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Chair

Mr. Pat Finnigan

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone, to meeting 143 of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have a short study on the African swine fever.

I want to thank our panel for coming over so fast on short notice. Of course, it is a very important topic and something that could certainly be of concern to our pork producers. It's good that we have you here.

Before we move on, I'd like to thank Kelsey Johnson. She's been a familiar face at our committee for so long and I just learned she has a new position with Reuters. Congratulations. We're going to miss you. I'm sure you'll remember us in your statements and you'll always have a good word for us, I hope, in the future. Thanks very much.

We'll start with our panel.

From the Canadian Pork Council, we have René Roy, Vice-Chair; John Ross, Executive Director; Audrey Cameron, Director, On-Farm Programs; and Gabriela Guigou, Manager, National Swine Health Service Initiative.

Welcome to all of you.

[Translation]

Mr. Roy, you have the floor for ten minutes.

Mr. René Roy (Vice-Chair, Canadian Pork Council): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is René Roy. I am a pork producer from the Beauce region in Quebec and the 2nd Vice-Chair of the Canadian Pork Council.

Thank you very much for inviting me today. I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which has shown leadership by agreeing to look into the issue of African swine fever.

African swine fever, or ASF, does not pose a problem in terms of food safety.

However, the virus does kill pigs and could destroy a growing and globally competitive industry valued at \$24 billion.

The pork industry generates more than 100,000 jobs both in rural municipalities and urban centres. The risk of losing their operations constitutes a very serious threat to the mental health of a good number of pork producers.

Canada exports 70% of its production, either as live pigs or pork products.

An outbreak of ASF would immediately close our export markets and, unless we can react quickly, lead to the decline of the pork industry. Canada's experience with bovine spongiform encephalopathy gives us a clear indication of what could happen. However, the situation in the pork sector would be even worse.

This disease is present in Africa, Europe and Russia and is currently spreading across China and Southeast Asia. The fact that both personal travel abroad and international trade between Canada and these regions is growing, and that the viral load is quickly increasing, has boosted the risk of ASF being introduced in North America.

Fortunately, all is not lost. Canada has a well-established and rigorous animal health monitoring system. Our producers know how to raise healthy pigs and have the support of various types of animal health experts, such as internationally renowned veterinarians and researchers. This system is also supported by a vast network of animal health laboratories and rigorous regulations, both at the federal and provincial levels.

• (1105)

[English]

Producers know they have a critical role. They have invested heavily in traceability, biosecurity, extension and research. They collaborate with their colleagues across Canada and work closely with their local government. They are also active at the international level.

In the case of ASF, producers are seeing the benefits of a close working relationship with officials at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada Border Services Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Global Affairs Canada. Together, we have taken some very significant steps to help prevent and prepare for ASF.

Pork organizations have developed a series of products highlighting the potential impact of the disease and the necessity of strengthened on-farm biosecurity. Producers are funding a Canadian Food Inspection Agency research project to develop faster diagnostic tests for ASF. The CBSA has strengthened its vigilance at the border and committed an additional \$30 million to increase the number of detector dog teams.

The CFIA has implemented new control measures to mitigate the risk associated with imports of potentially contaminated feed grain. Representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Global Affairs Canada and industry are working closely to secure zoning recognition agreements with key trading partners. These bilateral agreements are critical to mitigating the impact of a disease outbreak in Canada.

Perhaps more importantly, the commitment to co-operate has taken hold. Federal and provincial governments, producers and processors are all stepping up to address the challenge. The four cornerstones of an effective emergency management plan are prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Recognizing that investing heavily in preparedness and planning is the most efficient, cost-effective use of resources, we have focused our effort in these areas. Within this space, there remains much work to be done.

The pork sector believes there are four key priorities. The risk posed by wild pigs must be addressed. This invasive species must be eradicated. Biosecurity measures, both on farm and at the border, must be enhanced to prevent disease entry. Our traceability, biosecurity and surveillance systems must be strengthened to ensure they support rapid zoning and the reopening of our export market. The challenges of communicating with a wide range of differing stakeholders both before and during an outbreak must be addressed.

To date our response has simply been to roll up our sleeves and work harder with the resources at hand. Less important tasks are being pushed aside. Very few new resources, apart from detector dogs, have been brought to the battle. While this has yielded good results over the short term, it is not sustainable.

At its May 8, 2019 meeting, the industry members of the Pork Value Chain Roundtable recommended that a letter be sent to Minister Bibeau asking her to take immediate action to address the need for more resources, specifically to ask departmental officials to work with the pork sector to develop a funding proposal under the Canadian agricultural partnership program to address the priority issues and establish the pork promotion and research agency as a new source of long-term, private-sector funding.

The creation of the pork promotion and research agency has been a long-standing request of the Canadian pork producers. Check-off agencies are established under the authority of the Farm Products Agencies Act, which falls within the mandate of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food. A beef check-off agency was incorporated in 2002 and similar organizations exist within the United States.

In 2016, the Farm Products Council of Canada, which administers the act, recommended that the Government of Canada establish a pork promotion agency. Unfortunately, no action has been taken to date, and access to an estimated \$1 million in additional private-sector funds has been denied.

Much has been accomplished and much remains to be done. Canada can prevent and prepare for ASF. Armed with additional resources, we will protect the sector and ensure its continuity to provide Canadians with a readily available source of high-quality

protein and remain an important contributor to the Canadian economy.

I thank you for your attention. I, along with the Canadian Pork Council animal health team, would be pleased to address your questions.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roy.

We will now move to question period.

[*English*]

Monsieur Dreeshen, you'd be the first for six minutes.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Roy, you said there is some specific monitoring for feed grain. Are you speaking of feed grain, or are you talking about processed feed that would be coming in for the animals to eat?

Mr. René Roy: Go ahead.

Mr. John Ross (Executive Director, Canadian Pork Council): We're talking about both spaces and the risk is associated with either product. A processed feed like soy meal is different from what we would see with a whole grain, if we're just importing the soybean directly.

The import controls that the Food Inspection Agency has brought forward recognize those two risks in those two different spaces. If a product is properly processed in the exporting market, meaning heat-treated for the most part—so we're going to run a soybean through a mill and heat it—it will kill the virus. That product can be moved in with certification that it was in fact treated properly in the exporting country.

Secondly, if you're bringing in a whole grain, you would have to provide assurance to the Food Inspection Agency as an import condition that the product is going to be moved into a mill in Canada where it would be processed properly. The import conditions cover both of those aspects.

Where they may not apply and were not intended to apply.... We do import a lot of feed ingredients—vitamins, minerals, those sorts of things. There are some recommendations available on our website that we've made available to producers about storage times for those products and the temperatures at which they're stored. If that's done, that will help manage the virus load as well.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: My main reason for saying that is we have a very good supply of feed in Canada that we use for our hogs and so on. I understand that is specifically imported feed or processed feed from—

Mr. John Ross: Largely, it's organic feed that's being brought in.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I just wanted to make sure that people understood and recognized that we did leave that lie.

I have an article here that talks about CFIA working closely with North American partners and counterparts to harmonize testing protocols. What testing protocols are they using as they harmonize between Mexico, Canada and the U.S.? Do you have any information on that?

Mr. John Ross: You will have the benefit of Dr. Komal, who will be here in about 60 minutes. He'll be able to answer your questions specifically.

What we've seen and been most encouraged by is that when a suspect sample comes into a animal health laboratory, exactly the same testing protocol is being used in Canada and the United States, and I believe—Jaspinder will know better—being extended into Mexico. It is of critical importance to us that the animal health laboratories on both sides of the border are using exactly the same tests in exactly the same manner, if for no other reason than it enables some confidence in the tested results that come out.

Secondly, if we do get into a run, it provides you a little more access to get capacity that might not be there.

• (1115)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: On the point of the wild boar risk, the point was that we have to get rid of them. My question is: How do we do that? You will have to deal with other animal rights groups and so on, because there will be people saying that they're the same as people and all these kinds of things.

How do you propose going through that particular process?

Mr. John Ross: The eradication of wild boar is going to be a many-year process, depending on the province. I think the population is such in Quebec and Ontario that it might be eradicated quite quickly. They have a little bit more of an extensive range in western Canada. It's going to be a little more of a challenge. In your home province you got rid of the rats, so you're presumably going to figure out how to get rid of some wild pigs.

We're going to have animal activist problems regardless of what we do. When we're dealing with an invasive species and the harm that it is wreaking on the environment, we might have to set aside animal rights guys and think a little bit more about the environmental perspective in Canada. From our perspective, there is the disease issues that fall from wild pigs.

