

May 7/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to introduce today His Excellency the Ambassador to Canada from Tunisia. His Excellency and his wife are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and it's a pleasure for me to introduce them. I think it's a double pleasure because I talked to him about some interesting things that Tunisia does and things that we could trade with them on. They import a lot of grain, and wheat is one of those things, and they export phosphates and those are things that we could probably use in Canada and I know that we do.

They also, Mr. Speaker, have an 8 million population and they have 4 million tourists every year, which I thought was extremely interesting. And I think that it would be on our part a positive gesture if we welcome them in a normal fashion here today, and I want to welcome you to Saskatchewan, sir.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to this Assembly, 14 grade 12 students from the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School in Lebret, Saskatchewan, which is in the Qu'Appelle Valley in my constituency. They are seated directly in front of you in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are attended by Mr. Alan Kakakway, their bus driver. I will be meeting with them at 2:30 for pictures and drinks. And I want the members to welcome these students and I wish them an interesting and educational stay here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding for University of Saskatchewan

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Education. Mr. Speaker, the president of the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. George Ivany, addressed the University of Saskatchewan senate on Friday, a few days ago, and he said that the university is going to have to in all likelihood cut programs because of the underfunding of this government in the budget. The president stated, "I consider nothing to be sacred in this process," referring to the process of budget cutting at the university.

Mr. Speaker, that's bad news for anyone concerned with education in the province. And my question to the Minister of Education is this: how could you allow education funding to deteriorate to this state of affairs such

that your government's underfunding at the university has left people like Dr. Ivany in a position where he had to say that there is nothing which is sacred, nothing that can be protected?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that we have increased the budget at the University of Saskatchewan a substantial amount again this year. The Leader of the Opposition can talk about underfunding for education all that he wants, but we have been increasing our expenditures in that area.

I think that when we consider \$888 million in total that's going to be spent for the current year, that's a pretty substantial amount of money, 20 per cent of our total budget going to education.

We give a very substantial grant to the University of Saskatchewan for their operating grant and also moneys in the enhancement fund, and it's up to the administration of the university to determine how that money's going to be spent.

When we talk about underfunding, I'm sure that there are other areas where there's been a substantial amount of underfunding. I think farmers have probably been underfunded. I think that probably many business people in the business community also would say that there's been underfunding.

But we're doing the best that we can, Mr. Speaker, and whether or not education is deteriorating, I would disagree with the member opposite on that. I think that our educational programs in this province are among the best that you'll find any place in Canada, and in fact in many areas outside of the country.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Minister of Education. And I would remind the minister that when he says the Leader of the Opposition says this, that I'm saying it, but what I'm doing is referring to the statements made by the president of the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Ivany. The headline in the Star-Phoenix says: "Programs to be cut, Ivany warns."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the president in the same story that I referred to says that there's likely to be a shortfall of \$6 million on the projected costs to maintain the university services -- \$6 million shortfall. And as a result Dr. Ivany says, in this newspaper story, the following:

I'm interpreting that budget message (referring to the government's budget message, albeit unstated), is that our university must reduce its array of activities.

Must reduce its array of activities. Mr. Speaker, what do you suggest that the president of the University of Saskatchewan do? Should he increase the professor-student ratios? Should he increase the tuition instead of by 10

per cent to 20 per cent or 40 per cent or higher? What courses or colleges should he eliminate? What precisely do you think Dr. Ivany should do in order to pick up the funding shortfall due to your budget decisions a few weeks ago?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Speaker, it's going to be up to Dr. Ivany and the administration at the university to determine what changes are going to be necessary. I would point out that we have a lot of other things happening in the province which will be facilitating the provision of programs for post-secondary students, and we saw just this past Thursday where we had the official kick-off of the Saskatchewan Communications Network which is going to work with the university and with SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) in providing more programming off-campus.

But I think that there are areas on the university campus where there can be some changes. Dr. Ivany and I discuss these changes from time to time, and I'm sure that they will give every college a very close examination to see in fact where they can come up with more funds during the coming year. But I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the programs at the University of Saskatchewan, that they will be quality programs this coming year in the same way that they have been in the past, in spite of the fact that right now there may be some shortage of funds.

But the government of the province of Saskatchewan has made a very substantial contribution. We're very committed to the University of Saskatchewan, when one considers the new college of agricultural building that is being constructed at the present time and will be completed, I believe, some time later this fall, and the faculty will be starting to move into that early in the next year, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new question to the Minister of Education. Mr. Speaker, I think every one of us in this House understands that these cut-backs to higher learning university education by the government opposite are not only an attack on education and the opportunities of our youth for tomorrow, but it's really an attack on one of the largest economic engines in our economy in Saskatchewan.

Aside from anything else, the University of Saskatchewan is a \$60 million research facility -- a year, \$60 million. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: in the light of these budget cuts which have forced the University of Saskatchewan to set up a committee to look at ways to cut its own activities, to cut back on its own research activities, do you not, sir, see the irreparable harm that you're doing to universities, to Saskatchewan, to education, and to the young students of this province. Do you not see this irreparable harm? And if you do, will you undertake today to ask the Minister of Finance and the Premier to undertake today a review of the budget with respect to university expenditures in order to make the funding level at least come up to the basic minimum requirements of the

president and the university.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Speaker, it might be a good idea for the Leader of the Opposition at some point to take a dictionary and look up the meaning of the word reality. Because reality . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- The reality is in this province, Mr. Speaker, that we are in severe economic times, with the agricultural prices being down, with the price of potash and uranium being down, Mr. Speaker. We never ever hear any suggestions from the other side as to where any additional money could come from.

I think when we consider that the University of Saskatchewan is getting nearly a 4 per cent increase this year, a budget, an operating grant, which amounts to probably some 110 to 115 millions of dollars, when we look at the construction of the new College of Agriculture building, Mr. Speaker, that they were asking for for 25 years, what did that party do when they were in power in the 1970s, when times were good? They did absolutely nothing.

We recognize the fact that the University of Saskatchewan is a very important institution as far as research is concerned. When there is more money available, Mr. Speaker, we will be very happy to provide more money for the University of Saskatchewan plus all the other educational institutions in the province.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Education said that I should look up the dictionary meaning of the word reality. I would recommend that to the Minister of Education because the reality is permanent quotas, cut-backs, young people leaving the province of Saskatchewan, thanks to your budgetary. The reality is, on the other hand, your spending priorities of GigaText and Cargill and salaries for Chuck Childers.

My question, Mr. Speaker, of the minister therefore is, will you look up the dictionary meaning of realities and start to get back to priorities and realities for young people and for education?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Speaker, it's really interesting when we listen to the Leader of the Opposition with his doom and gloom. Let's take a good look at the amount of money that this government has given to the university over the years -- an increase in the budget every year since this party has been in power. I sat on the board of governors, was on the Finance Committee; I know of the substantial amount of money that was going into that university. We never hear them talk about some of the blunders

they had, like Nabu, \$5 or \$7 millions. Why didn't you put that into education? Why didn't you do something back in the 1970s when there was lots of money, supposedly, and you were in power, about building more facilities on that campus?

He talks about quotas today, Mr. Speaker. Part of the reason that we need quotas up there today because there isn't space for the students. They did their own studies. They did their studies back in the 1970s and did absolutely nothing about building more facilities on that campus, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, it seems that you've forgotten your government's record with respect to university spending. I remind you, in 1987 you provided the University of Saskatchewan with a zero per cent increase. In 1988, Mr. Minister, you provided the University of Saskatchewan with only a 1.9 per cent increase in the face of 6 per cent inflation.

Now, Mr. Minister, you are clearly implying in this budget that the University of Saskatchewan must abandon its historic mandate of providing a full range of training to professionals in professional colleges on the campus. And my question to you is this: in light of President Ivany's statement on Friday at the senate meeting that there is a \$6 million shortfall and that colleges like law, even if they were eliminated would not make up for that shortfall, will you give us your commitment here today that you will provide the university with the financial resources to ensure that the elimination or reduction of professional colleges on the campus will not be required and that the quality of education at the university can be returned to what it was in 1982?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Speaker, I'm really surprised with the member's question when he talks about quality of education on the university campus. In my view, Mr. Speaker, quality is determined by the professors, by the instructors that are on that campus. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that we will find top quality instructors and professors on that campus the same as you will any place else.

When you stop and take a look at the increase in the number of students that we have had on that campus since 1982, when you look at the amount of support that this government has given for student loans since 1982, we have done many things, Mr. Speaker, since 1982, that that government failed to do all the time that they were in power when supposedly we had very much better economic times.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, another element in determining quality is ensuring adequate resources on the university campus. And in the College of Arts and Science,

Mr. Minister, there hasn't been the additional funding to hire any new permanent faculty members for the last five years as a result of your government's budget.

Now, Mr. Minister, the university this year at the senate meeting, the senate decided on Friday that quotas on the College of Arts and Science at the U of S would have to be extended indefinitely as a result of the funding shortfall that you have provided. And my question to you is, sir, how can you justify this in light of the fact that you are forcing hundreds of young people by way of these quotas to leave Saskatchewan in search of education elsewhere. You are forcing hundreds of others to return to grade 12, to repeat their grade 12 courses.

Mr. Minister, why don't you instead put the dollars into lifting that quota at the University of Saskatchewan instead of requiring our young people to unnecessarily return to repeat grade 12?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, in the first place, it is not this government that's forcing young people out of the province. Young people are leaving the province in many cases to get jobs in the same way that they did back in the '60s or '70s when other governments were in power.

Mr. Speaker, when you consider the increases that we are making this year as far as funding for regional colleges, we are going to open up access to first and second year university courses for more students in rural areas. There are many students in rural areas, because of the tough farm situation, that cannot go to university in Saskatoon or Regina because of the additional living costs that go along with that. With the increase to regional colleges, they will be able to offer more of these courses and more and more students will have access to them, Mr. Speaker.

We feel that that's very important at this time when the economy is down in rural Saskatchewan. Those people have a right to education in the same way that people in the urban centres do.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I have a final question for you, and it relates to your government's earlier announcement that it would pick up much of the cost of installing a slowpoke nuclear reactor at the University of Saskatchewan campus.

Mr. Minister, in light of the financial constraints that your budget has imposed on the University of Saskatchewan, would you give the Assembly your commitment today that you will abandon the concept of financing a slowpoke nuclear reactor at the university campus and instead put those dollars into badly needed operating funds for the University of Saskatchewan which would allow it to lift quotas at the U of S and which would allow it to ensure that professional colleges will not have to be eliminated on the campus. Will you give us your commitment on that today, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, we finally know why all of the questions have been asked by that particular member. He finally let up to what the real concern is. The whole party over there has absolutely nothing to do with the students; it has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of education in the University of Saskatchewan campus. It's back to the fact that the people on the other side of this House are opposed to uranium development in this province, Mr. Speaker.

They're also opposed to any type of development of the type of research that would go into the nuclear reactors, the type of thing that we're talking about here with the slowpoke. They've already got a slowpoke in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. We've got a few of them over there. But we've also got another one.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- We also have one that is being used by the Saskatchewan Research Council and it has been there by a good number of years and there hasn't been any danger from that, Mr. Speaker. It's just the fact that the people on that side of this House are opposed to any type of uranium development and any type of nuclear energy within this province.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Recommendation on Election of Boards

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, this question has to do with the recommendation which states very clearly that the super-boards from the South are going to be elected and the boards from up North are going to be appointed. People see this as not only condescending but colonial and discriminatory. Can you tell this House whether or not you support this discriminatory position?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, as I've said to the member's colleagues on a couple of occasions, Mr. Speaker, and to others in the province, the various recommendations of the commission on directions in health care are being and should be looked at over some period of time.

