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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 133 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

Before we proceed, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. Please address all your comments through the chair.

With our first panel today, from 4:30 to 5:30, we're studying supplementary estimates (B), 2024-25. We have votes 1b, 5b and 10b under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

We have with us on our first panel the Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. Also joining us, we have Annette Gibbons, deputy minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and Mario Pelletier, commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Welcome, Minister and officials, and thank you for appearing today.

Minister, you have five minutes or less for your opening statement. You have the floor.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard): Thank you very much.

I'm delighted to be here today, on the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, to present the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2024-25 on behalf of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Before I begin my remarks on the supplementary estimates, I would like to inform the committee of a matter of interest to some members. I'm pleased to announce that the Government of Canada has approved a new set of regulations for the elver fishery, and that these new regulations will be published in the Canada Gazette on December 18. These new regulations will create licences for possession, export and solutions to enable traceability that will help manage this fishery into the future. While I await the final advice and recommendations of departmental officials, I am more confi-

dent than ever that the 2025 elver fishery will proceed as per my commitment.

In the supplementary estimates, I am requesting \$531.1 million. That amount includes \$524.7 million in approved appropriations and \$6.4 million in statutory appropriations..

In terms of approved appropriations, the bulk of that funding will be divided among the following four areas: funding for the Great Bear Sea project for permanence initiative; funding to advance reconciliation on indigenous fishing rights; funding for small craft harbours; and funding for the Coast Guard, including money for fuel and fleet renewal.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight those last two items and their importance for our communities.

As federal Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, small craft harbours are one of my top priorities. This essential coastal infrastructure supports Canada's thriving fish and seafood sector, which employed over 45,000 people in 2022. With nearly 950 small craft harbours in the federal inventory, it takes a lot of time, effort and money to keep them in good working order. It has become even more difficult due to extreme weather events.

The funds I'm asking for today will be used to repair and maintain small craft harbours, including those damaged by hurricane Fiona, through initial investments in climate-resilient infrastructure.

I'd like to take one minute to highlight several ridings that are receiving funding for small craft harbours under the supplementary estimates (B). The riding of Miramichi-Grand Lake, currently represented by MP Jake Stewart, will receive approximately \$1.63 million for the McEachern's Point and Pointe-Sapin harbours. The riding of West Nova, represented by Chris d'Entremont, will receive funding for the Meteghan harbour. The riding of Cumberland-Colchester, represented by Stephen Ellis, will receive money for projects involving the Wallace harbour. These are just a few examples among other ridings, such as Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Parry Sound-Muskoka, York-Simcoe and Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Small craft harbours are the heart of many coastal and indigenous communities. By ensuring that they are safe, accessible, well maintained and built to withstand the effects of climate change, we will contribute to the long-term economic prosperity of the fish and seafood sector and the communities that depend on it.

The endless games being played by the Conservative Party and others in the House of Commons are jeopardizing funding for projects in their own ridings. I strongly encourage the Conservative Party and others to stop jeopardizing important projects, projects in their own ridings. If they don't, they should be prepared to answer to their constituents as to why their harbours will be deprived of maintenance, dredging and other important activities.

That brings me to my next point, funding in the supplementary estimates for the Canadian Coast Guard.

In the supplementary estimates (B), the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are requesting \$29 million in funding to recapitalize the Canadian Coast Guard's small vessel fleet, \$28.1 million for the operational requirements of the future fleet of the Canadian Coast Guard, and \$20 million for marine fuel costs.

I don't think I need to explain to committee members how important the Canadian Coast Guard is. Many of us have witnessed firsthand the bravery of Canadian Coast Guard members and the important role they play in our communities. It is therefore disappointing that the Canadian Coast Guard fleet renewal work is at risk if the Conservative Party and others continue to threaten to not allow the supplementary estimates (B) to pass in the House of Commons. Even more worrying is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition and his MPs are holding funding for fuel needed to conduct DFO activities hostage.

I'd like to conclude my remarks today by appealing to the Conservative Party and the other parties to get out of the way, to let the government do its job and to not let partisan anger put coastal communities at risk.

If altruism isn't enough, I invite the Conservative Party and others to allow the supplementary estimates (B) to pass for the simple reason that their own ridings are supposed to benefit from funding allocated under these estimates.

I'm now prepared to answer any questions you may have.

• (1640)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll now go to our first round of questioning for six minutes or less with Mr. Small.

I would ask members not to interrupt when somebody else is speaking, please.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister and officials for being here today.

Minister, the FFAW, the MFU, the PEIFA, the UFCA and many other fishing industry stakeholders are quite concerned about who

is gaining stakeholder status at stock assessments. Do you believe that foreign countries should be able to influence decisions made for Canadian stock assessments?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Thank you for the question.

When it comes to stock assessment, we turn to science. We know that climate change is disrupting the oceans. We consult scientists—

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: No, the question—

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —we're talking with people from the associations—

Mr. Clifford Small: Excuse me—

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —and we also look at—

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Cut her off.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: In short, we're working together with the associations, scientists and governments.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Again, do you believe that foreign countries should be able to influence stock assessments, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: When it comes to our fish stock assessments, we don't work with foreign countries. As I mentioned, our work is based on science, on consultation with people in the communities and with the provincial governments.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Minister.

If an ENGO receives a large amount of its funding from foreign sources, is it possible that they might push the agenda of their foreign funders?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: As I mentioned, and I'll say it again, decisions at Fisheries and Oceans Canada are made by departmental scientists and experts. In addition, we work with the associations and discussions are held with provincial governments.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: I didn't get an answer there.

Actual fishing industry stakeholders have reached out to me quite a bit lately. We have two ENGOs right now that have gained stakeholder status in many stock assessments throughout Atlantic Canada. For one of them, five out of nine major donors—that's Oceana—are foreign entities. Sixteen out of 22 major donors for Oceans North are from foreign countries. Did you know this?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I'll repeat my answer.

I want you to know that, when we're at the table making decisions, we work with departmental experts and scientists, with the associations and with the various government representatives in Canada. We make the best possible decisions to ensure that our children and grandchildren will have access to fisheries in the future. That's my priority, and that's what I'll continue to work towards.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Again, Minister, do you think that entities sitting around the table as stakeholders that receive the vast majority of their funding from foreign extreme activists should have the right to have an impact on the livelihood of our coastal communities?

• (1645)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: My answer is clear, but I'll repeat it for the fifth time.

We're working with the various partners at the table to make the best possible decisions to ensure that our children and grandchildren will have access to fisheries in the future. It's a question of our country's food security.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Minister, we have ENGOs in stock assessments that constantly want quota cuts, fisheries shut down and fishing areas taken away from fish harvesters, and they're funded by groups outside of Canada. Why are you allowing that to happen? You are the minister. You have the final say. You have ministerial discretion. You know the industry is upset about this.

Why are you not doing something about it?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I've been Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for just over a year, and that hasn't stopped me from taking a clear stand in favour of developing the seal hunt. I don't see how any organization could influence me. The work is done and will continue to be done with the various representatives.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Will you commit to the fishing industry to removing the ENGOs that are funded by foreign countries from stock assessments in Atlantic Canada? Will you commit to that for the fishing industry here today, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I didn't quite hear the interpretation, but I'll tell you what I'm going to commit to. I will commit, as I

have since becoming Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to ensuring that our children and grandchildren have access to fisheries in the future, and to working with our partners and with the provinces.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Small.

We'll now go to Mr. Hardie for six minutes or less.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, I noticed that about 40% of the additional funding you're looking for is for something called the Great Bear Sea project finance for permanence. It's all about conservation. It also says it's supporting sustainable economic development.

Can you go into a bit more detail on sustainable economic development? Sometimes, when fishers hear "conservation", especially those on the west coast, they feel that their ability to fish and make a livelihood, difficult as it is now, will be further impaired. Could you give us some more background on that, please?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Climate change is indeed an important issue. We know that every wild species on the planet is at risk. Establishing marine refuges and protected marine areas allows species to reproduce, and that's how we can ensure the future of our fisheries.

In the case of the Great Bear Sea, for example, that work is being carried out in collaboration with indigenous communities as part of the reconciliation process. We have other projects throughout our oceans to promote wildlife reproduction and protect the fisheries sector for the future.

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie: Is DFO subject to staff reductions as the federal government looks to trim the public service? Are you in a position of needing to oversee staff reductions at the DFO? If so, in which areas?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I'll ask the deputy minister to respond to that question.

