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Private Members' Business

HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)

moved that Bill S-215, An Act to protect heritage lighthouses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-215, An Act to protect heritage lighthouses.

As we know, this initiative has been before us several times previously and has always received broad support. In fact, this is the seventh edition of this bill since 2000. I am proud to sponsor this bill in the House, but there were many people before me that have taken up this cause and I would like to take a moment to mention them now.

This bill owes a great deal to the work done by the late Senator Forrestall and carried on by Senator Carney and Senator Murray, who together moulded this bill from a desire to protect part of Canada's maritime heritage into the legislation that we have today.

Senator Carney has worked tirelessly to champion this initiative. In fact, she worked right up until her last day in the Senate to ensure that a number of administrative and financial concerns were addressed.

As well, I would be remiss if I did not thank the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's for his help on this initiative.

I would also like to recognize the hard work of Mr. Barry MacDonald and his organization, the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society. I thank Barry. Mr. MacDonald's contribution to this legislation was paramount when it came to continuing this process that would allow us to protect not just the lighthouses of the fine province of Nova Scotia but throughout the country as well.

In fact, there are nine lighthouses in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, which include some of the six imperial tower lighthouses. Cove Island is one of these and it is a treasure. Cove Island Lighthouse was built in 1858, while Griffith Island Lighthouse, which is also in my riding, along with Chantry Island, Point Clark, Nottawasaga and the Christian Island lighthouses were all built in 1859.

This bill would provide for the designation of heritage lighthouses to require that they be reasonably maintained to prevent unauthorized alteration or disposal and to facilitate the sale or transfer of heritage lighthouses. We can all appreciate the role that lighthouses have played in

shaping Canada's history since the 18th century on Canada's coasts, along the St. Lawrence River and on the Great Lakes.

Lighthouses have long shaped the history and economic development of this country. These majestic structures have helped to open key transportation corridors into the heartland of central Canada and the markets of our neighbours to the south.

What makes lighthouses so special and memorable? Perhaps it is because they represent where we have come from as a people and a nation. They stand as unwavering proud and unique symbols of our maritime history.

If we look closely, it is hard not to imagine lighthouse keepers in their lonely outposts, protecting our mariners as they strove to steer their vessels safely through rough waters in fog and darkness. For those mariners, the glowing, steady beam of the lighthouse shining from the shore must have instilled a sense of relief, a sense that they had made it, and that their lives and their cargo were safe.

Let us talk a moment about some of the people who manned those often remote lighthouses across the country. Friends of mine, Bert and Pearl Hopkins of Tobermory are two of those people. They spent years in various lighthouses, finishing up their careers on Caribou Island in Lake Superior.

There is no denying lighthouses have played a critical role in the development of Canada as a nation. Like the railroad tracks that etch our landscape and the grain elevators that dominate the prairie sky, lighthouses are embedded in the Canadian consciousness. They are woven into songs, poetry, stories and art. Today, they are frequented by thousands of hikers and tourists from across Canada and around the world.

Light stations were pivotal in Canada becoming a trading nation, lighting the way for safe passage of mariners, commerce and opportunity. Lighthouses were essential, modern technologies that facilitated trade within and between nations.

The first Canadian lighthouse and the second oldest lighthouse on the continent was constructed at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in 1734.

Another important east coast lighthouse, the Sambro Lighthouse, was established by the very first act passed by Nova Scotia's House of Assembly in 1758. The act placed a tax on incoming vessels and alcohol imports to pay for the lighthouse. It is the oldest operating lighthouse in North America and a Canadian national historic site that celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, an event that makes passage of this bill so important and timely.

The history of lighthouses on the Great Lakes goes back to 1803 when a decision was made to construct a lighthouse at Mississauga Point on Lake Ontario. Several other towers were built on the lower Great Lakes during the next two decades. It was not until 1847 that the first lighthouse on Lake Huron was built at Godridge. The establishment of more lighthouses continued through the mid-1850s, prompted by the settlement of my region along the Bruce Peninsula and the free trade agreement with the United States in 1854, which considerably increased shipping.

