

*Oral Questions*

The Badgley report says that 57.2 per cent of prostitutes wants to leave prostitution and start a new life.

Outreach and community workers are appalled by the fact that even a low statistic like that would be quoted by a reputable group like Badgley. They say it is much higher. Why is the government backing away from this? Why are they trying to slough off this problem? Why does the government not show some overdue and much needed compassion by bringing forward educational programs for the prostitutes to get them away from prostitution and on with their lives?

• (1440)

**Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, it must be a slow day on the other side of the Chamber for the hon. members to be—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre):** —repeating the same questions over and over again. I addressed the same question when it was asked by that member's deputy leader.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the Acting Leader of the Opposition would ask that question, but I am surprised that the hon. member would ask it since he is a lawyer and would have the knowledge of the Constitution of Canada and the constitutional jurisdiction. He would know that the provision of social services falls primarily within the provincial level. I can tell him that I am aware of and have been involved in discussions with people offering services at the provincial level to deal with those who are on the streets.

If the hon. member would be intellectually honest and would read the whole of my response to the standing committee report, he would know that I responded to three recommendations. Among the things that I did for example was indicate that I would not follow the recommendation of that report to fingerprint prostitutes, which is a very distinct way of confirming their identification as criminals and making it harder to get them off the street and back into a life. They are not criminals as such.

They are people with deep social problems that need to be addressed.

**Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys):** Mr. Speaker, the definition of slowness is how long it is taking this minister to act on this very serious problem.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. MacLellan:** How can we as Canadians and parliamentarians go blindly forward, knowing that the average age for young people entering into prostitution is 15—sometimes as young as 10 and 12—and they are out of the business by the time they are 25. If it is so lucrative, as the minister would have us believe, it is strange that they are out of this profession by the time they are 25. They do not want to get into prostitution. They are forced into prostitution. Physical violence and drugs threaten their every day.

Why will this government not act to do something to provide immediate help for these people?

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, regrettably volume does not improve the coherence of the hon. member's comments.

The hon. member knows that social services are delivered primarily at the provincial level. The two senior levels of government have very specific responsibilities and I believe that our government has addressed its responsibilities seriously. Street prostitution and prostitution among young people are symptoms of a much deeper social problem. One of the aspects of that problem is family violence. Many of these young people go on to the street as a result of trying to escape from violent and abusive relationships in their families.

This government has just announced a very significant program to deal with that and the justice aspect of that is quite considerable. My colleague, the minister of health and welfare, is the lead minister on this.

We have our particular responsibilities as a federal government and our responsibilities push us in the direction of addressing some of the root causes of this