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# Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald





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Friday, October 28, 2022

• (1305)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 38 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

Before we proceed, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For interpretation, those on Zoom have the choice at the bottom of their screen of floor, English or French. Those in the room can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. Please address all comments through the chair. Finally, I'll remind you that screenshots and taking photos of your screen are not permitted. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on January 20, 2022, the committee is resuming its study of the North Atlantic right whale.

We'll now go to opening remarks. I would like to welcome our first panel of witnesses. Representing the New Brunswick Crab Processors Association, we have Gilles Thériault. Representing the Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles, we are joined by Charles Poirier, president, and Léona Renaud, director. Appearing as an individual, we have Mr. Glen Best, fish harvester and owner of Glen and Jerry Fisheries Inc. I'm sure Mr. Best has presented to committee before.

Thank you for taking the time to appear—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I would like you to confirm to the committee that the people attending the meeting virtually have carried out successful sound checks.

[English]

**The Chair:** All the tests had been done before I said we were good to start.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for taking the time to appear today. You will each have up to five minutes for an opening statement.

I invite Mr. Thériault to begin, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Thériault (President, New Brunswick Crab Processors Association):** Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for inviting me to discuss the current situation regarding the status of the North Atlantic right whale as a species at risk.

My name is Gilles Thériault, and I am the president of the New Brunswick Crab Processors Association. Incidentally, I first got involved in fisheries development in Canada 50 years ago this year.

**Voices:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Thank you very much.

Not to boast, but I have to tell you that I've seen it all over the years.

The appearance of North Atlantic right whales in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence in 2017 led to a major uproar, both here and elsewhere, after several unfortunate incidents that resulted in mortalities. Those incidents involved whales becoming entangled in trap lines and collisions between these marine mammals and vessels in our waterways. Six years later, we still haven't recovered. That's a really long crisis for this day and age.

No industry was harder hit or more strongly blamed than the snow crab industry, particularly by the U.S., but also around the world.

On behalf of the snow crab industry, I testified that we shifted from our initial reaction of seeing right whales as a nuisance to devoting an unprecedented level of effort to saving a species at risk. I've never seen anything like it in my career. This is being done as part of a new approach, one that favours management plans and innovative research and development programs for fishing gear modifications. The goal is co-existence, so that fishers can continue to fish thanks to exceptional management measures put in place to protect whales.

The collaboration on this issue between processors and fishers has been unprecedented. The processors created a program called the Fisheries Improvement Program, and we launched the Fisheries Improvement Project. The fishers' associations are carrying out numerous projects to experiment with fishing gear, including one using on-demand buoy technology.

During this process, I've also observed outstanding collaboration between processors, fishers and both federal and provincial departments. Our objectives are to establish annual fishing plans and to facilitate the implementation of other important measures, such as harbour breakouts. Along the way, we have had our disagreements and many long discussions, but we have always kept our goal of co-existence in mind, to give whales as much protection as possible while allowing our snow crab quotas to be captured to the extent possible. In my opinion, the work isn't over and the battle hasn't been won.

I have to tell you that I'm pinning a lot of hopes on on-demand buoy technology, more commonly known as ropeless fishing. I think that fishers have put so much effort into developing this fishing technique that they have a head start on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. DFO has some catching up to do in terms of developing fisheries management measures using this new technology.

This year, 18 fishers used this technology, and they were able to fish in the closed areas where whales were believed to be present. For the first time, a significant amount of crab was fished commercially using this new technology. This is a major breakthrough that's creating a lot of interest in all quarters. It's a first, and in the not-so-distant future, it could change the way all trap fishing is done in closed areas, to protect species at risk like the right whale.

Our fishers are pioneering a revolutionary fishing technique that I believe will one day be used around the world.

• (1310)

DFO urgently needs to support the fishers' efforts by immediately implementing management measures and scientific analyses to prevent chaos at sea and expedite the growth of this new technology in as quick and orderly a manner as possible.

Thank you for listening.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We'll now go to a joint statement. I now invite Ms. Renaud and Mr. Poirier to give their opening statement, please.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charles Poirier (President, Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles):** Hello.

My name is Charles Poirier, and I'm the president of the Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles, or RPPCI. I'm here with Léona Renaud, the director of our organization.

RPPCI is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2015 by lobster fishers. Today, it represents more than 200 coastal fishers

from the Magdalen Islands, fishing a variety of species, and it's the largest organization in Quebec.

RPPCI's mission is to promote the collective interests of coastal fishers and support their advancement. It also seeks to harness fishers' collective strengths, at both the local and national levels, and to develop partnerships and common strategies with other associations and groups to move forward on issues.

RPPCI believes that the coastal fishery is, and always will be, the fishery that is the best for the marine environment, the most sustainable and the most beneficial for the local economy.

Since it was founded, RPPCI has carried out a number of scientific projects for the advancement of the fisheries, while taking into account the climate change that affects us all and the preservation of ocean resources. RPPCI is a member of several fisheries-related committees and working groups.

Today, we want to outline our concerns about the presence of the North Atlantic right whale in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its impact on our fishers. We submitted a brief to the committee. I won't read out the whole thing. Right now, I want to talk about the current situation and what RPPCI is proposing.

As mentioned, RPPCI has participated in many presentations and meetings on the subject of adapting fishing gear with a view to reducing the risk of entanglement for North Atlantic right whales. Numerous discussions have also been held among fishers in the Magdalen Islands regarding the possibility of modifying their fishing gear.

No matter what species they fish, fishers on the Magdalen Islands unanimously agree that, given the ocean currents around the Magdalen Islands and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it would be unrealistic to think the types of ropes tested by lobster fishers around the Gaspé Peninsula are suitable for the ocean currents to which the Magdalen Islands are exposed. With concrete slabs already weighing 1,700 pounds, there is no question that Magdalen Islands fishers will need gear that can support at least 2,000 pounds.

RPPCI therefore proposed concrete steps that could have been taken in the spring of 2022 and that would have reduced the risk of entanglement for right whales moving around the Magdalen Islands. RPPCI is asking Fisheries and Oceans Canada to amend the grid closure protocol and the 10- and 20-fathom protocol lines around the Magdalen Islands. The lines that RPPCI is proposing are shown in the table attached to our brief.

Furthermore, given that the Magdalen Islands sector is part of the right whales' transit corridor in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, RPPCI is proposing to use its boat *RPPCI* to detect and monitor whales as they move through the waters around the Magdalen Islands, especially in fishing area 22, where Magdalen Islands lobster fishers are concentrated.

When a whale is detected in area 22 at a depth of 20 fathoms or less, RPPCI is willing to send its boat and its captain to monitor the whale until it leaves the sector. However, if the whale remains in area 22 for more than 48 hours, RPPCI agrees to an "active" closure, where certain grids would be closed while the whale is monitored more closely. RPPCI proposes that, before the grid closure protocol is triggered, the whale should have to be sighted in the area for two consecutive days before the closure and the closure should not last more than 48 hours.

● (1315)

If the right whale is still in the fishing area at the end of the two-day period, RPPCI would like DFO to modify the protocol regarding the duration of the grid closure. Instead of a 14-day closure from the outset, reduce the closure to seven days.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the Magdalen Islands are right in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. All whales travelling through the gulf swim by the islands. Our little community is home to 325 lobster fishers and a dozen crab fishers. Lobster fishing is the biggest economic activity in the Magdalen Islands. When the lobster fishery closes, the local economy essentially shuts down. Without lobster fishing, the economy of the Magdalen Islands falls apart.

That is why we are requesting changes to the protocol. We previously asked for this in 2021, because all of the whales that enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence swim by the Magdalen Islands. That's dangerous for our community. We want to protect them, of course, but as far as we know, no whale has ever come near our sector at a depth of less than 10 fathoms.

Today was our first opportunity to present our brief to you. We want to thank those who invited us to—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. Poirier. I am going to have to cut you off there. We have gone way over the five-minute time limit. Hopefully, anything else you had to add will come out in round two questioning.

We'll now go to Mr. Best for five minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Glen Best (Fish Harvester, Glen and Jerry Fisheries Inc., As an Individual):** Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for giving me the opportunity to present before the committee today.

My brother and I are fourth-generation fishers who operate 18-foot to 65-foot fishing vessels and employ 18 crew members. The crab fishery represents approximately 85% of our revenue. As the Newfoundland snow crab fishery had a landed value of \$624 million in 2021, you can appreciate how important the crab fishery is to our fishing operation as well as rural communities and Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole. Without shellfish, rural com-

munities would not resemble what they are today, but rather struggle to survive.

