



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 011**

Friday, May 22, 2020

---

Chair: Mr. Pat Finnigan





## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Friday, May 22, 2020

• (1405)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 11 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I'll outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either “Floor”, “English” or “French”. When you intervene, please make sure that your language channel is set to the language you wish to speak, not “Floor”. This is very important. It will reduce the number of times we need to stop because the interpretation is inaudible for our participants. It will maximize the time we spend exchanging with each other.

Witnesses, could you let us know with a nod or a wave of your hand that you understand how this all works?

Great. It will work fine.

Also, before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you're ready to speak, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike.

[*Translation*]

Finally, make sure that your microphone is muted when you are not talking.

We are now ready to begin. I want to welcome our witnesses, especially the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Marco Mendicino.

Welcome, Minister. We are very glad that you are taking the time to appear before our committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Minister, without further ado, we'll give you seven minutes to give us an opening statement on whatever the topic is. Today we're interested in temporary foreign workers, but also human resources on farms in general.

Go ahead, Mr. Minister. The floor is yours for seven minutes. Thank you.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to the members of the committee, good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these remarks and to answer your questions about the significant contributions of temporary foreign workers on our farms, at our processing plants, and at all points in Canada's food supply chain. This often-overlooked group of migrant workers has long served to ensure that Canadians may continue to enjoy food that is safe, healthy and affordable. That remains especially true today as we continue to confront COVID-19. Indeed, the work we are doing at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has been a vital lifeline to our food security, health care system and economy as we continue to effectively manage this global pandemic and flatten the curve.

Before I go any further, I first want to express our ongoing gratitude to health care workers, as well as Canadian farmers, food business leaders and workers, both domestic and from abroad, for everything you are doing to keep us healthy and to preserve access to high-quality food at our grocery stores and kitchen tables. We say thank you.

Following the outbreak, my department has played a critically important role in the Government of Canada's response to COVID-19. Today I want to highlight the special measures we have put in place to support temporary foreign workers, farmers and industry leaders to sustain Canada's food security.

Our work in this area is done in close collaboration with federal branches, which are led by my ministerial colleagues at Agriculture and Agri-Food, at Employment and Social Development Canada and at Fisheries and Oceans.

To help contain the spread of COVID-19, the federal government introduced travel restrictions at the border, with targeted exemptions for essential travel, which includes temporary foreign workers. IRCC is principally responsible for the issuance of work permits to temporary foreign workers and the supporting regulatory framework, which is under my purview through the immigration and refugee protection regulations.

[Translation]

Since the beginning of the crisis, the government has prioritized work permit processing for critical occupations, including those in the agriculture and agrifood sectors.

To safeguard the continuity of trade, commerce, health and food security for all Canadians, we have implemented an exemption to our travel restrictions to allow these workers to enter Canada, so that our farms and food processing facilities can continue to provide for Canadians.

Since April, nearly 22,000 temporary foreign workers have arrived in Canada on charter flights to work in our agriculture and food industry.

While we are facilitating the entry of temporary workers into Canada, further supports are required once they arrive, and the government has made progress there, as well.

On April 13, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada announced \$50 million to help all food production and processing employers put in place the measures necessary to follow the mandatory 14-day quarantine, required of all workers arriving from abroad.

[English]

We're also making better use of the workers who are already here. We've introduced additional strategies to address status restoration and to reduce timelines for documentation.

On May 12, my department announced a new public policy that cuts the time that it takes for temporary foreign workers to start a new job from 10 weeks or more down to 10 days or less. This will allow temporary workers who are already in Canada with an employer-specific work permit to quickly change jobs when they find a new one. It's a win-win situation.

Our government is working very closely with employers of temporary foreign workers to ensure that the 14-day quarantine period is respected once workers arrive in Canada and that appropriate accommodations and provisions are made available to allow workers to do their important work in planting and seeding.

To help enforce these new requirements across the board, a package of regulations came into force on April 20. Employers have a responsibility for the health of their workers as well as to public health generally. Employer associations continue to work collaboratively with the government to figure out how they can help fulfill both of these objectives. In addition to the measures we're taking in response to the immediate effects of COVID-19, we continue to plan for the future.

Immigration is an enduring value that I believe in and that I trust Canadians believe in too, and we will see that for a long time after COVID-19 is behind us. Just last week, IRCC opened applications under the agri-food pilot program. Over the last several years, industries such as meat processing, mushroom and greenhouse production, and livestock raising have experienced ongoing challenges in finding and keeping employees. The agri-food pilot aims to attract and retain workers in these industries by providing them with an opportunity to become permanent residents. As we work to rein-

vigorate our economy after the pandemic, these workers will play an important part in getting Canada back to business.

This is a three-year pilot that will test an approach to help employers in these areas fill ongoing labour needs for full-time, year-round work. It will provide a pathway to permanent residency for many temporary foreign workers already in Canada. A total of 2,750 applications will be accepted annually throughout the pilot, which applies primarily to people who are already here.

The success of our Canadian farmers and food processors depends on their ability to recruit and retain the workforce that they need. This pilot will help to ensure that farmers and processors have the much-needed skills, experience and labour so we can continue to strengthen Canada's food security, grow our economy and improve our living standards for all of Canada.

Mr. Chair, temporary foreign workers are of vital importance to our food security and our economy. They are critical to the success of our farms and our hospitals, and this is why we have made the exceptions to the travel restrictions and why we continue to work with our partners provincially and in the sector with farmers, doctors and others to ensure everyone has the support they need.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members. I'm now happy to take your questions.

● (1410)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister, for your opening statement.

Before I go any further, I just wanted to also mention the personnel from the immigration department. We have Marian Campbell Jarvis, assistant deputy minister, strategic and program policy; Louis Dumas, acting associate assistant deputy minister, operations; and Matt de Vlieger, director general, immigration.

From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we also have Jonathan Wallace, director general, temporary foreign worker program.

Welcome to all of you. You will remain for the second hour, I understand, to answer further questions.

With that, we shall commence our question round. We'll start with Ms. Lianne Rood, for up to six minutes. Go ahead.

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for appearing before us today.

Minister, I've heard from many farmers in my riding. They're having difficulties with some of the audits that are being done. A farmer's greatest fear right now is not the weather; a fruit and vegetable farmer's greatest fear right now is an audit by the integrity branch.

I have heard some examples from different farmers, one being a phone call at 7:45 in the morning telling her she had to talk to this auditor right then, and if she didn't, then she could fail her audit. An hour and a half was spent on the phone, and numerous photos and videos.... Of course, we want to make sure that the quarantine is safe and is following the health guidelines.

I have another example of a farmer, a pregnant woman, who was asked to go into a quarantine bunkhouse with quarantined people in there to carry out the audit and provide photos and videos to the auditor that the social distancing was happening.

I'm just wondering, Minister, what the guidelines are for these auditors when they're carrying out these audits. Showing very little kindness and compassion in some of these instances is not going very far.

Can you give us an idea of how many audits are happening and what the direction is on them?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** First I want to thank you for the question.

I want to echo the concerns we have not only for the farmers but for the officials who are supporting farmers in ensuring that we have safe workplaces. I want to underscore that everyone has the right to work in a safe and healthy workplace. That is one of the reasons we have put into place standards under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to ensure that when workers and inspectors show up, they can feel confident that they're working in a healthy and secure place.

In a previous committee appearance last week, I expressed my profound concern when we heard of some of the outbreaks that have occurred. We need to be sure we're looking into the causes of those, but without in any way compromising the safety and security of those who are conducting those audits and inspections.

We will continue to work very closely with the provinces, which I'm sure my honourable colleague knows have the primary line of jurisdiction to ensure that occupational health and safety is being upheld on our farms and in our food and processing plants.

• (1415)

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Thank you.

I'm going to switch gears here a bit, Minister. We've heard some numbers coming out from the Minister of Agriculture, I believe, last week with regard to the number of workers who have arrived in Canada. Some were saying that 90% of temporary foreign workers were here. However, that's not what I am hearing from industry. For instance, I'm hearing that on the seasonal agricultural worker program, we've only received about 78% of the workers who should

have been here at this point. I understand in B.C. it might be 50%. I know it's somewhere around the same in Quebec.

I'm wondering what number we should believe. Can you give the committee a definitive number for April, and perhaps what the outlook is for May, June, and beyond for workers arriving?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I'm going to try to break that down. I want to give you the most accurate data I can, and I'm certainly happy to continue this conversation after the committee appearance.

In round terms, currently approximately 30,000 agricultural workers have arrived in Canada for this year, which breaks down along the seasonal agricultural worker program, as well as the broader family of workers who are providing support to our farms.

