

Oral Questions

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, federal government transfer payments to the provinces are growing at one of the fastest rates of any element of federal government spending. The increase in the next five years over the last five years is going to be \$25 billion. It will increase from \$65 billion to \$90 billion over the next five years. That is a very, very substantial increase and will provide the provinces with a good deal of funding in order to assist them in their responsibility for financing post-secondary education.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT WITHDRAW BILL C-96

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice Dickson obviously disagrees with the Government, as do all those who appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Will the minister meet the wishes of everyone involved and will he withdraw Bill C-96 and undertake real consultations with the provinces about the financing of universities and post-secondary education in general?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have discussed this matter with provincial government representatives on, I think, four separate occasions. I can understand the position the provinces might take. However, they also understand very clearly that we have a very, very serious financial problem. We are not backing away from it, we are dealing with it in a broad way. This is one element of the over-all program to get the debt under control so we can have lower interest rates, create more jobs, and have a healthier economy. That is the policy of this Government and we are going to hold to it.

* * *

NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

SALT II—CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Is the Government of Canada prepared to cancel Cruise missile testing in Canada if the U.S. violates SALT II by deploying the air-launched Cruise on B-52s later this year?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned, as I indicated in the House the other day, about the implications of President Reagan's most recent statement. Insofar as the scrapping of two Poseidon submarines is concerned, that is a very helpful development. He has indicated that unless there is some response by the Soviet Union to indicate they are finally prepared to begin to respect SALT II, then it may no longer be possible for the U.S. to respect the limits set out in SALT II. We would hope that the President's statement on May 27 is not the last word on this subject and that we will hear from

both the Soviet Union and the U.S. that they intend to respect the limits under SALT II.

CANADIAN POLICY

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, if Canada continues to develop the air-launched Cruise, regardless of what transpires in the meantime, is it not supporting the Reagan administration's policy that SALT II should not be considered in determining deployments?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that is no, because the ultimate decision on SALT II limits has yet to be taken. If I may just underline, on behalf of those Canadians who are genuinely interested in having the SALT II limits respected, the importance of making the case to both the Americans and the Soviet Union, there is an expectation on the part of Canadians that both of them will respect the treaty. The Americans have, the Soviet Union has not. We should be making the case to the Soviet Union, on questions such as, for example, the way they are encrypting telemetry and on the way they have moved into a second system, that they are in violation of the SALT II limits. If they believe they are not, they should respond to the representations of Canada and other countries and make that evidence clear.

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

EVACUATION OF CANNING, N.S., FOLLOWING CHEMICAL FIRE

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. Can he bring us up to date on the unfortunate and suspicious fire which caused the evacuation of the village of Canning, Nova Scotia, in my riding?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the federal Government is treating the chemical fire in Canning with the utmost urgency. Some six Departments or agencies of the federal Government are involved, including my own Department, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Agriculture Canada, right through to the National Research Council. They are involved in analysing soil, water and food samples, providing decontamination equipment to the province of Nova Scotia, monitoring local fish populations, and generally giving whatever backup we can to the lead Government which, of course, because of jurisdictional considerations, is the Government of Nova Scotia. The situation is totally under control largely because of the co-operation of all concerned, including the Hon. Member who has taken a special interest in this issue.