



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

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

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AGRI • NUMBER 133 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Friday, March 29, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat Finnigan**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Friday, March 29, 2019

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

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

This meeting was requested by four members of the committee to discuss their request to undertake a study of China's recent halting of Canadian canola, wheat and pea sales to the Chinese market. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is proceeding to the consideration of the request.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

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

I want to thank my colleagues from all the parties for being here today to participate in this emergency meeting to request a study of a crisis that has been going on for some time. I'm talking about the canola crisis, which has been hitting Canadian canola producers hard since China's decision to block canola imports.

On March 21, our committee requested that a study be launched to discuss the crisis. Unfortunately, the committee members then refused to undertake a study on the crisis currently affecting us.

I'll read the motion before us:

That the Committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning China's recent halting of Canadian canola, wheat and pea sales to the Chinese market:

- a. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food;
- b. The Minister of International Trade Diversification;
- c. The Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- d. Officials from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; and
- e. Industry Representatives;

that all witnesses appear no later than Friday, March 29, 2019.

Since today is March 29, this motion will be amended in order to change the date, if everyone agrees. We'll introduce an amendment to this motion later.

For the time being, this is the motion before us. If I may, I can speak about this motion.

**The Chair:** I should follow the order, if you're done—

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I'm not finished yet. I just wanted to introduce the motion before talking about it. I'll start talking about the motion now.

China is Canada's second largest export market. Billions of Canadian agricultural and agri-food products are exported to China.

Canada exports 90% of the canola it produces. It exports 40% of its canola to China. In 2018, Canada exported 4.8 million tonnes of canola seed, valued at \$2.7 billion.

A number of other Canadian products are also exported to China. These products include peas, for \$700 million; soybeans, for \$1.7 billion; wheat, for \$593 million; flax, for \$167 million; and beef, for \$267 million. For the agriculture and agri-food sectors, the relationship between Canada and China is very important.

Why are we here today to ask the committee to meet with these ministers and with CFIA officials and industry representatives? I think that the study on the future of agriculture and Canadian exports must be carried out by the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. The issue concerns the agriculture and agri-food sector. As a result, on March 21, we requested that the committee study this crisis.

I know that a study is already under way at the Standing Committee on International Trade. Two ministers have already agreed to appear before that committee. Their appearance was supposed to last two hours. Unfortunately, the time was reduced to one hour. The meeting will take place next week.

Nevertheless, we're requesting that the ministers appear before us, at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Our questions will focus on how the current crisis is affecting agricultural producers and the entire canola industry in Canada.

There are 43,000 canola producers in Canada. According to Brian Innes, from the Canola Council of Canada, Canadian canola producers provide employment for over 250,000 people. This crisis directly affects these people.

When the price of canola drops, even by \$10, the money isn't taken from other parts of the production chain or from the government. The money is taken directly from the pockets of producers. We must hear the producers and industry representatives talk about the agriculture and agri-food perspective, and not just the trade perspective. This crisis will have major consequences.

Everyone recognizes that Canada produces the best quality canola in the world. Canadian research has resulted in an extraordinary product. This product is the envy of other countries and the pride of Canadians. It's totally absurd to claim that the canola shipped to China doesn't meet the quality criteria. We can't accept that excuse.

We definitely want to hear from the ministers, for a number of reasons. Here are some questions that we want to ask the ministers when they appear.

We have questions for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For example, what steps are being taken with China to find a solution to this crisis? Have official contacts been established with the Chinese government to resolve the crisis? The Prime Minister talked about sending a high-level delegation to China. Who does the Prime Minister want to send to China, and with whom does he want them to speak? Has the minister entered into discussions with Canada's traditional allies to exert pressure with regard to China's unfair decision? Is Canada considering special measures against China to exert pressure in order to resolve the crisis? We want to ask Minister Freeland these questions.

•(1105)

We also have questions for Minister Bibeau. Does she plan to participate in a mission to China? What measures does the government plan to take to protect canola producers and the canola industry in Canada? Does the minister plan to recommend to cabinet the solution proposed by the Premier of Saskatchewan? Does the minister recommend that producers move away from canola production and change their plans for the coming years?

In terms of agricultural production, we must hear what the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has to say about the future of canola in Canada and this crisis. We want her to tell us how long she thinks the crisis will last. It's important. To that end, we definitely need to invite the minister to come answer questions about agricultural producers.

We also have questions for Minister Carr. How does the minister plan to prevent the canola crisis from spreading to other crops in Canada? Does the minister know how much the Prime Minister's failures on the global stage have hurt Canadian producers? I'm thinking of the crises involving durum wheat exports to Italy and Vietnam, pulse exports to India, and, more recently, canola exports to China. There are also all the current crises that we're facing with Saudi Arabia. The government seems unable to resolve extremely significant crises for Canadian producers.

It's ironic, because I've heard this government repeatedly embrace the recommendations in the Barton report. The report recommended increasing the value of Canadian agricultural exports to \$75 billion. New recommendations then put this figure at \$85 billion. We seem to be really struggling to maintain our current exports, and that's worrisome. We need to hear what the Minister of International Trade Diversification has to say about how this drop in trade is affecting Canadian producers.

For all these reasons, we must carry out this study and hear from the three ministers, Canadian Food Inspection Agency officials, industry representatives, and even farmers and producers who are directly affected by the crisis.

We're currently talking about canola. We're officially discussing canola exports to China. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Producteurs de grains du Québec, and everyone expressed concern. Even though the markets for the other crops haven't been officially closed, people are reluctant to send their crops to China. They don't know whether they'll have buyers. The canola crisis is affecting much more than canola. It's also affecting the other crops. We must make every effort to ensure that this crisis doesn't spread to all the other agricultural and agri-food sectors in Canada.

I implore my colleagues to say yes to this motion.

•(1110)

[English]

I'm sure all Canadians want to hear from government officials and government ministers about what they are doing to solve this crisis. We need a solution and we need a solution fast. All of the producers and all Canadians want to have those answers from those who are responsible for the solution, namely, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of International Trade Diversification, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, officials from CFIA, and industry representatives.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said earlier, I'll have the opportunity to address this issue again.

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

Mr. Dreeshen, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Of course, I have canola in the bin right now, so this affects people like me and all farmers who have so much of it left. The road bans are on right now. It's difficult to get it to market. Then there is all of this uncertainty.

Certainly, canola is something that we as Canadians should be extremely proud of. My colleagues from Manitoba recognize that this is where it was developed. It is Canadian oil. That's really the critical part. We are extremely proud of what we do and what we have been able to do with this particular crop. The world understands that it is one of the best types of oilseed to be able to turn into a product for human consumption. It does affect everyone. We have companies in Quebec that crush oil and sell that oil into China right now. I had the opportunity to be in China a while ago, and these were the things we saw. We were trying to push for all types of products and to make sure there was great recognition for the quality products that are being produced. They know—the consumers in China understand—that Canadians are sending them the very best quality food there is, but unfortunately we have a political crisis. That is the concern that I have.

We were speaking about the timeline of the crisis. On March 5 there was a report that Canadians' largest grain handler, Richardson International, had their canola export licence cancelled over what the Chinese claimed were hazardous pests. That means taking a look at dockage and so on, which is something that is a standard part of grain handling, but there is another aspect as well. We did talk about having the witnesses, that is, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of International Trade Diversification and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, come and speak to this committee on Thursday, March 21. I had presented that motion on Friday, March 15, before some of the other things had taken place. As we know, on March 21 the Canola Council of Canada stated that the Chinese importers were refusing to purchase any canola seed from Canada. We could have been talking about that on that particular day, on March 21, but that didn't happen. Right now we know that Viterra's export licence has been suspended, again using that same bogus argument. I think that's a critical part. Again, we realize that contracts are not being filled. Where do you send that product when you have it sitting in your bins? This is a critical component that we have to look at.