John Francis is the owner and publisher of the Tobermory Press and one of my constituents. He is also a lighthouse enthusiast, and his comments on this bill should be heard by the House. He wrote, "The lighthouses on the Great Lakes are among the most important historical buildings in Canada. As government assets, lighthouses are valued only for their function. Preservation and public access are often incompatible with tight budgets and limited manpower. The transfer of responsibility from the federal ministry to private trusts and historical societies will ensure that historical lighthouses are carefully preserved and accessible to the public".

Fish, fur and lumber were abundant in the upper Great Lakes area. Harvesting these resources led to increased economic activity and navigation through central Canadian waters. This fundamental need sparked plans for the imperial towers.

Named to denote the fact that their material and construction costs would be assumed by Great Britain, the imperial lighthouses were absolutely majestic. During the mid-1800s, 11 were planned and six were built. Constructed from limestone and whitewash, these stone towers are truly magnificent.

On the west coast, the start of the Fraser River gold rush in 1858 saw Victoria, B.C. go from a small frontier settlement to a thriving city in a matter of months. The huge increase in shipping that resulted from the gold rush quickly led to demands from shipowners and captains for aids to navigation.

The Fisgard Lighthouse was the first permanent lighthouse constructed on the west coast of Canada. It was constructed in 1859 along with Race Rocks Lighthouse, and thus began B.C.'s association with lighthouses in support of its maritime transportation and heritage.

By the first decade of the 20th century, more than 800 staffed lighthouses and other aids to navigation, such as lighted beacons and foghorns, were in service across the country. Before the advent of the automobile, our waterways were the highways of choice for travellers and their cargo. Today, however, rapid technological changes have set aside the traditional roles of our lighthouses.

In the 21st century, new marine safety and navigation technologies are replacing lighthouses as aids to navigation. These new technologies are more effective and accessible to vessel operators. As a result, many of our lighthouses are becoming operationally redundant. As a result of our focus on new and more effective aids to navigation, expenditures on upkeep and maintenance of lighthouses have been reduced and many are now in a state of disrepair.

Should we care about this state of neglect? Yes, we should. For one thing, since lighthouses often define a community, they can be integrated in community development and other activities that can support tourism and historical purposes. That is why we should all support Bill S-215, a bill that would provide statutory protection for lighthouses across Canada.

I want to speak a little about the role of lighthouses in the 21st century. For example, today much of the shores around the Great Lakes have been transformed into cottage country. Surplus lighthouses represent an opportunity to enhance recreational activities and help redefine communities. As a result, communities across the country are looking at these properties in a new light. There is ample evidence of this.

Ongoing growth and ecotourism has resulted in Fisheries and Oceans Canada divesting more than 130 lighthouse properties. Many of these have been successfully converted into interpretive centres, museums, bed and breakfasts, gift shops, restaurants and other small business ventures.

Let me talk for a moment about lighthouses in my home province which have undergone major, very successful transformations. Cove Island Lightstation, which I mentioned earlier, is in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and is one of the few lighthouses on the Great Lakes that has retained navigational significance. It continues to be in top-notch condition, and is the only imperial tower to have its original Fresnel lens. Its incredible strength means the light can reach 20 miles. Standing in what is now Fathom Five National Marine Park, the very first underwater national park in Canada, Cove Island Lighthouse remains the crown jewel of the 6 imperial towers. Its role in opening navigation on Lake Huron led to its designation as a federal heritage building. Standing tall above the rugged shore, this tower is one of the highest in the

entire country.

During the summer months the light station is accessible to visitors through boat tours operating out of Tobermory. The sight success is largely due to the collaborative effort between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Cove Island Lightstation Heritage Association. This cooperation resulted in the restoration of both the tower and keeper's residence for multiple purposes.

Similarly, Cabot Head Lightstation, also in my riding, was refurbished by the Friends of Cabot Head who operate the restored building as a museum for local residents and tourists. Visitors to this area can also catch boat tours to the Flowerpot Island Lightstation, which is also located in Fathom Five National Marine Park.

