

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 1, 1995

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The
Teachers' Federation Act

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, before we recessed for supper, we were discussing Bill 52. Part of this Bill deals with sexual assaults and related charges and complaints against teachers; how will this now be handled under this particular piece of legislation?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The legislation makes it absolutely clear that sexual misconduct or a sexual offence is a professional misconduct. So it allows us to clarify that issue with some precision. Even if a teacher is accused of sexual misconduct there still will be processes that one will go through in order to conclude a decision regarding the professional misconduct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the changes, will a sexual misconduct charge or a conviction be dealt with in a similar manner to what the alcohol and drug abuse professional misconduct was dealt with previously. I know that one has been changed to a medical situation, but will the disciplinary board handle that in a similar manner?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This offence would be dealt with as any other professional misconduct offence.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, I believe the Bill deals with two years retroactively, if a charge was brought forward. This would give the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) the power to provide disciplinary actions against the teacher's certificate even if they were no longer serving as a teacher, if they had lost their job or resigned or whatever the case may be, in the province of Saskatchewan. The STF would have the power to discipline them by removing their certificate for any offence occurring within the last two-year period. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation can commence disciplinary action within a two-year period after a teacher ceases to be a teacher or a member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What of a teacher who may have a charge or a complaint brought against them in another province who then comes to Saskatchewan with the desire to enter the teaching profession here? How are those events going to be dealt with? What if a teacher has a problem in Saskatchewan, leaves Saskatchewan to go to another jurisdiction with the desire to enter the teaching profession there?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If a teacher is coming from outside of

Saskatchewan, and if that teacher does not hold a Saskatchewan teaching certificate, they are asked to sign a confidential disclosure form which asks a number of questions. As well, we would consult with the other jurisdiction, the jurisdiction that they were coming from, to determine whether or not there were any professional misconduct issues.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Would part of the discussion with the other jurisdiction that they were coming from involve determination of a length of time that they may have been involved in that jurisdiction? What I'm thinking of is a person is in British Columbia, has a problem, moves to Alberta, teaches for a year, moves to Saskatchewan. Would you trace them back then to British Columbia or beyond, or would you limit yourself to the one provincial jurisdiction?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well we would limit it to the last jurisdiction, obviously. But I think the other thing you need to know is that, because this is emerging as a major issue, provinces do talk to each other about misconduct issues, particularly if you know that someone is moving from one jurisdiction to another.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well what I can see happening, Madam Minister, is the person leaves British Columbia because they have a problem. It's been discussed with them. No charges are perhaps laid or perhaps charges are laid and a conviction results. They move to Alberta before the conviction takes place and get a teaching job. It's found out that there's a problem and so they resign and move on. So I think you need to, within the disclosure period which you've said is two years . . . that there needs to be some back-checking for the entire duration of those two years, as a minimum, to determine whether or not there are any problems.

Another issue that could be a problem is to check to determine whether or not the individual has changed their name. Reading through the papers today, there is some discussion there about people who change their names and their criminal records do not necessarily follow them. And I'm not sure if the same situation would apply in the teaching profession that a name change . . . would a name change follow if an individual was to have a problem in one jurisdiction, change their name, and move to another?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We do ask them for a statement of their name and date of birth so we're aware of that. So we have provisions to deal with the issue you've just addressed in the legislature.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would you also though be dealing with the problem of the movements within two years if they've moved to Alberta a year ago, moved here — would you go and do the two-year check rather than just simply the last jurisdiction if it's been shorter than the two-year period?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — In terms of the two-year time frame that you're talking about, the two-year time frame is for Saskatchewan teachers with Saskatchewan certificates. And if

they cease being a member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and some professional misconduct information comes to the attention of the profession, then they have a two-year period to launch professional misconduct investigations and remove a teaching certificate if there's found to be a problem.

In terms of your other issue of people coming from outside of Saskatchewan, one of the things that we do not do is we do not offer or issue a Saskatchewan teacher's certificate to a person unless they have a job in the province. And secondly, we do not give them a permanent teaching certificate. We only issue a provisional teaching certificate until that school division is prepared to recommend that they become a permanent . . . or they receive a permanent licence to practice in the province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it's a concern though across the province and indeed across Canada, of teachers who have had problems who move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and how does the school board monitor that. I mean if the teacher is not prepared to disclose the entire truth on their application forms, I'm not sure that the school boards have a lot of access to . . . In the case of the example I used, British Columbia, they may indeed check with Alberta where the person was working before and not find a problem. So how do they go back beyond that is the problem, is how do the school boards check into it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well first of all, if you had a teacher that had only taught a year in Alberta and had other teaching time in other provinces, you do check. As an employer you check. So you would know, based on their résumé, where they had practised, where they had taught. So I don't think that that is as much of an issue.

What I can tell you is that we have a disclosure form that they have to sign and we have a statement of name and date of birth form that they have to sign in order to have a Saskatchewan teacher's certificate issued. And in order to have a Saskatchewan teacher's certificate issued, we have to have confirmation from the board that they're employed, with that they're prepared to recommend that this teacher be issued a Saskatchewan teaching certificate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. One other question on the Act. When it deals with the changing of some of the names and titles in it from The Teachers' Superannuation Act to The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act, what impact is this having on the teachers' federation?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There's no substantive change. The old Teachers' Superannuation Act was replaced with a new title, The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act. So there's no impact.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 28 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the minister and her officials for coming in this evening and answering our questions.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I would like to thank the officials for being here this evening and I would also like to thank the critic for thoughtful questions.

(1915)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 13 — An Act to amend The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 51 — An Act to amend The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act, 1985

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Federation Act

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Education, Training and Employment Vote 5

The Chair: — The last time that this department estimates was before the committee was February 27, and so I will ask that the minister reintroduce her officials to the members of the committee before we proceed.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. To my right is Dan Perrins, deputy minister. Behind Mr. Perrins is Ken Horsman, assistant deputy minister.

To Mr. Horsman's left is Mae Boa, executive director of finance and operations branch. To my left is Lily Stonehouse, assistant deputy minister.

At the back, behind the rail, is Gerry Sing Chin, our manager of school grants; Irv Brunas, director of facilities planning; Paul Fudge, executive director of operations division of Saskatchewan Communications Network; John McLaughlin, executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission; Brady Salloum, director of student financial assistance branch; and John Janzen, assistant director of student financial assistance branch.

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, welcome again this evening and to your officials. I have a couple of questions that come in from the public that I would like to deal with first, Madam Minister. And the first one comes from Mary Jean . . .

