

This is a matter of grave concern for me personally and for the members of this government, and also, I am sure, for all hon. members.

We will act on all the suggestions that have been made, and I want to thank the hon. member for her comments. We intend, as a government and as a people, to deal with a situation that is having such a disastrous effect on the status of women and on social justice in this country.

• (1130)

[English]

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I hope that soon we will hear the concrete plans of this government to act in this area.

Given that the most recent budget saw drastic cuts to the Secretary of State women's program, will the Prime Minister give an undertaking today to restore funding at the very least to those programs that deal with violence against women and accepted a 15 per cent cut.

Mrs. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons there were some changes in the women's program was so that it could be directed particularly at groups with special needs, such as doubly disadvantaged women, the disabled who are more subject to violence than some other groups, to immigrant and visible minority women's groups. In this way the focus is on those where the needs are greatest. Among those issues that will be taken into account by the Secretary of State are those that deal with violence.

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GUN CONTROL

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): My question is for the Minister of Justice. People say that tough gun control legislation does not deter the professional criminal. The Montreal tragedy reminds us of the undeniable fact of crime in Canada and that most murders by firearms are not committed by professional criminals. Since we brought forward tough gun control legislation in 1978, firearm related crime has declined. I want therefore to ask the minister if he is prepared now to bring forward even tougher gun control legislation?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we have been consulting for some time with the interest groups, the police

officers' associations throughout the summer. My officials have been dealing with the interest groups on both sides of this issue in an effort to bring forward a package of amendments which will eliminate the further importation into Canada of automatic weapons, that is, weapons that are designed and manufactured and assembled to fire in the automatic mode.

Second, there is a package of what might be called housekeeping amendments. I can assure my hon. friend that within those amendments there are provisions to both eliminate administrative irritants and toughen gun control legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Kaplan: Just to get back to specifics, I would like to ask whether the Minister is prepared to impose a compulsory waiting period when an application is made for a firearms acquisition certificate, and whether he is prepared to require that each application include third-party character references.

[English]

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I think there is in fact a delay time between the application for the firearms acquisitions—

Mr. Kaplan: Same day service.

Mr. Lewis: A delay in order to allow the officials to review the application and to do the checks that they want. However, my friend makes an interesting point. We are interested in improving legislation.

This law has been in place for 10 years and I think, by and large, it is working. But it can always be improved. That is the attitude we are taking. I think that this is the kind of thing that can be explored in debate. When we get to committee with the bill it is something that can be looked at there.

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PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It deals with published reports which indicate the government is prepared to now sell Petro-Canada completely.

Petro-Canada is a crucial public instrument to work for energy security, to work for environmentally safe energy development. The Prime Minister himself said in