

Oral Questions

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS

EDUCATIONAL PAYMENTS TO PROVINCES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance as well. It concerns his acknowledgement that the Government is now going to apply its six and five program to post-secondary spending. At a time when not only young people, but adults who have not been able to get a job, are returning to universities and community colleges in increasing numbers, and at a time when many Provinces, if not a majority, have a greater need for money, how could the Minister justify the Government's plan to apply the six and five guidelines to post-secondary spending, when he knows that what is involved is really a cutback in the amount of money which would otherwise have gone to this sector, and at a time, in particular, when such spending is labour intensive and would be creating more jobs?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is probably aware that many provinces have restricted increases in spending on the post-secondary sector to less than 6 per cent. In fact, some provinces intend to maintain the status quo next year, without any increases in spending at all. However, the decision on how much money is to be earmarked for post-secondary education rests with the provincial authorities. As far as the Federal contribution for next year is concerned, if we apply the 6 and 5 formula it will increase by \$256 million over what will be paid this year, in other words, next year, the Canadian Government will be contributing nearly \$3.9 billion to post-secondary education in Canada. I may point out that this is a very substantial sum.

Second, I may remind the Hon. Member that the Government of Canada is also spending hundreds of millions of dollars on youth training through training programs provided by the Department of Employment and Immigration. The Canadian Government also has a student assistance program which provides loans and also a summer employment program with a budget of \$170 million, compared to \$120 million for last summer. These are real contributions the Canadian Government is making to help young Canadians, while ensuring that the money will go directly to young people.

[English]

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the Minister answered about ten questions I did not ask. Because Conservative provincial Governments are taking socially regressive and economically foolish steps in cutting back on post-secondary education is no reason the federal Government should follow suit. That is the important point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1430)

EFFECT ON WOMEN

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, since today is being celebrated around the world as International Women's Day, is the Minister aware that, in this sector where he is about to make cutbacks, well over 50 per cent of the people affected by job losses are women? How can he justify that to the women of Canada, particularly today?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I find it strange that the Hon. Member is talking about cutbacks when we are going to increase payments to Provinces by \$256 million, and when he himself says there is no guarantee that that money will go to post-secondary education. The basis for that is his own argument that the Provinces are not necessarily allocating that money to post-secondary education. He knows this is the case in many Provinces.

Mr. Broadbent: Bring in a Bill and make them do it.

Mr. Lalonde: Even so, we are increasing significantly the amount of money going to that sector.

I have also indicated the other things we are doing to ensure that the young women as well as the young men of this country are going to benefit directly from federal programs in the areas of training, student loans, and summer jobs. These are things we are doing, and we are going to continue, Madam Speaker. I think the record of the Government of Canada in that regard stands up very well when you look at it objectively.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, we in this House should be aware of precisely what is involved. So far the Government has applied its six and five program to pensions, and over 54 per cent of pension recipients are women. It has applied six and five to family allowances where the vast majority of recipients are women. It is now going to apply it to the education field where the vast majority of working people are women. As applied by this Government, the six and five program is nothing less than an anti-women program.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: The Minister is smiling at this, but I know lots of women will not find it funny. I ask the Minister how he can take a step that will affect disadvantageously those trying to get higher education at a reasonable cost, and at the same time take a whack at the ordinary woman in this country precisely at a time when she needs more assistance, not less?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the arguments of the Leader of the New Democratic Party are so far-fetched that quite frankly, I find it difficult to keep a