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**Monday, October 3, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Paul Steckle**

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## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Monday, October 3, 2005

• (0900)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)):** Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to call the meeting to order.

Firstly, let me say how pleased we are to be here on this fresh, cool morning, very much unlike what we have back in Ontario this morning, a balmy day there at probably 24 or 26 degrees with high humidity. A welcome change. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of your community today.

I should just say before we begin that this is a meeting that's been on and off for a long time. Some time ago we had made known the intention to come to this place, but obviously, with the sometimes unsettling environment in Ottawa, it's difficult to find the opportunity for members to get away. So I want to thank my colleagues today for making time available for the meeting we have today and tomorrow.

As I understand it, tomorrow we'll actually be going on site and seeing some of the things that have taken place as a result of the good work you've done and as a result perhaps of the recommendations that were put forward by the committee in 2003. It's been an ongoing process and this process will go on beyond today. What we really want to do today and tomorrow is get a hands-on of what's taking place, what has taken place, and what we might do to even further enhance the cause we believe has to be furthered.

Before we get into the remarks of our witnesses, I want to introduce my panel of colleagues this morning. There's Inky Mark of course, who has graciously offered to host this meeting in his riding. I understand he lives right here in town and was a long-time mayor, and as a result of his work back nine or ten years ago you have a facility such as this. So thank you very much, Inky. James Bezan, who is also from this province, is here this morning from the Conservative Party. We have with us also André Bellevance; André, welcome. Thank you for taking time to be here this morning, and of course he's from the Bloc. From the government side of the House we have Rose-Marie Ur, from the Lambton—Kent—Middlesex riding in Ontario, a neighbouring riding of mine. And I'm Paul Steckle, your chair, coming from the Huron—Bruce riding on the shores of Lake Huron.

So that is our panel, and now if we could we'll begin.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you wish you can come to the front chairs of your church pews. Obviously we always gather in the back, but allow yourselves to hear what's going on today. This is why we came here, to be heard and to hear from you as well.

At this time I'm going to introduce our first panel of witnesses as we begin our day's study on the further TB issue regarding Riding Mountain National Park. We have with us, from the Riding Mountain Liaison Committee, Calvin Pawluk, member of the board of directors; and from the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee, John Whitaker, who is the chair; and then the Riding Mountain TB Science Advisory Committee, Paul Paquet, chair—and he graciously gave us a ride over from the hotel this morning, so thank you very much, Paul; and from the University of Manitoba, Ryan Brook, Department of Environment and Geography, Clayton H. Ridden Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, for being here this morning.

As you understand, we have an hour and a half allocated to the four panels today, with the exception of the last panel being a little shorter. If you consume your time in speaking, obviously we won't have much time for questions, so we would ask that you keep it within the ten-minute timeframe. If there's any way you can abbreviate your remarks, please do so; it'll give us more time for questions and perhaps vice versa, questions from you for us.

You may begin, and I'm not sure who's first. It looks like Mr. Pawluk might be the first person.

Mr. Pawluk.

• (0905)

**Mr. Calvin Pawluk (Member, Board of Directors, Riding Mountain Liaison Committee):** Thank you.

Welcome, bonjour, to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food representatives present today, other federal and provincial government officials present, residents of the Riding Mountain region, and guests.

I am here today as the spokesperson for the Riding Mountain Regional Liaison Committee, or, for the purposes of this presentation, the liaison committee, which is a 15-member municipally based organization with two participating federal government departments—Parks Canada and Fisheries and Oceans—and two participating provincial government departments, which are Manitoba Conservation and Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives. In addition, other government agencies under the federal Department of Agriculture, such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, act as advisers. The liaison committee was formed in September of 1980 and meets eight times a year. Our mandate is to help resolve issues that arise due to interaction between our national park and its surrounding neighbours.

The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association also attends our meetings and is instrumental in taking our concerns with the bovine TB issue to provincial and federal levels of government. Bovine TB in the Riding Mountain region has been the liaison committee's major issue for the last number of years, and I am here to express our accomplishments and concerns.

Cattle, elk, and bison producers around Riding Mountain National Park are fully supportive of eliminating bovine TB in our region, and although progress has been made in eliminating the disease, producers' financial and emotional concerns have not been adequately addressed. Costs associated with testing our animals have consistently been borne solely by producers. While we appreciate the standing committee's previous recommendation for a mustering fee to be paid, to date no such compensation has been forthcoming. Over the last couple of years testing procedures were changed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; for example, blood tests were added to the routine. Because we are part of test adjustments and research, the liaison committee strongly recommends payment to producers for presenting their animals for testing.

Producers also bear the extra cost of quarantined herds, that is, extra feeding and labour costs, and the biggest cost we face both financially and mentally is our inability while under quarantine to market livestock when we are ready to do so. In the case of confirmed TB and total herd depopulation, before producers can repopulate they are without income for a year because of a missed calf crop. Repopulation is a slow process. When depopulation occurs, our herd genetics are lost forever. My family has continuously raised beef cattle on the western edge of the Birdtail Valley in and along Riding Mountain National Park for a hundred years now. We have been lucky to date, for after the five tests our herd has been subjected to the herd has remained TB-negative, but an emotional roller-coaster ride begins whenever we receive notice we are due for yet another test. We ask for counselling services to be provided immediately to farm families who face the trauma of herd depopulation.

The liaison committee sees the need to remove the cap on the payment for animals that are slaughtered due to a TB-positive result. Purebred operations and dairy farmers receive considerably less money than what an animal is worth. Local Canadian Food Inspection Agency staff have done their best to provide compensation for the animals slaughtered, but it would make the job of TB testing easier if they had the ability to adequately compensate for higher-valued animals such as purebred breeding stock.

The liaison committee also believes that extensive testing of our wildlife population must continue in and around Riding Mountain National Park and the Duck Mountain region. TB showed up in a cattle herd in the early 1990s on the southwest side of Riding Mountain National Park on the eastern edge of the Birdtail Valley in the Rural Municipality of Rossburn. That same year a responsible hunter reported a suspicious-looking elk carcass to Manitoba Conservation officials. He shot this particular elk approximately three miles northwest of the farmyard that had the TB-positive cattle. That elk was also TB-positive. Cattle producers in the Rossburn area were concerned with this recent discovery of TB in local wildlife.

● (0910)

The government response was that this was an isolated incident of bovine TB, and that the TB-positive elk was likely an innocent bystander that contracted the disease from cattle herds. We were very uncomfortable with this conclusion. Many had become complacent due to what we were told in the early 1990s, and it cost all of us dearly.

A few years later a second major outbreak of TB occurred in a cattle herd in the same area. Since then more incidents of the disease have shown up in the Grandview-Pleasant Valley corridor area, both in domestic herds and in wildlife.

It is our responsibility to prevent this disease from spreading any further. The barrier fencing program has been successful in keeping wild ungulates away from winter feed supplies. It is important that this program continue and that government agencies work closely with producers and researchers studying elk and white-tailed deer movements in appropriately locating more fences. At present 124 fences have been placed to protect feed storage areas, and there are plans to erect 32 more in 2005-06. Of the 124 fences we have up to date, 12 of these are part of the 2005-06 commitment. There are also a few fences placed around winter feeding areas.

A researcher in the Riding Mountain region, Ryan Brook, from the University of Manitoba, has completed an extensive report on the barrier fencing program. Together with his research, we have more work to do. We have questions about fencing feeding grounds in areas where wildlife and domestic animals interact. For instance, can a fenced winter feeding area meet new manure-management regulations?

Another very valuable tool farmers have lost is our ability to swath-graze our cattle. Not only did this help reduce winter feeding and manure-hauling costs, but it also helped to reduce nutrient overloading on our farms by having the cows spread the manure around over a large area.

The Riding Mountain Regional Liaison Committee is pleased with the positive results being achieved as a result of the collaborative approach that has developed in the Riding Mountain region. After a great deal of finger pointing when this crisis first struck our area, we have progressed to the point at which we all realize that this was and is our problem, and that a commitment to working together is necessary if we are to achieve solutions.

Primary producers on the surrounding landscape—Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, local first nation communities, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, environmental organizations, outfitter and tourism operators, the TB task group, the scientific advisory group, the TB stakeholders advisory group, and the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve—have all had involvement in trying to resolve this issue.

Many people have spent countless hours at meetings, providing input toward solutions. Without progress, many of these individuals would not have continued to volunteer their time. It is extremely difficult to come up with practical solutions to a problem when you don't talk to all parties involved.

We believe the committed level of interest in this region in resolving this issue is unprecedented. The level of support and cooperation from both federal and provincial government departments and agencies has strengthened. It has taken some time and compromise to get to this point.

Parks Canada, with the hard work of their staff at Riding Mountain National Park, have taken a lead role in coming to grips with the TB issue. The Manitoba government takes this issue very seriously, and both the Minister of Conservation and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives are in regular contact with representatives of the area for regular TB updates. A lot more work is still to be done.

On behalf of the Riding Mountain Regional Liaison Committee we thank you, the standing committee, for your past interest and recommendations, and ask your continued support and help in the ongoing efforts to resolve finally the bovine TB issue. Such a solution will not only benefit our region, but all of Canada, as bovine TB can appear in any part of our country.

• (0915)

Our continued cooperative efforts will reassure primary producers on the landscape that our livelihoods will not be threatened again, as we keep gaining better knowledge and understanding of how to prevent and combat an outbreak before it can negatively impact the economy of the cattle industry on the local and/or the national level.

Thank you for making the time to visit the Riding Mountain region. We hope your stay with us is both educational and enjoyable.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Pawluk, for your presentation. It was very much within the timeframe we allowed you to speak.

We now go to Mr. Whitaker, chair of the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Whitaker (Chair, Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to my corner of the world.

[English]

Together with my family, I raise beef cattle in the TB eradication area east of Erickson. I've spent some time on municipal council and I think oftentimes politicians wonder if they're able to make a difference during their term. I'm sure that goes through your heads at times as well. Perhaps you're in opposition or you're sitting on the backbench and you wonder, "Will I ever really make a difference?" I just want to let you know that your recommendations last time around certainly did make a difference to us. In particular, it was recommendation number one in your report of April 2003, which talked about stakeholder consultation and the role of the park superintendent in that process.

Riding Mountain National Park, to their credit, took this recommendation and really developed it by funding a stakeholders advisory committee with a highly skilled facilitator, administered and chaired by the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve. The Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve is a United Nations designated area consisting of the national park and the municipalities surrounding it. Its purpose is to work towards developing a beneficial relationship between the park and its immediate neighbours. So the Bovine TB Stakeholders Advisory Committee formed in 2003 as a result of your recommendation. We've met about eight times to date, and hopefully we represent all of the local interests affected by the bovine TB situation.

Most members seem to be happy with this collaborative approach, although for some of them our pace of progress is a little slow. You will be meeting several of them today in subsequent presentations. You can ask them whether they think it's worth while or not. I think Calvin has already said that it's been a positive step as far as he is concerned.

We are currently functioning through three subcommittees. One is aimed at looking at determining whether we're making progress on the TB issue. Another one is addressing wildlife issues like barrier fencing. A third one is addressing first nations concerns, because they have their own special concerns regarding this issue. While we are cautiously optimistic that there are going to be no further cases of TB found in cattle this coming winter, such that we will get our TB-free status back in the spring of 2006, we recognize that eradication of TB from the Riding Mountain ecosystem, because of the fact that it has a wildlife reservoir, is going to be a very long-term process. It's going to require long-term funding commitments on behalf of the federal government and other governments as well.

There's also the whole question as to whether TB is going to break out of the Riding Mountain eradication area or not. If it does, and perhaps should it perhaps move north to the Duck Mountains, then this collaborative approach is going to have to be broadened and is going to have to involve new stakeholders. There's a series of other more specific recommendations found in our brief, which I will not go over right now. I want to make a couple of more general observations on this whole consultative approach.

Our committee always seems to be waiting for more information before we can make recommendations. Often this information is of a research nature. I know there's not an awful lot we can do to hurry up the research progress, but it's ongoing and it's working hand in glove with the local stakeholders. As soon as we get answers to some of our questions—for example, whether the barrier fencing program is working—then we can make recommendations on perhaps how it should be changed to make it work even better.

There's also an awful lot of information out there right now that still has to be communicated to stakeholders. It's a huge and continuing job for us and for the government agencies to try to get this information not only back to the TB Stakeholders Advisory Committee itself, but to all of the parent groups that they represent so that it's actually getting down to the grassroots level. Those of us who sit on the committee feel that we're pretty up to date with what is going on regarding bovine TB, but it's a real challenge to try to get that information back to the people we represent.

• (0920)

I've also become a very strong supporter of stakeholder involvement early on as a partner with government agencies and researchers in solving our problems—and Calvin and I really look on bovine TB as being our problem. I think initially government thought it was government's problem, that they were going to solve it, but really it's a problem for all of us.

I guess my first initiation into this consultative role came from Ryan Brook, who you're going to hear from in a few minutes. Ryan has been with us for about four years, doing his PhD on elk movement. He's had a very nice study because he's been following radio-collared elk around the area, getting locations and getting information on how elk move. The local people were very interested in what he was finding, and Ryan started to share information with us, almost from the first locations that he was receiving.

Parks Canada was quite aghast at this approach. They were used to the old-style approach, where Ryan would come in and do his research for four years and then he would report. They could see all sorts of problems with Ryan sharing information with us prematurely, that the stakeholders were going to run to their politicians or they were going to start running to the press and they were going to be using it against Parks Canada.

None of this ever happened. The local people were very appreciative of being completely up to date in what these elk were doing all the time, and as time went on, Parks Canada as well became much more comfortable with Ryan's sharing of all data as early as possible with local stakeholders.

I mentioned earlier that the park had aggressively adopted one of your previous recommendations, but it is more than that, in that they are now sharing all their information with stakeholders as soon as they get it, almost following Ryan's model. And I think they are finding that making their hard decisions is a little bit easier, because the stakeholders are already completely up to date with what the information the decision is based on is showing, and I guess the stakeholders are maybe feeling that they are starting to participate in the decision a little bit as well. What has happened is that a lot of the controversy and confrontation has gone out of the TB issue because of this complete sharing of information now.

Also, following your recommendations of last time, I notice a change in their staff's attitude to stakeholders, in that they were more respectful, seeing us as partners in developing the solutions to this problem, which is a problem for everyone.

But this consultative collaborative approach involving stakeholders as full partners requires our involvement in an *ex officio* capacity in all of the government groups and scientific groups that are part of the TB question. There's a diagram in our presentation showing how these groups interrelate. I guess the main ones are the task group, which is composed of the four governmental agencies that have jurisdiction over various aspects of the TB issue, and also the science advisory committee, which Paul chairs.

I guess we feel that by being part of these committees they can learn from us and we can learn from them, and we can get information back to our people in an unfiltered form because we heard it from the horse's mouth.

This has not happened to date, and this is one of the problems that I still see with the continued effective functioning of the TB stakeholders advisory committee, in that we have been blocked from attending in an *ex officio* capacity, both the task group composed of the four government agencies as well as the science advisory committee.

Our understanding is that Parks Canada is supportive of us being part of these committees, as is Manitoba Agriculture, but CFIA and Manitoba Conservation are less supportive. I know you don't have any jurisdiction over Manitoba Conservation, being a provincial department, but they're very traditional in their approach and they're much more comfortable consulting with their client group, the hunters. Getting them to become involved in multi-stakeholder consultation is a bit of challenge, but we're going to continue to work on that.

But CFIA is federal, so they do come under your jurisdiction, and they can learn a lot about working with stakeholders from the new approach taken by Parks Canada. It's not the local CFIA I'm talking about here, and in fact we have very good relations with the local people, Brian Manns, Ted Shwaluk, and Tammy, who handle the local TB testing. Even Maria Kholer-Jones has come out to public meetings. I remember she was in Rosssburn a while ago, and she stayed until the last question was asked, into the wee hours of the morning, and that's just great.

• (0925)

To me, the corporate culture of CFIA seems to be based on old-style consultations, in that they tell us what they are going to do and then they ask us if there are any questions, rather than developing us as full partners and providing us with complete information and a team-based approach that includes stakeholders.

The best example of this is the way the Bovigam blood test has been imposed on the cattle producers of the Riding Mountain eradication area. I'm not going to go into that any more, except to say that the approach certainly concerns our committee. I think the later presenters are going to talk about the Bovigam test a little more.

Thank you very much.

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

We will move to Mr. Paquet, who is the chair of the Riding Mountain TB Science Advisory Committee.

The time is yours.

**Dr. Paul Paquet (Chair, Riding Mountain TB Science Advisory Committee):** I'll be very brief so we can allow more questions.

The science committee was formed about two and a half years ago. It's composed of scientists with various expertise and disciplines from government, including the federal and provincial governments, and academics from various universities, including the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Calgary.

As a group, we function not by consensus but as scientists typically do, by argument and discussion. Our role really is to vet the science that has been used to address the question of TB and infectious disease in and around Riding Mountain, to be certain that anecdotal information and politics are not trumping the science that is necessary to understand the problem. Because of that, we ask all members of the science committee to dispense with their associations with government or universities, or agendas they might have when they participate on the science advisory committee. That's advantageous, because we hope to objectively represent the science as we see it and as we understand it.

I might also note that our role is never prescriptive. It is simply to make recommendations as we see fit or to address questions of science that we're asked to address by the various committees we report to.

As John indicated, our membership does not include individuals from other committees—as representatives of those committees. In some cases we do have overlap, however—not because they are members, for example, of the liaison committee, but simply because they are scientists who are active in the area.

We are certainly available to answer all of your questions today. As necessary, we represent the science committee and the opinions of the science committee. If you ask, I can provide my own opinion as well, but I'll be very careful to distinguish that.

Thank you for your time.

• (0930)

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

We will move to Mr. Brook, who represents the University of Manitoba. You have a long title and we'll leave that for another time.

**Mr. Ryan Brook (Department of Environment and Geography, Clayton H. Ridden Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources, University of Manitoba):** Fair enough.

**The Chair:** Tell us what you have for us this morning.

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** Good morning, everyone.

I was actually born and raised on a small farm in southern Manitoba, so this particular study was a real natural fit for me. I live here in Dauphin with my wife, and this has been home for the last three years.

I've been working full time on this TB issue since 2001. Basically, what I sleep and breathe is this TB situation. I'm trained as a wildlife biologist, so what I've really been looking at is that interface between wildlife and agriculture in and around Riding Mountain National Park. I'm also a member of the scientific review committee. As John mentioned, a big focus of the research is to try to include local people as well, and not to just do more traditional ecological science, which is sort of in an ivory tower. That's been the focus of things.

One point that needs to be made at the beginning and that we all need to recognize is that everyone wants to get rid of TB. I think that's a good place to start. We don't have anybody standing up and saying, "Gee, guys, we'd sure like to keep this TB around". That's an important point to make from the beginning.

From a scientific perspective, I'll just give you a quick overview of some of the methods we've been using to collect data around the park. When we first started this study in 2001, we realized pretty quickly that we didn't know a heck of a lot about what farmers were thinking about TB or what they were doing to manage their farms. The first thing we did was to send a mail survey to every single farmer within 50 kilometres of Riding Mountain National Park. That's 4,220 surveys, just enough to fill the back of a half-ton truck right up to the cap. We got a 25% response rate, which is quite good for a government-sponsored, regional-type mail survey.

**The Chair:** Would you slow down a wee bit? Translation may be having a hard time keeping up.

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** All right. Very good.

Yes, we mailed out this survey to every single farmer in 2002. That gave us good regional coverage of what every farmer was thinking about TB, what their concerns were, what their knowledge was around TB, and also what the regional distribution of wildlife was from their observations. We also conducted in-person interviews with over 140 farmers within the hot zone for TB in the RM of Grandview area, and that was really to document the knowledge at a more detailed level and really get a good understanding, on a personal basis, of where elk were moving within this hot zone of TB, some of the changes that people have observed with elk and habitats, and get a better idea of their concerns around TB.

We also conducted surveys of agency representatives that participate on the TB task group as well, to get a perspective on their attitudes and perceptions of the issue.

Then, as John mentioned, I've been involved in this study of collaring 200 elk in and around Riding Mountain National Park over the last four years, to document their movement patterns and their habitat use. That's been a key part of our program, to understand also how they interact with cattle herds.

We've been interviewing farmers to map out exactly, in very good detail, where these cattle herds are, where the summer pastures are, where the winter pastures are, and then with these moving collared elk we can see how that interaction occurs, what time of day, what time of year, and how it changes from year to year. We can also link that to the local knowledge we collect by interviewing farmers.

The last part is synthesizing it all to bring it all together. It is an interesting study, in that it brings in the social science data, asking farmers about their perceptions, but it also brings in the ecological data as well from collared animals. That's where I'm at right now. We've collected all of the data for the study, so now we're writing up the final results and synthesizing all the data.

I'll share with you a few of the key findings, and, as I said, I'll certainly be glad to answer more questions around anything that's of interest to the committee.

One important point that we got from the regional study is that farmers, for the most part, have a very positive attitude toward wildlife on their farms. When asked to respond to the statement, "Elk are important components of a healthy environment", 68% of farmers agreed and only 8% disagreed. There is certainly a strong perception there. When asked to respond to the statement "I enjoy seeing elk on my land", 56% of all farmers agreed with that and only 15% disagreed. These are important points to think about and recognize that farmers aren't anti-wildlife in this area. In fact, they are quite strongly supportive of wildlife. In response to the statement "I enjoy seeing deer on my land", 81% agreed and only 8% disagreed. Again, there is a very strong perception there.

There is an overall perception by many farmers that the habitat condition within Riding Mountain National Park has been degraded and that's forcing wildlife out of the park. That's heard time and time again through these interviews, primarily in relation to beavers. The perception is that the beaver population has changed the habitat in the park because there's no logging or human activity of haying in the park and that is now changing the habitat conditions and pushing the wildlife out. That is, I would say, quite a common perception of wildlife that farmers have around the park.

Another issue that's been front and centre has been baiting and feeding of wildlife. This is a situation where people put hay bales out on purpose, or don't bring them in, in order to attract wildlife, whether that's for hunting purposes or simply that they feel they're making a contribution to helping animals survive the winter. When I started this study of the collared elk in 2002 it was very common to fly around the periphery of Riding Mountain and see large piles of hay bales being visited by dozens and in some cases over a hundred elk and deer coming together and congregating. That was a huge risk for TB transmission, in my opinion.

I should say that Manitoba Conservation has done an admirable job of cleaning that up. They've changed the regulations and they've started enforcing them, but I should also say that in every year of my work we continue to see baiting and feeding sites around the Duck Mountains and around Riding Mountain. Every year we've seen collared animals at these sites, and it's my opinion that until we totally clean up this baiting and feeding situation we are not going to get rid of TB. As I said, we've taken a good step in that direction, but it certainly hasn't been resolved.

I should also note that as far as my research shows, elk have always come out of Riding Mountain. This is not a new situation. Even at the turn of the century, certainly right at the beginning of agriculture, as far as I know, there have always been elk, sometimes in large numbers, coming out of the park.

Around the issue of compensation, it hasn't been a focus in my research, but that was one question on the survey to all farmers. Three-quarters of all farmers showed very strong support for compensation of some type for any losses associated with TB. Only 8% of all respondents showed an opposition toward compensation. So that is interesting background there.

• (0935)

Although I think John and Cal make a good point that people involved in the issue are certainly more informed, it's my perspective from my work with your average workaday farmer who's not on these committees that they really don't feel adequately informed about TB yet. Most of these farmers who aren't participating on committees don't feel they have a voice on TB, and they really feel they could be more informed on that.

On the movement of animals, I won't get too much into the details of the science of that, but I should say that of all the animals we collared and monitored continuously for three years, a total of 74% have left the park at some point during this study. These are animals that for the most part were collared either inside the park or just outside the boundary. So we have a lot of movement of elk across that boundary.

Often local people call them the park elk population, but in fact we're really finding it's a regional elk population, in that they do spend large amounts of time outside of the park. We have some animals that spend more than 50% of their time on agricultural land. These are animals that were collared inside Riding Mountain. So we do get a tremendous amount of movement, and that's in all seasons. Every season of the year we see elk coming out of the park, so this is not a rarity at all.

Around the situation of hay bales, I think we have improved to some degree, in that farmers are doing a better job of moving hay bales out of the fields, into the hay yards, and behind fences. But every year of our study we're seeing hay bales out on the landscape just not being brought in soon enough. So I think farmers have to continue to work on getting those hay bales in earlier and dealt with.

Just as a final point around the hay yard fences, through the study we did evaluating these fences we found that they worked extremely well. They do an excellent job of protecting hay bales, and farmers are incredibly pleased with the results. But we're finding from these farmers that the fences are not working to protect cattle from contacting deer and elk where the cattle are being fed. In my opinion, the most important situation that needs to be rectified right now in terms of TB is this interaction that occurs at the sites where cattle are actually being fed. There are many farms right around Riding Mountain National Park and in areas of high TB concentration where wild elk and deer are still getting in and feeding directly with cattle. That results in a very high likelihood of contact and TB transmission.

So that's a very brief overview of some of the results we've had from the study so far.

Thank you very much.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Brook. That was very insightful.

As we begin our question period we're going to follow the normal procedure. We're going to offer the first question to you, Mr. Mark, for seven minutes. Then we'll go to Mr. Bellavance, then our government member, and then back to you, Mr. Bezan. That's the order we will follow today, and we'll see where that goes.

Mr. Mark, you're on for seven minutes total for questions and responses.

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first responsibility is to welcome the committee to the riding, as well as our witnesses. It's great to see the community interested in this issue, which has been long going. I also want to thank the committee for being here. It's not often that federal committees come to Dauphin, Manitoba. In fact, over the last decade and a half I think we've only had three committees from the House travel to this community.

I've been involved with this since I became a member of Parliament in 1997. We've come a long way, as Calvin indicated. Back in 1997 we had public meetings. All we heard back then was denial. But I must thank the committee, because if it wasn't for the committee all the studies and the things that are happening today wouldn't have occurred. So the committee has to be thankful for the initiative we took, because the problem does have a huge impact on the economy of the local area.

And I must reflect John's comments. The openness displayed today is like night and day compared to what it used to be. That's the biggest change. Again, I agree with John, this needs to be extended further so there is complete openness, because even reading the report there's still this mandate that the park has for themselves and the mandate the province has. Really, if we are going to deal with this problem, we need to deal with it collectively.

Ryan has indicated a lot of data that the local people have known for a long time, generations, on how these animals move around the region, but what do farmers know about elk, right? They just live

with them. So we have come a long way. I hope that down the road we do really work as total partners between the province and the feds, and the local municipalities and the farmers, so we don't protect our turf. Just because we're Parks Canada, big deal. Parks Canada is an island surrounded by other people. So hopefully that attitude will change and hopefully we all have access to information.

One of my criticisms always has been.... The Duck Mountains has been connected to the Riding Mountain very closely. Historically, they have more elk in Duck Mountains than we have in the Riding Mountain. Don't tell me there's a fence somewhere, that the elk don't move back and forth. Also, the other problem now is with deer. Again, the provincial governments have to be more responsible in relationship to deer. There are lots of deer in the Riding Mountain, too. We haven't even begun to look at that issue.

So there's a lot of work to be done. The question I want to ask Paul is, in terms of the science, in terms of what we're doing in the Riding Mountain, how does that reflect to other areas of the country? I was in Fernie on the weekend and actually I spoke to one of the individuals there who went elk hunting. I asked him, is there TB in the Riding Mountain? To his knowledge, there wasn't. I've read articles saying there is TB throughout the country.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** That's an important question. I think the science that's being conducted now is as good as any science anywhere in the country, but it could still be better.

We have some limitations right now. We're limited by lab capacity. We can't do all of the things we would like to do, because of those limitations. We also have to work from quite a number of assumptions, because the tests that we use for wildlife have not yet been optimized—those are the tests to detect TB, for example. Those limitations are preventing us from making progress in some areas.

