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CANADA

STRENGTHENING THE REGULATION OF RECREATIONAL BOATING

**Report of the Standing Committee on Transport,
Infrastructure and Communities**

Peter Schiefke, Chair

**MARCH 2026
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

has the honour to present its

EIGHTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

In October and November 2024, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (the committee) undertook a study on the regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways. Witnesses included academics as well as representatives from municipal authorities, environmental groups, the boating industry, and law enforcement.

Many witnesses focused on the environmental impacts of navigation, particularly in terms of shoreline erosion, and the complex regulatory processes that municipalities face in their efforts to mitigate these impacts in their jurisdiction. The committee heard recommendations on simplifying this process, as well as on educational efforts to promote a sustainable shared use of waterways that would also provide local economic benefits.

Some witnesses also addressed other issues such as stricter boating licence requirements, the effects of high taxes on the boating industry and related economic impacts, and the recent loss of a safe disposal program for expired marine flares. The committee also heard conflicting points of view on the issue of mandatory requirements for wearing personal floatation devices.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada delegate to municipalities the power to regulate recreational boating on closed-circuit bodies of water according to their own needs and local realities.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada streamline and simplify the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORR) process to ensure that an applicant undertaking the procedure can reasonably expect that a regulation will come into force in time for the next boating season.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada support the development of scientific knowledge related to navigation in order to protect biodiversity and the quality of our waterways.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada make regulations requiring the mandatory wearing of PFDs (personal flotation devices) for the types of watercraft considered most at risk, based on existing data.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada modernize the process for obtaining Pleasure Craft Operator Cards (PCOC) by including an environmental component in the theoretical examination to ensure that boaters are aware of the potential impacts of their behavior.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada modernize the process for obtaining Pleasure Craft Operator Cards (PCOC) so that its nature and complexity vary according to the size and power of the watercraft, as well as introducing a mandatory, in person, practical boating exam for all operators.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada reinstate a program for the collection and disposal of expired distress flares.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada provide greater support for initiatives promoting responsible boating and civic mindedness.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada introduce measures to adequately identify vessel ownership to reduce instances of abandoned and wrecked vessels and facilitate the proper disposal of vessels.



STRENGTHENING THE REGULATION OF RECREATIONAL BOATING

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a steep rise in recreational boating on Canada's waterways, exacerbating existing tensions between various users, and property owners. Municipalities may struggle to regulate solutions to these tensions, due to the shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments, and to existing regulatory schemes.

On 18 September 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (the committee) adopted the following [motion](#):¹

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways; that the study include at least eight hours of testimony over four meetings of the committee; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

From 29 October 2024 to 7 November 2024, the committee held four meetings on this topic. It heard from 25 witnesses and received three briefs.

Legislative and Regulatory Context

Jurisdiction

Under the [Constitution Act, 1867](#), the federal government has the authority to legislate in the areas set out in section 91, while the provincial governments have legislative authority in those set out in section 92. However, municipalities can make by-laws only in the fields of jurisdiction delegated to them by the provinces. In Quebec, for example, this delegation

1 As this report was not completed at the time the 44th Parliament was dissolved on 23 March 2025, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities adopted a [motion](#), on 18 September 2025, to undertake a study of regulation of recreational boating on Canada's waterways, and to consider the evidence and documentation received during the previous Parliament. No additional evidence was gathered following the committee's study during the 44th Parliament.



is done through the [Municipal Powers Act](#), which gives a “local municipality” jurisdiction over “nuisances.”²

Under section 91(10) of the [Constitution Act, 1867](#), the Parliament of Canada has exclusive legislative authority over “Navigation and Shipping.” The [Canada Shipping Act, 2001](#) (CSA 2001) is the key federal legislation governing the safety of marine transportation and recreational boating, and the protection of the marine environment. It applies to all Canadian vessels operating in Canadian waters, from canoes and kayaks to cruise ships and oil tankers. The Minister of Transport is responsible for enforcing the CSA 2001.

