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Chair: Mr. Pat Finnigan



Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1530)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting 39 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, March 10, 2021, and the motion adopted by the committee on May 11, 2021, the committee is commencing the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-205, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021, and therefore members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website, and the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots or taking a photo of the screen are not permitted.

[Translation]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute your mike. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer.

Just a reminder that all comments by members and witnesses must be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

[English]

Kody, you have your hand up.

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

As you know, last week we were unable to meet because of the resources available to the committees as the extension of sittings in the House has continued, so we had conversations. I sent an email to my colleagues on Friday, expressing that I thought it was important to finish all three of the panels we had agreed upon and move to clause-by-clause on Thursday. I've had conversations with Ms. Rood, Mr. MacGregor and Mr. Perron, and I'll now move:

That, notwithstanding the motions adopted by the committee on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, regarding Bill C-205, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act, the

witnesses that were scheduled to appear on Thursday, June 10, 2021 be rescheduled to Tuesday, June 15, 2021; that clause-by-clause consideration of this bill commence on Thursday, June 17, 2021; and that amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee no later than 12:00 p.m. (EDT) on Wednesday, June 16, 2021.

That is the text of the motion. I believe it has been distributed to my colleagues.

Mr. Chair, I would also say to my colleagues as we go to vote on this, that given the conversations I've had with my colleagues, I understand the clerk has prepared for the adoption of this motion, and I would ask that we go forward with that at this time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blois.

The committee has heard the motion. Are there any comments on the motion?

Go ahead, Ms. Rood.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also had conversations with Mr. Blois and Mr. MacGregor. While I appreciate that we wanted to hear all of the witnesses, I had suggested a friendly amendment that we hear from a full panel of witnesses for one hour today and then move into clause-by-clause to ensure that we can finish this bill and report it back to the House before the end of this sitting session.

In the spirit of goodwill, we will accept Mr. Blois's motion to have the witnesses appear here today, so we can finish this fulsome study on the bill, but I would like to add that I was not appreciative of how this came about, and I think we could have worked together a bit better. We usually work together great. In the spirit of goodwill, we will support your motion, Mr. Blois, and then we'll move forward with the witnesses today.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rood.

Are there any further comments on the motion, before we take a vote? I don't see any hands up.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We're going to change to a witness panel. We'll let our witness in and do sound checks. I'll just suspend, and once it's ready, we'll come back.

Mr. Blois, do you have something to add? I see Mr. Steinley also.

Mr. Kody Blois: I thank Ms. Rood. We want to focus on getting this bill back to the House, and my hope is that we'll be able to do that concretely once we finish up on Thursday.

I would note that Mr. Komal is here from the CFIA. My understanding, and the clerk can explain this, is that there were supposed to be two witnesses for the first panel. I think it was Ms. Lazare who was unable to be here today.

If it pleases the committee and the other members, perhaps if Mr. Komal is willing, he could sit and be available. I believe he has testified. If that goes against what the committee wants, it certainly will not proceed in that way, or if that's what Mr. Komal doesn't want either. However, given the fact that he was here on the basis that the motion might or might not have passed, he does have some expertise from CFIA. If not, I'm happy just to proceed with what the clerk has available.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blois, for the suggestion.

Mr. Steinley, I assume that it's on the same topic.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Yes. I just want to make it clear that we'll do one witness and two full rounds. If we have to, we can suspend for a few minutes while the other witnesses do their sound check, and then we can start the second round of witnesses as soon as possible.

I appreciate Mr. Komal's expertise, but he has already been a witness. I was hoping the plan would be that we'd go with the one witness, do the two full rounds, and if the opportunity is there, maybe start the second round a bit sooner, as soon as possible.

That would be my suggestion, if that's okay.

The Chair: I don't see any other hands. We'll have to decide on Mr. Blois's suggestion.

Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I will side with Mr. Steinley on this one. With no disrespect to the gentleman from CFIA, we have heard his testimony and we should give priority to those who haven't had the opportunity to appear.

The Chair: I don't see any other comments on that.

Is everybody agreed to continue as we had planned? You can raise your hand if you agree that we just go ahead with the original plan.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It looks as though we have a majority on that.

Mr. Komal, I certainly thank you for taking the time to join us today. We'll see you probably on Thursday, with the clause-by-clause. It's no disrespect and it's not because we wouldn't want you here, but we'll just concentrate on the other guests. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal (Vice-President, Science Branch, Chief Veterinary Officer and World Organisation for Animal Health Delegate for Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): It isn't a problem, sir. There are no hard feelings.

Thank you so much.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we'll suspend. I don't know if the witness is ready or not.

We'll just suspend the meeting for now.

• (1540)

(Pause)

• (1540)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

With that, I welcome Dr. Jane Pritchard, who is the interim registrar of the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia.

Welcome to our panel, Ms. Pritchard.

We'll start with a five-minute opening statement, if you wish. The floor is yours.

Dr. Jane Pritchard (Interim Registrar, College of Veterinarians of British Columbia, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation. It's definitely a very new experience for me, so I hope this all works out for everyone.

My name is Jane Pritchard. I am a veterinarian who has lived and worked in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, as well as the Netherlands and China. I've worked for both the Alberta and the British Columbia ministries of agriculture, in a number of positions.

I graduated from the Ontario college of veterinary medicine in Guelph, Ontario. I've taught at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Early in my career, I worked in traditional small animal practice and equine and mixed animal practice in British Columbia. I moved many times in my career. My CV looks like I couldn't hold a job. I've been a diagnostic pathologist in three different laboratories in Canada; a field veterinarian in southern Alberta; a beef specialist; a public health veterinarian; a director of veterinary diagnostic laboratories; a regulator of dairy farms, fur farms and game farms; the chief veterinary officer for British Columbia; and the chair of the Canadian Council of Chief Veterinary Officers. As well, I'm a member of the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council and the executive director of the plant and animal health branch with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture. I am currently the interim registrar for the College of Veterinarians in B.C. This was a post-retirement whim job.

Please understand, though, that today I do not speak for any of the organizations that I previously worked for or currently work for. I speak as someone who has worked for many years to ensure animal welfare and biosecurity.

In December 2014, I was the chief veterinary officer and the director of the provincial veterinary diagnostic lab in B.C. when the Fraser Valley experienced an outbreak of pathogenic avian influenza. The poultry industry had done a lot of work and survived to 2014, after the 2004 outbreak, because of the lessons they had learned during that outbreak. They had enhanced their biosecurity. They had developed strong traceability. They had learned to quarantine.

Biosecurity has remained a significant part of my work in British Columbia, with the constant threat of avian influenza within the Fraser Valley and the poultry industry, but also the swine industry as it met new challenges from new diseases such as porcine epidemic diarrhea and now African swine fever.

Throughout my pretty varied career, I have remained committed to animal welfare. I was directly involved in bringing in the national standards for slaughter without stunning in Canada and upgrading the B.C. mink farming regulations to enforce the national mink code of practice on farms. I am currently serving on the working group tasked with the review and revision of the national dairy code of practice. This is despite never having had animal welfare as part of my job description.

I support holding our livestock producers accountable for transparency in their actions and also for the humane treatment of all the animals raised on our farms. I have always endorsed the use of science to guide the industry in determining what is good welfare.

Equally, I take issue with the disregard for animal welfare by animal activists who trespass, occupy and threaten public safety while terrorizing livestock and breaching biosecurity on farms in Canada. I support anything that will prevent these vigilante acts that inflict trauma on the animals, the individuals and the farm families. To me, these acts are nothing short of cruel.

I am sharing this so you're aware of what has informed and influenced my remarks today. I hope I can be helpful.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Dr. Pritchard.

Usually we have more than one witness here, but today all the attention will be on you. Our members are all collegial and respectful. Take your time. It will be good. Although I will be, don't feel that I'm interrupting if your time is up. I'll try to let you finish your sentence, but I might be cutting you off so that all our members have a chance to ask questions.

With that, we'll go to our first panel. Mr. Barlow, who is the sponsor of the bill, will lead off with six minutes of questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. Pritchard. Don't feel any pressure whatsoever that you are literally in the spotlight for the next hour. Certainly, it's great to have somebody with your experience and knowledge in this field to provide us with some great insights.

I wanted to touch on some of the things we've heard so far and to get your opinion on what you feel is possible. We heard from CFIA

officials that Bill C-205 would be difficult to implement and enforce due to current resources.

