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**Company Affiliations:** Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), Cargill Elevator (Baie-Comeau)

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**Summary:** In this two-part interview, Canadian Grain Commission grain inspector Patrick Chandler describes the CGC's operations in the St. Lawrence Seaway system and how it compares to the Thunder Bay and western operations. In part one, he discusses starting in Baie-Comeau and teaching himself about grain to take the grain inspector exam. As a grain inspector, Chandler details his typical work in the terminals across Quebec and out to Halifax, the process of loading boats for export, the kinds of problems that could arise while loading, and the typical destinations for Canadian grain. He describes his pride in Canada's global reputation, the CGC's work to uphold that reputation, and his fear that less importance is being placed on inspection. Other topics discussed in part one include a short history of Bunge Elevator, the introduction of computers, the CGC's connection to the Canadian Wheat Board and grain researchers, new chemical tests for toxins and GMOs, and testing for grain pests. In part two, Chandler shares some vivid stories of wildlife seen on the job and funny stories of his colleagues. He discusses the older generation's use of alcohol on the job, how grain elevator explosions can start, and the difference in housekeeping standards between the St. Lawrence elevators.

**Keywords:** Canadian Grain Commission; Grain inspection; St. Lawrence terminal grain elevators; Cargill Elevator (Baie-Comeau); Bunge Elevator (Quebec City); Grain transportation—ship; Grain transportation—rail; Salties; Lakers; Canadian grain exports; St. Lawrence Seaway; Canadian Wheat Board; Grain testing; Grain sampling; Chemical testing; GMOs; Grain pests; Ship inspection; Montreal; Silos Port-Cartier; Richardson International Elevator (Sorel-Tracy); Workplace alcohol use; Grain elevator disasters; Grain elevator explosions; Halifax grain elevator explosion; Grain elevator inspections; Dust control

### Audio Part One

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: Starting my second interview in Quebec City, and I am sitting on September 1, 2011, in the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] office beside the wonderful Bunge Elevator here. My narrator will introduce himself.

PC: Hello, everybody. This is Patrick Chandler speaking from Quebec City. Born in Baie-Comeau, but now living in Quebec for eight years now.

NP: Okay, great. Now, Baie-Comeau is a place that I've heard of because there's an elevator there.

PC: Yes.

NP: And one of our Prime Ministers was from there as well.

PC: Yes. Mr. Mulroney, exactly.

NP: Yeah. Tell me how you first got involved in the grain industry.

PC: Actually, I was studying in college working a summer job at a garage, Hyundai garage. I was like where the pieces--. People came to see me just for selling pieces of cars, and I met Mr. Bulgan there, but he saw me work at the curling club in Baie-Comeau at the day. When he saw me, he told me that there was openings to work for the government for work at Cargill. Me personally, I didn't know nothing about Cargill. I didn't even know it was grain that was storage there, so. [Laughs] I applied for the job. So I got the job. I got the job. I started working in 1997. I was 21 years old. I worked there for seven years, so I was pretty young. It was funny because I went to Baie-Comeau only two weeks ago, and I met all the people that I worked with when I was really young, and it's strange because now I'm 36 years old. It's kind of funny to see when you're really young and starting in life and where I am now, and then you go back and meet the people who were very glad to meet me. It was not a lot of workers left at Cargill that I worked with when I started there, but it was fun.

NP: So when you started work then, were you working as an employee of Cargill?

PC: No, I started for CGC. When I applied for the job, I took all the tests. Took me only maybe two or three months before hiring me. Yeah, I just started for the CGC. Only for the CGC.

NP: I'm always quite amazed—I grew up in Thunder Bay—and if it weren't for the fact that my father worked as a grain inspector for the Canadian Grain Commission, I don't think I would even be aware of the elevators. Now, the elevators are not tiny, so you sort of wonder--. And even in Baie-Comeau, there's a big elevator there. What did you think was happening in that big elevator? Or did you even notice it was there?

PC: Because if you look at the way Baie-Comeau is, the town is made, actually if you don't take the time to look, you won't really see the elevator because it's kind of, like, in a corner, like in a bay in a corner. There's a big, big company—aluminum company—just beside Cargill. Because Cargill is big, actually. It's the biggest storage elevator in Canada, I think, if I'm not mistaken. About 491,000 tonnes of storage of grain it could hold.

NP: Do you know how that would compare with the Bunge Elevator that I see out the window here?

PC: Bunge, it's 200-something, 250, I think. I have the amount, actually, right here. 225,000 tonnes. So this is pretty big in Baie-Comeau. The thing with Baie-Comeau, they have two big sections. It's like big arenas. It's very impressive to see when you go in because you have big doors that open, and when you go in, it's like a big, big arena, and you have all the grain at the hold there. I think it's about close to 100,000 tonnes only in those sections.

NP: So they aren't bins then, they're more like warehouses?

PC: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. They have big tanks, some bins, tanks, bins, and two sections. Because between the sections they have bins.

**[0:05:03]**

NP: I'm going to ask you to think way back then, to when you started with the Canadian Grain Commission. Did you go to Winnipeg for your training?

PC: No. All my training, actually, I did myself a lot. I asked a lot of questions to my supervisor, and back in the day, we didn't have computers to look up information. We had an old Apple that we didn't have internet, for sure. So the learning I got was by asking a lot of questions, and some people actually from Winnipeg came to work in Baie-Comeau for, I think, a month or a few months. Mr. Pankowich, Mr. Merl Pankowich came to help me a lot for the training for the grade because, like I said before, for me, I'm not a farmer or none. When you tell people you work for the Commission, they never know what it is. When you tell them you look at grain, they say, "Grain? There's no grain in Quebec." But there is grain in Quebec, but they don't know it exists.

NP: As a new person starting, what was your impression of elevators? What was your impression of the grain industry? What sort of surprised you most about what you were learning?

PC: Actually, the thing that surprised me the most was when I learned that, first of all, Canadian grain is the best grain in all the world, pretty much. The other thing that surprised me also was that this is what we export the most in Canada is grain. That actually surprised me when I learned that at the beginning. After that, I would have to say when people ask me questions about the grain business and how it works, the thing that surprised them most, I think, was--. [Whirring sound] Is that going to bother? No? Okay. Is when they saw bay loaders going in the holds to unload the grain from the boats. That surprised them a lot. The other thing that surprised them also was when we told them that we put grain as food into the holds of the ships because they say, "We eat that, and they put that in the hold of ships?" "Yeah. [Laughs] That's how it works."

NP: Yeah. Where do the--. Explain a little--. Since you really are the first person that—well, and Stefan—that I've talked to about the eastern system, do you have any comments to make about, from your perspective, about the system as it works from the Prairies to Thunder Bay, and then from Thunder Bay to here? How would you describe maybe the similarities and differences?

PC: Well, the big difference is the boats because in Thunder Bay they load laker boats that are made to travel in the Great Lakes and then the rivers. And the difference from the boats here is that we load boats that are going across seas, so they have to travel a lot more and the cargo has to stay in the holds a lot longer than the lakers. After that, we have the cars also that come from Thunder Bay that we don't see, like, we don't inspect grain that goes in cars and then leaves. That's a big difference between Thunder Bay and here. But also, that grain that leaves from Thunder Bay to come here is not--. Usually, they don't go directly to the buyer or the country or whatever. Usually it has to stop here, and then we load from here to the country that bought the grain. So that's one of the differences between the inspection from Thunder Bay and--.

NP: When you said that one of the differences is that the grain that gets shipped from Thunder Bay into lakers doesn't have to be on the ship as long as when you ship out of here on the saltie.