[English]

Ms. Annette Gibbons (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): We are looking at staff reductions as a result of the budget 2023 reductions exercise. There are a lot of different buckets of money that we'll be making reductions to.

Travel is a big one, not staff reductions. Also, in procurement, we'll be reducing some of our professional services budgets. There are other things we'll be doing across the department in different areas. We're trying to be more efficient in our use of different types of workers and categories, for example; more efficient in the way we do communications; and more efficient in administrative services and financial management activities.

It really is broadly distributed across the department. We expect that we will be able to do this in a way that does not affect services to Canadians. That's a summary.

• (1650)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you for that.

I'm wondering if there's any consideration about rebalancing DFO's resources. We quite often hear suggestions that DFO is quite top-heavy at the headquarters in Ottawa, which is a long way from our oceans. Is there any thought about getting more resources closer to sea level where they can do things like enforcement and a lot of the other things that DFO is being challenged to do?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: As it is, 80% of DFO's employees are distributed across the country outside of the national capital region, and we're very careful in the reductions exercises not to have a disproportionate impact on the regions. As to the 20% of employees who are in the national capital region, there's a higher percentage of reductions to personnel in the national capital region. I believe it's 35% or 40%.

Mr. Ken Hardie: One of the other areas of concern, which has come up with the elver fishery and a number of other areas, has to do with enforcement. I'm wondering if DFO is considering making better use or a more expanded use of indigenous guardians to help fill in the gaps, because there are only so many peace officers or other officers available to enforce fishing regulations. Again, I'm thinking specifically of the elver fishery, which has been in a pretty difficult situation for the last couple of seasons.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: We're working with indigenous communities. You're right to mention the river guardians. Indeed, indigenous communities are ready and eager to work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, particularly to ensure the protection and future of the fisheries. In this respect, we are gathering knowledge not only from people in indigenous communities, but also from non-indigenous fishermen and the department's own scientists. It's really by combining these three aspects and taking everyone's experiences into account that we'll succeed in protecting the fisheries, not just for today, but for tomorrow too.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for six minutes or less.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Thank you, Chair.

I thank the witnesses for coming.

Good afternoon, Minister.

I've obviously seen a lot of numbers, and I'm just wondering one thing about the Great Bear Sea project. It's a lot of money. In the pile of figures before us, how much is going to Quebec fishermen, inshore fishermen, indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen?

You showed awareness earlier when you said you wanted to ensure there would still be fish for our children. The next generation is also concerned about inshore fisheries. Some fishermen's sons had planned to be fishermen but that's no longer the case.

In this heap of millions of dollars, is there anything for Quebec, be it for non-indigenous fishermen, indigenous fishermen or newcomers?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I can tell you that the figures announced forecast significant investment in small craft harbours in Quebec this year. Moreover, exploratory licences have become commercial licences for sea urchin and sea cucumber fishing. In addition, licences have been issued on the north shore for exploratory lobster fishing. I think that the people of Quebec are doing well right now.

The marine protected areas include the Banc-des-Américains. We also have a project under way with the Magdalen Islands and another project with the Quebec government around Anticosti Island.

• (1655)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: What proportion of the money is allocated to Quebec as opposed to the rest of Canada?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I can tell you that Quebec has never seen as much investment as this year. I hope that this reassures you. I'm also working hard with harbour associations and fishers' associations.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Good.

I'll draw your attention to the Verchères and Saint-Laurent-de-l'Île-d'Orléans wharves. People are impatiently waiting for their wharves to undergo repairs so that they can use the wharves again. This applies in particular to the municipality of Saint-Laurent-de-l'Île-d'Orléans.

Indigenous people recently told us that they don't have any resources for recovering ghost ships, for example. They told us that their voices aren't being heard. Do any of the 40,000 or so people who work for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans reach out to indigenous people?

We've heard here that they lack the resources, for example, to recover ghost gear and ghost ships from the ocean floor. They have the desire, the skill and the knowledge, but they come to us begging to be heard.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Let me reassure you. We work closely with indigenous communities.

I'm quite proud of the collaborative work between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Transport Canada when it comes to abandoned vessels. Since 2017, 791 vessels have been removed. The work is ongoing.

I can tell you that I work closely with indigenous communities.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: So much the better. That's good news.

We're experiencing a fisheries crisis. As recently as Monday, we heard that, given the mental state of the fishers affected by Fisheries and Oceans Canada's various decisions and the ensuing consequences, the Quebec fisheries crisis has resulted in a psychological shock almost as severe as the shock caused by the Lac-Mégantic accident. A study on this topic was carried out in Trois-Rivières by a leading scientist. It's quite a significant impact.

I was wondering whether the budget appropriations included more investments to recruit scientists—such as sociologists, psychologists and analysts—to assess the psychosocial impact of any decisions in advance. This could then have a greater impact on the direction taken by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier : First, we happily agree that the fisheries are facing major issues and that global warming is having an impact on the gulf. I still wouldn't go so far as to compare this situation to Lac-Mégantic, where fatalities occurred.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: It's a scientific study.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: The situation was catastrophic in Lac-Mégantic. This isn't the case for the fisheries right now.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: There have been suicides, Minister.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Are the fisheries facing challenging situations? Yes, indeed. The fisheries will continue to face them in the gulf over the next 10 to 15 years as a result of global warming.

The work currently being done with the associations, both in the Atlantic region and in Quebec, plays an important role. It's a collaborative effort. I was told at meetings that, in the past year, the associations had become much more keen to work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada at round tables.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: We recently held a wonderful and very constructive forum. This isn't quite the message that we received. I should point out that all the organizations were represented.

That said, I just want to say that a great deal of money is floating around, but we aren't seeing that many results on the ground. The department is asking for even more money. I hope that it will be put to good use.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Desbiens.

We'll now go to Ms. Barron for six minutes or less.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Welcome, Minister.

[*English*]

Minister, recently, constituents in my riding from the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Nanaimo branch specifically, brought to me a series of petitions from constituents who are concerned about deep seabed mining.

We know that in the deep sea ecosystem, there are species of which we have yet to even have a glimmer of understanding. We also know the deep seabed regulates climate by sequestering carbon and that mining in our deep seabed would destroy sponges, corals and other important marine life and habitat. We heard in our most recent meeting from Susanna Fuller of Oceans North, who also talked about this issue.

Minister, I'm wondering if you could provide some clarity both to constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith and to Canadians across the country who are concerned about deep seabed mining. We know that you made an announcement last summer that supported a moratorium on deep seabed mining, but a Canadian-registered company called The Metals Company recently announced that it plans to submit an application to mine the international seabed on June 27, 2025, which is rapidly approaching, even though there are no regulations in place to manage deep seabed mining.

I'm wondering if you and the Liberal government will commit to putting words into action to prevent this application from being approved.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Before turning the floor over to the deputy minister, I want to reassure you about the government's work. We can work on economic development while protecting the environment and waterways. This includes freshwater rivers, which flow into the oceans. Major work is being done in this area.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: It's a collaborative effort. We sit at the table to ensure that all aquatic species are respected and protected.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I appreciate the comments you are providing, but I'm wondering if you could answer the question specifically of whether the government will be approving the application of The Metals Company to mine the international seabed on June 27. I'd prefer it if this answer came from you, if possible.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Solid regulations are in place. We won't ignore the regulations.

By the way, could the interpreters be asked to speak into the microphone? Otherwise, I can't hear them very well.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: The problem is that there aren't clear regulations on this, so there is a lot of concern about moving forward with implementing mining in these seabeds.

Another question that's being asked is whether you'll be implementing an international moratorium on deep seabed mining at the International Seabed Authority. People across Canada are asking for some clarity on this. We know that there's a lot of good work happening around the world, but in Canada we need to make sure we are a leader to ensure this is not happening here.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We are working in the context of the International Seabed Authority. Canada's position has been clear that we will not approve deep seabed mining until there is a clear regulatory framework in place.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you.

I want to move on to my next question. I would appreciate any further clarification in written form, so I can provide it to my constituents and to Canadians who are inquiring about this.

My other question is about the European green crabs that are invading B.C. waters. We're hearing from a lot of people who are very concerned about this. There's an article in *The Narwhal* that describes the impact of the European green crabs well, but I don't have time to quote it so I'm going to move on.