I think your question about the extent of TB and its distribution is important. We really don't know what the boundaries are right now, and the science committee has recommended, in both of our meetings, that we try to understand the geographic distribution of TB. How far does it extend from the Riding Mountain area? Does it extend, for example, even into Saskatchewan? We don't know.

As you suggested, there's likely movement. We have shown that there's movement—some of it from Ryan's studies—between Riding Mountain and the Duck Mountains. For those of you who aren't familiar with your geography, the Duck Mountains are immediately north of us, and they have a population of elk, deer, and other wildlife.

We're just now beginning to understand and get some information on what's occurring in that area. We probably will be looking at extending our surveys beyond even the Duck Mountains at some point. That's my guess from the committee.

You also brought up the question of deer. We do have a researcher looking at deer right now, trying to understand the ecology as it relates to disease and TB. This is a major concern. We do suspect—from the committee—it's one of our working assumptions that other species of wildlife probably are infected with TB, not simply elk. We do view elk as the primary reservoir, but there's no reason not to expect that deer could be a reservoir as well, not just a spillover, and that there is the potential for transmission of the disease from deer to domestic livestock.

I might add that we have not yet shown that this transmission does occur. We believe that the mechanisms are, as indicated by Ryan, through feeding in common feeding sites, but we've never been able to demonstrate that this is the case.

So there are a lot of considerations.

● (0945)

**Mr. Inky Mark:** That's the age-old argument, who got it first and who gave it to whom, right? So the scientists.... In this whole business of eradication, that always comes up.

If we look down the road, is it logical to even talk about eradication, 100%?

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** In our discussions on the science committee we discussed eradication to detectable levels. We believe that's the best we can do because of the limitations of the testing we have.

When we talk about, for example, the prevalence of tuberculosis in the wild populations, we use the phrase “apparent prevalence”, and that is the modifier that tells us that we're limited in our ability to detect a disease.

So our effort, our objective and recommendation from the science committee, is that eradication would really be eradicating to detectable levels. Our ability to detect the disease probably will improve over time, however.

**The Chair:** Time has expired.

We move to Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like, first of all, to thank Mr. Mark for his hospitality. It is my first visit to Manitoba, and I have been very warmly welcomed by everyone I have met since my arrival. I thank you for this reception.

I would like to take advantage of the presence of scientists to ask certain questions. Even though I come from Quebec and represent the Bloc Québécois, this issue is of concern to me.

Over the last few days, knowing that we are coming here to discuss the tuberculosis issue, I have had the time to get acquainted myself with what is happening.

Some might say that this does not concern us, as it is limited to a specific part of Canada. But on the contrary, it does concern me because I come from a riding where there are cattle farmers. There are two areas where bison are being bred. It may seem odd to people out west that there are bison farmers in Quebec. Yet these

producers are there. They do not necessarily have big herds, but it is a beginning. I will soon be going to a bison tasting in a municipality.

I am also aware of the fact that there was a case of tuberculosis in Quebec during the 1990s. There have been cases in Saskatchewan as well as in Ontario.

Currently, the phenomenon is limited, and affects only Manitoba, in Riding Mountain National Park. Could it spread to other areas of Canada? Is it possible that tuberculosis, even if it is officially eradicated in the other provinces, could return and cause problems elsewhere?

Mr. Paquet, please.

● (0950)

[*English*]

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** It's an important question, and one that is frequently asked, as to whether this disease could spread from here. There's always the potential for spread of infectious diseases. Our feeling on the science committee, however, is that it's unlikely that it will spread. Given work that's been done currently, the likelihood is very, very low.

You mentioned that it has been eradicated from other areas in Canada previously. I would like to emphasize again that it's been eradicated to detectable levels. So there is some possibility that TB is still prevalent in other parts of Canada, even though we don't recognize it formally as being so.

But again, I'll just re-emphasize our feeling in the science committee, and we've discussed this, which is that this disease expanding beyond this region is unlikely, given the restrictions that have been placed on the trade and movement of cattle and wildlife.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** If you had the answer to my next question, I imagine there would be no further problems. I have a theory, and you can tell me if it makes any sense.

Why is there still a problem here, when many solutions have been found and a great deal of effort has been made? Yet it is not completely eradicated. Is it because here in the park, domestic and wild animals are in closer contact than in the other provinces or even within Manitoba? Is it because of the number of deer? Why have we not been able to eradicate the problem here?

[*English*]

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** I don't have an answer to your question. I think you've certainly looked at the same information that we have. It could be anything from the number of animals, wild animals that may have the disease, elk as a reservoir, deer as a reservoir, the contact of wild animals with domestic animals, the opportunity to make those contacts. Those are all working assumptions right now.

But again, I would re-emphasize that we did believe the disease had been eradicated from here at one time. There are probably a lot of factors that affect the prevalence of the disease and the occurrence of the disease, and some cycles that we may not even be familiar with, including weather. We are very, very ignorant when it comes to understanding the mechanisms that contribute to this disease and our ability to eradicate it.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Brook, if I understand correctly, you are currently doing a study on the effectiveness of the measures that have been taken, particularly the fences that have been built. You were saying that this was particularly effective.

Do you have any specific data on the differences that exist now that certain steps have been taken, compared to the situation in the past? Also, the reduction of the herd size — I think you were saying that it has been reduced to 2,500 within the park — has certainly had some impact.

Do you have any specific data on the fact that these measures were put in place, and the subsequent reduction in the rate of tuberculosis transmission? What kind of percentage does that represent?

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** That's a very good question.

I guess the point that I think needs to be made around any of these management activities is that we can look at it and study it from a scientific perspective, but there's so much going on at one time, I don't think it's easy to say specifically whether they work or don't work. We have a change in the elk population, a change in hunting activities, we have these barrier fences that are being put up, and changes in farm management practices as well, all going on at the same time. To be able to say from a scientific perspective that this one issue of fences has had this influence on TB or contact I think is impossible.

My research has looked at talking with farmers and asking them how they feel the fences have worked, and what their experiences with damage to hay bales and contact between wildlife and their cattle have been. These fences have only been in place from one to four years. Every year, from one year to the next, there's a difference in weather as well, and that has a definite influence on wildlife.

Farmers are saying the words "cautiously optimistic" a lot. I hear that from many of the farmers who have the fences. They feel the fences work well so far. They're quite confident for the most part, and almost all farmers say quite clearly that the bales are protected. The elk or deer come to the fence, circle the fence, try to get in, but they cannot get to the hay bales. So in that sense, it works really well so far.

There is a concern that over time, in really bad winters, elk and deer may try harder to get in. But generally the fences do work very well at protecting hay bales. As I mentioned earlier, the observations of farmers on their own farms is that elk and deer are still coming into areas where there are no fences, where the hay bales are being fed to the cattle.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

We'll move to Mrs. Ur for seven minutes.

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

I too thank you for coming this morning. It's always interesting to have these meetings in Ottawa and to have everyone present in Ottawa, but it is always more effective when it's hands on and into

the community where we listen to the people it really affects. I'm really looking forward to having more input on the subject matter, to say the least. And I too thank Paul for the ride over this morning.

Mr. Whitaker, you made a very interesting statement in your opening remarks, and I just thought I'd highlight my opening by repeating your statement that the government thought it should solve it and come down and tell you how to do it, but actually it's vice versa and it's a lot of input from the local people, from the liaison committee. I'm certainly glad to hear that it's starting off on a better foot than sometimes things happen from Ottawa.

That being said, we also heard this morning here that you do have a great liaison committee, but many of the producers feel like they're still on the outside. What are you looking at or looking to change so that they feel part of the process, and perhaps be able to gain more information from the local communities affected by TB?

**Mr. John Whitaker:** I guess what we're looking for is if no one else is going to do it, then the Bovine TB Stakeholders Advisory Committee could take on this communications role, but it would require a lot more money than we currently have available in order to do that.

We have people coming to our meetings, including the first nations. The first nations representative, Dwayne Blackbird, who you will be talking to later, is telling us that he is having a tremendous problem getting back to his four first nations communities with all of the information that he is receiving at our table. If there's some way we can assist him in doing that, and I don't even know the best way to reach first nations communities, we have to start to try a few things. People from the various hunting groups are saying they have to go back to a very large constituency and somehow tell them what they're learning at this table. I guess we see it as our role, but we can't do it with the resources we have right now.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Okay. Good point.

Also, Mr. Brook, in your statement I thought it was very interesting in the survey you had sent out where the farmers under the circumstances, with this problem of TB, still are happy to see wildlife on their properties. I was surprised by your statement saying that. And that's a good response, 25%; I've done surveys and not received a 25% response to my surveys.

You had indicated that there still seems to be a problem—one of the major problems—where the cattle are feeding. I've not seen this, and perhaps tomorrow I will. The fencing where the hay is seems to keep the elk out. Is there any way of doing that where the cattle are feeding, or is that just not a reasonable thing to think about?

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** I think it's very reasonable to try that, and there have been several farms in this area that have fenced their cattle areas. It seems to be working very well. That depends on your particular farm. Some people feed cattle over a very large area, so it would be a matter of expense. It would cost many thousands of dollars to even fence one cattle feeding area. I think it would be very possible.

There are some concerns around manure management, but I really think that's the direction we need to go—fencing or some other way of protecting these cattle feeding areas. That seems to me the number one priority.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** In your presentation too, Mr. Whitaker, you had said the costs associated with testing the animals is a major factor. What is the actual cost for testing of animals, do you know?

• (1000)

**Mr. John Whitaker:** You mean the cost to me as a producer?

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Yes, that's right.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** I've heard figures of around \$15 per head as being what it would cost a producer if he has to bring in additional help in order to put the animals through the chute. The CFIA do not charge for doing the test themselves. It's the bringing of the cattle in and running them through the chute, and whether you have to hire staff, or maybe the neighbours come and help you, and then in return you have to go back and help them.

That's a figure that I have heard. I do not have numbers from our own herd to confirm it.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** You also raised concerns about the new blood testing.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** Yes. This is a new blood test for cattle called the Bovigam test. It seems to us to be producing an awful lot of false positives, and these false positives have a large repercussion for the person whose herd is showing the false positives, with respect to quarantine and lack of ability to market when the person wants. You're going to be hearing more about this later on from, I believe, the milk producers.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I think Mr. Paquet was saying that the deer and elk were the greatest reservoir. Have you tested other wild animals or wild game that were certainly exposed to TB? Could there be something sitting out there that we're totally missing, just looking at wild game?

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** That's a very good question. We have tested other animals, but not very comprehensively, and the possibility that other species are involved is real. It's very difficult, of course, to test all of the wild animals that are there, so we have focused on the two species we think are most important—elk and deer.

We've just recently completed a study of coyotes, at least in a localized area, and they did not show TB, although they have shown TB in Michigan and in other places.

As you probably know, we did detect TB in wolves in the 1970s, but we assume that's a dead end and does not necessarily transfer to other species. But this is a real possibility; it could even be in earthworms or ticks.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Did you want to add to that, Mr. Brook?

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** No, I think Paul is right on. I think there is a very real possibility of it being in other animals as well—for example, small mammals, like mice. Certainly the surveillance needs to be high, and given the prevalence that we're seeing in other wildlife, you need to have very large samples of animals, which we haven't had for any other species, so I think there's a real risk there, yes.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** You made an interesting statement—the lights came on or a flag came up—about the habitat and why the elk were leaving the park. Is there something that Parks Canada could be doing differently? You mentioned logging or whatever. What could

change to perhaps give more of an incentive for the elk to stay inside?

I'm on a farm too, and I love to sit out at night and have my dinner and see the deer at the back of the farm, but we certainly don't bait. Is there something that Parks Canada could do to keep the elk within the perimeters?

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** You will hear from them this afternoon, and they'll be talking about their fire program where they are doing controlled burns. I think that's helping.

I think the challenge we have, though, is that we've got agricultural crops surrounding the park, and it's hard to compete with alfalfa and canola and barley and wheat, particularly when you have people who are putting piles of grain and hay bales right on the park boundary on purpose to draw them out. So until we clean up the hay bales and the baiting situation and get everything behind the fence, I don't think you can compete with anything that's in the park.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Are there any rules or laws out there as to baiting, or is there any punishment? You mentioned hay, and when we flew in yesterday, we could certainly see a lot of hay on the fields all around. Is any directive given to a producer that they have a deadline to get that in or covered?

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** Right. I'm sure that Manitoba Conservation will talk about their regulations around it and their work to inhibit baiting and feeding. They're working actively to do that. As I mentioned, they have done a good job of enforcing it and cleaning it up to some degree. The problem is that it's such a large area, it's quite hard to get it all, and I don't think we've got it all yet.

So it is illegal and they're working on it, but we're not there yet, unfortunately.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan, you're on for five.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to thank the panel for making their presentations today. We really appreciate it.

I grew up in this area on the west side of the park. My father is a councillor in the RM of Boulton—Shellmouth. My brother and father are still farming over there, and I have cows in the test zone, just so you know that I'm well familiar with the problem. I was a manager of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association when we started having our outbreaks and the associated problems in the early nineties, including the denial by Parks Canada that the disease existed in the park and was in the cattle herd.

So I'm glad the program has advanced to this stage, but essentially I want to find out what we need to do to make sure that we do clean up this disease, that we continue on with the testing, and that we protect our domestic herd and achieve a status of being TB-free for the entire province, because this zone is affecting the tuberculosis status of the domestic herd, and of course that's affecting markets.

I guess I want to get into where we go from here. Essentially, I think that's the type of information we need. We need to know the background and the history, but where do we go from here?

You can take it on, one at a time.

•(1005)

**The Chair:** Mr. Whitaker.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** Thanks, James.

I guess from my perspective, we've got a large problem developing all over the world right now with raising domestic animals, in that there seem to be more and more diseases—I'm thinking of Asian bird flu here—that possibly have natural hosts. They're being spread to domestic animals, be they cattle or bison or birds. We like to see wildlife on our land, as we said, and I like to see wildlife on our land, but I have to do my part in making sure they do not share their food source.

As far as where we go from here is concerned—and it's not only for TB—we have to make sure that there is no shared food source between the wildlife reservoir and domestic cattle in the RMEA first.

**Mr. James Bezan:** That only accomplishes narrowing down the cross-contamination, or the disease spread from wild to domestic. How do we get control in the wild herd? Otherwise we're never going to get over this.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** That's the second point. I guess I'm saying this is the first priority, to rule that out.

When Mr. Bellavance was talking about his own situation in Quebec, make sure that your cattle producers and bison producers are not sharing a food source with wildlife that would have the potential to spread disease.

For me, that's step one, to make sure that has happened to 100%.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Ryan.

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** Yes, I agree with John. I think fencing cattle feeding areas is absolutely critical—breaking that barrier with the cattle. If we can stop spreading TB to cattle first, I think that seems to be the high priority. Certainly these hay bales are sites of transmission among wildlife too, so baiting and feeding sites, and where these animals are feeding with cattle, these are probably sites where elk are transmitting to deer, and deer to elk, and elk to other elk. That is probably a high concentration point for animals. We see large groups of wildlife at these sites too.

I also think we need to work with farmers even more to change farming behaviour—not just telling them what to do, but helping them to effect change. This is not a good time to be expecting farmers to carry extra burden in terms of cost, so give them some support. Certainly, shooting for having no hay bales accessible to wildlife after October 1 within the entire zone would be a very good start, both from a wildlife and a cattle TB perspective.

**Mr. James Bezan:** But possibly not always practical, depending on weather conditions.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** I just want to add a caution here. I think our objective to eliminate the disease entirely is unrealistic; it's not going to happen. We need to get over that expectation. We can only reduce the disease to undetectable levels. That's as good as we can do. Given that it probably does exist in many, many species, our ability to eliminate it is very limited. That, then, means we have to focus on management of livestock to control the transfer of the disease, as indicated by Ryan.

Our objective is still to eliminate the disease, but let's be realistic.

**Mr. James Bezan:** There's still the whole issue of the population of the wild herd, as well, within the park, and the different pressures they are facing. I think it was Calvin or John who mentioned habitat—the change of habitat is forcing elk out of the park. I know from growing up that sometimes predator pressures were higher at certain times of the year and we'd see elk in particular, and also moose, coming out of the park for calving and things along that line and be in fairly close proximity to livestock herds.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** Let me comment on that again, James. Those are really assumptions and it's anecdotal information. The reality probably is that predators are a benefit, because they're probably selectively removing diseased animals. The science committee has already made the recommendation that we maintain a large number of predators to help to control the disease. It's probably that natural control that's going to be most successful. So we have to be very careful about how we interpret what's happening there as to whether predators actually drive animals out, whether they leave during calving time, whether the park in fact can make changes to habitat that would keep wildlife in the park. I just don't think that's going to happen.

•(1010)

**Mr. James Bezan:** What about the overall population of the elk herd and trying to manage that at a reasonable level?

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** In management to a reasonable level, there's a possibility that even the reduction itself could be causing more disease. The target of 2,500 that we've identified is just an arbitrary number that has no meaning in science at all. We don't know whether that's actually controlling the disease or whether it's contributing to more disease. We assume, with some confidence based on only a professional opinion, that it's advantageous, but we don't know that. There is the possibility that we could be contributing to an increase in the disease.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I think we all agree that the spread of the disease, as Ryan already said, accumulates in places where animals tend to collect, such as feeding stations. If you're going to have an increased population, you're going to have higher competition. So there are going to be animals in closer proximity, and then we're going to be in a situation of having more transmission of the disease between animals.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** That still remains an assumption that's unproven. That is our working theory right now, but we haven't been able to demonstrate it. Again, the possibility of removing the animals.... For example, hunting could have an effect on the disease by creating vacuums that then increase movements of wildlife so that there's increased contact. That's a reality as well. Hunting can cause social disruptions in herds, so that we have more movement than we would normally have, including to outside the park.

These are really complicated issues, and that's the role of the science committee. We're trying to understand them.

**Mr. James Bezan:** You raise more questions than answers.

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

We're moving to Mr. Bellavance again.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to hear Mr. Pawluk, as well as Mr. Whitaker, who also mentioned this. My question is to you, because you are agricultural producers and breeders.

You touched on the subject in response to a question from Mr. Bezan concerning the additional costs you are facing to have your herds tested. I would like to hear more on this subject. I know that the committee studied the issue quite seriously and there was even a report on it in April 2003. Of the three recommendations made, two were accepted by the government whereas the third, concerning money, was not.

Is this still a problem for you?

[English]

**Mr. Calvin Pawluk:** Yes. Some of the cost associated with the test, as John mentioned, is the work of putting the animals through the chute, through the handling facilities, for the test.

Something else that happens with cattle is that they are usually very accustomed to the people who are around them every day. I can walk into the herd and they're very comfortable; a stranger comes in and they tend to have a far different reaction. What can often happen when they're handled is that a few days later they can lose a calf due to this kind of handling. There is no compensation for that.

Another concern of mine is people coming in from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to test cattle. I've asked this question before and never received an answer. If someone got hurt and it was because of negligence connected with my facility—my facility is something that is suitable to me but is not up to a particular standard—who is responsible in that area?

Another thing as well is that the more often cattle are put through a crowding alley, the harder it is to get them to go in there. We try to minimize the amount of time the cattle spend in that area because happy cows make for a happy atmosphere. If we do need them to go into a particular crowding area and they haven't been there too often, they're much less reluctant to do it if I'm doing it on my own.

Those are some of the costs that I personally experience with that.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** I'll raise one more thing, Mr. Bellavance, and that is the cost to the reputation of the area. Cattle production is really well suited to the area around the park. That's the business that

most of the farmers are in. I've had purebred cattle breeders tell me that they can no longer sell bulls out of the Riding Mountain eradication area because it is known as the TB area, and why would someone buy a bull from a TB area when he could as easily buy a bull from outside the TB area? So there is a bit of a cost to our reputation of producing high-quality cattle.

We don't produce purebred cattle. We produce cattle for the meat market. And I have not noticed any discrimination toward our cattle at the market because they are coming from the area around the park. Other people have said they think this is possibly going on, but I know it has certainly affected the purebred cattle business.

• (1015)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** In Quebec, we experienced the scrapie problem. There was compensation paid out at the end of the 1980s, but it was only in terms of market price. We have just indicated that all of the factors are not taken into consideration. There are other problems, like the avian flu, and the mad cow crisis. In a word, some farmers are beginning to have serious financial problems.

First of all, because you are here on the ground, instead of looking only at the market price in order to compensate for certain losses and leaving it at that, can you tell me what kind of compensation would be fair? It is clear that the compensation does not equal all of the expenses you have had.

[English]

**Mr. John Whitaker:** There certainly is the fair market value compensation question related to high-quality animals. This has been raised over the past winter regarding dairy cattle in the Riding Mountain eradication area. Part of this comes right back to the Bovigam blood test. The producers feel that it is not a good test and that it is producing false positives. They do not want to lose a cow that is perhaps worth \$30,000 to them because they're using her for embryo transfers and receive CFIA compensation that maxes out at \$2,500. However, I think this question is on the way to being addressed, so that for these very high-valued animals there is going to be some additional compensation.

I guess my concern regarding that compensation is that we have to have a better test, one that actually detects TB. I would hate to lose a \$30,000 cow for whatever the compensation level you received, if it happened because of a faulty test.

**The Chair:** Next is Mrs. Ur.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** In my area, there has always been a concern. I have a large rural riding, and my local farmers aren't always partial to game farms; they look at them negatively. Is there concern in this area with game farms as well? Mr. Brook, or anyone, please give your opinion on that.

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** Yes, there certainly are elk ranches around the park area. Quite a number of concerns have been raised by producers about them as a reservoir or transfer of disease. Obviously, these game farms are tested regularly for TB and other diseases, but there is still a very high concern. Some photos went around, not that long ago, of wild elk and game-farm elk touching nose to nose through a fence, right along the park here, so that contact is definitely a concern.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** John, Paul is agreeing with Mr. Brook, so I'm just moving along to you. Have you had that raised at your liaison committee meetings?

**Mr. John Whitaker:** Yes, this point is often raised by producers. They feel those elk ranches are a possible site of transmission. However, we don't have any proof of yet. When elk ranching came into this area about ten years ago, it was very controversial; a lot of producers were opposed to it. It does not have a good feeling for a lot of cattle producers.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Maybe Mr. Paquet would be able to answer. Obviously there probably is ongoing research as to new kinds of testing. Is anything coming down the tube that's going to be more beneficial than what is presently there?

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** The questions for testing should probably go back to CFIA, because they are conducting in-house research now, in collaboration with others. But there are new tests forthcoming that I am aware of, so we should have an improved ability to determine disease and prevalence in animals.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** In your presentation, Mr. Whitaker, you spoke of the CFIA, which has certainly done a great job over the last little while, showing their true colours and making a big difference as to how Canada is seen around the world in terms of our good testing system and the good work our producers carry out on their farms, but you indicated there was a problem—not with your local CFIA, but were you perhaps indicating how they see this issue in Ottawa? Could you expand on that, so that maybe we can go back and perhaps have a chat with those individuals? What was the problem you were alluding to in your opening remarks?

• (1020)

**Mr. John Whitaker:** The problem is that they are not as open an agency as the Parks Canada agency regarding sharing of information. I don't know how Paul is finding them with sharing information at the science level, but they do not share much with local producers.

They're very sensitive to the producers' needs when they come on your farm to do the testing and will accommodate your schedule very nicely, but they did not talk to us about the Bovigam test—this controversial blood test—before it was ever imposed on us. So when they come on with a test that producers do not have any confidence in, right away it sets up a mood of confrontation, which I think could have been completely avoided if their style had been different.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mark is next. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you very much.

I have a question for Paul. This matter has been raised by cattle producers, as well; it's about how they're treated. It's about site contamination. We eliminate the whole herd because of site contamination. Why does that same principle not apply to elk?

Because we know elk winter together—they go to one area of the park, and this is repeated year after year. Should the same principles apply to cattle or bison?

The other question raised was that if a bison were found to have TB in the park, would that whole herd disappear? I never got an answer from anybody on that.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** There are two questions there, as I understand it. The first question is whether the principles used for livestock should apply to wildlife in control of the disease. One of those is contamination. I think what you're suggesting is elimination of the wild populations—

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Even if you have control of the site, or even if you can control the site—if it's a contaminated site, perhaps that should be controlled.

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** The difference is this: it's a very difficult principle to apply to wild populations. It has been attempted worldwide without success, mainly because these are not closed populations. By that I mean their ability to move in and out is not restricted as it is with livestock, for which you have, for example, fenced areas, so you can control that. That's the major limitation to using that approach—

**Mr. Inky Mark:** But in the case of Riding Mountain National Park, you know more or less that many of them are going to gather at the west end of the park. If you find disease samples from year to year in that area, why wouldn't you just fence it off, so they can't get there? What effect do contaminated sites have on producing more TB?

**Dr. Paul Paquet:** In theory, those contaminated sites could be contributing to increases in TB. We've not yet identified contaminated sites. We might be able to theorize that areas where we find more TB are contaminated sites. And that is one possible approach, to fence off those areas. It's problematic, however, because of the effects on all wildlife. It might not be advantageous in the long run.

But that's a good question, and we'll bring it back to the science committee. We have not actually addressed that specifically.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I have a question for Calvin and John on compensation, following up on what Mr. Bellavance was saying.

Recommendation 3 in the report of the standing committee on agriculture, which recommends better compensation to producers to cover costs, was declined by the government. The Department of Agriculture felt there was adequate funding available under the current agriculture policy framework, particularly under the CAIS program.

I want to get your opinion on that and whether or not there is any way of covering the costs associated with testing and the extra market cost, and also whether the lack of proper compensation, especially for presenting animals, is affecting cooperation by producers.

**Mr. Calvin Pawluk:** The cooperation is definitely being affected. I know of one producer, a dairy farmer, in our area—this was in 1992—who absolutely refused the test. He had a million-dollar cow in his yard. He was selling embryos from her all over the world. The tests never did come to his yard. So as you said, Mr. Bezan, yes, of course there's tremendous reluctance there.

Let's just talk a little bit about the cost of quarantines. Today, if there's any disruption in our cashflow as farmers, the bankers aren't very sympathetic any more. They look at farmers and say, listen, fellas, either you make it or you break it. When things like quarantines are coming at us, things that are beyond our control, weather and issues like that, it puts a tremendous strain on family life in particular.

That's extremely hard on the home life. You can't plan for next week or next month. Producers' backs are up whenever it's testing time again. In my municipality, I've been informing producers that we are again going to be tested this fall. Most of them aren't even aware of it, and fall is upon us.

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. James Bezan:** John, do you have to anything to say about whether or not the concurrent safety net programs are providing any compensation?

**Mr. John Whitaker:** No, they don't, James, because they apply to producers whether they're in the TB EA being subjected to TB testing or not. There's no provision in CAIS to take into account the cost of TB testing. Riding Mountain National Park did, for a short time, offer \$5 a head.

It would be nice to have a compensation plan that would cover the total cost of testing. But even a symbolic payment is often really appreciated by producers, and this \$5 a head was sort of a symbolic payment. It was almost like the government saying that they respect farmers, they know what they're going through, and they're going to offer them a little something that will maybe help with the cost associated with testing. I think it certainly does make the CFIA's job in lining up herds a little bit easier. Although I'd have to admit, at my level I have not heard of a lot of people who are actually refusing the testing.

**The Chair:** We've pretty much exhausted our time, but I do want to pose a question to you, Mr. Whitaker.

You mentioned that getting the message out and communicating a message is always difficult. I think most of us find that one of the difficulties in whatever we do. You mentioned the native commu-

nities and the hunting fraternities not understanding the issues and not getting the message.

Do you have a website where this could be posted so that the information you would want out there would at least be available to those who have access to the Internet? I'm just wondering whether that's one vehicle you may want to use or have not been using. Maybe you're using it, I don't know. But getting that message out, particularly to a community of people who aren't really looking for information, even though they need the information you're offering, is always difficult. I'm wondering whether that's something you're doing.

