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Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Thursday, December 10, 2009

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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Ms. Demers, you asked for the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): I do not believe that it is up to the committee to discuss such a motion. I do not believe that it is up to the committee to determine how democracy should be expressed, nor how we express our convictions. I do not believe that that falls within the purview of the committee.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, there was no translation.

Nicole, I'll ask you to start again. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair.

I do not believe that it is up to the committee to discuss this motion. I do not believe that it is up to the members of the committee to determine how democracy and our convictions are to be expressed. I do not believe that it is appropriate that this motion be discussed here today.

[English]

The Chair: So you're making a point of order, Ms. Demers?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: You believe this motion does not fall within the mandate and jurisdiction of this committee?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: It is up to Parliament to decide how democracy is expressed, not up to the committee; it is up to our leaders, our whips, our committees on procedure.

[English]

The Chair: We're going to deal here with the question of whether or not this motion is appropriate to the mandate of this committee, so I will entertain discussion on this.

Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Madam Chair, I guess because it's my motion, I should probably be first to address that.

It's obviously not our intent. The intent goes a little bit deeper than that. I would suggest that if you're opposed to it, you'll defeat the motion. I just thought it would be a healthy thing to talk about and a thing that would benefit us all if we brought this up.

As to the legitimacy, I think we could argue for a long time. I'd kind of like to get to the party. I'd like to just be able to spend some time with my colleagues.

The Chair: Does that mean you're removing the motion?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: No, the issue is that if you feel that way, you can vote it down. We recognize that too, but I just think it's something that should be aired.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Zarac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): I do not share Mr. Van Kesteren's opinion. I have great respect for you, but I do not believe this is a way of airing things, as you say. The Committee has a mandate and, I agree with Ms. Demers, debating this matter does not fall under our mandate. If we want to air things, there are other, probably friendlier, ways of doing so.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I certainly didn't intend for it to be unfriendly. I just intended that talking about these things could be, as a matter of fact, something that might bind this committee together more.

I'd hoped we could have done this earlier—we didn't have that opportunity—just to show this side of the table's feelings and our position on some of those things. I think it would be wise to look at those things so that in the future when we come across issues like this, we can understand that there are differences of opinion.

Nevertheless, the overall issue, I think, is that we as a committee have an air and a dignity about us and that we move forward on very important issues. I think we've demonstrated that. Madam Chair, you've done an excellent job in the past, chairing for the last committee report, which we've accomplished, and I'd like to see that continue. I just thought this was something that left a little bit of a cloud, so this gives us an opportunity to air those concerns.

The Chair: Cathy.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): I have two points, Madam Chair.

As to whether this is an appropriate motion for this committee to be talking about, if there were issues about Remembrance Day, we would certainly expect that the veterans affairs committee would deal with those.

Very clearly, the women who were killed at École Polytechnique were killed because they were women. We are the status of women committee, so I think it is an appropriate motion for us to talk about, but as a point of order, I don't know that it should be excluded from discussion. Perhaps we could be guided.

• (1540)

The Chair: Yes, Irene.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): I have to say that I think such a discussion would be more divisive as far as this committee goes. We as committee members, as parliamentarians, have to be free to respond to the realities as we see them, and the reality is that the women at École Polytechnique were killed by a non-restricted weapon, and I think that is at the heart of the concern we have expressed.

That weapon was not registered. It was not restricted. That gunman killed 14 women and wounded many others. That, I think, is the essence of our need to—

The Chair: Irene, I have to say that you're arguing on the substance of a motion that is not yet on the table. We are asking whether the motion should be appropriately put on the table.

Lise, are you speaking to the procedure here?

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Yes, I am.

I understand what you're trying to say, but if we want a unified committee we have to understand that we have different values. We shouldn't have to justify our different values. We should respect our different values and not take anything personally because we have different ideas. I think that's what we're debating here.

The Chair: I have allowed some discussion on this. I think Ms. Wong would like to say something. Then I would like to speak to the propriety of bringing this motion and—from what I've heard and what I've read in the rules—whether I believe this motion is appropriate here or not.

So I will entertain Ms. Wong. Then I will discuss not the substance or whether people should or should not discuss the issue, but whether this is the appropriate forum for discussing this issue. It's my role as the chair to decide that.

Alice.

Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

If you look at the motion carefully, we should acknowledge that we will be facing a lot of commemorative ceremonies as status of women committee members. So those will come in the future.

Then there's the fact that they should not be politicized and should be treated in a non-partisan manner. I think it applies to all parties, not just to the specific event that was quoted here as an example. I wasn't even there, because I was on the road.

I'm looking at this strictly as a motion, and I think this will also clarify that it's something for all of us to observe in the future—that

we will respect each other. So I think that is a positive motion rather than a negative one. In the spirit of cooperation, it's really mutual respect that we put in it.

This time it's one party and next time it could be another party. In other words, we work for the benefit of women. There will be a lot of commemorative ceremonies. For example, down the road there'll be something for first nations women. Those can be politicized, but we don't want that to happen, either way. So that's why I think this is a good motion, and it is nice to set some common understanding that we as a committee observe.

That's my support.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Wong.

I am not going to speak to the merit of the motion or the demerit of the motion. I'm not going to speak to the intent of the motion, because that is not my role here. But when I look at what the motion is asking, it is meant to cover all commemorative ceremonies, and this is one example. It says “commemorative ceremonies”.

This was a national ceremony; therefore, it was the purview of Parliament and not this particular committee. There are going to be many national ceremonies that are the purview of Parliament and not this committee. How Parliament behaves—the manner in which Parliament deals with ceremonies and other events—is the role of the House and therefore the Speaker. This should be brought rightly, if you wish, to the House and not to this committee.

