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# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

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**Tuesday, June 17, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Mr. James Bezan**

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## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

•(0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk about the agenda. Usually notices of motion are dealt with at the end of meetings, just in case the debates on the motions last for quite a while. Some witnesses came here today in order to speak to us about their bee-keeping industry.

I would request unanimous consent from the committee to change the agenda and hear the presentations before discussing the motions, as we often do out of respect not only for the committee's work, but also for the people who travel here.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** I don't have difficulty with that as long as we ensure we have time for the motion, because if you recall, we were supposed to deal with the motion at the beginning of the last meeting and we couldn't because of the translation. So providing that we allow half an hour, or whatever you think is fair time, at the end of the meeting, we're in agreement with that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

It was Mr. Lauzon's request at the last meeting that this be the first order of business. But if there's consent—

Mr. St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** It was probably just an inadvertent slip of the tongue on the part of Mr. Lauzon in talking about the motion—in the singular—being dealt with prior to the end of the meeting. He'll know that there are two motions on the agenda.

**The Chair:** There are three, actually. We have a housekeeping motion for witness expenses, then we have Mr. Lauzon's motion, and your motion, Mr. St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** With that in mind, Mr. Chair, what do you propose, then, in terms of a cut-off time for the witnesses who are presenting?

**The Chair:** What I'm going to suggest is that we have 45 minutes for each set of witnesses—first with the beekeepers, and then with the CFIA briefing on transportation issues in terms of running

livestock. So it will probably be only one round of questions for each set of witnesses. Then we'll move right into the motions, if everybody's in agreement.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Okay. What time do you anticipate starting the three motions?

**The Chair:** We will start at 10:30.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Did you say at 10:30?

**The Chair:** Yes—45 minutes and 45 minutes.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** I did hear 10:30 a.m., Mr. Miller. I was listening carefully, as were you.

**The Chair:** Okay, is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** With that, we'll change it so that committee business drops down to the third item on the agenda.

Moving up to the second item, we're going to do our hearing on the bee industry issues. Joining us from the Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec, we have Jean-François Doyon, who is the president, and Diane Caron.

Welcome, both of you. I would ask that you keep your opening comments to 10 minutes or less. I will indicate if you are running over that time.

The floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon (President, Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec):** Thank you.

Given that we come from Quebec and that our mother tongue is French, I will make my opening remarks in French, if that is not a problem for you. I will start by describing the situation of the bee-keeping industry in Quebec. I will also make some recommendations.

The Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec was established in 1979, its mission is to advocate for the economic and social interests of its members. The federation is in fact the main lever of the bee-keeping sector in Quebec. Its goals consist in providing support and assistance to producers in Quebec in order to sustain and develop a bee-keeping industry that has the tools it needs to face current and future challenges within its environment and its sector.

In 2003, we suffered losses due to the varroa parasite. Since then, beekeepers have had to continue to adapt to new work methods in order to remain competitive. In 2007, there was another very significant loss of bees due to the varroa parasite and other factors that further aggravated an already precarious situation, which led to a decrease in our stocks. The difficult task of constantly rebuilding our stocks of bees undermines the development of bee-keeping and its ability to flourish. These problems have occurred in Quebec and throughout Canada. This is a major problem for the whole country.

In the spring of 2008, there was better news about bee losses than the past few years. Despite a rather hard winter, the colonies were relatively healthy in the spring. We hope that this will continue, with mother nature's permission.

The colony collapse disorder (CCD), has caused enormous losses in the United States. We don't think it is in Quebec or in Ontario. However, veterinarians are strongly advising us to report any suspicious diseases. In Quebec, we have about 30,000 bee colonies. Normally, our potential would be around 50,000 and 60,000 colonies. There is a very strong demand for pollination, for example, for blueberries in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, as well as for other small fruits, vegetables and cranberries.

Approximately 40% of the food supply is linked to bees, directly or indirectly. If one extrapolates, one could even include dairy producers who provide their animals with legumes that have been pollinated by bees. In Quebec, the economic benefits are about \$150 million for various crops, and there are 780 to \$800 million per year for Canada. These are not insignificant numbers.

The main problems we are facing in Quebec are these: insufficient marketing and labelling, as well as diseases. For two years, the federation has been trying to organize this sector with joint plans and with 100% Quebec honey certification, in order to find solutions to the various problems that Quebec beekeepers face. Quebec produces approximately 20 to 25% of the honey it consumes. Usually, there are between 700,000 and one million pounds of honey annually in beekeepers warehouses. This is ridiculous. We can't have these kinds of honey surpluses when we're only producing 20% of what we're consuming.

The main problems that came out of our consultations with producers were mainly linked to bee health: viruses, diseases, parasites, and so on.

The price of honey is an equally important problem: foreign honey coming into Canada is significantly cheaper than the Canadian cost of production. For example, in Quebec, we produce honey at a cost of \$1.75 per pound, whereas Argentinian honey coming into Canada costs 85¢ a pound.

● (0910)

Current labeling does not indicate the true provenance of the products that have been purchased. There has been a lot of debate around the label « Canada No. 1 » and this debate continues. This label is often on the front of the container but it is simply an indication of grade not of origin. On the back of the container, in very small letters it might say « Product of Argentina » or « contains some Canadian honey », but without a magnifying glass, you cannot read these words. This is misleading to the consumer. We are

therefore asking the Government of Canada to show leadership on the issue of labelling.

A door recently opened after several representations from the agricultural sector were made. However, the work has to continue. As I mentioned, the label « Canada No. 1 » is a grading category. Something has to be done about this.

With respect to the environment, unfortunately we can only note that bees are encountering more and more problems; they are sending us some very troubling messages. More and more, diseases, viruses and malnutrition are daily problems. The environment is deteriorating and we all know that if there are no more bees, we will soon have a food shortage. Coated seeds, transgenic seeds, and other issues are a big problem for us. Monoculture and biofuels are not helpful either: there are less and less honey-producing plants that the bees can use to make their honey. If bees do not make honey, they will not have the food they need to develop. If we lose the bees, we lose the whole cycle of pollination, which would have very significant consequences for agriculture in Quebec and Canada.

Research is helping producers find solutions to these situations that are becoming more and more frequent within the Quebec beekeeping industry. Often it is a series of factors that weaken, or infect people and plants, and because of this the federation is involved with various partners, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Quebec (MAPAQ), the SEDAC and the Centre de recherche en sciences animales in Deschambault (CRESAD). Researchers often make research applications. It is the federation that looks for the necessary funding for this.

We are considering a joint plan that would make all beekeepers who are benefiting from the research realize that they all have to pay for this research. There are approximately 375 beekeepers in Quebec. Our federation represents between 175 and 200 beekeepers who pay contributions for the purposes of research, however everyone benefits.

In Quebec, we are fortunate enough to have a research centre with an experimental hive. I am certain that this is the only experimental beekeeping centre in all of Canada with its own hives. Some of the hives in the experimental centre at Deschambault belong to our Federation. That gives a considerable amount of flexibility to the researchers and it has been made possible thanks to the efforts of partners such as the CRESAD, MAPAQ and the Federation.

With its financial support programs, we believe that the federal government can make access easier to beekeeping researchers and make beekeeping a priority. The federal government must ensure that the agencies responsible for registering pesticides and authorizing their use, work in collaboration with the beekeeping sector. Concrete action is urgent so that pollinating insects, including bees, can be protected. The very existence of several agricultural sectors depends on this, including beekeeping.

●(0915)

We are also working with the Union des producteurs agricoles on a food sovereignty project. This is a project that is important for the whole agricultural sector in Quebec and Canada. We also believe that the new government can help by enforcing the strict food inspection and labelling roles. The food crisis makes the food sovereignty project even more important because it makes countries aware of the importance of having a productive and strong agricultural sector.

Thank you for your interest in the beekeeping situation in Quebec. Bees are an important component of agriculture in general and through their work, they provide us with healthy and natural products. It is essential for them to be protected and governments, through their messages, programs, actions and legislation, can contribute to protecting bees and pollinators in general. Their extension would lead to the disappearance or scarcity of several fruits, vegetables and plants. There could be major damage inflicted on the fauna and flora of the country.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[English]

Mr. Easter, you have the floor first, for seven minutes.

