



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

**Wednesday, November 28, 2007**

***Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken***

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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**[Statements by Members]**

[\(1405\)](#)

**[The Speaker:](#)**

It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Halifax West.

*[Members sang the national anthem]*

**[The Speaker:](#)**

The hon. member for New Westminster--Coquitlam.

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**Violence Against Women**

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):**

Mr. Speaker, shockingly, violence against women still permeates our society. We are in the middle of The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and fast approaching--

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for New Westminster--Coquitlam.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Mr. Speaker, shockingly, violence against women still permeates our society. We are in the middle of The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and fast approaching December 6, a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It was my private member's bill that created this day, so it has particular significance for me.

Later today, members of Parliament will stand in the House of Commons and vote on a motion which calls upon Japan to offer a formal, sincere and unequivocal apology to the women forced into sexual slavery during the second world war. Several of these so-called comfort women are on Parliament Hill today, and one cannot help but be moved to tears by their terrible stories.

A vote in favour of this motion would be a vote in support of not only these women but all women across the world who have experienced unspeakable violence just because they are women. I urge all members to vote in favour of this motion. It is simply the right thing to do.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

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### Violence Against Women

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):**

Mr. Speaker, during the second world war, 15 year old girls were subjected to torture and rape by countless men from the Japanese army for weeks, months and years on end. Over 200,000 women suffered through that kind of torture.

Four of the survivors of sexual slavery are on Parliament Hill today asking us to join them in asking Japan to give a formal sincere apology. Will Canada be on the side of the comfort women? Will we take a stand?

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her interest in this matter and I believe the House will be seized of this matter shortly.

I, too, have had an opportunity, along with many members, to meet with these living witnesses to an unthinkable evil that happened some 60 years ago. We commend them for their courage, bravery and dignity considering what terrible things took place.

They inspire us all, I hope, in all parties, to join together in combating contemporary forms of slavery, sexual servitude and human trafficking.

  [\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**[Ms. Olivia Chow \(Trinity—Spadina, NDP\):](#)**  

Mr. Speaker, I have faith that all ordinary Canadians and all members of Parliament will join together and say no to violence against women and support the comfort women.

In the words of some of the victims,

*[Member spoke in Cantonese]*

*[English]*

What I just said is that rewriting history is not the answer to a lasting peace and it is not the answer to justice and reconciliation.

When will the [Prime Minister](#) publicly ask and encourage the government of Japan to formally and sincerely apologize to these comfort women?

  [\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**[Hon. Jason Kenney \(Secretary of State \(Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity\), CPC\):](#)**



Mr. Speaker, we know that the [Prime Minister](#) and the current and former foreign ministers have raised and discussed this matter with their counterparts in Japan.

We in Canada truly believe that as Canadians we acknowledge moments of injustice in our own history but these women come to this country with a story that needs to be heard because we need to learn from the lessons of history to ensure they are not repeated.

We need to do everything we can to be inspired by them to redouble our efforts in fighting similar kinds of violence against women and against children to ensure these things never again occur.

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[\(1515\)](#)

## Human Rights

  [\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**[Ms. Olivia Chow \(Trinity—Spadina, NDP\):](#)**  

Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations with all parties and I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move, seconded by the hon. members for [Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock](#), [Scarborough—Rouge River](#) and [Vaudreuil-Soulanges](#):

That, in the opinion of this House:

- i. During its wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands, from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude, who became known as 'comfort women'; and
- ii. That some Japanese public officials have recently expressed a regrettable desire to dilute or rescind the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the 'comfort women', which expressed the Government's sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal; and
- iii. That Japan has made progress since 1945 in recognizing and atoning for its past actions, and for many decades has been a major contributor to international peace, security, and development, including through the United Nations; and
- iv. That the Canada-Japan alliance continues to be based on shared vital interests and values in the Asia-Pacific region, including the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for

human rights and democratic institutions, and the securing of prosperity for the people of both countries and the international community; and

v. That the Government of Canada should therefore encourage the Government of Japan to abandon any statement which devalues the expression of regret from the Kono Statement of 1993; to clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the 'comfort women' for the Japanese Imperial Forces never occurred; to take full responsibility for the involvement of the Japanese Imperial Forces in the system of forced prostitution, including through a formal and sincere apology expressed in the Diet to all of those who were victims; and to continue to address those affected in a spirit of reconciliation.

  [\[Table of Contents\]](#)

**The Speaker:**  

Does the hon. member for [Trinity—Spadina](#) have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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