PC: Mmhmm. Usually.

NP: What difference does that make to your job?

PC: For the length of time, the grain is in the hold. I think the biggest factor that you can consider for this is, like, if it rains. Because if it rains when it goes overseas, the grain will have time to germinate. And depending on the weather also if it's so hot over there, so if it's in the hold for a long time it can have time to have nice grass on the top of the hold. [Laughing]

**[0:10:21]**

NP: Do you know where the grain goes from here?

PC: Yeah. We always know where it goes, yeah.

NP: Tell me a bit about the different countries that the grain that comes through this port goes to.

PC: Well, the countries usually that go—even, I'm talking maybe Quebec, can have Quebec or Baie-Comeau—usually they go pretty much the same places. Morocco, Netherlands, Egypt, Algeria, Italy. Even Italy. That's another thing that surprised me also is that when I learned that the pasta that is made in Italy, that the grain came from Canada. So that's kind of funny also, a funny fact.

NP: We ship it away just to buy it back.

PC: Yeah, exactly. [Laughing] Exactly. Yeah, so that's pretty much all the countries. You have some also sometimes Africa, South Africa.

NP: Any go from here to the Caribbean or South America?

PC: Sometimes, yeah. But I can't remember right away a place exactly. But it's not as often as the other places actually. But we do sometimes even ship, I think, we did ship some in the States. Even the States. But usually the States, they go by car or by truck or by train usually for the States.

NP: When we left your career last, you were just starting up at the Cargill. Was it always Cargill, that elevator?

PC: Yeah. Always Cargill and still is.

NP: So they built it?

PC: Yeah. What they told me actually when I was working in Baie-Comeau was when Cargill started, they built the elevator in Baie-Comeau. That was a big job because the elevator is built in the hill. So when you go in the elevator, you have a downhill. So you have to go up the hill, and you're in the elevator and you have like a slope because they thought in the day that with the slope, the grain would go faster on the conveyors. I don't know exactly why. But the beginning, that's what they said that Cargill that when they built that in Baie-Comeau that it was their little baby. It was their baby, and they were betting a lot of money, I think, for the construction of that elevator in Baie-Comeau.

NP: And then what happened to your career?

PC: I studied—studied a lot, actually—because like I said before, I didn’t have a lot of experience in grain. So I studied. I studied. I read books, looked at grain a lot. Finally, I did the test to become a grain inspector. I passed, and when I passed, I had three choices. I could go in Montreal, Quebec, or Baie-Comeau. Since I liked Baie-Comeau, but I wanted to try something else in my life—I was 28 years old—I decided to go to Quebec because Quebec is a wonderful town—very beautiful. A lot of things to do. Snowboard and golfing, and that’s why I chose Quebec.

NP: What’s the difference between the Canadian Grain Commission operation in Montreal versus Quebec versus Baie-Comeau?

PC: Well, Montreal, it’s the main office, so all the information goes out from Montreal. It could be, like, inspection side. It could be weighing side. All our managers, our big managers, are in Montreal. For the difference, like, if you only look at the loading of boats, it would pretty much be the same. The only big difference that I noticed from all the other ports in the province of Quebec is the port wardens, because if you look at the other ports beside Quebec, the port warden are people hired from the federal government, and in Quebec it’s the ports of Quebec that hire the guy to inspect the holds. The big difference that this makes is that usually the port warden from Quebec are faster to finish boats because they have to approve the loading of the grain in the holds, and usually they’re faster than the other port wardens. So we usually, when we finish boats, it’s faster in Quebec than other ports. That’s--.

**[0:15:18]**

NP: Why would that be? Any--.

PC: I don’t know. [Laughs] I don’t know exactly why. I don’t know. Maybe it’s because the port pays the salary of the guys that looks at the holds. [Laughs] That could be a factor, but it’s still the same responsibility.

NP: How much difference would that be? Like minutes, hours, days?

PC: Usually it’s hours, yeah. And another thing, the difference also, is every port you go, they say, “This is the place they load the fastest.” But I would say that Port Cartier loads very fast, Quebec and Montreal. But like I say, the big difference between these three ports that supposed to load very fast is when they finish. Usually, the finishing of the holds are much faster here than they are in the other places. So that’s why they average about 2,000 tonnes an hour. When you calculate, about 2,000 tonnes an hour. That’s

another difference between here and Thunder Bay also is the way of loading is much faster here than a couple of elevators in Thunder Bay.

NP: What do you think makes the difference there? Is it an equipment--.

PC: Probably, yeah. Probably the equipment because I don't know if they're old in Thunder Bay. You can tell me if they're old in Thunder Bay. [Laughs] But like for here, it's very important to be fast for loading because the faster it is--. Because I think we can load here, I think, we can load 3,000 tonnes in 45 minutes. We do that often. Same thing for Montreal. It can be even faster. 4,000 tonnes in 45 minutes. Usually the elevators in Thunder Bay, it's much longer than that. That's one of the changes also that we had before, because in the past when I started working, we did increments every 2,800 tonnes, or every four hours.

NP: What do you mean by increments?

PC: I mean every 2,000 tonnes or four hours, we have to cut down the grain and go get a portion to work with where we go get the moisture, the dockage, roughage, and stuff like that. So that was the thing is that in the old days, it would be 2,800 tonnes or four hours of loading. For here, usually, we always got 2,800 tonnes before the four hours. The reason why they put the four hours is in the western part, like in Thunder Bay, sometimes the loading took four hours only to put 2,000 tonnes in, 2,800. So now they switch it back—I think it was maybe five years or six years ago—they switched to--. They cancelled the 2,800 tonnes to 2,000 tonnes. So now it's 2,000 tonnes but with no limit of time. That's why they tried to regulate that. It was one of the big changes for us because for us, it's a couple of minutes more if you wait to 2,800. So we have to do more sublots or increments because of that downgrade of tonnage.

NP: Which elevators, then, does this office handle?

PC: Actually, we don't have elevators that are really--. Because I work in the elevator here in Quebec, but I can go work anywhere. They can call us to go anywhere. So we don't--. You can't say, "Patrick, you're going to be responsible of the elevator in Port Cartier or in Baie-Comeau." If they need somebody, I have to go to every elevator.

NP: So where have you gone?

PC: But I'm based in--.

NP: Quebec.

PC: Quebec, yeah.

NP: So which elevators have you gone to?

PC: Actually, I worked in all the elevators on the St. Lawrence.

NP: Starting from--?

PC: Starting from Port Cartier, Baie-Comeau, Quebec, Trois Rivieres, Sorel, Montreal. Prescott is not in province of Quebec, but we do cover Prescott. And I did work also in Halifax. So that's the eastern part, yeah. I had the chance to work. But usually if you're talking about Halifax, Halifax we load usually, I think, it's five boats a year, even maybe less than that.

**[0:20:07]**

NP: Who owns the elevator in Halifax?

PC: Good question. I don't know. I'd have to check that out.

NP: Why—and maybe you can't answer this—why would someone ship out of Halifax?

PC: Well, the grain business is always where the boats go. So if they have to send a boat with, I don't know, it could be steel or coal or whatever, they sometimes try to book grain if it's going out to be sure to pay less for travelling. [Laughs]

NP: To have cargos in both directions?

PC: Yeah, exactly. If the boat goes in full, it has to go out full also. So the Wheat Board always tries to put grain very strategically in a way that it goes out with the boat, the buyer, whatever. But there's not really--. I don't think they prefer elevators from another one. You try usually to give them all the business, so they can keep their certification for grain. So maybe you probably have to export grain from an elevator so they can keep their certificate for shipping grain.