Its lightkeeper's residence and several other buildings were renovated by Fisheries and Oceans and the Friends of the Bruce District Parks Association. Their efforts to restore the structures have resulted in the lightkeeper's dwelling operating seasonally as a museum and gift shop.

Thanks to the Friends of Fathom Five and the former St. Edmund's Township, the Big Tub Lighthouse was made more accessible to visitors. A viewing area was cleared and an interpretive sign was installed. This tower at Lighthouse Point was particularly important for guiding ships from the treacherous waters of Lake Huron and the Georgian Bay into the harbour.

Tobermory's light still guides boats through powerful currents, dense fog and shoals to the safety of Big Tub Harbour. Underwater shipwrecks are a testament to the dangerous waters, and those undersea monuments still attract scuba divers in large numbers from around the world. Big Tub, Flowerpot Island, Cabot Head and Cove Island are just a few examples of Ontario's lighthouses that have undergone noteworthy restoration as part of tourism and economic development.

With the help of community groups like those just mentioned, lighthouses are being restored to their original splendour.

This government is committed to working with community members and other levels of government, and Bill S-215 enhances our ability to join forces to preserve these vital links to our past. Light stations in central Canada hold tremendous heritage value, economic worth and architectural significance as they do in our many coastal areas.

What does Bill S-215 do? Bill S-215 enshrines in cultural and historical significance, and acknowledges the places of lightstations in our maritime and national heritage. This bill offers lighthouses much needed protection. Bill S-215 would protect heritage lighthouses under the legislative authority of Parliament. The bill would require heritage lighthouses to be reasonably maintained and would prevent unauthorized alteration or disposal.

Other provisions under Bill S-215 align with other federal government efforts to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada. Honouring our maritime heritage is a shared responsibility. Under the proposed bill the minister responsible for Parks Canada would designate the heritage process and would task or establish a new organization to administer the provisions of the bill, and this includes developing criteria for designating, maintaining or altering heritage.

There is a proposed amendment coming forth, and the government wholeheartedly supports the spirit of this bill since the late Senator Forrestall first championed this initiative in 2000, and there has been general support for it in the House.

The government is pleased to support it, along with its Fisheries and Oceans divestiture program. It is the government's view that what this amendment does in a nutshell is it would

amend the bill by replacing the terms “related built structure” with “related buildings”.

I see that my time is quickly running out, so I will urge all members of the House to support this bill. I think we may have unanimous support. It is a very non-partisan bill. It is something that will go a long way to protect the lighthouses.

Mr. Gerald Keddy

(Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I believe we will get unanimous support for the bill.

I thank my hon. colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for carriage of Bill S-215. This is an important bill for coastal Canada. Those of us from the east coast think we have all the lighthouses. Those from the west coast think they have all the lighthouses. There are about 25 lighthouses sitting around me here. It is quite interesting to see the amount of lights in the Great Lakes.

I would like to recognize Senator Carney, who has since retired, for her carriage of this issue in the Senate, certainly Senator Lowell Murray, and most important, I would be remiss if I did not mention Senator Forrestall. The late Senator Mike Forrestall had carriage of this bill at least a half dozen times in the upper chamber. He was an avid advocate of lighthouses and the need to protect them. I quite frankly think if it were not for Senator Forrestall, we probably would not have this bill before us today.

I think it is a giant step forward. I appreciate the support that this place has shown.

Mr. Larry Miller:

Mr. Speaker, there was not a question there and that is okay. Once again I would like to thank the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's for all his work on this issue, and yes, the work that was done in the other place by the aforementioned senators. It is unbelievable what they did. My colleague was right, that without their work in the early years on this issue, we probably would not have a bill.

It is important to mention some of the groups that are headed by people like Barry MacDonald from Nova Scotia. They have a big care for this. In the last few days when it looked like we could see daylight at the end of the tunnel and we are here today, Barry made the comment, “I don't think that I could go through this again”. This is the seventh time and let us be seven times lucky.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):

Mr. Speaker, I have a straightforward question. Actually, it is practically a comment. I wonder just how enthusiastic we could possibly be about this bill. Indeed, this is not the first time such a bill has been introduced, but rather the umpteenth time.