I have fished for 34 years, operating out of Fogo on the northeast coast of Newfoundland. I have to say that every time I see whale, and I've seen hundreds, it's still an amazing experience. I want to see our marine ecosystem thrive while doing the least harm possible. In those 34 years, I have never seen a right whale, let alone an entanglement. Only once have I ever heard of a whale entanglement of any species in crab gear.

If you reference the interactive North Atlantic right whale map on the DFO website and select October 2015 to present, this map shows only four confirmed right whale sightings on the east and northeast coast in this time period. The clerk can forward you the link upon request. One of these sightings occurred in September while three occurred in November. During these months there is no crab or lobster fisheries taking place and indeed very little fixed gear activity of any type.

Still with no impact on right whales in these areas, we are still mandated to use new whalesafe ropes that are not proven effective, while places like Nunavut and British Columbia are exempt because they are deemed not to have whale entanglements. As harvesters we have taken measures in the past to protect whales and satisfy the MMPA rules, including rope markings to identify area and fishery in case of an entanglement, plus minimizing slack rope at the surface.

Since these measures were introduced, has there been any evidence that these fisheries from the east and northeast coast or Labrador fisheries have entangled right whales?

In regard to whalesafe rope, you have to appreciate the environment we operate in. We need to impress upon DFO that a one-size-fits-all solution doesn't work for all fisheries and regions. In the gulf, some harvesters operate single traps, which increases the density of vertical lines in the water. In Newfoundland, we use fleets of pots with about 70 pots per fleet, with one vertical line at each end, posing much less risk for these whales.

During the limited consultation last winter, fishers were informed that the 1,700-pound weak link would be implemented in all fisheries. You have to appreciate that includes a lobster fisher in two fathoms of water, crab fishery in 200 fathoms to turbot fishing on the edge of the continental shelf in depths down to 650 fathoms.

Our vessels fish in very harsh conditions starting April 1 with crab, early in the year to avoid mortality from softshell as the season progresses. With that early start comes challenging conditions from ice to heavy seas. It is not uncommon to haul gear in four- to six-metre swells. Just picture a 65-foot vessel at 150 tonnes hauling up a fleet of crab pots from 1,200 feet of water full of snow crab in four- to six-metre swells. As the vessel rises on the swells the 1,700-pound weak link will certainly break. The physics don't add up. Ropeless technology is far from proven or practical. Why are we trying to create a solution for a problem we don't have in our fishing areas in the first place?

North Atlantic right whales have been in the media often, with groups such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch advising people to avoid east coast Canadian crab and lobster. This information is not correct and portrays that all crab and lobster fisheries in eastern Canada are harmful to right whales. The department instead should be prioritizing their work in areas where there is deemed to be a problem and focus their resources there, while educating environmental groups and promoting the positive side of the crab fisheries where there are not any entanglements.

It is so easy to place blame on the fishing industry when gear seen on a whale is tangible. How much research is done on other industries to see what the effects are? Noise from busy shipping lanes, pollution and seismic activity that emits huge underwater air blasts are all concerns for fishers. Maybe you can understand why we feel unfairly targeted.

In closing, I will say no fisherman wants or can afford to lose gear. We have taken measures in the past, including biodegradable twine in crab pots, to allow escapement from ghost gear. With these regulations for implementing whalesafe rope, we are actually increasing the chance of more ghost gear and increasing the risk to the marine ecosystem, the very opposite of the goal. The department is trying to fix a problem that doesn't exist in one area, but it is actually causing a much bigger one.

The department must not forget that, with all the new rules and regulations, managing the species that live in the ocean is critically important but, in turn, managing the people who work on it and earn their livelihoods from it must not be forgotten.

• (1320)

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Best. That was dead on the mark for your time.

We'll now begin the first round of questions.

We'll first go to Mr. Small for six minutes or less, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for taking part in this very important study, a study that will have an effect on the social and economic well-being of all affected.

My first question is going to be for Mr. Poirier.

In which direction does the Gulf Stream flow? Does it bring water from the United States into your area?

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** Do you know where the Gulf of St. Lawrence is? The Magdalen Islands are right in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The whales enter through the Cabot Strait and head directly for the area around the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula. That's where the whales migrate and feed for the rest of the season.

That means they have to pass directly through the Magdalen Islands, which—

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Mr. Poirier, what I meant was this: Does the water coming into the Gulf of St. Lawrence not come up the eastern seaboard? The current direction, does it bring water from the eastern seaboard of the U.S. into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** I don't know enough about geography to answer that question.

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** I don't think the Labrador Current comes down through from Labrador that way. I think, from what I can find.... I just wanted you to enlighten us on it.

Would it be possible that dead whales could be coming up from the United States into your area with the current in the Gulf Stream and not, in fact, dying where they're found but dying south of the border?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** I can't answer that question.

What I do know is that the whales entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence follow the Gulf Stream, and they come directly from the United States. We all know that. They migrate here, and then they go back south to the U.S. in November or December. I can say that much for certain.

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Thank you.

Mr. Best, if this ropeless technology comes in, how difficult will it be for you to avoid the gear of fellow fishers or even your own gear? When you're setting up your gear, you could set it up on top of your own or others. How would you find ropeless technology in your area?

**Mr. Glen Best:** I'll have to say, from limited consultation, that I really don't have a lot of information that's been given or that I know of on this coast. I don't really know how it will work and the impacts it would have on us because we don't have the information. That leads to the point that, this implementation in a short period of time, I don't know how it can proceed.

In terms of gear conflict, we have lots of gear conflict as it is when we have markings at the surface. Nobody has told us how ropeless gear will work, how we will avoid another person's gear or how we'll even know that person's gear is there when we go there to fish. Sometimes you can get a high concentration of fishers in one area, so these are a lot of questions that I don't really know the answers to. I've thought about those and it really concerns me, but I don't really have a definite answer for you. All I know is that there are so many unknowns.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Are you satisfied with the level of consultation that DFO has had with harvesters at this stage in this process?

**Mr. Glen Best:** I can say adamantly that, no, we're not satisfied. You probably heard from Mr. Keith Sullivan in his presentation a few days ago.

I was part of those two Zoom meetings last year. I was in on two and I think there were probably three. That's probably the limit of the consultation that was presented to us as fish harvesters. All that was talked about were ideas of what we could do and some of the different technologies that could be tried and tested. There was nothing concrete. There was nothing that would tell us that they have this straightened out, and we can go forward on January 1, 2023, to confidently use this gear, retrieve the gear and not have a bunch of gear sitting at the bottom causing another environmental mess.

• (1330)

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Mr. Best, previous witnesses stated that they had a goal to reduce the risk of entanglement by 90%.

Given the facts that you just outlined, what do you think the risk of entanglement would be for right whales in the fixed-gear fishery in 2J, 3K and 3L?

**Mr. Glen Best:** Just to be clear, are you talking solely about right whales?

**Mr. Clifford Small:** I mean right whales, based on the time of year they've been sighted.

**Mr. Glen Best:** I can say with confidence that it's a 0% chance.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Thank you.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Cormier for six minutes or less, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Thériault.

Mr. Thériault, I congratulate you for your 50 years of involvement in the fishing industry. You look too young to have 50 years of experience. All joking side, I also want to commend you for the work you're doing with McGraw Seafood, a plant located in the riding I represent. I just want my colleagues to know that this plant is owned exclusively by the Elsipogtog First Nation. I also want to give a shout-out to Jake Augustine, the plant manager.

In my opinion, the efforts that fishers and fishing industry stakeholders have been making for the past five years are nothing short of miraculous. We both know there's room for improvement as re-

gards the flexibility of the measures and getting the fishery more back to normal in the coming years.

Mr. Thériault, do you think it would be possible to offer a bit more flexibility in terms of the measures and the temporary and seasonal closures? Last year, the gulf fishery was almost completely closed, although most of the quotas had been caught.

Is it possible to offer flexibility while ensuring that our markets, which are very significant in the United States and around the world, are not affected?

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** That's a very important question, but it's also very tricky.

We always try to design management plans that will enable us to fish efficiently and capture the quotas for this type of fishery while also protecting the whales.

The current management plan doesn't prevent entanglements. There are no guarantees in that regard. I don't think it's even possible to guarantee that whales will be fully protected, short of closing down the fishery entirely, as the Monterey Bay aquarium recommends. I think that's a preposterous idea, by the way.