●(0920)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Can we do five?

**The Chair:** If you want, we can do five, and if we can fit in—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, I think we'd get more in. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll do five.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** And there may be enough time here for Robert as well.

First of all, on the labelling issue, Mr. Doyon, this committee has made a report that I hope will deal with a number of your problems in labelling. I am disappointed that the government has a dissenting report with it, but in any event, if you go through it and have any concerns, we'd certainly like to hear them.

Secondly, on the price of honey, you're right, and it's the same as with many other agricultural commodities: we see that we're not producing enough to meet domestic demand, yet prices are driven down mainly by imports.

Where are those imports coming from mainly? I understand a lot of product comes in from China. And is the reason it impacts negatively on our price regime that there's an entirely different environmental regime in China, and also a different labour standards and labour costs regime?

I guess I'll ask the second question at the same time. On the environmental side, I've heard it said that the bees are like the canary in a coal mine: they indicate trouble within our environment. I would ask you whether the United States or Europe is facing similar problems with their bee population.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** To answer your question on the canary and the goldmine, yes, this is a sign of global problems to come. If there are no longer any bees, there will be problems

everywhere. Bees are the very basis of agriculture. Once they no longer exist, there will no longer be any pollination. There will then be a serious crisis and serious problems.

You spoke about imported honey, whether that be Argentinian or Chinese. Beekeepers in those countries do not work under the same conditions we do. They do not have the same food safety standards nor do they have the same production costs. Obviously, it is very difficult for us to produce honey at the same cost as Chinese or Argentinian producers, because of their salaries and quality standards.

In Canada we have very strict quality standards. In Quebec we produce between 20 and 25% of what we consume. On the other hand, Canada is an exporting country. It produces approximately 120% of what it consumes. Why are we exporting the honey that Canada produces while we're importing honey from Argentina? It boils down to cost. Are Canadians and Quebecers willing to pay the price of quality-Canadian honey? The Americans are, whereas we are satisfied with Chinese, Argentinian or Australian honey at a lower cost. Should we not be raising the awareness of the consumer about the fact that what we produce is of a much higher quality than what is produced abroad? That is what we need to ask ourselves.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Thibault, you have just over a minute.

[Translation]

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Doyon.

In Quebec and in Canada, are Canadian or Quebec bees used, or are imported bees used?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** They are originally from Italy, but they have adapted to the Quebec and Canadian climate.

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** I noticed this spring that wild apple trees had even more flowers than usual. I don't remember ever having seen that many. Nature produced many flowers, but I don't see any bees. Has the North-American bee disappeared? Has it been replaced by imported bees?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** There aren't actually any Canadian bees, given that our climate is too harsh. During the winter, bees cannot survive outside. Therefore there are no bees that originally come from Canada. We imported them.

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** Then, the bees we see in nature are bees that have escaped from farms, from bee-keepers hives?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Normally, you should not see any in nature. The ones we see are in fact bees coming from beekeepers. I can see where you are going with your question, and I can tell you that while they originally came from abroad, they have been adapted thanks to their lineages. Scientists did research to adapt the species to the rigorous winters in Canada and Quebec.

●(0925)

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Bellavance.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you for your remarks. I had been wanting to hear from you for quite some time now. Over the years, we have seen the apiculture industry face serious losses. I think that you did a good job of putting the problem in context by targeting what is at the basis of the phenomenon. You talked about pollination. Cranberry production began in my riding. The work that you do is therefore very important. We talk about the blueberries in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, and so on. It is the very foundation of agriculture everywhere. So it is very important to discuss the issue. We are hearing your comments today, but because the session is winding down, I would like us to continue examining this issue in the fall. The committee will make that decision.

Mr. Doyon, you said that there is nothing that proves our bees were affected by the colony collapse disorder, or CCD. However, in Canada in 2006-2007, 30% of the colonies were lost. You said that the situation had perhaps improved for 2007-2008.

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** The situation improved slightly in Quebec in 2007-2008, but in Alberta, losses this year were approximately 60%.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** That is huge.

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Indeed. However, it is the first year that Alberta has experienced such significant losses.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** What are you basing your comments on to say that the problem is not due to colony collapse syndrome? While the United States recorded losses of 40%, Canada faced losses of 30%. The Americans have determined that it was due to CCD. Why would that not be the case here as well? Does scientific evidence enable us to establish that it is not a case of colony collapse syndrome here?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** As I explained a little earlier, the problem that we are facing in Quebec and Canada in general is linked to a host of minor factors. There are parasites, but when the varroa parasite enters the colony, it weakens it. Bees also introduce viruses and other diseases that already existed, but that were not widespread. All of these factors are contributing to our loss of colonies.

In the United States, they say that the problem was colony collapse syndrome, but we do not really know what that statement was based upon. Exactly what CCD is has not really been defined. Therefore we cannot say that we have lost bees due to that problem. There are a host of factors.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** It may be like human beings, who become accustomed to the medication they take. You talked about the varroa parasite. I have visited beekeepers in my riding. They have told me that the bees were perhaps less apt to receiving treatment that was applied in the past and that this phenomenon was likely behind their death.

Do you have any information on that?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** No, I don't think so. The products are still registered. That is another problem we have faced. In 2003, we had only one registered product to treat varroaosis, and it took quite some time to get a second one. When it came, it was highly effective.

In 2004 and 2005, everything went well. In 2006, we faced the same situation, because in many cases, beekeepers were using only one product. I think that the parasites and not the treatments weaken the bees. Parasites do, however, become resistant to treatment.

That is why we are calling for new products or different pest control products to be registered. We would like the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the PMRA, to be able to register products more quickly, to save as many colonies as quickly as possible. Having just two products that are chemical products is not very effective. With a variety of products, we can diversify the treatments, and in doing so, significantly reduce the losses.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Action could perhaps be taken on the scientific side. Laboratories do tests, but at the national level, in Canada, although you may be able to exchange certain tests, and so on, there is not really a national lab that can gather the data. Could that be an advantage?

You said that Alberta lost 60% of its bees. It would be helpful to know exactly what happened, and to share that with everyone. The same thing goes for the problems in Quebec. It seems to me that it should be possible to have very precised scientific studies that can be shared with all beekeepers.

• (0930)

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Things are, indeed, being done: CAPA meets once a year, and various Canadian researchers discuss and conduct research together. However, it is quite difficult to follow all of that, because in Quebec, we have the Fédération des apiculteurs, whereas in Ontario, it is the OBA. The CHC, or the Canadian Honey Council, is the umbrella organization for these groups, but it is quite costly to be able to follow the activities of the Canadian Honey Council. We are talking about quite limited budgets. When we experience losses in colonies like that, beekeepers are less inclined to spend the money to participate in different activities at the national level. So it is quite difficult, financially speaking, to follow everything that is going on.

However, Canadian researchers do talk to each other. Research is conducted in each province, but there are also things that are done generally. I would even say that we meet the Americans about twice a year to discuss these issues. Symposiums are organized.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Time has expired.

Go ahead, Ms. Skelton.

**Hon. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Thank you very much for being here today.

I wish I could remember what size of honey container I bought at the farmers' market and how much the difference in price is between Saskatchewan and Quebec. My husband and I love honey. I use it in my baking and everything, and I buy it from the local farmers' market.

You talked about parasites and the registration of new products to combat them. How long does it take for the registration of a new product to help against parasites? Do you know? Do you have a timeline?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Registering new products does, indeed, require a considerable amount of time. It can take up to two years and it is extremely costly. I thank you for choosing Canadian honey in Alberta—I believe that is what you said. There is excellent honey, quality honey. I believe that in Alberta, the Alberta coop packages the honey. I think you are making a good choice in buying Canadian honey.

If we go back to the first part of your question, yes it does take an enormous amount of time to register new products, it is very costly and it is difficult. When it can take two years to register a product, that is often too long; colonies can be lost. And I would say that it takes more than a year or two to rebuild colonies.