I've been fortunate in this Parliament, as I was in the one before, to do some work with trade. My colleague Mr. Hoback and I spent time in the U.S. talking about some of the issues associated with both NAFTA and CETA, recognizing what had been taking place there. We spent some time in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand with the ASEAN countries, trying to see if there were other ways for us to move our products. These are all critical issues that our trade and foreign affairs ministers need to speak to. These are things that are necessary for each and every one of us to be able to bring to light.

As well, we speak about bringing in industry representatives, but we also need the farmers. It has to be the farmers talking. They are the ones on the ground. They are the ones seeing what is taking place. That, I think, is a critical component. This is something we should be sure to include as this study goes along.

So far we've seen delays and postponements. As I indicated, we could and should have been talking about this the same date that the Canola Council got their directions and directives. We can't continue to procrastinate. We all know that the government is seized with a lot of other issues at this particular point in time. I think it's critical. We can't expect much to come out of the PMO, but we can still expect something to come out of these ministerial departments and ministers who have that responsibility.

• (1115)

I think that's the critical part. We know that Canadian leadership is more than a ceremonial position. We have to make sure that we have people who in good faith are out there working as hard as they possibly can for our farmers and for canola.

Again, as was mentioned, people say that you're going to lose a little bit, \$10 here and \$20 there, as far as the bases are concerned and then with that changing to affect the prices we have. That comes directly out of the farmers' pockets. The grain elevation costs are exactly the same, and the cost to move it to wherever it may end up going is exactly the same. That is coming out of the farmers' pockets, and they are being hit with so many other things at this time. We know that in a couple of days there are going to be carbon taxes

associated with this. Another concern they have is in terms of all of the other problems associated with what is happening right now with this government.

We can take a look at what is happening in Alberta specifically. There is a provincial election taking place, of course, so we don't have that government-to-government relationship that can be handled. It's very important that we at least get some direction out of the federal government so that people out there have a little bit of hope.

Again, as has been mentioned, seeding intentions are critical. People have prepped the land for this. They've bought the fertilizer. They have the canola seed all ready to go. What do you do with that now? You can change to other commodities, but the concern is what's going to happen to those commodities as well. As we've seen, there are concerns about wheat and peas. That has been indicated here. We need to know. The government is going to have better information, and the CFIA is going to have better information, perhaps, than some of the industry leaders are going to have at this point in time. That, we need to have. We have to get that discussion going.

I think it's critical that we get this on the way as quickly as possible, and I thank Mr. Berthold for making sure that this is uppermost in everyone's mind.

Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Again, I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing me to come to the ag committee from the trade committee to present on this issue.

I know Mr. Dreeshen and Luc have been working really hard on this file in the ag committee. They are doing what they need to do to make sure this moves forward, and they are trying to do it again here today. I want to be here to support them, to make sure our farmers out west and the industries right across Canada know we have their backs.

You know, Chair, it's really frustrating. We were here before. We've made notice of the problem. Now we're seeing the problems expanding. It has now gone on to a second company. We're talking to people in the industry, and there's lots of confusion within the industry and about what's next.

When you talk about new crop canola, new crop wheat, new crop barley, new crop linseed or pulses, some people say that yes, they are going to be impacted. Some people say that no, they won't be impacted. Some people aren't sure what could be impacted. I think what they all agree on is that they really don't know, and that's the problem. Nobody knows what the future looks like, and there has been no guidance by this government to help provide or shine some light on what that looks like.

We don't know if the Prime Minister has reached out to the ambassador. We don't know if CFIA officials have been on the ground to just refute what we already know is not true, because everybody in this room will agree that we have the best canola in the world, that we have the best food products in the world, and that when we ship them abroad, we ensure they get the best of the best. We know it's not a quality issue. We know it's not an issue as far as that goes. This is a political issue. We do not have an ambassador in China right now. I need to know who is on the ground actually talking to officials in China in regard to this.

I'm also very concerned that this is going to spread to other sectors. Maple syrup could be next. Seafood could be next. We really don't know, and all of them are scared. All of a sudden, when you look at this, this could spread right across Canada. Canola is just a start.

The impact on the Canadian economy is going to be really huge all because the Prime Minister has created a bad relationship with China, all because of his actions on his first visit there, and a combination of things he has done that have not created a good working environment with our partners in China who buy our products.

We've seen this in other countries, such as India with pulses. What happened in India is really sad, but the people who pay for that are the farmers, the people who are exporting into that marketplace. In that situation, when the farmers couldn't ship to India, they managed to find a market. Guess where that market was: China. Guess what? That market is now in jeopardy too. Every time we turn around, whether it's the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, they are putting up hurdles for Canadian businesses to do business around the world.

Another example is that of Saudi Arabia. During this last crisis, Saudi Arabia bought a lot of canola and a lot of oil. They were actually a market for that product when China decided not to take it. We worked with Saudi Arabia. Yes, we have concerns with Saudi Arabia and human rights and women's rights. You bet we do, and we have influence with them when we trade with them. But when you have a situation in which they won't even talk to you, you have zero influence. You have zero impact. When they don't care what you have to say, that's exactly what happens. They don't care what you have to say.

Who pays? The farmers do. When we see the drop in price in the market—everybody says the canola market has dropped some \$20 a tonne or \$30 a tonne, or maybe \$40 a tonne, and it's maybe not done yet—that's the profit the farmer gets. That's not the cut for cargo or JRI or anybody else. That's not the cut for CN. That's not the cut for the food processor. That's the farmer's margin. That's his profit. That comes right out of his wallet, so if he needs to make adjustments to his planting intentions, he needs to do that now. That's why we need to have the ministers come forward now to tell us exactly what they plan to do.

Give us that road map on how you're going to improve these relationships with these countries, particularly China right now. Tell us what you're going to do. Are you going to have a temporary ambassador in China? Are you going to appoint a special envoy? Who will be that envoy? What are they going to talk about? Have

you talked to the ambassador? Have you invited him into your office? Has the Prime Minister sat down and had a heart-to-heart with them? I don't know; farmers don't know, and I can assure you nobody over there knows. It has been going on for three weeks, so why haven't you?

Has the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked to them? I don't know. She's not talking on the subject. The Minister of Agriculture two weeks ago said the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the lead on this topic, but they won't allow her to come in front of committee, which blows my mind because she's actually very good in committee. I worked with her when I was the chair of the trade committee. She was an excellent member of the committee. She could provide a lot of insight on what's going on, and farmers would appreciate that insight. Why they are putting her in the corner I don't know. I can't figure that one out.

● (1120)

I'm glad the Minister of International Trade Diversification and the Minister of Agriculture are in Saskatchewan today. Where have they been? You don't need a passport to go to Saskatchewan, and it shouldn't take an invite from the Premier of Saskatchewan to get them there. That's what it took. That's outrageous. This issue has been rearing its head for three weeks now going on four and they're just starting to engage. The Prime Minister is starting to consider that maybe we should send an envoy. It's very frustrating, but let's put that behind us.

What I need to know is what they're going to do now, and what they're going to do in the future. What are our trade commissioners doing on the ground? Who are they talking to? How are they talking to our customers there on the ground? What's being said there? How is that intelligence coming back to farmers here in Canada? How is it being shared with the agriculture community? Is it being shared with the agriculture community? Those are the things we need to work on. Are we going to have an envoy? Great. Who's going to be part of that envoy?