An Hon. Member: — Spell it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Maybe that's a good idea, I'll spell it: B-l-a-q-u-i-e-r-e, Blaquiére from Edam; and Mrs. Blaquiére is a licensed practical nurse and she'd like to know if the Department of Education requires all education professionals in schools to take CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and first aid courses, and if not, why. She's concerned there may be an emergency at the school in her area and that the first responders may get there too late to provide assistance.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised by the officials that this is certainly not compulsory in the province of Saskatchewan, where people would have to take CPR, but I'm also advised by the officials that there are many people in school divisions that have that kind of training.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Chairman, a question leading from this, from the public. A number of teachers are now being requested and perhaps even required to provide medical assistance to students within the classroom, providing them with their medications or monitoring their conditions in the sense of asthmas, etc. What types of requirements are needed for the teachers to provide that assistance for the students? And what kinds of protections are provided to them by the department, or by the school boards, in cases where they are providing that assistance and something goes wrong, or because of classroom duties they are not there to provide, say, necessary medical prescription attention at the time that it's supposed to be administered?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that, first of all, in order for any school personnel to administer prescriptions or medications to students that they must first of all have . . . the school must first of all have the consent of the parents or the legal guardian. As well, anyone involved in the administration of medication or prescriptions has to have adequate training in order to do that.

Finally I'd just like to say this. That because this has become a concern of teachers, and they certainly have raised it with me on

at least two or three occasions when I've been visiting with teachers, the department is in the process of striking a committee to review school procedures in the province, particularly around the administration of medication.

We have sent invitations to our educational partners to appoint someone to this committee and the committee will be looking at our present policy to see whether or not that policy requires some amendments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It's not only a concern of teachers, because teachers could be held responsible, but it's also a concern of parents who may send a child to school with Aspirin or something along that line just for a toothache or a headache of the day. And what happens is that the teachers find out about it — through either the student mentions it or they see the tablets, whatever — and then the teachers will not allow the student to have those medications without a note from home.

So it goes both ways. Parents are concerned that their children aren't being given the medication, not prescription medication but over-the-counter drugs that they may be in need of. So that's one concern.

On the other side, they have a concern that their children receive their medications if they are needed, prescription drugs, at the proper times, which may mean every three or four hours or whatever the pharmacist and doctor have prescribed for them.

And so there's a concern there that their students receive those at the appropriate time. The teachers need some protection that if they do indeed administer medications, that they're protected because obviously they're not trained as nurses, doctors, or pharmacologists; they're teachers.

And so there needs to be some protections provided in the system for them if they are to administer those. When you're looking at circumstances, say, with allergic reactions to certain things, when the student needs to have their medicines in place for allergies — in particular bee stings or something like that — where they can sit on the shelf for a considerable period of time without being used, I think that's another area where teachers need to be protected if they're going to administer those. If the date that says it's run out is a month ago and the teacher allows the student to take these drugs or administers those drugs, what kind of responsibility is being placed on the teacher for allowing or for administering those drugs at that particular point in time?

I think it's a very serious question for everyone concerned — the teachers, the school boards, and the students, and the parents, and there needs to be some discussion on that and some resolution, Madam Minister.

(1930)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think that the member has raised a number of important issues and we certainly want to deal with the health and safety issues surrounding student population and

it's our expectation that the committee that we've invited our educational partners to appoint people to will address many of the issues that the member refers to in his discussion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — In this committee, Madam Minister, will you also be bringing in some medical professionals for consultations or at least as resource people to find . . . for them to give their professional opinions of lay people administering drugs to which they might not be totally familiar, in the case of these things.

The parents of that student have sat down with the doctor and have gained some knowledge of what is involved, how you do it, when you do it, etc., how much of the drug is administered. But the teacher, unless they have taken a very special effort to go and learn about that particular drug . . . and in a small school such as I would have in my community, it's possible for the teacher perhaps to learn the frailties of all the students and the medical needs, but in a large school that you would have in a major city, it would be very difficult to gain that information, Madam Minister, on all the students that may require it.

So will the medical profession be involved in this committee to provide some advice and some criteria, some protocols to follow, when teachers may be required to administer these types of drugs?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well first of all, I just want to reiterate that teachers aren't administering these drugs without parental and legal guardian permission. So they don't administer the drugs without the appropriate permission. That's part of our policy.

The second thing is, I don't want to predetermine what the committee is going to decide, but I certainly will ensure that the issues that you've addressed, and I have some of my own, that those issues are dealt with by the committee so that we have a policy that people are comfortable with.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you Madam Minister. The idea of drugs being out of date is one of the recommendations that I would ask that you give your committee. Because I think it puts some onus on those that are in possession of those drugs, which would be the school at that particular time, to ensure that they are current.

If the parents want to take them home and use them, I guess that's their responsibility. But I would hate the idea that somebody came back onto the schools and the school boards and the teachers because of an out-of-date drug.

Madam Minister, another case from the public that I would like to deal with, and you may be familiar with this, is the Tokarzs' situation down at Weyburn. I'm sure you've probably heard about it anyways, where the family has moved out of Weyburn to the rural areas, would like their child, Gillian, to remain in the Weyburn School Division or in the Weyburn school, but they live just outside the Weyburn School Division. I believe in fact that their homestead, their acreage, is a little jog in the boundary that takes them out into the rural division.

Madam Minister, what is happening in that particular case and

what can be done to provide some assistance? Because what's happening is the school bus for the Weyburn school goes past their door, but their daughter is not allowed or has not been allowed to ride that bus to school and the Tokarzs have to find some other means to get their daughter to the school in Weyburn.

I wonder if you could bring the Assembly up to date on what's happening in that particular case.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand it, there are discussions that have taken place with the regional director, the Tokarzs, and the two school divisions. And the other thing that I understand the Tokarzs are trying to do is get their land . . . because they're right on the boundary and I understand that they're not encircled by other people's land, they could ask the two school divisions to agree that their land would go into the Weyburn School Division.

And I guess the final thing that I would suggest that they do is we have just appointed an independent boundaries commission to deal with disputes where school boards can't resolve boundary issues. And that commission will deal with the issues that the department feels, or others feel, could be dealt with when there are differences of opinions when it comes to boundaries and where land should or shouldn't go.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I believe in this particular case that the Tokarzs have considered or are — I'm not sure which one it is — taking their daughter over to their grandmother's place where she would get on another bus and be transported to the Weyburn school. But I believe the additional costs involved in that are about \$1,200 on the taxpayer to do this. And it just seems to be somewhat of a waste of money for the bus to be going past the door and the child not being able to get onto it simply because of bureaucracy. And, Madam Minister, I think that's one of the areas that needs to be looked at with your boundary commission that you are dealing with.

Just what particular regulation though, Madam Minister, is involved in this denial of allowing the Tokarzs' child to simply get onto that bus and move to the Weyburn school rather than going to the rural school division?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well here's the issue. You have the Weyburn School Division which they want their child to attend in the city of Weyburn and their land is not located in the Weyburn School Division, it's located in a rural school division. And this often is a problem around larger urban centres where people who live outside of the division want their children to go into the urban centre from the rural community.