You talked about the avian flu that was in the Fraser Valley in 2014, and we've seen the impact of BSE and the concerns with African swine fever. I also kind of tie it back to COVID, where, if we've learned anything, it's that when you prioritize something from government officials and they're given the right direction and adequate resources, you can overcome some obstacles.

Do you feel that with the right resources, and understanding the potential risk that is there with the right priorities, Bill C-205 could be implemented and enforced?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: Certainly, I am not an expert in saying what resources the CFIA have or don't have available to them. In my personal interpretation, reading the bill through, as a person who has supported the development of regulation and continues in a career that regulates, I guess there are a couple of ways of looking at it.

If I was writing the guiding notes on this, and someone was putting together the regulation, I think it could be interpreted that as long as the person who has entered the premises, or the enclosed space or building, did not follow the required biosecurity processes for that building, then they have breached the biosecurity.

For all the industries I've worked with, every barn has a standard. If you don't follow that standard, then, essentially, to me, you are breaching it.

If there's also a trespass, an undocumented trespass, the CFIA wouldn't be documenting the trespass. The biosecurity issue could be addressed quite simply by whether protocols were followed or not followed.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you for that.

I want to go back to the last comment you made in your introduction about these acts being nothing short of cruel, and that you want to support anything that would address the stress, mental health and anxiety issues that this has on a farm family and processors, but also on the animals themselves.

How important is it, Dr. Pritchard, in your opinion and in your experience, that the federal government show some leadership here and have this type of legislation that would, if anything, act as a deterrent and show those activist groups that there are consequences when they do not follow biosecurity protocol and they cross that line, going onto private property and into enclosed spaces to do this unlawful activity? How important is it for the federal government to show leadership here and have those deterrents in place?

• (1550)

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I have two things, really. One, having the additional federal legislation always helps, because federal trumps provincial. Showing that there is clear support at the federal level always helps as a provincial enforcer. It's always helped to have that backup.

The other part of it, though, is that the federal legislation piles on, so there is an additional deterrent that's brought in. Also, my experience with developing national policy versus provincial policy is that it's always better to have something where it doesn't change from province to province, so there is no excuse that, "Oh, well, it was different in B.C., so I was unaware."

That "I was unaware" excuse is something that provincial legislatures sometimes face, because people have crossed jurisdictions and there isn't a consistency between them. Certainly, with animal welfare and animal health, we really appreciate anything that develops consistency across the provinces.

Mr. John Barlow: Yes, I think that's something we've certainly spoken about at this committee. Some provinces, like B.C. for example, are in the process of putting in legislation to address trespassing, but in B.C. and Manitoba, it hasn't passed yet. Alberta and Ontario, from my understanding, are the only two, so you have no consistency across the country, which I think is why this is so important.

You've also touched on the fact that... One of the instances we had was a group of protesters going from a hog farm in Abbotsford to a turkey farm in Alberta. From your experience, can you just explain what the risks are of these protesters going from one farm to another—this was within a couple of days—potentially harming animals but also spreading infectious diseases or other dangerous bacteria or viruses?

The Chair: I will accept a very short answer because we're out of time, but go ahead.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: The very short answer is that influenza is a disease in which the strains mix and can change and potentially become zoonotic and affect people. Certainly, when you start mixing a pig strain, which is one that crosses into people, with a turkey strain, which is one that crosses into others, then you get a strain that may affect all species.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Pritchard.

Now we'll move to Mr. Louis for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Louis.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it.

Thank you, obviously, to all our witnesses.

I want to say thank you to Dr. Pritchard. I have to say that your stock has gone up exponentially with the fact that you're appearing today with your dog at your side.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I might have to pick her up. I don't know why she's whining. She's usually good.

Mr. Tim Louis: I think the chair would allow that, and we appreciate it.

I'm here in Kitchener, just down the road from University of Guelph, your old alma mater. Everyone says hello, and things are going well there.

With the testimony we've heard and the stakeholders we've heard from, we've all agreed that strong biosecurity measures are essential to protect animal health and well-being. We've also heard about

protecting the mental health of farmers, and then the marketability of farm products.

A lot of the testimony we've heard is saying that the introduction of a pathogen or a pest in Canadian livestock is most likely through routine animal health management practices such as moving animals between herds or flocks without appropriate biosecurity measures, or movement of service providers in previous contact with other animals and environments, or movement of contaminated equipment, manure or carcasses. We've heard about wildlife vectors and herds being close to wild animals. Is there a way you can kind of broadly give an order of prevalence for the major root causes of biosecurity issues?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: The most common transmission is when animals, or humans directly in charge of the animals, move between premises. That's the number one thing that you're shutting down with biosecurity.

In 2014, certainly one of the possible introductions—and it was pretty high on the list as a possible introduction—was the fact that there were B.C. Hydro vehicles going through fields. They were going from farm to farm through fields, putting in something.

In 2014, it was a strain of pathogenic avian influenza that was coming directly from wild animals, and I'm pretty sure that they basically carried duck poop from one farm to another farm and continued the infection. Something takes it onto the farm, and then someone takes it onto the barn, so yes, it could have been that a farm worker accidentally took it into the barn by not being careful or not changing footwear in a barn, but the introduction onto the property was actually thought to be transmitted by vehicles.

There are so many different things, and that's why, when you do an epidemiological investigation of what caused it and how it moved from here to there, you never really get the final answer. You're so lucky if you get that smoking gun. You get that it could have been this or it could have been that. When you're posed with whether it could be this threat, for someone who is unaware of the biosecurity measures that should be taken and isn't taking them, we don't know where they've come from and where they're going. That's a clear threat to me, because there are so many things that can do it. If you can say no to something that clearly would cause a problem, that's helpful.

When there are so many things—will wind carry it, will dogs carry it, do birds carry it, do insects carry it—you never know. Some things you can't stop, but if there's something you can stop, why would you not stop it?

• (1555)

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you. As far as where we as a government can dedicate our resources goes, would you suggest that we can improve the...let's say on-farm management, or should it be in broader education? What kinds of resources can we use to help with these major outbreaks or major pathogen concerns?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: Most of the industries are addressing that. Doing that is in one's own interest in order to remain viable as an industry. My personal experience is mainly with swine and poultry in the Fraser Valley. For anyone going onto a poultry farm in the Fraser Valley, there's an anteroom. Before you go into the barn there's a line at which you have to change your footwear and your outer clothing. As a veterinarian, you can't be in another barn that day, and you have to have changed everything in between farms.

How you perform biosecurity to protect a farm is well known. The measures are fairly intense for even just a broiler barn, and they go up, based on the value of the bird inside, to the point that they're not going to let a visitor in unless the actual barn is empty. They're just not going to let that happen. They go all the way up to the very high biosecurity swine barns, for which you have to shower in and shower out. Literally, there's that point going in and out at which you have just come through a shower and you are naked and you're putting on a whole different set of clothes, on the other side of the barn, that stay in the barn. That's a very high level of biosecurity.

These things are very variable. For instance, if you go to a dairy farm, people don't seem to really pay a lot of attention other than not letting onto the premises or into the barn, hopefully, people who have been in another barn, and trying to be aware of that. Different industries have different relationships with biosecurity, and I guess the ones I'm more familiar with—and certainly the ones that come under more scrutiny by the animal activists—are mink farms and poultry farms. On swine farms and even on mink farms there is a very high level of biosecurity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Louis.

Thank you, Dr. Pritchard.

We'll move on to Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes. Please go ahead

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Pritchard, thank you for making yourself available today. We are glad to welcome you.

You are in favour of Bill C-205, of course. I would like to start by talking about current legislation. Some who are opposed to the bill tell us that these break-ins are already covered in the Criminal Code.

What can we tell them to justify passing Bill C-205?.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Dr. Jane Pritchard: My experience is very local on this. After the swine farm occupation in British Columbia, I organized a meeting dealing with One Welfare, which is dealing with both human and animal welfare. At that meeting were the RCMP officers who had responded to the family farm the animal activists had invaded, as well as representatives of processors, and not directly that farm family but friends of that farm family and the veterinarians who attended that farm.

