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Chair

Mr. Paul Steckle

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)): Order. The time has arrived for us to begin this meeting, ladies and gentlemen.

This afternoon we want to begin to look at the matter of regionalization of agriculture and health practices, something that Madam Poirier-Rivard put before the committee about a month or so ago now. We have with us this afternoon, to address some of those concerns, people from CFIA, no strangers to this committee: André Gravel, executive vice-president, and Jim Clark, acting director of Animal Health and Production Division.

You two gentlemen have the floor for a while, to give us a bit of insight on this matter. It's a very interesting matter, and something we've talked about a number of times. Perhaps we can get a greater understanding from our deliberations this afternoon.

Mr. Gravel, are you the first person on?

Dr. André Gravel (Executive Vice President, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much. I'm pleased to appear before this committee to discuss the motion tabled by the honourable member from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant regarding a study on the feasibility of regionalizing agricultural health practices.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is mandated to ensure the safety of Canada's food supply and protect the health of its plants and animals. Over the past few years, the CFIA has dealt with several serious threats to Canadian livestock. Our experiences with avian influenza and BSE have shown that the impact of certain diseases can be swift and long-lasting. In the case of AI, regionalization, or zoning, helped in the eradication of this highly pathogenic disease and reduced its impact on international trade markets.

[*Translation*]

Please allow me to speak to you briefly about regionalization. In a country divided by geographical or political borders, regionalization consists in establishing clearly defined regions that have a health status different from that of the rest of the country.

The main objective of zoning is to restore export markets after a disease has been detected. By proving that the disease is confined to a single region, we can hope for a faster resumption of trade in the rest of the country by avoiding trade embargoes imposed on the whole country.

The agency's first priority therefore remains the protection of the health of Canadians and our animal population. Even though significant economic advantages are associated with regionalization, creating these zones remains an effective means of slowing the spread of a disease.

There are international rules governing regionalization. The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures set out conditions that permit its implementation. These conditions depend on information on the movement of animals and animal products and the extent of the disease, which is collected before or during the outbreak.

[*English*]

In addition, the World Organisation for Animal Health, OIE, has developed guidelines that specify the measures a country has to take to be considered to have zoned or regionalized a population of animals. The extent of a zone and its limits are established using scientific methods based on natural, artificial, or legal boundaries. The OIE guidelines also provide direction on setting up and maintaining such a zone.

Canada has already adapted the concept of regionalization for our own animal disease situations. We have successfully applied the principles contained in the OIE guidelines to the periodic occurrence of bluetongue in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, the TB-infected elk herd in Riding Mountain Park in Manitoba, the occurrence of velogenic Newcastle disease in ducks in Quebec, and, as I've already mentioned, to the control area established for the highly pathogenic Al outbreak in British Columbia.

Given the size of Canada, almost 10 million square kilometres, I'm sure you can appreciate why we would want to regionalize outbreaks whenever possible. As a country, we have also accepted the application of zoning in recognizing other countries as being disease-free, with the exception of small areas where measures are applied to restrict disease presence to specific geographic areas of the country. The CFIA has worked collaboratively with Canadian industry and provinces to describe methods for zoning and compartmentalization that would be effective in establishing and maintaining barriers for disease control and eradication purposes.

The Canadian Animal Health Coalition has recently received funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to develop plans for establishing a control point at West Hawk Lake on the Manitoba-Ontario border. The establishment of control points facilitates the monitoring of the movement of animals and animal products. It offers a cost-effective addition to animal identification and traceability, and will enhance Canada's outbreak response.

The information gathered could be used to establish control zones in a disease situation. It may also serve to limit the extent of measures taken by Canada or its trading partners, limiting zones to east-west or to a smaller area that the monitoring information has helped to establish.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Discussions are continuing with industry representatives concerning the operation of the control point at West Hawk Lake. We are also discussing the regulatory framework that will have to be created to control the movement of animals and animal products and by-products, whether or not an outbreak has been discovered.

The West Hawk Lake project will be the first of a series of control points to be established in Canada for the purposes of animal health zoning. If other outbreaks of high-risk diseases are discovered in Canada or near the Canadian border, other monitoring stations could also be set up at certain strategic points in Canada.

Canada has seen the concrete results of regionalization and the ensuing advantages, notably during the avian influenza crisis. Internationally, a growing number of governments have accepted the concept of regionalization and recognize the advantages it offers for health and the economy.

[*English*]

As I mentioned, we are in the process of establishing our first monitoring station, which will assist in creating regions within Canada at the time of a disease outbreak and help limit controls placed on Canada by our trading partners. To achieve the full benefits of this investment, it will be imperative that industry, provinces, and the federal government component of the animal health community work in a seamless manner.

Furthermore, we must continue to work with our international markets to demonstrate in a transparent and verifiable manner that we have the surveillance systems and animal movement controls necessary to allow our trading partners to fully respect the regionalization definitions adopted in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

So there's just the one statement from both of you? Thank you.

We will begin our series of questioning. Normally the procedure is for the Conservatives to begin, but perhaps today, with the concurrence of the opposition party, Madam Rivard can lead off, seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Regionalization essentially applies to infectious diseases such as bovine tuberculosis or foot-and-mouth disease, which are readily transmitted from one animal to another through contact or the environment, and whose spread can be prevented by geographical and environmental divisions. I would like to hear you speak on this matter.

Mr. André Gravel: By regionalizing a disease, we want to demonstrate to our trading partners who import Canadian products that the spread of the disease is being contained by concrete means. We want to be able to state that we have established a zone within which movement is controlled and to demonstrate how it is established. In this way, we want to be able to say what tests animals undergo to determine whether or not they are infected. This is much easier in the case of a disease for which living animals can be tested and whose incubation period is short enough that the transmission speed of the disease can be established. This is what we mean in this text.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Mr. Clark, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

Dr. Jim Clark (Acting Director, Animal Health and Production Division, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): The honourable member mentioned BSE as one of those diseases that would be considered contagious. It indeed can be transferred from animal to animal, but not directly. It must move in the form of a feedstuff. The contamination of the feed chain is an event that will take place many years before the animals show any signs of the disease. In the concept of regionalization, or zoning, steps must be taken in which to mitigate or prevent that thing from happening, or minimize the opportunity for it happening.

