

Supply

Prior to the 1992 budget there was an imbalance. Canadian people were telling us that we did not recognize the importance of the family unit. That was recognized in this budget. It was a very important initiative and one I was happy to support.

There is an area I want to get into in relation to this government that 20 minutes certainly will not cover. It is in relation to women's equality. All budget considerations aside, I want to mention some of the initiatives we have taken.

We realize and it is being realized in some quarters for the first time that there is a lack of concern on the part of all governments in this country, particularly as may be reflected in today's motion, to respond to these women's issues, the equality of women and the basic right to security of the person.

I want to talk about the violence and fear that deprive women in Canada of their ability to achieve equality. When we talk about violence against women we are talking about that violence manifesting itself in horrific ways, everything from physical and sexual assault to psychological and mental abuse. This creates an atmosphere which is almost indescribable in words as to what it does to the family unit and particularly to women.

Let us go through some of the statistics with regard to violence to women in our society. The numbers tell us more than anything else. Statistically we are told that at least one in every ten women is battered by her husband or male partner. We are told that an average of 100 women a year are murdered by their male partners in this country.

Ms. Clancy: That is low.

Mr. Thompson: The member for Halifax is telling me that is low. I do not disagree with her. I am sure that it is very, very low. I am sure those are only the officially reported statistics.

But whether it is 100, 200, 300 or even if it was 50, it would be too many. In the discussions before the Canadian Panel on Violence against Women that is criss-crossing this country, I cannot quote exactly but one person mentioned that if we were speaking of 100 soldiers killed in the line of duty or in battle, there would be an outrage, an investigation or an inquiry as to what happened.

Somehow, this passively goes on in our society. One hundred women are murdered by their male partners, and that figure we all acknowledge is probably on the low side. There were 27,000 sexual assaults reported by the police in 1990. One of the most startling facts is that this figure has actually doubled since 1984.

It says that almost one in two women with disabilities had been sexually abused as a child, that one in four had been sexually assaulted as an adult. It tells us that 80 per cent of aboriginal women surveyed in Ontario have experienced violence. That is 80 per cent. Female victims of elder abuse outnumber male victims two to one.

The figures tell it all. It is horrific. They tell us that innocent victims suffer but it is very important to remember that the toll they pay does not end when the physical abuse stops. When the physical abuse stops, they continue to pay in countless incidents of alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, prostitution, mental health problems, violent crime and suicide.

The figures tell us that 80 per cent of women in prison under federal jurisdiction today have had a history of physical or sexual abuse.

Putting an end to this violence is certainly one of the most pressing challenges in this country today because the problem has to be recognized before we do something about it.

These old attitudes and stereotypes have to be changed. What we are finding in this country today is that our old traditional abuse combined with a societal tolerance for violence has allowed this type of thing to continue. And continue it has.

One of the things that this government has focused on is the economic equality that has perpetuated itself in this country for years. What it does not do is allow women the freedom to leave abusive situations when they should. Most of us in our own constituencies have all kinds of evidence of that, where women tolerate an abusive situation because there is no other recourse.

One of the things I want to point out is that we are recognizing that very real problem.

One of the things I am very proud of in my home town of St. Stephen was the recognition of that problem many years ago. In fact 10 years ago we set up Fundy Transition House, which is still in existence. It was set up back in the early 1980s in recognition of that very problem where