Eradication of them directly is going to require some new science. Quite frankly...and perhaps manage the populations a little bit easier. Clearly, running a bunch of hunters into the field and chasing them around is not going to get the job done. It'll take a little more of a sophisticated strategic approach to clearly identify where they are, get them trapped and take out the entire sounder, one at a time.

It will be a lengthy process for sure. In the interim, there are a number of steps that need to be taken in terms of how we do a better job at biosecurity with our smaller holdings—places that might have outdoor pigs—where you could see that interaction. I think there are some opportunities to improve there as well.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: As far as the rats are concerned, I've been around for a long time. I've never seen a rat. From talking to other people, I do know the damage that is done. The fact that the eradication has taken place is certainly worthwhile.

Mr. John Ross: Perhaps, more importantly, in Alberta they've actually managed to keep them out as well.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: We have our rat patrol, so we'll work on that.

Maybe CFIA would be the ones to speak to this, but the concern, of course, is that China can't ship any pork to us because the vaccination against FMD and so on. You can't really tell what's happening there.

When you have processed pork dumplings and that sort of thing, that kind of meat isn't supposed to be there, but how—

The Chair: Mr. Dreeshen, we'll have to wait. Maybe somebody will ask that same question.

Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen. Unfortunately, your time is up.

[Translation]

Mr. Breton will now have the floor for six minutes.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

Mr. Roy, you touched on what I want to ask you about. Which countries exactly are affected in eastern Europe and Asia? Do you know? After all, Asia is a large continent.

I imagine that China is one of these countries?

Mr. René Roy: Yes. However, Eastern European countries are mostly affected.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Really?

Mr. René Roy: Yes.

I will name a few from memory. The European countries affected are Georgia, Poland, Hungary, Russian, Romania and Belgium. There is a list that we could give you.

Mr. Pierre Breton: What about Asia?

Mr. René Roy: In Asia, China is affected. However, the disease is spreading to Southeast Asia.

Mr. Pierre Breton: China remains an extremely important market, and Canada's exports to China are already significant. Is that correct?

Mr. René Roy: Yes.

Mr. Pierre Breton: This may sound a little odd, but this situation could result in an economic benefit to Canada. Our main concern, of course, is to prevent this disease from entering Canada. That said, do you believe that the problems China is experiencing could result in our exports to China increasing? Do you think this could be an opportunity to be seized?

Mr. René Roy: We're already seeing an increase in exports.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Okay.

Mr. René Roy: There's another advantage, in that the value of the product goes up. This whole situation has created demand in China, increasing the value of Canadian product exported to China, which in turn has boosted the market potential.

•(1120)

Mr. Pierre Breton: Do you think that's because of the disease or just because Chinese demand for pork is going up?

Mr. René Roy: I'll start, and then Mr. Ross can take over.

To give you some context, based on official figures, we estimate that China has lost 15% of its pig population, primarily sows.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Fifteen per cent of all their pigs is a lot.

Mr. René Roy: It's huge. That 15% is equivalent to the total output of the United States and Canada combined. The scale of these figures is a little hard to imagine, but bear in mind that China is by far the biggest pig producer in the world.

Mr. John Ross: I just want to add that the amount of production capacity that China has lost exceeds total global pork exports. The loss is so vast that it couldn't be made up by all global exporters combined.

Mr. Pierre Breton: That's unbelievable.

I presume there would be significant repercussions if the problem reaches Canada. How confident are our hog farmers in the authorities right now? Are they confident that the outbreak won't reach our shores? That would be a catastrophe for them.

Mr. René Roy: I've discussed it with many producers, and I can tell you their anxiety levels are very high. You need to realize that we export 70% of what we produce.

If the outbreak reaches Canada, we'll have to shut down our exports for at least a few days, or maybe longer if we're not well prepared. What will we do with the animals that represent that 70% share of our production?

Producers are extremely worried. They're happy with the announcements that have been made about protection at the border, especially the announcement of \$31 million in funding to increase the number of detector dogs. However, we need a better traceability system, and we need to eradicate the disease vector, by which I mean wild pigs.

As you might imagine, there's a great deal of uncertainty and psychological distress right now at the thought that the disease could penetrate North America, through either Canada or the U.S.

Mr. Pierre Breton: How would you describe your current relationship with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CFIA, in relation to all the measures that have been put in place for this file over the past few weeks?

Mr. John Ross: Our relationship is absolutely incredible.

Mr. Pierre Breton: In a good way, you mean?

Mr. John Ross: Definitely.

Mr. Pierre Breton: That's great.

Mr. John Ross: Before I joined the Canadian Pork Council, I spent 30 years working at Agriculture Canada, as the department was called back then. Right now, its relationship with the sector is closer and stronger.

Mr. Pierre Breton: You're connected.

Mr. John Ross: We're more connected than ever. It's absolutely amazing. We have so many committees working on this file, and we

have a direct line of communication. We communicate our vision and views directly. So our current relationship with the CFIA is really strong.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Has the relationship grown stronger since the disease became a threat to Canada?

Mr. John Ross: There was already a solid foundation, but it's even better today.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Do you have a relationship with any farmers, other than pig farmers, who could be affected by this disease?

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Breton.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Didn't I have seven minutes?

The Chair: You had six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Breton: I'm sorry, Mr. Ross. Thank you for answering my questions.

[English]

The Chair: Quickly, I'd like to welcome Mr. Sheehan. He is usually quiet, and that's why I didn't notice him. Welcome to our committee.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): That's unusual for me, but....

The Chair: Now we will move to Mr. MacGregor, for six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much for appearing today.

I want to start with the wild boar issue. I was just looking at a map of their spread over the last 30 years, and it is quite incredible just how much of the Prairies they're now covering.

I know that if you were to unleash hunters, that wouldn't effectively deal with the problem, because wild boars are a nocturnal animal. They become sexually mature at a very young age and are usually quite hard to find.

I know they're causing a lot of environmental damage, but is the concern of your industry that they are a potential vector, should the disease ever come here?

•(1125)

Mr. René Roy: Yes. In terms of regulation, there is not much difference between ASF in a wild boar population or in the commercial population. You can imagine that for a pork producer, it does not matter where it happens—it can be in the forest—but there is an impact on us, too.

In addition, the vector is a pig, so it sheds the disease.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Are wild boars tested on occasion, when they are captured, just to make sure?

Mr. John Ross: I would add to René's two comments that the other challenge is that if we do get a disease among the wild population—not only ASF, because they are vectors for other diseases—how do you get it out? If we get it in the commercial population, we're reasonably convinced that we're going to be able to get rid of it. We can take down a barn of hogs. It's not a happy day; it's a very bad day for a lot of people, but it is possible to get the job done. If it gets loose in the wild population, I'm not sure how we'd get rid of it.

To your point, hunting is not going to get.... You'd shoot 70% to stay even, and it's not going to work.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That's right.

Mr. John Ross: In terms of disease surveillance of the wild pig population, one of the files we're working on with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is in on how we do that, and how we do it in a very systematic, coordinated fashion so that first, we do the job properly—there is no sense in trying to do half of it. Second, we need to be ready to respond if we do find something. This becomes another element of the discussion.

Testing, and how to do it—the physical test, and whatnot—is in place. To your point about the complexity of finding and trapping them, are there some sentinels we could use on the landscape that we could...? If we have pigs outdoors, and we know where they are and where they are processed, or harvested, could we use them as an indicator of the disease status of the wild population, given that there is interaction between the two populations?

Those sorts of things are in play, and, of course, Dr. Komal will be in a little better space for you on that.

Fundamental to that is: Where is the population you can focus on, so that your sampling procedures are appropriate for the risk?

Mr. René Roy: If I may add, what is important from the industry perspective is the lack of resources right now. We have devoted additional resources. Our staff is devoted to it. Producers are increasing their biosecurity, but resources are a key issue right now.

We would really like to see the government stepping in and helping us sort out some of these problems. We believe that PRA, the pork promotion and research agency, is a key point here. The agricultural partnership program is also something that can help a lot to address this issue.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That leads me to my next question.

You have been calling for the creation of a pork promotion and research agency for quite some time. Even in 2016, three years ago, during our current government's mandate, the Farm Products Council of Canada did submit a recommendation.

What are some of the reasons you're hearing from the government about why this has not yet been established?

Mr. René Roy: We've met with the minister several times since 2016 to ask about it. They were saying that there was a concern about trade relationships. However, it's something they have in the United States. Every time we sell pork, there is a check-off on our pork that we sell there. They use it for their research and promotion.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: So other countries would have a trade concern with us if we established this?

Mr. René Roy: That's what we have received as an answer. As well, beef has one, so we are still wondering why this file is lagging behind. We think we would certainly benefit from it.

