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# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, December 8, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** Mr. Valeriote, could I ask your indulgence in dealing with one quick motion on a budget item for the GMO?

Is everybody in agreement? We have a copy here. I believe everybody has it. It's \$15,350 to deal with witnesses and what have you for the GMO report. Unless there's discussion, I would entertain a motion to approve this.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** I so move.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion? All in favour?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Mr. Valeriote.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** I have had conversations with most members of the committee, and I think they are in agreement with the motion. You'll all recall on October 22 the attendance of a number of farmers from out west, together with members from Canadian National, who appeared before the board to answer questions about the notice given by Canadian National in anticipation of, one, closing 53 designated producer car loading sites in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and two, removing the shunt lines providing services to those sites.

I recall some of the answers that were given in response to our questions. I've rarely seen an occasion when the opinion of this committee coalesced around a single issue—closing these shunt lines and the producer car loading sites. CN showed a reprehensible contempt for public responsibility when they said their only job was to move cars. We had to remind them that their job is to provide services to the farmers of western Canada.

I think they likened their work out there to having a doughnut shop. If they weren't selling doughnuts, they'd have to close it down. We heard from the farmers that those loading sites were crucial to their work. They said they needed more time, and they made suggestions of various amounts of time that would be more appropriate.

They've been attempting to meet with CN. We know that the cost of keeping these lines open is minimal. Costs would be absorbed elsewhere in the system and would result in no loss of revenue.

We don't want to see reliance on local roads. At a time when all of us recognize the need to use the railway as opposed to the roadways, I think it's advisable that our government immediately take such

steps as may be required—in the way of inquiries, or amendments to legislation or regulations—to prevent the delisting and subsequent closure of these lines. I go on to say that this should be done “for such period of time that the Government of Canada in its opinion and in consultation with the stakeholders determines is advisable and in the best interests of all concerned.”

I'm not wanting to tie their hands. I'm wanting them to investigate and use their discretion in looking at this, provided that it's in consultation with all the stakeholders. I would hope that everyone would see the merit of this motion and support it.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Hoback. But a letter came to me from CN right after the motion. It was sent around to all of your offices. Basically, CN was trying to defend itself by saying it had told us what it was going to do and that it hadn't advertised.

I'm not defending what they're saying. But check with your staff; I know all of you got that letter.

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** I have a question related to this motion. During the committee meeting, we had CN here and they said they were going to provide further documentation on the cost of sidings and the maintenance schedules. Have we heard or seen any of that information yet?

**The Chair:** I haven't personally, and Isabelle says we haven't received anything.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Maybe we should discuss it later, but I just would like to see that followed up.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Maybe we could do that, then, Isabelle.

Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Yes. I think it's a very important motion.

Just to also put it on the record, Mr. Chair, I do think they showed absolute contempt for this committee. I think CN has consistently shown contempt for Parliament.

The fact of the matter is that on these designated producer car loading sites that we had them here on, it was within two weeks, wasn't it, Randy? We had the meeting here. How long a time period was it between that and when they advertised more in the *Western Producer*? You brought it forward. Was it two weeks or three?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Actually, I looked at that afterwards, Wayne. They did make statements in the meeting saying they missed advertising some of those sites.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay. So they were the same ones—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** That's right.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** They were the first of the 53.

**The Chair:** You can see it in my letter, Randy, that I was referring to...

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay. In any event, they moved ahead just as if it doesn't matter, Mr. Chair. I think that's a real problem.

I will quibble a little bit with Frank's motion, although he's a colleague. I actually think we should have put a timeframe to this, but we'll see what happens. I maintain, and not just since this government came to power, that for the Department of Transport, we could rename it the Department of Railways, because they consistently support the railways over the public interest.

I'd also mention that we didn't even get forthright answers from CN officials when they were here. I recall that I asked them about their return on capital, which was 20% prior to the Crow benefit cap coming into place. They left the impression that they didn't know anything about it. As for the lady who was here from Transport Canada, she admitted that it was true that they were assured a 20% return on capital and that it is now in the formula, although it's not necessarily the same 20% because it would change over time. But they're assured of a return on capital.

So the reality of the world is that even on these sidings they're trying to close down, they are assured of a return on capital. Wouldn't we love that as farmers?

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Are you saying 20% a year?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** For a return on capital, yes.

**The Chair:** So five years...

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Absolutely. That's what was in the original formula at the time it was converted into the revenue cap.

So that's where it's at, and I do think we have to find a way that the public interest... I would hope the government looks at it that way: that they cannot make these moves, that they're denied from closing lines, shutting down branch lines, etc., until the public interest is considered in a concrete way.

I'm fully supportive of the motion.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there further discussion?

All in favour of the motion?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The motion is carried unanimously.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Chair, since we are considering motions, I have one that has been pending for some time now with respect to SRMs. I have new

information to share in order to convince the committee members to vote in favour of my motion. It calls on the government to immediately implement a program to help the cattle industry cover the cost of \$31.70 per head, which represents the competitive gap between the U.S. and Canada and which is the result of Canadian standards on specified risk material.

Last week, I was at the 85<sup>th</sup> convention of the Union des producteurs agricoles in Quebec City. During his speech, Quebec's agriculture minister talked about how the federal government had not fulfilled its duties with respect to SRMs and said that it should do so.

I have all the more reason to tell you about it since no federal representatives were at the meeting. I was there, as were some of my colleagues. Mr. Ritz, we know, could not attend because he was away with the Prime Minister. Mr. Blackburn, however, was here in Ottawa. He could have gone to Quebec City to speak to the producers directly. He did not. The fact that he did not go to Quebec City to speak to the producers directly did not go over well. I think he offered to send a recorded DVD message. Traditionally, the producers want face-to-face interaction. He could have appeared by video conference or in person. That would have been the best.

Quebec's agriculture minister answered the producers' questions and talked about the SRM issue.

Furthermore, I was asked two questions by the government. At the convention, I had the opportunity to talk with producers and people in the industry about providing assistance with respect to cattle older than 30 months. My motion seeks exactly the same thing as the producers. If we do not do anything, if we do not help producers close the gap between the Americans and us, a gap caused by Canadian SRM standards, the industry of cattle more than 30 months old will more or less completely disappear in the near future. I, too, am concerned by the fact that the Conservative government will not be giving producers money directly. When I discussed it with the president of the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec, he said he was aware of the problem. He was also aware that slaughterhouses are losing money. Money needs to be invested in slaughterhouses.

In Quebec, the Levinoff-Colbex slaughter facility is owned by the producers. Even if the money does not go directly into their pockets, they know they will get some assistance down the line. If nothing is done about this issue, there is no doubt that the producers, themselves, will pay the price. And that is happening right now, for that matter. As for the two questions from the Conservative committee members, I want to say that the producers completely agree with the contents of my motion. So I urge the committee members to support it.

• (1545)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the committee that Mr. Bellavance's motion has been tabled, which means that it is on the side. It is not in play right now. It was tabled one or two meetings ago and is basically out of play, unless the opposition votes to bring it back into play. I am surprised that Mr. Bellavance is trying to bring it back into play, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

On the Conservative end, I can say that we are disappointed because we would like to carry on our work with the report. We have been studying the issue of the competitiveness of the agricultural industry for a year now. We have heard from many witnesses, and we now have a report. We are trying to finalize that report.

I have to point out that while reviewing our report, opposition members moved not one, not two, not three, but five motions. In our view, the opposition members are slowing down the process, because each motion has to be debated, and that slows down our work. I would remind you that the agricultural industry is expecting our report. Initially, we wanted to have it finalized by Christmas, which is nearly impossible. We have a meeting today and another Thursday, and we are still discussing motions.

The opposition's answer is always to ask for an immediate vote on the motion and to then carry on with the report. They said that two meetings ago, and right afterwards, they moved other motions. So there are constant motions.

