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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 19, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat Finnigan**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)):** Welcome, everyone.

We'll continue our study on perception of and public trust in the Canadian agricultural sector.

Today with us we have, from the Canadian Trucking Alliance, Mr. Stephen Laskowski, president. We also have Lak Shoan, director of policy and industry awareness.

Welcome to our committee, both of you.

From the National Cattle Feeders' Association, we have Janice Tranberg, president and chief executive officer.

Welcome to our committee, Ms. Tranberg.

From Egg Farmers of Canada, we have Roger Pelissero, chairman and egg farmer, and Mr. Tim Lambert, chief executive officer.

Welcome, both of you, to our committee.

We'll start with opening statements. Usually we allot seven minutes, but as we have three panellists we'll go with six minutes. Please keep it as close to six minutes as possible, because we do have some questions afterwards.

Also, we will have to cut five minutes off this panel and another five because we need 10 minutes for business at the end of our committee meeting.

We will start right away with the Canadian Trucking Alliance.

Whoever wants to lead, go ahead.

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski (President, Canadian Trucking Alliance):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and committee members.

By way of background, the Canadian Trucking Alliance is a federation of provincial trucking associations from across Canada. We represent over 4,500 trucking companies. Our members are both big and small. If you did it on a numbers count, the vast majority of our members would be 20 trucks or less. We are a \$67-billion industry employing over 500,000 people.

With regard to the agricultural sector, increasingly our industry is becoming somewhat of the face of it. More and more people in Canada are becoming urban, and as such, are perhaps disconnected

from the farming community. It is our members who move over 800 million animals a year. That becomes the connection point between the people of Canada and livestock movement.

With regard to the carriers themselves, drivers in trucking companies have had increasing responsibility for the handling of livestock animals. We accept and understand that responsibility, but we also would like to discuss the complete supply chain responsibility, and accountability and enforcement, which may come in the form of questions.

Accepting responsibility and accountability becomes training standards and licensing standards. Recently, Minister Marc Garneau announced a national pre-licensing minimum training standard for the trucking industry. That was a great announcement. From coast to coast beginning on January 1, 2020, we will have a national pre-licensing standard with regard to the specifics of livestock. It doesn't end there with the safe movement of a piece of equipment; it also involves the training and responsibility of handling livestock animals.

With that will come training, which is something we as an industry would like to work on with the Government of Canada. We understand that training is important and that all sectors want training dollars. One of the things we would like to do is change the lens a little bit on how those dollars are handed out. Currently, truck drivers are not deemed as skilled, even those who move livestock animals. Any farmer or anyone who knows will tell you that the handling of animals with regard to transportation is an extremely skilled profession. It requires a lot of training in handling. We want to be treated like other sectors of the economy.

So you understand the demands and the pressures facing our industry, in 2024, we expect to have a 34,000 person driver shortage in Canada. It is more acute when it comes to handling livestock. It's not a job that is the first choice of everyone, because of some of the demands that involve moving livestock and training. That is why we'd like to see more training dollars head to our sector, not just for all of the economy, but specifically for livestock.

I have a couple of points with regard to some improvements. With changes to the amount of time that animals can stay on a truck, which we support, we'd like to see an investigation, or perhaps more dollars, going toward feed and rest locations in Thunder Bay and the Manitoba and Saskatchewan areas. That would help our sector and our customers.

The other aspect that I'd like to bring to your attention that will help—there is no hindrance—is the introduction of electronic logging devices that will govern the movement of livestock transportation. It will govern all transportation, but for the purpose of this committee, it's livestock. There are zero issues associated with moving toward electronic logging devices. It's going to help the Canadian economy move more safely. It's going to help livestock transportation be safer, and it's not going to impede the supply chain. It's a good news story, and it's going to help the movement of livestock.

Thank you again to everyone for this opportunity. We look forward to any potential questions.

**The Chair:** We will hear now from Janice Tranberg of the National Cattle Feeders' Association.

**Ms. Janice Tranberg (President and Chief Executive Officer, National Cattle Feeders' Association):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this morning. My name is Janice Tranberg. I'm the president and CEO of the National Cattle Feeders' Association. NCFA was established in 2007. It represents Canada's cattle feeders on issues of national importance and works collaboratively with other beef organizations to strengthen the value chain.

Our farmers produce safe, healthy and affordable food for families in Canada and around the world. They take great pride in growing this healthy food and maintaining the land that has been in their families for generations and will be passed on to future generations. People are losing their trust in agriculture, often because they don't have the full story. These misconceptions might result in such negative impacts as undue regulation and limited access to the tools and technologies they rely on. Therefore, I commend the committee for taking on this study. I am pleased to contribute today.

Canada's cattle feeders are committed to providing safe, healthy and high-quality food in an economically, environmentally and ethically sustainable and socially responsible way. We do this through our dedication to four pillars: following and exceeding industry standards of safe and humane animal care, employing the best practices in animal health and production, practising good environmental stewardship, and investing in our people and their communities. The dedication of NCFA members to these four pillars demonstrates our commitment and continually improving industry reputation. For example, in 2014 NCFA developed a workable, credible and affordable animal care assessment tool for the Canadian industry in order to provide assurances to customers on feedlot animal care and handling. This auditable feedlot animal care assessment program covers multiple aspects of production, including transportation practices, facility design, cattle handling, nutrition and feed, and animal health management.

Another example is NCFA's recent and ongoing efforts to monitor the use of antimicrobials and their potential for resistance buildup. Antibiotics are used in feedlots to prevent disease and the resulting infections from cattle sharing close quarters, especially when new cattle are introduced to an existing group. It's of the utmost importance that cattle feeders have access to these important medicines so that their prudent and judicious use is taken very seriously and closely monitored to keep animals healthy and comfortable. Our producers employ the best practices in animal

health and production. They work in conjunction with feedlot veterinarians and nutritionists to ensure this.

There are many opinions on food and agriculture, its impact on the environment, and its safety to humans, and yet so few of these opinions come from the people who are actually in the know. No one knows more about food than the farmers who produce it. How do the voices of farmers and agricultural researchers get heard? While modern agriculture is often criticized as being the major source of air pollution, research shows that North America has the lowest agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Africa, on the other hand, is the lowest adopter of modern agriculture and has the highest emissions. So increased production actually has an inverse effect on emission intensity.

I recently attended the Alberta beef industry conference and heard Dr. Frank Mitloehner, a professor from UC Davis. According to his research, the balance of emissions in beef production is net zero. In other words, the greenhouse gas emitted in cattle production is equivalent to the greenhouse gas sequestered by the same industry. Beef production is not contributing to the increase in global greenhouse gases, yet we are still often targeted as the main emitter. If the public does not understand science such as this and continues to paint modern agriculture as a major polluter, our fear is that new technology will be taken away from producers. We'll have to revert to postmodern practices that will be more harmful to our environment and decrease production potential.

How do we address the challenge of public perception? The NCFA offers the following recommendations to the committee for consideration. First, government legislation and regulations must be based on sound science and research from reliable and peer-reviewed sources. The sector will always defend the government if this is the case.

● (1110)

Canadian regulatory agencies serving agriculture and food have a global reputation for excellence that plays a critical role in public trust. The government needs to regularly defend these agencies and the work they do to keep Canada's food safe.

Government must also provide officials at these regulatory agencies ongoing training on the current and evolving tools and technology for the agriculture sector. These officials need to have an understanding and trust of modern agriculture for the public to have the same. Government must play a proactive role in communicating to the public the positive Canadian agriculture story and support industry-led education, communications and awareness initiatives.

Finally, you can do more to ensure marketing campaigns are based on fact and do not mislead Canadians.

Be assured that NCFA will continue to do our part by following world-class standards of animal care, employing best practices in animal health and production, serving as faithful stewards of the environment and investing in people and communities.

Thank you.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Tranberg.

Now it's the Egg Farmers of Canada. I'm not sure if both of you will speak, but you can split your six minutes. Thank you.

**Mr. Roger Pelissero (Chairman and Egg Farmer, Egg Farmers of Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having us here today.

