

Oral Questions

Quebec. The government must be aware of the fact that without women's centres, many battered women and victims of sexual assault will not know where to turn and have no one they can rely on. Will the Prime Minister change his policy and promise the women of Canada that these centres will receive permanent and adequate funding?

[English]

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I, of course, am very much aware of the situation in five of the provinces with women's centres where federal funding helps to ensure their continued role, and where much of their role is to help support women who are victims of violence, or women trying to access various government services. That, indeed, is why the government continued its funding of government centres last year. Since that time my colleague, the Secretary of State, has had discussions with his provincial counterparts, the ministers responsible for the status of women. We have been in the discussions with them and are working toward a resolution of this matter which would ensure that women's centres continue to thrive and continue to provide support and services for women in all provinces and territories of the country.

• (1430)

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. I believe the women of Canada deserve to know from the Prime Minister where the government stands on behalf of women in this country. I appreciate the comments of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

There are many causes leading to violence against women in this society: structural, fundamental, political, social, and cultural. Will the Prime Minister commit today to the establishment of a royal commission on violence against women which will address all these issues, which will show his government's commitment to address these issues, and which will give a commitment to the women of Canada on this very sad anniversary?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the hon. member that in my portfolio as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women I have responsibility within this

government to speak on behalf of the interests of women. I am very pleased that I have the support of my colleagues on these issues that are so fundamentally important to women.

As my hon. colleague has raised once again the issue of a royal commission and as I have responded earlier, we are looking forward to discussions about this proposal both from the women's organizations that have put it forward and from colleagues in the House who are examining the issue of violence against women.

I am sure that we will have in place mechanisms to ensure that we move forward with not only developing a greater understanding of the causes of violence against women but also reaching the solutions which will ensure over a period of time that women will be able to look forward to a brighter society and that violence can be reduced and ultimately eradicated from Canadian society.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Since in 1988 the federal government announced it would invest \$40 million over four years in local initiative projects against family violence, could the Minister explain to the House why, in Quebec, 40 centres had to close their doors because of lack of funding?

[English]

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, this government did continue its funding for women's centres in Quebec. It has, through the Family Violence Program, provided funding for some 700 projects across the country involving a variety of initiatives from prevention to education and to programs like the recently announced Canadian Teachers Federation curriculum program "Thumbs Down" to bring into our schools with our teachers the ability to educate our children more effectively on issues relating to violence in our society.

Those kinds of initiatives, along with initiatives from the Minister of State for Housing to provide capital funding for shelters for women who have been abused across the country, are evidence of this government's commitment.