[*English*]

There's no end to this, and it is slowing down the work of the committee. None of these motions has to do with the competitiveness report, Chair, and I think this is the concern.

We've had witnesses come in front of the committee. If this is in the report, then let us discuss this in the report. If Mr. Bellavance is objecting and saying this is in the report, then leave it in the report and let's review the report, Chair. Until the point that we get there... When the committee tables its report in the House of Commons, it will carry more impact than tabling a motion that parallels what's in the report. We should be putting aside these motions so that we can complete our work on the report.

I think this is important.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, during the last meeting, I spoke at length with my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the NDP. Unfortunately, Mr. Bellavance was not here, and I did not get the opportunity to speak to Ms. Bonsant.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance, on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** A point of order.

I just want the honourable member to be very careful when he says I was not here. It is not because I do not hold this committee in high regard, it was because I was with the UPA.

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** I was certainly there, but he never came to see me.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Exactly. That is not what I said. It was that I just did not get a chance to talk to Mr. Bellavance or Ms. Bonsant. However, I did speak to my Liberal and NDP colleagues and I think we all agree that we have to move forward quickly with this report. It is our job. We have to finish the report.

[*English*]

But after all of that, Chair, we're back to motions.

I want to underline that these are motions that are being tabled by the opposition. In fact, we have a motion that has been "tabled", moved to the side, and is no longer being considered by committee, and Mr. Bellavance is trying to insert it back in there. I have to ask, to what end?

We need to get back to the work—

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, on a point of order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I'd ask the clerk for an interpretation, because we were debating. André took his motion on this issue off the table about two or three meetings ago, when we had GMO witnesses here. We were debating the issue. In fact, several of us made pretty extensive remarks on this particular motion. There was a concern over the timing of witnesses, and I believe Alex made a motion that we go to witnesses.

So we need an interpretation from the clerk. If we need a motion to take this off the table, then we'll take it off the table—

**The Chair:** I can give you that interpretation. You do need a motion to bring it out, Wayne.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I would so move.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** What I'm saying, Chair, is that I'm disappointed that the opposition members are delaying our progress on the report. I think the agricultural sector is awaiting our report. I think we have a duty to table the report in the House of Commons as soon as possible.

And before I give up the floor, Chair, I would like to put forward a motion that will help us in that regard. My motion is that the committee call forward no more witnesses and debate no more motions until the review of our competitiveness report is complete.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance, on a point of order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I think I've moved—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** You can't move a motion while you're on a point of order, Wayne.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** While my motion is being debated, Mr. Lemieux is trying to make another one. We have to discuss my motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're not debating your motion, André. You indicated that you wanted to talk about it. You have to introduce a motion and we'll vote on it, but Mr. Lemieux has the floor.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** My motion is on the table. That is what we have been discussing for the last five minutes.

[English]

**The Chair:** No, it wasn't, André. You can't just pull it back on. That's what I'm trying to say. Mr. Easter just asked for clarification on that, and I already had that clarification from the clerk.

When Mr. Lemieux is finished and we deal with whatever business he is to speak about—he just raised a motion—then, when it's your turn—

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** It is my turn. We are discussing my motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** I guess you don't understand or I'm not explaining myself right. In order for your motion to be debated, we have to have a motion to bring it back on the floor, unless there's unanimous consent. I will get to you at that point.

Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Bellavance, on a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I need clarification. This is not working. You are telling me that I need unanimous consent to introduce my motion again. Actually, my motion was deferred, I have already introduced it. Frank introduced his motion, no one asked for unanimous consent to discuss it. I introduced mine, so let us discuss it. I do not see how Mr. Lemieux can introduce another motion when we are discussing SRMs and try to superimpose his on mine. I must also say that he is the one wasting the committee's time with his endless motions and points of order. I want a vote on my motion. It is there; I introduced it.

[English]

**The Chair:** I never heard. I took Mr. Valeriote's motion with the discussion that there was no dissension to that. Unless there is unanimous consent to bring any motion forward, André—yes, that's the way it is—we have to have a motion on it. I took it that everybody agreed to deal with Mr. Valeriote's motion, so we've dealt with it. It's out of the way. Correct?

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I was quite happy to discuss Mr. Valeriote's motion, but there is nothing to stop me from bringing mine back, as any committee member can do at any time. It does not take unanimous consent to discuss a motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** You don't need unanimous consent. You need a majority decision on a motion. When Mr. Lemieux has finished, if you want to entertain a motion whenever it's your turn to have the floor, André, we'll deal with that.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** That is what I have been asking for a while.

[English]

**The Chair:** No, you did not make a motion. You indicated that you wanted to.

Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** As a comment on the point of order, when Mr. Bellavance put forward his motion one or two meetings ago, there was actually a vote taken to table the motion. There was a vote. The majority of the people on the committee voted in favour of tabling the motion. When a motion is tabled, Chair, as you know, it's out of discussion; it's on the side; it's no longer under regular debate. It can come back in front of the committee, but it needs a motion to do so. You don't need unanimous consent to bring it back in front of the committee; you need a motion, and the majority of MPs around the table have to vote in favour of your motion to reactivate your original motion.

Chair, through you to André, he did not put forward a motion when he had the floor. He just simply spoke about his own motion, but that's a discussion item. There was no motion, no vote to bring back his motion. So my comments are in order.

• (1555)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Okay, that is it. No one, not you, not Pierre Lemieux is going to put words in my mouth. When I make a motion, I make it, and I ask permission to discuss it. Good grief! You are skewing the facts; you are saying that I show up, just like that, that I just want to have fun by talking about my motion for five or six minutes for no reason. What I want is for my motion to be discussed and voted on. Afterwards, we can—

[English]

**The Chair:** André, I never said anything of the kind.

Look, I checked with the clerk. It's on page 1087. I'll let her come and show it to you, if you wish. I'm not making it up.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, there seems to be some general disagreement here. Maybe we could have time to collect the blues on this, and then you could all get your arguments out of the way in that manner.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Is it a point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, it is.

I think Pierre is right. There was a motion at committee to retable, so all André has to do is move a motion to lift it off the table again and then we can discuss it and we're certain—

**The Chair:** That's what I tried to say.

**Mr. Wayne Easter:** So if André could move a motion, that would be great.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Lemieux, I have Mr. Atamanenko, and then I have Mr. Easter. Then I have Mr. Bellavance.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, I was just at the point where I was commenting that I think we need to move ahead with the report, and I would like to table a motion. I'm going to table a motion now that states that the committee call forward no more witnesses and debate no more motions until the review of our competitiveness report is complete. And the reason I am making that motion, Chair, is because we need to focus on our report.

There seems to be a general agreement—I'll call it a low-level agreement—among all my colleagues around the table to focus on the report and to get it done. But it's going to take a motion like this to actually, I'll say, constrain the committee to focus its efforts and focus its resources on finalizing the report.

If we don't have a motion like this that somewhat guides the committee in the direction of the report, Chair, what's going to happen is that another MP—probably on the opposition side—will have yet another motion to bring in front of committee while we are studying the report. I think this is my main point, Chair. As I mentioned at the beginning, as of today there were five motions from the opposition in front of committee, all of which had been put in front of committee since we started studying the report, focusing on the report. So to me, all of this debate is actually slowing down the work that we need to do on the report so that we can bring it through to a speedy resolution.

That's my motion, Chair. I had lengthy discussions—I'm talking in the neighbourhood of 45 minutes to an hour—during the last meeting with my colleagues, and I'm appealing to them to support this motion so that we can actually get on with the report, which is what I heard my colleagues clearly wanting to do when I was discussing this issue with them last week, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. Discussion on Mr. Lemieux's motion?

I have Mr. Atamanenko next on the list, and then Mr. Easter.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** I speak against the motion. We have a democratic process in place in our committee, and you and I talked about this briefly, Pierre, and I didn't talk to anybody else after I talked to you. My suggestion was that we move very quickly through all the motions we have. We all have a position on them. We know we can get stuff on the record. We basically know where all of us stand. We should just get through these motions; it shouldn't take a long time. Then we can get back down to business and get this report done. There is no reason why we can't even start it today and finish it this week.

