

Adjournment Debate

dropped by 4.6 per cent this year in spite of an over-all increase in government spending of 4.3 per cent.

As a matter of fact, between 1986 and 1994, the government eliminated \$9.5 billion in transfer payments to the provinces. According to the latest statistics, by the year 2004 absolutely no federal funds will be going toward education and to the provinces in transfer payments.

While federal funding for education has been decreasing, student costs have been on the rise. Looking at post-secondary education, for example, Statistics Canada reports that Ontario tuition fees alone have increased by 53 per cent since 1983-84.

Likewise the cost of living has increased. On top of the cost of living, the federal government has introduced a 3 per cent tax on student loans and has applied the GST to books. This has added hundreds of dollars to many students' financial burdens and hit hardest those least able to afford to pay for their education.

I am here to ask the government: Would you please, members of the government, clarify to the Canadian public how you can say on one hand that we are on the leading edge when it comes to spending on research and development and, on the other hand, we have a tremendous number of cuts in areas such as education and transfer payments?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member for Ottawa Centre is concerned about education and I wish to assure him that I am too, because before I was elected to Parliament I was a teacher.

Contrary to what the hon. member suggests, Canada plays a leading role because it is clearly determined to promote excellence in education while respecting provincial jurisdiction. As the Secretary of State said, we devote a larger percentage of our GNP to education than most countries do. Canada comes second for the proportion of young people registered in post-secondary educational institutions, right after the United States.

To help us remain in the forefront of human resource development, the government recently announced the prosperity initiative, of which education is a key element.

Regarding the last part of the hon. member's question, I would like to say that the government has not cut funding for post-secondary education. We froze spending in order to control the national debt and we are proud of our success in this field. Moreover, although we had to limit transfer payments to the provinces to do so, the total funding available for post-secondary education continues to increase.

Thus assistance for post-secondary education under Established Programs Financing rose by \$80 million in 1990-91 and \$70 million in 1991-92, to reach nearly \$6 billion this year. Of this total, about \$2 billion is in cash. Total transfers are to increase to reflect population growth in future years.

In conclusion, in addition to providing financial aid to the provinces and territories the federal government is increasing its direct support for higher education through programs like funding for the University Research Council and the Canadian Student Aid Program. In all, it is estimated that about \$2 billion will be given in direct support in 1991-92.

• (1810)

[*English*]

FORESTRY

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pursue some questions I had asked of the government regarding the completion of the signing of a very important forest agreement between the Government of Canada and the province of Nova Scotia. In fact, back on March 26 of this year I asked the forestry committee of the Minister of Forestry when that agreement would be finally signed. The minister said at that time that he had a good fix on the Nova Scotia situation; the funds had been identified and he did not anticipate a delay.

Later in the year on October 28 in the House I asked the minister when he would be able to sign this important agreement. He answered on that date that he would be able to sign the new agreement as soon as a date could be arranged.