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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, October 25, 2018**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat Finnigan**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Thursday, October 25, 2018

• (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)):** I want to welcome everyone to our shortened meeting this morning.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we're continuing our study of mental health challenges that Canadian farmers, ranchers and producers face.

We have presenters by video conference and teleconference.

With us this morning by teleconference, from the Manitoba farm and rural stress line, we have Janet Smith, program manager, and Kim Hyndman-Moffat, counsellor.

I think our video conference is not yet online. We will start with our teleconference.

Can you start us, Ms. Smith? You have up to seven minutes.

**Ms. Janet Smith (Program Manager, Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Janet Smith. I'm the program manager with the Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services. With me is Kim Hyndman-Moffat, a counsellor and trainer with our program. Together, we hope to provide the standing committee with a better understanding of our program and how it helps serve the mental health needs of farmers in our province, as well as identify needs, best practices, resources, gaps and recommendations.

The Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services—MFRNSS—is located in Brandon, Manitoba, the agricultural hub of the province. We are an off-site program of Klinik Community Health, which is located in Winnipeg. We've been in operation since 2000 and are funded by our provincial government's Department of Health. The MFRNSS offers free and confidential information, support, counselling and referrals for farmers, as well as rural and northern Manitobans. Counselling takes place over the phone and online. All staff have both professional counselling and farming backgrounds. We also do outreach and public education, and we run a volunteer training program and a monthly suicide bereavement support group.

The standing committee has heard from numerous stakeholders on the challenges facing modern-day farmers. Long hours, isolation, market fluctuations, financial insecurity, crop and livestock disease,

and weather are just some of the factors outside of a farmer's control. Farming is, by nature, a risky business, and farmers are no stranger to stress. However, when this stress goes for on a long time without resolution, it can turn to distress.

Recent research out of the University of Guelph has shown that Canadian farmers have high stress levels and are more at risk for depression, anxiety, and burnout than the general population. Farmers also have low help-seeking behaviours due to a variety of factors, including perceived stigma, a stoic farm culture, less access to mental health services in many rural areas, and lack of understanding of the counselling process itself and how it might help.

While no current Canadian research into farm suicides exists, we would argue that farmers are an at-risk group given their high stress levels, low help-seeking behaviours and access to lethal means, such as guns, pesticides and even tractor rollovers. Unfortunately, we in the ag industry know of many farm suicides that are not publicly identified as such.

• (0850)

**Ms. Kim Hyndman-Moffat (Counsellor, Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services):** The MFRNSS is a program run by and for farmers. Research conducted by both the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association in 2005 and the University of Guelph in 2016 concluded that when farmers reach out for help, it is of the utmost importance that the person is knowledgeable about farming. Our farm callers often start a conversation with two questions: "Is this confidential?" and "Are you a farmer?" We can answer yes to both.

In terms of clinical practice, the counsellors at the Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services bring with them a wealth of professional skills and education. All staff have received their crisis counselling certification through the American Association of Suicidology, have taken intensive crisis counselling and suicide intervention training, and have received regular clinical supervision through Klinik.

We have adapted and developed numerous resources pertaining to agricultural mental health. These include “Difficult Times: Stress on the Farm”, “Sleepless in Manitoba”, and a free app called “Calm in the Storm”. Our website provides information on our services and connects people to our live chat, which is one of our most popular and fastest-growing services.

Our pamphlet and help cards are distributed widely throughout our province, and we appear with our display or as speakers at agricultural and mental health conferences and trade shows. We are also active on social media. In short, we make every attempt to meet farmers where they're at, with messaging that resonates with them.

The committee has heard about many mental health programs and services for farmers across Canada. These include the excellent awareness-raising efforts by Do More Ag, the U of Guelph's research on agricultural mental health and their soon-to-be-released farmer mental health training, and the peer-to-peer support programs in Quebec, among others. While these are all positive programs, there is still a patchwork quilt of farm-specific mental health services across Canada, particularly when it comes to direct services.

In terms of crisis lines, the Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services has the only farm stress line in Canada that employs solely counsellors with farming backgrounds. Our toll-free number is limited to Manitoba callers and chatters.

Other challenges we face are largely due to limited resources: We are not a 24-7 service; we cannot provide SMS or text support; and we are limited in terms of marketing dollars and outreach.