In order for that to occur there has to be agreement between the rural school division and, in this case, the Weyburn School Division. There has been no such agreement and it's impossible. The Minister of Education does not get involved in these kinds of concerns. There's nothing I can do to force that rural school division and the Weyburn School Division to enter into an agreement. This is a situation that has to be resolved at the local level.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I wasn't asking you to bend the rules or anything on it. I was just wondering which regulations were the ones that prevented Gillian from going to the Weyburn school?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You see school divisions receive grants for students residing in that school division, and if a rural school division agrees to let a student go to an urban school division, then there is a tuition fee agreement where the grant and perhaps some of the local taxes go with that student into the Weyburn School Division.

And in this case — and there are other cases like it — the rural school division and the Weyburn School Division have not been able to arrive at a decision where that young child could go into the Weyburn School Division and have the accompanying grant go with her. There's been no mutual agreement there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Do you know if there has been any . . . what the discussions have involved in this particular case? Has the rural school division — I don't know which one that is that would be involved — have they commented on whether or not they would allow Gillian to go to the Weyburn school if the grant was not transferred? Would they be allowed . . . or has Weyburn been asking that the grant plus the land taxes be transferred? Do you know what is happening in that particular case and where the dispute is at?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand from the officials, that there has been no agreement between the rural school division and the Weyburn School Division; that the Tokarzs are now thinking about moving . . . trying to get their land moved into the Weyburn School Division boundaries. In order for that to take place . . . it can take place through mutual agreement or it's one of those items that could be referred to the independent boundaries commission when there is a boundary dispute.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But to your knowledge then, there's been no discussion of letting Gillian go to Weyburn without a transfer of the grant or the tax base?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The answer is no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'll move on to another subject, Madam Minister. I have here a copy of the *Trustee News* from the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) in April of '95, and they mention here that Mr. Horsman from your department met with the SSTA executive to outline an Equity in Education Working Committee proposed by your department. I wonder if you could give us an outline of what you foresee for this committee, who would be on it, etc., what was their time frame, what's their reference.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This is a six-member committee that represents the various educational partners. It's looking at a number of issues including increasing the numbers of females in administrative roles, increasing the numbers of aboriginal teachers or teachers with disabilities, addressing the issue of

girls in the classroom, particularly student girls who should be encouraged to take mathematics and science. As I understand it, the committee is halfway through its work and will soon be reporting its recommendations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Could you give us the time reference of when this committee was implemented and when you expect them to complete their duties and who the members of the committee are?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The process began shortly after Christmas and I'm advised that we hope to complete it this fall. So that would be the answer to your question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's the answer to one of my questions. The other question is: who is sitting there?

(1945)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We are going from memory; we don't have the exact information here. But I'm advised that Ed Bath from LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents); Tim Yee from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Barry Bashutski from the SSTA; Donalda Ford from the Human Rights Commission; Gillian McCreary from the Department of Education, Training and Employment; and Ken Horsman from the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. How is this committee being funded? Is it being funded out of the Department of Education? And the members that are on the committee, are they being paid per diems or are they receiving any compensation? How is that working?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that there are no costs. When the educational partners put people on these kinds of committees they pick up their own expenses. And in this case, there are three people who represent either a government department or an independent commission, and the department or the commission would look after the expenses. But they're, from the government's point of view, very little expense because they're located in Regina; the meetings occur here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Well perhaps for the government's purposes, there are no costs; but for the taxpayers concerned, there is a cost to each and every one of them because they are being paid either through the Department of Education, through taxes collected to pay the STF funds, or through property taxes for the SSTA — it all comes from the taxpayers' pocket at the end of the day, Madam Minister. So there is indeed a cost there.

How many meetings are being planned, or how many meetings are being dealt with on this particular item, or what kind of special equipment would be needed, if any, to deal with this, and what kind of travel is being contemplated? Are all of these people situated in Regina, therefore no travel is necessary? Or are they going around the province seeking advice? What kind of consultation is involved?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that there've been three meetings held to date; there will be another three to four meetings between now and the fall; that Ed Bath from LEADS and Tim Yee from the STF reside outside of Regina.

And when I say there is no cost, what I'm saying is that there is no cost to the Department of Education, Training and Employment, which I assumed we're doing the estimates for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, we are indeed doing the estimates for Education, Training and Employment. And the entire budget of Education, Training and Employment comes from the taxpayer. Every single penny of it comes from the taxpayer. And that's what we're here to ask you questions about, is how you disburse those pennies from the taxpayer, Madam Minister. So indeed, while it may not be a direct cost to your department, it is a direct cost to the taxpayer.

So, Madam Minister, the two people who live outside of Regina, their costs are being covered by their associations or the teachers' federation?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The areas that this committee is to review, I believe you said the numbers of females in the administrative positions within education, the number of native teachers within the education system, and getting girls into mathematics and perhaps the sciences.

Madam Minister, along that line, this committee, will they be making recommendations as to whether or not affirmative actions are desirable or necessary, or are they going to be making some form of recommendation as to how to increase those numbers without having a formalized plan in place to mandate that these changes be made?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that the committee will hopefully complete its work by the end of September; that the committee will make recommendations to the department, or the committee may make some recommendations to myself or whomever the minister is; that there is no predetermined agenda as to whether or not we're moving in an affirmative action direction.

I know this, that we had the provincial Indicators Report last year that showed we did not have nearly enough women in administrative positions. And I did ask the department to see what we could do to improve this particular indicator of our education system so that it was more reflective of society.

This year we're planning on putting in the Indicators Report the numbers of first nations or aboriginal teachers, Metis teachers, in our schools. And obviously there has been a great deal of interest lately as to how we assist first nations and Metis students complete their high school education. So this committee is looking at a number of equity issues and they will be making some recommendations to the department, and maybe some recommendations to the minister. But those recommendations have not been predetermined and that this is not necessarily leading to an affirmative action program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You stated that when you looked at the numbers within the education system that you felt there was not enough women in administration. I wonder if you could clarify for me what you mean by enough. What levels are you talking about? What makes enough and what makes it not enough?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well we know that there are gender distributions in elementary school and that predominantly in elementary schools, for instance, we have a large percentage of women teaching in elementary schools. They are not necessarily . . . those numbers are not necessarily reflected in the numbers of principals or vice-principals. We know that we're having increasing numbers of women teaching in high school, and if you look at the percentage we do not see that type of distribution throughout the administrative structure.