The B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund is jointly funded by the province and the federal government. We know there are companies, such as the Coastal Restoration Society, doing essential work. Josh Charleson, its executive director, was here recently. They've been doing this work for four years. Some 780,000 crabs were cleaned up over just a short period of time in three indigenous bodies of water. My concern, though, is that despite the good work of organizations like Coastal Restoration Society, there's no funding left.

What's the plan to ensure that the invasive green crabs don't take over our marine ecosystems along the west coast?

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I understand your concern. I have the same concern about invasive species, such as the green crab found on both the west and east coasts. We also know that marine traffic is increasing. We must continue to work together.

I'm eager to continue this work with the provincial government's new fisheries minister. I've already been in contact with her. She must be informed about invasive species, such as the green crab, but also about other species. That way, we can move forward.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Can they expect funding to be allocated again by the federal government?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barron. Your time has gone over.

We'll now go to Mr. Arnold for five minutes or less.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I must take exception to some of your opening remarks. You blamed Conservatives for slowing Parliament's work. I will correct the record. Parliament has been slowed because of your government's refusal to produce the documents for the green slush fund.

Will you tell the Prime Minister to release the documents, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I'm here to talk about small craft harbours and harbours in your constituency. I'm here to talk about the Canadian Coast Guard and the money needed. I strongly encourage you to stop playing political games, to help protect the public—

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's not a yes or no answer, and you brought the question up.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —and to ensure that our coastal communities have access to key infrastructure for their areas.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's not a yes or no answer. Thank you, Minister.

Minister, this committee unanimously voted to request your appearance for two hours for the review of the Fisheries Act. When will you be appearing for the Fisheries Act review?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I didn't quite hear the interpretation.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Do you not know?

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Do you have to look to your MPs for an answer about when you're going to appear?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, clearly there's a delay in interpretation. I think all members should respect that. Let the minister hear the question and have it interpreted, and then she can respond. Jumping over her is not helping the interpreters either.

The Chair: Mr. Cormier, you had your hand up.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): It's on the same point of order, Mr. Chair. Even I sometimes use interpretation, and when people talk, we cannot hear the whole thing. I can imagine that the minister cannot hear either.

The Chair: Okay. Is everything straight now?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I need to hear your questions properly so that I can give you the best possible answers.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Before we resume time, with these interpretation devices, unless my microphone is turned off, I cannot hear interpretation coming through. We'll have to make sure we turn the microphones off when the minister is responding. That's why I couldn't hear the minister.

The Chair: Okay, so you'll hear the answer in your earpiece if your mic is off.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Yes, but I don't think everyone was aware of that.

The Chair: You can turn off your mike on your own.

Mr. Mel Arnold: The controllers are also controlling the mikes. It gets confusing.

Can you tell me how much time is left?

The Chair: Three minutes and 49 seconds are left.

Go ahead.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Minister, can you tell us when you'll appear for the Fisheries Act?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I think that the committee has work to do on the Fisheries Act. I hope that it does this work. I look forward to your recommendations. I'm working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and with the associations—

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: No, the question was, when will you appear?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —to protect owner-operators. I would very much like to see the work done here too.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Minister, you're here today seeking an additional half million dollars to be added to the \$5 billion already authorized to DFO, for a total of \$5.5 billion. Is that correct?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: In fiscal year 2014-15, DFO's expenditures were \$1.7 billion. What you're proposing is a 300% increase over DFO's 2014-15 expenditures.

Would you say that DFO is doing 300% better service today than it was nine years ago, yes or no?

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: You're comparing the 2014-15 budget with the 2024-25 budget. I would like to inform you that construction costs have increased. In addition, the funding requested today will be used to repair and maintain small craft harbours in some of your constituencies and to purchase fuel for the Canadian Coast Guard.

I expect us to put petty politics aside and to work on ensuring the safety of fishers on the water. They need this infrastructure to do their job properly.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: This is a 300% increase. Would you say that DFO is providing 300% better service than they were in 2015?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: As a result of global warming, the oceans have less or even no ice and small craft harbours require much more dredging. Costs have risen. We must give our fishers the opportunity to fish and provide safe infrastructure. This infrastructure is vital to economic development both for the harvesting industry and for the processing industry and SMEs involved in the fisheries sector.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: It seems that \$332 million in these estimates is for grants and contributions, which is paid to outsourced operations outside of DFO. You're asking for \$332 million in grants and contributions. If you consider the \$400 million that has yet to be accounted for in the green slush fund scandal, you can understand why we want to know what this \$332 million will be spent on.

Could you provide us with details on what the \$332 million in grants and contributions in the estimates will be spent on?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: The funding will be used for new activities, fleet renewal and initiatives for marine protected areas. As I said, we—

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Could we have some details in writing?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —need to upgrade harbour infrastructure in a number of your constituencies. I hope that you're taking the fisheries sector into consideration.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: There must be planning to ask for those kinds of funds.

Could we get this provided in writing to the committee, please? I want details on the \$332 million.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: We'll provide the details.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

We'll now go to Mr. Morrissey for five minutes or less.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming.

What you've heard so far from the official opposition is empty rhetoric—which consistently comes from opposition parties—relating to the management of the resource. That's what occurred for years. I'll paraphrase a former Progressive Conservative fishery minister, John Crosbie, who had to shut down a fishery that totally collapsed: It is extremely important for your department to get accurate stock assessments. We do that well in a number of fisheries. It is not always widely received and welcomed, but management is important. All the input we get on stock assessment is important, because we only want to make decisions that ensure the successful future of fisheries.

Madam Minister, I support the expenditures you're looking for before the House. The former Conservative government slashed small craft harbour funding for a number of years, which left harbours deteriorated.

My question for you, Minister, is on small craft harbours. I raised this with you before. It is about looking at the possibility of utilizing your harbour authorities jointly to manage the output and repairs in harbours, which can get the job done in a lot of cases faster and more cost-effectively.

Madam Minister, will you take it upon yourself to see that the amount of federal funding harbour authorities can use to improve their harbours is increased from what it is now?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I can tell you that a meeting of harbour associations from across Canada was held recently. I attended their meeting by videoconference. They submitted requests to me. When I talk about collaborative work, I'm also thinking of this type of approach.

Requests have been submitted. We're currently analyzing them. Harbour associations indeed do important work. They're volunteers. We must be there to encourage them and to work in partnership with them.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Minister.

I'll turn the rest of my time over to MP Cormier, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Morrissey.

Minister, thank you for joining us today.

You spoke earlier about the Conservatives. I couldn't agree more. They voted against the budget and their actions in the House are delaying any potential fisheries initiatives.

However, we mustn't forget that the Bloc Québécois is also implicated. Two weeks ago, the Bloc Québécois came to Caraquet to put on what I would describe as a theatrical production. I'm talking about its fisheries forum, which it held to convince stakeholders that the Bloc Québécois was the saviour of the fisheries in Parliament. However, most of the stakeholders weren't there. There were more Bloc Québécois employees than stakeholders.

Yet the Bloc Québécois, like the Conservatives, voted against the latest federal budget. It voted against funding for small craft harbours.

My Bloc Québécois colleague asked earlier whether one of the wharves in her constituency would undergo repairs. I wonder whether she knows that she voted against the budget.

You also spoke about Canadian Coast Guard funding, which would be delayed should the budget not pass. Imagine the impact on the earlier opening of the crab fishery, for example, before the whales arrive. The Bloc Québécois said other things at the fisheries forum in Caraquet. For example, they all supported an earlier opening. However, if we don't have access to this funding, we know what will happen.

Tell us a bit about the Bloc Québécois and what will happen if we don't adopt these budget appropriations as soon as possible.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: In my meetings with various associations and people in the industry, I hear about the need to invest in small craft harbours. We experienced hurricane Fiona and we'll be experiencing other major storms. The impact of climate change is being felt in the gulf. All the fishing associations are worried. People want to work together.

We did this in New Brunswick. We set up a pilot project for striped bass with the Maritime Fishermen's Union. The fishers also want to work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to keep track of harvests. That way, we'll have data and we'll stop putting dead fish back into the water to feed the seals. We can use our resources for other purposes. The case of New Brunswick is a fine example. It just goes to show how much we can work together.

In terms of the Bloc Québécois, we know that its leader once said that squid fishing would save Quebec's fisheries, even though Quebec has hardly any squid.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Minister.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cormier.

I will remind members not to talk over one another when other people are in a conversation, whether it's the minister answering a question or somebody else. The interpretation team has a hard time picking up whose voice they should be interpreting. That's especially for Mr. Perkins. He's been chirping all evening, but I'm going to forgive him for that for now.

