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Chair

Mr. Scott Simms

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, otherwise known as FOPO, or SCOFO, or whichever acronym you wish to use on this given day.

We are continuing our study into marine protected areas. I won't go into details about the motion. We'll get to our guests.

We have one witness here in the committee room. We have two video conferences, one from British Columbia and another from Australia. We thank you so very much.

We're going to start with Dr. Rodolphe Devillers, professor, department of geography, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

What we'll do, folks, is have our 10 minutes or less as your opening remarks, and then we'll get into the rounds of questioning from the members of Parliament around the table.

Dr. Devillers, you have 10 minutes or less.

Professor Rodolphe Devillers (Professor, Department of Geography, Memorial University of Newfoundland, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee for the invitation to contribute to your study on the Oceans Act's marine protected areas. My name is Rodolphe Devillers and I am professor of geography at Memorial University. I have been a scientist for about 20 years, specializing in geographic methods that can help understand and manage our oceans. One part of my expertise is the design of marine protected area networks, making me one of very few academic experts in this field in Canada.

I have worked in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for over 10 years. I am involved in the MPA network design in the Newfoundland region, and I led the technical team that conducted the analyses for the design of the MPA network in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

Several Canadian marine scientists, including doctors Natalie Ban, Isabelle Côté, Daniel Pauly, and Boris Worm, have already made their statements to this committee and have clearly demonstrated that MPAs, when designed correctly, are known to be very effective tools to protect our oceans. The past 20 years of scientific research confirmed the benefits MPAs can provide to the protection of marine ecosystems, but also people and the economy.

Working for over a decade in a province that suffered dramatic economic and social crises largely due to overfishing, Newfoundland, I do strongly believe in the key contribution MPAs make to support healthy oceans and their sustainable use. When talking about MPAs, I use the definition provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN, the only internationally recognized definition for MPAs and the one that will be used by the United Nations to assess Canada's progress towards the Aichi target 11. I assume this is also the one supported by this committee, as it was adopted by vote by all IUCN members including Canada at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008 and has been used in many DFO documents.

I am thrilled by the energy this government is putting in to meet Aichi target 11. From the mandate letter of Prime Minister Trudeau to Minister LeBlanc, to the ENVI committee report released in March, to the position taken by Canada at the United Nations ocean conference last week, Canada is now moving in the right direction. As a scientist, however, I feel I have a duty to warn you that, if Oceans Act MPAs keep having low levels of protection, the upcoming Canadian MPA network is unlikely to bring the benefits the government and Canadians expect.

Many scientific studies have documented reasons why MPAs can fail to provide expected benefits. Those reasons include not placing them at the right locations to avoid sites of higher economic interest, making them too small, providing levels of protection that are too low, and also failing to review MPAs when new scientific evidence is made available.

All of those issues apply to Canada Oceans Act MPAs and greatly impact their ability to be effective. Bolder actions will be rapidly required to create an effective MPA network. For this reason, 15 of the most respected Canadian marine scientists, including me, sent a letter yesterday to ministers LeBlanc and McKenna summarizing our concerns and calling for action.

We made four key recommendations. The first one was that the Oceans Act be amended to include minimum protection levels for MPAs, similar to terrestrial parks, such that activities known to impact marine ecosystems are excluded from MPAs and from other effective area-based conservation measures. The second recommendation was that DFO restructure the way it integrates science advice to require a systematic scientific assessment of proposed areas and management plans before new MPAs are established.

The third recommendation was that the government be more open and transparent about the effectiveness of existing MPAs, the ongoing MPA network planning process, and how scientific data are being incorporated to evaluate different conservation options. The last recommendation was that DFO acknowledge that the 10% Aichi target is an interim measure and set broader and more effective conservation targets beyond 2020, including a mechanism to allow for adaptive management of existing Oceans Act MPAs.

I have in the past decade been involved in a number of processes related to MPA designation, and I would like to focus the rest of my testimony on the role science plays in the Oceans Act MPA decision process. DFO science has some of the most brilliant marine scientists, I know. While this government does not muzzle its scientists anymore, I would argue that it too often fails to listen to their advice, or even worse, it does not request such advice.

I will focus on some key issues that I see.

● (0850)

First, DFO science has gaps in terms of expertise. While strong on fisheries science, there is to my knowledge no single research scientist at DFO with expertise in socio-economic questions or conservation planning, expertise that other similar international agencies, such as NOAA in the U.S., CEFAS in the U.K., and Ifremer in France, have developed in the past decade. Such science is critically important to support policy in marine conservation, but also for sustainable fisheries management. I recommend DFO science diversify its current expertise by hiring research scientists specialized in those fields. One of the negative outcomes of this gap in expertise for the MPA design process is a lack of peer review of socio-economic data that would be similar to the one done with biological data.

Second, the role of science is currently compartmentalized to specific stages of the MPA network planning, resulting in MPAs that have been at some point informed by science but may not be scientifically sound at the end of the process. Let me take as an example the Laurentian Channel MPA that is to be announced in the next few weeks, or actually it's going to be next week. My research group has studied the past 10 years that led to this MPA and discovered that science played little role beyond the initial identification of the area. Changes to the AOI, the area of interest, boundary that resulted from stakeholder consultations have been characterized by a complete absence of any scientific confirmation that those changes would not compromise the ability of the MPA to meet its conservation objectives.

We found that changes made to boundaries in response to fisheries industry requests resulted in up to 43% of species identified as conservation priorities being now left outside of the MPA. I hence strongly recommend that the role science plays in the MPA planning process be reviewed and that a scientific assessment of all proposed MPAs be required before those MPAs are designated. Such an assessment should be made publicly available in a DFO science report, and acknowledge explicitly the trade-offs made during stakeholder consultations.

My third point is that the characteristics of the MPAs being created, including their conservation objectives, boundaries, and levels of protection, tend to currently reflect what can be negotiated

with stakeholders and not what is required to effectively protect those ecosystems. In addition, some of those negotiations are often done outside existing committees, sometimes in private meetings with regional directors, and are not documented. I hence recommend that all changes that can impact conservation objectives, MPA boundaries, and their level of protection be only discussed in meetings open to all stakeholders and be documented and made public.

Generally, Canada is aiming for quantity, while the quality of Canadian MPAs, including those to be announced, tends to be low and does not meeting peer-reviewed science recommendations. I clearly understand the complexity involved in those processes. Studying those trade-offs has been the focus of some of my work, but to be effective, the MPA network will clearly require much stronger levels of protection. Failing to do so is likely to provide marginal benefits in terms of conservation, but also in socio-economic terms.

Protecting our oceans has a price, but the benefits can greatly outweigh that by ensuring a sustainable use of our oceans. Much like climate change, the price of not acting now will keep increasing in the future, both economically and socially. I believe this government has an opportunity to really be a world leader in marine conservation and oceans management.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my view on the key challenges I see for the MPA network planning process. I look forward to your questions.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Devillers. Thank you very much, we appreciate your comments on that.

We're now going to go to our video conference. We're going to Chris Sporer, who's the executive manager for the Pacific Halibut Management Association of British Columbia.

Mr. Sporer, you have 10 minutes or less, please.

Mr. Chris Sporer (Executive Manager, Pacific Halibut Management Association of British Columbia): Thank you.

My name is Chris Sporer. I'm with the Pacific Halibut Management Association, which represents the majority of commercial halibut licence-holders on Canada's Pacific coast. I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to you today as part of your study of the criteria and process being used to identify and establish marine protected areas in Canada.

What I'd like to do is give you a brief background on our fishery, show you five maps, and then make three key points.

Canada's Pacific commercial halibut fishery is dominated by small family-owned businesses and significant first nations participation. Approximately 25% of the 435 limited entry commercial halibut licences are held by first nation tribal councils, bands, organizations, and individuals. Vessels participating in our fishery range from 31 feet to 80 feet, but most fall in the 36- to 45-foot range. We're basically a small boat fishery.

The fishery is managed on an ecosystem basis as part of the groundfish integration program. Under groundfish integration, each vessel is fully accountable for every single fish it catches in both target and non-target species—so that's halibut and non-halibut species—regardless of whether the fish is retained or released at sea. It's all verified through a monitoring program that includes 100% at-sea monitoring and 100% dockside monitoring. This program ensures that total fishing mortalities—retained as well as released at sea—stay within allowable harvest limits and encourage fishermen to fish selectively. Today our fishery is as much about not catching other species as it is about catching halibut.

I'd like to say that we do support the international commitment and Canada's target of protecting 5% of our coastline by the end of the year and 10% by 2020, and we believe that commercial fishermen can and should be partners in achieving this goal.

The committee has heard from a number of witnesses, and we agree with the comments on the need for a science-based, evidence-based process that is collaborative, open, and transparent, but we also share the concerns expressed. On the Pacific coast, we are not seeing science- and evidence-based decision-making, transparency, or collaboration.

We also support reconciliation with the indigenous people of Canada, but we share the apprehension expressed by other presenters that the convergence of protected areas and the reconciliation looks like reallocation of the fishery resource by zoning without compensation.

These issues have already been raised by other witnesses, so what I'd like to do is focus on the five maps and our key points.

The first map shows crucial halibut fishing locations, using data from 2012-16. As you can see, the fishery takes place almost entirely in what is called the northern shelf bioregion. The red, orange, and yellow areas are the high-catch areas.

For the second map, the PHMA has added the main fisheries closures and protected areas that were in effect during 2012-16, which show that the fleet had already been displaced from some of those areas and had to move and fish somewhere else.

For the third map, the PHMA added the Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound glass sponge reefs; you can see them on the map in pink. Those were designated in February of this year. The fourth map shows—you can see the polygon—the Scott Islands marine national wildlife area, which is intended for the protection of seabirds and is expected to be designated later this year.

We'll go to the fifth map and what it shows. You could toggle back and forth between the fourth and fifth map just to show the change. This shows some but not all areas that have been identified for protection through other processes that excluded the federal

government and fisheries, and that are now on the table for consideration as part of the northern shelf bioregion MPA network planning process. As you can see when you toggle back and forth, there is a significant overlap of these identified areas with commercial halibut fishing locations. If these identified areas were adopted—or even just some of them—it would devastate our fishery in some areas. It would mean the death of it.

