

Oral Questions

An Hon. Member: Good question!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, federal-provincial transfer payments have not changed. These transfer payments may be spent at the provinces' discretion. The transfers are limited to a growth rate of 3 per cent. The growth rate of federal spending is also limited to 3 per cent. We have asked the provinces to share these restrictive measures, in the same spirit as the federal government.

We have also made a distinction between higher income provinces, such as Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, which will receive a lower increase, and provinces like Quebec, which benefit from equalization payments. I think our policy in this respect is very fair, and I think the issue is important enough to ask the provinces to share a national solution in dealing with a national problem.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance not realize that he is committing a sin of omission in cutting government funding, which is also vital and fundamental for the future of our youth, who are really the future of our country?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I understand that if we do not reduce the deficit, it will be a big problem for our youth. It is very important for the future of our country and for the future of our youth to lower the level of the national debt. This government has a policy to reduce the national debt and a big part of this problem is reducing the annual deficit and asking the provinces to take part in solving this national problem.

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[English]

MAIN ESTIMATES

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board said that the despicable contempt with which parliamentarians were treated this morning in a lock-up, in which we had half the amount of room we needed and half the resources required and denied 14 of the key departmental estimates, was as a result of budget secrecy. Some secrets. I do not blame him for wanting to hide the secrets from the glare of publicity.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): My question is: Will the President of the Treasury Board provide us with the secrets and explain the cuts in drug addiction funds when we have a drug strategy and cuts in grants to multicultural and ethnocultural organizations when we have a problem of tolerance steadily growing in this country? Will he provide us with the details of those 14 departmental estimates we have been denied up until now?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We will provide the 14 documents. I explained very clearly that the reason they were not available this morning was because we wanted to preserve the security and integrity of the budget.

I indicated clearly in this House this morning that those documents have been in the printing process since the Minister of Finance stood in this House and will be available to all members of the House on or before March 12.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I also participated in the lock-up this morning that was such a farce. When I left that lock-up, I received calls from women's organizations in Newfoundland, the Yukon and Quebec.

Mr. Speaker: That may all very well be so, but I want to know what the question is.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): My question is this: The information on the cuts to women's programming is public information. The women's centres in this country know that their program funding has been cut 100 per cent. Will the Secretary of State please tell us what other cuts will be made to women's programming? Violence against women is a crisis in this country. These are the centres that provide information and support to women. They tell me they have been cut 100 per cent. Will the minister confirm that?

• (1440)

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, there is a plan in place to provide for our future security and prosperity. The deficit is being addressed. That is what we are concerned with. It hurts when we have to say to any group in the nation—