We do have a democratic process. We have a right to at least vote on the motions that we have before committee, and let's get on with it. I think we can get both things done if we just keep the rhetoric to a minimum, get down and vote, and we can get on with it.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

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

I will be speaking against this motion because of what it does. It's really interesting how the parliamentary secretary some days wants to debate the motions and some days doesn't. They really wanted to debate the motion that I believe I had on prison farms, and that held up the committee's work because the majority that day wished to defeat it. And that's fine, it's defeated. It's not a problem with me. As

I said to my colleagues, don't worry about it; they can vote against it and that is fine. So that motion is lost.

But he tries to leave the impression that it's the opposition members who take up the committee's time. It's not the case at all. If anybody ever played games in this committee, it's more often the government than it is the opposition.

Yes, we'd like to see your report on competitiveness dealt with. There is no question about that. But to support a motion that hamstrings this committee from doing its work in other areas... If we were to support that motion, this report, for whatever reason, might not get done for months.

The motion André has here is I think of an urgent basis. It's something the industry came forward with on an urgent basis and asked us to do. It should be something the government could quite simply support. I just referred to what I said previously on the motion, Mr. Chair, and that is that two years ago in December—under Chair James Bezan—we presented a report in the House on this very issue, and the government still has not dealt with this very issue. So I think we have a responsibility as a committee to—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I don't want to take up too much of my honourable colleague's time, but he should stick to the facts.

We did present a report on the red meat sector, which you'd be very aware of as you were on the committee at the time. The minister then took action within a month's time, and he was congratulated by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. I would be more than happy to go down the list of farm organizations that endorsed the actions the minister took and the speed with which he took those actions.

I don't know if Mr. Easter was on holiday during that time, but it certainly was an important time for the red meat sector in my province. So I think he should stick to the facts.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** If the member wants to get into quotes, I can start quoting from farmers, not just the farm leadership. I know the—

**The Chair:** We are debating Mr. Lemieux's motion, but you do have the floor.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's fine. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chair, that it was two years ago—it continues to go to the record of failures—and this issue of SRMs has not been dealt with. The industry is uncompetitive as a result.

André's motion makes a lot of sense, and therefore....

I will say this, though, Mr. Chair. I have a motion on the table as well—

**The Chair:** You do.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —that I think deals with—

**The Chair:** Let's deal with one motion at a time, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I know. I just want to make this point, Mr. Chair.

I'm not going to put forward that motion today or on Thursday, so we will have time to get through the report. I'll hold it back. It is a motion highly condemning the Minister of Agriculture and his lack of effort in supporting farmers. But we'll not deal with it before Christmas.

I oppose the motion by the parliamentary secretary. Let's get it out of the way so we can do something specific and concrete for the livestock industry by supporting André's motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance, we have Mr. Lemieux's motion on the table. Do you want to speak to it?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I really thought I had made a motion to discuss my motion, and I will do so in a few moments. But I am opposed to Mr. Lemieux's motion. It is quite ironic to hear someone make a motion for there to be no more motions; any time we are dealing with opposition motions, people from the Conservative Party do everything they can to delay them. They say that they are no good, that they are out of order, they speak for inordinate lengths of time in order to stop them coming to a vote.

Basically, the Conservatives see democracy as a problem. In this committee, up to now, each time motions have been presented, we have not agreed, but we have moved to a vote. We did that with Mr. Lemieux's motion on the same issue, the SRM. I had my say. In my opinion, the motion was too weak, but I still agreed with what it was proposing. We had a vote, and there was no undue discussion about it. We have just passed one that Mr. Valeriote introduced. Everyone seemed quite happy to begin this meeting of the committee with that motion; we all agreed.

But the moment the Conservatives do not agree, like here, for example, we hear them say that the opposition is creating problems and that the opposition is trying to hold up our good old report on competitiveness. I repeat, Mr. Chair, last week, I was at the UPA congress. Not a soul talked to me about the report on competitiveness. But a lot of people talked to me about SRM, and about AgriFlexibility and about the agreement with the European Union, given that supply management is still on the table. I had a lot of discussions about matters like that.

We have to think about the present and respond to the requests from our producers when they are faced with an emergency, as they are with SRMs. That is all I am trying to do by introducing my motion. I am not trying to play games. The motion is the direct result of a request from Quebec producers. I feel sure that Canadian producers are making the same request because we heard testimony on this very subject that said the same thing: they are looking for a program to compensate for the competitiveness gap between Canada and the United States caused by our SRM standards.

So I do not see what is so terrible about the opposition that makes people on the government side incapable of holding a vote and moving on. We have to finish by discussing the report. So I am opposed to Mr. Lemieux's motion.

● (1605)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Storseth.

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

I'll say just a couple of points to Mr. Bellavance, who I have great respect for. You know, I think if he looks back to the blues of November 19, I believe, he'll see how he and the other members of the opposition participated in a filibuster of their own motions for two hours before they then voted for them. So let's not pretend the games are being played on one side or the other. We genuinely disagree with some motions. You genuinely disagree with some motions.

But the one thing I do take umbrage at is this constant talk about democracy. The only time you guys ever talk about democracy and abiding democracy is when you've got six members sitting on your side, and the only time you complained about our forcing the majority on you is when we have six on this side. So the games are being played all over the place, Mr. Bellavance.

At the end of the day, I actually disagree with the motion Mr. Lemieux has put forward. I disagree with it on a couple of fronts. One, I believe it's against the member's privilege to not allow him to bring motions forward in committee. I believe it is a privilege we all have extended to us through the House of Commons that we should be allowed to bring motions forward. I believe members should be responsible with their motions and not use them in a dilatory manner, which sometimes I believe happens—mostly from the other side, but nonetheless.

Two, I believe the committee has already genuinely set the direction in which it wants to move. The committee has said we want to move in the direction of the report. We want to get the report out of the way. We've said that for a year now. I don't know what it is about the report that the opposition is filibustering. They're adding amendments; they're basically redrafting the report. They're delaying; there are five or six opposition motions in the queue to delay. Now today we're trying to work on the report, and they then go and hijack the agenda of the meeting, move it to committee business by a vote, which I did not agree with, and move towards getting all these motions out of the way. And they know it's going to take an entire meeting, if not two meetings, before we can get back to the report.

So I don't know what it is about competition in the agriculture sector that the opposition is opposed to reviewing, but it is clear that the committee has already set the agenda for where we want to go. That's why I disagree with Mr. Lemieux's motion, because it has already been stated. We have stated it not only once but twice. I mean, we've already passed a motion very similar to this. And I will get into my disagreements with André's motion if and when André brings his motion up. But at the end of the day, committee members are using their own individual freedoms as members of Parliament to hijack the agenda of the committee, the agenda that has already been put forward by the entire committee stating the direction we want to go. I could do what Wayne loves and quote out of the new O'Brien and Bosc as well as *Robert's Rules of Order* as to how this is out of order, but I'm not going to.



At the end of the day, I really do believe we have a job to do, and that is to move forward on this report as expeditiously as possible and to get something done on the report. I wish we saw some good faith on the other side, either by dropping some of their amendments they're continuing to bring forward, or, if we agreed to deal with one motion, by allowing us to move on—

•(1610)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I believe I just said I was willing to set mine aside until after.

**The Chair:** Point taken.

Mr. Storseth.

**An hon. member:** It wasn't really a point of order, but anyway.

**The Chair:** I didn't say it was.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Chairman, I just do believe we need to make sure we get this report done. Maybe what we need to be talking about doing is setting extra time aside before we leave for the Christmas break to get this report finalized.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** I want to take about a minute. I agree with Mr. Storseth. In terms of the timing, we have pushed to get all our witnesses in on the report, to get the witnesses to come in so that we could actually set a schedule. In fact, we set aside business to the end of January, which is fine, which was touched on in terms of beginning farmers, which would have the same impact in terms of the competition we're dealing with—waiting for a report from the minister on beginning farmers. We also did all those things to get our schedule in place so that we would have time to not be dealing with motions that keep coming forward, but to be dealing actually with this report we have in front of us.

