

Oral Questions

tion fees, and thus student debt, increase? How many students will be unable to continue their education?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is again another one of the scare tactics hon. members opposite are dreaming up.

On the question that my hon. friend mentioned, the transfers to the provinces under Established Programs Financing are unconditional. They do not have to go to any particular use. It is the option of the provinces to use them as they may.

As the Prime Minister has indicated, our direct funding will continue and it will not be affected. However the hon. member must understand that the transfers to the provinces have been going up and will continue to go up each year. They are going to be going up on average by 3 per cent.

Ms. Clancy: There will \$80 million less in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, my friend from Halifax says that there will be \$80 million less. If she would check the numbers she would find that the transfers to the province of Nova Scotia next year will go up in excess of 4 per cent.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Aboriginal people across Canada are shocked and appalled with the decision of the federal government to cut Indian and Inuit programs by \$100 million and the Secretary of State by \$44 million. This is truly a shame when throne speeches and glossy government publications brag about the federal government's commitment to self-determination of native people.

Why did the Minister of Finance impose such an unfair burden on Canada's native people? Why is the Minister of Finance punishing the native people of Canada for his own incompetent economic management?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is exaggerating what we have done in the budget. A number of native programs will not be affected by the budget. There are some that will be limited to a 5 per cent growth rate.

Ms. Clancy: Answer the question.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): My hon. friend from Halifax cannot contain her mouth. I am answering the question.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. member for Western Arctic.

• (1500)

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same Minister of Finance. On February 9, the government claimed it supported International Literacy Year. It was full of rhetoric about taking a leadership role and addressing the challenge of literacy. But yesterday it cut all the northern broadcast access programs by 16 per cent and completely eliminated the native communications programs and all the native newspapers. Why has the Minister of Finance abandoned his government's commitment for native Canadians? Why is the minister being so deceitful and unfair to native Canadians?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, let me be quite precise for my hon. friend. Funding of \$24 million per year will be maintained. It will not be affected by the budget. Education programs for native peoples will not be affected. There will still be \$736 million per year.

Ms. Blondin: I asked about this program.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): It is easier to listen when you are not talking. There will be \$736 million per year spent on education programs for native peoples. We are maintaining our commitment there because we understand the needs of the native peoples for education.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance knows that Petro-Canada was established in 1975 to serve a definitive public policy objective, building energy security for Canadians. That is no less important today than it was in 1975.

My question is directed to the Minister of Finance who yesterday announced an *ad hoc* privatization of this successful and necessary corporation. Can the finance minister tell us who is running the government's agenda? Why is he so determined to take this regressive step that will allow foreign-dominated huge multinationals to once again dictate the future of Canada's energy resources?