Under the seasonal agricultural worker program, we have approved permits for 18,000 temporary foreign workers, 15,000 of whom have already arrived and are starting the important work of planting and seeding. We know there are more coming.

This is work that not only I but my colleagues at Agriculture Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, and Global Affairs Canada are continuing, to ensure we are facilitating the safe and orderly arrival of temporary foreign workers who are abroad. One of the ways my department is accelerating that process is by setting up a dedicated team to reduce the period of time and ensure that those approvals are coming within 10 days or less, and to ensure that the mandatory isolation periods are in place to keep farms and our food security safe.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** I've had the opportunity to talk with some folks from the seasonal agricultural worker program. I believe they've been speaking perhaps with you, and I know with Minister Bibeau as well. They put a proposal before you last week with regard to resolving some of the backlogs in industry moving forward. I believe this policy was trying to streamline with labour market analysis. They were asking that those who requested or were approved in 2020 on their labour market impact assessment applications could renew their work visa for 2020, based on the fact that their permits were granted in 2019.

I understand there are some changes to the program. As of right now, the worker is supposed to pay the \$155 visa processing fee, but that used to be done at the employer level, and then they would just deduct it at a later date. I wonder if you've seen that proposal and where you are on this proposal to make the process more streamlined.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I'm certainly familiar with both the proposal to look at ways of renewing visas for a two-year term as opposed to just one, as well as looking at ways to create additional flexibility around how fees are paid. I had a great call with a number of farmers and industry leaders earlier this week where we developed a bit on both of those subjects. Those discussions are ongoing.

In the short term, based on the numbers I just read into the record regarding our progress in April, as well as the progress we're making in May, we are seeing a significant number of temporary foreign workers arrive here in a timely, safe and orderly fashion, and that is because we stood up a dedicated team. We are fast-tracking approval.

Most importantly, and I think this gets to the gist of your question, we have introduced some additional work flexibility. If you're here and you're tied to a specific job or employer and you've lost that job because of COVID-19, you're now able to stay in Canada on implied status and take that new job prior to the official approval, just as a means of filling those labour gaps, which we know exist every year.

I thank you for that question.

• (1420)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

We'll go to Mr. Drouin for the next six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister for being in front of us today. I know he's no stranger to agriculture. If we go back about four or five years, I briefed him quickly on a milk protein issue, and he delivered flawlessly to our caucus at the time, so I want to thank him for that.

Here we are, five years later, discussing agriculture and the importance of temporary foreign workers.

Minister Mendicino, all MPs reached out to you at the beginning of this. I can't believe it has already been two months.

How important was it to get a proper solution regarding temporary foreign workers for Canada so that we can grow our food?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I'll begin by thanking my honourable colleague both for the compliments as well as for his work and advocacy when it comes to supporting our farmers. I know it's something he's very passionate about, as well as his dedication in the community.

He's quite right that at the outset, when we were examining ways we could limit the spread of COVID-19, we took a look at our borders and it quickly became clear that we needed to establish a life-line for our temporary foreign workers, particularly those who come and work on our farms, are here year in and year out and have developed a close relationship with the farmers who employ them and with their co-workers and, as I've said before, have established a deep-rooted connection to Canada. We owe them a debt of

gratitude, because without them, those labour shortages would continue to exist.

That was the principal rationale for creating a targeted exemptions regime that ensures they are able to arrive in Canada, but like everyone else, they have to abide by the 14-day isolation period. We have provided some additional support to farmers so that they have the resources they need to accommodate for physical distancing and isolation where necessary.

I could not agree more with the question.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Minister, the additional dollars we have provided for the cost of quarantine measures are so important to ensure we have a safe workplace and to make sure that if there is an issue, we can catch it earlier.

Ms. Rood talked about audits, and I know it's never fun. When I served my first year as an MP, I was audited by the CRA, so we are never protected, and it can be a stressful time.

How did that policy come forward for those additional dollars, which I believe is up to \$1,500 per worker?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** First, I'm glad to see you survived the audit and you're still here among us.

Yes, you're quite right that the \$1,500 per temporary foreign worker benefit, which is distributed through a \$50-million envelope that went directly to farmers for this purpose, helps to ensure that workplaces in farms and processing plants are safe. This was in direct response to the feedback we heard both provincially and among farmers and industry leaders.

We looked at, and are continuing to look at, ways to provide that support. That's something that was acknowledged on my call earlier this week with stakeholders.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Thank you for that response.

In your opening remarks, you briefly touched on the agri-food pilot. I know this is something that was not necessarily COVID-19-related, but your department was still able to launch it during this pandemic. Now more than ever, it's so important to ensure that our meat-packing plants or our slaughterhouses are filled with folks who can do that work.

Can you explain to this committee how your department was still able to stay on a timeline to get that launched?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** It allows me to express my gratitude to our public servants at IRCC, who have really risen to the challenge by creating alternative processes, by moving more into the digital realm, as all of us are, right across government and in life. As a result, we were able to launch the agri-food pilot, which is a commitment we made because we wanted to recognize not only the contributions that temporary workers are providing on our farms, but also, as I said earlier, the connection they develop to Canada and to their communities over a period of time.

What I've heard from farmers, and I'm sure my honourable colleague and members of the community are familiar with this too, is that there is a relationship that develops over a number of years. Because of that relationship, we want to acknowledge the work, effort and energy expended to help Canadians continue to get access to safe and affordable food by providing these workers with a pathway to permanent residence. It's very clear; it's set out and straightforward. There will be an allocation of 2,750 principal applicants each year for the next three years. We're going to make sure this is something that will contribute to long-term success by providing a way for them to become permanent residents, as well as to continue to contribute to food security for all Canadians.

• (1425)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Thank you, Minister.

I think I'm almost out of time. I see the chair staring at me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Francis. We had a few seconds, but I went a little bit extra on Ms. Rood.

Colleagues, I don't know if you're timing your time, but when we get close to 30 seconds, I may tell you that you have to cut your questions because it will take time from somebody else down the line. It's just to remind you.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to Mr. Perron.

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I assure you that I am paying attention to my speaking time and should not go over.

I want to begin by acknowledging the witnesses, as well as the minister and Ms. Martinez Ferrada, and thanking them for joining us. I have actually been in frequent contact with Ms. Martinez Ferrada lately. I am very grateful to her for her cooperation, but that does not mean I would not have any criticisms or, I should say, constructive questions.

Minister, even before the government announced \$1,500 in financial support per foreign worker during the quarantine, the Bloc Québécois was already thinking—unsurprisingly—that this should be publicly funded. Since it was not, however, you offered agricultural producers \$1,500 in assistance per foreign worker, which was interpreted by everyone at the time as an automatic lump sum payment.

I want to point out to the committee that people from the agricultural community are the only ones who must pay their workers during the quarantine period. That cost is already being incurred, with-

out taking into account the higher airfare, the fact that those workers arrived later than planned and various other factors.

Agricultural producers are currently telling me that they have forms to fill out and receipts to provide to prove their expenses, and that the \$1,500 has now become a maximum of \$1,500.

How can you explain that change? What is more, can you guarantee to producers that they will in fact receive \$1,500 per foreign worker?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Thank you for your question and for your collaboration with my parliamentary secretary, Ms. Martinez Ferrada, who is with us this morning.

To answer your question, we have created a process that is more efficient and gives farmers more assistance. As you said, the money is for temporary workers, as it is true that the employer must cover the costs related to those workers.

At the same time, we were looking for new solutions and new ways to support our temporary foreign workers and our farmers. We have a team focusing on that program, which is so essential. We will continue to collaborate with you and with my Quebec counterpart, Mr. Jolin-Barrette, with whom I work every week. That collaboration will continue.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Minister, I would like to get right back to the \$1,500 compensation.

Could you guarantee to us that every agricultural producer or every employer in the agrifood sector who hires a foreign worker and who must take on the burden, the cost and the tremendous responsibility of organizing their quarantine—while they have already lost a great deal—will be able to receive the full \$1,500 amount without being stymied by paperwork they have no time to fill out? People should now be out in the fields.

• (1430)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** That is exactly the objective of this program. It's about providing that assistance to the farmer, who will pass the benefits on to the worker. If ever you found out about any problematic cases, you could contact my office, and we would carry out an investigation, if necessary.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** So my understanding is that there won't be too much paperwork to fill out, but that is not what I am hearing from people on the ground. That really reassures me. That is important, as this assistance is already very minimal.