On the one hand, I understand where the fishers are coming from. They're always trying to find ways to make their job easier while protecting the whales. On the other hand, I also see where the Government of Canada is coming from. It's resistant to the idea of making the measures more flexible, because a whale could accidentally get entangled in ropes and die.

In other words, I understand the government's reluctance and I also understand the fishers' concerns. The fishers are very familiar with the situation, and they don't have a selfish attitude.

I don't have a ready-made answer for you, but maybe there isn't one. The fishers' argument is reasonable, and it takes the sensitive nature of the issue into account, but I understand that we need to proceed with caution.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** In my region, there's a lot of talk about ropeless traps, and it seems to be working well. Experiments have been going on for three years. In other regions, like Nova Scotia and the Bay of Fundy, they could be a bit harder to use because of the currents.

The technology that's supposed to be in place for 2023 is weak ropes, meaning low-density ropes. Unfortunately, the tests haven't been conclusive.

If we want to keep whales safe and have less rope in the water, should we wait for more conclusive test results before going ahead with a technology that could be more harmful, both to whales and to the crab and lobster markets?

• (1335)

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Mr. Cormier, like a good politician, you may be trying to make me say what you want to hear.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Not at all. I want your opinion.

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** I fully agree with you in this case, because the effectiveness of these measures hasn't been proven and there's a safety issue for fishers. I don't think low-breaking-strength rope is the solution. I strongly believe that there should be no rope in the water. I'm a firm believer in on-demand buoy technology. The buoy sits on the sea bottom, there's no rope, and when it's time to harvest the catch, you raise the buoy to the surface, empty the trap and lower it back down.

As I was telling you, this year, 18 of our fishers tried out this technology, and I spent a lot of time talking to the captains to get their opinion. The ones who weren't believers initially and said this method was silly became fervent converts. This is a revolutionary approach that gets ropes out of the water. I think it deserves to be promoted more. We're not quite experts at using this method, but it seems obvious to me that this is the way of the future, especially in comparison with low-breaking-strength rope.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** All right.

Thank you.

[English]

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

Your six minutes are up.

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

[Translation]

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

Mr. Poirier, the Magdalen Islands area is very special, as is its economy. The socio-economic balance of the islands is directly related to the fishery, based on what you've told us. Having been there several times myself, I can confirm that. All the islanders talk about fishing. Their lives are built around lobster fishing.

I would like you to comment on what would happen if DFO decided to maintain its 2023 deadline for the implementation of gear that hasn't been tested properly or that has given inconclusive results.

In the short term, for the next fishing year, what repercussions would this have on fishers and the entire economy of the Magdalen Islands?

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** Let me give you some idea of how things stand. There are 325 fishers in the Magdalen Islands area. That means a lot of traffic. Because there are so many fishers, the traps are practically sitting on top of each other. Between two traps on the same line, the depth can vary by about 20 feet.

Furthermore, the sea bottom in these waters is very rocky, which makes it hard to fish. If the planned requirements are maintained and we have to use the low-breaking-strength rope that's currently being tested, our traps will stay in the water. Whales won't get en-

tangled, but our traps will stay in the water. That will be far from acceptable from an environmental standpoint.

We have 273 traps each worth \$100 to \$150, so it wouldn't be a great solution from an economic standpoint either.

I myself took part in a test involving fishing gear using rope designed to break when exposed to more than 1,700 pounds of tension. Unfortunately, I don't have a very high opinion of the result. The rope broke on its own, due to the low breaking strength. It wasn't a whale that broke it, it was the weight of my boat and the sea bottom.

We would be creating an ecological problem that makes no sense. The traps left on the sea bottom will break down after a year, but until then, they'll keep catching lobster on their own. That won't be very cost-effective for Magdalen Islands fishers. It's not every day that we replace a dozen traps.

That's why we are requesting that the deadline be postponed to 2025 to give us more time. It's not because we're against the principle. Quite the contrary.

I was listening to Mr. Thériault's comments earlier about ropeless buoys. I would love for him to come see what's going on in the Magdalen Islands sector. I don't know if you know this, but speaking for myself, even if I see another fisher's buoys next to mine, our traps end up on top of each other from time to time. If we don't see where our neighbour is, we're bound to do each other harm.

It's not just a matter of one trap and one buoy. For us, it's seven traps and two buoys.

• (1340)

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** Thank you, Mr. Poirier.

That was very informative.

You're proposing a dynamic approach where a boat could start monitoring a whale as soon as it enters the corridor of your fishing area. Then it would know exactly where the whale is, what direction it's travelling in and how fast it's going. Would that help you make the fishery safer?

Is that approach a good short-term option for protecting both whales and your fishing activities?

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** For starters, we—

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Poirier, please turn on your video and camera. We're suppose to be able to see you as you're speaking.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** It's not working.

I can go over to where Ms. Renaud is, if you like.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. You go ahead as is. I don't want to lose you and try to get you signed in again. Leave it as it is.



[Translation]

**Mr. Charles Poirier:** Okay.

Getting back to the subject of our boat, RPPCI has acquired a scientific vessel that we use for our projects.

I should start by noting that all scientists agree that whales aren't believed to dive deeper than 20 fathoms. The Magdalen Islands is on a 20-fathom plateau.

From time to time, a whale will come close to the islands. Whales swim at a rate of six knots, so at that speed, in 10 hours, it will be 60 miles away. It's gone. Based on the established protocol, as soon as a whale is reported, the protocol is put in place and the sector is closed after 48 hours. That gives us 48 hours to move our traps. However, after this 48-hour period, the whale has reached another sector. That means the government is closing a sector where there aren't any whales anymore. That is why we were ready to offer our captain and our boat to escort any whale as soon as it's sighted, to make sure it doesn't get entangled in our gear and doesn't come near the islands.

If there's a whale near the islands, we're prepared to close our sector, and we'll do it gladly. But as I was explaining earlier, we're right in the middle of the gulf. All whales swim by the Magdalen Islands. If 153 have been detected, those 153 all went by the islands, because, don't forget, the islands are located in a whale transit corridor.

Whales don't stop to feed near the islands, because there is no mackerel or herring there anymore. The only species we fish now are lobster and crab. Whales aren't going to come feed on lobster in waters one fathom deep. As long as they keep going to feed in the area around the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula, they will have to swim by the Magdalen Islands. But we don't want to relive the same experience we went through two years ago.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Poirier. We've gone way over time in Madame Desbiens' six minutes.

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

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses here today.

First, I want to say a big congratulations to you, Monsieur Thériault, for 50 years in the fishing industry. That is quite the accomplishment. I am certain I have a lot that I can learn from you. Perhaps we can continue the conversation after.

I do have a question. You spoke about processors, fishers and federal and provincial departments coming together to set up annual fishing plans. I want to get some clarification. Maybe I missed something, but is that you coming together, as well, to talk about the whalesafe fishing gear and the North Atlantic right whale? Are there any discussions around that?

I'm trying to understand if there has been consultation conducted that you have seen around the particulars of how we move forward, cohabitating with the North Atlantic right whale.

• (1345)

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Yes, there's a fishing plan for every fishery. It's a yearly fishing plan. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, at the beginning of the season, will say, "Here are the regulations, the same as last year," or "We are changing this or changing that." That happens on a regular basis.

Since the arrival of the whales in 2017, the fishing plans and the regulations have changed substantially, and, I would argue, rightfully so, because of the presence of the right whales and because of the incidents where we had entanglements and mortalities.

I have witnessed a great effort in co-operation and collaboration to come up with the right plan, and that was more significant than I was used to, over my years. I have never seen the industry.... I was saying the same thing to the processors and the fishermen. Quite often, we tend to butt heads, but when it comes to the right whales, it's impressive to me how everybody is really working together. It's not that we agree on everything, as we are hearing today, but the effort that is being made by everybody to try to work it out is very impressive. It has led to some improvement of this fishing plan from year to year.

We need to continue to have that exchange. We need to hear from Mr. Poirier again, and also from Mr. Best and others. We need to continue to do that. We have made strides of progress, but we can't say, "Yes, we have the right solution; now everything is fine." No, we need to keep on working and keep on making those changes.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you.

Because it has come up multiple times in this study already, could you touch on some of the work you're doing alongside first nations? I'm wondering how that plays into the consultation processes and planning you're seeing, moving forward, and whether there have been any pieces you've seen, with first nations, relating to the protection of the North Atlantic right whale, while, of course, ensuring that the livelihoods of fishers are also protected.