Again, seeding is around the corner. If you're going to do this, it has to happen now. Have you asked for the visit? Again, all these questions should have been asked two weeks ago, not now. The frustration's there, but we'll take what we get. The reality is that we brought the committee back, and I appreciate your doing that, Chair, but you could have come back on Wednesday or Thursday. I'm not sure why we're here on Friday. If we could have come in here on Thursday, we could have dealt with this. The ministers could have been here on Friday. If they want to come tomorrow, I'll stay here and I'll talk to them tomorrow. If it's Sunday, that's fine, because we came back on Sunday for the trade committee.

This is urgent. It needs to be dealt with now. The Conservatives are ready to deal with it now, and I know the NDP member is, too. You may notice that the NDP member flew the farthest. He was back in B.C. He hopped on a plane late last night and he's here today. Look at my colleagues from Manitoba and my colleagues from Alberta. They know that this is an important issue not only for their provinces, but for our country. That's why I really appreciate Luc standing up across the country and saying that we're going to have farmers' backs. Whether they're in the canola industry, the supply management sector, the maple syrup sector or the seafood sector, we'll have their backs.

We need to do something. Are you going to do something? You have the majority. The ball is in your court. You decide.

● (1125)

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

Now we have Mr. Falk.

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure for me to be here this morning. I wish I didn't have to be here. I wish I could be back in my riding and meeting with constituents. I had a farm visit lined up at a brand new poultry farm that has the latest technology in the egg industry. I was supposed to bring greetings. I'd sooner be doing that than be here, but I am here because I think it's an extremely important and urgent issue that has seized us. It's something that this committee needs to grasp and needs to get a hold of. That's why I fully support the motion that's on the table to bring to this committee the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of International Trade Diversification and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as departmental officials, industry individuals and farmers, to provide not only questions for us to look at but perhaps some answers. They could be terribly important.

As for what I've done, I've been hearing back from some of the farmers in my riding about this issue. In just a moment, I'm going to read a few quotes. This issue started almost a month ago with the export permit for Richardson's canola to China being revoked. That has been followed up now on the permit for Viterra. I'm sure there are going to be others.

We're unable to sell our canola into the Chinese market. That's 40% of our 90% of exports. We count on exports for our canola industry. Canola is a \$26-billion industry here in Canada. We have 43,000 farmers who are canola producers in this country. This isn't an issue that affects just a handful of people. It's not an issue that affects just a couple of trading companies that want to do business with China. This is an issue that affects 250,000 individuals working in the canola industry and 43,000 canola producers. This is a very big and significant issue and it requires us to take immediate action.

Some of the farmers in my riding have communicated with us. I want to briefly share a few comments from them.

The first one is from a farmer from the Oakbank area. Howard Bredin says, "This is definitely a concern. I've seen a dollar-a-bushel drop, which is a significant portion of the profit. I'd be tempted to grow less canola going forward." Volker Wyrich, from the RM of Springfield, says, "We're extremely concerned about market access and a potential clampdown on other imports. We're up against the wall here. We're cutting back on canola because of this."

Greg Smith, from the RM of Springfield, says, "We're slated to seed 800 acres of canola, but we're contemplating dropping that down. It's hard to be optimistic about what to grow this coming year." Another farmer from Springfield says, "We have enough challenges marketing and growing a crop without getting dragged into a political quagmire." Jeff Van Ryssel says, "I've already shifted to other crops out of worry of what's going to happen. This will have long-term detrimental effects to the Canadian economy."

Vernon Froese, a farmer close to Grunthal in the RM of Hanover, says, "We're seeing 23 million canola acres put in jeopardy. This puts downward pressure on prices for every other crop as well. Wheat, soybeans, corn and barley will all be affected." Finally, Roger Vaags, from the RM of Springfield, says, "Is Mr. Trudeau leaving farmers to bear the consequences of this political conflict or is he prepared to support out canola farmers like the U.S. administration did with its aid package to soybean growers?"

Those are just a few of the comments we've received in my office from farmers in my constituency. There are farmers right across Canada who have similar concerns and other questions in addition to these. This is an issue that we need to be seized with. Spring planting is just around the corner. Farmers need to know what they're going to be planting this year. Is there a market for the crop they want to grow?

Many of these farmers are already committed. They've done their fall work. They've already prepared their soils, their quarter sections and their acres, to grow this canola crop. There's an opportunity for some of them to switch gears and change, but they need to have the assurance that they have the backing of this government, and that our government here in Canada is prepared to support them and to resolve this trade issue with China. It's not a quality control issue. We know that our products here in Canada are world-class products. Nobody produces a better product than we do.

● (1130)

No one from the Chinese side has been able to produce any evidence that would suggest the allegations they've made about quality control are actually true and factual. We know they're false. We know that we have the highest-quality product of anywhere in the world and that's what China has been benefiting from all these years.

This is obviously a political issue. It's something that our ministers and our Prime Minister need to be seized with. He needs to get on the phone to whoever it is. As you know, we don't even have an ambassador in China at the moment who can be our advocate, the advocate for 43,000 farmers and for 250,000 people employed in the canola industry here in Canada. Who is our advocate in China? We need somebody on the ground. We need boots on the ground.

Many political leaders across the western provinces have been asking for a very high-level delegation to be sent to China to negotiate this political crisis. The question is: Who is going to be part of that delegation. Also, who are they going to be meeting with? What are the issues that we need to be addressing here at committee?

Mr. Chair, I just want to impress upon you once again that this is a good motion. It's a motion that will enable this committee to move the issue forward and to move the ball a little closer to the goal line. We have to get the ball across the line and get this trade issue resolved. It's a political issue, and we need to know what our ministers and politicians are doing.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to reiterate as well my regrets that I have to be here today, I guess, because we're right in the middle of the Royal Winter Fair in Brandon, Manitoba. It's one of only two royal winter fair designations in this country. It's a big event for our western Manitoba area and particularly for the city of Brandon. I spent the last three days there.

This issue that we're talking about today started back when Brandon hosted the brier back in early March. I've had farmers coming to me every day with their concerns since this happened back at the beginning of March. What are they going to do in terms of their seeding intentions this year? What has happened in terms of the drop in prices they've had since the beginning of December? If we've lost 40% of the sale of our canola, as my colleagues have pointed out, that's just under roughly two million tonnes of canola that we've lost exports for. That's a huge hit to the economy of the Prairies. At \$500 a tonne—that's where the price was when this started, but it's much lower now—you can see that the agriculture hit is at nearly \$1 billion.

We have a situation where our agriculture minister in Manitoba on Monday called for a face-to-face meeting between politicians in Canada and those in China. Premier Moe from Saskatchewan did the same, as did the ag minister in Saskatchewan. The only reason Mr. Eichler didn't include the Alberta minister is that they're in the middle of an election right now. I've had retailers come to me saying that they're very concerned about the farmers coming into their shops already talking about cutting back on the seed purchases they've already made for this particular year. A lot of those are made at the end of their fiscal year. The crop rotation we have in agriculture is three to four years in canola. Farmers make these decisions three to four years out in regard to the kind of crop program they'll have, the amount of canola they'll grow and the inputs they'll require. That's

how long out the budgeting process can be impacted by decisions that are beyond these farmers' control.

We have a situation today where, of course, we are faced with this motion. I want to thank my colleague Luc Berthold from Quebec, as our ag critic, for bringing this to the attention of the committee. I also thank the committee for holding today's meeting. It is important, as you can see with the agriculture ministers who are already involved, that we have our Minister of Agriculture here at a subsequent meeting, along with the Minister of International Trade Diversification. My colleague from Saskatchewan, Mr. Hoback, just indicated the importance of making sure that we have the trade side here. This is definitely what this is about, the 253,000 jobs and 43,000 farmers, if I can reiterate what my colleagues have said. A lot of these jobs are on the west coast. They're in the cleaning and handling of the product in the terminals as it is loaded. There are a lot of union jobs involved in this also as they load those ships and make sure that the product is secure as well as safe.