I've shown you these maps and I want to make three key points.

The first key point is that, as you can see, commercial fishing only takes place in a few areas of the coast, and this is for economic fisheries management and safety reasons. Fishermen try to fish in productive areas where there's a high catch per unit effort, which helps them keep their costs low in terms of fuel, food, fishing gear, and monitoring costs.

At the same time, due to the management regime and the monitoring regimes we have in place, halibut fishermen can fish only in certain areas of the coast. They can fish only in spots where they can catch halibut while avoiding or catching very little of the other species and staying within the limits for those other species. Safety considerations are also a factor in the choice of fishing locations. Smaller vessels may be available to fish only at certain times of the year and in certain areas.

The second key point I'd like to make is that closing certain areas of the coast without careful consideration could displace fishing effort, with possible negative ecological impacts.

● (0900)

By the end of 2017, we will have protected 16.5% of the northern shelf bioregion. If additional areas are closed to fishing, the ecosystem approach that we've adopted in our fisheries management would be disrupted. Fishermen would no longer be able to choose their location based on the relative abundance of species, and the fishing effort would be displaced to other areas. Vessels would be forced from spots where they can catch halibut with little or no catch of other species and forced into areas in which they may encounter greater amounts of vulnerable or long-lived species such as Bocaccio or yelloweye rockfish, putting pressure on these less abundant and weak species. We are under very strict requirements for those two species, for example.

Further, if fishermen are forced from productive, high catch per unit effort areas to less productive ones, this means increased fishing time and the need to use more gear to catch the same amount of fish. If you increase fishing time, that means more fuel. That means greater carbon emissions. More gear means increased benthic impacts and the risk of bycatch, for instance, of things like seabirds, something that we've worked very hard in our industry to minimize.

The MPA process needs to take into consideration and evaluate the ecological consequences of displacing fishing effort, but it also needs to take into account all the sustainability measures that have been implemented to date. At present they're not being factored into the analysis.

The third key point I'd like to make is that closing areas of the coast to fishing without careful consideration could have significant social and economic impacts on indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen and their families and coastal communities. At present that is not being fully factored into the discussion. The federal government has committed to working with stakeholders to identify new areas for protection while minimizing socio-economic impacts.

To meet this commitment, there needs to be comprehensive analysis that needs to factor in the cumulative impacts of all of these protected areas, not just looking at each area in isolation but looking at the cumulative impact of protecting all of these different areas over time. When they're looking at displacing fisheries from an area, they need to look at this not just in terms of the lost revenue but also in terms of what it costs the fishermen and their families if they're having to move from productive areas to less productive areas, in terms of fishing costs, revenues, and the value being extracted from the fishery.

For the vast majority of Canadians, the commercial fisheries are the only way of getting access to wild seafood. We provide food to Canada and the world. We can have biodiversity and healthy, sustainable commercial fisheries that can continue to provide food. Protected areas, as many other witnesses have pointed out, are one of the management tools in the tool kit that can get us there, but we need to get them right and we need the right process to get there.

Thank you.

• (0905)

The Chair: Mr. Sporer, thank you very much for your intervention.

We now go to Dr. Trevor Ward, who is an adjunct professor at the University of Technology Sydney.

Dr. Ward, we appreciate you joining us today. For your statement we'll start with 10 minutes or less, please.

Mr. Trevor Ward (Adjunct Professor, University of Technology Sydney, As an Individual): Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I'm a retired marine ecologist, and I have an adjunct professorial appointment at the University of Technology in Sydney, although I live in Perth on Australia's west coast.

For the past 20 years, after a previous 20-year career as a marine ecologist in Australia's CSIRO, the national research organization, I

have conducted research and given practical science support to governments, businesses, communities, NGOs, UN agencies, and aid agencies in almost all aspects of design and implementation of marine protected areas.

Much of this work has been focused in Australia and the Asia-Pacific countries. My experience ranges from, as we say, "talking the talk" to "walking the walk" among the science and technical issues, across the full gamut of MPA problems. This of course includes Australia's two major coral reef MPA systems, as well as across to small, community-managed MPAs in the Asia-Pacific.

I'm happy to send in later, Mr. Chair, a personal biography and any other supporting materials you might like.

However, today, by way of opening the discussion, I'd like to introduce you to a couple of concepts I see as being integrating, and then draw your attention to three of the complex issues I have found to be remarkably common across my work in MPA management, irrespective of the size, location, cultural setting, or degree of development that might apply. I'm sure these and many others—and I've already heard some this morning—will be central to the matter of MPAs for Canada. For the remainder of the time, of course, I wish to participate in the Q and A session.

I should also say at the outset that I only have a passing familiarity with the MPA situation in Canada. I was involved briefly in 2015 with round-table workshops on MPA issues in B.C., which were organized by local stakeholders there. If there are questions about Canada-specific issues, I will probably have to abstain, Mr. Chairman.

In terms of concepts, the modern era of MPA design and implementation is based on what is really a simple but in some ways very technical concept, that of spatial optimization. This concept holds that conservation outcomes for species, ecosystems, and the other elements of natural oceans can be achieved by allocating various parts of the oceans to specific forms of management control. Some of these may overlap with each other. We've already heard examples this morning, but they range across the full gamut of human interactions with the ocean.

The process of optimization considers competing requirements for the same parts of the ocean and seeks to resolve the most efficient and effective outcome across those competing demands. This model of MPA design is the same used in many other areas of human endeavour, and is really based on decision science procedures that are simply adapted from use in other sectors. The success of this approach in the oceans relies on the availability of a transparent and inclusive process, the open engagement of all stakeholders and their interests, a clear decision framework, and a willingness for stakeholders to be bound into the collective decision outcomes.

I believe spatial optimization offers a very practical mechanism for stakeholders from all walks of life to engage in a technical process that is defensible and equitable, irrespective of their capacity to engage, and to have confidence that their own expectations are represented in a balanced approach to problem resolution.

I'll take a moment to turn to what I think are three common problems, from my experience with working to implement and design MPAs. The first of these is one that I call confused terminology.

There is a considerable amount of uncertainty invoked in MPA design and management through the use of technical terms that have poor or variable definitions and interpretations across geographic regions, languages, cultures, sectors, and even local contexts. This is not just a matter of a problem of semantics. Some terms actually do have multiple meanings across the different disciplines. Two obvious ones are the term "sustainability" and the term "objectives".

• (0910)

This question is often confounded by a tendency to flexibly define and apply the terms for tactical purposes, often to service a narrow and specific mission-oriented stakeholder agenda, or to be expressed from a specific sectoral point of view. As a result, I advocate for the adoption and application of a clear framework of terms derived from decision science and analysis. For example, an outcome objective should always be expressed in terms that match the expected achievements of the MPA, such as you might recognize as conservation of species and ecosystems.

The second hurdle is the use of inappropriate underpinning conceptual models. Many of the concepts in the MPA debate are based on models and assumptions, some of which are well tried and tested. However, despite their widespread acceptance for some specific purposes, they may not have been developed and tested for the purposes of MPA design. The most obvious example of this problem is the concept of maximum sustainable yield. Whilst this and other related biomass yield concepts provide the fundamental parameters for fisheries management worldwide, biomass yield of any type is a management parameter that is not highly consistent with the conservation or protection objectives of an MPA or a network, no matter which IUCN management status might be applied. Maximum yield models are not the appropriate underpinning models to achieve the conservation outcomes for fish populations that are usually envisaged by MPA objectives.

As a result, fishing models are rarely appropriate as the main basis for determining scope, scale, and management controls for achieving the conservation outcomes of MPAs. MPAs must apply much higher standards than MSY for fish populations, and use criteria and metrics other than fish biomass yield to provide for the conservation of fish populations and their ecosystem's structure, function, and resilience.

The third hurdle is one that I define as using a decision analysis framework that's effective. After many long years in the theory and practice of MPAs, I have concluded that the science of decision analysis seems to offer the best prospect for achieving good outcomes for all stakeholders, including the ecosystems and the populations that are the target of MPA movements and interests.

In its most elementary construct, a decision analysis framework holds that there is a clear relationship between the setting of outcome-based objectives and defining how such objectives can or should be achieved through management intervention. Both the form of the relationship and the form of any consequent interventions can be derived from within the framework, including the establishment of performance assessment and reporting systems that have direct application for reporting on expected outcomes.

If stakeholders can be motivated to contribute freely and fully into a well-designed decision system, I consider that the many issues surrounding MPAs can be resolved into a few remaining highly intractable problems. Such problems can then become the focus of more detailed study and investigations to address the key uncertainties. Even then, there may be issues that remain but they will belong in the realm of politics, not science. Even then, though, science can well inform that debate. In short, trade-offs become explicit, and all parties, if they participate freely, become better informed about the detail and costs of such trade-offs.

The worst-case outcome is that trade-offs of competing objectives are made such that they do not allow substantive benefits for any of the stakeholder interests, and then the MPA system as a whole may become open to contest. The use of popular software optimization packages such as Marxan makes these spatial trade-offs tractable and subject to a number of basic requirements, such as spatial expression of objectives and attributes. I consider such decision support systems as the key element of any pragmatic and modern approach to resolving issues of design and implementing MPAs.

• (0915)

The more complex the EPA problem, the more valuable the decision framework and optimization approach will prove to be.

Thank you for the opportunity to say these few words and hopefully highlight a few of the commonalities and issues. I'd be happy to take any questions that you might have about anything I've said.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Ward.

We'll now go to our questions.

Colleagues, we don't have a lot of time. We have about 30 minutes, so we'll get through the first round. The second round is doubtful, but we'll see how this goes.

As we have two guests joining us by video conference, whoever your question is directed at, please say their names first so that they are aware they are being asked a question.

For our guests joining us by video conference, if you wish to weigh in on a certain issue that is asked to someone else, you could raise your hand to get the attention of the person asking the question.

Finally, I want to welcome our guest, Mr. Darren Fisher, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Thanks for joining us on our study of MPA.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: For the first question we're going to Mr. McDonald.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A special welcome to our three guests for appearing here this morning on this particular subject.