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Yes, I had the honour and privilege of working for first nations. I'm a consultant. I organized a fishermen's organization called the Maritime Fishermen's Union. I left that 35 years ago and have been doing consulting ever since. Recently, I have been focusing my efforts on the integration of first nations into the commercial fishery. I'm a strong believer in the Marshall decision and truth and reconciliation. That's very important.

Therefore, I am also quite involved with the Elsipogtog First Nation community, of which, by the way, I'm so proud. This community now has the most modern snow crab plant in Canada. We just built a \$25-million snow crab plant. We're making money, and the profits are going back to the community to create jobs and so on. It's a wonderful collaboration, because the plant is located in the Acadian community. It's a great collaboration between the Acadians and Mi'kmaq. When you come to visit our plant—and you are all invited—you'll see a big sign: a collaboration between the Mi'kmaq and Acadians.

Regarding the snow crab, the Elsipogtog First Nation has its own snow crab quota and we have 35 vessels fishing. That's very important to the community. It brings in millions of dollars every year and, yes, we make sure they are consulted. I would fight tooth and nail if they weren't. The process is interesting, because it's twofold. There is a separate consultation directly with the first nations, but they're also invited to partake in the broader forums of the advisory committees and so on.

To answer your question, they are quite active in this process and, of course, very preoccupied by the whale situation, as we all are.

• (1350)

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you very much.

My last question is for Mr. Best.

First of all, I want to highlight that I'm also originally from Newfoundland. It's always nice to see fellow Newfoundlanders here, although I'm on the west coast now and that's home.

I'm wondering if you can speak to the whalesafe gear adoption fund. What are your thoughts on how we can best move forward with this funding, in order to ensure we're moving in the right direction and have the gear in place to help protect the North Atlantic right whale, while also ensuring we're not losing gear out at sea, like you spoke about?

**Mr. Glen Best:** I don't really know how to answer that question, because there hasn't been that much information passed on about the whalesafe fund.

Going forward, the conditions we fish under.... If we're going to continue to operate under the fact that we have to have a 1,700-pound breaking strength.... We fish in depths of 650 fathoms, which is about 1,100 or 1,200 metres for some fisheries. I can't get past the idea of how it's going to be practical to use these whalesafe ropes in the conditions and depths we fish in.

What we fish on our coast is probably totally different from what you fish in the gulf. I'm not familiar with the depths and that kind of thing in the gulf, but I don't know how we can move forward under the criteria currently in place.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Barron. You've gone a bit over now.

We'll now give five minutes to Mr. Bragdon.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to start by congratulating Mr. Thériault for his 50 years in the fishing industry. That's amazing.

[*English*]

That's excellent.

It's good to be here with you all today. Thank you to the witnesses who've shared.

I have some questions and I'll try to move through them as quickly as possible. I'll open it up. Maybe I'll address this first one to the 50-year gentleman, Mr. Thériault.

How important is exporting your catch to the U.S., at this particular time? How would your industry be impacted if you weren't able to sell to that market?

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** It would be devastating; 90% of our production goes to the U.S.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Ninety per cent.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Yes. Many rural communities would just disappear. It's that serious.

The snow crab fishery has saved the fishery in Newfoundland, by the way, after the disaster with cod, and now it also is so important everywhere, including the Magdalen Islands and including all of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is essential, and we have to take seriously what we're hearing from groups like the Monterey Bay Aquarium. We just can't say, "Aw, this is fluff." These groups have a lot of influence in a lot of places, among some big retailers and some wholesalers, so we need to make sure that our story is told because we are doing much more than anybody in the world that I've seen. I study these things in terms of trying to establish a method of cohabitation, ensuring that we can earn our livelihoods while protecting the right whale.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Thank you. I agree so much on that.

As it relates to what you just said, it's so important that our story gets told because we have some of the best practices in the world for fish harvesting and the harvesting of lobster and snow crab. We take great care of our waters. There are no better protectors of our oceans than those who depend upon the oceans for their livelihoods. I think it's a great story, and that story needs to be told. The industry needs to be defended in this regard.

How much consultation has taken place with the lobster and snow crab fishers and other fixed-gear fishers as it relates to this?

I'll start with Mr. Best first and then Mr. Poirier. Just give as quick an answer as possible because I have a couple of other questions I want to get in here.

**Mr. Glen Best:** Are you talking strictly about consultation on the whalesafe rope?

• (1355)

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Yes, exactly. How much input or opportunity for input did they provide you on this?

**Mr. Glen Best:** Like I said earlier, there were three Zoom meetings this winter—virtual meetings—and that was pretty much the consultation process. Here in Newfoundland and on the northeast coast, there hasn't been much consultation with harvesters. I know there has been some push-back from harvesters.

I mean, there is some work being done now—to what extent, I'm not quite sure—but we're still not at a place where there's work done so that we can safely say that we can move forward and have whalesafe rope or ropeless gear. There are a lot of questions that have to be answered in terms of ropeless gear. If you're in 200 fathoms or 600 fathoms of water, are you going to be able to use ropeless gear? There are so many unanswered questions, and these things are not proven.

There hasn't been a lot of consultation.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** You'd say that, basically, the response from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and its decision-making process to your organization's input and others' has been less than satisfactory, I would take it, at this point.

**Mr. Glen Best:** That would be a correct statement, yes. It's less than satisfactory.

I know that these measures have been talked about for a while, but it seems like now that we're at the midnight hour, the pressure is on to try to get this whalesafe rope or ropeless gear in place. It's just not realistic and practical to be able to do it at this point in time.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Excellent.

I just want to follow up on that. What is the impact of the dynamic in temporary fisheries closures on the time and fuel required to remove and set traps every time they shut this down because of a sighting or something like this? Do you have an idea of what the cost is, and does it put your harvesters at greater risk every time there is a closure as a result of a sighting because of this new gear that's being experimented with?

Can you comment on that, Mr. Best?

**Mr. Glen Best:** As I said in my opening remarks, if you look at the interactive right whale map.... I mean, for 2015 to present day, there have been four sightings of right whales on the east and north-east coasts. Those were when there was very little fixed gear and absolutely no crab or lobster fisheries in place, so we haven't had issues with right whales.

Like I said, the chances of me getting a right whale is practically zero. We don't have right whales. We haven't had closures. We don't face the same issues that they have in the gulf when they get a concentration of right whales and have closed fishing areas. We're lucky that we don't have that problem. Whether it will come someday with the changing environment, I don't know, but right now, we don't have closures. We don't have those problems, so it begs the question: Why are we trying to fix a problem on the east and north-east coasts when we don't have one?

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Thank you, Mr. Best.

Do you want to comment on that, Mr. Poirier or—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bragdon. You've gone way over.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Mr. Morrissey, please, for five minutes or less, and I stress the "less".

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

He subbed on a committee I chaired, and he told me he would settle it here. I'm teasing.

Monsieur Thériault, it's good to see you. You've been a visionary in the east coast fishing industry for years. A lot of times, your ideology was not always appreciated by the fishers themselves.

This committee has heard extensively the common themes that everybody wants to protect the whale and everybody is aware of the consequences if we go back to a year like 2017 or even close to that. Earlier you said it would be "devastating" to the marketplace. It has become clear that one size will not fit all as the approach. The other common theme is that where fishers and whales interact, then something must give, and not all of the gulf is where fishers and whales interact.

My question goes to a statement you made in your opening comments, or maybe it was in an answer, where you referenced that DFO must accompany fishers on the road as we develop this new technology. Could you expand on that a bit more, on how DFO must accompany fishers on the journey?

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Yes, absolutely. It was a very important point that I was trying to make in my remarks.

First of all, I want to be clear that the situation in Newfoundland is totally different. There are no whales there, so I totally agree with the preoccupations about putting in regulations that impact areas where there are no whales.

When I talk about ropeless, I'm talking about a fishery that is happening in the closed areas. I'm not recommending or suggesting that we have ropeless everywhere, but in those areas, at one point it was almost half or more of our fishing grounds. If you could continue to fish and protect the whales...and I'm convinced that this methodology or technique of having no ropes in the water in a closed area but still being allowed to put traps in there would be fantastic. It's happening right now.

My point was that 18 fishermen did it this year, and they were very successful. Some were able to capture their quota because they were allowed to fish in those closed areas. They actually fished in closed areas. What I'm saying right now is that we have to plan for this. We need regulations on how close to be to each other, on how many traps per boat and on whether all the fishermen are going to be allowed. We need to make sure that....