**Mr. John Whitaker:** Yes, Mr. Steckle, it is. We do have a website, and we want to put more effort into it. I guess the strategy is that we have all of the information up on the website. Now, this doesn't help in reaching a lot of people in the RMEA, because they don't have Internet. However, this would serve as the place where everyone could go for information in order to disseminate it through other means—newspaper articles, printed materials, talks at municipal councils. So we want to have the website be our primary source for all of the information.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Brook, you mentioned in your stats that the number of people who like to see deer and the number of people who like to see elk is a substantially different number; 81% like to see deer but only 58% like to see elk. Is there a love for deer beyond that for elk, or what is the reason for that?

**Mr. Ryan Brook:** I don't know for sure, but I think part of that probably is that more people see deer. Deer are much more widespread on farms. Certainly that came out loud and clear from the responses as well, that many more people see deer on their farms. Most farms in fact see at least some deer at some point in the year, whereas many farms never see elk. So I think that's probably related to that. But certainly attitudes overall are quite positive to both species.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, gentlemen, you've been very insightful this morning and helpful in where we go from here. The questions have been great and the responses have been very honest, I believe. As you know, this is a recorded meeting. There's a Hansard of this meeting, so we will disseminate the information we gather today and use it for purposes hopefully in a positive way.

I should also mention to those who are sitting beyond the table that at the end of our meeting today, for those of you who have a comment you'd like to make, we will give up to two minutes for a number of you to perhaps give that comment. There will be no questions taken—again, given whatever time we might have left at the end of the day. Please make your request to speak known to the gentleman at the back, who will take care of that matter.

Again, thank you very much. We will now take just a short recess for coffee, and then we'll be back at the table at 10:45.

• (1030)

(Pause)

• (1044)

**The Chair:** We'll reconvene after our short recess.

The next panel that we're going to be hearing from are people from Parks Canada Agency. We have as witnesses Greg Fenton, field unit superintendent, Riding Mountain; and Doug Bergeson, ecosystem scientist, Riding Mountain National Park of Canada. From the CFIA we have Philip Amundson, executive director operations, western area; George Luterbach, network chief animal health and production, program network west; and Maria A. Koller-Jones, senior staff veterinarian, disease control. From the Manitoba Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives we have with us Allan Preston, assistant deputy minister, agri-industry development; and Shelagh Copeland, manager farm production extension, livestock knowledge centre.

Welcome, everyone.

The other group that was going to be with us now has been deferred until this afternoon, so the Manitoba Conservation Group will be joining us at a later time today.

We begin with Mr. Fenton. Again, as I indicated to the earlier groups, whatever time you take will be taken away from questions. If you want questions, keep your remarks brief. With seven people at the table, it means we can't go ten minutes.

• (1045)

**Mr. Greg Fenton (Field Unit Superintendent, Riding Mountain, Parks Canada Agency):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Riding Mountain area, which includes Riding Mountain National Park.

[*English*]

It's my pleasure to represent the Parks Canada Agency and provide you updates on the actions taken by the Parks Canada Agency in cooperation with its partners since our chief executive officer and minister presented before you in February and April of 2003. The intent of my brief presentation—and there is a paper that goes into a little more detail that has been presented to your clerk for your use—is to provide a status report and identify or highlight some key actions and the results that have been taken in response to the commitments of the chief executive officer and also the government response to the standing committee as it pertains to actions by Parks Canada. I'll highlight a couple of issues and challenges and make a few concluding statements.

The key highlight is that there have indeed been significant actions by Parks Canada, in cooperation with its partners, including stakeholders and stakeholder producer associations, since 2003 with I think some very tangible results. You have heard about some of the actions and results already this morning. You'll hear more over the course of the day. With respect to enhanced communications, as identified as recommendations in your report from 2003, there have been significant actions taken. I will highlight three of five.

One is certainly my participation and/or designates at all stakeholder meetings—and there have been a very significant number of meetings since 2003—with the intent of sharing information as quickly as we can in a much more timely fashion and to provide greater opportunities for stakeholders, stakeholder groups, and associations to have some influence on the management decision-making with a focus on the actions taken by Parks Canada. This is also aimed at trying to facilitate the opportunity for the recommendations of the stakeholder groups to have influence on the other agencies that are also heavily involved in trying to find solutions in meeting the visions and goals of the TB management program.

Secondly, there was the establishment of the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee, whom you have already heard from this morning through the chairperson of the Riding Mountain Biosphere, Mr. John Whitaker. Also, there's the involvement—and you heard a little bit about this—of local first nations with representation on the TB stakeholders advisory committee. Certainly we have made some advances in ensuring dissemination of information and active involvement in the stakeholder advisory committee. Yes, there is indeed more to do, but I believe we have made some good inroads in that area, with the three key results being more accurate and timely information, as I pointed out before; the opportunity to influence management decisions; and also an opportunity for us to understand in a more timely fashion and in a better way the issues and concerns of producers and producer associations and take those into account in our management actions.

The second recommendation of your report in 2003 was linked to prevention and control, with bringing the regional elk population down to 2,500. The actions that have been undertaken by Parks Canada—again in partnership primarily with the Province of Manitoba and the wildlife focuses of Manitoba Conservation—through enhanced disease surveillance activities by Parks Canada have been successful in bringing the regional elk population down below 2,500. It currently sits at 2,000. The reasons for the decline certainly are many. They're linked with enhanced hunting opportunities managed by Manitoba Conservation and the Province of Manitoba. The reduction and removal of animals from within the park are part and parcel of our live capture blood test and cull programs as required for those animals that are testing positive on blood.

I think it is prudent to point out that the reductions certainly have, I believe, contributed to a reduced risk of TB transmission involving elk. I must point out that we are starting to hear, as a result of the population being down below 2,000, a number of complaints from hunters, both permit hunters and first nations, about reduced hunting success. There is plenty of opportunity, but we are starting to hear feedback on reduced success rates.

Two additional but very important actions in support of prevention and control had to do with the expansion of the barrier or the hay yard fencing program that you heard a little on this morning—and you will hear more later on today, I'm sure—and also the prescribed burn program within the park, with the potential, yet unproven as a result of scientific studies, of trying to enhance habitat within the park with the intent of providing a greater chance of the elk staying within the park during the winter months.

• (1050)

Certainly those two actions represent an awful lot of work. To take the hay barrier fencing as an example, you've heard about the numbers of fences on the landscape. Parks Canada has invested in excess of a quarter of a million dollars in support of this particular program, as we see that there is very significant benefit in reducing risk as a result of the hay-yard fencing program. That quarter of a million dollars has gone towards the construction of approximately 39 fences since 2003, and \$100,000 of it is in activities that are taking place on the landscape as we speak, with the intent of having another 16 fences solely funded by Parks Canada as a part of the broader program this fiscal year.

In actions in support of surveillance and monitoring we have done a very significant amount of work, in partnership primarily with the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the three key actions being, first, the enhanced annual aerial surveillance of total and classified counts, focusing primarily on elk, with the objective of having better data on total elk population so that it can be used to determine what management actions need to be taken and as a means of determining success in meeting the objectives, such as reducing the population down to 2,500.

The second and I think the largest single focus has been on the expanded prevalence rate surveillance programs, and in particular the live capture, blood-testing, and then cull program of elk within and adjacent to Riding Mountain National Park. There are some statistics on the table for you, including that since January of 2003 in excess of 200 elk have been live-captured, blood-tested, and then where required removed from the population, with the intent of reducing the risk of possible transmission both between elk, with deer, and also with livestock in areas adjacent to the park.

The third major action as a result of a need was, given the enhanced surveillance program, to take many more samples. To fix or deal with the situation, it was determined that there was a need to enhance the capacity to deal with the samples that were collected, so, again in cooperation with the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, we expanded the on-site laboratory capacity that is located right in Riding Mountain. It serves as a repository for samples that come in from the field prior to going to the CFIA laboratories in Nepean, Ontario.

The results, as pointed out there, are more accurate elk population estimates for management and communication purposes, a very critical baseline for determining apparent prevalence rates and distribution of elk within the Riding Mountain area, and then of course increased lab capacity to assist in being successful with the surveillance program.

In support of the science-based decision-making, there are two key actions, I believe, that we've been playing a leadership role in

advancing. One is the creation of the science advisory committee of which Dr. Paquet is the chair. You heard from him this morning.

Secondly, studies to date have indicated and pointed to the need for enhanced or additional work in whitetail deer, given that it appears this is a multi-species issue, not just one that's focused on elk. We have initiated a whitetail deer movement study, an interaction study, in partnership with the Province of Manitoba, local first nations, and the University of Alberta.

The key results are: ensuring that we have the appropriate science information so that we can use it as a basis for management decisions and actions on the ground; identifying the need for more prevalence rate and distribution work in deer, given that this is where the information gap is; and—you talked a little bit about predators this morning—the role predators play, particularly wolves and coyotes.

• (1055)

Results of studies to date identify that elk comprise a high percentage of the wolf diet, and wolves play a very important role in limiting the elk population—likely deer, but certainly elk. As a potential dead-end host, wolves are playing a very important role in removing the disease from the ecosystem.

Financial investments have been very significant since we presented to you—in excess of \$2.5 million since 2003. A full 66% of that has been focused on surveillance, prevention and control, and enhanced communications, including things such as the creation and functioning of the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee.

This year we're still proposing to invest a very significant amount of money in support of the TB management program. More than \$1 million has been forecast for this year. Much of it has already been spent, in the area of prevention and control, on the additional hay barrier fences or hay storage fences.

The next two slides are just intended to give a status report on bovine tuberculosis within the Riding Mountain region. I draw your attention to the second slide, the graphic that shows Riding Mountain National Park. The small dots represent deer and elk that have been either live-captured and blood-tested, and/or, with the enhanced deer work by the Province of Manitoba, destroyed as a part of an enhanced sampling program. The dots represent the number of animals on the landscape that have been tested since 2003, with the locations of the positive animals represented by the animal figures.

The intent of this graphic is twofold. First is to show you the amount of testing or surveillance that has taken place on the landscape since 2003. There has been more than this, because this does not include all of the hunter-killed samples that are returned for testing. Secondly, it is intended to show that this is a multi-species issue, and it is a broader issue than just Riding Mountain, particularly as a result of the positives in elk in the Duck Mountains and the deer outside of the park. It demonstrates that the issue certainly has a western focus in the park and region, with movement back and forth between the Ducks, based on the results of the movement work to date.

I guess a good-news element is we're fairly confident, at least based on the research to date, that this is not an issue or a problem east of Highway 10 within Riding Mountain National Park, or within the Riding Mountain region, as the surveillance work has not shown positive results to date in that area.

There are two emerging issues. You've already heard them, but I wish to reiterate. This is a multi-species issue, not just a matter of elk in the Riding Mountain region, with the positives in elk in the Duck Mountains, and also the TB positives in white-tailed deer.

On the potential implications of this, it may challenge our abilities to meet the vision of the bovine TB management program. You've heard a little bit about that this morning, in terms of the issues around eradication: what are the potential successes of eradication of TB from wildlife? As the science review committee has pointed out, we may not be successful. We may be able to reduce the incidence, level, or prevalence of bovine TB within elk down to where it is not detectable, but we may never be able to totally remove TB from the elk population.

Until we have a better understanding of the prevalence and movement of deer in particular, and a better sense of the prevalence of TB in elk within the Duck Mountains, that's where the two challenges lie. So more work needs to be done. Certainly the TB task force, with the cooperation of the Parks Canada Agency, have already moved in that direction, with enhanced studies to determine prevalence in elk and deer in the Ducks and the western part of Riding Mountain.

In conclusion, Parks Canada believes that the vision of TB eradication from Riding Mountain may not be possible; however, the goals of the TB program are extremely valid and achievable. You will hear from CFIA about where the surveillance efforts are with bovine tuberculosis within livestock or domestic animals. In terms of eradicating TB in wildlife or reducing the risk and/or prevalence below detectable levels, I believe it is achievable and on track, and Parks Canada will continue to play a leadership role in this with all of the agencies.

• (1100)

We also believe in minimizing interaction as a third goal. So minimizing the interaction and the likelihood of transmission or not natural behaviour of wildlife is indeed achievable and it is on track as a result of actions you've heard about this morning, including debating legislation, the barrier fencing, which we have been heavily involved in, the prescribed burn program, which we have been heavily involved in with the intent again of increasing or enhancing

the habitat within the park, and also through changes to standard farm practices.

Parks Canada will continue to play a leadership role, as they have in the past, and continue to work with our partners. We'll continue to ensure that information is shared in a timely fashion and that it is influencing the management actions by Parks Canada and hopefully by the other agencies that are represented on the TB task force.

The next steps I point out we believe need to be carried out. They need to be carried out in continued partnership. We need to determine the specific actions that need to take place relative to determining prevalence and also determining the thresholds of prevalence within deer and elk, if indeed they exist, and what additional actions will need to take place. We need to set some realistic timeframes with those. I think the TB task group is on track to do that. We will continue to participate actively as a part of that group in trying to achieve the vision and the goals of the Manitoba TB management program.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Obviously we want to have some time for questions. Mr. Fenton has taken a great deal of time, so I hope he said something that you wanted to say. I would ask you not to repeat what has been said, because we do want to ask you some questions. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bergeson.

**Mr. Doug Bergeson (Ecosystem Scientist, Riding Mountain National Park of Canada, Parks Canada Agency):** I'm just going to be here to assist Greg with the questions.

**The Chair:** You're going to support Mr. Fenton. Well, that's being very accommodating. We've already gained most of our time back.

Mr. Amundson. I know he has something to say.

**Mr. Philip Amundson (Executive Director, Operations, Western Area, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** You're right.

Mr. Chair, we're very pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food today to address the issue of the bovine tuberculosis monitoring and eradication program in the vicinity of Riding Mountain National Park. We're also very pleased to appear with our partners, Parks Canada and the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Food.

I will make a short address. Dr. Luterbach and Dr. Koller-Jones will help with questions; they will not be making a statement.

Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for overseeing the health of Canada's livestock by taking aggressive and sustained measures to detect cases of bovine tuberculosis and to prevent its spread among livestock herds. Because of its serious implications for public health, animal health, and international trade, Canada follows a strict surveillance and eradication program for the disease when it is found in livestock. As a result, bovine tuberculosis has been eradicated from all Canadian livestock except for a small area around the park.

In 2002, after several cases of tuberculosis were detected in cattle and wild elk in the area surrounding the park, the CFIA consulted with the industry stakeholder groups and the Manitoba government to identify enhancements to the program to achieve eradication of the disease in this area and to prevent its spread to other parts of Canada. As a result of these consultations, a number of measures were implemented to restore the tuberculosis-free status of this area. I will outline these and the results we have achieved.

In January 2003 amendments were made to the health of animals regulations to allow the creation of a special eradication area around the park, referred to as the Riding Mountain TB eradication area. It consists of two provincial game hunting units and encompasses approximately 625 cattle producers. Boundaries to the eradication area are indicated by a dark purple line on the map we have provided to you.

The agency also instituted a program of testing all cattle, bison, and cervine herds on a regular basis in order to detect infected herds as quickly as possible. This will permit restoration of the tuberculosis-free status at the earliest opportunity. Under this program more than 100,000 tests have been conducted by the CFIA. And as the previous panel said, this was at no direct cost to the producers for the actual testing.

Mr. Chairman, the results of this testing program have been very positive. After finding three infected herds during the first season of testing, all herds tested during the past two seasons have been disease-free.

More importantly, should the upcoming 2005-2006 test season produce similar results, the eradication area will qualify for tuberculosis-free status next year. Mr. Chair, this is a classification that the area has not enjoyed since 1997.

Once tuberculosis-free status is restored the agency hopes to be able to reduce the frequency of testing in the Riding Mountain area, but as long as there exists a risk of cattle acquiring TB from diseased wild elk and deer, some level of periodic testing will be required.

The third enhancement to the program involved the containment of the disease. To prevent the infection from spreading to tuberculosis-free areas, the CFIA has implemented movement control systems under which livestock moved from the eradication area must be accompanied by a permit issued by the agency.

Permits are issued after a producer's herd has been tested and found to be tuberculosis-free. The permit may be used for up to 12 months following its date of issue, and to ensure compliance with these movement controls the CFIA conducts periodic audits of farm records and auction markets.

The value of the movement controls was demonstrated in early 2004 when tuberculosis was detected in a dairy herd in southeastern Manitoba. The investigation revealed that the disease originated with the purchase of a cow two years earlier from a farm near the park, prior to the movement controls being implemented. The current permit system will prevent further occurrences like this.

Mr. Chairman, the agency is confident that the measures I have described will lead to the complete eradication of bovine tuberculosis from all Canadian livestock in the very near future.

We also recognize that a program of post-eradication surveillance in livestock herds will be required once the underlying disease in wild elk and deer has been resolved.

Regarding the wildlife, I would like to describe CFIA's role in working closely with Parks Canada and the Manitoba government to assist these jurisdictions in carrying out their mandates in relation to TB in wildlife.

●(1105)

The agency has been a support partner in the design and implementation of the Manitoba bovine tuberculosis management program from its inception. The program's objectives include the prevention, detection, and elimination of bovine tuberculosis in wild elk and deer, and the prevention of its spread from wildlife to livestock.

The CFIA endeavours to bring the best possible science to these complex and unique challenges. In this supportive capacity, agency veterinarians provide advice and expertise on the design of surveillance plans and on sampling strategies. The CFIA scientists develop and adapt diagnostic tests for use in wildlife species. In addition, the CFIA provides field staff and laboratory diagnostic testing services to assist in carrying out the tuberculosis surveillance programs of wildlife in the Riding Mountain area. Through the hunter harvest sampling program, more than 5,000 animals have been examined for tuberculosis since 1997, and more than 350 animals have been tested for the capture, radio collar, and test program since it was initiated in 2003.

Regarding compensation, I would like to address the issue of compensation as it relates to recommendation 3 in the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, tabled in April 2003. The compensation provisions in the Health of Animals Act permit the minister to pay livestock owners the market value of animals destroyed for the purpose of detecting or eradicating tuberculosis. The intent of this provision is to encourage the reporting of suspected disease and to provide assistance in replacing destroyed animals; it is not intended to address other costs to producers that may occur as a result of the disease situation. These costs were mentioned by the previous panel.

Mr. Chairman, the disease eradication programs in livestock are not only for the public good, but they are also for the good of the industry itself. This is why producer groups have understood that the financial costs of eradication programs are a shared responsibility and a worthwhile investment in the future of the industry.

The CFIA recognizes and appreciates the important contribution livestock producers have made in the Riding Mountain area in achieving this eradication objective. While the Health of Animals Act is not designed to provide compensation for costs that producers incur, the progress of the last three years, together with the incorporation of new scientific methods and other modifications of the program, have reduced the costs incurred by owners. Animals need to be handled less often, and the number and duration of quarantines have been minimized.

Finally, although the act is not being amended, the CFIA is currently reviewing the regulatory components of the compensation program, and a public consultation document will go out to all stakeholders this fall for comment, including recommendations to the minister to raise the current maximum amounts of compensation for destroyed animals. Additional consultation opportunities for industry groups and individual producers will follow in the *Canada Gazette* process.

This brings me to my closing remarks.

Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency can say with confidence that the measures taken over the last few years have been positive ones in eradicating this serious disease from Canadian livestock and in safeguarding the achievements of the national bovine tuberculosis eradication program. We will continue with this aggressive and sustained action, and we will work closely with our partners in the wildlife sector to ensure that the health and safety of Canadians, and the animals on which they depend, are never compromised.

Thank you.

• (1110)

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

Now we move to Mr. Preston, the assistant deputy minister. We want to give you our attention.

**Dr. Allan Preston (Assistant Deputy Minister, Agri-Industry Development, Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of my minister, Rosann Wowchuk, and Deputy Minister Barry Todd, who are currently in Europe on a trade mission, I'd like to echo Mr. Mark's opening comments and welcome the committee to Manitoba and to the Riding Mountain National Park area. This is indeed a beautiful location any time of the year, and especially so in the fall. I live about 180 kilometres as the crow flies southwest of here, so I drove through the park this morning coming to this event. I'm reminded again of a quote we use quite often that "this is an island of wilderness in a sea of agriculture", and that indeed is part of the concern we have with this disease.

I'd like to acknowledge my counterpart, Dr. Shelagh Copeland, for her hard work in putting this information together today, and of course I'll defer all the questions to her so she can answer them.

I will try not to be repetitive. A lot of the same material will be covered over and over again today, but I do want to hit some of the high points, and in particular, some of the areas that are of most significance to agriculture and indeed are worthy of some degree of repetition.

I don't need to remind anyone around this table that since we last met in February 2003, we've had a huge disruption to the livestock business, the cattle business in Canada. The BSE issue, while not behind us, is at least addressed to a large degree, and we're certainly hoping that the TB situation in the Riding Mountain National Park area does not add additional stresses and economic losses on producers in this area.

I would like to thank the committee for their review and their recommendations from 2003. And as we've already heard, two of the three recommendations have been acted upon and followed up very aggressively. The last issue of compensation—and again we need to find a better word than compensation—has not been fully addressed, and I'll be making some more comments on that as I proceed.

Again, not to be repetitive, but the first goal of regaining bovine-TB-free status for the area is within our grasp. The problem that we will continue to have—and my colleagues from CFIA can address this better than I—is as long as we have a wildlife reservoir of TB, our ability to maintain that TB-free status in the eyes of our trading partners is a challenge.

The issues of wildlife and cattle interactions and the issues of unnatural elk and deer herding behaviour have been addressed to a very significant level. We do have a little farther to go, but we have made significant progress in meeting those goals. Yet the goal that we have not attained at this point, which has been commented upon on several occasions this morning, is that of eradicating bovine tuberculosis in wildlife. As has already been indicated, perhaps that goal is unachievable.

I think it is the view of Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives that we can indeed take more significant strides in our efforts to bring that eradication closer, even if we cannot achieve it completely.

At times there is a difficulty in describing MAFRI's role in TB control and eradication. We have this rather interesting situation in which the elk herd inside Riding Mountain National Park is Parks Canada's jurisdiction, the elk and deer herd outside of the park are Manitoba Conservation's jurisdiction, domestic livestock disease control is CFIA's jurisdiction, so where do we fit?

I guess we fit in the area of being a facilitator, a bridge-builder, an element of some support to our producers, and of course we do put financial resources into the program as well. But communication and extension to our partner organizations is certainly vital to us, and certainly communication and extension to our client groups, primarily our farm clients, is an extremely important part for us.

So what are the next steps? Again, I'm going to venture down a road that takes me into a degree of disagreement with the scientific advisory committee. You've heard already on many occasions that the most prevalent areas of TB in the park are in the western third, and it's our view that we need to continue to work on the removal of affected elk and deer in some of these known hot spots. I certainly applaud Parks Canada for the work they've undertaken in the past two years to deal with that issue directly, and I think that is having an impact on the prevalence and the level of TB within the wild herd.

We need to continue working on the barrier fence program. We've heard repeatedly that it has worked very well in terms of taking care of feed that is behind the fence. The bigger issue is how do we go about perhaps fencing feeding areas on farms?

We have to recognize that the best management practices that we generally put forward for our beef producers are different in the Riding Mountain eradication area. We normally would ask for producers to spread their cattle out in the winter months, feed them over extended areas, to look at this as a means of managing nutrients, managing manure. In this area they're not able to do that. They're not able to swath-graze. They're not able to do some of the things we have been putting forward in the last number of years as best management practices.

• (1115)

We certainly need to come back to this compensation issue and look at the somewhat less tangible costs, outside the actual value of animals that either die or are destroyed.

We've made significant progress in involving the stakeholders in the management of the TB program. But, following up on John Whitaker's remarks from this morning, it's the view of my department that we can go farther. We can certainly involve the stakeholder group and the first nations group on bodies such as the bovine tuberculosis management team.

I want to come back again to this term "compensation" and indicate that from our perspective the lack of a complete financial package for affected producers, including compensation as defined under the Health of Animals Act, is the most significant unresolved issue. It places an unfair economic burden on cattle producers in the Riding Mountain National Park area. As has been indicated, we may be continuing TB testing even after April of 2006 on a limited basis, and this is a cost and a stress factor on the producers in this area.

These producers shoulder the benefit that applies to other cattle producers not only in this province but across Canada, and I really think there has to be more significant effort put into a shared responsibility for some of these costs for the producers. The producer organizations on a national level could be part of it; the federal government, outside of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, could be part of it; and certainly the provincial government, including my department, needs to be part of it.

We talked about the current maximum for animals ordered destroyed, so we don't need to come back to that one.

You will be hearing later today, I'm sure, from the dairy association about some of the sidebar costs when herds are either tested or put under quarantine: some of the interruption of business costs; the drop in milk production when a dairy herd is subjected to a test; the cash flow issue that was mentioned this morning, when a producer is asked to hang on to calves during a quarantine period. A lot of these intangible items add up to significant dollars, and again, I think they're part and parcel of the financial package we need to look at.

In summary, I would like to say we've seen some very considerable evolution since our discussion in Ottawa in February 2003. The support and recommendations of this committee have been a significant driver in that evolution.

I've already touched on next steps, but I'll revisit them in summation.

Continued aggressive removal of high risk elk populations from the hot zones is in our view a component of this puzzle that needs to be pushed a little more.

We need to develop this comprehensive compensation program, not under the Health of Animals Act per se, but in a broader context.

We need to continue to work on a national scale to develop both the national animal health strategy as well as the national wildlife health strategy. Both of these would assist us with the situation we face in the Riding Mountain National Park area.

And we need to continue working on our overall emergency management strategies for animal health diseases in this country. We have a number of the pieces in place, but we have a long way to go yet to be at a point where we could be comfortable that we can deal with disease incursions.

With that, I thank the committee for your time and attention. We hope these comments have been some help in the ongoing understanding of the situation and in developing further recommendations to the federal government.

• (1120)

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

That takes us to our question period. I take my direction.

Mr. Mark.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will spend the time with my colleague James.

**The Chair:** You have seven minutes for the first round.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I'll just make some comments.

First, let me commend Greg and Parks Canada for the change in attitude and behaviour. He knows that at our first meeting I wasn't very kind to him in Ottawa. I certainly congratulate you, as well as the CFIA and Dr. Luterbach, for all the progress you've made. Any time I've wanted information, it has always come back in a very timely way. I appreciate the reports sent to me periodically. Keep up the good work.

The only additional comment to our federal departments, as mentioned earlier in the first panel, is to keep the doors open and make sure the stakeholders do have a voice in all decision-making.

My criticism really goes to the provincial government. This is no criticism of Allan, because Allan has done a super job everywhere of meeting with people and representing the industry. Basically the provincial government has, over many years, piggybacked on the works of the federal government. My criticism is that I wish they would put their money where their mouth is. It's one thing to say we're involved and we take credit, but it's something else to actually put some money into it.

It's only been this past summer that they actually collared some elk. Again, they looked at the problem with blinders on, saying it was a Riding Mountain problem. Well, it's not a Riding Mountain problem; it's a provincial problem, especially when we have an island just north of Riding Mountain that's full of elk, and there are deer all over the place, yet the provincial government basically thinks it's somebody else's job to look after the elk. Now we've found, through Ryan's good work, that the elk do go back and forth from the provincial park to the national park, and vice versa, and they're all out in the area outside the boundary of the park.

That's my criticism, and I'll bring it up with conservation later this afternoon.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bezan is next.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I thank all of you for making presentations today and taking time out of your schedules to be here to answer some pretty difficult questions. I know George and I and Allan have been around this before over the years, and we're still dealing with it. It's one on which we have to come to some final resolution.

Allan made the comment on compensation. I know the CFIA refuses to look at expanding compensation. I look at this from the standpoint that we have a special, unique circumstance. It is a monitoring situation that goes beyond anything we've had to deal with in the past in terms of compensation for disease eradication. This is an ongoing surveillance program, and CFIA needs to be a stronger advocate in the department for the producers to make sure proper compensation is received, so that in turn there can be good cooperation. I've seen firsthand how non-cooperation can be a huge impediment to the department in carrying out its job.

I would like a comment from the CFIA on whether or not they would be prepared, outside of the Health of Animals Act, to look at proper compensation to producers for cooperating with this ongoing surveillance program that has hurt these individuals over a long period of time and will continue to do so.

