

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO)**  
**April 3, 2008**

**Mr. Barry MacDonald (President, Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society)**

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this committee on Bill S-215, which seeks to protect our heritage lighthouses.

It's been a long road since the first meeting of the lighthouse protection act committee was held in Halifax in early 1999. In February of 2000 the late Senator Michael Forrestall met with our committee and presented us with the first draft of what was to be Bill S-21.

I've been involved in lighthouse preservation for the past 12 years, and have served as president of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society for the past five years. During this time I've had the pleasure of giving lighthouse talks in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia. I have been consistently impressed with the positive response I have received. I've seen evidence of the strong bond that exists between people in these communities and the lighthouses that have served them and their forefathers.

Lighthouses are given almost a spiritual value by people in these maritime communities and rate in importance with the church. To verify the spiritual connection we have only to look back in history to see that administration of early aids to navigation along the St. Lawrence River was entrusted to the Jesuits and Trinity House.

People in these communities all across Canada have become increasingly concerned with the welfare of these very special structures. I could give you many stories of fundraising efforts involving bake sales, bingos, etc., ideas that money-strapped community groups come up with to save and protect a fixture in their community that they hold dear—their lighthouse.

I cannot say enough for the volunteer effort put forth by people across the country, an effort that I feel should be taken into account by our lawmakers as they consider this legislation. Bill S-215 will send a strong message of acknowledgement and added incentive to these hard-working Canadians.

Lighthouse preservation is alive and well all across this country, but it's not new. I'd like to give you one very early example. In 1967 the Puntney family of Morson, Ontario, located in the Lake of the Woods region of western Ontario, rescued the obsolete Tomahawk Island lighthouse, towing it across the ice and relocating it on their property. Since that time, the Puntney family has carefully maintained this lighthouse and proudly shows it off to anyone who cares to visit.

This is only one example of early efforts to preserve these maritime beacons. And efforts at lighthouse preservation continue on a larger scale today, with groups located in almost all provinces with lighthouses on their shores.

There are many examples of success stories, and I would like to talk about a few in the Maritimes. The Cape Forchu lighthouse in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, was the first lighthouse in Canada passed over under what we now know as the DFO divestiture program. This project was a cooperative effort involving the Friends of the Yarmouth Light, a not-for-profit community group, the Town of Yarmouth, and the Province of Nova Scotia. This transfer took place in 2000 and this community group is still alive and well and greets thousands of tourists in the town of Yarmouth each year.

A pioneering effort began in Prince Edward Island in 1984 with the lease of the West Point lighthouse. A well-organized development plan saw ten rooms, a full-menu restaurant, and a gift shop in place by 1987. A real success story, this lighthouse has consistently employed 25 local people and is a major tourism destination on Prince Edward Island.

Lastly, in the Province of New Brunswick the award-winning Cape Enrage Interpretative Centre welcomes over 40,000 visitors per year to this rugged Fundy shore location. This non-profit group generates annual revenues of \$350,000 and has a payroll of \$120,000, employing approximately 20 students. This dynamic group has been in business since 1993 and hasn't looked back.

These are but a few examples of the alternative uses that volunteer groups have found for their lighthouses.

We must recognize and protect the rich architecture that is present in our lighthouses across this country, from the British influence seen in lighthouses across Newfoundland and Labrador, to the majestic “imperial towers” of the Great lakes, Quebec, and British Columbia, to the work of the famous Canadian architect, Colonel William P. Anderson, in light towers such as Pointe-au-Père in Quebec, and Estevan Point in B.C., to name only two. And of course we cannot forget the humble pepper-shaker-style wooden lighthouse that was developed in Canada and still dots our shores to this day. Few countries can lay claim to such an eclectic mix of lighthouse architecture.

Since the formation of the World Lighthouse Society in 2004, many articles have been written by that society about our rich lighthouse history and our attempts at securing federal legislation. Passage of Bill S-215 will send a strong message to our friends around the world that we take our lighthouse heritage very seriously.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who has worked to get us to where we are today. We all remember the late Senator Michael Forrestall, who was the first one to come to Nova Scotia and work with us, and Senator Pat Carney, who's put a great effort into this act over the past several years, as well as Senator Lowell Murray. I'd like to thank also the local MP Gerald Keddy, from Nova Scotia, who's put a lot into this bill, as well as MP Larry Miller, who has currently introduced it. And last but not least is Peter Stoffer, from Nova Scotia, who has consistently supported our efforts with this lighthouse legislation.

Few pieces of legislation have ever seen this many attempts, and I think this speaks volumes for the tenacity of those involved and for the high regard in which lighthouses are held in this country. I join with Larry Miller in saying let's make this seven times lucky.

Thank you for your time.