But I will say this about the specific recommendation the member raises, and that is that the three regions as visualized by the commission in the northern part of the province, and they're saying they should be appointed, and in the South, in the rural they're visualizing 10 regions and they're saying they should be elected.

I believe it's the case that the northern mayors or a group of northern elected people made that recommendation to them when they were travelling in the North, that they be appointed. Now I don't know if that's the case for sure, but it is my impression.

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question. Of course the minister said something about the mayors. I want to know, Mr. Minister, the next question. A lot of the . . . Dr. Murray himself said that the North is a place that resembles third-world medicine. And your government has also slashed important programs such as the community health workers. Now you're adding insult to injury by endorsing such a recommendation.

Mr. Minister, what is your basis for saying northern people are not competent enough to elect a health care board?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. I did not say . . . I mean when the member in his second question which was prepared along with the first question before he heard the answer to the first question . . . That's what we just heard here.

I did not say . . . I did not say that I endorse the recommendation of appointed boards in the North. I said that recommendation . . . I have the impression and I have been told that that recommendation was made by elected people in the North. I'm not saying whether I agreed with it or didn't agree with it, Mr. Speaker. And the members come to this question and just puts words in my mouth. Mr. Speaker, it's not legitimate.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, another question. Mr. Minister, you choose not to answer the last question, and that's the same type of colonial attitude -- every time a question is raised from the North, you never answer it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, this question to the minister. People are sick and tired of advisory boards that your government never ever listens to, and appointed boards. I would like to know clearly from you, Mr. Minister, whether you yourself support this recommendation.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, the member, as I say . . . as I said in my second answer, the member attributes these recommendations to me. I don't take them, Mr. Speaker. The commission on directions in health care made those recommendations. I believe they made the recommendations based on suggestions by elected councillors and elected boards in the North, people who are elected in the North now. And the position, as I understand it, is what they're suggesting.

What the commission is suggesting is that the boards be appointed by elected people in the North, not as they would be appointed by the Minister of Health with some, what you would call colonial attitude. It's nothing to do with . . . They're not recommending that Saskatchewan Health or the Government of Saskatchewan, whoever that is, is who would appoint the

boards.

For the member to stand in his place and talk to me or to the government about colonial attitude, as it relates to the development in northern Saskatchewan or the administration of anything in northern Saskatchewan, when he is a member, I believe even an employee of that former fiasco called DNS (department of northern Saskatchewan), Mr. Speaker, it's a real joke to hear it.

It is not fair for him to say there's a colonial attitude when the colonial attitude that was raised by that member who's taken his training in Nicaragua, or wherever else he's been.

DMr. Speaker, the facts are, the facts are that the colonial attitude of the DNS under the former administration was far more serious than anything that's recommended by this reasonable commission on health care.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- A final question now, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, will you stand up in the House and tell us straightforward: do you support that recommendation or not? Quit blaming the people who are elected in northern Saskatchewan. You are elected in this legislature to make decisions. What is your decision, and what is your own opinion in relation to this particular recommendation?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, the recommendations for those three boards, if they in fact come about, if the regional system even comes about, and if the regional system comes about in the North, the recommendations that are put forward by the commission will be treated in for those three northern regions, as they will be treated for the southern regions. And that is, we'll hear what the people in the North have to say about it. We will.

And, Mr. Speaker, I make no apology, I make no apology for not going from one page of the commission report to another page of the report, and giving my impressions of what should happen at this stage. I make no apologies for that, Mr. Speaker. There will be implementation of many of the recommendations but those will not be done in isolation by the government, nor should they, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Use of Polls

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. Mr. Minister, two weeks ago your colleague, the Minister of Economic Diversification and Trade, told the House that when you were next here that you would be more than happy to explain why it was that the Crown investments corporation spent \$42,000 of taxpayers' dollars to do a

post-budget telephone poll in the summer of '87. Now that being the case, I know that you're only too delighted to stand up today to explain that expenditure.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, relative to the specific item the honourable member raises, I can't provide any particular details over and above what would be self-evident, Mr. Speaker. But I can say that from time to time -- whether it be the Crown sector or government -- political parties, governments, officials do use tools such as polling to help in delivering the public to help guide in our decision making, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the minister. And I would agree with him that it's certainly important for governments to understand what it is that the public wants, as it is for political parties to understand the political implications of political undertakings. And if the minister is saying that this particular poll is in the interest of the public as opposed to the interest of the PC party of Saskatchewan, then I know that he will waste no time in tabling the details of this particular poll with the Legislative Assembly.

So my question is, Mr. Minister: when will you table the details of this poll and all the documents related thereto in this Assembly, given the fact that the Saskatchewan taxpayers have shelled out \$42,000 for this poll, not the PC party of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, information contained in polls, as has been the practice for many administrations, at least to my knowledge, isn't something that has been tabled in the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly from time to time I think it's fair to say that players involved in the process -- certainly I can speak from my time in Education where joint efforts were under way with trustees, administrators, the teachers, where that data was shared because it was mutual interest to us all. But certainly past practice hasn't been, I don't think, to table them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 22 -- An Act to establish the Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Communications Network Corporation Act. The

proposed new legislation is the province's most recent initiative to maintain Saskatchewan's reputation as a world leader in both education and telecommunications technology.

SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) will be the most advanced educational informational network in Canada. Its technology will include satellite-to-cable transmission, fibre optics, and microwave technology. This combination of technologies will extend SCN's reach into rural and northern areas of the province which currently cannot fully benefit from educational and informational programming. The end result will be that the educational opportunities currently enjoyed by urban residents will soon be available in a wide variety of locales in the province.

SCN will deliver programming over two interrelated networks: a public information network which will provide a range of educational and informational programming over existing cable television systems. This system will provide a range of quality alternative programming directed to the needs of Saskatchewan residents.

A narrowcast network which will use electronically equipped class-rooms for the delivery of high school, university, and technical institute programming as well as offer specialized programming from a variety of organizations wishing to offer training, upgrading, or education programming.

The SCN network will provide a very important resource that will facilitate the upgrading of the skills and training of Saskatchewan residents in all walks of life.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, SCN's activities will serve to stimulate Saskatchewan's film and video industry. As SCN begins to commission programming materials targeted for Saskatchewan needs, local producers will have an opportunity to learn new skills and to market their expertise both nationally and internationally.

The SCN Corporation will provide the basis for Saskatchewan to become world leaders in distance education. To ensure the continuity of this effort in place in distance learning for Saskatchewan, the SCN Act will provide the corporation with the ability to collect the distance education development fee from current cable television subscribers. Should the corporation opt to implement this fee, revenues will go directly to the corporation, allowing it to build upon its educational services for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, SCN will begin the process of equalizing the availability of educational and cultural programming to our residents in the rural and remote areas of the province. It will stimulate and showcase the products of our provincial high-tech industries and it will provide, above all, new opportunities for local production industries.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to establish The Saskatchewan Communications Network.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Trew: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Bill is nothing if it's not an example of how the government has made what should have been a non-partisan Bill partisan. It made what should have been non-partisan partisan. The Bill was first introduced last year and then it was dropped by this very same government, and I can only conclude in some jest that the reason it never got through last year was we didn't sit long enough. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we sat all through the summer till the very last days of August. And yet now we see the same Bill coming before us again.

And what has happened since then to make this SCN Bill partisan -- because I think that's very important that we understand some of the things that the Conservative government has done since then -- SCN has operated, according to its annual report, by an order in council since January 8, 1989. In other words, cabinet set it up; it didn't come before the Legislative Assembly as it should have. Cabinet set it up and it has been up and running for some 16 months, one day shy of 16 months. But I don't think very many people will call me a liar for one day over 16 months.

Sixteen months operated by order in council, cabinet control totally, and it is only now that the opposition gets a chance to see what SCN is about, the details of the Bill. The board, according to the Bill, is allowed to have up to 11 people. Again we have a concern in that these 11 board members are all appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; in other words, they're all named by the cabinet.

There is potential for SCN to do distance education and we welcome that potential; we think that it has some exciting potential, but it also has some not-so-exciting potential, particularly in the hands of the government opposite. Because we see the potential for this to be a propaganda arm, if you like, of the government.

And what has happened with the board, we see in the annual report that they have named five board members, again appointed by order in council. The people of Saskatchewan, I think, would expect this board to be somewhat non-partisan and representative, but what do we have? We have in the annual report these five members, consisting of one . . . Mr. Speaker, I'm asking you for a ruling. Can I name the names from this annual report? Can I read the names?

An Hon. Member: -- Go ahead.

Mr. Trew: -- I will do so. The founding board is, first of all, one J. Gary Lane, as chairman; one Eric Berntson, the member for Souris-Cannington; Ray Meiklejohn, the member for Saskatoon Mayfair -- that's three MLAs, all Tory; fourth is one Lorne Hepworth, MLA for Weyburn; fifth, the fifth appointed board member is one Neal Hardy, the member for Hudson Bay.

Now here we are, the people of Saskatchewan hoping for a non-partisan representative board, and what do we get? Five . . .

An Hon. Member: -- No politics.

Mr. Trew: -- No politics there, as my colleagues say.

And why I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, is why . . . I have a question. Why is it that we would have these five cabinet members appointed to the board? Is it perhaps that . . . oh, so the selection of sites for the SCN distance education sites can be made in a totally political manner? Could that be the motivation, Mr. Speaker? Could it be so that the sites would be specific where it might be best for these five board members in their re-election bids and in their narrow partisan views? I think it just might be.

And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I've had a representation from a town that should have been considered and they never got half-way to first base. Why did they not get half-way to first base? They didn't know who the members of the board were. And I want to report to you, sir, that one of the members of the board that I named happens to be the MLA for that constituency.

And those people are some upset because they tried repeatedly to get an appointment with their MLA to find out who they should talk to to find out what is the process, what are the hoops that the government opposite wanted them to go through. They made a very good presentation.

I listened to it, as did one of my colleagues and a researcher from the New Democratic Party side. I can tell you, sir, it was a very well prepared, well documented application, if you like, for that town, rather, to become a site for an SCN operation.

But I can also tell you that they did not get their MLA to even talk to them. And I think that's a discredit to the government; it's a discredit to the board. The minister responsible for this SCN may say that well, you know, it's up to the board, that these people were trying to get to one of the five members of the board who also happens to be their MLA. None. But not political, as my colleague, the member for Elphinstone, says.

And wonder why we say that the government has taken what should have been a non-partisan distance education proposal and made it very, very partisan. I wonder if the reason that there are five cabinet ministers as the board members for SCN might have something to do with one of the sections of this Bill 22 that says that the hiring of staff for SCN does not have to go through any, well, it's order in council.

In other words, the cabinet appoints it. There's no hiring process. I cannot, at this stage of the debate, get specific to certain sections of the Bill so I cannot read it but I can tell you, sir, it is there. I have perused this Bill 22 and I really have to wonder if this isn't just an opportunity for the government members opposite to be true to their track record and fill SCN full of nothing but their political hacks. I wonder if that's what the motivation is.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Trew: -- Or, Mr. Speaker, is the reason for this political board . . . I'm going to start referring to the five cabinet ministers who make up the board as political -- the group of five. Is this group of five set up to make it easy to set the fees charged to every cable TV subscriber in the province? It's mandatory; they simply have to pay it. The fee, as I understand it according to today's paper, is suggested to be a dollar a month or \$12 a year. It's mandatory; these subscribers, these TV subscribers have no choice. They simply have to take that; they have to pay that \$12 a year. Whether they use this SCN network or not, they have to pay.