Folks, we made a commitment almost a year ago to the agriculture community about going ahead with this report, and I will support whatever we can do to get to that process before we break in two days.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Eyking.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we have about three hours left before Christmas break. Here's the scoop: if we continue in this manner, we're not going to have anything done by Friday. We're going to be down as probably the most dysfunctional committee on the Hill—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Oh, no, we're not that.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** No? Are we not that bad yet?

We'll be leaving with not a lot of love in this room. I think Alex has a great idea. I know it's a little different from most, but let's get these motions done. Let's limit the debate to maybe two minutes for each party and get the motions done—

**An hon. member:** Is that democratic?

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I want to raise the point of order that I had to listen in the House of Commons for hours yesterday about how the NDP hated to see

debate limited. I really find it hypocritical to hear it introduced here today.

•(1615)

**The Chair:** Point taken.

Order, please. Go ahead, Mr. Eyking.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Chair, you know as a farmer that you need to get the harvest done. You see the clock ticking and you have to make tough decisions. I think we should get these motions going here and get them done. If not, by Friday...well, I don't know if there'll be much shaking of hands, but we'll just leave. We won't have the report done. The motions won't be done. I might as well bring in the rest of my Christmas cards and sign them for the next three hours and make some use of my time while I'm here.

We have an hour today and two hours on Friday. I think we have to change the direction of the wind here a bit and get it done. Mr. Chair, I think you should try.

At the last meeting I chaired, maybe I should have been a little easier on the opposition and let them debate their motion, but I pushed through two motions and they were voted on. The Conservatives won; that's the way it rolls. You can't always have it the way you want it.

That's my suggestion, Mr. Chair. Maybe we can limit some debate here and get these motions done.

**The Chair:** Mr. Eyking, any time I tried to limit debate in the past I got chastised for it. You can't suck and blow at the same time. I'm not suggesting you are, Mark, but you can't do it.

Unless we change our... On the way over to the House today, Wayne made the statement that we're not going to get the report done. If that's the attitude, then it'll never get done. That's like saying we're not going to get it done. With anything I ever tackled before, I went out with the attitude that, yes, I'm going to get it done.

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thanks, Chair.

I just want to highlight that the motion I put forward is meant to focus the committee on the work at hand, which is finalizing our report. As I mentioned, I think this is the underlying desire of all MPs around this table. It is not a partisan motion. It throws no rocks. It's simply a motion trying to focus this committee on the work at hand, which is finalizing the report. I want to make that clear, because in the debate we've had so far, it sounded somehow as if it was more than that, and it's not more than that.

The other thing is that I understand what Mr. Storseth is saying about MPs having the right to table motions at any time. They can continue to table motions. I am only suggesting that we defer their debate. I am not suggesting we overrule their debate or not allow their debate; I'm only suggesting that we delay the debate until we're done the report.

I think this is quite reasonable. We do this at committee and with witnesses all the time. Often we have motions sitting on the agenda, Chair, and we don't discuss them. Why? We have witnesses in front of us. We'll go through a whole meeting with two sets of witnesses, give them one hour each, and never quite get around to the motions. We are de facto agreeing to delay debate on those motions, and this will happen time and again.

In fact, one of my criticisms of the way we work is that we often don't leave enough time for the committee to do its work. The committee has to do work that is outside of listening to witnesses. I'm saying that in the normal course of the work of our committee, we willingly delay debate on motions. We do it all the time to listen to witnesses, to move ahead with our report, to collect information, to do all sorts of things; now, when I put forward a motion that simply puts into writing what we've already done throughout this last year, it's somehow an affront to the opposition. It just doesn't make any sense.

What does make sense is focusing ourselves on the report. If they have motions, let them bring them forward, but let's delay debate. In fact, that's exactly what my motion says: that we call forward no more witnesses. Let's not fill up our schedule with more witnesses at this point, because we're trying to focus on the work that we've done over the past year, and let's debate no more motions. It doesn't say not to table any more motions or not to give any more notices of motions; it just says not to debate any more motions until the review of our competitiveness report is completed. It's simply asking the committee to delay debate on motions until we've done this more important work of finishing our report.

I think it's quite reasonable, Chair, and I'm appealing to my colleagues to support it so that we can get on with the business at hand and finalize our report.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I would just make a suggestion to try to accomplish something here.

I would ask, Mr. Lemieux, whether you would agree to an amendment to your motion, that instead of having it until the report is complete, at least allow us to spend the rest of today—and hell, maybe we'll get lucky and finish the report today—but not to delay it past that.

It's just a suggestion, because I'm getting the feeling around the table that you're not going to get support for your motion. It's your decision.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, I'm not against it. It's just that I'm worried that we'll relive all this on Thursday.

**The Chair:** It's a possibility, but, again, it's the will of the committee.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Let me look at my colleagues. Will they support this motion if we at least today go back to the report without moving on to motions again? No, they're shaking their head, Chair.

So I thank you for the friendly amendment, but your amendment is not moving or swaying the opposition members at all.

• (1620)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Do you want me to add something about Mr. Lemieux's motion?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** No, I have said enough.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Oh, sorry. The clerk had your name down, André.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Yes, I want to speak after we have voted on Mr. Lemieux's motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there any further discussion? All in favour?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Chair, can we have a recorded vote?

**The Chair:** (Motion as amended negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** You had a point of order, Mr. Hoback?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Actually, I have a document I want to table, Chair. It's in both official languages, and I would ask my colleague to pass it out.

**The Chair:** He says it is in both official languages.

I have it. What is it in regard to? Oh, yes, I've seen this.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It's an article that Kevin Hursh put out. He's used data from Alberta agriculture that talks about the changes in the price of fertilizer over this last year. I think it would be timely and good for our report that we table this document as evidence, since we're doing a report on competitiveness.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to make a motion to move forward and actually deal now with the motion that Mr. Atamanenko has on the honey bees, recognizing the honey producers.

**The Chair:** I think we'd probably need the motion read back just to refresh our memories. I know I did have a copy of it here somewhere.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Isabelle Duford):** Which motion is it?

**The Chair:** He's moving a motion to pull Mr. Atamanenko's motion back onto the table.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** It's a question. Mr. Hoback wanted this tabled with the report? I didn't quite understand what—

**The Chair:** Yes, he was tabling that report, and then he just moved the motion in regard to the motion tabled by Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** The motion, Mr. Chair, if you don't mind me reading it, is as follows:

That the Committee recommend that the government follow in the footsteps of the Province of Saskatchewan and the over 40 Municipalities across Canada that have issued proclamations declaring May 29, 2010 as the Day of the Honey Bee by proclaiming May 29, 2010 as the National Day of the Honey Bee and that this be reported to the House.

**The Chair:** A point of order?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Can one member present another member's motion? Let us get things out in the open here; all I see is people using up all the time in order to stop me discussing my motion.

Cattle producers in Quebec and elsewhere will hear about all this.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You're talking to Mr. Hoback, right?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Yes, I am talking about what Mr. Hoback and the Conservatives are trying to do: nothing less than preventing my motion from passing. I hope they know that this will not make my Christmas any less merry, except for knowing that cattle producers want us to ask the government to help them. Mr. Hoback can talk about honey bees if he likes, I am fine with that, but my question is still about whether one member can present another member's motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** It takes unanimous consent.

**An hon. member:** I'm surprised, because Mr. Atamanenko is here.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I think we can agree on it.

**The Chair:** This is a different twist. This isn't a tabled motion, so we need unanimous consent to allow Mr. Hoback to table Mr. Atamanenko's motion.