When the event has taken place so many years before the disease is discovered, it becomes extremely difficult to act retrospectively and impose controls that would have been effective years prior to the event of the disease being discovered.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: We are speaking about using compartmentalization in the case of BSE. Explain to me what that is exactly.

Mr. André Gravel: In fact, these terms are, up to a certain point, interchangeable.

A compartment could be, in particular, a description based on time. Time or a period of time could constitute a compartment, for example. Geographical distribution could constitute another.

The World Organization for Animal Health uses the two terms as practically equivalent.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I would now like to speak to you about the United States. They recognize zoning at the state level, because they monitor the movement of animals between States.

What is Europe doing to control the movement of livestock between countries?

[*English*]

Mr. André Gravel: With your permission, I'll ask Dr. Clark to answer.

Mr. Jim Clark: With respect to your question, the United States has a mechanism that may be considered one of the elements to allow zoning or regionalization to take place. As you pointed out, that would be the interstate movement and the requirement for a federal licence or permit to move animals from one state to another.

They do not monitor that. That simply becomes a legislative requirement. We have no such legislative requirement in Canada, with the exception of the movement of cervids. Currently, if a cervid or a deer is to move from one province or one location in Canada to another, it requires a permit issued by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. There are no similar requirements on any other animal species. We used to have similar requirements many years ago, when we were dealing with tuberculosis and brucellosis that was widely disseminated in the cattle population. Having successfully dealt with both of those diseases, that requirement went away in the late 1980s. We have been struggling since that point in time to identify our national herd and the traceability associated with that.

Currently, through the national livestock identification program, there is the ability to identify all cattle in the country and to know when they're going to move, but at this point in time there's still no legal requirement for them to be issued a permit to move.

Does that answer the question?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: We are speaking of traceability in the case of animals, but should traceability also be used in the case of food?

Mr. André Gravel: We are speaking of regionalization associated with the control of animal diseases. As Dr Clark indicated, BSE is a disease that is transmitted not from animal to animal, but through animal feed. Therefore, we must demonstrate that we also know the source of livestock feed. This would be one of the situations when it would be desirable.

With respect to food for human consumption, it is quite obvious, in cases of recalls because of food poisoning, that a tracing system is almost essential.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I would like to quote UPA Chairman, Laurent Pellerin. In a news conference on May 21, 2003, he made the following observation, and I quote:

> If we were separate provinces each with its own distinct inspection system and if we had a more regional approach to product marketing systems, only one province would have to deal with this problem.

As we know, we have all suffered because of one case of mad cow in Alberta.

The Bloc Québécois and I agree that it should be regionalized. There must surely be some way of doing so in order to combat BSE or any other disease. If we had regionalization, we could ensure that it wouldn't happen to us. It has already happened, and we have all been penalized. All producers have suffered from a loss of potential earnings. We are still not out of the woods.

How, in your opinion, could we really introduce a regionalization of health measures? There must be some way. We can't just sit around waiting for a crisis before putting programs in place.

● (1545)

Mr. André Gravel: I agree with you. If we have no contingency plan when a disease appears, it's already too late. So we have to be proactive.

In this way, with the exception of mad cow disease, I believe that Canada has been able to convince its trading partners that it could regionalize when dealing with animal diseases.

In the case, for example, of Newcastle disease—which appeared a few years ago in a Quebec farm, we were able to convince most of our trading partners that the disease was localized in Quebec, and not throughout Canada.

In the case of the avian influenza in British Columbia, the same thing occurred. Thanks to the data we provided for our trading partners, we were able to convince them that not all of Canada was affected, but only a part of the country, British Columbia, and even, in certain cases, just part of British Columbia. We had established a control zone.

I believe that the West Hawk Lake tracking station, which I spoke about during my opening remarks, is part of our contingency plan for the purpose of convincing our trading partners in advance that we have control measures in place. Indeed, this monitoring station will provide information that may be included in the animal identification database. We will therefore be able to say how many animals from the West have passed through this control point over the past year, and what their final destination was. I think that this is one of the control measures that the agency is studying with the industry.

[*English*]

The Chair: Your time has expired; next round.

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to follow up on what you said earlier, that, last year, when the western Canadian animals went through West Hawk Lake facility, you were able to generate information. I guess I would like to know a little bit more about how that facility is operating. If somebody comes in there with a load of animals, or a load of feed, what's required? What happens there?

Mr. Jim Clark: At this point in time, prior to the implementation of the zoning or regionalization, West Hawk Lake station serves as a monitoring point for humane transportation of animals. In other words, we look at the truck, and make sure that the physical requirements required within the health of animals regulations have been met. It's possible, given the right circumstances, that we could examine the animals, depending on the form of identification used, such as the ear tag. If there was radio frequency, or RFID, technology, then it would be possible to identify each animal on that load.

Mr. David Anderson: Are you planning on doing that?

Mr. Jim Clark: RFID has been adopted by the industry as the current standard within the regulatory framework of the health of animals regulations. All animals are not currently RFID-identified, but they will be at some point in the future as the technology makes its way into the animal population.

Mr. David Anderson: Is it your intention, then, to eventually identify every animal that comes through that control point?

Mr. Jim Clark: That would be the purpose of establishing the monitoring station, so that the movement of the animal would be tracked as it moves from east to west or west to east.

Mr. David Anderson: You're going to have a number of these control points across Canada?

Mr. Jim Clark: If regionalization or zoning were applied on a peacetime basis, I will say, it's possible that we could track that form of movement at those locations. Right now, West Hawk Lake is being proposed as a pilot, and we have to examine whether it's technically feasible, at this point in time, to do what I've just suggested could be done.

Mr. David Anderson: I guess I'd have some questions there. Have you done a projection on the budget involved? There's the one, I guess, but if you're setting up a series of them, you must have some idea of the cost. Do you know what it is?

Mr. Jim Clark: Right now that's part of the pilot project that has been identified within the Canadian Animal Health Coalition. Within their work plan, they will identify the budgetary costs of proceeding on an ongoing basis with that particular thing.

Mr. David Anderson: What's their budget in terms of this project?

Mr. Jim Clark: They've been awarded just over $1 million in ACAAF funding.

Mr. David Anderson: What does that cover?

Mr. Jim Clark: That covers their development of a work plan and implementation of the pilot project.