Given federal jurisdiction over shipping, the navigation (and mooring) of pleasure boats cannot be regulated by a provincial or municipal authority. That said, some municipalities may use municipal noise by-laws to try to limit the noise caused by pleasure boats. In so doing, local authorities must pay close attention to the limits of their jurisdiction. As the committee heard during its study, these jurisdictional circumstances can complicate and slow a municipality’s efforts to regulate certain behaviours on the water.³

Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations

Under section 4 of the [Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations](#) (SOR/2008-120) (VORR), local authorities can apply to the federal government to impose restrictions on navigation in certain waters. These restrictions can, for example, prohibit the operation of any vessel or motorized vessel in certain waters, impose speed limits or even prohibit sporting or recreational activities outside of certain authorized times. Prior to 2025, the restrictions in force were indicated in the schedules to the VORR, and the authorities responsible for enforcing them were also set out, in section 16 of the VORR. In addition, universal restrictions are set out in section 2(7)(a) of the VORR. One such restriction is that vessels are prohibited from exceeding a speed of 10 km/h within 30 metres or less of the shore in the waters of certain provinces.⁴

2 [Municipal Powers Act](#), CQLR c C-47.1, s. 4.

3 Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (TRAN), *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session: [Benjamin Furtado](#), Director, Urban Planning and Environment, Municipalité de Lac-Simon (Lac-Simon); [Ariane Orjikh](#), General Manager, Memphremagog Conservation Inc.; [André Bélanger](#), General Manager, Fondation Rivières; [Constance Ramacieri](#); President, Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d’eau (FQDLC); [Claude Sicard](#), Administrator, FQDLC; [Denise Cloutier](#), Vice-President, Coalition Navigation; and [Sarrah Storey](#), Mayor, Village of Fraser Lake.

4 The application of this restriction in Ontario was mentioned by [Sgt. Dave Moffatt](#), Provincial Marine Coordinator, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

The process for local authorities to apply for new or amended restrictions under the VORR is described in the [Local Authorities' Guide](#). Note that only local authorities can apply, not citizens' groups. The process includes the following six steps:

- a) Preliminary assessment of the problem
- b) Preparing and submitting a formal request for regulation
- c) Review of the application by Transport Canada
- d) Preparing a Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement
- e) Publication in the *Canada Gazette*
- f) Putting the restriction in place

In a Transport Canada [intentions paper](#) published in 2023 for consultations on modernizing the VORR, the department acknowledged that the process may take up to four years or more and noted, “[o]ne or two boating seasons can often pass before a requested restriction comes into effect.” Transport Canada then stated that “we need to modernize” the process for requesting and implementing restrictions in order to simplify the first and shorten the time required for the second. Several witnesses, particularly those representing municipalities or citizens' groups, echoed this point of view that the process is too long and cumbersome.⁵

In June 2023, the CSA 2001 was amended by the [Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023](#). Under these amendments, the Minister of Transport can make orders to suspend or modify the operation of regulations regulating or prohibiting the navigation, anchoring, mooring or berthing of vessels for the purposes of promoting the safe and efficient navigation of vessels and protecting the public interest and the environment. The Minister may also make orders respecting the safety of persons on Canadian waters for the purpose of sporting, recreational or public events or activities. Thus, the Minister of Transport may, for example, make an order to implement new restrictions on the operation of vessels that are not currently set out in the VORR. [According to Transport Canada](#), this “allows pressing issues to be addressed immediately before going through the full regulatory process.” Such orders are valid for a maximum of two years.

5 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Bélanger](#) (Fondation Rivières); [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon); [Raynald Collard](#), Public Relations, Media and Press Officer, Association des riverains et amis du Richelieu (ARAR); [Ramacieri](#) (FQDLC); and [Laurence Renaud-Langevin](#), General Manager, Massawippi Blue.