NP: Yeah. The Wheat Board tries to do that in fairness to the farmer too, that you allow all the farmers to deliver who want to deliver.



PC: But like in Sorel, the farmers deliver directly to the elevator. Halifax, I don't know. They have places to unload. Like I say, I've been there once, and I was pretty young. I was 23. It's a little bit far away, but I can get some info about if the farmers unload because I know there's a lot of farmers, actually, in New Brunswick. They even come to deliver grain here in Quebec, the province of Quebec.

NP: What are the--. Coming out of the west, for example, canola and wheat would be major crops, and then others like flax and barley and so on would also come out of there. What's different here about the crops that are handled?

PC: Well, it's a major difference. What we export the most from the eastern part on the St. Lawrence is mostly grain. If I talk about grain, I talk about Red Spring or durum. We also export soybean from the east, actually grown in Quebec, province of Quebec. We export soybeans and corn mostly. We do grow other things like canola. We grow it, but we don't export it from the ports.

NP: I know very little about the eastern system. It's like the system ends in Thunder Bay, and that's why I'm really pleased to be able to speak to you today. Because you're working here for the Canadian Grain Commission whose head office is in Winnipeg, is there a them and us kind of attitude at all? Like they know the western system, but they really don't know the eastern system. Is there any sense of that?

PC: Well, actually, the manager, Mr. Stewart, worked for many years in this province. He pretty much knows how it works. For sure it's very different. The difference between the work that they do in Winnipeg and the work that we do here, it's not the same thing at all, because we have to work with the industry directly. So we have to do the hours. We have to do pretty much what the company does as hours of work. I think the biggest difference between the head office and the offices on the St. Lawrence is that we have to do the hours. That we have to do much more hours than central office.

NP: And off-hours. Like, depending on when the boats come in and they want to get them out.

PC: Exactly. Weekends, holidays, whatever. For the other parts, the difference between--. Well, for sure, only in this province. If you talk about Montreal, talk about Quebec, the information goes pretty easily, but when you talk about Baie-Comeau or Port Cartier, I think it takes a little bit more time to reach actually Baie-Comeau and Port Cartier. And I lived that directly when I was living in Baie-Comeau. You need material. You need information. It was much more complicated and longer to receive information when I lived in Baie-Comeau, and I was working in Baie-Comeau. And the difference between working here also is here, the Montreal head office is closer, so I think it was easier that people from Montreal to come down to Quebec and talk to us. It was less complicated.

**[0:25:52]**

NP: Have computers made a difference in that speed of communication?

PC: Major difference. Yeah, for sure, major difference just with the pictures. When I was working in Baie-Comeau, if I wanted to see what ergot looked like, spartina looks like, you know, stuff like that, I had to go to Montreal and ask and try to find a jar of ergot, spartina, or whatever this fungus and think about it. So the big difference with the computer for people starting to work in the Commission was the picture and the information, for sure. The grain guide was directly in the computer, and if they had to do changes or amendment, it was instant, compared when I was in Baie-Comeau. They had to send it by post office and then had to get to Baie-Comeau and then had to change it in my book. For sure the information is much, much better.

NP: Is Port Cartier the furthest east elevator in Quebec?

PC: Yeah. Yes.

NP: Okay. Who runs that?

PC: It used to be Marc Laroche, but he retired, I think, two years ago. So now it's [inaudible].

NP: And which company?

PC: Les Silos Port Cartier. The name of the company is Silos Port Cartier, and I think it's owned by a European, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah.

NP: Is the Bunge Elevator the largest? Or the Cargill?

PC: You mean with tonnage?

NP: Yeah.

PC: Whole tonnage?

NP: The storage.

PC: Yeah. Storage is Baie-Comeau, for sure. From far away. I think the next one is 296,000 tonnes, and that is Port Cartier.

NP: Hm. Montreal have only one elevator?

PC: 261,000, yeah.

NP: Just one elevator.

PC: It used to have a lot of elevators. I think they had about five elevators, actually, in Montreal, but they closed them down, and now they use them for opera singing because the sound in the bins is very good.

NP: Yes, I know. On the computer, I got onto silophone, which is the one out of the elevator right at the walkway in Montreal.

PC: And actually, Montreal just sold—the elevator, I mean—because it used to be owned by the Port of Montreal, and they sold it to Viterra.

NP: To who?

PC: Viterra.

NP: Okay.

PC: Now they own the company now for not even a year now. So it's going to be big changes also for CGC.

NP: Is one elevator pretty much like another, or are there differences in reputation?

PC: That's a pretty good question. For sure they have reputations. I think the Wheat Board, what I was told from the Wheat Board is you have to be very nice with them because sometimes they can choose the elevators where they want to put their grain. So that's why there were apparently sensitivities. So that's why I think most of the elevators are very nice when they have to speak to them. [Laughs] Reputations? I know for sure that Cargill—I didn't know this fact when I started also—is that Cargill is very big. If you look at the processed food, meat, they're in everything. In grain, they have their fields, they have their cows. They have everything.

If Cargill was shut down, I heard that we would miss food for a couple of months, I think, if they would stop producing. For Bunge, I know that it's pretty big also. Same thing for JRI [James Richardson International], that's Sorel. So they are pretty big companies, actually, in grain. People will always have to eat, so that's why I think for sure this is a promising company. They won't close down soon because of the production of food.

**[0:30:32]**

NP: So you started out in Baie-Comeau knowing something about car parts, but not much about the grain industry in Canada.  
[Laughing]

PC: Exactly!

NP: From that perspective then, what are your thoughts about the grain industry in Canada? What do you know now that you didn't know then?

PC: Yeah. Like I said before, I did work for the car parts, but I was studying administrations. So that was kind of awkward when you say you're studying administration and you're going in the grain business. They didn't understand. In administration, I think, was the big part, like I said before, was the export of the grain. For the grain business in Canada, I think if you travel a bit--. Like I went to Vancouver, and I did see the elevators also in Vancouver. I didn't see the elevators in Thunder Bay, though. I think it's great. A big part of history of Canada, actually. I can only have very much respect for farmers that grow the grain because I know it's hard work and sometimes it's very discouraging. We have trouble with the weather and stuff like that, so they have a lot of things to juggle with for the farmers. So that's why my job is to protect them, to help them so they don't have any trouble with their grain, and try to give them the best grade I could give them, you know? For sure.

But Canadians should be very proud, actually, of the grain business because, like I say, a lot of—I don't know for the rest of Canada—but I know for the part of Canada, for the port of Quebec, I try to say to people that, you know, "Grain is a big part of our heritage and a big part of our history also, and we should be very proud." Because like I said, it's what we export the most, and it's the best of the best. So we should be very proud of that.

NP: One thing that I've noticed—and maybe you can comment on this—is I think I mentioned my father was a grain inspector in Thunder Bay. That was his career, and I knew nothing about the grain industry, even about what my dad did until after he died. I was really quite amazed at what goes into building a big industry like this.

PC: Yeah, it's a lot of--.

NP: Besides the people that grow it, or the people that ship it.

PC: Yeah. It's a lot of money, for sure. It's a lot of money. It's a lot of--. Construction is very also complicated. If you walk around in Baie-Comeau, it's like a maze with all the bins. You have to know where you're going, and it's very dark, very moist. Yeah, it is kind of impressive to see the construction when it goes up. It's big. It's heavy also, for sure. [Laughs]

NP: Some people consider it a scary place, the elevators.