We also know that, while we have large numbers, a large percentage, of women in the teaching profession, that large percentage is not necessarily represented at the division board level. We do have more women going into administration at the board level, where they're becoming directors of education or assistant directors of education, or curriculum specialists, or consultants, but it's still not reflective of the general distribution of women throughout our K to 12 system. And so I think it's important that we take a look at some of the systemic barriers to why that's occurring and what can we do to begin to remedy that issue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I wonder if maybe you could give us a breakdown, then, of those percentages in the various levels — elementary school, high school, administration — all of those various areas that you would be measuring.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We know that approximately 60 per cent of the teaching force are female and we know that approximately 22 per cent of the people in administration are female. So obviously there is a difference in the teaching force versus women in administration, so we want to take a look at some of the systemic areas that may lead to that fact.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. How about in high school? What would the levels be at . . . 60 per cent would cover everyone I'm assuming, so what would it be in high school, percentages men, percentage of women, that are teaching in high school?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't have the exact detail here, but we'll get it for you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When you state that there are 22 per cent of the administrative level positions are female I would agree you that that's disproportionate to the number of women within our society. On the other hand, you could also say that 60 per cent females in teaching is disproportionate to the numbers of women in society also. So when you're talking about an equity program will you also be dealing with that 60 per cent number or 40 per cent men that are involved in teaching to somehow bring a

balance into that also?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I think that for those of us who are teachers, it certainly is a profession and was a profession that women were encouraged to go into. And it's my impression that we are encouraging men to go into elementary school education.

Historically what's happened is, men have gone into high school education; women went into elementary school education. And we're now seeing a reversal of that where more and more men are going into elementary education and more women are going into high school education and teaching the maths and the sciences.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But will you be providing, Madam Minister, an equity program though to encourage that. You have a study in place now to encourage more women to enter into administration or to promote that in some manner. You're talking about an equity program to promote more natives into the teaching profession. You're talking of an equity program to provide for more girls to enter into the maths and sciences. But, Madam Minister, are you also going to have a program in place to promote more men to enter the teaching profession?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'd just like to say this to the member, that the Saskatchewan school trustees or trustees across the province have done a good job; and so have our other educational partners, have done a good job, in beginning to change a predominantly male administration to more of a little bit of a mix.

So we've come a long way in the last 20 years. That doesn't mean we don't have some ways to go. But I just want to assure the member — who obviously is asking the questions on behalf of a constituency of people — that this is not about enforced anything. This is about having a discussion around equity issues, particularly when you see the number of people who are interested — particularly women — into getting into administration.

And it's ensuring that there are no systemic barriers to women moving into administrative positions as there are no systemic barriers to first nations and Metis people who might be interested in teaching and have the credentials to, in fact, teach in Saskatchewan classrooms and have those credentials in spades.

(2000)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Well I'm glad you brought up the idea of the constituency of people out there, because further on in that same article, the SSTA says: however the association has been less supportive of mandatory equity programs. And indeed that is the case, Madam Minister. While in certain jurisdictions and amongst certain members of society the idea of mandatory equity programs is very popular, amongst another equally probably large percentage of the population it's unpopular.

So, Madam Minister, while I look at my own school board,

currently we have three women on the board and two men. Prior to the last changes that were made, we had four women on the board and one man. Our school division has a male director of education and a female secretary-treasurer. I look around my local RMs (rural municipality) at the administration in places there and we have a significant number of women who now hold those positions and do a very good job of it, and do a very good job of it.

So, Madam Minister, I think the changes are coming. Maybe they're not fast enough, but they are coming, and I would not want to see a mandatory quota system put in place. I think that is probably more disruptive and more negative than it is beneficial because whenever it seems to happen there's always some resistance.

I saw a demonstration one time of while people don't mean to resist, it does take place. And the demonstration was: two people put their hand up and put their hands against each other, and without even consciously trying, they always resist that pressure. And that happens in these cases where you provide a mandatory equity program in place, that there is always some natural, built-in resistance, Madam Minister, which is to the detriment of the program.

So I believe that an equity program could be put in place, could be encouraged without it necessarily being mandatory. And I would certainly encourage all the girls to go into maths and sciences, because it is an area that is going to be very important, and it is currently important and will be even more important in the future. And the females of our society certainly have the capabilities to excel in all of those areas. They need take a back place to no one on that area, Madam Minister.

So I believe that when you're looking at these recommendations that may come down from the committee, I think it's very important that you keep in mind that mandatory will generate some resistance to it.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I would say this to you, that the way to avoid mandatory anything is to respond. And one of the reasons behind the equity committee is to have the major partners in education respond to some indicators of the success of our education system.

We are encouraging, through this committee, a full and open discussion about some of the reasons — systemic barriers perhaps, or some of the other reasons — why it is that women, while they're applying to go into administrative positions, aren't necessarily getting those positions when we know many of those women have good credentials.

We're asking the question, why is it that there may be 20 or 30 per cent population of first nations or Metis students at a particular school, but we do not see a first nations or Metis teacher? We know that our educational institutions are graduating students from Gabriel Dumont Institute, SUNTEP (Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program), NORTEP (northern teacher education program), and other programs. We are graduating many first nations and Metis teachers in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so we have to ensure that school boards consider the hiring of first nations and Metis people, particularly when we know that there is a 90 per cent high school drop-out rate amongst that particular group of people.

And so how do you begin to change that fact? And one of the ways you begin to change that fact is to have Indian and Metis role models in our schools.

So I think that this is a discussion that everybody in Saskatchewan should welcome, particularly our educational partners, because we have some issues that need addressing.

We have an issue of a disparity: the numbers of women in administrative positions — that's a fact — relative to their numbers. And we also have a disparity of Indian and Metis teachers in our classrooms relative to the numbers of Indian and Metis students in the classroom.

And we do know that we are graduating good Indian and Metis teachers that have the same credentials as everybody else that's graduating from our College of Education programs. And we want to ensure that we begin to see more and more Indian and Metis people in our classrooms because that reflects the classroom of the 1995s.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. Well let's take a look at the number of teachers who have graduated from our universities in Saskatchewan, let's say the last three years. Can you give me the numbers of the students who have graduated from the teaching schools in the province in the last three years; give me a number for each year if you would, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that we graduate about 800 teachers a year from the College of Education, U of S (University of Saskatchewan); U of R (University of Regina), and Gabriel Dumont Institute and SUNTEP.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. How many native teachers have we graduated in those years?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We are estimating, and we think it could be between 50 and 60 Indian and Metis teachers. And they would come from SUNTEP Regina, SUNTEP P.A. (Prince Albert), SUNTEP Saskatoon, NORTEP, and ITEP (Indian teacher education program). So we have three programs, and we think that we're graduating between 50 and 60 students, but we're not precise and we'll get you that information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Okay of the 800 teachers that graduate from the university, would that include 50 to 60 Indian Metis or are they separate?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — They graduate from the College of Education, Saskatoon, and Regina. I think I know where you're taking this. I think what you're going to say is that we have unemployed teachers and we have unemployed Indian and Metis teachers. Here's the thing that troubles me and I'll put my bias on the line. What troubles me is this: that we are educating Indian and Metis people in the province of Saskatchewan and

we have done so for a number of years, particularly in the teaching programs, and these are highly successful teaching programs.

