

EVENING SITTING
ADJOURNED DEBATES
SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 38

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code be now read a second time.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before 5 o'clock, Mr. Speaker, I think I spoke about 10 minutes and I'll just give a few highlights of what I said. I'm sure the members would like me just to repeat just a little bit.

I said it wasn't necessary to have Bill 38 brought before this House; it wasn't necessary at all. I wasn't a bit surprised, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill came before the House, of course, because when the NDP (New Democratic Party) won the election in '91 I've been looking for it last session and this session. It's just that I thought maybe it would come in in a little different manner than what it did.

When I closed off, Mr. Speaker, I was just in the middle of a paragraph, so I'll go back and I'll just continue on. I'll start back on that paragraph and repeat that bit so it will flow properly in *Hansard*.

Likewise with employee health insurance benefits for same-sex partners, the government, a court, cannot hold that discrimination is unlawful in this province and also hold that benefits will only be paid to partners of the opposite sex. Denying them those of the same sex, that is discrimination which is unlawful. If discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is unlawful, then one cannot consistently and logically hold that marriage or spousal benefits can only be available to members of the opposite sex. To do so would be blatant and obvious case of discrimination based on sexual orientation and thus unlawful.

And we don't know what sexual orientation means, Mr. Speaker, because they've never said what it means. They've never told us what sexual orientation means. In every Bill I've ever seen in 15 years in this House, there's always the words that are more technical, always explains the meaning of that word. But no, they didn't do it with sexual orientation. So prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation leads directly, if not immediately, by logical reasoning following this discrimination thinking, to provisions for homosexual marriages and same-sex benefits. The famous Mossop case recently ruled on by the Supreme Court, February 25, 1993 — and that's just a couple months ago — and the Haig and Birch case are clear examples of homosexual activists demanding family status and spousal benefits on the basis that to not grant such would be discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

In a third well-publicized Ontario case, Beaulne and Layland, two men were seeking to be married. They argued that they are entitled to equal benefits and equal protection of the marriage law, and to construct marriage as being exclusively heterosexual institution is a denial of equal benefit of the law. Dissenting Madam Justice Suzanne Greer agreed, stating that restricting marriage to opposite sex couples was discrimination against homosexuals.

Pro-homosexual groups argued a family is whatever the participants choose to define as a family, even if there is no habitation, and to deny this is to discriminate against homosexuals. An Ontario human rights tribunal recently read out an opposite sex definition of marital status in the Ontario code because it was discriminatory and ordered the Ontario government to pay full employment benefits to same-sex partners.

Also 79 Ontario laws are being rewritten to be consistent with this decision — changing the definition of spouse and family to include same-sex partners — laws dealing with adoption, division of property, custody, wills, and estates, etc. Amending the Human Rights Code to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation could and will lead very quickly and very simply, if pushed, to homosexual marriages, employment, health benefits for same sex partners. I know, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of the people on the government side don't agree with that, but if they would go to their own lawyers even and get the Bill interpreted, they would know that I am right.

Another quote from the Minister of Justice. Premier T. C. Douglas and Prime Minister John Diefenbaker "were great champions of human rights."

Mr. Speaker, human rights, maybe; homosexual rights, no way. Tommy Douglas would have nothing to do . . . And that's why probably the now Premier . . . the now Premier, the then attorney general in 1970, wouldn't bring in sexual orientation into that Bill because Tommy Douglas was still living and he wouldn't allow it.

. . . human rights legislation must . . . be amended from time to time to meet our changing social values.

That's what the minister says now. Changing social values. Many, the majority of people believe in values that do not change from generation to generation. Principles of family truth, religion, Christianity do not change. Most people believe what was wrong yesterday is wrong today and will be wrong tomorrow.

The Minister of Justice, another quote:

. . . our social values . . . are not frozen and stagnant . . . our understanding broadens and deepens. We become more tolerant.

Mr. Speaker, my comment, changing social values.

And he says again:

This . . . legislation . . . strikes chords of deeply held social beliefs and prejudice.

To oppose special rights for homosexual amendments has nothing whatsoever to do with prejudice. Prejudice is unreasonable, without reason, ugly. To oppose restriction of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, educational programs, affirmative action programs, gag laws, extension of benefits, homosexual marriage is not prejudice but common sense. The people who oppose Bill 38 are not prejudiced bigots which the minister appears to be calling them. If anything the minister should apologize for insulting the large number of fair-minded Saskatchewan people who oppose Bill 38 who are not prejudiced. I don't think it's right, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Justice and two or three more in the front row are calling me a bigot and prejudiced because they're saying that to me. When they say it to all people that believe against this Bill, they're calling us bigots, and I don't appreciate that.

I have . . . The Minister of Justice said it on radio the other day, and he has said it many times. He said the other day that, Mr. Speaker, the day before yesterday, he asked people not to sign the petition. But if they did and they had enough votes, the law says there'd have to be a vote. And it would cost too much money, and we won't honour it anyway. Now who's discriminating on who, Mr. Speaker? That's discrimination of the worst kind. I've never heard of such a thing.

If the people of Saskatchewan spoke in a plebiscite, then the government must listen. And I think they will listen because I think that the back-benchers and the good-thinking people on the other side will see that three or four people that have hoodwinked you on the facts of this Bill . . . I think it will happen.

"The right to equal use of public transit by blacks . . ." — that's the quote from the minister. And I'm saying it has nothing whatsoever to do with homosexual rights, a flawed and inappropriate analogy. General Colin Powell, chairman of the U.S. (United States) Joint Chiefs of Staff and the highest-ranking black man in U.S. military history, does not like the comparison of discrimination against blacks with that of homosexuals. How do you compare blacks and homosexuals together? That's just like comparing whites and homosexuals together. It's terrible. He says that skin colour is a non-behavioural characteristic.

Homosexuality is perhaps the most profound of human characteristics. Comparison of the two is convenient but invalid argument. The minister quotes again:

. . . legislation which is based squarely on our traditions of tolerance, fairness, and understanding to promote recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all the members of the human family."

My comment: to object to Bill 38 is not to be intolerant, unfair, and irrational. All people are born with inherent dignity but not all behaviour is dignified. There is nothing dignified about homosexual behaviour. He states again, "Our starting point is to eliminate wrongful discrimination." I say: does that mean that there is wrongful discrimination and just or reasonable discrimination?

The minister quotes again:

. . . Code provides protection to persons who, because of certain characteristics . . . historical disadvantage, or vulnerability to political or social prejudice."

Response: code protects certain characteristics not behaviours. Prejudice again not the point. The thousands, even hundreds of thousands of Saskatchewan residents who oppose Bill 38 are not prejudiced — quite a patronizing statement. If reasonable people happen to disagree with the minister, they are prejudiced. And I say again that I am very disappointed in the minister's saying that we're prejudiced.

A quote from the minister again, "most people of this province strongly reject discrimination." Discrimination simply means wise choices is my point, separating one from the other and analysing. All law discriminates between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is the basis of all law. This is a foolish statement — law discriminates between murders or robbers and law-abiding citizens.

Most people strongly reject Bill 38, and more would reject if they knew what it will do. Most people in this province reject special rights for homosexuals. Most people in this province reject the homosexual agenda that the NDP has been taken captive by, and the legislation of the agenda of the fringe, special-interest group.

". . . there remains a minority who out of fear or intolerance or simple misunderstanding . . . That's another statement by the minister. My response: to disapprove of homosexual behaviour is not the same as fear and intolerance. This sounds just like Egale's irrational rantings as in their February letter.

Another statement from the minister: the most significant amendment — that's right — has generated some controversy. Sure has. Get the hint? "The protection that is extended is a very limited but a very important protection". My response: the minister is misleading the people of this province, looking at sections 14, 25, and 47, fundamental law implications. This Bill extends much more than what the minister is saying it does.

Hypothetical example: lesbian fired. Pretty extreme example designed to emotionally sway public sympathy.

Point one: that is all we are talking about. "A job and a

home." That's what the minister says. That's all we're talking about — job and a home. Right. And section 14, gag law, section 25, educational programs, section 47, affirmative action programs, same-sex benefits, homosexual marriages, parental choice in who teaches their children, effect on school curriculum.

The minister is misleading the people of this province to think that this Bill is much more moderate and harmless than it is.

The minister states again, point two:

The Bill does not confer rights at all, it merely prohibits wrongful discrimination. To suggest that it creates special rights is to profoundly misunderstand the scope and the function of human rights legislation.

... the right to work free from discrimination is not a special right. To rent an apartment ... The plain fact is that these amendments do not create any special rights at all. They do not create any extraordinary legal status. They seek only to eliminate discrimination.

Again, that last paragraph was the remarks of the minister.

Mr. Speaker, my response. Section 14, right. To silence your opponents is a special right. To force a particular employer to hire you or particular landlord to rent to you, or be charged because of the sexual orientation is a special right. Now that is a special right. To be the only group whose immoral behaviour is protected by law is a special right protected from the natural consequences of an immoral lifestyle. To prohibit parents from objecting to homosexual teachers in their children's classroom is a special right. To classify a teacher's immoral lifestyle as irrelevant. Only sexual orientation is a special right.

The section 25, educational programs, and section 47, affirmative action programs, are special rights. And promotion of the homosexual lifestyle. To eliminate discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation leads to special rights, rights that others in society do not have. Adulterers, homosexuals, to be the only ones protected is a special right, not available to others.

To specifically recognize homosexuals in the code is special rights. Special recognition is the law. In the law, a distinction in the law, is a special right.

Another point from the minister. Point three:

We can't ignore the similar developments in human rights legislation in other provinces ... and at the federal level.

Similar legislation introduced federally. So what? My response. So what if other provinces have amended their codes. Doesn't mean we have to. Public attention, information in these provinces were scarce.

If people would have known what was being passed and its implications and seen the results that we now see, many would not have been amended.

(1915)

The federal government is not going to amend the federal code. You can look at **The Globe** ... see **Globe** article, A44.

Another quote from the minister:

... not to afford the protection of human rights legislation to groups that have been subjected to considerable and blatant discrimination undermines the very integrity of these laws.

My response, quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. To protect immoral behaviour, homosexuality in the code, as compared to morally neutral birth characteristics, undermines the integrity of these laws. The very legitimate protection offered to black people, Chinese people, is diluted because of this amendment. Public support for these important laws crumbles.

Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

Again he quotes:

... this is a fundamental human rights issue.

He's not right. It is a moral issue. It is a freedom issue. It is a "thought police" issue.

Another quote from the minister:

If we do not protect this group, how will we proceed in the future when other groups are singled out for their particular characteristics and are denied full participation in our society? To leave one group beyond the pale sets a very dangerous precedent.

My point is, if you protect homosexuality, how can you consistently deny another group protection for their immoral behaviour? To specifically recognize one group in the code based on the behaviour, especially immoral behaviour, sets a danger precedent. How can the government deny similar protection to other groups in the future — adulterers, foul mouths, liars. Where will this end?

Another point from the minister:

... a recent Ontario court ruling ... the federal government was told it must amend its law to comply with the charter.

My point. The courts are not to dictate to the elected representatives what the laws are to be. They are to apply the laws but not make them. The people ... (inaudible interjection) ... That's correct. They are to apply the laws but not make them. You must listen to the people. The people in democracy through their elected officials make the laws, not the courts. The

courts don't make the laws. And what you're doing here is just a cop-out. They're saying, Mr. Speaker, they're saying what, what? — to me as if they make these laws. I guess they got the power to make them, but they're supposed to make them through the people. But this government has chose to go a different way and not listen to the people. That's why they don't want plebiscites or petitions.

Point four the minister makes: ". . . legislation does not make a value judgement about the homosexual lifestyle"; ". . . does not speak to the question of individual acceptance of homosexual behaviour. It does nothing to promote homosexuality."

The minister is absolutely wrong, and he knows he's wrong, and that's the problem. If the minister would have just have stood in your caucus and explained this whole Bill to them, to all you people, you would agree with me. And if you find out . . . time will find out that everything that I'm saying in here is fact.

Another quote: the government simply does not believe the Bill will contribute to a breakdown of family values or traditional family lifestyle. The acceptance, promotion, condoning of homosexuality goes against the most basic of traditional family values and is very offensive to those who hold these common-sense values.

The minister's remark again:

First, there is nothing in the Bill that changes the traditional definition of who can be considered as married. In plain terms, the legislation does not recognize homosexual marriages.