The quality of this product is not in question. We have an extremely beneficial and thorough checking program through the Canadian Grain Commission and the CFIA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. They do their work on a regular basis to check every outgoing shipment of grain that leaves our ports so that we know the quality of it when it leaves.

The other area was one that was mentioned yesterday when I was at a Brandon Chamber of Commerce luncheon before we raced out of there to catch a plane to get here last night. Over 300 business people in a community like Brandon showed up for a luncheon yesterday, and this was a main topic of concern for all of them as well. They know how important that cash flow is in our western Manitoba area to all of their businesses, whether they're in the retail industries, in clothing, in food industries, grocery stores or wherever.

I met with Bill Campbell, too, the president of Keystone Agricultural Producers, the general farm organization in Manitoba. He asked, "What can we do?" Basically he was saying that they're so frustrated. They don't know what's happened. They don't know what the government's plan is. They don't know if the government is talking to China. They don't know if the bureaucrats are talking to China. There are rumours that they are. I would hope that they are.

For the president of a general farm organization like that not to be included, as our colleagues in other provinces need to know those things as well, I think raises the issue of why this is such an emergency. That's also why we need the foreign affairs minister here. They know that this has gone on for at least a month already without the kinds of meetings that they feel are necessary to be able to bring the discussion point back to China on the political side. That is a big concern to them.

•(1135)

They know as well from their involvement in the Grain Commission and other areas that the quality of our product is not at question here. With regard to the dockage that goes into the loads, when it comes from the farm, with canola particularly, there's very little dockage as it leaves the farm, so that shouldn't even be a concern or a question here, because it's so easy to clean canola right out of the combine when it's being harvested.

The issue they're claiming is that it is way beyond their control. That's why they want to have officials from CFIA here, to find out about the scientific part of it, what they've done and how they do their checks. We can outline that, because we all know what the process is, but it would still be nice to hear from them.

I think it would be good to have some of the industry representatives themselves, who have been impacted by the sales of their product, and representatives of the grain companies appear before us.

It might even be good to have someone here just to make sure that the railroads are represented as well, to look at the kinds of handling that they feel are necessary and to see that there's no contamination or quality disturbance from their end either. From their end, it's pretty simple, I think.

The general public may need to know that. I think the agriculture industry already knows that it's a safe bet the quality of our product is as good when it comes off the ship as it is when it goes in.

With those areas, Mr. Chair, I guess I can reiterate to my colleagues—I've already done that—the importance of the value of the canola products to our industry. I'd also like to say that we have included soybeans in that. I think we're looking at 59% of our soybean industry exports going to China, about 1.7 billion dollars' worth a year as well. We're just into the process in western Manitoba, southern Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan of developing an expanding soybean industry right now as well. We certainly don't want to see these types of trade scenarios become the rule in other crops, as well as livestock areas that may be of concern as well.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair, for right now. If there's anything else that we can add after our colleagues have spoken, we'd be glad to help with that as well. Thank you.

•(1140)

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

Monsieur Drouin.

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

I want to say right from the get-go that we do agree in principle with the motion but there is a “but”. What we don't want to do is double the efforts of the international trade committee. I think that was the reason we did not accept the last motion.

I also want to talk a little bit about the delays and part of the reasons for those. I think it's important to take accountability when there are delays. We could have heard from officials on March 21 if the opposition had not decided to create a voting marathon for 30 hours. We could have done that, but they chose otherwise.

I also want to say that we are extremely focused on that. The minister is focused on it, and the Prime Minister is focused on this issue. I can't talk to what the opposition will do, but I know that last Friday they had some 30-plus questions to ask to the government, and only one question was asked on canola—only one question. I'm not going to answer on the reason for that. They can answer that themselves.

We know, and it is a fact, that CFIA was already in contact, last week, with the Chinese government. It is a fact that CFIA has been in contact with the Chinese government again this week. We know as well—and I think Mr. Hoback mentioned it—that Minister Carr and Minister Bibeau are meeting with the Canadian Canola Growers Association, the Canola Council of Canada, and the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission today; there are round tables.

Our government is taking this seriously. It is taking this approach, and it is meeting with stakeholders and industry associations that represent farmers. For us to agree to a motion...we're not going to invite the Minister of Agriculture back to this committee simply to say the same things she's going to say at international trade. I know Mr. Hoback is a member of that committee, so he will hear what she has to say at that particular committee. We're not going to invite the Minister of International Trade Diversification either. He's going to appear in front of that committee as well.

I think if we're going to move forward with a motion, we have to be seen to be adding value. I think there is a lot of merit in having industry associations appear in front of this committee. I think we should be inviting officials from CFIA and potentially from Agriculture Canada to ensure that, yes, in case the worst-case scenario happens, we will be there to help them. I know Premier Moe has asked for advance payments for that particular threshold to be lifted. I don't know if that's the answer, but I do want to ask industry representatives about that. I think it's important that this committee find out whether it's the right way forward.

With that I would move an amendment to that particular motion. Before I do, though, I think it's also important that we don't cause fearmongering among other industries. I don't see the particular value of having other commodities appear before this committee. We know for a fact that nothing official has been done to other commodities. I think it's important that we spend our time on canola producers and that we hear, with regard to the notice of non-compliance from China and with regard to canola exports to China.

I think Mr. Berthold has already alluded to this. Obviously the date is going to have to be changed. March 29 is today, and here we are talking about this.

I would move:

That the Committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning official notices of non-compliance from China for export of Canadian canola seeds:

- a. Officials from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; and
- b. Industry Representatives

and that all witnesses appear no later than Friday, April 12, 2019.

•(1145)

We can discuss as soon as possible when we would like to hear from witnesses. It's going to be a matter of who's available as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

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

An amendment to the motion was introduced.

Mr. MacGregor, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate everyone's comments about how they'd rather be in their constituencies, but I think we can all agree that we are elected as members of Parliament and when duty calls, we have to come to Ottawa, and this is one particular example.

I don't have canola growing in my riding, but I certainly appreciate the importance it has to the Canadian economy. I don't want to belabour the points that have been made by my Conservative colleagues, but it's not just the canola; it's also the spinoff effects. Those farmers reinvest those profits in their communities. They make investments in machinery. They hire a lot of people. The canola doesn't come off the field by itself, so we also have to take into account the spinoff effects.

As has been said, farmers have to make their plans as to what types of crops they're going to plant months, if not a year, in advance. It requires a lot of planning. We in this committee have been seized with a number of studies, notably our recent study on farmers' mental health. We heard a lot of testimony about how the unknown variables, especially the environmental factors but also not knowing the commodity prices or whether trade deals are going to be honoured, all wear on farmers' mental health. We heard very substantive testimony in that regard. This is one of those moments where, yes, we do have a number of studies that we're working on, but at times like this, I think the committee has to come together and realize the seriousness of the situation, and we have to act upon it.

I want to address Mr. Drouin's point about the ministers. Next week we are going to have two ministers appear before the international trade committee. I think Mr. Hoback said it's down to one hour. We're going to have two ministers appear jointly for just one hour. That's the only interaction we will get to have. Reference has been made to the fact that, yes, we have access to ministers during question period, but come on. With 35 seconds to ask a question and 35 seconds for an answer, how in the world can we have a substantive discussion on such an important issue in question period?