Unfortunately, it is hard to get excited and support such a bill. There is finally a move to designate heritage lighthouses, but no one is willing to put any money, not a penny, not one red cent, into ensuring that the lighthouses in question will survive and prosper. There are all sorts of horror stories regarding heritage lighthouses. I also have some in my riding. More than anything, some substance needs to be added. This is merely a bare-bones bill, and on that I agree with my colleague entirely. I am therefore left to wonder how he can be so enthusiastic about such a bill, when there is no money behind it.

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller:

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for the question, but he is totally mistaken.

I am glad to hear that he sees a lot of merit in this and I will be expecting his vote of support.

The truth of the matter is that any of these lighthouses that will have the opportunity to be designated as heritage and taken over through proposals by different groups, like some of the ones I mentioned earlier, will be handed over in good operating condition. They have to be in good general repair. It would be very unfair to ask any group to take them over. They will be fixed. The money does come with it. This bill allows it to happen in a controlled budget. It is not wide open as some members in the House think that government can operate it. It is a good way to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, with applause like that from the Conservative Party, I am beginning to think I did something right, or maybe not.

I would like to congratulate my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound who has brought this bill forward in this House. I would also like to congratulate my colleague on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, who brought this up in its former version which was known as Bill S-220.

A big congratulations goes to the hon. Pat Carney who did so much for so many years on this, as did Senator Forrestall. These people have been mentioned for all the good work they have done to make this a big issue when it comes to heritage lighthouses.

My colleague from the Bloc, the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine mentioned something about the money situation. I think what he talked about is the operating funds, or core funding as we like to call it. In that case many smaller communities are unable to take over these lighthouses for the simple reason they are unable to provide the upkeep, certainly when it comes to heating and when it comes to maintaining the exteriors, being in the harsh climate that they are, because after all, these are lighthouses, and many of them find themselves in trouble. It is a constant battle to raise funds in order to keep these lighthouses up. They have been around for 250 years. We have made alterations to these lighthouses but keep in mind that we have always managed to maintain the character of the lighthouses.

I speak of my neck of the woods, the east coast lighthouses, particularly for Newfoundland and Labrador, but also for Nova Scotia. My hon. colleague talked about the ones around the Great Lakes which also share a great deal of history. We cannot forget how Pat Carney so eloquently spoke of the lighthouses on the west coast.

I would like to bring out some of the arguments that Senator Michael Forrestall of Nova Scotia and Senator Carney, who championed this for quite some time, made about supporting a bill like this and the designations that are needed for heritage lighthouses.

In 1988 Pat Carney talked about Canada's Heritage Railway Act and she compared protecting lighthouses to that legislation. Lighthouses fall under federal jurisdiction when it comes to their

being altered, sold, removed, assigned, transferred or otherwise disposed of without public consultation. Therein lies the key to this bill, which we do support. Yes, we do support it.

When the public consultation process is engaged, it becomes far more beneficial to the community, the not for profit group, or the municipality which chooses to take over that building, because only then will there be buy-in from the community. Only then will the lighthouse survive. Only then will these lighthouses continue to be the beacons they always were. It is not so much from a navigation point of view because many of them have been decommissioned, but this time they will be revered because of their cultural and historical perspective.

As I like to say about Newfoundland and Labrador, and I do not mean this as a slight, we are brimming over with character, brimming over with culture. Many colleagues can attest to that. My colleague from Nova Scotia would probably say the same thing.

I want to talk about the west coast for just a second. Senator Carney spoke about British Columbia having 52 of Canada's surviving 583 lighthouses. Buildings are vulnerable because fisheries are vulnerable. Fisheries and Oceans Canada over the years was responsible for the lighthouses. There was really no mandate to protect them for the sake of heritage and culture. The bill attempts to help us restore some of the dignity that has been lost in many of these cases.

With respect to Bill S-215, formerly known as Bill S-220, there is a controversy surrounding the potential costs of implementing the bill. There was a ruling some time ago about private members' bills and whether they dip into the public purse and require a royal recommendation. This avoids that. On October 29, 2003 the Speaker ruled, "After examining the bill, I can find no obligation for the spending of public funds either by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board or by the Minister of Canadian Heritage". That is something to consider as well.