My first question is to Dr. Devillers. If the other two guests would like to participate in an answer as well, as the chair said, just indicate by putting your hand up, and the chair will recognize you accordingly.

Dr. Devillers, you mentioned in your statement that the design of MPAs is your field of expertise. When you look at a particular area for an MPA designation, do you just look at that area based on information that says it should be a protected area for various reasons? Do you balance that with looking at what activities take place there, i.e., particular fisheries that might be part of what's going on? What impact would it have economically on the communities that are surviving or participating in an activity in that particular area? Do you balance it all out before recommending that this area should be designated an MPA as a complete no-take, no-touch zone?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Thank you for the question.

I will say there are two types of process: designing a single MPA or designing a network of MPAs. They are slightly different, and I'm going to focus on the network because that's what we're doing right now.

I'm one of the few specialists who understands completely the mathematical process in Canada that we use and that is used by DFO to do those things. In short, we use a lot of biological data—some of them come from government, and some of them don't—to understand where species are. We also input a lot of socio-economic data, and DFO is selecting which socio-economic data come in. Typically, it's fisheries but sometimes it's transportation or oil and gas. It can be recreational and all that. The goal of the process is meeting biological targets. If we say we want to protect the health of this species, the process is aimed for the health of this species while minimizing the cost on the socio-economic side.

One caveat with that is how much we know about the socio-economic aspects. We know where people fish, what they catch, and what the value of this catch is, but we don't necessarily always know where it's landed, who is going to use it, and all that. There is a bit of uncertainty, but that's related to how good as the data is. On the biological side, no data is perfect. The international guidelines say that, if the data is not perfect, just move forward. Canada has much more data than most of the world's countries, anyway.

The short answer is yes. We measure quantitatively the impact on the socio-economic based on the data that are input in the process, which typically are the value of the catch. Every time a DFO region estimates and looks at that, they know exactly what the impact of

this scenario will be on which industry, for which location, based on their data.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Thank you.

I have a second question. You mentioned that we need to have a much higher level of protection in our designated areas, our MPA areas, in order to reach the maximum economic benefit of designating that MPA.

Could you explain the correlation between both?

● (0920)

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I don't think I said the maximum economic benefit, but I said the maximum benefits. I was thinking of conservation benefits as well, but it's also applied to economic benefits.

Let's start with the process that is currently used by DFO, which is very specific. When they create an MPA, they identify specific species they want protected, and they identify specific threats. They are trying to say that this kind of gear is going to impact this kind for fish, so we're going to ban this. It's somehow going against what we know in science, which is that the system is complex and has interactions. The species have interaction between themselves, related to their habitat, and all that.

We should look at the ecosystem in a holistic manner. This is why we like to look at levels of higher protection because we think that having minimal protection does not necessarily allow that.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Thank you.

Mr. Sporer.

Mr. Chris Sporer: I would disagree. I don't think the socio-economic analysis, the value data, the information that DFO has is sufficient. A lot of work needs to be done to truly understand the value of the fisheries and the activities in the area.

They need to look at the cumulative impacts, not just at each different initiative in isolation, so that people can understand what the impacts are together. Don't just look at the value; look at the costs you're imposing in turn. What's it going to mean for people's operating costs and that type of thing? I think a lot of work needs to be done on the socio-economic part. I don't think it's quite there yet.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Sorry, I don't want this to be a dialogue, but just quickly.

I don't work for DFO. They have a socio-economic branch, and they do a lot more analysis of the impacts. A lot of data goes there: how many people are impacted, where do these people live, how many ships do they have, and all that. I cannot say, but it's much more than....

To my understanding there is a thorough process. I saw some reports on what goes on behind the scenes in DFO.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Mr. Sporer, you wanted to...?

Mr. Chris Sporer: I have a master's degree in economics. I used to work with economists in Fisheries and Oceans Canada, so I am aware of what socio-economic analysis is done and can be done and should be done.

Thank you.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Mr. Sporer, do you feel that proper consultation has taken place with your group or the people you represent, especially the indigenous groups involved in the halibut fishery on the west coast?

Mr. Chris Sporer: I'll speak to our group.

I think some processes we have been part of have worked well. Then, as was pointed out by one of the speakers, stakeholders need to be bound to a collective decision. We've gone through a process, and all of a sudden we've seen people trying to get in on the process. I think that's a very important point.

I think what we're seeing now on the west coast, and you've heard it from some other people, is that we'll be overwhelmed by all these processes on these different MPA initiatives. We do not have the capacity to participate. We don't even have the people to participate. I think that's creating a big problem. The timelines are incredibly tight.

As I say, on the west coast we support the 5% and the 10% commitments. We think we can meet them by 2017 and 2020, but other processes are going on that we think are moving very rapidly. We don't have the capacity to participate.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sporer and Mr. McDonald.

Mr. Sopuck, you have for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you.

Dr. Devillers, you said we should be adopting the IUCN criteria. Is that no take and no industry?

A short answer, please; I don't have much time.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: No, the IUCN classifies MPAs at different levels. To be an IUCN category of any sort, conservation objective has to be the primary goal of any MPA. That's a requirement. Then you get anything from no take to something that can allow some extractive use, but not at the level we see in many countries. Not necessarily industrial extractive use, but limited extractive use.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Of course, the concept of sustainable development requires that social, economic, and environmental issues be given equal weight, so the IUCN criteria in my mind are clearly wanting.

Chris Sporer, if all the MPAs that are being proposed off the coast of British Columbia were implemented—and your map is very dramatic—what would be the effect on the halibut fishery?

• (0925)

Mr. Chris Sporer: As I say, if some, not all, of those areas that were identified for protection were implemented, it would devastate our fishery. As you can see, some of the key areas are affected.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That would essentially mean the end of commercial halibut fishing off the coast of British Columbia.

Mr. Chris Sporer: In the current form, yes, it would devastate our fishery.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: This goes back to Dr. Devillers' point, again not meaning to pick on him, but I find this constant among people who are not part of the industry but are in the science game. The needs of peoples and communities are woefully underestimated and rarely mentioned. I think there's a strong consensus in this particular committee that crosses party lines that people in communities are very important. Too many people think their clients are the fish. In my strong view, people are the clients for all these things. Conservation should be for the people.

Yes, sir.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I just want to mention that being a conservation scientist doesn't necessarily mean I'm a tree hugger.

One of my main research projects is actually working with small-scale fisheries. It's an international project. We've been working on it for five or six years, trying to see how we can actually support small-scale fisheries in communities. It's also something that we do understand and value.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Along the lines of Chris Sporer, talking about his credentials, I'm a fisheries biologist by training myself and have been a regional fisheries biologist. It was drilled into me that people should be the clients of science and biologists. The fish are important, obviously; without the fish, you can't have a fishery.

I find with the environmental community and the science community—and we've had many of them here testifying over the last few months—the lack of mention of communities and people is a very strong, common thread among that particular group.

Back to Chris Sporer, would you agree with the statement that the creation of MPAs automatically requires the displacement of people?

Mr. Chris Sporer: I would say that would depend on the objective of the area, what you're trying to achieve, the goals, and where the area is located.

As I said, and I made it clear, I don't think the industry and our members are opposed to MPAs and protecting things. MPAs are one tool in the tool kit to help you achieve your objectives.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes, and the other tool in your tool kit, I gather, is the rigorous record-keeping that you conduct to ensure that the fishery is sustainable.

Given how well the halibut seem to be managed—and when we met in my office, you presented that in even more detail—is that halibut fishery sustainable for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Chris Sporer: We've been harvesting halibut off the west coast of Canada since the late 1880s. Right now, every year there is an independent survey done, and it shows that the health of the resource in Canada is quite healthy.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Dr. Devillers, you made the comment that MPAs can provide major benefits, yet you provided no details or specifics. Can you provide some specifics on the major benefits of MPAs to local communities, for example?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: To the communities and not to the ecosystem...?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'll let you answer how you want to.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: The main goal of an MPA—and I'll follow the IUCN definition—is conservation, so the benefits I see are mostly conservation, which include fish.

Typically a lot of studies have looked at inside MPAs versus outside MPAs, and before and after, and shown that fish get bigger and the diversity of fish and species is larger when you create an MPA. That has been well documented. I believe Dr. Ban came and gave a number of papers and evidence on these effects.

I am one of the proponents who thinks that MPAs are actually very good for the community—mostly the small-scale fisheries—because they are a very good way to protect the land or the piece of water that is close to your community. In short, if you screw it up in front of your community and you're a small-scale fishery, you don't have any plan B.

MPAs really help you sustain the system locally, unlike the industrial fishing that has more ability to move.

• (0930)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think you were saying that you want Canada to meet its targets, and you want the number of areas of MPAs maximized. But when we layer the proposed MPAs off the B. C. coast onto the halibut fishing areas, Mr. Sporer, who has a great deal of experience out there, says that the industry would be devastated if all of those MPAs were put in place.

How do you square that circle, Dr. Devillers?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: First, I don't think the B.C. plan for MPAs is finalized. I don't think anything is drafted, so I'm not familiar with the zones that have been shown earlier. I am not saying...but I know that the MPA network in B.C. is just in the draft process, so I believe that the industry will be consulted. If there are major issues, one of the processes is actually trying to avoid those conflicts and minimizing them.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Chris Sporer, the map that you showed with the MPAs, is that an official map that you have from government saying that this is what they want to do?

Mr. Chris Sporer: No. For the fifth map, we've put on there areas that have been identified for protection in other processes that did not include the federal government or fisheries, but are now on the table as part of the MPA network planning in the northern shelf bioregion. They're from marine plans that were developed in a separate process, but they're now on the table for consideration. That's our understanding.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Donnelly, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses for being here and providing your testimony.

Dr. Devillers, I'd like to pick up on that and ask a similar question. You stated that MPAs work. I'm wondering if you could provide this committee with evidence that they work, such as studies or things that you could submit to the committee.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: We wrote a letter to the ministers, which we sent yesterday morning. We appended a number of references. I can provide them to you.

