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Chair

Mr. Massimo Pacetti

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• (1150)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.)): Good morning. Thank you for having us here in Manitoba. It's our last stop on the tour.

We're here pursuant to Standing Order 83.1 for the pre-budget consultations of 2005. Again, thank you for taking time out of your day and allowing us the opportunity to hear your briefs.

The way it's going to work is that I'm going to allow you seven to eight minutes for opening statements to present your brief. If we can keep it to that seven or eight minutes, I would appreciate it. I don't want to cut you off, but seeing as you're seven groups, I may just have to, because we're running a little bit over on time. The reason I want to keep on schedule is that I have members who want to ask questions.

So if we could get started right away, we have the Canadian Wheat Board up first. Mr. Ritter.

Mr. Ken Ritter (Chair, Board of Directors, Canadian Wheat Board): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Our presentation will follow the material you have, but it will be in an abbreviated form.

My name is Ken Ritter and I'm a farmer from Kindersley, Saskatchewan. I'm the chair of the farmer-controlled board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board.

With me today is my colleague Bill Toews, a farmer from Kane, Manitoba. Bill Toews and I are elected members of the CWB.

Farmers are pragmatic business people who understand the reality of what it takes to make a business succeed and what can make it fail. We are accustomed to hard work and sacrifice. We've already ridden out many storms. We have weathered the high interest rates of the eighties and the low prices of the nineties. We are the survivors. As survivors, we've slashed expenses, diversified our farms, and run sound businesses.

While other farmers in the U.S. and Europe receive enormous subsidies, we have among the lowest subsidy levels in the industrialized world. Today, however, prairie farmers are facing what I can only call a perfect economic storm that threatens to swamp us all.

Over the past two years, the Canadian dollar has risen by more than 35%. As our products are sold on international markets in U.S.

dollars, this trend has slashed our income on crops that were already only marginally profitable to grow.

We farm an enormous amount of land in a climate suited for the production of just a handful of crops. At the same time, the underlying prices have trended downwards due to large crops of heavily subsidized grains in other parts of the world that compete directly with ours.

Current farm-level price predictions for durum wheat, barley, and malting barley, for example, are 25% to 30% lower than the previous eight-year average. Milling wheat prices are estimated at 13% lower. Canola prices, long one of the few bright spots in prairie agriculture, are 21% lower than the previous eight-year average. Prior to this we had three years of drought, and last year we had severe frost. At the same time, the BSE crisis cost cattle producers \$3 billion by some estimates. This past spring saw endless rains in the eastern parts of the Prairies that left over two million acres of farmland out of production.

There has also been a wave of price increases for the inputs we require to grow our crops. Diesel fuel costs are up 75% since the beginning of 2004, according to the Alberta agriculture department. Nitrogen fertilizer, which is made using large amounts of natural gas, is up 19%. If you've been following the prices for natural gas, you know that those prices have literally doubled from a short time ago. To put this in perspective, we estimate that these two additions have added something like \$37,200 in additional costs just for diesel fuel and fertilizer for an average 3,000-acre farm. Assuming a base of 70 million acres of farmland in western Canada, with 45 million to 50 million acres cropped, this is an additional \$558 million.

It is not an exaggeration to call what we're facing a crisis. We're used to farms failing and farmers leaving the land. It has become an unfortunate reality in agriculture. What our industry is not prepared for, and cannot prepare for, are conditions like those we are facing today. This spring it was all but impossible to find a crop that, based on price predictions and even average yield and quality, would return a profit. I can think of no other industry where primary producers are forced, through economic reality, to continue producing products they know will be unprofitable.

Unlike a factory or a mine, a farm cannot cease operations or slow production until the market returns to profitability. When a farm is shut down, it closes permanently. Farm families simply lack the necessary resources to wait out low prices. This is not a situation that will be remedied any time soon. Our competition, particularly the U.S. and Europe, appears to be committed to high-subsidy regimes that will inflate production and depress prices. Global political instability, rising energy consumption, and uncertain energy supplies are making rising production costs for farmers a moving reality looking forward.

The effects of these waves can already be seen in the countryside. Large, efficient and well-run farms are beginning to fail. Many farm families who face an uncertain future are victims of a rising level of despair when they see their lives crumble around them.

The current state of affairs is markedly more serious than the already grim situation of recent years. At the CWB we've seen unprecedented numbers of calls from these farmers. The situation has become so serious that front-line members of our staff have received training in crisis counselling. These circumstances cannot continue without being addressed. Canadian farmers are generally not fans of subsidies; however, we must accept the reality of the situation we face and acknowledge that the current situation is unsustainable.

The long-term solution is empowering Canadian grain farmers and putting the controls of their industry back in their hands. We may not be able to control Mother Nature, but there are immediate and ongoing crises before Canadian farmers that you, as government leaders, can help us address.

My colleague Bill Toews will now outline a few of the thoughts we've had around what can be of assistance.

Mr. Bill Toews (Director, Canadian Wheat Board): Thank you, Ken.

Firstly, steps must be taken immediately to maximize farm income and cashflow. This includes revisiting the CWB initial payments to ensure they maximize cashflow to farmers. The federal government guarantees these payments and, therefore, directly controls their level. They are currently set at unjustifiably low levels, well below those recommended by the CWB.

There's some concern about existing farm income support programs such as the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program. We believe it should be amended to ensure maximum cashflow as quickly as possible. We believe that the program should reference the CWB pool return outlook in calculating payments to farmers. Currently, the initial payment level that is used results in lower payments because it does not reflect the full value of farmers' grain. Any changes to farm income programs, such as changes to inventory valuation methods, must be implemented in a way that does not negatively affect farmers. We are somewhat concerned about arbitrary changes that can have an unforeseen impact if they are not carefully studied in the first place.

The interest-free portion of the federal government's spring and fall cash advance program should be increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to provide greater cashflow. This is crucial for farmers who have expanded over the years and need to have an adjusted, interest-

free cash advance; there hasn't been an adjustment for a number of years.

Governments must support, protect, and enhance marketing arrangements that provide farmers with market power and that foster profitability. These include single-desk selling for wheat, durum, and barley, and supply management for milk and poultry products. We should determine the shape of our domestic industry ourselves, not jurisdictions like the U.S. or Europe, which are in fact among our fiercest competitors.