Mr. David Anderson: I'm just wondering how a point like this would have helped in such a situation as BSE or avian flu. I can see it there, because you're identifying animals quickly and trying to stop movement of them, but in BSE, or even the TB thing out of Riding Mountain, how do you see this control point working?

● (1550)

Mr. André Gravel: I think in the case of BSE, it would not necessarily have been of greatest advantage, given that we're talking about such a long incubation period. But we see that as an additional safety net beyond the controls you can implement around the disease focus.

Let's say there is an animal disease somewhere in western Canada and we establish a control zone around that disease. That station could be operated as a fail-safe mechanism. If we fail to control the disease in this area, we have yet this other control measure in place.

Of course, our overall objective is to make sure that the zone affected by disease is as small as possible. Our view would not be to split Canada in two, necessarily, and say if there's something in B.C. that means the whole of western Canada is infected with it. We would implement a control measure that would allow us to limit that to a smaller zone, but at the same time, we would have this additional control, which perhaps would convince our partners that not only do we have this control here but we also have another one over there.

Mr. David Anderson: That's your only natural geographic boundary that I can see in Canada, unless you're prepared to go to something like provincial boundaries, which I think would be impossible. Over the years they've tried to limit grain movement across provincial boundaries, and it never has worked.

I'm just wondering how you see other control zones developing. It's impossible, I would think, in western Canada, for example, to be able to control movement if people want to move animals. You have to rely on goodwill, not on government regulation, in order to deal with outbreaks like this.

Mr. André Gravel: In the case of a disease situation such as what we had with avian influenza in B.C., we did implement some control measures to ensure that the movement of animals and animal products was restricted in the control zone. So it's possible to do that.

Mr. David Anderson: But establishing a control zone in an emergency situation is different from what you're proposing here.

Mr. André Gravel: Yes.

Mr. David Anderson: Now, we're in the middle of discussing Bill C-27, and I'm wondering how you see the passage of Bill C-27 fitting into this whole proposal. I would imagine it's fairly significant.

Mr. André Gravel: Some aspects of enforcement related to the establishment of control zones and monitoring of live animals would benefit from the passage of Bill C-27, giving the agency the authority to implement additional control measures and enforcement measures.

Mr. David Anderson: Are you planning on taking this further than just disease control? I can think of chemical improvements and approvals. You've already mentioned animal ID and tracking. GMOs perhaps would be an issue in the future. Are you planning on using it for those kinds of things? Has there been any discussion of that?

Mr. André Gravel: Do you mean the station?

Mr. David Anderson: Yes, the station, the whole idea of zoning and control points. I'm just wondering how far you're willing to go with it. Is it just for tracking disease, or are you thinking of some other things you can do with that as well?

Mr. André Gravel: The first objective we have, of course, is to establish a control area related to the movement of animals and animal products, depending on what the pilot project gives us as conclusions; as a result, it may be possible to use it for other purposes. Yes, we're open to it, but our main goal at this point in time is animal movement.

● (1555)

Mr. David Anderson: I guess I'd get concerned if I started seeing a government bureaucracy that's growing and growing and controlling movement of things like chemicals and GMOs on a national level.

I have another question. You have had basically a pilot project going in Riding Mountain National Park, and I'd like you to talk a little bit about the success or failure of that. You put a zone around there and tried to restrict movement, and I don't think we're having success in eradicating the disease.

Mr. André Gravel: In the case of Riding Mountain National Park, what we were trying to do was convince our trading partners that the disease, the TB we had in one province of Canada, was actually controlled to that province, and beyond that, within a certain area of the province. That was our main goal.

With regard to how those measures actually controlled TB and the spread of TB between live animals and domestic animals, it's another story. I mean, there's always the difficulty of dealing with live animals that are not necessarily easy to catch and easy to test and all that stuff. We think that by implementing the Riding Mountain National Park control area, we limited, as much as we could, the economic impact of TB in that area.

Mr. David Anderson: There was a suggestion made to reduce the number of animals in the park to the point where the disease would likely disappear. The government has chosen not to have anything to do with that suggestion.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you're on next. I know you have to leave, but do you have time to ask a couple of questions before you leave?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank our witnesses for coming. I think this is a very important subject.

In your conclusion, you raised several points. I understand that we can resort to regionalization, but we have to ensure that our trading partners accept the principle that we are adopting and that there is transparency, as you put it so well.

If I understand correctly—you will set me right if necessary, it is difficult in principle to eliminate mad cow disease by resorting to regionalization, since this disease is essentially transmitted through feed. Therefore, even if we had resorted to regionalization three years before, we would nevertheless have gone through a mad cow disease crisis. Japan doesn't distinguish between the United States and Canada; it looks at all of North America. It would not have opened its borders.

Could the present process allow us to use new methods in dealing with mad cow disease? Have other countries resorted to regionalization to counteract the trade effects of mad cow disease?

Mr. André Gravel: Mr. Chairman, that is a very good question. Perhaps I have not stressed this point sufficiently. No matter what efforts Canada may make to put regionalization structures in place, if the countries that import food stuffs from Canada or live animals from Canada are not satisfied with these measures, regionalization will obviously serve no purpose. We can control part of the equation, the implementation of regionalization in Canada, but we have to convince people that what we are doing is acceptable.

Dr. Clark told me that a delegation of Russian officers is presently in Canada. We are trying to convince them that avian influenza has disappeared in British Columbia and that they should therefore abolish control measures for Canada. One year after the incident, we still have difficulty convincing people. Obviously, we are doing what we can, but we have to convince them.

To my knowledge, no country has been able to convince another country to regionalize part of the country for mad cow disease. The World Organization for Animal Health has not accepted this principle for the moment, but it has demonstated a certain openness to adopting certain measures that could permit it. However, as I said to Madam just before the meeting, they are more forward-looking in nature than retrospective. The measures we adopt today will perhaps permit us to proceed with regionalization in a few years.

Hon. Claude Drouin: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Easter, do you want to finish off? There are four minutes.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Yes, sure. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen.

On the answer that was just given, Mr. Gravel, about the BSE, I think it goes even beyond country. And I know what Madam Poirier-Rivard is trying to get at with the regionalization on BSE. If we could have had it regionalized, other provinces would have been able to sell their product. On the BSE issue, isn't it true, if you look at Japan, for instance, that the United States is not getting into Japan either, because they see it as a North American herd? So I think regionalization will be different from disease and commodity and crop, to a great extent.