Madame Desbiens, the next two and a half minutes are yours.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Now my friend Mr. Cormier is angry with me.

I would like to set the record straight. We voted in favour of the appropriations. We didn't vote for the budget, because the budget tabled by the government was riddled with items that encroached on provincial and Quebec jurisdictions. That's why we aren't voting for the budget. As my leader said, it's easy to throw a few goodies into the proposals to try to get us to take the bait. However, it will take more than this given how clever we are in the Bloc Québécois.

By the way, I see that we had a ripple effect that prompted you to respond. You said that you wanted to take a closer look at bycatch to ensure that fish aren't put back in the water. You want us to work with fishers on the ground and take their measurements. This is great news. We've been lobbying the government on this issue for months, if not years. We've long known that it was the right thing to do. We're glad that you heard us.

That said, I'll be continuing along the same lines, or fishing lines, if you'll pardon the pun.

New scientific studies, which I must emphasize were carried out independently, propose a number of excellent solutions for involving people on the ground in decision-making at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. We're even hearing about the need to eliminate partisanship and set up an organization. This organization would include department officials along with independent players, such as scientists, and it would remain above politics. This idea was brought up to us at the forum, and it was quite serious.

If you want to make greater use of the expertise of people on the ground and pursue your strong desire to save the fisheries for our children and grandchildren, as you put it, wouldn't you want to focus on an environmental mediation approach? Would you welcome the creation of a slightly more independent agency that—without necessarily playing a leading role—could certainly affect political decisions and make them less partisan?

• (1720)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: First, if you just realized that we're out on the ground—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. I have to interrupt you—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —the reason is that you aren't on the ground.

[*English*]

The Chair: —because we've gone over the two and half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: If that were the case, you would know that I work closely with people on the ground and that I meet with associations—

[*English*]

The Chair: Minister, we've gone over time. Madame Desbiens used more than her two and a half minutes for the question itself, so there's not much time for an answer. If you want, you can provide it in writing to the committee at a later date.

We'll now go to Ms. Barron for two and a half minutes or less.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair. It's unlikely that I will take less.

The Chair: I'll be the one controlling that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I want to thank the interpreters. I appreciate that this has been a bit of a challenging meeting to interpret.

Minister, we have had an entire study at our committee about the derelict and abandoned vessels lining our coasts. In Nanaimo, Ladysmith and other coastal communities along Vancouver Island, we are particularly hard hit. In Ladysmith specifically, along the coast they have what's called the “dogpatch”, where vessels are all lined together and are sinking, polluting our marine ecosystems. It's a huge problem. It's an issue being brought to my attention over and over again, not just for the environmental impacts but also for the impacts on tourism and the safety implications for mariners.

Minister, we have the information. We are in the process of putting forward recommendations from this committee. Will you commit to helping clean up these vessels along our coasts and preventing them from...? It shouldn't be easier for Canadians to abandon a vessel than to clean it up properly. Can you commit today to working to get these recommendations implemented so that these vessels won't continue to line our coasts?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: According to the information provided, since 2016, about 2,100 wrecked or abandoned vessels or dangerous vessels in Canadian waters have been reported. Of these vessels, 791 have been removed. At this time, 1,358 vessels remain in the national public inventory.

You're right to bring this up. We know about the environmental impact. The work in this area must continue.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Minister, can you commit to following through with the recommendations? I know that you haven't seen them yet, so I'll tell you about them. Sound recommendations have been put forward by witnesses who have come to our table and told us the solutions that need to be put forward. As a matter of fact, you can look at my bill. Everything the witnesses said coincides with the bill I put forward.

Can you please commit to helping clean up these vessels?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Yes, we'll make commitments within the confines of the allocated budget.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barron.

We have approximately six minutes left. I'll split it between Mr. Perkins and Mr. Cormier.

• (1725)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Why? Is that because of the technical delay? That's not fair.

The Chair: That why I added two minutes.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Minister, in the summer and before this committee, you insisted that you were doing enforcement in the Bay of Fundy against lobster poaching. Is that still true? Do you still stand by that?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Perkins, I can see you getting agitated. I would ask you to show a bit more respect both for the interpreters and for the fact that I'm a francophone as opposed to an anglophone like you. I gave you time to ask your question, so you must give me time to hear the interpretation and respond.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: You're going to try to burn up my time.

You insisted on enforcement. Your own department's documents—

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Illegal fishing and fisheries—

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: —show that there was no enforcement day by day in July, August and September.

Did you lie to this committee, or are you just ill informed about your department? There were zero days of enforcement—almost none. For only four days were there about five hours of enforcement on the Bay of Fundy in August.

Why did you mislead this committee?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I can tell you that we're working hard on the issue of illegal and clandestine fishing, for the benefit of fishers. Work is being done and it will continue.

This work began with the fishers' associations. We started working with the Canada Revenue Agency—

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Of the 10,000 illegal lobster traps—

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —and we'll also be continuing our work with the Department of Finance.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: —in the Bay of Fundy in the summer, how many were seized? I'll tell you the answer. It's 259. That is not enforcement.

I'll move on. You're destroying the elver fishery. Not one person has written to your department supporting what you're doing—not the adult eel harvesters or any of the employees you want to give this to. Your agenda, according to some, is to put licence-holders out of business. Some ask, "Why are you putting my family out of work with this communist policy?"

Why is it that you believe people should make less money? What part of the Fisheries Act gives you the ability to decide what amount of money somebody should make? What part of the Fisheries Act allows you to expropriate 75% of a business?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: In terms of the elver fishery, work has been done and stricter rules have been introduced. As a result, families and young people in the next generation can—

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Have you read the Fisheries Act?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —earn a living. This work will carry on, because I'm committed—

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Have you read the Fisheries Act, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: —to continuing our work in the fisheries sector.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: You have not read the Fisheries Act.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: However, your current move to block supplementary estimates (B) is a real disgrace.

[English]

The Chair: Watch yourself, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, it was impossible for me, and probably for Ms. Koutrakis and Mr. Hardie, to hear anything that was just said.

[*Translation*]

The interpreter can't get the job done with all this noise. Mr. Chair, please call the committee to order.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm trying.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: I just want to reassure my colleague that the Fisheries Act states that licencing decisions fall under my purview.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Madame Lebouthillier. The time is up for Mr. Perkins's questioning.

I will now go to Mike Kelloway for the last three minutes to finish this off.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Thank you.

In the summer, Minister, we saw the Canadian Coast Guard conduct the search and rescue of seven Newfoundland fishers off the coast of Newfoundland. The Coast Guard did phenomenal work, and it was because of their ability to act quickly and effectively that lives were saved and that families had hope and have their loved ones back. In fact, the entire province was mesmerized by what was accomplished by those fishers, and in particular by the Coast Guard.

With the obstruction going on in Parliament, I have a concern that the estimates are not going to go through. How would that impact safety for fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., New Brunswick, Quebec and elsewhere?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: We know that fuel costs have gone up. We need much more fuel. The funding requested in supplementary estimates (B) will help get the boats out on the water.

I'll let Mr. Pelletier answer your question.

• (1730)

Mr. Mario Pelletier (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard): The funding is intended for both fuel and ships' crews.

[*English*]

We're getting new ships and new technology, and we need to do more training. Some of that money is going towards the Canadian Coast Guard College, and some of that money is for recruiting new people when the new ships are delivered.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Along the same line of questioning, if the supplementaries don't go through, how will that impact the small craft harbours in terms of repairs or even dredging? How will that impact small craft harbours across Canada?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The supplementary estimates include money from the budget for small craft harbours. There are all the Fiona repairs we're doing in a number of different harbours. On

augmenting, we have an annual budget that we receive in our regular appropriation, but we do a lot more. We need to do a lot more on small craft harbours, so we depend on that supplemental money.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I think I have 20 seconds left, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have 17 seconds now.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I have 17 seconds. Thank you very much.

What's of concern to me, beyond the party politics, is that if we don't get things done here and get money to small craft harbours, particularly for safety, I believe that people's lives will be at risk. That's very serious business. I hope we can get on with the order of getting the funding to them.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I do too. Release the documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway. Your time is up.

That concludes our first hour of questions for the minister.

I understand that the minister is only here for an hour, and the officials are staying for an hour to answer questions on the estimates.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing again today. It's always a pleasure.

We'll suspend for a moment.

• (1730)

(Pause)

• (1735)

The Chair: We will now resume the questioning of the officials.