Our country must aggressively pursue its interests in international trade negotiations to ensure that Canadian farmers have fair market access, and to ensure that meaningful progress is made on the elimination or substantial reduction of trade distorting farm subsidies. Many farmers tell me they are concerned that we are not aggressive enough and that these trade negotiations have not been in our best interests. We have to ensure we are aggressive.

Canada must look at the regulatory environment to ensure greater competition and remedies within the grain handling system, particularly with respect to rail service. Without the ability to get our crop to market in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost, all our hard work is for naught.

There must also be a continued strong public sector involvement in research and development activities that return benefits to farmers. This includes public sector involvement in plant breeding that results in new varieties that farmers can produce economically, using their own saved seed.

Finally, regulations must be in place to ensure the responsible introduction of new agricultural products. For example, novel new products should undergo market acceptance evaluation to ensure their introduction does not harm the economic interests of farmers.

The key to a long-term solution, however, is a long-term farm policy that reflects the realities Canadian farmers are struggling with. The recent report by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Wayne Easter, highlights some possible solutions. In particular, the report recommends a number of recommendations that should form the basis of any future national farm policy. They include the expanded use of cooperatives and other farmer collective actions—

● (1155)

The Chair: Excuse me, but I have to interrupt you, as we're at 10 minutes.

I just have a quick question on your brief. When it says "I would like to request", I assume it's on behalf of the board?

Mr. Bill Toews: Yes, it is.

The Chair: Okay.

The next group is the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, and Mr. Beachell.

Mr. Laurie Beachell (National Coordinator, Council of Canadians with Disabilities): Thank you.

At times, coming to this table is a challenge in that there are very diverse presentations. On a personal level, they are not so diverse when you consider that people's lives cannot easily be compartmentalized.

I live on a family farm. Although I'm not part of the business, my brother and my father both farm. We work with the Canadian Farmers with Disabilities association, and we have an interest particularly in some of the stress-related issues that have been raised around the economic conditions of farmers in this country.

While at times our groups appear diverse in our interests and the challenge to you as leaders at the federal level is great, the interests of individual Canadians often overlap in many ways. I think you have to look at that balance. We are not just a homogeneous, one-sector community. We are a community that lives together in a variety of ways.

Therefore, I will keep my message relatively simple and say to you that Canadians with disabilities are a part of that very broad community within every sector of Canadian life. They are members of our families, they are our friends and neighbours, they are our children going to school, they are people in the workplace, they are seniors, and they come from every part of our ethnic diversity.

Disability is a horizontal issue that is crosscutting and as such must be brought into all policy debates the Government of Canada is engaging in, whether it be the children's agenda, the infrastructure agenda, the Canada social transfer, etc.

My brief is fairly short. I have given it to you. It is very similar to what you have seen in previous years. We have been coming before this committee since Michael Wilson was the Minister of Finance, and that's a while ago.

Let me just say the priority of Canadians with disabilities is an investment in supports and services that enable them to get jobs, get education, get training, and participate in community life. Our community has come together in all of its diversity and identified that as a priority. We have identified to federal and provincial ministers the need for an immediate down payment in budget 2006 to address the disparity and the gaps in service delivery that exist across this country.

In some parts of this country it is so diverse that you must purchase your own wheelchair. In some parts of this country you will have to leave the province in order to get the service. In some communities, aboriginal communities, for example, you will likely have to leave the reserve in order to get the services you require as a person with disabilities.

Federal leadership is required. In the last budget we saw significant initiatives around tax reform. To be perfectly blunt with you, I'll say that while positive, they do not address those who are most disadvantaged, those who do not have a taxable income; and the majority of people with disabilities live in poverty, with incomes of under \$10,000 a year. So I would say to you we are looking for an investment in disability-related supports. We are looking for federal leadership in determining a long-term strategy to address the needs of Canadians with disabilities in partnership with provincial governments and the disability community.

The mechanism we talk about for the next budget is a transfer of funds to the provinces for investment—and I know that within Ottawa this has become a dirty word. But it is respectful of jurisdictional authorities, it is necessary, and yes, we agree the federal government needs reporting accountability mechanisms to know how those dollars are spent. But we need an investment in disability support, we need a down payment in this budget, we need a long-term action plan to address persons with disabilities, and we need to ensure that disability is part of a crosscutting analysis of all policy initiatives, whether they be child care, investments in seniors, investments in infrastructure to create accessible communities, etc.

I'll mention a very specific piece. Our community came together to create an accessible transportation system in Canada. We did that over thirty years ago. I will tell you that in the last seven or eight years it has absolutely eroded, and we have now put in place transportation mechanisms under federal jurisdiction that are inaccessible, that people cannot use. People cannot get on the plane. People cannot get on the train. People cannot go where they want to go to do business or to travel as a student, etc.

I will leave it at that. I thank you once again for the opportunity and welcome questions later. Thank you.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation Centre, Ms. Martens.

Dr. Patricia J. Martens (Director, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation): Thank you, honourable Chair and honourable members of Parliament.

I'm here to talk about the theme of productivity today from the perspective of the health researcher, particularly focusing on population health and on health services research. As the director of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, I'm here to talk about the importance of funding health research to maintain and improve the productivity of Canada.

You have several sheets in the handout I've provided you, one in French and one in English. The yellow is the English one and is the PowerPoint presentation I'm referring to as I do a brief version of those sheets.

For productivity for Canada, how is that possible? Through population health research and research about our health care system, we can understand where the problems are and what to do about them in order to create a healthier population and a more efficient and effective health care system. But it doesn't stop there. Top-notch researchers are a valuable commodity for the productivity of Canada, and if we fund our health researchers appropriately, we're more likely to keep the best and the brightest of them to fuel our knowledge-based economy.

But we need to be careful about stopping at the production of research. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the federal funding body—or CIHR, as we call it—has built into their vision the idea of translating research into action, sometimes called knowledge translation, to ensure that we have strong evidence to inform our decisions in programs, in clinical decisions, and in policies.

Now, we'd be naive to think that evidence is the only thing that's important in decision-making, but if decisions occur in a vacuum without clear-eyed evidence, we can do a whole lot of damage. Evidence is one of the key players, or as Peter Drucker once said, "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all".

So the key messages today from a health research perspective are these: fund population health and health services research appropriately to make sure we have the power in Canada to describe where the problems are and to find out what works and what doesn't work; make sure this knowledge is translated into action; make sure you put your research dollars into transparent, peer-reviewed, accountable systems to the public; and ensure that the information produced is public knowledge at the end of the day.