Your pilot project on access to permanent residence is a good idea, and we are very happy about it. However, you have requirements in terms of education. If the foreign worker has been a farm hand in Canada for a number of years already, they will still be required to have the equivalent of a high school diploma. Can you explain to me the logic behind that requirement?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** The objective of that requirement is to ensure a minimum level of academic training, but the most important part is farm-related experience. That is the goal of this project—

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I am sorry to interrupt you, Minister, but we don't have a lot of time.

You understand that behind my question is a concern over imposing a bunch of forms and conditions.

I will tell you about a case I learned of this morning, related to a labour market impact assessment, or LMIA. It involves people whose work permit expired, who theoretically must leave the country, but they cannot do so. In addition, the employer wants to keep them. So applications for permit renewals were submitted very quickly, but the LMIA must be carried out at the same time. However, officials are refusing to renew the work permits under the pretext that the LMIA has not been completed.

I would like to know two things, but I have about five seconds left. Is there a way to loosen that process? Could the requirement for an LMIA be suspended during the current crisis—for instance, until October?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Yes, we just adopted a policy to maintain the status of workers whose permit has expired until it has been renewed.

[English]

Just to follow up, as I said, there is a principle in place that if a worker has an expired visa, we are undertaking to renew that visa as quickly as we can to allow them to remain in Canada and to find that next job. That was a policy we just introduced in the last week and a half.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Now we have Mr. MacGregor for up to six minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome, Minister, to our committee. It's good to see you here to give us an update on how your department is dealing with COVID-19, specifically as it relates to agriculture.

I wanted to touch on the agri-food pilot program as well. I think a lot of us welcome the fact that there is a pathway to permanent residency for many of these temporary foreign workers.

I'd just like to get your comment, Minister. How do you respond when an organization like the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change raises concerns that the program isn't designed very well for workers, that maybe it gives employers too much leeway—because these workers are very much essential—and that maybe the education and language testing requirements are a little too stringent? How would you respond to some of those concerns that have been raised?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I'd begin by emphasizing, as you did, the significant contribution of migrant workers, particularly when it comes to ensuring food security. We are always open to having constructive conversations about the way in which we can improve the program and ensure that it's meeting the objective of recognizing those contributions, the value of the work on farms when it comes to food security, by providing a clear way in which they can establish permanent residency in Canada.

Mr. MacGregor, as you know, this is a three-year pilot. By its very definition, it is an experiment, but one that we feel confident and optimistic about, because it is a step in the right direction in acknowledging the importance and the vitality of the work that migrant workers provide.

• (1435)

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Yes, and in acknowledging that work, I think COVID-19 has laid bare some of the weaknesses that we have in our system. Our agricultural system has a great reliance on temporary foreign workers, and that's obviously a very weak point when governments around the world start to shut their borders. We've done well to try to address that, but what I'm interested in, Minister, is going forward. What kinds of lessons is the government learning from this? How will you build resiliency into the system so that when another shock comes, we may not be in as bad a position?

Really, the theme is resiliency. What kinds of steps do you think you can take to build resiliency into the system so that we can withstand future shocks?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** One is by ensuring that we continue to manage our borders and place the health and safety of Canadians as our paramount concern, but also that we also have targeted exemptions for temporary workers, migrant workers, who are allowing Canadians to continue to get access to safe and healthy food. This agri-food pilot is an initiative that supports all of those objectives and recognizes the relationship between workers year over year to Canada.

The way we create that resiliency is by continuing to measure our success in this program and by measuring our needs within the economy, particularly when it comes to the labour shortages that we see on our farms and among seafood workers, and by leveraging the opportunities for those who are abroad who have the experience, who have the skill sets and who want to come and put their shoulders to the wheel, if you will. I'm confident that there are many ways in which we can ensure the long-term resiliency of these initiatives.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Yes, and I think agriculture and agri-food are going to be a big driver of our economic recovery.

When I met with Food and Beverage Canada in February, they talked a lot about their need for skilled workers. They project that Canada will be 65,000 jobs short by the year 2025. That's a really important part, and it's related to COVID-19.

What incentives will government put in place to make sure we have a skilled labour force, especially as our food processing plants upgrade to become more mechanized, with more automation? You still need skilled workers to service those machines to ensure that they're running on time.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** We sure do.



I want to take a moment to acknowledge that as we come out of the pandemic, we are also concerned about Canadians who are unemployed. We want to be sure that we're supporting them in this period through a variety of financial assistance programs, which have been well received, and are allowing them to retool so they can bounce back and get back to work, because we need to ensure that our economy gets moving again.

Where we can't do this, and where in our economy we continue to see labour shortages, I want to assure members of the committee that the temporary foreign worker program will be there as an important lever. We will align those shortages to the skills and experience that we find abroad, as we have done with farming and food security. I believe that will be very much a part of our ability to recover after we are on the other side of COVID-19.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Quickly, Minister, in the limited time I have left, can you update the committee on the biometric requirements for the workers who lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19? Some Service Canada centres are closed, so has your department done anything to ease the potential bottlenecks to ensure the biometrics process? Is there anything you can add to address the potential bottlenecks?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** We have looked at ways to create that flexibility, including with biometrics, having regard for the fact that our visa application centres are either closed or at reduced capacity.

I want to emphasize that decisions to close visa application centres are made by foreign governments. However, we remain engaged with our service personnel abroad and remain engaged with source countries to ensure that they are recognizing the importance of the essential sector for our visa application centres. That's especially true in Mexico.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

[*Translation*]

We will now begin the second round of questions.

Mr. Lehoux, go ahead for five minutes.

• (1440)

We cannot hear Mr. Lehoux. So we will give the floor to Ms. Bessette and will then come back to Mr. Lehoux.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Minister. Thank you for joining us this afternoon.

We know how important temporary foreign workers are for our producers. You just talked about the number of temporary foreign workers in the country, but I would like to hear your comments on the challenges related to those temporary foreign workers. What difficulties do those people have to overcome?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Bessette.

A number of challenges exist. First, as I was saying, conditions are imposed outside Canada, in other countries, which are restricting the opening of offices. We are continuing to hire, in collaboration with our partner, outside Canada to expand and improve the process followed in other countries. In Canada, we have created a team that is in charge of expediting request approvals. Currently, requests are being approved in only 10 days or less. We have made a lot of progress, and we will continue to look for solutions to support temporary foreign workers.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

As we know, every province throughout the country has a different landscape in which the COVID pandemic is having an impact in a unique fashion.

Can you speak to what actions have been taken among the provinces and territories through your department to align our country's response to COVID-19 for temporary foreign workers?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Thank you for your question.

I am working closely with my counterparts from across Canada, including Mr. Jolin-Barrette, in Quebec. We are collaborating on a number of aspects in various areas, in particular on the temporary worker program. When we collaborate with other countries, we need to have an approach that aligns with provincial approaches. So a lot of cooperation is going into accommodating those workers, and that work will continue.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

How is the current infrastructure holding up for those temporary foreign workers?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** If by “infrastructure” you mean the supports in place, they are holding up quite well, and that is because we have provided financial support to farmers. We have provided supports for temporary workers around the conditions of their work to ensure there is a high standard of health and safety.

As I said, we want to ensure that they are getting into Canada as quickly as possible, but without in any way compromising our primary objective to stop the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible. We've put into place a whole suite of measures to ensure the temporary workers and the farms on which they are working are very supported.

• (1445)

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you.

I think I have a little bit more time.

[*Translation*]

The agri-food pilot program helps integrate a specific industry approach to address the labour shortage, but as far as I have understood, there is also an immigration assistance component.

What is the ultimate objective of that program and what gap is it filling?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** The objective of the agri-food pilot program is to open up a pathway to permanent residence for temporary foreign workers. Its goal is to make us think about the contribution of that category of workers and about their connection to Canada. I am optimistic about the outcome of that pilot program.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you very much.

[English]

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

Thank you, Lyne.

I believe Mr. Lehoux is still having technical problems.

We will go to Mr. Barlow, and I would ask if you could submit somebody else from your party, Mr. Barlow, in case Mr. Lehoux can't join.

Go ahead, Mr. Barlow, for five minutes.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had Richard's questions here just in case this happened, so I will ask Richard's questions for him, and then, hopefully, if he's able to jump in, he will.

Minister, I will be giving these questions from Mr. Lehoux's perspective, minus the French.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Okay. He owes you one.

**Mr. John Barlow:** That's right.

Mr. Lehoux sent a letter to your office in February, before the pandemic even began, with some questions regarding temporary foreign workers. He never received a response or even an acknowledgement of that letter, which is concerning for a new member of Parliament. He offered some recommendations on the temporary foreign worker program.

