

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO)**  
**April 8, 2008**

**Mrs. Everdina Toxopéus (Chair, Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners)**

Good morning. My name is Ina Toxopéus, or Everdina Toxopéus. I represent the Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners and Cabot Head Lighthouse as well. I'm the chair of both committees.

Chairman and honourable members of the committee, I appreciate the ability to come before you to point out my case for why the lighthouse bill should be passed.

Our lighthouses are very important to all of us here, on all coasts, and to the Great Lakes. They are part of our architectural heritage. They are individually unique. They are survivors of the now fast-disappearing public architecture of the 19th century, from imperial towers—concrete towers or wooden stand-alone towers—two of which in the Great Lakes have fine buttresses, to towers built at the side of a house, or extending from the middle of the house or roof line, to one on Lake Erie that looks like the Parthenon in Greece. Cabot Head, for instance, has cedar eavestroughing, hand-made metal down spouts, shiplap board siding, a rock and rubble foundation, and board and bead along the staircases. The uniqueness of our lighthouses brings present-day tourists and connects them with our architectural heritage. The lighthouses are therefore an important tourist attraction.

The lighthouses were erected to safeguard ships and sailors in days gone by. They are at the heart of the marine history of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay in our Great Lakes, as well as both of our coasts. I'm not sure if we have any on our north coast. Our lighthouses are central to the dramatic stories of shipwrecks and rescues that are told on our coasts and the Great Lakes. They're a reminder of the first great commercial corridors of Canada. Canada was explored through these corridors. The lights still serve as a beacon of safety for those who sail our waters, even today, either commercial or pleasure vessels—and the latter even more so today. The volunteers who staff two of our lighthouses up in the peninsula have been involved in helping tourists who've had the misfortune of being stranded on an island, or having had to look for lost ones at Cabot Head.

Lighthouses have a fundamental connection to local communities. Their keepers were frequently recruited from local families. Many of these families returned with their grandchildren, or children, to recount stories of their time, or grandpa's time, spent at the lighthouse. Local communities see lighthouses as belonging to them, regarding them as essential features of the community landscape.

Lighthouses have a universal appeal. Just look at some of the publications on the Internet, such as by Bruce County. Our brochures are all centred around the lighthouse. The romance of their setting and their history captures the interest of many in the public. Visiting them takes one along scenic roads, or on a boat cruise, or tour. Visitors can view

the lights and their museums, swim, picnic, and take in the walking tours, or just sit and dream.

They are now important local tourist attractions. The Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula depends heavily on tourism, with most of the businesses in Tobermory directly related to tourism.

This municipality is home to two national parks, Fathom Five being the very first marine park in the area—or in Canada, I think. It's a UNESCO biosphere, or part thereof. The Bruce Trail, the longest footpath in Canada, runs the length of the peninsula, and our lights are an integral part of that trail. Bruce County's lights are grouped into a tour, showcasing different aspects of our lights: the development of the lighthouses, their local history, the style of life that their keepers used to have, shipwrecks, local lumber and fishing industries. All of these aspects are represented at our lights.

The Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners works closely with the Bruce County Museum in Southampton to improve and expand this product, giving the tourists a greater educational experience. We're now working on our newest product for the Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners: educational packages that the museum in Southampton can give to children. If you take the lighthouse tour, you start with one lighthouse that gives the past history of lighted lights, which Cabot Head does. Flowerpot Island doesn't have a light station because all it has left is the keeper's cottage, and the other lights have their own specific theme, all related back to the Bruce County light museum.

Cabot Head and Flowerpot have an assistant lighthouse keepers program through which volunteers, in our case, pay to stay at the lighthouse or station and work wherever they are needed, usually at meeting and greeting the visitors.

Cabot Head alone received over 10,000 visitors last year. We have nine lights in Bruce County alone, six on the peninsula and five within the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, home to two national parks. Cove Island, Flowerpot and Big Tub lights are within the Fathom Five Marine Park, Cove Island's imperial tower being the oldest and the most complete site.

Tour boats in Tobermory, two big ones and two Zodiacs, are kept busy in the summertime taking people to and from Flowerpot Island. The Chi-Cheemaun passes by Cove Island light, in three seasons daily, to and from Manitoulin Island and Tobermory.

The lights are an essential ingredient in the promotion of regional tourism, adding greatly to the local economy. Bruce County's logo for tourist signs on the highway is a lighthouse. Bruce County has 854 kilometres of coastlines, and our lights are identified through the Ministry of Tourism product development process as a core trip motivator for tourism and development.

We have a strong connection with Michigan, as Michigan residents have a total of 240 lighthouse sites. Although visits from the United States were down in Ontario last year, they were up by almost 40% in Bruce County.

Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners are celebrating the years of light with the celebration of the 150th year of the imperial towers. Our celebration will take place over the summers of 2008 and 2009.

Cove Island is a complete site, as I said before, located in Fathom Five Marine Park, Canada's first underwater park.

In 2006 Bruce County hosted the International Lighthouse Conference, and this year when we did that, Bruce County produced a guidebook with the lights in the back section. This year, in celebration of the history of the lights and the towers, our guidebook is again doing a good section on the lights, a little bit more extensive, and it's in French on the Bruce County website. I can give you the website, if you wish.

Bruce County produced a PBS show and has done three shows on the Bruce County lights alone, and those were carried usually in the American border states. The new Georgian Bay circle tour, which is a new initiative in Ontario, actively promotes 32 lights out of the 50 sites around Georgian Bay alone, six of which are imperial towers, two of which are in Grey--Bruce, with a total of seven sites on or near the Bruce Peninsula as it is. So you can see our lights are an integral part of the tourism industry in our area for both the county and the municipality of Northern Bruce.

I thank you for your time.