**Ms. Janet Smith:** The Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services supports the recommendations laid out by Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton of the U of Guelph to this committee: namely, support for a Canadian network for farmer mental health, a federal funding stream for farmer mental health research, and evidence-based training programs for farmers and front-line workers.

We would add to this list the following recommendations: farmer assistance programs in every province that are modelled after employment assistance plans—and P.E.I. currently offers such a program—so that farmers can access in-person counselling by professionals with farming backgrounds; online and in-person peer support groups for farmers in each province; and a mental health app designed specifically for farmers.

Our main recommendation to the committee is for funding for 24-7 farm stress services—that would include phone, chat, and text—in each province across Canada, staffed by counsellors with farming backgrounds.

In summary, farmers want, need and deserve a range of mental health services that meet their unique mental health concerns. These services should be available to all farmers across Canada. They should be free, confidential and delivered by people who understand agriculture and the lived experience of the modern-day farm family. Among other programs, we desperately need a fully funded national farm stress service for Canadian farmers in crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. We welcome any questions or comments by the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Smith and Ms. Hyndman-Moffat.

Since we do not have a connection yet for the video conference, we will start with the questioning. When they join us, we can break —

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order before I begin.

If those witnesses join us after I have finished my turn, could we at least put one question to them while they are here? If everyone agrees, I will take a bit less time now in order to have more time later. I can use only five minutes now, so that we can put a question to the other group later on.

• (0855)

**The Chair:** That's fine. Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you very much for your testimony, Ms. Smith and Ms. Hyndman-Moffat.

Among our many observations over the course of our meetings—and you mentioned this during your presentation, Ms. Smith—is that there were a number of disparate programs from one province to another. Quebec handles things in one way, Manitoba in another, Prince Edward Island in yet another, and so on. In short, there are as many different ways to intervene as there are provinces.

It has come out from the beginning of this study that the federal government and the agriculture department do not have a true mandate in terms of farmers' mental health. What role do you think the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the federal government should really play? Should the issue of farmers' mental health be left to the provinces because they have the mandate to look after the health of their citizens? Is it necessary to have a national program in this area?

[English]

**Ms. Kim Hyndman-Moffat:** That's a great question. I must admit, I don't fully know all the ins and outs of the political system when it comes to budgeting and distribution of mental health dollars. That said, I do believe it may be a hybrid model, provincially and federally driven. We in the provinces know our issues best, so, at the very bare minimum, I think we should be consulting with the provinces about their specific needs and how the delivery should best take place. I think there is possibly a role for a national service whereby farmers from across Canada could call in to one central number and be directed to services within their regions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Why is it the federal government's responsibility to implement that kind of a service, Ms. Smith?

[English]

**Ms. Janet Smith:** I think the federal government can show leadership when it comes to the needs of Canadian farmers and work with the provinces to direct the service and make it happen. Without a needs assessment, we probably don't know the best model.

When we first started, there were farm distress lines across the country. Many of them were funded either by their department of agriculture or through a federation of agriculture. All of those programs, with the exception of Saskatchewan's and ours, have since gone away.

The sustainability of each of those provincial programs is really important to keep in mind. Our program is funded through the health department, so we are in essence embedded within the mental health services of our province and are less easily dismantled than, potentially, programs that are funded by independent, non-governmental organizations or departments of agriculture that have a smaller budget.

I don't know if I'm answering your question properly, but I think that a feasibility study, a needs assessment, could be done to determine the role of the federal government and the provincial governments.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** You are answering my question because you are raising a very specific issue: the role of federal government in mental health, taking into account different provincial jurisdictions. Should Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada implement standards and approaches?

That is the question the committee is asking itself after hearing a lot of testimony and many good experiences like yours. In your case, your hotline uses farmers and people who have training or experience in agriculture to respond to farmers' issues. That is an essential element because it is difficult for people to put themselves in farmers' shoes if they have never been involved in agriculture.

One of the elements we are talking about that I often bring up to people who are not involved in agriculture is that a farmer has nowhere but their farm to go after their workday. That situation is fairly unique. Some owners of small or medium-sized businesses may be going through the same experience, and they are also under a lot of stress. However, that is the norm with farmers.

In closing, Mr. Chair, you are reminding us that we adjourned the debate on the motion inviting the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to appear. I am wondering whether my colleagues have changed their minds on this and whether they would now agree to invite the minister to discuss that specific issue? Do you want us to take up that debate again?