[English]

**Hon. Carol Skelton:** I think we will have to talk to the minister about that.

I have a question for you. When we run out of honey at our local farmers' market, would our farmers from Saskatchewan be able to talk to Quebec farmers and transport between the two provinces? Are there regulations stopping the trade between provinces for honey producers?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** There is no problem, but I would say that in Quebec we produce between 20 and 25% of the honey we consume, whereas Alberta is a province that exports it; it is the largest honey-producing province. Quebec should work with Alberta to bring Canadian honey into Quebec. We have nothing against bringing Canadian honey into Quebec. What frustrates us is seeing honey from Argentina, China or Australia on our shelves. When the Albertans want to work with us... They are already prepared to do so, but when they need us we will be there to develop the markets; there is no doubt about that.

[English]

**Hon. Carol Skelton:** Well, I'm from Saskatchewan and I can really say we have very good honey producers in Saskatchewan.

Recently the Prime Minister made an announcement about how the Government of Canada is going to change the labelling in some way, and hopefully that announcement, the final announcement, will come soon, after the report that was put out by this committee.

Did you read his announcement, and what were your feelings about this at that time?

• (0935)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** First of all, I apologize about the origin. Saskatchewan is also a good honey-producing province. We could even work together. Beekeepers in Saskatchewan are already working with us, in Quebec, as well as a long-time family of beekeepers from Zenon Park.

[English]

**Hon. Carol Skelton:** Oh, Zenon Park, yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** We are aware of the minor changes to come as regards labelling, and we are very happy with them. As I said in my presentation, I hope that we will continue in the same direction that we will be able to provide Canadian and Quebec consumers with information showing where the honey comes from. We would like the origin of the honey, if it comes from abroad—although it should not enter Canada—to be clearly identified.

[English]

**Hon. Carol Skelton:** I think up until now it's been very confusing for people when they go into the market and they see "Made in Canada", and it doesn't say it's grown in Canada, or whatever. So I think the labelling regulations have been confusing.

You lost a lot of bees. Have you been able to partake in the farm programs that have been available to farmers in Canada? Have you been using the programs and have they covered the cost of your losses?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Unfortunately, we have received virtually no assistance from the federal government. The provincial government has provided some money. It has been difficult, unfortunately. We would have appreciated receiving more. The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program was replaced by the AgriStability and the AgriInvest programs. I hope that Quebec beekeepers will be able to benefit from them.

[English]

**The Chair:** I will follow up on what Ms. Skelton was just asking.

Under the old federal-provincial CAIS program, were beekeepers able to make use of that at all? And do you think the new changes to AgriStability will apply to beekeepers?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** The program does not talk about beekeepers, but agriculture in general. I would like this program to do more for beekeepers. As I said earlier, beekeeping is the foundation of agriculture. Bees are the link between plants and animals. Bees are what enables the cycle to go on. I would like more attention to be paid to Quebec and Canadian beekeepers.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Atamanenko, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Doyon and Ms. Caron for appearing before the committee.

Mr. Chairman, before asking any questions, I would like to point out that I wanted to invite a witness from Alberta whom I met a long time ago. His name was submitted several months ago, but we did not get a reply. It would have been good to hear someone from Alberta as well.

[English]

**The Chair:** Right, and we did invite everybody from the names that were put forward. Only the Quebec producers said they were available for this hearing.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Thank you.

Mr. Doyon, you mentioned transgenic seeds and biofuels, and that also affects genetically-modified crops. If monocultures all use transgenic seeds, will that pose problems in the future?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Yes, monoculture is currently causing problems for bees. Since only one type of pollen is being brought back to the hive, there is a pollen shortage.

If I were to draw a parallel with humans, it's as if you were to eat cereal every day. At some point, you would run out of various nutrients. The same thing is true for bees. That is why biodiversity and crop biodiversity is essential.

Yes, this can cause problems for bees. Furthermore, when we talk about genetic modification, the problem is often that flowers that have been genetically modified no longer need to be pollinated by bees. So, they no longer hold any appeal or attraction for the bees, who will then not go and seek out their nectar. So, without nectar there is no honey.

When we use genetically-modified seeds, usually, it's to ensure less traffic in the fields and less soil compaction. However, we realize that yields are lower than they were previously. So if yields are lower, we need to grow crops on a larger area.

If we are talking about biofuels, the same thing holds true. We are currently producing corn, not to feed human beings or livestock but rather to produce fuel. Why are we experiencing a food crisis? We want to be able to produce biofuels, but we can no longer feed people. The question needs to be asked. Just how far can we go? When we introduce genetically-modified seeds and seeds coated with pesticides, we are directly and adversely affecting beekeeping in the short term. In the intermediate and long term, we still don't know how this will affect human beings. We see the prevalence of cancers; perhaps we need to start exploring those areas.

Numerous pesticides are banned or prohibited in Europe. Yet, in Canada, we are starting to approve them. Perhaps we need to ask the PNRA why we are approving products that have been banned elsewhere. We are somewhat behind certain other countries.

● (0940)

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** If I understand correctly, Canada needs to do more research in those areas.

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Yes, that is true.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** That is one solution. Are there any other concrete ideas or solutions that you could suggest today?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Clearly, research has to be done with regard to all those approvals, coated seeds and genetically-modified products. We also need to do research in beekeeping in order to ensure that we have bees that are much more resistant to varroa and all those other parasites.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I have another question. Is there any danger to using the nectar of a genetically-modified organism? If we mix that nectar with another nectar to make honey, will it pose any danger?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** At this time, we don't know exactly what the short-term effects will be. However, we will no doubt know something in the intermediate and long term. Before we determine whether the honey or the nectar collected from genetically-modified plants is bad for our health, we would have to see whether what those plants are providing is harmful to human health.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** You are aware of what is being done in Europe. Are they doing anything in this regard?

**Mr. Jean-François Doyon:** Yes, a great deal of research is being conducted. There are many pesticides, such as Gaucho and Admire, which are banned in Europe in order to protect bees. In Europe, it's a matter of ensuring the survival of bee colonies.

[English]

**The Chair:** *Merci.*

The time has expired. I'm sorry. Thank you, Alex.

As agreed, we've gone one round, and it is past quarter to 10 already. We want to leave time for motions at the end.

So I want to thank our witnesses for coming today and giving us this briefing on what's happening in the apiary business. I would ask you to excuse yourselves from the table, and that Mr. Paul Mayers come up as our next witness.

Rather than suspend the meeting, maybe we'll deal with that housekeeping motion and get that out of the way right now, if that's okay. It's in front of all of you. It's for \$11,000 to pay for the tobacco witnesses we had here this last week.

Would somebody please move that?

● (0945)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** I so move.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. St. Amand.

Are there any questions on it? Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now, Mr. Mayers is here.

**A voice:** He's not in yet.

**The Chair:** We don't have our witness, so let's go right into motions then, if that's okay.

Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Please move your motion onto the floor.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you very much.

As you recall, Mr. Chair, I moved this motion.

[Translation]

First, I want to apologize to my Bloc colleagues for the French version of this motion. It was written in French at the last meeting. I hope that this version is a bit better and therefore more acceptable.



[English]

Mr. Chair, as you know, we did a pretty comprehensive study on input costs. We also know there is some discussion about the possibility of the introduction of a carbon tax. From what I gather from speaking with agricultural people both in eastern Canada and certainly in Ontario, and from speaking with some of my colleagues as well, I know the agricultural community has some concerns about what a proposed carbon tax would do to their input costs. In the last day or two, I've read that there might be some consideration given to exempting certain areas from the carbon tax.

I would like to move that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food urge the Government of Canada to ensure that Canadian farmers are not saddled with a carbon tax that would further increase their input costs and hurt their competitiveness vis-à-vis their American competitors.

The reason I think this is so critical is that if this is in fact in the proposal stage, we could have a tremendous impact on the eventual final product. It's critical to the agricultural industry that we have our input into that process. Our producers and agriculture, as you know, have enough challenges as it is without extra input costs.

