



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 039**

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

---

Chair: Mr. Kody Blois





## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 39 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I will start with a few reminders. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. Just so you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee. Taking screenshots or photos of your screen is not permitted.

[*English*]

Colleagues, today we are studying Bill S-227. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, November 2, 2022, the committee is commencing the consideration of the bill, an act to establish Food Day in Canada.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses to our panel.

First of all, it's always a privilege to be able to be your chair on this committee, but it's always nice to be able to welcome my counterpart in the other place, as they say, Senator Black, who is the chair of the agriculture committee on the Senate side.

It's wonderful to have you here. Thank you for your work as a parliamentarian and thank you for your work on this bill.

We also welcome Mr. Nater, who is the sponsor of the bill here in the House of Commons, the member of Parliament for Perth—Wellington. Mr. Nater, thank you for your work in helping to sponsor this bill and for your presence here before the committee.

Colleagues, as your chair, I would hazard a guess that this is not a controversial bill. The clause-by-clause study would be quite short, because it's only one line, but I think it gives us an opportunity as a committee to ask our witnesses about the rationale of this coming forward, the ability to talk about the importance of agriculture and how we collectively share that vision.

I see John saying that there goes his question.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** The way in which I'm going to handle this, colleagues, is that we will go back and forth in the traditional manner. Feel free to choose your time. We have up to two hours. It doesn't have to be two hours; it's really at the discretion of this committee.

I'm in your hands as always, and I'm going to start with opening remarks from our witnesses. I've given you seven and a half minutes, but you don't have to use all that time.

We're going to start with Senator Black. It's over to you, my friend.

**Hon. Robert Black (Senator, Ontario, CSG):** Good afternoon.

Thanks very much for inviting me to appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food today. It's my honour and pleasure.

Bill S-227 seeks to designate the Saturday before the first Monday in August as Food Day in Canada.

As we know, food is at the heart of our homes, our communities, and our economy, and I think one positive thing that has emerged from the pandemic is that many Canadians, especially those outside of rural and agricultural communities, have become more interested in learning about where and how their food is grown.

It's important for our future generations to understand that our farmers, producers, processors and agri-food retailers work hard to produce good food. Canadians young and old need to see for themselves that our agricultural communities care about the land, the commodities they grow and animals they raise.

Having a nationally recognized Food Day in Canada can help them understand that there is so much to learn about agriculture and food production in our country and will, hopefully, increase public trust in our food supply systems. As rates of food insecurity rise, not only in Canada but around the world, I believe it's paramount that we work to support our systems and trust that it can provide us with healthy, safe and affordable food.

When we talk about local food production, we are talking about people in our everyday lives. We are talking about the farmers who grow the crops we drive by as we travel Canada, about the agri-businesses that produce the food we see on the shelves, about the restaurateurs and chefs who feed us and the vintners and brewers who produce the wine, beer and spirits that we enjoy. Local food is about much more than just what we eat; it is about Canadians.

We heard about these Canadians during the many speeches in your chamber from the members for Perth—Wellington, Wellington—Halton Hills, Guelph, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. They all presented compelling accounts of how agriculture has impacted their communities and Canada at large. I am confident that most, if not all, parliamentarians could do so. Agriculture truly touches us all.

As you know, Canada is one of the largest producers and exporters of agricultural products in the world. In 2021, the agriculture and agri-food system employed 2.1 million people, provided one in nine jobs in Canada and generated \$134.9 billion, which is approximately 6.8% of Canada's gross domestic product. Passing the Food Day in Canada act is another way that we can acknowledge the important role that agriculture and local food plays in Canada.

In fact, many provinces already celebrate local food with special days throughout the year. For example, here in Ontario, the province passed legislation to proclaim Food Day Canada in Ontario in June 2021. While provincial celebrations are wonderful, I am a firm believer that there should be one day nationally when the entire country can come together in honour of this important sector. Bill S-227 would give Canadians a reason to celebrate agriculture and agri-food from coast to coast to coast together every summer.

Some of you may recall that a previous bill, Bill C-281, which was originated in your chamber by a former member of Parliament, sought to designate the Friday before Thanksgiving each year as national local food day. While the ideas may appear very similar, and I wholeheartedly support the call to celebrate agriculture any time, Bill S-227 is based on an existing celebration that began as an industry-led initiative. I believe it's important that we involve industry as much as possible in the organization of this event. It is important, and the industry agrees that the day should fall in the summer, at the height of the growing season, as opposed to the fall, when agriculture is slowing down before the start of winter.

If established, this annual celebration would not only see Canadians join together in celebration of our food from our farms to our forks and the people who make it happen but also encourage Canadians to continue learning about our agricultural and agri-food industries. It's a chance to highlight and appreciate the diverse and nutritious food products we have access to each and every day. Agriculture and agri-food are critical industries that contribute not only to the whole of our nation, but to countries around the world.