PC: Actually, I did tell myself that a couple of times, "It would be a nice place to make horror movies." For sure, for sure. [Laughs] When you see the elevators--. Because especially when they work shifts, the night shifts, and you walk around night shifts, you can hear things in the dark. For sure it's kind of intimidating to walk around in the dark. It's very silent, very quiet sometimes. Yeah.

NP: Before I forget—because you did a little bit of research on the Bunge Elevator that's here—did you want to just have on tape some of the history of that particular elevator?

**[0:35:00]**

PC: Yes, actually, I translated this. This is roughly translated from--. It was a document that Bunge was nice enough to give me. So I just translated it because they didn't have it in English, a little bit of history here about the grain elevator in Quebec City. "The grain terminal on Abraham Martin Street at the Port of Quebec started in 1904 as a woodshed. It's in 1913 with the growing demand of the grain market that the construction started. Built in concrete, the elevator was a very modern and efficient building with all the necessary equipment for loading boats, unloading lakers and railcars. The construction with a 60-metre tower, 51 bins, and a total capacity of 8,000 tonnes was inaugurated in 1914. Operated by the federal government and after several important additions in 1917, 1928, 1958, and 1964, Bunge took possession in May 1967. With Bunge in control of 604 bins and a total storage capacity of 225,000 tonnes, they rapidly prospered in the grain business in Quebec. Their location was a big part of their success, being the last elevator with the possibility of railcars and connecting the Great Lakes with the rest of the world. The potential was limitless." I don't know if I should read that back and just--.

NP: No, that's good.

PC: That's good?

NP: Yes! So the federal government had it built.

PC: Yeah. Actually, it's still the federal government that rents the building to Bunge.

NP: Ah. Which department, do you know?

PC: No. I don't know. Good question. No, I don't know.

NP: Well, if you could find that out for me, because it would be good to interview them, if for no other reason, one of the things that we wanted to do was start to get a central location for all of the information about the construction of the various elevators, because as the elevators get demolished—sob, sob—sometimes the history of them disappears too. They just toss out the paperwork. So if I know which department is responsible for it, [laughs] I can at least go and track down the information.

PC: I can ask. For sure, I could ask for the elevator--. I can ask, yeah. No problem.

NP: Yeah? Okay. Good! Describe a typical day on your job.

PC: Okay. I start working usually at 8:00 in the morning. Usually we have, the day before, we know that the boat is coming, and we are loading boats. We know the quantity of grain we're going to put in the boat, the sort of grain we're going to put in the boat, destination, shipper, buyer. We usually check the weather also before loading the boat. [Laughs] After that, we come in at 8:00 and start loading. We always check the paperwork if we have extra samples, stuff like that, paperwork. We always check if the paperwork is done just before the loading of the boat. We start loading. We wait until we check the grain when we get 2,000 tonnes. The assistant will cut down the grain and will give me about approximately 1,000 grams of the grain we're shipping. Then I do all the tests. I pick the grain for different kind of barley, whatever they ask for, in the computer. That's pretty much it. We usually check the grain, we wait 2,000 tonnes, and once we had the 2,000 tonnes, we do the pick for the percentage of shipping.

NP: Is there anything that can go wrong there? Do you ever have to shut down loading?

PC: Yeah. We have the responsibility to make sure that the grain is shipped with the specs that are supposed to make for different grades. So if you get a big off-grade, if you get the problem—you could get heated grain, you can get whatever—if it starts raining also, we can stop the loading. Tell the elevators to stop loading for rain, for problem with the tonnages going to whatever kind of percentage we can get over. \

NP: So what's the turnaround time then? When you say cut the shipment, that means to stop the grain from going in, and then you do your sample? Okay. So what's the turnaround time before they start up again?

PC: They don't stop.

NP: They don't stop. So what if you find a problem?

**[0:40:05]**

PC: If we find a problem, we have to tell the elevator that we have a problem. It could be going to unloading the holds if the problem is major. So usually when we tell the elevator, they don't wait because if they wait and they take the chance and don't stop immediately, it's going to be longer to unload the hold. That's a lot of money. We're talking about a lot of money for the company.

NP: So what's the turnaround time then, from the time you take your sample to the time you say to them, "Stop" or "You've got a problem"?

PC: The time it takes to do an increment, it's around 45 minutes. But depending on the problem, we could even see the problem before an increment. So if--.

NP: It might be a visual thing.

PC: Yeah. We get a sample every 45 seconds. Every 45 seconds we get a sample in the office, a small quantity. I think it's 300 grams of sample going in the boat. So if we see immediately the problem, we're going to call them and tell them to stop because--. We don't tell them to stop, they decide to stop, but we tell them it would be better that it would be stopped because there is a problem. [Laughing] We can see the problem right away. Because usually the elevators, they don't wait. They know the inspector won't stop the loading just for fun.

NP: No. [Laughs]

PC: So they'll stop the elevator pretty--. If I say, "Stop," it's going to take maybe, I don't know, ten minutes so they can stop the loading.

NP: So at the same time as you're doing your samples here—the ones that are coming in every 45 seconds did you say?

PC: Mmhmm.

NP: Is the company doing that same sampling?

PC: They're starting, actually, the elevators to have house inspectors. Like for Quebec City, it's easy for them because they have a person working for Bunge that used to work for us. He used to be my coworker. He's working now, I think, it's been six years for Bunge. So usually he trains the foremans to check the grain and what to check for, but they don't really have experience.

NP: So that's not the usual process here? Because my understanding of Thunder Bay is they have parallel systems in just about all the elevators.

PC: They do have parallel systems, but to tell you that the foremans know what they're looking for, I would say I'm lying because they pretty much don't know. So they depend a lot on us that if they see problems to tell us.

NP: I know it's difficult to give a percentage, but what percentage of shipments would be problematic?

PC: Well, we have lots of different percentages of problems also. We have a lot of different categories of problems. So if you would ask me what's the percentage of boats unloaded for this elevator in a year? Like I say, in a year, it's very minimum. Maybe, you know, it could go from one boat a year--.

NP: Out of how many? How many boats go through here a year?

PC: I cannot say the number of boats. I cannot say the tonnage. We export 2,250,000 tonnes of grain from this like last year. Only last year.

NP: So if you had one boat out of 500, one boat out of 200? And I know it's very loose. I'm not saying I'm going to--.

PC: Well, if you calculate it, if we exported 2 million tonnes, it's about 25,000 tonnes we load. The average is 25,000 tonnes. So that would be 1,000 boats. It would be approximately 1,000 boats. So on 1,000 boats, I would say maybe two boats a year.

NP: Yeah.



PC: But it could go--. Like I say, it depends. Sometimes they have grain with problems, they can go maybe--. You can unload maybe five boats depending. But the average is about one boat a year, I would say.

NP: Yeah. What are you most proud of in the work you do?

PC: Actually, I take pride in every increment I take. Everything I take, usually, I try to take my best, and I always try to do my work as best as I can. That's why I say people, sometimes the people say, "Well, why do you take the time to do that?" Well, I always say, "I'm paid to do it, and I take the time to do it. I'm not paid to do it fast. I'm paid to do it well." That's what I say.

**[0:45:17]**

NP: And would you say then that--. Well, we'll get to this in a moment. I'll ask this question, although people oftentimes draw a blank on having an answer. What would surprise people most about the work that you do?

PC: Actually, when I explain a little bit and they see the work I do is the patience I have. [Laughing] I think that's the most common comment I have is that I'm very patient to do that because, you know, when you do 16-hour shifts, when you do a lot of hours looking at grain, there's an expression in French that says, "Veiller au grain." That means it's a long process and you have to be patient. A hard process to check that. But I think that's the most comments I have is, "You counting the grain?" They always think I'm counting the grain, but I'm not counting the grain. I'm picking very specific factors in the sample I get and looking at an overall view of the grain and how it looks like and stuff like that.