And what we're finding is that while there are teachers being hired in certain parts of Saskatchewan throughout the last several years, often Indian and Metis people were going to Alberta or British Columbia, and they were being hired there.

It is troublesome when you have Bates prize winners who . . . those are people who are the most outstanding teachers who graduate from the College of Education in Saskatoon and they don't get a permanent job. That is troublesome and I think that that's an issue that we need to begin to address.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I'll talk to you a bit about Alberta and British Columbia. I'm wondering how many of the 800 teachers that graduate every year get a job in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't have that information. We'd have to get that from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister, because that's going to be very important information dealing with the equity program; because the next question is, how many of the 50 to 60 native, Metis teachers that graduated got jobs in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised by the associate minister that in NORTEP about 80 per cent of the teachers are hired; in SUNTEP, about 60 per cent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Your officials would have no idea what the percentages would be in the 800 that graduate every year? If you listen to the media, or you listen to the complaints from teachers, they would give the impression that a very small percentage of teachers get hired every year. So if the people coming out of SUNTEP and the other programs for the native and Metis are getting 60 to 80 per cent, they may very well be getting a very high percentage in comparison to those coming out of the other programs. Sure it's small numbers, but that's all you've got in the program, Madam Minister, is 60 to 80.

So, Madam Minister, I think it's . . . when you're looking at those numbers, it's important to say yes, we have a very small number of native teachers in the system. But if you're only graduating 60 a year, it's going to be very difficult over the . . . to get a large number in a short period of time into the system.

You talked about Alberta. Well, Madam Minister, maybe the question needs to be asked, what's the starting salary for a teacher in Saskatchewan compared to B.C. (British Columbia)? Maybe that has an impact on why the teachers who graduate from the native studies program go to Alberta or British Columbia to teach. It may have nothing . . . with Saskatchewan being prejudiced against natives; it may very well have something to do with the economy and the economics of going to Alberta or British Columbia to teach.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand it, Alberta has been hiring Indian and Metis teachers and so has British Columbia. And there are, quote, head-hunters that come here, or have over the last several years come here, to hire teachers because we have specific programs for Indian and Metis students, which I understand is different than Alberta or British Columbia. I believe Manitoba has a similar training program to ours.

As well, just for your edification, our teacher training programs — particularly SUNTEP — is a program that is a good program. And I think that if you ask people who have hired teachers who have SUNTEP, particularly the Regina Catholic School Division, they would tell you that they have received excellent teachers and they regularly take a trip to SUNTEP to hire people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the fact that we have a good program is excellent, but that doesn't explain why the people have gone to Alberta or British Columbia to work. The fact that head-hunters are prepared to come here and approach our students and our graduating teachers to work some place else, and they go, doesn't say anything about the school system in Saskatchewan. It says something about the incentives that were used to move them away. And that incentive, in most cases, is going to be dollar bills.

And that is what causes us perhaps to have a lower percentage hired into Saskatchewan out of these programs than the 100 per cent that you seem to be wanting to aim at. So, Madam Minister, it's dollar bills that are moving people. It's not the fact that there is a roadblock in Saskatchewan that doesn't allow them to enter the system.

So again I ask you the question: what's the difference in the starting teacher's salary in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, since those are the two provinces you used as an example?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — First of all, I just want to be very clear with the member. What we're trying to do here is to promote the notion that Indian and Metis people who graduate from our institutions of higher learning such as the colleges of education — U of R and U of S — find themselves into a Saskatchewan classroom. Particularly when we know that the numbers of Indian and Metis children in our classrooms are increasing. Particularly when we know that we have a 90 per cent high school drop-out rate.

Now you can get on your high horse about the fact that we are trying to have a discussion around equity issues in the classroom. That is not leading to anything other than a number of recommendations to the department or to the minister. I think that this is a logical thing for the province to be engaged in.

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And it's logical because we need to have a well-educated and well-trained population going into the next century and beyond. And if we don't begin to address the whole issue of a high Indian and Metis high school drop-out rate, I think that the

province will bear the consequences of that.

So if I were you, Member, I wouldn't be getting on my high horse about the government thinking about equity issues, given some of the issues that we're facing. And it might be helpful, Member, if you, instead of getting on your horse, came and discussed this with the department if you have some problems with the notion of equity.

I don't know if you have a problem with sexism; I don't know if you think women shouldn't be in classrooms, shouldn't be in administration. I don't know if you don't think Indian and Metis people should be in the classroom and in administration, or disabled people in the classroom, in administration. What is your point?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I asked you earlier what was enough, and you didn't respond to what was enough. You were the one who said there is not enough women in administration. I asked you what was enough, and you said, something closer to society's level. But you wouldn't qualify it, Madam Minister. I asked you about mandatory, and you wouldn't say that it would not be mandatory. The fact is, you left that door very wide open, Madam Minister.

So, Madam Minister, what are you going to do to increase the percentage of native teachers in Saskatchewan? Are you going to force every native who graduates from the teaching program to remain in Saskatchewan? Because you yourself said that a significant number were going to Alberta or British Columbia.

Madam Minister, what are you going to do? Are you going to set quotas for the school boards, that they have to hire a certain number of native teachers, so that they in turn will have to send head-hunters out across Canada to find native teachers? Or are you going to provide special monetary incentives to native teachers to remain in Saskatchewan? What's it going to be?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Do you know what I want? I want a discussion. And that's what we're having. No one can solve the problems of not enough women in administration. I can't, you can't, the trustees can't, the teachers can't, LEADS can't. We can begin to address that together; we can have a discussion.

No one can solve the problem of not enough Indian and Metis teachers in the classroom, but I think that the partners of LEADS, the FSIN, the Metis Society, the SSTA, the teachers' federation, the Department of Education, parents, we can begin to have this discussion. It's a discussion. It's about making some recommendations to the department to deal with equity issues. It is not about enforced, mandatory affirmative action. I said that earlier. I said it's about a discussion that will lead to some recommendations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, there is indeed a very big difference between a discussion on how we improve the circumstances to allow girls to go into mathematics . . . They're not disallowed today but very few are . . . and a growing number are doing it, but traditionally fewer have done so, and it's my belief that it is changing and perhaps it's not changing fast enough. While we need to encourage it, I don't believe we

can force it, Madam Minister.

The same as the health boards. The health board changes were coming, but to force them is very difficult to make it work. And the same deals with equity both within the administration level, with natives in the system, in the teaching profession, and girls in the hard science classes, mathematics. That is certainly changing and the women and the girls that are involved in this, and the natives, are certainly showing that there is absolutely no reason why they shouldn't be there.