I also want at this time pay tribute to a great advocate: Anita Stewart, the founder of Food Day Canada. As many of you will know, the first Food Day Canada was born from Anita's concern for beef farmers during the 2003 bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis, the BSE crisis.

Anita was a trailblazer who made a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of the Canadian food system. Her spirit and passion for Canadian cuisine from coast to coast to coast and the people who grew, harvested, and cooked it were unrivalled.

• (1635)

She is missed by all her knew her. Her memory lives on in the legacy of her recipes, her family and of course in Food Day Canada.

Thanks very much again for inviting me to join you today. I would also like to send my thanks to many of you and to many other members of Parliament who spoke in your chamber on Bill S-227.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have, and I look forward to hearing what our second witness has to say.

Thanks in advance for your support of celebrating Canadian food regardless of the outcome of this bill.

Thank you. *Merci. Meegwetch.*

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Senator Black. Those were strong words.

We will now go to Mr. Nater to follow up.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to be at the agriculture committee. It's certainly a bit of a change of scenery sitting at this end of the table, but it's great to be here and great to be an associate member of this committee. I have subbed in a few times, but I have not yet had the honour and privilege of sitting on this committee as a permanent member, despite coming from what I argue is the greatest agriculture riding in the country—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. John Nater:** —with the most dairy farmers in the country, the most chicken farmers in the country, the most pork producers in the province, in the top three or four for beef producers, and some of the most fertile farmland literally anywhere in the world. It is an honour to be here.

First of all, I want to thank my dear colleague Senator Black for first introducing this bill in the other place and for his initiative and long-time advocacy of agriculture and the agri-food system.

Of course, this bill didn't initiate with either of us, really. We as politicians are pushing forward the legacy of someone else. As the Senator mentioned in his statement, Food Day Canada is the legacy of the late Anita Stewart.

Most of my words here today are not my words. They are words from the Stewart family. They are from her four sons—Jeff, Brad, Mark and Paul Stewart—who wrote to me and wanted me to express words on their behalf on the importance of Food Day Canada.

These are their words:

To us, Anita Stewart's four sons, growing up in a family surrounded by food and culture, we saw and learned many things about Canadian cuisine. We got to learn about how sharing food builds togetherness and connection. We got to see how food changes lives and creates community around a kitchen, around a table, or at a backyard barbecue. We met people who worked tirelessly to grow, harvest and produce food supporting their families and country. We got to see how food can brighten a day just by being delicious.

Mom was a central figure of our family but simultaneously also for our nation. It was Eve Johnson, a respected Canadian food journalist who said, "If there was a patron saint of Canadian cuisine, it is Anita Stewart." According to the National Post, "Anita Stewart is the wonder woman of Canadian cuisine."

It is our dream—Mom's dream—to have at least one day nationally when it is impossible to ignore the culinary, agriculture and cultural-food contributions that sustain and enrich our lives in our bountiful north.

In Mom's own words, "By being attentive to our food sources, not only do we keep the cash flowing for our producers, but we also enable them to maintain and nurture diversity, creating a fabulous edible shopping list for us now and, even more important, for future generations. [It is] about pride and tenacity, and it is about the pure sensual pleasure of tasting the richness of Canada on every level." That is an excerpt from *Anita Stewart's Canada*, HarperCollins Publishers 2014.

Food Day Canada was created as an incredible tribute to Canadian ingredients and celebration of the good people feeding our nation. In the ensuing years, Food Day Canada has evolved into a unique, award-winning, proactive, positive event in Canadian food and farming that provides an opportunity to engage Canadians in a celebration of who we are as a nation.

Since its humble start, Food Day Canada has grown exponentially and become a respected force for good in the food life of Canada. We are innovators, educators and trendsetters. Hundreds of chefs from across the nation are our advocates. We are restaurateurs who are on the vanguard of Canadian culinary excellence and represented by a group of active volunteers. As chefs, restaurants, academics, producers, events, farmers, organizations, media and enthusiastic foodies from across Canada, we care deeply about Canadian regional cuisine.

Canadian cuisine is a food of possibilities... It is regional and seasonal, with a dash of our multi-cultural histories thrown in for good measure to create a nation of food stories. Coast to coast to coast we have so many unique authentic culinary possibilities!

The food life of a nation expresses its collective culture as much as any newspaper or television programme or splashy new building. The privilege of being a citizen in this nation producing and harvesting some of the finest ingredients on earth goes hand in hand with the challenge and responsibility to build a dynamic, real food culture then celebrating it.

We believe in using Canadian ingredients while we celebrate and recognize those who feed and nourish our nation. Support the research and education of Canada's food, agriculture, and culture and believe in our diversity reflecting traditions, history and our evolving nature.