That's my first question, then: doesn't Japan look at it as being not just countrywide but really continent-wide?

Second, I understand that in the United States they have kind of a zoning system by states. I may or may not be right on that. Can you explain how their system works? If they had BSE in one state, how would it apply? Or if they had potato wart in one state, how would it apply?

● (1600)

Mr. André Gravel: Thank you for the questions.

In the case of BSE, you're right that the Japanese and many others see North America as one market. I think the Japanese delegations that we have entertained and the Americans have also welcomed have realized that there is an extensive movement of live animals between the two countries, of animal feed between the two countries, and meat and animal products. So for all intents and purposes, it would be very hard to convince the Japanese that there is a situation in Canada that is not parallel to the situation in the States.

That I think applies for BSE...only as far as I can think; for other animal diseases, I think it's always easy to demonstrate that you can have control measures and tests that allow you to determine that a given part of the country is free of the disease.

With regard to the second part of your question, dealing with what type of control system the U.S. has, Dr. Clark was mentioning that for live animals there are permits issued to move animals from one state to another. It would be on that basis that they could say there is some control of movement that is implemented that allows us to track that movement.

Potato wart is a different story altogether. I think in that case, they would have to convince us, the same way we convinced them when we had it in P.E.I., that there are control measures adequate to limit the movement of the disease between states.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I still don't trust them on their answers on potato wart, to be honest with you. But that doesn't matter; that's not what we're here to talk about.

A voice: That's another story.

Hon. Wayne Easter: It is quite a substantial story, their system on potato wart.

Just tying your last answer into something that David Anderson asked, BSE is probably not the right example, but if we had another animal disease that didn't have as long an incubation period... because they do look at BSE as being continent-wide. They obviously provide documentation when you move animals from state to state.

I know how difficult it would be to completely monitor all the movement of cattle, say, or hogs for that matter, between Alberta and Saskatchewan. It would be a substantial chore. You wouldn't want to get into the cost burden of a whole lot of control centres, either, in terms of border points. How do they do it in the States, that it can be believed?

Mr. Jim Clark: There is a federal legislative requirement for the movement of animals or products interstate. That's administered by the USDA.

While it's true there are not established monitoring stations on an ongoing basis in every state on the border, they do periodic checks at a variety of different locations to ensure that people are complying with the requirements of the federal legislation. There are some substantial penalties built into their system to deal with people who are not in compliance with their particular requirements, as well.

So we have assurances and we believe that the majority of people in the United States are complying with their interstate movement requirements. They have monitored it and found a very high compliance rate. That's our assurance that they are doing what they say they are supposed to be doing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Easter.

We'll go now to Mr. Angus, for seven minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I found that an interesting introduction, and I would like to go back to the example on BSE. We have had a North American herd, and we've had the transfer of animals across North America. It has been one of the successes of our industry, and now it's one of the things that has damaged us.

I accept the argument that because of the feed standards we have, which are pretty much North American, and the long incubation period, we don't really know where BSE is even going to pop up as a case. But what if a region such as Quebec, after the two years we have been through, now decided to do 100% testing of any animals coming through their slaughter plants as a guarantee. Isn't that a standard then where they can at least guarantee, animal per animal, that they are BSE-free and should therefore not have to be subject to the ban?

● (1605)

Mr. André Gravel: I think the difficulty with BSE is that the test is not necessarily reliable for an animal that is in incubation. So even if you tested all animals, it wouldn't actually give you the degree of assurance that the animal you've tested and that doesn't have the disease in its brain is not incubating the disease. It'll be very hard to convince another country and to convince OIE that you can actually regionalize on that basis.

Mr. Charlie Angus: So you're saying in the incubation period, but you're going to be taking the SRMs out anyway.

How does this test work? My understanding is that you can tell if there are prions or not, even whether it's in incubation.

Mr. Jim Clark: As with most diseases, there's a progression of the infective agent in the body of the animal. An animal can be infected at a very young age. The traditional portion of the body or the nervous system that's tested for the disease will not show any evidence of that disease, because the disease agent has not progressed or moved into that area of the brain stem. That is one of the reasons why, in the SRM removal, the distal ileum becomes a significant piece of the animal's anatomy that needs to be removed as part of the SRMs. If the infective agent is in the feedstuff and the feedstuff is in the gut, that portion of the intestinal tract becomes the section that would be the highest risk of having infective material present in the tissues.

Dealing with your suggestion of 100% testing, that would be effective in demonstrating that the animals that have been destroyed and that have become part of the meat or other processes do not have the infection. Over sufficient time, if enough of the population was tested, it would be some indication of disease incidence. However, if you find one infected animal in that population, then it proves that the infective agent was disseminated someplace in the animal population through the feed source.

That's the difficulty with BSE. By the time you find the infected animal, you look retrospectively at the point in time when it likely became infected. Then you have to assume that other animals were exposed to the same feedstuff that infected that animal.

It is what we're trying to do with the surveillance that's going on. By targeting the animals that represent the highest risk of showing the disease or being infected, we are trying to demonstrate to the world that the Canadian animal population is at very low risk of having additional BSE cases.

The measures we've implemented to remove the infective material from the feed chain will, at a point in the future, have a completely free population of animals. Getting to that point in time, with the monitoring necessary during the interval, makes it very important that we deal with the Canadian population rather than a smaller segment of it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I recognize that need—I mean, I think we need to have some national action on this—but I'm just throwing out these hypotheticals, because we don't know how long this R-CALF injunction could go on. With softwood it's been years. So if a region decided tomorrow to go to, say, a 100% protein ban, so we wouldn't have to worry what was in the feed, and maybe in 18 months, two years, on what was coming in on the kill floor there's been 100% testing in that region—not in the rest of Canada, but in that region—would it then be possible to argue that the region should be considered free of the ban?

Mr. André Gravel: Certainly we would be willing to look at any scenario that could limit the economic impact of BSE in Canada to a given area. Some of the control measures that the member is suggesting would be elements of a control point. Whether we can convince the international scientific community and international partners that this is adequate is another story. Again, as I mentioned, regardless of what we do here, there's always a buyer who has to be willing to accept our product.

● (1610)

Mr. Charlie Angus: All right.