• (1130)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: What are some of the concerns other countries would have if we had such a council? Is it that it would be an unfair advantage?

Mr. John Ross: Maybe I could start.

Quite frankly, it is largely a bilateral issue simply because of the volume of trade. We export 70,000 to 80,000 pigs a week into the United States. We export a billion dollars' worth of pork. All of that is checked off by our colleagues in the U.S. at the National Pork Board. Ironically, much of the research that's being done is funded by the National Pork Board in the U.S. On some of that research being done up here, we'd actually like to be able to contribute to the effort—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ross. I have to cut it off here and move to our next question.

Mr. John Ross: Oh, sorry.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Longfield, you have six minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Would you like to finish that sentence?

Mr. John Ross: I would just finish the idea that in terms of objections, we can't find any in the United States. When we speak with our colleagues down there, they look at us with kind of raised eyebrows as to why this wouldn't move forward in short order, simply because for probably 30 years we've been paying a check-off going south. They understand how it would work.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

The pork value chain round table just met again. Was that the first meeting on May 8, or is that something that's ongoing? What's the schedule of meetings for that council?

Mr. John Ross: The pork value chain round table actually started in 2003. There aren't many things you can think about where industry and government have met for 25 years.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes.

Mr. John Ross: I co-chair the pork value chain round table. It has been meeting routinely. It generally meets twice a year.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Does that tie in with the Americans or Mexicans in terms of North America? Is there a North American representation at some other council where items like those Mr. MacGregor was bringing up could be discussed?

Mr. René Roy: Maybe the forum.

Mr. John Ross: Yes.

Obviously, we did see the Canadian Food Inspection Agency bring forward the international ASF forum here. We meet fairly routinely, or at least we have in the past—we got a little sidetracked during the NAFTA discussions—with our colleagues in Mexico and the United States. The Canadian Pork Council and the National Pork Producers Council meet four to six times a year at various events. Twice a year we are at each other's board meetings for formal presentations.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Great. I'm sure there are collaborations.

Thinking about traceability, this committee studied the safe movement of animals. We looked at some of the risk factors in terms of trailer cleaning, taking animals on and off trailers, and how that increases the risks. We also talked about the animal rights groups invading farms and how that increases the risk in terms of food security.

You mentioned in your presentation a bit about risk management. I'm thinking of PigTrace and the PigTrace system that's in place, looking at real-time movement and things like dead-stock trucks, feed trucks, or utility and maintenance service vehicles. Do we have enough traceability within the system to account for any risks that might come in from either animal rights groups or from movement of pigs through transport trailers between Canada and the United States or other things?

Mr. René Roy: As producers, we are working really hard to make sure we inform the old system about traceability. I'll just separate it into two parts. Animal activists are one thing. With traceability, right now we are at a good level, but we want to increase it. Instant reporting would be really important, but it's a kind of 2.0 platform. We want to go there. We have discussions and we put money in it. The industry has too. We believe in it, so we put more money into it. But it's not that easy, because government right now is stepping aside from traceability efforts. It's important that government is helping us, because not only commercial producers but also backyard producers, who we're not discussing so much, are at high risk.

Another concern is the animal activists. Why can somebody break into a farm? Why can they steal pigs? Why can they go on a farm without any right to do this and not be charged criminally? There is a problem, and producers are really concerned about it. When can we stop this?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Especially in times like this when we're managing a very fragile system, or one that could potentially be fragile, the laws have to be enforced in order to protect Canadians and our farmers. With regard to the provincial regulations, I'm looking for any areas or gaps where there's federal and provincial jurisdictions over the management of our supply chain. Is there any area there that we need to be concerned with?

• (1135)

Mr. René Roy: I'll say a couple of words on the wild pigs.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Please.

Mr. René Roy: It's really complicated because of the intricate link between municipal laws, provincial laws and federal laws. It's really complicated to have a discussion at all levels when it's time to manage this kind of problem.

Mr. John Ross: Mr. Longfield, I would offer that we probably have enough regulatory authority across the federal and provincial jurisdictions. There might be spaces here and there that are questionable that I can't think of off the top of my head. Our challenge will be to be able to exercise that authority immediately and in the right sequence. There will be a little bit of a delay, for example, between when a disease is suspected and when it is actually confirmed where the federal government will have a space where it may have a challenge to fully bring its resources into the field, but provinces have some that should be able to get us going in the first day or two. I don't think our challenge is actually going to be on the regulatory side in terms of authorities. It's going to be the exercise of that authority in a timely manner.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'm thinking with regard to managing veterinarians and managing some of the services that need to come to bear.

Mr. John Ross: I did live through the BSE run. We actually found out that we could come very quickly into the game once the crisis hit —

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: We don't want to get there.

Mr. John Ross:—but we'd like to get there ahead of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ross.

[Translation]

Now over to Ms. Nassif for six minutes.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be sharing my time with my colleague, Mr. Sheehan.

My question is for my friend Mr. Roy.

If you raise pigs on your farm, could you tell us about it?

Mr. René Roy: Yes, but I'm not just a pig farmer. I also raise dairy cows and produce maple syrup. It's a medium-sized mixed family farm.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: What do you mean by medium-sized?

Mr. René Roy: It's a farrow-to-finish operation. I have 120 sows that I raise from birth to slaughter.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: There was an international ASF forum in April. Were you there?

Mr. René Roy: Yes.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Could you fill us in on what was said at the forum about ASF and its harmful effects?

Mr. René Roy: Earlier I talked about the four cornerstones, namely prevention, preparedness, response and, if necessary, recovery. We discussed those four cornerstones at the forum. There was a discussion involving stakeholders from around the world. Some of them had animals that had been affected by this disease, and they talked about what they were going through. It was really fascinating. We got to see how we could implement our zoning approach, if it comes to that.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You mentioned prevention, but there is no treatment or vaccine for ASF.

Mr. René Roy: No, there's no vaccine.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Then what do you think prevention would entail?

Mr. René Roy: Primarily biosecurity, like checking ingredients brought in from other countries. Another very important factor that hasn't been talked about much is backyard pig farming. I'm talking about people keeping a few pigs outside their homes over the summer. It's really important to make sure these people don't give the pigs their food waste, in case it contains contaminated meat. That's one of the critical points we're working on right now.

You've received several fact sheets that we handed out not only to farmers, but also to people buying a few pigs. The goal is to make them aware that they shouldn't feed their food scraps to the pigs. Right now, that's a very critical entry point to Canada for this disease.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: ASF affects pigs, but could it also affect other livestock?

Mr. René Roy: It only affects swine, primarily boars and pigs.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Can it spread to other animals, like cows?

• (1140)

Mr. René Roy: No, not to cows or any other animals.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

Mr. Sheehan, over to you.

[English]

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Thank you very much. It's great to be here today. I'm on the industry committee as well as the trade committee, so these subjects obviously come up from time to time and are absolutely critical for people who make a living from swine, and for the overall economy.

Going on to biosecurity which, to my understanding, is one of the issues that we need to make sure we continually hold to the highest standard.

I come from a riding called Sault Ste. Marie. There are farms around the area, but I went to school in Michigan, and there are a lot of pork farmers from Ohio, etc., whom I went to school with. I had an opportunity to have those conversations about the importance of all of us working together.

A former trade minister, Conservative Jim Kelleher, once spoke to our high school, and about pork in particular and how some countries will use backdoor trade tariffs on pork. Even if it's not tested or real, the perception is that they'll claim there's some sort of risk.

What are we doing to work with the United States, Australia, New Zealand and other countries to combat the African swine flu and also demonstrate that we have very sound scientific methods to deal with it?

Mr. John Ross: Maybe I can start. You've opened the door to a very large question.

African swine fever, globally, has clearly been within the purview of the OIE, the world animal health organization, forever. A number of us are going with Dr. Komal to the OIE's annual general assembly in Paris at the end of the month. The OIE have dedicated a fair chunk of time—obviously, there's a full agenda when you bring 180 countries together to talk about animal health—to ASF, and obviously lots of bilateral meetings will occur in the same space.

The idea, I think, at the international level is that there's lots of willingness to dig in on it. There's lots of expertise. They're willing to share, and you're seeing the OIE take a number of leadership roles to establish these international groups and international centres of expertise. We're trying to get one in the Americas, but certainly there's one in Europe and one in Asia already. They are trying to lend expertise to the local veterinary infrastructure to help it along. There are lots and lots of discussions between Canada and the United States, as you might imagine, on a near full-time basis.