Did you receive that letter?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** First, I want to say that if we haven't gotten back to him, we will make sure we get back to him as quickly as possible. I acknowledge that it has been a very challenging time for our team and our officials, but we will be sure to get back to him with a response as quickly as possible.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you.

You did talk earlier in your presentation about some of the numbers regarding temporary foreign workers coming into Canada, but my colleague, Ms. Rood, did mention that Quebec and B.C. seem to be lagging far behind compared with Ontario, for example. In Quebec they're still quite short of the temporary foreign workers who are supposed to be coming in to that province. The numbers that we have seen are close to around 50%. Is that accurate and why is there such a discrepancy?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** You're quite right that there are some regional disparities. We are looking at ways we can increase and accelerate the rate of arrival for some of the provinces who are perhaps not as far along, like British Columbia, as you mentioned. I think we have seen good progress in Ontario and Quebec. One of the ways I think we're going to pick up speed in facilitating the arrival of temporary workers is by continuing to invest the resources

that are necessary in the dedicated team within my own department, and also among a number of other departments like Agriculture, as well as Employment and Social Development, and Public Services and Procurement Canada. We understand there's a challenge there, but we are really expending every effort to get those workers here as quickly as possible.

**The Chair:** Mr. Barlow, just to let you know, Mr. Lehoux is back. Do you want me to switch and then come back to you?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes, please.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lehoux, if you are ready, I give you the floor for three minutes.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** I am ready, but I have unfortunately not heard the question Mr. Barlow asked. I hope I will not repeat it.

Good afternoon, Minister.

My riding has a number of processing plants involved in the agri-food industry. Several of those plants employ temporary foreign workers. However, the permits of many of those workers are expiring. The situation is fairly complicated.

I know that an announcement was made last week, but couldn't the process be further simplified to enable those employees, during this time marked by COVID-19, to keep their job? It is very difficult to recruit factory workers right now.

• (1450)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I am always ready to work with you and with all of our colleagues from the House of Commons to find solutions that could simplify the process or to create a more efficient process.

The announcements our government has made are the result of collaboration with all the parties, all the members, and we will continue with that exercise. It is very constructive.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Thank you, Minister.

Just to make sure I am being understood, I want to specify that the plant has not stopped operating. The workers are still at their jobs, but their work permits have expired. The employer wants to keep them at work because the need is really high. I am talking about a pork processing plant.

Will the government ensure that those workers can keep their jobs?

[English]

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Yes. Just to clarify, as I said, if their visas have expired, they are able to stay on implied status and continue to look for new work. As soon as they get that job offer, they are able to start that work.

[Translation]

Policies are in effect to enable workers who have lost their job or whose permit is expired to remain in Canada, to search for another job and to start working more quickly.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chair, do I have a bit of time left?

[English]

**The Chair:** Now you have five minutes of your own time, John, or you can split it whichever way you want. I'll leave it to your discretion whether you want to continue with Mr. Lehoux or get your five minutes.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I may ask a couple of questions. Then I'll pass it over to Mr. Lehoux if he has a couple of others.

Minister, thank you for getting back to us when we had questions early on about this program. I understand that it was sketchy at the beginning as to whether we would be able to offer this labour force to our producers. I hope you understand now how critical the seasonal agricultural worker program and the temporary foreign worker program are to our food supply.

This is a bit off-topic, but I just want to put this on your radar to see if there's anything that we can do. We have a lot of agricultural producers in the southern part of many of our ridings that have American borders. I have ranchers who have cattle on the Alberta side as well as on the Montana side, and some who have grain. They are having a really difficult time going back and forth to check cattle, feed animals and those types of things.

I know this isn't necessarily an immigration thing. However, I have spoken with my counterparts in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, and we all see agriculture as an essential service. They are having similar problems as they have that reciprocity. I'm wondering if it's on your radar or on the government's radar to address this issue, to have some sort of a permit or a process where agricultural producers who are an essential service can make that trip back and forth across the border.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Barlow. As well, it was my pleasure to be able to collaborate with you in the early days of the outbreak to ensure that we were making the strongest possible case to create the exemption for migrant workers who are plying their trade on our farms. I just want you to know that co-operation will continue.

As a result, I feel as though the government and, I hope, all Canadians truly appreciate the significant contributions of this class of workers, who come from abroad to shore up food security.

Thank you for bringing this specific issue to my attention. I think, as you alluded to in your question, it's one that I will share with my colleague, Madame Bibeau, at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, as well as with Minister Qualtrough at ESDC. We should continue that conversation.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you. I knew that wasn't something you could answer, but I really wanted to put it on your radar as we are having a lot of difficulty with that right now. If there's some sort of program, permitting system or something that we could put in place so that they are not turned away at the border coming back or going south....

Now I'll go to a question that I'm sure you'll be able to answer. I know that you've put some programs in place for processing and the employees that.... I have Cargill in my riding. If that goes down,

that's almost 40% of the processing capacity in Canada. It's reliant, certainly, on temporary foreign workers.

Have there been any discussions, Minister, with the unions that are employing some of these employees? I think there's an opportunity for us to have a discussion to address some of the misunderstandings with some of the programs, work safety and some of those things that are going on. Despite the programs that you're putting in place, the unions are really not allowing those workers to go back to work. There is a stop work order, a court injunction, for Cargill.

Have some of those discussions happened to re-educate or to educate the workforce, the unions, Cargill and JBS to get them all on-side to ensure that employees go to work?

• (1455)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** As I mentioned, we had a very constructive call earlier this week with a number of stakeholders, and we did talk about the significance and the importance of guaranteeing occupational health and safety on farms and in food processing plants.

As I said in my remarks and throughout the course of today's appearance, everyone has a right to work in a place that is healthy and safe. There is an opportunity to discuss with some of the leaders in the labour sector exactly what their concerns are. I am generally aware of what those concerns are. In the meantime, I want to assure you that's one of the reasons we amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act: to set the bar very high, to provide the additional resources to inspectors and auditors, to be there as an important guarantee for not only the temporary workers but all workers who are there to keep our food supply chain going.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you for that. Certainly all of us, I think, thank the workers and the food processors who are going to work every single day. We want to ensure that they're safe, but there has to be some sort of continuity that they are going to work.

I'm not sure how much time I have left, Mr. Chair, but I'll maybe pass it over to Mr. Lehoux in case he has some other questions.

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds. It would be a very quick one, if you have one.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Minister, your pilot project is very appealing for immigrant workers, but it won't be able to resolve all the issues.

To remedy the situation in my riding, a way must be found to make the temporary permit renewal process easier for full-time temporary workers who are not seasonal employees. That process must really be made easier because agricultural businesses, including farmers, need those workers.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I agree with my colleague's comments.

It is true that the pilot project is not a magic bullet that will solve all the problems in that sector. On the other hand, this is an example of an initiative that highlights the value of that sector's workers and the areas where progress can be made.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister, and Monsieur Lehoux.

Now we'll go to Mr. Ellis for five minutes and that will be our final question.

**Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Thank you.

I have a couple of questions and I know the chair has a question, so I'll split a couple of minutes with him.

Thank you, Minister Mendicino, for appearing today. It's nice to see you.

I know that when I took office in 2016, the temporary foreign worker program, to say it politely, was not that great and we had a lot of issues to settle. In 2017 it got a little better, and in 2018 and 2019 there seemed to be a change around. In my community, the Bay of Quinte riding, we depend on the wineries having agricultural workers come to our community. It was smooth in 2018 and 2019, and 2020, fortunately, has been good for us so far. The office hasn't had to do a lot of streamlining or deal with a lot of complaints with the program this year, so we've been fortunate.

Can you tell me what you've done in the last four years to improve the program and why it's been better?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Ellis, it's good to see you. I recall with fondness my visit to your riding and our visit to CFB Trenton.

With regard to the progress that we've made with the temporary foreign worker program, it's certainly not the product only of my time in this portfolio. This is the value of having a government that believes in leveraging the skills and experience of workers who are coming from abroad to help shore up the food supply chain, who are truly here to help us keep affordable food—healthy and safe food—on the plates of Canadians.

The way in which we have seen progress is by investing in this program and standing up teams to ensure that we are fast-tracking approvals of the permits, particularly now during COVID-19, by introducing a number of standards in place to protect the workers' health and safety while they're here and, as I've pointed out, by creating a way they can establish a permanent connection to Canada through the agri-food pilot.

These are all important initiatives that are the product of our government, and this work will continue and will position us to recover very strongly after we're on the other side of this curve with COVID-19.

