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# **Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 26, 2015**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Bev Shipley**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC)):** Welcome everyone to the agriculture committee today.

Today is a bit of a unique day. I consider it a privilege for the committee to have the people with us who we do.

Before we get to the participants of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum, I do want to acknowledge the folks from the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan. These people are representatives who wanted to come in, I think, to see how they're going to transition their farms to their younger people, as that is all part of it.

I do welcome our guests and visitors who are with us today.

Colleagues, as I mentioned, today is unique, but if it isn't, it's certainly a special day. Just so that our friends from the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum know, it came up a little while ago that you were coming to town as part of your conference. It was suggested that there might be an opportunity to get hold of you to see if you'd be interested in coming in and talking to us as a committee.

We say thank you for taking that initiative and taking the time out of your schedules to appear in front of us.

I've told you not to be nervous. I want this to be as informal as possible, even though we will go to rounds of questions. We're here to learn. It's great to have young people who are getting into agriculture, and who are into it, which is one of the most significant industries in this great country of Canada. It really is. From that, as committee people, we look at legislation and we look at where agriculture has taken us. We talk to a lot of witnesses, and we talk to a lot of people who come in from different organizations. Not often do we get the opportunity to specifically address young farmers who are in it as innovators and as leaders in your community and in your organizations, who specifically come and talk to us. We look forward to that very much.

As I mentioned, there is a bit of a formal time.

I'm going to ask Mr. Froese to start. He will have opening statements. I think he was told seven minutes, but it's seven or ten. Colleagues, I'm not going to cut off the time as I usually try to do. I will try to keep it more informal during our time.

We do have two hours today. If we run out of questions, we'll quit early, but I doubt that will happen.

With that, Mr. Froese, I'll turn it over to you for an opening statement. Welcome.

**Mr. Kerry Froese (Chair, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're very, very pleased about having the opportunity to be here. We're excited to be here. We're young farmers who are excited about agriculture, and we're excited about being part of a vibrant and profitable agricultural industry in Canada.

I'd like to introduce us and touch on what we do and who we are.

First off, my name is Kerry Froese. I am the chair of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum. I'm a broiler chicken farmer from Abbotsford, British Columbia, so I'm here all the way from the west coast. I'm also involved there as one of two farmers elected to the British Columbia Chicken Marketing Board, so I'm involved with our production in Canada.

Danielle Lee is here from Calgary, Alberta. She's our Yukon-B.C.-Alberta representative to the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum. She is a cow-calf and sheep producer. Next to her, we have Larry Spratt. He, along with his cousin, farms over 5,000 acres of grain and has a 200-head cow-calf operation in Melfort, Saskatchewan. He is our Saskatchewan-Manitoba representative to the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum.

Next to Larry is Guenette Bautz. Even though she's our general manager, she also is involved in farming as well and has a 125-head cow-calf operation, with 600 acres of hay and pasture and 1,400 acres of grain. Next to Guenette is my vice-chair, Paul Glenn. He farms in Keene, Ontario. He is a cash crop farmer and a seed producer. Beside me is Pierre-Luc Lacoste. He's a cash crop farmer and seed producer from Mercier, just southwest of Montreal, Quebec. He serves on our board as our member at large.

Last, we have Kimberly Stokdijk, who is a greenhouse producer from Beaver Brook, Nova Scotia, and the first vice-president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. She isn't on our board of directors, but she has attended our event in the past and she's here this weekend for our event as well.

That is who we are, but what is the Canadian Younger Farmers' Forum?

I'd like to start with a little story, based on the fact that one time I was at an event, and a woman at the event asked what I did for a living. When I replied to her, I said, "Well, I'm just a farmer." I was scolded. She got mad at me and said, "You are not just a farmer. You feed the world." I took that to heart, because it's something that I need to convey to people: how proud we are of what we do, and we're feeding the world.

From that point on, I've known that I'm never just a farmer. I do everything and I feed the world. That's something we want to convey to people through our organization to make agriculture more profitable and more fun. Agriculture is just a great thing, and we're proud to be part of it.

The CYFF is a national non-profit organization solely focused on the age group of 18 to 40. As for where we fit, there are other national organizations, such as 4-H, where kids start at the age of six. 4-H raises people through agriculture all the way to the age of 18, or even to 21 for their young leaders. We fit in just after that in helping young farm leaders in the 18-to-40 age group to become even better. The 4-H starts the young farmers, we polish them, and then there's another program called Outstanding Young Farmers, which celebrates young farmers' successes. I'm actually the current B.C. Outstanding Young Farmer for 2015.

[Applause]

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Thank you. It's actually for B.C. and Yukon.

That's where we fit as far as the young farmer organizations go. Also, mainly, we're the leader that supports the 11 young farmer organizations throughout our country. Each province has a young farmer organization, from British Columbia and the BCYF, all the way to Newfoundland. We connect those young farmer organizations in such a way that we can have a national network.

Another story I'd like to share about that, too, is that being part of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum has helped young farmers in different facets and different commodities become better in their operations. A young dairy farmer from New Brunswick was a new entrant into chicken farming in New Brunswick. From British Columbia, I was able to help this individual with his farming operation. Having that national connection is huge for young farmers, so that we can take advantage of our successes, and even of the bad things that have happened on our farms, because it's cheaper for us to learn from other people's mistakes rather than make them ourselves.

● (1535)

We are also the voice of young farmers at many industry board tables. Through my being the chair of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum, we have a seat at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Paul is on the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council. Danielle sits on the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association board. Larry sits on the Grain Growers of Canada board. Pierre-Luc is also on the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council. Kim is a strong leader, too, in being part of her federation of agriculture. Connecting those groups and providing the young farmer's voice at those organizations is something we do to help bring up the young agriculture voice there.

As for what our group does, in the next couple of days we're going to be here in Ottawa providing young farmer business training and creating stronger farm leaders through offering training in things like succession planning. The age of our farmers is rising, and we want to make sure the transition can be easier for each farm. It's never an easy process, but talking with your peers and learning from them how they did or didn't do it is something we try to promote.

Business management practices, or how you deal with things on your farm, include making sure that you have a good business plan, that you know your costs of production, and that you're making more money than you're putting into your farm; otherwise, you're doing it for free. Farming isn't a charity. It is a business. Even though we love it, we need to make money at it, so we teach that to our producers.

We also take part in other organizations. We went down south to take part in the young farmers and ranchers group in the United States, a group that's under their farm bureau. Connecting with them helps us to grow as an organization, because they are just so massive in the United States compared to us, but we can learn from their successes and how they've done things. We also took part in an event with Agriculture Canada on relations with Mexico. We talked with a young farmer group from Mexico and tried to make some connections there. That's still in progress.

What else? We've passed out our AGM booklet. If you look at our conference agenda on page 5, you'll see that on Saturday we have some serious things going on. I will be giving my Outstanding Young Farmer Award presentation on my farming background and my farming operation. It's a virtual farm tour. If we can't bring people to our farms because of things like biosecurity and such—not to mention that you don't end up having smelly shoes when you get back to your hotel—we give virtual farm tours of what we do in our operations to help to teach people what we do on each other's farms. We will also be receiving a farm tour from the Young Farmers & Ranchers of America, so we'll get an inside look on an American farm.

Also, of course, we'll be learning about the political landscape. Becoming young farm leaders also involves talking to you people here. Our organization builds up the young farmers and leaders of our farms, but we're also building up the young farmers as leaders of our communities, who may even one day sit in your seats. As well, we're trying to raise the level of professionalism in our industry.

We're funded by the government, of course, and are in Growing Forward 2. We're in the current funding proposal year right now. We have our application in, and we have some exciting things in it too.

Something we're putting in there that's new and innovative is that in young agriculture a lot of people are looking at how they can take advantage of government programs, if not the resources of other commodities and commodity groups and what they provide. We want to make an app for that. While everybody is doing apps—it seems like a clichéd thing—with young agriculture, everybody is mobile. Everybody wants to move towards just going to your cellphone, pushing a button, and finding the right programs for you, so that you can take advantage of what you can do on your farm and farm smarter.

● (1540)

Getting all those resources into one central location so that they can be accessed at any point in time and whenever needed on our farms is something that I think will really help us as young farmers. We're really looking forward to creating this app. Also, that hopefully will take us.... There is possibly a three-year deal that we're looking to continue with.

Guenette, is that correct?

Guenette is our general manager, so she knows about the nuts and bolts of our organization.

Is there anything you want to add to that, Guenette?

**Ms. Guenette Bautz (General Manager, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** Thank you, Kerry.

Thank you for having us here this afternoon. We appreciate the opportunity.

With regard to our funding, Kerry is correct. We did receive a two-year agreement. We are very thankful for the support we receive from AAFC, as we believe in the team and we do want to build our relationships with government. Currently, we have our application in process and we are looking for support from April 1, 2015, through to March 31, 2018, to where the GF3 would then come into effect.