I think the largest problem in opposing anything like this is when you understand the trauma this causes. I completely agree that the provinces need to step up and address the trespassing, but to me it's clear that someone should not be able to come onto your property, cut a chain, open a door and walk in. If that can't be enforced, I don't know.... We need to be able to do better on that. We need anything that continues, as I said, to make it more consistent across the provinces and that adds to the penalty to make it somehow or other a deterrent to this continuing to happen, because this causes significant trauma to the people who go through it. They clearly have post-traumatic stress disorder from this. More than a year after the event, they could barely talk about it. The emotion was building up in them as they tried to address this. It was clearly painful, and there were discussions about how the children had been shamed on social media and continued to pay the price and had to change schools. It's just painful. It's just painful.

I think anything that contributes to, as I said, a consistent national approach and to increasing this as a deterrent is a step in the right direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

You mention post-traumatic stress disorder and so on. Do you feel that it could also give rise to regrettable incidents? We don't really know how people will react if they feel attacked on their own property.

[*English*]

Dr. Jane Pritchard: Farmers are farmers. Certainly I wouldn't say this about ranchers in some provinces, because when animal identification came in I felt a little threatened going on to some ranches, but farmers aren't going to take this into their own hands. I have never heard a farmer say that they were going to do that. What they say is that when their neighbour is impacted, they are going to go and stand beside them.

Some purchasers of the processors just walked away from them when they were impacted, but the ones who stood up and said they wanted to help and they stood beside.... They come out and they literally stand on the property and show that the farmer is not alone in this, that the bullying is unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

Let me go back to the enforcement of provincial legislation. According to a number of witnesses, it seems that having to prove damages also makes enforcing the legislation difficult. That would be one of the strengths of Bill C-205. It would remove that burden. If I understood your opening statement correctly, you could start from the simple fact that the required protocols had not been followed. Since an offence would already have taken place, that would remove the burden of proof.

Did I understand you correctly?

[English]

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I spend all day reading regulation and trying to figure out how to enforce it. Being reckless as to whether entering such a place could result in the exposure of animals to a disease or toxic substance means.... To me, if you're not following the protocols, it could.

I feel that the burden of proof is not to show that a disease was transmitted but that it could have been transmitted. I feel that the bar for burden of proof is much lower.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay, thank you very much.

Earlier, you said that you are not an expert on the resources of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Do you believe that there can be an effective partnership with local police forces at a certain point, whereby they could simply document the offence?

[English]

The Chair: Dr. Pritchard, we're out of time on this one, but go ahead with a very quick answer, please.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: Very quickly, when I have spoken to the RCMP, certainly in the Fraser Valley, the officers wish to have that kind of a relationship, but there are not a lot of resources for them to develop that expertise and support.

Definitely we all work together when we have disease outbreaks. I am sure there is a way of doing it.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Pritchard and Monsieur Perron.

Now we will go to Mr. MacGregor.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor, for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Dr. Pritchard, for informing this committee as we examine Bill C-205.

You were chief veterinary officer of British Columbia—also my home province. Can you tell me a bit about some of your main duties in that role?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: That was one of three hats that I wore in the duties. You get a little grey in between, so I was replaced by three people when I retired.

As the chief veterinary officer, the primary duty is basically to advise the minister of agriculture and the government, and to en-

force what was brought in while I was there, which was the new act to protect animals. It's a lot of being aware of what's going on.

When you get into the relationship like I had with avian influenza in 2014, a lot of what I was doing was simply being this spokesperson as the CVO. I was getting all of the information, but my duties within that were of a relationship, advice and that sort of thing. Most of what I was doing was running the lab and getting the diagnostic samples through and, at the same time, making sure we were delivering the same services to prevent all the diseases in all the areas. Then the other side of it was overseeing, to make sure the people who were working under me—because we had been through it before—were not burning out.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Dr. Pritchard, during that time, in the conversations you had with the minister of agriculture and other departmental officials, did you ever discuss any shortcomings with the existing Health of Animals Act? Did you see a gap that Bill C-205 is now trying to fill, at that time?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I did not specifically, but the current Health of Animals Act....

In British Columbia, the chief veterinary officer is all-powerful once an emergency is declared. There is a tremendous amount of power that falls on the shoulders of the chief veterinary officer to be able to do things, without even having written approval or putting it in writing; you can do all kinds of things verbally. There is a great deal of power that is very onerous to carry. The act itself provides so much power that you weren't looking for anything else to support it.

However, outside of that, certainly in dealing with an occasion where animal activists broke into a mink farm, let mink out and filmed them—it was just horrible—that was a family farm, and I was looking for something more there.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I guess one of the struggles we have had with competing witness testimony thus far is on the question over jurisdiction. Property and civil rights fall under provincial jurisdiction, which is why they make trespass laws, and, of course, biosecurity is definitely an applicable federal criminal law power trying to prohibit public health evil and bring the prohibitions to stop it.

In your view, is the issue we are trying to address here an issue of trespassing on farms and causing all of that unrest that farmers have to deal with, often by themselves, for a few hours before enforcement comes, or are we legitimately trying to plug a hole in existing biosecurity gaps right now?

• (1610)

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I personally feel that if the trespass regulations were enough of a deterrent, that would be enough, because you would be able to prevent the act, and if it occurred, you would be able to react quickly and contain it. The issue is that if you cannot react quickly and contain it or prevent it, then that introduces the concept of a risk to biosecurity. That is where I see the addition being protective.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I've visited a few egg farms in my riding, and all over the barn are clearly marked signs about biosecurity measures being in effect, such as a warning that special types of clothes are needed or that there is no unauthorized access. You would have to be blind to not see the signs. It's quite apparent to anyone visiting the property that those are in place.

We are always going to have a group of people in this country who are committed activists, but I am wondering about the people who are persuadable. I'm wondering more about the conversation that needs to happen between agricultural producers and the general Canadian public.

I look at things like the National Farm Animal Care Council. Do you have any recommendations, in the short time I have, about maybe how we, as a federal government, can be strengthening that particular policy?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I have only one recommendation with the National Farm Animal Care Council, and that's permanent funding, because it relies on grants to survive. It is the cornerstone of how I can stand up and defend any of our industries, because we have these very strong, science-based protocols that are constantly being updated for the industry to use as a minimum standard, and then recommended practices on top of that.

That's all I can say.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Pritchard and Mr. MacGregor.

We'll move to the second round and Mr. Epp, for five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I look forward to saying, "Thank you, Mr. Chair," many more times yet, but given your recent announcement, I hope that our bonding opportunities over our favourite vegetable—which of course we know is a fruit—will not be cut short.

We'll go on to the testimony.

Dr. Pritchard, thanks for being here with us today. We very much appreciate it.

We've heard in previous testimony that there are a number of vectors for how disease could come onto a farm. Obviously, Bill C-205 is dealing with one particular vector, and it's in that vein that we have heard some conflicting testimony.

We've heard one witness explain that human beings need to have close, prolonged contact with animals to transmit a disease to them, and that scientific literature provides very little evidence that farm trespassers have transmitted pathogens to animals. Conversely,

though, we've also heard from Dr. Jean-Pierre Vaillancourt at the University of Montreal, from Scott Weese at the University of Guelph, from Dr. Brian Evans and from Dr. Henry Ceelen that there are very real risks of transmission. You've alluded to that in your testimony.

To me, this is something that's at the basis of how a law to combat this needs to be solid. I wonder if I could solicit your opinion as to if there are real risks here, or are they just perceived risks?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I have two examples.

One is avian influenza. We know that simply by walking through a puddle that a bird had pooped in and then walking into a barn, the number of viral particles introduced into that barn was extraordinarily low, yet it went down with pathogenic avian influenza. It doesn't take much with certain diseases.

The other thing is porcine epidemic diarrhea. Trying to get rid of that disease and clear it from manure slurry is not a conversation you want to have—

Mr. Dave Epp: Over breakfast.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: —but it takes very little viable organism to result in a massive loss of life in a barn: any introduction on footwear, on clothing or on a vehicle that brings it onto the property improperly.

Then there are other diseases where it is a considerable load and you have to be exposed; you have to bring a large load of the organism and expose it quite closely to the animal for it to transmit.

You can just look at COVID, right, and the initial strains of COVID we had. We know now. We were worried about paper and all the rest of it, and it turned out that it actually had to take a fair bit of exposure to be able to transmit. Now, with the new strains, we find that it doesn't take very much, and that even not wearing a mask outside and being in close proximity to people can result in a transmission. It's strain-dependent, even with viruses. Certainly, fungi are different from viruses, which are different from bacteria.