And is this political group of five set up so they can set that rate and then increase it whenever they want? Because that too is in this Bill, very clearly set, OC, order in council -- total power by the five who take their proposals to cabinet. But these five are all cabinet ministers.

So we wonder why it is that cable TV subscribers should get real excited and enthusiastic about paying an additional \$12 a year for a service that many of them do not want, and can't get.

Some of them will want it; I have no dispute of that. The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is, it is absolutely mandatory. Every cable TV subscriber will pay this dollar a month, and that dollar a month is only the starting fee. It is much like the 7 per cent rate for the goods and services tax, or the grab and steal tax. That's just the jumping-off point. Next year it can be increased and the year after that it can be increased ad nauseam.

(1445)

So we have a number of concerns. We're wondering, Mr. Speaker, what is the cost per student of this SCN operation. How much is it going to cost per student? And is there an opportunity for effective feedback, two-way dialogue, between the student and the educator? I understand that in the early going there was not that provision, not even a telephone line where a student, who could view the presentation made by the educator, could call and ask or discuss the presentation. That wasn't there. And as you can appreciate, if you watch a three-quarter hour presentation you're going to have a few questions. And education is always a situation where the educator can be challenged by the students. And I mean challenged in a very honest and open manner, in a learning capacity, so that the students can learn and understand the subject matter much better. And yet that's not there.

We had earlier today some questions about education, university education, Mr. Speaker, and we see cut-backs to university funding. We see university education becoming unreachable by many of the working poor people in this province

_ - unattainable because tuition fees rise higher and higher at record rates to the point where our two universities in Saskatchewan have the highest and second highest tuition fees in all of western Canada. And that's a shame; that's a crime.

So we're wondering what the cost is per student here, and I'm even a bit suspicious, sir, that on some of this you could send out an educator and give them one-to-one tuition and perhaps it might be as cost-effective. It wouldn't cost anything more. Because I hear some grumblings about the SCN network costing many, many millions of dollars. I know of a \$3.3 million OC amount, \$3.375 million to assist in the funding of the technical infrastructure of SCAN (Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network), and that was done in 1989. And I understand the federal government is kicking in money as well, and I believe that the provincial government kicked in an additional amount beyond what I've just read in.

So I'm wondering how many students can potentially use this. How many are using it, and just how cost-effective is it? Is there in some instances a better way of getting a better quality education to these people?

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined some of the concerns of the New Democratic Party with this SCN proposal. I will have some further comments as we look deeper into this Bill. So with that, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure -- Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address a couple of areas of questions to the minister, both having to do with post-secondary education. First of all, Mr. Minister, having to do with changes that have been recently made in the apprenticeship branch of the department. And I am aware, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, that in recent months the apprenticeship branch was disbanded and then there were complaints that were brought to your attention and to the deputy minister's attention from the apprenticeship board, and a large number of trades areas around the province who were concerned about that. And now changes have been made to in effect put it back the way it was, as I understand it.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, in light of your Premier's recently announced commitment to be consulting, doing more listening and more consulting and not acting without the people's approval, Mr. Minister, if you can explain to me and to the Assembly what the rationale was in making the initial decision to take the apprenticeship division, to spread those responsibilities throughout the department. And then after having done that without having had prior consultation with the apprenticeship board, and then getting feedback, restructuring again very similarly to your original structure, Mr. Minister, if you could describe to me just why it was done this way and what your view is as to how this is better for apprenticeship services in Saskatchewan now than before.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the earlier changes that were made back in 1989 -- I'm not just sure of the month -- were internal changes, reorganization with the bureaucracy with the idea to improve client service. There probably was not consultation at that particular time because, as I say, it was an internal organization.

Since that time, of course, and since last October, I know that I had an early meeting with the apprenticeship board, with representatives from it. I know that the deputy minister has had several meetings with the board. And in looking at the overall picture of apprenticeship training in the province, the decision was made, I guess not too long ago, but again, an internal decision in consultation with the board that we would again make some changes. And as you've indicated, it may look somewhat like it was prior to that, but it was an internal decision before.

Mr. Hagel: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'd hoped you'd be a little more complete and forthcoming in your response. Maybe we can just break this down into parts then and ask you individually.

Why was the decision made when restructuring, doing an internal restructure, Mr. Minister, why was the decision made to do that without consulting with the apprenticeship board?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- The situation, as we see it today, would be we feel better, or the department officials feel is better than what we had before, in that we do have more people involved through an apprenticeship council, greater representation. And as you pointed out about consultation, as I've indicated, there have been several meetings since last October, and the new look, if you will, now has the blessing of the apprenticeship board and all of those who are involved with apprenticeship training programs within the province. So even though there has been some change, again it's been basically internal. Now we feel that it is much better than it was before.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, I fully support the concept of consulting with the apprenticeship board, and I'm pleased to recognize that that is happening now.

But, Mr. Minister, when your department was doing the restructuring of the apprenticeship branch without consultation with the apprenticeship board, it was almost bang on, exactly at the same time, Mr. Minister, that your Premier was calling a news conference -- for the first time in the western world that we had a political leader call a news conference to say that now the elected members were going to start listening, we're going to do radically different things like return phone calls and answer letters, and that they were going to start consulting with people and wouldn't act without the approval of the people of Saskatchewan.

Now I would appreciate a frank response, Mr. Minister, given that your Premier was making that announcement to the people of Saskatchewan that this was a new characteristic of your government -- the new look as he referred to it. Will you tell me why that restructuring was done within your department without having had a single consultation with the apprenticeship board?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I would hope that the member opposite doesn't think that there's going to be a consultation any time there's an internal reorganization of administration. That wasn't done when that party was in power; it's not done when any government's in power. I mean you can do reorganization of your administration within a department without the consultation.

The fact of the matter here, Mr. Chairman, is that there wasn't any change as far as client services during that period of time. That was not the intent here at all. The client services had to remain in place, and you can do that with a reorganization within a department, and within a particular branch in this case, without it affecting the client services.

The fact is that today now there is much greater consultation because of the new organization. But at the same time, any changes within the structure of the department, you're not going to be going out and getting consultation. It has nothing to do with policy; it has nothing to do with services. The services were maintained all along from the time that the changes were made by the previous department head.

(1500)

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, you will know better than I that trades and industry were of the view when you did your internal restructuring without having consulted the apprenticeship board. You will know better than I that they had a large number of concerns as to whether services were going to continue to be offered to the same level, whether their access to your department was going to be to the level that it was previously.

And I am pleased to note, and thank you very much, I would add, to those tradespeople and industry people who raised those concerns and brought them to the department's attention, that another restructuring has occurred, internal restructuring has occurred, and that there is improved communication now, and I applaud that. I agree with the conclusion that you bring to me.

But I ask you again, Mr. Minister, because you fail to answer this question for me. When you, when your Premier, at the same time that your Premier is announcing this new era of consultation, you are making internal restructurings of apprenticeship services without even having had a single consultation with the apprenticeship board. What I want to know, Mr. Minister, is why that occurred, and specifically I would like to know that so that I'm in a position, and more importantly that the apprenticeship board is in a position to know whether there will be further possibilities of restructuring without consultation, be that apprenticeship board or others who interface with the Department of Education.

Is it the position of your department, Mr. Minister, that internal reorganizations will be done without consultation with those parties and those interests in Saskatchewan that are affected by them?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the reason that we employ

administrators within departments is to look after the day-to-day affairs of the department. I mean, to talk about the Premier being out making announcements with regard to consultation has nothing to do with what we're talking about. It has nothing to do with the Minister of Education. We are talking about an internal reorganization within a branch of the department, and this goes on all the time within probably every department of government. You do not go out necessarily and consult with groups of people, whether you're going to change this person around or you're going to change something over there. That's an internal reorganization, and that is done on a day-to-day basis.

Now you talk about the fact here that there were concerns by the Provincial Apprenticeship Board. Obviously they felt that there were some problems with the restructuring that was done last year, brought this to my attention, brought it to the attention of the deputy minister. So in consultation with them then we have gone about having a series of meetings in ensuring that we include more people in there, but these are all types of things that are done without the advice of the Premier or without his knowledge of the whole thing that's taking place. Many of these things of course were all done by the deputy minister. It has nothing to do with the consultation that you talk about for an internal reorganization.

So these things are a matter of course, but at the same time there was no service affected as far as the clients were concerned. They were reporting to different people than before. This was a reorganization that was done by the associate deputy minister of the day and changes that were felt to be making the whole thing much more efficient.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, did the reorganization occur within your department without your knowledge?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well I wasn't the minister at that time, Mr. Chairman, so I couldn't say whether the minister was aware of it.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, did the reorganization occur within your department without the knowledge of the minister of the day?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the information that I have, that this was considered to be a minor change within the department. And there is that possibility the minister may not have been aware of the fact that it was taking place. It was a minor change.

Mr. Hagel: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'm surprised by that because it was no minor change from the point of view of trades and industry that are affected by services from the apprenticeship branch, and you will know that as well as I.

Well at any rate, Mr. Minister, I simply conclude this little dissertation by encouraging you and your department to continue to consult; to do what as a matter of fact you say you're going to do. I am pleased that there is an improved communication at the current time between the department and the apprenticeship board, and I would encourage that that continue.

Mr. Minister, I understand that at this point in time, although there had previously been a director of apprenticeship, that there currently is not, and I would ask, Mr. Minister, for you to tell me what the intentions are regarding the position of director of apprenticeship?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the competition, as I understand it, has just closed and this particular position will have a much broader area of responsibility than before. As well as being the director, there will also be a lot of co-ordinating activities going on with the post-secondary branches.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, when will the director position be filled?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, that will depend on the process, as I'm sure the member understands. Interviews will have to be held and then it will be determined by the time of availability for the successful candidate.

Mr. Hagel: -- And the latest date that the director of apprenticeship will be filled with the appointee? What's the latest date that that will occur, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well it's hard to say the latest date. We want to fill it as soon as possible. So as I've indicated, as soon as the interviews have been conducted and a successful candidate has been named, it will depend then how soon that person can be available. But as soon as possible. In the meantime, others are filling in and taking on that responsibility.

Mr. Hagel: -- Would it be a reasonable assumption, Mr. Minister, to assume that it'll be filled by August 1?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Yes, I would say that's reasonable. We would hope to have someone in place by then.

Mr. Hagel: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister, I appreciate that. I would like to ask you what the department anticipates regarding the federal transfer payments for updating and upgrading of apprenticeship, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, negotiations are still going on with regard to Unemployment Insurance Commission funding, but it's anticipated that payments this year will be the same as last.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, does your department consider that to be satisfactory?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- The simple answer would be, Mr. Chairman, we would always like to get more. But in view of the cut-backs that the federal government has been making in many cases, we're probably fortunate if we can get the same amount as last year and not take a cut. So yes, we could always use more but we'll have to be happy, I guess, with what we got last year.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, does your department have any plans to attempt to increase the amount of funding from the federal government to Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- With regard to the federal funds, we will be attempting to get as much as we can through the Unemployment Insurance Commission, but in so far as the other programs that we're going to be providing, we will probably assist in the same way provincially that we have in the past through SIAST. And there were no requests denied at all last year, so I would hope that we can maintain that this year.

Mr. Hagel: -- Just one final question regarding apprenticeship, Mr. Minister. You referred before to new responsibilities related to the director and a reorganization of the reorganization of apprenticeship, Mr. Minister. Would you describe for me how your reorganization of the reorganization is different from the organization that you had before you started the reorganization without consultation, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, some of the changes that have taken place, the curriculum has been now moved into another area, and some of the federal funding, the Canadian Jobs Strategy, for example, is now within another branch as well.