I can provide the letter, if you're interested, for the record.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Please.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: It's a public letter. For instance, one important paper is the paper from Lester et al., 2009, in *Marine Ecology Progress Series*. It really showed the impact of no take. It showed that no-take zones provided more benefits than zones of lower protection.

In terms of science, one paper we refer to a lot is by Graham Edgar and other authors, in 2014, in *Nature*. *Nature* is one of the best journals we have in science. They did a larger analysis of a number of MPAs in different regions, in different contexts, and tried to see what criteria explained why some work and some don't work. They showed that the larger the MPA and the higher the level of protection and all that, the better it works. This is all supported by statistics. It's top, peer-reviewed research.

There are actually 20 or 30 papers that prove that MPAs work, but my caveat is that they only work if they are designed properly. They only work if the science is behind this to assess how big they have to be, where they have to be, and at what level of protection. That's one thing that we are concerned about, that sometimes with the trade-offs we make the resulting MPA does not necessarily work.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Would you submit those studies to the committee so that we have those for reference?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I would be happy to do that.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: And the letter as well...?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Yes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: You mentioned that low levels of marine protection will not be effective. I'm wondering if you could briefly explain that.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I said that the low level of protection would not provide the expected benefits. I'm not saying that it will do nothing; protecting something at some level will provide benefits.

One of my colleagues compared MPAs to bank investments. It depends on the interest rate you get. The more risk you take, the more benefit you get. It's a bit of the same thing with MPAs. If you protect an area and you don't go there, you don't fish there, and you don't do anything, this area has more ability to develop and grow than an area that would be extracted and damaged—for instance, where you get the bottom-contact gear that will destroy the habitat.

Again, that's something that has been well studied over the last 10 to 15 years.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: You mentioned the role of science, and not just having it at the beginning of an MPA process but throughout the process. Can you elaborate a little on that?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I've been involved in the DFO process for about 10 years now, and I've looked with a lot of interest at the role of the different branches in science and oceans and all that. One way to summarize it is that science is only consulted when somebody else needs advice, but they're not necessarily encouraged to provide advice spontaneously. In the MPA process specifically, science is very important for originally designating the area, but the rest of the process is carried out by the oceans branch. They don't necessarily request advice from science on the modifications made to the initial recommendation. For instance, if science says we need something big with no take, and then we get something small with partial take, they don't ask if it still works. That's a concern we have, because we think that the outcome sometimes is not scientifically sound.

• (0935)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Sporer, you showed us fisheries closures on one of your maps. Could you explain to the committee why those areas were closed?

Mr. Chris Sporer: I think it was on the second map that I talked about the fisheries closures that were in place in 2012 to 2016. The purple areas are what are referred to as “rockfish conservation areas”. I believe you've had several witnesses refer to them.

Between 1999 and 2007 they were implemented, or phased in over time, to protect inshore rockfish and inshore rockfish habitat. As you heard from one of the witnesses, one of the big problems, especially in some areas, is that they're not being enforced. There's no enforcement, so that reduces their effectiveness.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Could you just elaborate a little more? They would protect them from what?

Mr. Chris Sporer: As part of a comprehensive program, a rockfish conservation strategy includes reducing TACs and increasing monitoring in the commercial fishery to try to reduce fishing mortalities with inshore rockfish species.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Okay, thank you.

Dr. Devillers, you mentioned MPAs and an MPA network. Could you elaborate a little more?

I think you talked about low-quality MPAs versus having a network of more effective MPAs, or having MPAs that would be

more effective if they are in a network. Could you explain a little more about the benefits of a network versus just isolated MPAs?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Yes. Isolated MPAs typically tend to protect one specific feature or set of species. There are many ideas for doing a network. One of them is having complementarity, which means that we protect a bit of everything. One MPA may protect rockfish, but another one may protect corals and so on, so through the network we protect a bit of everything.

Another idea is that the network can bring benefits from one MPA to another. A lot of scientists are looking now at larval dispersion. To reproduce, fish create larvae. Those larvae go through the currents somewhere, settle, and then grow. It's an effort to look at how those species are arranged, and to assess whether one specific part of the network can actually benefit other parts of the network. That's something that has been studied in Australia a fair bit.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Again, if you have any studies or evidence on the benefits of a network, could you provide the committee with that, as well?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I would be delighted to provide you with enough reading for a few weeks.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly.

Now, we're going to go to Mr. Morrissey, and given the time, this will be our last question, because we have to move into another meeting.

Mr. Morrissey, I'm afraid you have about five minutes.

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

My question is to Dr. Devillers.

At the United Nations Ocean Conference last week, Minister LeBlanc stated that there must be a balance between environmental and commercial requirements and pressures when dealing with MPAs.

I would like you to expand a bit on your comment that they must be designed properly. We heard evidence earlier before this committee that a series of small, specifically targeted MPAs would probably achieve more than simply doing large geographical areas within the ocean, and in developing MPAs designed to be small, you may have less impact on the community aspect.

Could you broaden a bit on your definition of how they should be designed properly?

● (0940)

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Yes. In terms of the social-economic balance, just to put things in perspective, about 99.9% of Canadian waters are open to industry. There is a very unbalanced balance at the moment.

Small versus large is a long-standing debate in conservation science, and it basically depends on what you protect. If you protect something that does not move, such as coral on the seabed, the enclosure can be very small because the impact would be very localized. If you protect species that move a lot, over hundreds of kilometres, it's a completely different matter. Understanding the species you want to protect will guide you towards the size that is appropriate to protect it.

There is no general, blanket recommendation I can give saying that it has to be large or it has to be small. It depends on the species you want to protect and the context.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I know that Mr. Sporer wants to make a comment.

Please be brief, because I have two quick questions for Dr. Devillers.

Mr. Chris Sporer: I was just going to comment that we do not use 99.9% of the ocean. Fishing only takes place in certain areas of the coast.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I'm glad you made that clarification, because it does sound like we're putting limited pressure when he says that 99.9% is available to commercial, but commercial does not take place in all of that area, a very good point.

Dr. Devillers, you used the phrase "low levels of protection" in terms of existing MPAs.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Low, yes.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: That's a concern that was brought by numerous witnesses before this committee. Designating MPAs is one thing, but having adequate protection is another.

I liked your comments on the fact that while science may be used in establishing, we do not have a good history of government returning to science through DFO for advice on the continued specifications in the MPA. Could you expand a bit on your concern about the low level of protection.

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: Just as a little follow-up quickly, on the 99.9%, I didn't say "fisheries". I said "commercial use", and that can be seabed mining, that can be oil and gas exploration, that can be anything.

A low level of protection relates a bit to what I was saying earlier. The level of protection right now is a bit too specific for some species and some threats. What science told us is that things are interconnected. I wanted, actually, to bring something showing the food web, which species eats which species, with the example of cod and capelin in Newfoundland. It's extremely complex. If you're trying to protect only one piece of this puzzle, you may not actually capture the complexity of the system.

High levels of protection have been shown scientifically to work better. That's one of the basic statements in science. It does work. It

does not mean that in every case you need a high level of protection. I'm not saying we have to enclose everything in no-take areas. I'm just saying that currently Canada is not doing well compared with most countries, and it's also not doing well compared with scientific advice, scientific advice being about 30% as no take.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I have one question, though, and again I would like for you to expand on a comment you made that the quality of MPAs tend to be lower. Are you referring to Canadian MPAs?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: I could refer to many countries, but yes, that was in my statement referring to Canadian MPAs.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could you expand a bit on why you're making that statement, and what your definition of lower quality tends to be? Could you expand on that?

Prof. Rodolphe Devillers: The only metric I'm using to assess the quality is how much a difference it makes to the species that we're protecting. If you create an MPA to protect some species, then you can measure if the species are coming back.

In Newfoundland, for instance, we have two MPAs that I'm familiar with: Eastport and Gilbert Bay. Eastport is in Newfoundland and Gilbert Bay is in Labrador. Neither of these are doing very well. They were created about 20 years ago. Eastport is not showing a significant increase in lobster, which is what is targeted there, because it's too small and it's not necessarily at the right place. Gilbert Bay has been problematic as well because the fish go in and out of the MPA and get fished outside, something they've tried to address. Those are examples of the complexity of those processes, which also link to my statement about the importance of adaptive management, the importance of revising our measures when we have additional science.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Morrissey. Thank you to our committee.

I want to say a special thank you to, joining us by video conference, Dr. Trevor Ward. Thank you for joining us.

I want to thank, as well, Chris Sporer, joining us from Vancouver. We thank you very much.

Of course, Dr. Rodolphe Devillers, thank you so very much as well for joining us today.

● (0945)

We're going to break, literally for about two minutes, so that we can set up for the second part of our meeting at a quarter to.

● (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0945)

The Chair: We're starting.

In the second part of our meeting, we're now discussing supplementary estimates (A). As committee members know, they have been reported back to the House of Commons. However, it is incumbent upon us to delve into the supplementary estimates (A). There will be no votes at the end as a result, but we do have an hour.

In anticipating we're a few minutes behind, with the indulgence of the committee, can I ask for a five-minute extension on unanimous consent so that we could get in our hour as scheduled?

No one disagrees. Everyone is okay. Good, so we're going to go to about 10:50 eastern time.

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): I just want to speak on a point of order, Mr. Chair.

With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary with us here today for the supplementary estimates, I'd like to voice my disappointment, our disappointment, that the minister's not here to defend the estimates himself. I know we're on record on this previously. I know that this committee has allowed the parliamentary secretary to join the minister at this committee for important meetings in the past, such as main and supplementary estimates. That was fine because the minister answered the questions. I did not realize that this was an intentional transition to have the parliamentary secretary represent the minister and the department at the committee at every opportunity. The fact is that the parliamentary secretary is not the one making the final decisions—

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, I'm sorry.

Mr. Todd Doherty: With all due respect, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: No. Respect received, and thank you, but I'm still trying to seek a point of order here. Does it have something to do with the Standing Orders?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Absolutely.

The Chair: Carry on.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, the fact is that the parliamentary secretary's not the one making the final decisions. He's not in on every briefing, and probably is not being fully briefed on the reasons why decisions are made.

