

Oral Questions

I work along with my provincial colleagues responsible for the status of women in our intent to ensure that we work jointly to reduce the incidence of violence and to work toward full equality for women in Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, that is all very well, but it has no connection at all with the subject of my question.

Considering the remarkable ease with which the government cut \$1.6 million in funding for women centres, and considering it was forced to reinstate that funding, if only for one year, will the Minister give the House the assurance today that this funding will again be available next year and the year after?

[*English*]

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague has recognized that the funding of women's centres has continued during this year in Quebec, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Yukon, the Territories, and Newfoundland.

As I indicated to her colleague earlier, the Secretary of State is having ongoing discussions with the ministers responsible for the status of women in each of those provinces to work toward appropriate sharing of responsibilities for the further continuation of financial support to those centres throughout Canada.

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GUN CONTROL

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Strong, effective gun control legislation is an issue for women, but it is also an issue for the whole of society. As long as young women are killed by angry men with guns, this House must press for stricter gun control legislation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacLellan: The minister had an opportunity to honour the victims of the Montreal massacre in a very constructive way by bringing forward quickly strong, effective gun control legislation. Instead she side-tracked her own bill.

Why, when Bill C-80 was introduced in June, did she wait until November to bring the matter before the House, a time when it became obvious that this bill would not pass in this session?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear in this House that I would have preferred to have the package before the same kind of special committee during the summer. I have been working very closely with my colleagues on the issue since the bill was tabled.

As I have said before, I am absolutely committed to the fundamental principles that are contained in our gun control measures. I intend to see these changes made into law.

As the hon. member will know, this is a contentious issue. If I can quote his colleague from his party who sits on the special committee, he has expressed the view that the government's proposals for gun control stink. He said that in rural Canada we do not understand some of the difficulties that are taking place and what urban Canada is asking for. He also said that Bill C-80 would deny rural Canadians a long-standing right to hunt, shoot at targets in a gun club or merely collect weapons. That is in fact a misconstruction of what is in Bill C-80.

I am very concerned about violence. I am also concerned about democracy and think it is important that those who are affected by the legislation understand what is in it. That is why I am very pleased to see it before the committee.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, we must fight acts of anti-feminism such as the massacre the way we fight racism. We can never ignore the social context in which these murders took place.

As the first woman Minister of Justice, will she please honour the thousands of females who die as victims of violence and bring forward, in the event that Bill C-80 dies on the Order Paper, new, stricter gun control legislation by March 15?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have already made it very clear that I am committed to bringing forward such legislation. I hope that I will have the support of the hon. member and his colleague from Kenora—Rainy River.