My response, as explained on page 1, this is simply not true. To outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation stops the government, a court, from holding that marriage is only between a man and a woman. This is discrimination; it's now unlawful. To deny marriage privileges of two people of the same sex and not to two people of the opposite sex is discrimination and is not allowable. It's being proved, is noted page 1, in the most prominent Supreme Court cases today.

You don't have to pay any attention to me, my friends in this Assembly, all you've got to do is just read the court cases in Canada. Don't just sit there looking like you're hearing something for the first time. You all know it, but you don't want to admit it. Just do such, and you'll find out.

Another remark:

I should note an important exception . . . permits discrimination in one circumstance.

My answer: I thought discrimination was unlawful in this province. Another contradiction. If some forms of discrimination are allowed, why not others? Home owner renting one suite to homosexuals, why is discrimination acceptable in this case, but not in others? If discrimination on the basis of . . . is so evil,

why specifically and purposely allow it here? And why allow with one suite and not with two?

I mean I can't understand this, and this is what the minister said from his second-reading speech, Mr. Speaker. He says if it's one person in a home, they don't have to take a homosexual or lesbian person in. But if they've got two or three or more, why does two or three or more make it right? If it's right, then the one person should be forced to do it. It's just not consistent.

Mr. Speaker:

. . . nothing in the Bill that touches on the content of school curricula. The rights of parents as they relate to educational programs in our school system will not be affected by these changes.

This is not true, Mr. Speaker. Letter section (e) stated that lesbianism is an irrelevant personal characteristic, in regards to a teacher in the public school system. Parents have no grounds, now, to object to a lesbian teaching their children . . . must accept, unlawful to discriminate.

Further the Bill opens the door for curriculum like the Toronto Board of Education sexual orientation, lesbianism, homosexuality, and homophobia. To not allow it in the schools, to refuse to teach it, to object to it as a parent will now be discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, which is now unlawful. Some homosexuality-promoting curriculum is the logical and direct extension of section 25, educational programs.

Another comment the minister made:

Legislation alone cannot eliminate prejudice . . . but some moral goals can be expressed in legal terms.

My comment: prejudice has nothing to do with this issue. Reasonable people can have very legitimate objections to the homosexual lifestyle that have nothing whatsoever to do with prejudice. And frankly, you are offending the thousands and thousands of people of this province who object to Bill 38 by calling them prejudiced. Some moral goals, I thought, that were a human rights issue only and not a moral issue.

Then he states, the minister: fear or hatred:

. . . this common thread of fear or hatred lies at the root of discrimination against homosexuals.

My answer: what an insult to the people of this province. You are now calling the vast majority of the people in this province who oppose Bill 38 fearmongers, full of hatred, prejudiced.

Another comment from him, the minister:

This legislation gives voice to society's

rejection of the passive acceptance of prejudice and wrongful discrimination . . . an outright rejection of discrimination in all of its forms.

Society's rejection — Saskatchewan society is rejecting Bill 38. The government has no mandate whatsoever from the people on this issue.

When he's calling people prejudiced, he's calling myself prejudiced and calling me a bigot. He's calling my preacher in my home town of Davidson, he's saying that about him. He's calling all the ministers in this province and their followers, they're calling them bigots and prejudiced. And that's not right, Mr. Speaker. That's not right of the minister to do this.

I've been involved with the person that they call . . . very clearly, they say that Mr. Hassett, head of the coalition of the family, I've had ministers tell me that the man is crazy and there's something wrong with him. By saying that you're saying that to all the fundamentalists in this province and all the followers that back him, who are most of the Catholic people in this province and many others — thousands of good, moral people.

Many of you people are saying this about Mr. Hassett and you shouldn't do it. He put this book out in the '91 election called **The Real Issues**. I went and bought . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, somebody from Bengough-Milestone, the member says, oh yes. Well I'll tell you I attached my name to that book, sent out 5,000 . . . to 5,000 families and put my heading on. But I got here.

People appreciated that book. They're talking about it more and more all the time. But oh, somebody's shaking their head. You go out into Bengough . . . I say, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Bengough-Milestone, you got out and say all the things that he said in that book, that I endorse, and you tell people public in your riding and I guarantee you'll never get back here again.

Another quote: All people are equal. And I say yes, but all behaviour is not equal or positive or desirable.

Another quote he makes:

When popular opinion is based on prejudice, or when it is based on a lack of understanding of the effect of the legislation . . . each one of us is duty-bound to give calm consideration to the proposed law.

My comment: the Government of Saskatchewan is saying popular opinion is based on prejudice and lack of understanding.

Does this government have no respect at all for the common sense of the people of this province? Just how much can the government say against the people. How entirely arrogant they are.

Another comment from the minister " . . . horrible

injustice of wrongful discrimination." Horrible injustice — I say what horrible injustice? Where's the evidence, the documented proof? I'm 62 years old, Mr. Speaker, and I've never heard of anyone in this province yet — there's probably some, but I've never heard of one — that's lost a job because they were a homosexual or a lesbian, or put out of a home. Maybe it's happening but I've never heard of one. I don't think many people have.

This Bill is not for that. It's the cover-up for the big things that they want to do. Another quote he says:

I believe that most citizens of this province will support our approach to this issue, based as it is on values that lie at the very root of our existence.

That's not right, Mr. Speaker. The citizens of this province are opposed to Bill 38. They do not support the government's approach. The "values that lie at the very root of our existence". What about traditional values of right, wrong, family, morality? Another quote from the minister:

Thoughtful men and women, recognizing the lack of any rational basis . . .

Thoughtful men and women. Only those who agree with the government's line are thoughtful and the rest are prejudiced. How arrogant they are.

My last remarks that I'm going to read just at the moment is Premier Douglas, a Baptist preacher, would never have supported homosexual rights. He was a Baptist preacher. I want you to keep thinking that, you people. Think about Tommy Douglas, the one who started your CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) party and was still here when it was called the NDP, and see what he would think that if you were doing such a thing as you are. Baptist people are fundamentalist people, Christian people, and he would not allow it. No such a thing would ever happen if he was here.

But you people have changed. You're not the same group of people that I sat in opposition with from '78 to 1982. The front row, several of them are still there and most of them have all changed and it's not to the good, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn to a pamphlet I have here and it's got in here, at the NDP annual convention, November 6 to 8. I'm just going to read out the one, just the one that's means something to what we're talking to on Bill 38:

Changes to the definition of a spouse, family and married status in all provincial statutes to include same-sex partners.

Now they try to tell us they're bringing a Bill in that they wouldn't think of ever letting . . . the minister said no, we'll never ever allow marriages and that'll never do a thing like that. But if they're going to do what their convention says, Mr. Speaker:

Be it resolved that this annual convention express its grave concern that our government has failed to live up to the promise to establish protection against discrimination because of sexual orientation and has thereby left gay men and lesbians exposed to harassment and just denials of their rights, benefits and opportunities generally available to all.

Be it resolved that this convention urges the NDP government to recommit itself to amending the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code to specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation; and further, to review all provincial statutes with the objective of amending the definition of the term spouse, family and marriage status, wherever they occur to include same-sex partners so as to ensure that lesbian and gay partners enjoy the same benefits as are available to heterosexual partners under pension, disability, sickness and other benefit plans.

This is your own resolution. So don't any of you people go out and talk to the press and to your constituents and say that we, as a party, don't believe in it because it's right there. You do, very, very clearly. And it's sad, Mr. Speaker, very sad, that we have a government that believes in such things.

Mr. Speaker, this government is fooling Saskatchewan people. They've made a good job of it because the minister's come out so quietly and nicely. He's saying it's all we're talking about is jobs and a home for these people. And maybe that's all right but there's better ways of doing it, Mr. Speaker.

(1930)

I say the problem is much bigger. Most of the caucus I don't think believe this but they'll find out if they push their front row hard enough — and when I say the front row I don't mean all 11; I mean about 3 or 4 in the middle there — have misled their back-benchers. Marriages and adoptions, full rights to all rights for same-sex partners, this is what the main part of this Bill means. This is what they're going to have happen.

They know perfectly well that if they just wanted to protect, Mr. Speaker, to protect somebody to have a home, to have a job, there's other ways of bringing it in. They could have done some of what some of the states have done in the United States. Some of the states have just brought in Bills that just covered protection for those kinds of things without touching the Human Rights Code.

MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) who believe this is wrong, on the government side, stand up and be counted. If each and every one of you people would stand up that believe as I do, and I know many of you do — many, many of you do; you have made the statements that you do — and if you'd stand up and be counted, you could stop this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, what do people that call themselves normal . . . normal sex partners, heterosexual people, what do they do to be protected? What are they going to do? Do they have to be a lesbian or a homosexual to hold a job? I want to tell just a short story about what a principal in one of the schools said, in my constituency.

They said what will happen if we have to advertise for a teacher in our school and we get two applications and one is an excellent resume and the other one is not a good résumé. So naturally they hire the person with the good résumé. But the one that's the other person happens to be a gay or a lesbian, and so they get the job, and then you've got the one with the poor résumé and the gay and the lesbian.

Try it and wait. They're sitting there laughing. The Minister of Education is smiling and laughing. I don't see anything here to protect that. I don't see anything in this Bill to protect my rights if I don't want my children or my grandchildren to be taught in school by a lesbian or a homosexual, so they can teach their lifestyles to them. It's happening enough in the schools without them being homosexuals and lesbians, without having them right there. Because if the children have a lesbian or homosexual teacher, they're going to say, what's wrong with it. They're going to say, what's wrong with it.

And they maybe some day will become one and you people will be the victims. Because I got one person sitting there, one member sitting scowling at me, I think she really believes that homosexuals are born that way. Well they're not. Sin makes them that way. When people are born, they're all born equal. Homosexuals . . . If you read your Scriptures and read it very carefully and read the Bible very carefully, you'll find out that no one is born a homosexual or a lesbian. They become that through sin.

And before I'm closing I'll give you all the reference to the Scriptures to tell you such, so you don't have to sit there and smirk at me because you can go home and spend the evening reading it because it is fact. It is God's law. We still call ourselves a Christian nation, don't we, Mr. Speaker? Well then if we don't want to call ourselves a Christian nation, then take it out. Don't have it in our charter that we honour the supremacy of God.

People sit in shock that I'm saying such things. Well I'm in shock of what they believe. If they want to believe it that's fine, but don't scowl at me for believing what I believe. I have my right. I have the same right as . . . Where they come from, some of the seats they're representing here tonight as I know fundamentalists in Saskatoon, the evangelical people, 20,000 there, 12,000 in Regina and 4,000 in Moose Jaw, along with thousands of more people that believe the same as they do. Exactly the same. I know what can happen if you people would stand up and be counted.

I'm just going to go back, Mr. Speaker, and a just a little bit more reading here. Mr. Speaker, the minister,

January 7, 1993, these are some letters from NDP MLAs, and I'm not going to be mentioning names. I'm not going to pick any individuals out because they'll know who I'm talking about. In response to a pastor-parent concern about how this Bill would affect teachers in the public school system and parents' concerns about who teaches their children, that lesbianism is an irrelevant personal characteristic that should not be the cause of dismissal from employment.

This question and your response highlight the sides in this debate — the side most Saskatchewan people are on, the side you are on. You say that this legislation will only affect employment, accommodation, and public services. People are concerned about what else it will affect. This letter is a prime example to just one other area it will affect: the ability of parents to have any say in who teaches their children. I know a great many parents that would have objections, legitimate objections to their children being taught by homosexuals and them not being able to object without being told by your laws that they are discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. Not many people would agree with your statement that lesbianism is an irrelevant personal characteristic in relation teachers in the public school system teaching young, impressionable children. This, Mr. Minister, is a very serious concern.

This Bill will affect parents' objections, choices, as who is allowed to teach their children. This is a reasonable concern. Will you admit that the Bill would force parents in this province to accept lesbian and homosexual teachers? I got a snarl a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister of Education as if I'm wrong. Well if you're going to protect all people on the jobs, then if a lesbian or a homosexual is teaching my children, there's no way to stop it. This Bill affect education in this province. Parents' rights to have a say in who teaches their children — will you stop playing games with such an important issue and be upfront with the people of this province and let them know some of the real implications of this dangerous Bill?

Another member has admitted receiving numerous letters — this is a member, an MLA on the government side, and I'm not going to mention names — numerous letters, phone calls and a few petitions regarding this issue. He says that it is my belief that the act of homosexuality is sinful and contrary to God's law. Go back to your caucus you people and talk to them. You've got lots of them right there that believe the same as I do.