The fishermen are moving very fast. This is creating a lot of excitement. As I said, they didn't believe in it at all. Now it's the way of the future. We need to make sure that we have the proper regulations in place for fishing with this technology in those closed areas. My sense is that the department is lagging behind right now in this area.

• (1400)

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** To be clear, it's the area of regulating the fishery as it would relate to using ropeless technology. Am I correct on that?

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Exactly.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Okay. Thank you.

I would appreciate your opinion on another point that was made. We've heard a wide range of opinions. Canada, and a lot of times the department, will get criticized a lot, and I can be one of the critics. But it has become clear that there's a lot of consensus that DFO acted in a reasonable way following 2017, when we were hit with the high numbers of whales, in moving to protect the whales and also to protect Canada's reputation in the international marketplace.

Is that a fair assessment, from your perspective?

**Mr. Gilles Thériault:** Yes, it is from my perspective. This was really a bomb. As a country, we had to react quickly. It was uncharted territory.

I'm not criticizing the government. The government and the department have been doing a tremendous amount of work, as far as I'm concerned. We're still feeling our way through this. It doesn't mean they're right all the time, but I am not criticizing the attempts the Government of Canada has made to try to address the issue. On the contrary, I applaud it.

Having said that, we need to further our work. We need to perfect it and make sure we continue to do this. For example, there was the question of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch recommending that Americans stop buying snow crab and lobsters. How ridiculous is that? The government took a pretty good stand. I thought it was okay, but we need to be able to do more on that level.

We, as processors, were quite involved. I didn't get a chance to talk about this, but I'm really impressed with the fisheries improvement program we have. We were certified as an industry with MSC—Marine Stewardship Council—and because of the whale entanglement, our MSC was taken away from us. A lot of our buyers were saying that, if we are not certified MSC anymore, they're not sure they can buy our product. This is what's happening.

Now we're taking steps by including the fishermen, working with government, working with NGOs including the New England Aquarium, and working with our buyers. We've created this group on this project called the fisheries improvement project, so we can return to our MSC certification.

This is tremendous coordination, so I'm not knocking anybody. I'm just saying that this is evolving very fast. DFO needs to do more to make sure its in sync with how fast this is going in terms of ropeless technology.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll let Mr. Morrissey know I let him go a little bit over actually, even though he didn't recognize me at the former committee, as he mentioned.

I want to say thank you to our witnesses for appearing here today and sharing their knowledge.

We'll take a recess for a couple of minutes as we get ready for the second panel.

We're suspended.

• (1400)

(Pause)

• (1405)

**The Chair:** We're back.

I'd like to welcome our second panel of witnesses.

Representing the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we have with us Marc Mes, director general, fleet and maritime services, Canadian Coast Guard. We have Robert Wight, director general, vessel procurement, Canadian Coast Guard. Virtually, we have Mr. Nabaa, director general, marine construction sector.

I believe Mr. Mes is going to give a statement for five minutes or less, please.

• (1410)

**Mr. Marc Mes (Director General, Fleet and Maritime Services, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members.

My name is Marc Mes. I am the director general of fleet and maritime services at the Canadian Coast Guard. I am accompanied today by Mr. Rob Wight, our director general of vessel procurement, and by Nicholas Nabaa, director general of major marine construction at PSPC.

I am speaking to you today from the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

My role at the Canadian Coast Guard is to ensure the delivery of fleet services in support of Coast Guard and government programs and to ensure the provision of services to mariners that ensure their safety and promote efficient movement of marine trade. My two colleagues are responsible for renewing the Canadian Coast Guard fleet through the national shipbuilding strategy.

The Canadian Coast Guard is pleased to be here today to speak about our efforts to support and protect the North Atlantic right whales.

[*Translation*]

As the agency mandated to ensure the safety of mariners and of the marine environment, the Canada Coast Guard cares deeply about our oceans, marine mammals, and the entire marine environment. We work closely with our Fisheries and Oceans Canada colleagues in their quest to ensure sustainable fisheries and healthy marine environments.

[*English*]

This is primarily achieved by the provision of on-water platforms so that key activities such as science at sea and conservation and protection can be effectively delivered through Canada's largest fleet.

Our fleet of over 120 vessels, including icebreakers, science vessels, buoy tenders and search and rescue vessels, to name a few, are mission-ready, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our fleet is the core component for the delivery of Coast Guard programs. We are working to strengthen and renew it, thanks to the national ship-building strategy.

At the core of our current fleet is our icebreakers. Up to 19 icebreakers operate each winter to make sure that marine traffic moves safely through ice-infested waters. These same icebreakers also facilitate access to open waters in the spring so that fisheries, such as the snow crab fisheries in Quebec and the gulf regions, can be opened as early as possible while not compromising the lives of mariners.

The criticality of these icebreakers cannot be understated. The Canadian Coast Guard works extremely closely with all of our stakeholders to meet their expectations during the winter period and in the challenging shoulder seasons. That is when there is still ice in multiple areas. At the same time, ice has cleared in other areas, and marine navigation buoys need to be placed to ensure safe navigation. All the while, the fishing industry is eager to start their season.

From a fleet assets point of view, the shoulder seasons are one of the most challenging times of the year. Coast Guard icebreakers are in high demand. Unfortunately, sometimes the demand outstrips our capacity, and difficult decisions must be made to prioritize services.

We have also started to make use of third party vessels, or what we call “spot charters”, through established standing offer contracts that allow us to draw down on these services if and when required. This allows us to supplement our fleet when demand exceeds our capacity.

As we accept our new fleet, I am pleased to report that the Canadian Coast Guard will be better placed and prepared to support the difficult shoulder seasons and to support growing stakeholder needs more broadly. This is thanks to a new class of icebreaker we are currently designing called the midshore, multi-mission ship. These smaller icebreakers will enable us to operate more effectively in shallower water.

I would also like to inform this committee of the significant contribution that the Canadian Coast Guard makes to support whale-related information sharing with mariners. The Coast Guard has created a mammal desk, one of which is at Les Escoumins at the marine communications and traffic services centre. This serves as a critical resource to provide mariners with key information such as whale location, navigation warnings, temporary speed restrictions in shipping lanes, area closures and other relevant information.

[*Translation*]

We work closely with Transport Canada, who, as the regulatory agency, ensures compliance with these navigational restrictions on vessels in an effort to protect the North Atlantic right whales from collision with vessels in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

• (1415)

[*English*]

In closing, I hope I have conveyed to you how we are working closely with our clients and partners, including our DFO col-

leagues, on important matters such as protecting the North Atlantic right whales and the key role of our icebreakers in supporting them.

The Canadian Coast Guard is working to ensure that our future fleet will be better placed to meet the expanding needs of our partners and clients, and we are prepared to ensure that our services continue until the new fleet arrives.

On this, I will end my remarks, Mr. Chair. We would be pleased to answer any of your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We'll now go to Mr. Small for six minutes or less, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses. Thanks for coming to this very important study.

My first question is this: Does the Gulf Stream take water from the eastern seaboard into the Gulf of St. Lawrence?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** You're asking a question that unfortunately I am not able to answer. That is more from a science perspective.

I don't know necessarily where that water would come from. I suspect that the Atlantic water, of course, goes into the gulf and into the river, but that's as far as I know from a scientific perspective. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Okay. I'm wondering which direction the Gulf Stream flows and whether some dead whales could be brought into that area from the eastern seaboard. The eddies that circulate inside that part of the gulf could be a catch basin for debris and dead whales.

What do you think?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I just can't answer that question.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Okay. It's not a problem.

To go on to my next question, given that we have restricted speeds in some of these areas, are vessels allowed to travel at night and in restricted visibility?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Yes, vessels are allowed to traffic at night in these restricted areas. There is no prevention.

What they are restricted to do is related to speed. When there are whales that are identified, the restrictions are put in place, monitored by Transport Canada, and any vessel that goes outside of that speed for any more than 95 seconds is automatically notified and a contravention is issued and sent to Transport Canada for follow-up as the regulatory body that is responsible for that.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Okay. What's the vessel length in the United States that's restricted by speed versus in Canada?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** All vessels are restricted by speed in Canada in those restricted areas, whether it be a search and rescue boat—unless it's on a search and rescue call, of course—or a large tanker.

All vessels are restricted, and that information is issued to mariners through navigational warnings, notices to mariners and postings that go through our marine communications and traffic services centre at Les Escoumins, through continuous broadcasting messages to the mariners informing them of these restrictions in these specific areas.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Okay. We heard witnesses earlier in this study say that Canada has done more in the last five years than the United States has done in the last 25 years in the endeavour to protect the right whales.