• (1625)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Actually, Mr. Chair, I'm not tabling it; I'm just asking that—

**The Chair:** You are not tabling it, but you're moving it for debate.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm moving it for a vote, yes.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** We think we can agree on it quickly.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** That's exactly what I was going to say, Mr. Chair. This is something that I think would be easy to get through. It shouldn't take a lot of time. Let's get it done with.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** It's meant to pass your motion quickly, Alex.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I feel as if I've lost control over it.

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

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** People are making decisions for me.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Atamanenko, my intent was to just get this motion forward and dealt with. It's up to you, Alex.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** If we can vote on it right now, and we're going to vote on it, that's fine. I don't want my motion to interfere with more important pressing motions that we have to discuss. If you

want to call a vote and vote on it now, I would be very happy to leave it.

**The Chair:** It looks like Mr. Bellavance wants to speak to it, and then Mr. Lemieux.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I give my consent for an immediate vote on this motion. My hand is up because, after that, I want to speak.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I have you next, but I have Mr. Lemieux on this issue.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I want to speak next.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thanks, Chair.

Just to talk about what is trying to be done here, basically, as I mentioned, there were five motions in front of committee today. I tried to get us to focus on the report. That was voted down, so now we're going to be dealing with motions.

I think we all showed goodwill on Mr. Valeriote's motion. First of all, we allowed it to be dealt with at the beginning of the meeting, and we all voted for it. Now we have Mr. Atamanenko's motion. We can pull that forward. I think we can all vote in favour of that and dispose of that motion. That's what Mr. Hoback is doing. We all realize it's a motion we can all support, so why don't we just vote on it and get it off the table? Then we'll move on to the other motions.

That is the intent. It is a goodwill intent, a goodwill endeavour to vote on a motion and move it off the table so we can get back to the report.

**The Chair:** The year of the bee.

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

**The Chair:** I'm going to make a notice of motion that I'm going to be bringing a motion through for the year of the Charolais steer next meeting.

Who else is hapless up here? My God, I've heard just about everything now.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** I just have a question, if I can, of Mr. Lemieux. Through the chair, do you not consider the content of André's motion to be serious and a matter so serious—

**An hon. member:** What's the relevance?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** No, I'll answer the question. Go ahead and finish it.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** —to the farmers that it deserves our immediate attention? It surely is something that deserves our attention before Parliament rises, especially acknowledging—and I think we will all acknowledge—that we are not likely to get through the report to its final stage.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Okay, Chair, I am glad to answer that.

The answer is yes, SRM is an extremely important matter. That is why I brought forward a motion two meetings ago that we've all voted on and unanimously agreed to after we listened to our witnesses. Yes, we know we're going to get to Mr. Bellavance's motion very shortly. We know it's the next thing on the table, but the intent here is to get back to our report, and if we can dispose of motions as quickly as we disposed of yours, then why not? Why have it sitting there on the agenda for another two or three weeks? Let's just do it.

That is the intent, and that is a teamwork approach meant to just dispose of a motion quickly without entering into lengthy debate.

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Chair, I think it is appropriate that Alex gets a chance to at least read his own motion.

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

**An hon. member:** Yes, that was a little weird.

**The Chair:** Without unanimous consent—which of course I think we have.

By all means, Alex, if you want to read your motion, then I have no issue with that.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I will read my motion. I must say that I am going to have confused dreams tonight. I'll be dreaming of SRMs and honeybees. My motion is:

That the Committee recommend that the government follow in the footsteps of the Province of Saskatchewan and the over 40 Municipalities across Canada that have issued proclamations declaring May 29, 2010 as the Day of the Honey Bee by proclaiming May 29, 2010 as the National Day of the Honey Bee and that this be reported to the House.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** There's unanimous consent. Very good.

Mr. Bellavance, you have the floor.

• (1630)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you. This is what I thought I was doing from the start.

Mr. Chair, I want to make a motion to discuss my motion, the one we have discussed at this meeting and at several others, so I do not want to waste too much time. I assume that I have to read the motion asking for my motion to be brought forward.

[English]

**The Chair:** I guess you could, but to save some time I'll ask if there's unanimous consent to bring it forth. If I don't get unanimous consent, I'll need a motion to do it and we'll vote on the motion.

Do I have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance, do you have a motion?

**Mr. André Bellavance:** *Oui.*

**The Chair:** We'll have debate on the motion. I guess at this point you should probably read it, André.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** This is my motion:

That the Committee recommend to the government that it immediately implement an assistance program for the cattle industry to help it cover the \$31.70 per head, which represents the competitiveness gap between Canada and the United States caused by Canada's Specified Risk Material (SRM) standards; and that the Committee report to the House of Commons.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll have debate to bring it forward.

Yes.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm still confused. We need a motion that actually states we're bringing this motion forward.

**The Chair:** I think he made that, Randy.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** He read the motion that he's bringing forward.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Okay.

**The Chair:** He first indicated that he wanted to move a motion to bring it forth. Then I asked for unanimous consent. Then he read the motion so I would consider it.

We're resuming debate on it.

Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thanks, Chair.

I'm not in favour of putting this motion in front of committee again.

[Translation]

The committee has discussed Mr. Bellavance's motion. We already debated it. At the end of the debate, the committee decided to set the motion aside, to table the motion, as they say.

[English]

But it's putting it aside and out of debate.

[Translation]

It must also be said that Mr. Bellavance introduced his motion after I introduced mine on the same issue. My motion urged the government to find solutions, without specifying exactly what they should be. We have to encourage dialogue and have more meetings with organizations and with cattle producers.

I say that because, if I recall correctly, I gave a good example during the last debate. When we were discussing hogs, a solution was proposed whereby an amount of money would be paid to each hog producer.

After a lot of work, Mr. Chair, that turned out not to be the best solution. It was a proposal, but it was not a solution. The solution is a program with three different components, one for each segment of the hog industry.

[English]

I guess I'm saying that I don't know why this is coming in front of committee again. It's a very narrow motion. This is exactly what was proposed to the committee. Now we're being asked to run with it before the committee has had an opportunity to look into this further—at least at this time.

The committee has already unanimously voted in favour of a motion that would seek out the necessary information in order to propose solutions to the SRM difficulties that our beef producers are facing. This is a very important matter, in response to Mr. Valeriote's question earlier. That's why we had those witnesses come in front of committee. That's why we listened to them. That's why I put forward my motion. Absolutely, this is important.

I'm just not convinced that at this early stage in our work this is the solution. The difficulty here is that this motion is worded in such a way—if it comes back in front of the committee—that it's proposed as “the solution”.

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Mr. Storseth, and then Mr. Atamanenko.

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

Mr. Chair, I would actually submit that (a) I don't believe this motion should even be considered or should have been considered to be in order in the first place, because it's negating a motion that the committee unanimously passed.

Mr. Lemieux, I don't know if you still have your motion on hand, but we passed the motion basically saying that we need to work with industry to discover what the solutions are, and then we're going to bring a motion forward a week later that says, “Oh, wait a minute, we've thought about it and we didn't need to talk to the industry, because we have the solution.”

So (a) I don't think this is in order, and (b) we have a motion. Once again, we've taken the direction that our committee is moving in, and we've taken a position, and Mr. Bellavance decided he wanted to tweak it a little bit and come up with what he feels is the solution. Now they're saying, well, you don't listen to farmers. No. It wasn't farmers who sat before us as witnesses; it was industry. It was the packing industry that sat before us.

Then, last week—and Mr. Bellavance, I'm not going to mention who was here and who wasn't here—we had the Outstanding Young Farmers here. Everybody took their turn asking them if they thought this was the motion...or at least I took my opportunity to ask them if this was the motion they would recommend. Every one of them said no, it was not what they would recommend.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, just for clarity, I chaired the meeting, and if I recall, there was an outstanding young farmer from Alberta. I forget his name. He was a major beef producer and he said—and we can get the record—it would be very helpful to the industry. He also said it would translate down to helping the producers.