We had the opportunity, at the time of the international forum, to meet with Dr. Shere, the CVO in the United States. Of course, as I said, we have fairly routine discussions. Gabriela is pretty much on the phone every week with the United States. We're all heading to Paris, so we'll have meetings over there. There's a whole series of things involved in that space.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ross, Mr. Sheehan and Madame Nassif.

[Translation]

Mr. Berthold, you have six minutes.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Roy, we've been talking about African swine fever since the beginning of the meeting. For the benefit of those who aren't familiar with it, could you summarize, in 30 seconds, the effects of this disease and why it's so serious and harmful?

Mr. René Roy: I'm not a veterinarian, but in a nutshell, this disease kills. When a herd is contaminated, all the pigs die. It's a haemorrhagic disease. The animals suffer internal bleeding and die. This disease doesn't spread rapidly, but once contamination happens, it's fatal.

Mr. Luc Berthold: There's no treatment, right?

Mr. René Roy: There's no treatment. Work is under way to develop a vaccine, but I wouldn't expect to become available in the short term.

Mr. Luc Berthold: We need to confront an international situation, but every crisis has its upsides and downsides. There are opportunities for us, provided we can protect our borders and keep the disease from spreading.

I may get a chance later to talk about small pig farms, because I've visited a few. These small farms aren't subject to the same biosecurity rules as the big farms scattered all over. The disease must spread much more quickly through small pig farms.

Could you give us a brief update on China? China suspended exports from Olymel and Drummond Export. Is the situation still bad for those two companies?

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. John Ross: The challenges that we're having with the suspension of the Olymel plant in Red Deer and with the plant in Quebec remain in place. They have not been resolved. The plants themselves have put in some corrective measures, and now those measures have been brought back to Chinese officials for their approval. The timing on that will remain to be seen. In some respects, it's quite disheartening. In other respects, we did, in fact, have a bit of a paperwork issue, and we do know that going into that marketplace we do have to have all the i's dotted and the t's crossed, particularly at a sensitive time like we're in right now. However, we are hopeful that it will be resolved in the short term. We took some relief in the fact that they suspended the plants—they did not delist them—and that it didn't spread to the entire pork sector, which would, of course, have been much, much worse.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's kind of a mixed message to send to all the companies that export to China. Even though demand in China is extremely high, the Chinese are prepared to bar shipments over incorrect paperwork. The message this sends to all producers is to make sure they fill out their paperwork correctly and use the right forms.

Mr. René Roy: Exactly. You know about a few of China's quirks. This is one of them.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this time to move a motion so we can explore this issue further. All of my colleagues have received a copy of the motion. It would enable us to learn a bit more about the situation and prevent it from happening to other companies. It's vital that Canada stand firm and show that it does want to collaborate, but that it won't let China get away with using these excuses for reasons other than trade, like political reasons.

The motion reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of Trade Diversification and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to update the Committee on the situation regarding the suspension of Canadian pork imports by the Chinese government and that the Ministers appear before the Committee on or before Tuesday, June 4, 2019.

The Chair: You have heard the motion. Are there any comments?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The canola situation has been going on for over two months now. We were made aware of this situation early this year. We recently learned that the pork industry has been dealing with problems involving forms. Maybe we'll have a chance to discuss that in greater detail in a little while with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency representatives.

It's important for ministers to come tell us what measures Canada will take to prevent these situations from happening again. We need to see all the ministers involved. This is a major crisis. We have an amazing opportunity right now, and we definitely don't want Canada to miss out. Politicians at all levels need to play a role. Specifically, the federal ministers I mentioned in the motion should appear before

the committee so we can continue our study on African swine fever as well as the opportunities we might miss if we don't react to the situation swiftly.

I don't plan to talk about this for long because we still have lots of questions for our witnesses. However, I would encourage my colleagues to support this motion so we can get to the bottom of the issue and prevent any potential losses by showing that Canada's position on how to maintain trade relations with China is firm and clear.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Longfield, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I won't be supporting the motion. I think we've just heard from the Canadian Pork Council that they're working with China and with the minister. There was an administrative problem that they're working on—crossing t's and dotting i's. This is taking away some very important time we have to talk with witnesses, and we also have industry reps coming in who will be able to speak to them directly. I won't be supporting the motion.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: As folks from the pork industry here have mentioned, Olymel is in my riding, in my town.

One of the critical things is that we get to a certain stage where various parts of the hog are being sent to Japan and parts are going to China, and there isn't a problem until all of a sudden the freezers are full. That becomes the scenario or the situation we have here. We don't know whether we're being able to find other markets for that particular product. Eventually it's going to plug up the system and there are going to be some serious concerns.

When we speak about the need to have an awareness by the ministers, which is what this motion is about, it's critical. It can't simply be, "Well, there was something wrong with the paperwork." That is the issue. The point is that this is something that could have been handled in a day or two because it was just paperwork. However, along with everything else, we've seen what has happened with canola being dragged out for months and months, and we hear of other issues that are causing consternation as well. Therefore, it's extremely important that these ministers understand, from the perspective of the agriculture committee members, the significance of this issue, and that we hear from them and they hear from us.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Everything we say is going to be significant to our witnesses here. We have an incredible pork industry.

René, I'm from Ontario, and I can tell you, our producers have the same concern as you do. We had a study here on mental health and what are the significant issues. These types of issues are significant to our producers.

A lot is being done, and I don't want to take folks away from what's being done. That is critical to know. However, the traceability at a time such as this is likely more significant than it ever has been.

We went through PED and the disinfectant. That was basically domestic in how we deal with sanitizing and not transferring it. If this were to hit, with all due respect, if I were in the government at the time, I would also want to hear from our ministers, who are the landlords of this issue.

We wouldn't be taking up any time if they just said, "I think that would be a good idea; why don't we set a meeting aside?" We actually have some time on our agenda. We'd have them come in just so we can get a update for the committee from the landlords who are responsible. I'd be disappointed if the whole committee....

I know Mr. Longfield has said he wouldn't be supporting it; I'll leave it at that. We have trouble getting the ministers to come in, but we just need to find out from them where they are, what is the status of it, and where do they expect to work with you in terms of going forward, and then maybe doing that with the industry.

We are the ones who need to talk to our producers back in our ridings. I don't want to go back ill-equipped from those who are the ones making the decisions.

I'll stop at that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, it's time for us to show leadership on this file. You'll remember that the agriculture minister went to the trade committee to talk about this issue, but it's now time for the trade minister and for the foreign affairs minister to come to talk to us about those issues.

This is important and we really need to have answers from them. This is an agricultural producers' issue and it has to be resolved in front of this committee. With this study, we have the opportunity to talk about it and to talk about the impact that the threat of those types of actions by the Chinese government could have on pork industry.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[*English*]

Seeing no more people wanting to comment, I shall ask who will support the motion.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Could we have a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: It will be a recorded vote.

[*Translation*]

(Motion negatived: yeas 5; nays 4)

• (1155)

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, you have two minutes.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I'm disappointed that we couldn't get the ministers in here to talk about this in detail. This isn't the first time the agriculture committee has declined to talk about agriculture.

I have a question for you, Mr. Roy. I really want to take the few minutes I have left to talk about the program you're proposing. If I understand correctly, the program wouldn't cost the government a penny, but someone always has to pay, so in this case, it would be consumers.

This already happens when our products are sent to the United States, but the opposite is not true. Canada is in a very difficult competitive situation because the Americans have an advantage. They can take advantage of all pork imports to improve their competitiveness and then compete with Canadian pork. Is that correct?

Mr. René Roy: Yes.

We talked about how important pork production is to the Canadian economy. It's worth \$24 billion. Producers tell us they could do all kinds of things if the government just gave them the proceeds of the supply management program. In other words, we're not asking for a lot of resources. We're asking for an amount that would help us make great strides in improving traceability in our market. That's what we want the government to help with.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds left.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's all. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Drouin, you have about two minutes left.

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

My colleagues opposite asked for the minister to appear on June 4, but I believe she'll be here on June 6. They'll have plenty of time to ask questions then.

Mr. Luc Berthold: There are two other ministers.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Roy, you talked about a traceability system. I just want to understand how that works for the producer from the farm to export. How is the traceability system falling short?

Mr. René Roy: I'll be brief. I'm a producer. I register all the hogs I ship. Every time a hog changes hands between two producers or is sent for slaughter, there's a system that keeps track of where my hogs go. I tattoo or label the hogs so they can be traced from my farm to another farm and all the way to the slaughterhouse.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay, is all that done manually?

Mr. René Roy: It's partly done by hand, and then we enter the data into a system. With platform 2.0, which we need funding for, we'll be able to do it instantaneously with off-the-shelf tools. We can use a cell phone to transfer the information. Imagine some kind of health crisis cropping up and the only information we have is seven days old. That wouldn't be very efficient.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No.