On the yellow sheet and the green sheet I've defined commercialization in terms of health services research as producing good evidence for health care decision-making and health decision-making at any level of government. So this is an investment. CIHR is a great investment for research dollars, with most of the investment going straight into research and knowledge translation activities.

With our per capita funding in Canada for health research, although way below that of the U.S.A. with their \$64 per capita and our \$7.53 per capita, we are seventh in the world. We could probably go up a little bit. To approximate the Swiss or the U.K. amounts, we would probably need our budget in Canada to go up from about \$6.6 million to about \$1 billion per year.

The knowledge translation has added to the cost of our research budgets in the past few years, but it's a cost well worthwhile to ensure productivity of Canada through evidence translating into action, because just publishing a research report is not necessarily an effective way of getting people's attention or having them change their policies or their programs.

As a centre, we've produced two models that have gained national attention throughout Canada as the way to facilitate research in action. One of them is our annual rural days, where we invite decision-makers throughout the province to engage in talking about research, and the other is a highly successful model funded through CIHR with a team of researchers from the centre, high-level planners from each regional health authority, and Manitoba Health. It's called the Need to Know team.

•(1205)

We co-create research, which means we work from beginning to end with the users of this research from a perspective of health research and on the ultimate use of the research to ensure it is put into action and policy, both within Manitoba and throughout Canada. One of the reports we produced together was called the mental

illness report, which has also received the attention of Senator Kirby for his mental health coalition and meetings.

I have a little story about that particular report, For example, visit rates to psychiatrists seem to be a little odd compared to the needs-based funding attempt that we should make in Canada to ensure that our services go along with our needs. Psychiatrist visit rates were highest in the highest-income areas and in the urban areas of the province, and not only that, they were the highest for people in the middle-income bracket. This is a little troublesome, knowing that most of the need for psychiatrist services for mental illness disorders is probably for elderly and low-income people and is probably equally distributed in urban and rural areas.

These are the types of stories that we're using from data to encourage Manitoba planners to look beyond and look at new ways to access psychiatrists.

To reinforce the population-based approach and the importance of it for cost savings and productivity, let's look at a normal distribution curve. On one side there's an unhealthy population, and on the other side there's a healthy population. Half of the population is considered healthy and half of it is unhealthy, when you're looking at a particular event such as smoking.

If you do research and find that a change in a population level actually makes the average person a little healthier, for example, by instituting some kind of policy across the board or some kind of change throughout the entire system, such as seat-belt legislation, no smoking in public places, or a tax on cigarettes, you have shifted the entire population to the extent that you now have substantial savings, where the unhealthy population shifts from 50% down to 30%. This huge shift creates huge productivity for Canada, when we can have a population shift instead of concentrating on the benefits for a very small and very high-risk group, which we already do very well. Let's look at the population-based approach when we look at any health funding.

In conclusion, investment into health research, especially population-based approaches, is critical to productivity in Canada. This investment in relation to the rest of the developed countries is most likely underfunded at present in Canada. Let's fund action-oriented, population-based health research that truly makes a difference.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you today on a vision of health research for Canada.

•(1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Canadian Drug Policy Development Coalition, Ms. Roos.

Dr. Noralou Roos (Director, Canadian Drug Policy Development Coalition): Thank you very much.

I've also been trying to think of how you link these disparate groups together in a way that will be meaningful for your take-home message. I've decided I have a bang-up way of doing it. What I'm going to talk about is where to get the funds, potentially, for investing in these other very compelling cases you've been hearing about.

The coalition I'm working with, of individuals, researchers, consumer groups, and various groups across Canada, is focusing on the need for an arm's-length, independent research network to investigate safety and effectiveness of pharmaceuticals in Canada. How this contributes to Canada's productivity potentially is something I do want to bring your attention to.

Nobody could have missed the headlines, the stories that are in fact still coming out as the lawsuits against Merck are proceeding around Vioxx and the other drug that has been emphasized in this whole area, Celebrex. Vioxx was found, at a time that three million prescriptions a year were being written for it in Canada before it was taken off the market, to actually double the risk of heart attacks and stroke. There's no question it was an incredibly effective pain control mechanism for some patients, but it was being used much more broadly than it had ever been tested for.

So there are real patient safety issues involved in this concern. There's also, as I mentioned, effectiveness, which translates into cost issues.

Pharmaceutical costs in Canada have more than doubled since 1990. About \$20 billion will be spent on drugs this year, and Canada is one of the highest in terms of growth in cost in this area of any OECD country. We're second only to the U.S., which is not a record... Although in past comparisons being much lower than the U.S. was problematic, in this area being lower than the U.S. is certainly not problematic.

You will hear often, "Why not? We're producing miracle drugs". In fact, there are miracle drugs, but there are not very many of them. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, PMPRB, which you're probably familiar with, review and classify every drug that comes to them: Is this a breakthrough drug? Is this a drug that has substantial effect? Is it basically a me-too drug, where you're giving it once a day rather than twice a day, or in liquid versus a different kind of potion, or with a different brand name? In the last five years there were nine breakthrough drugs. There were 133 me-too drugs approved over the same period, so we're not talking about this \$20 billion a year being driven by new miracle drugs.

What we don't have is good information on what happens to people taking these drugs after they come to market. Industry typically comes to Health Canada with their results based on about 1,000 patients who have taken these drugs, demonstrating minimal safety precautions, meeting minimal effectiveness standards, and then they go to market—sometimes drugs that are expected to be used in the chronic population, with maybe as many as 10,000 people taking them. But these are drugs...with Vioxx there were three million prescriptions a year.

What we're arguing is that what you need is arm's-length research centres set up across the country focusing specifically on safety and effectiveness of pharmaceutical drugs, looking at the post-market

period, when public interest is really driving the research agenda—how the drugs perform in the real world. We need to establish a network of pharmaceutical research centres and invest in them. We're developing a business case at this point. The first estimates are around \$20 million to \$30 million a year to examine this \$20-billion investment in drugs.

●(1215)

The investment in these research centres would be building on unique Canadian research strengths. We have a universal health care system. One of my colleagues who's been involved in this went to the States to meet with the FDA and asked what we could do in Canada to contribute to the research needs in the drug area. They said that we have a fabulous opportunity with our universal health care system, because we can basically track all individuals receiving a drug, whether they end up in emergency rooms, whether they end up with heart attacks, or with strokes. They can't tell that in the U.S.