Canada is a diverse and geographically disparate nation from all coasts. Although we are bound by geography and community ties, we are separated by distance. Food Day Canada, through its presences both virtually and in-person brings people together to celebrate. We share messages about the importance of supporting Canadians while creating multiple local and regional celebrations.

● (1640)

Food Day Canada's call to action is a pledge to shop, cook and dine Canadian. Participants shop locally at restaurants, businesses, and farms, or cook at home, or cottage or campsite to build community by sharing their table, while sharing positive messages of delicious celebrations and gratitude.

Our hope is having the day nationally established may help create widespread opportunities for Canadians to learn about the agriculture and agri-food system while we deepen our conversations about food and celebrate our northern bounty while remembering what is most important to us all: family, friends, community and food!

Jeff, Brad, Mark and Paul conclude with the words of their mother: "So, join the party! Head to a market, buy local, go home, and cook with the rhythms of the seasons. Be true to your own culinary story. It's really that simple."

I thank Jeff, Brad, Mark and Paul Stewart for allowing me to share their words in the promotion of the legacy of their late mother and the establishment of Food Day Canada.

Colleagues, I thank you for your time this morning, and I hope we can find support to move Bill S-227 forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Nater. I don't think you're going to have any issue with support with those strong words.

Thank you to the Stewart family as well.

Colleagues, we will move to questions, of course. Feel free to use as much time as you like. I'll keep an eye on the clock, but I think we'll just allow individuals who want to engage to do so, and we'll go from there.

Mr. Barlow, you're first up.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I think this would have been very easy to support and get through here until Mr. Nater made this a competition on whose riding was more agricultural than the rest. We may have to hold him over the coals for just a little while.

Senator Black, you can go.

No, it is good to hear that everyone around this table and within the House of Commons is very proud of our farmers, ranchers and producers and the critical role that they play. I am glad that this came back.

Senator Black, you talked about the legacy of Anita Stewart and how important it was when BSE was around. The fact that you can say bovine spongiform encephalopathy is fantastic, because it is important that we remember what brought this on initially, which was a catastrophic disease within the cattle industry.

I will put on the record now that I'm hopeful that we do not go through that again and how important it is now that the United States is no longer going to let us share access to their vaccine bank. It is imperative for Canada to develop its own vaccine bank, especially with foot and mouth disease, which is a very real threat to Canadian agriculture. I'm hopeful that it is something that the government is looking very seriously to do.

I have two questions for you. The previous PMB that Mr. Stetski from B.C. brought forward several years ago had a set date in August, and this is kind of a floating date that will be between July and August. I think the impetus of this bill is very important when we share information and maybe educate Canadians about the importance of agriculture and the modern Canadian agriculture that we do. Why was that decision made to have that floating day?

Second, and either one of you can answer, what do you envision Canada Food Day to be? When I say that, I say that I think this is an opportunity for us again to educate Canadians about what farmers are doing, how they do it, why we do it and the fact that we do it better than anyone in the world.

As producers, the biggest challenge we face is the misconception about what agriculture really does. We are not "Old MacDonald's" farm any longer; we are modern and we are innovative, and we are environmentally sustainable, but we must also be economically sustainable.

I know there are two questions, but please explain the date and what you envision the education portion of Food Day to be.

• (1645)

**Hon. Robert Black:** Thanks very much, Mr. Barlow, for your question.

With respect to the date, Food Day in Canada that Anita Stewart started was, in Ontario, the August long weekend, and that has, to this date 19 years later, always been the August long weekend in Ontario, but we know that the August long weekend isn't a long weekend across Canada in some other provinces.

When we went to the legal team and the clerks on our end, we had to make it so that it's the last Saturday before the first Monday in August so that it is always that weekend of the long weekend. That is the one and only reason.

The previous bill, as you referred to, was the Friday before the Thanksgiving weekend. When it came to the Senate chamber, we did make an amendment that would bring it to, we said, the August long weekend date. That was an error on our drafting team's part at that time, but it died in the Senate chamber anyway. It is, in fact, on the August long weekend that Anita always had it in the past. I might point out that 2023 is the 20th anniversary of that very first world's largest barbecue in Elora, which she started, and which was a precursor to Food Day Canada.

**Mr. John Nater:** Maybe I can address the second part of the question.

What do we want to see from it? I think there are a lot of things that we can see from it. One of the biggest is food literacy, so that Canadians know where Canadian food comes from. It doesn't come

from a grocery store shelf. It comes from hard-working farmers and farm families and processors across the country who do this work.

We've seen with Food Day Canada in the last few years a lot of visual representations. The CN Tower was lit in red and white, Niagara Falls was lit in red and white and the Calgary Tower was lit in red and white to promote Canadian food on Food Day Canada. The visual representations forced Canadians to see it and then ask the questions about where things went with it.