Mr. René Roy: The data is entered by hand, so it's not realistic to expect it to be entered into the computer right away. Platform 2.0 would enable us to do that instantly.

We also need to improve zoning. We have all the information, but if there's a crisis—fingers crossed that doesn't happen—we won't be able to mine that data to create zones within Canada.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay.

Once your hogs are transferred to another processor, it's no longer your responsibility, it's the processor's, right?

The Chair: Please be brief, Mr. Roy, because our first hour is almost up.

Mr. René Roy: It's a dual reporting system. It works both ways. Renderers are included in the traceability system. Dead animals are traced too.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Unfortunately, that's all the time we have.

I would like to thank Ms. Cameron, Ms. Guigou, Mr. Ross and Mr. Roy for taking the time to come talk to us about a very important issue. This will help us decide which steps to take.

I'll suspend the meeting for a few minutes, and then we'll have another group of witnesses.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

[English]

The Chair: For our second hour, from the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Mr. Fred Gaspar, director general, commercial program directorate. Thanks for joining us today on very short notice.

From the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, we have Colleen Barnes, Acting Vice-President of Policy and Programs, and Dr. Jaspinder Komal, Vice-President of the Science Branch and Chief Veterinary Officer and Canada's delegate to the World Organisation for Animal Health. Welcome back to our committee, Dr. Komal.

We'll start with Ms. Barnes for up to seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Colleen Barnes (Acting Vice-President, Policy and Programs, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the efforts being taken to prevent African swine fever from coming into Canada.

Let me touch upon three important points when it comes to African swine fever, or ASF. First, ASF is not in Canada. Second, our approach to keeping ASF out of Canada focuses on prevention and preparedness. Third, we are working with domestic and international partners to finalize a framework and an associated action plan to address ASF.

[English]

To begin on my first point, Mr. Chair, the CFIA has recognized from the beginning the importance of keeping ASF out of Canada. In fact, it's a disease we've been watching for years, even before it appeared in China, because an important part of our mandate is safeguarding animal health in Canada.

ASF is a contagious viral swine disease that can cause high mortality rates in infected domestic and wild pigs. To date, there have been no reported cases of ASF in North America, but the disease is spreading rapidly in other parts of the world.

ASF was first discovered in Africa in the 1920s and spread outside of Africa beginning in 2007. Since the summer and fall of 2018, ASF has spread to a significant extent in areas of Europe and Asia.

I want to make it clear that there are no human health risks associated with ASF. Food is safe, and there is no risk of transmission of the disease to humans. However, its entry into Canada could have a devastating impact on the health of the swine population and therefore on Canada's pork industry, as you heard just before Jaspinder and I joined the table.

Canada is the third-largest pork exporting country in both value and volume, representing about 20% of the world pork trade. In 2017, 1.2 million tonnes of Canadian pork, valued at \$4 billion, were exported to over 100 different countries. The Canadian pork industry contributes to more than 100,000 jobs, which in turn generate close to \$24 billion.

As you heard this morning, we've been working with representatives from other levels of government and industry both domestically and internationally to minimize the risk and protect Canada's swine population. Our efforts have very much been taken in a partnership approach with industry.

Given that Canada and the Americas are currently free of ASF, we've been taking a leadership role in acting decisively and collaboratively to increase awareness around ASF and fill in gaps that have been identified, in order to aid in our approach to the disease.

This brings me to my second point. Prevention and preparedness have been our major concern. We must be ready for any eventuality. That's why Canada continues to take steps in both of these areas.

Mr. Chair, a big problem with ASF is there's no treatment or vaccine, so this makes the focus on prevention and preparedness most important.

As I said, we've been engaging a broad range of representatives, especially industry, in this country—on both the producer and the processor side—to do all we can to prevent the introduction of ASF into North America, and also to be prepared in the event that the disease reaches this continent. That includes working with government and industry to develop and implement a national action plan, and working closely with both the United States and Mexico, recognizing the integrated nature of our industries. It also includes working closely with our QUADS partners in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S., with international partners like the World Organisation for Animal Health, or OIE, with the European Union, and with a wide range of other participants from industry to academia.

Another valued partner, whom you'll hear from shortly, is the Canada Border Services Agency. Up to \$30 million has been allocated to increase the number of detector dogs at Canadian airports, to help prevent undeclared pork products from entering Canada. This was recognized early on as one of the vectors we had to be worried about. These dogs are an extremely effective means of quickly searching large amounts of baggage, and they are very successful in finding undeclared imported meat products.

In addition, a ministerial declaration by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has placed additional import controls on plant-based feed and feed ingredients arriving at certain Canadian marine ports from countries where we know ASF is already established.

•(1210)

We are also working on tools such as zoning, because that's effective in facilitating safe trade from unaffected areas in the face of an outbreak. We are working with our key trading partners to have zoning recognized in the event of an outbreak in Canada.

This brings me to my final point. ASF knows no boundaries. It cannot be solved by any one country or any one stakeholder. What I know for sure is that we need to work together—industry and all levels of government—to make sure we keep ASF out of this country.

Also, we need to work globally. That is why, earlier this month, an international forum was held in Ottawa, organized by Dr. Komal and co-hosted by Canada and the U.S. Over the course of two days, we worked with colleagues from around the globe to address the risks of ASF. There were 150 leaders and decision-makers from government and industry, from 15 countries, who shared their experience and expertise, engaged in productive discussions and contributed to developing strategies to address ASF.

Jointly, we are finalizing a framework and associated action plan that will support ongoing international collaboration and action in the areas of preparedness planning, enhanced biosecurity, business continuity and coordinated risk communications. This framework and associated action plan will build on existing foundations for a high state of readiness to swiftly control ASF should it enter the Americas region, strengthening biosecurity measures to prevent the entry of ASF and mitigate its spread, establishing arrangements in the swine sector to mitigate trade impacts, and having effective communications.

Through our domestic and international dialogues, we have also identified several key opportunities to collaborate and advance the implementation of the joint framework, once finalized.

The framework was not the end of our work together. Our discussions are set to take this important work further. We have found areas where more exploration is needed, and there will be more discussions on next steps based on the finalized framework, which will take place later this month at the World Organisation for Animal Health.

We are looking forward to our continued collaboration with both domestic and international representatives in industry and all levels of government as we continue to explore how best to address the potential impacts of ASF in Canada. What I do know is that we all need to work together to be successful here.

Thank you again for having me speak about this important issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barnes.

Mr. Gaspar.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fred Gaspar (Director General, Commercial Program Directorate, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As my colleague from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency mentioned, the threat to the Canadian pork industry posed by the outbreak of African swine fever in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is serious and one that we are working very hard with CFIA to prevent.

[*English*]

The CBSA is responsible for enforcing CFIA's policies as they apply at the Canadian border point of entry. The agency fulfills this role by screening travellers for inadmissible food, plant and animal products, and ensuring that commercial shipments are released, refused or referred to CFIA for further inspection in accordance with CFIA release recommendations. It should be noted that goods from affected countries, such as uncooked pork products, continue to be inadmissible to Canada.

In managing the border, the Canada Border Services Agency works closely with CFIA to ensure that goods that may pose a threat of spreading African swine fever into Canada are interdicted at the earliest opportunity. To this end, the CBSA has taken several steps, both operationally and in terms of outreach to the public, to help prevent ASF from being introduced into Canada.

Some steps include strategic redeployment of our resources, including food, plant and animal detector dog teams, to focus on flights of primary interest from ASF-affected countries; increasing vigilance in the monitoring of travellers and goods arriving from ASF-infected countries; ensuring that our officers have the training and awareness they need to be vigilant when screening travellers; and ensuring readiness by collaborating with CFIA to develop operational response plans, should they be required.

With respect to our outreach to the travelling public, the CBSA has also taken a number of important steps. We have placed ASF warning posters in 13 languages at 18 Canadian airports and even locations outside of Canada. We have distributed leaflets to inform travellers of their responsibility to declare food, plant and animal items, and we have posted advisories about African swine fever on CBSA web pages and social media. We have conducted outreach to airlines and airports in international locations via CBSA liaison officers who are posted overseas, and we have identified additional means for the CFIA to request ASF messaging, such as on the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website for electronic travel authorizations and visas to Canada.

To increase compliance, the CBSA enforces the CFIA's agriculture and agri-food administrative monetary penalties system for contraventions of the governing legislation. Under this system, border officials may issue agriculture and agri-food monetary penalties of up to \$1,300 to travellers who fail to declare pork products.