Joining us on the panel we have, from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Richard Goodyear, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. Also, of course, we have Mario Pelletier and Ms. Gibbons, who have both stayed. Mr. Burns is back again, and Niall O'Dea is here as well.

Welcome.

I'm sure you're used to this by now. You'll have an opening statement.

A voice: No.

The Chair: Okay. We're just going right into questioning. That's perfect.

Mr. Small, you have six minutes or less.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're more than welcome, buddy.

Mr. Clifford Small: Yes, and our witnesses are more than welcome. It's wonderful to be here.

Ms. Gibbons, the minister just mentioned that around \$113 million of her ask is to go to the small craft harbours program, and she said it was a top priority. She mentioned that Miramichi—Grand Lake was going to receive \$1.6 million in funding. She didn't mention the riding of my colleague Mr. Perkins, South Shore—St. Margarets.

How was that funding disbursed? What were the criteria for harbours to receive funding this past year?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: As to the process, the department keeps a running list of the state of the different harbours, and then we look at a variety of factors. Certainly, safety is top of mind.

We have lots of different harbours across the country, and we look at harbours that are important for commercial fisheries, the number of users at a harbour, the importance of the fisheries in those communities—all of those things.

Mr. Clifford Small: Of the \$113 million that the minister is asking for right now for small craft harbours, how much is going to her own riding? Am I close to being accurate with the calculation that \$45 million of the \$113 million is going to her own riding? Is that right?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: I can't answer that question. We don't track that by riding in the department.

Mr. Clifford Small: Would you be able to provide that in writing to the committee?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We don't do that analysis by riding. That's not something we do.

Mr. Clifford Small: Okay. Well, it's been identified that the South Shore—St. Margarets riding alone needs \$600 million to make it safe, and those are DFO's own numbers. That riding received no money last year for its harbours and none this year.

Was there an order that came out of your department to not fund small craft harbours in that part of Nova Scotia?

Maybe that's for Mr. Goodyear. You're the money man.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Annette Gibbons: At the end of the day, it's a complex weighing of different things. Sometimes a harbour is functional but needs a complete overhaul, to be completely rebuilt. For something that's \$600 million, it sounds like it's in that category.

• (1740)

Mr. Clifford Small: It's very odd to me, though, Ms. Gibbons, that the \$2-billion lobster industry operating out of West Nova and South Shore—St. Margarets gets one project. Close to 20% of our nation's GDP is from the fishing industry, and they get one project.

Can you tie that knot together for me?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: There are lots of different harbours and there are lots of different needs, and we really—

Mr. Clifford Small: Wouldn't you say that's awfully peculiar?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We do different things in different places depending on what the needs are. In some cases, we focus on keeping things functional if it's a really expensive project to do and there isn't enough funding to do it. There are lots of different factors going into the decision-making process.

Mr. Clifford Small: I'll turn my time over to Mr. Perkins.

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Your own department estimates that West Nova needs \$600 million. It's the richest fishery in the country. It accounts for most of the value of our fishery. The value of the fishery isn't there, because no money is going into my riding, and there's only one project in West Nova, the most dangerous fishery in the world since it's the winter, yet Liberal ridings get it. The minister announced about \$45 million for her own riding this past summer and not a nickel went to the most important community in the fishery, with 7,000 commercial fishermen. It sure looks to me like somebody has made an effort to keep that most important Conservative riding out of the picture, mainly because the minister doesn't like the way I question minister number six.

Is she giving an order to keep the money out?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The decisions on the final projects are something I can't speak to in detail.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Does the minister approve the final projects?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The minister approved the projects.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Well, there you go.

The minister clearly said the part of the country that represents the most commercial value, worth, as my colleague Mr. Small said, over 20% of the value of the Canadian fishery in that area, gets nothing. The minister has the final say. It looks to me like a political decision using taxpayer money to try to save her own arse against Kristina Michaud, and you're being used to do it as bureaucrats. To me, that's shameful. You should not allow the minister to make political decisions like that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

We'll now go to Mr. Kelloway for six minutes or less.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Okay. That was interesting. That was maybe the worst episode of *Matlock* ever, to try to put logic behind it.

I want to get to some questions with respect to, in particular, small craft harbours, but before that I want to go to C and P.

As to the investments we need to make in C and P, we need more C and P officers and more intel and equipment for C and P officers to take on what is a difficult job. I have admiration for them, whether they're working in South Shore—St. Margarets, Cape Breton Island or any point in between. The world has gotten more dangerous for those men and women because of a lot of issues around underground sales and a lot of other criminal activity.

I'm looking to see what we are doing to up our game in the C and P world with respect to providing resources, personnel and things of that nature.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: There's an awful lot going on in the C and P space. I think everyone is aware that this summer we had complaints from some of our officers in the maritime region of Nova Scotia and southwest New Brunswick about danger under the Canada Labour Code. There's a multiphased process to go through in dealing with such complaints. Through that process, there was a decision on danger by the investigators at the labour program, particularly with respect to long arm rifles and individuals who have criminal involvement.

As part of the multiple phases we went through and the final ruling, we have been making a number of changes to the policies and procedures for our officers to make sure they are safe, because that is our top priority, of course. We have done some very specific things on the safety front with the equipment they have. Hard body armour is something we are moving to. We have started a pilot with an initial set of hard body armour for officers to wear in certain situations, if that is warranted. Body-worn cameras are another piece of equipment they have been working with for some time, but we're moving that along and accelerating and expanding their use.

Of course, those are just our policies and the rules of engagement they follow. They never have to engage if they are in danger, and that is really important, but we have been going over those policies and procedures and making sure that everything is up to the minute and reflective of the environment and the changes in the environment in which they are operating.

We are making sure their training is appropriate for the kinds of situations they face and making sure the protocols around engagement of the RCMP, for example, and other law enforcement personnel are fully understood and invoked as needed.

• (1745)

Mr. Mike Kelloway: My phone just died. How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have two minutes and 24 seconds.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: The minister alluded to the new regulatory framework with respect to elvers. I'm wondering if there's anything right now that you can dive into on what we should expect in the new regulatory framework. Then I will hopefully have a comment to make at the end of my time.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The new regulatory framework is intended to expand beyond the existing regulatory authorities—which are about harvesting elvers and possession of them by a fish harvester—to move along the supply chain to require licences for other points along the supply chain.

If you're going to be exporting elvers all the way out to export, you will now need to have an export licence as well. It's a very comprehensive approach to regulating in this sector that will give us much greater visibility in real time of the elvers that are harvested, and it will allow us better knowledge of whether elvers are coming from another country and there's no export permit for them—that sort of thing. It'll give us much better visibility into the whole market.

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I'll go to Commissioner Pelletier.

With respect to the Coast Guard's role in working with C and P, can you highlight what we may be doing differently in the coming year that we're not doing now in terms of the investments you're looking for?

Mr. Mario Pelletier: Obviously, some of the investments we're receiving for new ships will support that, because new ships will be more reliable and have better technology.

It's also about reporting when we see something from ships that do not have a C and P officer on board. We have a process there to make sure we capture the information and it gets reported to the program so that if any action has to be taken, it can be taken afterwards.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for six minutes or less.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Despite what our friends may sometimes think, we take action to improve people's lives. I'm sure that you do the same. I'm sure that my colleagues in the other two parties want the same thing too.

With this in mind, I would like to ask you my next question.

Who works at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans? There are bureaucrats, fisheries officers, Coast Guard workers and scientists. Do people focus only on protecting the resource, or do they also take the human factor into account when assessing the impact of certain departmental decisions? Is anyone assessing the social, psychological and economic impact of these decisions in certain coastal regions?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: Absolutely. For example, we have people who work as economists and analyze the impact of fisheries, the value of what is fished and the impact on coastal communities.

• (1750)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: You have economists, but do you have sociologists or psychosociologists? Do those positions exist within your department?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We don't have sociologists per se. However, people who hold positions as economists also deal with sociological and statistical issues.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: If you want more funding, could you consider using this budget to improve studies in that regard?

I'm telling you, we hear about difficult things. Although we're being criticized, we did a tour of the Maritimes because we wanted to hear what the people around us were saying. As we know, Quebec is linked to the maritime provinces by the river, the gulf, the estuary. We wanted to talk to them about how they felt and how things were going on their side. That's why we were in the Maritimes recently. We went there with the ultimate goal of understanding the fisheries issue in its entirety.