In addition to the innovative app that we want to execute and deliver to our young farmers of Canada, we're also going to continue to deliver our national conference, as we see young farmers coming from coast to coast with a really strong representation from each province. This year we will host 145 people, and over 90% of the participants are truly young farmers coming in for our conference.

We're going to continue to work on leadership training and building our organization and our collaborative partnerships with other organizations that are also funded through government dollars. We're looking forward to building those bridges moving forward.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** To close our introduction, I will reiterate that we bring together young farmers from all commodities and all provinces, and we share a lot of information. We share so many synergies. We're young farmers from different places, but we still share the same passion for agriculture. Our motto at the CYFF is to energize, empower, and educate our young farmers: the three Es. It's something that builds young farm leaders.

Once again, I thank you for this time. We're open for your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That was interesting. I suspect that at the end of this day, with the application in, as you mentioned,

this will actually put in real-life experience in support of that application.

In terms of your logo, I was looking at the 2014 convention program, Mr. Froese, and I see the motto, "Kiss Me. I'm a Farmer."

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I didn't know if that was something that was going to be a promotional aspect in terms of a logo or a motto. I think it's a great one, because it shows friendship and compassion.

● (1545)

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** That's actually a great part of Farm Credit Canada's "Agriculture More Than Ever" campaign. It's about getting out there to tell your story about agriculture. We're talking about the social licence of farmers and how we need to maintain that and about telling people why we do what we do. We farm for the reasons of being more efficient and the fact that we provide food for the world. That's a great campaign. Even those signs they're holding that are shown there help to promote agriculture too.

**The Chair:** I meant to say earlier how pleased I am, as I know all of us are and will be, to see that you have men and women as part of your panel and your organization. Agriculture, the agriculture industry, is strong because of its complexities, but it's also strong because of the diversity we have and the integration of strong partnerships that develop within the family and within family and business. I would pass that on to you.

In fact, you talked about the marketing, and on Saturday you will have a friend of mine there, Andrew Campbell. I was just out at his place. He will likely be talking a bit about exposing and using social media and some of those things to help market to those folks who are not much in touch with agriculture on the ground, in order to give them some real-life experience through social media.

With that, thank you for your intervention and your opening statement.

I'm now going to you, Madam Raynault, for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am really happy to have the witnesses with us today.

I'm really glad someone corrected you when you said you were just a farmer. People who feed the world play an important role in society. I know something about that because I was a farmer myself. I raised animals and was involved in market gardening. Of course, that was before local products became popular. Things would be different today. I was also a member of the comité provisoire du Syndicat des agricultrices de Lanaudière. Agriculture is still in my blood. You can take the woman out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the woman. She works on the Earth today, but not on the land. Anyway, I am happy to have the witnesses with us today.

Here is my question, each of you could answer it. Five minutes is really not a lot of time.

How do you see your current life, your involvement in agriculture, and your children's, 10 or 15 years from now?

I am somewhat familiar with the obstacles faced by young people who want to pursue farming. What do you think are the obstacles faced by Quebec or Manitoba farmers?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste (Member, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** Thank you for the question, Ms. Raynault.

I can talk about Quebec, or talk about what I know, so to speak.

The most restrictive barrier to becoming involved in agriculture really is access to land, mainly because of the soaring land prices. It's therefore becoming more and more difficult for young people who aren't from farming families to go into agriculture.

High land prices have made the intergenerational transfer of farms increasingly complicated. It's not easy to expand, acquire land or buy it from our parents. The market value is very high, and there are tax problems. Land access involves a number of issues. So it's no easy feat. The situation is difficult to resolve, but we are constantly trying to promote agriculture.

You talked about local products, which don't really require large tracts of land. Farmers can do well enough with smaller acreages. I think it's crucial to promote local products and Canadian products. I took some notes earlier. Although environmental standards are very strict, we are managing to do wonders with what we have.

• (1550)

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** That's definitely the experience of farmers in Lanaudière or the riding of Joliette, which I represent. In fact, land prices have risen so much that people can no longer buy land, even to expand their farms.

The witness from Manitoba could perhaps also answer the next question.

I think the problem is that parents want to give their children an opportunity to take over the farm, but they also want to be able to live comfortably for the rest of their lives, and that's not easy.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** Exactly.

The gross margins are really narrow. It's difficult to save. We have lately had some solid years in agriculture, given that product prices were higher than ever.

But it's still difficult to put money aside. In many cases, the land is our parents' pension fund. In order to survive, they have no choice but to sell their land at a fairly high price. That's one of the problems we are facing. Debts are passed down from one generation to the next. We always have too much debt, and that's a problem.

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Ms. Lee, is the situation the same for you in Manitoba?

[English]

**Ms. Danielle Lee (Member, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** Actually, I'm from Alberta.

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** *Désolée.*

**Ms. Danielle Lee:** That's all right.

I would say there are definitely challenges, especially where our farm is. We are very close to the city of Calgary. It's very good agricultural land; however, it is more used for development and those types of things, so it is harder to continue to be able to farm there.

I'm the fourth generation on our farm. We've been there over 100 years. It's nice to see it continuing, but I see the number of farms around us dwindling. The farmland is not even being used for farming anymore. It is going into development and houses and that type of thing, which poses a huge challenge, I guess, especially for me as a young person. I want to continue to farm on our family farm, but looking forward to the future, will it be in my best interests, or will I be surrounded by the city?

Those are the challenges that we face where we are. They probably face them all across the country from coast to coast, whether it's in Ontario around Toronto, or in B.C. where Kerry is. Land is very costly there as well.

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

Now we'll go to Mr. Keddy for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Welcome to our witnesses.

Kimberly, I'm from New Ross, Nova Scotia, so I'm trying to figure out exactly.... There are two Beaver Brooks that I'm aware of; I'm assuming it's the one down by Old Barns.

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk (Member, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** That's right. We're just outside of Truro.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Good. I've got you figured out.

Part of the discussion we're having here on land and resources, and the availability of land, will probably be critical to all of your futures. Quite a few years ago I was a young farmer; now I'm just cranky.

You really have a great career path. You have some huge opportunities. There are two things that I think are critical to what you're doing. You touched on both of them, but I'd like a little more explanation on how critical you feel it is.

The first one is accessibility to property, especially to rich agricultural land versus that land being turned into suburbia. That's number one. Ontario has a farm belt, with protection for a lot of that rich agricultural land, and Nova Scotia has protection for some of it but not all of it.

The other thing you touched on was your work with the American young farmers group. I really feel that's critical to your future success, especially in commodity groups and especially in international trade. I was in the Christmas tree business for 25 or 30 years as a medium-sized grower. We exported all of our product into the United States. I can tell you that the only way we succeeded in that was to become members of the national Christmas tree growers association in the U.S. It meant that we therefore had a seat at the proverbial table; we had a vote on everything they voted on, and we were able to have somebody there to actually counterbalance the innate protectionism that Americans are vaccinated with when they're born. On numerous occasions when we had trade wars with the States—shakes and shingles, and a number of others—we were able to keep Christmas trees out of it. It wasn't a big deal for them, because we're about 8% of the American market; they're 95% of our market. That's a huge difference, right?

Anyone can jump in, but I just want you to expand on those two thoughts.

• (1555)

**Mr. Paul Glenn (Vice-Chair, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** Thank you for your question.

I can speak on the young farmers and ranchers portion. I was lucky enough to go down to Nashville, where they held their leadership conference for young farmers and ranchers. There were approximately 1,400 participants in Nashville. It's quite an awe-inspiring event to go to. I was lucky in that it was my second year going, working with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada promoting trade with Canada. I think it's a really great initiative that they've done, because last year was the first time that Canadians have ever gone down to work with the Americans. It was much needed. We were looking across the table at each other saying, "I can't believe we haven't done this before". Luckily enough, they actually came up to our AGM in Calgary last year.

We are continuing to build our relationships with them. They have many great programs that we are trying to do as well. Really, it's just noticing how the American Farm Bureau young farmers and ranchers program is set up and seeing how well it does work for them to really get their messages out to government, and how agriculture really does have a strong voice. It's something that we would really like to strive for, especially to see young Canadian farmers having a really strong voice.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** One huge benefit they have down in the States, too, is the Future Farmers of America, or the FFA, which is built into their high school system. It helps teach agriculture in their system.

We also had the opportunity to go down to their national event in Kentucky for the Future Farmers of America, where there were over 60,000 participants. They have more than 600,000 members in FFA. If they have that type of system feeding into Young Farmers & Ranchers of America, there's no doubt that it's just awe-inspiring to us as well. It was very eye-opening to go to that event. It was at a giant convention centre down in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Do you have any ideas on how you keep access to rich agricultural land?