I want to highlight as well the BSE crisis. That's something that was exceptionally negative and challenging. Frankly, it's still being felt nearly 20 years later by beef farmers across Canada. They're still feeling the effects of it all these years later, but something positive came, and that was the promotion of Canadian food. If we can build on that legacy that came out of the dark days of 2003, and now, nearly 20 years later, be able to promote the food that sustains our country and the world, I think it will be a great and lasting legacy out of a dark day.

• (1650)

**Hon. Robert Black:** Perhaps I could add to that a little bit.

In terms of the group that oversees Food Day Canada, there's a small group of Anita's friends seized with—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I'm sorry to interrupt the senator, but we can no longer hear the interpretation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Black, we might have an issue with interpretation.

Monsieur Perron, I will keep speaking in English until you're able to hear me in French...

Are we good? Okay.

I had stopped the clock, Mr. Black. If you want to finish that, we'll go from there.

**Hon. Robert Black:** I will just say that the small group of Anita's friends involved in Food Day Canada are seized with this education piece going forward.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** That's wonderful.

Thank you, Mr. Black, Mr. Nater and Mr. Barlow.

Now we have Mr. Drouin for up to six minutes.

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

I do want to thank Senator Black for introducing the bill in the Senate, and obviously thank Mr. Nater for sponsoring that bill.

I do have to congratulate both of you. You are probably the only senator and MP to reunite Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Barlow at the same table in agreeing on one bill, so congratulations.

This question is for both of you. You've talked about the legacy of Anita Stewart. What's one thing you would like to see happening across Canada every Saturday of the long weekend when we do celebrate Food Day in Canada?

**Hon. Robert Black:** From my perspective, I'd like to see us acknowledge and recognize the continuum from farmer to plate. Whether it's your plate and what you've cooked on a barbecue or whether it's us enjoying something at a restaurant, the legacy of food and cuisine in Canada would be my desire.

I remember having a discussion with Anita on her back deck not long before she passed. Her desire was to see a food day in Canada nationally. Those were almost her words, so I would just echo that.

**Mr. John Nater:** To build on what Senator Black said, I think it's the sheer ability to share a meal and break bread with those around you. Whether it's with a family member, whether it's with a neighbour, whether it's at a community gathering or whether it's with a complete stranger, I think that ability to share a meal together and bond over that shared experience is so important.

One of the events I like to attend every year in my riding is a meal called "To Stratford With Love". Every year, just before Christmas, 1,800 people come together and share a meal. It's like a large family dinner. You come together and share a meal together. You get to know people you frankly have never met before. To everyone in that room, you're all neighbours. You're all family. You're all coming together.

I think the ability to share that bond over a meal is so important. Frankly, sometimes we've lost that in recent times, especially with the challenges from the pandemic over the last two years. The ability to come and share a meal together is so important.

Thank you for that question, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Great. Thank you.

Again, Mr. Barlow and I may want to put a friendly amendment in that bill just to ensure that Foothills and Glengarry—Prescott—Russell are the best ridings for agriculture. I'm just kidding; we know that the process would have to go back to the Senate, and we definitely do not want to do that.

I'm hearing from you that it doesn't matter how we would celebrate Food Day in Canada. It's just a matter of people telling the story of food across Canada, whether it's a farmer demonstrating what they're doing on their farm or a chef demonstrating how they're cooking food or whatnot.

I want to salute your efforts. As I think the chair has already acknowledged, it's a one-liner bill. It's simple. I'm not going to ask any more questions. I think both of you have done an amazing job of telling us about the story and legacy of Anita Stewart.

I want to thank you. As I've announced before, I will definitely be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's back to you.

**The Chair:** There's still a little bit of time.

Ms. Taylor Roy, you wanted to have an intervention. Perhaps I would invite you to make a few comments now.

• (1655)

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** I was going to ask a question very much along the lines of my colleagues.

Sharing a meal with people is something we do often, although you're right that it's maybe not so much since the pandemic.

When I read about Anita Stewart and what her mission was and when I was listening to you read the letter from her sons, it seemed like a lot of the emphasis was on local Canadian food. She was also focused on healthy food, environmental sustainability, diversity and labour conditions.

I'm wondering if there is any angle that focuses more on the local or the environmental part, because that seems to be her legacy. You also mentioned the small group of friends. Is there anything on that side that we'll be celebrating as well?

Thank you.

**Mr. John Nater:** I'll start, and I'm sure Senator Black would like to chime in as well.

Just two seconds ago we talked about.... She was the University of Guelph's first food laureate. The food lab at the University of Guelph is now named in her honour, which I think is simply exceptional.

The focus on Canadian food and local food is absolutely essential and a core of what Food Day in Canada would be, building on the legacy of Anita Stewart.

If you read some of the stories about Anita, you'll see she took great joy in travelling the country and experiencing unique, culturally appropriate, different regional food sources first-hand. I think that's one of the exciting celebrations of this. Local food is different for people in different regions and in different cultures. Experiencing that angle is just so important.

