

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House a couple of days ago and again last week, the deputy ministers of agriculture have been meeting this week and working on the design of a program that hopefully would go some distance in meeting some of the problems of the grain and oilseeds sector and agriculture in general, particularly with respect to the province of Saskatchewan.

That work is ongoing in close co-operation with the provinces and we hope that in the near future we will be able to make some positive announcements.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance but in his absence I will direct it to the Deputy Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

This government's unprecedented attacks against students and education have had the desired effect.

After cutbacks totalling \$7 billion in transfer payments to Quebec for health and education over a period of nine years, after the other attacks against students in Quebec, the province is now facing tuition fees that are twice as high. Today, Quebec students are demonstrating against these attacks.

How can the minister afford to threaten the future of our country by destroying our system of postsecondary education? What justification is there for this policy?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will probably be disappointed to learn that we are increasing our transfer payments to Quebec, not decreasing them.

Next year, under our programs, our transfer payments to Quebec will exceed over \$10.3 billion. Of course, in the global management of our budget, we have to consider our expenditures as a whole. We find that, as a Government, we have kept our increase in expenditures at 3.5 per cent over the past five years, while several provinces have increased theirs by as much as 10, 14 or even 17 per cent. We must therefore make sure that everybody share in the effort to reduce the deficit.

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• (1430)

[*English*]**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, I would personally like to thank all the government members who called the anti-GST Liberal line last week, including the Minister of Finance.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fontana: The government has spent millions of taxpayers' dollars to advertise the GST. It has gone to the expense of setting up a 1-800 information line.

But what do Canadians get when they call that line? The Toronto Homebuilders' Association called for information 20 times. The answers were incomplete and incorrect 75 per cent of the time. The government line gave correct information only five out of 20 times.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister this. If the 1-800 GST number is not an information line, what is it, a Tory advertising line paid for by taxpayers?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member and his colleagues on that side of the House make use of that number more often.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Loiselle: When I listen to their interpretation of the GST, I am also tempted to be against it, but when I look at the real project I am all in favour of it.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are using the lines, but the people who are answering the lines are giving out wrong information.