And for the member from Elphinstone . . . I wanted to say Shaunavon because that's where he took off from. But, Mr. Member, it is very important that everyone in society have an equal opportunity to participate and that roadblocks not be put in anybody's way, and I mean anybody and everybody, be they male, female, native, or some other ancestry. It shouldn't be there. But to force changes, to mandate that they have to be there, I believe will be counter-productive. And that's why, Madam Minister, I wanted to emphasize that even the SSTA is not supportive of mandatory programing. And again for the member from Elphinstone who wants to participate in this, and I believe he had a lot . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Elphinstone. Okay. Some place in Regina. Actually, I'm not sure why he runs in that constituency; he doesn't live there.

But, Madam Minister, I believe it's very important that these programs be an encouragement, but not to the detriment of anyone else in the system.

But, Madam Minister, I'd like to go on to another area, another program within the Department of Education, and that's the literacy program. And I would like to know what the department's involvement is with the literacy program.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We spend approximately \$764,000 on literacy programs, and this is based on a volunteer tutor literacy initiative and we send grants to the various regional colleges. Read Saskatoon, the Regina Public Library, Wascana Institute, Kelsey, Palliser, Woodland, the Service Fransaskois D'Education, the Circle Project and the WEST (workers' education for skills training) program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are you involved in any literacy programs in other provinces or overseas any place?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Not that we're aware of.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The reason I was asking, because I thought I heard a report on the radio about some involvement by the Department of Education in a literacy program in Tanzania. And I was just wondering what our involvement was in that and what this was all about.

An Hon. Member: — In Outer Mongolia.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The minister from Elphinstone believes it should have been in Outer Mongolia but I think that's where he's heading and that's why they need a literacy program there.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The department isn't involved in any kind of literacy program in Tanzania.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Any other African country, Madam Minister? Anything offshore at all?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The department's not involved in any offshore literacy program, any program outside of the boundaries of the province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well the minister from Elphinstone, who wants to really get involved in this, is suggesting we get out the atlas and ask a question about every country, which is somewhere in the 180 names or so.

Madam Minister, another issue that I'd like to deal with is section 93 of the BNA Act (British North America Act), where it's provincial responsibility to deal with education. Madam Minister, how does this section of the Canadian constitution affect education and who has the authority and the jurisdictions to deal with education in Canada?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Education in the country of Canada is within the purview of the provinces and the territories.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Is that an exclusive jurisdiction?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Post-secondary education historically has been cost-shared with the federal government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Does the federal government have jurisdiction over post-secondary education or are they a willing partner in funding post-secondary education under provincial jurisdiction?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think it's fair to say that the Government of Canada, under various administrations, has been a willing partner in the funding of EPF (established programs financing) post-secondary education. They have done this from a philosophical basis where they felt it . . . given that there were provinces in Canada that were have-not provinces, that there should be some equity and fairness in the delivery of post-secondary education, not only for central Canada but for provinces and territories outside of central Canada.

So they have been willing partners and they have funded post-secondary institutions such as universities and technical schools, regional colleges, to ensure that regardless of where you live in this country, that you can have access to a post-secondary education, and that access does not depend on what's in your pocketbook but it depends on what's in your head.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, does the Canadian government have jurisdiction in which to mandate certain criteria within education or do they participate with the province as a partner but not as in jurisdiction over what is being taught?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The answer is no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The “O” part because it always costs me something. Madam Minister, if the province . . . if the federal government doesn't have any jurisdiction in which to mandate the necessary education, how is it that under Bill C-68, the Firearms Act, the federal government can mandate education though — requirements dealing with firearms in this province — when they don't have jurisdiction, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I just have to say that I know that you're into the gun control legislation and I think that this is a question that could be best asked in Justice estimates when you have the minister, who is a lawyer, knows something about constitutional law, and knows something about guns.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I have to disagree with you in your comments that the minister knows something about constitutional law.

Madam Minister, we're talking about the education here, we're talking about jurisdiction over education. Under Bill C-68, the federal government is mandating certain educational requirements for firearms use and ownership, which I believe falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces, Madam Minister, because it's up to the province . . . they have specific jurisdiction under section 93 of the Canadian constitution to provide education and the courses and the mandate for that.

So, Madam Minister, how do you as the Minister of Education in Saskatchewan propose to allow the federal government to infringe on your jurisdiction?

(2030)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think what you're talking about is firearm safety. This is not within the purview of post-secondary institutions in the province of Saskatchewan nor, I suspect, anywhere.

Firearm safety is not something that we teach at our post-secondary institutions. We teach law, medicine, pharmacy, engineering, technology, nursing, health sciences, those kinds of things. We do not particular . . . we do not teach a particular safety aspect of gun handling.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if the department was to have the desire to enter into that field, would you then have jurisdiction?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm afraid we're going to have to get you the answer to this question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I realize it's not a simple question, even though the question was very short.

I think it's important that consideration be given to all the educational opportunities within Saskatchewan, dealing with firearms in this particular case, but in other areas that can

impact on our citizens and have an impact on our education system. When it comes to the provisions of education in various areas involving government legislation, I think that the province needs to be aware and be a participatory partner in that education.

If you look at some of the private industry situations, of say somebody within IPL (Interprovincial Pipe Line Co.) providing a course that doesn't involve the government, I don't know that the province needs to be involved. But when the federal government is involved in an education circumstance, both in providing the education courses and providing the testing, I believe that in those circumstances the provincial government should also be involved because that is an area of provincial jurisdiction, when governments are providing educational opportunities. And I would look forward to your answer in this particular area, Madam Minister.

I'd like to switch to another topic now and you can respond to that if you would like to, Madam Minister. I know that the former minister of Justice was getting a little nervous about the constitutional issues because the last time we got into the constitution, he shut the House down.

So, Madam Minister, I'd like to talk to you a bit about school closures that are occurring in Saskatchewan. And I wonder if you could give me a list of the schools that closed within the past year and those which are slated for closure in the upcoming year.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You want the names of the schools that have closed in the last couple of years . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, the last year — Denare Beach, Livelong, Speers, Prairie River, St. Gregor, St. Mary, Herschel Elementary, Fort Pelly, Arran, Quinton, Abernethy, Killaly, Fenwood, Dickson, Lafleche, and Wood Mountain.

Schools that are proposed for closure this year, we understand that there are perhaps four schools, four or five schools that are proposed, but they aren't necessarily going to be closed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Have any of the school boards made proposals to you or applications to you to proceed with school closures?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — They do not apply to the department to close a school. What they do is notify the community that it's their intention to close the school.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. To the best of your knowledge, have all of the proper notifications in the schools that you mentioned closing, have all of those steps been followed in the proper manner?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — To the best of our knowledge, for the five schools where there is potential for a school closure, they have followed the proper procedure, as we changed The Education Act to ensure that we wouldn't get into some of the difficulties and we would follow a proper process in the province. And we understand that that process is being followed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does your department have any involvement whatsoever with the determination of the closure of a school? Do you, say, take into consideration where the students will be moved to when a school closure takes place?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Under The Education Act this is a local decision, and so the local board makes the decision and the Department of Education in no way influences that decision.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What I was leading up to was the concern about the time that a student is on a school bus. And in the determination of which schools are closed and which ones aren't, I believe your statement at the SSTA convention, I believe it was, or perhaps it was LEADS, that you said that an hour and a half one way was the maximum that any student should be on the bus.