Second, on the local and environmental side of things, especially coming from rural ridings and rural communities like ours, it's just so important that we see that in our own backyard.

Organizations like Food Centres Canada and The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford provide that local dynamic. They provide the ability to learn how to use local ingredients to go beyond simply providing a meal to actually knowing what goes into that meal, how it's prepared and where that food comes from.

I'll turn it over to the senator.

**Hon. Robert Black:** Sure.

Very quickly, she was a food laureate at the University of Guelph, and they have not filled that position yet because it takes a special person to do that. She put her heart and soul into that role of food laureate. Her cookbooks are all Canadian, and each of them tells a story.

I remember reading and hearing her talk about travelling the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, catching fish and then cooking them locally. She always ate local. Her idea was that Canadian cuisine has a story to tell. That's what she wanted to see done.

**The Chair:** We are at time, Ms. Taylor Roy.

We'll move to Mr. Perron for questions or comments, and of course other members on either side may want to continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming.

As I wouldn't want my riding to be one of the few not to be mentioned today, I would ask my colleagues not to underestimate the agri-food potential of Berthier—Maskinongé, the most beautiful riding in the world.

Mr. Black and Mr. Nater, congratulations on this initiative. I don't think local food is ever assigned the importance it deserves.

I understand the reason for the date change, but can you tell me why Bill C-281 was rejected in the 42nd Parliament?

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Black:** I can.

Bill C-281 did come to the Senate and was referred to the agriculture committee. There was an amendment that changed the date to August. It came back to the Senate and did not pass there before Parliament was prorogued.

That's the only reason.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Once more, something that was done properly the first time will have to be redone yet again.

I still have some questions for you.

I understand the intent of Food Day in Canada, which is to promote farm production and inform the general population about how food is produced, where it is produced, and the chain that gets food from the farm to the table. All of that is excellent.

So why was "National Food Day" changed to "Food Day in Canada"? It strikes me that "local food" would have been quite accurate too.

**Mr. John Nater:** That's a good question.

In English, the name of the day reflects how Ms. Stewart had baptized it when it was established in 2003 as Food Day Canada. In French, it's *Journée canadienne de l'alimentation*.

The intent is to promote local food. We are really talking about food found in our respective communities.

• (1700)

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I understand. So the goal has not changed.

The day chosen is already called Food Day Canada. It's already a day designed to promote production in certain areas.

Do you think this new day will compete with the other or will it be complementary and contribute to the focus on local food?

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Black:** From my perspective, as I noted in my notes, there are a number of provincial days, a number of special days. We have Local Food Week in Ontario, just ahead of Thanksgiving. Other provinces have other days.

I think it's complementary, and I think any day that we can celebrate food, Canadian cuisine and local food is an important one. This day is one day across Canada that we can stop and call a national day.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I understand the intent. I believe it's fairly obvious that I'm in favour of the initiative. But that doesn't prevent us from trying to improve things.

What needs to be done to make this day special? As you pointed out in your response, there are already all kinds of days devoted to all kinds of things. I don't know whether my parliamentary colleagues have experienced what I have as I tried to keep track of all this on social networks, but at a certain point, you let it go. There are so many days for so many things that they become less meaningful in the end.

If we want this day to have a positive and profitable impact on agriculture, then special events need to be organized. It needs to be promoted in a particular way.

Have you discussed this? Have you thought about adding something about that in your bill? Or is the general idea satisfactory to you and you feel that everything will fall into place automatically?

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Black:** As I noted, there is a small group of friends of Anita Stewart who have carried on this day and who are driving this thing. I participate in some of their meetings, and I can share with you that the group has many things they have planned for the future.



As Mr. Nater noted, a number of sites across Canada were lit up in red and white, and that list is growing and has grown over the last five or six years, so they're working on that. Social media are significant on the days leading up to, and on the day of, Food Day Canada.

I anticipate greater things moving forward. I am excited to share with you that I think we've just begun. We, the small group, have just begun to make this a bigger thing across Canada on that Saturday in August.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Nater:** I would add that it's important to establish partnerships.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Thank you very much. That answers my questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Perron, Mr. Nater and Mr. Black.

Mr. MacGregor now has the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

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

Senator Black and Mr. Nater, thanks for being here.

I can remember being at this committee four years ago in June of 2018 when Mr. Stetski was before our committee. He was an NDP colleague of mine, and it's nice to see, Senator Black, that you're carrying it forward, and I think we have a real shot of getting this into law. Congratulations to you both.

It's not like we have to take a really deep dive into this bill; it's pretty straightforward.

I do want to ask one thing. Everyone who has spoken so far has talked about the agricultural bounty of their ridings. Cowichan—Malahat—Langford in the Hul'q'umi'num tongue means "warm land", and I believe we are the only Mediterranean-style climate in all of Canada, so we are definitely right up there.

