

Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the two territories have all increased spending on literacy programs.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Québec has passed legislation guaranteeing all adults the right to complete their secondary education. There is no limit on age or level of financing. This measure, which is unique in Canada, will help to increase literacy in the province.

[English]

I notice you signalling, Madam Speaker. I am deeply appreciative of having had an opportunity to work in these particular areas. The issue of literacy is an important one for all of us. We have now developed a very important partnership with the provinces, with those dedicated people who have worked in the field for countless years, very often strangers in the wind, looking for an oasis in the desert. We have been more supportive of those groups. We have found new partnerships to build on. We are now bringing forward initiatives with the business and labour movements and with the voluntary sector. Having 25 per cent of Canadians functionally illiterate is shocking, intolerable and it is something we must work to eradicate.

We will continue to do everything we can through the programs in my Ministry, programs that will be working to provide greater equality and social justice. We will do all that we can to make sure that this becomes a more open, more accessible, more understanding society and that we continue to be a country of freedom and opportunity which will continue to give all of the members of our community a full opportunity to participate. It is then and only then, Madam Speaker, that we can really take our place and say that ours is the great country of the 21st century able to challenge other countries of the world in the knowledge that we are much more effective and productive when we use the full capacity and full potential of all Canadians.

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his comments. I have a brief comment to make and a question to put to the Minister.

The Minister will know that I forwarded to him earlier in the year a report that had been prepared by residents of the Prince George, B.C. area who are arguing for a university in that community. I will be making some comments on that later in the afternoon. I appreciated the information which the Minister provided to me.

My question relates to the transfer payments to the provinces. There have been allegations, perhaps across the country but certainly in British Columbia, that the provincial Government has perhaps used those funds since they have not been, as has been put, tagged to be spent on education and health care. In fact, in British Columbia from the Social Credit Government the charges are that health and education money has been used for pavement on highways.

Has his Department done any studies to establish whether those charges are, in fact, correct? If his Department has, would the Minister be prepared to make them available to the House?

Mr. Weiner: Madam Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague recognizes that significant funds are transferred and, indeed, we are hopeful that they are being fully used. We realize that there is a lot of goodwill involved here. We work in close collaboration with CMEC, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. We have a very good relationship with all of the Ministers of Education. We meet from time to time. There is a genuine feeling on the part of us all who serve at any level of Government to continue to make sure that our young people are the most competitive in the world, the best trained and the funds being advanced in this particular area are used for the purposes that they are intended.

The Member is certainly in the knowledge that this is somewhat of a complicated nation, that there are jurisdictional differences and it takes, as a great Quebecer, Frank Scott, once said: "When you deal with issues of this type it takes realism and goodwill. It takes co-operation, not confrontation." We will continue to work