He knows most certainly that this is bad legislation. As a self-confessed Christian, he knows that he cannot in all good conscience vote in favour of this Bill — a Bill that sends a message opposite to everything he must stand for as a Christian. Are you going to suppress those in your caucus to object to this Bill, those who haven't already caved in to your party lines?

Another MLA — I have had hundreds and hundreds of telephone calls. And this is also a government MLA.

I've had hundreds and hundreds of telephone calls and letters about many important issues, but I have not . . . I have had not one from my constituency in support of the proposed amendment to included sexual orientation. Did you hear that? Did you folks hear that? He said not one. If you go out in rural Saskatchewan, you'll find in my constituency I sent out 5,000 letters to ask them to fill in their answers, and I got one out of hundreds that I got back. Does that not tell you anything about what the residents of this province believe? Residents who are smarter than you give them credit for, who object to this Bill for reasons other than, as you say, fear or intolerance or simple misunderstanding.

The member from — and as I said I wouldn't say — goes on to say: I am not in favour of the amendment only because of the signal it sends to the people of the province. Did you hear that again? Your own member, the member from . . . And he is right. He is absolutely right. He says further, I believe homosexuality . . . This is what he says again: I believe homosexuality is a sin and therefore I cannot support it in any way. He cannot support it in any way.

Now listen to this: most people would see this proposed change as our government — he's saying this — most people would see this proposed change as our government agreeing to or condoning homosexuality. And again, I'm saying he is right again. He is right on the mark. That is exactly how people see Bill 38, and they're right.

The member continues: I believe we as a government have to guard against this perception. I think homosexuality is wrong and I believe we as a government should be saying so. So maybe you people over there don't believe what he's saying, but many of you do. And the ones that believe what he's saying, for goodness sakes, stand up and say so.

The member is saying exactly what we have been saying. Your own members. And I got quite a few more here, but I only picked out two or three. The member is saying exactly what we've been saying, exactly what the people of the province are saying — Bill 38 is sending the wrong signal. Bill 38 cannot be supported by anyone with any moral standards in good conscience. The government should be identifying abnormal behaviour as such, and not making special laws to protect it.

The member says: in conclusion, I believe homosexual conduct to be morally wrong and I cannot lend my support to this amendment for the above reasons. This is one of your own speaking.

Mr. Minister . . . to the Minister of Justice, not one of us, that is one of your own MLAs, not one fanatic bigot or . . . and many of your MLAs feel the same way. Do you call them bigots too in your caucus? Is that what you do? Say you're prejudiced, you're bigots and you're stupid like Hasset? Is that what you say? Is that what you say to them? Do you scowl at them like you do at me when I'm speaking? But I see you're very quiet now when I've got . . . reading the letters from

your own members.

The member from — which I said again I wouldn't repeat his seat or whatever — is not alone in his views. His views reflect the majority of Saskatchewan residents. They reflect a good number of those in your caucus. They reflect many opposition MLAs' views. The member — it's again, I'm not going to say . . . There's 1, 2, 3, there's 5, 6, 7, 8 ridings here where there's letters that I have in my hands and I'm not going to single anybody out. So I'm going to jump through these here letters.

Mr. Minister, the questions and the answers contain such outrageous . . . You've sent out questionnaires to your people, you've talked to people, you've done studies. You've done many studies. Mr. Speaker, the government has got a government caucus research.

Let me just say something about this government caucus research. The questions and answers contain such outrageous and unsubstantiated statements that some outside individuals investigated your information a little bit further to find out where the information came from. Now listen very carefully, my friends, and Mr. Speaker. I ask everybody to listen carefully where your information came from. The NDP MLAs say it came from government caucus research. Is that right? That is where it came from.

Well I can prove by the brochures that it isn't true. It's not right. Let's be honest here. Look at this. And I have it here in my desk here but I would have to . . . I can show you afterwards or you can . . . You know yourself; you know I'm right. In fact, this information comes from the office of a buddy of the government's, homosexual active, NDP MP (Member of Parliament) Svend Robinson. Yes, it does. We have copies, and concerned individuals and groups have forwarded copies of this same questions-and-answers document received as early as January '91 and earlier from Mr. Robinson. And we have copies that came from Mr. Robinson's office with his business card, sent by his office.

His information obtained just in the last few months, and you can write or phone Mr. Robinson's office in Ottawa and verify it for yourself — if you can phone them before the government over there phones and directs Mr. Robinson's office to hide their copies and pretend they don't know anything about it, although that could be very hard to do considering Mr. Robinson's boldness about this problem.

It's true. The Government of Saskatchewan has been sending out, with taxpayers' money to their constituents, Svend Robinson's homosexual propaganda and they're not even brave enough or honest enough to reference this source as Mr. Robinson's — just say it comes from government research. And it comes right from Svend Robinson's office. Everything's word for word, but they say it comes from government caucus research. What a scam!

I can't believe it, Mr. Speaker, they'd do such a thing.

You ought to . . . Every one of you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You're saying, oh no, there's no connection at all, but you have to get an acting homosexual to write your material for you. That's a disgrace to the province of Saskatchewan. You're a disgrace to the good, moral, living people out in Saskatchewan to do such a thing. How could you send this biased propaganda to your constituents with your own money, our taxpayers' money?

It is one thing to have such extreme radical views, Mr. Minister, another thing to discriminate them to taxpayers with their own money; another thing to tell people the information comes from government caucus research when it really comes from your activist buddy, Svend Robinson. We would never condone homosexual behaviour. It is our opponents who are dishonest, distributing unsubstantiated propaganda. Come on. You've been caught in the act. You really have. You people have been caught and you might as well admit it. And we're going to get the word out to everybody that can read in this province. You've been caught in the act and you should be ashamed. Questions and answers on human rights by Svend Robinson is what you should be having on your letterhead.

(1945)

Mr. Speaker, this Bill must be stopped. Some other it has to be stopped. I can remember and the older members here, the Deputy Premier would remember, that a Bill did get stopped. In 1980 — I think it was 1980 — there was a private member's Bill came in from a Regina seat by the name of Billy Allen sitting where one of the members are sitting now, and that Bill at that time was a big thing 13 years ago. It was to promote Sunday gambling and Sunday at the race tracks. They were going to have gambling at the races on Sundays.

So on our side, Mr. . . . just to show you what can happen. Just to tell you what can happen if the people that stand up there and be counted. Mr. Billy Allen brought in this private member's Bill and on first reading of the Bill we were outvoted 30-some to 15. We had 17 in our caucus but there was 15 that come in and voted with us. And on the final Bill, we won the Bill by 15 to 14.

It was outvoted because I stood to my feet when I spoke one night and I quoted Scripture in this Assembly and I challenged the then premier Allan Blakeney to come to his seat and stand up for what he's talking about at that time. I challenged him. I quoted Scripture. The *Leader-Post* the next day said, Muirhead quotes Scripture.

And I'm challenging the Premier now, Mr. Speaker, to come to his seat and defend all the things that we're saying and what the people, the good people of Saskatchewan, are saying and what his back-bencher is saying, defend it. And then listen. He must listen. But there's been a change in so many people. That Bill got defeated. It can happen again. I'm calling on all moral government members to stand up against this

sinful, immoral Bill — Bill 38 — stand up and vote against it.

They're saying we have to . . . there's other provinces in Canada . . . Mr. Speaker, the other provinces in Canada have the same Bill. Why, Mr. Speaker, do we have to be like other provinces? Saskatchewan doesn't want to be like the rest of the world. Saskatchewan prairie people have been above average when it comes to morality and if we lose this one, we fall down the same as the rest of them. There's four or five provinces in Canada that have a Bill something like it.

Why don't you contact all the important people? Why doesn't the minister contact . . . if you want to know what people think in Saskatchewan, you could contact some important people.

Contact the Pope. Contact the bishops of Saskatchewan. They've already come out with a letter, some of the bishops, saying they were in favour of the Bill. But contact them and tell them what's really in the Bill, and they'll go along with all the priests in Saskatchewan opposing it. I can't find one priest in my constituency that's in favour of this Bill. They wouldn't even read the letter out that the bishop sent but don't blame the bishops. They were told . . . they were not told the facts.

If you would talk to all these people. The minister talked to 15 ministers the other day here. Listen to these people. It isn't just a few people. And they represent thousands of people. The minister representing the Hillsdale Alliance Church represents several thousand people in this here city of Regina. And the Canadian Bible College over here. And these people are pleading with you to back off.

Mr. Speaker, I'm about to close but before I do I'm going to just give some references in the Bible where people can look to get their answers. If they don't believe in the Bible, well that's their problem and I feel sorry for them, but if they do, if they believe in God's word, you better look in *Hansard* and get these tomorrow.

I'll read two or three out but I'm going to give . . . look at Romans 1 to 18, that's: "For the wrath of God . . ." Corinthians 6 to 9. I'm going to read that one.

Do you not know that . . . (the unrighteous) will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! (neither) Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, (homosexuals) . . . sodomites . . . will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5 to 19. Ephesians 5:5, I'll read that.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Timothy 1, 9 and 10:

. . . the law is not made for a righteous (person)

. . . but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers (for fornicators, for sodomites, sex perverts, homosexuals).

It's made for everybody, but they have to have God's forgiveness if they're going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Timothy 3, 1 to 3, Jude 7:8, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 22:15. In the Old Testament you can look in Genesis. Pretty near the whole chapter of Genesis, 13, well not really. Genesis 13:12, chapter 13 verses 12 and 13, Genesis 18 to 20, Genesis 19, Luke 17 to 28. Leviticus 18 to 22:

You shall not lie with the male as with a woman. It is an (I can't see my own writing there but) abomination.

Homosexuality is absolutely forbidden for its enormous sin. No place. Some of the . . . one of members here said that some people just pick out a few verses of the Bible and you think you got . . . think we're right. Find me any place . . . I challenge anyone in this room, anybody in the province of Saskatchewan, that can find me any place in the Bible where they'll endorse homosexuality as being the right and proper thing, where it's not a sin.

And I want to make it very clear that I love all my fellow man, including homosexuals, lesbians, gay people, perverts, I love them all. But I do not love their sin. I've had homosexual people in my home but they never bothered me. I wouldn't know they were if I hadn't been told.

It's the same thing here. The homosexuals and lesbians want protection. They don't need protection. Just keep what they do in the bedroom to themselves. Nobody has to know what you people do in the bedroom or what I do in the bedroom. God gives us that right. So the homosexuals and lesbians do not need any more protection than keep their mouth shut and don't tell anybody what they are, and who they are, and they can have a job and have a place to sleep, and nobody would bother them.

But once they start — and you people are going to be responsible — it's the same as what's happening in the United States, as soon as they start talking about more rights for homosexuals, it just stirs it up and makes it worse. You're going to stir this thing up so bad that everybody is going to know who everybody is in this province.

I don't want to know who my friends are that are homosexuals or gays or whatever. I don't want to know. If they don't bother me, I won't bother them, and that's the way it should be. But you people are going to make it public. What you're going to do, you're going to have . . . what's going to happen, you're going to have people applying for jobs and they're going to be afraid that anybody knows what their . . . whether they're a homosexual, or whether

they're heterosexual or whatever. So they're probably going to put down both to get a job. You're going to cause more commotion than you can even think of.

The last Bible verse is Matthew 19, 4 to 6:

(Jesus) answered (and said to them) "Have you not read that (he) who made them at the beginning, made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined (in) his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let (not man) separate.

And my conclusion on the biblical part, the Bible explicitly and repeatedly condemns homosexual acts. Homosexuality acts are viewed negatively whatever and they are discussed in the Bible without exception. So again if anybody can find me wrong, I will withdraw those statements.

And in closing my remarks on second reading for now, Mr. Speaker, the only thing that we can do is along with many other . . . that I can do and what you people over there that believe in prayer, that we can pray for the government.

And I ask all people in Saskatchewan listening tonight that are Christian people and are moral people that believe in prayer, to pray for the Minister of Justice and the people in the front row that we can have this Bill looked at and maybe withdrawn and brought in a right and proper manner. This Bill could be brought back in to protect the people that you're talking about in a right and proper manner without discriminating on the rest of the people of Saskatchewan.

I ask to adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

(2000)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

The Chair: — I would ask the minister at this time to please introduce the officials who have joined us.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much. To my right is Con Hnatiuk, the deputy minister. Behind him is Neil Yeates, acting assistant deputy minister, and beside Mr. Yeates is Elizabeth Smith, executive director, support services.