**The Chair:** I think Guenette was going to follow up on the first part, if you don't mind, Mr. Keddy.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Not at all. Sorry; I didn't mean to cut her off.

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** That's fine. I just had a brief comment to add on our relationship with the Americans.

We also had the opportunity to represent Canadian agriculture with regard to the importance of trade. We got to speak with young farmers down there about the issue of COOL, country-of-origin labelling. We've built some strong relationships that have been really beneficial to us. They are our trading partner, and we're now educated on the amount of trade we actually do with our neighbours down south.

Furthermore, we've had some great successes beyond just learning from them. We're also building relationships. We're looking forward to having them with us this weekend as well.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]...but you may be able to come back in later. We're well over.

I'll go to Mr. Eyking for five minutes, please.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Thank you, everybody, for coming. What a great organization for bringing together young farm minds from right across Canada.

My wife and I were the Outstanding Young Farmers 25 years ago, I guess. It was a great opportunity for us to get off the farm and see what other people do. It changed our attitude coming back. It also gave us a sense of pride for what we were doing. I think it's a great thing that you guys are doing.

I also saw a bumper sticker here, "I love farm boys".

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** That wasn't around when we were farming. I mean, the girls ran away from us. We were going around with old half-tons and we weren't making money. I'm glad they're in fashion now; it's good to see.

I'd like to talk about the international scene a bit. I guess now that you're exploring what other countries are doing, it is an international market. There's so much changing out there, from climate change to consumer changes in preferences. You see blueberries from Chile on the shelves or you see whatever. It's such a fast-changing food world. It's exciting, but you're competing against some real hotshots out there. In Brazil they can sometimes have two or three crops a year.

Tell me a little bit about the advantages they might have that stick out, that maybe we could be doing as a government, whether it's from Europe or whatever. Is it financing? What are some of the things that you think we could be learning from other countries, or some other things we could be doing as a government to help our young farmers get in?

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Before you answer that, Paul, the technicians here are amazing; when they see a mouth open, the microphone goes on. So when you go to speak, it will just automatically happen.

Go ahead. I'm sorry to interrupt.

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** Great. You've saved me a lot of effort.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** I can touch on that a bit. First off, starting with the Future Farmers of America, I think it's a really good tool for not only the people who are in agriculture but also the people who aren't in the agricultural scene but are interested in it. It gives them an area to actually learn more about it, especially at a younger age, when it's important to have an interest in something especially before they do any secondary education.

Through that FFA program, they do a lot of leadership training, such as public speaking training, to really build leaders. These young adults are just amazing in discussions and debates. They have very big sponsors. The national debate winner wins a Chevy pickup. You laugh, but these are very professional people and well-done discussions. That leads in through Young Farmers & Ranchers. It kind of builds them up through that.

That's kind of how we see us building our young farm leaders here, coming up through the 4-H people who are interested in it. Hopefully one day we can have an education system that will build up with agriculture as well. Then we can really solidify the leadership of the young people to be able to speak to you fine people.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** The other benefit of having that training in schools is that even if they don't grow up to become farmers, they learn where their food comes from, and we won't have the disconnect like we see right now in Canada—it is so global—where people don't know where their food comes from. Having that system allows more people to know how people grow things.

We don't have a cow or one chicken in the backyard anymore. Everybody goes to the grocery store for their food. But we need to be

able to convey to people why we do what we do. That's why we try to increase our social licence through this program.

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** Further to that, we've had discussions with Agriculture in the Classroom Canada and the CYFF is very interested in working with our Canadian government and any partners that we can put together to lead the project or to at least be involved in the development of a project such as that, which would be national.

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** It's important to note in addition that the FFA program.... Although education is provincial and in the United States it's also state-based funding, all vocational and technical training in the United States is funded federally. Those programs, including FFA and other trades programs within the school systems, are actually funded federally. That would be a wonderful initiative to start, and a challenge for farmers. It's just the average age of farmers, but the support.... It's the skills and the trades that come in and support our industry, and those in the United States are funded by the federal government. That's something to keep in consideration.

In looking at international opportunities and what other countries are doing, I would say that certainly support for innovation and new technologies coming into Canada, and honouring equivalent jurisdictions, such as, for example the EU and the United States in terms of their safety, with occupational health and safety being one end.... To allow new and innovative technologies to come into the country would be a huge boost to farmers across Canada, especially young farmers who want to innovate, who want to find ways to stay on the farm and be very profitable.

Also, it's about having some equivalencies with our inputs. There are some inputs that are not available to farmers in Canada, and that puts us at a competitive disadvantage. It's very important that these equivalencies be considered and that we provide opportunities for young farmers who want to innovate to be able to be at the cusp of science and technology in the country.

• (1605)

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

I'll go to Mr. Zimmer, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Keddy has one small comment to make. Then I'll keep going.



**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** You were talking about the educational component in the U.S. You have to realize, first of all, that our system is dramatically different, but we do have a health and social transfer. The social transfer is for education. The provinces do a great job of taking 100% of the credit for that as if it were their own money, whereas a huge portion of it is federal dollars. That's for the record.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Thanks for that.

Thanks for coming today.

I'm the B.C. representative on the agriculture committee, Kerry, and thanks for being there for our B.C. farmers. I'm up on the prairies; it's much like Alberta up where we are. We have the prairies and we have grain and cows up there. It's very much a farming community. It's good to see that you're representing the organization.

At first I was first going to ask what it takes to be a young farmer, and it looks like Dean qualifies—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** —because you have to be under 40. He's still good to go.

I'm glad that you're doing what you're doing, and I have a couple of questions. We're preaching to the converted, to you guys, because you guys are all farmers and you're all under 40 and all of that. My kids go to school. How do you get to that kid to make being a farmer a viable option in this day and age? How do you get to that? Are you getting out to the untouched groups, I guess, that are out there?

I come from a farming background. I wasn't raised on a farm, but my dad and mom grew up on farms. For a short period in my life, I actually wanted to farm. In visiting the farm out in Manitoba where my dad came from. I really liked the lifestyle and the whole bit. But life happens, I guess, and away we go.

Can you speak to what the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum is doing on that?

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** I guess I'm a bit of a success story from the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum. Actually, I almost missed out on the opportunity. I was in the 4-H club for a couple of years when I was younger, but in my local area I didn't think anyone else actually liked farming. I thought I was crazy. I got involved in the Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario, and I was lucky enough to go to an Ontario Young Farmers' Forum. The CYFF helps put on these provincial events. Then I was lucky enough as a voting member to be able to go—it was in Nova Scotia that year—and to experience the enthusiasm and excitement about agriculture, and to meet other people and say, “Wow, I'm not crazy”. I know it sounds funny, but I really thought I was the only one in my area. You are able to take that energy—and luckily it lasts all year until the next conference—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** —and really take charge and be a leader and not have farming be just a hobby. And if it's not working, then you can talk to someone else who's had similar challenges and then build on that.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** To follow up on that, do you see certain kinds of farming that are more popular, that more young people are getting

into? Is it grain farming? Is it raising turkeys or chickens? I used to go to UBC and Trinity Western. I lived in Abbotsford for five years while I was going to school, so I know the area well. It has a lot of those. Are there particular pockets that seem to be having no problem with getting and retaining farmers and young farmers?

• (1610)

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** As you know, land prices in British Columbia are very high. When I come to these conferences and I tell other people that I pay \$80,000 to \$100,000 an acre for my land, some of them literally say, “Why are you still farming?” Through our program, we have high-value, intensive agriculture in Abbotsford just so we can maintain our costs of production and actually farm in that area.

But, as well, I did mow my lawn before I came to this meeting today, just so you know.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Thanks for the information.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I understand the issues with getting young farmers, too, because I also look at my parents, who are 80 and 70. Farmers sell their land as their retirement package, and they retire in Arizona, or do whatever they do with that money. It would be nice to see a program that provided a kind of bridge for that.

I saw a hand go up, so maybe there is a program. Is there a liaison between those two groups now to help that farmer retire but also to keep the farms?

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Those are our provincial organizations. B.C. actually didn't have one. I came to the Canadian Young Farmers' in 2007, and I found out that there were younger farmer groups but B. C. didn't have one. In 2008, I went back to British Columbia and started the BC Young Farmers as a committee of the British Columbia Agriculture Council. Having those young farmer groups to help deal with that and those issues in the individual provinces helps build those issues.

Pierre, did you want to comment on that?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** I'd like to mention a provincial program in Quebec.

Some older farmers don't actually want to see their farm go up for sale. They want to transfer it, but the next generation isn't there or they don't have kids, or the kids want to do something more profitable than farming, so they have moved off the farm. In some pockets of Quebec, they've created a bank. It's a list of people who don't want to see their farms disappear, and they try to match them with young farmers who are not coming from farming or who come from a smaller farm and who have other siblings who are taking over but they want to keep farming. We're trying to match them, like a wedding kind of thing. We're bringing people together and "marrying" them to have the transfer going on.