• (0900)

**The Chair:** Do we have consent to resume the debate?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** It would appear that there is no consent.

Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I am not asking for a vote. I just want to make sure that the members from across the table do not want the committee to discuss this issue.

[English]

**The Chair:** Is there any desire go over that again, to debate the motion that was presented the other day?

No, there's no consent.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[English]

Mr. Longfield, six minutes is your time.

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

Thanks for the presentation from Brandon, Manitoba.

Thanks for the shout-outs to Guelph. My riding is Guelph, and I know that Dr. Jones-Bitton has been working on this a lot.

You've really keyed in on something, and Mr. Berthold was also keying in on it, which is the provincial jurisdictions versus a digital platform that goes nationally.

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada has been working out of Guelph with the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta on a digital mental health platform. We have bilateral agreements with most of the provinces on mental health, as part of the health accord.

I notice that you've limited the coverage to Manitoba through your 877 number. I was on your website looking at your platforms and service to Manitoban farmers. We have a massive problem. It goes across Canada, and it goes across sectors. Do you also limit your coverage to farmers, or can other people in Manitoba access mental health services through your organization and clinic?

**Ms. Janet Smith:** Thanks for the question.

Our name is Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services. Probably 70% of our calls are from rural Manitobans.

We are a provincial service. We are open from Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., according to the budget that we have. We offer both phone and live chat to all of those populations.

We get a lot of questions from people from outside the province about how to access our service and whether the toll-free number and our chat are limited to Manitobans, but that's where our funding comes from, so that's where the limitation is.

I do know that there's a need across the country. I wish we could fill it.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** How to scale this out? Canada covers six time zones.

You don't have 24-7 service, but B.C. could cover one part of the clock, and Newfoundland could cover another part of the clock if we were able to figure out how to coordinate provincial and federal jurisdictional issues. That's what I'm thinking.

**Ms. Janet Smith:** The models are out there.

Crisis Services Canada with their national suicide prevention service is doing some great work around suicide prevention, utilizing a model whereby calls and chats come into one central base and then are routed to the first available service in their network. That's one model.

Other models might be having farm stress lines in each province, or in zones or regions that manage, say, three provinces. Another model might be a national farm stress line or stress lines, given the linguistic diversity in our country—French and English, primarily—that would manage the calls out of a central base. It would be more like a Kids Help Phone kind of model.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** It looks like one of the real values that you're bringing to the table is having farmers also getting accreditation for crisis counselling. How do you recruit the farmers into that program?

**Ms. Kim Hyndman-Moffat:** I'm a volunteer trainer. We offer a three-month intensive crisis counselling program for people who have applied to take the training. We have extensive background checks, criminal record checks and personal reference checks.

They come in for an interview, and we screen them to see if they have a farming background and a desire to help people, to be good listeners, and to be empathic. For those folks who are going to go further and to answer one of our three crisis lines—that being the Manitoba farm and rural stress line—we want to ensure that they have a full understanding of the needs and issues that are facing farmers presently.

There's a lot of support for those volunteers who come on board. They receive a lot of excellent clinical supervision, and they're a really valuable part of the organization.

• (0905)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Terrific. Thank you.

This is my final question, because I have only a few seconds. How are you measuring success? Is it by the number of calls? Are you tracking whether people get better as a result of the counselling they are getting?

**Ms. Janet Smith:** This is a challenging thing to do with crisis counselling, because we may only hear from an individual one time. We have what we call familiar callers, who call us over a period of time, so we get a better sense of how they are doing.

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

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

Mr. MacGregor, do you want the full six minutes?

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** I'll see where it goes—

**The Chair:** Sorry, I think we have the video connection.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Roy, welcome.

We will immediately go to your presentation. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay (Researcher Professor, Masculinities and Society Network, Université Laval):** Thank you for inviting us. We sent you a PowerPoint presentation in French and were told that it has been translated and given to all the committee members.

To begin, we will tell you about us.

My name is Gilles Tremblay, and I have been focusing on studies on men and masculinity for 35 years. I led a team called Masculinities and Society, and I am now in charge of the new Pôle d'expertise en santé et bien-être des hommes au Québec, funded by Quebec's department of health and social services. I have a great deal of expertise in men's mental health, the link to assistance services and adaptation of services to masculine realities.

**Mr. Philippe Roy (Associate Professor, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Masculinities and Society Network, Université Laval):** My name is Philippe Roy, and I am an associate professor at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and at the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de la Maurice-et-du-Centre-du-Québec.