So I would strongly recommend that we approve this motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I have a couple of comments.

It's my understanding that this motion has come up at other committees too. I don't quite understand why it would, other than that it's probably a political statement.

I would like to suggest that since it's not the current administration that has...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]...a carbon tax, this is an election issue that probably should be decided. When all the facts are before people and the platforms are known, I think it might be an election issue. I don't think at this point in time it's critical to vote on this; I think it's more of a political statement from this government.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Could you mention, Mr. Atamanenko...? I'm not aware that it has come up at other committees.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I was at the finance committee, and the motion had come up. I arrived late and I don't know whether it was discussed or passed.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** That's hearsay. You don't know that for a fact, do you?

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I'm pretty sure...the motion was there, but I'm not sure whether they had passed it or discussed it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter has the floor.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Clearly it is at other committees, Mr. Chair, and this is a strategy run directly out of the PMO to attract a dialogue in other parties. That's exactly what it is.

I have a couple of questions for Mr. Lauzon.

Is this a proposal for a carbon tax that is coming from the government, or could you be more specific about where it is coming from? I mean, you are the government.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** As I understand it, there's a possibility of a carbon tax being introduced tomorrow.

By the way, if you could clarify which committees.... To the best of my knowledge, no other committee has introduced anything. This is coming from agricultural people; it's not coming from other committees. Maybe you could tell me what committees.

• (0950)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Where is the proposal coming from tomorrow that is actually going to be specific in legislation and a program, and not just a dialogue among Canadians?

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** It's my understanding, and I think it's the understanding of the Canadian public, that the Liberal Party is, as soon as tomorrow, introducing a proposed carbon tax. My agricultural people and other people, as a matter of fact, in eastern Canada have told me that the proposed carbon tax would devastate agriculture, and I don't want to see that happen.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Coming to Alex's point, really, if the Liberal Party proposes a green shift—let's call it that—that might include a carbon tax in it, it might also include other incentives. It might be counterbalanced with programs for carbon sinks, etc. If the Liberal Party comes out with a discussion paper in that regard...we're not the government. We're not the government and we're not implementing it.

Is the Prime Minister now, or the Conservative Party through this motion of yours, saying at this committee that debate among other political parties about ideas, big and small—crazy and wonderful, for that matter—should not be held? Is that what this motion is telling us? Are you trying to direct a political party, be it the Bloc Québécois, the Liberals, or the NDP, or someone else out there, not to have a dialogue about issues?

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Easter, what we're trying to do here is protect the Canadian farmer, and we would really appreciate your cooperation in this. We can ask the Government of Canada to ensure that agriculture is sustainable in our country. That's what this motion is talking about. It has nothing to do with other committees; it has nothing to do with any party. It has to do with the protection of the Canadian producer, who produces our food in this country.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I have just one last question, Mr. Chair.

Is my understanding correct, then, that by the way this motion reads, if there were a counterbalancing policy on initiatives that would hold the line, so to speak—as you say vis-à-vis their America competitors—with whatever it might be on a litre of diesel fuel, and there were another program, whether it's an income tax cut or a research incentive, or whatever...? Am I led to believe that as long as this leaves us competitive vis-à-vis the United States, or in a better position, it would meet the conditions of this motion?

**The Chair:** I'll let you answer this, Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I think the motion is pretty clear. It says that this is “to ensure that Canadian farmers are not saddled with a carbon tax that would further increase their input costs”.

The agricultural people tell me that in everything they do, a carbon tax would affect anything getting to them, when they're producing it and also when they're delivering it to market. They are tremendously concerned, and I think we in this committee should be equally concerned.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mayers is here. I have on the speaking list Mr. Boshcoff, Mr. Storseth, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Bellavance. I would ask that we suspend the debate for right now and allow our witness to come to the table. Then we'll be back at this.

Mr. St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Again I want clarification, Mr. Chair, with respect to when we will start to deal with motions again.

**The Chair:** I would suggest that we come back at 10:30.

Is everyone in agreement?

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Is it the same speaking list?

**The Chair:** I'll keep the speaking list, and we'll continue. You'll be leading off, Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Mayers.

Mr. Miller?

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Let me respectfully, through you, ask Mr. Mayers to keep his comments as brief as possible, and then we can all get a round. I appreciate his being here today.

**The Chair:** Okay. His written statement has been circulated.

Mr. Mayers, if you would be kind enough, give us your brief opening comments and introduce the person you have with you.

**Mr. Paul Mayers (Acting Vice-President, Programs, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With your indulgence I'd like to introduce my colleague, Ms. Cathy Airth, who is the associate vice-president for operations at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Mr. Chairman, I recognize that your time is short. I do have opening remarks. Perhaps I can quickly run through them and we will move from there.

● (0955)

[*Translation*]

In my remarks today, I would like to describe what we are doing to modernize our regulations so that all animal transport within, into, and out of Canada is conducted in a humane manner.

I would like to start by acknowledging that most producers and transporters in Canada are committed to the humane transport of animals and are interested in seeing stronger, modernized regulations.

[*English*]

Canada's existing animal transportation regulations were developed in the 1970s. Since then, of course, farming and the farm animal industry have changed dramatically. The number and

diversity of animals that are transported have been steadily increasing and an increasing number cross international borders.

Scientific information and observations arising from CFIA surveillance inspections have deepened our knowledge of how transport affects animals. New transportation vehicles and equipment have become available. The economic and competitive landscape, transportation practices, and international standards have changed.

Canadians' views on animal welfare have clearly grown stronger as well, as we've seen through recent media coverage on many issues.

It is clear that our rules and regulations must keep pace with these changes.

[*Translation*]

Since 2003, we have discussed amendments to our animal-transportation regulations with farming associations, trucking companies, animal-welfare advocates and other stakeholders.

We have analyzed research and considered feedback from interested parties to determine which amendments would be the most appropriate. In June 2005, a new amendment helped address one of the most urgent animal-welfare issues.

Canada became the first country in the world to ban the loading of an animal if it is unable to stand or walk without assistance, unless the animal is being transported for veterinary diagnosis or treatment.

Now, we are reviewing humane transport regulations so that they reflect the latest science, international standards and industry practices.

[*English*]

We want these regulations to meet the expectations of Canadians and we need them to be practical, effective, enforceable, and science-based.

Currently there are differences in how our transportation regulations are interpreted and applied. The proposed modifications would provide clarity and consistency in how farm animals across the country should be treated during transport. The modernized regulations would make it clearer what are and what are not appropriate humane transportation practices. The proposed changes would improve our ability to inform and educate those involved in animal transportation of their responsibility to effectively enforce the regulations and would contribute to continued care of Canadian farm animals when they are transported beyond our borders.

Modernized regulations would need to focus on outcomes and therefore take into account the contributing factors such as extremes of weather and not just prescriptive time allocations. This outcome-based approach will allow for greater flexibility and will improve our ability to take effective enforcement action if rules are broken.

[Translation]

In Canada, the protection of animal welfare is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play, and we rely on farmers, farming associations, trucking companies, animal-welfare groups and the Canadian public to provide feedback and information. We have already identified many industry and stakeholder groups and consulted with them about the changes to regulations.

•(1000)

[English]

Additionally, in April 2006 a consultation document was posted on CFIA's website. We received more than 130 submissions in response to the document, and the feedback we got supported a review and update of the regulations based on scientific knowledge and current industry standards and practices. Canadians across the country will of course have another opportunity to comment at the time of publication of proposed amendments in the *Canada Gazette*, part I.

We believe Canada can lead the way in humane transportation of animals. And if we continue to work closely with interested stakeholders, including industry organizations, the veterinary profession, researchers, and animal welfare groups, we can accomplish that.

Mr. Chairman, I do have a few more comments, but in the interest of time I will stop there.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We appreciate your brief remarks.

Mr. Easter, you have the floor first.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Mayers.

I don't want to get into the horse slaughter issue to a great extent, just the transportation side of it. But there has been some pretty damning coverage on the transport in, and slaughter of, horses slated for slaughter for human consumption—horses coming in from the United States and meat exported out of the country to other international markets.