The main changes, as well as taking over the overall administration with regard to the apprenticeship, is going to be expanding into the post-secondary institutions, in particular, I suppose, regional colleges and also SIAST in providing apprenticeship more as viable programs within other post-secondary institutions, namely the regional colleges.

I think that there's probably much more that can be done in the regional colleges, and this person is going to be involved on a much wider basis, I suppose then, than the previous individual was.

Mr. Hagel: -- So with that one position difference then, Mr. Minister, the reorganization of the reorganization will be the same as before you started?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- That's not what I said at all. I said that the new position is going to involve a lot more co-ordination with SIAST and with the regional colleges in looking at apprenticeship training that can be taken, particularly in the regional colleges. This is something that wasn't happening before. So it's going to be a much more expanded role than we had before.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, I'd like to move to a new area and that has to do with the offering of programs through SIAST. Could you please outline, Mr. Minister, the anticipated program offerings which you anticipate changing within the four institutes located in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, in the fall session, Mr. Minister.

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the department is not involved with

the program review of SIAST. This is done internally by the administration. And as I understand it, the review is still going on at this time. I think that they expect to be making some announcements before very long as to any changes that are going to be in place for this fall. But that's being done by the administration.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, do you have someone with you, an official with you today, from SIAST?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- No, we don't, Mr. Chairman. SIAST operates as an independent board in the same way the universities do. We don't include administration from the universities when we're doing our estimates either.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, are you telling me then that there will be some program . . . Let me rephrase this, Mr. Minister. Are you telling me that there will be some changes in divisions currently being offered at any of the four institutes? In other words, are there any divisions in any of those four institutes that, come this fall, will be present in some institutes that are not there now? Or conversely, do any of the four institutes have divisions that will not be there, offering courses within . . . come the fall, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, the review is going on at the present time and we don't know if there are going to be any programs that will be deleted or what changes are going to be taking place. I assume that as soon as the review is completed that we will be informed, and I'm sure at that point all of the information will become public. So you may very well know just as soon as we do.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, what's under review?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, times are changing. I mean we don't . . . This was of course part of the reason why there was a reorganization three years ago, because you had programs that were still in place that had been there when SIAST, or the technical institutes as we knew them, were first formed.

So I mean 20 or 25 years later one can hardly expect that you would still have the same demands that you would need today. And the member will be well aware that when we consider that maybe as many of 50 per cent of the jobs that are going to be in existence 10 or 15 years from now don't exist today. So we have to be always planning to meet the particular need that's going to be out there, and that need is not going to be filled by positions where people were being trained on programs that were set up 20 or 25 years ago.

So what changes are going to be taking place? I assume that SIAST is doing a study as to what the demands are today and meeting with industry so that those particular needs can be met as the time comes.

So there are changes. There will be changes needed every year as the demand for different types of training develop over the years. So what's to be reviewed? I think they have to be reviewed every year.

Mr. Hagel: -- Precisely, Mr. Minister. I don't know what your 25 year gobbledegook is all about; I'm talking three and a half months.

Mr. Minister, in September there will be programs starting at the campuses around Saskatchewan. Are you trying to tell us in this House here today that SIAST is reviewing the location of divisions within the four campuses? And there will be classes that will be starting, there will be registrations that have to be taken now; that process has already been occurring.

There will be instructors, class-rooms, facilities, students walking into class-rooms in September, and you're saying to me that you expect me to believe that somehow these divisions are being reviewed and SIAST has not yet made up its mind as to what it's going to offer where, three and a half months from now? Is that what you're asking me to believe, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well you asked the question about the review and what's happening at SIAST and I indicated to you that, as I understand it, the review is not complete but it will be very, very shortly, at which time they will be making some announcements. So whether that's tomorrow or the first part of next week, I can't tell you. SIAST is an independent body that makes these decisions on their own; we don't make those decisions.

So I would hope certainly, for the reasons that you have pointed out, that these decisions will be made very, very quickly and that the appropriate announcements can be made. Because I think that you'll find, for the most part, that students are looking at this point in time as to what opportunities there are for them this fall. So I would agree with you -- I hope that that decision is made soon and the announcement made very, very soon.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, what programs or divisions are under review at Wascana Campus in Regina?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, that's a question that you would have to ask the administration at SIAST.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, I'm asking you. You're the Minister of Education; you're responsible for the post-secondary education system, and here you appoint the board from SIAST that gets its funding from you. Mr. Minister, at Wascana Campus in Regina what's under review?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, we also give money to the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. And questions with regard to programs that are going to be offered on those two campuses this fall would be directed normally to the administration. I'm suggesting to the member that that is the same thing with regard to SIAST. Those questions should be directed to the administration at SIAST. They look after the programs, not the Department of Education.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, have you ever thought that you might be interested in knowing what is under review at the Wascana Campus in Regina,

and have you directed that question to the board or any proper official within SIAST?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- I'm interested in knowing what's going on in all the campuses, Mr. Chairman, but I cannot tell the member opposite which programs are being reviewed. Maybe they're all being reviewed.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, what programs and divisions are under review at the Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm interested in what's happening on all the campuses: Woodland, Palliser, Kelsey, and Wascana.

The review is going on right across the province, Mr. Chairman, at all four campuses. I cannot give you any specifics as to what changes they're anticipating there. I know that they are looking at efficiencies. I think there were some announcements made today or in the last couple of days on Woodland Campus in Prince Albert with regard to some changes in administration. But I haven't heard to this point what changes there are taking place as far as the programs are concerned. But I expect to have that information very soon and I'm sure you will have it the same time I will.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, let's go through these one at a time. What divisions and programs are under review at Woodland Campus in Prince Albert?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the only change that I'm aware of at Woodland Campus, and that's what I just indicated to the member, and that's a change in administration. There is a change with regard to academic and business divisions. There's been one of the deans has been released or will have an opportunity, as I understand it, to move into another position on staff.

They have also amalgamated the learning support service into student services and they've also reduced that staff.

The dean's position is now gone, and that person will as well have an opportunity to move in on some other position; and the manager of administration position was abolished. But in so far as programs, this is nothing to do with programs. This is administration. I have no indication at this point as to what changes there will be in programs on Woodland's campus.

Mr. Hagel: -- What changes may be considered by way of divisions or programs at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well the same answer would apply, Mr. Chairman. I will probably know at the same time the member opposite knows.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, is there consideration being given to removing the business division from Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well I think, Mr. Chairman, we could save a lot of

time if the member opposite would just take a minute to listen. As I've indicated, these are decisions that are made by the administration of SIAST, not by the Department of Education, and I do not have that information for any of the campuses.

I would hope to have it fairly soon because of the fact that it is now getting on in towards the middle of May. So I do not have any idea what changes are being anticipated in business administration or any other program on Palliser or Woodland or Kelsey or Wascana, but I would hope to have that information fairly soon.

Mr. Hagel: -- So would I, Mr. Minister. I wouldn't mind it right now. Mr. Minister, is there consideration being given to removing the motor vehicle maintenance repair (MVMR) program from the Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I don't have any information that there's going to be any change in that program this year at Palliser Campus.

Mr. Hagel: -- If I understand you correctly, Mr. Minister, what you're telling me is that to the absolute best of your knowledge, as the Minister of Education on May 7, that you are not aware of any consideration given to removing the MVMR (motor vehicle mechanical repair) program from the Palliser Campus. Did I understand that correctly, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I would assume that all programs, as well as motor vehicle repair, are being considered; looking at efficiencies and whether or not this is a program that needs to be offered at every campus. But whether or not there are changes there we'll wait and see when the report comes down from SIAST, but all programs are being reviewed.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister -- and I ask you to listen very carefully to the question and to respond honestly -- then do I now hear you saying that the motor vehicle maintenance and repair program is being considered for removal from the Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw? Is that what you're saying, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I didn't say it was being considered for removal. It may well be. I said that I presumed that it is being reviewed in the same as all other programs are being reviewed. Whether or not there is going to be a change there, I can't tell the member at this point. That's a question that you would have to check with the administration, see what SIAST is doing with it. But they're reviewing it, I'm sure, as they are with every other program.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, I'd asked you to listen, carefully. In the spirit of this new approach of your government with your newer, more, and bigger ears. I asked you, and I express my question again, Mr. Minister, to the best of your knowledge, are you saying that there is no consideration currently being given to removal of the motor vehicle maintenance and repair program from Palliser Campus?

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I have no indication that any program is going to be removed from Palliser Campus, motor vehicle repair or any other. But as soon as I have any information with regard to changes in programs, I'll be happy to share it with the member opposite.

Mr. Hagel: -- So, Mr. Minister, then your official position is that you know nothing?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, as I've indicated on several occasions now, I'm sure that all programs are under review, but whether there's going to be any change in motor vehicle repair, whether that program is going to be moved off Palliser Campus, that's not my decision. I don't know whether it's going to be changed, whether they're going to increase, decrease, or what they're going to be doing. But the review is going on right now, and these questions are ones that the administration are looking at right across the province, and they're going to make those decisions as to what programs will be changed. So I can't give you the information if I don't have it.

Mr. Hagel: -- And let me get this clear as well, Mr. Minister. Then what you're also saying is that you have absolutely no knowledge as to whether consideration is -- and I use the word consideration; I'm not talking about decision yet -- whether consideration is being given to remove the business division from Palliser Campus.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, SIAST has a responsibility as a large organization to review all of its programs and make a determination which ones should be deleted, which ones should be maybe transferred to another campus, which ones should be expanded. That's the type of review that's going on right now, and I would presume that probably consideration is being given to every program. Which ones in the end-analysis will have any changes to them will be determined by the SIAST administration.

And once that determination is made, I would assume that they will be contacting me and letting me know for information purposes only. We have nothing to do with those decisions; that's their decision. They will let us know so that we'll have the information if people are inquiring with us. But other than that, I would assume every program is under consideration. It's being reviewed. Whether there will be any changes in Palliser, I cannot say at this time because I don't know.

Mr. Hagel: -- One final question, then, Mr. Minister. I ask these questions regarding Palliser because there are a large number of people in the city of Moose Jaw, Mr. Minister, who have some very serious concerns about these very two programs, divisions, continuing to be offered at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw.

Let me conclude then, Mr. Minister, by asking you whether -- and I make it very clear that the answer that people in Moose Jaw are looking for, a large of number of people are looking for, the answer that they're looking for is yes.

And I ask you: is there any reason not to believe, Mr. Minister, that come this fall when programs start up at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw, that the school will be any . . . Let me rephrase that; let's not complicate it with a question. Is there any reason that people in Moose Jaw have to believe, Mr. Minister, that come this fall there will be fewer program offerings or fewer divisions or fewer number of student spaces, full-time spaces, at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw? To that question, very clearly a large number of interests in Moose Jaw would like to see a no, assured by you, Mr. Minister. And I ask you: do they have reason to be anxious, or is there a possibility that they may find a down-sized Palliser Campus come September?

And, Mr. Minister, you may also want to add then whether you see a continued . . . If the answer is yes, that there may be down-sized Palliser Campus, whether in your view, Mr. Minister, whether in your view, Moose Jaw can anticipate a shrinking Palliser Campus in the future and the possibility even of it disappearing some day?

Mr. Minister, I ask you to give assurance to the people of Moose Jaw that the campus will not be down-sized, that there will an equivalent number of programs and student seats, and that the future of the campus in the city of Moose Jaw is strong and assured for many years to come. Mr. Minister, will you provide that assurance to the people of Moose Jaw?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't have any problem suggesting to the people of Moose Jaw that Palliser Campus is strong and I'm sure it will be there for many, many years to come. As I've indicated on several occasions, programs are now being reviewed by the SIAST administration. And what I would suggest to the people of Moose Jaw, that if they are interested in finding out what changes in fact are going to take place for this fall, that they contact the principal at Palliser Campus, because we don't determine what programs are going to be changed. So we can't say whether there will be fewer spaces, more spaces, fewer programs, more programs or status quo.