**An hon. member:** That's right.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** No, he didn't say that.

Mr. Chair, can I respond to that point of order? I understand that Mr. Eyking may have chaired the meeting, but (a) that individual wasn't a young farmer who was a beef producer. He was a grains and oilseeds and hog producer. And (b), that's also not the context of what he said. He said both in the meeting and outside the meeting, and I'd be more than happy to have him send the committee a letter if Mr. Eyking would like—

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Check the record.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I'd be more than happy to.

**The Chair:** Okay. We can check the record.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** At the end of the day, farmers do not agree with this. Farmers do not agree with giving \$10 million to Cargill, \$8 million to Excel, and a couple of million here and there to other packing industries. What they want is exactly what the Minister of Agriculture was doing last week: opening up markets. He was opening up markets for canola and beef and opening up pork for us, in China, in Korea, in Hong Kong—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Is this on the point of order, Mr. Chair, or is this on the motion or—

**The Chair:** He's debating the motion.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —is he just giving propaganda for Minister Ritz? We're supposed to be talking about—

**The Chair:** You don't have a point of order, Wayne.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We're supposed to be talking—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, that is out of order and is not parliamentary language. Facts are not propaganda. Mr. Easter often likes to mix the two.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Let me make a point of order, then, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Do you have a point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I am disgusted at the way that member has attacked farm organizations in his remarks. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association is a farm organization. They agreed with the industry. The Dairy Farmers of Canada are an organization. They agreed with the industry. Laurent Pellerin is from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and they agreed with the industry. For that member to suggest that these organizations don't represent farmers is wrong.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure the member was saying that—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** He did.

**The Chair:** —but he can speak to that.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I'm more than happy to. I have said in the committee meetings that I oftentimes wonder where the Canadian Cattlemen's Association is when it comes to the cow-calf producers. If the Liberal Party of Canada is not going to stand up for the cow-calf producers, I know there are more than enough people on this side of the aisle who will.

To go back to the motion, Mr. Chair, I understand that you have ruled it in order. I do think it is out of order because it does basically eliminate a motion that we unanimously passed as a committee. As I said, this motion is wrong-headed. It doesn't listen to what farmers want. It doesn't listen to what the cattle producers, the cow-calf producers, in my riding want. It doesn't relate to what farmers in general in the western prairies want.

I understand that Mr. Easter doesn't spend that much time in P.E.I. anymore, but we'll be spending more time there this summer, and we'll discover what the producers in P.E.I. want as well.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** May I speak?

**The Chair:** You don't have the floor. Is it a point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I'm going to have a point of order because I'm going to correct that absolute misinformation that I do not spend much time in P.E.I. That's misinformation. It may come out of the Prime Minister's Office—

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

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —but they're attacking me personally. It's wrong and it's an absolute lie.

**The Chair:** Well, you two take that up with each other.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It's an absolute lie.

**The Chair:** Mr. Atamanenko, and then Mr. Easter.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Well, first of all, I think the motion just recommends to the minister a specific sum. In my opinion, all it does is reinforce the good motion that we had a little while ago and that we all passed.

I can't quite understand why anybody here would be opposed. Why would we oppose \$31.70 going to help the industry, which will filter down to the producer? I mean, they can always refuse it.

I understand that when you're in government there often may be a conflict between individual members and the minister's office, but I just don't quite understand why there's even a debate on this. We put it forward and the government rejects it or not. Maybe it comes up with a different proposal or moves it forward. At least it's there and on the record, showing that we're reflecting the opinion of people out in the field. I think we could be voting on this motion and getting on with it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

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

I agree that this motion should be debated by the committee. The argument by the parliamentary secretary that there was a motion unanimously agreed to is all well and good. We did agree that the government should look at this matter and we as a committee should investigate it further.

I really think, though, in truth, that it was a motion to cover for the government's failure, really, to deal with this issue. As I said earlier, Chair, we passed a recommendation some two years ago, two years ago in December, for the government to deal with this SRM removal. They've failed to do so. Contrary to what some members on

the other side said, that they are listening to farmers, they're just proving their point today that they haven't done so.

I believe many people sat around this room the day the industry was here. It was unique to have the total industry come together and agree on a proposal. By the total industry, I also mean the producers. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Dairy Farmers of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the Canadian Meat Council were there, and the processing industry as well.

So for them to come together and agree, I think we have an obligation, which is just a simple matter. I really can't understand why the government now has, at about four meetings, including a filibuster at one, refused to deal with this motion that witnesses wanted put forward. André, to his credit, has put forward this motion, so I think we have an obligation to lift it off the table, deal with it, and make a recommendation to government on something specific. We're not saying that's all they need to do. They need to do much more. But this is one thing they could do at the next cabinet meeting and get that money out there and make our industry at least a little bit more competitive with the United States. It only makes sense.

What doesn't make sense are the tactics...government members, for whatever reason—I don't know—are refusing to meet the needs of the farm production sector.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you, Chair.

I don't think it's as cut and dried as the opposition is making it. In fact, Mr. Laurent Pellerin was in front of us and he said:

As a farmer, I don't think we are expecting return on this \$31.70, especially on the cow-calf and finished beef.

This is testimony that came from the committee, and I think there are a range of solutions.

I just want to read into the record what it was that we passed right after our witnesses came. Mr. Easter doesn't appreciate the fact that the motion I put forward was a direct result of having heard these witnesses, actually having listened to them.

For example, my motion said:

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, after hearing witness testimony concerning specified risk material, would like to encourage the government to work with industry to find solutions to existing irritants.

I'll have to bring up a point here. The last time the Liberal government moved money towards cattle producers, it was a fiasco, a complete fiasco. Even they had to conduct a study, or not even a study, because they didn't even know where the money went. They had to actually review all of their processes and procedures to figure out where the money went. What they realized was that the money went to the wrong place. The money did not arrive—

•(1645)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On a point of order, Chair, I don't know why these members want to put so much misinformation on the table. The fact of the matter is that this committee looked at that missing \$550 million—not this committee under your chairmanship but under a previous chair; I believe it was two chairs ago. Mr. Ritz, the current minister, was chair when we looked at where that money went. We came to the understanding that basically the packing industry was where that \$550 million went, one program out of eleven. It wasn't the last program, it was the first program, and there were some lessons learned. The packing industry, by reducing prices, managed to pocket much of that \$550 million. That's what we concluded. But when we asked for the packing industry to be brought before Parliament, who opposed it? It was Gerry Ritz, the current minister. He didn't allow Parliament to go after the packing industry the way we should have.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thanks, Mr. Easter. That wasn't really a point of order. But the point I wanted to make was that the money went to the wrong place, and Mr. Easter just admitted it. It's a wonderful program. But the money went to the wrong people, to the wrong portion of the beef sector. This motion may very well repeat the same error, and that's my concern with it.

The motion that I put forward encourages the government to work with industry to find solutions to existing irritants. Clearly, the SRM is an irritant. We know that. But we have no call to jump up and claim we have a solution that we're ready to report to the House. We've listened to only one set of witnesses. When the Liberals were the government, their money went to the wrong people. So I don't think they're on solid ground when it comes to talking about how best to serve the agricultural sector or the beef sector.

That's my concern with debating this motion again—we've already discussed it and tabled it as a committee. It came to a vote. The majority of MPs decided to table the motion, which means to put it aside. We're no longer going to discuss it, at least not right now. We have other things to do.

I mentioned one of them earlier in this meeting—we need to review our report. But the opposition is very bullheaded in this matter. Whatever we say or however we appeal to them, they're a unified block. They spoke earlier about democracy, yet they want to limit debate on the motions. That's what they were proposing; I think Mr. Eyking was proposing this. I think we should leave this motion off to the side and move ahead with our report.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have problems with bringing this motion forward, much as my colleagues do. I'll try to explain my position to my colleagues across the floor. Mr. Lemieux's motion basically suggested—and we agreed unanimously—that we look at options for dealing with SRMs. When we haven't done that, it's hard to come back next week and tell the minister what he has to do. We've heard one set of witnesses on SRMs, but we have not talked to a lot of other people in the industry. We talked about this and we passed Mr. Lemieux's motion, unanimously.