The Chair: Which standing order are you referencing?

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'll get to that, Mr. Chair.

He probably is not fully briefed on the reasons why decisions are made and why certain things are in the supplementary estimates. We asked for an emergency meeting on a number of important issues last week, such as the cuts to the Manitoba coast guard, the B.C. dive team, and the educational and restoration programs. The government denied us that opportunity, and now instead we have the minister's representatives here for just one hour on those topics, as well as on those topics, as well as supplementary estimates—

• (0950)

The Chair: Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm getting to that, Mr. Chair, with all due respect.

This makes it quite difficult to hold the government to account. Mr. Chair, I've asked my colleagues, and nobody seems to recall the

parliamentary secretary ever representing the minister for something as important as the estimates in the last Parliament. Perhaps we could have the clerk look into the precedence for this for the fisheries committee and let us know if this is common for FOPO—

The Chair: Duly noted.

Mr. Todd Doherty: —or any committee for that matter.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, these are concerns you have to make during your presentation or during your time for questioning. You didn't mention one standing order. Is there a number? Can you give me a number within the Standing Orders?

Mr. Todd Doherty: No.

The Chair: We'd like to welcome our guests here today. We're doing supplementary (A)s, as you know, but there's a great deal of flexibility with that as well.

I'd like to welcome, from DFO, Catherine Blewett, deputy minister; Philippe Morel, acting senior assistant deputy minister, ecosystems and fisheries management; and Tony Matson, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. Last but not least, I'd like to welcome someone who has probably logged as much time here as maybe Trevor Swerdfager, and that is Jeffery Hutchinson, commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard. We've almost gone to that level.

I think you're doing the presentation, Mr. Beech, is that correct? Okay.

Terry Beech is the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and the member for Burnaby North—Seymour.

You have 10 minutes or less, sir.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

I'd like to start by thanking everyone on this committee for their hard work and for the relationship that we've been able to develop over the last number of months. Everybody on all sides has been very good about making sure that not only your riding issues are brought to the floor but also that we can work together on issues that affect the whole country. It has been a very positive relationship and I've enjoyed it greatly, so thank you.

Since the chair already introduced the staff, I'm going to move past that, but just know that there is a small army here as well, so if you have any specific details that you'd like to get into, we're well suited to get into the fine details.

I am here today to discuss the supplementary estimates (A). Specifically Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard are seeking Parliament's approval on \$359.4 million for the following items: \$166.7 million to maintain mission-critical services to Canadians, \$145.5 million for the oceans protection plan, \$32.2 million for the renewal of the Atlantic and Pacific commercial fisheries initiative, and \$15 million to support negotiations on fisheries and marine matters.

Today, on behalf of the minister—and Minister LeBlanc sends his regrets for not being here today—I am pleased to share that our government has invested approximately \$3 billion into the core operations for Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard through budget 2016, budget 2017, the oceans protection plan, and following a comprehensive program review. With these investments, Canadians will soon see a noticeable difference in the services they receive from Fisheries and Oceans and the Coast Guard. These important investments will improve the scientific evidence that decisions are based on, modernize aging infrastructure and IT capacity, renew efforts to restore habitat and rebuild depleting fish stocks, expand marine conservation and protection measures, create safer waterways for marine navigation, speed up response time for search and rescue missions, and strengthen our environmental response capacity.

These new resources will do more than just replace programs that have been lost in years past, as our oceans today face new threats with climate change, including flooding, droughts, and severe weather storms on every coast.

Our economy depends on safe navigation through waterways and ports that are busier than ever before. Our government has new priorities pertaining to reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people, working with municipal and provincial partners, and becoming global leaders in sustainable development.

The new investments will help DFO and the Coast Guard build the programs and services that Canadians need into the future. We know how much Canadians value DFO and Coast Guard programs. We understand how important these services are to Canadians. On the minister's behalf, I want to assure you that we are committed to maintaining those services related to Coast Guard's presence in inland waterways, that the Coast Guard dive team will remain at the Sea Island base, and that all elements of the salmon enhancement program will continue.

With significant, new investments in DFO and the Coast Guard, we will, in fact, be enhancing search and rescue services on all coasts and working with community partners on a number of ecosystem restoration projects. As you know, there are more demands on Canada's oceans and coastal areas than ever before. It is therefore vital that Canada have a plan in place that protects our oceans in a modern and advanced way and that ensures environmental sustainability, safe and responsible commercial use, and collaboration with coastal indigenous communities.

In order to meet these objectives, Prime Minister Trudeau announced a \$1.5-billion national oceans protection plan last fall. I'm pleased to report that DFO, the Coast Guard, and other federal partners are making steady progress on key elements of this plan. For example, from a Coast Guard perspective, we are increasing search

and rescue capabilities by investing in seven new lifeboat stations, four in British Columbia and three in Newfoundland and Labrador. A 24-hours a day, seven days a week emergency coordination capacity has been created within existing regional operation centres in Victoria, Montreal, and St. John's, complementing the new 24-7 emergency coordination capacity with the national command centre in Ottawa.

• (0955)

We are purchasing and installing emergency tow kits on 25 of the CCG's large vessels and leasing two new vessels on the west coast with the ability to tow large commercial ships and tankers.

We are creating four primary environmental response teams, which will strengthen the Coast Guard's on-scene capacity during marine pollution incidents. We are partnering with the Coast Guard Auxiliary to expand its network of over 400 search and rescue volunteers who engage in environmental response. We are also partnering with indigenous groups, coastal communities, and the private sector to ensure a faster and more efficient response to marine pollution incidents.

We are strengthening the Coast Guard's marine communications and traffic services centres to ensure uninterrupted communications with mariners.

The Canadian Coast Guard's efforts to deal with abandoned, derelict, and wrecked vessels, such as the ongoing operations related to the *Kathryn Spirit* and the upcoming work to be done to the *Farley Mowat*, speak to the organization's commitment, and that of its partners, to ensuring that such vessels of concern don't pose immediate risks to public safety or the marine environment.

This level of commitment will be enhanced by the oceans protection plan. Our government will continue to work in collaboration with provincial, territorial, municipal, and indigenous organizations to support the cleanup of smaller vessels that could potentially pose risks to Canadian coastal communities, while implementing a robust polluter-pay approach for future vessel cleanups.

In addition to this work, we have created a national, \$75-million coastal restoration fund, which will be used for the preservation, protection, and restoration of marine environments and coastal habitat over the next five years. DFO scientists are undertaking a science-based review of three endangered whale species in Canada: the North Atlantic right whale, the St. Lawrence estuary beluga, and the southern resident killer whale. Online public engagement will be available soon. Harbour authorities, along with other eligible recipients, will have access to \$1.3 million under DFO's small craft harbours program for the removal and disposal of abandoned and wrecked vessels from federally owned commercial fishing harbours.

Our government is committed to the long-term health of our oceans. In order to deliver on the minister's key priorities and commitments, a historic \$1.4 billion is being invested in DFO and the Coast Guard over the next five years. Just to be clear, that is on top of the oceans protection plan. This will help shore up a number of key program areas, including an aging Coast Guard fleet; a wide range of communication towers, buoys, and maritime radars; search and rescue training; sustainable fisheries; conservation and protection activities; and the physical infrastructure and information technology the department needs to carry out its mandate.

The latest investment in DFO and the Coast Guard will also provide the resources required to support sustainable fisheries management, which includes the development and update of integrated fisheries management plans, or IFMPs. This will help address some of the concerns that were expressed by members of this committee and by the Auditor General. It will enhance DFO's capacity for conservation and protection, while investments in infrastructure and information technology will give employees the facilities and tools they need to do their jobs.

Before closing, I want to mention that the historic investments being made across DFO and the Coast Guard will result in the hiring of approximately 900 new staff, who will help deliver our ambitious mandate. DFO is working hard to accommodate this growing workforce.

Mr. Chair, this year Canada is celebrating its 150th birthday, but this is also a milestone year for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, whose heritage dates back to Confederation. While steeped in history, DFO is at the forefront of shaping Canada's domestic and global responses to very modern challenges. The historic investments I spoke about today will help ensure that Canada remains a world leader in all matters related to our oceans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beech.

We'll now go to our questions. We're going to start with Mr. Hardie, for seven minutes, please.

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

Thank you, everybody, for being here.

I want to give the parliamentary secretary an opportunity to make abundantly clear a couple of points with a simple yes or no answer,

to be followed by an open-ended question in which he would be free to refer to his colleagues for additional comments and background.

I want to start with the metro Vancouver dive team. There was a rationale suggesting that this team, which is the only team in the area that's able to go in and rescue people from sunken cars or vessels, could be replaced if the RCMP or the Vancouver Police Department, both of whom have dive teams, was able to take on this additional function. I had also been assured that this dive team would remain in place until such time as those other teams could take on this work. We have now heard that they have no interest in doing so.

Will the metro Vancouver dive team remain in place, yes or no?

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you very much for the question. I know you want a yes or no answer. Yes, it is clear. I'll state it as clearly as I possibly can: the dive team is going to stay in place. There are no cuts.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you.

On the Coast Guard stations, I've had the opportunity to boat and fish on both Lake Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods. Lake of the Woods has a lot of tourists, a lot of people, a lot of boats, a lot of islands, and a lot of opportunities to get in trouble. Lake Winnipeg, as has been pointed out here by folks who've lived closer to it than I have over the years, is a shallow lake and extremely treacherous. Just last week the Coast Guard from Gimli had to go out and rescue some folks.

Removing the Coast Guard stations from those inland waters would clearly heighten the risk people face out on those two lakes. Again, yes or no, will the Coast Guard stations remain in place in Gimli, Selkirk, and Kenora?

Mr. Terry Beech: I think the minister himself made this clear during question period earlier this week. We are not only keeping the search and rescue component intact on our inland waters, but we are actually looking to expand our services there.

Mr. Ken Hardie: All right.

This is the final one. One decision that became known to the public, while I happened to be out door-knocking in my constituency... I had people running out of their houses to chase me down out of concern for what was happening to the salmonid enhancement program. It's been around for 40 years—salmon in the classroom, support for stream-keepers, support for the hatcheries, support for habitat restoration, the work of 10,000 volunteers in British Columbia, worth something like almost \$90 million to the provincial GDP—and the word came down that this program was going to be cancelled.

Will the program remain in place, yes or no, and will all of those program elements remain in place?

Mr. Terry Beech: I appreciate the question.

I think it's important to understand that the comprehensive review that was conducted by the department was a process that was designed—

Mr. Ken Hardie: I'm sorry. I'll let you get to that part. I just need to know. Be clear. Will these programs stay in place or not?

Mr. Terry Beech: As a British Columbian and somebody who's been through the program, I'm happy to tell you that these programs are going to stay in place. In fact, they will be buttressed by a new \$75-million coastal restoration fund.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Here's your opportunity to fill in a few blanks.

The process for this decision-making was remarkably, alarmingly tone deaf. For me to find out from a constituent—literally chased down on the street only to be followed up with any number of phone calls and letters from teachers, students, and everybody else—suggests that somewhere in the machinery somebody really wasn't paying attention to what was important to British Columbia. Can we fix that?

• (1005)

Mr. Terry Beech: I appreciate the question.

I think I might reflect back to what I was starting on previously.

Mr. Ken Hardie: This is your opportunity.

Mr. Terry Beech: I appreciate the opportunity.

I think it's important to understand that the comprehensive review process, which was brought forward in budget 2016, looked across the department at what we needed to facilitate our core mandate. A number of programs were looked at.

At the end of the day, my message here is pretty clear. We're keeping these programs. We understand how important these programs are. In fact, this is a good day. We're investing a further \$1.4 billion so that we can have increased science, increased coastal restoration, and increased partnerships.

While I understand that there might have been some speculation, you have to understand that there's a Treasury Board process and then there's also a consultation process. The same way that you hear from your constituents, I hear from constituents. We take in all this information. We consult with our indigenous partners. We consult with these volunteer organizations. The minister understands how important these programs are, and that's why they're going to continue.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I really appreciate this clarification, because it puts to rest some things that came up, perhaps needlessly. Again, it appears to be more of a process issue than anything else.

We've heard many times in the course of our studies the fact that Coast Guard and DFO resources are stretched. There are things that people want more of, particularly being closer to the community, which is why the salmonid enhancement program is such a great bridge between DFO and people on the ground. All those volunteers and all the work they do really enhance the reputation of the DFO, which we fear has been trying to become more isolated, being kind of impervious to outside science, outside input.

To maintain these programs, especially in British Columbia, and especially given the landscape that's there, is really a very productive

thing. I hope it signals not just the fact that we are investing more but that part of that investment will be, in fact, closer connections with the community.

Mr. Terry Beech: I appreciate that point, Mr. Hardie.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Coast Guard, for the last decade, have come under significant funding pressures. When you're under significant pressure, you have to prioritize. It doesn't necessarily mean that you can do everything you want to do. In this case, it meant that significant parts of our core mandate were actually threatened. That's what we are now fixing with this \$1.4-billion investment. The fact that a \$1.5-billion investment in the oceans protection plan preceded that means that we now have, between budget 2016 and budget 2017, almost \$3 billion to not only address our core mandate but to do many of the things this committee has been recommending we do.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Doherty, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to start off today by saying we're very happy that the parliamentary secretary is here.

I will apologize. I'm a bit confused. At the end of May, the department announced cuts: the B.C. dive team, the salmon enhancement program. It's now June 15 and you've reversed this decision. It is interesting to note that, when we talk about consultation, I don't feel so bad that even members of their own caucus in B.C. weren't consulted on this.

What made the department reverse its decision?

Mr. Terry Beech: I wouldn't necessarily call it a reversal, Mr. Doherty. As I stated earlier, there was a Treasury Board process that was facilitated. You are correct in that various employees were notified that, if things were brought forward, potentially their individual positions could change as a result of that. That's a standard process that happens as part of that process.

As I stated previously, all of these programs are continuing and are supported by the minister.

• (1010)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Interesting. Where is the money coming from to reinstate these programs?

Mr. Terry Beech: That's a good question. I'll turn it over to our CFO.

Mr. Tony Matson (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): As the parliamentary secretary mentioned, we did respect the thorough budgetary process that was conducted through the Treasury Board. These reductions and reallocations toward higher priorities are being respected entirely, and the funding to continue the salmon enhancement program will come from within the department from other lower priority departmental programming.

Mr. Todd Doherty: So the money will come from other areas.

Mr. Tony Matson: It will come from within the organization.

Mr. Todd Doherty: You made a big announcement here at the committee, which we appreciate. Will a formal release come out indicating all the services and programs mentioned in your presentation today? Will that be released?

Mr. Terry Beech: I'm certain there will be communication, absolutely.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I want to go back. Define your inland waterways.

I want to make very clear—similar to what my colleague asked—once again that the Coast Guard stations at Gimli, Selkirk, and Kenora will not be closed, specifically.

Mr. Terry Beech: Are you at the end of the question?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Yes.

Mr. Terry Beech: It sounded as if there was more coming.

Mr. Todd Doherty: No.

Mr. Terry Beech: Specifically, in Gimli, Kenora, and Selkirk, the search and rescue activities are actually looking to be expanded. I would like to turn it over to Jeff, who can go into more detail.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Hutchinson, can you confirm that the navigation buoys will be placed as well?

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson (Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I can confirm all of the foregoing, that we'll keep our operations at Kenora, Selkirk, and Gimli as they are, except for the enhancements that the parliamentary secretary has already referred to with respect to search and rescue.

With respect to aids to navigation, I want to give you a comprehensive answer without giving you cause for concern. As has been noted recently in the press, we do aids to navigation in waters that are federal waterways and we do some aids in some places that are not federal waterways. We want to work with our partners in those areas. We will maintain the level of service that is there. I would say that the only change that we would see in aids to navigation is where there is a willing recipient wanting to take that on. If there is no willing recipient, we will maintain the aids to navigation that are in place.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Perfect.

Ms. Blewett, when you appeared before the committee previously, you mentioned that strategic management plans were in development. Are you prepared to give us an update on where those are? Can you speak to them to this point?

Ms. Catherine Blewett (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you very much for the question. I'm actually delighted to have a chance to give the committee more detail. As one of the processes that all departments are able to take advantage of, we have an external audit committee. I met with them last week and walked them through the elements of our strategic and operational plan.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Great.

Ms. Catherine Blewett: I actually remember questions from my last appearance. They weren't ones that required an answer from me, but they were how comfortable we were feeling, what the direction was, and how stretched we were feeling.

As to the investment results we're seeing, at the date of that appearance we were just unpacking what the budget had brought to us. Our planning is well in train. As soon as I leave here I'm going over to the Treasury Board, because we're looking at our results and we're really pleased with the work that's going on. I think the department's going to benefit from it.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm glad to hear it.

Mr. Beech, I'm going to go really quickly to the subject of MPAs. Last week, some of my colleagues and I were at the UN with our minister. This committee has heard time and again, and just prior to you joining us we had testimony again, that our current MPA process seems flawed. There is concern that true consultation is not taking place. It was alarming to hear, for me anyway and I think some of our colleagues even across the floor, that we were looking at speeding up the process to maybe even 18 months in determining an MPA.

Is this something that the department is prepared to talk further about? Are they really moving forward with an 18-month MPA process just to reach an international target?

• (1015)

Mr. Terry Beech: I appreciate the question, and thank you for joining the minister on that trip to New York for the United Nations meeting.

I'll start by putting on the record that we are on target at this point to hit our 5% by the end of the year and are dedicated to hitting our 10% target by 2020. With regard to potential changes to the Oceans Act to facilitate or to speed up MPAs, right now the average length of time to implement a marine protected area is approximately seven years. There are measures being looked at that would include some type of interim measure that would put a freeze on the footprint of activity going on there. Right now, we only get protection under marine protected areas if we have full protection.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Perhaps I can stop really quickly and ask you to clarify about the freeze.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, we're out of time right now. I apologize.

Mr. Donnelly, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the secretary and his team of officials, the small army that's here with us.

Mr. Terry Beech: Feel free to utilize any of them.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Absolutely.

I want to start, too, with your announcement. On Friday, May 26, the government quietly announced they were cutting the Canadian Coast Guard's only search and rescue dive team, as well as phasing out the stream to sea or salmonoids in the classroom program.

Secretary, you've just stated that the Sea Island dive team and the stream to sea or salmonoids in the classroom program will continue. I think my question has been asked because this is essentially your first announcement, or the government's first announcement. Last week I asked the minister three times in question period and he did not give the same answer as you did. Is this the first time the government has publicly announced this reversal?

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly for the question. This is not a reversal.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: How can it not be a reversal when the government announced that it was cutting and phasing out? That's what's now confusing me, if you're not saying you're changing course and not going forward with that announcement.

Mr. Terry Beech: There were some notices put out as a matter of process. There were concerns raised from those notices.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Were the notices official?

Mr. Terry Beech: They were internal notices.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: It sounds as though you're disputing that it wasn't official, that it wasn't really what was happening because you're not reversing it.

Mr. Terry Beech: I'm saying that we are very excited about the results of the comprehensive review. We are keeping all three programs that you mentioned intact and continuing to invest a further \$1.4 billion so that we can expand on our mandate.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Okay, so that does sound like a reversal, which is welcome news. You're reinstating those. The communities that were impacted, like Mr. Hardie talked about, ran out chasing him in his community. I would say many MPs in British Columbia experienced the same thing. All political parties will welcome this announcement, so thank you for bringing that here.

I'm switching to the Coast Guard for a second, and following up on Kitsilano Coast Guard Station. Will that continue to be fully staffed 24-7 and not using on-call staff? There was concern about moving to on call.

Mr. Terry Beech: I understand the question that you're raising. In fact, we're increasing our resources at the Kitsilano base.

I'll hand it over to the commissioner to expand on this.

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson: There are different ways to staff a station with 24-7 capability. If we look at other first responder organizations, you might look at municipal fire departments, where some staff 12 hours on and 12 hours off, while some staff 24 hours, and some smaller communities don't have that kind of posture at all.