In terms of this monitoring station that's being set up, I find it very interesting. Is the object of the monitoring station now just to get an overview of what was travelling east to west, or is it to basically work out the kinks so that if you had to isolate one particular region and put up a number of monitoring stations, you'd be able to know that you could track what's coming and what's going?

Mr. André Gravel: I think it's both. To a certain extent, the agency is certainly interested in the animal industry along with having a handle on what's moving in terms of live animals from western Canada to eastern Canada. Our discussion with the Cattle Identification Agency demonstrates they're interested in logging in the data bank some of the information generated there, so that we know when an animal born on an Alberta farm is actually captured on its way to a slaughter plant in Ontario and Quebec. That would be very useful information for us to have retrospectively.

The second part of it is, yes, it would be also a way of determining how we could do it, what the costs would be, and what else we would need to do if this were operating in a time of disease.

There's also a third element. Once you have that in place and you can demonstrate that you've actually tracked the movement of animals, it's easier to convince trading partners, when you have a disease, that this thing has been operating for a year or two and here's the type of data we captured during that period of time.

So it would be very useful information as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Moving to Mr. Miller, for five minutes.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think you mentioned earlier, Mr. Clark, that about a year after the avian thing, we're still trying to convince people that things are safe. Well, it's been two years on the BSE thing, and we're still trying. But you probably knew that.

Mr. Easter, you also mentioned that BSE is now recognized as a continent-wide problem. Is the border opening tomorrow, do you know, or...?

Hon. Wayne Easter: How I wish.

Mr. Larry Miller: It should be a continent-wide thing, but it isn't.

There's a number of products...and Mr. Anderson touched on them earlier. This thing has perimeters such that you could take it, I think, almost beyond imagination. One thing I can think of, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that although some animal parts are being used for animal feed, some parts are also being used in fertilizer. Correct?

Mr. Jim Clark: Yes.

Mr. Larry Miller: There's a product that is basically transported all over the country. So if you got into an infectious problem or whatever, how would you control that type of thing in a regionalization thing? Perhaps we could have some comments on that.

Mr. Jim Clark: It would depend on the disease agent we're talking about. In the majority of cases, prions are recognized as one of the most indestructible infectious agents that we happen to be dealing with. Putting them in material that basically is not going to be potentially infected with the prion, the concern becomes less because of the removal of the SRMs. They're used not as a fertilizer, but have to be disposed of in a manner that would not allow the existence or the establishment of the prion beyond the point in time where they were disposed of. So the rest of the material becomes inconsequential.

If we're dealing with a highly infectious disease, the majority of the processes that would be involved in producing the type of material you're talking about, fertilizer or something else like that, a highly processed product, would inactivate whatever the disease agent happened to be. So the concern is not there with them, and there's no need to track them.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. I'm taking, from what you're saying, that any of the worst parts or the most dangerous are in prions. Is there any other disease out there, other than BSE, that could be transmitted through fertilizer that might put it into a regionalization situation?

Mr. Jim Clark: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Larry Miller: None that you're aware of.

Carrying that into another product—for lack of another term, I call them “concentrates”, but it's basically animal feed—that again is transported all over the place, would there be any thought from you two, or your agency, to put controls on where that feed would go as well, or could go?

● (1615)

Mr. Jim Clark: Again, unless there was a need to actually track it, the processes that are used to produce the material are such that it would remove the majority of the infectious agents, whether it's bacterial or viral, from the material. So from that perspective, an infectious disease perspective, no.

There is the potential that there may be contaminants in the material that have nothing to do with infectious agents, but could still affect animals, if they were exposed to them. From that perspective, it's desirable to be able to track it to some degree. But when we're dealing with those types of elements, then generally, when they're incorporated into a feed that may be fed to a large number of animals, it becomes a batch or several batches that the feed industry is producing. In situations where there are questions, we've always gone back and removed elements of the feed before and after, where we consider the greatest exposure may be present.

Mr. Larry Miller: Again, the same question I asked: is there another kind of disease that you're aware of that we haven't really touched on today that...?

Good, okay.

Another concern I have—again, Mr. Anderson touched on this, but I'd like to hear more comments on it—is whether the bureaucracy could get out of hand. I guess my fear is that it could just go and go; costs run into it.

If you were to put up some of these posts, as you say, whether you put one between Ontario and Manitoba or wherever, what would the cost be and how would you control those costs? Have you put much thought or input into that?

Mr. André Gravel: As we mentioned earlier, the establishment of the West Hawk Lake control station will give us an indication of the post costs. Clearly, we don't see the agency as the only player in that. Certainly, we're not going to be implementing controls and creating a huge bureaucracy to deal with something that the industry can do itself. Our partnership with the Animal Health Coalition is a case in point for that.

There's a bunch of stuff that industry can do much better than we can do. The animal identification database is not run by government but by the private sector, and it's run very well. So we would tend to limit our involvement to the areas where it's necessary for us to intervene. In that case, you don't need to have a CFIA-staffed station at that control point to track animal movement. If it's somebody that the agency has trained, or that somebody else has trained and accredited, it's fine with us.

There are a bunch of alternatives that the agency is willing to look at in terms of how we can have the information we need to convince trading partners that we have actually regionalized diseases. It's not necessarily us alone.

The Chair: Mrs. Ur, five minutes.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank you for your presentation, and I thank my honourable colleague for bringing this forth.

I have a couple of quick questions. First, your first project is set up at West Lake. Why was that chosen?

Mr. André Gravel: It's a very easy area to control in terms of the roads that go from eastern Canada to western Canada. There's one road and there's one railroad, so it's like the narrow end of a funnel. That's why we chose that area, because it's the easiest place where all the roads can get into.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: The funding for this project did not come from CFIA's budget, it came from Agriculture—

Mr. André Gravel: AAFC.

● (1620)

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Okay.

Also, would I be correct in thinking that regionalization or setting up control points would be based more on, say, commodity, land mass, or subject matter, rather than anything else? How would you set up regionalization or different areas across Canada?

Mr. André Gravel: I think regionalization can be based on many factors. It can be based on geography. It can be based on time. It can be based on boundaries established by governments.

In the case of avian influenza, as an example, in western Canada, in B.C., we used the natural boundaries of the Fraser Valley to determine what the control area would be. We also used the layout of access roads to that area as a control feature.

It all depends on how you can convince yourself and others that you've established sufficient control to warrant special treatment for that one area as opposed to the rest of the country.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: In your presentation, you also mentioned that you were in the process of establishing your first monitoring station, which will assist in creating regions within Canada at the time of a disease outbreak. Are you at all looking at some of those control points being portable?

Mr. André Gravel: It's certainly an option the agency would be willing to look at. We want to know, given the pilot project, how this thing would be functioning, what the costs would be, what the implications would be. I think in the case of an animal disease situation, yes, we would be willing to look at how we could implement these measures on a portable basis, for sure.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: When we were in British Columbia studying the avian flu epidemic, that was a really strong topic of discussion, basically looking at a portable team, like a DART team, that would be versed in this and that could go across Canada at any given time to cut down timeframes for testing rather than going off to Winnipeg and all the rest. Is that going to be considered in these projects?

Mr. André Gravel: That's one of the recommendations of this committee to the agency, actually, to look at how the agency could be intervening differently in the case of avian influenza and other animal diseases. The agency has agreed to certainly look at that as an alternative for us.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: To go back to this West Hawk Lake project, what is the timeframe you're giving to that project before you move on to other projects?

Mr. Jim Clark: The application that the Canadian Animal Health Coalition made to Agriculture Canada was over a three-year timeframe. The committee has gone back to the coalition and asked them for a detailed work plan, with elements in it that would establish timeframes for making certain aspects of the project occur.

I have no idea when the coalition is prepared to move on that, but CFIA and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have committed to the coalition to provide them with as much advice and expertise as we can in establishing that work plan .

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Would it not be good business sense to request a status update at the end of each year to see the progress and accountability and transparency?

Mr. Jim Clark: I'm sure those safeguards are built into the process that Agriculture Canada has established.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: As I indicated before, in my questioning as to whether it be commodity, land mass, or cause, do you think there should be a monitoring of feed across Canada, or is there a lot of that? Is it more provincial rather than interprovincial movement?

Mr. Jim Clark: The rendering industry tends to supply the raw materials for the feed industry in terms of meat and bone meal. There are many other aspects of raw materials that may go into feed. CFIA has a regulatory rule within the feed industry in general, but we rely on industry to develop their own tracking mechanisms, in terms of lot, VAX numbers and where they've been, where they've gone. They do an extremely good job of that on an ongoing basis. We don't feel there's a need for government to intervene, other than the regulatory controls that are already there, in establishing movement controls that would be applied to that particular industry.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Gaudet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Once again, thank you for the excellent supper you served us last night.

Now, let's talk about regionalization and cull cows. Quebec and the Ontario produce about 80 per cent of all cull cows in Canada. If, when it happened, we had had regionalization, do you believe that it could have opened doors, instead of closing them the way they did? In my opinion, there is a difference between cull cow and cattle producers.

I would like to hear your opinion on this matter, because I have the feeling that we would have won.

Mr. André Gravel: It is very obvious, Mr. Chairman, that if we had been able to convince our trading partners and the international organizations that Canada had implemented adequate control measures to regionalize its territory, the impact of BSE would have been less. That goes without saying.

As for cull cows, they also constitute a population at risk, because they are fed protein supplements from recycled animal proteins. This is another factor to take into consideration.

However, it is obvious that the impact would have been less if we could have had measures in place in the 1990s, convinced our trading partners, and established a standard with the International Office of Epizootics on the regionalization of BSE. Unfortunately, this is not now the case, as you know.

● (1625)

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Yes, I know, but I remember that the government had been asked several questions. I told myself that Canada is one country. It is very fine to be one country, but at a given time, Ontario and Quebec produced 80 per cent of cull cows and could have been excluded. I don't say that we would have sold all our stock, but we would perhaps have been penalized less.

You speak of costs. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Miller said earlier that it would have incurred some costs. I agree with you, but if this system had been introduced slowly, I don't think it would have cost that much. Today, if we begin, I hope we will introduce it immediately, whatever the reason. For my part, I don't find the cost so overwhelming. If we start slowly and we reach a certain consensus, it could certainly be done. I want everyone to receive his due, that is no problem for me, but it would be good if we could save money.

In my opinion, if we had proceeded in stages, the cost would have been minimal compared to the billions that BSE has cost Canadians, cattle producers and producers of cull cows.

I would like to hear your opinion on this matter.

Mr. André Gravel: Obviously, in many cases, an ounce of prevention costs much less than a pound of cure. I agree with you in this regard. Furthermore, when Canada put control measures in place in the late 1990s, I believe that we made the right decisions in the light of the information available to us at that time. I don't think we could have done otherwise. Even when we introduced control measures for animal feed, in 1997, I think some industrial sectors already thought we were going too far. It is always rather difficult to convince people during peacetime that measures should be taken to guard against war. Once war has started, we realize the economic and other impacts of not having made these decisions.

In the case of BSE, I believe that we did what we wanted to do. So, what we are going to do in the future, in the light of what we now know, is different. We regularly work together with the OIE to help establish a standard that would permit regionalization. This is something that we can envisage for the future. But, at present, it is quite impossible.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I agree with you. However, have you drawn up a program to be established, say, in 2006 or 2007? This is what intrigues me, because if we do nothing but talk and then another disaster occurs, it will be a serious matter for all our producers. If we accept their 2.1 billion dollar deficit in 2003, I believe that if we are not proactive, we are going to be up the creek, as they say.

Mr. André Gravel: I agree. I believe that the policy changes we made regarding BSE monitoring and the proposed regulations governing animal feed and high-risk foods are components of a control strategy. The pilot project at West Hawk Lake is another component of the agency's strategy of instituting control measures to limit the impact of other cases of animal diseases, including BSE.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: What interests me is your schedule. I want to know if it is going to begin soon. You tell me it has already begun; I am very happy about that. However, more pressure should perhaps be applied so that it comes into in force sooner.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Easter.

● (1630)

Hon. Wayne Easter: I have just a comment on Larry's point earlier, Mr. Chair. He raised the point about, well, seeing as we're considered, as Japan considers us, one North American region, then the border must be open. But the fact of the matter is that if the Americans would be more sensible, if they want to get in the Japanese market, then they would already be allowing the movement of Canadian beef. They are for under-30-months beef, boxed beef, certainly, but they should be allowing more movement into the United States. They're not going to get into Japan until such time as they treat us the same way they're asking Japan to treat them. That's the bottom line.

I don't know if Mr. Clark or Mr. Gravel want to make any comment on that, but that is the bottom line. I just want to put that on the record, and Larry can read it on Monday.

The Chair: Do you have any comment, Mr. Gravel?

Mr. André Gravel: Just one comment with regard to the U.S.

Let us remember that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Secretary of Agriculture in the States are in favour of opening the Canadian border. I think we're dealing with sort of a parallel process here that's blocking Canadian access. The current administration is in support of opening the border.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I'll be a little more blunt about it, Mr. Chair. We're dealing with an American judge who's playing politics with an issue that's serious to beef producers everywhere, especially Canadian beef producers. In my own view—I've said it publicly and I'll say it again—I think his decision is an affront to justice and the justice system.

The Chair: I guess we'll leave that. That statement stands by itself.

Mr. Watson, and then Mrs. Poirier-Rivard will have the last word.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to be sitting in for my colleague Mr. Bezan, who I think is probably more knowledgeable about this than I would be. Here's hoping I don't sound like I don't know what I'm talking about.

I guess the first place I want to start is to get some sense of certitude. Is CFIA committed to making regionalization a reality in Canada?

Mr. André Gravel: Clearly, we are definitely committed to it. We've done it in the past, and it's definitely our intention to continue with that. We intervene at international organizations to make this a reality. We provide our input. Whenever Canada has been hit with a disease, so far we've always taken that approach.

An important element is that if foreign countries are experiencing animal disease themselves, then we have to be open to let them regionalize the disease as well. And we've done that too.

Mr. Jeff Watson: In the presentation here, you said that the West Hawk Lake project is anticipated to be the first in a series of control points for the purposes of animal health zoning. How many zones do you envision? Surely there has to be some thought as to how many zones there would be.

Mr. Jim Clark: There has been work done by the coalition and by CFIA in general about what control points might represent logical and reasonable places to establish those zones within Canada.

When you go to the OIE guidelines in terms of the principles or the things that need to be considered in establishing those, there are some logical points in Canada other than West Hawk Lake where control points or monitoring points can be established.

Mr. Jeff Watson: How many?

Mr. Jim Clark: I believe there are seven.

● (1635)

Mr. Jeff Watson: What are these zones? Are they defined by political boundaries, geographic or topographic boundaries, animal stock? Can you give us some indication of how those have been arrived at?

Mr. Jim Clark: Perhaps I can read this into the record from the OIE chapter on zoning and compartmentalization. The OIE indicates that it's appropriate to establish a zone or compartment that :

> will depend on the epidemiology of the disease,

—that's the first thing that has to be taken into consideration—

> environmental factors, applicable biosecurity measures (including movement controls, use of natural and artificial boundaries, commercial management and husbandry practices), and surveillance and monitoring.

All of those factors can be used in establishing a zone. So when we look at the control points that might be established, we have to look at those particular principles and consider where they may be applied.

To use some illustrations, you've examined West Hawk Lake, and that forms a natural point where there is a confluence of traffic in one particular piece of the country, very localized. There are natural boundaries through the Canadian Rocky Mountains, into British Columbia and Alberta, and they form other points where you might consider putting control points. There are some limited opportunities across from Ontario into Quebec, and they would represent other logical control points. Prince Edward Island on itself and the causeway that joins it to the mainland would represent a potential control point. The ferry moving from the mainland to Newfoundland represents another control point.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Would those be the same zones for plant diseases as well, or would you be looking at a series of different zones for controlling plant disease?

Mr. Jim Clark: There may be environmental factors identified within the OIE code that could be considered for the purposes of plants. There may be natural conditions that would eliminate the potential for a disease to spread into a given zone.

Mr. Jeff Watson: So we're essentially talking now about seven control points. Do you have any idea of what that's going to cost? You've already rendered a decision that somehow West Hawk Lake is a cost-effective addition, so you must have sense of what seven control points will cost.

Mr. Jim Clark: On the actual dollar numbers, no idea; it will depend on who is actually running that operation. If it's industry, then the Canadian public does not necessarily bear any of the burden. I'm sure industry will be looking for contributions from the government, but exactly what that contribution may entail, no one knows at this point in time.

Mr. Jeff Watson: So the judgment that it's cost-effective is only applied to West Hawk Lake. We have no idea whether the others will be or not.

Mr. André Gravel: If I may, Mr. Chairman, the issue is one of cost benefits. The establishment of a control zone at West Hawk Lake would represent an investment that the industry and government would have to fund, and that has to be balanced with the benefit of having that in place in the case of certain animal diseases and the economic impact of zoning certain parts of the country as opposed to the whole of the country.

It's not necessarily only the cost itself. It's what you derive as benefit in the long term when these things are in place and you can convince your trading partners that they're effective.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Okay.

Let's go back to the seven zones here. One of the criteria for establishing these zones is the epidemiology of the disease. You've already envisioned seven zones without anticipating what the disease is. Am I mistaken in that?

Mr. Jim Clark: No. I think what's been identified is the potential for those places to exist. We're not suggesting that they have to exist, but the criteria that would look at the logical establishment of those has been examined.

You're right, the epidemiology of the disease would have to be considered in whether those control points would be effective.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Ms. Poirier-Rivard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: When France went through an avian influenza crisis, Italy, which is right next door, was not penalized. What happened? It *is* very close. Here, Quebec and Ontario suffered because of an event that occurred in Alberta. Can you explain how it happens that Italy, which is situated right next to France, was not penalized during the avian influenza crisis?

Mr. André Gravel: I think that avian influenza and BSE are two completely different diseases. In the case of the situation that Canada went through last year, for most countries, avian influenza could be regionalized. We therefore underwent the equivalent of what France underwent when it was hit by the avian influenza. With BSE, the situation is completely different.

Also remember that when foot-and-mouth disease hit England, trade with all of Europe was affected for a while. It was only when England's trading partners could demonstrate that they had control measures in place that certain countries eased their restrictions. For our part, when England reported the presence of foot-and-mouth disease, all of Europe was declared an affected area on the basis of the movement of animals and products that existed at the time. It was only when France, Italy and the other countries provided us with information that we were able to determine that only England was targeted by this action, and not the other countries.

I believe that each situation is somewhat different.

● (1640)

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Are exchanges of information taking place with those countries where programs are already in place?