This committee's mandate is to deal with issues specifically pertinent to women and women's issues and not to ceremonies, which is the purview of the Speaker of the House. I believe this does not belong here, and I'm moving that it not be done so.

If you wish, there is a procedure for challenging the chair's ruling, and I would like to rule on how that moves forward. We're dealing strictly with substance here and the appropriateness of this motion, and not with the substance of the motion.

Do we have the rules for this?

• (1545)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Can I address the chair?

The Chair: May I give you the process—

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: We're not going to challenge the chair.

The Chair: You're not going to challenge the chair. Okay.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Can I just have a wrap-up statement, then?

We accept your ruling, and whether we like it or not, I think the writing's on the wall.

The point I wanted to make is that for a committee—and I'm speaking now of Candice—those types of actions are very difficult. They're very difficult to take. It's one thing to have that type of attack from somebody who isn't on the same team—and I think of us as a team here—but this particular case was different. It came from members who are also from this committee.

I'm asking that when we do things like that in the future, we consider those on the other side. I appeal to the sense of good values that I know is among us all here. I really believe that. At the last meeting, when I think Rick Norlock was with us, I wanted to bring it up and point out that on this side too we have the same concerns and the same ideals as you have. I asked Rick, "How long have you been married, Rick?" He said, "Thirty-five years."

I don't want to zero in on just this one member; all of us also have strong values that we want to bring out. We may not agree on everything we do, but in the future I ask that you please consider those on the opposite side when you make strong statements like that.

I absolutely agree that we have to stand firm—we have to—when we feel strongly about something, but we must not make that a personal attack on an individual's characteristics unless something can actually be proven. I don't think that's the case in Candice's case; Candice has demonstrated her desire for good things for the women in our society.

The Chair: Dave, I accept what you're saying and I think we've all heard what you have to say. I don't believe that anywhere in this motion did a particular member's name come up, so I really don't wish to speak to particular members in this forum right now. I think it begins to move it into a totally different direction.

The motion itself has been ruled out of order. What you have said is duly noted, and we will now move on.

There being no other business for the day, I would like to.... I'm sorry; go ahead, Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I let Mr. Van Kesteren speak, he has expressed himself.

I simply wish to say that yesterday *The Hill Times* asked me to comment on Ms. Hoepfner, because the paper is preparing an article about her. I refused, because the idea was to talk about a person, and I do not wish to discuss people's personality. I find that to be quite low.

Last week, we did not discuss personalities. That being the case, Madam Chair, given that I believe that the firearms registry is a very important subject, I would like to move an emergency motion, that reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), that the following be reported to the House at the first opportunity:

That the Committee hold a commemorative ceremony, on the 5th of December of every year, date at which Bill C-68 "An Act respecting firearms and other weapons" received approval by the Senate and royal assent in 1995.

[*English*]

An hon. member: That's out of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry, it's not out of order. It's asking the committee to do something that's pertinent to the committee.

• (1550)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: That's not an emergency motion, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Well, let me check.

I think that it's not an emergency motion, but we are in committee business on the agenda, and any member may bring forward anything that they choose to committee business, providing it deals with the work of the committee and relates to something the committee is going to do in the future or hopes to do in the future.

It's my understanding that you're asking the committee to hold a ceremony. You're asking the committee, not the House—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: No.

[*English*]

The Chair: —but only the committee, to hold a ceremony every year—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: ... on December 5 to commemorate Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons, that received Senate approval and royal assent in 1995.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

May I have a copy so I can read it out?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: There will be debate on this motion.

I will read the motion in French:

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), that the following be reported to the House at the first opportunity:

That the Committee hold a commemorative ceremony, on the 5th of December of every year, date at which Bill C-68 "An Act respecting firearms and other weapons" received approval by the Senate and royal assent in 1995.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I'd like to direct a question to the clerk.

Is that not out of order in that we can't mandate for future committees? A committee is master of its own—

The Chair: You have to ask the clerk through me.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I'm sorry, through you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We could debate this motion and pass it, but it would only hold for this committee. We cannot set any intent for other committees, which may change and may have to set their own decisions and their own orders of business. Basically we can speak to this, and if we are still the same committee by December 5 and it is passed, it may happen. If it's not, then it's moot. But the point is that this cannot hold for all standing committees on the status of women.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): So it's out of order.

The Chair: No, it is not out of order per se. Knowing that this is what you are doing will absolutely determine how you vote, because you cannot make a binding decision on committees other than this one. I am telling you that this is only for this committee that this decision is about to be made.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Chair, on a point of order, the first thing we have to do is determine whether we're even willing to debate this motion. Anyone can bring a motion forward to committee, as I understand, when it's committee business. But if we haven't had 48 hours' notice, do we not need to—

The Chair: No, you don't, not if it's under committee business.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: But is this committee business?

The Chair: It is obvious that Madame Demers says this is committee business. The only thing on our agenda today is committee business, so it is actually appropriate for Ms. Demers to bring forward this motion on committee business.

Yes, Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: May I just say, Madam Chair, that I find it appalling. You've made your ruling on the previous motion. I think when the general public hears this and finds out that talking about commemorative ceremonies for women is somehow not committee business, but commemorative—

The Chair: Are you challenging the chair?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: No, I'm saying it is part of—

The Chair: You can't return to what I've already ruled on, so let's speak to this one.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Well, I have a right to speak. I do have a right to speak, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, you have a right to speak but to this issue. If you speak to the other issue, you are challenging the chair.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I'm saying you already made a ruling, and when I look at the past ruling and then I look at this ruling, it's totally inconsistent. When this is publically—

• (1555)

The Chair: Then you are challenging the chair. Shall we move to that?