•(1125)

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** Dr. Koller-Jones may have some comments.

Currently the only tool we have to compensate people is under the Health of Animals Act, and the rules and what we can compensate for are very clearly designed into that. I think a longer-term solution, as Dr. Preston has said, would be a more global look that would fall outside the Health of Animals Act alone, which is strictly for compensation for the value of the animal.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you.

Dr. Koller-Jones, do you have anything to add?

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones (Senior Staff Veterinarian, Disease Control, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** No, Phil answered it. The Health of Animals Act is the provision for paying out money to producers. It provides for specific costs, and you as parliamentarians have set the boundaries for what's paid out. At this point in time the minister has chosen not to change the act, but other avenues outside it may well be worth pursuing.

**Mr. James Bezan:** The way government works is that as a committee, we can make our recommendations and fire them forward as parliamentarians, and we can talk about and debate this stuff in the House—but at the same time, in the making of these types of decisions recommendations come from staff up into the upper echelons of the government itself. Recommendations did come forward from committee to cover this; they were shot down from the government's side and from the department's side—so, really, why has there been this roadblock to properly dealing with the producers?

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** As Phil said, it would require a change to the act, and that doesn't come from inside CFIA. That is the minister's and Parliament's—

**Mr. James Bezan:** That could be done through regulation, though.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** It can't be done through regulation, it requires the act. The act actually specifically limits compensation to animals ordered destroyed, things ordered destroyed, animals injured during testing that die or need to be destroyed for humane reasons, and disposal costs. It's that precise. Parliamentarians have tied the hands quite tightly in the act, because it comes out of consolidated revenues. I guess there are reasons.

The act specifies that regulations, which we are reviewing, allow the minister to determine how much he will pay in those categories—for animals ordered destroyed, things ordered destroyed—and those regulations are currently being reviewed. There will be a full consultation. So what is within the scope of the act is certainly being revisited as a result of not only the previous recommendations but the avian influenza and BSE as well, which have contributed to revisiting that. It certainly is under way and will continue.

Outside the act, the CFIA isn't in a position to make those kinds of payments. A broader framework in which all of the competing interests are evaluated is a more appropriate course.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I just want to correct you: it hasn't been parliamentarians who have been trying to hold back the changes to the act. The act would still have to be brought forward by government to have those proper amendments, on a recommendation from the department. It happens all the time with different acts. We're dealing with it right now with Bill C-27—I've heard the CFIA—where a recommendation comes from the department and a bill is brought forward that government and Parliament then will consider.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** And it's the minister's role to bring it forward.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Exactly; that's who's responsible.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I am in your hands, Mr. Chairman, but if I have a few minutes left, I would share my time with my two colleagues from Manitoba who are particularly concerned by this issue; they could ask a few questions.

[English]

**The Chair:** I will defer that time until the end of the period, because I believe we have to go around the table and then come back. But you do the time you need, and I'll come back to these guys later.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I am very happy to have a veterinarian present: my questions are more in the area of animal health.

Doctor Koller-Jones, we know that tuberculosis can stay in an animal system for a very long time. Is this one of the reasons why we will never be able to eradicate it from wild animals, as witnesses have been telling us this morning? An animal can have tuberculosis for a decade without dying of it. So we will never be able to eradicate this illness.

• (1130)

[English]

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** Your understanding of tuberculosis is excellent. Yes, it is a disease where once an animal is infected the infection can be lifelong. The disease progresses slowly, and many animals will die of another reason or be sent to slaughter as part of normal practice before they ever show signs of tuberculosis.

That said, tuberculosis also is not a highly contagious disease. It does require a period of either repeated contact or prolonged close contact. It isn't something where I, sitting here, cough once and you, sitting there, acquire TB. It does require repeated or close contact. Hence, it's not highly transmissible. When we find infected herds, less than 5% of the animals in the herd will be diseased, particularly if they stay outside. In a barn, where they're confined and they share an airspace, it will be higher.

When in Canada we finish the job that I think we're very close to completing, we will join a very elite group of countries that have eradicated tuberculosis: Australia and several Nordic countries, including Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Australia has demonstrated that it can be done.

At the tail end of eradication, you will see a sporadic breakdown. But is ultimate eradication, as defined by not finding diseased herds, achievable? Absolutely. We believe it is achievable. Does that mean removing every bacillus from the landscape? Perhaps not, but it's not necessary to remove every bacillus from the landscape, just enough bacilli that new infections don't establish themselves and that the old infections die out.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** You are talking about means that have been used to eradicate the disease in Australia and other European countries. You seem to be familiar with the subject.

Could the methods used elsewhere also be effective here? Do we use the same methods in Canada to eradicate the disease?

[English]

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** Yes, absolutely, we've employed the same methods in livestock. Those countries have been fortunate, in that they have not encountered a wildlife reservoir. In livestock, on the policy we've taken, whenever we find an infected herd we trace and destroy all the animals that have been exposed to the infection—

the so-called ticking time bombs—and that has been very effective in Canada. It's what has been used in those countries. All countries employ that at the tail end of their eradication programs. The U.S. is in that mode now. They're very close to eradicating tuberculosis as well.

The presence of the disease in a wildlife reservoir creates a unique challenge. Livestock herds aren't only threatened by other livestock—which we can manage with surveillance and the eradication programs—but they're also constantly threatened by reintroduction of the infection from contact with wildlife, hence the strategy that was discussed earlier this morning of trying to turn the farm into an island, as a first step. Stop the new infections from coming in from wildlife, basically compartmentalize your livestock herds, and deal with the disease there—find it, eliminate it, and compartmentalize herds from wildlife. Then tackle the wildlife with whatever the best tools are, whether that's going after hot spots, increasing surveillance, reducing populations, or stopping elk-to-elk or deer-to-deer transmission. There's a variety of strategies that can be applied, but the first step is to compartmentalize them, and then tackle the two problems with tailored solutions.

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** Right now Canada, other than this small area, is considered to be tuberculosis-free. If this year's testing of livestock across Canada is negative, all of Canada's livestock population will be recognized world-wide as TB-free.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Ur.

• (1135)

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Thank you for coming to present to us. It's always important to meet face-to-face.

I'm a little confused, and perhaps you can set me straight. Earlier this morning we heard from Paul Paquet of the science advisory committee, and he made one statement. Mr. Amundson said that we could perhaps be in a TB-free status. What do you mean by that? Mr. Paquet said it would be difficult to reach that level, and perhaps we could meet a non-detectable level. So I want to get the record straight. What do you mean by that?

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** I'll let Dr. Koller-Jones answer that.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** There are two ways of defining TB-free status. One is internationally. The World Organization for Animal Health sets the standard, and you can call yourself TB-free if your prevalence of the disease in livestock is less than 0.2%. Under our Health of Animals Act regulations, the minister has established criteria for tuberculosis-free status for Canada. They're actually stricter than the World Organization for Animal Health. They are harmonized with the U.S., because the U.S. is a significant trade partner.

To be tuberculosis-free in Canada the regulations tolerate a low level of infection. They allow basically one infected herd every four years in the province or area. Every province in Canada, to become TB-free, had to go five years without finding any disease, still maintaining active surveillance, but finding nothing for five years. Every province got there at some point through the nineties.

To maintain TB-free status you were allowed one strike, so to speak, every four years. Manitoba had one strike in 1996, and one in 1997, hence the status was downgraded one level. To get it back you have to go for three years without finding an infected herd, so it's easier to get it back once you've had it. That's what we're talking about. The last infected herd was found in April 2003, so barring finding further infections this year—and we're going to look really hard—in April 2006 Manitoba will qualify under the Canadian standard for being tuberculosis-free. Internationally, all of Canada meets the TB-free standard right now.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

In the CFIA presentation, you said you do periodic audits, of farm records and at auction markets. Is it pretty amicable when you go out to the primary producer? Earlier we heard that the primary producer feels left out of the loop. When you go out to do these audits, are they receptive to CFIA?

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** I think we need to give a lot of credit to the producers.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I am. I'm a producer—

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** They recognize that the value of eradicating this disease is to the producers. We heard some of the concerns from the previous panel, but we cannot complain about the cooperation we have had from producers.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I wasn't looking at that end.

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** No, we appreciate all the support we have had from producers.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Also, in your presentation you said that additional competition opportunities for industry groups and individual producers will follow in the *Canada Gazette* process. I'll go back again. We had heard that the primary producers don't feel they have fully-based knowledge as to what's going on. With all due respect, the *Canada Gazette* is really quite important, but how many primary producers pull out the *Canada Gazette* to see what's going on in Ottawa?

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** One of the things we do is try to work through the producer associations—the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, and the various provincial associations, which have their fingers on their producer groups—to try to get their input. That consultation is around the caps or maximums payable under the Health of Animals Act.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I'm not picking on you; I just need more clarification than you have indicated.

In your closing remarks, you said you wanted to work more closely with your partners in the wildlife sector to ensure that the health and safety of Canadians.... I presume that means also with the primary producer.

● (1140)

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** Yes, and I think we've achieved that. We have heard the comments from the previous panel. They mentioned it's in the early stages. Our staff are trying to work very closely with the producers as well as the partners who are sitting here today.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Mr. Preston, in your closing remarks you said you're continuing to work on an emergency management strategy. Is that within your department, or is it with CFIA? What shape is this that you're setting forth?

**Dr. Allan Preston:** It's all of the above. The province develops its own emergency management strategy for a variety of things, including animal health emergencies. We work in concert with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency through what's called the FADES planning process, "Foreign Animal Disease Eradication Support Plans", so it's tied in there as well.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Okay, thank you.

Mr. Fenton, in your earlier remarks.... We have heard that not everyone is in the loop—and with CFIA as well. Do you go out to have town hall meetings to bring individuals together to bring them into the loop as to what's happening with Parks Canada? We are here today, but people have a perception that we're somebody totally different living in Ottawa, while we're just ordinary people doing extraordinary jobs. I think that's the perception all departments have to deal with.

Are you doing that, and meeting with individuals so that they feel they're connected with what is happening, and is that what CFIA is doing?

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** I think we have a variety of means of communicating, with the intent of getting information out as quickly as possible, and also listening to producers and producer associations, as well as our partners, on what we believe to be the issues and the steps that need to be taken.

Concerning the variety of means or methods we've taken, the primary focus is certainly with the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee. You heard from Mr. Whitaker this morning, as the chair of that committee, of in excess of 15 meetings, not counting some of the subcommittee meetings. There have been town hall meetings. There are meetings of the TB task group, represented by the other federal and provincial agencies as well as the Manitoba cattle producers and wildlife federation. There have been press releases or media bulletins.

There are face-to-face or one-on-one meetings between my staff and some individual producers around some specific issues, whether it's fencing or sharing of information or is part and parcel with some of the enhanced surveillance—the live-capture blood tests.

So we're using a whole variety of means and methods: supporting the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve in the development of a website, so that there's electronic information available for those people who have access to the web.

Certainly more can be done, but I believe we're using the right kinds of means. We need to continue to review those, as we have in the last two years, to see whether there are additional ways of doing things, and look for feedback from the producers on what the best means of communicating is. We need to work with MAFRI, as an example, and the CFIA, figuring out how best to get the information into the hands of people in a timely way and to provide them the opportunity to feel that they are actually involved meaningfully in the process toward decision-making.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Time has expired. We now move to the government—no, the wanting-to-be-government side.

**Mr. James Bezan:** The “government-in-waiting”; there you go. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'm quite familiar with Riding Mountain National Park. I used to go backpacking in there as a teenager and trail riding in there in the recent years and camping down at Gunn Creek. The one thing that amazed me over that time was how much aspen encroachment has happened. If something isn't done about it soon, the Sugarloaf Hill is going to turn into the Sugarloaf Forest.

I'm just wondering how you feel that habitat change has impacted upon the elk herd and the migration of that herd within the park.

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** I'll defer to Doug to speak within the context of movements—and the possible changes of movements as a result of habitat change—and what we're doing in terms of the habitat. I alluded to the fact that we are, as a part of a national program, implementing a very active prescribed burn program. Theoretically, it will be enhancing the habitat to provide better habitat within the park, so there's less likelihood of animals moving out.

In terms of movement and what the science is telling us, Doug, could you comment?

• (1145)

**Mr. Doug Bergeson:** Certainly that point is brought up time and time again by people who live in the area and who have used the park over the years. Yes, the park has become overgrown, and in recent times, over the last five or so years, we've taken a fairly aggressive approach to burning to try to reduce some of that aspen encroachment. The west end is one of the focuses for sure.

In terms of movement of animals, we certainly know that fire has always played a critical role in the ecosystem as part of the natural process. It influences the movement of animals, and that's what we're trying to recreate again in Riding Mountain, trying to get more of a natural foraging regime set up for the elk and the deer and other species in the park, rather than having them leave the park and feed in more unnatural feeding sites, such as the agricultural areas.

It's certainly a good point, and something we really want to continue working toward is getting more fire in the landscape, in the park, and getting more of a natural feeding system going on again, as it was in the past.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I don't know if everybody on the committee is aware of it, but Riding Mountain National Park used to be an agricultural area. There was a lot of pasture land and hayfields and people actually living up in the park.

Is there any data to show the estimated elk population at the time the area became a national park and to compare it with where the population is today and how that habitat may have affected that population—any anecdotal evidence, even?

**Mr. Doug Bergeson:** Right. It would appear that numbers were relatively low at the time of the park establishment, in the neighbourhood of, say, 500 animals or so. There were a lot of people living around the park at that point, utilizing a lot of resources, such as wildlife. And in the park itself for many years there were cattle grazed and timber was harvested, that sort of thing. So there was quite a great knowledge of what was out there at that time.

Numbers have increased over the years, and now we're up to around the 2,000 mark with the population right now.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I know all the focus has been on the west end of the park, but we did have one herd eradicated on the east side of the park. There hasn't been a whole lot of testing of the herd in the east end of the park. I was just wondering what the logic is behind that.

**Mr. Doug Bergeson:** The last couple of years, actually, we've taken that approach to try to understand what the geographic distribution of the disease is within the park. In fact, we've captured and tested about 110 animals on the east side, east of Highway 10, so far and have yet to find a positive animal culture in the wildlife from the blood test.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I just want to go back to Allan's comments, on the one thing he said on how the whole program, especially in regard to fencing and, as Maria said, compartmentalizing our farms is going to affect best management practices, especially as we become more global and have to become more competitive in extending that grazing season and taking on new techniques to lower our costs.

What would you say is a way to encompass best management practices and still meet the needs of the testing regime that we have established?

**Dr. Allan Preston:** There isn't a really easy answer to that question. As I indicated and as you well know, the best management practices that you or I would use on our farm a hundred miles away from the park are different from the ones that can be used around the park.

I guess the perspective I would take—and we'll hear more from the producer organizations later today—is that recognizing that is one thing; providing some financial stability or basis for it is another. So if indeed we're going to ask the producer in this area, in order to help minimize the risk of transmission of TB, to implement measures that increase their cost of production, then perhaps we have to find a way to cover those costs of production to put that producer back on a level playing field with other producers.

It's interesting, and I digress for a second, Mr. Chairman, but in the *Western Producer* this week there was a story about elk and interaction with farms in western Alberta. They're facing many of the same issues, without the disease factor laid into it, and they're looking at situations there where they can provide some sort of fencing for large areas to enable farmers to continue to swath graze, to continue to do nutrient management to the best of their ability, but again, that adds costs. So I think if we're going to impose those restrictions on producers who live in this area, we do have to come back to this broad area of economics and find ways to compensate fairly for the extra cost of production.

• (1150)

**Dr. Shelagh Copeland (Manager, Farm Production Extension, Livestock Knowledge Centre, Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Can I just add something to that?

Compartmentalization has become a really important part of mitigation of disease. It works fairly well for things like avian influenza, where you can have concentrated numbers of animals and keep them within a barn, keep them compartmentalized away from your wild, possibly avian-influenza-infected birds.

That works quite well when you can do that. It's a lot harder to do it with cattle that are out on the landscape, and we don't really even know all the factors involved in that transmission. So to try to do compartmentalization, if we go the whole nine yards, it could be, as Al was saying, a heck of a burden to the livestock producers here.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Bellavance, did you want in?

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I have a few questions to ask. First of all, Mr. Fenton, in your presentation you refer to an elk migration in the direction of the Duck Mountains. Is this a new phenomenon? Could this movement have an impact on domestic animals? I do not know this area well, but could you tell me if this movement could create problems for agricultural producers in the area?

[English]

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** There is certainly the potential of problems for other producers, and I think this morning you heard Dr. Paquet say that we've seen movement.

Although the movement studies have certainly confirmed the fact that there has been movement between the Riding Mountain and the Duck Mountain areas, there is anecdotally landowners in history who have always felt that this was the case.

Dr. Paquet said it's possible that this movement may even extend into Saskatchewan, and all the more reason to get a handle on the movements of animals—in this case, elk, and also deer, given that there are some positives within white-tailed deer within the region.

So it will be critical to get a handle on not just the movements, but also some of the prevalence rates in elk and in deer, not just in the Riding Mountain but also in the Duck Mountain area, to determine that extent before we can then definitively set in place management actions towards achieving the goals of the TB management program, of eradicating TB from wildlife.

We certainly will continue to do some work in the Riding Mountain area towards achieving those goals, but we need to get a better handle on the prevalence rates and movements of those animals. They'll continue to pose a risk until such time as we have determined what the movement and prevalence rates are.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** I'd just add a quick comment on the livestock side.

Having seen the preliminary reports of the movement, we have tested livestock herds outside the boundaries of the eradication area. In the last two winters we tested cattle herds around that south end of the Duck Mountain area, right to the border with Saskatchewan, because of that very question you asked, and we did not find any disease. So at this point in time it looks promising that if the disease is present in the wildlife in the Duck Mountain area, it's at a very low level and it hasn't spread to cattle to this point that we can detect.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Amundson, I am in no way challenging the usefulness of the tests carried out on the cattle, quite the opposite, but — we have already discussed this — you would agree with me that this kind of exercise creates stress for the animals and financial losses. You therefore recognize that the fact of going to the agricultural producers in order to test the animals could even cause the loss of a calf because a cow was so stressed by the testing?

[English]

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** Absolutely, and it's one of the reasons we start right now, in early October, to try to get the testing done early. When the cows are heavy with calf, it's a lot more stressful on them. We recognize there are costs to the producers to muster their animals and bring them in. There is stress to the animals. Part of what we're doing, as Dr. Koller-Jones explained, is because the parameters under which we can pay compensation are very well defined under the Health of Animals Act. We do recognize those other stresses on both the producer and the animals.

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I know that you are not the government, but you do not agree with the recommendation made by the committee to amend the Health of Animals Act, to make compensation adequate, as several witnesses have asked us to do this morning.

[English]

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** We have dealt with other situations, where in fact producer organizations, provincial governments and such, have banded together to address some of those other costs that don't fit nicely under the Health of Animals Act. In some cases, for high-value animals, or in particular cases, as one of the panel mentioned earlier, some of those additional costs were funded through other sources, either industry funds...that we currently can't pay unless there's a change to the Health of Animals Act.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Ur.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** You said there have been roughly 132 barrier fences erected thus far. Have you done any number crunching as to where we should be going with that number of fences, that would be even more productive?

**Dr. Shelagh Copeland:** All the positive TB farms to date—if I remember correctly—have been within three miles of Riding Mountain. We've almost completely covered that first two miles, but as we've gotten into this situation and where the positive elk and deer are, we're asking if we should be focusing on doing that next additional mile and completely filling in those dots or do we concentrate on those various hot spots, not just the sites for hay storage, but also the sites for feeding?

As Allan was saying, we have to do best management practices. A lot of our farmers roll their hay out on a quarter section and move it around. Well, the deer are just waiting up in the field for those hay bales to get unrolled, and as soon as they can, they get down in there. So it's not just the storage sites in some of these areas, it's the feeding sites that we should be looking at as well. That's the point where we are now: where do we focus on the cattle facilities?

As well, we have to think somewhat about the people who just produce hay in the area. They don't have cattle themselves, but they produce hay, and we should be looking at some of those people for barrier fences.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Mr. Fenton, what is the number of people working with Parks Canada in your area? Is there a specific number who work for Parks Canada?

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** That we employ in Riding Mountain?

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Yes.

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** During peak season, in the middle of summer, I have about 150 employees. There are about 70 full-time employees during the winter months.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Is that sufficient to do the job, especially with the high occurrence of TB? Would it be advantageous if there were more people working there?

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** You may be well aware that the role or mandate of Parks Canada is really threefold: providing educational opportunities that communicate the importance of the natural and cultural heritage, within the broader context of culture and heritage, in Canada and internationally; providing for quality or meaningful visitor experiences; and thirdly, the protection and management of the natural and cultural resources that occur within Riding Mountain and the broader region.

The staff of mine that have focused on the management of bovine tuberculosis are supporting the implementation of the bovine TB management program provincially. We have about five dedicated, full-time staff there, who we add to or supplement out of a core staff, depending upon the enhanced actions that have to take place.

I think this is a question that was asked of me last time when I stood before you.

• (1200)

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Probably, probably....

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** The simple answer is yes, you can always use more people, but I think we have done a very good job, given the limited resources that we're all dealing with, in managing to the best of our abilities and in moving people into the program as required, depending upon the actions that are determined by the task group, and with the advice of groups like the stakeholder advisory committee.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Also, earlier today Mr. Whitaker stated in regard to the CFIA that there needs to be more supportive action from CFIA to the liaison committee. Was that the first time you heard that, Mr. Amundson?

**Mr. Philip Amundson:** I'm going to let Dr. Luterbach answer, because he has actually worked with the liaison committee.

**Dr. George Luterbach (Network Chief, Animal Health and Production - Program Network - West, Canadian Food Inspection Agency):** I guess that in our first case of bovine tuberculosis in the area in the recent past, in 1990, we already had established town hall meetings and, perhaps in a more informal way, consultation and communications, or information dissemination. This did evolve over the years, especially after the second finding of tuberculosis in 1997, to regular meetings.

I guess we can always say that we could communicate more. We should always explore other venues to see whether we can enhance communications, but as a liaison group, and as the four principal departments, two provincial and two federal, we have had regular and active meetings with the producers and the Riding Mountain Liaison Committee.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ur, your time has gone.

Now, back to you, Mr. Mark. I'd like to conclude in the next five minutes.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair.

On that note, Rose-Marie asked about town hall meetings. I can certainly attest to you, Greg, that I do my surveillance too and that all the departments, including the provincial ones, have done an excellent job travelling to the communities annually to talk to the producers directly. So they have done that; it is great to see that they're doing their job.

My question is about surveillance. Even if we become a TB-free province, at what point in time do you do post-surveillance? I guess I need to understand just exactly what is post-surveillance, which you also need to relate to what other provinces are doing with post-surveillance programs, if that's what's happening.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** All provinces, all countries that want to call themselves TB-free, have to undertake surveillance. They have to be looking for it in order to say they haven't found it. What's going on across the landscape, including this area, is what we call slaughter monitoring, where animals go through us to federally and provincially inspected slaughterhouses. If something that looks suspicious of TB is seen, it is sent to the laboratory and we conduct a test. So slaughter monitoring is across the landscape on an ongoing basis.

In countries that have reached near eradication or are virtually eradicated, that's very effective and sufficient. When we have the unique challenge of reintroduction, something more than that is required if you want to stay on top of it, before it gets away on you, so to speak. In that case, we go back to on-farm testing, which is the way we did surveillance back in the fifties and sixties when we had a lot of TB. You go to the farm; you don't wait for an animal to be culled and actually have something you can see in the slaughterhouse.

That's certainly the approach we've taken for the time being. How long we will have to continue to do on-farm testing is a question we can't really answer. The best time to answer that is when we have all of the available information. So I guess the first milestone we'd like to get to is next spring, when we can entertain that. We'll know more about the situation in livestock, we'll know more about the situation in wildlife, so it's a matter of de-escalating the on-farm testing.

There is also work ongoing. The CFIA is continuing research into a blood test that would only require one-time sampling. Animals could be sampled, for example, at an auction market. The blood doesn't have to be stored. This blood test we've referred to—I would like to make a brief comment on that, to clarify some of the discussion earlier. This rapid blood test could be something we could do as the animal is going through. You'd have the result right away and you could take that animal and say, "Let's take a closer look inside her". That research is ongoing, so that we might be able to move it to assembly points, much less intrusive, but still have something more than slaughter monitoring.

I also understand that there's a federally inspected abattoir under construction, to be open soon, in the Dauphin area. This will allow us, perhaps, to strengthen slaughter surveillance to a point where it's enough.

It will be a combination but a de-escalating, hopefully, that's risk-driven. We have to respond to the wildlife risk, and if we can narrow the risk geographically in the wildlife, for example exclude the eastern end of the park, be confident that the prevalence in wildlife in the eastern end of the park is so low as to be minimal risk, then livestock producers in that area may well be the first to fall into a scheme of much lower frequency testing, perhaps no testing, and enhance the surveillance at abattoirs.

• (1205)

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Is it possible down the road that TB prevalence in wildlife will have an influence on the status of being TB-free in this province, or any other one, or any states?

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** It can, potentially, absolutely, because there are not too many jurisdictions. I mean, we're leading the way here. There are not too many jurisdictions on this globe that are going to say we have a TB-free livestock sector, but it is husbanded in an area where the disease is prevalent in wildlife. So we'll have a challenge, but it is something that a lot of other countries will have to do. Michigan has a comparable problem; it's bigger in scale. Of course, we have Wood Buffalo National Park, which is another subject. But in more and more countries, as we put more animals and more people and more wildlife in the same landscape, the interactions increase and the potential is always there for any disease.

We're going to have to learn this, as Allan said, not only for tuberculosis. We're going to have to learn how to compartmentalize, segregate, manage the issues and establish healthy livestock herds in sometimes difficult situations, for other diseases. And other jurisdictions will have to do the same.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mark, your time has expired, but I've promised you one last question—one question.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Will there be other questions from the floor, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Not before we have lunch. I am going to conclude with the last question, but I'm going to—

**Mr. James Bezan:** As long as we make use of our full time that's on the agenda, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** One question.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I guess it's a question to the entire panel. Marie was talking about the future and what if we do achieve the TB-free status. We're talking about not knowing for sure what the testing is going to be, but would we still require the livestock permitting, are we still going to maintain the surveillance on the wild herd, are we still going ahead with more fencing outside of the park? Everybody can simply make brief comments on what they see in the future and what type of programming we're going to need.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** I'll answer the livestock one very quickly. Once the RMEA gets TB-free status back, qualifies under our regulation, we can dismantle the permit system. We can take that burden off of producers. It's a cost that we incur and we can redirect those resources. That can be removed as soon as the area has TB-free status.

**Dr. George Luterbach:** I'll just add one comment to separate the issue of the permits and the surveillance. The surveillance in the area of the wildlife reservoir is a separate issue and will have to be addressed based on the risk.

**Dr. Allan Preston:** In terms of the way we raise cattle in the RMEA, as long as we have a wildlife reservoir, we're going to continue to need programming along the line of barrier fences, fences around hay yards, changes in best management practices, so that piece of programming will be ongoing for a fair ways into the future.

**The Chair:** This is not the group, probably, that could answer the question—we'll get to that this afternoon—but I'm going to pose it to you, and you can think about it if you don't want to respond to it.

How would you respond to the request of a farmer with a million-dollar cow? How would government have to respond to that? I think these are the kinds of questions that we have to address, going back, if we want to enhance the argument that outside of the act today we would have to enact further legislation in order to accommodate other funding arrangements. How would we and where would we find our boundaries?

Yes, Mr. Luterbach.

•(1210)

**Dr. George Luterbach:** I think it's a shared responsibility. Certainly from the CFIA's perspective, we're going to do our best at surveillance—detecting the disease and eliminating the disease such that we don't infect other herds, either locally or even by inadvertently moving the animals to other parts of Canada. That's one part.

