

letter to the minister asking for a meeting at his convenience. We have not received a response.

This is an urgent situation, and that is why we are using this opposition day to put forth this motion. I think it is a black mark on this government if it feels it can get away with this, and there will be continuing civil disobedience if it is to continue.

We should also focus on the fact that the government's international reputation will be sullied by this action. The government is breaking international treaties by this initiative. Canada has signed the UN convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The government has also gone along with the Nairobi forward looking strategies.

Canada cannot say one thing in international fora and another thing at home. We are talking about \$1.6 million dollars, a piddling amount when we consider some of the other initiatives that have been increased by this government in what is being applauded as a deficit reducing budget. Canadians are not fooled at all.

In responding to questions on the committee for the elimination of discrimination against women about the country's success in combating discrimination against women, the permanent representation of Canada at the United Nations explained that it was the strength of the Canadian feminist movement and the commitment of Canada's leaders to the equal rights for women. How does eliminating the core funding for women's centres demonstrate the commitment to equal rights for women? There may be some painful logic, and I am willing to listen to it today.

• (1020)

The women's movement is constantly undermined by funding cuts and the refusal by government to meet with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Canada's largest women's lobby group, made up of over 600 women's organizations. Not only has this budget cut \$1.6 million from women's centres funding, it has also cut funds available to feminist publications. I think that is also a concerted effort to reduce the ability of those publications to work effectively and to bring the women's agenda to light. There is a concerted attack on women's equality through those reductions. I remind the

Supply

House that this is a cut of \$1.6 million, compared to a \$33 million increase for the budget of CSIS.

That comparison alone speaks to the government's agenda, of this government's priority, and of its lack of commitment to promoting the equality of women. It is a black day if this government continues with this initiative. I hope the minister responsible will go back to his cabinet colleagues. I also hope the Minister responsible for the Status of Women will carry out her responsibilities for the status of women and will ask her cabinet colleagues, as my motion indicates, that the funds be reinstated for those women's centres so that the women of Canada, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, to Yukon, to Yellowknife, will be able to do their work as they have done in a very efficient, effective, low cost and committed way.

Mrs. Pauline Browes (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words today concerning women's centres in relation to comments that the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has made.

Some 10 years ago in Scarborough we set up a women's centre. I was a member of the board founding that centre. It was very important to establish the centre in order to reach out to women who are having difficulty so that we could as sisters help them. In the process of setting up that women's centre we looked for funds. We spent a lot of time around the table filling in those applications, getting the right words in order that the funding would become available, but at no time did we believe 10 years ago that our sole funding for women's centres was to be from the federal government.

At that time we were looking to foundations, to the community, and to fund raising events to see how we could have funding from various levels. I am very pleased today, thanks to two very wonderful individuals in Scarborough, Nina Willcocks and Linda Davis, who have diversified this funding so that now there is very little funding from various levels of government in order to provide services for social justice and economic equality for the women in Scarborough.