Item 1

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, the first question I want to ask you is the

material sent over, seeing that I was just involved in Bill 38 and I didn't have a chance to look at them, does that cover like all these kind of questions, like the name, job descriptions, and do you have any staff from previous ministers; were those the questions that you, when you became minister, you hired any new staff for your office . . . are those the type of questions that you answered me?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. The ministerial staff that were hired when I became the minister are included in the employees that you asked for, in terms of being new employees.

Mr. Muirhead: — Okay, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, do any of your assistants travel in conducting their work? Please provide me with the total your department has spent on ministerial assistants' travel expenses. I would like full details of this travel.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The ministerial travel is included in the information that we sent to you. If you want it in more detail, I can give that to you. I can send it over shortly.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, what I said to the member on estimates last year, what I said to the minister, it would be helpful that if we had that information come not just two or three minutes before but a day or two before, if possible — and I say that to all ministers — so the critic has a chance to go through them and see what's answered and what isn't. Because I don't know what's there; I haven't got a clue what you've answered.

But this is in detail to the question I just asked. I would like full details, and I'll just . . . I think these first questions will likely be in there, I'm sure. If not, I want your commitment that we'll be able to get the answers if you've missed some of the ones I have on my list.

I would like full details of this travel, including the assistant's name, total cost per trip, the purpose of the travel, mode of travel, who they accompanied, the minister or departmental officials, and destination.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can give you some information for the previous minister. Lorraine Bethell travelled with the minister on September 17, 1992 to Weyburn for a group home opening with the minister, for travel cost, \$59.53. Margaret Morrisette travelled with the minister on April 26-27, 1992 to Saskatoon. And this was for the Social Services appeal board orientation. Meals were \$16.75. Mark Stobbe from April 23 to 27, '92 travelled to Saskatoon for a staff training employment branch Social Services appeal board orientation. His travel costs were a 132.92. Bev Cardinal who is an employee in my office travelled with me on February 11, 1993 from Regina to Meadow Lake to North Battleford to Saskatoon to Regina. She accompanied me on the airplane for a cost of \$987. And a practicum student in my office also accompanied me on February 11, 1993 from Regina to Meadow Lake to North Battleford back to Saskatoon for a cost of \$509. This was also by air for a

. . . he was involved in ministerial functions and his name was M. Kajmahkotayo, and his first name was Merlin.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, let's do it this way for the sake of time because I wouldn't know. You said, you got up and said some of these here assistants were with the past minister, and I'd like to have . . . I'll just take your word for it. But I'm going to . . . so they can get it properly out of *Hansard* and if anything's missing from here or you didn't put . . . if it is I'm going to just repeat that, and then they can go through it tomorrow and have it sent to my office, anything that's missing just for the sake of time here.

Do any of your assistants travel in conducting their work? Please provide me with the total your department has spent on ministerial assistant travel expenses. I would like full details of this travel including the assistant's name, total cost per trip, the purpose of the travel, mode of travel, who they accompanied, the minister or department officials and destination. So they can just look through *Hansard*. And what I haven't already got, just send to my office and I'll be satisfied with that.

My next question, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, ministerial travel. Please provide total spent on ministerial travel.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I just said to you, Mr. Member, is the total travel for the minister's office. But we will send that in writing to you tomorrow. In terms of ministerial travel, I can send this over to you, if you would like, or I can read each trip into the record. What is your wish?

Mr. Muirhead: — I'll give it in more detail and also for . . . I told you earlier this evening that we'd be on here at 8 o'clock. I tried to get you off, to accommodate you as soon as possible. So I'm going to try and do that unless we get bogged down on something else here. I'll just put it on the record and take your word for it you'll get it sent to my office.

Ministerial travel. Please provide total spent on ministerial travel; provide details of this travel including purpose, who accompanied you, mode of travel and destination. What do you feel you accomplished from these trips? You can just take that tomorrow from *Hansard*. Or if you have more to send over, fine.

Mr. Chairman, question to the minister again. What is the total number of people that were on social assistance in January of 1991?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can tell you is in the year 1991-92, which is probably the figure you're interested in, the case-load was 28,167.

Mr. Muirhead: — When you say '91-92, is that a certain year end there, or what?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That would take you to the end of March of 1992.

Mr. Muirhead: — Now give me the '92-93 then.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The total case-load was 32,904.

Mr. Muirhead: — So it went up about 5,000 just about; 28,167 to 32 . . . almost 33,000. Okay, my next question. How many people on social assistance today?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The latest figures that we have available take us to the end of March of 1993, and the total case-load is 35,044 cases.

Mr. Swenson: — Madam Minister, would you describe to me what you mean by case-load? Does that mean an individual or does that mean families? So maybe we have to get different figures here. If it's 28,167 families or individuals or what? Explain that to me, what you mean by case-load.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — A case could be a combination of single people, families, couples without children, couples with children, single-parent mothers or fathers with children, or people who are alone.

Mr. Muirhead: — So then as I kind of expected, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, when you gave me the figures, it's a little bit misleading — 28,167 and 32,994 and 35,040 or whatever. I need the figures, the total figures of individuals is the question I asked you. I said: what is the total number of people that were on social assistance. That wasn't families. So the figure I want is how many individuals.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I heard the member ask for cases, so I gave you cases. If you're interested in individuals, for the year ending March 31, 1992 — so that would be the 1991-92 year — there were 56,555 individuals on social assistance. For the year 1992-93 — that would be ending March '93 — there were 64,915 people on social assistance.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, what's the total today?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As of March 31, 1993, there are 68,235 individuals receiving social assistance.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, did I hear that figure right — 80,000?

An Hon. Member: — 68

Mr. Muirhead: — Sixty-eight thousand — sorry. I see the budget has increased, the social insurance budget. In fact it's the first time in the history of this province the social insurance budget is more for the entire budget for all of agriculture for the whole province.

Madam Minister, I guess with all the new families having to apply for it, this increase was necessary. After all, we've lost over 16,000 jobs in this province since the NDP administration has taken over. There's approximately 16,000 jobs lost since you've taken

over. So naturally that's why the increase here.

What are the projections of the ever-growing numbers of social assistance applicants for the end of this year? Because if you take a look at your own figures — 56,000, 64,000, 68,000 — what are you estimating's going to happen this year, in the worst year in history, with all the people your government has fired and the farmers losing their land? What are you estimating?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — First let me say this to the member, that social assistance case-loads, regardless of what province you happen to live in, are escalating. There isn't a province in the country that has not seen an increase in the number of citizens coming onto social assistance. And as you are probably aware, Canada is facing an economic recession and all provinces are facing similar situations as the province of Saskatchewan.

In terms of your question, we are estimating a case-load this year of 34,200, or approximately 68,000 individuals on social assistance. The other thing that we should note, Mr. Member, is that now that we are coming into the spring and summer season, historically case-loads decrease during the months of May, June, July, August, September. And then they start to increase as we go into the winter months.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well that's understanding — even the comment you made, this is happening all over. But that isn't what was promised by your government in 1991. They promised that they were going to have jobs for everybody. So I don't think you should stand up, Madam Minister — you used to sit over here yourself — and stand up and say, when we get to be government, we're going to correct all these things that you people did. Well these here individuals have sure changed from when we were in government, from 56,000 to 68,000.

Now when you're saying 68,000 by the end of the year, that has to be a poor projection — maybe now, but by the end of the year, you're saying there will be the same amount of people on welfare as there is today.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as you may know, we look at averages. And we're predicting or suggesting that there will be an average of 68,000 people on social assistance. But we expect the numbers to decline over the spring and summer and going into fall months, and then they will go up, as they have historically done. So this is an average case-load we're predicting.

(2015)

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, the question I asked in the first place: what was Social Services department expecting would be at the end of the year. I didn't ask the question now. What is expecting? They must be projecting. I mean when this government just fired hundreds of people, and maybe they won't be going onto social services but they might be bumping

somebody else that is or whatever, and there's people losing their jobs that don't have pensions and severance pays, and things are getting worse out there. Farmers are leaving the farms, and there's farmers that are definitely, I know, applying for welfare now.

So I asked you . . . they must have because in your budget you've asked for . . . the money you've asked for in the estimates, in this year's budget, you must be planning some place with a future claim of what it's going to be because it certainly changed from 56, 64 to 68. Your change in every leap is . . . you changed leaps and bounds. When we were in government it was 56,000 but that took in also '91-92, so that's half of us. Then it jumped almost 10,000 right away. So it looks like under your government it can sure get people on social aid in a hurry, or they have to be on social aid.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question and just say that if you look at the figures that existed in 1984-85, '85-86, you saw a trend of social assistance increase because, as you may be aware, social assistance . . . people coming on to social assistance and the numbers parallel what's happening in terms of unemployment rates in provinces, and it also parallels what's happening with the economy.

But if you look at the numbers of people as a percentage of our population on social assistance, we have the lowest level of dependency in the country. And Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec have much higher rates of dependency as a percentage of people living on social assistance relative to the overall population.

Mr. Muirhead: — I didn't ask you, Madam Minister, anything about 1984, but if you want to start doing comparing, can you tell me this: is 68,000 — that's the figure we have now of individuals on welfare in this province, on social assistance is a better word — is that the highest ever in the history of this province?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The answer to that question is yes.

Mr. Muirhead: — Okay, Madam Minister, since the numbers of those on social assistance is growing so rapidly, what measures have you taken to combat this serious problem because it's going to be escalating some more? We know that for sure.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well obviously unemployment is the major concern of the Government of Saskatchewan, and obviously these numbers are a major concern to the government. And we are working very closely with New Careers Corporation to ensure that there are employment, training, and educational opportunities available to people who have to rely on social assistance as their form of income. As well we are very optimistic that the economic development strategy that has been adopted by the government, as outlined by the Minister of Economic Development, will be very

helpful in terms of reducing these numbers.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, when you took over government in fall of 1991, you dismantled the Saskatchewan Works program. Can you tell me how many people were unemployed as dismantling the Saskatchewan Works program? How many people were unemployed and went on social aid after that was dismantled.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The Saskatchewan Works program was replaced with a community employment program. The program was not dismantled.

Mr. Muirhead: — So you were just so desperate not to have any name that was even connected with the Tory . . . That's why you had to just change the name, so you're saying it's the same program. Why didn't you just leave the name the way it was, and it wouldn't mix people up? You've done everything that you possibly could just so you . . . anything that we done was right . . . you're saying the same program . . .

Now I was misunderstanding here because I, on the heels of dismantling the Sask Works program, I thought you unveiled the New Careers home repair program. How is that connected with what you just was telling me? Is that the same program, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That is part of the community employment program.

Mr. Muirhead: — I realize this now then, but it's the same program. It's just to get people working, the same thing really as the Saskatchewan Works program — it's just to get people working. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There was a different emphasis in that we were trying to assist single-parent families or single-parent persons, most of whom are women, to be able to access career opportunities, to the program. As you probably know, Sask Works program, a lot of its emphasis was more male oriented. And because a number of people on social assistance are single parents and the head of that household is a female, we wanted to change the program somewhat so there would be opportunities for female assistance recipients.

Mr. Muirhead: — I realize the New Careers home program, that's not under your department now; it's now under Education I understand. But it's still connected because it takes people from social welfare to work in that program. So between the two programs, whatever, whether they're connected with Education or not, I'd like to know how many people are under those programs. I believe the New Careers home program is under Education and Training.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The 7,590 spaces through New Careers employment and training programs, that was for 1992-93. This year the estimate is 7,810 spaces, but in fact the participants are higher so I'm now going

to give you the participant numbers: 1992-93, 8,590 participants; and in 1993-94, we're expecting 8,760 participants — that's because more than one person may go through a space.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, I understand the New Careers home repair program offers work experience but of a very limited . . . it's very limited, is that correct? Or can you explain what they do, or what type of work. I understand actually work itself is very limited.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As you may know, New Careers Corporation has been transferred to the ministry of Education, Training, and Employment. Her estimates are coming up shortly and I would suggest that you ask the Minister of Education those questions.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, which program then is offering . . . A pilot program is supposed to be in Saskatoon, is supposed to be under way now. I wonder which department is that then. Which one is that?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If you're talking about the home repair program, that is with New Careers Corporation and the Minister of Education is now responsible.