My name is Roger Pelissero. I'm a third-generation egg farmer from St. Ann's, Ontario. I'm also the chairman of the board of Egg Farmers of Canada. Here with me today is Tim Lambert, CEO of Egg Farmers of Canada. We welcome the opportunity to share our perspectives on the perception of public trust in the Canadian agriculture sector. We are also pleased to be here today with our agriculture colleagues, the National Cattle Feeders' Association and the Canadian Trucking Alliance.

Egg Farmers of Canada manages the national egg supply and promotes egg consumption while representing the interests of regulated egg producers from coast to coast. There are over 1,000 family egg farms across Canada located in every province and in the Northwest Territories who are dedicated to producing fresh local eggs. In fact, surveys conducted by Canada's top polling firms confirm that over 88% of Canadians say it's important that the eggs they purchase come from Canadian farms, and 89% of Canadians say they trust the quality standards of food from Canadian farms.

We believe that many of the issues encountered by today's food system are related to the fact that people are often disconnected from their food and that the players in our food system have shared responsibilities to connect with Canadians who want and enjoy our products. Egg farmers do this by approaching every aspect of their business, from operations to policy development to governance, with the utmost regard for our communities, our environment and our society. Our collective efforts are amplified through Egg Farmers of Canada, who engage in a number of activities and raise the profile of our farmers and strengthen the connection with Canadians and our stakeholders.

These efforts include promoting eggs as a high-quality protein and a nutrient-dense food. They also include showcasing many of the farm families behind the work we do. I'm pleased to say I've had one of your members, Mr. Longfield, at my farm and given him a tour. By all means, if any members of this committee would like a tour, I'd be happy to open my doors and bring you to our family farm and give a tour.

We also do activities advertising national campaigns like "Wake Up To Yellow", which is an event we did across cities in Canada, like downtown Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax, as well as our "Downtown Diner" event here in Ottawa. I know many members on

this committee have attended that. Canadians living in urban and rural parts of our country have an opportunity to meet our farmers and see that the eggs they purchase come from a family just like theirs.

Our provincial egg boards take part in similar and complementary outreach activities. For example, Manitoba Egg Farmers and Egg Farmers of Ontario travel around their respective provinces with a portable hen-housing display to show Canadians first-hand what modern farming looks like. This unique approach bridges the gap between the farm and the table by helping Canadians experience egg production up close.

Additional activities include farm tours, which I mentioned, virtual farm tours, and are shared and promoted online with a mix of other activities that showcase our production practices and the people dedicated to producing made-in-Canada eggs.

**Mr. Tim Lambert (Chief Executive Officer, Egg Farmers of Canada):** I'll just pick up the thread from there.

Thanks for the opportunity to address the group.

As Roger pointed out, we see public trust as a core principle of our future, our industry and our business. Societal expectations have clearly changed. Society wants to know more about where their food comes from. They want to know it's safe. They want to know it's high quality. They want those standards to be public. For those of us who deal in animal agriculture, they need to know and want to know that we care for the animals humanely, so it's not good enough that we just say we're doing these things. We need to back the talk up with meaningful actions, communicate those actions and build that trust.

This generation—in fact, we just had Mr. Drouin address our young agriculture leaders group—we've engaged them as well. We're very active, as Roger has pointed out, on social media and a variety of means, telling our story. The fact of the matter is that the story of food production is going to be told. It's going to be told by us or it's going to be told by activist groups, environmental groups, vegan groups or any other number of groups, so it's really incumbent upon us to lead this, be proactive and tell our story.

We're proud to say that all eggs produced on regulated farms, whether they're in Newfoundland or on Vancouver Island, are all produced to the same standards. They're all audited by a third party. Recently, we've launched an egg quality assurance program, which matches both animal care and food safety under a common brand that we will promote across Canada so that Canadians can know that they're buying Canadian eggs.

Canadian egg farmers believe in the intrinsic link between public trust and business success. We nurture that acceptance nationally and internationally, not just because it's the right thing to do but because it strengthens our industry, our sector and our communities. Our engagement includes a number of national and global initiatives focused on dialogue and discussion. Through these initiatives, we work side by side with industry, government and other stakeholders to advance matters that affect the public's perception of our sector.

With that, I'll conclude. Thank you.

•(1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lambert.

Now we'll start our round of questions, but before we do, we welcome Mr. Randy Hoback in place of Mr. Berthold.

We'll start with Mr. Dreeshen for six minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses today.

What precipitated this particular study was the previous study we did on mental health for farmers, ranchers and producers. From that we heard from various groups that they feel they are being denigrated by certain actors. That is one of the reasons we're now talking about public trust and perception, because we need to have your groups and organizations helping us move in that regard, giving us some advice, but we also need to realize that all of our members—our constituents and your members—have to be listened to as well. There are some serious things happening that sometimes we just don't want to talk about, which is one of the serious issues that happened with mental health. I know my colleague Mr. Shipley will, perhaps in his questioning, talk about some of the issues with the way animals are moved, transportation.

I would like to talk to Ms. Tranberg on the issues as far as beef is concerned. I was at the Red Deer beef conference last week, and I heard the professor from UC Davis talk about how, in both the beef cattle industry and the dairy industry, there is less greenhouse gas now being produced than there was in the past. The efficiencies that have come about in that industry have helped reduce that. Also he raised the fact that, as far as methane is concerned, it basically becomes a wash. So here is an industry that is being denigrated in the media by those people who haven't seen that information. It was very well presented.

My point is this. How do we make sure people see that information and are educated in that particular way?

There is another point that I want to ask about. There was a discussion about how officials need to understand and trust modern agriculture. If you take a look at the Canada food guide and if you look at the picture very carefully, you might see a couple of little slivers of beef. These are the kinds of things. Officials have to get their act together, but we also have to make sure this message is presented.

Ms. Tranberg, could you present your views on that? If there's some time, maybe some of our other guests could as well.

•(1125)

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** It's not an easy question to try to answer.

I think the main point is that there isn't a single way. When I address the first part, it's how do we get those messages out? I don't think there is a single way that we're going to do it. We need to use all the tools in the tool box.

Certainly we need to inform our farmers and give them the support they need. I'd say a lot of this conversation happens right at the dinner table. That's where it really starts. If you have relatives over and you're scared to talk about agriculture and what you do, and you don't have the resources to do that, then that's where it needs to start.

There are other things we can do. For example, agriculture has not been a conversation in our education systems. I think it's simply because we haven't needed it to be in the education system. It used to be that one in six people was related to the farm, and now I think it's one in 52, if I remember correctly, so there's that broadening gap. We need to consider how we put agriculture back into the education system and how we promote that.

We also need to ensure, as I said, that our regulatory agencies are kept up to speed on the most current science being used. Sometimes we even find that there's a breakdown between them and farmers, and they don't understand, so can we get more people coming out to the farms? Certainly our producers are more than willing to bring people onto the farm, but as we heard just the other day, there were some biosafety concerns. People just walked onto their farm without being invited. It's helping to bridge all of those different gaps. Can we make tools and can we make farms more accessible to the general public so they can come out and see the care that the farmers take in working with their animals?

Then we need good speakers like Dr. Frank, who was here last week, to go out and really make the science available to people, to you, to me, in a way that we can understand it. There isn't a single answer. I think we need to try to use all the tools in the tool box. As I said, the government can help by perhaps making resources available so that we can increase those different opportunities.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Mr. Pelissero, on the egg side, we're back again to bad cholesterol now. It was good; it was bad; it's gone back and forth. If you look at the Canada food guide, you can get four meals out of that one egg, because you have a quarter of an egg that they think you should have for protein.

What are the egg producers doing to try to have some common sense there?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** On the egg side, we feel egg is the golden protein choice. In terms of that article that came out in the U.S. the other day saying that eggs are bad for you, again, I'm going to be like the President of the United States and say, "false news, bad claim". Eggs are healthy.

We have really good engagement regarding our social media. We have good engagement on Twitter and on Facebook. We engage with food bloggers. I've had a busload of food bloggers to my farm and I invited them in. Before we went into our production facility where the hens are housed, I asked them if they had a cellphone. They all looked at me as though I was going to take it away from them. I told them I wanted them to take multiple pictures inside our production facility—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Pelissero, but we're over time.

I will move to Mr. Breton.