Are we moving to challenging the chair? You have just said to me that—

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: It is inconsistent.

The Chair: —my ruling on that and on this are totally inconsistent.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I would just suggest to you—

The Chair: Do you wish to officially challenge the chair, Ms. Hoepfner?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: It probably would not do any good, unfortunately.

The Chair: Well, no, if you want to challenge the chair, feel free. I don't take offence, because the bottom line here is that I've made a ruling, and Mr. Van Kesteren, whose motion it was, will not challenge the chair. So we're speaking to this particular motion and the appropriateness—

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: So you're saying this is in order.

The Chair: It is in order because it speaks on what this committee will do. It doesn't ask for all—

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: May I speak—

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Hoepfner.

It does not, as the first motion did, speak to all commemorative ceremonies and to all parliamentarians, which is what made that out of order. That's the purview of the Speaker and of Parliament when you start speaking about all parliamentarians and all commemorative ceremonies. We don't have the opportunity to say that a commemorative veterans ceremony therefore falls under this. It says "all ceremonies", so basically we don't have that authority.

But here we're asking the committee to do something. The fact is that the committee cannot rule in perpetuity about what other committees will do. Anything we agree on here with regard to this only holds for this committee. If the committee changes in another session, it no longer holds.

I am just giving you that for information so you will decide whether you wish to debate this motion or not. If you don't wish to debate the motion, somebody could move that the debate be adjourned and then we will take a vote on it and move on.

Ms. Duncan, welcome to the committee. You wish to say something.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you.

I would like to speak on this. I really like the motion. I think 1995 was a watershed moment in Canadian history. The World Health Organization has looked at what the costs of gun violence are. Canada is held up as one of the countries that has, for the small cost of that gun registry....

If you give me a minute, I'll come back to what the numbers actually are.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Maybe I can add to this, then.

May I speak?

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I support Ms. Demers' motion. I received a letter from Ms. Laplante-Edward, the mother of one of the victims, and I would have liked to have had a copy of it here. In this letter, this woman mentions how important the gun registry is. The letter includes two pages in which she pleads with MPs to keep the gun registry in order that a situation such as that which occurred never repeat itself.

I would have liked to have been able to provide you with the translation today but, unfortunately, we did not have the time to do it.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, are you ready to resume your point?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I am. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Gun violence, which includes suicide, has alone a cost annually in the U.S.A. calculated at \$155 billion, with lifetime medical treatment costs per victim ranging from \$37,000 to \$42,000. I really feel that what you have said—

The Chair: Order, please.

If there's going to be discussion, can it be *sotto voce*?

Thank you.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I really feel that this is such an important moment in Canadian history. I think it would be a tribute to those who have died at the hands of gun violence and violence in general. Those numbers are staggering.

The Chair: Does anyone else choose to speak to this?

Ms. Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong: This seems to belong to another committee's work, not to the status of women committee. If we're talking about gun violence and other aspects of that, it should be another committee that looks into it, because those crimes apply to all, not just to women. I'm saying that this should be another committee's work.

The Chair: I was going to say that you have just challenged the chair again, Ms. Wong. I ruled that it is pertinent to this committee, because it is speaking specifically about the passing of a bill with regard specifically to the École Polytechnique massacre. That is why the bill was passed, so I think it is the business of this committee, because we're speaking to a specific event here.

Ms. Demers wants to say something. Then we'll move on.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do not wish to come back to what was said today, but we are talking about being unified behind something. I am wondering to what extent the desire to stand united behind something is truly real when, every time our opinion is taken into account, someone sets out to destroy it. I am having great difficulty believing that people want to stand united behind something when they say that it is my way or no way.

The gun registry was put in place because of the Polytechnique victims, following a battle waged over several years by the families of the victims and the survivors of the Polytechnique massacre. This commemoration is deserved and must be done. It is a commemoration that will prove to be essential in the course of things to come.

Furthermore, I would say that if today the victims and the families of the victims were listening to us discuss this, they would be very pleased to see that we want to adopt this motion because these people called out to us.

When we get to the vote, I would like it to be a recorded vote.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, and then Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I believe one of our members was approached at the memorial for L'École Polytechnique Montréal. One of the mothers said that they have lost their daughters, but the one legacy they had was the registry. That is the legacy for their children. They can't have their daughters.

I want to add to that. It comes back to the gun registry. The World Health Organization said that the gun registry law in Canada cost \$70 million and that by comparison, the total annual cost for firearm-related injuries in this country is \$5.6 billion.

The Chair: I'd like to point out some things to the committee, because it might determine or inform what you say.

This motion is asking the committee to report this to the House and asking that the committee hold a ceremony each year at this time, etc. If this is passed, it means that the committee will have to go to the House to get a motion of concurrence in the House. Is that not so? There would have to be moneys allocated to the committee to be spent on a ceremony.

I'm not speaking to the propriety of the motion. I'm speaking to some of things that the motion would kick-start, the domino effect of what would have to follow through if we passed the motion at all.

I think you should know this, because it would be taken to the House, and then we would have to seek money and would have to get concurrence in the House on it.

Is that right?

Ms. Angela Crandall (Committee Clerk, House of Commons): If it goes anywhere, yes—

The Chair: If we all agree that this will happen, there would have to be concurrence in the House.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Do you mean if the bill is passed?

The Chair: If it passes at the committee, there will have to be concurrence in the House. The committee should very well be aware, then, that what this will do is open up debate in the House that would be very harmful, I would think, and hurtful.