Finally, budget 2019 earmarked \$32 million over the next five years, starting in 2019-20, with up to \$5.8 million per year ongoing, to increase the number of detector dogs at the CBSA. Over the next few years, the CBSA will acquire and train 24 new food, plant and animal detector dog teams for deployment at high-risk ports of entry, with our first deployment of six teams at major airports by the end of the calendar year 2019.

We've received the mandate, and we've begun to act.

•(1215)

[Translation]

This concludes my opening statement. I would be happy to take any questions you may have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gaspar.

We'll go to questions now.

[English]

Mr. Shipley, for six minutes.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Gaspar, you answered the question on penalties. When you have a major, intentional breach with an import coming in, what are the consequences?

Mr. Fred Gaspar: The Agriculture and Agri-Food administrative monetary penalties system provides those consequences. The primary one we're dealing with in the traveller stream relates to declarations. If you declare that you don't have food, plant and animal products and you are found to have food, plant and animal products, that is a false declaration, and you are subject to up to a \$1,300 penalty. That's the maximum penalty allowed by law. We have provided guidance to our officers that they should be vigilant, aware and prepared to apply the maximum penalty.

Mr. Bev Shipley: For a major breach, \$1,300 is part of doing business. I'm more concerned about—

Mr. Fred Gaspar: Commercial?

Mr. Bev Shipley:—an intentional breach coming in and what the consequences would be. You've given me the answer.

I'm hoping there would be something a lot more significant. Our pork producers rely on exports, so having this in our country would be detrimental to one of the greatest commodity organizations we have with pork.

If they're exporting that, I'm concerned. Earlier witnesses talked a little bit about it. There is concern about animal activists coming in, because we don't know where they're coming from. They're breaking into our facilities. They're in contact with our animals. In fact, they start to carry them out. If I were being asked what we can do, I would suggest that all of us, as an industry, and those supporting our industry, get on board. We need to become active to our attorneys general in our provinces and our government to make sure that we get some action taken, because this could very well come into a barn with one of the activists.

On the contamination of feed, we've talked about processed feed. Grains have come in. Are there feeds that come from countries that have ASF?

•(1220)

Ms. Colleen Barnes: Mr. Chair, yes, there are.

For those countries we're importing from, the importers have to be sure that ASF is not there. They can do it as described earlier. Either they are heat-treated ingredients before they come to Canada, or they're stored, or they come from a facility that has really high biosecurity. We've tried to be outcome-based in our approach and let the importers manage that risk as best they can using the science we have. There are several acceptable ways we will let an importer bring in a feed ingredient or a feed from an ASF-infected country. They have to prove to us, essentially, that there is no ASF there.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal (Vice-President, Science Branch, Chief Veterinary Officer and World Organisation for Animal Health Delegate for Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): We talked about biosecurity, Mr. Chair, but that part of biosecurity also includes producers making sure that the procurement is actually from sources that are known to them and that are actually part of a program, such as the FeedAssure program. They then are very sure of the origin and who is providing those ingredients. Those are all elements of biosecurity at the farm.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Ms. Barnes, you talked in your presentation about zoning. This was a challenge that we had with BSE. You also mentioned that prior to this outbreak, you had been working on it. Can you tell us about your achievements from where you started to where you now are?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: I think this is a good contrast with BSE, because with BSE, we really started moving once we had the problem. By contrast, we're moving before we have the problem. We're trying to think through all the scenarios and think through all the programming in advance.

Mr. Bev Shipley: For the countries that we have to deal with, is there some sort of an acceptance of the zoning within Canada, given our huge geography and small population?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: I'll let Jaspinder respond, but I'll start. These are conversations we have with our trading partners.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Yes.

Ms. Colleen Barnes: They must have confidence that all of the risk is managed in the zones we are creating and can be confident taking product from Canada. We're thinking through the scenarios. What if it's in Manitoba where there is high-density? What if it's in a place that's remote? What will be our offering to the trading partners? Again, to try to get ahead of it before we have a problem, we're negotiating with our trading partners now on what basis they would allow us to zone and accept our conditions.

This is a conversation that happens at the CVO level, so I'll let Jaspinder colour it in a little bit.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: Thanks, Colleen.

One of the things we need to keep in mind is that these agreements on zoning are bilateral, so they have to be both ways. If the country that we have an agreement with has a case of ASF, we need to accept that they will be zoning and we'll be accepting their product. That is a very important point.

With that in mind, as we try to negotiate based on the OIE rules, the country must have good veterinary oversight and be able to manage their problem with zoning for disease management purposes, and also give us the confidence that products are coming from the safe areas. Those are two good arguments for a zoning agreement.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Komal.

Unfortunately, I have to move to the next one. I'm sure you'll have a chance to respond later.

[Translation]

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Before I go on, I too want to echo the comments that you made at the beginning of the meeting about Kelsey Johnson. We hope she will work hard to find a replacement so that agriculture will be as well-reported as it has been by her over the past six or seven years.

I'm assuming, Mr. Komal, that you'll have a big role to play in this, because I am asking what the policies are that we have in place to monitor issues around animal disease. What triggers determine whether we have to implement policy X? As you've said, Ms. Barnes, it only affects animal health so there's no risk to human health. Obviously, science tells us that, but once the trigger happens and oops, there may be an impact on human health, or it's just going to impact animal health.... How does Canada play a role on the international stage to manage those particular diseases and to ensure there is no major outbreak? At the end of the day, we do not want to have any producers in Canada being impacted.

•(1225)

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: That is a very good and quite a big question. Implementing animal health policies is my colleague Colleen's responsibility, but I'll speak to it and she can add.

In deciding policies, we look at whether the disease is present in Canada. If it is present, we look at whose role it is, because there's a shared responsibility between provinces and the federal government. We'll take care of all responsibilities for diseases that are not present in Canada. In other words, we'll look at the border and any diseases that come in, we'll manage or eradicate them.

Second, we also look to work with the Public Health Agency of Canada to understand the implications of the zone audit perspective for human public health issues and how we manage them. We can manage that with the Public Health Agency and also with the provinces.

We always look at those areas when we develop our programs. For diseases that are not present, our first action is to keep them out, or if they come in, to eradicate them. With ASF, because it's not here, our actions have been based on prevention. We took a novel approach to keep it out. Given the global concentration of this virus that is circulating in the world, our industry thinks we need to take action on prevention.

As for the international role, we have actually worked with OIE and other partners such as the FAO and the European Commission. They are now living with this disease, so we wanted to learn from them. We held a forum here in Ottawa to learn from their best practices in case we got this disease here and had to take action. We learned a lot and we have come up with a pretty good approach moving forward, which is synthesized in this.

At the same time, Canada took a leadership role in this by bringing the world together, because it's a global problem and we want to tackle this collectively to minimize the concentration of this virus. Our objective is also to keep it out of the Americas region.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Are conversations happening with regard to regional boundaries? I know we're working on developing regional boundaries, but would those be accepted, for instance, in the U.S., where we do a lot of trading? If we say we'll manage that disease because it's only happening in some part of Ontario, would those practices be accepted in the U.S., for instance? Are those conversations happening to manage those who are unaffected by those diseases? Do you think it's possible on the world stage for this to happen?

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: Thank you. I'll actually continue from the answer I was trying to provide.

When we know that like-minded countries are following those rules on zoning and have good veterinary oversight and we have confidence, we will draw up those agreements with them. We are doing one with the U.S. and one with Europe, and are working with Japan to get one in place. Then we'll look at other countries as we continue to get that confidence in place.

With the U.S., we're very close to actually having that. Under our regulatory co-operation with the U.S., we have a zoning agreement in place that we have been practising for avian influenza management. We just wanted to make sure that we had the right sort of case and conditions in place as we were finalizing this with the U.S. We have done that, and both the U.S. and Canada will practise it if the disease happens in either country.

•(1230)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay, that's great, because at the end of the day, what we want to avert is a complete shutdown of the border.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: Yes.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin and Mr. Komal.

Now we will go to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much for appearing before the committee today.

Mr. Gaspar, I think I'll start with you for a little clarification. There's \$32 million over the five years at \$5.8 million per year. That's how it's divided over those five years?

Mr. Fred Gaspar: Yes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That's for the detector dogs. That's great. I know the dogs are very effective with their sense of smell.

That being said, with all of the measures that we're putting into place—the notifications, and so on—do you have an idea of how many undeclared pork products your officers are finding? What's the rate? Is it still a pretty common problem? Are they finding undeclared uncooked pork products coming in, in people's suitcases and so on?

Mr. Fred Gaspar: We have statistics up to the end of the previous fiscal year, which is 2017-18. Our detector dog service teams were responsible for just over 5,000 searches, which resulted in just over 7,000 interceptions of prohibited food, plant and animal products annually. That resulted in over 400 agricultural monetary penalties.

