

*Oral Questions***WOMEN'S PROGRAMS**

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Figures released yesterday suggested that the government has sunk over \$111 million into its program to get the goods and services tax off the ground, some \$15 million of that on government propaganda and \$85 million on furniture and computers.

This does not seem to make sense to the women of Canada who have seen this same government slash those very programs like social housing, cutting spending on health care, post-secondary education, core funding for women's centres across the country, the very programs that could give Canadian women access to equal opportunities in our society.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister to explain to the women of Canada, on International Women's Day, what are the priorities of this government. What are the values of this government? Are computers and propaganda on the goods and services tax more important than equality for women in this society?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the priorities of this government are very clear. My colleague, the minister responsible for the status of women, has stated very clearly the breadth of the women's programs that we have brought in during our term of office, the increase in the funding that has gone to those programs.

At the same time, we do have other obligations that we must look after. One of those is to bring in a goods and services tax so that we can continue to finance the programs that are so important to Canadians whether they are for women, whether they are health and post-secondary education, regional development, or any of the breadth of programs that Canadians look to us as a government to provide.

We are making preparations for the goods and services tax consistent with parliamentary practice for many, many years.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): My supplementary question is for the minister responsible for the status of

women. Her government will spend \$1.6 million just to renovate a Senate committee room. The same \$1.6 million is the amount that the government will cut from women's programs. Forty-one centres will close in Quebec, for example. And the \$44,000 that will be spent on the Governor General's limousine would be enough to keep four centres open. How can the minister accept such an order of priorities from her government without crying scandal?

[*English*]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member had some concerns about how the Senate is spending money. I am anxious to hear her suggestions as to what we can do about the Senate.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister responsible for the status of women.

Clearly, the colleagues of the minister responsible for the status of women do not want to answer to the women of Canada. I ask the minister, how is she going to fulfil her mandate to promote opportunities for equality for women in this society when her government has cut back on social housing, women's programs and on the very jobs that women hold? Women work in women's centres. Women work in child care centres. Women work in native friendship centres.

Will the minister explain how she can fulfil her mandate to the women of Canada?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the leader of the NDP has asked this question.

One of the things that we are celebrating today on International Women's Day is the fact that there are now so many women in positions of influence and authority, and indeed that she is a leader of a major political party in this country.

That is the kind of progress that we want to see for women. We want to see them progress in terms of economic equality. The best way that can help them is to have that healthy economy. In fact, there are one million more women working today in Canada, earning money, being able to be self sufficient, looking after their