NP: So how has your knowledge or abilities changed from the time you started to now? Like what used to be hard and is now easy?

PC: For sure it's the overall view of the grain. When I worked as an assistant, I had to check every 300 grams I got in my pan just to be sure we didn't have any problems. Now I think the experience I have is how to deal with the problems more. When I started, I didn't know how to deal if I saw problems, but now I think the big difference is I know how to deal with different kinds of problems.

NP: To find the problem is a lot easier, and so you can move faster to correct them.

PC: Yeah. It's a lot easier, and you know the process. You know the steps to follow much easier. So that's a big stress less. You know if you have a problem, I have to call Montreal, speak with my manager. You know, you have to be prepared. You have to

know what to look for, what to do before calling him. Because we're talking about a lot of money. A lot. Because if you were to stop the loading, it's a lot of money also. You have to be very serious. When you find something, you have to be 110 percent sure of what you're looking at because, like I say, it's a lot of money. [Laughs]

NP: Do you find that some people are better at this than others?

PC: Well, I think the thing you see the most is the experience, the years. I think that's a big factor, the years' experience. That for sure you see the difference. If you see an inspector that's been working for three years inspecting boats, you will see a difference between 10-15 years for sure.

NP: I think you've talked a bit about the interconnectedness between the Canadian Grain Commission and the producers, how you feel it's a very important part of getting them the best reputation for what they grow by doing your job well. Do you have anything more to say about your connectedness with grain companies? The interconnectedness between you and the grain companies.

PC: Well, I just wanted to say this comment because I just thought--. You just made me think about that because I wanted to say it before, but I didn't say it before. I think what I'm a little bit afraid of with the Commission is--. Because, like I say, I'm very proud of the grain that we export. I'm very proud of the reputation we have for Canadians with that part. Because when you travel and go to other countries, if people ask me a question, "What are you most proud of from your country actually?" Well, for sure, because Canadians, we don't have the army, we don't have the great power. We are the small brother of the Americans, you know? But I think we should talk about more how proud we should be of our grain and the reputation we have of having the good grain.

**[0:50:25]**

The thing I'm a little bit scared of in what I'm seeing presently and maybe in the future is that they're trying a bit cutting down a little bit on the personnel and the importance of inspection of grain. I'm a little bit afraid that the CGC will start looking a little bit more like the Americans. The Americans, they do inspect their grain, but I don't think they're not as thorough as us. They don't--. I'm kind of scared that the government that's in place right now is going a little bit in that direction, going in American way of inspection. That scares me a little bit for that part because I don't want to lose our reputation for having the best grain in the world. But like I say, the government will maybe change in five to six years. [Laughs]

NP: What connection do you have, say, on a day-to-day basis or a week-to-week basis with the actual carriers? The rail companies or the shipping companies. In your job, do you have any connection with those?

PC: We started, I think, maybe three years ago, started to stop inspecting railcars coming into Bunge. So the connections I had with the railcars are pretty much over. For the lakers, actually, we don't even look at the grain that comes by lakers. If it comes by lakers, the only reason why I would look at the grain is because problems. Sometimes they have a problem with the weather or whatever. There's a leak in the boat and it can affect the quality of the grain. That could happen, but it's a submitted sample, so that we know it's the elevator's responsibility now.

NP: So the elevator would call you in to look at it if they felt it necessary?

PC: It did happen in the past, but what I was told was that you can't do anything except if they bring it as a submitted sample. If they bring the grain as a submitted sample, I can check it, but I cannot go on the laker and say--. I can not be the between man between the elevator and the laker.

NP: So it's very much moving towards inspection on export as opposed to anything that happens internally in the country?

PC: That's a big thing also that changed also in the last, I think, it was five years is the CGC is more and more concentrating on their mandate of exporting grain. The certification of exported grain. Because I know that in the west and the Prairies, they are having a lot of people getting laid off that work for the Commission. I was told that the eastern part will not be affected with the big layoffs because our mandate will still stand for inspecting exported grain.

NP: Any connection that you see between the work you do and the Canadian Wheat Board?

PC: Hm. Well, for me personally, what I can see is that the Wheat Board deals with the buyers. I'm there to protect the Wheat Board, also the buyer. That's the link I can see with the Wheat Board. Like the Wheat Board, they sell the grain, and they pretty much own the grain that they ship from--. Usually the shipper is all--. Like the one that we're loading tomorrow, actually, is the Wheat Board that is shipping the grain. So for sure, if I have a sample problem, if they need samples, then usually the demand comes from the Wheat Board. Sometimes from the buyer, but usually it's from the Wheat Board, and we do often need to do samples, more extra samples, for the buyer or the Wheat Board.

**[0:55:11]**

NP: This is a leading question, but does the work you do make the Canadian Wheat Board's job easier? Is it easier for them to sell grain because of some of the work you do?

PC: I hope, yes. That's the answer I can give you. I hope, yes. I really, sincerely hope that it helps them. But I think the buyers often don't know actually what we do in the CGC because I think I saw that many times. The buyers hire companies to get samples, but I'm not really sure that the buyers know that the sample is made by us. I don't know if the other companies that give the sample to the buyer say I made the sample. But that's the part I don't understand from the buyers' side is why does the buyer ask other companies to get samples from us? Because we're the ones that do the sample. That's kind of awkward.

NP: I have heard many times from various people that we've interviewed the certificate final is like gold.

PC: Yeah, it is gold, actually, for the buyers. That's very important also for the farmers and company because that's their relief. Once the certificate is made, the money goes out. [laughs] So that's why it's very important it be very fast. That's why I was--. Many times I was told you have to know the buyer's waiting for the certificates. They need that to unlock the money. So yeah, it's very important. It's very important.

NP: Did that ever bother you? The sort of weight on your shoulders of signing off on that certificate final?

PC: Usually, yeah, it's a big--. It's some weight on the shoulders, but I can deal with that one no problem because I know that I'm pretty much--. When I finish loading a boat, I know that what I loaded is what I got. That's what they ordered, that's what they wanted, and that's what I inspected. But no, usually I don't stress. I don't even think. It's not in my mind or my thoughts when I load a boat about the certificate.

NP: But if you were to say to someone else—and you know, because you're deep in this now—and you think, “Well, that's just what I do,” right? How much money—if you didn't do a good job—how much money is at stake? \$10? [Laughing]

PC: Like I say, for sure, sometimes I stress a little bit if I have problems with a boat and they unload and stuff like that. That's much more stressful because you think a lot more—especially when you have problems—you think a lot more about the certificate because it's your reputation. It's for your very reputation, and it's a very small family the Commission. That's why your reputation is very important. Yeah, like I say, that's a big part of the work we do.

NP: Why you make the big bucks.

PC: Yeah. [Laughs] But it a lot of money, actually, because if you think about only the grain apt when we load a boat, it could be like \$2 million for a \$20,000 boat. When you put the grain in, it's \$2 million of cargo that's in the boat. You have to calculate the dockage. They charge for docking the boat. They charge for standby. They have to pay the people to load the boat. The elevator has

to pay the people, so that's a lot of money also. That's a lot of money, a lot of lives. It is a very big deal when you think about the quality and certificate, money. All money.

NP: A little bit more distant connection, but any comments that you make on your connection or the work that grain researchers do, grain seed developers, what kind of impact or connection is there between their job and your job?