[Translation]

You have six minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank all of you today for being here for our study.

I'd like to discuss research, development and innovation in agriculture and agri-food. Innovation can increase quality and productivity in our agricultural sector. Productivity is extremely important, as we are told that there will be 9 billion people on the planet by 2050. You are all going to contribute, I hope, to this large increase.

Mr. Lambert, the funding for private sector research and development has declined over the past 10 years. In parallel, research and development is being done in the public sector, by the federal government, notably.

Here is my first question: can you explain the decrease in investment in private sector research and development and innovation? Personally, I am concerned. The agricultural sector should also be concerned.

•(1130)

[English]

**Mr. Tim Lambert:** At Egg Farmers we've made, I would describe, a pretty massive investment in research and development. We sponsor a network of research chairs across Canada. We have a research chair in ag economics at Laval University. We have a research chair in public policy, Dr. Bruce Muirhead, at Waterloo. We have a research chair in animal welfare, Dr. Tina Widowski, at the University of Guelph. Most recently, we launched a research chair in environmental sustainability at the University of British Columbia's Kelowna campus.

What's exciting about that is not only the research and innovation that comes out of it. For example, Dr. Pelletier at UBC did a life-cycle analysis which shows that in the egg industry, we're producing 50% more product while using half the resources that we were using 50 years ago. What we intend to do with that is build benchmarks so

we can continually improve our resource efficiency and continually evolve technologies to produce more protein while using fewer resources.

It also provides a large group of young people, graduate students.... Some will stay in academia, but many will come to work in our industry. We've put R and D as an extremely high priority, because we think it's, as you point out or asked in the question, a critical part of our future. We're encouraging government to maintain or even increase its investment in research. It should be, really, about public-private partnerships.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lambert.

Ms. Tranberg, the Government of Canada funds several research and development initiatives. Our country in fact ranks seventh for its public investment in research and development. Given our vigorous agricultural sector, we, of course, dedicate a lot of energy and effort to it.

Can you tell us what impact this has, here, on our Canadian producers? How could we help them more? How could our programs be modified?

You have a minute and a half to answer.

[English]

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** Obviously, research and investment constantly have an impact, as Tim mentioned. We don't see the herd increasing in numbers in Canada, but what we do see increasing is the weight per cattle. We're taking the research, exactly as he said, and we're looking at how we can increase production. How can we grow more using fewer resources?

As for the actual numbers and the impact, I'm sorry, but I don't have that. I can certainly provide those numbers for you.

The cattle industry has one of the biggest research clusters this year that has been received through the BCRC. I'm going to echo a little bit of what Tim said. I think it's a matter of how we leverage those dollars and how we pull together industry with government and farmers. We've been seeing a lot more farmer dollars getting invested into research than, perhaps, private company dollars.

I did want to question that we're seeing investment decreasing. I'm not sure that investment is actually decreasing. I think it's just getting spread out, and it's going into different areas. For typical investment in the past, you might have thought of production or you might have thought of genetics, but there's also investment going into technology such as micro-feeders so we can have the exact amount of nutrients that the cattle need and are able to monitor exactly their feed intake to increase weight gain. I think there is a lot that's going on that might not be considered typical research.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Tranberg. I have to cut you off.

Thank you, Monsieur Breton.

Mr. MacGregor, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Thank you, Chair. I'm going to try to get through three questions.

Ms. Tranberg, I would like to start with you. I found very interesting in your remarks the reporting that in the beef cattle industry, greenhouse gas emissions are at net zero. I'm really interested in agriculture's role and the important role it can play in combatting climate change. I assume a lot of that comes from the sequestration of well-managed pasture lands. Can you talk a little bit more about that, the carbon sequestration potential of well-managed pastures?

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** The cattle-feeding sector is the sector that I represent, so I'm sorry I can't talk as much about grass-fed, but I can certainly talk about the cattle-feeding sector. There is a lot of research that's being done right now in feed efficiency to make sure we have the right feed and to look at proper management techniques.

I'm sorry, I'm going to—

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** There is a proposal in my riding at a dairy operation to try to set up biogas capture from manure, and so on, and try to feed that back into FortisBC's natural gas link. If this is successful, then we may not have to rely so much on fracked natural gas.

Is there anything like that going on in your operation, capturing methane and using it for biogas?

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** Not that I have heard, not in the cattle-feed sector.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Okay.

Mr. Laskowski, I appreciate the comments you made about the training that goes on with respect to your drivers, and so on, and the labour shortage. We've heard that echoed among many different sectors.

Last month there was an article in the Calgary Herald with respect to the new livestock transportation regulations that are going to come into force.

The CFIA's own figures show about 98% of livestock shipments are already in compliance, but when you break down the remaining 2%, I think the CFIA's own figures show about 16 million animals are arriving slightly injured, and there are about 1.6 million that arrive dead.

We're talking about public perception. If we're going to try to address public perception, I'm just wondering what more can be done to address that remaining 2%.

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** The question of animal health prior to transportation and then upon delivery is one that's ongoing between my membership and the customers, and it's a high priority. Drivers are trained to identify animals that perhaps shouldn't be moved.

Also, the farmers themselves who are loading the trucks will go through that process, so there is a check and a countercheck.

Those are ongoing discussions within the supply chain, and quite frankly, they're a high priority and something that my membership and the customers and CFIA do have ongoing discussions about, how to deal with this issue.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Yes, I brought this up with our last witnesses, and 2% sounds great, but then when you take in the fact that we transport about 800 million animals a year, it actually adds up to quite a bit.

But yes, I am glad to hear about that.

Mr. Lambert and Mr. Pelissero, it's great to see you here. I'm really glad you mentioned visiting farms, because you both know that in my neck of the woods I know Farmer Ben's Eggs, run by Ian and Jen Woike. One of my first great introductions to how supply management works and the modern-day egg farming operation was actually a tour of their farm. They were very gracious hosts who brought a whole bunch of local political leaders from the valley onto their farm and were very open to all the questions.

Your industry runs under supply management. I know you have a lot of political support for it. Are there ongoing perception issues out there with the public? We often see columnists write things attacking supply management. I'm just wondering, from your own perspective, how that public trust and perception in the supply management sector is proceeding.

• (1140)

**Mr. Tim Lambert:** Yes, we put a lot of time, energy and effort into not just the aspect of communicating to build public trust, but I talked about on-farm standards, although I haven't talked too much about community engagement through food banks and breakfast clubs. We believe very strongly in our product and the value of our product. To us, public trust is a very holistic thing.

We've made the move to eliminate conventional housing. One of the points I would make is that we often talk about the need to educate the public, and in effect, yes, we need to tell our story, but the public informs us, as a society, of what standards they're looking for, what they expect. I think in that is the responsibility for us to address areas of weakness.

There are always going to be critics of supply management. I worked in the beef industry for eight years and I worked in the pork industry for 10 years, and now I've been here for 16 years with the egg farmers. The system works. It returns a fair return to farmers, and in turn we have a social contract with the consumer, so it works.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Unfortunately, the time is up.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Longfield, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to everyone for being here.



I'll start with you, Mr. Laskowski. You recently were a witness at the industry committee, where I sit as well, talking about regulations. You mentioned a little bit around the health of animals regulations, part XII, and the adoption from the trucking industry. Is there anything else you'd like to expand on there in terms of how that's being adopted by the industry?

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** I guess there's the generic.... We're accepting of those regulations. There will always be some to and fro about what works and what doesn't, but at the end, we have acceptance of that. We want to move forward with the regulation for all the reasons the other panellists mentioned.

The question then becomes twofold. One is compliance in the sector, which is always an issue, to ensure that the regulations are then followed by all. As I mentioned to the previous committee, regulations are always good, as they always bring us forward, but compliance and enforcement are equally important. That will be the other issue. The second part is in regard to training and training dollars. We don't want to look like a sector that continually puts its hands out and says we want more, but the Government of Canada looks at allocating training dollars on certain issues, and this is definitely an area of need for our sector. It's not just in general but specifically because of the specific training requirements to move livestock. This is beyond driving a truck. They're very specific. They're being elevated, and for good reason, but that requires a significant amount of training. Training dollars would definitely assist the industry.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Pelissero, thanks for having me at your farm. I had a great tour with you and Jake. The technology going into eggs gave me a whole different appreciation. Now when I'm having an egg, I look at the thickness of the shell and wonder about all of the composition you track on a daily basis.