Is your department considering the possibility of managing the protection of the resource, of course, but without overlooking the human factor and the repercussions on humans when a decision is made? It's all well and good to want to save a fish, but people have come here to tell us that, to save a fish, three families who own a company are being destroyed.

Is it possible for budgets to be set aside in your department to hire specialists to assess these kinds of effects?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: As I was saying, our department has teams of people who do this kind of analysis in all regions.

The advisory committees on the various fisheries have discussions on the economic impacts. The Fisheries Act says that the minister must consider economic and socio-economic factors in fisheries decisions. Yes, the minister does receive advice on the socio-economic impacts for each fishery. That includes scientific advice, but it also includes socio-economic advice.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: How can we explain that certain decisions are greatly affecting mackerel and herring fishers, for example? That was also the case for shrimpers recently. For a number of years, we've been saying that the redfish fishery needs to be opened because it's a major predator attacking the shrimp resource. The shrimpers have sounded the alarm, but there's no such contact or measure. It's as if there's something missing between what's happening on the ground and the department's decisions. That's why I'm trying to propose a mediation mechanism.

Could you consider funding for a mediation mechanism, so that we can have a better understanding between the people on the ground and the people who work at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We hear a lot from fishers' associations in this regard and they do a lot of—

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: However, they tell us every time that they're there as a decoration. No matter what they say, it doesn't resonate.

Perhaps there should be an environmental mediation. Could that be included in the budget?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The department can't really make decisions without the advice of coastal communities. Taking that into consideration and incorporating it into decisions is part of the minister's obligations. The advisory committees are there to do that kind of analysis and to hold discussions on the socio-economic impacts of the fisheries. I think it's already built into the advice the department provides to the minister.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: If it's integrated, how is it that we're hearing this kind of comment from stakeholders on the ground? I'm just trying to understand and come up with solutions.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: Yes, certainly.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: How is it that we're hearing this kind of comment from people on the ground? Is there a gap in the chain of communication that the department missed that could be corrected, in good faith?

As I was saying earlier to the minister, we aren't fooled. Academics have studied this and have done a very serious double master's study. The results tell us that the psychological shock caused by the fisheries crisis in Quebec was almost as great as the one caused by the events in Lac-Mégantic. That's quite something.

• (1755)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Desbiens. Your time has gone over.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: In short, we have to look for solutions.

[English]

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Barron for six minutes or less, please.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair.

Welcome back, witnesses.

Deputy Minister Gibbons, I'll put these questions to you. Then if somebody else can answer, that's okay as well.

My first question is about the ghost gear program. We know that many organizations have been taking part in the important work of cleaning up our oceans and that there has been a lot of success as a result of this. I don't need information about what that looks like, but now the concern is that we have cuts. I'm hearing that an international conference is coming up in February that's likely going to talk about how great the program is, but how much can be celebrated when the funding is now cut? This means that the people doing the work are going to be out of jobs. They're going to move into other areas and the costs are going to double.

When it starts up again with funding, if it starts up again, there will be more damage and implications, so I don't understand the logic behind cutting this vital program. I'm wondering whether you can share what the plan is, other than everybody gathering to pat themselves on the back at this conference in February.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: The program wasn't cut. The program was for a certain period of time, so the program reached its natural end.

On the issue of ghost gear and the impact of gear on ecosystems and marine mammals, there's a much broader body of work on that beyond just retrieving ghost gear. There is whalesafe gear, as an example, and whalesafe gear strategies that we're working on. In fact, we have some pilots right now, in LFAs 36, 38 and 38B, with a different type of gear to minimize impacts on whales.

There are lots of different pieces we are engaged on. The session in February you're referring to is about whalesafe gear.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I appreciate that, Deputy Minister.

I recognize—and I know we've talked about this as a committee—the importance of ensuring that the different types of gear are whalesafe, but I'm hearing directly from organizations that have fully participated in ghost gear cleanup and had much success in doing so that the funding has been cut. Can you explain why these organizations are no longer getting funding to clean up ghost gear and perhaps give some rationale as to how this is a cost savings? It's going to cost us more money in the long term.

Ms. Annette Gibbons: As I said at the start, it was a time-limited program. It was an initiative, if you will, and we reached the end of that initiative. We still carry on much work with respect to the management of gear to minimize impacts.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: As for my next question, if I can be honest, I don't feel like I got a straight answer from the minister. I'm going to give her the benefit of the doubt that we were having some interpretation issues at the time, so I thought I would ask you for some clarification about the European green crab. European green crabs are recognized as one of the world's most destructive invasive species. We know there was funding for them through the BCSRIF, which is joint federal and provincial funding.

My question is actually being asked of me by organizations that are involved in this work. Will you be directing funding towards maintaining long-term control and early detection programs Canada-wide?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We do things through different programs. We have ongoing programs. We have ongoing aquatic invasive species work in the department, contribution programs and support for provinces, for example—various initiatives. The BCSRIF is a time-limited program. As the minister said, with the re-election of the B.C. government and letting the ground settle there, there will no doubt be discussions on the renewal of BCSRIF. That is another avenue, for example, for dealing with aquatic invasive species.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I want to highlight what I was pointing to before. The Coastal Restoration Society has cleaned up 780,000 European green crabs since November 2021 in Ahousaht, Clayoquot and Sooke waters. It's an incredible number. I'm just imagin-

ing how quickly they will reproduce and create so many more. I hope that organizations like the Coastal Restoration Society get the answers they need and the funding required to maintain and keep up the important work they are doing in our marine ecosystems.

In the last minute that I have, I'm going to point out that when my colleague, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, brought forward an Order Paper question, he received a response on October 25, 2024, that was, for lack of better words, highly inadequate. The question sought a detailed breakdown of how the government has spent funds under the Pacific salmon strategy initiative. We're particularly concerned that insufficient funds are being invested in stock assessment and that the collection of basic escapement data has been declining for decades despite the promises of the wild salmon policy.

Given these concerns, Mr. Chair, I'd like to move the following motion:

That the Committee request Fisheries and Oceans Canada to provide documentation detailing in the current fiscal year a) the amount of the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative budget allocation that has been allocated, and the amount spent, for stock assessment; b) under PSSI's Conservation and Stewardship pillar, the list of specific projects that have received funding commitments and the amounts committed to each project; and c) the total amount of funding that has been disbursed to date since 2021 under each of the strategy's pillars.

I bring that forward in the hopes that we can agree to have some answers to the very important questions that impact us all.

● (1800)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I just have a point of order on this.

I'm wondering if this needs to go to notice. I'm just looking at the rules.

The Chair: We're in committee business.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Can that then be forged ahead?

Mr. Rick Perkins: We're in estimates. It's spending and estimates.

The Chair: We're not in committee business, but it's in order.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Okay. I'm just checking. I'm just doing my due diligence.

The Chair: I'll ask if there's unanimous consent, which would avoid an actual vote count. I see thumbs up or heads nodding on this side.

Yes, Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could we get a written copy of that? Then we could suspend for a moment while we see it.

The Chair: It's been sent.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could we suspend until we read it?

The Chair: We'll suspend for a moment

• (1800) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1800)

The Chair: We're back. I'll ask the clerk to count the votes.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I think it's unanimous, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. I'll ask this again: Is it unanimous that the motion be approved or is it on division?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That concludes your time.

We'll now go to Mr. Arnold for five minutes or less.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, witnesses, for being here.

Commissioner Pelletier, the minister is failing to ensure that fisheries law and regulations are being enforced. It's unclear if non-enforcement is because of a shortage of enforcement capacity.

If the minister requested it, would the Canadian Coast Guard be equipped and able to assist with enforcement of laws and regulations of fisheries?

Mr. Mario Pelletier: We don't have fishery officers on board Coast Guard ships right now, but we prioritize the work that needs to be done. There are a certain number of days dedicated to C and P, and we do make sure that we deliver those days.

Another good example was last summer through Operation North Pacific Guard. We deployed a Coast Guard ship through the north Pacific to do some IUU monitoring. That was the first time we've ever done that.

This is the kind of flexibility or the kind of prioritization that we do.

• (1805)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Ms. Gibbons, you stated in one of your comments, "They never have to engage if they are in danger". Isn't this a signal to criminals and organized crime that if they threaten DFO C and P personnel, it will result in their backing off?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: Maybe I'll ask Adam to speak to this particular point, but if there is physical danger that the officers think is going to get out of hand and threaten their personal safety, they do not engage in that situation. That is when we would go to law enforcement for support.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I think that's a significant enough answer.