Madame Demers, I am trying here to see whether we could follow suit with what Mr. Van Kesteren said. I think he was very sincere in what he said about our being able to come together on certain things, and Ms. Demers is also asking for this.

I would ask you, as we discuss this, to understand that underlying both of these motions, one of which is not appropriate to this committee.... The intent in both of those motions is the idea of bringing together some sort of unity on something that is important to Canadians. I am just saying that.

Now, Candice, I'm sorry.

• (1605)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I have a couple of things.

I want to say, first of all, that I for one will do whatever I can—and I'm sorry, I'm going to become emotional—to not politicize the death of these girls: I will not argue my bill on the long gun registry.

In January 2008, a very close family friend lost their daughter. Her name was Joanne Hoepfner. She was eight months pregnant with her little girl, and she was shot. She was in the wrong place at the wrong time. They haven't caught the guy who did it, but I'm sure it was drug-related. He shot through a door and he killed her. I will never forget being at the funeral and seeing Joanne in her coffin with her baby—Kiera Tetley was her name; they named the baby.

First of all, I will say God help me to come here and do what I believe in, but to not politicize when people lose their daughters. I have a 15-year-old daughter. I cannot imagine losing your daughter.

Why? It was because she was a girl. She was shot because she was a girl. I pray God will help me to not do that, and I look you in the eye and I know each one of you is here for the same reason.

I have lots of things I'd love to tell you about why I believe the long gun registry should end, and I know we disagree on that. My reasons are that I think there are other things we can do to protect women. I really, sincerely believe that, and I know that you disagree and I respect that. I really do respect it. But if we can find a way to honour these women and honour and support their families without going into the long gun registry debate.... And I know, Kirsty, as you said, that it was created as a monument, as a memorial. That is probably right; it was created as a memorial. But I'd like to go past a memorial and find a way to stop violence against women and gun crime.

I know we are disagreeing, Nicole; we're disagreeing on how. I will just tell you right now that this is all I'm going to say on this issue, because I will not debate the long gun registry here at this table under the same topic as the girls who lost their lives because they were women. I won't do it. I will just say that, and I will leave it at that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): I think we are missing the boat. We should be holding a commemorative ceremony not only in remembrance of the women killed by gunfire, but of all of those who have died through violence, be it by strangulation, by poisoning, by an edged weapon, through rape, that is what we should be commemorating. This is a day that should be commemorated nationwide, without any political overtones, because we know some of these women. They could be our children, our nieces. We must remember all of the women who have died through abuse of power, who have been victims of violence, killed at knifepoint, through strangulation, with bare hands, or who have been beaten to death. This is what we should be commemorating, all of these women who died because they were women. No matter what weapon was used, these women are dead, first and foremost, because they were women. This is what we should be commemorating.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Zarac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Madam Chair, I would simply like to remind everyone that if we are so ardently defending this point of view today, it is because the survivors of the Polytechnique massacre are pleading with us to do so. The mother of a victim is begging us to do this. This is not a matter of politics, I am sorry; these are words that

you are using that have no place in this context. These people are begging us to maintain the firearms registry. It is in honour of these people who are no longer with us; this is not a matter of politics, it is a matter of doing the right thing.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. McLeod.

• (1610)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I reflect back on the words of my colleague here, and in my opinion this motion was clearly set out as a divisive motion. I think it was set out as a divide, as a committee motion, because you know how strongly linking those two together and not trying to understand the perspective of different places and different people.... For every person who talks to you.... When I lived in a big city, my perspective was very different from what it is now in terms of life and many things.

I think this motion was brought forward to be divisive and—

The Chair: Ms. McLeod, I think it's really not appropriate to suppose why the motion was brought forward. People can't suppose those things. We're discussing the substance of the motion, and not the intent behind it of anyone, for any political reason.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Clearly, this motion is going to come to a vote, and for any ceremony that is created out of it, it is going to be a divided group that celebrates it, because obviously our side will not be able to support the motion. If it goes ahead, it will be strictly a divisive action that really does not bring us together as a committee.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: When I introduced my motion...and I think everybody would agree to that too. Whether you agree with the intent or whether you agree with whether it was right or not, it was to unify this committee.

I will tell you, Nicole, that should we vote on this motion, I will reintroduce my motion and I will make it applicable. The end result will be that we will be divided, and the only people who will suffer are those very women you're talking about. To suggest that women on this side care less about women than women on that side is an insult, quite frankly. If we can't come together and decide that we're going to work for women, then the people who are going to suffer are those very groups we represent, those very women who are being abused, those very women who are suffering at the hands of violence. They are the ones who will be on the short end of the stick.

So I repeat, I will reintroduce my motion. It may be defeated, but I will reintroduce my motion, which will make it applicable. That was not my intent. My intent was to have us agree to come to a conclusion that we will, as a committee, because we believe.... All of us want the same thing for women, and for you to disagree with that is, in essence, saying, no, we really don't think you want what's good for women; you have some other alternative option.

The Chair: Madam Demers, you were on the list.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When I entered politics, it was to try and make a difference. When I prepared this motion, I did so because during all of last week I was in contact with people who were victims or who had victims in their family, or with pressure groups, social organizations, that are asking us to continue to wage battle in order for this registry to stay in place.

Madam Chair, what I do not appreciate is this moral blackmail, this moral manipulation, in an attempt to have me say that I do not believe that these people care about women. Perhaps all of us care about women, but differently. I am sorry, Madam Chair, but despite the fact that some are questioning my way of expressing myself and expressing my solidarity towards the women who have asked me to stand up, I will continue to stand up, even if that does not suit the party in power. I must assume what I believe in, my convictions, I must assume who I am and what I stand for and the way in which I do so. If other women want to defend their position differently, that is their right, but I do not have to lower myself to doing the same thing, under the grounds that we must all be the same. I am very sorry, but that is not my way of doing things.