What I've found is that our minimum length vessel that would be restricted in speed in those areas is 42.64 feet. In the United States, it's 65 feet. That's what I've found.

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Yes, I can't speak to the difference between Canada and the U.S. and some of the actions they're taking on behalf of the protection of whales. I can say that the actions that Canada has taken are significant and have made a significant difference over the last number of years in—number one—making mariners, shipping and industry that much more aware of these restrictions as we move forward.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** How many vessels did the Coast Guard intercept last year that were breaking the speed limit in restricted areas?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** The Coast Guard doesn't intercept. The Coast Guard identifies and monitors vessels. If a vessel goes over the restriction of 10 knots, it would then issue the contravention, notify the vessel and pass that information forward to Transport Canada, as the regulatory agency to follow up. There is a potential administrative monetary penalty that Transport Canada and their enforcement officers would then apply. What we do is that we establish and we communicate with the mariners, and then we move forward and pass that information along.

● (1420)

**Mr. Clifford Small:** How would you describe the vessel density south of the border—we'll say in the eastern seaboard—compared with what we have in the areas that are of more concern in the Gulf of St. Lawrence? How would you describe it?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** I think traffic densities on the eastern seaboard and within the Gulf of St. Lawrence are significant, whether it's above the border or below. These are key areas where ships will be going, whether it's into New York, Boston, Philadelphia or any of the major ports along the eastern seaboard. As you know, there's also significant traffic that comes down into the St. Lawrence. It is the largest pathway into central Canada.

As a matter of fact, the Great Lakes and that region have been identified as the fifth-largest GDP in all of the world—both Canada and U.S.—because of course vessels go down and will go to Detroit, Michigan, or up to Canada.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Do I have time to get one quick one in?

**The Chair:** Yes, you can have one quick question.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** What's the percentage of vessels, if you look at the total combined violators of the speed criteria in terms of commercial fishers versus non-commercial fishers, that have been found violating thus far?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** I wouldn't have that information specifically, but I could have a look to see if we could break that down based on the number of contraventions we've had in the last couple years.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** I'd like to have that submitted in written form. Thank you.

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

I think that part of his answer will be provided if it's available.

We'll now go to Mr. Cormier for six minutes or less, please.

[*Translation*]

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

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

First, Mr. Mes, thank you for the efforts you've been making over the past few years with regard to icebreaking. Just in front of my riding office, I can see the places where those efforts are being made, by which I mean the Baie de Caraquet and the Baie de Shipagan a little further away. Those are the places we have trouble every year, as you know. These small channels need to be cleared of ice so that our local fishers can go to sea a little earlier and prevent whales from becoming entangled in their ropes. It also ensures that there are no whales on our fishing territory when the season starts.

What steps need to be taken to charter third party vessels, as you mentioned?

As you know, Ocean Group has come to lend a hand these past few years, as has ECO Technologies, which is in our region.

What's the process for awarding these contracts?

[*English*]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Thank you very much for the question.

We use a bit of a tiered approach. The first thing is we always assign a light icebreaker to Shipagan and Caraquet in New Brunswick, the Acadian peninsula, which is one of those areas that the fishermen want to get out to sooner rather than later. I completely understand that.

The light icebreaker will break ice, but it is restricted, of course, by its size and its draft and will only be able to do a portion of that. Then we cascade in other resources. We'll bring in the spot charter. We'll bring in a small tug that will be able to get into some of those other areas that the light icebreaker can't get into. It too is restricted by the fact that it can only break up to 40 centimetres of ice. Then we also bring in what we call the Amphibex machine—basically an excavator with claws on it that floats on ice—which is able to then break out additional ice that the other two assets can't get to. This opens up the shipping lanes that have already been opened up by the light icebreaker and the tugs so that the fishing vessels can get out.

The last resort is to bring in our air-cushioned vehicle, our hovercraft. The hovercraft will come in and then further break any ice. We have to balance the need of the hovercraft with regard to its priority in the Restigouche River area, which is a priority, because if we don't break ice there, we then have flooding into personal properties. Once we can get the hovercraft, it will come in.

It is very much a cascading approach. Because of the icebreaking, over the last couple of years we were basically opening up the fishing harbours about a week earlier, on average, than we normally did if we didn't have this cascading process of assets.

• (1425)

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** I follow you perfectly. I think it's very important to note what you said, which is that your icebreakers can't fit into small channels like the ones leading into the Baie de Shippagan and the Baie de Caraquet. That's why, as you said, it's necessary to charter third party vessels like Ocean Group, which sends its tug.

But you also said that, unfortunately, when the ice is more than 16 inches thick, it doesn't work. We saw that this year. The tug wasn't able to get through until a few weeks later than usual, owing to the thickness of the ice.

In the same vein, you talked about the arrival of new icebreakers. Everybody is waiting for them, because they'll be able to navigate shallow waters like the channels to the Baie de Caraquet and the Baie de Shippagan.

First, do you have some idea of when those new icebreakers will be ready?

Second, what is the minimum depth in which those new vessels can operate? Will they be able to enter the Baie de Caraquet and the Baie de Shippagan?

[English]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** I think, Mr. Chair, I'll pass that over to my colleague, Mr. Wight. He is probably better placed than me to talk about what the timelines are for the arrival of the new midshore multi-mission vessels with the shallower draft, which hopefully will be able to help us in these areas.

**Mr. Robert Wight (Director General, Vessel Procurement, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are currently in the design stage for the midshore multi-mission vessel, looking at the requirements with our colleague, Mr. Mes. We have gone out with a request for information last year into the beginning of this year for industry input. This vessel will be approximately 700 tonnes to 900 tonnes, somewhere in there, so a fairly small vessel. That vessel will be capable, we're hoping, of breaking 40 centimetres or more of ice with its icebreaking hull, and doing so in a shallow draft.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** I don't mean to cut you off, but how much time are we talking about before we see this vessel built and in operation?

**Mr. Robert Wight:** We will be going out during the year 2023-24 for design. Following that, which will hopefully take a year, we will be seeing a build contract issued. We will be seeing those in the late 2020s.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Did you say late 2020s?

**Mr. Robert Wight:** [Technical difficulty—Editor] delivered. The speed of delivery will depend on the shipyard that's chosen. It won't be one of the three big shipyards under the national shipbuilding strategy. It will be a small shipbuilder, as was the intent of the national shipbuilding strategy for ships that are less than 1,000 tonnes.

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

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You're dead on your six minutes.

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

[Translation]

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

I want to thank the representatives of the Canada Coast Guard for being here. It's always nice to have them here.

I'm going to take 30 seconds of my speaking time to thank them. My first time on a boat was when I was seven days old. In fact, it was on the Canada Coast Guard ship *Montcalm*, which took my parents and me from Quebec City to Isle-aux-Coudres, because the Isle-aux-Coudres ferry was out of service due to a fault with the clutch. My father was the ferry captain at the time. So the captain of the *Montcalm* told my father he would take us to Isle-aux-Coudres.

The ferry to Isle-aux-Coudres was out of service this morning too, and people would have loved to see a Canada Coast Guard ship sailing along Isle-aux-Coudres.

Mr. Mes, have you ever had to intervene in area 22, which lies along the Magdalen Islands, when whales were sighted? I would imagine so, but I would also like to know how many times you've had to intervene and how it went.

Could you describe the circumstances of your interventions?

[English]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** The frequency of whales is very much dependent on where these mammals feed as well. Sometimes they are along the coast of the Magdalen Islands. Other times they are further up the coast or further into the gulf. I can't give you any specifics with regard to the percentage of time that they are along the Magdalen Islands. I can tell you that, through the monitoring, each of the respective zones, the restricted zones, once they are monitored, can be opened and closed depending on whether or not whales are sighted.

As soon as whales are sighted through aerial surveillance as well as any other monitoring, those areas are then closed. Whether it's one whale or five whales, it doesn't matter. If a whale is in that area, it is then closed and restricted until no whales can be seen.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** It's taken as a given that whales sighted near the Magdalen Islands are just passing through and that their feeding grounds are located somewhere else, not in those waters.

In your opinion, would it be possible for a group of fishers to acquire a scientific vessel to track moving whales and more accurately gauge their position, so that fishing areas can be reopened as whales leave them?

[English]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Yes, absolutely.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans works on tracking these whales. It's their area of expertise. They track the whales. They identify when there is a whale that is in danger or entangled, for instance. It's the Department of Fisheries, then, that tracks that whale and are able to hopefully untangle it, for instance if it's caught in any sort of nets.