It's more of a provincial issue that's being dealt with right now, but we could absolutely do something nationally from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I think that's an absolutely great idea. If we did that nationally, it would at least help. It's exactly what we're looking for as an answer. We like young farmers here at the agriculture committee. To be sustainable, we need you here, so thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Zimmer.

I'm going to Ms. Brosseau now, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair

I want to thank all the witnesses who are here today.

They are sharing their experience with us and making recommendations to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I also want to thank the people in attendance. It's really rare for the room to be full of people who come to listen to our discussions. That shows how important it is to hear from you in committee.

I'd like to address you, Pierre-Luc, as I want to discuss issues specific to the province of Quebec.

A document produced by the Library of Parliament indicates that Quebec is the province with the highest proportion of young farmers. Why do you think more young people are becoming farmers in Quebec than in other provinces?

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

We are all members of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, UPA. That organization has invested a tremendous amount of effort in reaching out to young people and creating the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec—FRAQ. It's beneficial for the UPA to have that youth wing, which consists of not only young farmers, but also people aged 18 and over with an interest in agriculture. Our organization includes all members of the community, farmers or not. That's why the interest in agriculture in Quebec is so high.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** You were the vice-president of FRAQ recently. In 2012, the director of FRAQ said that it's sometimes more profitable and easier to dismantle a farm than to transfer it when the next generation cannot buy it at market value. Can you comment on that?

•(1615)

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** In a way, lands and agricultural companies are their owners' pension fund. Given the price of inputs

and goods, it's difficult to stand out and make a lot of money. These past few years have been very profitable for agriculture in Canada and in Quebec. We have also benefited from that abundance. However, farm transfers are definitely complicated.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** It's really complicated?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** Transfers are extremely expensive and lead to a loss. People have to be able to save money. Mechanisms should be implemented to help farmers put some money aside. For instance, governments could offer young people tax incentives to help them acquire a farm.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** The great document you submitted also talks about issues experienced last year in terms of labour shortages. Last year—and I don't want to get the amount wrong—the president of FERME said that Quebec had suffered losses of about \$56 billion because of a labour shortage.

Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** I don't have all the information I need to comment on the labour shortage. However, I can definitely tell you that bringing foreign workers to Canada and Quebec is complicated. That certainly may have hurt agriculture in general.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Over the past few years, average-sized family farms have suffered losses. Since 2007, we have lost 22,235 farms—a decrease of about 13%.

You touched on that briefly, Ms. Lee.

[English]

You've been seeing fewer and fewer farms. Is it because they are getting bigger?

I would like to have more comment on that, please.

**Ms. Danielle Lee:** Just to clarify, you asked me about Alberta and if the farms are disappearing. Is that right?

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I'm just saying in general.

**Ms. Danielle Lee:** In general, I would say that when you look at agriculture across Canada, especially in Alberta, our farms are definitely larger than they were historically. To be efficient, many of them have to be larger in size than they were in the past. For example, in the area where we were, there was a very high concentration of dairy farms and they were all the smaller family farms. I'm not saying that there aren't still family farms in Alberta. It's just that they've had to get bigger and move farther away from the city, mainly onto land that isn't quite as high priced and, hopefully, get a little bit larger to make the economies of scale work.

**Mr. Larry Spratt (Member, Canadian Young Farmers' Forum):** I'll make a comment on that.

Yes, farms are getting bigger, but you have to remember that, for example, we farm 5,000 acres and it takes us the same time as my grandfather took 30 years ago to farm 300 acres. Farms are getting bigger, but that's just how it works. We try to maximize what we can per acre in order to achieve what we can do best. With farms, you hear 20,000 acres or 30,000 acres, but it's all relative to what you have per person or per animal or such like that.

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

Now we'll go to Mr. Dreeshen for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** Welcome, everyone.

Similar to Mark, my wife and I were also outstanding young farmer nominees. This was probably more than 25 years ago. Nevertheless, my wife is still managing the farm. She was hauling grain yesterday.

There are a lot of different things. Of course, I did things a little bit differently. I lived on a farm. My older brother and I took my father's equipment, and we went out and rented land, and that was how we got our base in farming. I also then went out and became a schoolteacher. I taught school for 34 years to support my farming habit.

You mentioned the price of land. I had the same stories and discussions with my parents when it was the price it was then. Every time a new quarter comes up, we go through the same discussion about how you can ever make any money on it at that particular point, but I think that's a continuous thing.

The succession planning, though, I think is a critical aspect of it. You have to make sure you find quick and easy ways. That's why when you take a business approach to it, you realize there are ways to keep your folks involved in it. After a while the older guys might like driving the tractor, and there comes a time when you don't want them driving it anymore, but at least they are still part of it. People say the age of farmers is going up. Well, we just don't want to give up. We want to die as a farmer. It's not the tax implications; it's the fact that there's something really important about getting your hands dirty and getting involved in all of these types of things.

The point I wanted to make in the time I have here is that farmers are the true environmentalists. They are the true conservationists. When you speak to where we are going and how the consumer ties in one way and another, I think it's important, whether you have learned your skills through 4-H or through the discussions you have with the panels here, to recognize that it's important for you to make sure you get the message out there.

It's not a case of defending; it's a case of promoting. We hear so many things, and we know market-led arguments get thrown in. I'm sure you have heard that if you follow the money, you will know why somebody wants to put a limitation on one type of a product versus another. I think that really becomes the critical part that you and your organizations have to look at.

We know it's difficult to get farmers to agree. When you go down to the coffee shop or the curling rink, you know that if there are two farmers, there are going to be two or three different positions by the time they are finished discussing something.

It's important for you to be able to look at and work together for the future. You have these great opportunities to develop the social media side of it. Yes, sometimes you're going to have to go and debunk the things that get thrown at you, because they are designed to make it difficult for you, but I think it's important that you stand up and try to work toward it.

I'm going to leave that with you. Maybe you could comment on some of the ways you are looking at getting the message out that when it comes down to it, you are the ones who understand and care about the land and understand how important it is. If you're going to be kissed because you're a farmer, you have to make sure you get that food out to the world, and just go from there.

Thank you.

• (1620)

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** Absolutely. Thank you for the comments.

Through our social media outreach we really are achieving many great things beyond just telling our story. Social media is really hot for every age starting with the very young, and so through our outreach with social media, we have an opportunity to reach young people and to encourage them to be interested in agriculture.

Further, we provide mentorship through provincial organizations and through our national level to start connecting younger and younger people with those in the industry who can assist them.

With regard to succession planning, I think the difference is that through the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum and our national organizations and others who are encouraging succession planning, we are making headway on succession planning for farmers in our age category. Beyond that, we are preparing to do succession planning with our children, because we realize the earlier you begin succession planning, the better it is for you in terms of retirement savings and in terms of putting into place the support you need through life insurance or savings to help your children and future generations become the next generation of farmers earlier.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Allen, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, folks, for coming.

Did any of you not come from a farm family background? Kimberly.

The reason I ask is not so much what that means. I'm just always interested in talking to someone who decides to do this, young or not so young. I had this experience in southern Ontario, when I did a tour a couple of years ago, of talking to folks about young farmers. This woman put her hand up and said, "I don't think I'm qualified." It turns out she'd become a farmer after having a career in the public service. She decided to farm, not on a hobby farm, but a farm. I don't want to give her age away, but she was certainly over 50. I had to then start rethinking folks who start farming as maybe being "new entrants" rather than always being young farmers. So I'm always interested in hearing what attracted you to it.

Here on the agriculture committee, those of us who are full time think it's great, but I'm always interested to hear from folks on what drew them to it, on what gave them the sense of "I think I'd like to go do that".

• (1625)

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** I actually was attracted to a farmer and ended up on a farm. That's the easiest question.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Hey, whatever works, I guess.

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** It works well.

To expand on that, I was a military kid. I grew up in town, and I had no clue about farming, but I married a farmer. He is a third-generation farmer in Nova Scotia. His grandfather and father were Dutch immigrants. He adored farming. I was a French and Spanish teacher for a number of years. As an educator you love learning, and I loved learning about farming. I have just absorbed everything I possibly could.

The four years that I've been involved in Young Farmers has been amazing. The first year I was able to attend was in Halifax, and a lot of the programming was around succession planning and business management. What a great way to learn about operating a farm. There are a lot of skills that I can transfer from my years in education. Farming has become an integral part of our family and of our life, and our children will be the fourth generation to run the farm. They already are well on their way.

Hopefully, you all can help us with the challenges associated with the succession, with the tax implications and the other things that are challenges to bringing farms to the next generation.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Well, we might be able to do certain things, but I'm not so sure we can do things about falling in love with a farmer.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I'm not quite sure how we write policy on that, to be truthful. Nonetheless, we may start suggesting that one ought to check out folks in rural communities and perhaps should do those sorts of things.

