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Chair: Mr. Bryan May



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• (1325)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

I ask the committee for unanimous consent to move a motion by MP Brassard. Do I have unanimous consent? I am seeing that the answer is yes.

Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Like most Canadians, I woke up this morning and saw the news about Whole Foods and its corporate decision not to allow its employees to wear poppies. I think the reaction of Canadians is not dissimilar from mine. As we clearly saw in the House of Commons this afternoon, all parties came together to strongly condemn the actions of Whole Foods, in addition to directing this committee to have the appropriate people from Whole Foods—which I understand is based out of Texas and is part of Amazon—come to committee and discuss their decision to implement this policy.

I will say—and I hope that all members agree with me—that wearing a poppy in this country isn't a reflection of any cause or any political statement. It is, in fact, a show of respect for those veterans who served this country, for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, for those who continue to serve and for their families who have given up so much in the name of war and peace.

As a result, I'd like to move this motion now. It's in both official languages. I think the clerk may have a copy or will have a copy of this shortly. It says:

That the Committee immediately invite John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market Inc., to explain his company's policy which inexplicably prohibits its employees from wearing the Poppy to honour Canada's Veterans by November 20th, 2020, and [to] report its findings to the House.

I'll read it in French as well for my friend from the Bloc:

[*Translation*]

That the committee immediately invite John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market Inc. to explain his company's policy, which inexplicably prohibits its employees from wearing the poppy to honour Canada's veterans by November 20th 2020, and report its findings to the House.

[*English*]

That's my motion today, Mr. Chair.

I'm asking all members to support this motion, as indicated by the support of their parties in the House of Commons, so that Mr.

Mackey can come to explain to Canadians and veterans and their families in this country why this policy exists.

I'll go further and ask Mr. Mackey directly, through this committee, to change his mind now—change his company's mind—and show proper respect and honour for Canada's veterans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Could I have the French version of the motion sent to my P9 account?

[*English*]

The Chair: We will make sure that happens, Sir.

MP Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I'll be supporting the motion. I think the fact that the House has directed this probably binds us.

I want to come back to the last thing Mr. Brassard said. I cannot imagine any universe in which this company, given the public outcry, won't come to its senses and reverse this before our letter gets to them. That's what I expect will happen.

It's not going to change my support for the motion, but as to what we would do with an invitation once the company changes its policy—which, again, I fully expect will happen before the weekend is out—I leave that for your consideration.

I still think the motion should be adopted.

The Chair: Excellent.

MP Blaney.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I of course also will be supporting this motion.

In response to Mr. Casey, I think it's important that even if they do in wisdom change their position, it's also important for us also to hear how they came to make it. I would like that on the record and would like them to be accountable, because this has had an extreme effect and impact on our veterans across this country. It's so disrespectful, and I want to hear them speak to that.

Thank you.

• (1330)

The Chair: Seeing that we seem to be unanimous on this issue, for my own two cents I agree that this is one of those cases when you wake up and just scratch your head. In basketball terms, we would refer to this as an unforced error, one of those things that just does not make a lot of sense. I would be 100% in support of this motion as well.

Mr. John Brassard: I would classify it as an air ball, Bryan, quite frankly.

The Chair: An air ball? Well, that's another way to put it.

Seeing that we are going to be having bells very shortly, can I call the question?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will be sending that letter as quickly as possible.

Now let's turn to the purpose of today's meeting, which unfortunately we will not get to.

I want to take the opportunity to apologize to the minister for his having taken time to come here and our not having the time to hear from him. This happens, unfortunately, as we all know. Votes get called and we get torn away from the work we do in committee.

I assure you that we'll take every opportunity to have you back as quickly as possible so that we can report on the main and supplementary estimates as quickly as possible.

That goes as well to those who are in the room. Clearly they have fixed what was broken. I know we put a lot of pressure on them, so a big thank you goes to them and to all of the technical folks who make this possible during an incredibly challenging time, not just for us members of Parliament but also for those of you in the room as well.

My timing couldn't be more perfect. I see the lights flashing for the vote.

I call for adjournment of our meeting today.

Is there any discussion?

Seeing none, I adjourn the meeting.

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