It is the Department of Fisheries and my colleagues who work very much on tracking that. The responsibility of the Coast Guard is really to monitor and to identify any vessels that could potentially be contravening the restrictions in that zone. They always communicate with mariners, informing them of any changes to the restrictions in the zones as well.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** Basically, your job is to observe illegal behaviour and report it to Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Your duties also include looking for whales. If you see one, you report it.

The Magdalen Islands fishers' group, which is the largest fishers' group, has acquired a boat that tracks whales.

Do you think that's a good idea?

Could it be an option worth considering as regards the management of area closures and reopenings?

[English]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Absolutely. I think the Department of Fisheries and my fisheries colleagues would very much like any information with regard to where whales are or, for instance, where they are going to. First of all, it's difficult to monitor any sort of mammal. Any

sort of assistance that the public or fishers might be able to give to the Department of Fisheries.... They're probably the best people to go to help coordinate those kinds of efforts.

We don't want a million boats on the water, but at the same time these kinds of efforts will help us in identifying where these vessels are.

If I could just respond to the committee member's comment, communication is critical for us. It's communicating with our mariners, issuing notifications and the continuous broadcasting to all of the ships and vessels. There are call-in points. Whether they are coming into that region and have been cleared by Transport Canada and the Coast Guard, or whether they are leaving with a full cargo there are call-in points where they have to get this information. Through the continuous broadcasting they are always informed of any sort of restrictions or news of whales, so that they can at least reduce their speeds in those areas.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Desbiens.

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

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I'm not very good at the "or less" part, but I'll try.

**The Chair:** I've noticed.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

I'm very interested in the work that you're doing. It's such important work. I have to admit, I'd love to come out on the water and see the day to day of the work that you're doing.

You spoke in your opening statement about the challenges, the shoulders of the seasons and how sometimes there just aren't enough vessels to go around. I'm wondering if you can expand a little bit on what happens when there aren't enough vessels and what impact it has on the local fishers, communities and so on, to continue on with their work.

• (1435)

**Mr. Marc Mes:** There is a level of service that we have for ice-breaking. We meet with industry to identify the levels of service and also to prioritize and understand the prioritization of icebreaking services.

The first priority is that any sort of distress or emergency situation takes precedence. That also includes ice jams, because of the significant impact it can have on the economy and those who live ashore.



The second priority is a service request from the ferry service in accordance with the terms of the union. That will be given priority. What I'm talking about here, of course, is the Marine Atlantic ferry from Sydney to Blanc-Sablon. In the terms of the union, it gets a priority.

Then, it's ships with vulnerable cargo. Anything that has the potential for pollution, dangerous goods, perishable goods or vessels that are vital for the survival of the community. It has to be resupply. Then it becomes marine traffic, fishing vessels, commercial ports and fishing harbour breakouts.

These priorities are agreed to with the fishing industry, as well as the levels of service in the Coast Guard's ability to respond. If a vessel breaks down, for instance, and we have to move things around, then we have to reprioritize a tasking to a higher priority based on what has been agreed with industry. The levels of service, ice conditions and traffic density also dictate how that goes.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** How about the capacity of people? I know we have the vessels, but of course we need the people to work on the vessels. Are you seeing any shortages of that?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** It's been a long two and a half years with COVID. I'll be very honest with you.

If we look at, for instance, all of the icebreakers in the Arctic this season, we were able to man them all. Right now, we have sufficient crew to man our vessels on the east, west or anything that goes up into the Arctic. We have COVID and we manage with COVID. We also then, of course, have to manage with the global industry's demand and need for engineers and specific expertise.

That's the reason we focus so much on the college. We'll be having some very large graduating classes in the next couple of years that are going to really help us in identifying and filling some of these spots that we need, but also to be able to replace those who are retiring in the coming years.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you.

I ask all of these questions, because they're so interconnected with our capacity to respond and protect the North Atlantic right whale, and of course to ensure that livelihoods and fisheries are maintained.

I had a quick question. We talked about what I believe you called the midshore vessels that were being constructed. You talked about the shipyards that they were being built in. Do we know if these shipyards are in Canada or elsewhere, or where they're going to be built?

**Mr. Robert Wight:** Yes. They will be in Canada. Under the "build in Canada" policy, all of the ships the Coast Guard builds will be built at Canadian shipyards. We know for the midshore multi-mission vessels, which will not be built at the big yards that are doing the big ships, there is strong interest among a number of players to ensure a competitive environment for those ships being built.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you for clarifying.

Could you clarify? When a whale, say a north Atlantic right whale, is tangled or in distress, what is your role? What does that process look like from the moment that a call comes out?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** If a call comes out, first of all we will be issuing a navigational warning to mariners to say there is a whale in distress, and hopefully tracking that whale and updating that notification to mariners as we move forward. The Department of Fisheries, of course, gets very involved and is looking at ways, working with industry and its experts, to, hopefully, disentangle the whales from the gear they have been caught up in.

I know that over the last couple of years the department has been successful in removing some gear from whales.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** For my last question I think I might have just enough time. Have you been seeing an increase in ghost gear out on the waters, by chance, in the last few years?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** You know, that's a really good question. There is ghost gear. We're seeing it, but I don't know whether or not there's any more or any less than what we'd normally see. Unfortunately, that ghost gear also gets caught up in some of our gear and some of our propellers. These are things we have to be somewhat aware of, but, yes, it is out there.

• (1440)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Barron. You've saved me 15 seconds.

We'll now go to Mr. Arnold, who will probably use those 15 seconds on top of his five minutes.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the time.

Thank you to the Coast Guard for the work you do in keeping mariners and harvesters safe. We all appreciate it very much.

Mr. Mes, I believe in your opening comments you mentioned that your vessels are mission-ready 24-7. Is that an actual goal, an aspiration or an actuality?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** It is an actuality. Our vessels are 24-7. Some of our vessels are out 28 days straight. They come back, change crew and go right back out again.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I would beg to differ, having visited a vessel this summer. It was in dock because it had engine problems and was not able to place buoys. Could you provide the committee with a list of all Canadian Coast Guard vessels, by vessel type and vessel readiness, over the past five years, so that we can identify how many were disabled for mechanical or other reasons?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Absolutely. There aren't just vessels that, for instance, have been disabled. Others have vessel life extensions. Others have planned maintenance. Vessels have to have planned maintenance. We do that every year on every single vessel. There is a period of time during the year to maintain these vessels. Otherwise, we would not have a fleet in the coming years. It is very organized through the fleet operational plan. There are specific times for every single vessel to go through its maintenance. That doesn't mean we don't have breakdowns.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you. That would be, I think, beneficial for the committee.

On another topic, does the Canadian Coast Guard contact or communicate with the U.S. Coast Guard to discuss and compare enforcement of right whale measures on both sides of the border? Does the Canadian Coast Guard receive notification from U.S. authorities when the U.S. is doing surveillance overflights of right whales in the Gulf of St. Lawrence?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** The relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard is a very long-standing one. There is a summit that happens every year between Canada and the U.S., with the commandant and the commissioner. There is engagement at all levels, including operational levels such as search and rescue and environmental response.

Specific to the right whales—and I think that was your question—I suspect...but I will get back to this committee with regard to whether information on surveillance overflights is shared on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border. That's information I don't necessarily have at this moment.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you. I would appreciate it if you could share that information with us and share what information is communicated, especially when it comes to the U.S. doing overflights in Canadian waters.

With regard to the enforcement, some of my colleagues here have mentioned the enforcement of mandatory speed restrictions and so on. An electronic vessel monitoring system is used to look for infractions. We've heard about how, in other parts of the world, vessels will simply turn off their transponders—I believe—or transmitters and go dark. How much confidence do you have that you would be able to monitor these vessels appropriately should they choose to go dark and disappear off the electronic system?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** You know, I don't think it's as high as people think with regard to dark vessels in this area. It doesn't mean that it doesn't happen, but those are really for nefarious things they are going to do. I suspect that if we have vessels that are transiting from a trade perspective, from a commerce perspective or from a pleasure perspective, they're not going to necessarily turn off their AIS.

We also monitor through satellite. It's not just AIS. We can track vessels through various means. We have AIS transponders, we have satellite and we have other means that we're able to track with, as well as regular check-in points from radio contacts so that we have a sense of where that vessel is. Within our marine communication traffic services centres, they also have predictability with regard to where those vessels may end up. All of this is in the process to at least try to manage the vessel traffic in the area.