I follow @JakeandEggs on social media. He posted something about EQA with regard to a presentation he did with OMAFRA, I believe. Could you talk about what EQA is and how that could maybe help with public trust?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** Sure. EQA stands for the egg quality assurance program. It was the result of probably 10 years of work with the provinces to come up with a logo and a mark that will go on egg boxes and menu items and where consumers can be assured that the eggs they are purchasing, no matter what type of housing system, have met the standards, which have been strictly followed and adhered to. It helps in identifying that they're Canadian eggs, too. We do have trade commitments that are given, so we know that eggs will come in at certain times of the year to fill our market shortages. The EQA program will make that link and give that consumer confidence. We're hoping, as we talked about, that will put a face to the farmer.

We'll also be looking at egg identification, which is happening already, with numbers on the eggs. The consumer could log in on a website, put those numbers in, and actually see that family farm. They could actually know where those eggs came from and make more of a link.

●(1145)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** That's wonderful. In Guelph, free-range hens versus caged hens has been the discussion. I saw the cages, and those hens are treated very, very well. Thousands and thousands have a separate compartment within the cage where it's darker and quieter, where they can lay and they can access water. However much water they need, they know where to go for it.

In terms of the technology around cages, how recent is that, or how prevalent is it? Is your farm different from a lot of farms?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** As you said, our enriched housing system, which has been in existence for six years now, gives the hen the ability to go to a nest box to lay her egg. It gives the hen the ability to go to a perch and perch there, with scratch pad areas. This allows the hen to exhibit a lot of its natural behaviour.

Our conventional housing systems are not the conventional housing systems my father had back in 1950. They're different. But consumers have told us that they want us to transition away from conventional housing. Is enriched perfect? No. Is free-run perfect? No. There is no perfect housing system. As Canadian egg farmers, we want to produce the eggs that Canadians want. They want choice, so we'll provide choice. Enriched gives that great balance between allowing that hen to exhibit its natural behaviour and producing eggs at an affordable price while taking care of the hen properly.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Tranberg, the Elora Beef Research Centre is just north of Guelph. They monitor feed and look at the health of animals. One thing I've heard from talking to some of my constituents who work in offices that support the beef industry is that offices can be invaded by people who are advocating against the beef industry. Do we know who the players are, how they get access to offices and how we could connect with them to build trust?

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** I keep getting these great questions that I don't think I can answer.

We have built protocol for on the farm. When people might get opponents of agriculture who come onto their farm, we've developed a protocol so there are appropriate responses on how they manage that. I hadn't heard of people storming offices.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Guelph Police Service told us about that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** Can I follow up?

**The Chair:** Mr. Peschisolido, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, thank you.

I'd like to thank the guests today for a very thoughtful presentation.

Mr. Pelissero, like you, I love my eggs. I say it's because of the selenium, but I think it's because my grandma would feed me frittata in the morning all the time. It was very tasty.

I'd also like to commend both you and Mr. Lambert on the changes that you've made. I think the dilemma that most folks have with the livestock industry and the public perception of it is that they simultaneously view it as pork and as a pig, as beef and as a cow. You love eating the stuff but you also worry about an animal that has feelings, that can feel pain.

Just like Mr. MacGregor, I have farms in my area. There is an innovative farm called Rabbit River Farms. You may know the Easterbrook family, who have taken egg production to a new level.

Can you talk a little about the changes that have occurred in both the poultry industry and the egg sector to meet the demands of people who want to have eggs but also are concerned about the well-being of chickens?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** I can speak specifically to the egg industry.

As a farmer, our first priority is always the care of the hen. It always has been. We are the original animal activists. We're the animal welfare people who want to maintain that our animals are healthy. That's the case for all farmers. I was in pork production before. I have friends in beef production. The number one priority of a farmer is the care of our animals.

In the egg industry we've heard the concerns of the public. Just recently we have a new code of practice that sets guidelines for every farmer across the country on housing standards and those requirements.

What it means is, as Mr. Lambert said, whether you're in Newfoundland or in British Columbia, every farmer is producing to those standards. When you look at those standards, it's not just the farmer groups that sat together. We had the Canadian humane society and the Retail Council of Canada. Several different groups sat down. Scientific research showed how we should be caring for our animals, the concerns of consumers. That was all put together. That's how we follow it.

• (1150)

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** Ms. Tranberg, you talked about the importance of bringing agriculture back into the classroom. In Richmond there is Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and an individual called Kent Mullinix. He runs the sustainable agriculture department there. He's put in a system whereby he takes about 30 or 40 young folks and tries to create farmers of them.

Do you think that's a model we can take all across the country?

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** How can the federal government be helpful in doing that?

**Ms. Janice Tranberg:** Recently I was the chair of Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan. They were building a curriculum to

take agriculture back into the classroom and to fit it into the curriculum. I know Agriculture in the Classroom Canada is going to be here later. Another model farm is just being developed outside Saskatoon. It's the same thing, where you can bring students to show them how these animals are being cared for. I think that's an excellent model.

Beef comes from, as you said, a cow, but in the city I think people think that beef comes from the grocery store. We need to make those connections and pull the two together.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** Mr. Laskowski, you were discussing the national supply chain for transporting animals, and you talked about building or creating stop places. I forget the terminology, but it was places where the animals can rest—

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** They are water feedlots.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** You talked about them being in Thunder Bay and—

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** —in the Manitoba and Saskatchewan area.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** Sure. It's really a simple logistics issue that the safe transport of animals and the legal transport of animals, especially on those longer hauls, involves the supply chain. The movement of livestock has expanded in terms of the length of hauls, so that requires the truck drivers at times to stop.

You have two requirements here. You have the rest and feed element for the animals, and obviously the truck driver's hours of service. There are no conflicts. Where the challenge comes is actually a place that works logistically for both the truck driver and the animals. There are currently rest areas/feedlots in Thunder Bay and in those areas, but they are in need of improvement. For the safety and welfare of the animals and for the drivers themselves, we're saying there should be a review of these facilities. Quite frankly, after the review, I think they will come to the same conclusion that we need to invest in these facilities, and that's part of it.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** Mr. Chair, I only have 10 seconds left, so that's fine.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, you have two minutes.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you very much.

I only have a couple of minutes.

First of all, I want to commend each of you for what you're doing for your great industry.

On the movement of animals, my concern is that we have trucks on the road moving pork, for example, to slaughter plants. We have people on the road giving them water through the sides of the trucks. I don't know if it's water or if it might be something that poisons the animal. If that animal is poisoned, is it true that the farmer would lose the truckload?

**Mr. Stephen Laskowski:** I can't speak to the supply chain in terms of how it works concerning the delivery of animals.

I was educated myself as a trucker. We became educated ourselves. The problem with watering swine in the heat is that it can cause a heart attack.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Yes. I don't think half a bottle is going to give them a heart attack. It's the principle of what's happening.

Thank you, Mr. Pelissero and Mr. Lambert. Do we import eggs?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** Yes, we do.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Do the farms they come from meet the same standards in terms of feed and housing that you have to meet?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** The short answer is no. They meet CFIA standards, but I have a major concern that I've talked about with the ministers in place regarding our animal welfare standards. On the feed side, there are standards they meet, but on animal welfare standards, they don't.

• (1155)

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Do we have an issue then in terms of the economics of our industries, whether it's cattle, pork, beef, eggs or dairy and milk? Do we have some of the highest standards in the world?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** We have some of the highest standards in the world.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Thank you. Now we are able to bring products in that don't meet those standards, but because they take a sample—it always drives me crazy—the next question will be antibiotics. Antibiotic-free is how they gauge it when it comes in because there's a residue level that they meet, but it has nothing to do with how the animal is raised, how it is trucked in that country or any of that.

Would that be true?

**Mr. Roger Pelissero:** That's true, sir. There are different standards in the United States regarding antimicrobial use as compared to here in Canada. There are differences there.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Unfortunately, we're out of time.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Man, you're tough.