In addition, the Minister of Transport may now use incorporation by reference in order to amend the schedules to the VORR (where the restrictions are set out).⁶ [According to Transport Canada](#), this would enable the Minister to amend or add restrictions on the operation of vessels without having to go through the regulatory process. However, Transport Canada pointed out the following:

Transport Canada officials would only add a new restriction to the VORR after receiving a municipal restriction request. This includes a resolution from the town or municipality and after their consideration and consultation with local members of the public and Indigenous communities.⁷

The VORR were amended on 30 July 2025 to repeal the regulation’s schedules and move the restrictions set out in them to a Transport Publication, which would be incorporated by reference into the VORR. The amendments also repealed section 16 of the VORR, which contained the list of authorities empowered to enforce the VORR in favour of using section 135 of the CSA 2001 to “designate all enforcement officers authorized to ensure compliance of the VORR.”⁸ Although these amendments were enacted after the committee’s study, they are substantially identical to the [regulatory proposal](#) that was published in Part I of the *Canada Gazette* on 14 September 2024 and witnesses would therefore have been aware of them. Indeed, [Marie-France MacKinnon](#), Executive Director of National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada, and [Constance Ramacieri](#), President of the Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d’eau, both explicitly referred to the proposed amendments in their testimony.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF NAVIGATION

While issues relating to the regulation of recreational watercraft are longstanding, several witnesses reported a significant increase in the use of pleasure craft during the

6 Incorporation by reference is a mechanism that enables the contents of a document to be incorporated into a regulation. “Documents incorporated by reference have the same force as the regulation into which they are incorporated.” [Regulations Amending the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations](#), in the *Canada Gazette*, Part I, 14 September 2024.

7 Section 4 of the *Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations* (VORR) states that local authorities seeking to subject waters to a restriction other than what is already set out in the VORR “shall undertake public consultations with parties that would be affected by the proposed restriction.”

8 [Regulations Amending the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations](#): SOR/2025-158.

COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ This exacerbated or highlighted ongoing tensions between various users of lakes and rivers. Although these can include behavioural issues such as boaters throwing garbage or relieving themselves in the water,¹⁰ much more focus was placed on the environmental impacts caused by navigation.

Some witnesses pointed to the risk of introducing aquatic invasive species.¹¹ Several others took the view that motorboats generally reduce water quality, including for sources of drinking water, not only through greenhouse gas emissions, but by stirring up the bottom or shoreline of the lake or river.¹²

Several studies were referred to, notably one undertaken by the Université Laval, which found that sediments in the bottom of water less than seven metres deep can be stirred up by sports,¹³ and one commissioned by Transport Canada in 2018, which showed that boat traffic intensity can increase water turbidity and phosphorous levels, with propellers disrupting sediment up to nine metres deep.¹⁴ [Laurence Renaud-Langevin](#), General Manager of Massawippi Blue, explained that high phosphorous levels can accelerate the eutrophication, or aging,¹⁵ of waterways. [Sara Mercier-Blais](#), Research Associate at the Université du Québec à Montréal, who was appearing as an individual, explained that the effect is cumulative: “If it only happened for one weekend per summer, there would be no effect on the environment. You start to see more impacts when it happens over and over again. In that case, the environment is truly changed, which can obviously have consequences.”

9 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Marie-France MacKinnon](#), Executive Director, National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada (NMMAC); [Ramacieri](#) (FQDLC); [Jesse Vermaire](#), Associate Professor, Carleton University (as an individual); [Brad Thomson](#) General Manager, MacDonald Turkey Point Marina Inc., [Colin Rennie](#), Professor, University of Ottawa (as an individual); and [Sgt. Moffatt](#) (OPP).

10 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon).

11 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Rick Layzell](#), Chief Executive Officer of Boating Ontario Association (BOA); [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon); [Sonia Daoust](#), General Manager, Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska (OBV Yamaska); and [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation).

12 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon); [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); [Daoust](#) (OBV Yamaska); [Ramacieri](#) (FQDLC); and [Sicard](#) (FQDLC).

