

Oral Questions

dialogue on what I believe would be a constructive way of approaching these issues.

I am also, of course, prepared to meet with women's organizations across the country and speak to their annual meetings upon invitation. I will continue to do so, including, of course, with NAC upon an invitation that might be extended to me.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that the question is, why she will not meet in public.

I want to raise again with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women an all-party report from 1987 called *Fairness in Funding*. It is a report endorsed by her party.

The report states that funding for women's programs should "at least be maintained and indexed to a cost of living allowance". This report also endorsed increased funding for women's programs. It also endorsed considering increased funding for northern and rural women's programs.

How can the Minister responsible for the Status of Women meet her mandate? How can she stand there and say she will not meet publicly with women's groups? Will she again confirm her endorsement of these principles, as her party did in 1987?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, I am willing and prepared. I think I have met with representatives of some 40 women's groups across the country over two months, in nine of the ten provinces and in one of the territories. I will continue to do that. I will listen to their concerns and encourage my colleagues to enter into constructive dialogue and effective lobbying in order that we can further women's equality in the country.

The Women's Program of the Secretary of State, of course, undertakes valuable work but that program, like all programs of government, must recognize that we are in a period of financial restraint and we all must share in that restraint.

However, on the other hand, I think it is important to recognize that the work that has been undertaken by my colleagues in Health and Welfare and in Employment and Immigration. They are funding a wide variety of

activities to further women's equality through the Canadian Jobs Strategy program and the family violence prevention program.

The holistic approach of the government to support women in their various activities is a growing and expanding role and the results, we are going to ensure, will be the furtherance of social, legal and economic equality for women in the country.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the Minister responsible for the Status of Women that, unlike sometimes in Question Period, it is possible to have a dialogue with the women of Canada. We had a dialogue with the National Action Committee today. This minister can have one too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, my last question is directed to the same minister. In December, all women, in Quebec and across Canada, were horrified when fourteen young women lost their lives, murdered by a man who had a grudge against feminists. The minister must give a clear response to all Canadians who are trying to understand.

Will she order a public inquiry on this tragedy and on violence against women in society?

[*English*]

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, the incident in Montreal was a tragedy of proportions beyond, perhaps, the ability of any of us to truly understand.

The issue of violence against women is probably my top priority. The government must look further into the causes and prevention, and try to deal with this problem in an effective way.

I will be working with my colleagues and other colleagues in women's organizations across the country to help us find answers to this really dreadful problem in our society.

A royal commission on that particular incident would not be within the prerogative of the federal government. I think our approach should be to start to address the root problems of violence against women and also, of course, to support women who find themselves in situations of abuse, to provide protection for them and to deal with this problem from a holistic approach as well.