

country. The Prime Minister and I have kept in regular touch on developments in Lithuania and he is being kept up to date on a daily basis as to developments there.

I know that the group is coming to town. Before coming to Question Period this afternoon, I instructed my officials to be sure that they took the opportunity of their presence in Ottawa to meet with them, and that certainly will be done.

The hon. member will know that I have also been in touch by telephone with some of the leaders of the Lithuanian Canadian community, particularly from Toronto, to discuss particular matters that were of concern to them. We discussed one matter with regard to a visa problem that had been encountered in Moscow and some other particular matters. We will continue to respond in that precise way. The Prime Minister will continue to maintain his active personal interest in the developments in Lithuania.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

What is the minister doing to restore the \$1.6 million that has been cut from the operation of some 75 women's centres across Canada, on top of \$2 million that was cut last year? She knows very well, of course, that this is forcing the closure of essential support services for women.

In particular, has she been in touch with Newfoundland women who today are occupying the Secretary of State offices in St. John's, Newfoundland, and who, along with many allies from all political parties and all walks of life, are determined to stay there night and day until funding for women's centres is restored?

Will the minister meet with these women and will she take along the senior member from Newfoundland and the Secretary of State? Also, will she discuss their concerns and find ways to restore funding?

• (1440)

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and the member for St. John's East have been meeting very actively with me on a daily basis. We have

established a plan and there is a process in place to bring more funding and more help to Newfoundland. We are encouraging the groups to complete applications for the project funding we have made available. We are waiting for those applications to come in. We have indicated that we will even help them fill in their applications and will fast-track them as quickly as possible.

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): I am sure the women of Canada love to be patronized in that way.

Why is the minister only meeting with his colleagues? Will he meet directly with the women of Newfoundland? Will he, along with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, meet with the women in British Columbia, where 28 centres have had funding cut and 23 are having to cut their funding. Will he persuade the Minister of Finance that instead of increasing the defence budget by \$665 million and increasing funding to CSIS by 20 per cent, some of that money should go to restore funding for women's centres right across Canada?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, we have had budget cuts in our ministry. We have tried to apply them in a very fair and consistent manner. We know the difficulties this may create for some groups. I have been meeting as actively as I can since the budget came out with the Native Aboriginal Communications Society and with groups involved with heritage cultures and languages. I am prepared to meet with as many groups as I can and as quickly as possible.

I might add that senior officials of my department will be in Newfoundland in the next few days. We are hopeful they will have a chance to meet with the group. I know there is an indication they want to meet with me and the two other ministers who were named. We will look at every proposal and meet with as many groups as possible.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. Two years ago, the government started cutting funding for women's programs while subsidizing the reactionary group REAL Women. Today, all women's groups are barely surviving as a result of these budget cuts. Can the minister give the House the assurance that this anti-equality group which still calls itself REAL