13 Raymond and Galvez-Cloutier, *Impact de la Navigation en Milieu Lacustre – Étude sur la remise en suspension des sédiments : Cas du Lac Masson et du Lac des sables*, Université Laval, 2015 (in French only), cited by: TRAN, *Evidence*, [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.).

14 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue).

15 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Daoust](#) (OBV Yamaska).



[Denise Cloutier](#), Vice-President of Coalition Navigation, explained to the committee that a given lake’s “carrying capacity,” the maximum number of boats it is capable of sustaining at, can be determined through factors such as the lake’s size and depth, and the different types of watercraft navigating on it. [Ms. Ramacieri](#) added that the purpose of this metric is to determine the environment’s capacity to heal itself from one boating season to the next and return to its natural state: “If the environment is under too much pressure—too many boats, too much gas, too much phosphorus—the life environment dies.” [Sarra Storey](#), Mayor of the Village of Fraser Lake, agreed that environmental protection should be balanced with economic development, to ensure that recreational uses of lakes are sustainable.

The issue of shoreline erosion caused by waves from recreational boating was also highlighted by several witnesses,¹⁶ whereas shoreline erosion by commercial shipping was the focus of a report published by the committee in 2023.¹⁷ [Colin Rennie](#), Professor at the University of Ottawa who appeared as an individual, explained that just as large ships can cause shoreline erosion, smaller recreational boats can do so as well, depending on the power of the waves and the nature of the bank itself. As with a general impact on water quality, [he](#) explained that while a single wave produced by a pleasure craft is too small to measurably cause a shoreline to recede, the cumulative impact over years is clearly viewed through satellite imagery.

Some witnesses stressed that erosion affects not only natural shorelines, but also built infrastructure, such as docks, boat launches, and dams. This can have a negative impact on local property values, which in turn can reduce a municipality’s ability to raise money through property taxes.¹⁸ Others added that much of Canada’s outdoor infrastructure, such as marinas, boat ramps, and public access points, are already in dire need of upgrades and modernisation to ensure safe continued use and promote outdoor recreation and tourism, without the added strain caused by oversized waves.¹⁹

16 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon); [Chantal Crête](#), Councillor, Municipalité de Lac-Simon (Lac-Simon); [Daoust](#) (OBV Yamaska); [Collard](#) (ARAR); [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue); [Bélanger](#) (Fondation Rivières); [Rennie](#) (as an individual); [Vermaire](#) (as an individual); [Thomson](#) (MacDonald Turkey Point Marina Inc.); and [Sarah Mercier-Blais](#), Research Associate, Université du Québec à Montréal (as an individual).

17 TRAN, *Reducing the Impact of Commercial Shipping on Shoreline Erosion in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Corridor*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, April 2023.

18 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); [Ramacieri](#) (FQDLC); and [Collard](#) (ARAR).

19 TRAN, *Evidence*: [MacKinnon](#) (NMMAC); [Ron Bankes](#), Port Rowan Harbour Committee (Port Rowan HC); and [Amy Martin](#), Mayor, Norfolk County.

[Ms. Mercier-Blais](#) referenced a study that she undertook, which showed that oversized waves caused by sports can result in shoreline erosion even if the vessel creating them is as far as 300 meters from shore. Several witnesses pointed to the issue of wakeboats, which are specifically designed to cause large waves.²⁰ Although the variety of factors at play would normally call for regulations to be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the type of shoreline and environment of a particular body of water, [Ms. Mercier-Blais](#) stated that she was in favour of simplified, generalised standards based on the 300 metre distance, in the interest of applying regulations more broadly to protect a larger number of bodies of water from environmental degradation.