What we are in the process of doing is moving away from having three crew 12 hours, three crew 12 hours, with only a maximum of three people available at any given moment, to a posture where we have six people available at any given moment. They will be working on-duty for eight hours, plus sixteen hours of on-call, as you referred to, Mr. Donnelly. Their shifts will be staggered, so they won't all be on duty at the same time. That general statement will be supplemented by, what we call our standing orders, which will ensure that we have people at the station 24 hours a day, and that all six of those crew members are available within the response times we're committed to.

Why have we made this change to our crewing posture—

• (1020)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Sorry, Commissioner, can I jump in?

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson: Yes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: I have seven minutes and I have a few questions. Thank you for that answer.

Secretary, could I ask you which MCTS stations are still understaffed?

Mr. Terry Beech: That's a loaded question. We've invested in new equipment.

In terms of the specific staffing decisions, I would again turn to the commissioner for a more specific response.

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson: The announcements contained within the oceans protection plan and the comprehensive review are actually going to move us to a deeper or stronger posture at our MCTS. While the current MCTS stations are staffed and in fact, our training curriculum for MCTS is currently fully subscribed, we have people coming through the process. With those new trainees, we're actually going to be going to a better crewing posture. Getting into the deep numbers would just be confusing.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: May I jump in and ask, then, specifically, how do overtime amounts accumulated at Victoria and Prince Rupert MCTS centres compare with those accumulated in centres in other regions?

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson: I don't have those exact numbers in front of me. I do understand that all of the centres are running more overtime than we want to maintain over the long term, which is why we're changing the posture to actually bring those numbers down across the board.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Is there a commitment to address that?

Mr. Jeffery Hutchinson: Yes, there is.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Okay, thank you.

Turning to the Fisheries Act, Secretary, we were expecting the changes to the new Fisheries Act to be implemented this month. We were hoping to see the minister introduce the new act. Can you tell us why that isn't coming this month?

Mr. Terry Beech: Certainly. I appreciate this question, as I do the committee's work on the Fisheries Act as well. The Fisheries Act is being reviewed as part of the environmental assessment regime, alongside the National Energy Board, and the navigable waters act. We want to make sure that we're taking the time to get this right. It is likely that we will be seeing the legislation coming forward in the fall.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you.

I have a final question then. Secretary, could you tell us what money, if any, is being allocated to address the impacts of disease related to Pacific region fin-fish aquaculture, and specifically the Cohen recommendations related to aquaculture?

Mr. Terry Beech: From a high level, I think the first thing I would mention is the \$197 million that has been invested in science for over the next five years. Much of those resources or some of those resources will definitely be allocated to that. In terms of drilling down, perhaps we'll give the person who hasn't been able to speak so far, Philippe, a chance to dig more into the details.

Mr. Philippe Morel (Acting Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): A lot of programs are contributing to the response to the Cohen report. I don't have the exact number, but science and all of the management plan for salmon are contributing in our regular programming to respond to the recommendations of the report.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Morrissey, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are a collegial committee, so I'll just say on the record that there's no history of the minister appearing for supplementaries. Some have in the past and some haven't, but officials have appeared as well.

Mr. Terry Beech: For the record, I'm very happy to be here.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Yes, and the opposition has acknowledged that the substance of your answers is of a higher quality than the minister's were in the House, so I'm not sure why they were complaining that the minister wasn't here.

Mr. Secretary, one of the issues that constantly came up during hearings on MPAs was the concern about the ability.... While designating protected areas was one thing, the ability to provide ongoing protection, from enforcement and scientific perspectives, was in question. You referenced the additional funding for the protection of MPAs, which is critical if Canada is committed—which we are—to proceed with hitting the numbers.

Could you expand on how the department is going to allocate resources and what those resources will look like?

• (1025)

Mr. Terry Beech: Certainly. Thank you very much for the question.

The movement that we're making on our MPAs, or marine protected areas, is quite ambitious. In order to do that and to stay on target, we need to ensure that we deploy our resources. These

investments are going to allow us to make sure that we have the resources to get this right.

It's one thing to throw numbers around, but in the last two years, we have been in a generational hiring of new scientists within the department. The minister and I had an opportunity to actually meet with some of the scientists who were freshly hired. They are going to give us the capacity to do the kind of consultations and upkeep to the science to make sure that we are being as impactful as we can with our conservation areas. At the same time, it's not just about the people. It's also about the equipment. We've put—and are putting—more marine science into the water in these two years than we have in the last decade. This will give us the tools that our staff and scientists need so that we can make the right decisions going forward.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: That's on the science side.

How does the department plan for or envision the protection, the simple protection, because you address—

Mr. Terry Beech: You're speaking of enforcement officers?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: That was some of the testimony we heard. We have these areas, but nobody is ensuring that there's no fishing activity going on, and we have this expanding network of MPAs. We heard that in our northern trip, as well, from some of the indigenous communities. The protection is not visible.

Mr. Terry Beech: I've heard similar concerns in the consultations that I've had with various groups on the subject, but perhaps I can pass it over to Philippe for a more detailed answer.

Mr. Philippe Morel: Thank you.

Every time we create an MPA, we then implement a management plan for the MPA. It comprises the surveillance monitoring of the results, the conservation objectives that we're trying to reach and whether they're beneficial. That's more the science perspective. But there are also other programs that can be put in place by stakeholders and by us, so it can go from fisheries officers.... Every time we have a new MPA, fisheries officers are aware of that. In their surveillance, either by air or boat, they do go around the MPA and make sure there are no fisheries there.

We also have some guardian programs with indigenous groups that can contribute to that. As well, when the MPA is very small—for example, a small sponge reef that is protected by an MPA—we have examples where communities look to see if there are fisheries activities in the MPA, and if so, they report it. When they report it to us, we do act with our fisheries officers to make sure that the boundary of the MPA is well known by the people who are in there.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: You referenced hiring 900 new staff. Is this replacement staff or 900 additional staff to the normal allotment of the department?

Mr. Terry Beech: If we take before the oceans protection plan as a baseline, 900 new staff are incremental because of the oceans protection plan.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Is that simply because of the oceans protection plan?

Mr. Terry Beech: That's combined with the comprehensive review.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: That's a significant commitment by the government to enhance these.

Briefly, in the time I have left, this is one of our favourite subjects. In the budget passed, the government announced a significant new capital investment in small craft harbours. As the parliamentary secretary knows, this is near and dear to east coast politicians. How are you progressing on spending that allocation?

Mr. Terry Beech: When it comes to small craft harbours, as you know, spending the funds is not the issue. It's more a prioritization issue and making sure we're putting the money in the right place. We are prioritizing infrastructure, and small craft harbours are a big part of that. We added \$5 million in the last budget to the totals we had previously.

I have a provincial breakdown, if that would be helpful, of where the money is being spent.

• (1030)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: You can table it.

Mr. Terry Beech: Certainly, I would be happy to table the provincial breakdown afterwards.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Do I have one minute or one second?

The Chair: You have one minute, and slightly less now.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: If you could, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Terry Beech: I will certainly.

For 2017-18 that would be \$22.7 million in British Columbia, \$3.1 million in Manitoba, \$8.4 million in Ontario, \$58.4 million in Quebec, \$26.7 million in New Brunswick, \$32.4 million in Nova Scotia, \$11 million in Prince Edward Island, \$42.5 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and \$2.8 million in contingency funding that will be allocated in the year.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Briefly, is the department satisfied with the overall operating condition of small craft harbours in general?

Mr. Terry Beech: Who would like to answer that?

Philippe.

Mr. Philippe Morel: I would say yes. We can always have more. With the additional funding we received through the last several budgets, we are able to address priorities and ensure that all small craft harbours are secure and that the fishermen who use them can use them with security.

The answer is yes.

A voice: Better is always possible.

Mr. Philippe Morel: Yes, better is always possible.

A voice: Sunny ways are too.

The Chair: On that note, we go to Mr. Sopuck for five minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

Given your move to rewrite the Fisheries Act, I would like to provide just a bit of background into one of the reasons that our government changed the old Fisheries Act.

In 2009, the Auditor General wrote a report evaluating the fish habitat management program, entitled "Protecting Fish Habitat", which asserted that DFO could not demonstrate that it adequately protected fish habitat, and by extension the fisheries. A simple reversion to the old act is certainly no guarantee that habitat will be protected.

I'd like to now go to the government's response to our Atlantic salmon study. It's a decent response, with two grave omissions, in my view. Recommendation 13 of our Atlantic salmon report talked about us wanting DFO to support a grey seal harvest program to reduce seal populations to enhance the recovery of wild salmon. Grey seals are known to be significant predators. Seals were not mentioned in the government's response.

Also, recommendation 14 was that Fisheries and Oceans Canada allow a significant increase in the harvest of striped bass by the recreational fishery by lengthening the retention season and increasing catch limits where striped bass populations warrant it, which of course is at the Miramichi.

I have documentation here that talks about the social unrest that occurred in Miramichi because the season was closed for three weeks during the spawning season when it had never been closed at that time before, according to the documents I have. People were very angry and upset. I'm curious as to why the department completely disregarded the science on striped bass and our report, which strongly recommended an increase in striped bass harvest, and through the regulations you put in place, caused great unrest in that community, so much so that it affected a major fishing tournament.

Can you explain why you ignored that recommendation?

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you very much for the questions. I'll try to unpack them as best as I can.

The committee's report on Atlantic salmon was very appreciated. The entire report was very much in line with the department's goals. The government supports a humane harvest of grey seals. We are looking for opportunities to expand markets. I know that the Northwest Territories is a designated body, as is Nunavut now. We're continuing to push to try to find more markets for our whole seal products.

I will let Philippe comment on the striped bass issue on the Miramichi.

•(1035)

Mr. Philippe Morel: Stocks are historically low on the Miramichi this year. That is why we closed for nine days—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: The striped bass stocks are low...?

Mr. Philippe Morel: No, not the striped bass, the salmon.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Right, but I'm talking about striped bass.