Mr. Muirhead: — Okay, for any of the people on social assistance, Madam Minister, and they're chosen, how are they chosen to work on any of these here programs? How are they chosen? Is it by their choice or your choice or how are they chosen for any of these type of programs?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Individuals are referred to New Careers Corporation through their social worker. They may ask to be referred there. It's on a referral basis.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well if they . . . Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, if they volunteer to do something will they get something to do? Will you find them something to do? If somebody volunteers that's on social assistance, they just want to do something, is there something for them?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Many individuals ask to be referred to the program and they are. Many individuals have opportunities to find employment in the community and their social worker may assist them in doing that. So we think that we are doing all we can to assist individuals in terms of becoming independent of social assistance.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, the way these figures are going up, you wouldn't think that — it's going up by thousands. But I hope you're right. I'll take your word for it.

But what if you ask . . . what if you have a job? What is your policy, Madam Minister, if you have a job available for someone, and someone is strong and healthy or whatever, and if they say no, what do you do?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If an individual is capable of work and they have access to a job and if they refuse to take the job, then they disqualify themselves from benefits. So that's one of the provisions of the plan.

Mr. Muirhead: — Now this is getting to be a . . . No, it's costing a lot of money. Social Services is a large budget. Has the government got new plans? I mean you've just come out and said, pretty well what you've done is just took over . . . called it a new name and took the same program as we had, Saskatchewan Works program, and you've got a New Careers under Education.

What are you doing to try to get the people working, to find something for them to do? Even if they're getting social assistance, maybe there's work they could do for free in the cities, or whatever. Are you doing anything to try to teach people to work?

Now there's many people on social aid that couldn't possibly . . . I don't believe that pregnant mothers and single mothers, I don't believe they should have to, I think they should be with their child for as long as possible. And there's people out there like that that have been left stranded and their spouses have passed away and things like that, I don't believe that.

But I believe that there's strong individuals that are just wasting their good muscles, that you should be doing something in the Department of Social Services to encourage them to be doing something, if it's only work for the communities or whatever. Because I always believe that anybody sits around idle and that gets to become a habit, it's hard for them to work when the job does come along.

But what are you planning, Madam Minister, to combat this big problem that's coming upon us in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well that's a very good question, member. In March, at the end of March, 1993, 3,746 people, or 11 per cent of the total social assistance case-load, were in training and that was an increase of 12 per cent from March, 1992. And this number . . . I just want to tell you what the number consisted of. We had 1,896 single persons involved in training and we had 1,850 family heads involved in training.

And we're of the view that it's important to assist recipients in terms of becoming independent from social assistance dependency. A job is the best way of insuring that one doesn't lead a life of dependency, along with training. And that's exactly what we're doing to insure that people do have the skills necessary to meet the new challenges in the workforce.

Mr. Muirhead: — What kind of response are you getting from the people on social services to respond to your program and . . . (inaudible) . . . ?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Very positive response. I think what's interesting is that the people that I come in

contact with on a daily basis want to work. They do not want to be on social assistance. They do not want to have that kind of dependency, state dependency.

The feedback that we're getting is that the people have an opportunity to be trained or to receive an education or to have a job. That's what they want any day over living on social assistance.

(2030)

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, the member from Rosthern is going to ask you a few questions now.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I had not really intended to get involved too deeply today, and I don't think I will. But from some of your answers and from some of your comments, I cannot help but notice that the weight of government falls heavily on your shoulders, because the comments and the answers that you've been giving to my colleagues thus far fly pretty well in the face against what you were saying while you were in opposition and certainly your opposition critic of the day, Peter Prebble.

Now you made the comment that all provinces are having trouble with deficits, all provinces are having trouble with growing case-loads and so on. But I suggest to you, madam, that this is the only province where the opposition ran on a campaign to eliminate poverty.

You folks, in your study that you did — and I think you were one of those that went around the province in this study — said that we will eliminate poverty. Now that was a tremendous promise at the time. And I know that during the election many of the folks out in the province of Saskatchewan were taken in by that and they certainly voted NDP because they did not like being poor. And so they voted for you because you were going to eliminate poverty.

And yet as I look at the statistics that you handed over to my colleague, with case-loads of 28,000, 32,000, 35,000, talking literally of 70,000 people on social services for whatever reason, this I would suggest to you is hardly an elimination of poverty.

Now the other question that I want to bring into consideration here is, I understand that Ed Bloos from the Food Bank in Regina — and I know Lorraine Stewart from Saskatoon is probably experiencing the same thing — I understand through the media that Ed is saying now that, even as late as the early part of this week, the case-loads that they are experiencing is increasing by about three families per day.

Now whether you want to confirm that or add to that, I'd be interested in your comments about the fact that things are not quite as rosy as you were indicating a year or two ago. Now I know what you're going to be saying is that we don't have the resources. And to kind of offset that right at the beginning, at the outset, we know that. But you knew what the financial situation

of the province was during the election of 1991, and in spite of that, you still held out this carrot to the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm just wondering what your reaction is to that particular situation.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question. First of all, let me say this. That the document that you refer to that was undertaken by some of my colleagues in opposition, along with myself, talked about eliminating poverty by the year 2000 . . .

An Hon. Member: — You admit you were naïve then?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I wouldn't admit I was naïve. I think it's always important to have noble goals. And if you do not have goals and a vision for the future, then you don't know how to get from point A to point B. And I think what we were talking about were some principles, something to strive for. It's important that governments, citizens, individuals, have things to strive for. And we are striving to eliminate poverty by the year 2000, not unlike a number of other governments across the world that are on the road to trying to do the same thing.

Now in terms of what has happened, we have seen some major changes to unemployment insurance since we came to government, changes in the rules regarding people accessing unemployment insurance programs. There's been a reduction in the number of weeks . . . or an increase in the number of weeks that a person has to hit in order to be eligible. Obviously that impacts upon our case-load. As well, we've had some other changes to unemployment insurance regulations and that impacts upon our case-load.

The other thing that I'd like to point out to the members is that our 1993-94 budget addresses, or attempts to address, needs of children. And we will see the children's benefit under SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan) and FIP (Family Income Plan) increase by \$5 a month effective July 1. And we are designing a new children's benefit that hopefully will be implemented on January 1 of 1994.

As well, we are now beginning to pay actual utility costs, and the hope is that people will not take their food money to pay for utilities and that we will begin to alleviate a little bit of the pressure at the food bank.

The other point that I would like to make. I understand from speaking to people at food banks across the province that not all of the people that visit the food bank are on social assistance, that they are other individuals who, because of circumstance, are coming to rely on food banks.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Unless things have changed, the way you operate is that you take an individual and you make an assessment on that individual based on that individual's or family's . . . the case-load's needs, then you take a look at the resources that that person has on his own or through government, other programs and so on, and the difference is the balance that you will

supply in order for that individual case-load to support him or herself.

I'm still wondering, are there any deductions from outside sources that you are still deducting from the amount payable to this individual? And I refer specifically to family allowances.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We are doing the same thing that you did and previous governments did. We are deducting the family allowance from benefits paid to families with children.

Mr. Neudorf: — What about the amount deductible in terms of the individual being able to earn money on his own. There was a cap on it and after that it was dollar for dollar deducted. Has that changed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have not changed the income exemption since coming to government. The other thing that I'd like to point out in terms of the family allowance, what we did do was increase the benefit to families with children by \$5 come July 1, 1993. And we are also designing a new children's benefit that will affect individuals with children on social assistance but also will have some help for low income working families.

Mr. Neudorf: — I'm pleased to remind you that we increased those by \$10 per child while I was the minister. But the point I'm trying to make with you, Madam Minister, is simply this: the weight of government is falling heavily on your shoulders.

I remember very profoundly, and so do you, Mr. Prebble standing here, chastising us in no uncertain terms for having the audacity to deduct family allowances, but that would be changed when you were in government. And the people voted for that.

Now, Madam Minister, you have just informed me that essentially you haven't changed anything. Why not, Madam Minister, when with the stroke of the pen, with the stroke of the pen, you could put all of those additional dollars into the pockets of families that needed that? That's the point that I'm trying to make with you, Madam Minister. And I just couldn't resist getting up to make that point and showing a little bit of the hypocrisy that we are experiencing.

Madam Minister, one other thing, and I just want a general comment from you on this, and that is that whenever you were on your feet or the member from Saskatoon, Peter Prebble, whenever he was on his feet, always continually referred to that magic safety net, the safety net that was there to catch people. I'm interested in your philosophy as Minister of Social Services.

I never subscribed to that philosophy of a safety net and I still don't. I don't view Social Services to be a safety net, because in my opinion a net is exactly that. That it catches, it holds, and it destroys because it won't let go. That's the problem with fish in a net. Now that may be a crude analogy, Madam Minister, but that's the problem I have with safety nets.

And you should, as we were, spend much more of your emphasis on the springboard effect. The springboard is where you kick, wherever necessary, people so that they are catapulted back into being productive members of our society. And that was the essence of all of the training programs we had. Whether it was Sask Works, and I'm glad to hear that in spite of the rhetoric of the former minister of Social Services, the hon. member of Finance now, Minister of Finance, that you have in fact retained Sask Works, and like my colleague says, that you're disguising it in different terminology, but that it is still there.

Now first of all, Madam Minister, a reaction on your philosophy, personal philosophy perhaps because you're permeating that throughout the department, so that is significant I think. And secondly the issue of Sask Works, is it still there? Are the training programs there?

Another question I could ask: why did you do away with the job search program in Saskatoon that I put into place in conjunction with the business community in Saskatoon? Very effective, and yet that was done away with.

So all of these things I think are part and parcel, and just a quick reaction on your part, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Prior to becoming a politician in 1986, I worked with street kids, and many of the kids that I worked with came from low income families. My personal philosophy with regard to Social Services is this: that everybody in this province regardless of where they live, who they are, what sort of background they come from, what the economic status of their family happens to be, is entitled to be treated with human dignity. That means that they are entitled to be treated fairly and equitably. It means that they will not be judged because of the circumstances they face.

In terms of personal philosophy when it comes to the Department of Social Services, it is my expectation that the people who work in the department will serve the clients in this province. They are there to serve clients, and they are to act professionally, and they are to treat people with human dignity and respect.

In terms of what I expect from the income security system, I expect that an income security system will meet people's basic, human needs. I am personally of the view that our system does not yet do that because we have too many people that are having a very difficult time living on the basic income that the Department of Social Services allows.

Obviously, as you know, our province is facing some dire economic circumstances, and we are trying our best. In terms of what we have been able to do, given our very limited resources, I can say that we now acknowledge people's shelter allowances. We actually are beginning to pay utilities, laundry, and telephone.

In terms of basic allowance, if you're a single mom, your first child is treated as an adult, and they saw the basic allowance for the first child increase to \$195 per month. All other children receive, at present, \$155 per month, but as of July 1, that will increase to \$160.

In terms of personal living, we've had an increase to personal living, effective August 1, 1992, to \$85 a month. We now are assisting recipients with travel allowance to allow them to go on medical trips and to travel to places of employment and training. As well, effective August 1, 1992, we increased the northern food allowance to \$50 per month per recipient, and that's to all recipients north of the 54th parallel.

As well, we are trying to change our social service delivery system so that staff will have more time to do what they are paid to do, and that is to do social work. As well, there are some other increases, but I know you have many more questions that you'd like to ask, and I would be quite willing to send all of the detail of the changes to the system to you for your perusal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(2045)

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much for that litany, Madam Minister. I guess that begs this question. With all those wonderful things that your colleagues are applauding you for, how many children are living in poverty in Saskatchewan today?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Far too many children live in poverty. Twenty-seven thousand children live on social assistance in the province, and 20,000 children receive social assistance living on Indian reserves — 47,000 children living on social assistance if you include both on and off reserve.

As well, as have many children whose parents come from low income, working backgrounds. That is something that we are personally committed to reducing. And that's why, on January 1, 1994, we hope to have a new children's benefit designed to assist kids in this province, so that their parents will have money to feed them and shelter them, and make sure that they have access to recreational programs like other middle-class and upper-class children. That is something that our government is committed to improving for the kids of this province.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, remember your promise. You didn't promise to improve it. You promised to eliminate poverty. You promised to eliminate poverty. Something that someone greater than any one of us said: the poor will always be with us — but the NDP in Saskatchewan determined they were going to beat the odds and you were going to eliminate poverty.

Now, Madam Minister, one other thing now. The figure that you give me is very startling, because you didn't come up to the 64,000 children in poverty that you were always quoting while you were in opposition. And yet now you're equating poverty just

to people being on social aid. I don't equate that. So your case-load is higher and yet your number of children that you're admitting are in poverty is lower.

