

forward as a government, as a society, to try to finally reduce and eliminate violence against women.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, all across this country, women's hopes are being blighted by their legitimate concern about their personal safety. I regret that the government has not seen fit to announce today the creation of a royal commission on violence against women, something my party strongly supports.

• (1420)

Will the Prime Minister at least make a commitment today that there will be no cuts in funding for those centres which provide vital support services for women? In fact, will he make a commitment today, not simply to maintain, but to substantially increase the funding for these centres that provide services that are so important, so vital, to the women of this country?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member is aware that there are a variety of initiatives and programs through the federal government working on fighting against violence against women.

Among those, of course, is the family violence program. We have been reviewing that program and as the Prime Minister has indicated, we are looking forward to new and extensive initiatives over the coming months.

In addition, through my colleague the Secretary of State's women's programs, we will continue to fund the efforts of many women's organizations and women's groups throughout the country which are also involved as one of the partners in trying to deal with this very difficult issue. This is going to require the efforts of all levels of government, of men and women across society and of educators, teachers and families.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I also address my second supplementary question to the Prime Minister. I hope he will get up and agree with me that the rights and aspirations of women are more than just another entry on a government balance sheet.

Oral Questions

If so, will he commit today to provide substantial funding for new programs that will help eliminate violence against the women of this country.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, and I know that this view is shared by hon. colleagues on all sides of the House, we all want to work toward that end objective.

There have been some 700 projects funded through the family violence program over the last few years. I look forward, as I know my colleagues do, to extension enhancements of those initiatives and those programs so that the federal government can play its role along with other partners in society to eliminate this tragic incidence in our society. If there was one way to eliminate it, I am sure we would all be able to do it quickly. There is not one way. It is multifaceted. It will require effort and understanding of the reasons why, and efforts on prevention, education and support for those women who are victims of violence.

I hope my colleague will join with us in working toward that goal of eliminating violence against women in Canadian society.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, one year ago we mourned a massacre and called for a royal commission into violence against women. Thousands of voices now echo that call.

Will the Prime Minister, in whose sole purview this is, offer dignity and legitimacy to the millions of Canadian women who spend part of every single day in fear, and announce the commencement of this royal commission immediately.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, as I addressed my hon. colleague's leader, this proposal has been made to us in the last few days. I am looking forward to meeting with those who are suggesting a royal commission to discuss with them what its goals and objectives might be.

We are also looking forward to the report from the committee upon which the hon. member sits as to its