I hate to tell you, Kerry, but I come from Niagara, which is wine country. We could have picked ice wine grapes about five times this winter, it has been that cold. In fact, we're looking at about a 30% loss, probably, in the tender fruit crop when it comes to the vines and the trees.

Mr. Allison is in an adjacent riding to mine, just up the way, and it has been bitterly cold. It has been  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  for a long time. In fact, it was interesting—I don't know if Mr. Allison saw it—we actually had one day since January that got close to  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It was actually  $-0.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ . That's as good as it got to  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which is unusual in Niagara. Farmers down there will be adding those up.

There's an interesting statistic on your sheet. I want to thank you for the copy of your "Family Farm 2.0 – Preparing for 2050". Like a few of us around here, when you start talking about "2.0", I'm not quite sure what you really mean. The interesting stat you have in here—it's a cautionary tale as well, as we have to start thinking about how we do different things to get folks into farming—is the fact that 8.2% of farmers are 35 years of age or younger. That's not a good demographic, to be honest, in the sense that the number is low.

Notwithstanding Mr. Dreeshen's comment that farmers sometimes want to stay on for a long time, the issue is that they may want to hang around—Mr. Dreeshen's probably right—and some of us may actually use equipment we shouldn't be using anymore. In my case it's usually the chainsaw. The issue is that the replacement demographic needs to be higher than that. I think that becomes abundantly clear. Granted, farms are changing and evolving. Some are larger and some are smaller. Organic farmers are small, and can be full time and profitable depending on where they are, and they can be smaller. It's moving all the time.

Let me ask a question, and anyone should feel free to pick up on it. It's in regard to technology, whether that be the smartphone, the use of the Internet, the sharing of information, or those lovely little drones that I notice you have a picture of in your magazine. Where do you see it going? Has it worked for you? Is it overhyped? Is it under-hyped? Where do you see this going, and how effective is that for you? Some of it's not cheap. Some of it is. I'd love to hear some of the feedback around what you see in technology and where we're headed.

• (1630)

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** I love technology, because I can do so much more with less. I am a broiler chicken producer. I can go to my cellphone right now and know by the second how heavy my birds are, how much they're eating, and how much they're drinking. I can adjust my fans and the lights. Anything I can do when I'm there, I can do from here.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** You can do it right now from here?

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Right now.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Why don't you do me a favour? Look it up and tell me what some of those birds.... Do you have any birds in the barn now?

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Would you look it up for me and give us an example? Just give us an example at some point before we adjourn.

**The Chair:** I'm going to let him do that in a little while.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I know you will—

**The Chair:** One thing you'll find is that sometimes members eat up their five minutes in making their comments.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I want to find out how big his birds are—

**The Chair:** They're big.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** —before we're done.

**The Chair:** What I am going to do, though—and you may get back into some of that—is go to one of our guests who is with us today, Mr. Lunney, from B.C.

You have five minutes, please.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As the chair has indicated, I am not a regular member of the committee, but I am very pleased to be here for such an informal opportunity to engage with young farmers.

I'm from British Columbia, from Vancouver Island. Nanaimo—Alberni is my riding. We're where the far west meets the far east, with a little bit of water in between.

I want to throw something on the table here. First of all, we all like to eat, and yes, I see that Mr. Dreesen is headed over there to get some watering too—

**A voice:** I'll have a cookie—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. James Lunney:** I do have a question for you, but by way of a comment, I am serving on the health committee. Health is a passion for me. I was also on the environment committee. It was Mr. Dreesen, I believe, who mentioned that farmers, duck hunters, and our recreational fisheries people and so on are the people who are really our ultimate and first conservationists, because farmers engage with the land. Also, you're growing things, so you engage with nature. You have to nurture nature to be successful.

What I want to throw out there is that with 80% of our population being urban, on the environment committee I have to tell you that we're very concerned about the disconnect, a whole generation of Canadians who aren't connected to nature, who probably think that fish comes in fillets and chicken comes in wings and drumsticks and so on. If you gave them a whole bird and they had to pluck it or something, they wouldn't know where to begin, nor would they know how to fillet a fish. That's a big concern to the Government of Canada, actually. Also, utilization of our national parks is going down.

It seems to me that the young people... Where we are, we don't have a lot of farming. There is some dairy and we have some poultry production on the island and so on, and hay, but there's not a lot of agriculture. Increasingly, we have some vineyards developing on the island.

I know that the 4-H clubs really do help connect people. It was mentioned earlier. I think that you young farmers, your families, and the people whom you interact with have a real opportunity, let's just say, and perhaps a way to serve the community, by helping to engage with urban dwellers and tell the farm story. Maybe there is something the federal government could do to help in that process—or governments at all levels, perhaps—because there's a real need for people to engage with nature. I think your story is one that people do need to hear.

I want to see if that provokes some thought and maybe some responses from you.

I'll put one other thought out here. We do a lot of talking—at least in British Columbia—about a 100-mile diet and eating within 100 miles of home. We do import a lot of food from elsewhere, and from a long way away in many cases. With transportation costs being what they are, or if there were interruptions in travel for whatever reason, we're concerned about making sure that we can produce enough food locally. I'm wondering if you are aware of barriers to that being a reality in your communities.

I'll just throw those comments and questions out there for you.

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** I can speak to the opportunities to communicate with urban dwellers, as you say, and with young people within our country.

The Agriculture in the Classroom program is a wonderful opportunity. If you have an opportunity to support that organization, I would highly encourage you to do so. That group is also a collaboration from across the country by various organizations. Some provinces send a government representative. Others send representatives from their federations and so on.

That group is organizing and creating materials that can be used within the classroom. As a matter of fact, the upcoming week is Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week across the country. Farmers will be going into classrooms with the same book across the entire country to talk about what it's like to be a farmer. They will leave resources in the classrooms for teachers to use with their students, all aligned with the curriculum within each province. Agriculture in the Classroom is a wonderful opportunity to support that initiative.

• (1635)

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** There's something we're doing as individual farmers. Mr. Shipley mentioned Andrew Campbell, who started the hashtag #farm365 for Twitter, which has just taken off. He's sharing a picture of his farm every day of the year so he can get the message out to people about what he does on his farm, uncovering what's behind the farm door. We're not hiding anything.

I totally agree with you on the urban disconnect. In British Columbia, the BC Chicken Growers' Association has a Poultry in Motion educational trailer. It's a trailer that we take out to fairs. It was at the PNE, Pacific National Exhibition, the last couple of years, and we take it to schools.

It's basically a trailer that looks like a barn. The sides flip up and then you have the inside of a real chicken barn. We can't bring people to our barns because of biosecurity and we don't want to have the disease risks, so we bring the barn to them. The disconnect is so bad that last year at the PNE, I was manning this trailer and a woman my age came up to me and said, "You know, I know beef comes from cows and pork comes from pigs, but where does chicken come from?" I was so blown away that I said, "That's why I'm here". This is bad. Commodities are doing a great job of trying to promote that message to consumers about where their food comes from. I know that the British Columbia Dairy Foundation also has the dairy classroom, in which they actually show young urbanites, or just urbanites in general, how they milk a cow, because they've never seen it done. They even try to give them a chance to do it. That's one way we get the message out.

To the other side of your question about what the barriers are, I know that in British Columbia we were having some issues with our domestic producers using rail transport to get grain to us. On Vancouver Island, I think they were within three days of being out of grain stocks for their poultry, so that was a serious issue for them. That's being alleviated now, but it's basically being done through transporting by trucks, which raises the cost to our producers. That's another barrier with regard to our competitiveness with other countries.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Were you putting in a plug for rail on Vancouver Island? I'm just asking. I've been working on that for a while.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Mr. Keddy to wrap up this part.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** I'm not trying to be the devil's advocate here, but I can't help myself. With all due respect to Mr. Lunney, I really think you folks were terribly polite in not taking him up on the 100-mile diet. Agriculture in Canada depends upon exports. Farms are getting larger—we know that—and all the great things that happen in small agriculture are fantastic, and good for them and for the little farmer markets that are around. But you folks can't survive with a 100-mile diet, and the country can't, and we can't close our borders either interprovincially or nationally. If we want strawberries in December, they're going to come from Mexico. We just can't do it, so I'd like you to revisit that.

With full respect to what's going on locally and in many of the smaller operations, and the fact that they go to the farmers markets on the weekend and they're buying locally, good for them, but there is that whole other aspect of agriculture.

You're still being polite.

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** I think it's important to note that we have some very distinct regional differences across the country. You have groups in B.C. that love the 100-mile diet, and they have farms around them that can supply that. In the west with our grains, it's just not going to work. Quebec and Ontario can definitely work with some of that, but they want to be big enough and supply internationally and export. That's occurring across the country. The Atlantic region is very unique. One of the biggest pushes in the Atlantic region right now, which is building my business and the businesses like mine in the horticulture sector, is local movement.

