

*Government Orders*

30 B.C. municipalities, including the cities of New Westminister and Burnaby in my own community, supported my anti-stalking private member's bill and wrote to the Minister of Justice and others in the House to indicate that.

My bill had a minimum penalty for repeat offenders and those who break restraining orders. I felt that provision was very important. I am sorry that my amendment was not passed through the committee stage. All too often the men who engage in this harassment and terrorism thumb their noses at the court right in the court. They are served with a restraining order. I have been told by family practice lawyers, Crown prosecutors and others in the criminal justice system that on receipt of being handed that restraining order or peace bond, many of them have said right there in court that it is not worth the paper it is printed on and it is not going to protect her one bit.

All too frequently they are speaking the truth. Consider when the Manitoba government came to the committee stage. In all the cases cited in Manitoba where women have been killed there was a restraining order prohibiting that person from continuing his actions of harassment and terrorism.

There has been discussion in the House at all stages of this bill around private members' bills that have been put into the House. The private member's bill that was put forward by the member for Moncton was a provision that actually would have made the situation less protective for women. It is important for it to be acknowledged.

Often when we are talking about legislation such as this Bill C-126 we must be very careful that the legislation we propose as government members, ministers and in private members' bills meets the needs we are trying to address and that it will make the situation better for the people we are attempting to protect.

I have a petition here today which has been signed by over 1,800 people in support of a stalking law. I just received these petitions. There is not time to put them through the process of the House of Commons to officially table them as petitions. They were collected in a very short time by Stephanie Whitehead from the Windsor area who has worked tirelessly to raise her community's awareness of this issue. I want to make mention that in a very short time 1,800 people signed

these petitions for an effective stalking law. It is indicative of the support that is out there in Canada at large in terms of supporting this legislation.

Criminal harassment or stalking and child abuse touch a chord I think within many of us. Some of these people are dealing with their own pain at having experienced this personally or have seen a family member or friend who has experienced this. Some are simply very concerned for others in our society and for the possibility that these issues may in future touch their own lives in a more personal way.

I very much support the provisions of the bill that are designed to facilitate child witnesses testifying and to replace the law on prohibition orders for convicted paedophilic sex offenders to prevent them from loitering around children. I presented two amendments to strengthen these sections. As the parliamentary secretary for the Minister of Justice said earlier, one of those amendments was passed at the committee stage. It was an amendment to raise the maximum penalty for intending to take a child outside the country to commit acts of violence, particularly sexual violence.

• (1250 )

My unsuccessful amendment would have put the onus on the adult support person in a child sexual abuse case not to communicate with the child witness. The bill currently places equal onus on a frightened child of five or whatever who has been sexually abused not to communicate in any way with the adult even to say that perhaps they are scared and frightened and want to go home. I do not think this is in keeping with what the bill is intended to do. That is my concern on that issue.

In order for the bill to be effective it requires very effective education of police officers, Crown attorneys and judges about the issues of violence against women, criminal harassment, child abuse and about the equality rights of all women in our society.

As the member for Halifax said earlier, my fear is that without this kind of education the bill will be used inconsistently. I am concerned that the bill will be used inconsistently and will not be reflected in our court system the way all of us here in the House of Commons and all of us who worked on the committee stage of the bill want to see this enforced.