In politics, you have to take responsibility for your positions or else refuse to take part in the debate. If we are not able to assume our positions in politics, then we have a problem.

● (1615)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thought we had looked at the first motion, but we seem to be discussing it again.

It would never have occurred to me that the remembrance was politicized. This is a remembrance of women. This is a humanitarian issue. It would never occur to me that it could be separate.

And now we come to the new motion. I come back to what Candice talked about.

First of all, before I get there, I want to say that I think everyone who is here is here to protect women. We cannot start looking at one another and assuming that we're not here for the same reasons.

But what Candice said...this was a memorial to those women. I think everyone who's in this room probably remembers where they were when those young women were killed, and it is the mothers who are asking.

So I would like to strongly support your motion.

The Chair: Mr. Desnoyers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): No.

[*English*]

I was trying to understand.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to go back to something Mr. Van Kesteren said.

I think it would be naive if we believed we were going to pursue our obligations in terms of advancing the reality of women in the same way. We approach that mandate differently. The different parties have differing perspectives. I've been here nearly four years, and I've heard a great deal of testimony in that time about how to secure the economic freedom of women, how to make sure they have the ability to free themselves of poverty and extricate themselves from violence. And over and over again in those four years, we've heard that women need a national child care system, affordable housing, pay equity, independence, and the ability to have lives that are filled with hope, promise, and free of violence. But despite the fact that for nearly four years that's what I've heard, we still don't have those things. They are not part of how this country functions.

So I think Madame Demers is making a very important statement here. She is saying that we have to come back and remember why we're here. We're here to advance the cause of women, and if we commemorate the reality of what happened at l'École Polytechnique in this committee, then we're taking a step forward.

I would agree that we need a national day of recognition about violence against women. Brian Vallée, who wrote *War on Women*, made an interesting comment. In a period of time that Canada was engaged in Afghanistan, we lost 131 soldiers and a diplomat. It hit the front pages. It was an issue we felt very deeply because they were young men and young women who our country sent to do what our country asked. And in that same time, more than 500 women died violently at the hands of people who were supposed to love them. Many of them died of gunshot wounds. We don't have a memorial to those women, and we need one.

In a former life I was an MLA in Ontario, and I was a rural member. One of the things I felt very passionate about was getting a community house, a safe place for women in that rural riding, because there was none, and I worked very hard to get that house in place. In the process of that, I talked to the executive director of the Women's Rural Resource Centre Strathroy and Area, and she talked about how women were abused and threatened and harassed with guns, with long guns. And the guns weren't just used to frighten them or shoot them; the guns were used to rape them. The barrel of the gun was used to rape them. The reality of what that weapon could do to the security, the hope, the aspirations of a woman in a rural area devastated me, because I knew it was true. I knew it was true.

Because of that, I have become a very strong supporter of whatever means it takes to protect women. I spoke to a former OPP officer whose job was to register and control weapons. He said the issue with the registry is that a woman—and this is a woman in an urban or rural setting—calls the police and says she's threatened. They have to be able to go and find all the guns. They have to know if there are two guns or three guns or four guns. They have to know how many guns there are, because that woman will not be safe until all those guns have been identified and removed. That's just the reality of it.

•(1620)

This discussion was inevitable. It was coming, given what's happened in this place in the last few weeks. I would say that we have to stand back from the emotionalism of this and look at the statistics, the evidence, the proof that is there; and in doing that, we should say we need to commemorate these women and never forget them, never forget what happened and never set it aside, for whatever reason. I hope this committee will do precisely that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong: From the last speaker, it seems to me that it's suddenly become a debate on the gun registry, or the long gun registry. Let's just correct that.

I have no problem commemorating violence against women, because I used to work for—

The Chair: I think you might have a problem with commemorating violence against women, Ms. Wong. I think you mean to say something different.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Okay, said differently, we don't want to turn this committee into another committee. That's exactly what I'm saying, because when honourable members on the other side started to speak for this motion, it seemed to me that it became another debate on another issue, rather than the one here.

The Chair: Not really, Ms. Wong. It is not. If you're going to commemorate something, you have to first agree with the thing that you're going to commemorate, so it is very appropriate for the debate to speak to the thing we want to commemorate, and then people can say, "I don't wish to commemorate it because I don't agree with it", or people will say, "I wish to commemorate it because I agree with it."

So it is very pertinent to whatever we're commemorating that we discuss the issue that we're planning to commemorate, as to whether we agree with the issue or not. It's very pertinent, because you're moving into territory that's again challenging what I said—

Mrs. Alice Wong: No, I'm not challenging you. I'm saying—

The Chair: So let's move away from it and make a point that has to do with whether you agree that this should be commemorated or not, which is what we're dealing with here.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Chair, can you please repeat the motion?

The Chair: Yes. The motion is that in keeping with Standing Order 108(2), it be reported to the House on the first occasion that we can. Then the Standing Committee on the Status of Women will

hold a ceremony of commemoration on December 5 each year, which is the date on which Bill C-68, which is the long gun registry, received approval from the Senate and royal assent in 1995—so we're being asked to commemorate that—and that it then be reported to the House, under Standing Order 108(2), whether or not we agreed to this.

We're commemorating the royal assent in 1995, December 5, when the long gun registry became law in this country.

•(1625)

Ms. Candice Hooppner: So the motion is not calling on us to commemorate women who have died because of gun violence. We are commemorating the long gun registry.