I wrote my PhD thesis on masculinity and farmers' adaptation to stress. My work was awarded the best PhD thesis award, in particular for its social relevance and the fact that I was giving farmers a voice. So it relates perfectly to today's meeting. My thesis also received an award of excellence for gender, sex and health research. As you can see, this issue relies on research, and we are very happy to see that the world of politics is also interested in it.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** How did we start taking an interest in farmers?

The Masculinities and Society team is made up of 30 researchers with partners on the ground, in particular at the Direction de santé publique de la Montérégie. When we consulted our partners in the beginning to establish research needs, one of the themes that emerged was the need to better understand farmers' realities, especially in terms of their psychological health.

It is in this context that Mr. Roy decided to write his thesis on that topic. We requested funding from colleagues in Australia, Great Britain and western Canada, to conduct a comparative study, but that request was refused. Nevertheless, we are pursuing our efforts, especially in relation to Mr. Roy's thesis.

We can give you the first findings of our studies and then share our recommendations, since time is fairly limited.

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** Among the sources of stress that have been identified is the paradox between the simplicity of farming in the past and the its complexity now, when a farmer can no longer do alone today what he was able to do before. We must also take into account very significant economic pressures, and a mistake is often made of focusing on a farmer's income without taking into account their spending.

The lack of social recognition is another problem. Farmers are people who work very hard to feed the population, which sometimes fails to recognize that. Let's also not forget the paradox of being your own boss and making your own decisions while having no control over certain determining factors such as globalization, climate change or trade agreements that have been dominating the news lately.

There is a second observation related to men, masculinity and rural settings. Farmers must deal with a series of paradoxes and contradictions. Here are three examples that do not align with hard work and another element.

Some farmers must choose between hard work and parental duties. For example, a farmer who works with his father tells him that he is going to pick up his daughter from day care. The father, offended, asks him why he is stopping his work to take care of children. The son wants to be an involved father like other men of his generation, but he also wants to work hard like his father has taught him. Also, what about the dichotomy between the value of hard work and hobbies? Farmers see on their Facebook page their friends who are not farmers talk about vacations, but they don't always have that luxury because they are taking care of living animals. Let's also not forget the opposition between hard physical work, and aging and wear and tear. It becomes difficult to maintain a positive identity in the context of that aging.

Our research brings us to a third observation, which is related to farmers seeking help. Hard work, the idea of masculinity based on strength and that work, sometimes lead to an exaggerated feeling of autonomy that prevents farmers from seeking help, from appearing vulnerable or admitting their lack of knowledge in a given area.

We have noted a significant gap between farmers who have consulted therapists in the past and those who have never done so for psychological reasons. People who have done it in the past become the best ambassadors because they are aware of the positive effects and results they have gained. Those who have never seen a therapist

show a lot of distrust and suspicion, and they question things. So there is a gap in how the masculine role is perceived. We sometimes hear that it is not very masculine to go to a therapist, but those who have seen one say that it is the responsible thing to do that helped them become more human.

*[Technical difficulties]*

● (0910)

**The Chair:** Are you still on the line, Ms. Smith and Ms. Hyndman-Moffat?

*[English]*

**Ms. Janet Smith:** Yes, we're here.

**The Chair:** We'll continue. Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor, with your five minutes.

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

Thank you, Ms. Smith and Ms. Hyndman-Moffat, for being patient and staying on the line with us.

I really enjoyed listening to your opening statement. I want to concentrate on some of the things the federal government already does. I'm looking specifically at Farm Credit Canada and the suite of business risk management programs. I think a common theme we've heard throughout the testimony at this committee is that farmers face a lot of uncertainty. A lot of this uncertainty comes in the financial arena, with commodity prices going up and down.

You have a lot of expertise in the farming community, and you certainly hear a lot of feedback. From your perspective, do you think that what Farm Credit Canada currently does, and the suite of business risk management programs... Are there any areas where there's room for improvement, specifically in the context of addressing the mental health of farmers?

**Ms. Janet Smith:** What we can speak to most directly is direct service for mental health for farmers. All the programs that assist producers when it comes to their financial world are very important. That is one of the primary issues that we hear on the line. It often has a financial seed that impacts the rest of their lives: their family life, their health and their well-being. Anything that can assist producers in weathering those financial storms and the ups and downs they go through is really important.