The question can be answered in many different ways, but the possibility is there for it to transmit very easily, depending on the disease.

• (1615)

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

Moving on, then, to how we might administer such a law should it come into place, my understanding is that the RCMP has livestock units, particularly in western Canada. Is that something the CFIA could leverage in its administration of a potential law such as Bill C-205?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I would suggest that you have better information on the actual resources assigned to livestock in western Canada.

For the two people I know in the Fraser Valley who do it, they do it because they're both from farm backgrounds and have a farm. They're actually a husband-and-wife pair. The only RCMP officer I've worked with outside of that is a single officer in the province assigned to livestock.

It's a small resource, as far as I'm aware, but there could be some training to help them go on and off farms to deal with the issue. As with any regulation, it comes down to whether there is a will to enforce it and how much you want to enforce it.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

You've mentioned deterrence several times in your testimony. When we're crafting legislation, there's the balance or principle of law that the punishment should fit the crime. However, in something like this, given the risk or the outcome—the massive harm that could come from mental anguish, animal cruelty, etc.—is there not more value in deterrence in such a law, as opposed to trying to fit the punishment to the crime after the fact, when the damage has been done?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I would completely agree with you.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Your timing is good.

I want to assure my good colleague and friend that I would never mistreat a tomato and we'll never need a bill to stop mistreatment of tomatoes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: That's great. Thanks.

We'll move to our next questioner, Mr. Blois, for five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Blois.

Mr. Kody Blois: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Dr. Pritchard, for providing great testimony here today.

I know you don't have the legislation in front of you, but for my colleagues and for you, right now there are provisions under the Health of Animals Act regarding notice forbidding entry, which is basically, as we have talked about and Mr. MacGregor mentioned, the signage and the biosecurity risks that are already highlighted.

There is a prohibition under the act that already says:

No person shall knowingly enter a building or other enclosed place in contravention of a notice affixed under this section, unless the person has a right of entry or way into the building or place or any part thereof or an inspector or officer has authorized the entry.

That language is very similar to what we have here in Mr. Barlow's bill, and the penalties under the act are very similar. You just said that sometimes it's about the will to enforce the provisions. Do you think that perhaps we just need to try to have more will to enforce what might already be in the act?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I don't think I get paid enough for that question. That's very complicated.

I looked at this—and I'm familiar with the legislation that you're referring to—and thought there must be a point at which it isn't

easy to enforce, and this is to make it easier to enforce. I've dealt with that, with the language in the regulation or the bylaw or whatever I was trying to enforce not being clear enough and the government not wanting to enforce it the way it was because it was not going to stand up.

Mr. Kody Blois: Was that the federal government?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: That was provincial and it was not related to this. When I see something like this coming in, an amendment like this or an addition, my default thought is that someone needed it so a case could be built more easily.

• (1620)

Mr. Kody Blois: I know you don't have the act in front of you. I think we as a committee will have to reflect on whether or not there have to be clear instructions regarding the provisions that might already be in there.

You mentioned in your testimony earlier that you had conversations with some animal and health care groups as part of your background and your history. What impression did you get from those conversations about the activists' knowledge that they might be putting biosecurity at risk by going on a farm?

Obviously, as much as I might not intrinsically agree with some of the ideology, some activists think that this is something that's beneficial to the animals. You've mentioned the harm that can occur. How adept are these particular organizations or individuals at knowing that they are indeed putting biosecurity at risk when they carry out these particular acts?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: They have had limited exposure and are speaking from small experiences. I have spoken, after farm invasions, to people who obviously were part of the invasion, who have called me up, as the chief veterinary officer of the Province of British Columbia, and said, "You have to stop this. You have to do something. I want to help. What can I do?"

I've spent the hours that it takes to explain animal welfare and what's in place already to support it, how these standards are developed and why we enforce these standards, and that they are standards and they are enforced. If you look at something and you don't understand it, you can't understand what's being done.

Those people are often very ashamed that they contributed to that, when you explain to them that they have actually put those animals at risk and terrorized them. The animals are not used to having people going in and shining bright lights on them in the middle of the night. These people are ashamed.

The perpetrators of this are very good at social media and at gathering people, and telling them things—

Mr. Kody Blois: Ms. Pritchard, I'm sorry, but I have about 45 seconds.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: That's a rant. I'm sorry.

Mr. Kody Blois: No, no. It's okay. I guess what I'm hearing is that as part of the education, there's more of an awareness once people realize.

I have one final question in my last 35 seconds. You mentioned at one point that farmers are not going to do this themselves. You mentioned, of course, the intrinsic support that farmers offer one another.

Do you have any idea why there seems to be a hesitation? We've heard this from other witnesses. Why don't farmers press charges or try to encourage the authorities to use the full provisions that might be there? Do you have any comments on that for the committee?

The Chair: Give a quick answer, if you can, Dr. Pritchard.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: All I can speak to is that I know the mink industry never prosecutes them because they don't want anyone to know where they are.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Pritchard and Mr. Blois.

Now we'll go to Monsieur Perron.

[Translation]

Mr. Perron, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Ms. Pritchard, you have talked a lot about those who participate in these invasions. People have told us that we must spare a thought for whistleblowers. We have received a number of briefs from those saying that Bill C-205 is a gag order that would hamper freedom of expression and prevent people who suspect mistreatment from becoming involved.

Could you explain the processes that already exist? For example, if people suspect an operation of mistreating its animals, are they really forced to break in? What other means can they use to report their suspicions?

[English]

Dr. Jane Pritchard: There are two deterrents for farmers to make sure.... Number one is the SPCA, which, if given any kind of evidence that there is something going wrong on a farm, will go on to the farm. They also have relationships with the industry, and if they think but they don't have evidence, they can contact the industry and the industry will follow up.

The other thing is that there are third party auditors. There are third party animal welfare auditors going on most of the farms in Canada right now, and that's for animal welfare: trained auditors who go to make sure that the farms are following the standards.

With regard to the dairy industry and the cattle industry—even the ones that don't have high biosecurity and are a little less under the spotlight—there are third party animal welfare auditors and the BC SPCA.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: If I understand correctly, many solutions already exist and they do not include breaking onto a farm to verify a situation.

Let me finish with this question. In your opinion, Ms. Pritchard, if Bill C-205 is not passed, what will be the repercussions for agriculture?

[English]

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I'm sorry, my crystal ball is not working very well for that. I just hope that whatever comes out of all these discussions contributes to deterrents being put in place so that these acts stop.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Pritchard and Monsieur Perron.

Now we will go to Mr. MacGregor for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Pritchard, a lot of the animal activist groups have been saying that respecting property rights is incredibly important, and it's good to see. We have heard that statement.

Obviously, though, there is a gap, because we have heard from farmers and they have been, for several decades now, raising the cry that there are not enough legal protections. We have seen some provinces react, notably Alberta and Ontario, by increasing penalties for their trespass laws.

You must have heard these stories coming from farmers while you were in the positions you held in British Columbia.

Why do you think the majority of Canada's provinces have been slow on the uptake in strengthening their trespass laws? We acknowledge that farmers have this right to safely and securely enjoy their property, to conduct their work in peace in accordance with all applicable laws, but they're still feeling that a gap is there. Why do you think provinces have been a bit slow in not strengthening trespass laws?

Dr. Jane Pritchard: I never criticize a province for being slow, because I've probably been open to that criticism myself.

I guess I feel there are probably reasons that people aren't aware of for why the progress is less than desirable. I have to feel that everyone is committed to moving in this direction and that there are often roadblocks that you're unaware of in the development of legislation.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I appreciate your appearing before the committee.

I'll leave it there, Chair. There will be no more questions from me.

Thank you, Dr. Pritchard.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

That is going to be it for the first panel.

I really want to thank you, Dr. Pritchard. I hope we haven't stressed you too much. You did a great job.

Dr. Jane Pritchard: Me and my dog.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's great. Thank you so much for taking the time. I'm wishing you a good day.

For the rest of the panel, we'll break to bring in the new witnesses and be right back. I will suspend the meeting for now.

• (1625) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1630)

The Chair: We'll call the meeting back to order.

[*Translation*]

Today, I would like to welcome, from Dairy Farmers of Canada, Pierre Lampron, President, David Wiens, Vice-President, and Érik Tremblay, Special Advisor, Government Relations and International Trade.

I would also like to welcome Pierre-Luc Leblanc, President of Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec.