The Chair: No, we're commemorating the passing of the law.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: It's the passage of the long gun registry. Well, then I guess we are—

The Chair: If I may paraphrase, I think everyone who is speaking to this actually said that they are doing this because they were specifically asked to by the parents and families of the women who were murdered on December 6 at École Polytechnique, and they asked them to do this because obviously they felt that this day was very important to them with regard to the deaths of their children. That is basically what I'm hearing on this side.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Okay, I wasn't finished, Madam Chair. I wasn't finished my time.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Hooppner. Go ahead.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Thank you.

I would strongly suggest that both my Liberal colleagues and my NDP colleagues look to their colleagues, because 12 of their members voted in support of ending the long gun registry. Eight of the Liberal members did, and in fact Niki Ashton has been very public in saying that the long gun registry has not helped end violence against women—

The Chair: Ms. Hooppner.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: —so I think that's an important point to bring forward as we're discussing this. This is—

The Chair: Ms. Hooppner.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Yes.

The Chair: I think you are asking members to speak to their caucus. That's not particularly appropriate. Let's stick to the message.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Madam Chair, can I—

The Chair: Members will speak—

Ms. Candice Hooppner: I have—

The Chair: Excuse me. Members will speak to the issue.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: I have the right to ask that. They don't have to.

Okay, call the question. Just call the question.

The Chair: You're telling members that they are coming and voting and speaking to an issue without any prior decision-making. I think it really speaks to the fact that you are suggesting that the members here did not think about how they're going to vote. I think that's not something you should presume, that people are not thinking how they vote. I would not presume to think that you don't think how you vote.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Madam Chair, you cut me off. I had my time and you cut me off.

The Chair: I am speaking.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Well, I was speaking before you were.

The Chair: Do not yell, Ms. Hooppner. Please keep your cool.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: My cool is kept, thank you very much. Don't tell me.... I am not yelling.

The Chair: Yes, you are.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: I'm being very emphatic and I'm being very passionate. I have a right to speak. You cut me off, and I would like to finish what I was saying.

You might not like what I say, Madam Chair, but I do have a right to say it. I'm an elected member of Parliament, I'm on this committee, and I have a right to encourage the opposition members to look at their colleagues, because we're discussing the long gun registry now, apparently. Now we're on the long gun registry, so I have a right to say that even members of their own party have supported the vote and have said the long gun registry is nothing to end violence against women.

The Chair: Except you have a tendency, when the chair is speaking, not to listen. I am the chair of this committee.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Yes, you are.

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Hooppner.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: You have a tendency to stop other people from speaking.

The Chair: There is decorum within a committee.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: You have a tendency to stop other people from speaking.

The Chair: Ms. Hooppner, please be careful.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Or?

The Chair: Because I'm the chair.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: And what?

The Chair: You are obviously disrespecting the chair. You cannot do that in a committee. Let me tell you this, Ms. Hooppner. The bottom line is that there is decorum in how we speak to each other—not in what we say, but how we say it. And if one presumes to say to other people that they do not have the right to make decisions on their own and you are then deciding that they do not have the integrity to make their own decisions, that's disrespectful of your colleagues. Please think about how you phrase things. I'm just asking you be respectful and to have some decorum in how you speak to your colleagues.

Mr. Van Kesteren has spoken very clearly about respect for each other. Let us really try to phrase.... You have points to make. I am not stopping you from making your points. How you make them is

something that I must be concerned with. So please be careful how you speak to your colleagues. By insinuation, you are saying that they have no integrity in their own decision-making.

I'm sorry.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Madam Chair, you're not being fair. Forgive me.

We listened to Ms. Mathysen. She had a long speech, and there were things in there that some of us didn't agree with, but she was given that opportunity. Madam Duncan made some points that we would strongly disagree with, and you allowed her to speak, rightfully so. Nicole, you got pretty passionate, and I understand that. I love that about you. She's a passionate woman, and that's a great thing. You weren't asked to tone that down.

I think that Candice was just giving her opinion. Not her opinion—she was making a very valid point. Are we talking about a commemorative occasion, or are we talking about the gun registry? If we're talking about the gun registry, now we open up a whole new topic of discussion, and she has that right to remind the NDP member and the Liberal member that, listen, you're not being consistent with your own party. She has that right to say that.

• (1630)

The Chair: Of course she has the right to say that.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Then she should be able to say that.

The Chair: And there's a difference between passion, which Ms. Hooppner showed very much at the early part when she spoke.... She was very passionate, she was moved to tears. I did not stop her at that time. It's appropriate for a member to be passionate and to be moved. I think that what I heard was an insinuation that I thought was disrespectful. Of course, if Ms. Hooppner had wished to point it out, she could have said I would like to point out to the honourable member that some of her people did not vote for this. That's a different thing. It's not to think about what you should be doing and how you should be making that decision. That's a different thing.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Would you give her the opportunity to address it in that way, then? Because I think that's what you want her to do.

The Chair: Absolutely. Maybe sometimes we need to think about how we say what we say.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: You just said exactly the thing you're telling me I'm not supposed to say.

The Chair: Yes, because I'm speaking to decorum, Ms. Hooppner. These are not equal things. I'm speaking to the decorum in the House. I have been in committees where chairs have made members apologize for the way they insinuated other members were behaving. I do not believe that's appropriate. I don't want us to go there. I'm just saying, Ms. Hooppner, make your point—it's very clear—but think about how you make it. That's all I'm asking you for, because I'm trying to keep decorum and some respect here.

You may continue your point, Ms. Hooppner.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: I am still not sure how to say I ask you all to put these thoughts into your brain and consider them as you're making your decision. I'm trying to say “think about”, but I won't put it that way.