The committee also heard that the larger waves produced by increasing numbers of wakeboats travelling at high speeds can cause strain, not to mention safety concerns, with other users of the waterways, notably children or kayak and paddleboard users.²¹

CHALLENGES TO REGULATION

[Sgt. Dave Moffatt](#), Provincial Marine Coordinator with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), pointed out that enforcing a 300-metre distance from the shoreline would be very difficult. Not only can enforcement officers not be on location at all times, but even if they were to be on scene, it can be difficult to measure a distance on a lake without clear demarcations. [Ms. Mercier-Blais](#) acknowledged this difficulty but suggested that posting signs onsite could help raise awareness of the restriction. [Sgt. Moffatt](#) expressed the view that the majority of boaters generally do try to follow regulations and simply want to enjoy being on the water. As such, [he](#) favoured an approach based on educating boaters about shared waterways, and “on being good mariners.”

As an example of this approach, [Ms. Renaud-Langevin](#), mentioned Transport Canada’s Intelligent Boating project, which provided funding for active education efforts on Lake Massawippi, offering information on “how to behave on the lake, regardless of the type of vessel used,” as well as for buoys, navigation corridors, and an interactive map.

[Dr. Jesse Vermaire](#), Associate Professor at Carleton University who appeared as an individual, similarly indicated that during a study conducted on the Ottawa River, he found that recreational boaters were generally respectful of no-wake zones posted near marinas. Meanwhile, [Ms. MacKinnon](#) stressed that the boating industry has been

20 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Furtado](#) (Lac-Simon); [Rennie](#) (as an individual); [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); [Sicard](#) (FQDLC); [Mercier-Blais](#) (as an individual); [Crête](#) (Lac-Simon); and [Daoust](#) (OBV Yamaska).

21 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Crête](#) (Lac-Simon); [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); and [Bélanger](#) (Fondation Rivières).



insufficiently consulted on the issue of wakeboats, despite being ready and willing to collaborate on the question of wave sizes and to promote education to ensure harmonious use of waterways.

[André Bélanger](#), General Manager of Fondation Rivières, however, disagreed with the premise of an approach solely based on education. In his view, “[c]onflicts arise because certain uses aren’t compatible.” He suggested that, while education does indeed help ensure that “people of good will” get along on shared waterways, regulations are nevertheless needed to address the behaviour of those “who don't want to listen to reason, who believe that the body of water belongs to them and who don't listen to recommendations.”

As previously mentioned, many witnesses pointed to the complexity of the process for municipalities to request restrictions through the VORR. Some pointed to years-long procedural hurdles.²² [Ms. Ramacieri](#) added that a municipality wanting to amend regulations across 25 lakes in its jurisdiction would need to file 25 separate applications with Transport Canada.

As such, the committee heard recommendations not only for the process to be simplified, but also for a national, generalised restriction on sports that cause oversized waves taking place less than 300 metres from shore. As an examples of such a restriction, several witnesses pointed to recent regulations imposed by the States of Vermont and Maine, either limiting wakeboarding to specific lakes, or establishing minimum distances from shore. It was noted that the regulations established in Vermont were partly based on studies undertaken in Quebec.²³

[Mayor Storey](#) also raised the issue of unmarked, hidden reefs that are increasingly becoming a safety concern due to lower water levels caused by drought. She explained that the Village of Fraser Lake was unable to install water hazard buoys due to liability concerns and was instead forced to pass a resolution calling upon the Government of Canada to do so.

[Ms. Mercier-Blais](#) and [Ms. Ramacieri](#) were clear in their view that any regulatory reform should take into consideration the effect that boats have on the environment.

22 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Collard](#) (ARAR); [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue); and [Bélanger](#) (Fondation Rivières).

23 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); [Ramacieri](#) (FQDLC); [Sicard](#) (FQDLC); and [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue).

BOATING LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

A [Pleasure Craft Operator Card](#) (PCOC) is one way for boaters to demonstrate proof of competency to operate a boat with a motor for recreational purposes. Some witnesses pointed to this proof of competency process as a way of strengthening the knowledge base of Canadian recreational boaters.