• (1500)

**Mr. Neil Ellis:** I have just one more question. You spoke about changing job permits and that you've switched that process. I know it was very hard to do this before, and I wonder what the process was before and what the difference now is in changing a work permit to move to another agricultural area?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Ellis, as you likely know, this is a shared portfolio, so it really does involve a number of ministries coming together to open the pathway to allow a temporary worker to come to Canada. One is at my department, IRCC, where we issue the visa, the travel document, but it also requires in the vast majority of instances a work permit, which is issued as a result of a labour market impact assessment issued by my colleague, Minister Qualtrough, and her department.

The reason we have both of these two departments collaborating is to ensure that we're allying the skills and experience from abroad with those parts of the economy where it's proven to be difficult to recruit domestic labour. The flexibility that we've introduced very recently is really a reflection of the need to find ways to fill those gaps even more effectively during COVID-19, and of our not necessarily having the luxury of waiting for the usual timelines to expire before somebody can start that new job.

This again is the product of a lot of consultation and a lot of feedback we've gotten from provinces, farmers and other leaders in the industry.

**Mr. Neil Ellis:** Thank you.

I'll flip to the chair now. I believe he has a question.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I have more of a statement.

Being the only MP from New Brunswick and also being a producer, I don't have temporary foreign workers. As most of you may know, New Brunswick is the only province in Canada that has not allowed temporary foreign workers to come in. Today the premier has said that's starting next Friday, but as you can imagine, there is another 14 days after next Friday.

There's already been some damage. I spoke to producers as late as yesterday. For example, there's a disconnect between the farming community and the general public. They think that anybody off the street can walk in and have the skills that are needed on a farm. These are highly skilled workers whom you can absolutely not replace overnight. One farmer was telling me he's hired two. One came in, he got him on the tractor and he ripped the side of the service truck with the mower.

I want to highlight the need to try to connect more with the general public that these are highly skilled workers. We definitely need them. Some of the farmers experienced some crop loss. Some never seeded. I wanted to highlight that.

I don't know, Mr. Minister, if you want to comment on that. It's affected our producers. It's a disadvantage to all the rest of Canada. Thank you.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I don't have much to add. I think you put it very eloquently. It's a cautionary tale to stop and think before anyone jumps on a John Deere and thinks they know what they're doing.

No, Mr. Chair, I echo the sentiments very much. Certainly it was my intention today to shine a light on the significant contribution of temporary foreign workers and to help educate Canadians that throughout this pandemic we are very much dependent on these workers right now who are coming, who are planting, who are seeding, who are beginning to harvest. This is work they do year-round. They work pretty much 365 days a year; certainly farmers do. As a result we get access to good, healthy food. We need food. We could not do it without them.

Thank you very much.

● (1505)

**The Chair:** On that, I'll thank you, Mr. Minister. We stretched your hour a little, but we really appreciate your coming here and having this conversation with all our MPs.

On that, we'll continue the second hour with the officials. We'll take five minutes, so if you want you can set your timer for five minutes. We'll be right back.

Again, thank you all. We'll see you in five. I will suspend for five minutes.

● (1505)

(Pause)

● (1510)

**The Chair:** We shall resume the meeting.

We'll start the questioning of the panel. You may want to direct your questions.

Again, with us from Citizenship and Immigration, we have Marian Campbell Jarvis, assistant deputy minister; Louis Dumas, acting associate assistant deputy minister; Matt de Vlieger, director general; and Jonathan Wallace from the Department of Employment and Social Development.

We will continue our round now with the Bloc, Madam Caroline Desbiens.

**Mr. John Barlow:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Are you just carrying on? We're not starting a new second hour. We're just carrying on with what we had before.

**The Chair:** Yes, we're just carrying on. That's how we worked it out with the clerk, that we just carry on because there was really only one panel. Well, it was two panels, but it was the same department. We're just carrying on and then we'll go to the next round. We'll have two and a half minutes for the Bloc and for the NDP, and we'll start again with the Conservatives for five minutes. They will all be five-minute rounds after that.

Is that clear?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes. Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Since Ms. Desbiens does not seem to be online, I give the floor to Mr. Perron.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Ms. Desbiens can take the floor during the next round of questions.

So I will continue with questions that were asked earlier.

Earlier, the minister was saying that, a week ago, instructions that help facilitate permit renewal were implemented. The case I raised is that of a refusal. The refusal was announced this morning and was based on the lack of a new LMIA for the company, but the case involves a worker who is unable to leave the country. They just want to continue doing their job.

Would there be a way to stop requiring the LMIA in renewal cases during the crisis period?

● (1515)

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** I am sorry, but I did not hear a large portion of the question.

Mr. Perron, could you please repeat it?

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Of course, as long as the chair won't reduce my speaking time.

Earlier, I asked the minister about facilitating work permit renewals. I heard this morning about a case where the request was refused by an official, under the pretext that no LMIA was presented at the same time. However, the agricultural organization has obtained an LMIA in the meantime. So it could have presented it. Given that deadlines are tight, the two requests must be submitted at the same time.

Would it be possible to allow renewals without a new LMIA when the employer is the same? It seems to me that this would be pretty easy to do right now.

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** Thank you for the question.

Issues related to licensing and the renewal process are important to us.

My colleague Mr. Dumas could briefly explain the renewal process to you.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Actually, Ms. Campbell, I'm quite comfortable with the renewal process.

I would also like to mention to the committee that there are still administrative impediments that are not necessary and that result in additional costs, aside from the delays. The producer in question had to pay for a new permit application, in addition to paying the \$200 penalty to restore the status that had been withdrawn.

Currently, would there be a way to accept permit renewals without the LMIA having been obtained, or to accept them if it can be proven that the LMIA was requested? We know that the licence can be issued because it was issued before.

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** I'm sorry, technology is always a challenge.

I'm not familiar with the case the member mentioned.

Mr. de Vlieger, could you give more details, please?

**Mr. Matt de Vlieger (Director General, Immigration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Yes, of course.

If it's the same employer and the same position, the worker can continue to work.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** You just have to make sure the information is transmitted. I sent the case this morning, so it should be resolved quickly.

Thank you.

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

[English]

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you very much, Chair.

My question is related to some of the concerns our committee has heard from employers over the years. Even in their meetings with me privately they've spoken about the possible creation of a trusted employer program. This has been a long-standing thing. Some employers have sometimes decades-long relationships with their employees, but they have to go through the same application process over and over again. Many of the relationships between the employees and the employers are almost like family.

As we look to the post-COVID recovery, is the department considering anything such as that, a pilot program? Do you have any updates on what some employers have requested for getting this trusted employer status?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** We have indeed heard a lot, actually, about the trusted employer notion and the concept. It is something that, working with our colleagues at Employment and Social Development Canada, we have considered. My colleague Jonathan Wallace is here from ESDC and he could add some additional details about the thinking in that space.

I would just add from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's perspective that we certainly want to be facilitative, yet at the same time we want to ensure that we know who is in the country and for what purpose.

• (1520)

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Is anyone else adding anything to that? Is that it? Okay.

I have a final question. It has been estimated that for a successful 2020 growing season we're going to need approximately 70,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada. Given where we're at now and the challenges we have ahead, how confident are we that we can meet that requirement?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** Mr. Chair, if it pleases the member, my colleague from the ESDC would have been able to add more details to the previous question. We could add to that in a moment.

With respect to the number of temporary foreign workers, we are certainly doing all we can to support the process. That is all the way

across the continuum, working with our missions abroad, whether it's Mexico and Guatemala, to support efforts on the ground and in Mexico. We are looking at our processing here in Canada. We are doing the facilitation and the isolation measures as well.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. We're out of time. I have to move on to the next questioner.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Now we'll go to Mr. Soroka for five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Soroka.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Actually, I think Ms. Rood is going to be taking the questions right now. She has some temporary foreign workers in her riding.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Thank you.

Seed corn growers in Ontario are having a difficult time this year finding enough labour domestically, in part due to the Canada emergency student benefit acting as a disincentive to work. As well, corn growers aren't able to use TFWs because their commodity is not on the national commodity list.

They've requested that seed corn be added to the national commodity list. Is this being looked into, and is this something that the government supports?

**The Chair:** Was that for anyone in particular, Ms. Rood?

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** No.

**The Chair:** Ms. Jarvis, do you want to answer that question?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. That's a question I will have to look into and follow up on. I'm not familiar with the state of where we're at in terms of additions to the commodity list.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Thank you. If you could get back to the committee on that, that would be great.

My understanding is that there's an agri-food immigration pilot program and there is currently no nomination or certificate of acceptance that is part of the process, which is needed for all other immigration permanent residence. Stakeholders have requested that this be added so that workers can receive a certificate from the agri-food immigration pilot and that it can be sent to the TFWP. The reason is that, otherwise, farm workers and butchers would all have to have LMIA renewals while they are in the pilot process, making it redundant. More importantly, it's time-consuming, confusing and expensive for IRCC, ESDC and the employer.