With regard to what happened last week, Mr. Drouin knows perfectly well that in a majority government, the opposition has very limited procedural tools at its disposal. He knows that the whole 30-hour voting marathon was directly linked to what's going on with Madam Jody Wilson-Raybould and SNC-Lavalin. In fact, I was in the chamber a number of times when motions were moved on points of order to stop the voting marathon, if we simply allowed her to come and say her piece. I want to put that on the record, Mr. Chair.

Multiple attempts were made through points of order to stop that and they were all rejected by the Liberals.

That's beside the point. The point I want to make is that the last time we had a minister appear before the agriculture committee was November 29. We did not have the chance during the recent financial cycle to have Minister MacAulay appear. We now have a new minister. Therefore, to say that having a one-hour exchange with two ministers at another committee is sufficient is completely off the mark.

I think it's great that the ministers are reaching out to industry representatives, but in our responsible system of government where we're lucky to have the executive branch sit within the House of Commons, one of the best things that the legislative branch does is its oversight of ministries and agencies.

The buck stops with the minister. We need to have more than an hour. If Minister Carr and Minister Bibeau are so sure of the policies they're putting into place, then I think they can stand up for themselves, appear before this committee for two hours and sufficiently explain their actions and defend themselves, if they're very confident that they're doing everything they can.

On a final note, as a member of Parliament, I may not represent canola farmers, but we have a number of people here who do. Members of Parliament speak for their communities. We are their representatives. We were sent here to Ottawa to represent specific geographic areas of Canada. It would be a shame not to allow members of Parliament who represent canola-growing regions to have that chance to have a polite, respectful exchange with the minister on exactly what's going on.

•(1150)

This is the crux of the matter. The conversation today and the amendment being proposed are precisely why we wanted to have this meeting out in the open and televised so that the Canadian public knows where the respective parties fall on this issue.

I hope the amendment that was made by Mr. Drouin is defeated and that we can honour the original amendment. I think it's incredibly important to have the ministers, and at the very least, the agriculture minister, appear before the agriculture committee. Canola is an agricultural product. This is absolutely an important issue.

I have a number of questions. This raises serious questions about our relationship with China. Look at the track record of China in international trade rules. They have a track record of systematically violating WTO rules. We know that they use their trade policy as a vehicle to give their state-owned enterprises access to strategic markets and critical areas. If it was a fully functioning, accountable and transparent democracy, I think we could all rest a bit easier, but it's not.

If in the future we are going to try to pursue more access to the Chinese market, I think we should be very concerned. We can look at this stroke of a pen whereby they can simply say no to 40% of one of our most valuable agricultural exports. What kinds of contingency plans does this government have in place for when that eventuality happens? This is happening now. If we are able to fix this in the next couple of months, what's to say it won't happen again in another year or two years with another agricultural product?

These are serious questions and we, as the people's representatives in a democratic open system, demand access to the ministers so that those two ministers can explain their actions.

I think I've made my point, Chair, as to why I will be supporting the original motion. I seriously hope that my Liberal colleagues have been listening to my arguments and will find it in their hearts to agree with me.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

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

My Liberal colleague's comments show how out of touch the Liberals are with the current situation in the west. It's totally ironic. He said that we couldn't hear from witnesses last week because the opposition used one of its only recourse methods to make the government listen to reason in the SNC-Lavalin case and to hear from witnesses. Mr. Drouin said this. Mr. Drouin was the one who shut down the public meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. He blames us for the 30 hours of voting, when all this came from him. Today, he's criticizing us for not holding a meeting, when he was the one who shut down a public hearing on the SNC-Lavalin case, an issue that Canadians wanted to hear about.

Last week, I proposed a number of times that the government end the voting marathon by allowing Jody Wilson-Raybould to speak and by allowing the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to continue its study. Each time, people said no. Today, the person who shut down the study of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights is trying to prevent the ministers from speaking to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and is criticizing us for not holding this meeting last week. It's totally ridiculous.

[*English*]

I heard my colleagues from the west. They talked about real stories. They talked about real things. They talked about real fear. This is not fearmongering. This is the reality. They are afraid of what will happen.

You don't want to hear that? You just said that this is fearmongering. Go there and talk to them. You will see that this is a real fear. You will see they are really afraid of what's coming up with China.

It is unbelievable, Mr. Chair, that we heard that from that Liberal colleague. I hope he will go to the west. I hope he will go and listen to the farmers, to the canola growers, and hear what they have to say, because they are afraid of what's happening right now with China. They don't know how to deal with that. They will lose a lot of money, Mr. Chair.

• (1155)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the member is mistaken. I never talked about fearmongering for canola growers. I just said that for other sectors we don't want to further these issues by fearmongering—yes, potentially adding to the fear of those anxieties

—but we certainly want to hear from canola growers here at this committee.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks for the clarification.

Go ahead, Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, this shows how completely out of touch my colleague is with reality. Canola producers don't only produce canola. They produce other things. Again, we've just seen how out of touch the Liberals are with reality. Canola producers produce other things, because in agriculture there's something called crop rotations.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I didn't know.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** It shows, Mr. Drouin.

Farmers do crop rotations and there are concerns about all of that. The other producers I met yesterday from Cereals Canada are really worried about everything that is coming.

This shows to what extent this crisis is not being taken seriously by the government.

As you may recall, in the beginning of March, we sent a letter. It was not signed by all of the members of the opposition, because we did not have the opportunity to collect everyone's signature. That said, in the beginning of March, long before the Standing Committee on International Trade began to examine this question, we had requested that the ministers appear here so that we could discuss this situation. So this is an unacceptable and incomprehensible excuse. I don't know what people are afraid of.

What you will remember is that the first time we invited the new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to come to testify here before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, she fled. The Liberals are refusing to hear their new minister at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. This is unacceptable. This is a crisis that affects farmers. Not only does it affect canola producers, but all other producers as well. It is going to affect maple products and perhaps also pork and beef; we don't know. We want to hear the minister. At the first opportunity the Liberals have to talk about this file, what do they say? They tell us that they don't want to hear the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I think this silence speaks volumes. What is she afraid of? Why does she not want to come to this committee?

To my knowledge, next week, the Standing Committee on International Trade will be hearing the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. She agreed to appear before that committee but not before the agriculture committee. The Standing Committee on International Trade will also hear the Minister of International Trade Diversification; it is normal that he appear there, since that is his committee. We had also asked that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Freeland, appear. Unfortunately, she will not be here. She can come and testify at this committee if she wants to; we will welcome her. It would not be duplication. However, you did not propose that. Ms. Bibeau herself stated that the dossier is currently in the hands of Ms. Freeland, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The only person the Liberals do not want to see at the Standing Committee on International Trade or at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is Ms. Freeland.

It is time we woke up. There is a real crisis and it is urgent.

There is another element in the amendment that is totally absurd. There has been a crisis since the month of March and the suggestion is that we hold a meeting with representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and industry representatives on April 12 at the latest. Why postpone that to April 12? We should have heard representatives from the agency and the industry this week or at the beginning of next week, at least. Why wait two weeks?

We should hear these people at our next meeting. We should hold an extraordinary meeting Sunday; that would not bother me. We could also hear them Monday. Why wait? There really is a crisis. The entire canola industry is worried and that concern also affects all grain producers in Canada. We are also concerned for all of our productions.

A record quantity of canola is continuing to accumulate in silos in the west. Why? You will remember that it was a hard winter and harvest. There were also transportation problems again. The current crisis is generating a lot of uncertainty.

