

Supply

The federal government will transfer close to \$2 million for the status of women. I think this is a very good approach and I am very proud of what we just did because there comes a time when we have to turn over a new leaf. The 1970s were different from 1995. We had to closely examine what we were doing, and in doing so, we found a better way to handle women's issues.

Madam Speaker, thank you and I still acknowledge the importance of the role of women. Our political party will persevere, in our interests and in the interests of women—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I regret that I must interrupt the hon. minister, but her time is up. We will now proceed to the question and comments period.

The hon. member for St. Boniface has the floor.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest to the minister's speech and I would like to ask her a question.

Like her, I realize that the government is doing a number of things for the women of Canada.

[English]

For example, we have come forward with an agreement for equal pay for work of equal value. We have the gun control legislation that is being supported by women. We have the prenatal nutrition program. We have the court challenges program that has been reinstated, centres of excellence on women's health and a number of others.

There is simply a larger proportion of women who are poor, a larger proportion of women in society who are victims of violence and abuse, and a larger proportion of women who are single parents. Women still earn less than men.

Despite various initiatives that have been undertaken by government and because of certain decisions that have been taken—my colleague has addressed one of them—are we assured that we will continue to make progress on these fronts?

I tried to raise a question previously with respect to the importance of research on those fronts. I have a bias, I must admit. I think research on those issues is of critical importance to ensure that we continue to move forward because there are serious problems in society that affect women disproportionately.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I have visited Winnipeg and I have met with both English and French women's groups in the area as well as with multicultural groups. I can assure him I am more than ever convinced the research that needs to be done is proactive research as well as reactive research.

In the proactive field of research today, which we did not have in 1972 with the advisory council's arrival on the scene, there are women chairs of study across the land. Within the universities there is capacity to look at many of the problems such as the problems of poverty, the problems of inequality in terms of education and training, the whole area of change in the percentages of men and women in various institutions, and the need for the diversity of Canadians to be better reflected in the House.

A university study was done on the integration of women and visible minorities into the marketplace. When we see the disparity at least once it is put into concrete terms through research at the university level, or at SHRC for that matter, and we are in a position to be able to speak out and effect change on government policy.

I listened to some of the remarks of members of the Reform Party which I do not share. They say that government cannot make life fairer.

• (1555)

If we did not do research through the Canadian Federation for Independent Business, would we know that women who have an excellent record with respect to the creation of jobs in small and medium size businesses are far more effective and far more efficient or that over 40 per cent of the jobs are created by the small businesses in which women are the most successful after five years?

That research was done by the private sector, the CFIB in this instance, not by a university. It indicated that despite their success 20 per cent more women were refused loans at our banks and institutions than men and that when women obtained loans, 95 per cent of them had to pay higher rates with more difficult terms.

That research was extremely pertinent. I am very glad the member asked the question. It is a solid answer to the Reform member on whether or not we need to be doing work on equality for women in the fields of employment and earnings. Yes, we need to reach economic equality. The question was very pertinent. It allows me to thank the member very much.

There is room for research at all levels: through the private sector, through the public sector and through the universities with their great expertise.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Secretary of State for the Status of Women. I understand the government's new policy, which led to yesterday afternoon's decision that that would be the best way to operate.

I do not think that there is unanimity among women's groups or that it is as obvious as the minister would have us think. There is concern about the probable lack of transparency there would be in the department when public servants in this department are