

“War Against Women”; the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women; gun control legislation; the 1991 federal family violence initiative; a network of research centres on family violence and violence against women; and the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare’s announcement this morning of a joint initiative—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately the time has expired.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to take this first opportunity since my return from Ukraine last night to rise in the House today and offer my sincerest congratulations to the citizens of Ukraine on their new-found independence.

It was certainly heart warming to hear the overwhelming gratitude of the Ukrainians for Canada’s involvement in this peaceful and democratic process. Indeed, independence was gained, not through bloodshed but through a peaceful expression of the will of the Ukrainian people that serves to strengthen this achievement.

Over 90 per cent of the Ukrainian electorate freely voted for independence.

The history of Ukraine overflows with centuries of war, tyranny and persecution at the hands of its oppressors. Nevertheless, the flame of hope and freedom continues to burn brightly in the hearts of its people.

I am deeply honoured to have witnessed such an incredibly historic event. Indeed, there is much to celebrate both in Ukraine and here in Canada. Canadians must certainly be proud that our government was one of the first to decide to recognize Ukraine’s independence. But our role is not yet complete. Diplomatic relations must be extended immediately. The Ukrainian government needs our assistance now to sustain its democracy.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, the time has expired.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, violence against women in our society goes far beyond brutal beatings and vicious murders. As we pause today to remember the 14 women who died in an unbelievable massacre in Montreal, we must include in our thoughts what their deaths symbolize.

They symbolize for many women a lifetime of anxiety and fear, a lifetime of consciously and unconsciously being worried on the streets, in parking lots, in malls and in our own homes, a lifetime of making sure that we take the safe route, have the right locks on our doors, have someone accompany us to our cars.

Now added to our fear of being attacked by strangers, we are being told that most women who are victims of violence and death are victims of the men they love. Surely Canadian society has to pause today and reflect about how we come to find at least half of our population living in fear.

We must, as Canadians, ensure that among the freedoms we enjoy in a democracy must be the freedom from fear of violence.

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MINORITY RIGHTS

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Madam Speaker, as our constitutional dialogue progresses I remind the Prime Minister that minority rights and minority language rights must be protected.

The need for watchfulness is real. Quebec still has Bill 178 which remains an offensive act to all of us seeking freedom of expression as a right. I say to Premier Bourassa as I have many times: removing Bill 178 will tell all Canadians they are at home anywhere in this great land, speaking and communicating, either inside or outside, in the language of their choice. A so-called softening of 178 will not do. Remember, most ordinary Quebecers across our province agree with this view and are not so mean spirited.

With reports that Mr. Bourassa’s party will review the shameful French only sign language this weekend, I ask the Prime Minister to send this signal to Quebec City: