

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State. As we all know, today is International Women's Day. It marks the progress women have made in overcoming barriers to their full equality, but it shows the extent to which those barriers still remain. Nowhere is this more evident than in the gap between the rhetoric of the government and its actions when it comes to support for women.

In its most recent budget, the government cut some \$1.6 million from its women's program. Yet it had the nerve to send across Canada a glossy, expensive poster on International Women's Day. As Carol Greene of Canadian Women's Studies said: "The cost of this one poster project could have kept one women's centre open for a full year."

I ask the Secretary of State, will he today, this International Women's Day, show that there is some sincerity behind the government's rhetoric and enable the 80 women's centres across Canada to stay open by restoring their funding? Will he do it today? Yes, or no?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, today is indeed International Women's Day and it is a day when we celebrate the progress that women around the world have made over the past 80 years in achieving equality, and nowhere more so than in Canada.

The basic way in which women can achieve true equality is having the opportunity to have jobs. The best way to ensure they have jobs and good paying jobs, is to ensure a healthy economy. This budget is to ensure for the future of women, the future of our children, that they will have that equal opportunity for their own future self-worth and their future economic benefit.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will note that the Secretary of State, who controls the women's program, was not able or willing to stand up and answer my question.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women said that the cuts to women's centres are: "are an attack on the heart of the women's movement".

I ask the Secretary of State, if he and the government are committed at all to women's equality, will he stand up today and say he is restoring the funding for the women's centres that are the heart of the women's movement?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the hon. member understands the progress women are making in this country and the role that this government has played in ensuring that progress.

It is not only the Secretary of State's department which assists in the funding of women's programs. It is all departments of government. It is the \$40 million program to assist in reducing family violence. It is the \$25 million to assist aboriginal women. The Secretary of State will continue to fund and assist aboriginal women, visible minority women, disabled women through all of its programs, to assist advocacy and education.

• (1420)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, still no answer from the Secretary of State. Canadian women have already given up on the minister responsible for the status of women. It is clear that there is a lot of sound and fury but no action for Canadian women.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition could put the question.

[Translation]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): So, Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In the last election, the Prime Minister promised Canadians a national child care program, but the government has not kept its promise. In his Budget, the Finance Minister set a ceiling on the funds used by the provinces to provide child care services. He also cut the child care initiative fund from \$15 million to \$13 million.

I ask the minister why the government did not take the opportunity provided by this International Women's Day to restore these funds, to keep its promise and to