Mr. André Gravel: Yes. With Europe in particular, we have a veterinary agreement that permits us to exchange information on the spread of diseases and the movement of animal products, etc. We have a steering committee that meets twice a year to examine both trade and disease prevention aspects. With US staff, we have daily contacts about plant health, animal health and meat. The agency has many contacts with our trading partners on this subject.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Is there anything that we can use, that we can implement to help us get through this crisis?

Mr. André Gravel: Thank you for the question. When avian influenza struck our country, contacts were immediately established with countries that had been affected by this disease, such as the Netherlands, and on the basis of that country's experience, we instituted certain control measures. It is very useful to speak with people who have had experience with the disease.

When England was hit by foot-and-mouth disease, Canada provided a number of veterinarians, who went there to help people in that country. In a certain way, we were helping ourselves, by getting training and exposure to those conditions.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I have a final question, Mr. Chairman.

Minister Mitchell announced 1.8 million dollars for programs. Is the practical health regionalization pilot project part of this announcement?

Mr. André Gravel: I'm not sure.

Jim.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Clark: I don't know. The ACAAF funding that has been provided to the Animal Health Coalition over a three-year period of time constitutes $4.5 million. Whether the $1.8 million is part of that figure, I don't know.

The Chair: We'll just let the parliamentary secretary answer that question.

Hon. Wayne Easter: What was the question, sir?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Ah! He wasn't listening.

[*English*]

The Chair: He's always working, so we have to assume he was working again.

Madam Poirier-Rivard, you wanted to ask a question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Yes, I will repeat it.

I want to know whether the traceability pilot project is part of the 1.8 million dollar program announced by Minister Mitchell.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: He doesn't know.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: I believe the funding is coming out of other areas for that. I think it depends on the area. I know in one particular area of the country where they're looking at traceability, it's coming out of the Agri-Adapt Council funding. So I....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Could you give me the answer next week?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Will do.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, as I always kindly do, you have another word.

Mr. David Anderson: It's just because I'm so interested, Mr. Chair.

I have a few questions, but I won't do them all today. First, I'm wondering, how do you keep from running over provincial jurisdiction and interfering with them? You must have some issues there. Agriculture's a shared jurisdiction. I'm sure there are environmental.... I think DFO is an example of a federal agency that had gone wild in our province for a while, although they seem to have pulled back now.

How do you work with those issues?

Mr. André Gravel: Federal-provincial jurisdiction is an opportunity, I think, in the case of animal diseases and control of animal diseases, avian influenza being a case in point. We couldn't have done what we did without the help of B.C. MAF. We do have regular exchanges of information. We're part of networks for animal disease prevention. So we like to see that not as a problem but as an opportunity. There are many areas where they're better equipped than we are to do what has to be done.

Again with regard to AI, for instance, in B.C., the disposal of a lot of dead animals represented certainly a challenge for us, and B.C. MAF and B.C. Environment had the answers to those questions.

● (1645)

Mr. David Anderson: If you don't follow provincial boundaries, how much more difficult does that make it for you to not just establish the control zones but then to be able to manage them?

Mr. André Gravel: In some cases it can be natural borders, in some cases it can be political borders—quote, unquote—but it all depends on what opportunity exists to control movement of animals. If it's political borders, then so be it. Other than that, either we or the agency can...or provinces can give us a hand on it.

Mr. David Anderson: There was a comment a few minutes ago about industry. I'm going to give you the opportunity, I guess, to say you're not intending that industry's going to bear the cost of this experiment, are you?

Mr. André Gravel: No. In fact, as we said, the funding for that pilot project comes from the government.

Mr. David Anderson: Okay, but it's a growing project, from everything we can see. There was some mention about industry managing it, which I think would probably be far better than having the government do it, but right now industry, in the crops or the animal livestock sections, can't afford to be handling those costs.

I just would like to come back to Riding Mountain Park again. We've talked about this so many times that I think people are really sick of it, but it's still affecting people there. You went into British Columbia and were very aggressive in taking out the animals. You took out a whole pile of animals that couldn't have got the disease anyway, but they were done away with. I'm just wondering, why has there been such a reluctance to do that in Riding Mountain Park? I guess we probably would accept an answer that involves Heritage Canada.

Why hasn't this situation been taken care of? It probably could have been by now if there'd been a cull of enough of the elk to be able to spread them out in that park. Why haven't you done that?

Mr. André Gravel: In the case of avian influenza, the agency did what it did on the basis of its regulatory powers. We have sole jurisdiction for animal diseases in animals that are raised for human consumption, general agriculture.

In the case of Riding Mountain National Park, the agency doesn't have sole jurisdiction on that. It's multi-jurisdiction. There are other challenges related to how you assemble those animals, etc.

So in this case, we operated as a partnership with other government departments and with other segments of the Canadian population as well.

Mr. David Anderson: Then I guess I would say I'm disappointed in the cabinet that they have not taken the initiative there, because they could have done that, and it could have been done through you folks and/or Heritage Canada, but they have not done what's needed to be done in that area. That disease is going to be there forever, the way they're treating it right now.

In closing, I just wanted to respond to Wayne. He had talked about one rogue judge in Montana, and that's basically what is supposedly holding up a pile of favourable rulings for us. But I guess I'm also disappointed that our government doesn't seem to be doing its job legislatively or legally down there either. It's fortunate for us, I guess, but unfortunate for Canadians that the government hasn't stepped forward and the Conservative MPs have had to do that instead. We're the ones who are in the U.S. courts trying to be friends of the ranchers and to get this overturned.

I'd just like to express that disappointment with the government.

The Chair: That's not the kind of note I'd expected we'd end this meeting on. I think we should try to keep our partisan positions to ourselves and deal with them at the political tables, not at this table.

Gentlemen, thanks for coming, and Madame Poirier-Rivard, thanks for raising this worthy issue. I think it's enlightened all of us. All of us understand that much of what we do is contingent upon other partners, OIE particularly, as they set protocol and guidelines, as we have to subscribe to those kind of rulings, expending a lot of money when in fact there is no recognition of the work we're doing—for instance, the export of product—given that other countries would not recognize those kinds of rulings. It becomes a very difficult issue.

Despite that, I think we've learned something from the experience in B.C. Certainly, Riding Mountain was mentioned as an experience that has not had the same kind of results.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, and we look forward to hearing from you again.

Thanks to all. Have a great weekend.

With that, I adjourn the meeting.

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