But I think it would be a very simple matter for them to contact the principal at Palliser Campus and find out direct, because that's where the decisions are going to be made.

Mr. Hagel: -- So, Mr. Minister, you're telling me then that if there's a decision to down-size it'll be made at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw. That's where it'll be made. I heard you say that and I appreciate that explanation.

Final question, Mr. Minister, regarding the Palliser Campus. Does your department intend to provide funding for a swimming pool located at, or close to, with access to the Palliser Campus, perhaps in conjunction with the city of Moose Jaw, Mr. Minister. What is the intention of your department in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, no one here is aware of any plans for a swimming pool at the Palliser, or near the Palliser Campus in

Moose Jaw. So certainly there's not going to be any funding here. We haven't had any request for it, and I'm not sure whether there's a pool being built there or what's happening. We haven't heard about it.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I just want to ask you a few questions concerning the SIAST deficit. You'll know that the annual report that they tabled showed that the institute lost \$1.7 million for the year ending June 30, 1989.

I wonder if you might provide the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan with a brief explanation as to the reason for that \$1.7 million deficit? And if you can give us any run-down on which of the divisions of SIAST might have been more responsible for that \$1.7 million deficit than other divisions.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, with regard to the member's question, it was a \$1.9 million deficit for all of SIAST -- I can't tell you what specific that I think you had said for Wascana -- but \$1.9 million. Now I point out that this is due to the accrual accounting method that is used dealing with an anticipated expenditure, and it was anticipated that the collective agreement would have been completed during that year. So this was an expenditure then that showed up in that particular annual report. As you know, the agreement was not completed until the following year. So it's because of the accrual accounting method that's being used.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Minister, the information we have suggests a \$1.7 million deficit and I guess there would have been an approximately \$200,000 deficit from the previous year to arrive at a \$1.9 million figure.

Mr. Minister, I asked you -- I think that what you say with respect to salaries might have been part of the explanation -- but I also wonder if there's been any deficits, that is to say, expenditures above and beyond what might have been anticipated or budgeted within the SIAST, whether there was any extensive overruns in any one division as opposed to another? I wonder if you can tell us that.

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I can indicate to the member it's anticipated that there will be an overrun in a division, but we don't know what that will be of course until the audit has been completed, which will be later this summer I presume. So we're anticipating there will be a deficit in one division, and that's what you've asked.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Can you tell us what division that might be, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well I think, Mr. Chairman, I've indicated that there is one division that it is anticipated that there could be a larger deficit. We would also suggest that there could be others. But I don't think at this point that I could be more specific than that. We know that the audit will not be done until after the end of June, and at that time we should wait and have the official position on it.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Minister, I think you can be more specific than that. You've told me twice now that at least one of the divisions is anticipated to incur a deficit; that's what you have told me twice. And then you say that you can't tell me which division that is. Obviously you have information to suggest that it's going to be one division, that you know what division that is, and that you can tell this House. And I ask you to do that now.

I also ask you to table with the House the documents that you've been referring to that have been passed to you by your officials, to table those documents with the Assembly today.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we're getting into internal financial operations of SIAST and I don't think that it's incumbent upon me to be becoming specific with that sort of internal documentation. And I am not about to table anything, Mr. Chairman, other than I would table any of the other working papers that I am using here. So I mean for the member to ask me to table a particular document, I do not have documents here that I am going to be tabling other than I have tabled the annual report. I've also forwarded information over to members opposite, but this is a working paper the same as all of the other ones are.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you again want to hide behind some screen of . . . Sure you say it's none of your business; it's internal affairs of SIAST and therefore it's not your job to comment on what they may or may not be doing.

Yet on the other hand, you seem to be aware of details in that a particular division will be incurring a deficit. We all know that provincial legislation allows you, or suggests that you had the opportunity to review the finances of SIAST, in so far as deficits are concerned, and gives you the authority to tell SIAST that, yes, they can or cannot incur a deficit. And it seems to me that, unless you're horribly incompetent, that you wouldn't allow them to incur a deficit without first asking some questions such as why is there a deficit, where is the deficit, and what plan you have to get rid of that deficit.

I again want to ask you: can you tell us which division it is, based on the information that you're getting from your officials now, which division it is that's going to be . . . that is to say, which division relative to other divisions is going to be greatly over budget and will be incurring a large deficit this year in SIAST's operations?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm concerned about SIAST as a total entity, but here we are, May 7, the year end isn't until the end of June, at which time an annual report will be developed after the audit has been done. We can certainly discuss information that's provided in the 1988-89 financial or final report of SIAST, but we can't get into any detail in so far as the current year of operation. We look at the total operation of SIAST. That's the information we're provided with.

We do not know at this point whether they're going to have a deficit or a

surplus in any particular division, although it's estimated or suggested that there could be one division -- I've already told you that a couple of times -- but I'm not going to be divulging internal information. If you want to check with SIAST, maybe they'll tell you that. Any more than the same thing would apply with the university campuses. These are independent bodies that are responsible for looking after their own organization and the four campuses.

And so following the year end, when the annual report comes out, then we can take a look at what their overall picture is.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask you to rule on this. We've asked the minister. He's indicated that he's aware that certain divisions of SIAST, or a division of SIAST, is going to be incurring a healthy deficit this year. We want to know some details on this so that we might better be able to pass judgement as to whether or not the estimates for SIAST, as outlined in the blue book, are going to be adequate.

The minister knows which division it is, refuses to give the information. I suggest to you, sir, that it's his job to provide the information if he knows the information, as opposed to saying to members of the Legislative Assembly, you can go elsewhere to get that information. It's his job to give us the information if he has the information. I'm asking you, sir, to tell him to give that information to the House.

Mr. Chairman: -- It's not the responsibility of the Chair to say what the minister can answer or cannot answer or will answer or won't answer. It's up to the minister.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now let me put a straightforward question to the minister. Mr. Minister, can you confirm that Wayne Hanna, the dean of the agricultural division of SIAST, has been . . . his employment was terminated last week, I believe, or the week before, and that this resulted from a 1.3 projected, \$1.3 million projected deficit in the agricultural division of SIAST. Can you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm aware that Mr. Hanna is no longer an employee of SIAST but the reasons for his leaving certainly are between Mr. Hanna and his employer, which is SIAST.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Can the minister confirm that the agricultural division incurred a \$1.3 million deficit during its current year of operations so far?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we're only a little bit more than three-quarters of the way through the current year. And I can't say whether or not there's going to be a \$1.3 million deficit in agriculture or what the final tally will be at the end of June. We're going to have to wait until year end when the audit is done, and then we can see what is actually happening in that particular division.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Has the minister and his officials, have they expressed any concern to officials of SIAST? And I quote from a memorandum

here, Mr. Minister, dated March 29 from the same Mr. Hanna, the dean of the agricultural division to Richard Bonokoski, the principal of the Wascana Campus. And in this memo Mr. Hanna states in part that horticultural programs in the United States are scheduled to begin in early April.

Can the minister confirm -- and I assume that the minister and his officials have privy to this kind of information; our concern because it is your job, notwithstanding what you say about not having any responsibility, but it is your job to be aware of the reasons for deficits at SIAST -- can the minister confirm that you have given instructions to SIAST officials to cease and desist from offering things such as horticultural programs in the United States, so that Saskatchewan taxpayers are not paying for people in Montana or North Dakota to learn how to grow tomatoes? Have you done that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, why would we restrict SIAST from offering programs in the U.S. any more than we would restrict them from offering programs in some 18 or 19 other countries in the world? I mean part of the reason-for-being of SIAST and the reorganization is that they can expand their operations.

And they are providing programming, I believe, in 19 countries around the world. Now this of course generates a fair bit of revenue. I don't know why the member opposite would think that this has to be a cost to the taxpayers of this province. Does he not think that there's the possibility that they would be doing this to provide revenue in the same way that they are providing programs in these other countries around the world?

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly understand why SIAST, the Saskatchewan government, the Canadian government might be involved in countries such as Namibia, the Philippines, Zimbabwe to assist the educational authorities in those countries with programs in those developing countries. But the last I heard, Montana and North Dakota did not qualify as developing countries, and that those countries had their own expertise to be able to develop their own programs.

The fact of the matter is Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars are being expended to provide horticultural programs south of the border, and the minister is aware of this and is trying to justify it. I can't accept that, Mr. Chairman. And it's little wonder that Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan's finances are in such a sorry state when we have a minister who seems to be aware of problems but refuses to familiarize himself with the problems as they exist, and refuses to deal with huge deficits as they're incurred by an organization over which he has some ongoing responsibility.

And again, Mr. Minister, I want to ask you: can you confirm that in fact it's the agricultural division that is in large part responsible for the deficit this year?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, a comment first on the program that the member has raised that's going on south of the border. It's my understanding that this is done on a fee-for-service basis. It's a

cost-recovery program. It's not costing the taxpayers of Saskatchewan any money.

With regard to the second point that he raises with regard to the agricultural division, we look at the overall budget of SIAST. We don't know at this point the significance of any particular division. We have to look at whether or not there's a deficit for the whole operation. He's aware of the fact that if there is to be a deficit, that permission has to be received from the Department of Education, from the minister. And that would be for an overall deficit. It isn't going to be for any particular division.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Chairman, I want to turn my attention now to the University of Regina and the question of capital funding. The minister, and certainly the people of Saskatchewan, will be aware that on April 30, 1986, the provincial government announced with some great fanfare that it would pay half the cost of the proposed \$4.4 million student union centre at the University of Regina. In fact I quote from an article from the Leader-Post at that time which says that, and I quote:

Premier Grant Devine announced a government contribution towards the new centre with much fanfare during a 100-guest reception at the university last April.

The remaining dollar . . . or the remaining contribution for that building was to have been paid for by the students themselves out of a fund set up by the student union over the years. It's my understanding that students would contribute \$10 per year from their student union fees towards a building fund.

(1600)

At that time the provincial government also promised an additional \$400,000 to convert the existing student union building into a day-care facility. On April 9, 1987, the minister of Education at the time, the member from Weyburn, announced that the provincial government's contribution had been put on hold due to severe economic restraints.

Now I don't need to remind anyone that exactly six months prior to that announcement the provincial election occurred and that the announcement of the provincial government commitment made by the Premier with great fanfare was made six months prior to the provincial election in October of 1986. That those series of announcements and the intervening election -- the announcement that yes, there would be money prior to the election; the subsequent announcement by the Minister of Education that the money would not be forthcoming -- has to rank, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, as one of the great betrayals in Saskatchewan history.

A great betrayal because everyone saw your actions for what it was, and that it was a cynical and calculated manipulation of the hopes and dreams of many young people at the University of Regina to further your particular political interest. That is you, at a time that you were touting some partnership for progress program, you said that there would be money to

participate with the university students to build this building prior to the election, and after the election you said the money wasn't there.

I want to ask you at this time, Mr. Minister, as to the details of any discussions you may now be holding with the University of Regina students and the university administration as to any discussions that you may be having on this particular project. Can you advise us, are there discussions with the university as to resuscitating your commitment towards this building project, and if so, what is the status of those discussions?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I have not had a meeting with the students for a little while now, from the University of Regina, but I have had several meetings with them. I've also had several meetings with representatives from the administration and the board of governors from the U of R, but I haven't had any in the last few weeks.

I am certainly aware of the fact that they are very anxious to get their new students' union building, and I would hope that . . . I had hoped that of course we could have moved ahead with that this year. And at the same time they are in . . . I'm sure, as the member opposite knows, they are in need of a new fine arts building that they're working very hard to get off the drawing board. And I certainly support that.