Commissioner Pelletier, considering the violence that has emerged in the fisheries conflicts caused by the minister's failure to enforce laws and regulations, would the Coast Guard need to be

armed if they assumed a supporting role in supporting fisheries enforcement?

Mr. Mario Pelletier: We are actually supporting fisheries enforcement. We have two ships out of Newfoundland that do NAFO patrols, and there's an onboarding team on board.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Would they need to be armed? That was the question.

Mr. Mario Pelletier: If they're going to do onboarding, then the onboarding team needs to be armed. Other than that, to work alongside a C and P officer on board our ship, we provide protective equipment such as body armour, but they don't need to be armed.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Burns, is there a director general for DFO's conservation and protection branch? If so, who would that be?

Mr. Adam Burns (Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Yes, there is. The acting director general, who's been in place for a number of months now, is Anik Chartrand.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Mr. O'Dea, B.C.'s shrimp fishery is collapsing, unlike our neighbour's shrimp fisheries, which are harvesting record catches, driving strong coastal communities and providing healthy nutrition and protein for their communities. This is the result of DFO's Pacific shrimp resource management, which has heaped six—yes, six—precautionary approaches on B.C.'s fisheries with zero consideration of the cumulative effects that these have on British Columbia. This is costing B.C. harvesters hundreds of millions of dollars annually in lost revenue. This year, DFO required monitoring fees amounting to 43% of the value of the landed catch of B.C.'s shrimp fisheries. This is absolutely ludicrous oversight.

Mr. O'Dea, as the lone witness from DFO policy here, will you initiate an investigation into this matter and provide the committee with a written brief by year's end explaining why the DFO is shutting down B.C.'s shrimp fishery?

Mr. Niall O'Dea (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I would clarify that it's not the role of policy to investigate. However, if a written response to the question is requested, we can provide one.

Mr. Mel Arnold: It's certainly requested, and it seems to be policy that is shutting this fishery down. It's ludicrous that there are so many precautionary principle approaches placed on this fishery when the harvesters themselves can show DFO that there is abundant biomass out there and they get no access to it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

We'll now go to Mr. Cormier for five minutes or less.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I ask my questions of our honourable witnesses in the room, I have to go back to the comments of Mr. Perkins and Mr. Small regarding small craft harbours.

Can you believe this? My colleagues at the table voted against the last budget, which included more money for small craft harbours. Now they're begging to have projects in their ridings. I hope fishers are listening to this tonight because if they—

Mr. Mel Arnold: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, can we confirm where Mr. Cormier is? To some it looks like it could be a CBSA holding cell.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1810)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, what's the point of order?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, what was the point of this comment?

The Chair: It's been dealt with, Mr. Cormier. Continue, please.

Mr. Serge Cormier: I hope fishers in their respective ridings know that since they voted against that budget, there will be no more money for small craft harbours if they take office.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Serge Cormier: I have a suggestion for members: Do like their colleagues did for housing projects and write a letter to Ministers—

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, will you please stop talking out loud? Keep it to yourself, under your breath, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I would certainly, Mr. Chair, if he would be relevant.

Mr. Serge Cormier: It's relevant, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: They should do like their colleagues did for housing projects and write a letter to Minister Leboutillier to ask for support for their projects. However, there's no way they can because they will be punished by their leader, Mr. Poilievre.

With that, let's start with some questions.

Mr. Pelletier, I just want to get some clarification regarding the Coast Guard and the money you need.

[*Translation*]

You know that we need your staff to have an earlier fishing season in our regions, before the whales arrive.

I don't want to alarm the associations or anything, but what would it mean if you didn't have that additional money? Could that compromise icebreaking operations or hovercraft operations, for example? Can you comment on that?

Mr. Mario Pelletier: I'll just comment on the fuel side. Icebreakers are the ones that consume the most. Icebreaking operations also require a lot. Without that extra money, we won't be able to put fuel in the icebreakers this winter.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Earlier, you said that the employees' pay might not be paid either. So there would be no staff on the ships.

Mr. Mario Pelletier: As for employees, it's more a question of increasing the workforce. The new ships, which will be equipped with new technologies, will require different skills. This new money would enable us to recruit the right talent today, before the new ships arrive.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Pelletier. I think the people from the associations are also very pleased with the efforts that have been made in recent years, so let's hope that things will go well this year and that we'll have this additional money.

Ms. Gibbons, people are all very happy to have received additional money for small craft harbours, but something isn't right when it comes to the allocation of those funds. It takes an enormous amount of time for some projects to get under way. I asked Adam Burns this question the last time he appeared before the committee.

Can you explain the process a little bit? For example, if a dredging project in a certain riding receives money from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, what happens then? Who authorizes the digging? It seems to take a long time. Unfortunately, some projects aren't moving forward quickly enough, which jeopardizes the safety of our fishers. Can you tell us a bit about how things are going?

Also, could you try to talk to each other between departments so that things move more quickly?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: Thank you for the question.

There's a lot of planning, at various stages. First of all, fairly general planning will be done, where we will determine whether a port needs to be completely rebuilt, for example, or whether a wharf just needs to be repaired. Once we know the amount of money to be received, we have to plan the timeline. It will depend a lot on the decisions that have been made about prioritizing projects, but we also take into consideration the status of the necessary in-depth studies, in engineering, for example. Our engineers have to be ready to tell us exactly what needs to be done.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Ms. Gibbons, permits have already been granted for certain regions, for certain channel dredgings in particular. It seems to take a huge amount of money.

I won't blame you, but it seems that the problem lies with Environment Canada. Can you confirm that? It takes a long time.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Cormier. Your time is up.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier: I would like to ask for a written response on that, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Cormier, your time has expired.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for two and a half minutes or less.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't put my timer on, so you'll let me know.

I'm going to ask you a question about our indigenous communities. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested in truth and reconciliation. There's a lot of money allocated to indigenous people, but we wonder if it gets to them, for the simple reason that here at the committee, we spend our time hearing from witnesses who deplore the fact that they don't have the means and that their skills, knowledge and science on the ground aren't being considered.

I sometimes get the impression that money isn't going to restore this kind of nation-to-nation equity relationship with indigenous peoples. Millions of dollars won't solve the problem, but rather it will involve a way of addressing the land issue with them.

Within this framework, scientists who are more inclined to the social sciences and humanities could study, particularly on sociological and psychological levels, the relationship between nations, and the relationship between indigenous peoples and government bodies.

Is that something that could be built into a budget? Could that aspect really be targeted to establish a better use of the money invested?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: Those who receive funding allocated to indigenous communities are indigenous communities. That's clear. No one else is receiving those funds.

In terms of how we work together, sometimes we give money for a fishing boat, sometimes the money goes to further foster collaboration. In the latter case, the money the communities are asking us for will be used to build their capacity to work with the department. If, for example, they want indigenous traditional knowledge to be applied, they will want to have funding to pay people in their community who will do this kind of work together with the department, whether it be fisheries management or marine ecosystem conservation, for example. This is often referred to as capacity-building funding. This is something that communities are asking us for.

In our relationships with communities, we try to focus on their interests and know what is important to them in terms of fishing and ecosystem conservation, for example. We try to meet them

where they're at and satisfy their interests, as opposed to having targets set by the department.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. I have to cut you off there. You've gone a bit over.

Ms. Barron, you have two and a half minutes or less.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair.

Witnesses, thank you again for your answers and for being here.

On March 7, I sent a letter to Minister Lebouthillier. In this letter, I was reaffirming some of the concerns of the B.C. Wildlife Federation, in particular around whirling disease. We know there have been several confirmed cases in B.C. lakes and waterways, and the BCWF, at that time, was urging a request for information on the department's plans to eradicate this parasite. They're warning that this critical fish species, which is threatened and endangered, would be completely wiped out if this problem was left unchecked. I received a response from the minister that basically redirected me to, at that time, Minister Holland.

The bigger question here is this: Is this still a problem that we should be worried about? I've seen the impacts of this disease, and they're not very nice to look at. What's being done to ensure, through the budget we're talking about today, that we don't see it being spread?

• (1820)

Ms. Annette Gibbons: I would answer in general that we work with the CFIA and with the provinces on helping to manage disease. DFO plays a part, but we're not always a central player.

