimony. Usually, we have one-hour panels. That's four panels of witnesses available to us. In my view—and I'm sorry if I'm stepping over the clerk's and analysts' roles here—there are four groups

of witnesses whom I feel are most appropriate. First nations are first and foremost, and then it's ministers. I agree with Mr. Lawrence that it's vital to have them here, because ultimately they're accountable. One aspect of this that is particularly frustrating to the community is that they repeatedly wrote to the ministers, asked them to address the issue and did not receive adequate responses. I think those are very important questions that this committee, in its accountability role, should pursue. The third category is independent experts and the fourth category is government officials.

If we can invite witnesses for those four panels, I think we can do a condensed study in two meetings, write a strong letter to the government and table it in the House.

When it comes to the amendment, the version I have is as follows. I can have my staff provide it to the clerk if the committee wishes. It would read—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to cut you off, Mr. Bachrach, but for clarification, is this another motion you had access to, or does this have something to do with the two different versions sent out by our committee? The clerk and I want to make sure we haven't—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** This is a proposed amendment. I believe it's to Mr. Lauzon's motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach. We just wanted to clarify that.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** For clarity, is that currently on the floor?

**The Chair:** It is, yes. The motion is on the floor with no other amendments. You're the first to put forward an amendment.

• (1810)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** The amendment would strike some words after the first phrase. I'll just read the preamble, as amended:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and following the news of inaction on the part of the Government of Canada with regard to a contaminated Transport Canada dock located in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, putting the health and safety of indigenous communities at risk, the committee invite the following witnesses....

There's a list of witnesses here. I think it reflect the witnesses in the four panels that I mentioned. The witnesses who are mentioned are Mikisew Cree First Nation chief Billy-Joe Tuccaro, Fort Chipewyan and Métis Nation president Kendrick Cardinal, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Other ministers are included as well: the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Given the extensive list of witnesses, we're not going to have enough time in two meetings to address all of that. I would move to amend the first part of the body of text, and then the committee can invite witnesses as it sees fit within the frame of that motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

I'll go to Mr. Lauzon first.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon:** Okay, let's start from there.

[*Translation*]

It's not really clear to me right now. I think it's a good idea to begin with. Of course, the person most directly concerned, among the ministers mentioned, is the Minister of Transport. I'm prepared to add her to the motion, but not the other ministers.

Mr. Bachrach should send his amendment in writing to the clerk, so that we can analyze it. He went back on his word a little. When we read a motion in committee, we read it in full so that everyone would understand its content. We don't give explanations or add ideas while reading the motion, as Mr. Bachrach has just done when reading his amendment. I think it's important to have the text of the amendment in both official languages so that everyone can read and analyze it. We should take the time we need.

Mr. Chair, as we are past the time to end the meeting, I want to make sure that interpreters are still available. Can we check with the clerk?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

We have resources until 6:21 p.m. So we have eight minutes left.

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

I'd like to receive the amendment in writing. If we want to be able to speak, we have to be able to clearly see in writing what amendments are proposed to the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Mr. Bachrach, can you share what you have? Do you have it in soft copy as well? If so, would you be able to send it to the clerk so she can circulate it? Then we would have an idea of what you're proposing to keep or add to what Mr. Lauzon had proposed.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could ask for a five-minute recess to prepare that and get it to the clerk.

**The Chair:** That's fine. I'll suspend for five minutes so you can get that to the clerk, and we'll resume at 6:18. Could you do that quickly?

Actually, Mr. Bachrach—and my apologies—it looks like there's a list of people who want to speak to this. You have to get that information to the clerk.

I'm just wondering if we can resume this at the next meeting. I think we're supposed to be doing clause-by-clause.

Go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** I just want to make one comment.

This has to be dealt with. Mr. Lawrence alluded to that, and I'm sure we all share the same sentiment. It has to not only be dealt with but dealt with in a proper way.

This issue has been lingering for too long for whatever reason. I don't really care what the reason is. What I care about is dealing with it now. The past is the past. We're moving into the future. There's a contaminated site and we have to deal with it.

What I'm worried about is that we're trying to do it in a patchwork way. If we're going to do this, then let's do it right.

What I would suggest is that Mr. Bachrach and Mr. Lauzon sit down, put their heads together and bring this motion forward. We can add in the witnesses everybody wants to add in, ministers or not. I have an opinion on the ministers: I don't think they're going to add much value. I'm more interested in the technical part. That's the “how” and the “what”. We think we know what the “what” is, but do we? I ask because attached to the “what” are the implications of the contamination. You're not going to get to the bottom line until you get the science to it, which goes back to the technical part.

If we're going to do this, my point is to do it right. Let's put our heads together. Let's come back at the next meeting with a motion that deals with the situation versus having a patchwork that we'll have to keep revisiting year after year.

● (1815)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I think I have agreement from all members that we'll try to get this done off-line and then we'll come back with something we can all agree to, because we all agree this is important. Is everybody good with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, thank you for a great day. Have a good rest of the evening. We'll resume after the break.

This meeting is adjourned.









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