**[1:00:00]**

PC: Well, directly, it's the extra samples. I know the research part, they have more and more tests to do actually that goes in the certificate because buyers now are very--. They know what they want. They're very demanding on the results, also, for toxins. So now with the technology we have it's easier and faster, but we still have to send a sample to Winnipeg. So that's also important that we have good relations with Canada Post. [Laughs]

NP: Uh, something that you said. What are you testing for now different from what you tested for when you first started? Anything?

PC: There's a lot more tests, actually, the difference between when I started. When I started, the samples were pretty much all the same for every boat. We didn't have a lot of extra samples. It was very constant. I think it's been maybe eight to nine years we started to have problems, ochratoxin, GMO grain.

NP: What was the first one you mentioned?

PC: Ochratoxin. Ochratoxin.

NP: Yeah. I'll have you spell these out.

PC: No problem. Ochratoxin, that's a problem that happened in Italy actually. There was a research person—I don't remember his name—that said that Canadian grain had ochratoxin, and that started a big snowball. The toxins, we didn't have any of those toxins in Canada. Because of that person in Italy, now we have to do—like for the European countries—we have to do that test for every boat that's shipped in those European countries.

NP: Is that fusarium?

PC: No. Ochratoxin, no, that's different.

NP: No, it's a different one. Okay.

PC: Ochratoxin, that's one of the big factors because you have to have one other person to load the boat because of those tests. We have to take two kilos every 500 tonnes and they test that two kilos of 500 tonnes. That's a lot of work, and much more work.

NP: Just for ships going to Europe?

PC: Usually, yeah. Usually it's a European country, yeah.

NP: So where did it come from? Was it always there and nobody found it, or it's something that's developed.

PC: That's something that's more probably you have to ask the questions to the coats—not the coats—but the people who research the toxins. Because I cannot specify exactly. Like I say, I know it's people from Italy that they said that Canadian grain had that problem, and it went to court, and they had big problems with that. And he lost because it wasn't true, but we still have to do the tests for ochratoxin because now they're scared. Then there's the GMO, the genetically modified organism. Europeans, usually, they're big on that also. They don't want GMO grain going in their country.

NP: So GMOs, what kind of tests do you do for it? Is it visual?

PC: No. GMO is the same thing. You have to do a chemical test. Like a couple of years ago, we did a lot of tests with soybeans because we did have GMO soybeans in Canada. I think if you had only one grain of soybean that was GMO in 300 grams, you would be affirmative for--. Yeah, that was a lot of tests. And then we have the vomitoxin and the fusarium, well, that's another test also. We have also the falling number that usually the buyers ask for. That's the pace that the tending of the germination in the grain.

NP: Have you said everything that you needed to say about major changes in your job from when you started to where you are now? Given that you haven't been here all that long compared to a lot of other people we've interviewed. [Laughing]

PC: Like I said before, the major changes for sure was the computers.

NP: All positive would you say?

PC: Yeah. The changes that were made, yeah. Well, except, like I said before, for the--. We did lose a little bit in the services because we used to be more wide in our services. We used to do hold inspections for the USDA [United States Department of Agriculture]. We used to work for the USDA, for the US government, for a couple of things, and now we don't no more. So that's big changes to my job.

**[1:05:13]**

NP: What would you do for the USDA?

PC: We did hold inspections.

NP: Like the hold of the--.

PC: We would inspect holds for insects, and we did inspect also for bugs when we shipped US grain. Had to look for bugs for the Americans, in the name of the Americans.

NP: But not now?

PC: Nope. That's finished. Now the mandate for the CGC is only export.

NP: Does anybody do the bug inspections?

PC: Yeah. You mean for the Canadian grain?

NP: Yeah.

PC: We do test every 2,000 tonnes for bugs that are shipped. Plus there we have persons that do elevator inspections for sanitary reasons.

NP: But as far as if a ship came in here with bugs in the hold, as long as you say the grain is bug-free and the elevator storage is bug-free, whatever comes in in the ship is somebody else's problem?

PC: They did change that also because usually we do tests every 2,000 tonnes, and now we have to wait at the end of the boat. Because in Vancouver, the samples we send for bugs, in Vancouver they're sent at the laboratory in Vancouver, but we did the tests in place on the spot, did the test for Berlese on the spot. We did find bugs, and then you had to fumigate the ship before leaving. But now we only check for bugs at the end of the boat. This is new this year. But when the boat leaves, if you haven't fixed an infestation, they have to fumigate when they arrive at the destination. So that's less money for the elevators to spend, I think, was a big part of the reason why they want that done that way now.

NP: So let me get this right. If you're testing at the end of the shipment and you find bugs, the fumigation gets done at the other end?

PC: Yeah.

NP: If you test and you don't find bugs, but there are bugs at the other end--.

PC: Well, we did our part. I don't even know if the buyer looks for bugs when they unload.

NP: Hm. Extra protein. [Laughing]

PC: That's another part of the job or the sanitation of the Berlese and the insects.

NP: The sanitation of the--?

PC: Well, like I say, if you get a laker here that they know is infested, that's the elevator's job to contact a person in Montreal, that's the--. Not the bug man. [Laughs]

NP: Department of Agriculture?

PC: No, he works with us.

NP: Oh, does he? Okay.

PC: Yeah, he works for the CGC. He's the--.



NP: Entomologist?

PC: Entomologist, yeah. Entomologist. We have an entomologist in Montreal who has to get the paperwork because the company cannot grain infested without cleaning it. By law, they are obligated to treat the grain for infestation with phostoxin or whatever.

NP: Yeah. If the boat is infested?

PC: If the laker is infested.

NP: Yeah.

PC: That's, like I say, if the laker is infested, they unload the boat, but the elevator knows that it's infested, so they have to take procedures to make sure that the infestation doesn't spread. So they have to fumigate that grain.

NP: So if you get an empty boat coming in here and it's infested, you wouldn't necessarily know about it? Do you do an inspection of the hold?

PC: No. That's another government--. That's the Agriculture, they do the inspection of the holds.

NP: Would they be routinely inspected?

PC: All the boats have to be inspected. Before when I come work in the morning, before starting shipping, I have to have the pass of all the holds that is mentioned that there is no infestation in the holds.

NP: Okay. Good. We're just at five after 12:00, and I'm coming near the end. Are people wanting to get in here to eat?

PC: Yeah, yeah.

NP: [Laughing] Let's put it on pause.

**End of audio part one**

## Audio Part Two

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: We are resuming the interview with Mr. Patrick Chandler at Quebec City. I wanted to start off the second part of the interview just to finish off a few loose ends, and then we'll go into trying a bit of a French version of your interview. You were telling me a story about some of the wildlife—of two types—at the elevators. One was whales, the other was the people who drank. [Laughs]

PC: Oh, yeah.

NP: So maybe we'll start with the whales.

PC: Okay. Actually, the stories I have about the whales and the drinking people was in Baie-Comeau. Actually, it was a funny part because in Baie-Comeau, the way it works is that some tourists come to Baie-Comeau, and they pay to go watch the whales. The office in Baie-Comeau at Cargill was just beside the water, obviously, but the fun part, it was kind of like a bay, and in that bay, they had the krill. And krill is what whales eat. So we were paid not hours at the time, but the breaks we took to watch the whales eat, actually, in the bay. So we had ring-side view of whales eating in the bay just in front of our office. That was pretty neat actually. You could see the whales going out and eating just beside where the boats were being loaded.

NP: You were giving me a description earlier on off-tape about how the whales did this.

PC: Yeah, the way they eat. Yeah. They do like a--. They go around and around, and you told me it was like a--.