Now here's my question. What is your definition today of poverty?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. My definition of poverty is when you don't have enough money to meet your basic needs, like food, shelter, clothing, and ensuring that your kids have access to some form of recreational activity. Food for your spirit, your emotional well-being, your physical well-being, your psychological well-being — all of those things that ensure that we are healthy, whole individuals.

And in terms of your previous question, why the 47,000 versus 64,000, I can say this. Forty-seven thousand children live on income support in the province of Saskatchewan; 27,000 of those children live on SAP, social assistance plan; 20,000 receive funds from Indian Affairs, through their band councils. There are other children who are not on income support — and when I say income support, I'm talking about state income support — whose families work but they are still classified as children living in poverty, and those families are the working poor.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Madam Minister, the definition of poverty, I guess I could throw back at you the StatsCanada statistics and so on of 58 per cent for food, shelter, and clothing that you used to throw at us. You conveniently forgot to mention that at this particular point.

But all I'm trying to do, Madam Minister, is show the people of Saskatchewan that when you are in government it is much more difficult to fulfil the wild statements that we tend to make sometimes in opposition. And I think that is exactly what you are finding out now as I did — as I did. And I'm sure that you are just as sincere as I was that we want to do more for people and we want to do good, but there are restrictions within our system.

And I guess what I'm trying to do also is show that the philosophical approach is not always the same between us either. I still maintain the springboard effect is more effective. But we could spend a lot of time on that and I don't want to.

There are just a couple of other areas that I want to touch on briefly, Madam Minister. One thing that I was very proud of, as being part of the government, before I was minister, my very first news conference ever as a politician was in my home town of Hague. And it was in the town hall, and some of your officials are here tonight that were there with me at that particular time.

And the news conference was held to establish the first group home of the mentally retarded where we, in spite of the Prince Albert members and so on, violent . . . vigorous perhaps is a better term, vigorous opposition to the closing of North Park Centre and the institutionalization that had been going on. We

scattered group homes throughout the province. And I think if you have had the opportunity to visit some of those folks who are in group homes you can certainly attest to the tremendous increase in quality of life in small town.

You don't need your officials for this, Madam Minister. I see you're trying to signal them. All I want from you is your indication once more in terms of what you intend to do with the process that we began in terms of the group home concept as opposed to the institutionalization that was the process for many, many years in Saskatchewan.

And while you're addressing that, just from a philosophical point of view, maybe you can add to me an indication of what you expect to be doing with Valley View. I've always been of the view that Valley View in Moose Jaw will always be there because there will be always that need. And the folks that are left there are very, very high needs people. Do you see more coming out of there? And don't worry about the specifics, we can get that at some other time. I just want your general reaction.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as you know that there are people living in Valley View who are very severely disabled, and it is unlikely that they would be able to live in the community in a group home setting because of the severe disabilities that they have. And so I agree with you that there will be need for that type of institutionalization for some people, some citizens in the province of Saskatchewan. We are committed to making the transition for mentally challenged people from sheltered settings to more community settings, and so therefore I think on this point you and I will agree.

Mr. Neudorf: — To a different topic — cheque pick-ups. Are you still following that policy?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't have massive cheque pick-up but workers do have discretion to insist that clients pick up cheques if they believe the client is having some difficulty.

Mr. Neudorf: — So out of a case-load of 35,000, or 68,000-some individuals, how many of those would be under the cheque pick-up strategy?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I don't have that information but I can tell you this: that the other day a person living in my riding, who I've known for many years, who for the first time in his life has had to rely on social assistance, 58-year-old man who has always worked but because of changes in UI (unemployment insurance) had to rely on social assistance, he has picked his cheque up for the past two months. So there is cheque pick-up that is still going on but we're not having the kind of line-ups that we've had in the past.

And I should also point out that this man told me that it was very humiliating for him to have to go down to the Social Services office in downtown Saskatoon, 1st Avenue, and stand in line with a number of other men. That's something that I want to change because I think

people need to be treated with human dignity. Just because you have come to a point in your life where you have to rely on social assistance, we should not have you pointed out for all to see by having you stand in line — when you don't want to be there because what you really want is a job — to pick up your cheque.

So we're not interested in having that kind of inhumanity put on people.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Madam Minister, to follow that weak and lukewarm philosophy, does this mean also that you are now planning to ban food bank lines as well? Is that not just as humiliating? Are you going to establish a delivery system whereby you deliver the food to these folks as well?

I mean come on, let's be realistic and logical here. If you say that's humiliating, when we're spending taxpayers' money . . . And accountability is something that I think, is something that you can be condemned for. I think there's an utter lack of accountability now in your department.

I know what your predecessor did when the special investigators . . . and you say we don't need special investigators because they're . . . Well that leads me to the next question that I wanted to ask. First of all, error rate, what is your error rate?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Our error rate has not changed in the past two years.

Mr. Neudorf: — What is it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It's 2 per cent.

Mr. Neudorf: — Which would be . . . about how much money are we talking about is what I'm after?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — 2.3 to 2.4 million approximately, I'm advised.

Mr. Neudorf: — And this error rate and this percentage that is being overspent, I am assuming that the error are always to the cost of the taxpayer. How much of that is recovered?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — An error rate can be because a client may not have understood the program in terms of what that client had to report — income, interest, those kinds of things. Error rate can also be because the client has been overpaid.

So error rate isn't just error on the part of the system, error rate can be as a result of non-reporting by clients.

Mr. Neudorf: — I understand that, Madam Minister, error rates are generated both by the client itself and the department, or the system as you put it, and I understand that.

What percentage of those overpayments, money that people unrightfully got — because I view that anybody who gets extra money is really taking it out of

that pot that you have to work with and somebody else is penalized as a result of that. So how much of that is over . . . through overpayments. And I want you to describe for me the system that you have in place to recover the error rate, what your overpayment system is.

(2100)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The causes of overpayments may be because of wage reconciliations later inaccurate; may be because of utility reconciliations or undeclared changes; may be because of lost, stolen cheques, transient aid, utility arrears, damage deposits, that sort of thing; and other, which would include changes in the family composition or assets, for a total overpayment of about \$12 million. In that, my officials advise me, we collect about \$10 million back. And that would have been in the past year.

Mr. Neudorf: — I also asked you to describe for me the method that you use to recollect that overpayments, because quite frankly, this is a problem I always had when I looked at the system. Because as I described to you before, the amount of money that a recipient receives is based on, first of all, needs, resources, and the difference is the balance that that person needs to survive. Now an overpayment, how are you collecting that overpayment back from a person that has just his basic essentials? That's what I'm asking you.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We haven't changed the way we collect overpayments at all. We make arrangements with the client to have a small amount taken off of his or her cheque to begin to pay the overpayment. As you know, there was the Finlay case. The Manitoba government's position was upheld in the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Neudorf: — I am certainly familiar with the Finlay case; we were interveners on that. Madam Minister, my only point is that the weight of government hangs heavily on your shoulders because you are not making all of those dramatic changes that you were criticizing and chastising us for on an almost constant basis. Those very same things, as you have just said, you have not changed. Now if we were wrong before, you are wrong now; two wrongs don't make a right. That's the point I would just want to make with you, Madam Minister.

But I relinquish the floor now to the critic of Social Services, and I thank you for your cooperation, and I wish you well.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, on March 24, 1993, you announced the Department of Social Services' participation in the review — responsible partnerships: human services in review. Please provide the estimated cost for the department's participation in this review and detail for the Assembly today any tangible benefits that would be derived from the study for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The cost of the review will be

approximately \$70,000. The contract is with the Western Institute for Public Policy, and Eldon Anderson, a well-known person who I believe was a former employee of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and very involved in non-governmental organizations, is going to be the chair of the review.

The purpose of the review is to make recommendations on ways communities and government can work more cooperatively in order to shape some of the future social directions in the province of Saskatchewan. We know that the NGO (non-governmental organizations) community does an absolutely incredible job in providing services, raising funds that government alone couldn't possibly raise to ensure that citizens who are experiencing difficulty or people who are vulnerable have access to community-based resources. So we are hopeful that we will find new ways of doing things that will ensure that the people that we mutually serve, both in the community and through government, will have their needs met in a more integrated and holistic way.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, would you for the sake of time, would you see that I get sent to my office full details for that program, exactly what the cost went to and what for, and the details on this here individual that you hired, a past wheat pool I understand you say. See if he's eligible for the position, or see if he's another political appointment. I'm hoping he's not.

When it comes to Social Services, I hope we can keep politics out of there because it's very, very, important. I've always been very pleased in when I was in opposition from '78 to '82 and the years we were in government that all the people that worked for Social Services, I did not see politics have a play. And that's very, very, important, that when you're dealing with the lives of people out there and that there's no favouritism. And I have to say in 15 years as a member I'm very pleased. I'd like to get full details on this man that's doing this study. And so now, I won't . . . You've nodded that you will do that, so maybe I'll let you put that on the record that you'll do that.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We'll send the terms of reference and all the information regarding the review to you.

Mr. Muirhead: — Yes, Madam Minister, you'll be able to read out of *Hansard* exactly what I asked for so that's what I'll expect. Madam Minister, back in January my colleague, the member from Moosomin, wrote to you inquiring about a new federal child tax benefit program. As you are aware the new federal child tax benefit replaced family allowance; we're all aware of that, refundable child tax credit and the non-refundable children's credit.

The member from Moosomin contacted you on behalf of those on social assistance to see how this new program would affect their income. As you are well aware, those who receive additional monies generally have this amount deducted from their cheques. Your response was to announce that she would make

policy changes to partially exempt the federal child tax benefit for people on social assistance. I repeat, Madam Minister, you said, partially exempt. Now I didn't like that word, but you did say it. These benefits . . . this money is for children. Why are you taking these benefits away from individuals with children who are on social assistance? You say that those in need will be protected, but you don't hesitate to deduct money from their social assistance cheque that is an earmark for their children.

Now if that was provincial money, that's different, but this was special money, extra money, this is federal money, Madam Minister, allocated to children, and the NDP government is taking it away. You give a new meaning to the term federal transfer payments.

I'd like you to explain in your own words really why you did that and why you didn't let them have all that extra money from the federal government.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We continue to do what your government had done. As you may be aware, prior to the child tax benefit coming into force in January 1, 1993, we had the family allowance which amounted to \$34.88. Your government deducted \$34.88 from social assistance for families with children. When the new child benefit came into effect on January 1, we continued to deduct \$34.88.

But what we are doing is increasing benefits for children come July 1, 1993 in the amount of \$5 per child, and we are designing a new children's benefit where we will take monies from the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan designated towards children, monies from the Family Income Plan, plus some other monies to try and design a new program that will assist low income families with children.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, that's fine and that's exactly how I knew you were answering, and you did answer. But the thing is, when you were sitting over here when we did things like that, you said that you were going to do it different. You said we were starving the people. You and several ministers . . . critics for Social Services through the years, every time we done anything like you're doing: you're starving the people, we're cruel the things we were doing.

Now things have changed a lot in the last two to three years, Madam Minister, as you know that we have a real problem out in rural Saskatchewan and that comes into being into all the urban areas, that there's people without jobs and it's getting worse because of the economy. And I'm not blaming the economy onto any government, it's happening all over North America.

But when a few dollars comes through now when things are getting much harder . . . Tonight I read in the *Leader-Post* where a family, a mother has one child said her total money from Social Services — it's in the *Leader-Post*. I intended to bring it with me but I didn't — and she said 400-and-some dollars total and she said how much it took for . . . \$100 for special milk

replacement for the child and what it cost for food and clothing, and they were actually sending the child to school hungry some mornings. And they had to depend on . . . sometimes she had to depend on food banks and help from school and what not, and I felt sorry for this woman because she sounded like a proud lady that didn't want to be in this position. But you people said you wouldn't let this happen when you were over here, and I wonder what you're going to do about this.

So I'd just like to, I think, at this time to help save time again here, I'm going to ask you these questions all at once here. You said to my colleague from Rosthern tonight, who used to be the minister of Social Services, how much you've increased some of the funding. If you can't answer me this tonight, that's fine, as long as I get it. How much funding to a single, individual person able to work? How much will they receive? A single, with one child, a single with two, three or more, or whatever? Maybe you can answer me this tonight.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If you're an adult with one child, your basic allowance is \$390, the maximum to \$390; your shelter allowance, maximum to 385; utilities and laundry, maximum 125; for a total of \$900. And then we exempt the family allowance of \$34.88, so the total is about \$865.