• (1200)

[English]

A recent article states that the “majority of Canada’s harvest is stored on-farm. As such, many farmers fear they won’t have the space they need to store the 2019 harvest if the situation with China isn’t resolved soon.”

The article also states that there are concerns about “possible bottlenecks throughout Canada’s grain handling system that could restrict the grain industry’s ability to get other crops to market. Canada’s rail system is already operating at or near capacity.... [This] dispute with China has cost the Canadian canola industry [approximately] \$1 billion in losses since it began in early March. Meanwhile, the Canola Council of Canada said prices have dropped 10 per cent in recent weeks.”

Falling prices also mean that many farmers in western Canada haven’t contracted as much grain as they traditionally do because current prices are simply too low. The article states that crop spoilage is “another thing that farmers are worried about”, and that last year’s “challenging harvest”, due to early snowfall and high moisture, “means a lot of the canola currently stored on-farm in western

Canada has a higher moisture level than normal, which means the crop cannot be stored as long.”

This is the reality, Mr. Chair. This is why it is urgent to act right now, not in two weeks.

We need to hear from the new ag minister. She doesn’t have to fear us. We want answers for Canadians. We want answers for canola growers. We want answers for producers. We want to hear from the trade minister. We want to tell him how important it is for farmers that trade with other countries be predictable. We must say that as producers and from an agricultural viewpoint. We must tell him. We should. The one who is responsible for naming an ambassador for trade, for a relationship with China, won’t appear at any of these two committees...? This is unacceptable, Mr. Chair. That’s why we cannot accept this amendment.

We will not accept this amendment. We will not let the Liberals get away with this. Producers need answers. I hope they will focus on something else other than the cover-up they have been worried about for eight or nine weeks now. That’s the real problem.

It’s now time to take up your responsibility and do the right thing. Let the ministers appear before us and have this meeting as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Hoback, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thanks, Chair.

You talked about March 21. The Liberals control the committee. The chair could have had that meeting if he still wanted to, and we were going to be there. In fact, if he wanted to do it the next morning, we would have been there. The voting was done well before that meeting was to start. The CFIA officials are here in Ottawa. We could have had that meeting. He chose not to.

Liberals have majorities on these committees. I can’t change that. When the chair says “I want to go home”, which is what he did, I can’t do anything about it. What makes me even more upset is that he reschedules the meeting, and what does he do? He breaks his word. His word to us on the committee was that he was going to give each minister an hour and then have two hours for officials. What did he do? He combined it in one meeting because that’s easy. It’s convenient; we can do that, get it done, get it off the plate and get back home.

That's what we're facing on the trade committee, so make it right on the ag committee here. Do it properly. Do a proper study. Make sure farmers understand what's going on. That's all they want. There's no scandal here, so you don't have to worry—other than the scandal the Prime Minister has with relationships with other countries, but that's a different topic. It's really unfortunate that agriculture producers across Canada are paying for that. I'll use an example. Hutchinson Acres in f Nova Scotia had all this maple syrup in bottles ready to go to Saudi Arabia until one tweet. Thankfully, Canadians said that we would help them out. We bought the syrup in those bottles. They were able to move it here in Canada.

Those are the consequences when the Minister of Foreign Affairs just goes rogue. Those are the consequences when the Prime Minister doesn't take foreign relationships seriously. Those are the problems when you're not having ongoing relationships with countries around the world—even countries that you don't agree with. You know what? If you want to change them, trade with them. Show them a better way. Talk about how things are better in Canada because we let women drive. They look at that and they appreciate that, and they slowly start to respect what we do and how we do it, and they want to do the same thing. Quit preaching.

What this committee needs to do.... It doesn't have a choice, or at least I don't see it. If it does, then it's really neglecting its role as parliamentarians.... They need to do exactly what this motion asks for and they need to do it now. So let's bring in people tomorrow. Let's bring them in on Sunday and Monday. Farmers are making decisions right now, not on April 12. On April 12 in southern Alberta they will be in the fields. That's why it should have been done two weeks ago. We tried to tell you that. You won't listen. Please listen. Jesus....

• (1205)

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

Now we have Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I think my colleague pretty well covered the ground that I was going to get into in regard to the present scandals that are going on. There's only time for one question, and March 21 was too late to have had the emergency meeting anyway. We should have had our emergency meeting before that, before the international trade meeting that we've already had. We should have had this before so it could be dealt with.

In yesterday's Globe and Mail one farmer indicated that they're already in the fields in Alberta now. That's in the Globe and Mail, so you can have a look at that for yourselves. I guess it may be early but they're in the fields.

Canola is just one industry. I agree at present it looks like it's the only formal one that's being dealt with here, but if you ask the industry, they're very skittish on being able to manage this. How would you feel if you were shipping something to somebody and they decided, on what we think is a non-tariff barrier basically, that your product isn't fit anymore? Would you ship them another crop? That's why we're hearing rumours about some of the other crops that are out there as well.

I think that's unacceptable. All farmers want to know, and the industry wants to know, is what the plan is to get this solved. That's

why it's so important to have these people appear before the agriculture committee. I cannot believe that the agriculture minister, if they asked her, wouldn't want to appear before the agriculture committee. It just makes common sense that we would deal with this here. If this isn't an agricultural issue, as well as a trade issue, I don't know what is. If it isn't affecting foreign affairs, then what would?

I think it's important to have those three ministers together, but we need more than an hour, as has been pointed out. I was at that international trade meeting when we were promised two hours. We could have a separate meeting with the officials, as well as one with the ministers. They both should have been held ages ago, and we've still not had either one of them.

I'll just leave it at that.

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

Mr. Dreeshen.

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

I'd like to make a subamendment to the amendment to change the date from April 12 to April 5. I would then like to reinsert the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of International Trade Diversification and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I've been on the ag committee....

**The Chair:** You cannot reinsert things that were in a previous motion, but you can change the date.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Then I will change the date.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, just for clarification, we do not know if witnesses will be able to appear before April 5, so we gave that timeline. Otherwise, we're going to have to come back and redo the motion to reinstate the witnesses. That was the point of April 12. We certainly hope that witnesses will be able to appear in front of this committee as quickly as possible, but that was why the April 12 date was there. That's just a point of clarification on that.

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

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I thank the member for that clarification. However, it seems as though there is a serious lack of trust, and that is the main reason I am saying we have to deal with it. If the member recalls, in the notices of motion that I presented—it would have been three weeks ago—even with April 5.... I think it is extremely critical that this be done immediately.

We put out into the public, "Oh, we don't care until April 12." Maybe we can talk here about the nuances of what that means, but that is not what our producers are looking at, their concerns.

I would concur with the chair and simply state the point about having April 5 as the deadline.

Then, to speak to some of this, I have sat on the ag committee, both when we were in government and now in opposition, for many, many years. It has always been focused on the producer, not focused on what CFIA might be able to do and that type of thing. I'm starting to see that shift away. We've seen it with Canada's food guide. We've seen it with the transportation regulations changes for livestock. We have seen all of these types of things in which the only focus is what the government departments are doing. We try to get in there and give the farmers' perspective on what is taking place, and then we get stonewalled.

I'm speaking only to the date right now because this is on the subamendment. That's why I think it is so critical that we at least let farmers and producers and industry know that we are engaged with this and that it is uppermost in our minds. Going from March 21 to April 5 is bad enough, but I believe that should be how we deal with that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1210)

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

The subamendment is to change the date to April 5. That is what we would have to vote on at this time, the subamendment.