We do find of course, though, that in spite of the fact that these two projects are not going ahead, that for this past year of 1989-90 that some 6.3 millions of dollars have been provided to the U of R for capital projects, and another \$4 million is committed for 1990-91.

But I think at the same we are committed to these projects, but when the economy is a little bit better than it has been. We know that the universities would like more money for operating as well, but we find that at this particular time that it wasn't possible to move ahead with those two projects.

So until our economy gets a little bit better, in spite of the fact the students have done an excellent job of raising funds over there . . . We support those projects, but when it comes down to priorities as to where the money is going to go, whether you're going to provide more money in the form of operating grants or whether you're going to provide it for the construction of student union building, that there's no question as to where the priority lies. So as soon as it's possible to move ahead with those projects, we want to do that, but it certainly was not possible this year.

I would also point out to the member opposite that this government has spent more in the last two years than the NDP administration did in the last five years that they were in power. And the economy was much better at that time. And I don't have any doubt but what building was probably a little bit cheaper at that time. But I think if you take a look back at what was done by the NDP when they were in power, as far as the University of Regina, there was very little construction during those good times in the latter part of the 1970s.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Minister, we don't have an NDP government right now, we have a PC government. The people of Saskatchewan have had a lot to say in the last number of years about which political party forms the government, and you're the government now, Mr. Minister. So you can answer for your particular government and we'll let the people of Saskatchewan judge the NDP government as they seem to have done in some previous elections.

Now let's hear your explanations as to the actions of the PC government. Let's hear your explanation as to how it is that given this great betrayal of young people in the province of Saskatchewan, you can stand here now and say that you have not had specific discussions with the student union on that particular project and on that building.

How is it possible that you can stand in your place in this House and say that you're committed? Well how is it that you can be committed but not have 1 cent? That doesn't show any commitment. I mean those are weasel words, Mr. Minister, weasel words, to say that you're committed to a project but you don't have 1 cent for the project. That's some kind of weasel language that you're developing to say that yes, we're committed for the project; unfortunately, we don't have a cent available.

You're developing a whole new vocabulary or giving whole new meanings to words such as committed, Mr. Minister. You're saying that it's possible that you may move on this project if the economy gets better.

Mr. Minister, all I can hope is that you don't believe that lightning can strike in the same place twice, and that you're going to try it out six months prior to the next provincial election, a commitment and a promise to fund the student union centre. In fact I hope you do because you know what's going to happen? You people will get laughed out of the election campaign if you try and restore that one; if you try and come back to them again to say, forget what we've done in the past, but we're just going to try that again.

Mr. Minister, you talk about priorities, you talk about priorities, that the priorities of your government are such that you can't find the money to honour a commitment that you have made previously; that you can't find the money to move ahead with this project, to cost-share this particular building with the students at the University of Regina. Your priorities are such that you can't find the money. I ask you, Mr. Minister, if you can't find the

money to carry on with this commitment that you made, how is it that you could find \$5.5 million to blow on GigaText? How is that possible, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, how much did the NDP blow on Nabu? That was probably \$7 million. You could have built the whole student union building without the students having to put in much at all. So where were you then?

Let's talk about commitment, Mr. Chairman. This government has spent no less than \$243 million on capital projects on our two campuses since 1982.

Now to me, Mr. Chairman, I think that any of the taxpayers and any of the students at the University of Regina would recognize that as being a pretty substantial commitment to the people of this province -- \$243 million in capital projects.

Maybe it would be a good idea for the member opposite to go over and visit the campus and take a look at some of the construction that has taken place over there during the last eight years, because there has been a substantial amount. These other projects will be up there just as soon as there is money available to do them.

As far as the member to say, well now we're going to be out and promising this six months before the last election, I thought the election was going to be this June. I mean that's what some of them on the other side have been saying. So I haven't heard any promises yet; I haven't made any promises that we're going to be making to the students this year. And I have talked to the students. I'll be talking to them again before very long. But it was not possible to move ahead with those particular projects this year, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Chairman, six months prior to the last election, your government undertook to cost share a building project with the student union at the University of Regina -- six months prior to the last election. Six months after that election, you said you didn't have the money. Now either: (a) you are horribly incompetent; that is to say, you can't see one year ahead of time to know what your finances are going to be, that you can, that you would, your government would make those kind of commitments without seeing down the road as to what your finances are going to be; or (b) you're absolutely dishonest in your dealings with Saskatchewan people, that is in a cynical, calculated way trying to garner electoral support come election time, and then back away from your commitments.

So either: (a) you're horribly incompetent; or (b) you're horribly dishonest. Either option, Mr. Chairman, is not much comfort to the people of Saskatchewan. And I predict that because of your incompetence, because of your dishonesty, your government won't get past the next election.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the member opposite can get up and say all kinds of interesting things, but the fact of the matter is he doesn't know what the economy is going to do this year. He doesn't know what the crops are going to be like; he doesn't know what the price of oil is going to do or potash or anything else. And they were never able to do that.

And certainly we would hope that our economy is going to be much better, Mr. Chairman, and as soon as that is the case we will want to move ahead, not only with the students union building but many other buildings on both campuses, Mr. Chairman, that the NDP failed to take a look at and to do anything about when they were in power back in the '70s.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, you will recall that there was some

information released about some plagiarism that had occurred at the Woodland Campus. At that time you said that you would be implementing a committee that would ensure that there were no longer plagiarism in terms of the Department of Education or SIAST. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, who the members of that committee are and how often has that committee met?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, with regard to the question raised by the member opposite, there was a committee established, as I understand it, within Woodland Campus staff. This is where the incident occurred. But as I understand it, now the policy that has been developed is something that is right across the piece for all SIAST campuses.

What has happened there, Mr. Chairman, is that all of the materials have been reviewed and copyright permission has been sought. They have also instituted a policy to ensure that all course material in the future is going to be reviewed and if copyright is required or permission is required, that this of course will be the case.

So they have developed a policy then which, as I say, is being applied to all of the SIAST campuses. That's the understanding I have.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, you have not told me who is on the committee, and how often has this committee met?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we can request this information. We don't have the names here. These are SIAST employees. These are SIAST employees on Woodlands Campus. We can get that information for you. But it's not a department committee. This is a committee within the staff at Woodlands Campus.

(1615)

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, did you not tell the press that this was going to be a committee that you were going to appoint? And, Mr. Minister, were you not going to ensure that there was no further plagiarism occurring in education in this province?

This is not the first time we've had plagiarism in education under your government. And I want to know: who is on this committee, how often has this committee met, and did you not assure the people of Saskatchewan that this would be a committee responsible to you, Mr. Minister, to ensure that there was no plagiarism occurring in education in this province?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't recall that it was a committee that I was going to set up. It was a committee that was being set up within SIAST. This was being done on the Woodlands Campus. They have now developed a policy, as I've indicated, that is being applied right across all of the campuses within SIAST.

You make mention of other cases of plagiarism, and I mean that can be questioned as well. But in this particular case, whether it was . . . I don't recall saying it was my committee, but the information I had was the committee was going to be set up within SIAST and this was at Woodlands

Campus.

Now if you want a list of the names of the people who were on that committee and how many meetings they've had, we can try and get that for you.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, it was not Merv Houghton that responded to this press article about plagiarism at Woodlands Campus; it was the Minister of Education, yourself, that responded to plagiarism at the Woodland Campus. It was you, Mr. Minister, that said that a committee would be appointed. Now as I understand it, Mr. Minister, it was a committee to be appointed by you. It was a committee that was going to deal with plagiarism in education in this province.

Now I want to know, Mr. Minister, surely you, as Minister of Education, should be concerned about plagiarism in this province, particularly in education. I want to know who is this committee and why aren't they reporting to you, Mr. Minister? And why aren't they developing policies, not just for Woodlands or SIAST in the province of Saskatchewan, but for the Department of Education? Because as you know, there is some core curriculum that's being developed in this province.

What assurances do we have that plagiarism isn't going to occur any longer? Because your record, Mr. Minister, is quite disgraceful. There have been too many examples of plagiarism in education and I want to know why didn't you appoint the committee, Mr. Minister, and why isn't this committee reporting to you?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well let's separate the two issues here, Mr. Chairman, if we're talking about the post-secondary and the SIAST incident or whether we're talking about the K to 12 area in so far as the core curriculum is concerned. Certainly we are all concerned about plagiarism in education, as we should be in every area.

But I pointed out to the member opposite, this was not my committee that was being set up; this was a committee within SIAST. And the committee that was set up at the Woodland Campus, if you want me to get the names of those people I will try to do that and I will also find out how many meetings they had. But as a result of those meetings, they have developed a policy which, as I understand it, SIAST has now accepted and has put into place all across the campuses in the province.

Now with regard to the core curriculum, the officials are very, very conscious of all the new materials that are being utilized and every effort is being made to ensure that permission is sought on any new material that is being used. And we expect that that policy should be adhered to. So when we talk about some examples that you maybe have raised and whether or not they're authentic or not, that's always the question that we have to ask. But we are concerned about plagiarism and we will continue to be.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell me why you responded to the allegation and, I guess, substantiation of plagiarism? Why was it the Minister of Education, yourself, that responded and not SIAST that

responded?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well the plain and simple answer, Mr. Chairman, would be that the media had contacted me and wanted my response. I gave my response and that's what it was, that a committee would be set up -- this was after consultation with SIAST -- that a committee was going to be set up and that was done. And as I say, the results, I think, were pretty valuable, because they are now being implemented across the province.

Ms. Atkinson: -- You see what I find so interesting, Mr. Chairperson, is that my colleagues in this House have been talking about SIAST for the last several days. What I find so interesting is when the minister wants to respond to issues at SIAST, the minister can respond, and he does respond.

The minister created this committee. But when my colleagues ask very specific questions about SIAST and what's happening at SIAST in terms of the economics, the financial picture, management, programs, the minister can't respond. He says go to management.

So the minister seems to be able to pick and choose when he responds to questions raised about SIAST. In this case, the minister could respond to plagiarism, but in other cases, when we want to know about salaries and severance packages and programming and finances, the minister has no knowledge. Well, Mr. Minister, you've got to stop picking and choosing. You are responsible for education in this province, including SIAST, Mr. Minister. And your answer in terms of plagiarism is totally unacceptable.

Now, Mr. Minister, while you're getting the names of this committee, and what we're talking about here, Mr. Chairperson, is a committee, an internal committee that looks at itself. We're not talking about a Department of Education committee that looks at education in the province of Saskatchewan in terms of plagiarism.

But, Mr. Minister, when you're getting this information, I want to know specifically what policies will now be in place to ensure that plagiarism no longer occurs at SIAST or any other department . . . or division of the Department of Education.

What assurances do the public have in this province that we won't continue to have plagiarism when it comes to curriculum? What assurances, Mr. Minister, do we have that core curriculum won't have any evidence of plagiarism down the road? What assurances do we have that curriculum wherever it's being developed, or policy wherever it's being developed, or reports wherever they're being developed, aren't going to some day down the road come back to haunt us in terms of examples of plagiarism?

Now, Mr. Minister, I think that you have not taken your responsibilities in a serious way. There was evidence of plagiarism at the Woodland Campus; you promised to appoint a committee to look into it. The minister can't tell us who these people are; it obviously is an internal committee to SIAST, it's not a committee of the Department of Education. The minister can't tell us what specifically the policies are, and I look forward, Mr. Minister, to getting specifically the names of the people on this committee

as well as the policy initiatives that they've developed for all of the SIAST campuses in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'd appreciate having that by tonight.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we'll get it as soon as we can, but whether it's by tonight or the next time we sit, we'll see about that.