Several witnesses raised concerns with the ease with which a PCOC can be obtained online. [Ms. Cloutier](#) suggested that the process could take as little as four hours, while [Ariane Orjikh](#), General Manager of Memphremagog Conservation Inc., questioned whether it was even possible to fail the test. Meanwhile, [Sgt. Moffatt](#) stressed the complexity of driving a boat and proposed more in-depth training to the process of obtaining a PCOC, in line with obtaining a motor vehicle driver's licence: "[B]ecause what I'm seeing out there right now is not adequate."

Witnesses presented suggestions such as including practical training and testing, beyond the current written component,²⁴ a requirement for PCOCs to be renewed regularly instead of being valid for life as is currently the case,²⁵ class-specific PCOCs for different types of recreational vessels,²⁶ as well as requiring a PCOC to rent a boat or jet ski. On the last point, rental businesses are currently empowered to provide temporary licences to renters.²⁷ [Ms. Renaud-Langevin](#) even suggested that boaters should need to demonstrate certain skills and local knowledge before being allowed to operate on a specific body of water.

Finally, some witnesses recommended incorporating an environmental component to the PCOC testing process, to ensure that boaters are aware of the potential environmental impacts of navigation.²⁸

PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICES

The committee heard conflicting recommendations from two witnesses on the issue of mandatory personal floatation devices (PFDs). [Sgt. Moffatt](#) was clear that the Ontario

24 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); and [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue).

25 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); and [Mayor Storey](#) (Fraser Lake).

26 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Renaud-Langevin](#) (Massawippi Blue).

27 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Margaret Creighton](#), Director, Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association (Port Dover WPA).

28 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Orjikh](#) (Memphremagog Conservation Inc.); [Cloutier](#) (Coalition Navigation); and [André Philippe Hébert](#), Director and Engineering Advisor, Coalition Navigation.



Provincial Police, supported by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, are in favour of mandatory PFDs for boaters on board vessels of six metres and less. [He](#) viewed the six-metre threshold as a more “realistic” target than the blanket requirement he would otherwise prefer, since 88% of fatalities in Ontario related to boaters not wearing PFDs take place on vessels of this size.

[Rick Layzell](#), Chief Executive Officer of Boating Ontario Association, however, recommended a comprehensive survey of data collected from the Canadian Coast Guard and police forces across the country. The current studies, he argued, around the length of vessels involved in fatalities is inconclusive as powerboats are typically treated as a single block, with canoes and kayaks showing a higher incidence rate. As such, [he](#) told the committee that the boating industry supports mandatory PFDs for human-powered vessels, for children under twelve years old while a vessel is under way, on personal watercraft, and for persons being towed. Further details, and situations during which PFDs should not be mandatory are the topic of ongoing discussions between Transport Canada and other stakeholders. This position was echoed by a [brief](#) submitted by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), which provided the results of a survey of its members. The OFAH expressed its opposition to a blanket requirement for PFDs in all situations, arguing that other risk factors should be considered, and pointing to non-regulatory strategies and education initiatives as alternative ways forward.

[Sgt. Moffatt](#), on the other hand, stressed that data collected in Ontario shows clearly that vessel size is more indicative of higher fatality risks than other factors, such the age of a boater, since no more than 2% of fatalities are children under the age of 14. He did also indicate that children are more likely to wear PFDs than adults.

FLARE RECYCLING

Many witnesses strongly recommended that the Government of Canada reinstate a program that, prior to 2024, provided funding for the recovery and safe disposal of marine pyrotechnic flares. The recovery and disposal were arranged by [CanBoat](#), a national, non-profit boating organization operated by Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons (CPS).

Boaters are required, under the [Small Vessel Regulations](#) (SOR/2010-91) to carry flares on board their vessels, depending on the size of the vessel, the size of the waterway, and the vessel’s expected proximity to land, as a means of signaling distress. Larger vessels may be required to carry up to twelve such devices at a time, while the regulation also states that a flare expires four years after its manufacture date.