I welcome you all to the committee.

Each of you will have five minutes for your presentation.

We will start with Dairy Farmers of Canada. The floor goes to whomever wants to start.

Mr. Pierre Lampron (President, Dairy Farmers of Canada): Good afternoon, everyone. I am pleased to be here with you again today, on behalf of all the dairy farmers of Canada. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to present our point of view on Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act.

As you said, my name is Pierre Lampron, and I am the President of Dairy Farmers of Canada. With me are my Vice-President, David Wiens, and our Special Advisor, Érik Tremblay.

As Canada's dairy farmers, we are essential to the Canadian food supply chain. Our job, to feed the country, would not be possible without our animals. Their health and well-being, therefore, are very important for us.

Using our mandatory program called proAction, dairy farmers work every day to produce quality milk that meets the highest standards in the world. The six areas that our proAction program covers include animal care and biosecurity. Both are in peril when visitors from the outside do not follow the appropriate protocols.

I will now hand over to my colleague, David Wiens.

[*English*]

Mr. David Wiens (Vice-President, Dairy Farmers of Canada): Thanks, Pierre.

As Pierre mentioned, the proAction program is a key part of our commitment to producing safe, high-quality milk, and one of the six modules of proAction is biosecurity. Strict measures are put in place at every Canadian dairy farm to mitigate the risk of exposure to dangerous disease or toxic substances that can affect cattle health.

One of the most important aspects of biosecurity is controlling traffic and visitors. Dangerous pathogens can be introduced and

spread by contaminated footwear, clothing and hands, as well as vehicles, farm machinery and other equipment.

An individual entering a farm without permission may not be aware of or may not respect biosecurity requirements, which are really critical to preventing the introduction and spread of disease. Failure to respect entry protocols or previous exposure to other animal sites could have severe implications on the health of farm animals and undermine the contingencies put in place by farmers.

DFC believes in democracy and the fundamental rights of citizens to protest and disagree in public space. However, farms are not public spaces. Actions that threaten the health, safety and well-being of people and animals on farms or anywhere in the food supply chain should be prohibited. There should also be consequences for anyone who is responsible for such actions.

Now I'll let Pierre finish this with our position on this bill.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Lampron: Thank you, Mr. Wiens.

Bill C-205 is one more step in the right direction. We believe that that the wording of the bill could be strengthened to provide our animals with better protection.

In our opinion, enthusiasm or lack of knowledge should not be used as excuses when animal health is at stake. This must therefore be removed from Bill C-205. The result of doing so would be to ensure that the bill achieves its objective, which is to protect animals from toxic substances, dangerous pathogens and excessive stress.

In addition, we believe that the bill should also protect animals from all individuals or organizations who help others to contravene the legislation. In reality, unauthorized access to farms is often linked to organizations that suffer no legal consequences as a result of their actions.

Dairy Farmers of Canada are emphatically demanding that the government and all political parties support Bill C-205 with the amendments previously proposed. Passing this bill would guarantee that all livestock is protected against unauthorized access to farms, thereby reducing the risk of dangerous diseases among the animals. The legislation would also provide a legal framework that would strengthen the measures that dairy producers are already taking to protect the health of their animals under the proAction program.

Thank you. We will be glad to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lampron, from Dairy Farmers of Canada.

The floor now goes to Mr. Leblanc, President of the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec.

The floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc (President, Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

First of all, on behalf of the 731 chicken and turkey farmers in Quebec whom we represent, I would like to thank the committee for providing us this opportunity today to express our views on Bill C-205. As proposed, it is an important piece of legislation that seeks to better protect our birds from the enormous risks and consequences of incursions onto farms.

First, allow me to say a few words about our organization. The members of the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec are 650 chicken farmers and 157 turkey farmers who raise their birds with care and in compliance with strict food safety and animal welfare standards. In Quebec alone, the poultry industry supports almost 30,000 direct and indirect jobs, representing \$2 billion in annual gross domestic product. Our industry is therefore a major driver of the dynamism and economic vitality of our regions and communities.

Our main goal in appearing before you today is to give you a clearer idea of the considerable risks that break-ins on animal farms like ours can have. Trespassing by individuals or groups can have very serious impacts on the health and well-being of the animals, and on humans in economic terms. It can affect not only the farmers but also our society as a whole.

The first risks are to the animals' health and well-being, which are put in danger. We have rigorous standards to protect biosecurity and the well-being of the chickens and turkeys we raise. Since 2009, these programs, which are recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, have been continually improved to meet the demands of Canadians. Quebec's chicken and turkey farmers work hard every day to comply with these programs, including when suppliers need to enter the production site and the buildings where the birds are housed.

You can probably guess that trespassing on a poultry farm therefore directly jeopardizes all these measures that all Quebec farmers take to maintain farming standards that are among the highest in the world. You should also know that farmed birds, especially turkeys, are sensitive to stress caused by intrusions into their living space. This stress can lead the birds to huddle, causing injuries and even many deaths by asphyxia. A weaker immune system and a disruption of their watering and feeding habits are also possible. The stress caused by trespassing on poultry farms can quickly lead to a loss of 10% to 20% of the birds caused by the huddling and the disruption.

Other effects can be seen over the medium term. Diseases may result if biosecurity measures are not followed. Indeed, a series of diseases, including avian influenza, infectious laryngotracheitis and mycoplasmosis, can be introduced, even inadvertently, by humans entering a farm without observing a rigorous protocol of biosecurity rules. Let us not forget that avian influenza is a reportable dis-

ease because of its substantial potential impact on human and animal health and, in the event of large-scale spread, on the Canadian economy.

If a disease is introduced through trespassing without the farmer being aware of it, the infection may have time to spread more widely before mitigating actions are taken. This further complicates the work of health authorities and raises the associated costs. If a disease is introduced, it can also lead to the requirement for humane slaughter, an unfortunate decision that runs counter to the chicken and turkey farmers' commitment to supply the Canadian market with food.

The third major risk of farm break-ins is financial loss. To properly understand what an outbreak of a disease can do, we need only read the report prepared by the Équipe québécoise de contrôle des maladies avicoles on the outbreak of infectious avian laryngotracheitis that occurred on 10 farms in Bellechasse and the Beauce from May 18 to July 28, 2010. The outbreak, which began in a single poultry barn, affected no fewer than five municipalities. It affected 20 poultry barns on 17 farms in the region, or more than 50% of the poultry barns in the entire region. A total of 1.8 million chicks had to be vaccinated in two consecutive lots following the infected lot. In addition to the increased mortality and condemnation in the infected lots of birds, a number of expensive measures had to be carried out, increasing the overall cost to the industry by more than \$1.8 million.

It is also worth noting that Quebec poultry farms have specialized equipment to optimize growing conditions and bird welfare. However, this equipment is expensive and, if it is damaged during a break-in, resulting in no ventilation or heating, the farm could suffer serious consequences, including the total loss of whole lots of birds.

• (1640)

Finally, we must not forget that human beings are behind every operation. The fear of being the target of a break-in is very real among our members, and the stress that this can cause may be traumatic for the targeted farmer.

The Chair: Mr. LeBlanc, can you wrap up your presentation? It is time for us to move to questions. Thank you.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Okay.

In addition to animal health, the health of farmers is also at stake, given the psychological and physical consequences of trespassing on the farm.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. LeBlanc. You will have the opportunity to answer questions.

We now move to questions. We will start with Mr. Lehoux.

Mr. Lehoux, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon to the witnesses. My thanks to them for joining us today to talk about Bill C-205.

My first question goes to Mr. Lampron or Mr. Wiens, from Dairy Farmers of Canada.

At your symposium in 2020, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said that break-ins were unacceptable. Can you tell us today whether you have had any discussions with the Minister on the issue since February 2020? What is her approach to it?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: That is a good question. Politically, nothing has happened. I don't know the stage that the latest discussions have reached. Mr. Tremblay may know more about it. As you point out, however, the Minister did express quite a firm commitment at that time. As for any other steps, I don't know what has happened.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Tremblay, can you answer that for us?

Mr. Érik Tremblay (Special Advisor, Government Relations and International Trade, Dairy Farmers of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To my knowledge, there has been no discussion on the matter since last year's symposium.

• (1645)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: She decried the situation, but she took no concrete steps with regard to it.

