

*Private Members' Business*

Another point I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues is that while some provinces are more sensitive about this issue than others, there are others that would welcome it with open arms.

I would like to make one more point of some importance. Some members will know that I have prepared two reports in the domain of education. I flagged as important people with learning disabilities, to see what we might be able to do more of in order to help them compete fully in Canadian society. One of the points I made was that the most important contribution of government at the federal level may be to equalize social and economic opportunities for these citizens. In other words, perhaps we could eradicate the poverty we have today. Many of us know that we are talking of more than five million people, over one million of whom are children. There is a correlation between poverty and academic achievement. Perhaps that is the federal government's greatest role.

This is such a common sense motion that we should all stand in this house and give unanimous approval for it to go to committee to be studied and brought back to this House for further debate if necessary. I would end on that request.

**Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be part of the debate this afternoon on the bill put forward by the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre. I know his riding very well because I was born and raised not too far from it.

This government is very well aware of the importance of providing educational opportunities for Canadian students, the young people who will lead this great nation into the 21st century.

But my hon. friend's bill—and I am not wanting to question the intentions of the bill—has ramifications that go far beyond the boundaries of education. Even though we fully recognize that education falls under provincial jurisdiction, this government has done more than any previous federal government to provide educational opportunities for Canadian youth.

In recent years enrolment in our colleges and universities has shown considerable growth during a time when

fiscal realities have put an unprecedented restraint on fiscal resources. We know it is education and training, especially at the post-secondary level, that must provide the advanced skills, knowledge and research to form the infrastructure that will sustain and increase Canada's economic and social development.

Each year the competition in the expanding global economy confirms our need to develop the best possible human resources. Through the prosperities and learning initiative the federal government is providing an opportunity for all Canadians to work together to ensure a prosperous future for themselves and for their children.

This government's support to education has been much more than just moral support. In the 1990-91 fiscal year the government support of the post-secondary education was over \$7.5 billion and is still continuing to increase.

I say to my hon. friend that 75 per cent of this support was provided through arrangements that authorized federal contributions of cash and tax points to the provinces and territories. To be specific, under the post-secondary education component of these arrangements the federal government's contribution totalled over \$5.5 billion. That is not all. Besides the support I have just mentioned, the federal government provides other forms of support to post-secondary education. In the 1990-91 fiscal year we channelled \$1.9 billion into areas such as university research, student assistance, federal schools and official languages.

Besides the support I have outlined for post-secondary education, the federal government also provides income tax benefits for students, their families, educational institutes and those who contribute financially to the support of education. Students and in some cases their families are assisted through provisions for an education tax credit. This is currently \$60 per month, but the 1992 budget indicated that it would be increased by one-third to \$80 a month.

Likewise tuition fees for post-secondary education are tax deductible and the first \$500 scholarship or bursary income is tax exempt. As well, families are helped to provide for costs of post-secondary education through special tax treatment for registered education savings plans.