I think it's important to remember that there is variety across the country. A lot of regional aspects need to be considered, from funding to research, to the fact that we need to export and we need to have large farms, and we need to have medium-sized farms, to the fact that the needs of those different farmers are very unique.

I think it's important to note that my peers have a desire to export. They may have a desire to meet the needs of the 100-mile diet. Others are going to be working on smaller farms. We're all farmers, small and large, and we all support the economy. One in eight jobs in the country is related to agriculture and agrifood.

So to your point, definitely we want farms to be large enough to be profitable. We also want to support the regional opportunities that exist. In the Atlantic area, regional and local aspects are very helpful to us in our economy.

• (1640)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** That's a great answer.

You need to keep her.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** My final comment is to say thank you to all of you for coming in today and sharing your experiences as young farmers with our agriculture committee and to also thank you for the job you're doing. Take it seriously, because in that whole disconnect that James was talking about between urban and rural, the importance of educating the public on safe food and science, science-based farming, is absolutely essential to your future. Thanks for what you do.

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

One of the things about being chair of the committee is that usually I don't get to ask many questions, so I'm going to take the chairman's privilege, if that's okay. I have two or three quick questions.

Kerry, in your opening, you talked about the ability to share the experience. I have to think that this has to be one of the strongest things that can happen in the involvement, the building up, and the encouragement to one another as farmers. Do you do that in any sort of formal way, where you will take it regionally and sit down with different organizations, and not all grain farmers and not all chicken farmers? If you do, how do you build that confidence and trust among each other so that you're not just sharing the general stuff? A group that I know started out and have it right down to where they actually share all the fine details of their operations, because they've built this incredible trust among each other. They share the good things and the bad. Is there any part of the program that does this?

Succession planning I think is likely one of the most critical aspects in terms of the industry itself. How do we move that generational asset from one to the next? It hasn't changed in 40 or 50 years; the numbers have. They're the same issues. Mr. Dreeshen talked about land values, and he's absolutely right. With regard to that, do you set up a sort of professional direction and seminars around that to invite not just your own but to reach out through the commodity organizations and other farm organizations for them to come in? What I'm finding when I talk to some of the succession planners is that it's a huge issue, and if you don't start your succession planning until you are 50 or 60 years old—and many don't—it becomes a huge financial quandary.

The last question I would ask is in terms of agriculture and the opening of markets. I think that in Canada we've recognized this in terms of our growth and our strength in many things, but I'm going to talk about agriculture, because I believe that agriculture is the foundation on which every free trade agreement is built; I really do. That said, do you have some thoughts about it? One of the things is open markets. I think that we as a government also have an obligation to help access those markets. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about what we might do to help improve that and to help you as the coming-on farmers who are our next generation. Some of you may be in this position of making regulations or legislation some day, but you could help us in terms of some of your thoughts in getting better access. I know there's the transportation issue out west. I guess I'm trying to work around taking up all the time on that one.

I'll leave those quick three questions out there, and anyone can jump in, please.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** You took a lot of time, Chair.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Not as much as you did, actually.

Go ahead, Guenette.

**Ms. Guenette Bantz:** I think I can speak to the succession planning and how we are addressing that concern. As I mentioned previously, at every national conference and at the provincial level there is a lot of discussion and there are a lot of professionals coming in to encourage succession planning. We have some great companies out there, such as FCC, Farm Credit Corporation, that are offering the service to support farms in their transition phase. Our role is to encourage young farmers and get them to understand the process and the need and to support them in the process so they can talk to each other about how their families are dealing with it.

It takes great amounts of funding to deliver succession planning in as in depth a way as we would like to; however, we do support it, and we deliver it as best we can at the provincial and the national levels.

You've said that this problem has been around for several years, and I think the reason we are making ground is that, as I said, we're working with our young farmers, and we're also preparing for our families. We're starting to address it earlier instead of waiting until our dads are 60 to talk about it.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Does anybody else want to jump in?

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** On your first question about how we deal with things from the different commodities and how to gain that trust, I think just coming to our conference and networking with each other and learning that we all have this strong passion for agriculture, that's where we gain the trust to share that information with each other. While it may not be very specific, as it's generalized to farms, it's easier to do that sharing of information when you're from the same commodity. You can be more specific with your targets of whatever you're growing or producing. As part of our national event, we do round tables where we discuss all these issues as young farmers.

On your last question, about the issue of opening markets and such, that would vary per commodity. I'm a poultry producer, which is also a supply-managed commodity. Without having the supply-managed industry in Canada, we probably wouldn't exist as poultry producers. The United States is so large; there are farms in there that are bigger than all of Canada's. Having that assurance of a fair cost of production model that provides me with a fair return is something that I as a young farmer do see definite benefit investing in.

**The Chair:** Larry, you may have something in terms of the free market part.

**Mr. Larry Spratt:** I'll first answer your two questions and kind of tie them together.

For succession planning, you mentioned meeting as a group, as individuals, and provincially we did. We had one where there was succession planning. We actually had an adviser whose job was to facilitate between the two generations, and we were able to talk about differences. For instance, my dad basically was able to just give me the farm; there were no questions. But for a friend of mine, he and his dad would fight over it. His dad literally threw a hammer at him one time. They were fighting so much they went for two weeks through harvest without talking to each other. But through this group, he was able to call me and ask how I was able to work with my dad. Communication is the big thing.

In terms of the open market, you mentioned transportation. It's just the accessibility. Right now where we grow, in northern Saskatchewan, we had an opportunity with Quaker Oats, for example, in the U.S. They wanted to buy as much oats as we could produce in our area, but we just couldn't get the product to them. They went somewhere else and we missed out on almost a dollar more a bushel for us as producers. On our farm that would have been an extra \$200,000, which would have helped out. But it just was not there for us. We couldn't get the product to them and we missed out.

**The Chair:** Yes. Some of us met with some of the oat folks the other day.

I've eaten up my time now, colleagues. Rather than go down into the third round, I'll start back at the one that gives Mr. Eyking a chance to have another five minutes.

Madam Raynault, you have the first five minutes, but Mr. Eyking is in behind you.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I may, I'd like to say that I disagree with what my colleague Malcolm Allen said about making older farmers retire. I disagree because there is a bit of a contradiction here.

The land is part of who we are. When I travel from Ottawa to Joliette and see producers working in their fields, I'd like to be in their shoes. So I don't agree with Mr. Allen.

That said, Mr. Lacoste, you mentioned earlier that people don't know where food comes from, and that's true. I spent some of my youth in Montreal. Our neighbours didn't know where food came from. They visited a farm and were surprised to see eggs there. They saw chickens laying eggs. Food obviously has to come from somewhere. People should be informed about what they eat and about the source of their food. Steak doesn't magically appear at the grocery store.

Here's what I would like to know. How do you see the rural community in 10 or 20 years? Let's hope that it won't be too crowded by cities. Each of you can answer this question. You have only five minutes, which isn't very much time.

How do you see that community over the next 10 or 20 years?

• (1650)

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** That depends on where farms are.

I am located about 30 minutes away from Montreal. Since the city is growing and the pressure from property taxes is huge, I am not sure whether I will still be able to be a farmer in 20 or 30 years. There is also a lot of land speculation. People buy land and farms for purely speculative purposes. That is a huge issue for the next generation of farmers, and it really creates a barrier for those who want to go into agriculture.

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Yes, indeed.

I live in Joliette, but I occasionally go to Repentigny. You can see where all the farms used to be. Today they have been replaced by houses. There is less and less space for us to grow our vegetables and fruits during the summer. We are eating food that comes from elsewhere.

Would anyone else like to speak to that? How is that situation perceived by the rural community?

[*English*]

**Ms. Danielle Lee:** I think nowadays when you look at a rural area, many of the rural people still do not have that farm connection. Our idea of what a rural area used to be is that they had some connection to a farm, whether they were involved in the agriculture industry or something along those lines. I think now when we look at our rural areas many of those people aren't connected to farming and they don't know where their food comes from.

Even when we look at our own agriculture industry, our farms have become a lot more specific in what we produce. There's even opportunity within the agriculture industry to educate one another.

That's what CYFF, the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum, does. We're able to learn from one another and what we do on our farms to be able to represent the agriculture industry as a whole. As farmers, yes, we do need to educate people. It's not just our urban people; it's our neighbours in our rural areas. You might be on a farm and you might have a neighbour next door who isn't farming anymore and they don't know what's happening.

For instance, where our farm is located, we probably have 20 neighbours around us, and one is a farmer. There's a huge opportunity to educate those people and work with them, too. They like seeing our cows in the field, but they don't want any...you know, when you spread your manure or something like that. You have to work with them and I think educate them, even if they are in a rural area.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** In 2013, I went on an agricultural tour of my riding.