For example, with the VA system, if somebody gets care outside of their VA hospitals they don't know what's happened to that individual. We have the incredible strength of doing that in Canada.

We need to train individuals. We also need a new way of doing research, where you'd have a federal-provincial expert committee on pharmaceuticals that would pose the questions that go to the researchers and the evidence would come directly back to this expert committee. That's the new innovative research model we're proposing.

Why is this important for productivity? The costliness of the health care system and employee benefits is exactly...because it's cheaper here than in the U.S., and it's why Toyota moved to Ontario, as we all read about in the *Globe and Mail*, and for Canada its also, as I mentioned, a world-class research opportunity. It's also an opportunity to improve the efficiency of how drugs are approved.

We've been working with patient and consumer groups. They're also very concerned that it not just be arm's length from the pharmaceutical companies, but also that it be arm's length from government, because they want and obviously need effective new drugs as soon as possible. We're working with individuals from both the federal and provincial levels, which currently don't talk to each other. You have one process that approves for patient safety and effectiveness; you have another process that approves what goes on the provincial formularies. We're trying to come up with a process that would put these two very disparate pieces together. I think this is a way to find some of the funding potentially to invest in these things.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we have Ms. Margaret Haworth-Brockman from the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence.

Ms. Margaret Haworth-Brockman (Executive Director, Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence): Good morning. My name is Margaret Haworth-Brockman, and I'm executive director at the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, which is located in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to provide our recommendations for public policy direction that will improve women's health and economic security. I will be following up with a full submission to the committee.

Prairie Centre receives core funding through the Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis. We manage a small but comprehensive research, policy, advice, and communications program, and we have an extensive network of colleagues and associates in women's communities, among academic researchers, with government and regional health authorities, and with counterparts across the country.

With the focus that remains in these two provinces, we support credible, applicable research relevant to the women who live here and to those who wish to provide appropriate supports and care. We have a mandate to redress the gaps in our understandings of the influences on women's health, particularly for women who have not been well represented so far in research and policy discussions.

Most recently, our own work has been to redress the gaps in our understanding of health concerns for women who live in poverty; aboriginal women; women who live in rural, remote, and northern communities, and how these three intersect, of course; and considerations of gender and health planning and health services.

There is overwhelming evidence that the health of all people is profoundly affected by social and economic factors. The evidence shows that health will improve where there is substantial investment in the basic social programs and with improved living situations. Health is thus not just about acute care management or about providing the most up-to-date technology, important as these very much are. Rather, good health is equally achieved by addressing fundamental needs, basic income, housing, clean water, adequate nutritious foods, and genuine involvement in decisions affecting one's life.

A large portion of our public budget is spent on dealing with health problems. However, preventing disease in the first place by promoting the social and living conditions that support healthy lifestyles has been neglected. In assessing the investments needed to improve health, we need to look beyond the health services; thus I want to make three main points on the budget allocations beyond the health silo.

First, despite some real gains in women's overall equity in Canada, they still bear the greater burden of poverty in this country. Women are more likely to be among the poor, and women are particularly vulnerable to being poor if they are elderly, a member of a visible minority, aboriginal, or have a disability. Many women, of course, fit a number of these descriptors. Women are the majority of those on social assistance, and women are overrepresented among the working poor because they frequently are employed in insecure and poorly paid jobs.

Much of the discourse across the country has drawn our attention to the plight of children who live in poverty—the statistics are

staggering—but we must recognize that if children are deprived, then they are certainly living with parents, and likely mothers, who are also struggling in poverty.

Our own work supported at our centre has highlighted poor women's own assessments of the effects poverty has on their health and that of their families, and the benefits of adequate services. The research highlights the deleterious effects of bad housing, for instance, on stress—not to mention the fear and dangers of bad housing—and the benefits of good social housing. This, of course, is particularly so on reserve. This would be a good area of investment for the federal government.

In the elimination of the Canada assistance plan and the institution of the Canadian health and social transfer, the underlying principles of CAP, which guaranteed the rights of citizens to basic income and other necessities, were removed. Reduced federal spending and greater flexibility on how the moneys were spent has meant that much of the block funding has been directed to health care, leaving social assistance and other social programs to stagnate. This is despite a wealth of research that demonstrates the importance of adequate income and social services to maintain the health of the population.

Second, I want to talk about gender-based analysis. The needs and circumstances of women and men are different. Canada, in numerous documents, both federal and international, recognizes that inequities and inequalities will persist in our society as long as gender considerations, such as the social roles, responsibilities, and expectations that are experienced by women and by men, are not taken into account. Accurate gender-based analysis of policies is needed to understand the differential impacts on women and men, and to forge policy alternatives that will improve women's economic security and equality.

● (1220)

The second report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success*, released earlier this year, provides a succinct and comprehensive history of Canada's obligations and commitments to gender-based analysis with specific recommendations for the inclusion of GBA in all facets of government, including budget planning.

In her report entitled *Gender Budget Initiatives: Why They Matter in Canada*, Isabella Bakker has said, "...gender budget analysis is increasingly recognized as an important way to hold governments accountable for their commitments to human rights and gender equality as they connect these commitments to the distribution, use, and generation of public resources."

We ourselves have had some success with a small gender-based analysis guide. Despite its particular focus on health planning, the guide is recognized across the country as an example of a straightforward manner in which gender-based analysis can be included in the work of the civil service, and not just as an add-on to already heavy workloads. I can provide copies of that guide to the committee members.

As part of gender-based analysis, we encourage the federal government to use consultation and qualitative research as success measures that complement the quantitative measures. This will ensure that key factors and social policy that are not readily measured strictly by numbers, or for which quantitative data is not yet available, still receive their due consideration in budget decisions and policy-making.

Third and last, I would like to talk about federal support to community programs. I did have the good fortune to be part of a comprehensive national project on the health concerns of women who live in rural, remote, and northern Canada. There are a number of key findings from that study, but a primary one is that women feel uninvolved in policy and decision-making. In fact, women tell us they feel that some decisions are being made without them and that citified solutions are imposed without consideration of the implications for smaller communities with diverse circumstances.

The trend over the last decade has been to make government funding project-based as a means of assuring accountability. This deprives communities of the paid infrastructure needed to sustain momentum and deprives the communities of central meeting places to conduct their work and provide you with advice and recommendations.