So I want to deal with the transportation side of that, and to begin, I'd say that CBC documentary was not good stuff. I was shocked by it, and it's a pretty damning documentary. But off the top, I want to say that I would expect that plant was the exception and not the rule, because what I know of CFIA is that you do good work in terms of human health and safety and in terms of care of animals, as a rule.

So I have two questions. First, in terms of the water and feed to those horses coming from the United States, were they watered and fed according to the rules?

Second, as a spinoff question to that, we ship a lot of livestock from Prince Edward Island now to the U.S. and to Ontario, long distances. What happens in terms of feed and water for that livestock in shipping? What's the timeframe in terms of when they have to stop and feed and water them?

My third question is related to the horse documentary. We're told that some of those horses were shipped on double-decker livestock trucks, which would mean that the horses did not have headroom,

which is required under the regulations, at least when they hit the Canadian border. I understand they can be shipped in the United States as feeder horses without headroom. Did the truckers change the designation of the horses when they hit the border? Give us the background on what the trucking regulations really are related to horse shipment, and were they met in that particular case?

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** Thank you very much, and thank you for the complimentary remarks related to CFIA.

You've raised a number of issues. Let me start in terms of the transportation.

Canadian regulations do currently permit longer periods without feed, water, and rest than prescribed in the standards of other countries. That is one of the reasons we have undertaken the work that I mentioned in terms of a review.

We believe it is necessary to strike a balance between an outcome-based goal and a prescriptive regulatory approach. Importantly, it is our view that specific timeframes may be problematic. Instead, we would prefer to focus on the desirable outcomes in terms of the physiological effect on animals when transported. The modifications that we aim at are to address those physiological impacts as opposed to specifying a particular timeframe for transport, recognizing that in extreme weather a specific timeframe may still be too long to allow for the humane treatment of the animal.

In terms of the specifics of your question related the current regulations, if the chair would permit, I would like to invite one of my colleagues, Dr. Martin Appelt, to speak to some of the specific requirements in current regulations.

•(1005)

**The Chair:** Please.

**Mr. Martin Appelt (Human Transportation of Animals Specialist, Foreign Animal Diseases, Animal Welfare, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** Mr. Chair and committee, in answer to your specific question about the transport times for horses entering Canada from the United States, slaughter horses actually are the only species of animal where regulations exist in the United States with regard to humane transportation. They carry a time limit of 28 hours without feed, water, and rest in transit. Canada currently allows 36 hours for horses and other monogastric animals, such as pigs, without feed, water, and rest. So depending on the origin of the horses arriving at this particular plant, it is likely completely legal that they did arrive without having been fed, watered, and rested in transit.

We do have regulations in place with regard to slaughter that stipulate that those animals have to be given water, feed, and rest at the plant, and evidence exists that this was in fact the case.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bellavance, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good day ladies and gentlemen.

Last winter, Radio-Canada broadcast a show called *Enquête*—this is probably not the same show that Mr. Easter was talking about—on animal transportation and related problems. According to this show, of the 600 million animal slaughtered in Canada last year, over two million died during transportation. Of course, these kinds of shows always focus on the more lurid details and problems. I am not saying that we must not condemn this situation, but the fact remains that 598 million animals were alive upon arrival. So we have to put these figures into perspective.

Whatever the case may be, I am pleased to note that you are looking at this issue and making amendments in order to ensure the greatest possible respect for animal welfare. Everyone wants this, of course. Farmers don't want to hurt their animals, on the contrary. They make their living off those animals.

Perhaps some things need to be changed in the trucking industry. You talked about the number of hours in transportation, which was something that was also reported in the *Enquête* show. Current regulations allow hogs to be transported by truck for 36 consecutive hours and 52 hours for livestock and ruminants.

Mr. Mayers, you seem to be saying that these figures will not change and that's really not what we should be looking at. Could you tell me why exactly? Did I understand correctly what you said?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** Thank you.

I'm not suggesting that won't change; what I am saying is that rather than changing to simply establish a new specific time limit, what we would prefer is to pursue an approach that recognizes the physiological requirements of the animal. As opposed to establishing an artificial maximum time limit, we would instead focus on the actual condition of the animal, meaning that an animal that is dehydrated in transport would not be acceptable.

For example, in extremely hot conditions, rather than holding to an artificial time limit, those who are transporting animals would instead be required by the regulations to pay attention to the physiological effects of that transport on the animal and therefore provide feed, water, and rest before any of those negative physiological effects on the animal can occur.

That's the difference in an outcome-based approach. We would focus on positive health outcomes for the animal as opposed to simply establishing new time limitations. But that's not to say we would retain the existing time limitations; instead, it would be to ensure that animals, when transported, do not suffer the negative physiological effects.

• (1010)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** So, it would be the transporters' responsibility to verify the condition of animals and check the weather conditions. You were talking about very hot days, but it could just as easily be extremely cold days. So standards would be established regarding the mode of transportation in such conditions. Is that correct?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** That's correct. What the CFIA would do through the regulations is establish the outcomes. Then, through education and guidance, we would assist the transportation industry in determining when negative physiological effects are approaching and therefore what actions are appropriate to take to avoid those effects.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** The show also raised the issue of sanitary conditions. It said that the trucks weren't always properly washed between trips, nor were the unloading zones at the slaughter houses always very clean, which could lead to contamination. We are talking about pieces of slaughtered animals lying around, excrement, and so on. The show said that there could be a risk of contamination and that this could affect human health.

Do you intend to look at this? Do you already have an idea of the obligations we need transportation companies to respect to ensure that the animals are being transported in the cleanest trucks possible?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** The issue of the cleanliness of the animals impacting on potential food safety considerations is beyond the scope of humane transportation alone, but is an important element, of course, of CFIA's overall mandate in terms of both animal health and human health. So issues related to the potential for cross-contamination at slaughter are indeed addressed in the requirements from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. However, they are addressed under a different part of our responsibility, and that's in terms of our Meat Inspection Act and regulations as they relate to addressing the ultimate safety of the food supply. Indeed, these issues are important, the control of potential for cross-contamination and contamination at slaughter, but they are separate from the issue of humane transportation in our regulatory oversight.

Would you like to add to that?

**Ms. Catherine Airth (Acting Associate Vice-President, Operations, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** I was going to say that in terms of activity by our operations staff across the country, we spend a lot of time...we conduct blitzes, we look at inspection at auction marts, along with livestock yards, the transporters. A lot of our activities are involved in educational efforts to train people so they understand that those are not proper conditions.

The other thing we recognize from working through various stakeholders is that truckers change. People change jobs. They carry one commodity one day, and they carry something else the next day. It's a constant effort, and you can never get away from that educational aspect. We certainly take more punitive action when we're able to, but because it's an education issue.... It's constant. I guess that's what I'd like to indicate. It may be beyond the scope of the actual regulation, but it's part of our continuing efforts on the part of operations branch to make sure that we're continuing education efforts with truckers and other stakeholders.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mayers, and your colleagues, thanks very much for coming today.

There's a couple of things I need to point out and emphasize—some things you had in your written material. One is that most producers and transporters in Canada are certainly committed to the humane transport of animals. That goes without saying. For farmers in general, livestock is their livelihood and they have a deep respect. I think I can speak to that pretty honestly, being a farmer myself.

You pointed out that new transportation vehicles and equipment have become available. But the key words you didn't have in there, Mr. Mayers, are “better” and “improved”. If anything, the equipment that's used is far better than it was years ago.

As I read through your notes here, one other thing that really bothers me is that you never miss an opportunity to emphasize animal welfare advocates. Although their comments are important, we have to keep in mind that there are some groups out there—I'm simply going to say that—that are so far out in left field that it's not reality. As for where you need to be doing your consultation, by far the large majority is within the industry—the producers, the haulers, that kind of thing. I think you need to stay in that.

To keep it brief, you talk about cross-contamination. Cross-contamination of what?

•(1015)

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** Thank you for your comments.