We're really not on the production side of things. We're on the human side of the equation when it comes to supporting producers, so we've come here today to talk about the fact that programs like ours work. We know we are reaching farmers where they're at. The fact that we have trained farm counsellors is really important to our callers and our chatters. We wish we could do more in terms of our hours of operation and offering texting support and in-person support if that were possible. Those are some gaps we've identified.

I'm not sure if I'm answering your question properly in terms of the role of FCC. All those lending institutions are important to our producers. Anything that can reduce their financial stress is important.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** Mr. MacGregor, our connection is back and we need to let our witnesses have their last minute. Then you can finish your time.

[Translation]

Can you hear me now, Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Roy?

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Very well. You have a minute to wrap up your presentation.

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** Our recommendations are global and interrelated: valuing agriculture; promoting mental health, especially in terms of social determinants; promoting gender-specific help; raising awareness among medical doctors, farm support workers and gatekeepers on the need for early identification; and adapting psycho-social services.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** We find those elements to be especially important. The services implemented are very worthwhile, but they're often only provided on a temporary basis. So we are struggling to maintain them, even though they are very promising.

**The Chair:** We will resume questions and answers.

[English]

We have three minutes, then one and one.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Professor Tremblay and Professor Roy, my question is for you.

You have conducted some fascinating research. In terms of the studies of masculinity and the stoicism that exists in the farming community, we've also had success in other professions—notably the Canadian Armed Forces and our first responders—where there used to be a culture of stoicism and manning up, just sucking it up and doing your job without talking about it.

Is there anything we have learned from the success in those professions that can be applicable to the farming community, so we are not reinventing the wheel?

[Translation]

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** I have worked with the Canadian Armed Forces in the past, and I have noticed similarities between farmers and soldiers. Both groups are trained to face adversity, in whatever form it may take. However, when they go through a relationship break-up, for example, those people are completely caught off guard.

So it seems essential to strengthen their human side and recognize that humanity even though they are farmers and they work hard. They're human, and they are men first, and farmers or soldiers second. So it seems to be of vital importance to normalize asking for help and to put forward identity models and important stories.

Do you want to add anything, Professor Tremblay?

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** The Canadian Armed Forces had the case of General Dallaire. That was a good example of difficult situations men can go through.

It is important to reach out to people and provide prevention programs. People may go through a separation. In Canada and in Quebec, that happens to half of all couples. What should be done in that kind of a situation? People should not wait until they are in significant distress.

Men need to be given tools and told that they must acquire psycho-social knowledge, just as they must now have knowledge in mechanics or in computers. That is part of the suite of knowledge they must have. Mental health is something that is often put aside. If things were normalized by saying to men that knowledge in mental health is part of normal knowledge they should have, it would be easier for them to embrace that and integrate it into their practices.

• (0920)

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** They must tell themselves that they are even stronger with help than alone. What is better, persistently trying to overcome your difficulties alone or seeking out the right resources, coming out of it quickly and regaining better control of your life faster?

[English]

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

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** The Quebec experience shows that dispelling the stereotype can also help a great deal.

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

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** In Quebec, the suicide prevention campaign “Demander de l'aide, c'est fort!” is especially noteworthy.

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

Mr. Berthold, do you want to use your remaining minute?

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Yes, thank you very much. I will be brief.

Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Your comments have been very educational and I am looking forward to seeing your PowerPoint presentation, which seems to contain many elements we have not had time to discuss.

You talked about preparing for a romantic breakup and all sorts of other things. That is a real problem in the farming world and in a number of other fields. It can be said that the repercussions are generalized among men who are not prepared for those types of situations.

The farming world aside, shouldn't each province provide tools to all young people to better prepare them to deal with those types of situations? That would be important. The agricultural world can be targeted, but that is a fairly generalized problem.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** Exactly.

Quebec women read a lot of magazines like *Châtelaine* or *Elle Québec*, which contain a number of elements of psychology 101, if I may say so, while men generally read *Aventure Chasse Pêche*, *VTT Magazine*....



**Mr. Luc Berthold:** There is also *Québec Science*.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** —but there are no elements....

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Those magazines often do not cover separation issues.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** No, there's not much about that in the magazines, so men often have a long road ahead of them.

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

[English]

Mr. Longfield, do you want to ask another question? You have one minute.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** I'm sorry. I wasn't quite ready for that.