The other issue is that butchers will not come out of the cap calculation for meat processing employers on the TFWP side unless there is a certificate. Why is there no nomination or certificate of acceptance as part of the agri-food immigration pilot project? Was this an oversight and will it be remediated to follow either the express entry or the provincial nominee program as the model for the nomination certificate process?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

I'm wondering if my colleague Matt de Vlieger can answer some of the details there, please.

**Mr. Matt de Vlieger:** Yes, absolutely. The agri-food immigration pilot is a new program, just stood up last week, for permanent residency. Unlike provincial nominee programs, there isn't a provincial role in terms of a nomination step. That's the role that nomination certificate plays there.

In the agriculture and agri-food immigration pilot, the applicants themselves, the workers who have that year of work experience, of full-time, non-seasonal employment, put in the application, and then the notice that is required happens as part of the immigration process. Once they get their final decision and they're through their application for permanent residence, and then their confirmation of permanent residence, all of those documents are part of the process like every other program.

The member might be referring a little to the interplay with the cap. Once an employer has a worker on their farm or in their meat production facility, we've heard from stakeholders that they would then like to have an additional position within the temporary foreign worker program. I know that's something my colleagues from Employment and Social Development Canada are looking into.

• (1525)

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Continuing on here, due to COVID-19 the applicants can't be expected to have their relatives stand in line at the village high schools and institutions in the city to get what's needed. The education assessment company has unopened envelopes and cannot access these unopened envelopes because their staff is self-isolating as per instructions.

Many workers have their high school certificates with them. Would IRCC approve adjusting the authentication process required by the assessment company? I understand that it would only require a change in wording to read "assessment based on documents submitted by applicant". If IRCC would accept the definition, then workers would be able to proceed this year if they have their documents and cannot get them from their institutions, uploading them to the education assessment company's website.

The other option would be to waive the assessment process this year. Is IRCC considering either option in light of the challenges of the COVID pandemic as presented?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** Thank you for the question.

Perhaps I'll just speak a little about the educational aspects. One of the points that are important to note is that with these pilots and bringing in people to the country, we actually want to position them for success, and we want to ensure that people are able to establish and settle here. That is part of the rationale and the thinking behind maintaining the educational requirements.

In terms of the processing and facilitating—

**The Chair:** We're actually out of time, so we'll have to move on but perhaps you'll have a chance to answer later on.

Go ahead, Mr. Blois, for five minutes.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for their participation today in the committee.

I want to start by giving a little bit of context. In my riding of Kings—Hants, we have an important agricultural sector. It's the underpinning of the local economy. Really, the minister alluded to it but perhaps I'll ask you, Louis. As I understand it, you're the director of operations within the department. From my understanding, we as a government have basically put most barriers or any barriers at all out of the way, but in terms of bringing the workers in, we are seeing challenges in some of the countries of origin where these workers are coming from.

Can you explain some of the challenges in countries such as Mexico, Guatemala and others that you're seeing in terms of the actual logistics of just getting these workers into the country?

**Mr. Louis Dumas (Acting Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you for that interesting question.

Indeed, there are some major impediments in certain countries. In Mexico, for example, where we have a big processing centre for Central America and South America, just the fact that we have to deal with the ministry of labour in Mexico, which is facing its own challenges—working with reduced staff, for example—has been quite demanding on our teams. I have to salute our teams for the efforts they've made to find resolutions in that relationship.

Also, the minister has spoken a bit about the visitor application centres, which are a crucial part of the equation when you work overseas. They receive applications. Because the visitor application centres, or VACs, as we call them, have been closed for a number of weeks now, it has been a real challenge to process them. Nonetheless, we've been able to move a high number of people from Mexico and Guatemala to Canada. It has been at the cost of great efforts, but required, knowing full well the reality here in Canada.

• (1530)

**Mr. Kody Blois:** I appreciate that insight.

I know, in speaking with my farmers locally and as you've alluded, that we've tried to move mountains, at least domestically. Sometimes that's just the nature of a global pandemic. Ms. Rood mentioned that in the seasonal agricultural worker program, SAWP, we've received only 78% of the workers. I think those numbers are pretty strong, all things considered.

It was discussed in the committee, but for the benefit of those who might be watching and those tuning in to our committee proceedings, perhaps Mr. Dumas or Ms. Jarvis can clarify that it's not the Government of Canada that's bringing these workers here, but organizations such as F.A.R.M.S. Canada, or FERME in Quebec, and others that work with industry to get the workers here.

Sometimes it says, “we as a government”, but really this is private industry bringing them in. We're just creating the channels to make sure that they're processed. Is that correct?

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Mr. Chair, I could take the question.

Indeed, there is a role for IRCC overseas, working in the embassy. I will use the example of Mexico again. We're working very closely with recruiters, local recruiters and the ministry of labour. When work permits are authorized and issued, it then comes under the responsibility of the recruiters and the organizations to bring those individuals to Canada.

We've been able as well to waive certain requirements, such as biometrics, and work very closely with our colleagues at the Canada Border Services Agency to collect those biometrics here in Canada, so there has been good co-operation, and I would say, with the industry as well.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** I appreciate that. Certainly we know the logistical challenges of travel at this point.

My next question, quickly, is to Mr. Wallace on the economic and social development side.

Ms. Rood talked about audits, and I know that would be under the purview of Service Canada, but she talked about some of the social distancing rules. My understanding is that is 100% determined by the provincial governments and their own public health authorities. Obviously, we set guidelines, but it's the provinces that actually have the ability to influence. Is that correct?

**Mr. Jonathan Wallace (Director General, Temporary Foreign Workers Program, Department of Employment and Social Development):** Yes, provinces do set their requirements. At the same time, at the federal level, the Minister of Immigration recently implemented regulatory amendments that set federal requirements as well. One of those requirements is that employers of temporary foreign workers abide by all provincial or territorial public health laws related to COVID-19, so that's one piece in particular.

The regulations also have requirements for employers who provide accommodations to workers. For example, the workers who are in quarantine have to be housed separately from those who are not. In addition, any worker who gets sick or exhibits signs or symptoms of COVID-19 at any time must be isolated from other workers. Those are some of the other ones.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Wallace, and thank you, Mr. Blois.

We'll go now to Mr. Barlow.

Go ahead. You have five minutes.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I may split my time, but thank you very much.

I just want to go back to this. We've had some discussion about the accurate numbers out there, and maybe the officials could give us some better insight.

The minister was saying that we are around 86% of the workers who were expected to be here in April, but when we were talking with our stakeholders, the comments we were getting was that the government is using statistics that do not reflect the actual situation on the ground.

For example, I think the minister mentioned today that, in the month of April, Canada received about 10,000 workers compared with 13,000 in the year previously. At first glance, I think that would look fairly good, given this current landscape and the situation we're facing. However, what we're hearing from our stakeholders—and certainly from producers on the ground—is that they're not getting those numbers. It's actually quite a bit lower, and the numbers the government is using include the workers who should have come or who were in the process of coming but haven't arrived.

When we look at what I mentioned with Ontario being at a much higher number than Quebec at 50% and B.C. at only 54%, I'm wondering if the officials could give us the accurate numbers for the workers who have arrived in Canada. What is the outlook for May and June?

There's not a lot of excitement to answer that question.

● (1535)

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** I apologize. I was on mute.

I'll go over some rough statistics, and we can provide more defined statistics if required. The number of work permits for the month of March was indeed lower. There were approximately 3,000 fewer than for the same period in 2019. In April it was roughly the same, a little lower, with between 11,000 and 13,000. We are tracking a little behind. However, rest assured, Mr. Chair, that folks overseas are making every effort to prioritize the seasonal agricultural worker applications.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Mr. Dumas, do those numbers—when you say work permits—stipulate workers who have actually arrived in Canada, or is that just permits that have been approved?

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Those are permits that have been confirmed, meaning those are individuals who have arrived in Canada.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Great. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I will share my time with Ms. Rood, who had some other questions as well.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Thank you very much. I just want to give Ms. Campbell the opportunity to finish answering the previous question.

If you need me to ask that again, I can go ahead.

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** I think I recall most of the question. It was regarding what facilitation arrangements we're making to process, and you were also speaking about the educational requirements for the pilot.

In terms of some of the facilitation, we have undertaken quite a few measures to support the processing. I should actually probably turn to my colleague Louis to answer that part of the question, though.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Before you do that, I have one quick question to add to that.

