

Oral Questions

Women will have no further grants from this government?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)):

Mr. Speaker, this year we will support at least 600 projects or programs totalling at least \$6 million. All programs will be subject to the same criteria which include promoting equality and social justice for all women in this country. I realize there are areas where far more should be done, including Native women, women who belong to visible minorities, immigrant women and, of course, women living in isolated rural areas. We will keep on doing as much as we can. As the hon. member is no doubt aware, during the Liberal government's last term, \$12 million was earmarked for women's programs. During this term, we quadrupled that amount, bringing it up to a total of \$48 million.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): The minister never answers questions when they concern women. I wonder what he thinks of REAL Women.

My supplementary question is addressed to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. The minister recently promised to convince her colleagues of the importance of funding for women's programs. The women's centre in Antigonish is facing probable closure because of this year's budget cuts. Has the minister really discussed the problem with all of her colleagues, and does she have good news for the women of northern Nova Scotia and similar groups nation-wide?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm to the hon. member that indeed I have been discussing this issue with my colleagues on a continuing basis, as well as with a number of representatives of women's organizations and a number of the provinces to see how we can deal with these situations.

I believe we are working out a solution, as the Secretary of State has indicated. He is prepared to make project funding available on an emergency basis and to assist those organizations in applying for project funding. I know that we are going to be able to assist a number of the groups that I have met with in continuing their work of advocacy and education in compliance with the Secretary of State women's programs.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. The minister says he is meeting with women and women's groups across Canada, but of the \$1.6 million cut in the last budget, women's groups in Newfoundland are losing \$250,000 in funding.

Will the Minister restore funding so that women across Canada will not be denied the help they need and the means to be heard?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)):

Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that a process is under way; a process to bring more program funding to Newfoundland *pro rata* than they had before. The core funding does not exist for the women's centres because that program has been cut in keeping with the announcement made in this year's budget.

What I have said is that we have programmed funding. I am going to be as flexible as I can. My officials have already been indicating the kind of flexibility that can be shown to make sure that we are of help in those areas where we can be helpful.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars have been loaned to strip bars where women are exploited and demeaned while organizations which work to improve the status of women are being stifled in a stranglehold by the government.

How can the minister justify cuts that will shut down women's counselling centres, rape crisis centres and centres that help battered women and their children? Will the minister admit that this heartless move against Canadian women is a mistake and restore full funding immediately?