

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, it proves one thing, that there are still people at AECL who intend to do just that, and I can assure you that instructions have been issued so it will not happen.

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Either the Minister does not recognize the value and success of the Post-secondary Education Assistance Program, or he is indifferent to the continuing cycle of poverty and despair that faces many Indian and Inuit young people today. Why is he deliberately closing the door to education and a better life for Indian and Inuit young people by capping the Post-secondary Education Assistance Program?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, neither one of the Hon. Member's assertions in his preamble is accurate. We recognize the success of the program. We recognized it by creating an additional \$12 million to be added to the post-secondary budget this year. That is some \$94 million that is provided for some 12,000 students attending post-secondary educational institutions in Canada.

The growth rate from 1983-84 to 1987-88 is over 200 per cent. The reason that the interim measure had to be taken was to assure that there would be fairness and that the funds provided would be used in an equitable manner, to provide post-secondary education to Indian and Inuit students.

Mr. Manly: The program was growing because it was working and more students were able to take advantage of it.

FUNDING OF PROGRAM

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Why is the Minister closing this program at the very time when Indian communities recognize the possibilities available to them in post-secondary education, when more Indian and Inuit young people have come through school and are able to take advantage of it? Why does the Minister cut it off now when the program is beginning to work? Is that not an example of bad faith, to fund a program until people begin to take advantage of it, then shut it down?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member refers to shutting down a program. An increase of \$12 million over budget is not shutting down a program. Some 12,000 Inuit and Indian students are taking advantage of post-secondary education. The expenditures are some \$94 million.

The interim changes were made so that those who are benefiting now and those who wish to benefit in the future will be able to do so. Ten years ago the program was funded at a level of \$8 million. Today it is funded at \$94 million. I suggest to the Hon. Member that there is a program in existence which will benefit Indian and Inuit students.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

SENTENCE IN QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MURDER CASE—
CALL FOR REFORM OF CRIMINAL LAW

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Justice my question is directed to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister. The decision on Monday that Denis Lortie, a man who has been convicted of murdering three and wounding 13 others in a machine-gun attack, will be eligible for parole in some seven years is undoubtedly going to underline and reinforce the concerns of many Canadians who are calling for the return of the death penalty.

Bearing in mind that for many weeks now his Department has had the report of the Sentencing Commission, will the Parliamentary Secretary give the undertaking to the House that the Government will move immediately to reform criminal law sentencing? Will he give us the assurance as well that the Government will not wait until the end of the capital punishment debate to move to reassure concerned of Canadians in this area?

[Translation]

Mr. François Gérin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Member for his question. Indeed, the Sentencing Commission tabled its report a few weeks ago, and the Department is completing its examination. But, as you know, there will have to be consultation with the provincial Ministers of Justice, in view of the fact that the administration of justice comes under provincial jurisdiction. Moreover, the Minister has every intention of seeking the advice not only of provincial Governments, but also of federal and provincial Government corrections representatives and all individuals and groups interested in this important matter.