Is it true that if this issue isn't resolved, no immigration can happen this year?



**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** No immigration can happen this year...?

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** I mean under this program.

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** You mean under the agri-pilot.

We may have difficulties with landings because of the travel bans, but there are actually already people here in Canada who would be able to apply and proceed. People who are already here in Canada can now apply and use this pathway. It's the people from overseas who would have more challenges, just because of the COVID context and the travel bans.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Thank you.

Mr. Wallace, my colleague Mr. Blois was asking something along the same lines. I'm wondering if there was an attempt ever to have streamlined federal guidelines for the quarantine measures that were to happen for temporary foreign workers or seasonal agricultural workers upon arrival. I know they're under provincial jurisdiction, as far as health goes, but was there ever an attempt—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Ms. Rood; we're out of time. Maybe you'll have a chance again for Ms. Campbell to finish your question.

[*Translation*]

I now yield the floor to Ms. Lyne Bessette.

Ms. Bessette, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since many producers and farmers in my riding benefit from the help of temporary foreign workers, I am pleased to see that there has been some relief in terms of paperwork. The process announced on May 12 is making our administration more efficient and getting workers to work quickly.

Can you explain to the committee how this helps workers? Is it possible to keep this relief in the future, or is it only temporary?

● (1540)

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Mr. Chair, if I may, I'm going to answer the first part of the member's question, and I'll ask my colleagues to talk about future progress in this area.

With respect to paperwork, we have indeed made great efforts to compress the administrative process. We've really tried to streamline it. I will give a few examples. On the ground, overseas, we have had close discussions with the staff of the departments of labour and the visa application centres. So it was a matter of having a good synergy. We also worked very closely with our colleagues at Global Affairs Canada.

Earlier, I mentioned biometrics. With the help of the Canada Border Services Agency, we have been able to obtain biometric data at ports of entry. It is very helpful to us. We have really focused on the demands of agricultural workers so that they are given priority. We are doing that not only abroad but also in Canada. We have created specialized teams. We have also brought some of our officers who were abroad back to Canada for medical or family reasons. They're now working in Ottawa on these files.

In Canada, we have asked that all applications from agricultural workers be fast-tracked. As you mentioned, people picking straw-

berries on Île d'Orléans could pick apples in Montérégie in the fall, for example. So there needs to be a great deal of flexibility in the system in order to be able to meet the needs.

I'm going to ask my colleagues to continue on the topic of future progress.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you.

**Mr. Matt de Vlieger:** Thank you for the question.

The question was about the new policy that was announced on May 12, last week.

[*English*]

The question was about whether this a temporary measure. It is a temporary measure. It's a public policy that waives some of the current requirements under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, for any work permit, there has to be an application before you can get on to a new work permit. What this new policy does is that it allows somebody, if they've found a new job, have that job offer and it's backed up by a labour market impact assessment.... Because of the context we're in with COVID, because of the number of people impacted who might be laid off, might have had trouble finding new employment, if they've secured new employment, we're going to facilitate their getting into work as quickly as possible, so within 10 days. That's a temporary measure.

The act does want the full application processing to happen. That's what we'd be looking at for the longer term, making sure that all of those application steps happen.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you.

Do you see the effects of this new process? Are they being felt?

[*English*]

**Mr. Matt de Vlieger:** It's early days. We're within the first week, so there are no trends.

I understand that there are upwards of 300 applications in already. Those are people who have submitted their application for a work permit, as well as the web form for this particular public policy to be able to be authorized to work within those 10-day periods.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** With respect to the seasonal agricultural workers program, I know how complex it is to coordinate the whole thing. Not only are there groups from the agricultural sector, but also representatives from foreign governments.

As for the process announced on May 12, which groups were targeted in the decision-making process?

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Your time is up. Mr. de Vlieger may be able to answer you later.

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** That will be Ms. Desbiens, since I took her turn in the previous round of questions.

**The Chair:** All right.

Ms. Desbiens, we're listening.

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you also to Mr. Perron.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I thank the witnesses for being here. We worked with them to urgently repatriate Quebecers during the COVID-19 crisis, and we are grateful for their cooperation.

I'll get back to the complexity of the situation. "It's an ill wind...", as they say. It wasn't all drama, it was a time for us to reflect on the future.

In this regard, what would your priorities be for streamlining the system? What would you do now to make the temporary foreign worker program more effective on a permanent basis?

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Thank you for the question.

My first thought would be about the need to move towards a more digital system. We are still very dependent on paper-based information. As you can imagine, we need to have access to certain files, and that presents some pretty big challenges.

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** In another connection, the Internet should be accessible to all if we opt for digital.

My question is about closed versus open permits. Couldn't easing the rules be a permanent solution? Think, for example, of the people who pick strawberries on Île d'Orléans in July, beans in August and apples in October...

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Mr. Chair, my fellow politicians could answer that question better. So I'm going to give the floor to Ms. Campbell Jarvis or Mr. de Vlieger.

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch the question.

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens:** I was saying that there was a desire to lighten the rules on open permits and employer-specific permits so that people could move from one employer to another, no matter what work they do, because the skills are similar.

In the event of a recovery after the COVID-19 crisis, would it be possible to make these measures permanent?

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** We have put several measures in place. One of my colleagues has already described the situation with respect to public policy on the transfer of permits.

[English]

This initiative allows people to start a new job, whether they're switching between employers or they've lost their job. It's this kind

of measure. Whereas in the past they would have had to wait for a new work permit before they could start, they can now apply under the public policy and have an exemption and can begin to work while they're waiting for their work permit to be processed.

This kind of—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm going to have to move on to the next one.

Mr. MacGregor, you have two and a half minutes. Go ahead.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you so much, Chair.

What I want to ask our witnesses—we're running out of questions here, so I guess that's a good thing—concerns the funding announcement that was made with regard to the \$50 million allocated to help employers with the costs of putting their workers into the 14-day isolation period. I believe each employer is entitled to \$1,500 per worker.

Can you provide the committee with an update on how the budgeting for that particular program is going, how much of the funding has been used, and whether it looks like it's going to be an adequate amount going forward in the weeks and months ahead?

• (1550)

**Ms. Marian Campbell Jarvis:** Mr. Chair, that initiative is led by my colleagues at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We are familiar with the initiative, but as to the specific questions about the budgeting, they would probably be best directed to them.

I am aware, though, because we are in close collaboration with our colleagues at Agriculture and other departments on these issues, that they have received several hundred applications already and it's well under way. It's also structured in a way that allows the department to work with provinces and territories or employers directly, so there is some flexibility there.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Great.

As a final question, I know that other governments have been having their own troubles with COVID-19. In terms of trying to get temporary foreign workers to Canada, what are some of the main bottlenecks that we're experiencing? Is it with the availability of commercial flights? Are there still some delays in processing in host countries and so on? Are there any quick words you can offer on that?

Thank you.

**Mr. Louis Dumas:** Thank you, Chair, for this question.

I think the member explained it well. The scarcity of air connections, for example, makes it very difficult. Conversations with ministries of labour overseas—and they are operating with reduced staff—are also very complicated. I've alluded to the fact...and the minister, as well, mentioned the relationship with the visa application centres, which are crucial to our equation. It's a harsh reality, not only here in Canada but overseas.

Again, the folks in the embassies, high commissions and consulates overseas are trying their best to find solutions, and I have to salute them.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That wraps up our panel for today.

I want to thank, from Citizenship and Immigration, Marian Campbell Jarvis, Louis Dumas and Matt de Vlieger. I also want to thank Jonathan Wallace for taking the time to be with us today.

With that, we will terminate the question round and I'll ask the members to stay on for a bit of business before the meeting next week.

I thank the panel, and we'll start our business section.

We had a conversation to try to guide us as to how we're going to have our coming meetings and how everything is going to unfold. Sticking with the themes, we have chicken and eggs, grains and the meat processing.

Maybe I'll let somebody who was on the call today —

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Chair, I would like to move a motion that I believe has the support of the committee:

That, in relation to the study of the Canadian response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair, in consultation with the clerks and analysts, assemble panels in preparation for the meeting scheduled for Friday, May 29, 2020; and that, to the extent possible, these panels consist of witnesses suggested by the recognized parties in the following sectors: poultry and eggs, the grain sector, and the meat processing sector.

That's it, Mr. Chair.

I hope my French teacher will be proud of me.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Very good, Mr. Blois. Your French was perfect.

Mr. Perron, do you have a question?

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I do not know about the French teacher, but I will say that the Bloc Québécois member is very proud. You did that very well, Mr. Blois.

We agreed to the motion informally, and there are no surprises. I was wondering if we could add a point to the motion.

