

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 4, 1992

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF MEMBER FOR NEW
WESTMINSTER—BURNABY

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege that emanates from a statement pursuant to Standing Order 31 that was made yesterday in the House of Commons by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

In the member's statement she imputed motives to an action that I had taken which I believe impedes me from doing my work as a member of Parliament.

In the particular statement she mentioned that I was endangering the lives of women and children by a pamphlet that I had given out wherein I had listed the names, the addresses and the phone numbers of some transition shelters that were listed not only in my riding but across metropolitan Toronto.

On March 31 in this House of Commons I participated in a debate where I read to the House a piece of material that was a gift to me from a survivor. It was entitled *Women's Country* and it talked about the issue of violence against women and children. At the end of that speech I received calls not only in my Ottawa office but also in Toronto for copies of this particular speech.

We went to the Department of National Health and Welfare and obtained some additional statistics on violence against women. We also gathered together a list of shelters and transition houses which we obtained from myriad places. We received them from libraries. We received them from a variety of places.

We then responded to the requests that we had received in Ottawa and in Toronto. The balance of them I sent to approximately 2,000 people in my riding.

Many of the people who called me and asked for this piece had said that they were survivors. Many of them had said that they were people who had worked in the violence against women issue for many years. I felt, based upon the reaction I had received, that I was doing the right thing.

Last Friday I started receiving phone calls. I might say that this was after about 10 days of the piece being out in the community. All of the calls that I received were positive, previous to this last Friday.

A leader in this violence against women committee said to me: "Dennis, you should not be releasing the addresses of these shelters". She did say, of course, that I was putting lives in danger.

I responded to her by saying two things. First of all I will not give out any more with the addresses on them. I will also call the chief of police, which I did, Chief William McCormack, to make sure that there would be an added security alert to the houses that were listed.

Some of the shelters that were listed in the pamphlet have their addresses listed in places that are quite public. For example, the two shelters in my riding have their addresses listed in the Toronto phone book. Not only does it have the phone number, but it actually has the address of the shelter.

I refer specifically to Nellie's Hostels for Women. The idea that these addresses are confidential is a debatable point. In other words, there are some shelters that do believe that they should be confidential and there are other shelters that publish them.

I leaned to caution and did not distribute any more with the addresses. I respected the voice of the women who called me. I must say, though, that if I am guilty of putting the lives of women and children in danger then I would ask the question: What about those professional organizations that also publish their addresses?