We estimate that about 25% to 30% of all those food, plant and animal seizures do relate to pork products.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Wow.

Which port of entry is taking the lead on this? Which is the most problematic one, would you say?

Mr. Fred Gaspar: We try not to divulge operational details with regard to the deployment of the dogs. It is certainly fair to say, and I don't think I'm telling any tales out of school, that those airports that have flights from the affected countries are the ones of primary interest to us and where we are focusing our efforts, but as a primary principle we try to use agility as the means by which to manage this disease.

One of the things we've done in consultation with CFIA from the very beginning is put our program on a posture whereby we can deploy a couple of teams on relatively short notice to primary ports of entry if need be.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Ms. Barnes, in the fight over canola that we're having with China, getting information out of them with regard to their phytosanitary concerns about our product has been

like trying to squeeze water out of a stone. In our international relations, are you finding that countries are being quite open about the extent and spread of ASF and whether their containment measures are being successful? Are you finding that it's a very open and frank dialogue with other countries?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: I'll start by saying we had a great example at the forum, Mr. Chair. Even a representative from China was there to talk about what was happening in that country.

Also, if you're a member of OIE, there are obligations to report if you have the disease. In fact, countries have been coming forward when they get their first case. From where I'm sitting, it looks like there is pretty good transparency.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: Europe is living this. We have seen examples of their being very co-operative. Then Japan is sitting in the middle of all this happening, with China, Vietnam, and now Hong Kong recently, and even Mongolia. It's spreading like fire. Japan is working very closely with us. They are open to discussing these things.

As the chief veterinary officer, I think that where Canada is positioned on the influence side with the OIE, I can say with good confidence that, yes, countries are sharing information. They all have an interest in eliminating or managing the disease or keeping it out. Even the Americas region that I'm working with is quite interested in working with us.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Which country currently is taking a leading role in the virology of ASF?

I know it's probably a coordinated effort, but is there one country that's applying a lot of resources to studying this, trying to find a cure, a vaccine, etc.?

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: It is a coordinated effort. It's a very hardy virus, a DNA virus not like influenza. It's very difficult to produce a vaccine.

There's a global alliance on research. It's called GARA. They work on it. Canada and the U.S. are part of it. We take a leadership role in pushing or leading other countries to help us along with the OIE and FAO. Through the forum we have a recommendation that GARA should continue these activities and work with countries to develop the vaccines. Canada will be a very active participant in that.

•(1235)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: My final question is for Ms. Barnes.

We have heard about the spread of wild boar. One of the requests to Agriculture Canada was that...because it's now crossing over provincial boundaries and made its way into British Columbia. They've gone over the Rockies.

What kind of coordination efforts is the federal government offering to provinces so they are not having to fight this battle alone?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: We've been working federally with Environment Canada as well, which has an interest in this. We talked to them right away once we understood this as a possible vector.

Also, we're then working with the provinces. It's interesting. At the provincial level, you have the agriculture ministries that then have to reach out to the wildlife ministries in those provinces. This is a major effort now to try to coordinate. I think as John mentioned, it's going to take a while just because of the size. We benefited yesterday when the study came out from Saskatchewan to give some sense of where these animals are. That's going to be very helpful to us.

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, you have six minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Ms. Barnes, I want to continue the train of thought that we're on right now on provincial coordination.

I mentioned to the last panel a concern. You just mentioned the Environment and Climate Change ministry. This is a global problem. Some countries or subnationals are backing out of climate change initiatives.

What if, politically, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario decide not to participate in African swine fever detection? What if they say it costs their government too much, that they're cutting costs and they're not going to be involved?

What kind of risk does that pose to our food supply?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Point of order.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Longfield, we have a point of order.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, with that particular comment, if the member wishes to discuss climate change, I can see no problem with that, but to suggest that any of these particular provinces would in any way try to minimize the work they would do on African swine fever infestation or any other type of disease is certainly out of order.

I would ask the member to recognize what he is talking about—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: No.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: —and the significance of that type of a comment.

The Chair: Okay.

This is really a debate. It's raising a point, if...

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'm trying to find out about a risk

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: In terms of provincial co-operation, or international co-operation, how would we determine the risks there or report those back?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: Mr. Chair, all we can do is what we can control. We've been really focused for the last year on raising awareness, making sure that everybody is aware of the danger and the implications. That is something we can control. We've been very effective at bringing stakeholders along and making sure that we're all aligned and understand what we're doing, and that every province or government is doing what it can to manage the issue.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Does the OIE look at sub-national concerns? We talked about compartmentalization, which isn't a standard all countries are following. It's certainly one of the options, but there are other options on the table.

How far do we go with the OIE in terms of international standards, including sub-national standards?

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: The OIE develops standards with the member countries. Canada is a very active participant in developing those standards. Zoning is one, and compartmentalization is another one.

Once the standards are developed by the OIE, then it's up to the member countries to implement them and incorporate them into their regulatory programs. That's where I was talking about the developing oversight and capacity. Our members are all on different levels, but Canada is quite active in preaching that member countries should follow those rules.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Great.

The U.S. is looking at a national active surveillance plan in commercial, backyard and wild swine. Is Canada going along those same paths, or are we far enough along to know where we're going to go with the active surveillance plan, including some of the software that we mentioned in the last panel?

● (1240)

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: As was mentioned before, we're working very closely with our U.S. counterpart, looking at what they're doing and what we are doing. They are moving ahead with the surveillance program. We are also looking at what our surveillance program in Canada is going to look like. As John mentioned, we need to make sure that we're doing the right things. We are making sure that if it is there, it is there. Sometimes you can have false declarations, which can have implications.

Those are the things we're trying to sort out, but we'll have a program. The U.S. is also looking at what they can do that's similar to our key program. It's a very concerted effort by both countries.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I appreciate that we're taking a leadership role, in that we actually have an international conference coming up this month. This issue was brought up to me by some of our stakeholders in Guelph back in mid-March, which resulted in a motion coming forward.

March, April, May—when will we have the mitigation plans well in place and communicated out to the farmers in south-east Manitoba and all the way to the small farms in Newfoundland?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: Mr. Chair, that's something we're actively working on as we speak. We've taken a number of measures. It's going to take us.... There's still work to do.

I think we're at the point now where we're managing the possible ways it can come in, to our satisfaction. Now it's about making sure internally that we're ready. We need to do some very detailed operational planning, like, "Day one, if this happens, then this is what happens next." We need to think through a number of scenarios, be they provincial or a wild incursion, and work through what the planning is.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Sure.

Ms. Colleen Barnes: These are things that are actively being worked on. Coming out of the value chain round table, the pork conversation last week is going to really help us understand where we need to focus.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: The minister received a letter on May 13, so I'm sure she's going through it now with her department and staff. Time is always of the essence, but also of the essence is money.

Do any of these recommendations come with dollars or is this something that we have to look at from the political side?

Ms. Colleen Barnes: From our side, we've been investing. We've taken our most talented people and put them on this file. Right now, I think we're good where we are with our resourcing of the effort. Also, if the worst were to happen, the agency has emergency management money that we would be able to avail ourselves of.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: There are agri-recovery plans that may need supplementing.

Ms. Colleen Barnes: In term of programming for the industry, it's really Agriculture Canada that has to respond to that. We're just here on the regulatory side.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

Ms. Nassif, it's now your time.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Mr. Longfield, you can take my time, if you want. It's up to you.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay.

Perhaps you could continue with my....

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: I just want to highlight the collaboration and partnership among the various stakeholders, including industry, provinces, the federal government, CBSA and also the U.S. and others internationally. They are very willing to contribute work. We started working on this last July and August with the U.S. and Mexico, when we had a North American animal health committee meeting. There's a lot of collaboration that is unprecedented. Given the importance of the disease, we have to highlight the help we're getting from all sides on this.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Very good.

I know that in previous years I've asked about funding for the CFIA, and whether we have enough resources to do the work we need to do on export development and to have inspectors available. Somehow we have to work that out together to make sure that we don't put a stress on our exporters through this whole process, because I'm sure there will be additional costs that we will need to face.

Mr. Sheehan also wants to share some time.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: How much time do I have?

The Chair: We have a little less than five minutes.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Again, thank you to the committee for being so proactive on this particular great, important subject.

I'm from Sault Ste. Marie, and I want to ask a particular question. Many, many times, I've seen truckloads of pigs with licence plates from all over Canada and the United States. They come through our

border. We're one of the top entry points into Canada. What does the Canadian border service do to control and inspect pigs and people at land entries? I know very well what they do at airports, but what strategies do they employ at land entries?