Monsieur Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, I would ask the clerk for advice, just before we take a vote on this. We're certainly supportive. What I don't want to do is to come back here and have another meeting after April 5 if none of the witnesses we're inviting is available before April 5 and if doing this will cause more delay for witnesses to appear. I would defer to the clerk. How can we make sure that...? We want to be supportive. We'll support the subamendment for April 5, but we don't want to have another meeting after if the witnesses are not available until after April 5. We just don't want to have another meeting to again discuss witnesses coming back to committee. How do we avert that, to make it happen as quickly as possible?

**The Chair:** We would know by Tuesday, April 2. Then we could modify the subamendment if need be. That's how it could work.

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Again, I'm concerned that you're saying Tuesday. No, you can start doing this today.

**The Chair:** Yes, she would, in fact, invite people, starting now, but we would know Tuesday if they are available.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm saying you could know today if some are available and have a meeting tomorrow.

**The Chair:** Well, I don't know if that's the case.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** You're the chair. You can do what you want. If you want to start this, I'm more than willing. My colleagues are here. We're ready to go to work. CFIA could be here today, later this afternoon, even this evening if they wanted to.

**The Chair:** The subamendment is for April 5 at the latest. It will give her a chance, on Tuesday, to know if these people are available. That's what we would be voting on right now.

Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Again, it's "no later than" Friday, April 5. It is not for April 5. My point was that, by stretching it out—and I understand what Mr. Drouin was saying. We need to push. We need to let people know. Yes, I can stick around this afternoon or tomorrow, Saturday, or Sunday in order to deal with this.

**The Chair:** I'm here all weekend.

Monsieur Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I don't think the issue is the members being here. I think the issue is whether or not witnesses can appear. We all don't have a problem before that; it's just that the witnesses have to be able to appear. I know that some of them are in Saskatchewan right now. I don't know what their weekend schedule is and I'm not going to pretend that...

I know. I'm aware, but in terms of the earliest convenience, if you're saying that Tuesday is the earliest convenience that they could show up, then we're ready to have witnesses show up on Tuesday. Again, I'm ready to have them on Monday or whatever day you want to pick. I just don't know how soon witnesses will be able to appear in front of this committee. I know we're all here, but we have to think about the fact that we need witnesses.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** We have a subamendment on the table. If there are no other comments, we can vote on it at this time.

I will read the subamendment.

[*Translation*]

It reads as follows:

[...] that all witnesses appear no later than Friday, April 5, 2019.

[*English*]

Yes, Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** On a point of order, Chair, with regard to the subamendment, is the only thing changed from our original amendment—

**The Chair:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] the original.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Can you read the whole amendment?

**The Chair:** The subamendment is only about the date, about April 5. That's all we're voting on right now. Then we'll move back to the amendment itself.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Again, who is in favour of the subamendment? Can I have a show of hands?

**Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.):** Could you read for clarity, please, the amendment and the subamendment?

**The Chair:** Right now we're just voting on the subamendment. All we need to vote on right now is the date.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** We're voting on the date?

**The Chair:** Just the date; that's it.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Okay. Then I would speak to the amendment after the date.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** This is the subamendment that is being put to a vote:

[...] that all witnesses appear no later than Friday, April 5, 2019.

Who is in favour of the subamendment?

[English]

Can I have a show of hands—

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** I am sorry. I'd like some clarification as to which subamendment we are voting on. Is it Mr. Hoback's or Mr. Dreeshen's?

**The Chair:** It is Mr. Dreeshen's subamendment. We are only voting on the date.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Very well. Who are the witnesses?

**The Chair:** The motion only refers to the deadline for the meeting. It does not change the witness list.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** I know, but there is a motion, nevertheless.

**The Chair:** Afterwards, we will vote on the amendment. Right now, we are discussing the subamendment, which only concerns the date.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** So, we are voting on the subamendment to the subamendment introduced by Mr. Drouin.

**The Chair:** It is Mr. Dreeshen's subamendment, which is about replacing the date of April 12 by April 5.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Which witnesses will be present?

**The Chair:** For the moment, we are only voting on the date. After that, we will return to the amendment and we will vote on the witnesses.

[English]

Again, can we have a show of hands?

(Subamendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback, you wanted to talk about the amendment.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes. Again, I'm glad we're making some movement on the dates. It's good to see that clause is in the motion, and I want to build on that, too.

Mr. Drouin, I think you should withdraw this amendment and go back to the original motion. Without having the appropriate witnesses here, what good is having the meetings? If anything, just amend it to include producers. You need the three ministers. You need them. You know that. Everybody over there knows that. Everybody over here knows that. So leave them there.

I'd ask you to withdraw it or change it to include producers. Actually, I identify producers as industry representatives anyway, so I guess they're already included. That's fine. Just withdraw it and let's vote on the main motion.

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

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

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

Once again, I will make the same appeal as my colleague did regarding this motion. I am going to ask my colleague to withdraw this amendment for a very simple reason: it is the role of the committee to ask the ministers to appear. Why not simply ask the ministers to appear before us? It's simple, it is easy.

Once again, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food herself will be quite shocked to see that she is not being allowed to come to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to discuss this first and very serious agricultural crisis since her appointment. Let's give her an opportunity to come and speak to the standing committee on a file that concerns agriculture.

In addition, this amendment does not mention the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is responsible... I don't know how to say it.

In short, I'm asking my colleague to withdraw this amendment, and we will keep to the original motion so that we can ask the ministers to appear. If the ministers do not want to come, they will have to bear the consequences of their decision to not appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

This is a clear message the committee is sending to producers and farmers. We want to hear the ministers give us their version of history and tell us what is going on. We want the ministers to reassure the producers here or, at the very least, to come to discuss an agricultural file at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. In what way can the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food have an adverse effect on a case by asking the ministers to appear? If we refuse to have ministers appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, this would be a first.

Once again, I am asking my colleague to withdraw this amendment and to keep to the original motion and allow the three ministers to make the decision themselves; they will accept the political consequences of their decision. Why is the committee again playing the government's role by deciding who is to appear before it instead of letting the ministers decide? It is our role. We are independent and we want to hear the ministers. I am sure that all of my colleagues want to know what the ministers have to say on these files. Let's let things unfold as they should.

• (1220)

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

Mr. MacGregor, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I'd like to join with the Conservative members in asking Mr. Drouin to withdraw the amendment.

We're here in public. We're televised. The media is doing a live stream tweet marathon on this committee meeting, so the Canadian public and Canadian producers are fully aware of what is going on in this committee right now. I think we made a very clear case for why the minister needs to appear.

I cannot support this amendment. That doesn't mean I wouldn't welcome the chance to hear from CFIA and industry representatives, but we need to have the minister. That's where the buck stops.

I think it's incumbent upon this committee to at least make the invitation. I know ministers' schedules are very busy, but I think we've just heard today a willingness to modify our schedules to help them out. I'm going to be here in Ottawa this weekend. I'm sure all of us can find some time next week for a special committee meeting to accommodate the minister's schedule.

I would ask Mr. Drouin, here in this public setting, in front of the wider Canadian audience, to please withdraw this amendment so that we can have the ministers here before this committee. As I mentioned before, it's been since November 29 and we're almost in April. We need to have this legislative oversight of a very important department on a very important issue.

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

Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I'll conclude by repeating that on March 8 we sent a letter to the committee asking that the three ministers appear. The month of March is coming to a close and we still have not heard the three ministers. And today we learned that the Liberals have no intention of letting the three ministers appear before the committee.

I invite my colleague, one last time, to withdraw this amendment and allow us to extend an invitation to the three ministers, so that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food can carry out a real study on this issue involving agriculture.

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

The subamendment reads as follows:

That the committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning official notices of non-compliance from China for exports...

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

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

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I just want to make sure that Mr. Drouin has understood correctly, and ask whether he intends to withdraw his amendment before you put it to a vote.