NP: Whirlpool.

PC: Whirlpool. Yeah. Just like a whirlpool. Then after that, they go underneath the whirlpool, and they go in the middle of the whirlpool and all the krill get caught in the whirlpool, and then they eat the krill that are caught in the whirlpool. Yeah. That's the way they eat.

NP: Would they come every year, the whales? Like was this rare or this happened quite often?

PC: It did happen, actually, pretty much every year. Depending on the time of the year that they go up the St. Lawrence. Yeah, we saw them pretty much every year. And actually, just before I left Baie-Comeau, there were sharks that were found in the bay. They

were called, what was it, Iceland sharks? Or Groenland [Greenland] sharks. I think it was Groenland sharks that they found, that divers saw, in the same bay. So it was kind of a big thing when they found those sharks in the bay.

NP: So quite a difference in the wildlife from the eastern system than in the Thunder Bay system!

PC: For sure. We saw also--. How do you say it in English? Sea, sea--. Not sea lions, but dolphin? No, not dolphins.

NP: En français? Qu'est-ce que ç'est en français?

PC: Des phoques.

NP: Oh, seals!

PC: Seals! Yeah. Seals. We saw a lot of seals also in Baie-Comeau and Port Cartier. Places like that.

NP: Do you think they were attracted to the grain or to the grain dust?

PC: The sharks, I don't think so, because the sharks didn't eat meat. Those are vegetarian sharks. But whales, what they eat—the krill—are small like shrimp, and I think they do eat the dust of the grain, actually. That's why the krill went there, and that's why the whales went there. The fun part also with the whales is that the shipping gallery was—I don't know how many feet high—it was very high, and it was fun to go in the gallery and look down in the bay because you saw in the water, and you can see the whales swimming in the bay, going around the bay and eating. We had a ring-side view. That was the better view than in the office actually.

NP: Did anybody ever take a video of this?

PC: No, never.

NP: Maybe that's something you could try to arrange because it would be great visual to have with your--.

PC: I'm thinking there probably are still whales there, but I didn't ask the last time I went. But I could ask, yeah. I could ask, yeah, sure.

NP: yeah. That would be great. Good.

PC: Try it out.

NP: Now, one theme that comes up whenever we talk to people who work close to the elevators or in them is the incidence of drinking in an elevator and how it's changed over time. So what have you got to say about that theme?

**[0:05:07]**

PC: Yeah. That's another thing I saw when I was working in Baie-Comeau when I started working was the older guys that were working there, actually, they did so many hours, so many time passed at the company, at Cargill, that they drank at work. [Laughs] There were lockers filled with alcohol. I didn't see it, but I heard about it that they had alcohol in the lockers. There was stories also. There was one guy that was supposed to give a boat water, and in exchange he wanted a bottle of whiskey or vodka, whatever they had. So when he got his bottle, he gave the water to the boat. And the story says also that the guy was on the boat loading the boat, and he drank while he was loading the boat. And when he went to come get off the boat, he had to take the gangway. He was so drunk that he had to go out on his hands and knees on the gangway to get off the boat and go on the dock. [Laughs]

NP: Things have changed though, I understand, from those days.

PC: Recently I went to Baie-Comeau, and even in Quebec I never heard or saw stories about workers drinking while working.

NP: Hm.

PC: So, it's, yeah, a generation change.

NP: Mmhmm.

PC: But the new generation now doesn't tolerate as many hours as the older workers did tolerate, the hours. The younger generation for sure don't want to do like their parents and work all their life at work and no play time, eh? Only work. That's another big difference I think about the generation that's coming in right now is they don't want to do as much hours work.

NP: So any other stories that you'd like to have sort of recorded as highlights?

PC: Sure. I have maybe three good stories, but they never happened in Quebec actually.

NP: No?

PC: Sadly, they never happened in Quebec.

NP: [Laughs]

PC: I would have to say my first story, same thing, I was in Baie-Comeau office. The office was on the second storage--. In the building, second storey building.

NP: Second storey.

PC: Yeah. And I was looking out the window, and there was one guy, one worker, that was cleaning his loader, payloader, with a fireman's hose. And the pressure of the hose, it's enormous. It's very high. And he was cleaning his loader with the hose. He went to step closer to his loader, and when he stepped a little bit closer to his loader, well, the hose wasn't long enough. So the hose went kind of straight, and when it went straight, it gave him a little nudge. And when he got the nudge, he lost control of the hose, [laughs] and he fell on his back, and the hose went crazy, eh? He tried to catch the hose, but he noticed very rapidly that he couldn't get his hands on the hose. But he was wet all over, and he lost his helmet. He was, you know, water everywhere. He was wet. I was up in the window, and I was laughing so hard. And he kind of glanced, but he wasn't sure, so he went to close the water down, but he was wet. And he got in his loader, and he went in front of the windows. Because when I saw that, I told my coworkers, "Come and see this! Come and see this!" So we were the three guys in the window applauding the guy passing in the payloader, and he didn't look. [Laughs] He saw us, but he didn't look. He only took his hand like that and, "Ah, never mind you guys." [Laughing] Yeah, so that was one of the funny stories that happened actually at Baie Comeau.

The other stories I have is there was one guy, like I said before, that came from Winnipeg. He worked for three months—Merl Pankowich—with us. He had to go in the elevators, so we always had to lend him equipment to go in the elevators for safety reasons. We got up on a conveyor that was maybe, I don't know, three feet high, and when we came to get off the conveyor, he just opened his legs, and he wanted to put his foot on the ground. And when he came to put his foot on the ground, he tore his pants from the knee to the crotch. [Laughing] So he was a very shy guy also, so it was funny because he passed the whole day working on his desk. He didn't go out his desk, and when he did, he grabbed his pants so he could hide the hole. [Laughing]

**[0:10:20]**

NP: Less serious accidents of working in the elevator. The hose. [Laughs]

PC: Yeah, the hose was one of the funny parts of the--.

NP: And the third one? The third story?

PC: The third story was with my old supervisor in Baie-Comeau. His name is Renald Boullianne. He is now working in Montreal. We have systems and a machine that's called a carder that is used to clean the grain from dockage. The machine was plugged in, and the machine didn't have a ground. So what happened is the machine was just beside a window in Baie-Comeau in the office, and the window had metal on the window. We noticed that when we put the hand on the carder and put the hand on the window, we had like a short. And I was just starting working, actually, in Baie-Comeau, and the way it worked was I was sitting at my desk, and just in front of me I had the carder and I had the--.

Renald kind of came in and another worker with us is Raymond Pouliot that works here. He wanted to show Renald, the supervisor, that they have a problem with the short. So instead of just saying to him, he wanted to show him why the electricity. So he wanted Renald to put his hand on the machine and like that touch the window. But the thing is, Renald already had his hand on the carder before touching the window, but Raymond didn't know. So when Renald touched the window, he had a short, and he jumped about three feet in the air. It was like, "*Ahhh!*" [Laughing] He was, you know, hitting his arm because he thought that the electricity was going through his arm. I don't know what happen. It was funny when he yelled, "*Ahhh!*" I was sitting just in front of him, and I laughed, and I laughed. I laughed all day. Every time I was his face, I was laughing. That's funny, that story. And I still laugh when I tell that story.

NP: So there was no problem convincing him that there was a problem with the machine? [Laughing]

PC: No. He only thought that Raymond tried to kill him. I don't know what he thought. [Laughing] Really funny story.

NP: I think we've pretty much finished all of our questions here. If you want to take a look at your list there and see if there's anything that you've made a note beside that we haven't had a chance to say.