**Some hon members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I'm looking after your next questions. That's what I have to do.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Can I get them to send something in on a question?

**The Chair:** Absolutely. If you have anything you want to send to the committee, by all means—

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Would each of you tell me what you're doing to change public opinion, where the federal government can help, and

what we should be doing? I ask this because the public opinion is critical.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Tranberg, Mr. Laskowski, Mr. Shoan, Mr. Lambert and Mr. Pelissero.

We'll break quickly for five minutes and then come back.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Welcome to the second half of our meeting on perception of and public trust in the Canadian agricultural sector.

For this part of the panel we have with us today, Ms. Johanne Ross, executive director, Agriculture in the Classroom Canada.

From the Agri-food Innovation Council, we have Mr. Serge Buy, chief executive officer.

From Food Secure Canada, we have Ms. Diana Bronson, executive director; and Leticia Deawuo, director of the Black Creek Community Farm.

Welcome to all of you. We will start with presentations of six minutes each.

Do you want to start, Ms. Ross?

Thank you. You have six minutes.

**Ms. Johanne Ross (Executive Director, Agriculture in the Classroom Canada):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and committee members, for the opportunity to appear today and to share the importance of bringing agriculture education to Canadian classrooms from coast to coast.

I am very proud to be here today as executive director of Agriculture in the Classroom Canada. You will hear me refer to it as AITC. That's what we call ourselves.

Before I talk about Agriculture in the Classroom Canada, though, I want to give you a little bit about me. I grew up in the city of Winnipeg, and after completing my Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1988, I moved to western Manitoba with my husband to become a farm girl. We have raised our family on the farm, and we've built our cow-calf farm operation there, and it's where I remain today.

I have held several different roles throughout my career in agri-food, but without a doubt the most rewarding and the most challenging has been the work I've done with Agriculture in the Classroom Canada over the last 20 years.

Agriculture in the Classroom Canada is the communication vehicle for the agri-food story in our nation's schools. We are a Canadian charitable organization made up of nine provincial member organizations from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Literally, agriculture connects us all directly or indirectly, yet Canada's agri-food sector is suffering from a significant trust issue evidenced, of course, by the work you're undertaking. On top of this, agriculture has a serious labour shortage that seems to only be getting worse. There has never been a more critical time for agriculture communicators to get louder and prouder in telling the real story of Canadian agriculture with transparency and openness.

Why is agriculture education needed? Simply put, we have a communication gap when it comes to agriculture information in our schools. Today, there are over five million listening pairs of ears and inquiring minds in Canadian schools. Not only do students make up almost 15% of Canada's population, they are consumers, decision-makers, voters, leaders, future policy-makers and, of course, the workforce as well.

The reality is that reaching our students with truthful agricultural information is certainly not without challenges. Social media has changed the learning playing field, and celebrities with no scientific background at all are often being trusted more than renowned scientists are.

Movies that don't portray agriculture in a positive or accurate way, such as *Food, Inc.* and *Cowspiracy*, which you may have heard of, are being shown in thousands of classrooms. They are part of the lesson plans for some teachers.

There is so much noise about the food we eat, often directed at young people, that students are often confused, and they are having trouble navigating their own food choices.

As recently as this week—I know you have already discussed it—activists were actually storming the farm gate, and students are watching this unfold right in the palms of their hands.

These are only a few examples of why we need to be turning up the volume on agriculture conversations in Canadian classrooms. If we don't do it, other groups are happy to do that for us. In fact, there are many organizations whose job it is to do exactly that, to spread myths and misinformation about Canadian agriculture into classrooms and beyond.

Why would teachers and students trust AITC in a time of such public distrust? AITC has earned this trust from coast to coast by adhering to what we call our ABC principle: accurate, balanced and current.

AITC's goal is not to promote the agriculture industry but to offer truthful and authentic resources and learning experiences on agriculture as a whole story that is accurate, inclusive and based on today's agriculture.

Our ABC principle guides us in everything we do, from writing a lesson plan to providing a field trip experience or a classroom speaker during an event such as Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month, which is happening as we speak. Agriculture in the Classroom will always tell the whole story of agriculture, all practices, all systems, all careers.

Beyond the ABCs, other areas set us apart in the eyes of educators. We inherently encourage critical thinking, inquiry-based learning and robust discussions or even debate in everything that's developed.

Where are the gaps in Canadian classrooms when it comes to agriculture information? The question may be where aren't the gaps? In most if not all jurisdictions in Canada, the subject of agriculture is not an element of core curriculum. Therefore, agricultural concepts are not talked about very often, and if they are, the information must be linked and woven into provincially mandated subjects such as science, social studies and math. Teachers don't have the time or expertise or, in many cases, the interest to do this, nor do they necessarily have access to accurate information. Enter Agriculture in the Classroom.

• (1205)

Integrating agriculture information into curriculum is what we do best, and teachers love it, because most educators do want to bring this important information to their students. All of our teaching resources, outreach programs and initiatives are linked by curriculum to the learning outcomes that teachers are mandated to teach, whether that's in grade 2 or grade 12. We work with all grade levels, and it is working.

AITC is making substantial impacts, as evidenced by our reach of over one million students over the past year. Part of the strength and success behind our organization is our deep belief in partnerships and a collaborative culture. We have worked closely with hundreds of ag industry partners, farmers, agribusiness, retail partners and even the education and health communities to deliver many successful initiatives, which I hope to talk about in the question period.

Informed, inspired youth who understand the importance of critical thinking are key to ensuring both the public trust required and the workforce Canadian agriculture needs to be a top competitor in the global market. Agriculture in the Classroom is the organization, on behalf of Canadian agriculture, that will continue to lead this effort in our nation's classrooms.

Thank you.

I really look forward to the questions and to talking more.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ross.

Now, from Agri-Food Innovation, we have Serge Buy for six minutes.

**Mr. Serge Buy (Chief Executive Officer, Agri-food Innovation Council):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate being here today, especially with two great organizations beside me. It's nice to talk about this important issue.

Within the presentation and the document we sent out, we provided three recommendations for action. I heard Mr. Shipley ask the previous witnesses what they would do or what would they recommend us doing, and we are definitely making three key recommendations.

Public trust in any sector is crucial. Consumers are motivated by different factors, such as price, availability of product, appearance, etc., but trust is essential to developing and maintaining a good rapport between the whole production and distribution chain on one side and the public on the other.

We have seen the importance of maintaining public trust in the debate on vaccination. Leaders in agri-food research identified public trust as the most important issue facing agriculture. As consumers embrace a notion of what farming used to be, they seem to lack trust in technological and scientific advances related to agri-food. They trust the farmer selling products at the local farmers' market, but would frown upon the notion that researchers have been involved in almost everything related to what the farmer is selling, from plant breeding to pesticide use to the type of packaging, etc. They trust the image of the farmer on his horse looking at his cattle, but occasionally will question beef sold in grocery stores.

Why is that? Why are we facing those issues?

The first factor is probably the lack of understanding of what farming is. It's been raised by my colleague just before. It's been raised in most of the presentations that you've heard on the issue. In 1920, when our organization was created, agriculture was a main source of employment. Canada's population had a greater proportion of people living in rural areas than in cities. This meant that the agri-food production and distribution chain was better understood and accepted.

The second factor is the reliability of information that consumers consult on agri-food. It is fairly common to see self-appointed so-called experts making ill-informed and/or false pronouncements about farming and food. The propagation of false information on social media and even mainstream media, as you've also heard, is a key issue for us.

Then there is the perceived lack of transparency related to scientific advances in agri-food. Progress is poorly explained, and due to this, is often rejected. This is despite the federal government and industry associations investing millions of dollars on various programs such as farm food safety, other food safety programs and quality assurance programs, some of which you've already heard about. While this money has been invested, there is still mistrust.

One of the key issues that we've identified is the fact that there is no single trusted source of reliable information on scientific advances in agri-food. You've heard about the fact that actors with absolutely no background are often more trusted than scientists. Why is that? This is a key issue. Well, consumers don't know where to turn. They have no information on who to approach for real information. This is why AIC's first concrete recommendation is that we should expand the mandate of the chief science advisor and provide that office more resources. The intent would be to have that office help break down misconceptions and promote made-in-Canada agri-food innovation.