When the bill comes before the committee, the official opposition will explore that aspect of the spending and the operational funds required, as I spoke of earlier. I would like to talk about that.

Through the preparatory process for Bill S-220, which preceded this bill, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada, through Parks Canada, asserted that there are 750 lighthouses in Canada that would require funding pursuant to the provisions of the bill. The figure has presumably been applied to the cost analysis by these departments.

In looking at some of the facts and figures involved here, let us look at some of the lighthouses in question. The figures state that only 3% of our lighthouses across the nation have genuine heritage protection, which was done by some of the departments and that may be questionable, and only 12% have received partial protection. In British Columbia, the figure is even lower, B.C. having 52 of the 583 lighthouses.

I want to talk about a submission from the Heritage Canada Foundation to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. This brief was done in light of Bill S-220 in the last session. I would like to read into the record some of the things the foundation had to say, which I found quite compelling:

Bill S-220-- --now Bill S-215--

An Act to protect heritage lighthouses, provides a means for the Government of Canada to examine, recognize, protect and maintain a highly significant group of heritage structures. Binding, legal protection for designated heritage lighthouses is absolutely essential.

Agreed.

Otherwise, accountability is compromised, and decisions about the stewardship of heritage buildings can be made in an arbitrary manner. It is important to stress that the all provincial and territorial jurisdictions and, by delegated authority, all municipal governments in Canada have binding heritage statutes and related legal measures, such as covenants and easements, to protect and guide the management of heritage property. Within the federal jurisdiction, only railway stations are subject to such binding legislation.

That is very key.

Prior to the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, the Government of Canada recognized only six heritage railway stations in the entire country through the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, and even these had no legal protection. Today, 166 heritage railway stations have been designated by the federal government. Therefore, it is a program that genuinely works. Therefore, what has been tried, true and tested in the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act can also be applied to lighthouses.

The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office evaluates the heritage significance of federally owned heritage buildings, but it is a closed process. Herein lies what I feel is the crux of this issue, which is to say, it makes mention here of the fact that there was no public consultation required. This is what my colleague spoke of and this is what we have to address as we send the bill off to committee.

Basically the community values heritage property. That is what the Heritage Canada Foundation states and I could not agree more. We certainly do have along the east coast so much history involved with our heritage lighthouses that it is long overdue, given that so many people volunteer so many hours to maintaining our culture and heritage through our lighthouses, whether they be around the Great Lakes, on the west coast or certainly on the east coast.

Since I only have one minute, I would like to quickly mention some of the lighthouses of which I am particularly fond: Cape Sable Lighthouse, Nova Scotia; Sambro Island Gas House in Nova Scotia, incredible, built in 1861 on Cape Sable Island; Seal Island Lighthouse, built in 1830; Estevan Point, British Columbia; all are amazing structures that stand the test of time and certainly so proud to be a part of this particular bill.

I would like to mention some of the Newfoundland and Labrador areas of distinction that I believe should be recognized from a heritage and cultural perspective: Belle Isle, Cape Pine, Trepassey, St. Mary's Bay, Cape Race, Fortune Bay, Green Island Cove, Green Point, Gull Island, Notre Dame Bay, and funnily enough one called Bay Roberts, and one called Confusion Bay Light Tower. How is that for a quaint name for a lighthouse? How is that for being a beacon in the fog when someone has to look out and say, "Where are we, sir?" and the reply is, "We are in Confusion Bay, for goodness' sake". What does that say?

At the end of the day, the lighthouse proved to be the beacon it always had, and has, been. It is something of which we should be very proud, certainly from a cultural perspective.

In North Head and Brigus is the Conception Bay light tower. Then there are some of the more famous ones. Some are provincially owned, such as the Cape Bonavista lighthouse in my riding. Others are owned by Parks Canada, such as the Cape Spear lighthouse in the easternmost point in North America. A lot of people in the House would probably be familiar with it.