Transport Canada has, since 9 November 2021, accepted the use of electronic visual distress signals on board pleasure craft instead of pyrotechnic ones. However, [Brad Thomson](#), General Manager of MacDonald Turkey Point Marina Inc., indicated that not all boaters are aware of this, particularly since Transport Canada's own [Safe Boating Guide](#) dates back to 2019, before this policy change took effect.

As such, the committee heard that expired pyrotechnic flares are piling up without safe disposal options. [John Gullick](#), Manager, Government and Special Operations with CPS, explained that the collection and disposal program had been run nationally since 2000, collecting over 200,000 expired flares brought in by boaters. The program was run in conjunction with CIL Orion Explosives, which took charge of the disposal and funded 40% of the costs, which on average has been \$2.50 per flare, in addition to \$1.00 - \$1.50 for shipping. [He](#) added that other options that had previously been available, such as disposal through municipal waste management programs, with the police, or fire departments, have been discontinued in recent years.

Without access to safe disposal methods, the committee heard that some boaters are resorting to setting off expired flares illegally, disposing of them overboard or in landfills, leaving them at marinas, or simply leaving them in their garage or basement. All of these are dangerous, and risk not only potential environmental damage, but also fires or explosions.²⁹ [Sgt. Moffatt](#) stressed that, should the flare disposal program be reinstated, more disposal sites would be needed across the country to ensure access in more remote regions, such as across northern Ontario.

THE IMPACTS OF TAXES ON THE BOATING INDUSTRY

The committee heard from several witnesses that high taxes were having a negative impact on the boating sector, both through reduced sales and through a reduced use of recreational vessels since the COVID-19 pandemic increase.

In particular, some witnesses referred to the [Select Luxury Items Tax Act](#)³⁰ and its application to the purchase or import of vessels with a value above \$250,000. [Mr. Thomson](#) and [Ms. MacKinnon](#) argued that this threshold was much too low, resulting in a higher impact on middle class Canadians than rich yacht-owners. [Mr. Layzell](#) agreed with this position, stating that "\$250,000 does not buy a luxury yacht. It buys a small

29 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Bankes](#) (Port Rowan HC); [Sgt. Moffatt](#) (OPP); [Creighton](#) (Port Dover WPA); and [John Gullick](#) Manager, Government and Special Operations, Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons.

30 Since this testimony was heard, the Government of Canada has [announced](#) that the luxury tax would no longer be payable on subject aircraft and subject vessels, as of 5 November 2025.



family cruiser or pontoon boat in our world now, for families' alternatives to cottages and what have you.”

According to [Mr. Layzell](#) and [Ms. MacKinnon](#), fewer Canadians were buying larger boats in Canada, preferring to purchase in the United States and leave them there, resulting in much lower luxury tax revenue than initially projected by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In addition to the loss to manufacturers and dealers, they explained that this has a significant economic impact on a wide-range of related jobs: “[T]he people who haul boats, clean boats, do prepurchase prep work, winterize boats and store boats”³¹ as well as tourism-related jobs such as “local restaurants, marinas, shops and everything that's related.”³²

[Mr. Thomson](#) also expressed frustration with the consumer carbon price (the “carbon tax”),³³ which he indicating was creating a disincentive for boaters to travel beyond their local waters: “Instead of coming to the fuel dock every Saturday or Sunday afternoon, we're seeing them come once a month now, and they're only going up the beach and anchoring.” [Ron Bankes](#), from the Port Rowan Harbour Committee, explained that higher costs to businesses, including from the carbon tax, would necessarily be passed on to the consumer, while [Ms. MacKinnon](#) was of the view that “[a]ny extra tax is hurting the industry.” Although she couldn’t speak to its impact on the boating industry, [Amy Martin](#), Mayor of Norfolk County, confirmed that the price on carbon was expected to cost her county nearly \$1 million in municipal operations by 2030.