The Bloc has been consistent. But all the other parties are divided on whether the long gun registry has helped stop violence against women. Niki Ashton, one of my colleagues from Manitoba, agrees. If we're going to do a remembrance, let's remember women who have died because of gun violence. It's not certain whether the long gun registry has stopped gun violence. I'm not sure if members are aware that Mr. Lépine had a licence to own a gun. Mr. Lépine, who committed these horrific acts, came from an abusive family. He saw his father be very abusive. He went through a lot of tragedies. He was a new Canadian. He obviously was a very disturbed man, but he got a licence to own a firearm.

First of all, we need to look at this process. My bill does not end the licensing process. This man got a licence to own a gun, so even if the registry had been in place and he had registered every one of his firearms, he still would have gone and committed this horrific crime.

We're talking about the long gun registry, which is a public safety issue. We should talk about licensing and who is allowed to own a firearm legally. There are some people who should never own a firearm. If they're criminals, they're going to go and steal one. But the licensing process denies legal access to a firearm to people who have a history of mental illness, domestic abuse, violence, or criminal activity.

It should be noted that police officers 94% of the time check the long gun registry database to find out who owns a firearm. For example, when they're going on a domestic dispute call and they want to find out if this person is licensed to own a firearm, they immediately look up the name and address. Under my bill, they would continue to have access to that information. About 2% of the time, they're looking at the serial and certificate number of the firearm. That's what the registration keeps track of. That does nothing, unfortunately, to stop bad people from having a firearm.

So if we're going to talk about the long gun registry, let's talk about the facts of the long gun registry. Let's talk about how women are dying because men are committing acts of violence against them. Let's talk about how right now there are no minimum sentences. Usually, they get a slap on the wrist if they commit a crime against a woman, especially in domestic disputes. I think we would all agree that this is unfair and wrong.

•(1635)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I have a point of order. We're spending lots of time on this, but we're not debating the gun registry. We're debating

Ms. Candice Hooppner: We want to do a memorial—

The Chair: Excuse me, a point of order is being made.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I feel we're debating something that we will be debating next year. We shouldn't debate it here. The motion suggests that we commemorate the enactment of a law. So I feel we're out of order, Madam Chair.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: But she already ruled on that. You said we had to discuss whether we agreed with the premise of the gun memorial. That is why I'm speaking to it, because of your ruling.

The Chair: Ms. Hooppner, agreeing with the premise of commemorating the passage of an act is different from debating the act itself. You're agreeing with the premise of the act. The act was

the long gun registry. The motion seeks to commemorate the day the act was passed in the House. That's what is being discussed.

People are saying we are talking about that. There's a certain amount of leeway in our discussions. But you have moved into debating your bill, Ms. Hooppner. You were literally debating. I gave you some leeway in this because I feel that this is a difficult discussion.

But we're not discussing your bill. We are discussing the passage of an act on December 5, 1995. Some people would like to commemorate that act. We're not discussing your bill. It's not on the table and it's not within the purview of this committee to discuss it. If you wish to discuss the issue in hand, which is the law that was passed in 1995, you can certainly do so.

Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was a little confused, but I think you brought that out. In other words, because this motion has been brought forward, it is proper for us to discuss the long gun registry law.

The Chair: Whether you agree with the one that was passed... I don't know what is so difficult on this issue.

We're saying let us commemorate a law that was passed, Bill C-68; on December 5, 1995, it became law. All right. People are suggesting that that day and that thing be commemorated, that that event be commemorated. Now, in order to do so, you may say, well, I can't commemorate it because I don't agree with it; I didn't think it was a good thing in those days and I didn't like that law. But we couldn't move now into another bill that is on the table. We're speaking to this. You may say, I do not wish to do this because I did not agree with that law then and I don't want to commemorate something that I don't agree with. This is what we're discussing. So you have to mention that particular law, Bill C-68, that was passed on December 5.

But we're not discussing further laws that are on the table. That is where Ms. Hooppner was straying a little bit, and I think that Ms. Zarac made that point.

So I think it's pretty simple, if everyone were to listen and try to understand what we're moving here, because we're trying to do a balancing act here. It's my job as the chair, whether people like it or not, to move you back to what we're discussing, back to the balancing act that we're doing, and not to allow us to tangentially go into other areas.

Thank you.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Just so that I understand, and I think I do, if we ask Ms. Hooppner to zero in on it—because I don't know a whole lot about that law—and if she were to zero in on that law and never mind the one she's bringing forward—

The Chair: We're not discussing that.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: —that would be legitimate.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: So why don't you talk about that law?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: The long gun law, Bill C-68.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Because I don't really know about that too much.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: That bill was introduced by the Liberal government of the day. It was introduced as a memorial and a commemoration to the women who lost their lives. I assume the motives obviously would have been to gather information on individuals who owned firearms, and the motive, we were told at the time, was to collect data to help reduce gun crime in Canada. So at that time the budget was presented and it was going to cost approximately \$1 million. Over the last almost decade, we have registered approximately seven million long guns in Canada. We do know that there are probably about 16 million long guns in Canada, so obviously a lot still are not registered.

But what that law did was start to collect information. It collected the serial and certificate number of individuals who already had a licence to own a long gun. So as that information was collected, they collected people's name, address, and phone number, again with the goal of ending violence against all Canadians, but specifically to end violence against women.

Then 10 years later we had two reports from the Auditor General, and what she reported was that it actually did not help reduce crime and in fact the costs were now close to \$2 billion. The problem was that it was actually impossible to determine the costs for this \$2 billion.