However, it does have a significant impact on producers. Mr. Lampron or Mr. Wiens, do you have any examples of break-ins on dairy farms in Canada? What is the impact on mental health that we talked about earlier? I will also turn to the representative of the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec a little later.

Have your members given you any specific examples?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: I will start and Mr. Wiens can add to my answer if he wishes.

As I said in my presentation, we have established the proAction program, which is mandatory for all producers. It includes protocols and measures precisely in order to protect the animals. When unplanned incursions occur, so do the risks. Personally, I have not heard of any specific cases. I am not sure whether Mr. Wiens has.

I go back to what you said earlier. Incursions cause stress, and producers do not want people coming to harm their animals. Dairy production is not perhaps as fragile as poultry production, but it still is to a great extent. Our production practices are good and our animals are monitored extremely closely. So anything that can harm their well-being is significant.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Mr. Lampron.

Mr. Wiens, do you want to add anything?

[English]

Mr. David Wiens: Yes, certainly. We had an experience here in Manitoba a few years ago where there was a barn fire and the farm

lost a significant number of cows. They were under threat from people wanting to come onto the farm in protest.

As other dairy farmers, we went there and helped to stand in the way of protestors coming onto the farm. The farm family was already devastated by the loss of these animals, and then to have people intrude on that, I thought, was very insensitive. It puts farmers in a very, very difficult situation.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Mr. Wiens.

Mr. Leblanc, good afternoon again.

We realize that the poultry farming sector has some vulnerabilities. Your biosecurity standards are very stringent. Do you think the fines prescribed by Bill C-205 are stiff enough to deter people from trespassing on farms?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes, exactly. If the bill passes, people will realize that there is a law and that they are committing an offence. It will get the message across. If the behaviour is covered by the law, if legislation is enacted, at least people will know that their behaviour has consequences. The fines are pretty high. People could face other penalties as well. My answer is yes, absolutely.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: At the end of your opening statement, you talked about the anxiety and the stress these incidents cause farmers. Can you elaborate on that? It's important to understand that farmers are very worried about the consequences of these break-ins.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes, precisely. Actually, they are acts of trespassing. Poultry farmers in other provinces have been victims of these incidents as well. Farmers are left to fend for themselves when it happens. Protesters show up, and the farmer loses control of the situation. Things turn chaotic, and farmers witness their birds being mistreated or otherwise disturbed. They see the consequences on their operation. When it happens on some farms, every farmer has questions. They reach out to the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec in large numbers to ask what they should do if it happens to them. Not having legislation to deal with these incidents adds to their stress.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Do you think Bill C-205 establishes a robust enough framework for police, whether it be the RCMP or Quebec provincial police, to respond quickly?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes, we think the bill could be passed as is because it establishes a framework; it introduces rules and parameters. It equates the act to trespassing. Treating the act as trespassing on private property sets a clear rule.

• (1650)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Mr. Leblanc.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lehoux.

[English]

Mr. Neil Ellis, go ahead, for six minutes.

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. As I said before, we're going to miss you at this committee. Maybe we can talk you into changing your mind.

I would like to thank the witnesses for attending today.

First I'll throw a question to Mr. Leblanc.

Except for this bill, are there any other legal means to address break-ins or any illegal entry to farms? Are they working, and why?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: From what we've observed, the measures that have been put forward, the legislation that has been passed, provide too much leeway. A pig farmer in my region was the victim of an incident and he had to fend for himself. The Sûreté du Québec did not know how to respond; officers did not know how to remove people from the premises, so it was complicated. I think the bill will send the right message and tell police, in fairly strict terms, how they should respond.

[English]

Mr. Neil Ellis: We talked about threats, and I believe it was you, Mr. Leblanc, or one of the witnesses...but is trespassing one of the main threats for your industry, or are there other threats that you face, such as biosecurity?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: That's a very good question.

Trespassing is becoming a threat. As I said earlier, trespassers on a turkey farm could cause the birds to huddle out of fear. It also puts biosecurity at risk because anyone who enters a farm without authorization and who does not follow the necessary biosecurity protocols could introduce other health problems, as I mentioned. For instance, those entering areas where animals are kept have to put on certain overgarments and change their footwear to make sure they are not introducing a disease such as laryngotracheitis or avian influenza.

The two risks you mentioned are major concerns for Quebec's poultry farmers.

Mr. Pierre Lampron: The same goes for dairy farmers. Any disease that could be introduced into the herd could cause serious damage. Biosecurity measures are in place, and we can see from COVID-19 what happens when those measures aren't followed. Pathogens we aren't familiar with could be introduced. That is the last thing we want to happen.

[English]

Mr. Neil Ellis: Thank you for that answer.

At the end of his testimony, Mr. Leblanc touched on mental health for farmers.

I'd like to ask this question to the dairy farmers, and this is coming, I guess, even from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Do you believe that Bill C-205 addresses critical issues such as mental health?

Mr. David Wiens: Well, it's a huge concern for us, obviously, because we feel the stress of people coming onto the farm. One of the things we see where some strengthening is needed is that there should be the requirement to have knowledge of what they're doing, or recklessness.... Those things should be removed, because to plead ignorance is unacceptable. Because of the damage it causes, there is huge stress on farms. We feel extremely vulnerable. To have people come onto the farm and simply claim ignorance and help to destroy the animals on the farm is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Neil Ellis: Thank you for your answer.

I guess this could go to whoever wants to weigh in on this.

Farmers' concerns have prompted provincial governments in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to pursue more stringent measures to protect farm owners and producers, including by increasing trespassing fines. Agriculture is an area of shared jurisdiction between Canada and its provincial partners.

Ontario pork producers were mentioned. In Ontario, with the enactment of Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act of 2020, pork producers, as well as others in the agri-food sector, now have protection. Has either of you contacted our provincial counterparts and spoken to a bill that might be similar to what other provinces are now enacting?

I don't know who wants to start with that one.

Mr. David Wiens: Certainly, there has been some work done in the provinces. For instance, I am from Manitoba and I spoke on a similar bill there.

Yes, we have come from a point where landowners were expected to address trespassing on their own, yet at the same time farmers were actually held liable for anything that might happen to anyone who trespassed. Those kinds of laws have been very difficult, and now they are being reconsidered.

My concern in all of this is that if we don't have some kind of a national framework around this, there are going to be varying degrees of legislation on this in different provinces, and that allows people who want to target farms to pick the jurisdictions where there are the least consequences for their actions. That is a huge concern.

• (1655)

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Leblanc, did you want to touch on that question?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes. We are already working extensively with the provincial government to establish biosecurity standards to protect food safety and animal welfare. The work has already started, in conjunction with Quebec's ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food, to ensure across-the-board compliance with animal welfare rules.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ellis and Monsieur Leblanc.

Now we will go to Monsieur Perron for six minutes.

[Translation]

Go ahead, Mr. Perron.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. It's a pleasure to see you all.

I'm going to start with you, Mr. Leblanc.

You said earlier that an incident occurred in Quebec and police did not know how to respond. How do you explain that?

A number of witnesses told us that Quebec already had laws in place to protect against trespassing. How is it that they are not enforced or not enforceable?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: It happened at a hog farm near me. It took police a long time to get the individuals off the premises.

As I understand it, the legislation will deter people from coming onto the property. Once activists gain entry to the property and occupy it, they do not up and leave just because police are on the scene. The law needs to deter people from breaking onto the property, to prevent the birds from coming under stress, to ensure their welfare and to protect biosecurity.

Mr. Yves Perron: Not being able to get trespassers out of their facilities immediately must be very hard for farmers.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes, it is stressful, and that stress spreads to other farmers and producers who see what's happening and how long it takes for authorities to respond. Once peace has been restored, the damage is already done. That's the problem farmers face.

Mr. Yves Perron: Do you worry that unfortunate incidents will happen if the bill is not passed? If the bill fails to pass, what consequences will it have?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: It is essential that the bill become law, in our view. That is a must. Laws are made to be improved. Time will tell how the law changes, but as things stand, Bill C-205 has to pass. Not only do farmers need protecting, but so do their chickens and turkeys. In the end, it's about protecting animal welfare.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

Many witnesses told us that farmers were reluctant to file a complaint after an incident had occurred and that seeking redress was a complex undertaking. Do you think the bill, in its current form, unequivocally allows for action to be taken? The offence arises from

being on the farm, not from causing a problem, even though the trespasser's presence could cause a problem.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: It's important to start somewhere. I think the bill as it currently stands meets expectations. As I told you, time will tell whether people ignore the law. What is currently stipulated in the bill does a good job of meeting expectations. I think the authorities will have the necessary willingness to ensure the law is properly enforced.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

Mr. Lampron, do you think Bill C-205, the way it's currently written, will have the same impact?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: Thank you for your question.