There is also the Port-aux-Basque lighthouse, the Channel Head light tower and the Random Head light tower. I would be remiss if I did not mention one of my favourites, the Long Point

light tower in the Crow Head, Twillingate area. It received distinction a few weeks back, one of which I am extremely proud.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):

Mr. Speaker, this is the umpteenth time that we have had occasion to speak about the heritage lighthouse issue. I had a chance a little earlier to touch on this and on the position I want to take over the next 10 minutes.

I listened very attentively to what my colleagues had to say. I want to congratulate the colleague who has introduced this matter, although I cannot support it. They have finally noticed the sickness, but when the time came to cure it, they forgot. At most, it is as if they are treating cancer with an aspirin. That is not how to do it.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for these structures. I want to remind the House that Fisheries and Oceans may be responsible but often it does not take proper, appropriate care of its own facilities. The small craft harbours are a good example.

When it comes to heritage lighthouses, unfortunately, we have a bill that tries to provide a heritage classification for lighthouses that somehow deserve it. They deserve far more than this. First of all, they deserve not to be in the condition they are in today. Some are in a terrible state, although not because of the people who take care of them or have tried to. The terrible state of these lighthouses is due to the inaction of the federal government, which has just let things go. It is like a leaky roof. If the roof is not repaired, eventually it will collapse. That is what has happened to our heritage lighthouses.

Finally, there are a lot of problems with this bill. The first and worst is the funding. It is not a question of under-funding but of no funding. There is nothing, not one red cent. Yes, they are going to set up a nice committee on heritage lighthouses in each of the provinces. A little bit of work will go into this, but ultimately the lighthouses will just be left to their fates, as they have been so far. They are being completely ignored and neglected. I have seen lighthouses in my riding in particular about which the question arose. We need to remember how these lighthouses operate.

For most of them, the land they are on is contaminated. So we should also be talking about decontamination and not just classification or recognition. I agree that heritage recognition is needed for lighthouses, because they are in fact part of our history. We also have to remember that people worked in these lighthouses in extremely difficult circumstances.

I have had a chance to watch a very good program on French language television a few times. I would in fact invite you to watch it occasionally. It is really very educational and helps us to see things as they really are. The program is Thalassa and it is on TV5. It has profiled people who have worked in lighthouses and people who are still working in them. These people live in very isolated situations. There is no situation more isolated. These people have strong bonds to the piece of property called a lighthouse. They are well aware that their work is a matter of safety.

This is the backdrop to the serious work that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, on which I sit, will be doing. In fact, we will be examining the bill in a little more detail. But I have told my colleagues from the outset that we cannot support a bill that ultimately recognizes a situation, a heritage property, and at the same time denies that the very essence of a heritage property is that it must be looked after.

If a property, a lighthouse for example, someday becomes a heritage property the most

elementary fact is that the lighthouse has to be maintained properly. That would mean that the people who became its new owners would have something that is simply common sense. There is a disease, but at the same time this is not the right treatment for it. There is not a lot of flesh on the bones.

That is why we need to assert this position and redouble our efforts. A lot of facilities that belong to the federal government are deteriorating. On Parliament Hill, the West Block is a prime example. We constantly wonder how much longer it can accommodate members. Work has been going on for several years now. The government is not looking after its own facilities in a responsible and rigorous manner

We are talking about heritage lighthouses. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about another type of infrastructure, specifically wharves and small craft harbours.

According to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it would take at least \$600 million to rehabilitate this infrastructure, and I use the word “rehabilitate” advisedly. Since the annual budget for this sort of work is \$100 million, it is easy to see that there is not enough money to meet the needs. It is like a leaky roof that will collapse. Unfortunately, that is what will happen.

I would like to say something else about heritage lighthouses. The bill establishes a process for selecting and designating heritage lighthouses and provides for setting up an advisory committee and holding consultations with interest groups. I listened to my Liberal colleague's speech earlier, and I was interested in what he had to say about consultation.

