

Oral Questions

Indian groups about the whole question of the impact this will have upon their revenues. I intend to meet with them again to explore how serious the impact may or may not be. Certainly some of their concerns were allayed in the sense that they thought certain regulations would be prejudicial when, indeed, they would not be. I intend to meet with them again for further clarification. After those meetings are complete I shall be pleased to report to the hon. member. Their concerns are certainly familiar to the Minister of Finance. As I say, we are going through the process of examining whether, indeed, it is having the type of impact which they envisage.

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● (1130)

EDUCATION**ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. Under the federal government's established programs financial scheme, the government funnels some \$3 billion to the provinces to help pay the operating costs of post-secondary institutions in the country. In light of the government's budget of October 28, which stated that the federal government intends to reduce substantially transfer payments to the provinces in areas under provincial jurisdiction, will the minister advise the House whether the government is planning to withdraw support for post-secondary education in Canada either by pulling out of established programs financing or reducing significantly the post-secondary education portion of that shared-cost program?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I would just add one element to the hon. member's preamble. While it is true that over \$3 billion per year is transferred to the provinces for the purpose of post-secondary education, I would like to add that there is also the transfer of tax points which amount to approximately \$1 billion and which bring the total federal contribution to post-secondary education to \$4 billion.

Of course, we are quite aware of the importance of federal contributions to post-secondary education in Canada. We are committed to seeing an excellent post-secondary education program continue in Canada, but, as in other areas, we are interested in seeing improvements made in the way federal funds are spent.

Mr. McMillan: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Secretary of State; he did not answer my previous question. Since support for post-secondary education under established programs funding is designed in large part to equalize educational opportunities across the country, does the minister realize that any major withdrawal of that support would devastate the quality of university education, especially in my own region of the Atlantic provinces, that it would cause student fees to skyrocket throughout the country, that it would

cripple the economies of university towns and, in fact, would undermine the government's own commitment to increase substantially research and development in the country?

In light of those facts, will the government launch a joint federal-provincial inquiry, review or perhaps even a royal commission to investigate university financing before it makes significant changes to this important area of our public life?

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Madam Speaker, I fully agree with the hon. member that federal involvement in post-secondary education in this country has been essential to the development of our excellent educational system. I also indicated that it was in the best interest of both sides of this House to see that funds be expended as efficiently as possible. Perhaps I could draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that on Tuesday next I shall be meeting with the provincial ministers of education and that we will probably touch upon this subject. Also there is no doubt that this matter is of great interest to the academic as well as the political community throughout Canada. An important seminar is to be held at Simon Fraser University on February 12 and 13 and it will bring together representatives of the academic community. My officials and I intend to be in attendance and we shall of course see that federal funds are spent as wisely as possible and that federal objectives are being met.

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[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS**PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS OF GREENLAND**

Madam Speaker: May I at this point draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of the Hon. Moses Olsen, Minister of Social Affairs of the Home Rule Government of Greenland.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: I had also intended to draw the attention of the House to the presence of a delegation of French parliamentarians but I think they have now disappeared from the gallery.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**DELAY IN BENEFIT PAYMENTS IN GASPÉ AREA**

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration or, in his absence, his parliamentary secretary. On December 8, I informed the minister that unemployment insurance payments