The other part is from the producer point of view. They have to recognize that in this situation all farms are not equal. The risk of tuberculosis on all farms is not equal. I think that it would even include the possibility, if I had an exceptional animal, whether I should consider raising her in a different part of Canada that would not have the same risk. Being a farmer, I know that this is not a popular choice. We like to have all our animals on our own farm close at hand. I think the reality is that there is a gradation of risk here, and that has to be considered as part of management practices.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mrs. Jones.

**Dr. Maria Koller-Jones:** I just want to make a clarification, and it carries on with what George had mentioned, which was the Bovigam blood test. This is an internationally proven test. It's used by all those countries I mentioned—Australia, the U.K., and the U.S.—that are well into eradication programs. It's a highly accurate test, and I think that's part of the problem we've encountered. It has better accuracy than the old test that it replaces. We've used it in the past two years and we've modified its use and its interpretation in response to how the test is performed in our situation here and in response to producer feedback.

Last year, for example, I think we tested over 34,000 cattle. We had 17 animals that were positive on the blood test that then had to be slaughtered. In three of those animals, we did see under the microscope what looked like early tuberculosis—lesions that were suggestive microscopically of very early infection—and these animals were removed. In essence, I think we feel that these animals were removed before they infected the herd. These were early incubating cases and they were removed. Seventeen out of 34,000 animals—that's one in 2,000, roughly. In an area where, from everything we know, there's a good risk of animals being exposed to TB, I think any lower rate of positives than that and we'd be concerned about false negatives on the test, rather than false positives.

The test has been adapted and there has been a lot of consultation with MCPA and dairy farmers of Manitoba in both the implementation and the modifications we've made to that test. One of the advantage is that it is a one-time handling test, so we have been able to eliminate one handling of the animal. We can also do it more frequently, so we've been able to shorten and reduce some quarantines that way.

**The Chair:** I realize we're running out of time. If you have something very short and brief....

**Dr. Allan Preston:** It is very short and very brief. I have two comments. They are more for information.

First, whether because of the standing committee or not, I would like to recognize that Parks Canada, since we met last, has employed a wildlife veterinarian, Dr. Todd Shury, who is based in Saskatoon and is contributing greatly to this program here. Second, in regard to

the issue of communication with stakeholders, we do have two meetings coming up in October. There are some posters out front advertising those. We're bringing in individuals from Michigan; as Dr. Koller-Jones indicated today, we have a similar problem in that state, only much more magnified.

So the communication and the exchange of information is ongoing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. James Bezan:** You asked your question before Parks Canada had a chance to respond to my previous question on what they're going to be doing in the future. Could I get a response to that question before we break for lunch?

**The Chair:** You have stretched the line beyond stretchability. Mr. Bezan and Mr. Fenton have this obsession about being able to talk for a long time. If you can give us a short answer, I'll allow this to happen.

**Mr. Greg Fenton:** The simple answer is yes.

**The Chair:** Yes, there we go. Thank you very much, Mr. Fenton.

Thank you for your cooperation. I apologize for being hard-headed at times, but we are under time constraints and we have to manage these meetings. Thank you very much. You've been very helpful in helping us to understand some of the issues.

We're going to suspend and be back here in one hour.

•(1215)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1317)

**The Chair:** I'm going to call the meeting back to order.

A group that was to appear this morning was deferred to this afternoon. I'm going to recognize them in our group of witnesses in this particular panel.

The first people I want to recognize, in our third panel for today, are from the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association: Betty Green, past president, and Bill Finney, chair of the animal health committee. Then we have, from the Parkland Producers Association, Ms. Renske Kaastra, chairperson, and from the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, Mr. Jim Wade. He's not in the room yet, but we'll begin anyhow. Finally, from the Manitoba Conservation group, we have Mr. Jack Dubois, director of wildlife and ecosystem protection, and Ken Rebizant, big game manager.

We'll begin with you, Ms. Green—or is Mr. Finney doing the presentation?

**Mr. Bill Finney (Chair, Animal Health Committee, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association):** We're both doing it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Finney is first and Ms. Green is to follow.

You know the time constraints. Obviously we have to try to live within that timeframe.

Mr. Finney, you're on.

**Mr. Bill Finney:** We'd like to also thank the standing committee for coming to Manitoba to hear input on the TB issue. We'd like to acknowledge the ongoing work of the CFIA on this issue. Their work has not only helped facilitate the testing of cattle, but their ongoing interaction with the other government agencies has been beneficial in helping to address the wildlife side of this issue as well.

It's very clear that past recommendations from the standing committee have made a significant difference in the situation here, and helped trigger many actions. For example, a review of the values for livestock depopulated or destroyed is currently under way, especially for purebred and dairy animals. A stakeholders' advisory committee has been established, and as an extension of that, a scientific review committee has been established. These are funded by Parks Canada.

There has been a greater effort made to keep wildlife population numbers at manageable levels, and there's been a much greater effort to obtain good test samples from wildlife.

In 2003 the standing committee recommended that producers be compensated for their time, expenses, and losses incurred during the testing procedure. The Government of Canada did not agree with this particular recommendation. Their reasoning was that disease eradication programs in livestock were not only for the public good, but for the good of the industry itself, and that historically, producer groups have agreed that the financial cost of an eradication program, such as presenting their cattle, was a worthwhile investment in the future of their industry and the protection of their families against animal disease.

We could agree with this response if this were a normal disease outbreak in domestic livestock. In such a situation, the source herd or herds would be removed, and that would address the source of the disease. However, the fact remains that the repeated testing of livestock herds around Riding Mountain National Park occurs because TB is endemic in wildlife species such as elk and deer.

The producers have been subjected to many conditions and challenges. In 2003 a zone or eradication area was put into effect around the park. This meant the producers had to obtain movement permits to move their cattle out of the area. They've had to maintain an annual health herd standing as well, and this is clearly not a normal situation. It subjects these producers to operating conditions that are not required of others. Thanks to the cooperation of the producers in this area, cattle producers elsewhere in Canada are able to conduct business without similar types of restrictions.

In the second year of testing, the CFIA introduced the Bovigam blood test in conjunction with the regular TB test. This resulted in an increase in quarantines, as well as an increase in the number of animals required to be destroyed. Approximately 80 head of cattle were removed as a result of the use of the Bovigam, none of which subsequently produced a positive culture for TB. Conversely, under the comparative cervical test used in the previous year, six cattle were removed, of which five produced a positive culture for TB.

The manufacturer of the Bovigam test reports a false-positive rate of approximately 5%, so there's always the possibility of a quarantine or a retest being imposed on a herd based on a false-positive result. As the number of quarantines rose, more producers were required to bear the associated costs.

In the past test year, the CFIA changed the sensitivity reading on the Bovigam test, trying to calibrate it to more closely reflect Canadian conditions. This resulted in fewer positive Bovigam results. They also made some other changes that reduced the incidence of quarantines being imposed. These are improvements, and we recognize these changes and appreciate them.

However, the committee should recognize that during the changes related to the Bovigam, some producers felt that their operations were being used as research facilities to help measure the efficacy of the Bovigam test. Moreover, some producers do not believe they were given enough information about the test itself. With all the uncertainty producers were experiencing related to BSE and the aftermath of BSE, this added uncertainty was not welcomed.

Although the CFIA has consulted with MCPA, the dairy producers, and other organizations prior to each test year, we strongly believe that producers in the testing area must be better informed about the testing protocols and any changes that are being made on an annual basis. This includes ensuring that any time the testing area expands, producers new to the process are fully apprised of how it works and how it may affect their ability to market their cattle.

• (1320)

As well, producers need to be made familiar with how to document and report injuries that arise as a result of testing. A well-rounded producer education approach covering a broad range of scenarios would help facilitate the testing process.

We have made several presentations to the federal and provincial governments for a participation fee to reimburse producers for presenting their cattle for testing. The first year of testing, which involved all the producers in the area and covered approximately 50,000 head, would be considered an industry contribution, but the producers must be reimbursed for their participation from that time on and until this disease is eradicated.

We also hear complaints from producers regarding abortions or injuries that occurred during or as a result of testing. The injuries that occur while the CFIA vet is present, or those that have been very recent or well-documented, have sometimes been addressed. But most losses, such as abortions or injuries arising as a result of trampling, have not. Quite often, these losses aren't evident until a few days after the test.

Those producers whose herds have been quarantined face financial and other challenges. Some have incurred many losses because they were unable to sell their cattle at the most opportune time and have faced extra feeding costs. In these times of volatile conditions again related to BSE, it only adds to the producers' emotional and financial stress if they're not able to market their cattle when prices are most favourable.

There is the potential for cattle testing outside the eradication zone, such as in the Duck Mountain region, if wildlife samples show the presence of TB in other regions. Testing may also be needed in regions beyond the park to validate the existing zone. It is important that producers in any expanded surveillance area be reimbursed for presenting their animals for testing as their participation in testing is essential to the eradication of this disease.

There are significant costs involved in repeatedly presenting cattle for testing. These can include the cost of hired help, extra feeding, record keeping, time lost from other farm operations, and, in many cases, taking time away from off-farm jobs.

Another consideration mentioned this morning is that due to the need to stem the spread of TB between wildlife and livestock, producers cannot make use of modern farming practices that could help reduce their costs of production. This includes techniques such as swath grazing or extended grazing. This places producers in the area at a potential for economic disadvantage compared to their counterparts outside of the zone.

The rest of our presentation relates more to the wildlife side of the issue. I'm going to ask Betty Green to take over for that part.

• (1325)

**Ms. Betty Green (Past President, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association):** Thank you.

Since 1997, 32 elk and seven whitetail deer have tested positive for tuberculosis out of 7,134 samples that were collected. That's in about eight years. By comparison, in a four-year period, testing established in the Riding Mountain eradication area from the winter of 2002 on resulted in 106,000 head being tested and only five positive animals being brought forward. Clearly that identifies that the prevalence of the disease is in the wildlife.

There are many opinions about the best practices for managing wildlife in order to stem the spread of bovine tuberculosis.

A resolution passed at the MCPA annual general meeting in January 2003 advocates the complete removal of elk in Riding Mountain National Park area, replacing them with elk from a herd that's been proven to be TB-free. Further analysis is required to determine the cost of such a proposal and its effectiveness.

There have also been calls for the expanded use of methods that can help limit the contact between wildlife and domestic animals. These include the continued use of barrier fencing and fencing for feeding areas. Fencing has been considered one of the most effective controls.

The Manitoba Cattle Producers believe current population control methods, such as hunting and targeted removal of certain species, are helping to stem the spread of bovine tuberculosis. But there's always room for improvement. The standing committee has recommended

maintaining the elk population level in the Riding Mountain Park area at 2,500 elk. We certainly ask that this goal be continued.

It's also known that bovine tuberculosis infection rates are higher in some regions than in others. This must be addressed by the best means available. For example, the prevalence of TB is higher in the Birdtail Valley, and measures should be taken to deal with the challenge in that specific area. MCPA notes that if a cattle herd has one affected animal, the entire herd is eradicated. That's not the case with the wildlife. We believe a more balanced approach to managing the disease is important.

MCPA supports the use of movement studies of elk, but notes that more studies may be required. For example, the current elk movement studies do not reflect the possible effects of adverse winter conditions on the movement of elk from the park into outlying areas in search of food. We believe the research should continue regarding the movement of whitetail deer and the potential spread from that species.

Efforts to enhance the ecosystem in Riding Mountain National Park to better support wildlife should also be examined. For example, would additional controlled burns improve habitat and help prevent the elk straying from the park's boundaries?

From a long-term perspective, MCPA and producers alike are looking forward to the day when the Riding Mountain eradication area regains its TB-free status. However, MCPA recognizes that there will probably be a requirement for ongoing testing in that region. That may result in the use of sentinel herds to monitor the infection rate around the park.

MCPA and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association are examining the issue of indemnification for affected producers. Long-term producers participating in the testing process will be a key to ensuring that bovine tuberculosis is eradicated in all of Manitoba. We ask that the federal government give serious consideration to providing some kind of compensation to producers whose cattle are used in those sentinel herds.

The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association commends the staff from the various government agencies for their efforts in addressing this issue. We've come a long way, from pointing fingers and offering blame to working jointly towards finding a solution. However, let's remember that everyone, except the participating producers, is being paid to do his or her job. Significant government funds have been used and invested in monitoring and capturing wildlife to help eradicate the disease. However, we question whether the same type of investment has been offered to cattle producers who are doing their best to eradicate bovine tuberculosis and to address the challenge. Some additional assistance to the producers would be a clear signal that the government recognizes the importance of their ongoing contribution to eradicating the disease.

• (1330)

MCPA believes that cattle production is the friendliest type of agricultural activity in the ecosystem surrounding the Riding Mountain National Park. Parks Canada must be a good neighbour and do everything it can to eradicate the disease. Agricultural activities were in place before the park was established. Cattle producers must be recognized for their contribution in maintaining this ecosystem, which in turn benefits the wildlife in and around Riding Mountain National Park.

MCPA has spent a considerable amount of time meeting with producers who have been affected either by quarantines or by having their herds removed. During those meetings, while sitting at their kitchen tables, they all offered the same kind of input. They told us that they loved the area, that they'd chosen to live here or had lived here all their lives, and they also spoke affectionately about the wildlife. But the one graphic story they all told in their own way was about looking off the end of their porch as dusk set in and wondering what animal might stray into their herd overnight. Unlike a wolf that would perhaps take a calf and the next morning that was done, they were worried about the elk or the whitetail deer that could come in and affect one animal in their herd and then months or perhaps years later would result in their entire herd being destroyed.

In my mind, that offers a very clear example of the shadow that hangs over the producers in the area; it is one we can't put a price tag on.

Once again, the Manitoba Cattle Producers would like to thank the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for the opportunity to put forward our comments and concerns with respect to bovine tuberculosis. We look forward to your thoughtful consideration of our submission.

Thank you.

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

Now we move to Ms. Renske Kaastra.

**Mrs. Renske Kaastra (Chairperson, Parkland Producers Association):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak on the TB issue and for showing your commitment to improving the situation facing producers with this complicated and multi-faceted situation with domestic animals and wildlife.

The Parkland Producers Association was formed as a direct response to the creation of the zone around the Riding Mountain National Park, affecting about 600 livestock producers.

These producers have changed their farming methods to limit the exposure to contracting TB. Hay bales are moved sooner off the fields and stored in fenced areas, where these are available. Salt blocks are placed so as not to attract wildlife; by this I mean you don't have them lying out there all the time. The cattle don't need the salt all the time, so when cattle don't use them, the wildlife would not take them. And if your herd is in a place where you know there are elk, you would not give the herd salt at that time but when they are on a different field.

To prevent intermingling with the wildlife, producers can no longer use swath grazing methods, stockpiling, and other methods of extending the grazing season.

The TB testing of the herds by CFIA has added another dimension to the already heavy workload and stress of producers. The farm facilities and working chutes in many cases were upgraded at the farmers' expense. Producers had to take time off from their work, and extra time and feed for cattle was used to facilitate the testing.

Mr. Amundson this morning said there was less handling of the cattle because of the Bovigam test. It's only for those that test positive that there's less handling; the initial test is still the same as with the other testing.

As you can see, life has changed dramatically at the expense of the producers—not to mention the stress and hardship when faced with herds being quarantined—and the list goes on and on. Livestock injuries, abortions, and even fatalities occurred during or because of the testing.

Knowing that the TB issue will not be resolved soon and will have to be monitored for an unknown period, it is frustrating that compensation for producers is not in place, first of all for the testing of the herds. We recommend there be a handling fee for animals tested to compensate for facility use, producers' time, and feed for animals.

Secondly, for the quarantine of herds, a formula for compensation should be applied, at the minimum for out-of-pocket expenses. Past experience shows that dozens of herds were quarantined unnecessarily because of the interpretation of the blood test used—one could also call it an experimentation. We are very grateful that the test was changed and this did not repeat itself.

Thirdly, for the higher-value animals, a system should be in place to compensate producers for high-value animals identified beforehand that have to be eliminated. With some imagination, if one did have a very high-value animal, maybe it could be quarantined separately and still be used for its usefulness and be separated from other animals. One could start thinking outside the box.

These are some of the issues that could be alleviated through compensation. There are others that are complicated and cumbersome to calculate—just to mention one, the stigma to the purebred industry in the zone. One would expect at first glance that it is a plus point to have a TB-free certified herd selling purebred animals; however, this is not the case, because buyers are quite aware of becoming a victim in a future trace-back situation, placing their reputations at risk.

I do not want to repeat much of what has already been said. But one thing that has not been mentioned is that since there are so many different parts of government, provincial and federal, and different groups involved, would it be possible—I think it would be important—to have one person in the federal government responsible for the TB portfolio? Too much time is lost explaining and educating civil servants of different departments with changing staff, and many a time one is running around in circles and getting nowhere.

Producers in the zone have sacrificed much for the good of the industry, especially in Manitoba, and have received nothing; therefore, retroactive compensation should be forthcoming.

• (1335)

We fully support the fencing of hay storage facilities program and the proposed expansion to include fenced winter feeding areas in critical wildlife zones. The amount of research done and published was much needed, and should continue, as it would help us make the right decisions in dealing with all aspects of wildlife management in or out of the park, including hunting practices. Matching the elk numbers within the park with habitat through burning practices or other means should continue.

No one today has mentioned the beaver work, so I will. Beavers plug up many streams and create lakes, and many a pasture has been lost because of that.

Monitoring wildlife, especially the elk, for diseases has been quite an undertaking and is commendable. Improvements have been made constantly, as some mistakes have been made and learned from along the way.

Thinking outside the box, for example, in the hot spots, maybe we should keep fewer cattle and have an enhanced program for other farming practices such as forestry. As chair of a conservation group, I do stress that this area has to be kept in permanent cover and not go into cropping.

The TB will remain a long-term issue around the park, and improvements have to be made to the cattle testing program. It was good to hear this morning that there may be a test in the future where all we have to do is get one blood sample. With all the preventive measures coming into place, infection should be minimized to the domestic animals, but it will not be eliminated until the source or sources are fully understood. To continue to support the producers, it is important to take their needs into consideration.

Thank you.

• (1340)

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

We now move to Mr. Dubois. I believe you are the one who's going to be speaking, or is it Mr. Rebizant?

**Mr. Jack Dubois (Director, Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection, Manitoba Conservation):** I am going to be speaking, Mr. Chairman, but if there are any difficult questions, Ken will be answering them. He's the hands-on manager of the program for our branch in our department.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present to the committee today. Like Dr. Preston, on behalf of my minister, Stan Struthers, I'd like to welcome you here. Minister Struthers is not only the Minister of Conservation for Manitoba, but he happens to be the member of the legislative assembly for Dauphin-Roblin, so he has a particular interest in the situation here—a very keen interest—and I'm sure he would welcome you and be here himself had he not been obliged to be at the annual joint ministers meeting in Saskatchewan this week. It's the same with our deputy minister, Mr. Don Potter, and our assistant deputy minister, Dave Wotton. They are all obliged to be there. I am going to be speaking to you on behalf of the branch and department.

As you've heard from our partners in the task group, we have been one of the responsible agencies of legal responsibility and authority in this area. We've been part of the task group since day one, and as others have said, it's been a unique experience and very instructive. We've come a long way in terms of cooperation, understanding, and respect for each other's mandates and for the ability to work together on a common cause. I think this has definitely been one of the positive outcomes of this bad situation, our being brought together.

We share the goals of the group that have been articulated many times in many fora: the eradication of bovine tuberculosis from the Riding Mountain ecosystem continues to be our vision; the achievement of TB-free status in cattle and the eradication of TB in wildlife that poses threats to cattle; the minimizing of interactions between cattle and wildlife and among species of concern in wildlife; and the minimizing of unnatural herding in cervids due to, for example, feeding and baiting.

You've heard of the programs that are under way—and I won't go into a great deal of detail, but I'll touch on the highlights—the barrier fencing, a program we have been financing and operating on behalf of the Government of Manitoba. You've heard there are 102 fences of hay yards in place. The intent is to put 30 more in place. That's from efforts both by the province and by Parks Canada this year. In the package of material we handed out to you there's a map showing the existing—

• (1345)

**The Chair:** I must tell you it has not been distributed because we have to have it translated in both languages to put it on the table, and unfortunately it wasn't received in time for translation to take place. I believe it would be the intent of the clerk to have it translated and for the members who have not received it to receive it, particularly our friend from Quebec.

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** I apologize for that. We gave it to our translation service but they were unable to meet the deadline.

The other program that is within our bailiwick, one we've been working very hard on, is trying to put a stop to illegal baiting and feeding of the species of concern in the area. We've had some considerable success, as Mr. Brook indicated this morning from his perspective as a researcher who does a lot of flying over the area. There always seem to be people who, despite all of the communications and public education that have gone on about the critical role of unnatural aggregations of animals in spreading the disease, continue for whatever reason to flout the law. We are actively doing enforcement, and we're at \$3,000 in fines so far this year for people who have chosen to flout the law.

We're also in the process of amending our act to extend the feeding and baiting provisions to the game-hunting areas around Duck Mountain. As you've heard, there is some concern that there's a shared elk herd and there's a possibility of the disease being present, albeit at low levels. We're amending our legislation to look after that, and we expect those regulations to be amended prior to the onset of the major hunting seasons this fall.

In terms of population management, you've heard the goal of maintaining the elk herd at 2,500 has been achieved over a fairly short period of time. It is our intent to cooperate with Parks Canada and others to maintain the elk population at that level. Last year we spent \$80,000 on an aerial survey of the Duck Mountain area. The Parks Canada agency looks after annual surveys of Riding Mountain, so we have a very good handle on the population numbers, which allows us to do the science and look at the prevalence rates, the sampling regimes that are needed, etc. This coming winter we will be spending an additional \$60,000 doing an aerial survey of deer in the Duck Mountain region for the same purposes.

You've heard about the tissue sample programs that have been going on in addition to the live capture of elk and deer. Most of the samples you heard about, over 7,000 samples, have been collected over the past several years...5,400 by my reckoning, not counting this past year. Most of those in fact were achieved by a system we put in place that makes it compulsory for hunters who take elk in this area to submit the head and lung tissue samples to the lab at Riding Mountain for preliminary examination and then for subsequent testing, should it be warranted, through CFIA. Over 2,000 deer samples and over 2,500 elk samples have been tested to date.

Again, this is a program that relies on the goodwill of the hunters to provide those samples, and we've been very pleased with the cooperation of hunters and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation in ensuring the word has gotten out. They are enthusiastic participants in providing those samples to the program, so we can say we are getting a good number of samples and our surveillance regime is up to snuff.

When you get your package, you'll see there are maps showing the distribution of the samples that have been taken. They surround, particularly for deer, both the Duck Mountain and the Riding Mountain areas. We think we're getting good coverage of samples numerically, statistically, and geographically for the areas, and at the advice of the science advisory committee last year and this year we have enhanced our number of check stations and our total efforts to increase the number of samples and the quality of the samples turned in.

●(1350)

The total program this year is over 280,000 direct dollars plus several staff years in the department on just this program alone. In fact, the bovine TB program gets more resources than virtually any other single program in the wildlife branch, so that gives you an idea of the order of importance we place on this issue, despite the fact that in the long run bovine tuberculosis is not a wildlife issue per se; it's a cattle issue. We are part of the Government of Manitoba and we have a concern for the cattle industry, obviously. As I said, we are putting more resources into this file than into virtually any other program area of the wildlife branch.

I think you've heard about the research activities. We're continuing the elk movement study, expanding it from the Riding Mountain area to the Duck Mountain area, and it's the same with the whitetail deer study. As to public education and communication, our staff are active participants in all of the committees that appeared in front of you, the liaison committee and the advisory committee; our staff attend every single meeting. We communicate regularly and often. We communicate publicly and we communicate with every single hunter who draws an elk licence, for example, in writing more than once per year. We show up at the winter fairs and the agricultural fairs in this part of the province to exchange information and to provide information to anyone who talks to us. So we have made a concerted effort; communication is a very important part of our program.

What have we learned over the past five years? In terms of wildlife, we've learned there is a low-level prevalence in elk. There's an even lower prevalence in deer, and it seems to be concentrated geographically on the west side of the area, as you've heard, in the Birdtail Valley. We've learned there is limited movement of elk between the Riding Mountain area and the Duck Mountain area, and that disease is likely spread where cattle and elk and deer are in close contact in hay yards and at the illegal baiting and feeding sites. We're using all this information to concentrate our program activities.

The main thrust of what we can do with our repertoire of activities we regulate has to do with regulating hunting, regulating illegal baiting and feeding, and encouraging such things as hunters providing tissue samples over a wide area so we can put the science to work here and get on top of this disease.

I think I'll stop there.

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

Now we move to the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba and Mr. Jim Wade.

**Mr. Jim Wade (General Manager, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do apologize for being as tardy as we were. Honestly, we read the agenda backwards. We started off reading where panel III started and the times were from 3 to 3:30, so we thought we were early, and we apologize for that.

**The Chair:** I should point out to you that your presentation hasn't been translated; therefore, it's not on the table. We can't distribute anything unless we have it in both languages. Your copy will be translated at some point and distributed to all the members, but it is a policy we have. It wasn't received in time for translation; therefore, it's not going to be on the table. You'll have to speak to us from what you have, and we will have to make notes.

●(1355)

**Mr. Jim Wade:** Again, Mr. Chairman, it's unfortunate that it wasn't translated, because I did send it, about three weeks ago. Anyway, if it hasn't been translated, I'll certainly live with the policy. That's no problem. I will speak slowly so that the translators can do the job that's necessary.

The Dairy Farmers of Manitoba is a dairy farmer organization and is 100% financed and directed by dairy farmers.

Under the Farm Products Marketing Act, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba is charged with the responsibility of marketing all of the raw milk produced in Manitoba, and among other things, is granted the following authority:

Paragraph 11(4)(g) states that we are to

establish or assist in the establishment of programs for the prevention or control of diseases that may impact on the production of milk, and provide assistance to the owner of any animal quarantined, treated, destroyed or disposed of in the interest of producers or in the public interest;

So we have a direct interest, not just because we represent dairy farmers, but we are legislated to have this authority to actually be directly involved in the matter surrounding bovine tuberculosis, the eradication program, and the monitoring program.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba has followed the bovine tuberculosis issue in the Riding Mountain eradication area since it was identified as such by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. There have been regular meetings called by CFIA to report on test results and plans for the testing season to come. As late as September 21, 2005, Dr. Maria Koller-Jones met with the Manitoba industry to review the 2005-06 testing year plan.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba raised several important issues with CFIA in 2003, 2004, and 2005 regarding the following.

First, in meetings and correspondence, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba has challenged CFIA's choice of the Bovigam test procedure.

Second, in meetings and correspondence, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba requested a complete explanation on why the Bovigam is not in use in other parts of Manitoba and in other parts of Canada. It is only used in the Riding Mountain eradication area.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba challenged the sensitivity of the Bovigam test procedure. The test frequently shows false positives. CFIA stated that this is an eradication program, not a monitoring program. CFIA also stated, and this is a direct quote from Dr. Maria Koller-Jones, "Bovigam will result in more animals being slaughtered than are necessary," and in another quote, "Bovigam picks animals that are not infected". The whole purpose of the Riding Mountain eradication area is eradication, not monitoring.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba has requested that the Bovigam test be discontinued and that the Riding Mountain eradication area cattle,

cervids, and bison be tested with the same comparative cervical test that is used in all other areas of Canada.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba has challenged the compensation paid for exceptional animals and has written to the president of CFIA regarding the need for changes to the Health of Animals Act to compensate for exceptional animals in dairy and beef breeds and for lost milk income.

Dairy farms are financed on the basis of their monthly income-earning capacity for milk and cattle sales. Milk income represents 85% to 95% of the total dairy farm income. If a dairy herd is depopulated, milk income ceases for a period of several months.

●(1400)

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba request that lost milk sales be included in the compensation package. It is not in the compensation package at the moment.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba request that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food investigate what progress has been made on these five issues. We have had no response from the CFIA regarding changes to compensation, and it has been six months since our recommendations were submitted. We received confirmation that they received our recommendations, but we have heard nothing since then.