It is also important to mention that many communities and developers would like to develop this infrastructure. However, by putting up roadblocks, the federal government might simply prolong the status quo and consequently the deterioration of the lighthouses. The federal government should also be modest enough to recognize that it does not have any lessons to teach the provinces about heritage protection. I am thinking in particular of the West Block on Parliament Hill, which I mentioned earlier, the degradation of lighthouses and, obviously, small craft harbours.

Some sites should be decontaminated before they are transferred to local authorities. I am reminded of a lighthouse in the Gaspé and Lower St. Lawrence area that the community is looking after. It is the Madeleine lighthouse. It is a beautiful spot. Unfortunately, it could cost as much as \$2 million to decontaminate this site. The lighthouse was recognized as a heritage lighthouse, but no thought was given to the fact that the site was contaminated, mainly with mercury.

I would therefore urge my colleagues to be very careful. Logically, we need to think about designating heritage lighthouses, but at the same time, we need to go much farther to make this a meaningful bill. Those are my main comments today. After the vote, we will have the opportunity to work on this bill in committee

[English]

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, last year I spoke to a predecessor of the current bill, Bill S-220. I am honoured to once again stand to talk about the importance of lighthouses. It has been, as others have said, almost 10 years since the original bill was introduced. I would like to recognize the work of Senator Michael Forrestall and acknowledge also the work of Senator Pat Carney, as others have done. Without those people before us, ensuring that the importance of this was laid out, we might

not be here today.

In speaking to the bill previously, I mentioned what a lot of people conjure up in their minds when we speak the word “lighthouse”, images of seafarers past and present who ply our coasts in trade or commerce, or just for pleasure. Our lighthouses have long been a part of our coastal history and our coastal heritage from sea to sea to sea.

I mentioned that it was a rare thing for a private member's bill or motion, if passed, to be enacted. A few bills have not been enacted such as the seniors charter or the veterans first motion, which were passed by a majority of the House. It seems to be a broken promise on the part of the Prime Minister who said he would honour the will of Parliament.

If this bill passes, I hope it is enacted. It also needs to have the funding attached to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of these treasures is a reality. Since the bill has been debated for many years, it must finally pass and be enacted.

Another vision springs to mind when one says the word lighthouse, especially in these times of increasing activity and changing weather patterns on our B.C. coast. One not so romantic is the stark reality that many thousands of people who live on our coast rely on the ocean for their livelihoods. They rely on our lighthouses for information, guidance and assistance. These are not the unstaffed lighthouses or lighthouses that will soon be turned into museums, but staffed lighthouses that employ thousands of people, workers who are on call 24 hours a days, 7 days a week to provide ears and eyes on our coast as well as assistance in times of need.

These gems of the Pacific coast, our light stations, are part of a living and working history. Canadians recognize these sites as historical icons with an important and continuing role in safety of mariners and aviators who ply our marine highways, transporting workers and coastal products that we need.

Our citizens have again and again demanded to keep these sites funded and staffed. Our 27 staffed light stations are strategically located to provide many services to the mariners, aviators, coastal communities and isolated inhabitants of coastal British Columbia.

Weather information is passed to Canadian Coast Guard radio stations on a schedule, seven times daily. Special weathers are submitted on significant changes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Lightkeepers also give updated weather reports on request, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This information is vital to aviators and mariners, as they move up and down the coast, in order to track weather systems and to find windows of opportunity for safe journeys.

The coastal economy also relies on our staffed light stations. Dependable weather information is vital to coastal communities. From Campbell River, one airline alone, Vancouver Island Air, flies 14,000 float plane passengers a year up this coast, delivering mail, workers and supplies. Lightkeepers provide meteorological services. Canada utilizes light station weather reports for forecasting weather warnings and continued tracking of climate data that will provide such necessary correlations as climate change occurs.

Because of their strategic location and federal presence, light stations are able to provide coastal security and testify to sovereignty. On many occasions, lightkeepers liaise with other departments such as the Department of National Defence, the RCMP, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and provincial wildlife and forestry departments, and provide them with any information and assistance upon request.

Many forest fires have been spotted by lightkeepers and they take an active role in the RCMP's coast watch program. Keepers act as first responders on many incidents and work closely with coastal search and rescue units in B.C. Light stations also act as staging grounds for medivacs.