We know many stories and examples of one and a half employees or fewer doing the work of many and using much of their time to apply for or report back on individual projects. And I believe you heard some good examples this morning. Thus the resources either depend much too heavily on volunteer availability and goodwill, or they are forced to close when the volunteer base collapses.

So instead of compelling the voluntary sector to do more, I think it would be more expedient to recognize the expertise residents have in a particular community and support basic social infrastructure to let the work and recommendations unfold in a meaningful way. Again, I encourage the committee to refer back to the first report from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women released earlier this year, entitled *Increasing Funding to Equality-Seeking Organizations*.

I would like to conclude with our recommendations based on what I was speaking to earlier.

I hope this committee will implement Canada's commitment to gender-based analysis and follow through on the plan for gender equality at all levels, including specific training and analysis; recognize the complicated ways that income and gender affect health, and treat women's poverty seriously; address children's poverty as a common outcome of women's poverty; ensure that housing expenditures translate into new social housing for women with low incomes; ensure that the federal government upholds the commitment to provide new money and strategies for social housing; consult with the women who will live there, and ensure that there are

enough funds to maintain and operate those units when they are built; and support improvements to programs to ensure good income and living standards, including student loans, pensions, income for seniors, effective employment insurance programs, and pay equity, all developed under the gender-based analysis lens.

Furthermore, we'd like to suggest you fund programs that recognize and support women's caregiving roles and unpaid work—

• (1225)

The Chair: I'm going to cut you off, sorry, because we're at 10 minutes.

From the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Mr. Bell, I think you're going to make a presentation.

Mr. Ron Bell (President, Association of Manitoba Municipalities): Thank you.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities represents all 199 cities, towns, villages, and municipalities in Manitoba.

With me this afternoon is Mr. Joe Masi. He is the executive director of our association.

All of the issues we want to talk to you about this afternoon relate to infrastructure. We believe the success of the community depends largely on its ability to maintain and expand its physical and social infrastructure. This makes infrastructure investment a significant priority for municipalities across the country.

We depend on the property tax base for the most significant part of our income. Our tax base has not grown to the same extent as provincial and federal tax bases. Cities and communities have not kept up with our share of the total tax. We've not been equipped to increase infrastructure investment to keep pace with our growing responsibilities.

In this province, infrastructure assets are aging and therefore require targeted, sustained investment to counteract rapid deterioration. The Infrastructure Council of Manitoba estimates there's a \$3-billion municipal infrastructure deficit in this province: \$2 billion in rural Manitoba, and \$1 billion within the city of Winnipeg. Cities and communities need federal and provincial partners to be successful.

The federal government's commitment to share a portion of the gas tax revenue, a new deal for Manitoba, was highly anticipated in Manitoba as a source of much-needed revenue for local infrastructure investments. I can tell you that our membership of municipalities across Manitoba is excited that there is recognition from the Government of Canada that they have a role to play in ensuring sustainable communities. We're confident that cities and communities across Manitoba will soon join the rest of Canada in participating in a new deal.

As our communities plan their long-term needs, it's important that they know they have a long-term partnership with the Government of Canada. The gas tax agreement therefore must be flexible and accessible to all in Manitoba, as it must meet the needs of big and small. We are excited about the gas tax agreement. We are pleased and hope that as this funding continues well into the future, it grows to meet the communities' needs in Manitoba.

We've also had the municipal rural infrastructure fund in Manitoba this past year. To date this program has offered two application intakes, with overwhelming response from municipalities. We have had in excess of \$320 million worth of projects applied for, and a total program over the next five years of \$126 million. These are projects that communities across Manitoba want to do this year. It's important that they do them as soon as possible. The needs are huge. It illustrates the widespread demand for infrastructure funding.

Municipalities are working on a variety of creative and necessary projects that may not be implemented due to the lack of funding from other sources. This program has a requirement of 40% green infrastructure. I can tell you that the way it's going in Manitoba right now, we will exceed 75% investment in green infrastructure, as the needs in this area are huge. Environmental concerns around waste disposal and sewage lagoons are growing. Therefore, we urge the federal government to continue the funding available through the municipal rural infrastructure fund to allow more municipalities to access crucial infrastructure funding.

Over the last number of years we've also had the prairie green roads program, in Manitoba and across the Prairies. It's a strategic road infrastructure program delivered through PFRA. In Manitoba, 50% of the funding went to municipal roads, and 50% went to provincial roads. This has been an incredibly well-accepted program. I can tell you that the road infrastructure has been delivered in a strategic manner to the areas of the province that really needed it. Our membership says that this is one of the best programs that has come along in many years. They would like to see it continue.

• (1230)

As we've looked at our infrastructure programs, we've noticed another need that has been coming up and that cannot be met with the current programs: a tripartite recreational infrastructure program. Many of Manitoba's municipalities do not have the appropriate resources to fund the repair of cultural, recreational, and community facilities or the funding to build new facilities. These facilities may lack the absolutely crucial accessibility that we now require in our communities.

Municipalities and the Province of Manitoba want to upgrade community facilities by contributing to a tripartite program, and the federal government should be prepared to participate in this initiative. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has continually raised the need for recreational funding at the federal level, based on support from municipalities across Canada. We know the federal government is aware of the need to improve recreational opportunities, and we hope that you seriously consider this program in the future.

As for rural water infrastructure, Manitobans need a safe, reliable water supply for personal consumption. Through the rural infrastructure program, we've also seen about \$60 million worth of

applications for boiled water orders. Again, these projects, many of which are for millions or tens of millions of dollars, are very difficult to fund through this program. Through the national water supply expansion program, we had a program that was able to allocate funding within the designated timelines much ahead of other provinces in Canada. This now means that Manitoba is without a program—and it's a crucial program, because without further funding, Manitoba's water infrastructure is in a tenuous position.

We have secured a commitment from the Government of Manitoba to match any new federal funding for water infrastructure. We believe Manitoba should not be penalized for responding quickly to the guidelines laid out, and we urge the federal government to provide additional funding to Manitoba until the national water supply expansion program extension is complete, and to commit to a \$180-million water infrastructure investment over a 10-year period.

