

April 27, 2012
Oral Question
Aboriginal Justice Strategy

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, funding for the aboriginal justice strategy reached its sunset date on March 31. The Minister of Justice has not said a word yet about new funding for this program. Crime prevention, youth gang strategies and restorative justice programs are at risk in over 600 communities across the country. Organizations are already laying off staff.

Why the silence from the minister on this important program?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to enhancing the safety and security of aboriginal communities.

Our budget has proposed funding of \$11.9 million over one year for the family violence prevention program, which would allow the department of aboriginal affairs to continue to offer current programming at a total budget of \$30.4 million. This investment would contribute to the safety and security of ongoing reserve residents, particularly women and children.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal justice strategy was an investment in crime prevention that was working. The Department of Justice's own study showed in communities with these programs, repeat crime was reduced by half. I do not know of any other investment that could show such a return. The minister himself praised this program at committee last month and told MPs to wait for the budget and see what would happen. We have waited, and there is nothing.

When will the minister support real crime prevention that we desperately need in our communities?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I guess the member opposite just cannot take yes for an answer.

I would like to remind the House about how the opposition members have been voting lately on justice issues. They voted against mandatory minimum penalties for child sexual offences. They voted against tougher penalties for child kidnapping. They voted against eliminating house arrest for sexual assault. Most recent, they have been unsuccessful in delaying a bill to crack down on human traffickers.

What can we talk about justice from that party?