I would like to quote Dr. Mona Nemer, Canada's chief science advisor, in her 2018 report, which was tabled last week, I believe. She said, "Communication of science is vital to ensuring an informed citizenry and healthy and engaged society." She places a

good part of the responsibility on science communicators, and we agree.

AIC held a conference three years ago on the effective dissemination of agri-food research. As a result, we produced a tool for researchers to disseminate their research, but the onus should not be left solely on the doorstep of science communicators. We also think it is incumbent on the federal government to take a key role in this process. We believe that this should be done through the expanded mandate and office of the chief science advisor.

Our second recommendation is that the federal government should play a role in promoting cohesive dialogue and information sharing within and between agri-food sectors. Knowledge transfer on scientific advances, best practices, etc., would help create a stronger agri-food sector. A stronger agri-food sector, more recognized, more visible, would gain more trust in the public.

● (1210)

Finally, our third recommendation is that the federal government help to incentivize initiatives that help Canadians connect with and further their understanding of our agri-food. This could be done through urban farming initiatives by local movements, the farmers' markets and even initiatives such as Agriculture in the Classroom—note the discussion before this presentation.

With a stronger connection, there will be a stronger public trust, and the public trust is what we're trying to either gain or maintain. We think this is really important.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur Buy.

Now, we go to Food Secure Canada.

I'm not sure who wants to do it or whether you're going to split your time.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diana Bronson (Executive Director, Food Secure Canada):** I will start.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to testify before the committee today. I speak on behalf of Food Secure Canada, a national network of organizations and individuals aiming to achieve three interrelated goals: zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems.

[*English*]

I'm accompanied today by Leticia Deawuo from Black Creek Community Farm, one of the member organizations we have.

The main point I want to make today is that public trust is not a public relations exercise. Very often these conversations revolve around how industry can better educate consumers who don't understand farming, science, markets or genetically modified organisms. In this view, consumers are naive, and particularly naive are the millennials, the foodies and the moms.

Today, I want to encourage you to take a broader view of public trust.

I don't believe we have a breakdown in public trust because Canadians don't trust farmers. We have a breakdown in public trust because there are four million Canadians who cannot afford to eat a healthy diet. We have a breakdown in public trust because we throw away \$49 billion of food every year, an economic and environmental travesty that has not been adequately dealt with by public policy.

We are raising a generation of children with an epidemic of diet-related diseases. That is going to sink our public health care system if we don't soon get a handle on it.

Finally, there is not enough accessible, reliable, independent information on the environmental impacts of our food system and whether or not that food is good.

People want to eat healthy and sustainable food—food that is good for their bodies and the planet. While I know it may not be universally applauded in this committee, Food Secure Canada is very supportive of the government's new food guide. What happened in that food guide, among other things, which could present an enormous economic opportunity for farmers in this country—something that's not been talked a lot about—is that it turned our attention from what we eat to how we eat. I think this is what needs to happen in public trust. We need to talk not only about what we're producing, but how we are producing it.

We need to begin to envisage a food system where the economic health, equity and environmental objectives are joined up rather than being seen as trade-offs. We have been waiting for the announcement of Canada's new food policy for over a year, a topic that this committee has studied, that you've written a strong report on and that I and many colleagues have had an opportunity to testify about.

One of the recommendations that you endorsed in your committee's report was the creation of a national food policy council or an advisory board body, an arm's-length institution, where civil society organizations, industry, independent experts and different government departments would get together around the same table and have some of the conversations that are right now very siloed and apart from each other.

• (1215)

[Translation]

After this meeting, I shall walk over to the budget lockup to listen to the federal budget being delivered. I hope that today's announcements will include the creation of a national policy council. It would be a great victory for public trust in our food system.

[English]

I have four quick recommendations: Don't treat this as a communications exercise, as there are substantive issues that need to be addressed. Don't support industry-only round tables to address the issue of public trust; bring in supported civil society in. Create a national food policy council. Let's announce this food policy.

**Ms. Leticia Deawuo (Director, Black Creek Community Farm, Food Secure Canada):** Thank you for enabling me to appear before you today. I'm a resident of the Jane and Finch community of Toronto, and also the director of the Black Creek Community Farm. I think it's important that someone like me can come here today and give you a different perspective from our community.

Black Creek Community Farm is a not-for-profit organization that's in the Jane and Finch community. Our goal is to improve food security, reduce social isolation and improve employment and education outcomes.

Many residents in the Jane and Finch community, and communities like Jane and Finch, are faced with multiple systemic issues. Accessing fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate, healthy and environmentally sound vegetables is one of the main challenges. People in my community have high rates of food-related illness, like hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol, to name a few. Fresh vegetables and fruits in our community are more expensive and have a lower quality. Processed food, of course, is very much in abundance. Macaroni and cheese is always on sale. I can go to No Frills, and I can guarantee that I can get macaroni and cheese for a very affordable price.

Why should vegetables sold in Rosedale be any different in terms of nutrient value and quality from vegetables sold in Jane and Finch? Black and brown people make up the majority of workers on our farms across the country. Why is it that the people who grow the vegetables are also the same people who face the most inequities in terms of accessing fresh, affordable vegetables?

Why public trust? Small-scale farms and farmers, especially black and indigenous farmers who are working against all odds to feed their communities, do not get the same amount of support from our federal government. Agriculture and agri-food budgets are set up to support big agribusinesses, not organizations like mine. Lower-income residents are frequently policed and harassed within their communities, so I guess I'm here to say, since my time is up, that public trust is built from the ground up and not necessarily from the top down.

I look forward to answering questions and to talking further. Thank you.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Members will have a chance to ask questions. Thank you, Ms. Deawuo and Ms. Bronson.

Mr. Dreeshen, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you very much.

Welcome to the panel.

I'm a former educator. For 34 years I taught math, physics and agriculture in Alberta. One of the major concerns that I've had is to try to make sure that we understand how agriculture is perceived throughout the country.

Ms. Ross, I applaud the work that you are doing. Before, the egg in the classroom program was simply that we'd send somebody out that had a bit of agricultural knowledge. They'd go and see a bunch of grade 4 or grade 5 classes—I can't remember the year—and they'd hit maybe one or two schools in the community, and we'd say it was good.

We need a lot more than that. We need to make sure that our educators.... Again, as a teacher I know that if lesson plans are available, those are the things that people are going to look at. The only ones who have taken the time to put those together have been the activist groups and so on, so that's all the kids hear. You illustrated a couple of those as well.

It's very important that we talk to our departments of agriculture and our departments of education, and we have them talk. Otherwise they're only going to present those things that are easy for them to get and go from there. I think that's really one of the critical parts of it.

The truth in agriculture.... I was at a conference in Red Deer a while back where they talked about methane gas and the relationship as far as beef is concerned, and dairy, and how there's actually less methane being produced now than there was 30 or 40 years ago when there were more animals. It's because of efficiency. We can't always talk about efficiency or the big farms and so on being the devil here. We have to look at the fact that you learn from that, and then smaller operations are able to use that technology once other people have presented it.

Those are some of the critical aspects of it.

The lesson plans, the field trips, Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week, and careers in agriculture.... Perhaps, Ms. Ross, you could take a couple of minutes and mention some of the things that you see on how we can coordinate with your Canadian charitable organization so that groups, whether they be industry groups or the Black Creek community groups, can talk to you and be engaged with you.

**Ms. Johanne Ross:** Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

You made a couple of points there. One really important one I want to start with is that agriculture is not in curricula, as you said. It's a challenge for teachers to bring agriculture concepts into what they have to teach. They don't have time to bring new stuff in that isn't connected to what they need to teach. This has been a really key element to our success across the country, in Alberta and beyond, that everything we offer to teachers is something they can use and connect to science, social studies or whatever they want to teach.

I'll mention some of the recent successes for our national organization. I may or may not have said in my comments that we've only been formalized nationally for four years. The provincial organizations were operating across the country, but the national voice has just come into play in the last four years. We're representing the provincial organizations now.