As we heard earlier this afternoon, we had over 130 municipalities in Manitoba requesting disaster assistance due to the extensive flooding across the majority of this province. The severity of this year's damage illustrates the urgency of enhancing existing programs to provide timely access to disaster programming. Municipalities are concerned about the federal government's review of the disaster funding formula, since any reduction in federal funding would mean the reduction in timely disaster recovery services provided by municipalities. The following is an example of this. As an incentive to minimize the costs of disaster recovery, the rate of compensation when using municipal equipment and labour is currently 16%. If we hire a contractor, it's 100% funding. What it means is that municipalities are basically forced to hire contractors to recover from a disaster, and that we don't have timely recovery from disaster, and that it costs all of us more money in the end. We think it's important that the federal government recognize that municipal equipment should be compensated at a greater rate than 16%—at least as high as 65%.

As well, to further illustrate our municipal concerns, we recommend that when the review of disaster assistance occurs, it should include representation of the municipal voice, perhaps through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Therefore, AMM urges the federal government to maintain levels of funding for disaster financial assistance and to raise the compensation rates for the use of municipal equipment and labour in disaster recovery efforts. As well, the FCM should be involved as a municipal voice in the review of disaster financial assistance.

That, Mr. Chairman, is my presentation this afternoon, and I look forward to questions on it.

Thank you.

•(1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bell.

I have a quick question. Is the money from the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure program separate from the municipal rural infrastructure fund?

Mr. Ron Bell: The municipal rural infrastructure fund is one of the infrastructure funds. It's currently the only one, I believe, in Manitoba that has funding available.

The Chair: Is that one coming due, by any chance?

Mr. Ron Bell: Coming due? Well, we're currently in the first year of what may be a five-year program. In Manitoba, we're probably going to run out of funds well before the end of the program.

The Chair: That's only normal.

Now, the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society—Lifelinks, and Mr. McComas or Mr. Summerville.

Mr. Chris Summerville (Executive Director, Manitoba Schizophrenia Society - Lifelinks): I'll go first. I'm Chris Summerville, executive director.

The Manitoba Schizophrenia Society is a consumer-focused, family-sensitive mental health self-help organization here in the province.

Listening to these excellent reports, I wrote down a moment ago, God help you if you're a physically challenged female aboriginal farmer in a poor municipality who also develops a severe mental illness.

I want to talk briefly about enhancing the quality of life for those with severe mental illness, and part of that includes creating economic opportunities for society's most marginalized, stigmatized, and disenfranchised folks. One in five people will have a significant mental health illness problem in their life. One in 100 will have schizophrenia, which is the most devastating of the mental illnesses.

So we can ask the question, what's disabling about a mental illness? The World Health Organization tells us that of the top five disabling chronic illnesses, three are mental illnesses currently, and in about 15 to 20 years depression will be the major disabling illness in the workplace.

We know about farmers and their struggles and stress, and the Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line has increased incredible amounts of calls concerning depression and suicidal ideation. Certainly, this all affects productivity performance, and thus we advocate very strongly for mental health literacy, and prevention and promotion. Verne McComas will be talking briefly about a particular project.

But what's disabling about mental illnesses? Loss of health; loss of family; loss of education; loss of income stability; loss of opportunities for full citizenship; loss of opportunity for reintegration into society; loss of economic opportunities, especially if you're an adolescent, and that's when most mental illnesses begin, early

adolescence. So what hinders this then? Lack of skill development, lack of vocational training, lack of consumer economic opportunities, lack of income security—or income insecurity—lack of housing, lack of workplace accommodations, primarily because of stigma and because it doesn't get votes within the political sector.

So why would I be so passionate about this? Because we know from the research—and Dr. Martens can clarify that, obviously—people can recover. People can recover to meaningful lives. But what are they recovering to if there's no economic opportunity? So we do believe in putting the emphasis on prevention and promotion and mental health literacy—and Verne will talk a little bit about a particular program—but at the same time, a major concern about economic opportunities for this group of citizens in our society.

Thank you.

•(1240)

Mr. Verne McComas (Programs Coordinator, Manitoba Schizophrenia Society - Lifelinks): I left a copy of my comments with you and I'll just read them very quickly.

Lifelinks genealogy promotes record keeping of the good to be found in people. The individual genealogy notes provide understanding of their ancestors and how the ancestors have responded to events in their life. Lifelinks provides a structure for family health events. Family data is stored individually, genealogy first. Health and the illness information that is known to the family is added over time to promote understanding of the illnesses, to increase financial support for research, to improve the sense of well-being in individuals who bear health burdens early in life—and I want to say this is all health burdens and not just schizophrenia.

Lifelinks uses four-generation charts to display information. Family history charts do not include health information, and we recommend that we avoid entering sensitive information.

Blind charts do not include family history or names, but do include relativity and health information that show basic ancestor health, their age, and specific illnesses. Broad health and illness category numbers, place codes, and standard date format is used for data entry. The pin number of individuals who are entered into the data banks and their sibling group number on the charts that I've supplied show relationship. Researchers and family doctors interested in health history may be provided with family health data without names, and little or no cost is involved.

Just to get an understanding of the charts, there are eight great-grandparents, four grandparents, two parents, and their siblings who make up the 15 groups in the chart for one individual and his or her same parent's siblings. For genealogy purposes, all of the eight great-grandparents are in turn linked to their own unique biological ancestors for genealogy purposes. So it's a good program in that respect.

I would be pleased to answer any questions that anyone may have.

The Chair: Thank you. That was interesting.

These panels with the various interests.... It's tough.

But anyway, I'm going to allow the members their allotted time, so we're going to go to five minutes. I just want to remind the witnesses that the five minutes includes the answers, so if you can keep your answers to a short timeframe or a brief, concise...whatever way you want to put it.

We'll go to Mr. Fletcher first.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Chair, can I ask...*[Technical difficulty—Editor]*

The Chair: Okay, yes.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: First I'd like to make a comment. I have to agree that we've had a period in the last ten or so years where people with disabilities...

Is my microphone working? I don't want any of you guys to miss any of my dialogue. It's very profound.

I was just saying that we've been slipping, particularly in the last 10 years. We did make a lot of progress; we had a lot more to go, but it's too bad we're going backwards.

One thing Mr. Beachell said that I think is really important is about the financial aspect of being disabled. As someone who relied on CPP disability and didn't have a taxable income other than the CPP, I was assisted by the government, but then they taxed it. Tax credits don't often help those with...*[Technical difficulty—Editor]*... and we have to do something about that.

The other issue that is important is around transportation. Transportation's a big problem. I also find it interesting to note that Mr. Beachell mentioned that the last seven or eight years, which happens to coincide with the Liberals in office federally.