So I'm wondering if these schools that closed or the ones that are proposed or possible closures, whether or not any determination has been made on the time factor that a student would be on the bus from their home to the school which they may have been moved to.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — To the best of our knowledge, the hour and a half is being adhered to, that no student will be on the bus for more than an hour and a half one way. And we're not aware of any incidents in the province where that is not the case, that students are getting on the bus prior to 7:30 a.m. in the morning or getting home after 5:30 — or 5 I guess it would be. So we're not aware of any school division that is keeping children on the bus for longer than an hour and a half one way. And if you're aware of that situation, we'd like to hear about it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, I'm not aware of any circumstances like that and that's why I was asking. But when you look at an hour and a half on the bus, in most cases an hour and a half, if it was exactly an hour and a half would not be getting on the bus at 7:30. The bus doesn't pull up at the door at 9 o'clock to allow the students in. You're generally looking at 10 to 15 minutes. So if it was an hour and a half, you're potentially looking at 7:15 that they could be getting on the bus.

Madam Minister, a number of the smaller rural schools are having difficulty both retaining teachers and students. And I'm not sure which one comes first, the teacher or the egg here. But how many school divisions, or how many schools within the divisions, are running double, triple, or four classes to a . . . four grades to a classroom?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That is not a statistic that the department keeps records on. But we do know that there have always been multi-grade classrooms, not only in rural Saskatchewan, but there are many, many, many, many multi-grade classrooms in the cities.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm just wondering if there is an increase though in the multi-grade classrooms over the last few years? If it's a trend that's expanding or if it's contracting or remaining the same? I would

suspect, especially in the rural areas, that it's probably a circumstance where it's growing — that there are more multi-grade classrooms as the smaller schools remain open and lose pupils.

And also because of funding cut-backs, there's fewer teachers available to teach within those classrooms so that the classes are expanded to accommodate the number of teachers available within the division rather than just the number of pupils that are available.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Right. I think you need to look at the time frame. When I was a kid growing up in rural Saskatchewan, for my first six grades I was in a classroom with four grades — grades 1 to 4. And then when I hit grade 5, it was grade 5, 6, 7, and 8. And then of course, that school closed and the population went to a larger centre and we reduced the numbers of grades in a particular classroom.

This has always been an issue for people living in rural Saskatchewan, unless you lived in a large centre. And it certainly is an issue for people living in urban Saskatchewan because we have lots of split grades, where you may have too many grade 1's for two classrooms and too many grade 2's for two classrooms, and so you have a grade 1/2 split, or whatever.

So we don't keep statistics on that information. But we have not . . . we're not aware of any evidence that the numbers of multi-grade classrooms are increasing in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I didn't go to the same school you did, but I went to a 1 to 8 school that had two rooms, so we had basically the same types of circumstances. But my younger brothers and sisters, their school had one class, one grade to a classroom. Now my children, who are going to that very same school, are now back into the multi-grade circumstances.

So over the period of a few years — not necessarily how many years since I went to school but over a period of a few years — that change has gone from the multi-grade classroom to the single grade and now back to the multi-grade because of the decrease in the number of students in the area. And I believe that circumstance is happening not just in my home community, but across the province, especially in the rural areas.

Indeed in the urban centres you will get some classes that are multi-grade because you have one and a half classrooms of grade 1's and one and a half classrooms of grade 2. But the majority of grade 1's and grade 2's in the school are in single-grade classrooms and it's only a much smaller number that are in the multi-grade.

So I'd like to ask you, in the urban areas, when you have a multi-grade classroom, which students— grade 1 and grade 2 — which students would go into the multi-grade classroom?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Just as I understand it, this is up to the, you know, the principals and the school to determine which children go into which classroom, which multi-graded room.

But I just want to make a point, that there's no streaming here. We're not putting the smart grade 1's with smart grade 2's, so if that's the point you're trying to get at, that's not occurring, from what I understand.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I had no idea how the determinations were going to be made, and that's why I inquired, because I'm curious.

Madam Minister, I'm not opposed to multi-grade classrooms. I believe that there are some strong points and some benefits from multi-grade classrooms. There's also some negatives there. If you have a student who is somewhat weaker than his peers, the multi-grade classroom can work against that student. They fall behind and have a great deal of difficulty catching up because the teacher has to deal not just with that individual grade and that individual course at that present time, but with the other grade and whatever course that they are also hoping to study.

(2045)

So I think if we can, we should try and diminish the number of multi-grade classrooms. But unfortunately because of the cut-backs in education funding over the years, that is becoming more and more difficult to do so. Not only has it meant though cut-backs within the teaching profession, and the STF says that there's been a thousand less teachers available . . . not available, a thousand less teaching positions in Saskatchewan over the last number of years.

I'd like to know what has happened with the student population over that same time period that the drop of 1,000 teaching positions has occurred.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Since '91-92 school year — so we're going back — the numbers of students have dropped by about 1,300 in the province of Saskatchewan, so the numbers of students enrolled in our public education system. Now what I want to say is that many first nations have developed their own schools and we've seen a transfer of students from a public education system to band-controlled schools.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Would this also include the people in the separate school system and in the third French school board?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The movement from the public system, or the separate system, into a native school system is occurring indeed across the province. And some of those are being successful and some of those are being less successful. And sometimes those students move back and forth, Madam Minister, so I can understand where it may be difficult to keep track of the total numbers in and out.

But would you have any indication whatsoever how many students might be in the native-run school programs through the different band councils?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't keep track of the numbers of students in their system, but we do know in the last three years that there have been students that have gone from a public education system to a band-controlled school.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You're correct in that, that there has been a number have moved, but some of them have come back also in that time period. I can think of one school within my area that a number of students moved from the public system into the band school and then a number of them have also moved back again. So there's some movement back and forth there.

Madam Minister, in that same time, can you confirm the STF numbers that there's a thousand less teaching positions, or is some other number relevant?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Since '91-92, it's dropped approximately 600 full-time equivalents.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Almost two pupils per teacher is the ratio there; decrease of 1,300 pupils and 600 teachers. It seems to be somewhat dramatic. I mean for 1,300 pupils you should have maybe . . . well, not even a hundred, 80, 80 teachers or something.

