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# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

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**Tuesday, April 28, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**

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•(1200)

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** The motion is pretty simple and straightforward, Mr. Chair. I do note that in today's media maybe Minister Day is taking a little more aggressive stance with the United States on this issue.

The motion is that in relation to its study of country-of-origin labelling, COOL, the committee invite officials from the Canadian embassy in Washington and the United States embassy in Ottawa to meet with the committee in order to discuss the United States country-of-origin legislation and its impact on Canadian livestock and other agricultural exports. I so move.

Just as background, I think all parties—quite a number of ministers in fact—have done a lot of work on this issue, trying to impress upon the United States how serious the country-of-origin labelling is. It's something that's been worked on for a number of years, even through the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Association. I know I've met a number of senators and congressmen, including the chair of the U.S. congressional agriculture committee, and I think they understand our position, at least at the political and administrative level, but I do find that they don't at the diplomatic level.

I think Ambassador Wilson has been pushing this issue and understands it. If they will come, we do need to express at the diplomatic level how serious this issue is for Canadian producers, and how serious it is in terms of our trading relationship with the United States. It gives us an opportunity to hear from them what they have to say, and for us to impress upon them how serious this issue is for Canadian producers.

The most integrated industry in North America was the cattle industry. A lot of producers are being hurt, especially in Canada, as a result of this COOL legislation.

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** I think all this is doing is helping our ministers, who are working hard now. It gives them a little more ammunition, more clout, so to speak, if this happens and we have some positive recommendations. So I don't think anybody loses. I think it's a win and it helps our government get on with the job of what they're trying to do.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I think this is an important motion. The minister and I have been doing round tables across the country and meeting with farmers, and certainly this is a subject of keen discussion, particularly among the pork and beef farmers, of course. There's just no question that it's having an impact on those agricultural sectors.

I think it's very appropriate for this committee to have these people come in front of us to talk about and to explain the reasoning behind COOL, what exactly is this voluntary component, and how voluntary it is.

I'd also like to know the impact it's having on their red meat sector, because the information I'm receiving is that this is not only impacting our red meat sector, it's impacting their red meat sector. What are their plans in terms of moving forward on this?

So, yes, I'm in favour of moving ahead with this.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I second this motion and I have only one question to ask. It is not the first time we try to get people from another country to come here, particularly Americans working at embassies, and it seems to me that they do not always come. I do not want to start a war, but can we force them to come as witnesses appearing before us? If I am not mistaken, we have invited them before and they did not come. I would like to know whether we could force their hand a little more. It would be most important for us to listen to what they have to say, and especially that they hear us.

[English]

**The Chair:** Isabelle just told me that they did appear one time, though not on the dates for which we had asked them.

As for whether we can force them, I think it's pretty hard to force somebody from another country, so probably not. But if we request, hopefully they'll attend.

Is there any further discussion on Mr. Easter's motion?

(Motion agreed to)

•(1205)

**The Chair:** Is there any other business?

We'll adjourn until Thursday at 11 o'clock.





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