I want to point out some facts. There are some things going on right now that address this question. There is a \$50 million fund to help our slaughter facilities. I understand that Keystone and Levinoff

each got \$10 million. I assume that some of that money is going towards determining how to go about removing the SRM material on the production floor.

I'd like to see what happens there. We're also looking at regulatory solutions on SRMs. One thing we have to be concerned about is this thirty million-some-odd dollars that Mr. Bellavance wants to give Cargill and Excel. Does Cargill need another \$10 million from the government? Does Excel need millions more from the government? No, and I think my producers back home would say the same if I asked them that. They all remember the BSE scandal. They all remember how that money went straight to the packing plants—the producers didn't benefit from it. Are we now going to make a recommendation that the minister give the packers more?

I'm wondering if we have given this enough time. Have we given Mr. Lemieux's motion enough time? Have we given this \$50 million fund enough time to show results? Are we going to put forward this motion? Let's say the government was to go ahead with this. We're going to give Levinoff \$10 million and then give them a few million more? Are we going to do the same for Cargill? Does that make a lot of sense? That's the question I have for the colleagues across the floor.

We all want to help farmers; I believe that. I look across the floor and I know you guys want to help farmers and you're looking at the best way to do it. It's not always simple. It's not always quick and easy. If we do this and end up with a countervail, all the work we've done to open up markets would get shut down. These packing plants would shut down. Our beef industry would be in worse shape than it is today. Do we want to do something that creates that type of scenario? No, I don't think so.

I agree with Mr. Lemieux—let's back off on this motion. Let's deal with Mr. Lemieux's motion that we have in front of us. I think it's adequate. It makes recommendations to the minister to look at it. Let's see what kinds of options they come up with besides what they've already done. Let's give it a little time and see how it looks down the road.

•(1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hoback. I'm going to call the question.

Yes.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Chair, I do think... I'll let Mr. Easter comment quickly, but I did misspeak and I would like to apologize to Mr. Easter. I don't have any facts as to whether or not Mr. Easter is in his riding or in P.E.I. per se, so I would like to correct the record on that. Mr. Easter is right.

I do, however, have Mr. Easter's own words that he's on a silence strike and is no longer going to speak up on behalf of Canadian agriculture. If they're not going to put their neck on the line for him, he's not going to put his neck on the line for them.

At the end of the day, Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that the point of this is that the members on this side will continue to defend our cow-calf producers, our pork producers, and the men and women we saw here in the room last week.

And they wonder why we won't vote for this motion. We are not going to vote for another per head payment. Mr. Easter knows.

Mr. Easter, answer this question in your point of order: where is most of the money going to go if you do a per head payment? It's going to go to the slaughterhouse.

**The Chair:** Okay. You clarified some information Mr. Easter asked, so we're going to go back...

Is it a point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, it is a point of order. Mr. Storseth is talking about an interview. I will state exactly what's in that interview and explain the background, just so—

**The Chair:** I don't think we need any explanation. I don't think it's—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** This is what it says in the interview.

**The Chair:** I've read it before and I presume—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** He tabled that, Mr. Chair, and you allowed him to table it.

**The Chair:** No, I didn't.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, you did.

**The Chair:** He never tabled anything, to my knowledge.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Well, he stated it, and I will state what it says in the article. It says:

I'm not asking questions in defence of the industry in the face of a do-nothing government if agriculture leaders aren't prepared to speak up and take the government on.

The reason I've said that, Mr. Chair, is because—

•(1655)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Do you have the article, Wayne?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, I have the article right here.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** We have the article, Wayne. Read the whole thing, Wayne.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It is just so much of what this government does, what these members do all the time in the personal, vindictive attacks they have against me—but that's fine. They quote partial quotes in terms of their attack. The agriculture industry will tell you behind closed doors, Mr. Chair, that the reason they won't get into it is the fear and intimidation tactics of the minister. That's the reality, and those are the facts we're looking at.

**Some hon. members:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Order, here. Let's not start—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Let's just be honest about it, Mr. Chair. This is a government that operates on intimidation.

**The Chair:** Order, please.

As Mr. Hawn so eloquently said, I believe it was in the House yesterday, let's not try to pick fly specks out of pepper. I can tell you that I haven't been in your riding, Mr. Easter, but you've been in mine and numerous others. As far as personal attacks, I think it's all around the table.

Let's get back to...

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Eyking?

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** On a point of order, I've mentioned many times how long I've been here, and many of you have been here shorter or longer than I have, but I find the House of Commons question period and maybe ten percenters are the places to take shots at each other, but not in committee. We have to keep this committee on track. We can debate issues. I've seen a shot taken at Alex one day in here, and I've seen the second shot. If we as a committee start going after personal things about what's happening in our ridings or in our families, there's no end to it.

**The Chair:** I couldn't agree with you more.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** I think we should keep the personal stuff out of this, because I've never seen this in a committee before.

**The Chair:** I couldn't agree with you more, Mr. Eyking.

On a point of order.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Chairman, I'd like him to table the document he's selectively quoting from.

**The Chair:** Would you please table what you were reading from, Mr. Easter?

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I'd like that on the record, please.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay, I'll table it. Could the clerk take a photocopy of this?

**The Chair:** Not right now, but I'm sure she could.

Anyway, I'm going to call the question on Mr. Bellavance's motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Could we have a recorded vote?

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux requested a recorded vote. I'll have Madam Clerk call the vote.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** This is the question on bringing it forward, correct? It's not a vote on the motion itself.

**The Chair:** Debate on the motion itself will come.

Madam Clerk will call the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** Is there debate on the motion?

Go ahead, Monsieur Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I want to say, Chair, that I'm disappointed that we've blown another meeting by going in circles on motions. The report sits here unfinished. I think it's worth reiterating that we in fact already voted on a very similar motion, Chair. It was my motion to seek different solutions, which I put forward in front of committee a number of meetings ago.



I still haven't heard why Mr. Bellavance feels so strongly that this is the only solution. Actually, I would put a question to him, through you, Chair. Does he feel that there are any other possible solutions to the SRM irritants, and if there are other solutions, why are they not included in his motion? Why is his motion so narrow? Particularly given the track record of the last time an undertaking like this was attempted, by the previous Liberal government, and the results of that undertaking, why is his motion so narrow?

**The Chair:** Would you like to respond to that, Mr. Bellavance?  
[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Of course, very quickly, because I would like us to vote. As I have said a number of times, the motion indicates to the government that there could be other solutions. This is why I voted for Mr. Lemieux's motion. It was very open-ended, although I found it too weak.

Other questions and comments emerged earlier in the discussion. We might even say falsehoods, when it comes to members of the Conservative Party. They said that agricultural producers are not asking for this. That is completely false. Mr. Dessureault, the chairman of the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec, is a producer. He has appeared before us more than once.

My mike was not on, of course, but I was saying to Randy earlier that the SRM standards were put in place two years ago, and, for two years, cattle producers have been asking us for assistance with them. I was in favour of Mr. Lemieux's motion when it mentioned the discussions that should take place between the government and cattle producers.

My motion does not come out of thin air; nor is it something that came to me during one of my restless nights. It comes right from the producers and from the industry as a whole. As Wayne said earlier, the cattle industry was unanimous on the motion. The only opposition, unfortunately, is the governing party.

• (1700)

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Shipley.

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

We're now at this motion for discussion, and quite honestly I'm not sure why we're here. The motion that had come forward actually...

We had a great discussion last week when the Outstanding Young Farmers were here, and it wasn't political. They were young farmers, and we had a number of them, including the acting chair at that time, who was a past nominee of that program. Randy Hoback was here also, and we had a great respect for them. Quite honestly, it was pretty refreshing to listen to these innovative young people who are going through some pretty tough struggles within their industry.