If there are two adults with two children, their basic allowance will be, starting July 1, \$700; their shelter allowance, maximum \$440; utilities and laundry, 140; for a total of 1,280. Once again we deduct the family allowance, for approximately \$1,210.

If you're a single employable, your basic allowance is 195; your maximum shelter is 210; utilities and laundry, 75; for a total of \$480. And if you are a single disabled person, your basic allowance would be maximum 195; you have a supplementary allowance for your disability of \$40; your shelter, 320; utilities and laundry, 110; for a total of \$665.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for those figures, having them available for me.

We'll just talk for a moment about this individual that had an article in the *Leader-Post* tonight that somebody wrote upon. She said she had to pay \$100 extra for milk replacement for the child that couldn't drink milk. Is there any extra available help for this child or this family? Because I find out so many times, and it's not anybody's fault, but maybe . . . because I know there's many people and social workers have a hard time getting their messages out. Some people . . . I know in my 15 years, especially the last five or six years, there's been many times people have come to me and said, well this is all I get, and finding out that they had more available but didn't know. So is there some way that this person can get more funding here?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I just sent some information to you regarding the allowances for various types of family situations. And the second thing that I would say in terms of the person that you mentioned, that she

should contact her social worker as soon as possible because what our system tries to do is fund need, and if there are families that have special needs, obviously that will be looked after by the system. We do not want people who require special foods and that sort of thing, because of allergies, to continue to have medical problems that cost the health system on the other end, so we could make arrangements for that woman, I'm sure.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate that and I'm sure they will too.

Madam Minister, I've just got one last comment. I've got figures; I brought them up in the House the other day to the Minister of Agriculture and I'll bring them to you, from the Farm Debt Review Board, that we have more people in financial straits in rural Saskatchewan this year since 1939.

And I know there's families in rural Saskatchewan that they still might have a little equity left in their land or maybe they have in their tractor and they have equity but they're absolutely cash broke. I know of a farmer that had to trade the last wheat that he had, frozen wheat, two bushels for one, to enable to be able to seed his crop. Is there anything available for these kind of people to get emergency food, because I know there's some out there that it's happening and I don't think they know whether they can or they can't.

(2115)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, there is help available and once again I will send you over our income security program for farmers.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and that's all the questions I'm going to ask, and we said we'd let you away in good time tonight. We're 15 minutes overtime; I said approximately 9 o'clock.

But I just want to close in saying that I think you have a real problem ahead of you and I wish you good luck because Social Services is going to have much more demand on it. The policy of the NDP government has always been the same as it was back each time they've been in government — that they like to tax people and they don't seem to look to be creative things to get people working. Now it seems to be what's happening here.

I hope that you can put your heads together, you ministers, and the back-benchers, and all you people, and get some people working so we can have less welfare. And I'm not blaming you if can't because maybe things will just get so much worse that you can't.

I know that many farmers are in a serious situation. As soon as the farmer runs into trouble, he can't pay his bills, it leads to the people he deals with in the little communities, and there's some people out there that are getting in desperate, desperate situations. I think many of us, unless you're in contact with rural Saskatchewan, don't understand.

See, we in this room don't know what it is to go without food or go without a dollar in our pocket. But it's not that way in Saskatchewan. I can remember the end of the '30s when people were hungry and they were tramping the roads, and I just hope . . . or the rails looking for something to eat.

In 1939, the war broke out and it took them away and made them heroes and everything seemed to turn all right. Now they're saying that things are turning back as bad as that in rural Saskatchewan. I'm hoping that things turn around and I'm sure you do, too, Madam Minister.

But I just wish you good luck in trying to . . . in your department. I'm the critic for Social . . . for your department and you can have full cooperation with me for anything we can do to help the people in Saskatchewan. I'll do anything I can to cooperate and I wish to thank your officials for being here tonight and for your prompt answers, and good luck to you, Madam Minister.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to this evening extend a welcome to your civil servants for joining us.

After reviewing the **Estimates** I noticed a number of increases in spending in certain areas such as income support through the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, Family Income Plan, and the senior citizen's benefits.

All told these increases amount to some \$37 million in additional funds for supporting family income. While supporting these, and individuals obviously who are most in need, is very worthwhile, it does raise some questions to which I'd like you to respond.

Firstly, Madam Minister, your department benefited from additional funding and it was, I'm sure, very needed funding. Other departments weren't so lucky, however. The departments which experienced the greatest cuts were the Department of Agriculture, to which I think the member from Arm River was referring, and the Water Corporation. And somewhat behind those in percentage cuts is the Department of Health.

While it may not seem so, this does bring a great bearing on social policy in our province. It has a great bearing on social policy because whatever positive effects the increases bring to people that are serviced by your department, it's going to be negated in some ways by the ill-thought-out changes that will occur in other departments.

Departments are being cut. And in the case of Agriculture, in particular, there were very, very deep cuts. Those cuts, especially cuts to farm support programs, are truly hurting rural Saskatchewan families, both economically and socially. And I believe that the cutting of your government should not come to the point where what it does is disempower people in order to be productive.

Added to this is the fact that your colleague, Madam Minister, the Minister of Health, has been reducing health expenditures significantly. And we know that we have to handle health differently in the province, but the expenditures are now being cut by some \$20 million and resulting in significant lay-offs of rural workers in particular.

I'd like you please, Madam Minister, to explain how all of this can be reconciled. I'm just wanting to understand it better, to come to some understanding about whether or not we can come to some consistency here.

And the questions I pose are these. First of all, how are we better off when, although you've been given what was probably a very needed increase to income supports, other programs, especially those affecting rural areas, are cut deeply, which are causing job loss and many, many livelihoods to disappear.

I'm going to cite two more questions that go along with that one, and if you wish for me to repeat them I will. How does this ultimately improve the social well-being of our province, and how is that a good vision for the social well-being of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well you're on a topic that's near and dear to my heart as someone who grew up in rural Saskatchewan and whose family has been involved in agriculture in this province since 1903. Obviously as a member of the Saskatchewan government I watch very carefully what happens to rural communities.

As you probably know, in the '80s we saw a major change in how agricultural support programs are funded in this country. And as I've heard you say in the past, you believe that we need to have a national agricultural policy, and I agree with you totally. It is my view that we cannot have province-by-province approaches to agriculture because basically Canada is an export country when it comes to the business of agriculture. What we saw was a downloading on the part of the federal government from their national responsibility to provincial responsibility. And therefore the province took on more and more financial responsibility for various, what I would call, income support programs for people living in rural Saskatchewan who are engaged in the business of agriculture.

When our party came to office in October 1991, we immediately set about taking a look at what had taken place in this province in the past nine and a half years. We had to come to terms with the fact that we were teetering on the brink of financial disaster. And from my personal point of view, it wouldn't have mattered whether it was the present Premier sitting in that chair or yourself sitting in that chair or the member from Estevan sitting in that chair, whoever was the government in October of 1991 would have been dealt the same set of cards. We had a \$15 billion debt. That debt was escalating, and we had to start to deal with that debt.

What our government did was take a look at where we were spending money. And from a public policy point of view, with a citizenry of less than one million people, with over 40 per cent of agriculture in this country done in our province, we could not expect the provincial treasury to continue to support agriculture to the magnitude that we had, given our fiscal crisis.

And so what we saw was a change in how we approach agriculture in the province, particularly when it comes to subsidies because we couldn't afford to pay the 200 million-some-odd dollars.

As you also probably know that there has been a demographic shift in the province. People are making the transition — and this is not new; this is something that's been going on since the '30s — people are moving from rural Saskatchewan to urban Saskatchewan, and in fact we've seen for many, many years people then leaving our province. Many of the institutions that we have in this province at present, in terms of our health institutions, our educational institutions, our municipal institutions, were designed in the '40s. But we are now in the 1990s, and change is painful, horrendously painful but the institutions have to adapt to some of the demographic changes that have occurred, and consequently there's a restructuring going on. And whenever you have restructuring, there is pain because change is painful. And so you will see, I think, in this transition period people who are going to be caught in that transition.

But I'm very optimistic that people can be retrained, they can be re-employed, they can have access to the new kinds of jobs that will emerge in this decade. So in terms of what about the social well-being of this province, I think if we hadn't begun to restructure our institutions, our province, come the year 2000, would be in much worse shape than it presently is in. And I think by the time we hit the year 2000 we'll be in shape to meet the new challenges of the next century because of the changes that we've undertaken.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just to go back to my initial question, it really is about how does one reconcile choices. Okay? That's really what it's about. I don't think there's anyone in the province that disagrees that this is a time of change, and I was talking to someone earlier today about a quote that I'd read early this morning saying that one has much more teaching from 10 hours of agony than 10 years of contentment. So I think we will all be well educated after this decade.

I guess my concern lies in the fact that this is all about choices, and there are ways in which people can make decisions about, are we going to be people who deal in the stock market with our Cameco shares of \$340 million worth, or now that they're very high . . . I mean, are we in fact considering selling them?

Do we in fact have some kind of a commitment to SaskEnergy to the point where, even though other provinces are looking at and already have made

significant changes, that they are doing that but perhaps for some ideological reason we would not consider that or perhaps we were . . . You know, I'm talking about the kinds of things that can deal with changing the monetary situation for the province, and the only reason we would want to be making some decisions is that they're in the best interests of the people. Now we've talked many, many times before — not in this Assembly — about people. And you and I know that Freud said the only thing that's required to be a healthy person is to be able to love and to work.

And this is really much of what I'm talking about here is there not a way that there can be greater coordination between departments to work toward having people have the dignity of employment versus spending the dollars that all . . . although no one would argue are very, very needed for the quality of life of individuals — what in the long run is going to be in the best interests of the people.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You raise a very good question and I agree with you. I agree with you that in terms of a person's overall well-being they need two things: they need love and they need work. I agree with you.

In terms of our approach to government, when we came into government it was pretty clear — and as someone who's worked in the community and you will appreciate this — that departments tended to be in their boxes, vertical . . . they took vertical approaches. And what we have seen is a much more integrated approach to problem solving.

We will soon release a childrens' action plan to the public of Saskatchewan. And that is a plan that was developed by seven different departments because seven different departments deal with children. We have a day care review that's presently being undertaken. We have a number of different departments involved in that review because day care shouldn't just be a social welfare issue — it is an economic development issue, it's a labour issue, it's an education issue. And so we're taking a more integrated approach.

(2130)

The ministry of education and our ministry are working to do some pilots, looking at preschool intervention. In communities where we have at-risk children, lots of single-parent moms, we're developing a children and youth plan where we will take . . . we will work across departmentally so that we can approach high-risk children in a more integrated way.

And that's what we expect from the NGO review, where communities are saying we can't continue to be in our boxes, we can't afford to do that, and we have to work together. So if government can integrate and communities can integrate and then we can work cooperatively, I think that we are on the road to a new vision.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman,

Madam Minister, some of your comments actually lead into my next question, but I do want to make a comment first. I'm absolutely delighted that there's an undertaking of a pilot project. It's something I've been talking about ad nauseam in here regarding the Department of Health which I think we could have gone much further in the last 18 months with health reform had there been an undertaking of a pilot project, particularly in strategic rural areas of the province, and learned a great deal by doing so and implementing changes that would not have resulted in the kinds of problems we're having today.

I'm concerned about some of the choices that have been made in increasing social income supports. And I examined the estimates for the New Careers Corporation which provides retraining, and I noticed that it was hardly increased at all. And while we all appreciate that people in trouble could always use more money, I fail to understand why the increases to income supports were so disproportionate to those for upgrading and training people on social assistance.

And from looking at the relative differences in the increases, it does not appear as though the emphasis was on getting people to become part of the workplace, but the emphasis appeared to be helping the people to stay on welfare. And I would like your comments please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as you probably know, New Careers Corporation has been transferred over to Education Training and Employment in order that we can take a more integrated approach to how we do training and employment in this province. So I'm quite pleased about that transfer.

In terms of the increase in income security in our budget, I can say this, that we've had some major changes to unemployment insurance which has had an impact upon our budget. We've been notified by the federal government that there's a very good possibility that the province is soon going to have to take ownership, I guess, of income support for aboriginal people who are living off reserve for one year. And of course, we've had escalating case-loads.