I am on the coast, and we associate a lot of our food bounty with the ocean. I know I have everyone around this table beat with the best salmon fishing. You cannot beat the west coast salmon fishing off Port Renfrew in my riding, and it's incredibly important to local first nations. The Cowichan tribes are the largest first nation in all of British Columbia. I have a very high indigenous population in my riding, and a lot of their culturally and historically important food sources are all associated with the bounty that the ocean provides.

Mr. Nater, you referenced culturally important food. Would both of you have some comments? I know we tend to focus a lot on agriculture, but we also have to realize that this country's natural bounty is also there for enjoyment by all.

• (1705)

**Mr. John Nater:** Absolutely, Mr. MacGregor. Thank you again for your speech in favour of this bill at second reading. It's much appreciated.

Certainly, you're absolutely right. A lot of the unique richness of indigenous culture does relate to some of the unique foods and the

culturally appropriate food that comes from different parts of the country, most notably, in your case, the ocean. Perth—Wellington is very poor salmon fishing. I'll make note of that.

Part of the joy of this bill is that we can celebrate all aspects of where food comes from, whether it's land, sea or any part of the country. You know the legacy of Anita Stewart and some of the work that she has done. It touched on some of the indigenous cultures and indigenous food preparation and sources of food that we've seen throughout the country. I think this is a special opportunity to look at that unique richness of culture. I'm sure some of us around the table may be somewhat jealous sometimes of your Mediterranean climate. I think that gives an opportunity to celebrate that as well.

**Hon. Robert Black:** I will just add that Anita Stewart's stories—and I have heard many of them—all talk about the localness of the food. I have seen pictures of her out on boats salmon fishing or in the north on a dogsled going somewhere. I will point out that her celebration of life, which was held on September 24 of this year, included a dinner afterwards that was a bounty of cross-Canada food served family style to 150 people. There was a bounty from the Pacific Ocean. I will share that two of her sons live on the west coast, so it was close to her.

I also want to point out that there is a website that we should have mentioned earlier. It's a place where all chefs from across Canada can participate. When they are doing that, they are also talking about local food, whether it's the bounty from the ocean, from the north or from central Canada. They share recipes of local food. They highlight local food from their area and regions. We can't forget about that.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you both.

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

Now I understand that Ms. Rood and Mr. Lehoux are going to share a short period of time for some comments.

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Senator Black, for being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Nater, for being here today.

I also agree with you that it's important that we share Canadian culture.

I have to respectfully disagree with Mr. Nater as well. I'm sorry; Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has some amazing farmers. I don't quite get you with dairy and chicken, but we're close with the number of farms we have.

I want to say thank you for bringing this bill forward. I know Ms. Stewart's family is very supportive of it. They have been champions of this day as well. I look forward to seeing this bill pass and having a national day to celebrate Canadian food and the people who produce it.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank Mr. Nater and Senator Black for being here.

As a former agricultural producer, I find this bill, which establishes Food Day in Canada, to be excellent. I hope that it will be adopted soon and implemented in time for summer 2023.

Mr. Nater, you briefly mentioned the idea of establishing various partnerships. I think you wanted to go into more detail on this. It will indeed be important, in order to properly celebrate Food Day in Canada, to clearly determine what partnerships might be developed. Here in Quebec, there are already certain things underway. It's important to determine whether we can work in partnership with these various stakeholders to boost the impact that the day will have in Canada.

I believe it's important to underscore the importance of a bill like this at a time when we are conducting studies on food insecurity and looking into other related issues.

Mr. Nater, could you go into more detail about the partnerships you mentioned earlier?

• (1710)

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lehoux.

It is in fact very important to have partnerships with industry, restaurants, people who produce food for us every day, farmers, producers and processors. These partnerships can provide us with information about the various aspects of food in every part of our country.

You mentioned food insecurity. And yet, our country is extremely well endowed in terms of agriculture.

[*English*]

It's unfortunate that we as Canadians, with such a rich country, still see food insecurity in our country.

Building these partnerships, building the ability to promote and focus on local food, building the skill set in different avenues and in different ways to ensure that we have that ability to feed the country with healthy, nutritious local food, are things that we as a country will be able to promote using this day.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** At the end of the line, the ultimate objective of this day is to make all Canadians aware of the importance of the food produced here, in Canada, wherever it may be. I don't want to start a rivalry between ridings, Mr. Nater, but you know that Beauce is an excellent farm production area.

Over the past 10, 15 or 20 years, people have become increasingly unable to understand where the products they eat are coming from. This day is therefore very appropriate and should be focused on that aspect of things.

Does Senator Black have anything to add?

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Black:** Thank you very much.