We have something on our website called the Canadian educator resource matrix, which means that any teacher in any province or territory can go into this matrix and apply filters as to what they're teaching, where they're teaching and what grade level it is and apply even other thematic filters. They can click and all those resources come up for them that will fit in. As a grade 10 Alberta physics teacher, you may even find some resources on there that would work for you to teach in physics. That's how much agriculture can fit into almost every subject area. That's one example of something we're very excited about.

That whole matrix is going to be a huge project, as you can imagine. We're going to continue to populate it with resources that fit that ABC mandate, which we've talked about, and need to be curriculum linked.

We also have these outreach initiatives. Think of the ag career initiative that you mentioned. That's an initiative we run across the country and can actually just ask students to be curious about agriculture and food as a career. They need to understand it's much more than farming. Of course farming is the foundation—we wouldn't be here without it—but there are so many dynamic and unique careers for students. They don't know about them because they think agriculture equals farming.

• (1225)

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you very much.

Because the topic has to do with perception of and public trust in Canadian agriculture, Mr. Chairman, a notice of motion was presented last week. I would like to move that motion at this time.

It is the one that reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning the recent revocation by the Chinese government of Richardson International's canola export registration to the Chinese market:

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food;

The Minister of International Trade Diversification; and

The Minister of Foreign Affairs;

and that all witnesses appear no later than Thursday, March 21, 2019.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, colleagues.

I want to thank the witnesses.

I apologize. This is something that is costing farmers a lot of money, and we have to deal with it. It's important that this committee focus on that at this point in time. It doesn't lessen what you bring to the table. We respect what you bring to the table and respect what you want to talk about. It's not that we don't want to do that. It's that in this last three weeks we've seen canola devalue in the marketplace by about \$1 billion at the farm gate. We have farmers who have canola in the bins right now because of a political decision.

I think everybody on this committee would agree that the quality of our product is the best in the world. There's no question about the quality of Canadian canola or Canadian food, as far as what we export around the world is concerned. We know it's good. We have a situation now that's a political decision by China, using a non-tariff trade barrier to restrict access to JRI of canola shipments into China.

As I said, the market impact of that decision in Canada coming back to the farm gate is roughly \$1 billion in lost value in the canola stock sitting in the bins.

We also have a situation where farmers are looking at their spring planting intentions. You're sitting there. You're looking at the marketplace. You see it going down. You're not sure what the game plan is to normalize this relationship with China. You have to decide whether you're going to plant canola, peas, malt barley, lentils. Maybe you shouldn't be planting canola based on what's happening right now.

It's very important that the committee look at this and do the study right away, as quickly as physically possible. We are devaluing canola as we speak every day. The market is reacting to what's happening, and there's not a clear message coming from this government on the path forward. We don't have an ambassador in China at this point. We're not sure what CFIA officials are doing on the ground there. We don't know when a minister will be going to China to talk about this.

I can assure you that when Mr. Ritz was the ag minister, when something like this happened, he was basically on the plane the next day. The last time this happened, the prime minister was in China within a month and talking about canola. He alleviated the issue and we got our market back.

The size of this market is some \$26 billion to the Canadian economy. That is 25% of our farm gate receipts. The bulk of our profitability for the agriculture sector comes from canola. It is huge. That is why I was really hoping that the committee would have met two weeks ago when we first asked them to. I was hoping that our NDP member would have signed the letter at that point. I understand that he had some issues and he couldn't make it here. However, it needed to have a response immediately, even last week, and it didn't get that response.

I think it's important now that the committee take this on, make it an actual emergency, and understand the importance it has to producers in western Canada and for the Canadian economy in general. Have these three ministers come forward.

You ask, why the three ministers? Well it involves different areas of the government. You have trade, so the trade minister has to be involved. There's no question about that. With regard to agriculture, CFIA is involved in this scenario, so you have to have the ag minister.

Last week, the ag minister, in press conferences in western Canada when she did her western tour, happened to miss Saskatchewan. We can't understand why an ag minister would want to learn about agriculture and not go to Saskatchewan. That is beyond us in Saskatchewan.

The concern we have is that the ag minister said the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the lead on this file. If the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the lead on the file, then it's very important that she testify in front of this committee. She needs to answer for the placement of CFIA officials, for what we have for resources on the ground in China. There are some concerns, in talking to people in the industry, that we do not have enough people on the ground in our embassies around the world.

We are looking at non-tariff trade barriers popping up all the time now. We've seen it in Peru, in Vietnam. We've seen it in Italy, on durum. We're seeing it now in China on canola. There is some fear

that it's going to spread to malt barley, to pulses. We know the issues we have in India on pulses. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has to tell us, to reassure farmers and Canadians on the integrity of our system, that we have the resources in place to do the work to make sure we can keep these markets open.

We export 90% of what we produce. You have to remember that. We export 90% of what we produce. This is an export-driven industry. Canola is a Canadian crop. It was developed here in Canada. It was our pride, our researchers. It was a success story. We developed it here in western Canada and we've taken it around the world. We've proven that it's the healthiest oil in the world.

● (1230)

When you start to hear all this, I think you can start to understand why I feel this is so important and why I'm very passionate about how this committee needs to address this right away.

I'm looking forward to seeing a positive vote on this, because I think everybody can understand the importance of it, and then I look forward to seeing all three ministers coming in front of this committee and giving us a path forward. We need to have some comfort and producers need to have some comfort that there actually is a game plan, that there actually is an action plan, that the government is actually taking this seriously so that they can make these planning decisions. Then hopefully, if the markets see that the government has a game plan, the situation will normalize and moderate as that plan is taken into consideration, and the discounting of canola in the marketplace which is happening as we speak will stop.

These are just some examples of why I think it's very important to do. I'll leave it up to my colleagues to bring forward some other examples, but I would strongly encourage you, Chair, to bring this forward as quickly as possible, and to deal with it even this week. We're willing to sit day and night. We're willing to sit next week if they want us to. Whatever it takes to get this to happen, we're willing to do.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

Monsieur Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** We understand what's happening out west and the impact it's having on farmers, and I know Mr. Hoback probably made that same passionate speech on Sunday when they asked to have the emergency meeting, which the members of Parliament on the government side agreed to. I know he knows full well that officials will be appearing this Thursday to discuss the very same issue. I know he knows full well that the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Trade Diversification will be appearing before the very same committee that he is a regular member of.

I know he knows that, and we will respect the process that is happening at international trade. We won't be supporting the motion, and it's not because we're against this issue. We support this issue. We're with you, but there's already a committee that has looked at this, probably commenced by you, Mr. Hoback. I'm sure you pushed your opposition members to write a letter to the chair or the clerk of the international trade committee.



Mr. Hoback knows what's happening at international trade. I know he's well versed on this issue, and I know it's having a major impact on his constituents. I know that Minister Freeland and Minister Carr are on this issue, and Madame Bibeau is also on this issue. We will respect what the international trade committee is doing. It is already looking at this issue, and we will not be supporting this particular motion to have the same hearings here at agriculture.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Chair, I'll respond to that.

First of all, when you look at what the trade committee is doing, I want to point out a couple of things. We asked to do it immediately. They are not going to deal with this issue until we come back in April. The amount of money that can be lost in the marketplace in a week is substantial. It's substantial. The impact it has on farmers' decisions regarding what they're going to plant will be immense. That's why I thought it was important that the ag committee deal with it. CFIA is an ag issue. It's not necessarily solely a trade issue. It is your issue in this committee.

The other issue—and you said it yourself—is that Minister Freeland is in control of this file. She's not allowed to come in front of the trade committee. I would like to think that you have confidence enough in your Minister of Foreign Affairs to bring her to the ag committee so she can lay out the game plan, because she has the lead. We know that. You've said that. The ag minister has said that. Why she will not come in front of a committee is beyond me. This is crazy.

I don't care what marching orders you got from the PMO. Do the right thing, please. We can do it tomorrow. We can do it next week. I don't care. It has to be done quickly, and it's not going to be done quickly enough at the trade committee. If this committee can do it faster...and actually this committee should take the lead on it. It should. It's embarrassing that the trade committee has to take the lead on it, but if we have to, we will.