There is no other eradication area in Canada subject to the intensive testing with an ultra-sensitive test, the Bovigam. We ask what the CFIA has done to support cattle, cervid, and bison producers in the Riding Mountain eradication area. The response we get in all cases is standing policy for normal monitoring programs. Unfortunately, that's not sufficient, not in an eradication program.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba request that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food investigate the CFIA procedures in the Riding Mountain eradication area and provide Dairy Farmers of Manitoba with a report on the issues raised above.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your time.

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

Now we'll move to questions.

Mr. Mark is first, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank our witnesses for being here.

It's pretty obvious that testing and compensation are the two main points with which there's no agreement. Perhaps the way to deal with Mr. Wade's indication that you have no response is to actually have the cow producers and the dairy producers meet with the CFIA—I mean just down the road, in the short future—and work this out. We're glad you're here to tell us about it, but now someone has to deal with the questions you raise. Our job is to take information, on behalf of the committee, back to Ottawa—and it will be; it's recorded.

Do you think that's a good approach—for the cow industry to sit down with the CFIA and work something out on both testing and compensation?

**The Chair:** Mr. Wade.

**Mr. Jim Wade:** Mr. Chairman, thank you.

We have had regular meetings with the CFIA, both the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and ourselves, jointly and separately, on a number of occasions in the last three years.

I want to back up one step, Mr. Chairman, and point out the work being done by all concerned is enormous. We certainly appreciate the fact that all of these resources are being thrown at an issue that is of really huge economic importance to Canada's livestock industry. It's not a small thing.

As Jack pointed out earlier, the work they have done has brought enormous amounts of new work to the work that the conservation folks have been involved in. It has also created a huge amount of cost and added work for farmers; there's no question.

Should we sit down again with the CFIA? We're prepared to do that, provided the CFIA is prepared to come to a meeting and talk about how we can improve things. There are five or six items there in our list that really have not been dealt with yet. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, the way to sum it up is that we have, in the dairy industry, a heavily capital-intensive industry. If this exceptional scrutiny is going to create exceptional conditions, then we need some exceptional treatment under the act to make sure that farmers are dealt with fairly. Fairness and equity are all we're after.

Certainly we're prepared to meet with the CFIA at any time anyhow, and have done so in the past.

• (1405)

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I'm glad to hear that, and you always have the option of informing the committee of a meeting that's taking place. You always have that option.

My other comment actually was in reference to what Jack just stated. He said that bovine TB is a cattle problem. I think it's much more than that. It's really a community problem. And my criticism of the province, as I said this morning, is that it's not so much what little they've done—they've done fencing, the hunter program, the collection program—but when it comes to surveillance, they're really short on...perhaps it's money, and they don't have the money in their budget. But when you look at the surveillance that takes place through the federal system...and when you look at the animals, most of them are outside the park—you know that—they are in the provincial park, both elk and deer.

So given the problems we have, that's why I asked the question, why has it taken all these years before you started to collar a few elk this summer and then do some surveillance?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** The elk collaring started in 2001, provincially. As Ryan said, his project started in 2001, and those elk spend more than 50% of their time outside the park. So we were supporters of and participants in that study, and we all share the results.

In terms of the adequacy of the surveillance, as you heard this morning from the chair, we participate in the science advisory

committee and we take their advice. We seek out the best veterinary medicine, the best wildlife disease information from across North America and around the world, and we design our program around that, including the sampling regimes of the surveillance we use.

If there is a better way or other methods that could be used, we haven't discovered it in utilizing the best brains of the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre out of the University of Saskatchewan veterinary college, for example, and Parks Canada's experts, and Paul, and everybody else. So if you know of better surveillance methods or inadequacies in the statistical methods that we and our colleagues from CFIA and others are using to address the problem, we'd be glad to consider those and incorporate them into our programs.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Maybe to put it more bluntly, how much money does the province spend on surveillance of both deer and elk?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** The province spent \$280,000 this year.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ken Rebizant (Big Game Manager, Manitoba Conservation):** I would like to add to that. We were made aware of the number of animals, the sampling targets we have to have in whitetail deer. We actively changed our surveillance program, and we tried to achieve not only the target number of animals for whitetail deer that were needed, but also we improved the quality of the samples that were coming in. With the great support of hunters, we exceeded our target levels last year, both for the Duck Mountain and the Riding Mountain area, and I think we've come a long way in our surveillance program.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have heard very interesting and relevant testimonies since this morning. We have heard testimony from the agricultural producers, Ms. Green, Mr. Finney, Ms. Kaastra and Mr. Wade. The cattle producers have also testified. This is the testimony that has touched me the most because in the end, you are the ones who will have to foot the bill. Moreover, I have the sense that this testimony comes from the people who are the real experts in this matter. You are on the ground, you know exactly what is going on, and you have experienced all of these problems. This is why I feel it is very important that the committee listen attentively to what it is you have to say.

Since this morning, I have heard that the compensation has been inadequate. and I agree entirely with that. I cannot speak for my colleagues. I know that in April 2003 — I was not there — the Standing committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food published a report in which there were three very clear recommendations on the subject, and they were not accepted by the government. This is to say that the committee heard you. We hear you this morning.

Are you giving us a mandate to go back to the government, particularly as concerns amendments to the Health of Animals Act, so that there will finally be fair and equitable compensation?

It was said earlier that the CFIA shares the responsibility. What I cannot agree with is the way in which you have had to share the responsibility because of all the efforts you must make, the work that you are doing and the sacrifices you must make. If you have to dig into your own pockets to share this responsibility on top of everything else, I have a real problem with that.

If you are giving us the mandate to go back to the government, you can count on me to do so. However, I would like to hear your comments on the subject.

• (1410)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Wade.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jim Wade:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to answer in Mr. Bellavance's language.

There are two main things to consider. We have had no response whatsoever from the CFIA concerning compensation for high-valued animals nor on the issue of lost milk income. Those are two points. Up until now, the president of the CFIA has not told us anything, and we need your help. That door is wide open.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Green.

**Ms. Betty Green:** I too would like to comment. We've been working on this issue. I myself have been working on this issue for over six years, trying to ensure that the impact on producers is understood. While everyone seems to appreciate that there's an enormous cost to the producers, we've had difficulty finding someone who's willing to address that issue by putting some dollars forward. The CFIA says it's not within their mandate, and I trust that it is not, but maybe that has to change—or perhaps there's another department within both the federal and the provincial governments that should step to the plate.

The cattle producers themselves are looking at ways we can share in that indemnification to producers, who are going to face this on an ongoing basis; it's not just until we regain TB freedom, and that's where this departs quite significantly from any other situation. Normally, if there's an infected herd, the herd is removed, the rest of the producers in a radius around that farm are tested, and it's done, but in this particular case, it goes on for years and years. So I think we all have to go to our respective agencies or government departments and lobby for some support for the producers, who really have shouldered the lion's share here.

**The Chair:** In fairness to the CFIA and in fairness to the government, under the animal health act there is no mandate for compensation in the areas you're talking about. There needs to be a change in government legislation for this to occur. So if there are changes to happen, rather than finger pointing at the CFIA—and even at the government, for that matter—we as a committee have to reference those changes and, through the minister, have acts changed. That's the only way it will happen. They're not abdicating their responsibilities.

For the clarity of those around the table, this is where it's at.

**Ms. Betty Green:** I just want to reiterate that certainly we understand that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wade, I'm not taking away from your time; I just want clarity here, so that we understand.

**Mr. Jim Wade:** One more point to add, Mr. Chairman, is that the past president of the CFIA did actually put in motion a complete review of the Health of Animals Act and the compensation packages out there for all species. This was brought about by the avian influenza of last year and a number of other things that have transpired.

Now the problem is that things are moving very slowly. We have not heard anything for six months. We need someone to champion this issue for us, so that we know what's happening and where it's going.

• (1415)

**The Chair:** Carry on, Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I believe we will continue our work. We will support you in that regard. We do not need to reinvent the wheel, because there was already a clear recommendation that seems quite fair. We need to raise this again so that the government will move.

Do you not find it ironic that in the case of the mad cow crisis, the government refused to impose zoning in Alberta, whereas since this morning, I have been hearing testimony to the effect that you are experiencing a highly regionalized situation, that is to say that you are the only ones suffering the consequences of it?

I am not saying that we should not support agricultural producers like those in Alberta who had to deal with problems attributable to the mad cow crisis. On the contrary, we should support them, help them and back them up. However, all of Canada was affected by the mad cow crisis, and I heard a great deal about it in Quebec because I was working on the issue. In the particular case of tuberculosis, it is happening in your area, and it does not go beyond that.

How can you explain that the government acts one way in the case of bovine tuberculosis, and acted in another as far as the mad cow crisis was concerned?

[English]

**Ms. Betty Green:** Perhaps we should leave that to the CFIA, but certainly the explanation we've been provided with is, of course, that they are two completely different diseases. In the case of BSE, because the incubation period is so long—it can be a decade—and the movement of cattle... It's very difficult to isolate the animals that may have been infected, so for that reason zoning was deemed to be inappropriate for BSE, whereas in this particular case, we seem to be able to isolate the disease in an eradication area, as we've identified here.

**The Chair:** Your time has expired, but just for your information, the standing committee has mandated itself to meet with the new CFIA president in the very near future—in fact, it's on our agenda between now and Christmas—so that's being dealt with.

Mrs. Ur is next.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I too wish to thank everyone for presenting this afternoon.

I have a couple of quick questions. Ms. Kaastra, is your association, the parkland association, part of the larger association—the Riding Mountain Regional Liaison Committee? Why are you a different group?

**Mrs. Renske Kaastra:** No. We are a group of cow producers who found in the beginning, when we were put into this zone, that we were not well represented and taken care of, so we organized meetings ourselves and made presentations ourselves; we work together with MCPA. We put up a survey ourselves to find out the true costs to the producers for going through this testing, and since then we have worked with MCPA together on the issue.

There were definitely producers who found they had been left out in the cold and wanted to start their own group.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Are there any other groups, or are you the only other—

**Mrs. Renske Kaastra:** We also always have representatives on the stakeholders committee, and we have our input there.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Mr. Dubois, you indicated the cause of this is the cattle industry, not the wildlife out there, so I'm just going to get clarification here. You made that statement, but in the printed statement—

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** I'm sorry, could I clarify? I didn't say anything about cause. What I said was in terms of impact; bovine tuberculosis does not have a long-term impact on wildlife populations. It's not a long-term concern for wildlife per se. It will die out. It doesn't affect the sustainability of wildlife populations.

Therefore, the concern of the Government of Manitoba is regarding the impact on the cattle industry. That's what I said.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Okay. I wondered about that, because there was totally different information provided by the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, and I saw a few heads shake when you made that statement.

Also, with Manitoba—

• (1420)

**The Chair:** I think Mr. Rebizant wants to respond to that question.

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** Can I just add to that? If in fact the impact on the cattle industry wasn't as significant as it is, we wouldn't be contributing significant resources to this issue. I guess that better addresses your question. Because we realize the fact that it does impact the cattle producers in the area, we are contributing significant resources to try to eradicate or control the disease.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Say you're contributing  $x$  number of dollars. With the fencing issue, is it a split down the middle with federal and provincial funding?

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** No, not quite.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Who pays what percentage, roughly?

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** I believe this year, in combination, we have plans to erect 30 fences.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Yes, I heard that, but what is the percentage?

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** I'm getting to that. Of those 30 fences, 15 are funded by the federal government and 15 are funded by the provincial government, of which we cost share not quite equally with our counterparts in Manitoba Ag and Food. We're contributing about \$30,000 towards those efforts this year.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Okay.

You had indicated that you're improving legislation on illegal baiting. What is the present punishment: fines, dollars?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** I'm not sure. Enforcement isn't part of my responsibility. Policy and legislation is what we do. So I'm not exactly sure of the details of the fines and penalties, except to say that they're there and we are more actively enforcing them. In fact, out of our program budget, we are augmenting enforcement patrols to step up the level of enforcement.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Maybe when you go back you can get that information and provide it to the committee. It might be helpful.

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** We will.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** This morning, too, we heard from Maria Koller-Jones regarding the blood testing, and she spoke about it a little differently than you did, Mr. Wade. So what is the difference? She spoke quite highly...

The Manitoba Cattle Association had indicated that 80 head of cattle were removed by the use of this test, and none of them produced a positive culture for bovine TB. How can we have a veterinarian out there saying it's really, really good and then the cattle group giving different indications? Can you explain that?

**Mr. Jim Wade:** I think a statement in our document says it is very sensitive. This is not a surveillance test. It's an eradication program that we're involved in. With the eradication program Dr. Maria Koller-Jones has chosen, the science behind it is excellent—there's no question about that—but it is an ultra-sensitive test. Many false positives come up on this test, which result, as the cattle producers mentioned and as we have experienced on the dairy side as well, in cattle slaughtered that were perfectly healthy and had no active TB, no hint of TB, other than what showed up on the Bovigam.

Valuable animals are being destroyed for an eradication program. It's a significant difference with a monitoring program.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Can I ask a question that's a little bit different from the subject matter?

What happens to an animal that's not positive, once it's slaughtered? Does it get incinerated like all the rest?

**Mr. Jim Wade:** No, the meat is used for human consumption, and that's another indication where we have a goofy program. Producers are really confused with this. Their animal is destroyed, and yes, they're compensated and that's fine, but the meat is used.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** That's interesting.

Do you know or do you have any idea why this is only being used in the Riding Mountain National Park area?

**Mr. Jim Wade:** The Riding Mountain eradication zone is an eradication zone. It's different from anywhere else in Canada, and yet producers are not being compensated any differently from anywhere else in Canada. That's the issue.

The thing that goes along with this is the frequency of testing and the depth of testing that is happening. We're seeing producers having to gather up their cattle repeatedly throughout the year. All of that extra work is not recognized by anyone.

•(1425)

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

There is a little confusion here. The ultimate goal in any of these programs is eradication. I believe that's the ultimate goal. That's the optimum. But to do that, there has to be surveillance or monitoring. You tried to separate the two, and I don't think you can do that. That's an observation that perhaps you can think about and give a response to later on.

We'll go to the next questioner, to Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** First of all, Mr. Chair, I want to clarify this whole issue of compensation and how this has all come to light. This committee has worked hard at trying to expand compensation under the animal health act and to recognize the efforts producers undertake in presenting their herds and the extra costs that are associated with them. This committee did make a recommendation to the Minister of Agriculture in 2003 to amend the Health of Animals Act, and that wasn't done. It's just something that we'd better keep in mind, that it's the minister's responsibility and it's the minister who hasn't done it. That's where those discussions need to take place.

I know that the Bovigam test is becoming a greater and greater irritant for producers, especially when we're getting such a high level of false positives. That is in the purview of CFIA. The president of CFIA can make a decision at any point in time on what testing protocols they put in place and what techniques they use. You're saying that from an industry standpoint you're getting very poor feedback from CFIA on the reasoning behind the implementation of Bovigam in this specific area and the excess false positives we're getting?

**Mr. Bill Finney:** We're not complaining about that. We have been informed by CFIA on that. We're saying it's the producers themselves who aren't informed properly.

I forget the second part of your question.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Overall, is the high level of false positives acceptable to the industry? Or should we just be going back, as Jim had suggested, to the cervical?

**Mr. Bill Finney:** We aren't scientists, so we can't tell you that the Bovigam blood test is not useful. It may be detecting early cases of the disease. What we're saying is that producers aren't being compensated for certain animals that are of high value, and they're also not being compensated for all the time they put into this process.

**Mr. James Bezan:** So you're suggesting that if there is proper compensation, this wouldn't be that much of an issue.

**Mr. Bill Finney:** It would be less of an issue.

**Ms. Betty Green:** Perhaps I could just add that there are really two parts to the Bovigam. The year the test was introduced, it was introduced at a high level of sensitivity, which resulted in the huge number of positives of animals in terms of the test. The second year, the sensitivity was reset. We lobbied for that, but I'm not sure whether that had any influence or not. We're certainly more comfortable with the sensitivity as it's being used now. It's now equal or similar to the sensitivity used by the United States, and that was our argument: let's set it at a level where it's acceptable, but not resulting in enormous numbers of positive animals being destroyed.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Dubois, I want to go back to your comment that this is a cattle industry problem more so than a wildlife problem. Who's the custodian of the wild ungulates outside of the park?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** We have responsibility for them under the Wildlife Act of the Province of Manitoba.

**Mr. James Bezan:** And that includes the health of those ungulates?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** All aspects of their history.

**Mr. James Bezan:** We've had this hot spot of TB activity in Manitoba around Riding Mountain National Park, and ungulates have been entering into the farming areas. The disease keeps popping up, and I would say that its vector exists in—or the reservoir is—the wild herd, not the domestic herd. Therefore, the people who are the custodians of those animals are responsible for getting this problem corrected.

We're talking about a herd not only in Riding Mountain; you've also got the responsibility of the herd that exists up at Duck Mountain. There's migration of the animals between, and there's migration south towards Spruce Woods. You've got to be concerned about that herd as well. You've got a huge elk herd now existing on private lands across the Interlake. Are you taking any measure to make sure those herds are clean?

•(1430)

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** No, we're not surveying those herds at the moment.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Even with hunter sampling or anything like that, there hasn't been a request?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** No.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I know from a cattle producer's standpoint, I'd feel a lot more comfortable if there was an expansion of that program. There's no consideration of going down that path?

**Mr. Jack Dubois:** Not at the moment. We're hard pressed to muster enough resources to deal with where the disease already exists, let alone putting a province-wide surveillance program in areas where the disease doesn't exist. As in all government issues, resources are a concern. We would like to use our resources where the fire is burning, rather than looking for fires elsewhere.

**The Chair:** Mr. Rebizant.

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** I'd like to add to that. One of the things that has happened because of the bovine TB issue in the Riding Mountain area is that disease issues in wildlife in general are getting a lot of press. The public and hunters now are definitely more aware of the existence of diseases. I would hazard a guess that if in fact hunters in the Interlake come across something that looks unusual in a particular animal they've harvested, they're now more apt to report that directly to the conservation officers, and we'd be able to find out about that a lot quicker.

We've produced a brochure. We pass out the brochure on bovine TB programming to hunters. We've put it in our hunting guide that is passed out to every hunter about the presence of bovine TB. It indicates what hunters can do to contribute to the programming. My sense is that there is a greater awareness now by the public, as well as by hunters themselves, about diseases in general. If the disease was at any kind of significant prevalence rate in either of those herds, either in the Interlake area or the Spruce Woods area, we would have heard of it by now.

**Mr. James Bezan:** From the producer's standpoint, we're talking about the overall program and presentation of animals. Has the relationship between those who are doing the testing—they're coming out from the government side, and the work being done with producers...nobody has really commented on how well that's going. What type of cooperation are the inspectors receiving? What type of professionalism are the inspectors showing the producers? Are they being timely in getting out to test animals before cattle have to go to market? Could you comment on that?

**Mrs. Renske Kaastra:** So far, it's the individual producer's own way of looking at things. There have been some cases where people have flatly refused until they were threatened with court cases, etc. In the end, you have to submit to testing.

Personally, when our herds are tested—we have quite a few cattle, and it's just my husband and myself—they come out with four people, which is great. There is no problem with that, as long as your facilities are adequate. Usually you do not have to do your whole herd in one shot; you do it in parts. Now you have to do the whole herd again in 48 hours. So from a personal point of view, our working relationship with the people, who are quite often neighbour boys who have been trained to do it, has been excellent. I can't complain about that.

• (1435)

**The Chair:** Mr. Finney, I think you had something.

**Mr. Bill Finney:** Yes. I don't think we've heard too many complaints about the actual staff who come out. They've been fairly happy with the staff. I think the staff themselves would be happy to see some of these changes, such as abortions and injuries being covered and producer time being reimbursed. It would make their job a lot easier, and they've told me that.

I don't think there's been a problem with the people on the ground. It's the way the overall situation is handled from the top down.

**The Chair:** Ms. Green.

**Ms. Betty Green:** I would concur. Certainly the information that we're receiving from the CFIA staff is that they appreciate very much the support they're getting from the producers. You heard that yourself this morning.

But likewise from the producers; they appreciate the information they're getting and the opportunity they have in terms of flexibility on when they test. The one caveat is that producers will often say to us that they get the information, but until they get into the testing, they don't fully understand the repercussions. Sometimes, even if they've been told once, they have to phone and ask again, to understand the full impact of the testing, or the quarantines, or so forth. One of the things that we've tried to encourage CFIA to do is put as much communication out there for them in the form of question and answer sheets and information, both before the CFIA staff present themselves and during the testing itself.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Ur.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Ms. Kaastra, just one quick question. You had mentioned in your presentation the amount of discussion that has actually taken place on the fact that perhaps there should be less cattle in hot spots. I found that an interesting statement. How much time has been really spent on that discussion?

**Mrs. Renske Kaastra:** Not much yet. I'm trying to initiate that, to get government to help facilitate a change. I mean, the reason we're into many of these problems is that we have to have more and more animals to keep our standard of living and to cover our expenses. When we came to Canada in 1979, if you had a herd of 80 cows you'd be doing great. Now we're looking at 200. It doesn't make sense any more. It doesn't make sense to go to 300; we're going to kill ourselves working.

If the wildlife source remains, maybe we should look at eliminating the chance of cattle getting infected by having less cattle in, for example, the Brookdale Valley. Set up a program for those producers who are willing to participate to try something else. There are programs for woodlot management, etc. It's a long-term thing, and there's no money up front, or not much, not worth making a change for, although it could be possible.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're almost out of time, Mr. Mark, but I'll allow you one question.

Before we get to that, this morning there was a figure used of \$15 an animal. Is that a reasonable dollar value in terms of the effort put into it and the cost of testing an animal? There are other mitigating costs, I suppose, but in terms of doing an animal testing program on a farm, is \$15 something that is reasonable? We don't want to hold anyone to this, but we have to have some sense of where you people are coming from.

**Mr. Bill Finney:** We take our policy from resolutions from our membership. Our most recent resolution, at the 2004 annual meeting of MCPA, was that producers who participate in TB testing be paid a fee of \$5 per head each time their cattle must be handled by CFIA. For TB purposes that's \$10, because you go through the chute twice. That was unanimously supported at our annual meeting.

**The Chair:** On the other side of things, on the compensation for the higher-value animals, if we go down this road, where are you thinking we should be going?

Yes, Ms. Green.

**Ms. Betty Green:** We've had a considerable amount of discussion around this. Certainly there are purebred animals and exceptional animals that need to be considered. In most cases there would be documentation to validate the value of that animal. We feel that the information could be provided in advance of testing so that it's on the record that those animals are going to be worth that amount should they have to be destroyed.

•(1440)

**The Chair:** The amount of \$1 million was put on the table this morning. You know that isn't going to happen. Now, if an animal was bought at \$1 million, is it the government's responsibility to make sure that...? Because you couldn't buy insurance for that animal for \$1 million.

I'm just using that number because it was used this morning.

**Ms. Betty Green:** That's right, and that's an exceptional case. In most cases, animals can be insured for their value, and that would be the value that we believe the farmer should be compensated. I have to say too, in discussion with CFIA, they've been accommodating in acknowledging that if an exceptional animal is going to have to be destroyed, there may be an option to retain that animal in quarantine for a time period so that you can collect semen or use some of their reproductive value for a period of time to mitigate some of that loss.

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

**Mr. Jim Wade:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Likewise, we've had similar sorts of discussions with Dr. Koller-Jones. As a matter of fact, about a year ago now, we had a similar discussion with a group of almost twenty or more veterinarians under Dr. Koller-Jones' supervision. Basically, what we came up with was a number of principles that needed to be covered by her in an exceptional animal program. We've already submitted that to CFIA, and that's one of the issues that has still not been resolved.

There's another issue for dairymen, Mr. Chairman. Every time you rotate animals in and out of a squeeze to do the testing, production goes down. It's important to note that production goes down significantly. We're estimating—based on some of the experiences we've had in this zone and elsewhere in Manitoba—that the monthly production from a dairy farm that has to go through a double testing of this kind is anywhere from 5% to 7% for the whole month. In this day and age of very narrow margins, Mr. Chairman, that's basically everything gone for the month.

The milk income issue has to be dealt with in a different way—or dealt with, period—by the Health of Animals Act. The Health of Animals Act is the responsibility of CFIA to amend and adjust and change, and with a little bit more pressure, perhaps we can get some

of that stuff going. But as far as we're concerned, we have some principles already on the table for the exceptional animal thing.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I have just one last question for Manitoba Conservation. The question is about deer, because deer are a popular game animal, plus they are very numerous in the province. We know there's TB in the species, and that's predominantly the mandate of the province. What plans do you have in place to deal with TB in whitetail deer?

**Mr. Ken Rebizant:** Primarily, we plan to continue with our existing monitoring program. As a matter of fact, the program we embarked upon last year was an enhanced monitoring surveillance program. Out of the just over 1,000 complete samples we collected—and I believe just over 300 were from the Duck Mountain area and 660 were from the Riding Mountain area—only two of those samples came back positive for bovine TB. Both of those animals were in fact from the TB hot zone, so to speak, in and around the Birdtail Valley, and from my point of view, that really illustrates the disease isn't widespread in whitetail deer. That was one of our fears right from the beginning, and the evidence suggests that it isn't.

Our plan is to continue with that level of surveillance and then see what the surveillance tells us again this year. If in fact it supports what we've already learned, then I think it'll be a relief from our standpoint. It will be further evidence that the whitetail deer might occasionally be infected, but it doesn't suggest the whitetail deer are a reservoir for the disease, by any means.

•(1445)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming and sharing your expertise, your knowledge, and your suggestions as we move forward.

We'll now have a short recess, and we'll come back at 3 o'clock.

•(1445)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1503)

**The Chair:** As we continue our afternoon session, we have with us on our fourth panel the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association, Mr. Carl Wall, executive director; and from the Riding Mountain Landowners Association, we have with us Glen Campbell, vice-president. He left his guitar at home, he said, so we will hear him on a different matter today.

Mr. Wall, I believe you're first on my agenda.

**Mr. Carl Wall (Executive Director, Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'd first like to thank the committee for the opportunity afforded to the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association, the MLOA, to address the committee and express our thoughts and concerns regarding this serious matter.

The MLOA represents the lodges and outfitters in the province as they relate to the resource-based tourism industry, primarily hunting, fishing, and ecotourism, when integrating with other government agencies and other organizations with an interest in the industry. The resource-based tourism industry in Manitoba contributes significant economic and employment benefits to the provincial economy. Millions of dollars are generated from outside of Manitoba, and, as a result, local businesses benefit from an active and healthy tourism industry and many rural Manitobans benefit from the jobs created annually.

Licensed operators provide a broad range of services for those who wish to enjoy Manitoba's rich resources, and hunting is a significant part of this industry, especially in rural Manitoba. Tourist operators in Manitoba have long played a significant role in resource management. It is important to the industry that resources are managed in a sustainable fashion, providing an annual surplus to support both resident and non-resident uses of these resources. Operators and their clients are not only users of these resources but are also stewards, working in partnership with those responsible for managing Manitoba's wildlife resources.

It is therefore important that serious issues, such as the one before us today, be dealt with in a manner that not only addresses the situation but also provides long-term sustainability for the resource and therefore our industry. It is imperative that resource management be based on good science; data should be collected and analyzed prior to making any significant changes in policy or management approaches.

The MLOA has supported the monitoring program and the management approaches presently in place to determine the extent of bovine TB in wild herds of elk and whitetail deer in the Riding Mountain area and other areas of the province. Operators have been supplying samples to assist the program—and the organization and the association have encouraged all operators to participate in the program—and believe that the results of this monitoring do not warrant any significant change in management approaches at this time.