Mr. Philippe Morel: What was your question?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: My question is why the extra restrictions on striped bass when they are known to be significant predators of Atlantic salmon smolts. This flies in the face of the recommendation we made in our report that you allow a significant increase in the harvest of striped bass. You closed the season for three weeks. I gather, from the documentation that I have received, that the communities are very upset about this. This flies in the face of the recommendation that our committee very carefully considered. Biologically, we made the right recommendation.

Why did you not follow that recommendation?

Mr. Terry Beech: I've read some of the science on the striped bass and the predation of Atlantic salmon smolts. While there is definitely some predation, I believe the science said that it wasn't necessarily significant. I remember reading the specific numbers in my report, but perhaps Philippe can expand, now that you've clarified the question.

Mr. Philippe Morel: Sorry, I don't have the exact—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I strongly disagree with that. I read the papers myself. Where do you get that information when there are 300,000 striped bass in the estuary of the Miramichi at the same time the smolts are undergoing their downstream migration? Let's say the percentage of striped bass that take the smolts may be relatively small, populations of the salmon are very low, so even if 20% of the 300,000 striped bass take smolts, that is a lot of smolts and a lot of production that is not happening. You refused to increase the.... In our view, you could have instituted a major increase in the harvest of striped bass because people prefer Atlantic salmon to striped bass. I think it's time for the department to realize that people are their clients and not the fish.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Finnigan, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the panel for appearing today.

I had another question, but I'll comment on the striped bass. Being from Miramichi everything happens four hours before the west coast, so I'm going to give you an update on that. The striped bass tournament was a great success. Over 2,000 people came. It's great for the economy.

Having said that, I was at a rally there with probably a couple of hundred people, and I addressed them on the striped bass issue. The department has expanded the fisheries and the catch you're able to take this year. Is it enough? I don't know. A lot of people will debate that it's not enough. However, their concern, and that was part of my

other question, is more the consulting process that takes place. There are means of consulting online and they also meet with different groups. But the people on the river who have been there for a long time feel they are not always part of the process. Again, I can defend science any day, but there are questions on how they came up with that number. I think that's one area where I believe we could do a little better.

I went fishing myself and I caught my limit of striped bass and I released some. It's a great thing, but again, we also want to protect the salmon on the river.

If I may move to another subject, it is small craft harbours. For the last 10 years, some harbours in my area have been really neglected, even in the management aspect. I have one right now in Pointe-Sapin where the fall lobster fishery is threatened because the harbour hasn't been dredged or maintained over the years. We're now facing a shortage of time to be able to do that, and some 40 lobster fishermen may.... I don't know where they would dock their boat. It's a long way to the next one. Right now, there's a stench in the community because of the algae that's built up.

We were talking about the resource allocation. Are we allocating more resources to be on top of that? It's very important. This is a very lucrative fishery for that small community, and we're facing a time crunch on that one particularly, so maybe I could ask you to comment on that.

•(1040)

Mr. Terry Beech: I'm going to actually handle that in two parts. I found the sheet that I remember I had read previously on the striped bass and I just want to get that on the record, and then I'll get into the small craft harbours, if that's all right.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Sure.

Mr. Terry Beech: There are going to be management decisions coming up on the striped bass, but the report that I was specifically referencing was a report conducted from 2013 to 2015. It was a three-year striped bass diet study that sampled a number of striped bass at the Miramichi estuary during May and June. Salmon smolts were found as prey, but they were located in only 1.5% of the striped bass sampled during the study. There were 48 smolts found in 28 stomachs of 1,844 striped bass sampled.

That being said, I agree that we can always have better science and we can always do more, which is part of what these investments —\$3 billion in 2016-17—are all about. It's making sure that we can better understand what is going on in our oceans so that we can make better decisions.

In terms of small craft harbours, decisions on prioritization of where the money goes are based on the status. Safety is always one big component, but then of course there's the productivity of the individual harbours. As we said during a previous question, there never seems to be enough money for small craft harbours, so this becomes a serious prioritization issue. But our government is dedicated to investing in infrastructure and in our coastal communities, and the small craft harbours are one way we do that.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Thank you.

My other question is on the question I get asked most in my riding about fisheries—recreational or not—which is the enforcement issue that has been cut way back over the last decade. I hear we're going to invest more.

Is it more in officers on the ground or in technology? How are we going to address that, because I hear there is a lot of poaching going on?

Mr. Terry Beech: I hear your concern and I share your concern. You've been very vocal about this and I appreciate that.

The resources we have are going to allow us to do more, both on the human resource side and also on the technology side.

Perhaps Philippe would like to comment further.

Mr. Philippe Morel: Sure. With the money we will receive from OPP, the oceans protection plan, and from the comprehensive review, the amount is ramping up, so it is about \$16 million a year to enhance particularly the entanglement program for whales on the east coast and the west coast, and also to complete the implementation of the intelligence team in C and P, conservation and protection, which supports the on-the-ground fisheries officers.

It is two teams of fisheries officers. One is concentrated on intelligence gathering and enables the on-the-ground fisheries officers to be more strategic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morel. I have to cut it off there. I'm sorry.

Mr. Arnold, you have five minutes, please.

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

I want to start by saying that I was disappointed when we found out the minister couldn't make it here, with all due respect to those who are here and to the parliamentary secretary for being here. Originally I was very disappointed that the minister wasn't going to be here. We have tried continually and have had very little success in bringing the minister to speak to this committee.

I'm even more disappointed now when I see the news story just now that the minister is out announcing that they're going to reduce the time frame around protecting these marine protected areas and basically establish them and then begin the consultation.

We've heard time and time again during our study of the MPA process from witnesses who continually said that the most effective and most co-operative manner of establishing these MPAs was when the discussion with the stakeholders began first, to identify the area that should be mapped out as an area of interest, and then going forward with laying out the areas.

To see that they're going to be hammering down these areas first, and then beginning the discussions is.... I guess I'm lost for words having seen the news story, but now we know why the minister isn't here today.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary or staff can advise us why this direction has been taken, that government knows best, DFO knows best, and then they'll talk to the stakeholders.

• (1045)

Mr. Terry Beech: To start, again, the minister regrets not being here. The last time I had the opportunity to address the committee in this capacity, of course, the minister was here, and that was in February, a number of months ago.

I know the minister and the entire staff of the department worked diligently to keep all members of this committee up to date. In fact, we've been able to facilitate separate briefings, which aren't a standard thing that happens in most departments, for individual members on individual issues. So we try at every turn to provide this committee and the members of this committee with the information you need to be able to do your important work at this committee.

With regard to the MPA announcement, yes, there is an intention to try to put into place a system where we can put in some level of protection, without having to wait the full average of seven years. Under the current system we basically have no protection until there is full protection. By having some sort of process where we can at least freeze the current footprint, while we investigate and consult, and then move on to a Governor in Council process—

Mr. Mel Arnold: What types of restrictions would you be putting on? Would these be fisheries closures? Would they be oil and gas exploration closures? What types of closures are you going to put in place without consulting those impacted first?

Mr. Terry Beech: The individual measures would be very specific to the individual MPA.

Mr. Mel Arnold: How are those identified without talking to the stakeholders?

Mr. Philippe Morel: I can jump in.

On the process to establish an MPA, first, we base it on the ecological and biological sensitive area, which does have a lot of stakeholder input to identify the conservation and biological objectives that could be achieved through that. After that, we move to an area of interest where what we recommend would still have some consultation before the minister declares by order.... It's an 18- to 24-month process for the minister to consult before he freezes the footprint. Then you have consultations that can last five years before he establishes an MPA. We are not shortening or trying to avoid the input from stakeholders, quite the contrary. What we are trying to achieve is that since we—

Mr. Mel Arnold: It looks like you are doing measures that are going to enable you to claim you've protected these 5% and 10% targets without actually having the full MPA process finished. Would that be correct?

Mr. Philippe Morel: It's an interim measure to make sure that the protection of what has been identified as an area of interest is actually done, and that the conservation objectives are not changed.

Mr. Mel Arnold: So you can say you've reached the 5% and 10% targets without actually having them completed as MPAs. Thank you.

On May 31, Minister LeBlanc was in Victoria and said that the stream to sea program is “a small piece of the salmonid enhancement program”. The minister went on to say the stream program is not part of DFO's regulatory mandate. What has changed since May 31, so that now this program is part of the mandate?

Mr. Terry Beech: I think the minister was referring to the Treasury Board process that we had discussed previously. By the way, if he referred to it as “small”, I would guess that would be in reference to the entirety of the salmon enhancement program, which is \$27 million—

Mr. Mel Arnold: But the entire program was announced to be cut.

Mr. Terry Beech: —and this is less than a \$2 million....

Sorry, are we out of time?

The Chair: We are, but go ahead. Finish your thought.

Mr. Terry Beech: The thought is that all those programs are staying in place, and we have almost \$3 billion in new money to do more.

The Chair: We have exactly one minute left.

Mr. McDonald, I don't suppose you have the shortest question known to this committee.

Mr. Ken McDonald: No, I probably wouldn't, and I probably won't even go with a question. What I wanted to bring up, though, Mr. Chair, is that an earlier witness, Dr. Devillers, mentioned that an MPA, which is in my province, my hometown of Eastport, is not doing what it was really put in place or designed to do. I do know a local fisherman who played a big role in that area actually being named as an MPA. I would ask the permission of the committee to invite Mr. George Feltham to either appear in person or by video to talk to us about the MPA, since he probably worked the hardest, as a fisherman, to get it designated as an MPA, and see if his testimony coincides with what we heard today.

● (1050)

The Chair: Are there any objections to that?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That would be in the fall, though. Right?

The Chair: Yes, of course, it would be in the fall.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That's a good idea.

The Chair: It is duly noted, and Mr. McDonald will get hold of Mr. Feltham as soon as possible.

Thank you to our guests, Ms. Blewett, Mr. Morel, Mr. Matson, Commissioner Hutchinson, and of course, our parliamentary secretary, Mr. Beech, the member of Parliament for Burnaby North—Seymour.

Thank you, folks. Have yourselves a great, productive, busy summer.

We are now adjourned.

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