That helped me see that farmers no longer operate in the way our grandparents did, but it's still a very interesting field. One of the concerns farmers have is whether their children or grandchildren will be able to take over. That's a major concern for them.

Would anyone else like to comment and tell us what they think the rural community will be like in 10 or 20 years' time?

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Spratt:** I'll make a comment here.

In terms of the board, I'm probably from the smallest town here. There's a trend in our area that people are going back to what it was like in the 1920s and 1930s. Everybody has a cow, or a couple of cows, and some chickens. I think it's more about uncertainty. Is it worth everything to...because who knows what can happen? For instance, where Kerry is in B.C., with bird flu or something like that, people are more concerned.

We were talking about the 100-mile diet. In our area there's a kind of cohesion with neighbours. We have the cattle and the other guy has pigs. We buy a pig from him and stuff like that. It's almost like a trend for when everybody back in the day used to have some chickens and a pig. You might not literally have them on your farm, but you might be teaming up with somebody else.

But I'm from a small town, and that's what I see it as. It's different for Danielle, who's outside Calgary, or in other areas like that.

• (1655)

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

Mr. Zimmer, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I have a couple of other questions. We as a committee went down to Washington last year to talk to them about the COOL agreement. I went down there before, too, with a U.S.-Canadian parliamentary group to discuss COOL. We had support from the vast majority. A lot of them understood what the issues were.



You said that your organization has been down to visit our U.S. cousins. Do these kinds of topics come up, and do you speak to them?

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** Yes, we do. COOL is definitely a hot topic. Most of the feeling we get back from Young Farmers & Ranchers is that they are basically on our side. Some of the southern states do have problems with the Mexican cattle. That's a large concern. All the northern states do so much trade in beef back and forth, bilateral trade, with Canada. The last lobbyist I spoke to down there in Nashville brought up something about chicken and pork, but that's actually not really much of a concern at COOL.

A lot of it is education: they just really don't know.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Right. Absolutely.

**Mr. Larry Spratt:** I don't know if you're familiar with Denver's National Western Stock Show.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I'm not.

**Mr. Larry Spratt:** It's the biggest stock show. I had the opportunity with AAFC to go down there. We met with some cattle producers from Colorado and the area.

We were sitting there one day comparing numbers, and they were astonished. They want our Canadian cattle. Their feedlots are sitting empty.

In northern Saskatchewan, we can raise the cattle. We were comparing costs and they were amazed. We can put 50 cow-calf pairs on 160 acres. They can only put three or four. But what hurts us is feeding them in the winter.

They were saying, "Why aren't you guys growing all the cows and then they should be coming south?"

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Right.

**Mr. Larry Spratt:** He wishes he could take his own truck and bring them down. Most of the producers we were talking to want our cattle.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** It was the same when I went to some of the western states. I think the one group of states completely understood it. There was unanimous support for what we were saying, because they understood the problem, but sometimes issues like this do get politicized, and that's what we ran into in Washington.

As a committee, we're all supportive of dealing with COOL and helping our farmers have access to the market once they have a fuller understanding of it. You guys do. We're preaching to the converted again.

I want to talk to Kerry about CETA and the benefits that could potentially be realized. Initially the Canadian Cattlemen's Association brought their concerns about this new market to us. There are definitely some regulatory differences in comparison with the way we normally do business selling cows to different groups. But we saw the tide shift, and they realized it was a huge opportunity. We saw that with dairy too. There is potentially a large market waiting there.

There's a bit of concern, too, because it's a new era. These markets, again, have their own different regulatory issues, let's say.

Kerry, from your perspective, especially as a poultry producer, have you seen that as an opportunity?

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Personally as a poultry producer, I think that every country has its own protectionist way of protecting its borders. If it's not through tariffs, it could be through insisting that meat from a country be cooked to 500° before it comes in. That's an exaggeration, but I know there are things like that out there. They may have just closed the border for different reasons.

In Canada, when we produce for our country, we have a good supply management system. We don't do too much export other than for our market development programs. For a while there was basically no need for dark meat in Canada, so we created a market development program. You obviously can't grow a chicken with just white meat; you have to grow the whole chicken, so we were allowed to grow the whole chicken and export some of the dark meat through an export program.

Our costs of production in Canada compared to those in other countries are significantly higher. That's how it is in Canada. Most things in Canada are 20% higher than in other countries. Our imports are higher, and we have high standards of production through our on-farm food safety programs and our biosecurity programs. Our animal care programs are the highest in the world. For us producers, attaining those things costs money.

Being able to compete with other countries that don't have those programs does not benefit us as poultry producers, because it's hard for us to do it as cheaply as they can without those programs.

That being said, I'm not opposed to trade deals that can benefit other producers in our country, because we've made multiple trade deals in the past without sacrificing our supply-managed industries.

● (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Zimmer.

We'll now go to Mr. Eyking, please, for five minutes.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Kerry, don't let Mr. Allen go near that cellphone. He'll shut your vents, and he'll shut the fans off, and you will be in big trouble. It takes one button. I know. My brother has egg-laying birds, and it's pretty scary when you have 20,000 birds and something gets shut off.

Farmers are the largest landowners in the country when you look at it, so when things happen with climate change, they impact you big time. Sometimes that's advantageous.

My first question is what opportunities not involving producing food do you see? I mean things like wind energy or agritourism or... What do you see? You're talking to farmers right across this country. What are farmers doing, and what are young farmers looking at besides producing food with all the land they have and the opportunity they have?

**Ms. Kimberly Stokdijk:** In the province of Nova Scotia, we do have some initiatives for biodigesters to generate power. There are some feasibility studies going on regarding wind. There are some opportunities in the east we're looking at through agriculture.

The regulatory burden makes it very difficult to step into that arena. Some would say outright that they don't think farmers should be involved in that. They don't understand that farmers are not just entrepreneurs, but we're also scientists and professionals, and we have done our homework. Across the world farmers are involved in these sorts of technologies.

There are some opportunities. There are some challenges and hurdles as well.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Are there any other big things they're doing on the farm besides producing food?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** Perhaps I could step in here.

Research is one big thing. A lot of the farmers I know take part in research with seed manufacturers, or even with agribusinesses or whatnot, to produce top-notch, quality products. But there has been a lot of decrease in research throughout Canada. That's a big issue. Once we start falling back in our capacity to produce as compared with our neighbours down south.... If research is not done to a higher level, we're falling behind. We're not as competitive with our neighbours down south. It's hurting us.

I mean, take the grain commodity, Larry's area. If we can't produce that many bushels per acre, we're not going to be as profitable as we were.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Just on that, what do you see in terms of the federal government initiating a program? Do you see more research stations? Do you see more investing in partnerships with companies, farmers, and even your buyers? Is that what you see: having that kind of input in research?

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Lacoste:** It's a great question. I'm no expert in that field, but there are a lot of research farms throughout Canada. A lot of research is being done by manufacturers in privately owned companies that could definitely benefit from numerous advantages. Farmers could benefit from partnering with those companies and helping them out.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Okay.

My second question deals with your app. I think that's the thing you're applying to the federal government for. Can you tell me more about it? Explain how it would work and how it would reach farmers right across Canada, and maybe not just young farmers but any farmer. Can you give us a run-through of how you would set it up and what it would look like? I'd like to hear an overview on that.

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** Absolutely. We're really excited about this project moving forward, because we know that having an app at the fingertips of all ages of farmers will really be beneficial.

We know that a lot of programs out there are available to support agricultural producers in general. Particularly we're focused on young farmers. By having the app, we're hoping, with our scope of project, to put together a plan that will outline how we connect our producers of every commodity to the support that is out there. How do we encourage our young farmers to address key business tasks

that need to be looked at on a regular basis? Through the app, there will be several components where we're connecting people to other organizations for resources and support, and these will be commodity-based. If you have a question, this is how you can reach out and get that support as quickly as possible.

Our app will be a three-year project. A lot of great things will be added to the resource as we develop and grow it. Initially, it is to do the connecting and to support the learning. It's also just to use the technology that young farmers are using to encourage them to continue to do what we're supporting them to do.

• (1705)

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Let's say you have a broiler farm and you're trying to reduce your energy. I don't know; would you press the app and indicate what it is you're looking for, which would lead you in the right direction to find out about efficiencies in electricity or things like that?

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** Absolutely. We want to make it as broad as we can.

It's a project that we're really looking forward to taking on, but it will take some time to develop all those sections. Ultimately, that is the goal, that if you have a question as a beef producer, through that app and through the hub and the organization of the information you'll be able to get the resources very quickly at your fingertips to help you through that, and to connect you with people who will be able to assist you.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Even if you have a disagreement with your dad.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** These are discussions that wouldn't have happened 10 years ago.

Mr. Dreeshen, for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I want to come back to some of the things that we were talking about before.