I simply note that of course the CFIA takes account of the voices of all interested parties who provide comments to us in our consultations. We have benefited tremendously from the input of non-government organizations who have contributed to the consultation process that I described.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I'm sure, Mr. Mayers, but I'd like you to talk about cross-contamination.

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** On the issue of cross-contamination, our particular interest is strongest, of course, in the prevention of pathogenic microorganisms that may be present in the gut of animals and through contact with, for example, excrement on the hide of an animal, avoiding in the slaughter process what is making its way to contaminate the final meat product. That's an important part of the controls that we oversee in the slaughter process, to prevent that contamination of a food that will ultimately be served to Canadians.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I fail to see where the transportation part of it comes into what you are talking about.

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** That's why I characterized our controls in that regard as under the Meat Inspection Act and regulations, separate from the issue of humane transportation. You're correct.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I probably don't agree with that statement or see anything as any different from what it has been for a long time, but we just disagree on that.

Another comment you made in here was that everyone has a role to play. Of course I touched on farmers associations, trucking companies, and of course you come back to the animal welfare groups again. As long as you're treating them, I guess, with the proper respect and not basing everything...

You have 130 submissions from groups. How many of those 130 submissions are from animal rights groups, and how many are from the industry? That should be easy—

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** I don't recall the breakdown. I don't know if my colleague would be able to give general input on the breakdown.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Maybe one of your staff could get those numbers while I continue.

**The Chair:** If you know it off the top of your head, please—

**Mr. Martin Appelt:** The vast majority of the segment was input from industry, and I fully agree with your statement with regard to where the expertise and the knowledge sit.

With regard to the input from the animal welfare or animal rights communities, we certainly received a lot of input. The tendency is, as I'm sure you well know, to send chain letters and repetitive statements, and we counted all of those as one input.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thank you. I'm glad to hear that it is from the industry; that's positive.

On the part about all the proposed changes, you talk about animal health, safety, and welfare. At the end of the day, I would hope that before anything is enacted, or whatever, it will be from the direction of either the government or through this committee and government. We certainly need that to happen.

How many instances of non-compliance have there been in recent years with our present regulations? I just need quick numbers.

**Ms. Catherine Airth:** I can tell you that in fiscal year 2006-07, we conducted 36,435 humane transport vehicle inspections; and of those, 463 instances of non-compliance were identified. So that translates roughly to a greater than 98% compliance rate for that year.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Okay, very good.

Is that it, Chair?

**The Chair:** Well, I'll allow you one very, very brief question.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Would any of the proposed amendments, or what you're looking at right now, increase costs to transporters, and would they basically facilitate the work that transporters are doing?

•(1020)

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** Thank you very much for that.

It's important to note that beyond the regulations that exist currently, the industry in Canada has indeed been extremely responsible and has worked together to develop national recommended codes of practice for the care and handling of farm animals. Those codes have been an important part of our consideration in terms of proposing amendments to the regulations. So in effect, the proposals match the industry practices that have evolved, and they are reflected in those codes. So we don't anticipate that for the majority of the industry—which, as you have correctly recognized and the statistics bear out, is operating in compliance—the regulatory amendments will mean significant changes, because the industry is already working in compliance with the national codes that we have worked to develop with them.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The time has expired.

Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Thank you very much for being here.

There have been submissions and consultations. When are we going to see the results of the updated regulations? That's the first question.

The other comment I have is that in comparison with many countries in the industrialized world, our regulation standards are among the worst. The European Union, for example, which is now geographically expanding, is becoming larger, is strengthening its standards. I would hope that as we move forward we will strengthen and tighten up some of these standards.

In regard to comments on animal rights groups, somebody in this country has to ensure that what we're doing is humane. Obviously a compromise has to be reached between industry and other groups, but the implication that we shouldn't be listening to these people, I think, is wrong. I think we owe it to the people of this country to ensure that we have good, strong, humane regulations.

Specifically as another question on what we saw in regard to what was happening at Natural Valley Farms, horses were transported with horseshoes on and not separated. This is in violation of the Health of Animals Regulations, subsection 141(7).

Horses were transported in double-decker trailers. I refer you to the Health of Animals Regulations, under "Segregation," section 142.

We saw that CFIA inspectors, according to that report, were absent for 10 or 12 hours.

I visited slaughterhouses a few years ago as an interpreter with a Russian inspector, and I saw how stringent CFIA is and how we actually had to shut down one plant that was not acceptable to be exporting to Russia at that time. From what I saw there, I'm just wondering, are you actually investigating this? Are you going to be tightening up this particular plant if in fact that's true? Are we going to be looking at other horse slaughter facilities to ensure this doesn't happen?

I don't have much time, so I'll stop there.

**Mr. Paul Mayers:** Thank you very much. I'll speak to the first part of your question and ask my colleague to address the investigation component of your question.

In terms of concluding the work and taking account of the output of our consultations and then moving forward, we will continue to work with our colleagues at Justice to prepare the regulatory amendments for consideration and ultimate publication in part I of the *Canada Gazette*, which will provide for a formal consultative process. I don't have a specific timeframe to offer you, because of course, in our work with Justice, it will have to fit within the range of priorities that both they and we have. However, we are committed to moving this forward as soon as possible. So that means it is among the regulatory priorities of the agency to advance this particular piece of regulatory amendments to part I for formal consultation.

In terms of taking account of the various voices, I'll reiterate what I said earlier. That is, within the agency, we're committed to taking account of all the input we receive, and we have benefited tremendously from the input of humane societies, the World Society

for the Protection of Animals, and other NGOs interested in animal protection. So we will continue to take account of those voices, along with the voices of all stakeholders, in our process as we move forward both now and in the formal comments that we anticipate when amendments are published in part I of the *Canada Gazette*.

And as it relates to the investigation....

• (1025)

**Ms. Catherine Airth:** Thank you very much.

I would just like to indicate that during the winter CFIA was notified of potential mistreatment of animals at that plant. We conducted a thorough investigation of the plant's operations, and we did not find any animal welfare violations. Similarly, the provincial Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals conducted an investigation and also confirmed that the plant was following humane practices.

However, in response to *The National's* report, we will immediately examine any new allegations. We have a veterinarian in charge at that plant, so we'll conduct specific audits as required to verify that appropriate procedures are in place and are being followed. We're also going to consider the involvement of an external animal welfare expert or experts, and we'll be sitting down with plant management to review the commitments that were made during previous inspections and to evaluate their progress.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Time has expired.

I just want to comment.

Mr. Atamanenko talked about animal rights groups, and I hope you're talking about animal welfare groups and animal protection groups, because animal rights groups, of course, don't believe in the use of animals for human purposes in any way, shape, or form.

As a cattle producer myself, I have been taking a great deal of interest in this, talking to my friends in the trucking industry. As somebody who used to be a cattle buyer as well, I know there is great concern that the regulations will significantly impact on industry and may increase costs to transport if new regulations come into play based on space and trucks. It may make us very uncompetitive versus other jurisdictions around the world, particularly against the U.S. industry.

There is a great deal of hope that this will come into balance, especially in light of what Mr. Miller said. The bulk of the industry has a great reputation, especially the trucking firms that have a great deal of reputation, know-how, and experience in moving livestock across this country. I think often the problems have occurred with inexperience, and as you stated, there is a need for greater education, especially as we have new entrants into the livestock hauling industry.

With that, I thank you for your briefing and I look forward to seeing that in the *Canada Gazette*, part I.

We are at 10:30 and we're going to go back to motions, so our witnesses are dismissed. Thanks a lot.

We'll go right back to Mr. Boshcoff and Mr. St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** If I may, Mr. Chair, with respect to Mr. Lauzon's motion, I note there's a speaking list of three or four individuals.

**The Chair:** We're at four right now.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** I'm concerned that this is likely going to be our last meeting this session and that my motion will not be reached, or if it's reached, the debate will be less than fulsome. By any gauge, Mr. Lauzon's motion has absolutely no urgency attached to it, and unless his government decides to bring in a carbon tax, there's absolutely no potential for a carbon tax to be foisted on farmers over the summer, over the fall, and not until after the next election.