I would point out again, the member gets up and puts on quite a show; this is not my committee. The media had contacted me about a specific incident, and I followed up with SIAST in that particular case because I have concerns about plagiarism. I think anyone who's in education has concerns about education, but at the same time this was a committee that was set up within the Woodland Campus where the incident occurred, and it was set up because the administration and the faculty there, I'm sure, were very concerned about the fact that the incident had been raised and this in fact was going on. So they were very, very anxious, I'm sure, to establish credibility with the public that this in fact was something that they did not condone and that they wanted to get it rectified.

When you talk about K to 12, though, that there are a lot of concerns that we have there whenever you've got a lot of new materials coming in, and there is in fact a policy in place that forbids any type of plagiarism with any of these new materials. So there's a very rigid evaluation that takes place, and we work on this idea of following all copyright regulations. So there have to be constant checks being made but particularly now because we are into the development of a new curriculum.

And we know very well that often times that you don't always reinvent the wheel -- that there is information and ideas that can be used that are put forward by others -- but it's very important, very important that permission is granted from the individuals who have developed it.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, I realize there's some very good information around, but the important thing to do then, is to source it: you indicate the source of the information that you're using. Now, Mr. Minister, I will wait for you to come forward with the names of the people on the committee as well as the policy, and then we'll pursue this matter a little further, either tonight or on Wednesday.

Now, Mr. Minister, I've now had the chance to go through some of the information that you provided me the other day, in terms of percentage increases in provincial funding to school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan. And as a result of going through this information, Mr. Minister, I can tell you that there were a good number of school divisions in this province that did not receive the rate of inflation when it comes to percentage increases to their school grants.

Mr. Minister, as a matter of fact, in rural Saskatchewan, only 17 school divisions -- and we're talking about rural school divisions -- only 17 school divisions out of 72 received a grant increase in excess of 4 per cent. Now, Mr. Minister, as you know, 4.6 per cent is the inflation rate in the province of Saskatchewan, but of these school divisions, only 17 received an increase in excess of 4 per cent.

Mr. Minister, as you will also know, in the province of Saskatchewan out of 101 school boards that we have information on -- we meaning myself -- they've had to increase the average mill rate in excess of 5.17 per cent.

Mr. Minister, I want you to explain to the people of Saskatchewan how it is that a school board that does not receive a percentage increase that at least meets the rate of inflation can continue to provide the kind of quality education that they have historically done so, when your government continues to underfund education and in many, many instances has failed to even meet the inflation rate in the province of Saskatchewan. How can they continue to provide the kinds of programs and the quality of education that they have done so up until now, when your government can't even meet the inflation rate?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, maybe the member opposite could explain why it was that the mill rates increased at a much faster rate back in the 1970s when the NDP were in power. Why was that? I'd be interested in knowing that.

But again in the calculation of the grants, Mr. Chairman, we follow the same policy that was followed by the NDP when they were in power and probably by the Liberals prior to that. It's the same formula that's being used, and that's the idea of trying to maintain a 50-50 split across the province with the property tax versus the provincial grant.

Now the member opposite knows full well that from time to time the enrolments go down, which has a bearing on the grants that they get, and also the fact that assessments change.

Now with the city of Saskatoon we know that the public school system this year, that their assessment this year went up by some 7 millions of dollars. Well wouldn't it stand to reason then that that would have an impact on the operating grant that they would get from the provincial government? So we have to consider those factors.

We also have to consider that the amount of money that school divisions are getting from the provincial government varies across the province from about 31 per cent to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80 per cent, depending on their assessment.

So we have to look at each school division individually, see what amount of money they get. We know that in all cases it doesn't meet the cost of inflation but we have to consider the other factors -- whether enrolment has gone down, whether assessment has gone up, and take into consideration that we are trying to be equal and fair right across the province so that school boards will have an adequate amount of money to operate for the coming year.

So you've got to take all of these into consideration. You can't just isolate and pick out one or two things.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, when a school division has to cut teachers,

can they still maintain the same quality of education as they had the previous year?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well if enrolment goes down, I think it's normal that boards will cut teachers. But I don't know at this point, Mr. Chairman, of many school divisions that have cut teachers. And you have to again look at the total operation. It's not necessarily a fact of the grant going down. What's happening to enrolment? I've been in school divisions where there've been cut-backs in teachers because enrolments have dropped off and there's been more consolidation, some smaller schools closed. So let's take all of those things into consideration as well.

So whether or not there are teachers being cut or whether we've got programs that are being cut, that's hard to say at this point.

I think if you look . . . it's an interesting fact to note, Mr. Chairman, that this past year the number of students in the province declined by some 2,260 students but the number of teachers went up by 79. So there may be an increase in teachers this year. Who knows?

(1630)

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Chairman, all of these students that have left Saskatchewan didn't all move out of one jurisdiction. They have left a variety of locations in the province of Saskatchewan and those school divisions still have to provide a quality of education. Now, Mr. Minister, if you have a school decrease, population decrease of 59 students but they're scattered from around the school division, you still have to provide a band program perhaps, French immersion, a phys. ed. program, social studies, core subjects, Mr. Minister.

Now you didn't answer my question. If a school division has to cut teachers, if they have to cut a band teacher or a phys. ed. teacher or maybe a French immersion teacher -- some of the so-called frills, Mr. Minister -- do those students still have the same quality of education as they had the year before?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well I think, Mr. Chairman, if you check back on the record, most of the band programs in this province disappeared when the NDP were in power so maybe that was because of underfunding.

The fact is that we still have the third lowest pupil-teacher ratio in this country, when you look at some 16.2 is the average across this province; and that's third lowest in Canada. So I don't think we've done all that badly.

But as far as the quality of education, I would suggest to the member opposite, she can go out into rural Saskatchewan and find that the quality of education is just as high or higher today than it's ever been. And the fact is that we do have children moving out of some of our schools and it does affect, in some cases, the number of students that are in class-rooms. We, in some cases, see that there are multi-graded class-rooms.

But at the same time I don't think that the education of those children, for the most part, is suffering. We would hope that the movement of children out of some of our rural areas will not continue. We would hope that this year we'll have good crops, that more farmers will be staying on the land, and more of our young people will be staying within the rural area.

So with regard to some of those changes, it can create some difficulties, but in most cases you would find that the enrolment maybe has gone down somewhat, but in most cases I would think you'd find that the number of teachers is going to remain the same.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, if school divisions are put in a position where they have to increase the number of students in a class-room or have to implement multi-graded class-rooms, do those students still have the same quality of education as they may have had the year before?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- I would suggest that the quality of education that those children are going to get, whether it's in a multi-graded class-room or it's in a single-graded class-room, is for the most part going to depend on the teacher that they have in the front of the class-room.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, if school boards have to consolidate schools because of your government's underfunding and children have to travel more kilometres, Mr. Minister, are those children getting the same kind of quality of education that they would have gotten had your government not underfunded education and had that school in a particular community remained open and they had smaller student-teacher ratios, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I think that we have to keep in mind, again, that we do aim for equity and fairness across the province when we look at school grants. And I don't know whether the member opposite is suggesting that we shouldn't be doing that or not. We know that we have to take a look at new ways of funding education and we're going to be doing that.

I would suggest that the formula that's been used and the funding that has been provided to school systems right across the province has not varied to any great extent in the last, probably the last 25 or 30 years. And I would be very happy to table this document if you want to take a look at it and just make comparisons as to what was happening, what portion of the operating grants to school boards was being provided by the provincial government

and what portion was being provided by the local tax base. Whether it was in the '60s or the '70s when you were in power or in the 1980s, if you really care to look at it, it's all in here; I'd be happy to table that.

But at the same time, I do have a concern about young children that are required to spend a lot of time on buses travelling great distance. I know I can go back into the 1970s when the NDP were in power and I can tell you that there were young children at that time in kindergarten that were probably getting on the bus at 7:30 or quarter to 8 in the morning and they weren't getting off until 5 o'clock at night. Now I could question the

member opposite as to whether those children were getting quality education at that time or how much of an impact it was having on them. So this isn't a new phenomenon that's occurring in the 1990s.

Ms. Atkinson: -- You know, Mr. Minister, all I can say to you is that surely in 20 years we can make some progress whether it's an NDP government, a Liberal government, or a Tory government. Surely we should be able to make some educational progress in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now I continue to hear this Minister of Education talk about the NDP government 20 years ago. We are now in 1990. We are now on our way into the 21st century, Mr. Minister. Parents have expectations. They would like to see their children in rural Saskatchewan have access to a band program, have access to core French, have access to physical education.

What I'm trying to get at, Mr. Minister, is this. When your government decides to underfund education -- they seem to have money for the Cargill Grains of the world and their business friends, but when they decide to underfund education, that has a direct impact on the community, and school boards have to make decisions. Do we increase mill rates, is one of the decisions. Do we increase mill rates, dip into our reserves or cut back on services?

Now, Mr. Minister, what I want to know is if a school division has to make a decision to cut a phys. ed. teacher at a school, does that have an impact on the quality of education? If a school division makes a decision that, gee we really can't have a certified French teacher teaching French, we'll get someone else to teach French, is that good quality of education, Mr. Minister?

I'm trying to get at what you really believe is quality of education in the province of Saskatchewan come the 1990s. Our high student-teacher ratios, is that good education? Multilevel class-rooms, is that good education? No phys. ed. teacher, no core French teacher. What is good education in the 1990s, Mr. Minister, and where does your commitment in terms of funding fit into that?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- I don't have any question about the quality of education that we have in this province today, nor do I have any question about the commitment that this government has had. When you consider the amount of money that is being expended in K to 12 today, compared to what it was back in 1982, we've gone from some \$310 million up to \$443 million, Mr. Chairman. We have indeed a very strong commitment to education.

When you look at the changes that are being made today with the introduction of the core curriculum, these are very significant changes -- changes that were long overdue, changes that had not been made since back in 1963, I believe, was the last significant change to our curriculums.

When we look at the Educational Development Fund and the additional money that has been put into school divisions over the last eight years -- which are not actually the eight years, the last five years -- there's been a tremendous change and a tremendous improvement in the quality of education,

where children throughout the province, whether they've been in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan, now have access to computer programs that they didn't have before; up-to-date computer labs, Mr. Chairman, which are going to do a lot to prepare our young people for the 21st century.

When you look at the resources that we have in our libraries today that are partly there as a result of the Educational Development Fund, Mr. Chairman, we have made many changes and we are making many changes in our schools. We, I think, find that the quality of education, whether you look at the smaller centres in rural Saskatchewan or whether you look at the larger urban centres in Saskatchewan, quality of education is improving all the time. We've got better prepared teachers, we've got higher qualified teachers, and we've got more equipment, more materials than ever before.

So I feel very strongly that we have done a lot and will continue to do a lot to improve on the quality of education in this province.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, when the inflation rate in this province is running at 4.6 per cent and when your government only decides to increase educational spending on average by 3 per cent, Mr. Minister, that has an impact upon the quality of programs that school divisions in this province can deliver to the young people of Saskatchewan.

Now as I said, Mr. Minister, 17 out of 72 rural school divisions saw an increase in their operating grant in excess of 4 per cent. The remainder, Mr. Minister, did not. Consequently what has happened in the province of Saskatchewan is that out of 101 school boards that I have information on, they have had to increase their mill rate on average, by 5.7 per cent. The highest mill rate increase, Mr. Minister, is at Big Butte, and that amounts to 14.17 per cent. Over 61 per cent of school divisions have had to raise their mill rates by over the 4.6 per cent inflation rate.