Mr. Eyking mentioned it a little bit, on climate change and so on, but again I'd like to get the positive story out there on what we've done with regard to technology: the zero tills, the types of things that are done, and the carbon sequestration. People seem to forget.... I think it was 1908 when there was a prairie fire that went from Calgary all the way to the Red Deer River. When you can't control those things, you get carbon in the air. Those are the kinds of things that happened.

What did we do in Alberta? We have a grid system. We have farmers out there. They control the fires. They do other types of things, but we allow people to say that farmers aren't really doing their part. People don't realize just how significant it is and how we take technology and use it so that everybody is benefiting. Of course, we're doing it so that our own farms are going to prosper. It's the same thing with the GMOs and so on, when you look at the ways in which you can produce crops that are going to take less water, and how they're going to more specific types of herbicides so that you don't have to put on a lot of herbicide; it just has to be specific. You also can look at the energy that isn't required.

I go back to what I was mentioning before about the stories that you need to tell. I go back to the concept of marketing. Somebody mentioned it before. When I was a kid, I stayed away from the chicken wings. They were not something I was eating, but any time you go someplace now, that's the first thing people have in front of them. It is a case of marketing. It's so important.

There was a research study done in Red Deer by Red Deer College. They went through various commodities. I wish I had all of the different commodities for you, but I know that one of them was vegetables and another was fruit. I can't remember the third one, but the last one was canola. They asked for which of the four commodities people had concerns about genetically modified organisms. Well, canola was the last of the ones that they said were genetically modified. They thought the fruits were. They thought the vegetables were and so on.

People get caught up in this hype that comes out, and it destroys the type of work that you're doing. The chickens are big now because of genetics and so on. It is not the way.... You've probably seen some of the games that have been put out that try to demonize agriculture. I'm not saying it the way I told you that you should say it before, but we have to make sure that we talk about the positive messaging and what it is that we're doing.

I thank you so much for the great effort that you're doing there. If there's anything you want to add to that, it's fine, but otherwise I'll stop.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** You mentioned that the chickens are big because of good genetics and good clean protein in their feed, right? In British Columbia, actually, we have what's called the Chicken Squad. It's a marketing program that we started in British Columbia. Because of our Poultry in Motion educational trailer, we found that the number one message we were telling people and that they did not believe was that there are no steroids or hormones in Canadian chicken—

• (1710)

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** —and even with the fact that we would tell them it has been illegal in Canada since 1963, they still didn't believe us. We showed them the legislation. They still didn't believe us. We thought this was so outlandish that we said we would make something outlandish, too, and that would get their attention. We made a spoof movie trailer that's basically like *Bad Boys II*, the movie, mixed with chicken farmers.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** It's literally the Chicken Squad. They have flak jackets. I play the evil guy who pretends to inject steroids and hormones into chickens, and I have to run away from the squad. You can check it out on the Web. It's amazing. It has almost 750,000 views on YouTube right now, so we're getting that message out there about Canadian chicken and how it's a good, clean, healthy food source for Canadians.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** But you do know that other groups are doing the exact opposite, with the attempt to—

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** Exactly, and that's why I'm putting it out there. It's sad when you go to YouTube and see our video and the next

thing is some Tyson farms exposé. Well, just because they think that's what's happening.... I mean, there's literally a video camera and a guy outside a silver barn, not knowing what's inside there. But we're trying to debunk those myths by doing this.

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

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

We're going to Ms. Brosseau, please.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I've been on the ag committee for maybe two years. I'm not from an agricultural background at all. One of the first trips we went on was to Cargill.

Mr. Zimmer, were you there?

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I wasn't there.

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** I was there.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Francine, you were there. It was quite something to visit that plant and see how the animals are treated, and the workers, and to see the whole thing. I've learned very much and I think I've learned a lot more again today. You guys have been amazing at this committee.

I've only been on this committee for about two years, but in 2010 there was a study done on young farmers and obstacles and the future of agriculture. Are any of you aware of this study? Have you had a chance to see it? There were 13 recommendations. Yes? No?

**Mr. Paul Glenn:** No.

**A voice:** I haven't, no.

**The Chair:** We could make sure that Kerry gets it.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I think it would be a really good idea if you actually had that, and we, as members of Parliament.... I know Malcolm was part of that tour, but I don't know if anybody on the other side was. I think it would be really good if we actually looked at the study and read the recommendations and then see where we are on this.

This has been amazing. I've learned a lot.

I want to make sure that we are as efficient as possible. I know this was an idea from Mark. I want to thank him for bringing this up at committee, and everybody for their work today. I think it would be important to see where we are with the 13 recommendations, what has been done, what could be done. We've talked a lot about problem solving, and I'm sure there are some problems that haven't really changed since 2010.

I am wondering if we could maybe do a round table if there's somebody who hasn't had a chance to speak very much.

Are there any recommendations or more wisdom that you'd like to add? I don't have anything else. I want to sincerely thank you and maybe leave some more time for you. I know that we parliamentarians like to talk and sometimes hear our own voices, but I want to leave you with the chance to wrap it up.

**Ms. Guenette Bautz:** Thank you for that.

We would be more than happy to have a copy of that study. We would absolutely be more than happy to continue discussions as often and as regularly as we can. We do believe that we are a unified team and together we will stand more strongly than if we are divided.

The Canadian Young Farmers' Forum welcomes all the opportunities to collaborate and work with you on any projects moving forward.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. As I said, we'd love to have a copy of that study.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Great, thank you.

I think Mr. Lunney had some questions.

**Mr. James Lunney:** No, I'm good.

**The Chair:** We do have a little business to do right at the end.

Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I believe Mr. Froese said he was going to inform the committee of the weight of his birds.

**Mr. Kerry Froese:** I did, but as an order of respect, I did shut my cellphone off.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** You're one of the few who does that, sir. Congratulations to you.

**The Chair:** We do have a little business, and I have a sense that when this part ends it will take a minute or two before we get back just to say goodbye to you. But before I do that, I want to tell you that right now we're studying interprovincial barriers. I think we all understood that there were some interprovincial barriers, but I'm not so sure we understood the complexity and the number of regulatory barriers in front of us.

I made a comment the other day that it's a bit like having barriers on steroids just trying to move products within our own country.

In terms of innovation and research, Bill C-18, the agriculture growth act, will be coming to fruition very soon. That is going to be one of the largest steps forward for agriculture with regard to plant breeders' rights and UPOV 91, etc., so I look forward to that.

With regard to that, I think as a country we can make great strides in research partnerships by involving as many partners as possible in the research and in moving this great industry forward.

I have to tell you that I think this app initiative is quite something. I sort of interrupted, but this would never have been a discussion 10 years ago and maybe not even five years ago. I've farmed all my life, but I think it tells all of us and the young people who are coming along that there is an excitement about the agriculture industry that I'm not so sure I've seen for a long while. Sure it has been profitable, and any industry should be. But we also recognize that there are valleys and hills in this industry. There isn't one of you who could not sit down with the CEO or the CAO of any advanced technology company or any business in this country and have a serious business discussion. That's the way it is. I think for many years this

agriculture industry was looked at as farming. Kerry said, "Well, I just farm". We don't do that. That's not it. It's actually the most significant industry in this country.

Why is that and why are we doing our trade agreements? It is because there isn't a country that is not interested and that doesn't know that it needs to have a safe supply of good quality food. Everything else gets built on top of that.

So I say thank you for those initiatives, and I encourage you, and likely you already do this, to become members of the chambers of commerce, become members of the business organizations in your community where there aren't farmers, so that they know that we have business people and leaders like you in them, wherever you can do that. We have a great industry. We have so many positive things to talk about in this industry, and I look forward to hearing about those great things that come out of your forum as you promote the agriculture industry going forward.

I want to thank all of you from all of us for taking the time to be here. The timing worked really well. As I mentioned when Mark brought the idea up, it didn't take much discussion to move into the action part of inviting you. So thank you very much.

We'll take about a two-minute recess if we can and then we'll come back and quickly wrap up the business part.

• (1710)

(Pause)

• (1725)

**The Chair:** People don't have to leave. We're not going in camera. I just need to get members of the committee back here for a minute.

Folks, I'm going to turn the meeting over to Michel in a minute, because Madam Ruth Ellen Brosseau has been first vice-chair, and she's going to step down.

Mr. Allen may be the member that would be proposed for the position, but this is the time that I would step away and let Michel run the meeting.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean Michel Roy):** Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** I move that Mr. Allen be nominated as first vice-chair.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I second the motion.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Eyking that Mr. Allen be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Allen duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** We don't allow speeches, and I'm going to start now.

Anyway, folks, thanks a lot. It was a great day.

We are back at 131 Queen Street, and we'll see you when we come back. Next week is a break week.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Do we stay in this building?

**The Chair:** We're at 131 Queen Street, yes. It's good. It's exercise.

Thank you. Have a great week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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