Some of them, particularly the ones in potatoes right now, are doing well. Some of the others in supply management are doing well. Over the last two or three years, some of our grains and oilseeds have done all right, but we have factors within our industry that are hurting, and I never heard any of them say that one solution was going to fix it for us. In fact, what I heard was quite the opposite. Just handing out dollars—and it would be interesting to go back and look at the blues on that—isn't the solution to what we have to do to

be successful beginning farmers. Not all of them are really young, but many of them are beginning farmers.

In fact, the couple who led the delegation in terms of the presentation were in the pork industry. They talked about the ability to compete in the pork industry and the ability to level the playing field. One of the issues they talked about concerned competitiveness in the pork industry, for example.

I have a motion coming forward in terms of being competitive. In the pork industry there is a product that is used by our competitors in the United States that our producers in Canada can't use. What's the issue? It's a regulatory licensing issue, and one of the things the farmers continually ask is what we can do to level the playing field.

It is not the one issue of \$31.70 per head. This is about making it so they can be competitive. They know they're good. They told us that. They know they are good farmers. They know they are efficient farmers. They know their productivity is as good as anyone else's around the world, particularly in comparison to the productivity of our major competitors, but we have some regulatory issues that are a hindrance to them.

SRMs are, quite honestly, one of those issues. COOL is one of those issues. The Canadian dollar, which fluctuates, is one of those. Some of those irritants we can actually try to do something about; some of them, such as the issue of the Canadian dollar, are bigger issues, but when we get to the SRMs—and I've talked to beef producers—there are some issues we've stepped into in terms of the industry and in terms of government that have been a disadvantage to us in terms of competition and competitiveness with our neighbours. Those are basically regulatory issues.

We have to see what we are doing with our money when we put \$50 million towards the improvement of slaughter facilities and put out money to the industries mentioned by my colleague, including the \$10 million that went to Keystone and the \$10 million that went to Levinoff-Colbex. In terms of this motion, we're talking of putting most of our money into two or three major packers. If they're going to be using money that we have put forward, what is it being used for? Is it being used to advance the technology and advance the ability to remove SRMs in a more competitive and more environmentally sound way?

One of the things we have in our regulations is that we can't even process SRMs for use as fertilizer. That becomes a disadvantage to us in terms of some of our competitors.

• (1705)

Why is that? It's a regulatory issue, but it's a big issue.

My illustration will always be that we need to look at solutions that represent the motion that was passed. I believe everybody did that in good faith, because that's what we have to look at. But this motion basically doesn't talk about that. It talks about the immediate implementation of an assistance program for the cattle industry to help it cover the \$31.70 cost per head, which represents the competitive gap between the U.S. and Canada with SRMs. That sounds really good. Maybe that is the number, but it isn't the cause or remedy to that issue. It can't be dealt with.

In a complex issue like SRMs, where we have standards, and competition from exporters that come into Canada and for those of us who are exporting into other countries, that is not the solution without having a full breadth of discussions about what we can do to actually... This is a one-shot \$31.70. So a month from now, when it hasn't solved the financial issue, they'll come back and we'll have gone through that \$31.70, which I think is \$23 million.

We made an allocation of \$50 million earlier on slaughter capacity and innovation to help the slaughter companies, the packers, be more effective in dealing with some of these issues. Then they'll come back and say it's actually another \$23.50 or something. I don't know. But that's what happens when you just try to hand dollars off—except you'll likely be into a countervail and all the money that actually goes out will be wasted.

I really appreciate what André is trying to do in his motion. I don't discredit him at all for what he is trying to do in listening to some of his producers or an organization. But what we have in front of us is one single solution—a “one-shot give me the cheque” that won't actually go to the producers; it will go to the packers. There is absolutely no guarantee that this money will ever get down to the producers. We should learn from experience where that did not work in the last term around BSE.

André, I understand and appreciate very much your integrity in wanting to move ahead and do for the beef producers what all of us want to do. I just can't support the approach of getting one figure out to them—\$31.70—without having a complex issue dealt with, just having a one-figure cost per head, which will put us in a countervail.

In fairness to all the producers that we would actually—

• (1710)

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Eyking.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Shipley mentions countervail, and I can't see that happening. Right now the United States is paying all the abattoirs that amount of money. I can't see a countervail coming from them, because they have that program in place.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** It wasn't a point of order in the first place.

The fact of the matter is that in 1994 the Liberal government signed off allowing the disparity in the subsidization between the European Union, the Americans, and our government. That is the real atrocity we've been fighting for the last 25 years.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I have a number of producers telling me that the Americans do it. Well, quite honestly they do. They had it grandfathered in. They have the ability to do it without countervail. We have provinces that can do those dollar-a-head per payments and not likely be at risk of a countervail because it's a national factor. But that was given away. The Americans can always do a per-head, per-acre, per-bushel... They have the flexibility that Canada gave away in 1994.

I didn't know the date, but I appreciate your accuracy.

I would leave it, André, with that part. I don't want to take away your credibility in what you're trying to do, but it's just not a one-solution fix.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Easter.

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

I listened to the parliamentary secretary try to outline his disappointment with the opposition members, but I think the farm community should be extremely disappointed in the government members.

In terms of this motion of André's, we're not proposing it as a single solution. We're proposing it as something the government could do with some immediacy. It would require immediate action, and it could be done at cabinet prior to Christmas. If the processing industry were to pass all of those costs down to industry, all those savings down to the producer, it would make a difference in the producer's bottom line. The bottom line for me is that it's something the government could do before Christmas.

The motion by the parliamentary secretary is so much of what the government has been doing for years, which is talking a good line but virtually doing nothing.

I want to go through a few of those points. The parliamentary secretary's motion is that this committee recommends that the government investigate these issues and basically do something. That is the bottom line.

Mr. Chair, let's look at the record. Does everyone remember during the last election campaign that the current government promised a 2¢-a-litre reduction in fuel for the farm community? Did we see it?

**An hon. member:** No.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It was in your platform. You promised it, but we haven't seen it. We haven't seen that reduction.

The Prime Minister himself committed to a cost of production at \$100 million a year for farmers, and he broke his word. It was in the last budget. He broke his word. Not a dime went to producers and the cost of production no longer exists.

Let's look at AgriFlexibility. I believe the Minister of Agriculture said at a debate we were at that he would go along with the AgriFlexibility proposal of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. But when it came to getting the AgriFlexibility money out there, it is not what the federation asked for at all; it's a slush fund without flexibility.

I believe the current government also said it would scrap CAIS. All they did was change the name and replace it with AgriStability.

• (1715)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we need to stick to the facts here. Maybe it would be better if I corrected all the facts at the end, but it is very egregious that all he says we did was to replace it with AgriStability. There are four components to this, things that the agriculture community and farmers asked for. Mr. Easter is even on the record saying that some of them are—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's not a point of order.

**The Chair:** Very few that are raised around this table ever are, Mr. Easter, and I don't cut them off.

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

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Earlier, Randy tabled an article by Kevin Hursh.

I'll read what Kevin Hursh said in an article in the *The StarPhoenix*. I quote:

Despite what the feds say, the farm support program known as AgriStability is of limited benefit to cattle producers. It's based on historical margins and after years of trouble in the beef industry, those reference margins have been squashed.

That's what Kevin Hursh had to say.

**The Chair:** The bells are starting.

You have one minute, and then I'm going to cut it off.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Let's look at what Mr. Breitreuz had to say in a letter to the minister. He said:

Unfortunately, this has gone on so long that the five-year formula used to calculate AgriStability payments no longer has a high value to pull up average costs. AgriStability is of little benefit to our cattle producers.

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

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Chair, I'll call the question for the vote.

**The Chair:** No, the bells are ringing.

The meeting is adjourned until Thursday.

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