• (1245)

Mr. Fred Gaspar: The commercial importation of pork and pork products is something that is governed by our regulations in terms of advance data requirements, before you cross the border, so that we are aware when the shipments are coming in. We receive advance information. We do apply a risk-based commercial threat targeting to inform interdictions or inspections that may be appropriate. When there is cause for concern upon those inspections, CFIA is engaged. They do perform any secondary inland inspections that may be warranted in that regard. We do have a pretty good line of sight into those movements. You're correct; we've learned that the movement of pork and pork-related products is quite significant across the border between Canada and the U.S.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: It certainly is.

I have a very quick question before I turn it over to Jean-Claude, who's the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

What kind of collaboration do you do with the universities and so on? I know what strategies we're employing right now, but can you give us a little bit of a prediction on what's coming down the pipe?

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: As the CVO and the VP of science, I do engage with the faculties of agriculture and veterinary medicine quite often, but more so on this. One, we wanted to raise awareness with everybody. We've never had this disease in Canada. We developed training materials that we shared with anybody who was working in the agricultural sector or would be working there in the future, including students, graduate students, professors and clinicians. We also did this with the industry, using the same materials in terms of looking for signs of this disease and to whom they should report if they find those signs.

We continue to raise that, and now we're moving into preparedness. For example, if ever we need help from people, we were talking to some universities about whether we can actually make use of graduate students or even professors in veterinary medicine. This is the kind of stuff we're working on.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: That's good. Thank you.

The parliamentary secretary wanted to ask something.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Poissant, you have the floor.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for the information you have given us today.

Earlier, the pork producer representatives talked to us about two issues that are of great concern to them: wild pigs and restaurant leftovers.

Are you following up with your provincial counterparts on the restaurant leftovers issue? There was a time when restaurants often gave their leftovers to small producers to feed their animals.

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: Thank you for the question.

We are working with various stakeholders on the wild pig issue. We are raising everyone's awareness about the tremendous importance of biosecurity. We don't want wild pigs to come into contact with domestic pigs. Preventing that contact is what will protect us.

On the restaurant leftovers issue, we're lucky because it's already illegal in Canada to feed pigs restaurant leftovers, including waste from planes and ships. That is already in force. We are working with the provinces to make sure that practice doesn't occur.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Thank you.

On another note—

The Chair: You just have a few seconds left. Actually, time's up.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Time's up?

Okay, thanks.

The Chair: We might have a chance to get back to that.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's too bad, Mr. Poissant. I'm sure your question was a very good one.

Pork industry representatives told us just now that establishing a Canadian pork promotion and research agency would enable the industry to invest \$1 million in promotion and research without costing the government a penny. I think that's a very good option because, if we consume more Canadian pork, we're less likely to import products that could spread disease. That's just a comment I wanted to make. I think it's a very interesting opportunity.

Dr. Komal, I'd like to know which form caused the problems with China. What is China's problem with the form?

• (1250)

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: The problem has to do with certain exports, and it's about labelling. The labels were on the boxes, not the products. We are working with Chinese authorities now. Our people on the ground at the Canadian embassy are working with people over there to fix the problem.

Mr. Luc Berthold: An industry doesn't make a mistake like that all of a sudden. Was there a change? Why did it happen?

Dr. Jaspinder Komal: There was no change. We export a lot, and things always happen. This isn't the first time this has come up. This kind of thing happens, and we take steps to fix it.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gaspar, you said the detector dog team would be operational by the end of 2019. Is that soon enough? Can the team be operational sooner? I would imagine you need dogs.

Mr. Fred Gaspar: Right now, we're promoting the program and the responsibility Parliament gave us.

We already have 15 dog teams. We are awaiting confirmation of a dozen more dog teams for this year and another dozen for next year. The availability of dogs is one limiting factor. We have to buy them. We have already ordered them. We certainly expect to deliver on that mandate.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Excellent.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to point out that things with China aren't getting better. They're going from bad to worse.

The Chair: Pardon me? I didn't understand.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, things with China aren't getting better. They're going from bad to worse. The Prime Minister just made a statement about 25 minutes ago.

[*English*]

I will say it in English: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says that China's government is “not following the same kinds of rules” after China's authorities formally arrested two Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Is this related to our study?

Mr. Luc Berthold: This is my speaking time, Mr. Chair. I don't understand why you're interrupting me.

The Chair: We have to stick to the subject. Is this related to the subject?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, this is my speaking time and I'm going to finish what I started saying if I may.

The Chair: Yes, but it has to be related to the study, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Well, if that's the way you want it, Mr. Chair, I'll move a motion.

The Chair: Sure, no problem.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you. That way I'll have time to talk about it.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to discuss her trip to the G20 Agriculture Ministers meeting in Japan and update the Committee on her discussions with the Chinese Agriculture Minister regarding the canola trade crisis, and that the Minister be invited to appear for two hours on or before May 21, 2019.

The Chair: Any comments?

Mr. Luc Berthold: As I said, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, made a statement a few minutes ago about the state of Canada-China relations. I will reread the information, which I have here in English.

[English]

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says that China's government is not playing by the same kinds of rules after China's authorities formally arrested two Canadians, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig.

[Translation]

Last week, we asked the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food if she intended to schedule an official meeting with her Chinese counterpart to talk about problems with forms and the canola file. The minister replied that she intended to stand up for canola producers.

We learned that she had an informal introductory meeting with her Chinese counterpart. Unfortunately, we have just the one version. The minister didn't tell us what happened during the meeting. What information did she get from the Chinese agriculture minister? Did she manage to arrange for a delegation of experts to go to China or not? We don't have that information. All we have is a press release saying that she had an introductory meeting with him. That's all. I think it's important for the committee to be updated on the developing situation with China.

We want diplomatic relations with China, but we still don't have an ambassador to China. We still haven't taken steps with the World Trade Organization to show that we aren't going to let ourselves be pushed around for technical reasons.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency officials have assured us that they are 100% confident in the quality of the tests and the canola that was sent to China. The canola we sent to China was good. All we're asking is to send a delegation of experts to China. Unfortunately, we made that request a month ago, and China seems to have completely ignored it.

Last week, the Prime Minister acknowledged that this is a political crisis. Now he's acknowledging not only that it's a political crisis, but also that China seems to be playing by two sets of rules. I'm saying what we've been told.

•(1255)

[English]

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says the Chinese government is not playing by the same kinds of rules.

[Translation]

For all those reasons, it's important that the committee invite the Minister to appear by May 21. We are quite prepared to meet that day.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Dreeshen, you may go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, the canola trade crisis is critical. Here we have a situation that's been going on for months. We have heard very little. We've had to go to the trade committee in order to talk about this particular

issue. When we're talking about trade, two of the critical countries that we deal with are China and the U.S. There was a time when Canada was that go-to country that China would come to talk to if it wanted to discuss things about the U.S. If the U.S. wanted to talk about things relating to China, they would come through us.

Right now we're like a mosquito to both of them. We don't really seem to be a significant part of it. Both of these things do not deal with issues like carbon taxes, and so on. Here we are in a situation where we do not respect our agricultural producers that have done such a great job. But I think it's time now that we move on.

The Chair: Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley: I think that when producers hear that we have not received visas for our diplomatic corps, our ministers in this case, to go to talk to the Chinese.... The ag minister is coming here, but this is about trade. We heard today that it's all about trade and it's all about Global Affairs getting action and that the minister did have an introductory meeting, whatever that means.

I ask that we go to a vote and that it be a recorded vote.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you may go ahead.

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

As I read this, I find it a bit curious that the Conservatives are moving these motions when their own leader has suddenly come out with a foreign policy statement. Of course, we all have Canadians' best interests at heart. Normally, the official opposition always supports Canada's position. I think it's shameful that they are using these issues for political gain.

It doesn't help the negotiations when the leader of the official opposition announces to countries that he doesn't want free trade agreements with them. Our message would be a whole lot more convincing to our partners if we put on our Canada hat instead of our partisan hat.

I would remind the committee that the Minister will be appearing on June 6. My fellow member could ask her all the questions he likes then. He asks questions from time to time. It took him a while to ask about the canola issue, but he finally did.

•(1300)

Mr. Luc Berthold: You never wanted to have a meeting.

The Chair: Unfortunately, our time is up.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

My fellow member Mr. Shipley requested a vote. Why aren't we having a vote?

The Chair: A vote can't be requested. It requires unanimous consent, and we don't have it.

Thank you, Mr. Gaspar, Mr. Komal and Ms. Barnes.

[English]

Thank you so much for being here. It's been very enlightening.

The meeting is adjourned.

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