We have actually recommended two amendments to the bill. I'll tell you what they are, and then, Mr. Tremblay can explain the legal ramifications. We are recommending removing the part that says the person who contravened the act would get off if they claimed that they did not know their behaviour would cause harm to the animals.

As Mr. Weins mentioned, these groups are often highly organized, hence the need for federal legislation. It will keep groups from targeting farmers in less protected provinces.

In terms of stress, the bill will definitely protect animals, but it also needs to protect farmers. Just think how you would feel if you saw a stranger in your yard stealing carrots out of your garden. Even worse, what if that stranger was sitting in your living room watching television? That is the level of stress farmers experience.

I realize the purpose of the bill is to protect animals, and we will get to that, but you asked about the farmer's stress. It's important to understand that, when someone breaks into your farm, your workplace, it's stressful.

• (1700)

Mr. Yves Perron: I completely understand.

In your opening statement, you brought up the proAction program and the way in which dairy farmers endeavour to pay attention to animal health. What do you say to those who would accuse us of trying to muzzle whistle-blowers and prevent people who suspect animal abuse on a farm from reporting it? Can you tell us what mechanisms currently exist in that regard?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: I will go first, but Mr. Weins is the expert on proAction. The program is mandatory for all farmers and is overseen by the National Farm Animal Care Council. The program is rooted in the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle, which is in the process of being updated. It's quite a program and it's based on legislation. We plan to incorporate this bill into the program as well.

I've said enough, but Mr. Weins can talk more about the connection with proAction and the program's credibility.

[English]

Mr. David Wiens: Thank you.

Certainly, proAction is mandatory for all dairy farms across Canada. We follow the same protocols. The whole point of proAction is to ensure that we have independent audits done on the farm to look at biosecurity, animal welfare and the list goes on, ensuring that all of these things are actually happening on the farm. It's not just in a code somewhere. It is being evaluated, so it's mandatory and, of course, you have to pass in terms of this proAction program.

That's what we do, and the whole point of the program is to let the public know what we're doing. This score card is not private; it's for everyone to see. It was done to address any concerns that Canadians would have about how, in this case, dairy cattle are being treated, housed and taken care of.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Wiens.

Now we go to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

I'm just wondering if the Dairy Farmers of Canada can clarify the amendment for me. It's in clause 1. Are you proposing that the sentence "kept knowing that or being reckless as to whether" be deleted? You want to remove both the "knowing" and the "reckless" reference so that it just refers to anyone who is entering a place.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Lampron: Can you answer, Mr. Tremblay?

Mr. Érik Tremblay: Yes, I'd be happy to.

That is a good question, and I would be glad to clarify.

That is exactly what we are proposing. We recommend that the references to knowledge and recklessness be removed from the bill, so they cannot be used as an excuse to contravene the legislation. The bill would then have enough teeth to protect all Canadian farmers.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, I was having a conversation with legislative counsel about that, because in my opinion.... Do you not feel that having "recklessness" in there would cover everything? If a person knows they could transmit a disease, that requires a higher burden of proof, but if the Crown can establish that someone was completely reckless when they entered a place, that of course requires a lower burden of proof. You would still object even with that terminology in there?

[Translation]

Mr. Érik Tremblay: Thank you.

Of course, we defer to the House's expertise when it comes to the exact wording that should be used. We can provide the necessary amendments, but all we are looking for is a bill with enough teeth to be enforced. We think the amendment we are proposing would achieve that.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

For my next question, I would like to have both groups respond. Amongst your member farmers, your producers, do your organizations have a signed policy in which you recommend that farmers clearly mark their properties with a "no trespassing" sign or signs to the effect that there are biosecurity measures in effect? Is that a uniform policy across Canada amongst your membership so that anyone who is approaching a property is, number one, aware that trespassing is not tolerated and, number two, aware that strict biosecurity provisions are in effect? Would that be something that is uniform across Canada, so that any would-be activists could not claim not to know?

• (1705)

Mr. David Wiens: That is a good point. In dairy, part of the biosecurity module of our proAction program is that you must have a sign on the entrance to your facility that states that there's biosecurity in place and that someone can't simply enter the building; they need to have permission. Then there's contact information given if they want to. Well, if they do go in, they know very clearly then that they are out of bounds and are going somewhere they should not be, and they know why they shouldn't be there. That is for all dairy facilities across the country.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Okay.

Monsieur Leblanc.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: The Éleveurs de volailles du Québec has similar measures to those of dairy farmers. Stop signs are installed at the entrance of each farm. Farmers are also required to have some type of fence, chain or otherwise, around the property, as well as a sign indicating that the farm is a secured area. Restricted access areas are also set up to let drivers who do not stop at the entrance know that stricter biosecurity measures apply the closer they get to the facility. Access is also restricted inside the facility, with signage telling visitors that they have to change their clothes in order to enter. Overalls and appropriate footwear must be worn.

Those measures fall under the provincial regulations farmers have to follow, but they also apply to all Canadian farmers, as part of on-farm food safety systems. Quebec farmers who do not comply with the regulations are subject to penalties.

I should also point out that nearly 100% of evaluated farmers follow the regulations.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Section 7 of the existing Health of Animals Act states that if there is an area in which a disease or a toxic substance is present, the minister can require that the farm clearly put up a notice that biosecurity measures are in effect. There is also a provision that says that no person shall knowingly enter that building if that sign is in effect. Do any of your farmers have experience with that happening, and have those signs mandated under that existing section of the act been successful at keeping anyone off the farm? I'll open it up to anyone who might want to answer.

Mr. David Wiens: I could maybe answer at least part of the question.

I know we had a situation where animals inadvertently got into a substance that obviously was not intended for animals and would impact the quality of the milk. Those farms were then quarantined so that nothing went on or off the farm. There was ongoing testing done until the substance cleared up and the milk was safe, and things were opened up again.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wiens and Mr. MacGregor.

We'll go to our second round now.

Go ahead, Mr. Steinley, for five minutes.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the poultry producers and the Dairy Farmers of Canada for being here.

First I want to go on record that the Conservative Party believes it is not the farmer's job to make sure that people don't come on their property. They're doing a great job with the signage and ensuring that people know where property lines are. Sometimes activists don't listen to signs. I don't think it's the farmers' fault when people trespass on their property. I just want to make sure that people realize the Conservatives stand with those farmers.

I'm going to be very clear. I think some of my colleagues have danced around this, asking the same question and hoping they get a different answer.

I'll ask the dairy farmers first and then the poultry farmers: Do you believe that this bill will help alleviate some of the fears and stresses that are put on farmers because of these activist activities?

• (1710)

Mr. David Wiens: I think it will go a long way towards addressing some of those concerns. Right now, like I said earlier, we're extremely vulnerable. We feel like we have very, very little control about who comes onto the property and what they do.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Go ahead, Mr. Leblanc.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: The members of Éleveurs de volailles du Québec share that view. They, too, have had people break onto their farms, despite signs indicating that access was restricted. I

don't think stop signs at the entrance of a farm necessarily prevent anyone from trespassing.

Mr. Pierre Lampron: I want to make clear that Bill C-205 is a very important step to give farmers long-term peace of mind. As was mentioned, this is long awaited. To feed people, we need healthy animals, and this bill helps us keep animals healthy.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: We very much appreciate the work you all do.

On the second question, one comment was that if this isn't a national framework, some provinces that don't have the same laws in place might be targeted by activists. I would like you to build on that comment. I think it's very salient right now, to the point that the federal government should show leadership on this file and have a national bill put in place.

I just want to hear comments. If this isn't done nationally, will some provinces be targeted that don't have the same laws?

Mr. David Wiens: I would expect that would happen. We become easy targets. If this is going to be a hodgepodge right across the country, organizations can easily look at what we have and then they'll approach....

Again, farmers can do nothing about it. To have a consistent framework across the country is absolutely going to bring a greater sense of security to farmers to enable them to do what they do best.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Leblanc.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: I completely agree.

I think you just heard the answer: the legislation has to apply right across the country. It will provide a national framework, especially since our animal health and welfare laws are national laws enforced by our national office. For that reason, Canadian legislation is preferable.