31 TRAN, *Evidence*: [Layzell](#) (BOA).

32 TRAN, *Evidence*: [MacKinnon](#) (NMMAC).

33 Since this testimony was heard, the Government of Canada has [removed the consumer carbon price](#), effective 1 April 2025.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Boating Ontario Association Rick Layzell, Chief Executive Officer	2024/10/29	134
Memphremagog Conservation Inc. Ariane Orjikh, General Manager	2024/10/29	134
Municipalité de Lac-Simon Chantal Crête, Councillor Benjamin Furtado, Director, Urban Planning and Environment Jocelyn Martel, Councillor	2024/10/29	134
National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada Marie-France MacKinnon, Executive Director	2024/10/29	134
Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska Sonia Daoust, General Manager	2024/10/29	134
Port Rowan Harbour Committee Ron Bankes	2024/10/29	134
Association des riverains et amis du Richelieu Raynald Collard, Public Relations, Media and Press Officer	2024/10/31	135
Coalition Navigation Denise Cloutier, Vice-President André Philippe Hébert, Director and Engineering Advisor	2024/10/31	135

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau Constance Ramacieri, President Claude Sicard, Administrator	2024/10/31	135
Massawippi Blue Laurence Renaud-Langevin, General Manager	2024/10/31	135
Village of Fraser Lake Sarrah Storey, Mayor	2024/10/31	135
As an individual Colin Rennie, Professor, University of Ottawa Jesse Vermaire, Associate Professor, Carleton University	2024/11/05	136
Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons John Gullick, Manager, Government and Special Programs	2024/11/05	136
Fondation Rivières André Bélanger, General Manager Coralie Massey-Cantin, Advisor, Philanthropic Development	2024/11/05	136
MacDonald Turkey Point Marina Inc. Brad Thomson, General Manager	2024/11/05	136
As an individual Sara Mercier-Blais, Research Associate, Université du Québec à Montréal	2024/11/07	137
Norfolk County Amy Martin, Mayor	2024/11/07	137
Ontario Provincial Police Dave Moffatt, Provincial Marine Coordinator	2024/11/07	137
Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association Margaret Creighton, Director	2024/11/07	137

APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

44th Parliament – 1st Session

MacDonald Turkey Point Marina Inc.

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

Port Dover Waterfront Preservation Association

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 12 and 20](#)) from the 45th Parliament, 1st Session and ([Meetings Nos. 134, 135, 136 and 137](#)) from the 44th Parliament, 1st Session is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Schiefke
Chair

CPC Supplementary Report - Regulation of Recreational Boating on Canada's Waterways
Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

During the recreational boating study, numerous witnesses testified that high taxes and overregulation were stifling growth in Canada's boating and tourism industries. Therefore, Conservatives call upon the government to eliminate the Clean Fuel Standards tax and the industrial carbon tax.

Supplementary Opinion Report on Strengthening of recreational boating on Canada's waterways

Hereby, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament Xavier Barsalou-Duval intends to table a supplementary report to the report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (TRAN), adopted on February 26, 2026. The Bloc Québécois supports the conclusions of the report but believes that the final recommendations remain too timid and do not fully reflect the legislator's intent to enact legislation on this important issue.

Once again, the Bloc Québécois deplores the adoption of superficial measures at the expense of genuine, structural solutions. The Bloc Québécois therefore proposes the following additional recommendations:

- That the Government of Canada direct Transport Canada to develop a basic regulatory framework governing the use of waterways for recreational boating, which would apply by default to all bodies of water for which no specific regulations exist;
- That the Government of Canada establish a formula to determine the carrying capacity of waterways based on their bathymetry, with a view to boating safety, water quality, and biodiversity preservation, and that it develop a strategy for its implementation;
- That the Government of Canada instruct Transport Canada to set guidelines on the use of vessels, particularly according to their size and power, and that retailers be required to inform buyers of the applicable restrictions for the vessels they purchase;
- That the Government of Canada share in the financial costs associated with the implementation of new regulations, notably those concerning signage.