• (1445)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I would like to get one more quick question in before the time runs out.

We've heard a lot today about tracking vessels. You've mentioned that you have a whale desk set up to provide information to mariners as to the location of vessels.

What work has the Coast Guard done with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on actually tracking whales through transmitters, satellite transponders or anything like that?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** It's a very good question.

If the marine communication traffic services centres are linked in with the DFO science.... It's again something, Chair, that I will have to get back to this committee on with regard to whether or not they are engaged in sharing that kind of information. I can at least let you know, but from an active perspective, we have what we call "observe, record and report" on any of our Coast Guard vessels. That information on any sort of whale or mammal sightings automatically goes into our regional operations centres. That's then disseminated, so that's also included in any sort of maritime domain awareness, particularly as it's related to the whales.

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

We will now go to Mr. Cormier for five minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Thank you.

Just to go back to my last question that I didn't have a chance to finish, I want to clarify this, Mr. Mes or Mr. Wright. I think you said that the planning or the design will be 2023-24 for the new vessel. Again, when can we see the first vessel in operation? I know it's hard for you to say, but just an approximate date.... What will be the time that we can have this vessel in operation?

**Mr. Robert Wight:** The plan right now is to see those vessels in the late 2020s. By "late 2020s", I would mean that 2028-29 is the current schedule when we hope to see those vessels.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Okay.

**Mr. Robert Wight:** Also, to answer your previous question about draft, the design draft that we have right now on those is 3.65 metres internally. We will see how industry can do with that, but that's the type of draft we're looking at for these vessels.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Okay. That's perfect. That was my second question—about the depth—and you answered it.

For the thickness of the ice, will those vessels be able to break more than 16 inches or 40 centimetres of ice? Is that what you said?

**Mr. Robert Wight:** They're right now being designed to break a minimum of 40 centimetres of ice—

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** That's perfect.

**Mr. Robert Wight:** —or a maximum of around 40 centimetres of ice.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Okay.

For my colleagues around the table, some of the questions I'm asking are because my region is one of the ones where we cannot go out earlier because some of the ice is stuck, like I said, in the Baie de Caraquet and in the Baie de Shippegan.

My question for Mr. Mes, I think, or for Mr. Nabaa, is that each year, for the last three years.... Like I said, thank you for all the effort you're putting in place for the icebreaking issue that we are having, but each year we run like dogs chasing their tails, because some of those contracts with third parties are not signed appropriately or are not done. There are a lot of issues when it comes to the third party agreements we have with some of those companies.

Can you tell this committee if those contracts with third parties, whether it's Groupe Océan for next year, for example, or with ECO Technologies, with the “frog” as we call it here...? Can you tell us that those contracts are signed and done so those companies can go out early next season if we have an ice situation? Depending on the season, sometimes we have ice and sometimes we don't have ice, but can you guarantee us that those contracts are signed as we speak?

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

That's my area of responsibility: to deliver the ships and the programs, including the third party agreements. Those agreements are in order right now. They are getting finalized and negotiated at the regional levels. They will be in place in time for the fishing season, both in the bays of Shippegan and Caraquet and in the other ports and harbours.

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Regarding the hovercraft, like you said, we have one hovercraft for the region, and of course priority goes to places like Restigouche when the river overflows. Of course this needs to be done in an urgent manner, but we all know that, even if the channels are getting worked on with some of those third party agreements, we also need the hovercraft to come to open and clear some of the ice before the fishermen can safely go out to sea.

How can we say that we want to go out early when I think it's clear that we don't have the tools in front of us, even if we're making all the effort. Yes, we have tools, but if the ice is too thick and Groupe Océan cannot come, for example, if the water is too shallow, the icebreaker you're using right now cannot come.

What is the other solution, in your opinion, that we can put in place to have an earlier season start to make sure that we don't have any entangled right whales and that they don't come early to our fishing zone?

• (1450)

**Mr. Marc Mes:** The question is a very good one.

Fishermen want to get out in advance of the right whales and then hopefully be able to get back in before the right whales arrive

so they don't get entangled in the fishing gear. Part of this is dependent very much on weather and the climate, so if ice is favourable and we can get in with the cascading resources, we do, including the hovercraft. We understand the need to get the fishermen out because of the right whales, so there is pressure upon us also to help address that as a priority.

We do have two icebreakers in central Canada, one is identified usually for the Restigouche River, but it also could be that we have to cascade in another vessel.

We do our best in moving things forward and trying to address it, but I understand fishermen want to get out and get fishing.

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

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

For the benefit of all the committee members, could you tell us whether it would be advisable to adopt an adequate and appropriate dynamic management approach with regard to right whale protection measures and fishing activities?

Would this have a positive effect on fishers' survival and on the fishing-related economy in this part of eastern Quebec?

Do you think dynamic management could give hope to fishers if we combine your coast guard services, the extremely valuable knowledge of the fishers on the ground, and DFO's interventions in terms of promoting outstanding efforts?

Could we, in the short term, make fishing safer for fishers and appropriate from an international market perspective?

Are there any other alternatives we should consider?

Do you have any advice to offer us on this subject?

[*English*]

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Again, it's very difficult to speculate with regard to how to answer your question. In the end, I can say that we look at every avenue we can to help get the fishermen out and get the harbour breakouts done.

We all know that climate change and the ice are cyclical. We've had two or three rather mild winters in Atlantic Canada and the gulf. If we go back to 2014-15, there weren't enough icebreakers able to help deal with the ice conditions that we had, which were significant.

All we can do is cascade. We have a zonal approach to icebreaking. That zonal approach means that I can take assets from central Canada and Atlantic Canada and move them around depending on where the highest priority is. That's really the manner in which the Coast Guard is able to address some of the demands that come for icebreaking assistance, whether it be in the gulf, Atlantic Canada or central Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Desbiens.

We'll finish off now with Ms. Barron for two and a half minutes, please.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was actually going to ask a little bit about the ongoing adaptiveness required with changes as a result of the climate crisis and also with changes in sightings and where we're seeing North Atlantic right whales. I can imagine that your role requires a lot of ongoing adaptiveness. I'm wondering if you can share with us what you feel are the one or two main things that we should know as a committee.

I know you spoke about the importance of having enough vessels, the importance of having enough capacity, the importance of having different types of vessels based on conditions, but what do you think are the one or two main things that we should know, moving forward, that you need in your role to specifically protect the North Atlantic right whale and fishers?

• (1455)

**Mr. Marc Mes:** Thank you. That's a very good question.

I think the first one you've already kind of identified, and that's fleet renewal and getting the fleet and the broad fleet. We're going to have more icebreakers than we currently have. We're going to have more ships than we currently have. That in itself is going to meet the ever-increasing demands of nature but also help in the delivery of our programs.

In concert with this new fleet, we've also, then, begun to look at what we call a fleet sustainability initiative. Really, it's about the people we're going to need for the larger ships, the increased number of ships. What kind of infrastructure are we going to need? What kind of training are we going to need? This is the next step that the Coast Guard is now undertaking so that we can position ourselves for the arrival of the new ships. I think that's one of the things that are critical. We're going to have more sailors. We're going to need more training at the college. We're going to have to have a different kind of infrastructure. We're going to have to have a different kind of expertise on board our ships to be able to deliver our programs differently.

Then there is the modernization of the marine navigation system, and that's the second piece. The whole world is going to digitaliza-

tion. The whole world is going towards real-time sharing of information and data. That is something that the Coast Guard is also leading, in concert with our department, and it is a critical piece that we're going to need. With regard to new ships, in 10 years—if not sooner—we're going to see autonomous ships. If we don't have a digitized and modernized marine navigation system, there is a really good chance that some of these autonomous ships won't come to Canada. It's important that we position ourselves, and we are beginning to work on that digitalization and modernization of the marine navigation system and the communication with our mariners.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That concludes our rounds of questioning for today.

I want to give a big thank you to our three witnesses who appeared in our second hour and shared their knowledge with the committee on this important study.

Your time is always valuable, I know, but you're always there to appear when invited.

I will remind committee members that, on Tuesday, we will have one last meeting with our witnesses for the North Atlantic right whales study. We will finish up with half an hour of committee business to provide drafting instructions to the analysts for the report.

Just off the record, I guess.... Mr. Morrissey did mention that I was going to pay him back for something on the committee. I subbed in on the HUMA committee, which he chairs, this past week. He wouldn't even let me ask a question.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** He exhausted his time.

**The Chair:** But I forgave him for it quickly.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.







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