For you guys to sit here on your hands, it's unacceptable. And I'll tell you this. This is not a western Canadian issue. We grow canola in Manitoba. We grow it in Ontario. We grow it in Quebec. We grow it across Canada. We buy goods that are made in eastern Ontario and manufactured in Ontario.

If you take \$1 billion out of our marketplace right now, or you take \$2 billion or \$3 billion out of it, what is that going to do to truck sales? What is that going to do to the manufacturing sector in Ontario? Do you not think it has a trickle-up effect? It has a huge effect, and if they should proceed into malt barley or peas.... It's unacceptable, totally unacceptable.

I can't accept that, Mr. Drouin. I can't. I know you did that in the justice committee, but you cannot do that here. This is the committee that should be dealing with it, and if they're not going to deal with it.... Yes, we will deal with it on the trade committee, but I'll tell you, there are going to be a lot of farmers put in a bad position because of this committee putting its head in the sand.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I will support the motion.

Our committee has been having trouble getting the former minister of agriculture to appear. I went across the floor yesterday to the new minister, Minister Bibeau, and congratulated her on her new role. I know she is dealing with some family issues right now; she told me that.

We have been waiting for the Minister of Agriculture to appear, to speak about the spending of her department as well, for the estimates process.

I think this issue absolutely does deserve some close attention and immediate attention, but we also need to have the minister appear to talk about her departmental spending plan.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Hearing no other comments, we shall proceed to a vote.

Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I think the critical part, as was mentioned by Mr. Hoback, has to do with the uncertainty that exists there. We have an opportunity in the ag committee to talk about something that is agriculture-related.

We know how long it took to get the previous minister here, and that didn't happen. We now understand that it's going to take a while to perhaps get people up to speed. I'm not sure. Nevertheless, this needs to happen right away because right now, people are trying to decide what they are going to be seeding. There are people who have the seed cleaners out there right now for their wheat and their barley, and these decisions are critical.

If we're going to wait until another committee—because we didn't get it done here—is going to take that lead, then we're making a serious mistake.

As far as our agriculture community is concerned, they expect things to come from the ag committee, and I believe if we make that decision and determination right now that it shouldn't be the case, then all of us will wear that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I'm going to be honest with you. I just don't understand. This is the time. Maybe the ones on the other side have never planted crops—I know Mr. Poissant has—to know about the timing in terms of changing cropping rotations and planning on buying inputs and getting a cropping plan in place. Maybe if it's a lack of understanding, then I guess that's the way it is. I feel bad for that because what you're doing is affecting people across Canada, as Mr. Hoback has said.

This isn't just a western issue. Up in northern Ontario....

The other part of it, folks, is what are we studying today? We're studying the perception of trust in agriculture. What did China do? Well, we have the safest product in the world here, one of the best that we market around the world, but China has said there is some issue with the quality of it. What does that tell people, the consumers, as this sits out there and tends to get media attention?

Well, we actually can't...I know you guys are saying that we can, but I guess we really can't trust you.

What is the government doing? Well, they don't think it's that important because they're going to wait for international trade. At that time, after farmers have made their decisions, in April.... They have to make their decisions not only on how they plant their crops, but also how they're going to start to market it.

There may be those who haven't done that, but I can tell you, you plan your crop planting and you plan your early marketing based on what you plant. If the meeting can't happen this week, at the latest it has to happen next week. I can assure you, if you can't make it happen this week, we'll be here next week.

I think the farmers across Canada, not just out west, will be looking forward to seeing us take some movement, as an agriculture committee, to help promote the government's action to move forward in realizing it's a huge issue. We don't have Canada's spokesperson in China speaking for us. They've booted the ambassador out and he hasn't been replaced. This is what ambassadors are for, to help promote. We don't have a promotion vehicle. We need to be it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

Monsieur Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I'm just going to correct a couple of facts. We are ready to call the vote, but if this were an important issue, I'll remind you, Mr. Hoback, you chose to send a letter to the international trade committee and not through this committee, so obviously you had a preference to go toward—

**The Chair:** Mr. Drouin, I'll ask you to address the chair, if you can, and also the other side. Usually we let it loose, but I think it's important that you address the chair.

Thank you.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** It's not us. To my knowledge, we did not receive any letters on our side to request an emergency meeting two weeks ago or last week. Of course we could have had this meeting at this particular meeting, if an emergency request were made, but it wasn't done. It was done at international trade, and I suspect because they—they, speaking of the opposition—wanted to hear this at the international trade committee.

Again, I'm just going to state a couple of facts, and we are ready to call the vote on this side.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Let me clarify the record of exactly what went on so that Francis can understand it.

When this first came out, we took it to the whips. At the time, the NDP were not prepared to sign an emergency letter to the ag committee, so we shopped it around to the trade committee because we knew how important it was. Tracey on the trade committee said yes. We actually got the letter to the chair of the trade committee on Tuesday, expecting him to call a meeting on Thursday. What did he do? He waited until the end of the standing order on Sunday to call that meeting.

Now I don't know if he's already in retirement or if he had other issues going on. It is what it is. He's the chair; he has the right to call a meeting when he wants to call a meeting, but you can see how it's already been pushed back by delay on delay. The only option we had in the ag committee was to do it here today. That was the only option we had. We're dealing with it as soon as possible, and we're doing it in a very respectful manner.

You still haven't addressed this issue. Why isn't the Minister of Foreign Affairs attending? Why are you so scared—

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback, I'll ask you to direct your questions through the chair.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Sure. I apologize.

Mr. Chair, can you ask the members why they are so scared to let the Minister of Foreign Affairs present in front of committee? She's very good in front of committee; she does a great job. Why can't she tell us what the game plan is? She's in charge of it, so why don't you want to hear that? Why wouldn't you take that information and give it to farmers so they can relax and so the marketplace could settle down? Why leave the mystery, unless there's nothing to say?

I will tell you, Mr. Chair, there are consequences, not just in China. If we don't fight back here on China, well then, what about Japan? They will say, "Well, wait a minute. Canada is not pushing back on China. Maybe we should be looking at this again, too." Maybe the U.S. will say the same thing.

It comes back to the fact that you have to deal rapidly and fast with these issues when they come up. You cannot do them in the normal timely fashion. You can't do it in the bureaucratic fashion. You have to expedite some things, and that's what this committee needs to do.

CFIA is an ag issue. We are hearing from people in the marketplace that we do not have enough officials on the ground in our embassies around the world, in CFIA, so I'd like to ask the ag minister what her game plan is to change that. That is an ag issue; there's no question about it, but the Minister of Foreign Affairs also has an input into who's placed in what embassy and the staffing levels. She deserves to have the same question asked of her.

There's nothing hidden here. There are no hidden surprises. We're not surprising anybody. We're not trying to ambush anybody. We just need to know the game plan. That's all we're asking for. It's a very simple ask. If you can provide us with a well-thought-out game plan, there is not a problem here, but if you don't, then there's a huge problem, and farmers will pay for our not doing this. They're paying for it right now. They've already lost \$1 billion in value in the last three weeks. That's why this committee needs to hear from her. If they say, "We don't want to deal with it", then why don't you? Then you need to do some soul-searching over there on what your role is here in Ottawa. Why are you here? If you're not going to deal with the tough issues.... That's government: dealing with tough issues. If you can't deal with tough issues, then, boy, why are you in government?

• (1245)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** But you guys do what the PMO tells you.

**The Chair:** Hearing no more, we'll vote on the motion.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Could we have a recorded vote, Mr. Chair?

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** You have 45 seconds, Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

Simply, where I'll go with the end of the time I have is public trust and why it is so important. It does not matter what commodity we have. In our discussion about the vegetables we eat, we need to understand that when people talk about concerns about health as far as vegetables are concerned and so on, basically it's because people don't know how to handle them. We have terrible waste. So much of what we produce simply gets thrown out. Education is required.

I know I'm going to run out of time, but hopefully, we can all talk about that together on how important it is that we recognize we have the best food in the world. We should also be good consumers and understand how to feed our families.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Unfortunately, that's all the time we have.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing: Ms. Deawuo, Ms. Bronson, Mr. Buy and Ms. Ross.

That's how committee works, unfortunately. Maybe we can get you another time.

We'll suspend and come back in camera for committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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