PC: No, I think that we pretty much--.

NP: Okay. If--.

PC: I do have, actually, other stories about our inspectors. There was one story that one inspector made a bed underneath the benchwork and slept underneath the bench. [Laughs]

NP: He didn't want to get too far from his work in case he was called.

PC: Yeah. Exactly. That's one of those funny stories.

NP: That must have been it, right?

PC: Yeah.

NP: We talked a little bit over lunch about the possibility of setting up a national grain centre focusing on the export grain trade in Thunder Bay. If we did that, or if we were successful in doing that, what parts of the stories do you think would be most important to tell people?

PC: Good question. I think what would be interesting for people, I think, that would visit the centre, just the history. All the history. One of the biggest, like you said to me when we were having lunch—the biggest elevators in a group in all of the world. I mean, that's something big that some people pretty much don't know. Same thing for the quality of Canadian grain. That's another thing that I think that people don't know, and I think it would be very important that we conserve that reputation actually. Just speaking about that. The stories for sure.

Like explosions. If you think about some explosions, that would be more interesting for young people that elevators can explode, and when they do, usually it's pretty bad. Because we saw one video, actually, in safety minutes that showed the way an elevator explodes. And the way it works is when you have the first explosion in a bin, that's not the biggest one, and it's not the most dangerous one because usually when it was one bin explodes, what it does is it's going to shake all the structure of all the elevator, and you're going to have fine dust. And that's going to be it. It will do a big fire ball, and then it's going to explode another bin. That's the biggest explosion that you can get. Because they also told me—and I was pretty much impressed about that—that grain dust is more dangerous than dynamite. And that for me, I didn't know it was, for safety reasons, as dangerous as that.

**[0:15:56]**

NP: You were mentioning as well an explosion in Halifax. Do you recall when that happened? What was the situation?

PC: I think it happened maybe, yeah, I think it happened maybe seven to eight years ago in Halifax. I only saw the paper clips. I didn't really know all the story, but what I heard is one of the bins exploded, but I don't remember all the facts because it was pretty long ago. But I remember that they had pieces of concrete in the houses and even on your--. You could wake up in the morning and have a big piece of concrete on your lawn because the elevator is so close to the town, actually. Same thing in a couple places where the elevator is really close to the town. Same thing for Quebec. If a bin would explode, there's a lot of people close by, and same thing for Sorel. I think Baie-Comeau is very far. Port Cartier is very far. Trois Rivieres is pretty close, so we have a couple elevators that are close to the people. That's another fact maybe people would like to know is how dangerous it can be. Probably don't help for the sale of houses, but--. [Laughing]

NP: Well, and there has been over time—I don't know whether you've noticed a change at all—but certainly previously, housekeeping in elevators didn't use to be the best. And it's a serious thing. It's not just the people are neat freaks.

PC: Yeah. Well, exactly. That's why the Canadian government with the help of Agriculture Canada, they developed a system for inspecting elevators for dust and stuff like that, because I worked for a year and a half as an entomologist, and I did the elevator inspections on the St. Lawrence, and actually that's one of the things that we had to check, actually, was the dust. Don't have too many amount of dust accumulated on the structures, and even bugs, because bugs, when they are together, they can make a big ravage on the grain. That's the thing with bugs is some bugs eat good grain. Some bugs eat dust. Some bugs will--. That's the one we check the most is primary bugs because they can do a lot of damage. I saw in Baie-Comeau they had big pockets of infestations in the day and the grain, and that was a big problem because it can kind of heat the grain and have problems with heated grain. And they did have problems with heated grain because of the infestation.

NP: How do bugs heat grain? Like what happens as the--.

PC: Like they do pockets, and they eat the grain, and it builds up the heat when they eat and they move around and stuff like that.

NP: So were all the elevators pretty much the same as far as the attention to detail related to bugs and cleanliness?

PC: Cleaness? No.

NP: No?



PC: No. In the days I worked in entomology, Trois Riviere was a big problem because they didn't get a lot of grain and they kind of didn't bother with the cleanliness. But I had a lot of problems with Trois Rivieres. Same thing, Prescott. A lot of problems with bugs. For sure, they didn't have the same safety types or proud of their cleanness, no. Some places were really clean though. Like Port Cartier was really clean. Even Bunge was really clean. Cargill was very clean also, so it was easy to inspect.

NP: Yeah. So leadership would be an issue? Person in a leadership role took it seriously, it probably was shown in the--.

**[0:20:02]**

PC: Well, it was the director of the elevator, actually, that you had to deal with and try to find ways to clean. Some elevators didn't want to pay guys to clean, actually, even they were people not working for the elevator that came in to clean the elevators. Some elevators are not well-built in the sense that it was hard to reach places. You could have under conveyors and stuff like that. A lot of workers didn't want to go in those places.

NP: No. Just like everywhere. Yeah. Some houses are nice and clean, and some aren't.

PC: There you go. [Laughs]

NP: If you come across—as you travel from one elevator to another—if you come across pictures, sort of historical pictures of their operations, any blueprints or things like that, especially if they are planning to throw them out, would you just sort of keep track?

PC: I'll take a note.

NP: Yeah, because even if we don't take possession of them—because we don't have a spot to put them in—but if they're going to get tossed in the garbage, we'd rather have them than not, or at least have a chance to say, “Well, toss them in the garbage. There's nothing we can do about it.”

PC: I have some small pictures here, but I have another picture also of the Prescott Elevator.

NP: Okay. Great. Are there other people you think we should interview?

PC: For sure if you could get your hands on the retired people that worked for--.

NP: Okay. Do you have some names, or can you send me some names?

PC: I can send you some names.

NP: If you make a note of that too and send me some names because normally it's been the retired people that we have interviewed. We find that they look back and feel a little bit more comfortable talking about their careers after they've retired.

PC: [Laughing] Probably! Probably. And they did work for maybe 20, 30 years for the grain business also.

NP: Yes. Although, I'm surprised from our interview—from my interview with you—is how much you saw change in what has been a relatively short time compared to some of the fellows who were 90 years old that we interviewed. I just want to check on some spellings. Was it you who gave me Toskavic? That must have been Stefan.

PC: Toskavic, no.

NP: Pankowith?

PC: Pankowich, yeah.

NP: How is that spelled?

PC: P-A-N-kowich. Same thing as a witch. Pankowich.

NP: C-O or K-O?

PC: K-O. Pankowich.

NP: W-I-C-H?

PC: Yeah.

NP: And what was Pankowich's first name?

PC: Merl.

NP: Meryl? M-E-R-Y-L?

PC: M-E-R-L. Merl.

NP: M-E-R--.

PC: M-E-R-L. Yeah.

NP: Merl. Okay. And Raymond?

PC: Pouliot.

NP: Spelled?

PC: P-O-U-L-I-O-T. Raymond is R-A-Y-M-O-N-D. Raymond.

NP: Okay. Thank you.

PC: Yes.

NP: I oftentimes forget to ask these questions and then I'm one of the people who does transcripts, and I'm thinking, "How in the world do you spell that name?"

PC: And that was Renald Boullianne. I don't know if you got that name.

NP: Who was that?

PC: Renald Boullianne.

NP: Oh, yes.

PC: Renald, that's R-E-N-A-L-D. Boulianne, B-O-U-L-E--. No, I, sorry. I-A-N-N-E.

NP: Oh, that's a--.

PC: Boulianne.

NP: An unusual one. Okay. Good. So, let's call it quits here for this one, and then we're going to do a quick en Français.

PC: Oui.

NP: Okay.

PC: Très super.

**End of interview.**