I appreciate very much, Dr. Martens, what you had to say on health policy, and also on mental illness. You and the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society may be interested to know that in June the Conservatives called for a national strategy on mental health and mental illness. I was able to introduce that motion on behalf of the Conservative Party, and unfortunately, again the federal government has decided not to follow through on that supply day motion. I would be interested in your comments on that.

I'm going to ask my questions and then I'll be quiet.

Dr. Martens, you talked about evidence-based research. I wonder what your views on evidence-based benchmarks and if we're going to be able to achieve those by the December 31 deadline, as per the health accord.

My last question goes to Noralou Roos, dealing with drugs. I wonder if you could share with us your views on orphan drugs—Fabry's disease, for example—and how we could facilitate a catastrophic drug program, where it will help alleviate people's financial burden in that regard.

And also, there's tracking of drugs. That's a very important issue. We have Infoway, which is the federal program to help with the information technology network, but it's behind schedule. The Auditor General can't audit the books to see if we're getting value for the money. It's the view of many people—and the number is growing—that Infoway's turning into another boondoggle. I wonder if you could comment on that.

I had questions on mental illness, benchmarks, and drugs. So if each person could respectively answer, that would be good.

• (1245)

The Chair: Okay. Let me help you. In all fairness, with only 15 seconds left, I can't let anybody answer questions.

I'll go to the next presenter.

Mr. Bouchard.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you as well to all of the witnesses. I'm always impressed by the quality of your submissions.

My first question is for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

You stated that people with disabilities often earn less than \$10,000 or at the very least, much less than most Canadians.

What measures need to be taken in order for persons with disabilities to have the same opportunities as other Canadians?

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Laurie Beachell: Thank you for the question.

Our priority, and the priority of many national groups who have come together, is to call for investment in support services, things like home care, sign language interpretation, assistant technical aids programs, etc., which are all within provincial jurisdiction. We believe the appropriate role for the federal government is to transfer funds to the provinces for investments that are determined by the provinces. We also believe that the provinces need to report on how the funds are spent and to indicate the outcomes and what is achieved within each province.

We presently have a very patchwork-quilt system of support across this country. Most people with disabilities are unable to travel from jurisdiction to jurisdiction because their supports will not transfer with them. We would call for an initial down payment in this budget for a national disability supports investment fund. It would again be an agreement with the provinces for reporting on the outcomes of those investments. We believe this is the best way to get jobs, education, and assistance for people. A job strategy without supports in place will simply not work.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: My second question is directed to the Canadian Drug Policy Development Coalition. You stressed the need for independent centres to ensure drug safety.

Are you aware of existing drug safety models in other countries?

[English]

Dr. Noralou Roos: The question is a very interesting one.

It's something that we've been working on with the group that has been surveying what's going on in the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. There are models, but none of them have the information resources that Canada has, so people have set up independent groups, particularly in the United Kingdom, that have been looking into this very carefully. I think they're looking to Canada for the opportunity to track how drugs are used in the real world, across an entire population.

[Translation]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left to ask another question.

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Fine.

My third question is for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Admittedly, municipalities have many — perhaps too many — responsibilities compared to their revenues. You've demonstrated that fact very clearly. You also observed that Manitoba infrastructures are facing a \$3 billion deficit.

What type of infrastructures are vitally important to increasing economic development and productivity, in rural as well as in urban areas? Your presentation did in fact highlight both rural and urban needs.

•(1255)

[English]

Mr. Ron Bell: Thank you.

Where do you start on that?

Certainly, I think we all recognize that infrastructure that relates to the environment is of great concern to all right now, as we need to have a sustainable country, a sustainable world. So priorities probably start with things like water, sewers, and waste disposal and spread out from there. As far as economic development goes in Manitoba, a province of few spread apart by many miles, certainly road infrastructure, highway infrastructure, and streets and bridges are important as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Bouchard.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Thanks to all of you for your very good presentations. I wish we had a couple of more hours to pursue what you've raised with us, but let me take a stab at a couple of different areas.

First, to Mr. Toews and Mr. Ritter, I think we're all aware that if we don't have a strong family farm and a strong agricultural sector, there's not much point in talking about productivity and the productivity gap in this country. We hear your call, as others have made it, for cash into the hands of farmers.

I want to ask specifically about our position as we go into the WTO talks around supply management. Is it your sense that the Canadian government is fortified enough to make sure that our position is strongly represented at the WTO and that there's no danger of the Americans or the EU trying to dictate to Canada how farmers should run their agricultural system?

Mr. Bill Toews: Of course you're aware that the Canadian Wheat Board is not a supply management industry, so we can't speak specifically about supply management. But there certainly are concerns that farmers raise about whether we are prepared to get something back for anything that we do give up.

Certainly, the strength of the Canadian Wheat Board is the single-desk selling ability. It's a very strong point and a proven way of capturing additional returns from the marketplace. Of course, it's being attacked specifically by the U.S. and the EU just because of its success. Over and over again, it has been shown that it is not a trade-distorting operation. So yes, we are concerned, farmers are concerned, and we want our negotiators to understand that this is a very important principle: that farmers should be able to determine how we market grain in our own country.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Thank you.

I'd like to ask about another part of productivity that often doesn't get addressed fully, and that is human capital. We always talk about physical capital, but I don't think we pay enough attention to the lost contribution to our productive capacity as a nation because we haven't cared for our human capital.

I want to ask Laurie, Margaret, Chris, and anyone else about any information that they have that would show we are in fact losing an incredible amount of productive capability because we haven't addressed the barriers to deal with disabilities, we haven't dealt seriously with mental health issues, we haven't dealt with the stress on women trying to juggle work and family responsibilities. In fact, one figure I have says \$33 billion is lost annually as a result of mental illness, and I'm sure there are a whole lot of other costs. I want to know how you can round this out for us and make sure we go back with the proper analysis on that front.

Mr. Laurie Beachell: As a quick comment, many of our support programs for people with disabilities actually require them to define themselves as unemployable in order to retain benefits on social assistance. There is no incentive in the program to go to work part-time or to accept a job. If your drug bill is significant, if you do not have a group insurance package, if there is no coverage provincially, or if coverage is attached to remaining on social assistance, frankly, you cannot accept a job. You cannot go into the workforce.

This is common throughout all income support programs. Not only do we find barriers in the workplace around accessibility, but we find programs that are designed to keep people out of the labour market rather than providing incentives for them to go to jobs, earn income, and contribute to our society.

