

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, December 5, 1990, the House will now revert to Statements by Ministers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TRAGEDY AT ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE

COMMEMORATION OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, it is with a deep sense of sadness that I rise today on behalf of the Government of Canada to remind the House that one year ago today, 14 young women were murdered at École polytechnique in Montreal.

As we recall that tragedy, we remember those young women: Geneviève Bergeron, Nathalie Croteau, Anne Marie Edward, Maryse Laganière, Anne Marie Lemay, Michèle Richard, Annie Turcotte, Hélène Colgan, Barbara Daigneault, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Leclair, Sonia Pelletier, Annie St-Arneault, and Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz.

That brutal act has left deep scars on the memories of Canadians. Nowhere is the pain and the loss felt more deeply than by the families and the loved ones of the women who were murdered.

[Translation]

Today, we offer our most heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends who lost a dear one in this tragedy.

I attended this morning with the members for Bourassa, Halifax and New-Westminster a ceremony at the Notre-Dame-de-Montréal Cathedral where, along with hundreds of men and women, we deplored this tragedy again.

[English]

Today is a day for commemoration and reflection on our loss. But it is also a time to consider how the spirit that enlivened those women has not been lost. Our initial shock at this senseless violence, our anger, and our anguish must now turn to a commitment to action.

I believe, as I know do all members of this House, that violence is unacceptable in our society. For any person to resort to such violence, wherever it may take place, is deplorable. As legislators and as a society, we must work together to convey the message that these actions will not and cannot be tolerated.

Throughout the past decades there have been many incidents of violent killings of innocent victims. Some were killed because of their colour, because of their religion, or simply because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, but the innocent victims struck down a year ago at École polytechnique were killed because they were women. As we condemn their murderer, we must also better understand and deal with the attitudes which led to this tragedy and to all acts of violence against women.

To change attitudes one must start with the beginning, with our children. By working together, families and teachers, we must teach children that violence against women—indeed violence of any kind—is wrong, building a new set of attitudes among our children to take their place in a better society.

In co-operation with women's organizations, research organizations, educational institutions, and thousands of women and men across the country, we must continue to work for women's full partnerships in all spheres of endeavour, in all spheres of society. Let us work for a time when violence against women will be an historical fact, rather than a tragic reality.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the members of this House were elected to put forward the aspirations of the Canadian people. Therefore, in memory of these 14 young women and all other victims of violence, we must work together to put an end to violence.

[English]

Let the House, by our actions in our laws and policies, and through the ideals to which we aspire, let us work together towards that ultimate goal, to eliminate violence against women and to eradicate violence against all innocent victims in Canadian society.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, the cold horror of the Montreal massacre remains with us all and will remain with us all, all our lives. Fourteen young lives snuffed out. Fourteen young women singled out for