I cannot give you a detailed brief on whirling disease today, but I'm happy to come back with more detail.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Can you give any updates about the continued ship-breaking happening in Union Bay that's polluting the surrounding marine ecosystem? Is anything happening with that? Is any funding being allocated to ensure that we have environmentally sound ship-breaking happening with proper procedures in place to protect our environment?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: This is an activity that touches a bunch of different departments, and the province as well. DFO plays a role. The Coast Guard plays a role. However, the core role of that activity, because most of it is on land, is really with the province.

I'm not sure about the exact name of the event, but there was an event about a month or six weeks ago where federal officials from Transport, ECCC and DFO participated in a sort of all-day session with community members expressing their views on that activity. We had officials there to answer questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barron. Your time is up. You were a bit over.

That concludes our rounds of questioning.

I want to thank Mr. Burns, Mr. O'Dea, Mr. Goodyear, Mr. Pelletier and Madam Gibbons.

Mr. Rick Perkins: We still have 10 minutes.

The Chair: We have votes to do on the supplementary estimates. We only have until 6:30.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: You can raise a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That wasn't on the agenda.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I'd like to ask for an extension of services.

The Chair: We don't have it; 6:32 is all we can get, and we have three votes to do.

Mr. Rick Perkins: First of all, you didn't check. When a member requests that, under the new rules, you're supposed to check to see if we can get additional resources.

Secondly—

The Chair: I asked that at the beginning, before I even started the meeting.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, the new rule is that a member can ask about that.

The Chair: I asked before I even started the meeting.

Mr. Rick Perkins: A member can ask anytime in the meeting for additional resources.

The Chair: Well, the answer is no.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, you don't get to rule on that. The clerk is responsible for asking.

The Chair: The clerk informed me, when I came in today, that we had to finish at 6:32—period.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Secondly, the vote isn't listed, so we have 10 minutes left to continue questioning.

The Chair: No, you don't.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, we do.

The Chair: It's right here. It says, "supplementary estimates".

Mr. Rick Perkins: I challenge the chair on that ruling.

The Chair: You can challenge who you like.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You have to conduct the vote.

Mr. Clifford Small: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're doing a vote first.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I have a point of order, Chair. I'm not sure what we're voting on. I'm not sure what the chair got challenged on.

The Chair: I got challenged on moving to the vote, I guess, on the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's correct.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins doesn't want us to vote on them.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, I want us to finish with what the agenda says.

The Chair: We only have until 6:32.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'd just like to finish with what the agenda says.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, how much time do we have?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Clerk, did you check with the central authorities on the time?

No, you didn't. It is your responsibility under the rules of the House.

The clerk has to check whether we can get additional resources. You don't get to rule on that. It's up to the clerk.

Mr. Serge Cormier: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Those are the rules, sir.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Perkins deciding what—

Mr. Rick Perkins: If you were in Ottawa, you'd know it.

Mr. Serge Cormier: I have a point of order on the floor, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: How do you know he's not in Ottawa? Somebody complained about his back picture before. He might be in his office. He could be in his hotel room.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Perkins and Mr. Small were in their car sometimes for votes.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, sorry, that never happened.

You cannot lie, Serge. I've never voted from my car. I know that Liberals like to do it regularly. I've never done that. I go to the House to vote. You should try it sometime.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Chair, can I raise a point of order?

The Chair: Yes. We have a point of order and then another point of order.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you.

The chair called the agenda of the meeting. We had witnesses brought in to discuss important issues. I would like to have gotten to my question round, but I respect the agenda set forward by the chair.

Can we have some order and get to that particular stage?

Mr. Rick Perkins: We have to check for an extension.

The Chair: We have to vote on the challenge first.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Dubois-Richard): If you vote to sustain the decision of the chair, we go to votes. If you vote nay, we defeat the challenge and continue questioning the witnesses.

● (1825)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I have a point of order. I don't have the full information to make a sound vote.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Do you want an explanation from the chair or the clerk?

The Clerk: There was a challenge to continue questioning the witnesses—

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: No, I know. It's hard to know whether to sustain the challenge or not if I don't have the full information on the process. That's the concern.

The Clerk: To sustain the decision of the chair, you vote yea.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I understand that.

The Clerk: Okay, sorry.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I'm sorry; I'm not trying to be short with you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Look, I'm not trying to be obstructionist at all. We need a vote so let's do it, but before that, because there were a lot of voices going back and forth—and maybe it's this 54-year-old brain—I'd like to hear from the chair the rationale—

Mr. Mel Arnold: The vote has been called.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Okay, but the problem is that you guys are talking over each other constantly, and some of us are trying to follow. The vote may have been called, but there has to be some civility here, guys.

The Chair: The clerk just explained to Ms. Barron—

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I understand that piece.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I'm on the same point of order as Lisa Marie. That's ridiculous.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 5; nays 4)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: We're going to the votes first.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You hadn't called the votes, so I have a quick point of order.

Has the clerk received a response yet on whether we get additional resources?

The Clerk: I'm sending it right now because I had to do the votes.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Chair, the notice of meeting that came out said that 4:30 to 5:30 was with the minister and 5:30 to 6:30 was with Department of Fisheries and Oceans. You cut this meeting off at 6:20.

The Chair: Yes, because we have to do the supplementary estimates. I read that out at the beginning. I said that we had to do supplementary estimate votes after.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It can be done at the next meeting.

The Chair: No, it can't.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Sure it can.

The Chair: We're doing it this evening.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's only because you wanted to cut it off.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: The chair's agenda and decision was sustained by the committee.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Let's move to the agenda.

The Chair: Have we heard anything back yet?

The Clerk: No.

The Chair: Okay.

There are three votes in all. Unless there's any objection, I will seek the unanimous consent of the committee to group the votes together for a decision.

Is there unanimous consent to proceed this way?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Okay, we'll go by each vote then.

I will now put the question on each vote separately.

Shall vote 1b under Department of Fisheries and Oceans carry or not carry?

Mr. Rick Perkins: No.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could you tell us what the implications are? What is the monetary amount? Do you have a brief?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Is there a full motion?

The Chair: I don't have any amounts.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I'm sorry; what is the title? What is the area of the department we're voting on to approve?

The Chair: These are the supplementary estimates (B), 2024-25.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: The deputy could give us that. What is that money for? I want to know before we vote for it or against it. Can you give me a general idea?

Ms. Annette Gibbons: We're just looking for the—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I want to know what the money is for so that we'll know who's voting against it and who's voting for it.

The Chair: We'll suspend for a moment.

• (1830) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1830)

The Chair: All right, shall vote—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's 6:32, so I would say the meeting is over.

The Chair: No, it's not.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It is 6:32. You said the meeting only goes until 6:32 so it's over.

The Chair: You asked the clerk to see if there was additional time and she found additional time.

Mr. Rick Perkins: She didn't respond before 6:32, so I call the meeting over.

The Chair: Yes, she did.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, she didn't.

The Chair: She told me before I turned on the mic.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, she didn't.

The Chair: Yes, she did. She showed it to me.

Mr. Rick Perkins: She might have told you. She didn't tell me. She didn't tell the committee.

The Chair: You should be listening instead of talking.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You didn't say anything on the mic. Just because you have private conversations.... It's 6:32.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Chair, on a point of order, if we have a motion to adjourn and we don't agree, we'll have to go to a vote. Is that right?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Is Mr. Perkins moving that we adjourn before the questions are answered and before the department gets the money that everybody at this table was looking and asking for? I just want to know.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I move to adjourn.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay. I don't agree with it.

The Chair: All right. The clerk will do the vote.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I request a recorded vote. I want to hear from the department and vote on the money that everybody was looking for.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Now we'll get to the votes on the money the department is looking for.

The Chair: There you go.

Mr. Rick Perkins: How much extra time do we have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I'll let you know when I'm finished. How's that?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Okay.

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$90,469,589

Vote 5b—Capital expenditures.....\$109,070,076

Vote 10b—Grants and contributions.....\$331,601,773

(Votes 1b, 5b and 10b agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

• (1835)

Mr. Rick Perkins: We voted against your massive overspending.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: You were looking for money for your riding.

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates (B), 2024-2025, votes 1b, 5b and 10b under Department of Fisheries and Oceans to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Next Monday we will resume our study of the review of the Fisheries Act.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Actually, no, we have an extra hour apparently, so we're going to continue—

The Chair: Is the committee in agreement to adjourn the meeting?

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, there isn't. We have an extra hour, according to you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to ask the officials—

The Chair: No, I said that we needed enough time for this, not an extra hour.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's not my motion.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: No.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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