•(1300)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Margaret.

Ms. Margaret Haworth-Brockman: I would just add two examples to what was just said, information we've heard from women with respect to housing and child care.

When women need to spend a lot of time and energy protecting their children from bad housing or moving them out of bad housing, it prevents them from contributing in other ways to our society. It's extremely stressful and takes up an inordinate amount of time. Of course, it prevents children from staying in school consistently and makes for all kinds of other factors.

Secondly, we are making strong moves to a better child care system here. I would like to suggest that we not just invest in better salaries for the workers but in spaces for more children, because without adequate care, many women cannot see the value in moving into the workforce or it simply isn't possible.

Mr. Chris Summerville: I have one sentence. My understanding is that of the G-8 nations, Canada is the only one that does not have a national mental health plan, and furthermore, provincially we don't have a comprehensive provincial mental health plan. Why not?

That was a question with a sentence.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you.

I'm going to go through this as quickly as I can.

The presentations were excellent. Thank you, everyone, for doing that. I wish we had a longer period of time.

First of all, I'm very moved by the things that are happening with Canadian farmers. We've had countless presentations to us. It's to a point where we need to ensure that rural Manitoba survives. It's not surviving very well.

Mr. Toews, could you expand on what you were beginning to say about a long-term farm policy that's needed for the survival of Manitoba farmers?

Mr. Bill Toews: The remainder of our submission was with respect to some of the things Mr. Easter said in his report. It's essentially empowering farmers at the basic level to ensure that they have the kind of leverage to make decisions, perhaps collectively or individually, to ensure that their interests are being looked after. That essentially falls into line with what Mr. Easter said.

Our presentation essentially dealt with the short-term needs and then of course the longer-term requirements to try to keep this a sustainable business. Just as an example, as to streamlining government regulation to create greater efficiencies, we're being faced with regulations that inhibit our ability to use crop protection products and so forth that we should be able to use and are more cost-effective than perhaps some others. There are those kinds of things, but they're more long term.

There is an immediate need to address the cashflow problem on farms. We've outlined some of those things we can deal with and be involved with because grains are under the mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board. Essentially, it has to do with cashflow.

I have had so many farmers calling who are at their wits' end to determine how they're going to continue on in the next year. I think the analogy to the perfect storm was so appropriate in their presentation. If you're not in the farm community, you probably don't realize what's happening, but there is a sense of desperation amongst many people.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you for that very much.

My second question is to Ron Bell. Ron, it's my understanding from my office, from about three minutes ago, that the new deal for Manitoba has not been settled. Could you expand a little bit on what

you were saying about the infrastructure? You were so pleased about the new deal for Manitoba, and I'm just not quite clear. Has it been settled? My office just told me it hasn't.

Mr. Ron Bell: No, I believe what I was said was that cities and communities across Manitoba will soon join the rest of Canada. We believe we're getting very close to having an agreement in Manitoba. You may have noticed that I diverged from the written report; it's because we are now at a different place than we were a month ago when we submitted this. We believe that steps have been taken and that we're very close.

Mrs. Joy Smith: What is that based on? We have been struggling to get the deal for Manitoba and we don't have that picture. Can you give that to me, please?

• (1305)

Mr. Ron Bell: I'm sorry, but when you're in a negotiation process and you get very close, everybody is very careful not to say or do anything that may harm the actual agreement when it comes. But I do believe the various parties are getting very close to an agreement.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I have another question for the farming community.

Ken, could you expand on this a little, please? In your presentation, you were talking about the desperation in the farming community. How much time do we have to make sure things are in place to help the farmers? We're lobbied on this issue all the time.

Mr. Ken Ritter: To tell you the truth, time is growing very short. I'll give you an example.

We've easily got over 100,000 farmers in Canada. The realized net farm income for 2005 was estimated to be about \$1 billion, which is about \$10,000 a farm. These farms often have investments of millions of dollars, or whatever. If a company like this was on the TSE, it would be shunted off in short order.

Farmers need the cash ability to survive another year with these high input costs. As I indicated, the cost for diesel fuel has risen by 75%.

Farmers also need a vision of where this industry is going. We cannot keep on going with ad hoc payments year after year, allowing another crop to be seeded for next year. At some point in time, we need to have a vision of the future. We need to have an industry that young people can enter.

We have to ensure that the primary producer gets a fair part of the food dollar. When you cut it all down to size, the reality in Canada is that \$200 billion of this country's GDP is agriculture and agrifood products and the food industry. Farmers are getting virtually none of that food dollar.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Smith.

Thank you to the presenters.

Mr. Summerville, I have one quick question on your presentation. You don't ask for anything specifically or you don't make a recommendation. Is there anything?

Mr. Chris Summerville: Well, a model has been built that is creating economic opportunities and employment opportunities. It's funded through the social development of the National Network for Mental Health. To see more of that would be very helpful.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're on a time schedule. I think that Judy and Ms. Smith referred to it as well. We're stuck with this schedule, so we're stuck within a limited timeframe.

These types of panels are indicative of the problems we're facing as Canadians. Mr. Summerville, I think you summarized it perfectly. From one end of the spectrum, you have aboriginals and you have farm workers. We had business communities yesterday. We had street kids. It's tough.

I have to leave. Unfortunately, I don't make the schedules for Air Canada. So I want to thank the Manitobans for having me here. The panel here has been a little different, even for the members. It's a little more political out here. It was less political in B.C. and Alberta. And I know that I even have to live with Judy as a regular member of the committee.

I have to take two minutes. I've already thanked the witnesses, but I have to thank certain people.

I have to thank the clerk of the committee, Richard Dupuis, and the co-clerk, Christine. You did a great job.

I have to thank June and Sheena, from the Library of Parliament; the logistic officers, Lise and Kate; and the three interpreters, Benedicte, Bridgitte, and Nicole. I want to thank the monitor people, Lynne and Ceilidh, as well.

I've got to put on the record the members that we had in Vancouver. We had Mr. Don Bell, Jean Crowder, Rona Ambrose, Charlie Penson, Lynne Yelich, Joy Smith, Steven Fletcher, and Judy, who is a regular member, and then Mark Holland joined us later.

A special thanks to Robert. *Robert, merci parce que tu étais là pendant toute la tournée. Merci.*

We're at opposite ends in our province, but he was a good friend during the trip. When dues have to be given, I give them. He has been good, and now we're going to take a plane flight together.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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