At the same time, Mr. Minister, school boards are dipping into reserves. School boards have indicated that they're going to cut back on teachers. They've indicated that they're going to cut back on support services like teacher aides that assist learning disabled and behaviour disordered young people. They've said that they're going to cut back on programs, Mr. Minister, subjects, teachers to teach those subjects, Mr. Minister.

And I'm trying to indicate to you, Mr. Minister, that when school boards have to cut back on personnel like teachers and support services, that has an impact on the quality of education in the province of Saskatchewan because those young people aren't getting the same kind of services as they got the year before, the same kind of expertise as they got the year before.

Now as the Minister of Education, how do you justify that? How can you stand in your place and say the quality of education will be the same in September of 1990 as it was the year before in September of 1989? Because it simply can't be possible, Mr. Minister, when you have to cut teachers, when you have to increase school routes, when you have to close schools, when you have to implement higher student-teacher ratios, when you have to

go to multilevel grades, Mr. Minister, or class-rooms, you cannot have the same quality of education.

As you know, Mr. Minister, about 80 per cent of the money that school boards get goes to salaries, to hire people to deliver programs and services to the young people of Saskatchewan. And when those people are cut back, that has an impact upon the quality of education in the province of Saskatchewan. And I say to you, Mr. Minister, you and your government's spending priorities are having a direct impact upon the young people of this province and the quality of education in this province.

And I want you to indicate how you could stand in your place as the Minister of Education and justify a decrease in the quality of education in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not prepared to buy the arguments that the member opposite's putting forward because they're not backed up by any facts.

And you talk about dipping into reserves and this sort of thing. Well the evidence does not support that at all. If you just want to take a little bit of time -- but you're not one that wants to look at facts -- in 1986 we look at the total surplus that had been built up by school boards in the province was over \$57 million. We find that two years later it was over \$56 million. So, Mr. Chairman, that doesn't point out to me that there's any substantial dipping into the reserve funds.

Now I would ask the member opposite, Mr. Chairman, if she in fact is questioning the equalization formula that has been used in this province for many, many years and well accepted by school boards. So is she questioning that equalization formula, Mr. Chairman? I would suggest that she is.

And again we find her getting into her scare tactics, and she's pretty good at that as well, when she starts talking about the fact that young children with special needs are going to be going in some cases without teacher aides and additional support staff. That is not true, Mr. Chairman.

Let me point out for this year that the amount of money that's going into the special needs funding is being increased by nearly \$3 million, and that's money that's going to special needs children to help out with support staff, whether it's teacher aides or whatever the case might be. So for her to stand in her place and suggest that some of these young children are going to be going without support staff, there's no basis for that kind of an argument at all. The money is going to be going out to these school boards. They should be utilizing that money as it's intended, and that's to provide the support for children that have special needs.

So I'm not prepared for one minute to buy the arguments or some of the figures that she's putting out here today, because we have no indication at this point as to whether or not there are going to be cut-backs as far as staff are concerned in the province, or whether in fact there are going to be any cut-backs in this province as a result of the grant that the school

boards are getting from the provincial government.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, when you cut teachers and support services it impacts upon students, Mr. Minister. They do not have the same quality of education as they would have had, had they not had those teacher cuts or those support services cut. Now any minister of Education should be able to understand that, Mr. Minister. Any minister of Education should be able to understand that, particularly yourself, particularly you, because you have been in education.

And you know full well, Mr. Minister, that if you have a young person that requires a teacher aide because they have some learning difficulties, Mr. Minister, that that teacher aide assists that young person in making progress and that adds to that young person's quality of education. If, because of budget constraints, that teacher aide is no longer available to that young person, that young person's quality of education has been decreased, it's been changed, Mr. Minister.

When you have a class-room of 20 grade 5 students and because of underfunding . . . and those 20 grade 5 students have their own teacher, but because of underfunding you put 10 grade 5 students and 15 grade 6 students into a class-room, and some of those other grade 5 students into a class-room with grade 4, you do not have the same quality of education, Mr. Minister. In my view you do not have the same quality of education. And that is what's beginning to happen in this province because of your government's consistent underfunding of education.

Now I also happen to hear the Minister of Education for the Nova Scotia government on CBC radio this morning. And, Mr. Minister, they are undergoing some of the very same pressures in Nova Scotia as they are in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1645)

And that Minister of Education used his funding formula as justification, but he also recognized, Mr. Minister, that it's true there has been rural depopulation in Nova Scotia. And as a result of that, those school boards are being underfunded, and those school boards are having to make decisions in terms of property tax increases and school closures and service cuts.

Now what that Minister of Education did was not defend the formula, Mr. Minister, and say, well the formula had been put in place by the previous Liberal government. What that Minister of Education said was that he was going to be going to some of those school divisions and trying to get further, or more money into those school divisions, Mr. Minister.

And I'm wanting to know, given the fact that there are now problems that have come about as a result of the formula because of rural depopulation, are you, Minister, prepared to go to some of these school divisions and say that there will be some enhanced funding for those school divisions in order that teachers don't have to be cut, schools don't have to be closed, teacher-pupil ratios increased, bus routes increased in terms of kilometres? Are you prepared to go to some of these individual school

boards in the province of Saskatchewan to ensure that they have good quality education in those rural communities?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, it's become quite obvious now that the member opposite is challenging the equalization formula that has been in place for some time. And I guess that my question to her would be, has she been in touch with the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association)? Because I'm sure that the SSTA would be horrified to hear the very things that she's saying in here today, because they have supported the equalization formula for many, many years and still do. I know that they want to move to looking at a 60-40, but that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about the very basis for educational funding in this province. And I don't think that she's done any checking as far as what their concerns are at this point in time.

As far as the quality of education, as I pointed out earlier, we do not know at this point whether or not there will be any loss of teachers, any changes in programs. We recognize that the funding of education in this province is a joint effort between the local taxpayers and the provincial government. And the amount of money that's going into education, as into any other program, is dependent on the ability of the taxpayer to pay.

So whether or not they feel that there are other enhancements or other grants that can be going in here, they have their operating grant; they know what it's going to be for the coming year. We know that the educational development is also going to be putting in, I think, around another \$14 million into the coffers of the school boards across the province, and that's money that they're going to be putting to very good use. So we've got some very serious problems when we stop and think of what some of the things that the member is saying this afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Minister, you yourself have said that there are some difficulties with the funding of education in this province. You said this the first day we stood in this House and started talking about Education estimates. You yourself have said that you are going to be reviewing how we fund education, the K to 12 system in the province of Saskatchewan. And when I asked you what are we looking at, you said you wanted to talk to various stakeholders in education. Mr. Minister, even you have said, Minister, that there are some difficulties.

What I'm trying to get at is, given the fact that there has been a tremendous increase in rural depopulation in the province of Saskatchewan, and as a result of that rural depopulation school boards have lost funding based on the formula; given the fact that school boards are having to cut teachers, look at school closures, Mr. Minister, implement multi-graded class-rooms, Mr. Minister, increase student teacher ratios, Mr. Minister; what I'm asking you is, are you going to provide in the interim some measures to assist these school boards so that we don't have to have school closure and we don't have to have teacher lay-offs or teacher cuts or program cuts, Minister.

Don't put any words in my mouth. I'm quite capable of doing that for myself. What I'm trying to get at, Mr. Minister, is what is your position? Are you prepared to go and enhance funding for some of these rural school boards or are you not?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter that we are following an equalization formula and when we have to look at what's happening to . . . when we are looking at assessment and when we are looking at the number of students and what's happening to enrolment, we do have built-in features right now.

And one of those is to do with the small schools factor and the other one is the sparsity factor, where in fact, school boards do get additional money to address some of those problems. So when the member is wondering how we're going to address the problems, we are doing that right now. These types of grant possibilities are there already to address the very problems that she's raising.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, that leads me to my next question. You talk about the small school factor. I want to know why it is that you changed the small school factor this year, particularly as it impacts upon high schools. And there are some school divisions in this province, or some school trustees, I will say to you, that believe that they are being told to consolidate schools because you've changed how you arrive at the small school factor. They believe that the obvious implication of this change is that they are to consolidate schools in the province of Saskatchewan.

So let's talk about the small school factor, Mr. Minister, and tell us why it is that schools are being penalized if they're closer than 17 kilometres or if they're closer than 30 kilometres, but if they're further away than 30 kilometres they get the full incentive.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the change with regard to the small schools factor, in the past it's been weighted more for high schools. But now of course you find that with some of the changes that are taking place, it makes more sense that this money be shifted now more to elementary so that you don't have smaller children travelling great distances to go to school. The dollars are going to be the same, but it's a shift from high schools to the elementary schools, keeping them going.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I understand that you want to put more emphasis on rural elementary schools, and I understand that because we don't want small children having to travel great distances, Mr. Minister. But as a result of this shift in emphasis to elementary schools, what sort of impact is that going to have on small high schools in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well in some cases it is going to mean that the high school sections of some schools will be shut down and the students will be transported to the next centre.

But this is something that has been done in close consultation and is supported by the SSTA. They understand that this is a change that is necessary, but it's more important that we keep those small elementary schools going than it is to support the whole school. And high school students then will be transported, and in most cases not that much farther down the road.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell me what rural school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan were negatively impacted upon in terms of funding as a result of your change to the small school factor?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we can't say what divisions specifically would be affected by this. There may be some adjustment, I suppose, in the final grant at the end of the year.

But I would point out that there's another feature in here too that I didn't mention, and that's distance sensitive where you have some of the students that maybe have to go a great distance, that there will be some change as far as the grant that would go to that particular school board. But that is made at the end of the year on the final grant payment.

The main thing that we have to keep in mind here, that with some of our small high schools -- if you only have, in some cases, 20 or 30 students in grades 10 to 12 -- it in many cases makes little sense to keep that particular high school going, and it would be better to take those dollars and put them into a good K to 9 or a K to 8 system and keep that going for the longer period of time and allow the high school students to go down to the next town, which in most cases in this country or in this province are not all that far away. But if it is a greater distance, then of course there is another factor that kicks in to assist those boards.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you are telling me that you cannot tell me which rural school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan have had money taken away from them because you changed the small school factor. I don't believe that, Mr. Minister. I think you do have that information, and I want you to tell me which school divisions have been impacted upon in terms of money being taken away from those school divisions because of your change in the small school factor formula.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, if the member wants to know the exact number of boards, the officials could get that information. We don't have that here right now because what you'll find that the money is going to be the same; it's just that in some cases the board might get less, but another board may get more. So I mean if you want us to get the list of those divisions, we can take a look at that and have it for you.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, I wouldn't have asked the question if I didn't want the information.

I don't see why we have to go through a teeth-pulling exercise here. If you have the information and I ask for it, then I expect you to give it to me. I expect you to give it to me. So when can you give me this information?

Excuse me, Mr. Chairperson. While the minister is getting the information . . . Mr. Minister, I want to know which school divisions are going to have to close high schools. That's what I want to know.

An Hon. Member: -- Which schools . . .

Ms. Atkinson: -- Which school divisions and which high schools are going to have to be closed because of the change in formula? Because, Mr. Minister, it's my impression that this change that your government has brought about is going to have an impact upon communities.

As you know, communities, as a result of various commissions, are looking at rural consolidation of hospitals, post office closures. The rural communities are seeing services leave those communities. And your policies, Mr. Minister, aren't doing anything to encourage people to move into rural Saskatchewan. What your policies are doing is encouraging school boards to consolidate schools because of your underfunding.

So I want to know: which school divisions have received a decrease in funding as a result of your change, the small school factor? What school divisions are going to have to look at consolidation of high schools in the province of Saskatchewan as a result of your changes?

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, please. It being 5 o'clock, the committee will recess until 7 o'clock tonight.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.