So there has been a lot of debate about this bill and about this piece of legislation. But again, without bringing forward my bill, I think what we've seen is that licensing even under this bill did change. Some would say that it maybe didn't change for the better, because previously police officers were able to intervene if they saw that somebody owned a firearm and there were problems. If maybe that person displayed behaviour that was criminal, they would have had a lot more ability to look at the licensing. And this might be something that needs to be looked at. But I won't get into that.

Unfortunately, the long gun registry has also been a way of collecting information on individuals, and it has been used in very harmful ways for law-abiding Canadians who are not abusers, who are not criminals. They are not using the long gun to kill women, men, children; they are using it to hunt and for sport shooting. And so this information has been collected on them. The database has actually been breached over 300 times and that's a very dangerous thing. So something that was created to protect Canadians has now been turned into something that is hurting Canadians. It is not helping to stop crime.

So I would say that the bill, the piece of legislation, that this motion would want to commemorate actually should not be celebrated, but it should be seen for what it is: a Liberal boondoggle, a lot of money spent to do absolutely nothing not only for women but for children, for Canadians.

So obviously I won't be supporting this motion.

Thank you very much.

● (1640)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Demers and then Ms. Duncan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I hope that we will not go on for too much longer because afterwards we are supposed to celebrate, and I would prefer that we do it while we still like each other.

I am obligated to speak not only about the motion, but also about the registry that was established in 1995. The police forces are also in agreement with that, as we saw in the report that was tabled after the vote. The report was ready before the vote took place, but no one wanted us to know what the report contained. Information was being hidden from us.

I would also like to clarify something. The members of the families of the victims did not ask us to bring forward this motion. They asked us to do everything in our power to maintain the firearms registry. I believe that this motion would allow us to remind people of the reasons for which the firearms registry was created. It would allow us to have the energy to keep up the fight and to give these women survivors and these families the assurance that the registry will continue to exist.

I am convinced that it is not all hunters who will use their gun to kill their spouse, their daughter or their children. Unfortunately, often times hunters do use their gun to kill their spouse, their children, their family, when family conflicts arise. These are not habitual criminals, these are spontaneous criminals who commit this crime. They will commit only that crime, but they will nevertheless commit it with a long-barrelled gun.

If the police officers are unaware that there are firearms in the house, when a man who is accused of violence against his wife... If the policemen are even just aware of the fact that there is a weapon in the house, they will know how to act and they will retrieve the weapon.

We know that 88% of women who are killed are killed with long guns. This is a very important statistic, and I do not think that we can ignore the importance of the registry nor its establishment. On the contrary, its establishment was one of the most courageous actions we were able to take, despite the fact that it was very costly. However, today it is no longer that costly. It only costs 7 or 8 million dollars a year, which is very little.

At present, it is costing \$7 million a year for Mr. Harper to get his face on television. In my opinion, we can spend \$7 million a year to save the lives of women.

● (1645)

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm sorry, we've had quite a bit of discussion, so these points cover quite a range.

Mr. Van Kesteren, I really appreciate what you said at the beginning. You talked about respect, and yet you managed to take two potshots at this side, and from my perspective it's very unappreciated.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: It's going both ways.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Not from here, it's not. I taught women's health at the university. I'm not sure why we're being asked to consult with our colleagues. I believe this motion has been brought to a committee and I believe the committee will make those decisions. It's the committee, not our colleagues.

Since the law was passed, the number of women who have been murdered by guns has dropped by one-third. This is why the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police are so strongly opposed, and certainly Chief Blair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to suggest that you are free as a committee to continue this debate, but in the meantime perhaps you might like to go and get some food, because we're going to have bells at 5:15, and we have half an hour.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Let's call a vote.

The Chair: Does the committee wish to call a vote now?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, then we will call the vote. I don't think we have any other speakers left.

The motion says that in keeping with Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on the Status of Women hold a commemorative ceremony on December 5 of each year, which is the date on which Bill C-68, which is a law concerning long guns and certain other arms, received approval from the Senate and royal sanction in 1995. So it is asking this committee to hold a ceremony on that day to commemorate the royal assent and passage of that bill into law.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I ask for a recorded vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. This will be a recorded vote.

Okay, we have a tie. I have to tell you, I searched every single piece of this thing to see if the chair really did have to vote. I think it is a difficult issue.

I don't have to give you the reasons why I vote the way I vote, by the way. I like to do it because I like people to know. I always have a reason for what I do; I work it out in my head.

On the weekend I received a personal call from Suzanne Laplante-Edward, who is the mother of Anne-Marie Edward, one of the women killed in the massacre. This woman is 70. She was 50 years old when her daughter was killed. She begged me—she sent a letter to everyone in the House—as a mother and as a woman and as a parliamentarian, to please ensure that this law that was passed on December 5, 1995, remains.

I will give you her words, which she said to me very clearly. She said she wanted me to repeat them. She said, “Nothing will bring my daughter back, nor the daughters from other families who were killed. We know this will not bring them back. But we believe this law will stand as a memorial and a testament to support and protect mothers, daughters, grandmothers, sisters, and nieces who are threatened in the future: women who are going to be killed purely because they are women. This was meant to be a legacy so that our daughters did not die in vain.”

I believe it would be very difficult for me to vote against this motion. I have read the statistics. I spoke to Madame Laplante-Edward personally. I was very moved by what she said. As she said, nothing will bring her daughter back. The statistics did say that since that bill was passed there has been a one-third decrease in the number of women killed with guns in this country. She said, “It doesn't matter if it saves only one woman. I think it is important.”

I believe I will have to vote for the motion in honour of Madame Laplante-Edward and the families who wish to see this become a legacy for their children.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: The motion is now passed, and we can enjoy the food.

Those who want to call adjournment, please do so.

Ms. Duncan moves it.

The meeting is adjourned.

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