So the increase that you see is not so much an increase in benefits for people living on social assistance or having to rely on social assistance; it's to deal with some cards that have been handed to the province that we hadn't anticipated because of changes in terms of federal government policy and in terms of new people coming onto assistance.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Last year I sent your predecessor a series of written questions. I was unable to present them in person in the Assembly because I was with my husband during his illness. In those questions, there was a lot of focus on restructuring and quite a bit on preventive work rather than interfering at a later point in crisis, where of course interference or trying to get involved would be far more costly.

Now if prevention is really such an important factor — which I agree that it is an important factor — I find it

inconsistent that your colleague, the Minister of Health, chose to cut programs involving alcohol abuse. The Minister of Health cut the Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission by \$1.079 million and that's an absolutely significant cut in a budget of some \$14 million.

And I'm really wanting your opinion here. I'd like to know how you think this will affect the work of the Department of Social Services and what you as minister have been doing to in fact meet with and discuss the ramifications of this decision with the Minister of Health, given the importance of these programs.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think if you look at the budget for SADAC (Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission), there have been some fairly significant increases in that budget over the last several years. And I think what we're trying to do is move away from institutional-type care to more community-based care. And as I read the literature and understand some of the new research, that you don't necessarily have to have 28-day programs or institutional-type programs in order to deal with addictions.

In terms of youth and what sort of impact that will have on our department, we are presently developing a youth plan for our department, and I would be pleased to share that with you if you would like a briefing by the officials in the department because I think you would find it quite interesting. And I'm sure you would be supportive because what we're trying to do . . . if you look at the way our budget is structured, most of the money goes towards core programs such as residential care, those kinds of things. And very little goes to prevention, and a little bit more goes to intervention. And what we're trying to do is shift the focus to more prevention before we have to intervene and then institutionalize kids.

So if you would like to have a briefing, we'd be pleased to provide you with that.

Ms. Haverstock: — I would be delighted to receive that information. I guess part of what I'm having difficulty with here is I do know a number of people in the addictions field, and they have grave concerns about this. These are not individuals who are on the payroll of SADAC. These are people who are very familiar with addictions as people who suffer from addictions and have been recovering for many years. And if they have grave concerns, then I think that it's something that the government has to take heed of because the focus really of what I'm pointing to here is on prevention. And one of the things that one has to be cautious of is not having the right kind of structure in place to take over when a transition is going on. What happens then is of course things are helter-skelter. And again it's not prevention, it's trying to rescue out of a crisis situation.

I do understand your points of view on this however. For the time of . . . the expediency here, Madam Minister, in response to my written questions again last year, it was emphasized that you would be

making a greater effort to involve aboriginal peoples in the delivery of social service programs. And I think you wanted to offer them greater control so that natives, particularly troubled youth, could enjoy the benefits of help from those of their own social milieu in the confines of their own community.

And in the responses last year, they were vague. I was going to say somewhat vague, but they were very vague, I'm sorry to say. In light of that, I'm hoping that you'll be able to clarify the status of this now for us and what you've done to facilitate greater aboriginal involvement in the delivery of social services.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Let me say this, that we have seconded three people to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations); that we now have a family connections program where we are working with bands in identifying kids that were taken into care by the Department of Social Services and then looking at reconnecting them to their families. We will have 20 individuals this year working in this area. We are hiring more aboriginal people within the department. And we have recognized the day care equivalency standards that the Meadow Lake Tribal Council has adopted as equivalent to the day care standards that our province presently has. We're in the process of recognizing the legislation that the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) with regard to child and family services . . . and recognizing that equivalency so that tribal councils can begin to set up their own child and family service agencies in this province.

Aboriginal people are telling us that for many, many years they have had to deal with a Social Services department that was basically nonaboriginal and that they have now got the skills, education, training, and ability to begin to take over their own services. So we are in that process of devolving services, and it is our hope that we will have some news to announce — I won't say shortly, but in the very near future.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much. Madam Minister, I would also like to raise a matter which I brought up last year and that is to get clarification regarding the coordination that there will be between services in your department and the many stakeholders and health care providers under the government's new wellness model.

You provided some description of that coordination that you were engaging in during this past year, and now that we have a somewhat better idea about this whole thing and what it might look like — in other words, in light of the 52 fewer rural hospitals in the newly formed health districts — can you give an update on what this coordination might look like, and how it's been considered?

If I may, I'll just illustrate. A lot of the regional personnel who would leave, let's say from Swift Current and go out into different regions, many of them served a lot of functions that would be interdepartmental, if you will. And that's really what I'm interested in, is how this is now being

conceptualized in the coordination that will take place?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well we're very interested in that too because we believe that in order to have wellness in the province, you have to have social well-being as well, and that the Department of Social Services, with our regional structure, because we do have a decentralized regional structure across Saskatchewan, we can fit very nicely into some of the work that has been done by the district boards that have been struck.

As I understand it, we have many people who are active employees of our department who are involved in some of the discussions that are taking place at the community level with regard to the types of services that could be provided by a district board. In fact I was up in the Melfort area on Monday, and one of our employees was going off to a meeting to talk about the new health district and some of the services that would be available. My impression is that our employees are being asked to be involved and are involving themselves in the process.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Do you actually see this in a way that you could be able to articulate what it is exactly that's going to be happening at some point? I don't expect that this evening. I'm actually thinking of terms of . . . You know, it's one thing to come up with a model, but if it's only a model because it's never been done before, it's very important for us to have clear guidelines as to what the expectations are within a particular time period with measurability.

Is that something that's actually going to transpire here, because part of what people need is not just the reassurance that something's going to happen; with such change going on, they actually need proof that what is being said to be better for them is actually in fact better for them. Is that something that is being worked on in your department so that you can work with the Department of Health and come up with some clarity here?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Our department . . . As you may know, the former associate deputy minister of our department is now the associate deputy minister in the Department of Health, and we're very pleased about that because we think that he has an understanding of the types of services that our department has delivered across Saskatchewan. He has a working knowledge of the NGOs that are in the community. He's also a community developer and he understands that it's important that communities have an opportunity to come together and talk about their vision for their community.

We don't have a master plan emanating from the Department of Social Services as to how we will fit into the health reform that is occurring, but certainly our employees are citizens in those communities where health reform is happening and they are being asked to participate. And they are participating because we think that wellness includes much of the work that we do. We're talking about the social

well-being of children, the social well-being of women, men. Many of the people that our department serves also are served by the health system in this province. As you know, if you are poor you are more likely to use the health system.

And so we have lots of people that are being engaged in the discussion, but if you're asking me for a blueprint I can't give you that. If you're asking me what I think the health reform will look like at the end of the day, I have my own personal vision of what that will be. But obviously each community, each health district, is going to look at their own community and determine what their community needs. I think that health reform will vary across the province because communities will identify different services that they want to have in their communities and then they'll go after them. I don't think we're going to have the same system regardless of where you go; it will differ. And I'm not talking about acute care or long-term care; I'm talking about community-based services.

(2145)

Ms. Haverstock: — I do understand that. Before I ask you my next question, I just wish to make a comment about it however. I really believe very much in providing something that would have a way of measuring what is transpiring, and so that there is some way of people having a sense over a time line where things are going. And if there in fact are going to be differences around the province . . . there are differences in some ways already, where some parts of the province, even in their own hospitals would have a particular area that they may have as an area of expertise where one may not, some people who are particularly skilled and so they've gathered them at one facility — so one does expect differences. But I think it's important for there to be an understanding of . . . and most importantly a collection of information, a database being formed on what is happening. And that's really crucial for us to understand, first of all where we're at, so that when we get where we're going, we know what's actually happened.

So I hope that does take place, and that it's done in a methodical way with time lines and the like, and of course in cooperation with the people who are carrying things out in their own communities.

I know that some of this has been raised by the official opposition, but I do want some comment from you to me about this. Last year, there was comment on the — and it was in quotes, I think, during the budget — a significant increase to child hunger programs, a large percentage increase. While it sounded like an impressive increase, I think it was . . . I mean relative to what there was before, anything would have sounded like a significant increase. I think it turned out to be \$244,000, in real dollars. That increase brought the total budget for child hunger to \$1 million. And if one thinks of it, \$1 million is not particularly a large sum of monies. In fact, a lot of people have been raising criticism that that's the amount that was increased to the provincial secretariat in this previous budget, the budget of late.

All that people know, really, is that if we're going to have to look at the description of what is done by one department, like the one that I've used for illustration purposes, versus the need to feed hungry children in the province, I think there's a question of priorities here. And I'm wondering if you could comment on the dollars and cents figures and how it's actually being addressed as an issue in the province. And I am interested in knowing how it is your department is keeping statistics on this really serious area of problem in our province.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Right. First of all, I believe that the budget was \$740 million and we increased the budget by \$260,000 . . . or 740,000 and we increased it by 260,000 to a total of \$1 million. Nineteen organizations in this province deliver 101 feeding projects in 17 locations. Twelve of these locations are rural and new projects have been announced in the cities of Yorkton, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and North Battleford, as well as the town of Lestock and Spiritwood.

I should tell you that we are told by the groups that are involved in these child feeding programs that for every dollar they receive from us, they're able to lever 3 to 4 to 5 more dollars. So in fact, the \$1 million means much more than that because we have communities through volunteerism and through fund-raising, doing extraordinary work in the communities.

As you may know, the child nutrition and development program was started in 1990 under the former administration. And they did so in consultation with the communities. In terms of the numbers, projects that receive the funds report to us with statistics and information, and that information is not yet available. I notice that you had asked for some information on that. We won't get that information until the end of March. And we're just now compiling that information. But we will provide you with those figures.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. I only have two questions, so I do hope that you will be patient. Earlier this year the people of the province discovered an interesting, if not heroic story of two physically challenged people in Saskatoon who wanted to get married. And both persons are employed by Cosmopolitan Centre in Saskatoon. But one who has cerebral palsy requires constant assistance.

That need for almost constant care may prevent them from fulfilling an aim in life which most people can enjoy. And they can't find suitable housing because of waiting-lists. And they cannot find financial assistance to provide one Lisa Belhumeur, I think her name is, the individual with cerebral palsy, the help that she requires.

That special assistance was available at one time but was cancelled by the previous administration. I'd like to know whether this administration has anything in place that could help these particular individuals or

individuals like these people? And I believe many people in this province are very empathetic as well as sympathetic to the plight of these two individuals involved and would like to know if your department has something that could provide them with assistance.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This is the attendant care issue that you're talking about. The Department of Health and the Department of Social Services, along with Elmwood lodge, is attempting to sort this individual's problem out.

We know that there are many people in this province if given the proper resources, could live independently. These are very expensive resources and obviously there are some financial implications given that the province is facing some horrendous fiscal circumstances. I can assure you that we are committed to ensuring that people in the situation that you've described can live as independently as possible. And this is an issue that we're working on very, very hard.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. I think they'll be most pleased to hear that.

Madam Minister, you mentioned earlier about the pilot project, the integrated, school-based services project, I believe. I'm just wondering if you would be able to provide some detail to me in the near future about how that's working. I . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay. All right. You haven't started yet, but I'm most interested in that.

Madam Minister, Hon. Minister of Social Services, I would like to thank you very much for your responses this evening, and I'd like to thank your officials.

Mr. Neudorf: — I'll make my remarks right at the end, Mr. Speaker.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Supplemental Seniors' Support agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992-93
Consolidated Fund
Budgetary Expenditure
Seniors' Secretariat
Vote 42**

Vote 42 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992-93
Consolidated Fund
Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Vote 36**

Vote 36 agreed to.

The Chair: — That concludes the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the official opposition to thank the minister for a frank and candid dialogue, and also the officials of the department who are very dedicated and capable people. And I know that the job that they have to perform is a very challenging one, and it is a difficult one. And I know that as far as the officials of the . . . not only the officials here, but indeed the officials throughout the entire department are going to do their jobs in implementing the policies which are dictated to them by the government.

And all that we can do is hope that the government stays the course and has policies that will indeed fulfil the needs of the people of this province. Mr. Chairman, again thank you, Madam Minister, and officials.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the opposition for their questions. I appreciated the discussion. I actually anticipated that it might be a lengthier discussion but it wasn't.

I also want to thank my officials. As the member of the opposition has said and being the former minister of Social Services, he knows how incredibly hard these people work, day and night, in some cases, weekends. I think that if the public only knew the kind of dedication that the civil service in this province has to their work, they'd be truly impressed, and I guess that's up to members of the legislature to get that message to the public. So I want to thank my officials as well.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.