**The Chair:** Mr. Drouin did not ask for the floor, so I will—

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, I am not here to play politics.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade Diversification will appear in committee Tuesday. Whether they appear at our committee or at the Standing Committee on International Trade, the important thing is that farmers be able to hear what the ministers have to say.

We don't want to duplicate the work by doing the same study as the Standing Committee on International Trade. That said, we felt that we could add value to our study of this issue by hearing CFIA representatives and industry representatives, including producers.

Thank you very much.

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

We are going to vote on the amendment. This is the text of the amendment we are voting on:

[...] concerning official notices of non-compliance from China for exports of Canadian canola seeds [...]

● (1225)

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I'd like a recorded vote on this, please.

**The Chair:** It will be a recorded vote.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on the amended motion.

Yes, Mr. Berthold?

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I would like you to read the amended motion, please.

**The Chair:** Here it is:

That the committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning official notices of non-compliance from China for exports of Canadian canola seeds:

- a. Officials from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; and
- b. Industry representatives;

that all witnesses appear no later than Friday, April 5, 2019.

We will now vote on the motion as amended.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I ask for a recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Very well, we will hold a recorded vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I would like to table the following motion:

That the Committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and industry representatives, farmers and producers to appear regarding the recent halting of Canadian canola sales in China, and that all witnesses appear no later than April 5, 2019.

**The Chair:** According to my interpretation, the motion that has just been tabled is almost identical to the one that was tabled previously, and so—

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Just before you make a decision, which I do not intend to challenge, may I remind you about the justification we provided for the amendment of the previous motion: we said that it was because the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade Diversification would already be appearing before another committee. I am asking that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will not appear before the other committee, come here to testify about this situation.

It is entirely normal that the committee wishes to hear the Minister of Foreign Affairs, either here or before the Standing Committee on International Trade. This motion is completely different. The previous motion asked that the three ministers appear here simultaneously to discuss this matter. This motion only asks that the Minister of Foreign Affairs appear here, together with farmers and producers, who were not included in the previous motion, which only referred to industry representatives.

● (1230)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** The original version of the previous motion did not say that the ministers and representatives of the industry would appear together before the committee. That is not true.

**The Chair:** The original motion asked that the Minister of Foreign Affairs also appear before the committee.

[English]

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Can he clarify what the motion does say then? He's saying it doesn't include officials. You're basically saying that you will not call any ministers in front of the committee then. What are you saying then?

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

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Berthold said that the motion called for all witnesses to appear together, which it didn't.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to make a clarification. Once again, I tabled this motion to allow Canadian producers to hear the entire story about this matter concerning China.

The decision to reject this motion by interpreting it in this way brings up another point. I'm going to ask the clerk for a clarification. Now that my previous motion was defeated, how could the committee ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify? Is there another way of doing that?

Honestly, this motion is completely different from the previous one. This motion asks the Minister of Foreign Affairs to explain Canada's relations with China. The point is to invite a minister and not all three, as well as farmers and producers, not industry representatives. I do not understand my colleagues' interpretation that the motions are identical.

If I had asked the three ministers to testify here, I would have understood, but it is not the same motion. We want to hear the only minister who is not invited by the Liberals to testify either before the Standing Committee on International Trade or this committee. I think it would be entirely legitimate that we ask her to appear.

As I mentioned, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food herself indicated publicly to the media that it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is responsible for relations with China and for this file. So, I don't understand why we would refuse to debate the motion.

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

We already voted on your motion regarding the appearance by the three ministers. According to my interpretation, it repeats the previous motion. I am going to disallow your motion because it is similar to the other one.

Thank you.

Mr. Dreeshen, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** From that reading, does it matter whether it's today that we ask, because we happen to be discussing, or does this simply mean that we will not have the opportunity in the ag committee to bring in the trade minister, to bring in the ag minister, or to bring in the foreign affairs minister? Is that what we are saying?

**The Chair:** Mr. Dreeshen, this is not debatable. You can challenge my decision, but this is not debatable.

If there are no other matters to be discussed, that is all I have for today.

Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Can you shed some light? Are we going to have a meeting later today or tomorrow morning? How are you going to inform us of that?

**The Chair:** I don't have any motion for a meeting today or tomorrow.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** You said that you would start immediately, so I assume you're going to start either today or tomorrow.

**The Chair:** We're going to give the clerk a chance to call witnesses. We have a day decided on. It's no later than the 5th, and we'll see when the witnesses are available.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Are you going to waive the 24-hour notice then on this scenario? How is that going to work? You're going to have to waive it.

**The Chair:** I will wait until I have information from the clerk about how soon they could be available and then we can decide on a date. It will be probably at this stage unless we can get all the witnesses who are invited to come in earlier.

Mr. Berthold.

● (1235)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, if we passed a motion allowing the clerk to disregard the 48-hour notice requirement, could she convene a meeting for Sunday, if necessary?

[English]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, can we let the clerk do her job and not try to change all the rules? Let's have full confidence in the clerk. I have full confidence in the clerk. If the members express no confidence in the clerk, that's their issue. Can we just have a reasonable amount of time to let the clerk call witnesses?

I trust you, Mr. Chair, and I trust the clerk.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** On a point of order, I never said I have no confidence in the clerk. I asked the clerk a question that you didn't answer yet, Mr. Chair.

It's fine to try to play politics, but this is not an issue to play politics with right now. We want to help this committee have this meeting as soon as possible and I asked the clerk how we could do that.

I want Mr. Drouin to be prudent. I didn't put forward any doubt as to my confidence in the clerk.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify. We just want to empower the clerk to be able to call a meeting in the next two hours if she can find the witnesses. Waiving the 48-hour privilege is actually, in most cases, detrimental to the opposition. We're saying we're willing to waive that if she can get the witnesses together.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback, that is not a point of order.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** You let Mr. Drouin speak on something totally opposite. I was just clarifying for the record.

**The Chair:** Right now we have a meeting scheduled for April 2 and that is the date I'm going to set right now as the first meeting. It will give us enough time to make sure we can bring the witnesses in. We'll have the officials. April 2 is what I have decided will be the next meeting, which will be next Tuesday.

Mr. MacGregor.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** On a point of clarification, Chair, I just want to understand. Maybe the clerk can inform, through you, what our abilities as a committee are. If, as has been indicated, a number of us are here on the weekend and on standby, is it possible for this committee to waive the normal notice period? That's what we're trying to get information on, Chair. That's all.

**The Chair:** We don't need a notice right now. It's not about 24 hours or 48 hours.

My judgment is that we need to have the proper amount of time to get the people in here. April 2 is next Tuesday, which is four days from now. I think that will give us the time needed to get the right people here to make sure we can have a proper meeting and to get prepared. We need to get the background. We need to get all that information prepared with the clerk. We need to get all the questions

and everything. My decision at this time is to have that meeting on April 2, next Tuesday.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, to expand upon where we were trying to go with getting information from the clerk, I think the question was whether we could have unanimous consent to move away from some of the standing committee rules. I think that's what we were asking for.

**The Chair:** There's no time.

That can be done, but my reasoning is that we need the proper amount of time to get information, to get the analysts to give us the proper background on all of this and to bring everybody up to speed. Then we'll have a quality meeting, where we can ask the right questions and get good answers from the producers.

Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** In short, we don't need a change or unanimous consent or a motion to allow you to call the meeting when you think the time is right. You made the decision that the meeting would be held on April 2.

**The Chair:** Yes.

•(1240)

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Very well.

[*English*]

If there's no other matter of discussion, we shall adjourn the meeting.







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