CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

François Lapointe
Député
Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup

Ottawa, Thursday, September 4th, 2014

MP Rodney Weston, chair
Of the Standing
Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO)
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Weston

I am writing to request that you convene a meeting of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans as soon as possible, inviting Department of Fisheries and Oceans officials and other stakeholders as witnesses. Given recent events surrounding the proposed marine oil terminal at Gros-Cacouna, Quebec, it becomes vital that our committee work towards providing clarity and transparency for the public on this issue of great importance.

Independent scientists, environmentalists and citizens have raised significant concerns about the proposed marine terminal at Gros-Cacouna and the potential impacts on the St. Lawrence Beluga, a species at risk.

In April of this year, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans gave the project proponent permission to conduct preliminary geotechnical analysis of the St. Lawrence seabed which involves sonar and drilling. This could have negative impacts on the local beluga population. Declarations from Conservative Ministers saying that decisions of the government would be based on scientific advice by Fisheries and Oceans experts indicate that your government, at least to some extent, is aware of Canada's commitments to species at risk. As you know, the St. Lawrence beluga is a threatened species, protected by the Species at Risk Act, the population is in decline, and the proposed site at Cacouna is in the middle of its essential habitat.

Our duty as legislators is to reassure the public that the decisions our government has taken are in the public interest and that we have done our due diligence and scientific analysis before we act. We would like to provide the Department of Fisheries and Oceans an opportunity to provide the public with the scientific analysis they conducted, whose existence was confirmed by the government, and explain to the public the analysis that supported that decision. This exercise in transparency would allow the public to understand the scientific basis that Fisheries and Oceans used to endorse the geo-technical work at the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna.

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I think we can agree that it would be irresponsible for the government to submit the St. Lawrence beluga to risks, without having first analysed the situation and determined that there are no threats. Therefore, the public deserves to have this analysis made public.

If the government is serious about developing Canadian natural resources responsibly, then we will do what is essential to protect species at risk, and to ensure that projects follow a rigorous and transparent environmental assessment analysis. Canadians expect nothing less.

François Lapointe
Member of Parliament for Montmagny – L'Islet – Kamouraska – Rivière-du-Loup

c.c: Honorable Gail Shea Minister of Fisheries and Oceans