I'll again share with you that I sit with the small group that is involved in this. Partnerships are a big piece of what they do. They bring their various networks together. They are partnered with provincial agriculture organizations across Canada and with industry. They already have that in place, but it's the smaller places, the local food.... I'm happy to share with them any suggestions you might have. Feel free to contact me.

Food security is an issue that the Stewart brothers are keen on. They felt that last year they would keep Food Day Canada moving forward. I can share with you without going into any detail that food security and food insecurity issues will be high on their list in the years to come.

[*Translation*]

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

I am now giving the floor to Ms. Valdez.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Thank you both for being here and for sharing the story of this bill.

I don't think anyone's brought it up yet. We recently reviewed "Canada's Food Price Report". It confirmed that food safety is at the top of Canadians' minds right now.

I was wondering how you were planning to use this bill to advocate for food safety.

**Hon. Robert Black:** I think it's important. All aspects of food preparation are part of this bill, whether I prepare the food in my home or chefs prepare it in a restaurant.

Food safety and food security are big pieces of the work that this group of friends are thinking about as they move forward. Food safety has to be at the top of our list. As we come to know food and know where and how our food is prepared, I think it's important that it be top of mind, as well.

**Mrs. Rechie Valdez:** Thank you.

As a food entrepreneur and restaurateur myself, I was curious as to how you're planning to engage the local restaurateurs as you're rolling this out.

• (1715)

**Hon. Robert Black:** The committee—the small group that's involved in this—works through the restaurant association, which filters out information. I am well aware that many restaurants in many of our cities across this country get involved on the day, preparing Food Day Canada-type meals. When I was here in Ottawa two years ago, four restaurants prepared specific Food Day Canada meals. I made it to two of them.

**Mrs. Rechie Valdez:** Thank you.

Mississauga—Streetsville doesn't have quite as many farms as my colleagues around this table, but we certainly have a hub of local businesses and restaurateurs, and I love how diverse our community is.

I'm encouraging you both in whatever way you roll out this bill to really advocate having people try new foods from different cultures and cuisines. I was wondering if you had considered that as well.

**Mr. John Nater:** Absolutely. That's a wonderful point to make.

Not everyone is going to live in an agricultural riding. There are not a lot of large agriculture-based farms in your riding, or Whitby, Aurora or Richmond Hill, but certainly we all eat. Where that food comes from and the different knowledge that comes with that food... It's the ability to work with the restaurants, community groups and organizations to promote unique food options that come from Canada and the bounty that is our country.

We are one of the greatest agriculture-producing nations in the world. In whatever way we can celebrate that, whether it's rural, urban or suburban—you name it—all of our country can come together and focus on this day.

That's a wonderful point.

**The Chair:** Ms. Valdez, don't sell yourself short. It's agriculture and agri-food.

Mr. Turnbull, we'll go over to you.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Thanks.

I couldn't pass up this rare opportunity to speak in support of a bill before this committee, which is great. I couldn't be in more support. I can barely find the words for how supportive I am for this. It's really a great bill. Thank you both for putting it forward.

I do have a few things that I want to say.

I really think it's great that you're paying tribute to Anita Stewart and her legacy.

For me, during all my work in food systems development over quite a number of years, about 15 years, I had a really good friend named Wayne Roberts. I don't know if you've ever heard that name, but Wayne Roberts was a doctor, a Ph.D., who started the first food policy council in Canada in Toronto. He also was on the board of FoodShare Toronto and Sustain Ontario. He was a founding member of Food Secure Canada. He won a Canadian environmental award. He chaired the Toronto-based Alliance for a Green Economy. He won a Queen's Diamond Jubilee award.

He passed away January 20, 2021, at 76 years old, the same age as my father, of cancer. It broke my heart to lose that friend who was one of my best friends and taught me so much about food and food systems. I think that if he were here today, he would support this bill. I often think about him when I'm on this committee and thinking about the interventions I make.

He would definitely support this bill. I know, because he loved the food system. He saw the diversity in our food system as an incredible opportunity for us to celebrate our culture as Canadians. He also saw it as a gateway. He saw food as a gateway to solving many of our issues. He wrote the book called *Food for City Building*, which is a really great book, if anyone has the time to read it.

Contrary to popular opinion, sometimes we hear about food in rural communities, many of which I've worked with. Mr. Nater, I

worked in your community. Ms. Rood, I worked in Middlesex-London to form the food policy council there over three years, and in Perth County. I hope you guys don't debate that too fiercely, because you both come from really great agricultural regions of Ontario.

I think the point I want to make is that Wayne Roberts talked about food as medicine. He talked about it as one of our last connections with nature. Our daily imbibing and enjoyment of food really connects us to the natural world, which many of us have lost. He talked about how, through the food system, we can build healthier communities. We can build a more prosperous economy. We can protect the environment. We can promote biodiversity. We can employ people, offer skill-building opportunities, have a better sense of mental health and wellness and on and on and on. There's almost no end to it, when you think about it.