There are many people working and staffing the 27 light stations along our B.C. coast. One such couple is Steve and Alice Bergh. They staff the Chatham Point light station in my riding of Vancouver Island North. Steve and Alice have been at Chatham Point light station since their arrival in 1989. Since then, they have saved numerous boats from sinking and have assisted many mariners.

The list of major incidents is quite long, says Steve:

--we have rescued divers, provided first aid to seriously injured victims, attended to a drowning victim, provided shelter to a lost hypothermic logger in an open boat in a blizzard who without our foghorn to guide him to our station would have suffered a serious fate....

I have quite a large file of letters and articles from mariners and boaters who have found assistance there in their hour of need.

Chatham Point is not the only station to provide this kind of assistance. They all do. The dedication of the lightkeepers all over the coast is well documented. Those saved are many.

I would like to read for the House an excerpt from a letter in the Western Mariner journal of January 2007. Mr. Ross Campbell writes a harrowing story:

It was howling outside, storm-force in fact, and the slack tide was allowing unusually large seas to roll into our small bay, making the boats heave at their lines. I was up, on-and-off, all night, checking and fretting and, of course, listening to the local weathers on WX2. Chatham Point, our nearest manned lighthouse, provided a special report at 02:20 hrs: visibility three miles; winds from the southeast at 40 knots and gusting; seas five feet, 'moderate'. The next regular report had the wind at southeast 55 and gusting. All the light-keepers give 100% for the travellers on this coast but after listening to the 'local weathers' over the years, I get the impression that the keepers at Chatham Point never sleep! They often supply the kind of up-to-the-minute, useful-to-the-mariner information that no automated system can ever duplicate such as the observation of the different sea-states in the various channels visible from Chatham Point. But it's the special reports in the worst conditions, at the darkest times of night, and the speedy and capable response to any need in their area, that I so much respect.

I believe every mariner and aviator on the BC coast appreciates the dedication to safety that these light-keepers demonstrate. I say, "Bravo!" and a heart-felt "Thank-you!"

I have to concur with Mr. Campbell of the MV Columbia III from Sonora Island, B.C.

Another light keeper at Cape Beale was recently recognized for spotting four mariners clinging to an overturned vessel. He was able to direct the search and rescue vessels out of Bamfield to assist. He then walked down to the beach to find a fifth man and give him aid.

Light stations are important investments in the prevention of marine casualties.

Lightkeepers provide such a variety of services, including the maintenance and protection of the light stations. Sites that have been de-staffed are in notoriously bad repair with no on site protections in place.

This is another reason why the preservation on site of historically significant working heritage light stations is important. Staffing these heritage and non-heritage sites is imperative.

Moneys and legal protections should be made available to preserve those heritage sites that need repair, such as Pachena Point's lantern dome. The tower at Pachena is suffering due to the ravages of the weather and without major work soon may not be savable. It is the sole remaining wooden light tower on the west coast. It is one of only two first order fresnel lenses on the west coast and the only dual bull's eye first order fresnel lens anywhere. The tower was 100 years old last year and was built by hand after the wreck of the Valencia.

Pachena Point light station is on the West Coast Trail and sees between 6,000 and 10,000 hikers a year, thousands of weekend campers and hundreds of day hikers, all of whom come to see the tower. Without fail they ask two main questions: can we see the inside and does it still work? The answer to both of these questions is no. Thousands of people come to see our light stations. On the west coast, this one is probably the most photographed site on Vancouver Island. It is currently depicted on a Canadian stamp.

I have highlighted only a few of the 27 staffed light stations, not to mention the other 29 decommissioned or automated stations, for a total of 56 on the B.C. coast.

What we need is a commitment to keep the buildings and structures at light stations staffed and maintained for the safety, security and benefit of our coastal communities, and for workers, for travel and for the historical and current education and benefit of every Canadian.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):

There being no other members rising, the hon. member for Bruce--Grey--Owen Sound does have a five minute right of reply before I put the question.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Approx time: 1840 EDST