However, we do recognize the concerns expressed by the agricultural industry. Many of our members are also involved in this industry, and for that reason, among others, we will continue to support the wildlife branch of Manitoba Conservation in their continuing efforts to monitor the situation, and we will continue to work with them and other organizations to ensure that all interests are served. Prudent management of our resources is a must. Extreme approaches such as a massive reduction of elk or deer herds without supporting science would not serve the interests of all involved. Such an approach would be a significant step backwards in resource management—one unprecedented in Manitoba.

The MLOA will continue to support efforts to monitor the situation and will continue to support Manitoba Conservation and the task group in their efforts to address this serious situation. We acknowledge their expertise in this area. Their staff are well-qualified and are dedicated to sustainable resource management based on the sound principles of science, and we support their decisions to date.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your time and consideration.

●(1505)

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

Mr. Campbell.

**Mr. Glen Campbell (Vice-President, Riding Mountain Landowners Association):** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the Riding Mountain Landowners Association.

Members of this association are landowners in the Rural Municipality of Park (South). The association has been and still is very concerned about the ongoing TB infection in the elk herd in Riding Mountain National Park.

This disease is a constant threat, not only to the health of the elk herd but also to other wildlife and livestock around the park. We have been living with this threat for years, and something must be done to eradicate this disease. By eradication we mean the incidence of TB is to be no more prevalent in wildlife than it is in the Canadian cattle population.

Parks Canada is knowingly harbouring a TB-infected elk herd that continues to threaten the ecological integrity of the park and the livelihood of the surrounding livestock producers.

Parks Canada has begun to study the problem and has initiated some programs in an attempt to lessen the spread of TB. They are missing the point. They have not initiated a program to eradicate the disease. Monitoring the disease will not eradicate it. Barrier fencing will not eradicate it. Reducing the elk population will not eradicate it, as evidenced by the TB incidence in the bison in Wood Buffalo National Park. Leaving the disease to die out on its own won't eradicate it, as studies of cape buffalo in Kruger National Park in Africa have shown. Not only did TB not disappear, but it has spread to the carnivores that prey on the buffalo.

Perhaps it has not been widely publicized, but two timber wolf carcasses were found to be infected with TB in Riding Mountain National Park. The original bison herd in Riding Mountain National Park had to be destroyed and replaced with a clean herd from Elk Island National Park when ongoing attempts to contain the disease were unsuccessful.

On February 27, 2003, Mr. Latourelle stated before this committee that Parks Canada's objective was to eradicate TB from Riding Mountain National Park as soon as possible. This hasn't been carried out.

As cattle producers, we have endured repeated testing of our herds, quarantines, slaughter of entire herds, financial losses, and emotional stress. Try to put yourself in the position of waiting three to four months after an initial positive TB test to find out whether your herd is TB-free or will be slaughtered, along with any farm animals that may have been exposed to the disease.

In order to solve this problem, the Riding Mountain Landowners Association has developed a plan that we believe, if implemented, would eradicate TB from the elk herd in Riding Mountain National Park. This plan was adopted in resolution form by the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and the councils of the Rural Municipality of Park, and the Rural Municipality of Rosburn.

The plan is as follows. Elk are to be captured in the east side of Riding Mountain National Park. The east side was chosen because no cases of TB have been found there. Each group that is captured is to TB-tested. If any individuals test positive, the entire group is to be slaughtered.

TB-free groups are to be moved to a secure facility outside Riding Mountain National Park. The groups are to be kept separate and will have no contact with other groups through any shared feed or water supply. An absolute minimum of human contact is to be allowed, to preserve the elk's natural instincts. The elk are to be monitored by CFIA to ensure they remain TB-free.

When sufficient numbers are secured and deemed TB-free, the remaining elk in and around Riding Mountain National Park are to be culled in as humane a manner as possible and the meat is to be used for human consumption if it is safe to do so.

After a sufficient period of time, as determined by CFIA, the captured elk are to be reintroduced into Riding Mountain National Park at appropriate locations.

• (1510)

This plan preserves the unique genetics of Riding Mountain National Park elk and ensures a TB-free herd. We ask that you use your authority to influence Parks Canada to adopt this plan to eradicate the disease.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you, gentlemen, for your presentations.

Glen, you're talking about implementing a scorched earth policy similar to what we use in cattle on the elk within Riding Mountain National Park after a group of elk have been taken out and preserved?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** I wouldn't really call it a scorched earth policy, but yes, that's the idea. You take out the clean elk, make sure they're clean, remove the infected elk herds, and reintroduce the clean elk from the same herd with the same genetics.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Tuberculosis is a very insidious disease. That's why when we get it in cattle herds we have to go through a disinfection program and everything else on the farm. As you said, there have been a couple of timber wolves found with tuberculosis in their carcasses.

How would we carry out a disinfection on the large scale they have in Riding Mountain? I know that sunlight will sterilize the ground, but it does take time.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** In a farm, the cattle are very concentrated in a small area, of course, so probably the level of infection would be quite high. We believe that given a sufficient amount of time after removing the infected elk over a wide area, the clean elk could be reintroduced and not pick up the disease.

**Mr. James Bezan:** As you're aware, similar propositions have been made with Wood Buffalo National Park, with the bison in Yellowstone National Park down in the States, and with the wild deer populations they have in Michigan that are infected. Of course, resource departments and conservation groups are unwilling to move down that path.

Do you have any suggestions on how we can convince those organizations? I know we're a committee of Parliament, but at the same time, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada, who they are responsible to, are unto themselves, away from this committee. Something like this would have to be referred to the environment committee and the environment minister. I would suspect there would be a great deal of opposition from wildlife organizations.

Have you thought about how you'd sell an idea like this? I'm not disagreeing with you, but it is a hard sell.

• (1515)

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** It is a hard sell at first, but the thing is we're not removing an elk herd; we're removing part of it for a short period of time and then reintroducing the same genetics back into the area. I think the timeframe needn't be too long—I would imagine a year or so. The elk herd has an ability to increase, given good weather and good conditions. I think before long we'd have at least the same numbers, plus we'd have a healthy herd.

Back in my early days, the elk population was extremely high. It was up to perhaps at one time an estimated 10,000. They had a few tough winters and it went way down, and now it's at a little under 2,000. So it wouldn't take very long to build it up to 2,000 if you took out 500 elk, for example. Not only that, but given that they would be probably under better feed conditions, the calf survival rate would be greater, and it wouldn't take long at all before it built up to at least 2,000.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Have you presented this resolution directly to Parks Canada?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** I believe they know of it.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Now, Carl, you were talking from the standpoint of the lodges and outfitters and supporting science in the decisions of managing the wild herd. I suspect that's not only the herd within the park but the animals outside of the park and in other areas of the province.

Have your conversations been solely with Manitoba Conservation, or have they been with other organizations as well?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** We have had conversations with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. You will hear from their president shortly. They mostly represent the resident faction of our hunting and fishing public, whereas our operators deal primarily with non-residents. So in terms of the elk situation, they do not cater to non-resident elk hunting because there's no allocation for that, but they certainly deal with deer. We keep in close contact with the Manitoba Conservation Districts Association on this particular issue and any other issues that affect the industry.

**Mr. James Bezan:** From a negative publicity standpoint, has this issue hurt business for outfitters?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** It has certainly made their marketing harder, there's no doubt about it. The word is out about it in the States. But on the other hand, all big-game hunters coming from outside of Canada have to be guided, so they are accompanied by guides. The guides and operators know what to look for in eviscerated animals, to see if there are any problems or safety concerns. So there is a safety net there, and that is important to the industry as well.

**The Chair:** You have one more minute.

**Mr. James Bezan:** But there's no doubt the outfitter industry would benefit from a clean herd again.

**Mr. Carl Wall:** Anybody who uses our wildlife, or who enjoys looking at it or hunting it, or any kind of interaction, will benefit from a clean herd. There's no doubt about that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll move to Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

Mr. Wall, do you represent the park outfitters, or a broader-based group than that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Carl Wall:** Yes. Our organization represents the outfitting industry in the province. There are no outfitters located right in the park, but they certainly do use the area around the park. They use the animals that go in and out of the park, and in this case it's primarily whitetail deer.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I imagine that there are quite significant economic spinoffs for the outfitters, because hunters are interested in deer and elk. Since the tuberculosis problem has appeared, have you been able to tally up—Mr. Bezan alluded to this earlier—the economic losses you have suffered because of this disease?

[*English*]

**Mr. Carl Wall:** No, we haven't. Our members have not actually brought this up. The only thing we have seen from a negative point is members having to spend some more dollars on advertising—more marketing effort, that type of thing. I don't think we've seen members actually lose clients because of it, but they certainly have to work harder to do the marketing in the U.S.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I am happy not to have heard that from many of this morning's witnesses. There must surely be someone somewhere who has had the idea of eradicating all the deer, moose, and elk from the park in order to prevent the spread of the disease.

Have you ever heard such a hypothesis?

[*English*]

**Mr. Carl Wall:** Yes, that has obviously been brought up previously. Before I became the executive director for the MLOA, I worked in the fisheries branch of conservation for the last 30 years. So I do have some knowledge of resource management and the impacts of these types of approaches on management.

It's not a chosen route to go. Certainly the MLOA does not support that kind of route. There are other methods we can use. I think the science we're seeing now that's being collected by the wildlife branch and their partners out there is showing us that it is not a prevalent or high-risk situation, particularly in deer. On the other hand, it's still there. It's still a threat to our agricultural people. It's still a serious matter. Just because it's not there in high numbers doesn't mean it isn't important to us. But using eradication measures for management of any wildlife species or any natural part of the ecosystem has never been deemed a wise approach in management, and it does not always solve the problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Are you satisfied by the measures currently being taken by the government, Parks Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the other partners you deal with? I would also like to know what more can be done to improve the situation, in your opinion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Carl Wall:** Well, given the short amount of time this has been going on, yes, I think we have seen some very good results, some very positive results. We're very supportive of the continuation of the program, to continue the monitoring, to continue looking at ways to manage the elk herd to the desired number, and even to manage the deer herd to a desired number.

As I said in my presentation, I think good science is critical. I think we need good science and continued good science to make these proper decisions. I know that the association supports that approach, and I think we will continue to monitor and work with these organizations to do that. There's a lot of effort and money going into it. It's not a problem that's going to be solved easily, and it's not going to be solved in the short term. It's something that's going to take some time.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ur.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** I thank you for your presentation. I just have a few quick questions.

In your presentation, Mr. Wall, you had indicated that the results of the monitoring did not warrant any change in management approaches at this time. What is the reason for that? Is it because you feel it's under control, or what is the reasoning behind your statement?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** I said “any significant change”. I think we're always going to look at changes. Managing wildlife population is a very flexible situation, as it changes from year to year. Our members are subject to allocation procedures and policies for the number of tags they get, so knowing the time it takes to make regulatory changes and changes in season dates—and the fact that our operators, for example, are now starting their marketing program for 2006—sudden changes in management approaches can have very serious impacts on the industry. That's one of the reasons why we work together as closely as we do with government, to ensure that doesn't happen.

So what I'm saying is that if science is showing us that more drastic measures must be taken, then, yes, we will have to look at those things, but right now we're quite satisfied with the progress that's being made with the data collected and the approaches being taken.

• (1525)

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Obviously, you're in the sports business. With only 2,500 elk in the area—and you say that the deer are more for the hunters than the elk are—does having that much smaller number than in the past hurt the business?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** Well, as I mentioned previously, our outfitters do not receive any allocation for elk, so they do not participate in the elk hunting business, unless they cater to a resident hunter who may happen to be drawn for a tag, and that's very, very rare. So the elk side doesn't have the same impact on us as a much lower number of deer would have on us. However, there's still the principle of managing resources on a sustainable basis, whether they be elk, and whether our members use them or not, or they be deer or moose, which we don't use very much of either. The principles are still there, and we still have to be true to those principles of sustainable management. So we support whatever measures are needed to sustain a healthy elk herd, as much as we would for any healthy wildlife population.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

Mr. Campbell, in your presentation you outlined the plan by your landowners association. Do you really think that plan is workable and feasible?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** Absolutely. I have no doubt that it could work if the political will were there to implement it.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** It seems like a pretty big undertaking—and how would you keep them segregated?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** We have already been offered facilities to keep the infected elk segregated.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** And who have you put this plan by? Who has heard this plan?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association endorsed this plan at their general meeting. Two of the local RM councils have endorsed it, and the Parkland Producers Association has endorsed it.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mark.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Carl, has the industry been asked to participate with the increase in the number of tags that are given out for elk?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** No, for deer we have.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Not for elk around Riding Mountain?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** No. There is no allocation for non-residents for elk. There are no non-resident licences available for elk, but there are for deer.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Have you suggested that perhaps they should do that, from your industry's point of view?

**Mr. Carl Wall:** As long as we're on a draw system for residents, if the resources cannot meet our resident demand, then we know we are not going to get tags. That's fine. We understand that. Residents get priority in terms of allocation, and that's part of the system we work under.

Members have been offered additional tags for deer. We'd like to see that far enough in advance that they have a chance to market those tags a little better. We've already talked to the branch about that and have worked on that to make it a better situation, and that's going to happen.

They do submit their samples; it's a must. They've been submitting samples over this test program, and willingly so, because they have a vested interest as well to make sure that good science is done and the situation is addressed.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Glen, I've thought through the same process as you have, because we call the program "eradication", and normally that means do away with. The problem is so huge you'd think that even if they did do that and if you could gather all the elk, which is probably pretty impossible, you'd end up in the same place, with one or two percentage points at the end.

You're still at risk of one or two percentage points. You would never get 100%. Even if you got rid of all the elk that are within the boundary of Riding Mountain National Park, you'd still have the ones outside.

• (1530)

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** The plan involves elk in and around the park. By eradication we don't mean that TB will never again show up; it's to be no more prevalent in wildlife than it is in the cattle population. I'm quite sure there's no way we can totally eliminate TB from Canadian cattle. Eventually it will show up, every five, ten, or fifteen years. We could accept a prevalence rate like that.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I don't think this mass killing clinically would be acceptable. I just can't see how the public would accept that as a solution to dealing with a disease.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** "Mass killing" is kind of a harsh way of referring to it. It's merely culling the remainder of the herd. Would that be more politically correct? We already have another herd to replace it.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** If you could find them all, I would think, but that's the problem, trying to search and find the ones that you want to cull.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** I'm sure it could be done. First and foremost, elk are fairly easy to trap in the wintertime. You could get probably most of them just by trapping them, and the rest could be culled by professionals who have the ability to do it.

**The Chair:** Before we go to another questioner, I have a question.

Assuming your program would work, you'd have a set-aside of 500 clean animals as a start-up base herd going back into the park. What would be the chance of contracting disease again from the deer population, which has not been culled? They're still out there.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** The infected deer are located in a very narrow band. I think if that population were culled you wouldn't have any problem with being reinfected.

Deer and elk don't really mix to any great degree. Elk will come in when you're feeding your cattle, and perhaps deer will come in, but given their own choices, you don't often see deer mixed in with elk.

**The Chair:** You see, the question always comes back. It hasn't been talked about today and perhaps we shouldn't talk about it, but I think we need to raise it. Where did the TB originate, from the wild populations into the domestic animals? Did it originate in the domestic livestock and propagate into the wild? Was there a mix? Was it simultaneous, spontaneous? What was it? Where did it come from?

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** I don't doubt that it originally came from cattle, because cattle used to graze in Riding Mountain National Park. It obviously didn't come from that infected buffalo herd, because that was probably the Wainwright strain that came. The Riding Mountain strain is unique. Where the unique strain first came from, I have no way of knowing, but through the interaction of cattle and elk it probably spread to the elk.

But that's in the past. We have to deal with what's here now.

**The Chair:** No, I know. I understand that.

Any other questions? Yes, Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I'm just thinking here, Glen—and I appreciate where you're coming from, because I've been there in the past, sitting around with MCPA—that if we're going to put all the money into the resources of capturing, to make this politically and publicly acceptable, with the testing procedures that are available now and the hypersensitivity of the Bovigam test, wouldn't it be acceptable just to try to test the entire herd? As you said, capturing is fairly successful. It's not going to be 100%. Hell, I know that with cattle, some animals you'll never catch, trapping them or otherwise.

So there is the possibility of just doing a massive test, if the resources were available. Wouldn't that be an acceptable solution, removing the ones that test positive?

•(1535)

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** Well, that's an idea, but I can't see it working. When we test cattle in a herd, we test them all one day and then read the test in 72 hours. In the elk herd, you could test animals now and they could come in contact with an infected animal later on. You could test that infected animal and take it out, but it's already reinfected the one you'd already tested, if you get what I mean. When the herds come and go, the herds go from two or three up to perhaps fifty and back, and they move, they split up.

**Mr. James Bezan:** The CFIA did suggest this morning that they're working on a blood test that can be done on cattle being moved through points of sale to do surveillance in the future. Possibly that test, if it was approved, could be used on elk as well.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** If you could isolate the elk as they are tested and make sure they don't come in contact with the untested elk, that perhaps could work.

**Mr. James Bezan:** So there are other possible solutions we could look at.

**Mr. Glen Campbell:** Oh, yes. This is not the only solution, clearly.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, gentlemen, for your input this afternoon. It seems like a more acceptable way of dealing with it,

rather than culling animals or eliminating a herd completely, which I think would be totally unacceptable in a lot of people's minds. Thanks for your moderate approach to a very delicate subject.

Now we'll bring up the next group of witnesses. From the West Region Tribal Council/Coalition of First Nations, we have Mr. Dwayne Blackbird. From the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, we have Mr. John Williams, president. And representing himself as an individual—I don't know what that means—we have Metro Belbas.

Mr. Blackbird, you are first on the list.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird (West Region Tribal Council/Coalition of First Nations):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the other committee members for giving me the opportunity to come and speak here this afternoon.

First of all, I'm going to explain that my position at West Region Tribal Council involves treaty consultations.

During my first months of being employed with the West Region Tribal Council, one of the projects that I came up with was the Coalition of First Nations with Interests in Riding Mountain National Park. The reason for that is because some of the surrounding communities around Riding Mountain National Park are not members of the West Region Tribal Council, so the first nations communities put forth their interests in Riding Mountain National Park.

The project's intent is to come up with a better working relationship with Parks Canada. Over the history of it becoming a national park, there were some ill feelings because it was first nations traditional territory at one point in time.

I've heard other presenters talk about the impacts on livelihoods ever since bovine tuberculosis came about. Some of the programs that have been put in place were to bring the elk population in Riding Mountain National Park to 2,500.

When we come outside Riding Mountain National Park, it becomes a provincial jurisdiction, and there is an issue of double hunting licences for whitetail deer and big game in the extended hunting seasons. I don't think anyone will disagree that there are some impacts on first nations hunters. During the hunting season, first nations hunters don't go out because of the increased number of other hunters out there.

When the elk population is down to 2,500 and there's a movement from outside the park, for instance, there hasn't been much success this past winter in hunting elk outside the park. I think the numbers are there because of the other hunters as well.

The reason that I'm here today is because a rights-based agenda on treaty rights and aboriginal rights is having some impact on first nations hunters and first nations people as a whole.

There are suggestions on eradication. I know you were trying to eradicate the TB itself from the wild.

I have been going around to first nations communities over the past number of years. The project was to come up with a good working relationship with Parks Canada.

The reason that I'm here is because this is an agricultural committee and some decisions that are being suggested are going to have some impact on first nations people in regard to treaty rights or aboriginal rights. I can already see some of the impacts of not having a good and successful hunting season last year. Yet they figured out that an obligation from the Canadian government is supposed to continue that lifestyle, whether it be hunting or whatever.

That's why I've come here today. I sit as a member of the bovine tuberculosis committee. I should point out that I don't consider myself to be a stakeholder. The reason for that is because of treaty rights.

The reason for the creation of the Coalition of First Nations with Interests in Riding Mountain National Park was to be involved in management, planning, and other initiatives, whether it be aboriginal or tourism. We never participated in the management plan of Riding Mountain National Park, but it's not like the opportunity never existed. We were always invited to a stakeholders' table, but why we refrained from sitting at a stakeholders' table. Now the project is to come up with our own process on how we can be involved in the management plan of Riding Mountain National Park.

● (1540)

Right now I'm participating. I have no problem sitting at a stakeholders table out of cooperation with our neighbours. But I think what needs to take place is to set up a process or create a forum so that the first nations can participate in the management of bovine TB, outside and inside. We do already have a process going with Parks Canada on how we're going to participate in the management.

One of the things that keeps popping up when we're trying to make an arrangement is bovine TB, because of the increased pressure being put on the wildlife. First nation members are out on the land every day pretty well, the hunters. You can see all this activity, whether it be helicopters...trapping of the elk inside Riding Mountain National Park. I'm the project coordinator, and it has created problems for me in trying to get a better working relationship with Parks Canada. Now we're talking about the white-tailed deer on the outside, in the Duck Mountains. I guess that's why I'm suggesting—the committee has a lot of influence on Manitoba Conservation—setting up the same process that we're doing with Parks Canada. The only opportunity is to be amalgamated into existing committees, and they're all stakeholder committees.

I have no problem sitting on a stakeholders' table, out of the spirit of cooperation, but the first nations need to have their own process on how they're going to participate in the overall management of bovine TB. There is a subcommittee being entertained right now, but as I said, it's from a stakeholders' point of view.

There are a number of good things happening with Parks Canada. As I mentioned, things weren't always that good with Parks Canada because of its becoming a national park. But things have changed with Parks Canada; I have nothing but good to say about Parks Canada now. A few years ago I would have never said the same things that I'm saying. But the willingness to work with the first

nations is there. That's why I say that things have changed. Now I'm willing to work with stakeholders, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the different interests in and around Riding Mountain National Park.

Some of the things that are taking place are going to have effects on first nations people.

I wanted to point out, too, that I mentioned treaty. At the time of treaty, in 1871, it was my great-great-grandfather who signed treaty on behalf of the southwest Indians, which means this whole area that we're talking about. He always knew that Riding Mountain National Park would never be suitable for settlement immigration purposes. At that time they were talking about a modern lifestyle, which meant farming. There were two lifestyles negotiated at the time of treaty. One was for traditional lifestyle and one was for a modern lifestyle, and in that arrangement was settlement immigration. That's the original agreement that we have. It's Treaty No. 2. That's the area where we are today.

He specifically asked that Riding Mountain National Park, which wasn't referred to as a park at that time, but was the traditional home of the Riding Mountain people.... He knew that place would never be suitable for settlement and immigration purposes. Today it's still not. It's a park today. It will probably always exist as a park.

So we have to come up with the way things are. I guess that's why we started talking about the coalition. How do we create a better working relationship? That's why I'm here today, to point out that there are some impacts of all the activities going on out there in trying to manage bovine TB. I thought I would come out to make you aware of that. What needs to take place is to come up with the same kind of arrangement with Manitoba Conservation. It's in provincial jurisdiction now.

● (1545)

I know the licences are down, because big-game licences are down. I guess that's how they've been using the issuing of double licences, to bring in good quality samples. What happens if the sport hunters don't fill out for double licences or the big-game draw is down? I guess that's where we can come up with programs with first nation people and how we can participate in an overall bovine TB management plan.

That's all I wanted to say today. I thank the committee for hearing my concerns in regard to first nation issues.

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

Mr. Williams is next. He's from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation.

● (1550)

**Mr. John Williams (President, Manitoba Wildlife Federation):** Good afternoon. On behalf of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, thanks for the opportunity to speak to the committee today.

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation was established over 60 years ago. It's a non-profit organization representing anglers, hunters, and conservationists in Manitoba. Today, we number our members at approximately 14,000. We are also creators of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation Habitat Foundation, which holds, owns, and/or manages 90 properties throughout the province, comprising in excess of 10,000 acres that we maintain as wildlife habitat.

We've been a part of the TB task group since its inception. We believe that the goals and the vision of the task group that have been agreed to are still valid. The main goal is to eradicate TB from the Riding Mountain region ecosystem.

Many groups have been impacted by TB programming—hunters included. It's a mandatory requirement for hunters to submit samples from harvested deer and elk in the Riding Mountain game-hunting areas 23 and 23A, and the Duck Mountain game-hunting areas 18A, 18B, 18C, and 13A. Hunters have willingly participated in these programs because they see the value of controlling the disease in wildlife and in cattle. Since 1991, more than 6,300 deer and elk samples have been submitted by hunters for TB testing. Last year, when there was a call from Manitoba Conservation for fresh, complete samples, hunters responded by supplying more than 1,000 fresh samples within 48 hours of kill. Those were deer samples and 200 fresh elk samples. The response by hunters exceeded all expectations.

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation agreed to the lower target population of 2,500 animals for the Riding Mountain elk herd, which has now been achieved, with the understanding that hunters would be impacted once the target was reached because of reduced hunting opportunity. It's for the greater good of the disease control. However, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation is opposed to any further reductions in the target. The present programming that addresses transmission of the disease, such as enclosure fencing, prohibition of baiting and feeding deer and elk, and good cattle management practices, should be allowed the time to bear fruit. We feel that this time horizon is probably ten years.

We also feel there is no need to take action to reduce the area's deer population. Hunters submitted over 1,000 fresh samples last year for testing and only two came back positive, both within the hot zone south of Grandview and near the Riding Mountain National Park. This scientifically based surveillance indicates the disease is not widespread in deer. The Manitoba Wildlife Federation will continue to support hunter sample surveillance plans for 2005 and 2006.

We also feel there is no need to take action to reduce the elk population in the Duck Mountain area. Only one elk from the Duck Mountain region has tested positive for the disease. It's known that this animal originated from Riding Mountain National Park, because it was a radio-collared animal. We'll further support efforts to test elk for disease from the Duck Mountains.

We also feel that eradicating the elk herd will not solve the problem. Bovine tuberculosis was originally a European disease that was brought to this continent by cattle. The generally accepted theory is that it was transferred from cattle to the wild herd—to the elk. If you eliminate the elk herd in the park and then reintroduce it, unless farming practices change and we continue with the program of enclosure fencing and reducing the opportunities for the wild animals and the domestic animals to mix in feeding areas, what's to stop the disease from being transmitted again from cattle to elk?

Another problem with eliminating the elk herd is what would happen to the natural predators of the elk, such as wolves? Do they turn on the cattle? What happens to the deer? Do we eliminate the deer herd? We think this is totally impractical.

●(1555)

We strongly believe that a methodical, science-based approach should be used in all program decision-making. We caution against making knee-jerk reactions to immediate problems. The big picture should always be considered. As well, the effects of any programming on all stakeholder groups, including hunters, should be considered in decision-making.

Thank you.

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

Now, as an individual, with an unbiased, non-prejudiced view, Mr. Metro Belbas.

**Mr. Metro Belbas (As an Individual):** Mr. Chair, committee members, my name is Metro Belbas. My wife Joan and I farm in the RM of Rossburn, which is situated on the south side of Riding Mountain National Park. We have three children; one is attending college in Winnipeg, one is working on the farm with us, and the youngest is still going to high school. We cattle farm within the perimeters of the Riding Mountain TB eradication zone.

Today I wish to speak about bovine TB and how it has affected our lives. Since the first outbreak of TB in 1991, when four herds were eradicated, we have been affected. At that time we ran a half-purebred, half-commercial cattle operation. We had to test cattle back then, of course, with no sign of TB. Our purebred business began to suffer because of our location and the stigma TB carried. By 1997, when the second outbreak occurred, our purebred business was virtually shut down. Who wanted to buy a purebred bull, cow, or replacement heifer from a TB area?

As an example, when we advertised purebred bulls for sale in the *Manitoba Co-Operator*, a farm paper, we received phone calls from as far away as the American border telling us to quit advertising our cattle. Reason? We were from an infected TB area. The money we had invested in the purebred business was lost, with no compensation.

In the fall of 2002 we experienced a third outbreak of TB around Riding Mountain National Park. By then our purebred herd was integrated into our commercial herd, with our calving season being both spring and fall in order for us to have a better cash flow.

We contacted CFIA in early November of 2002 and were one of the first farms in the area to test for TB. The results of the test came back negative. However, disaster struck shortly afterwards. We incurred three abortions as a result. With my farming knowledge of 56 years, I am fully convinced that these abortions were the direct result of stress placed on our cows during testing. No cowboy in his right mind would knowingly put his cow herd through such stress unless forced to by someone else, namely CFIA. Our losses at that time were substantial, over \$3,000. To date, no compensation. Why not?