It's really great, and I hope that a national Food Day like this will get to celebrate food system champions from across Canada. That's something I'm hoping for. I hope you guys would support that; I think you probably will.

Anita Stewart is definitely a food champion to celebrate, but there are many others. I can think of Debbie Field, who was one of the founders of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, who has worked her whole life to get children healthy, nutritious food. I think of Cathleen Kneen, who passed away years ago, and Nick Saul, who started Community Food Centres of Canada. There are many, many others across Canada, and obviously we can't name them all.

I just wanted to say that I hope we can honour those food system champions. That's something I'd really look forward to.

The only other point—maybe two really quick points—I think are important is that food literacy in my previous work came up over and over again when we talked about food security. Many of the organizations that work on building a more food-secure Canada are really talking about income and income security, but they're also talking about food literacy. Food literacy, we know, is a general term that includes all the skills, whether it be shopping, harvesting, growing food and understanding where it comes from—all the skills, right to maybe the compost pile and how you compost.

I think a Canada Food Day like this could really support our raising awareness and build a lot more food literacy in Canada, and that's certainly something I would support.

• (1720)

Last, for me a sustainable food system is one that's a citizen-engaged food system. It's democratic. It promotes a sense of active involvement and participation in the food system. I think in some ways—and Wayne Roberts really taught me this—through the food system, we can also build a healthy democracy.

I'll leave those with you just as considerations. I'm really thankful for your work on this bill. It's rare that we find things we can all support and there's not much debate on.

Kudos to both of you for your work on this.

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

I have some concluding remarks. They won't be long.

First of all, food has the ability to bring urban and rural communities together.

Senator Black, you and I were at the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions. Part of my remarks was about how fairs are a way to bring people together in that domain.

Mr. Perron, I see your hand. Do we have a translation issue or do you want another round of questions?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I just wanted to ask a final question. I didn't want to cut you off, Mr. Chair. I can wait until you finish to ask it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** No, no, Monsieur Perron; I want to have the last word, so it's over to you, my friend.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** All right, I understand. The chair wishes to retain the privilege of having the final word.

Mr. Black, I spoke to you earlier about the name of the day. Since everyone agrees that its clear objective is to make people aware of the importance of eating local products, why not include that in the title?

It's a big question that I'm asking, but you don't have to answer it. It's just that I was wondering about it earlier. In French, it's "*Journée canadienne de l'alimentation*"; in English, it's "Food Day in Canada". So it's a day devoted to food, but it doesn't say that it's about local food.

Would you consider an amendment that would simply add the word "local" before the word "food" in the title? Would you be favourable to a proposal like that or do you think it's already clear enough?

That's my final question. Thank you.

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Black:** From my perspective, I believe it's clear as it is. I think when individuals and communities and people in Canada delve into Food Day in Canada—the day—they'll quickly realize that in all respects it's local, it's food cuisine, it's food culture and it's how you prepare your food.

I think it's fine as it is. That's my personal opinion.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Perron. Thank you, Senator Black.

Colleagues, I don't see any other hands.

I appreciate the conversation that we've had thus far today on the legislation.

As I was saying to you, Senator Black, I see food and the conversation around celebrating food in Canada as an opportunity to bring urban and rural communities together. I applaud you and Mr. Nater on your work.

I also know that any good parliamentarian has good staff around them. I see Kimberly and Olivia at the back whom I've had the chance to work with. I know they are integral to your team. Thank you to your staff.

The final thing I want to say, of course, is that I would be remiss without mentioning my agriculture community of Kings—Hants. As your independent, impartial chair, I will not say that Kings—Hants is the best riding in the country vis-à-vis agriculture, but it is one of the best. We all have that privilege of representing agriculture stakeholders. I tip my cap to them today if they are listening and watching this committee.

Colleagues, I think we can end there.

There are a couple of things that I need to say. If there are amendments, it's not my job to dissuade you from moving them, but I will dissuade you from doing so because it would force this bill, which I think is not controversial, to go back to the Senate, as Mr. Nater has highlighted. If you or any parliamentarian do feel the need, November 30 is the deadline to get that to the legislative clerk. For the benefit of Mr. Nater and Mr. Black, we are intending to do clause-by-clause study, which will not take long, on December 14. We hope to have this report back before Christmas as a nice Christmas gift to you and to all of the folks who were involved.

Colleagues, we will be meeting on Monday to take on the study that we had talked about, which is in relation to supply management and Ukraine. We are working on witnesses. We hope to have confirmation of panels in due course, as the clerk is working on getting that lined up.

Are there any other questions or concerns, colleagues?

The last thing I want to say is that tonight is Irish heritage night. Our good friend Jamie Maloney, the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, is hosting. Senator Black might even be giving remarks

there. I would encourage you to go have pint and celebrate all things Irish and Irish-Canadian.

The meeting is adjourned.

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>