I would ask for unanimous consent, Mr. Chair, that the motion, which is pressing...20 or 25 individuals have driven some 300 miles to be present for this motion, and they are wives and family members of tobacco farmers, so I would ask for unanimous consent that my motion be dealt with first, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Is there consent? There isn't consent, so we're going to continue with the speaking list I have. As long as there are speakers on the list, you have to have the debate.

As chair, my hope is that we'll get through both these motions and be adjourned before the natural resources committee comes in here at 11 o'clock.

Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Is there a way of putting a time limit on these?

**The Chair:** Under the rules, as long as I have speakers on the list I have to take those speakers.

Right now I have Mr. Boshcoff, Mr. Storseth, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Bellavance.

Mr. Boshcoff, the floor is yours.

•(1030)

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff:** Thanks.

Just to make sure, I voted for unanimous consent to hear Mr. St. Amand's motion first.

Mr. Chair, the evidence is already conclusive that the motion we were talking about, about Canadian farmers and input costs, is already part of a cross-committee campaign. As confirmed yesterday, the member for Peterborough talked about the issue having been raised in the finance committee.

In half an hour, in this room, at the natural resources committee, we have a very similar resolution coming up. The fact that the notices of motion for these were all received by the clerks within a 36-hour period...I would hope the honourable member wouldn't dishonour himself. He must know this is going on across all these committees; it was in the House yesterday.

Mr. Chair, we have just produced a report on input costs and we all agreed on that. That would make this resolution either historical or out of order in some way, to assume there is a new input cost and that after all that research we had neglected to consider it, which I don't believe we have. So I'm hoping this is not a delay and an

obstruction of this committee's work. The issues we have to deal with, rather than a possible platform or policy in a partisan way... This is not the place for this.

Mr. Atamanenko also indicated that it was either ruled out of order or defeated in another committee. This committee usually gets along pretty well, so there's no place for this, and there certainly isn't a place for the resolution that's also coming up in the natural resources committee.

With all respect, I'm asking that this be ruled out of order.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm not going to rule it out of order, because as a committee we often deal with many motions that are out of sequence with the way we do studies around here. We're already into a fulsome debate on it, so I'm going to continue on with the debate.

Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I do believe we need to be quick on this, so we can get to Mr. St. Amand's motion, but I do have to say that, as always, I appreciate my honourable colleagues across the way. Mr. Boshcoff's only real problem is that he's far too sincere to spin and win like Mr. Easter does. That's one thing I've learned Mr. Easter does very well.

Mr. Easter, you can call it a green shift for the farm economy, you can call it a carbon tax, you can call it whatever you want. You and I both know that the reason you dance around it the way you do is simply because it is going to damage rural Canada, not only farmers but rural Canadians who live in small communities. You know that as well as I do. There is no way you will be revenue neutral on an issue such as this.

This will affect people driving to and from work, this will affect people who drive great distances, this will affect farmers who are trying to cut input costs, and I do believe that this is not a hypothetical debate. This is the key point: this is not a hypothetical debate. This is a policy that has already been implemented by a Liberal government in British Columbia. It is already having negative effects on the farm community in British Columbia. Therefore, this is something we should look at.

I agree we should take some of the partisanship out of this. I would actually propose an amendment to this motion.

Mr. Chair, I would propose that we amend the motion to say that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food study the effects of a carbon tax or any broad-based environmental tax on Canadian farmers and ensure they are not saddled with a carbon tax which would increase their input costs and hurt their competitiveness.

**The Chair:** We have an amendment to the motion.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Might I speak to it for two seconds, Mr. Chair? I believe this is something that comes halfway. If you want to have a fulsome debate on a very real policy that is starting to be implemented in our country, I believe this is the role of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Nobody in this room should be scared of having this debate.

**The Chair:** Mr. Storseth, can we have that amendment?

Okay, I have the amendment. I'll read it one more time:

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food study the effects of a carbon tax or any broad-based environmental tax and ensure Canadian farmers are not saddled with a carbon tax which would further increase their input costs and hurt their competitiveness.

Does everybody understand the terms of the amendment?

• (1035)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Would the mover of the amendment consider changing the word “tax” to “pricing”, “carbon tax” to “carbon pricing”, because I think at the end of the day you'll find, on our policy, what that's going to be is carbon pricing.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, but we're not actually talking about Mr. Easter's proposed policy in which—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's what was going on—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** We're not talking about Mr. Easter's policy. As he was so offended, we're not talking about his proposed policy. He's not sure if it's a green shift or a tax or what it is.

I believe that what was done in British Columbia was a carbon tax. It was called a carbon tax. And I believe this is the wording that should be used.

**The Chair:** We have the amendment on the floor.

Continuing on with our speaking list, Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

What I was going to say to the original motion goes with this one here. I think this actually strengthens that. This motion, as pointed out by Mr. Easter and Mr. Atamanenko, isn't about politics. We're here to protect and try to come up with things that will benefit agriculture.

At the end of the day, all this asks is that...and I don't care whether it's a carbon tax issue or carbon pricing, as Mr. Easter wants to call it. I don't care whether it's from this government or from a party that would like to be government. For example, I was going to bring up the one that Mr. Storseth mentioned, in British Columbia—Alex, where you're from. There's already one there.

All the original motion was saying—and I certainly support the amendment—basically is that in the event...at the end of the day, our farmers are protected from it. So I can't fathom how you could be opposed to it, or anybody sitting on the committee.

Mr. Chairman, this only stands out...and as I said, it doesn't matter when, who, what, or where something with this issue comes up; the committee is on record as making sure that it doesn't negatively affect farmers and agriculture in general.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I had a lot to say, but I will be quite brief this time because I want to ensure that we talk about Lloyd's motion. As he himself said earlier, we need to deal with this immediately. However, Mr. Lauzon's motion refers to a hypothetical carbon tax referred to at some point by the Liberal Party. That motion is far from being urgent. Furthermore, in opposition to what people have

said about Larry's case, this is an extremely partisan debate in my opinion. Ken proved this earlier. The fact that the motion was presented before another committee is an indication that, here, the Conservatives—and all is fair in love and war, simply want to bother the Liberals.

As I said at the last committee meeting, this motion presents two possibilities, in my opinion. The first is that the Conservatives want to implement a carbon tax, that this plan is in their books, but they are not saying so. If this is the case, I would like Mr. Lauzon to give us more details about this. His motion indicates that there will be a tax. So that is clear. The other possibility is that he really does expect that when the House resume sitting next fall, the Conservatives will be defeated and the Liberals, once in power, will implement a carbon tax.

[English]

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I know my honourable colleague is very skilled in debate in committee, and he knows we're talking about the amendment and not Mr. Lauzon's motion at this point in time.

**The Chair:** On the point of order, we are debating the amendment.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** This also concerns the amendment. We're talking about a carbon tax. So it's exactly the same thing. I think that Mr. Storseth is also an extremely gifted debater. He is also very good at cutting off other people, but that is what I was talking about.

I myself have come up with an amendment, but I'm going to set it aside for now. Otherwise discussions will take too long. Instead, I would like us to discuss Mr. St. Amand's motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** In respect for the witnesses who have come a long way, I would like to call the vote, Mr. Chair, and get this dealt with as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** I have nobody on the speaking list as it stands right now, so we are voting on the amendment. Everybody understands the amendment?

On a point of order, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** A recorded vote.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** A recorded vote.

• (1040)

**The Chair:** A recorded vote. Mr. Etoka, could we have a recorded vote on the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 9 ; nays 2)

**The Chair:** Now we're voting on the amended motion.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** A recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Is there no further debate? Nobody wants on? Okay, a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 2)



**The Chair:** Let's move on to the next order of business, which is Mr. St. Amand's motion. Could you read that into the record and so move it?

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Thank you Mr. Chair.

I move that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food urges the federal government to immediately provide funding for tobacco farmers to the extent of \$1.78 per pound as an interim payment until a full exit strategy can be implemented.