This brings us to the main story. The following year we were obliged to retest. With mutual agreement with CFIA—and I have to stress this, they were very accommodating—we tested after completion of our spring calving program, which was around May 1, in order to avoid the problems we incurred the previous winter.

One test came back questionable, so another test was performed, the Bovigam test. This test came back positive and the cow was slaughtered. CFIA then cultured tissue samples from this cow. Eventually no TB was found, and on July 30 of 2004 we received our new export permit.

This Bovigam test was a total flaw, as it revealed a negative result in my herd. Findings from over eighty other Bovigam tests performed, as you've likely heard today, showed no evidence of TB either.

We were without an export permit for 211 days, January 1, 2004, to July 20, 2004. We had 71 yearlings on hand throughout this period. Consultation with various government people revealed to us a figure of approximately \$2 a day to maintain these yearlings. This included feed costs, fixed costs, and labour. During this period of time we had no cash flow. To date, we have received no help from the government on this.

• (1600)

The various tests performed were for the benefit of our society in general, to ensure our food supply is safe for human consumption. Keeping this in mind, why does our government refuse to compensate us for our compliance? Seventy-one animals for 211 days at \$2 per day amounts to close to \$30,000. We as producers cannot take this burden on alone. This is for the benefit of our country, our society, so our society should stand behind us as producers.

Keep in mind also that during all this testing over the years we as producers have received zero cents for our time and expense. Everyone else involved is salaried. CFIA created a real hardship for me and my family financially and emotionally. No price tag can be put on the emotional hurt endured when a family does not know what is going to happen to our cow herd and our livelihood.

In conclusion, I would like to see Parks Canada take more responsibility. It seems that society has placed wildlife well ahead of livestock. We can test our cows till there are no more. We must also remember to eradicate the sources of bovine TB, one of which has been inside Riding Mountain National Park. If the park isn't cleaned up, we as producers around it will never be free of TB.

Also, I would like to seek compensation for damage done while testing for TB. Maybe compensation for time spent sorting cattle for testing and testing as such would be appreciated. Most importantly, I would like to see the government take responsibility for maintaining animals that are either in quarantine or without permit to be sold. In our case, this translates into a bill of \$29,962. Animals have to eat, so please help us feed them.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mark, you first.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here this afternoon.

Let me begin with Mr. Blackbird. Mr. Blackbird is a former chief of Keeseekoowenin First Nation, just south of Riding Mountain

National Park. In fact, they have a piece of property that's inside the park.

Maybe the first question I can ask you is do the band members hunt inside the park?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** No, they don't.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Then your concerns about the coalition, which is an excellent idea.... I can't see why Parks Canada wouldn't sit down with you and meet with you and do some future planning.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Oh, I hope nobody got me wrong. We do have an agreement between Keeseekoowenin and Parks Canada. We use what we call a senior officials forum, and we're using that as a framework to involve the other surrounding communities around Riding Mountain National Park to come up with an arrangement with Parks Canada, to bring them into an agreement with Parks Canada. So there are discussions happening.

I guess you know the problem we're facing right now is that in the agreement there are a number of work plans. One of the work plans was bovine TB.

I didn't mention in my opening comments that despite a number of good initiatives with Parks Canada, we never received any.... We put forth a proposal to the Department of Indian Affairs, and Indian Affairs doesn't have any money. Yet to participate in some of the initiatives we need funding and resources to come up with a communication strategy so we can communicate better with the band membership. There are nine first nation communities that belong to the West Region Tribal Council. Some of them are affiliated in some way or another. To alleviate the miscommunication with going in there and destroying all the elk...is not going too well with first nation communities, trying to work with our neighbours and stakeholders.

We need funding for resources to come up with a communication strategy on how we can get this information to the first nation members, this scientific information we've been privileged to.... It's sitting on the stakeholders' table in regard to bovine TB.

• (1605)

**Mr. Inky Mark:** But your other primary concerns are the extended hunting season, extra permits—how that impacts all band members.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** The pressure is being put on from outside.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I know, but that mandate predominantly falls under the provincial government. Have you sat down with Natural Resources to deal with that?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Only at the bovine TB stakeholders' table have we been sitting with Manitoba Conservation. They do have a co-management arrangement with the West Region Tribal Council, but it's only for Dauphin Lake in regard to fishing. The problematic area is south around Riding Mountain National Park. That's why I'm saying we need to come up with an agreement or arrangement on how we're going to participate, or how we're going to do this, whether it's through the collection of a good quality of samples from first nation hunters....

I should mention that Manitoba Conservation did contribute some funding to come up with a disease and monitoring program that started last fall, but by the time we got the funding, first nation hunters were not hunting elk. It was at the end of December, into January. Now we're starting up a new program that is being funded by Parks Canada for this hunting season.

I think we need some resources so we can have a better communication strategy with our first nation members. I think there are about 5,000 first nation members that surround Mountain Riding National Park. Some of the scientific information I'm privy to should be going out to the band members so they can have a better understanding of what's going on in their area.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Mr. Williams, do you have any information or data on hunters who have contracted TB through the cleaning or consumption of game that's supposedly infected?

**Mr. John Williams:** As far as we know, there's been none.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Mr. Belbas, I think we all understand the tragedy that's occurred in the farming business. Do you think that responsibility should be shared? In the province of Manitoba, when the beef industry is healthy, you're looking at a cashflow of about \$500 million. Do you think the responsibility for compensation should be shared between the federal government and the provincial government?

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** I don't know if I can answer that, but it should definitely be shared with the producers.

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Should both governments be responsible for coming up with a compensation package?

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** CFIA apparently is a federal responsibility, is it not?

**Mr. Inky Mark:** I know, but you said it's a big industry to Canada, and worth billions and billions of dollars. But it's also worth \$500 million in cashflow to the province. Should the province accept their share of the responsibility?

• (1610)

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** I understand your question now. I believe they should, because we're part of Canada and that's our share. The province should pull their share.

**The Chair:** We'll move to Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Belbas, I know that this testimony was very difficult for you. It is, however, most useful, and I thank you for it. It was very moving. In order to move things forward, we have no choice but to hear this kind of testimony.

To your knowledge have any of your neighbours, or has anyone else, suffered the same fate as you?

[English]

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** Yes. I ran into a neighbour from the neighbouring municipality last year, and he was in the same situation.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** This is the type of situation that led the committee, in 2003, to listen to the producers and breeders. They tabled a resolution at that time. I want to repeat that it was not

accepted by the government. I do not believe that bureaucrats nor even governments make decisions in order to do harm. The fact remains that when we hear these kinds of examples, one is inclined to believe that these people, at the highest level, do not hear them. It is up to us, and to you through us, to make sure that they do. We will make sure of it.

I cannot understand that the difficulties you have faced and continue to experience have not been taken into account. In fact, given that the legislation has still not been amended, the situation will remain the same. You referred earlier on to an amount of \$2 per day per animal. I understood that you were offered this amount, but that you never received it. I would simply like to know if this is indeed the case.

[English]

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** Up to this point I have been offered no compensation.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** What then is the \$2 per day per animal you referred to earlier related to?

[English]

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** They were provincial agricultural people who I talked to. They have figures that they pull out of their files—their hats, or whatever.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** So it was a provincial program, and not a federal one?

[English]

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** It's not a program as such. It's just consultation with the right people who are involved in feeding cattle.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** This morning, the breeders' representatives told us, in their testimony, that people from the agency were not always well received because of the repercussions their visit could have on their herds. I imagine that having had these problems and never having been properly compensated, it would not be very nice to see these bureaucrats land on your doorstep.

How do you receive them?

[English]

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** I hold no grudges. I'll still cooperate in the future. As a matter of fact, this morning I picked up the mail and found out that I have to retest this winter. I'm going to cooperate, but I'd appreciate compensation where it's necessary.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Thank you, Mr. Belbas. I hope that the Department of Agriculture and Agri-food will read the testimony before the committee. In fact, I assume they always do.

Mr. Blackbird, I'm happy to see that someone from the first nations has come to testify. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs during the last session. I was not the critic, but I was a member of the committee. The people of the first nations often speak with the voice of wisdom.

As for the elk, are we still talking about a herd of 2,000 to 2,500 head? I would like to hear you on that subject, Mr. Williams, because you represent a great many hunters and people who know wildlife. Is that a realistic number?

•(1615)

[English]

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** In regard to the figure of 2,500, I'm not sure. One of the things, sitting at the bovine TB stakeholders table, was to do a study on what are the impacts on first nation hunters, or in general, the wildlife. It's down to 2,500. I think we heard other witnesses saying that sometimes it was up to 6,000 or 10,000, over the park's history. It's right down to 1,700 now, under 2,000.

I can already see some of the impacts on first nation people. They're not having any success hunting elk.

Should it go lower than that? Right now, first nation people are just sitting back and watching.

Somebody mentioned here that as a result of the producers putting pressure, this standing committee was established. If the first nations were to push the issue, would there be a standing committee established to hear the concerns of first nation hunters or first nation people as a whole?

Right now, I've been participating out of cooperation. Going out to the first nations communities.... There are nine first nation communities that are involved here. They've been just sitting back and seeing some of the activities take place.

Just this morning I picked up one of the first nation papers, which was saying it has been 15 years since the Oka crisis happened. That was about expanding a golf course. Here, some of these things are taking place in our traditional territory, before it became the province of Manitoba. We're just sitting back and not saying anything right now. It doesn't have to come to that point. I'm not saying I advocate violence or anything, but we are just trying to play a meaningful role in the management planning or having good working relationships with our neighbours.

Throughout this winter, I do need to come up with a communications strategy on how we can get the scientific information and some traditional knowledge, going out to the elders and seeing whether this has been problematic in past years that the first nations are aware of. As I say, it takes resources to do some of these community consultation meetings. That's all I'm saying, and that's why I'm here today, because sufficient resources should be given to the first nation communities to hold some of these discussions and start to give back some information on seeing what are the real effects happening in all the management planning, whether it be provincial or federal, that's taking place right now.

**The Chair:** We're running out of time. Mr. Williams wants to respond yet before we—

**Mr. John Williams:** We don't believe the figure of 2,500 should be lowered. As I said before, only I mentioned when we eradicate the herd what happens with the predators and what not, as you lower the numbers, you upset the balance in the rest of the ecosystem. The hunters have given up hunting opportunity to help this happen, and we don't think 2,500 is an unreasonable number.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Did you have anything to add to that, Mr. Belbas?

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** I just thank the committee for hearing me.

•(1620)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Ur.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Mr. Blackbird, I thank you for your presentation. I'm certainly aware of first nation issues. I have five first nations peoples in my riding. They certainly keep me well informed, and I'm sure you do the same in your community, because it is important to hear first nations viewpoints on many, many subjects.

Hunting is certainly very important to first nations people. So has this had a dramatic impact on the lifestyles of first nations people?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** I would think so, with not having any success in big game hunting or elk hunting last fall. The only reason they're not having it is because they're not there. So the population dropping down to 2,500 is just not the animals coming out of the park.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** So are they being hunted by non-aboriginal groups? You had indicated that first nations don't go out at the same time because there are such large numbers.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Yes, well, they extended the big game licences. Usually they only had one, or two, or three, or four weeks, and now they extended that.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** For how long?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** It was in January or up till January. I'm not too sure of the exact date, but those numbers are there. It was only for the collection of samples.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Oh, I see.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** But I'm saying that we could collect those samples from first nation hunters as well, but we'd have to create awareness in first nation communities as to why we're collecting samples. Right now, there's suspicion. When somebody says, we want you to participate, the response is, well, why?

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** As first nations, you don't sit on any of the other liaison committees that we've heard of throughout the day? You don't participate in them?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** I sit on the bovine tuberculosis committee; it's a stakeholders committee. But that's why I mentioned that first nation people don't view themselves as stakeholders; it's no place for first nations people, because of their treaty and aboriginal rights.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** In one respect, it might help educate all of us if you were a part of it.

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** That's why I'm sitting here, so that you can hear what our concerns are.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** That's correct. Right.

Mr. Williams, in your statement, you had indicated that you felt that the numbers should not go below 2,500, because that would upset the balance in the ecosystem. Is that based on scientific knowledge? How come 2,500 is the number that has come up?

**Mr. John Williams:** Well, not being a wildlife biologist, I rely on the wildlife biologists at Manitoba Conservation and those participating on the stakeholders committee to give us those numbers. As a person with a modicum of common sense, it makes sense to me that as you artificially reduce one part of a natural area, it has to have an effect on the balance. One obvious one is that if you reduce the feed for certain predators, such as wolves, then those predators look elsewhere for food. So that may cause other problems, especially with domestic animals.

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur:** Right.

And Mr. Belbas, I saved the best to last. As a farmer in my previous life, I have to thank you for taking the time to share such a personal, private story—not a story, but a real life happening—with us. If anything can trigger the powers that be, what you stated will hopefully not fall deaf ears. I certainly thank you for coming.

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I want to thank you gentlemen for making your presentations.

I also want to thank you, Mr. Belbas, for sharing your story. I know the RM of Rossburn and the community have been hardest hit by this since it first started surfacing in 1991. When I was at the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, Terry and Wayne and the guys there went through all their testing and eradications, and I heard of all their difficulties first-hand. I can definitely relate to the loss of your purebred business, as well.

Now, in 2003, this committee made the recommendation to the minister to enlarge the compensation package to cover costs that traditionally weren't covered under the Health of Animals Act, and the minister did not do it. One of the explanations that we were given by the department was that the CAIS program would cover losses incurred under the surveillance and eradication program.

Do you feel that CAIS has been of any help to you with the TB testing and loss of income you've endured, especially with quarantine?

• (1625)

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** I don't believe it has; it just doesn't address the problem.

**Mr. James Bezan:** You had increased costs in maintaining your stock or cattle for three months over the winter while you were under quarantine, and those increased costs didn't help trigger a payout?

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** No, and it wasn't for three months, but seven months. And not only that, it created a ripple effect. We are basically a cow-calf operation now, since we went commercial. And because I had to keep those cattle till at least the end of July, those yearlings went onto my hayfields, so the following winter I had to buy feed for my cows. So it was a double whammy.

**Mr. James Bezan:** We'll make sure we carry that back to Ottawa and when we start putting together a report and recommendations we'll note that the safety net programs available to farmers are definitely not helping with the disease eradication.

I'm glad to hear that you've got a good relationship with the inspectors you work with. I think CFIA appreciates that. I'm glad to hear that CFIA has treated you properly when they're visiting your farm, and I congratulate CFIA for their professionalism.

You also mentioned your dissatisfaction with the Bovigam test, and you're not the first one to say that today. What would you say would be the proper testing? Since you've been going through this since 1991 you've seen the various testing regimes. Which one do you feel worked the best?

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** The one that makes the least mistakes.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Williams, I'm glad to hear that you're committed to a science-based resolution to this and the continued eradication of the disease. One thing I take exception with is that you'd like to see this work, making sure that a program has been installed and given the chance to work, and you're suggesting ten years. If we continue to see flare-ups, ten years is too long, if we continue to see problems in the hot spot zones with either wild animals or in the domestic herd. What ideas or discussions have you had at your board table?

**Mr. John Williams:** We haven't had that specific discussion. Again, we don't think there's been enough background yet to come up with anything on that.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Blackbird, I appreciate fully what you're saying about not being a stakeholder but being a partner, and that Parks Canada has been treating you as a partner more recently. You said the decisions that have been made are impacting and will impact first nations, and reduced hunting opportunities is one of those. As a partner at the table, what are some of the ideas you're bringing to the table in dealing with the disease problem within the park?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** What if the 2,500 supposedly gets up to 3,000, what then? First nations can help, using hunting as a management plan, to maintain the population of 2,500. I don't know what else we would do.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Maintain that and submit samples within the park or just on the outside of the park?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Both inside and outside of the park. We want more involvement in the management of this. Do we eradicate it? It affects us as first nation people as well having TB out there in the wild earth.

**Mr. James Bezan:** In your discussions with Parks Canada, has that been an acceptable position?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Yes, right now I think we do have a forum to bring our concerns to. Parks Canada has been more than willing to hear our concerns on creating a forum, and whether we agree or disagree, we'll come to some conclusions. Right now I'm saying that there is a forum we can bring our concerns to. Parks Canada has been more than willing to create that forum so we can bring forth our concerns. Right now we have to bring our concerns to the stakeholders table. I'm of the opinion we're not a stakeholder; we're indigenous to this area and we should be treated as more than just stakeholders.

•(1630)

**Mr. James Bezan:** I do appreciate that you've said you want to be a good neighbour with everybody in the community. The West Region Tribal Council, are they committed to make sure that we work towards eradication of bovine tuberculosis?

**Chief Dwayne Blackbird:** Yes. I'm pretty sure, it's just how we accomplish that. But I don't think we'll have anybody disagree that until we get it eradicated it's a problem for both agriculture and first nation people.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other questions?

Seeing none, I want to thank you, Mr. Blackbird, for bringing your perspective to the table this afternoon and making a very worthy presentation.

Mr. Williams, Mr. Belbas, I was the chair of the committee that brought forward the recommendations in 2003. My colleague Ms. Ur was on that committee as well. The message will go back, and I thank you very much for opening yourself up and giving us that.

**Mr. Metro Belbas:** Thank you for hearing it.

**The Chair:** I knew that you would bring a perspective to the table today that hasn't been brought before. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for coming.

We have one more presentation. I believe it is coming from.... We sometimes make exceptions to rules. Today we have the Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op Ltd. I believe something is happening as we speak, and we want you to come to the table and bring us up to speed on where things are today. We have Frieda Krpan. Are you related to another Mr. Krpan that we may have...?

**Ms. Frieda Krpan (Director, Chairperson Media/Communications, Ranchers Choice Beef Co-op Ltd.):** There are not very many in the country, so more than likely we are.

**The Chair:** Do you think you're related?

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** My husband would be, not me.

**The Chair:** We won't hold you to that.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** It depends how good or bad he is.

It wouldn't be Jason Krpan, would it be?

**The Chair:** No. It's a member of Parliament, actually.

What was his first name? We had a Mr. Krpan there for a number of years.

We're going to have a name for you in a moment.

You're not Mr. Krpan, are you?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** You look so happy together.

**Mr. Ken Yakielashek (President, Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op Ltd.):** Well, we have to work as a team.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** It's because we aren't married.

**The Chair:** Because you aren't married. I suppose there's some truth to that.

Will you give us your name?

**Mr. Ken Yakielashek:** I am Ken Yakielashek. I'm the president and chair of the board of Rancher's Choice.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming.

Perhaps you would open, Frieda.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** Sure.

[Translation]

First of all, I would like to apologize for the fact that my brief has not been translated. That is why I am making my presentation in English.

[English]

First, I'd like to thank you for allowing us a few minutes of your precious time.

I'm happy to see that my own member of Parliament is here with you, Mr. Bezan. Of course, I have known James for many years and I know he has represented us very well.

The importance of Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op will be given to you in a written presentation. Without going into a lot of detail, I think one of the issues in Mr. Easter's round of consultations was rural revitalization. I think in an effort such as Rancher's Choice, this is a good opportunity for everybody to put their money where their mouth is. Rancher's Choice will provide 80 direct jobs to the city and the RM of Dauphin.

Today, Ranchers Choice has not received any federal funding except for \$20,000 from MRAC to do a feasibility study. So Rancher's Choice is asking this committee for their support in urging the federal government to make the Rancher's Choice effort in the town of Dauphin not a stepchild, in terms of rural revitalization, but rather a poster child of rural revitalization at a very minimal cost.

Rancher's Choice has tried very hard to obtain equity, meaning cash, from cash-strapped farmers to get this effort off the ground. We have to do more and we know that we're probably not going to raise all the money that we need.

Our request of this committee is to urge the federal government to help Rancher's Choice be funded to the same amount of money and under the same terms and conditions that the province of Manitoba has. The province of Manitoba has stepped up to the plate and has contributed up to \$4.5 million in equity in the form of class B non-voting shares. That is a repayable non-interest type of loan. All we are asking of the federal government is to do the same; we are not asking for anything more or less.

To put it into perspective.... And this has nothing to do with the fact that Bombardier is in Quebec. If Bombardier were in Toronto or Vancouver, I would make the same remarks, so please don't take this as a slight to the province of Quebec. When Bombardier was given \$800 million in interest-free loans to create 250 jobs, our \$4.5 million for 80 jobs looks pretty darned good. That is all we're asking.

The federal government has made some adjustments to the loan loss reserve program. They have made a provision called "stacking" where one level of government is allowed to step up where another level of government is already making loan guarantees. But none of that will do in terms of getting this effort off the ground, and I can assure you there are other efforts in the country that need this support also.

Co-ops are the way to go in the future. So we are asking for your support in this effort. Dauphin has been great, and with Dauphin I mean both the city and the RM of Dauphin. They have taken the bull by the horns and they have really put themselves out. But I cannot emphasize enough that there has been no support whatsoever for this from the federal government.

The Honourable Wayne Easter has his report, which is an excellent report, identifying all the problems there are in agriculture. I have to compliment him on his report, but the steering committee that has been put in place to look for solutions does not include any co-ops, none. So Rancher's Choice is offering its participation in this consultation process.

Thank you.

• (1635)

**The Chair:** May I ask you, have you been denied access? You've offered your participation. Have you been turned down?

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** No, we were not invited. The Canadian Cooperative Association actually alerted me to the fact that no participation of co-ops was in place.

I have a call scheduled with the Honourable Wayne Easter on Friday morning, and I will certainly make my views known there.

But again, word coming from you who are his colleagues would probably help.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll do that.

We'll have a few questions here.

Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I want to thank both Ken and Frieda for coming in and making a presentation, because I believe strongly in doing more value-added processing here on the prairies. In Manitoba we have been chronically short for some time, as far as capacity. I've been a big fan of Rancher's Choice from the get-go and have been trying to make sure that every opportunity was open to them.

I guess what I want to ask is that of all the programs that the government announced...there's the loan loss reserve program, there's the SEC venture equity capital fund out of Regina, there was another program designed around cooperatives to encourage more producer participation—it's about a \$10 million fund available there—have you made a direct application to any of those programs and received a response?

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** That's a very good question.

We did approach the Farm Credit Corporation, and we were denied. The main reason was that we did not have sufficient equity on hand. That in itself is a bit of a dichotomy, because we are having to access farmers for whom both levels of government have created aid programs because they're so cash-strapped. Here we have to access the very same people for money they don't have.

I'm actually wearing two hats. I'm also the chair of the lending arm of the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, formerly the MACC. I can assure you that I have seen first-hand the hardship that the BSE crisis has caused the farmers. MACC alone has lent out an extra \$70 million in the province through BSE. That goes to show you that there simply isn't very much money.

In terms of the other programs, the loan-loss reserve was indeed increased from 40% guarantee to 60% guarantee. We have lobbied very hard with the federal government and the bureaucrats who are administering the program to allow stacking. This has now been allowed, where another level of government is able to pick up part of the guarantee not guaranteed by a federal program. That was a first, so we're very happy to see that.

All that is nice and dandy, but you still have to have the money on hand to do it. That's where the problem has lain.

• (1640)

**Mr. James Bezan:** I was wondering if you could give the committee a quick update on where you're at. I've been raising this for some time at committee and in the House.

I understand you have purchased equipment already for the facility and it's been paid for, but the actual construction here in Dauphin hasn't got under way yet.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** Yes. I didn't want to make too big a presentation because I was given two minutes, but I'll gladly speak longer.

**The Chair:** We're going to make an exception, because it's one of the programs that we, as a committee, have been promoting because of the BSE issue. I can assure you that your requests today aren't going to fall on deaf ears.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** My reason for asking, also.... I was very happy to have a group like you here, but particularly since you were in Dauphin, where we were going to be, it just kind of made it really nice. I did speak to James late last night, so here we are.

Rancher's Choice is not a co-op made out of a few very large, rich people. We are a co-op of very many smaller members. The average herd in Manitoba is not 500 cows; we have more like 50 to 100 cows. At the present time we have approximately 3,200 members, which is a fairly good number in the scheme of things.

Rancher's Choice raised about \$1.6 million in cash. With this money we purchased equipment from a plant in Ferndale, Washington, that was relying on culled cows from Canada for their production. With BSE their production stopped, and we purchased the equipment. That equipment is now here in Dauphin, paid for in cash. The blueprints for the plants were drawn up by Tower Engineering, a reputable firm in Winnipeg, and CFIA in Calgary has basically approved them. There were a few little items that needed to be done, but basically the blueprints are done.

The application for our environmental licence took some time. The province of Manitoba, in January of this year, changed the regulations in terms of emissions of nitrogen and phosphorus, and this set us back to some degree because we are the very first new venture in the province having to adhere to these standards. That has now been done.

A new share offering will be approved by our membership on October 11, when we have a general meeting to raise more cash. As directors we cannot simply approve this; it has to go through our general membership.

We hope that if all goes well, construction will start this fall, and by next year at this time we will have cattle walking through this plant.

**The Chair:** You have a business plan, obviously.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** The business plan is done. It was done by Deloitte & Touche. We will make a copy available to your committee for perusal.

**The Chair:** Is there anyone else?

**Mr. Inky Mark:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, thank you, Frieda and Ken, for appearing before the committee. I'm glad you're here to make the pitch to the committee of the federal government. When Andy Mitchell made the announcement of enhancing slaughter capacity in this country, in a way it was a joke, because \$66 million doesn't go very far. And half of that ended up with the CFIA. Then he decided basically that it wasn't real money, it was more on the insurance side.

As a country we need to increase slaughter capacity because we need to develop our own beef market in the world, so that we're not

so reliant on the Americans. There's no doubt that the cooperative approach is the way to go. Certainly in this riding, the only response I can give the people who are in the industry is no, the feds aren't going to give you any money.

So I'm glad to hear from you here, today.

•(1645)

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** I just want to say that as one of the originators of the plan, and having been involved with it from the get-go, I've travelled the province far and wide and have discovered places I didn't know existed in Manitoba. In November alone I put 5,000 kilometres on my car.

The one thing producers have told me over and over again is that they would rather have seen some of the federal money that was given for the TIS program go toward the slaughter facility. That would have been far more useful, because by now we would have had cattle slaughtered; they would not be sitting in our yards. You don't give people fish; you teach them how to fish.

I was sorting cattle this morning—I'm still hot from the sun. I have 20 to 25 old girls sitting there that I refuse to sell. Why? Because there are two people in this country who are going to make a killing on this—Cargill and Tyson, who now control 85% of our slaughter capacity. That is outrageous. I resent selling them; I have not sold them, but they're going to go because they're eating me out of house and home. So somebody else will get rich on my cattle, and that has to stop.

If I can make just one request, Rancher's Choice has always stayed apolitical because we feel this is not a political issue. So I would appeal to all members of this committee to support this effort in a cohesive and united way.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Frieda and Ken, for coming here this afternoon.

I can assure you this whole BSE issue has consumed a great deal of our time. As we reflect back on how we deliver programs, we know many mistakes were made, which is why the government is calling for a forensic audit on the packing houses. We know they made huge profits. We know they stole back the money we intended for farmers' use. We know all those things. But it's easier to say now what we should have done. People were urgently in need of money and the government tried to respond, not in a partisan way. In fairness to government, they tried to respond as quickly as they could. Hopefully we have learned some lessons in how we deliver programs.

I can assure you that your request today has not fallen on deaf ears. This committee will take this back, and I'm sure a number of us, probably all of us, will speak at some point to the minister and perhaps to Mr. Easter.

**Ms. Frieda Krpan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** So thank you very much. We certainly encourage you to keep working to develop more slaughter capacity. We're quite aware of the deficiency of that in the province of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for coming today, those who've been at the table and those who have listened intently. We haven't been heckled or

booed, and I haven't seen anyone even ready to throw anything. We felt quite comfortable here all day, except it got a little cold this morning for a bit.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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