May we add that we make it a principle to finish, as far as possible, the rounds of questions with our guests?

I'm referring to the last two rounds of questioning with the minister, which did not take place.

Can we include this? That way, the committee would have a general principle, to the extent possible. This will not become military, but it may make life easier for us in the future.

**The Chair:** I understand your point of view, Mr. Perron, and you're right.

We could have asked the minister to stay longer today, because we don't have several panels. That would have been possible. We were already over time, but we could have asked the minister to stay with us for another five minutes to finish the round of questioning.

Normally, when we have different groups of witnesses, if we take more time with the first group, we have to cut the time of the second group. I'm trying to find the balance. I try not to start a new round of questioning if the time limit is exceeded.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** That wasn't a reproach, Mr. Chair.

I know you're doing all you can, and I think you're being very reasonable in your position. We don't sense any partisanship on your part.

It was just a matter of including a basic principle, so that everyone would have the same. Can we add it? If not, we cannot vote on a motion like that. As we are talking about the upcoming meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, we are talking about mandate, objectives.

**The Chair:** I think that would be outside the terms of reference.

I'm still flexible. If the committee wants it, if you give me permission to extend a meeting, I can. However, we'll still have the same dilemma. If we take time on one side, we'll be forced to cut time on the other.

Today it was possible. Maybe I could have done it if I'd asked everyone's permission. Normally, when there are two groups of witnesses, we would have to cut time in either case.

I appreciate your feedback. Let me know if you think this could be done at the next meeting. We'll keep that possibility in mind.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Fine.

**The Chair:** Apart from that, does everyone agree on the motion that Mr. Blois just read? Do you all agree?

[*English*]

**Mr. John Barlow:** Mr. Chair, I don't know if we need a motion to do this necessarily, but I don't want to have a limit on or a specificity on the witnesses we invite. I know in Mr. Blois' motion, he specifically said that in the future we will have equine and all that. I don't think we need to have specific limits on the witnesses we will invite in the future. We don't know how long this committee will go on for. I would just suggest as a friendly amendment that this committee work to invite any witnesses we want to invite for Wednesday, May 27 for the next round. I don't see any reason why we have to specify which witnesses or which sectors of the industry we will be inviting, because I don't think we know that right at this moment.

**The Chair:** In other words, we wouldn't follow.... Well, I don't know if these are specific themes.

Mr. Blois, do you want to comment on your motion?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** We had a conversation, before this committee here today, about those subjects. Obviously the motion was in French. I again I think the focus would be on the certain subjects we all agreed would be beneficial to touch upon. Whether or not the it read in French so specifically that we would absolutely have to do that.... I'd be happy to accept Mr. Barlow's motion that it would not be guaranteed, but in the spirit of those subjects, we would ask that the analysts and you, Mr. Chair, move forward on that basis. We're asking that, assuming we will have more details on Monday about whether or not this committee is going to be extended.

John, is that kind of where your head was on that?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes, I guess so, more or less.

Kody, in our discussion this morning, we were just throwing stuff out there, things we could invite in the future. I didn't expect there to be anything specific in the motion. Honestly, I don't think we needed a motion for this at all. I think we could just agree to continue on the committee and then continue to invite witnesses.

I see Lianne has a comment as well, so I'll let Lianne chime in here.

• (1600)

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Mr. Chair, I'm just wondering if this is outside the scope of what we're able to do with our committee power, with what's going on with COVID and our scope right now.

**The Chair:** For witnesses, it's within our scope to move motions. That's the only motion we can move.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** We don't know what's going to happen on Monday, or what's going to happen going forward until then.

**The Chair:** I agree. We added that on because at our last meeting we were short on witnesses, and the discussion was that if it were going to go forward, that would give the analysts a chance to call the witnesses and organize a meeting. We've added some other themes that we may explore as we go on, but you're right that we don't know whether or not there will be more meetings.

To John's point, we don't want to corner ourselves with those themes. We are the masters of who we want to see and question. We probably need a motion to set the witnesses. I think it's prudent to have a motion, but Mr. Barlow and Mr. Blois, if you want to find a common path that we can put into that motion, that would be great and it would help the analysts to move forward and set up the other meetings.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Chair, do we have a record right now? Could I read something into the record and see if it would appease Mr. Barlow?

**The Chair:** Yes, you can modify the motion. If you can find a common path, that's what we're here for. Go ahead.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Basically, given that there is some uncertainty as to whether or not the committee will continue beyond May 29, which is our last scheduled meeting, my motion would be that, if this committee finds out it is going to be extended, the chair of the committee, in consultation with the analysts and the clerk, be willing to have witnesses available in, not limited to but including, the following commodity areas for subsequent meetings: chicken and

eggs, the grain sector, the meat processing sector, and—following May 29, if we are afforded that opportunity—small farms and smaller agri-food businesses, apiculture and the equine industry, and perhaps witnesses who could speak to the ability to have food manufacturing in the regions.

**The Chair:** John, is that neutral enough, in the sense that we just need to provide some level of certainty on Monday so that the clerks can go about their business? That was the only intention, not to limit it in any way.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thanks, Kody.

I think we're really overcomplicating this. If you want to put a motion forward that we ask the chicken, poultry, and meat processors—the ones we kind of agreed on—for next week, I'm fine with that. Then if we get extended on Monday, we can have this discussion again next week on what other themes we're going to discuss moving forward.

I don't think we need to dive this deep into it right now. None of us has had an opportunity to give some thought to who else we'd want to invite. I'd say keep it simple. If you want a motion to say these are the four witness groups we want to have for next week, I'm fine with that. Then let's revisit this when we know what's happening after Monday.

**The Chair:** Perhaps I can bring in the clerk here on, logistically, if we need to be more specific and why.

[Translation]

Mr. Clerk, do you want to comment on that?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand the point of view expressed by Mr. Barlow.

What is important for the team supporting the committee is to receive clear indications for its last scheduled meeting on May 29. The committee will be able to address this issue at its meeting on Wednesday, May 27, taking into account the decisions made in the House on Monday, May 25. It will also be able to determine which witnesses it wishes to call at additional meetings that the House may authorize. However, if the committee learns that it does not have permission to sit after May 29, this step will be unnecessary.

• (1605)

**The Chair:** If we wait until after Monday to further refine the themes, that would give you enough time. Would that be all right with you?

**The Clerk:** If we have about a week before we call witnesses for any meeting after Friday, May 29, that's fine with me.

[English]

**The Chair:** Now, with that information, can we find...?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Yes, it was just to try to help the clerk. That was the only reason this motion was put forward.

As we discussed in our informal conversation outside this committee, I would move that, on Friday, May 29, the panel consist of, and the clerk, along with the analysts and the chair, work to have representatives from the chicken and the egg sector, along with grains and the meat processors.

**The Chair:** Mr. Barlow, does that work for you?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes, that works for me. It's much simpler. That's kind of what we agreed on.

As an aside, Chair—and maybe the clerk can answer this—are we running out of witnesses? I know we all submitted some names.

Is that the problem here, that we're running through the witness list?

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, could you answer that question?

**The Clerk:** In fact, there are enough witnesses that have been proposed by the recognized parties for the areas you want to address on Friday, May 29. They are the poultry and egg sector, the grain sector, and finally the meat processing sector.

So, for the May 29 meeting, everything is perfect.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Barlow:** So really this doesn't matter at all.

**The Chair:** For the meetings that are already set up until Friday, we're good for witnesses.

With regard to anything beyond that, we would need to bring in more witnesses. If that's the wish of the committee, we can certainly wait until we know and then set a deadline to submit the witness lists.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Kody, we already have next Wednesday and Friday set, so I don't think we need to worry about this until Monday, until after we know what—

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Fair enough. I was working with the clerk to make sure they had the information based on what we talked about.

However, to your point, we can talk about it on Monday.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are we all good with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We'll leave that until we know further if we're going to go forward. We shall see you next Wednesday....

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** If we ever pass a motion, I'd like my addition to be included in it. I think my colleagues are in agreement. Having said that, I was wondering if the committee should submit a recommendation to the House of Commons to get the committee's mandate extended. Do we have that authority? I think all members of the committee want to continue the work, given that we haven't yet heard from all the groups of witnesses.

**The Chair:** I think it's up to all of us to talk to our whips. Indeed, they are the ones who will give us directives for the future. So I would encourage you to talk to your respective whips and tell them that we haven't finished our work and that we would like to continue it. That's what I'm suggesting.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Have a good weekend, everyone.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*English*]

Have a good weekend. Goodbye, everyone.

The meeting is now adjourned.

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>