**The Chair:** Do you want one minute?

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** No, I'll give it back to the floor. That's fine.

**The Chair:** T.J., you have up to six minutes.

**Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.):** I'll split my time.

Thank you, everybody, for coming.

I'd like to start with the Manitoba farm and rural stress line. Do you think there's a need to reinvent the wheel when we have organizations such as yours doing work on behalf of agricultural producers that could scale up to do something on a national level? Do you feel that if the funding was there, it would be a huge undertaking for an organization like yours to assume the role of doing something on a 24-7, 365-days-a-year basis?

**Ms. Janet Smith:** It would be very possible. Certainly we would entertain the notion. Currently, we are funded by our province, so we have to operate within that mandate.

As I mentioned before, a variety of models could be looked at, such as one or two national lines that service English and French. There could be a model that has a variety of farm stress lines within each province that are all connected. The third model would be farm stress lines in each province that operate very independently.

What we currently have is not working because we're the only one out there with the model that has trained professional counsellors who are also farmers. There are many gaps across the country, so it would be of benefit to do a needs assessment and to identify where the gaps are and what the best model is to meet the needs of producers in each of the provinces.

**Mr. T.J. Harvey:** Do you believe that if funding was not an issue and there was the ability of provincial and federal governments to work collaboratively with industry and organizations such as yours, the model would best be served independently in each province or as one organization located in an area where there is a tremendous amount of agricultural production so that the counsellors are in fact people who not only come from the agricultural industry but also have a really acute understanding of the issues that face agricultural producers?

● (0925)

**Ms. Janet Smith:** I think the easiest one to put together is a national line in terms of technology, staffing and all those kinds of issues. One of the benefits of having a line in each province is that they would know their region best and would be embedded in the issues and concerns of the producers in their provinces.

**Mr. T.J. Harvey:** Really quickly, because I want to turn the rest of my time over to Mr. Breton, do you believe that it's possible to operate an organization such as yours in a rural area as opposed to a large urban centre?

**Ms. Janet Smith:** I think it's best to be located in a rural area because you're going to attract the professionals and volunteers needed to run the line when they have lived experience.

**Mr. T.J. Harvey:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

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

I also thank my colleague. I don't know whether I will be able to recover Mr. Longfield's minute later on.

Mr. Roy, you got my attention when you talked about socially recognizing and valuing our farmers. I think that is one of the important elements. I hear a lot about that in my community.

Could you give us recommendations? Could you tell us what more the industry and government could do to give those people their confidence back? They are extremely important in our society and clearly represent a very important value for Canada. Could you give us some potential solutions to recognize them better?

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** I think that government organizations should adopt—if they haven't already—buy-local policies. For example, when a caterer is hired for an event, the government should make sure that the caterer uses Canadian suppliers.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** The government should promote that.

**Mr. Philippe Roy:** Often, it is enough to express some encouragement and recognition. Activities could be created for adding value to agriculture. A bridge must be built between Canadians and farmers. In the countryside, farmers feel like they are bothering people on the road when they drive their tractor, for example, when someone on vacation follows them in their convertible. That person is on vacation, but the farmer is working. Those kinds of situations anger farmers.

That should be recognized. It has to do with civility, but there is also a political aspect to it. The government must ensure that its organizations are highlighting the work of agricultural producers.

**Mr. Gilles Tremblay:** You may think of advertising and promotional campaigns.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** When I was director of human resources, we often told our supervisors and managers that the best recognition was expressed on a daily basis. That could mean a simple pat on the back, thanking and encouraging, for example, when the work has been done within a very short time frame. That was often the best way to ensure that our people were confident and felt that their work was being recognized. We understand very well that it is not easy for a farmer who often works alone, who is his own boss and has no superior to tell him he is doing excellent work every day.

Thank you and congratulations. Like Mr. Berthold, I am looking forward to reading your thesis.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's all the time we have.

Thank you, Ms. Smith and Ms. Hyndman-Moffat.

• (0930)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Roy, thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us this morning. We will certainly take your testimony into account.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Chair, could I just ask them what they think is the best remedy in terms of the consultation to set up, to send that in? I'm very interested in the rural part, and how the federal and the provincial would come together, just to help us, so that it doesn't become a bureaucracy as with gun control.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are you asking for them to send that in?

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

As you just heard, you could send us that information through our clerk. We will make sure that it is part of our study.

[*English*]

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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