We heard a lot about this at our meeting last week. Powerful presentations were made by the chairwoman of the Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board, and representatives of the Tobacco Farmers in Crisis.

I suspect, Mr. Chair, you and perhaps other committee members will recall my question of the witnesses: "On an immediate urgent basis, what is the best thing the federal government could do to assist tobacco producers?" They indicated during their presentation that the best thing, at least for now, is to do what the motion is urging the federal government to do.

It is an urgent situation. I don't—and I suspect other committee members do not—throw around the word "urgent" in too cavalier a fashion, but this is an urgent situation. We heard last week, as we've heard on other occasions, about suicides in the ranks of tobacco farming families.

To their credit, some 20 or 25 tobacco farmers and their wives or family members attended here in Ottawa, specifically for the purpose of this committee meeting, to lend visible and tangible support for this motion. They've been very respectful of the process and the committee. They were not here to agitate or demonstrate in an inappropriate fashion, but just to say they had driven hundreds of miles to impress upon committee members the urgency of this. Their families and their entire communities are in need of immediate assistance from the federal government. That does not mean another task force, awaiting the results of a task force, another series of circular meetings over the summer, or more half-baked commitments from the government. This is a definite thing for the government to do.

That's the thrust of the motion, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Being a farmer, I know the beef industry and the livestock industry in general, and the affect it's having on my community right now. I certainly sympathize with tobacco growers and some of the obstacles they have out there right now. But I have to be opposed to this motion because of some of the wording. I know what Mr. St. Amand is trying to do, but we have to come up with something that is a complete package. While Mr. St. Amand has pointed out one part of the strategy he'd like to see in here, there's a bigger picture there. We've heard that from witnesses here.

I've heard from a number of municipal representatives from the area where tobacco growers are, including from Mr. St. Amand's riding, and they unequivocally told me it must be a complete

package. It can't be just a buy-out. I think we have to look at that. I guess I wasn't expecting that from them, but it makes sense when you stop and think about it.

So I have to be opposed to the motion as it is. I know the minister has been consulting with the tobacco industry, and I think that needs to continue. I respect the approach and the peacefulness those in the tobacco industry have taken in the negotiations with the minister. I urge them to continue consultations and work with the board that's been formed to find out some way of solving the crisis in the tobacco industry.

● (1045)

**The Chair:** Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the work everybody on this committee has done on this. We heard from the tobacco growers last week.

I find the wording in this motion somewhat troubling. It would include not only all the quota from past years, but the quota from this year as well. That would garner a payout for this year plus their crop revenue, and I believe that would create some issues.

I don't know if Mr. St. Amand is open to looking at rewording his motion or if he's going to put it forward the way it is. But I do find some problems with the current wording of the motion. I agree with Mr. Miller's comments that we need to have a holistic solution to this problem.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We can quibble over wording, but the fact of the matter is that the intent of the resolution is to have an interim payment of \$1.78 per pound for those who exit the industry. Mr. Chair, there's been a lot of discussion on this issue, and as I said last week, I was in the area. It was clear during a committee meeting last week, when we had Mr. Preston here, the chair of—I'm not sure of the appropriate name—the tobacco task force or regional task force, and we raised in questioning that an immediate exit strategy for tobacco producers would not compromise the task force's work.

That was clear from the meeting we had with him last week. The government could come forward with an exit strategy for the tobacco producers themselves, who were under very strenuous personal and economic strain, in part due to the actions of the current Minister of Immigration herself. She made very clear to me when we were down there that the tobacco industry as a whole, the population down there, felt the government had committed itself to an exit strategy and had broken their word. Even the bankers lent money on the basis of the commitment that they felt the current government had given them towards an exit strategy.

The government holds a lot of responsibility here, and so the fact of the matter is that this resolution would not compromise the task force's work. That can go on. As a bottom line, I would feel that in fact, if the government were to commit itself to this \$1.78 per pound interim payment for those who are going to exit the industry, it would even complement the work of the task force. Then these tobacco producers, now under such financial strain, would see some light at the end of the tunnel and be able to focus on future investment and future opportunity, rather than worrying about where their next meal is going to come from.

**The Chair:** Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** You know, I'm not even sure why we're going back and forth on this. This is a chance for us to make a statement, to say let's get some initial money to these folks who have been suffering for all these years.

It's true that we need an exit strategy, and everybody's trying to work together, but this takes time. All this is saying is let's get out there, give them a little bit of help so they can keep those farms going initially, as we've done for other producers in a crisis situation, and let's just get on with it. This is a recommendation. It's a statement to the minister, and hopefully he will understand this. Let's get on with it, as we work towards this strategy. I would just hope that we can get this done quickly and give them some help.

•(1050)

**The Chair:** Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Really, I want to commend the folks who have driven a long way to be in attendance here. Your message is loud and clear, and we do hear you.

I, like Mr. Easter, have visited the area. I'm not sure I agree with all the comments he made. I think the people I spoke with agree that a comprehensive solution is needed. I hope this isn't a political ploy. I would hate to think that these people in distress would be used as pawns.

Mr. Chair, this is a complex issue, and we believe it requires a comprehensive solution. First of all, this motion does not bring all the stakeholders to the table. We've seen the damage from ad hoc programs that do not include all stakeholders. We saw during a previous government the very damage that can do. And in some cases it hurts the very people we're trying to help.

Mr. Chair, the minister is working with all the stakeholders. He's discussing this very issue with all the stakeholders, and they're working collectively and collaboratively on the solution. I would suggest that we let the minister finish his job and get this completed, and I really think we should call the vote.

**The Chair:** I still have a speaker on the list, so I can't call the vote.

Mr. St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** I'd just like to reiterate what I've said on a few other occasions now.

Mr. Atamanenko is correct; we are going back and forth on this. The government was elected 29 months ago—29 months ago, Mr.

Chair—and something needs to be done. Frankly, something needed to be done 29 months ago.

I take great offence at Mr. Lauzon's suggestion that these good people are being used—I guess by me—as political pawns. Nothing could be further from the truth. I'll indicate to Mr. Lauzon that I will not quickly forget that remark.

I am responding to hundreds of tobacco farmers in my area and in neighbouring ridings who have e-mailed me on a daily basis, describing for me very cogently, very descriptively, the financial situation they find themselves in, which is extremely dire. So no, they are not being used as political pawns. They are here begging the government to finally do something, do something in a tangible fashion, after 29 months.

**The Chair:** Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I have a question for you, Mr. St. Amand: what was done immediately prior to that 29 months? I ask that because it's quite apparent that this problem didn't start 29 months ago. What exactly was announced in, say, the six months before that?

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Chair, the previous government had done the TAAP program. The \$1.78 now being requested by the tobacco farmers is nothing more or less than had been done by the Liberal government a few years back.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Perhaps I can answer Larry's question, because I was involved in that fairly extensively.

What was put in place by the previous government, Larry, was a tobacco reduction strategy. It was agreed on by the industry and the government. Even though the member from the area, who was the Minister of Agriculture, had made that commitment and lost the election, the government still followed through on the commitment he had made.

So we paid out that money on the basis of a tobacco reduction strategy. Clearly it didn't move to a complete exit strategy. It wasn't thought that this was required at the time. Circumstances have since changed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Nobody in this room, including the people here today who have driven all those kilometres, should doubt Mr. St. Amand's sincerity when it comes to this. Certainly I don't. But I do have to take issue with one comment, and that is where he keeps referring to 29 months.

There have been 28 opportunities for your party to take us down. If this is an issue that's so vitally important that you need a change in government.... And you have Mr. Alghabra, sitting right beside you, who stands up in the House of Commons and says that their party will take us down when it's best for their party.

That is not putting these people first. I implore you to continue to work with the government in the fashion that you have been, or else work with your caucus colleagues to bring a little sincerity to their voting record when it comes to this issue.

**An hon. member:** Call the question.

•(1055)

**The Chair:** I'm not seeing any other speakers.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** I'd like a recorded vote, please.

**The Chair:** The clerk will record the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** With that, our time is up. I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

We are adjourned.

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