That does not prevent a province from introducing complementary legislation afterwards, but Canada will have at least assumed its leadership role.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Thank you very much.

Finally, I have one quick comment to make. A previous witness said there are many third party animal welfare auditors, like the SP-CA and others, specifically industry auditors, that come on farms safely and check on animal welfare.

There is no hidden, behind the scenes production going on, on dairy farms or producer farms. There are already many audits being done by third parties to ensure animal safety.

Could you guys confirm that?

We heard it from a witness just before you guys came on. I want to make sure it is on the record that there are already third party auditors ensuring animal safety on farms across the country.

Mr. David Wiens: There are, absolutely. Through proAction, validation happens on an ongoing basis by independent auditors. The process has also been approved by the CFIA, so it's credible; it's real, and it's on a regular basis. If you can't certify through that, you won't be farming for very long.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wiens.

We'll now go to Monsieur Drouin, for five minutes.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses, whom we know well. I would also like to recognize my fellow member Mr. Barlow, the bill's sponsor. I agree with him. I think the majority of the members on this committee agree with the purpose of the bill.

Mr. Lampron, if I wanted to visit your farm, I would have to put on special overalls, wash my hands and so forth. Those are things I do when I visit farms in my riding.

Why are those measures necessary when strangers come onto a farm?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: It's a biosecurity protocol, to help keep contaminants off the farm. A farmer does not know where you've been before visiting the farm or what you might be bringing onto the farm unintentionally. Protocols are put in place for health reasons.

Mr. Francis Drouin: All right.

Were those protocols put in place by the Dairy Farmers of Canada, or did they emerge from a partnership with governments?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: I'm going to let Mr. Weins answer. I don't dare talk about the proAction program when Mr. Weins is around.

The protocols were developed by farmers in conjunction with governments and other stakeholders, mainly veterinarians. We have a lot of veterinarians on our committees. The purpose of the protocols is to reduce the risk.

Farmers know a lot about that, but professionals help us prevent disease.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay.

Mr. Leblanc, I have visited poultry farmers on several occasions. It's virtually the same protocols for all businesses, whether they're in Quebec, Ontario, or anywhere in Canada. The barrier is in place and I can't go any further. Even if I open the door, announce my presence and the farmer lets me in, the farmer requires me to wear the same equipment.

Are these protocols developed by the poultry farmers of Canada?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Yes.

At the national level, we have recommendations. In Quebec, we work with an industry committee that includes veterinarians. We make sure to implement the suggested biosecurity measures. We do

everything in our power to ensure the biosecurity of farms. Our rules are rigorous.

In the past, we've seen cases of trespassing where people simply entered or forced their way in. Believe me, they didn't take the time to put on boots or overclothes before entering. A conscientious visitor who wants to visit the farm will follow the protocols. If not, the protocols aren't followed.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Breaking and entering is illegal in Canada. Our discussion on Bill C-205 concerns how to address this issue and how to create tools to prevent this type of activity. That's important.

Have there been any discussions? Have you been contacted by animal welfare organizations, such as the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or SPCA, in Quebec, for example?

Is this type of contact being made? Is it more that they aren't talking to you, they don't want anything to do with you, they're against you, and to hell with it, they'll do their campaigns on social media? At some point, and it's unfortunate, a farmer will fall victim to this situation, whether or not their family is there. That's how things will go.

Has there been any contact?

Mr. Pierre Lampron: I spoke earlier about the code of practice being developed. I was involved in the implementation of the legislative framework in 2009 with the SPCA. There were people on both sides, but we were making concessions and we're still in contact.

I don't want to call on Mr. Wiens' again, but he's part of proAction. We're in contact with these people. The extremes aren't good and we do everything that we can. Our animals are our livelihood and we take care of them.

Mr. Francis Drouin: You have no desire to beat your animals or abandon them, since this will affect production.

Mr. Pierre Lampron: That's right. It's important to understand this.

That's why the legislation matters, as we said earlier. At some point, these people must be reasoned with. They have no right to do this. The legislation is in place to protect animals.

• (1720)

Mr. Francis Drouin: I think that my time is up.

Mr. Lampron, it was a pleasure to see you. I hope that you have a great summer.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

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

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Leblanc.

I asked the dairy farmers earlier what they want to tell people who say that there will no longer be whistleblowers or people who report suspected abuse on a particular farm.

Can you tell us about your control structures? To whom could these people go without having to assault people by trespassing?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: I don't understand your question. Do you want to know whom people could contact regarding our farmers?

Mr. Yves Perron: Yes. I'll repeat what I said in the last round of questions.

People tell us that farmers are generally good people who take care of their animals, but that, if they have a concern about a specific case, they can no longer act because of the bill.

What would you tell them?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Okay.

The Quebec department of agriculture, fisheries and food, or MAPAQ, is currently providing support in this area. We received some complaints that birds in backyard farms were sick and untreated. We have the support of MAPAQ, which can send in a team of specialists to ensure that animal welfare is respected.

We've even taken action in the past against farmers whose practices, in our opinion, didn't respect animal welfare. We had to send in the MAPAQ team to conduct checks.

Mr. Yves Perron: An inspection is then done fairly quickly and action is taken. Is that right?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: Absolutely.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay.

Mr. Lampron, I assume that you'll tell me the same thing.

Mr. Pierre Lampron: Thank you for your question.

I would add that we mustn't forget that veterinarians regularly visit dairy farms to take care of the animals or as a preventive measure, and that they must report cases of abuse. Many organizations talk about cruelty. Yet we really don't benefit from abusing our animals.

The few cases that do occur are often related to mental health issues. It's sad to say, but it's true.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Leblanc, if I were to give you my last 15 or 20 seconds, what would you say to better inform the committee members on the significance of this bill?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Leblanc: In our view, the legislation must be simple. Breaking and entering is simple and straightforward. You don't need to start wondering whether the person broke in. The legislation must be simple. A procedure must be established to ensure that an unwanted visitor can be quickly removed from the premises.

Fines are also needed to deter trespassing on farms. If the offence is only breaking and entering and no theft or mischief is involved, the penalty may not be substantial enough. The bill must have a deterrent effect.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leblanc and Mr. Perron.

[English]

We'll now go to Mr. MacGregor, for two and a half minutes.

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

Throughout the testimony on Bill C-205, the word "trespass" has come up repeatedly. Under our Constitution, if you look at the exclusive powers of provincial legislatures, subsection 92(13) states that property and civil rights are under the domain of our provincial legislatures.

Under Canadian law, animals are considered property. That's a widely accepted legal interpretation, no matter which province you're in. Provinces will be very quick to speak up any time they feel the federal government is encroaching on their jurisdiction. I have colleagues in the House of Commons who will speak up if there is even the slightest chance that the federal government is intruding on something that is clearly under provincial jurisdiction.

If we're continually using the word "trespass", my question to both groups is, how do we square that constitutional circle, if we're dealing with a crime against property, which is so clearly marked under provincial jurisdiction? Do you have any thoughts on how we square that circle?

The provinces may speak up and say, "No. You are intruding on something that is under our domain to legislate." Do you have any thoughts on how they might push back against that?

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Érik Tremblay: If I may, Mr. Chair, I'll answer that very good question.

I think that we must see this as two complementary issues. There's animal health, which is being addressed today, and breaking and entering, which can be addressed at the provincial level. In my view, the issues go hand in hand. That's why the discussions before the committee have been connected and linked together. Complementary measures must be taken at both the provincial and federal levels.

In our opinion, the bill before us today must ensure that additional protection, which doesn't exist now, is provided. This protection must be provided in a consistent manner across Canada. At this time, the protection is incomplete. We also support the idea of a deterrent. This will help to ensure additional protection, but it won't necessarily right all wrongs. The provinces may work together to address the issue of breaking and entering. These issues are indeed complementary.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you. I think that's my time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

That pretty much wraps up our second panel.

[Translation]

I want to thank Mr. Lampron, Mr. Wiens and Mr. Tremblay from Dairy Farmers of Canada.

Thank you again for sharing your knowledge with the committee.

I also want to thank Mr. Leblanc, who represented Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec.

Thank you for joining us today.

This concludes our meeting today. I want to wish all my colleagues a good weekend. We'll meet again next Thursday for the clause-by-clause consideration.

The meeting is adjourned.

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