

Supply

many women cannot leave that abusive situation. They do not have the financial resources to do so.

Fundy Transition House was founded 10 years ago to deal with that very real problem. I want to go through some of the numbers. We must remember that Fundy Transition House is dealing with a community of give or take 20,000 people when all the citizens of Charlotte county are considered.

Since its founding, 1,600 people have gone through its doors. The transition house very much provides a shelter, a clean and safe environment for women and children.

• (1620)

The clients who come in are from all age groups. There are 16-year old girls who have left their homes because of sexual abuse, single mothers with young babies, and women who need emergency housing.

I want to pay tribute to a couple of the individuals that were really the forerunners. I wish I could remember all the names. I know one of them was a man. He is still involved with that organization, Fundy Transition House. The amazing thing is he was one of the first men to recognize that problem 10 years ago. I can honestly ask that question in this House as to how many of us had recognized that problem 10 years ago. There would not be too many of us who could answer that we had.

His name is Al Corbett. He is still involved with Fundy Transition House. The woman who now is the chairman of the transition house, Jackie Matthews, brought to my attention a few weeks ago that he is still on the board.

Like many other members of Parliament in their own ridings, I have visited the transition house in St. Stephen to take a look at how it operates and just to take a look at the physical structure itself. I was very impressed. It is doing a very good job.

We have the same thing happening in the northern part of my riding. This is a part of the response by our government to that problem. It is a program that is administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It funds a program called Project Haven. What it has done over the last number of years is set up 450 shelters for battered women across this country and 94 of these shelters have been for aboriginal women on reserves.

Those programs are working very well. They are carried out largely by volunteers in their own communities. The haven that we opened last year in Woodstock is a glowing example of how successful that program has been.

There are many more programs. Again they have touched just about every corner of this country. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has its own special programs, along with Health and Welfare Canada in its medical services branch. The Department of the Solicitor General has developed over 70 programs from coast to coast to deal with this problem. The Department of Justice is playing a very key role in addressing violence against women in amendments to the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act.

We have done a great deal in recognizing the problem and in dealing with the problem, but have we done enough? I would say that we probably have not done enough. Can we do more? Absolutely, we can do more.

One of the important things that we are doing right now at this time is recognizing that the problem is there. We have set up our task force as I have mentioned to criss-cross this country to get the kind of evidence and public awareness generated in this country to do more in the future.

The stories that come out of these hearings that we have been holding coast to coast are just incredible. It is just so hard to believe that these types of things happen to women in a civilized society, Canada being one of the most civilized of all societies. These things are happening and they are being exposed, sometimes for the first time.

It is recognition of a problem that is long overdue. It is going to allow the government to respond in ways that it has not been able to in the past.

I look forward to a continuation of this debate. I look forward also to questions and responses from the other side of the House.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, it is a little surprising that some of the things the member identifies would be surprising to him. They are things that are well-known across this country and are certainly well-known to women, both the experience of poverty and the experience of abuse. Governments have not taken these matters seriously.