An Hon. Member: — They're all in the same place. They're all in the same place . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — All the teachers and pupils were lost in the same place, Madam Minister? I think that's stretching it a little bit.

Madam Minister, what is the reason, your interpretation of the reason, for such a dramatic decrease in the number of teachers in comparison to the 1,300 student decrease that we've had in the province. And what impact has that decrease had on the pupil/teacher ratio in this province?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What are the reasons? I think we know the reasons, and the reasons are between 1982 and 1991, there was a group of people that ran this province into the ground and developed a \$15 billion debt. And when our government came to office in November of 1991, we were stuck with a fiscal basket case that we had to make right if this province wasn't — with all due respect — turned over to the federal government to administer because we were basically bankrupt.

And so what do you do? You have a huge Health budget and you have a Department of Education budget, the two big spending items. And the province very methodically told our educational partners that there would be a reduction in funding to the K-12 system and our post-secondary partners. And we reduced educational spending by minus two, minus two, and minus four, or we took 8 per cent out of the system.

Obviously that has an impact upon the numbers of people employed as teachers and support staff. It has an impact on programs. It has an impact upon student/teacher ratio.

But had we not done that, sir, we would be spending more than

\$850 million a year in interest payments, we would not have seen a credit rating increase, and we would not have been able to announce for the first time since you people . . . well since we left office, since we left office in 1981-82, a balanced budget.

And we did that with the help of our educational partners, our health partners, the taxpayers, the population of Saskatchewan. And I think because of the fiscal situation now in the province, where we have a balanced budget, we can say to our partners, next year you can expect to receive a 2 per cent increase barring some unforeseen circumstance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister, for your history of the province. But you've missed out one or two small pieces in there, Madam Minister, that perhaps you need to be refreshed on.

In 1982 there was approximately \$5 billion in debt in the province. So when you talk about the \$15 billion that you took over, there was a significant piece there in place when the previous administration took over. If you talk to the Provincial Auditor today, he'll tell you that there is about \$22 billion in debt for the province's jurisdiction.

So, Madam Minister, using your own numbers . . . and I believe it was the Provincial Secretary the other day who used the figures of approximately a billion dollars a year in debt put in place by the previous administration. If that is the case, Madam Minister, and using your own numbers of \$15 billion in debt in 1991, using the information from the Provincial Secretary that the previous administration put in \$1 billion a year in their term of office, you end up with 5 to \$6 billion already in place from your previous administration, Madam Minister.

So when the previous administration came into power in 1982, they were not debt free; it had been left there by you. If in the upcoming election some other administration takes over, they will inherit about \$22 billion in debt from your administration, Madam Minister, of which about 12 to 13 billion of that will have been put in place by the NDP (New Democratic Party) governments over the years, Madam Minister, which also includes a significant amount of debt that was brought over in 1991 from the Crown corporations to the consolidated accounts, Madam Minister.

And if I look back, Madam Minister, to that period of time, from 1986 to 1991, and look through Education estimates, I don't remember seeing in there, Madam Minister, any place where you said, as the critic for Education, that there should be a decrease in funding in that time frame. Not one quote — not one.

But I find a significant number of quotes, Madam Minister, during the 1986 to the 1991 period, in which you said there was not enough spending in this province on education — not enough spending.

So, Madam Minister, when you stand in your place and you say that the previous administration wasted the money, well, Madam Minister, if they wasted the money, you were demanding that more be wasted. So, Madam Minister, you are

as guilty of the debt of this province as any and every other citizen is, because of your demands to spend, spend, and spend more.

Never once, never once did you say, stop, you're spending too much. It was always the demand by you and every one of your colleagues that the spending should increase, that the spending should continue. Whatever it was, was not enough. A 3 per cent increase in the Education budget in 1990 was not enough. We have to have more. How can the students of this province possibly go out and get a job unless you're prepared to put money into education? Well what happened when your colleagues and yourself became the Minister of Education — a 2 per cent decrease, a 2 per cent decrease, a 4 per cent decrease across the board.

Madam Minister, for all your brave words in opposition, you didn't deliver. For all your demands of more and more spending, when you had the opportunity you cut it. So, Madam Minister, if you're going to point fingers, I think they better be pointing back at you as well as everybody else in this province because you are equally responsible.

An Hon. Member: — Oh well now, she wasn't on the Treasury Board then.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'm not even sure if she's on the Treasury Board now.

So, Madam Minister, when you look at 1,300 decrease in students across this province, when you look at 600 less teachers in this province, it has to have an impact on the quality of education being provided to students. What impact is that having on those students, Madam Minister?

(2100)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I'd just love to respond to this critic of ours for a couple of reasons, for a couple of reasons. First of all, if you've read *Hansard* carefully — and obviously you've got selective memory or selective quotes or your research staff is only selecting certain quotes — you will also find many, many, many examples of how I indicated, along with my colleagues, to the Devine government, how they could save money . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Now I think the minister knows that she's violated one of the rules of debate here and I ask you not to use the proper name. I ask you not to use the proper names of members who are still serving in the House.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Right. My apologies. I slipped. But we gave dozens and dozens, hundreds of examples of how the government could have saved money. And I think that what we found so appalling at the time is that your administration put millions and millions and tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars into things that were irresponsible, illogical, and not in the best interests of the province. You wasted money.

And when you saw this terrific waste of taxpayers' money at a time when we needed to educate people, of course, member, I

pointed out the contradictions and said, why aren't you spending money here? You can spend money there. Of course I pointed out the contradictions.

Now in terms of your question, you know, cutting spending in education. We cut spending everywhere. And why did we cut spending everywhere? Because your previous administration, under the leadership of the member from Estevan, spent money incredulously, stupidly, illogically.

And people realized that and what did they do? They threw you out of office in 1991. And we were given a mandate to open the books and get the financial house . . . this province in fiscal order, to take us out of a state of bankruptcy to sound fiscal stability.

And it doesn't matter where you go in this country, it is recognized that we went from being a financial basket case in all of Canada to getting our house in order. And we did it first, and we did it in three years. In fact we did it ahead of three years. We did it in two years.

So how did we do that? Does this government take credit for that? Obviously we did that in concert with the people of this province and we got our financial house in order and we can say with some certainty that barring some unforeseen circumstance, next year you can expect a 2 per cent increase.

And the final point I want to make is that Saskatchewan has a proud history of sacrifice — sacrifice. And people know that you can't continue spending your way out of a mess. And finally, you have to get your financial house in order.

Ask any grandparent, any business person, any farmer in this province — we are a province of savers, we are frugal, and we don't spend money we don't have. And that has been the history of this province whether you've been a Tory, a Liberal, or an NDP, up until the time you people came to power — up until the time you came to power.

So what you did was you ignored the collective history and the collective wisdom of this province; and what we have done is go back to the historical and traditional roots of the people here and we've become penny-pinchers, and if that's meant people have to sacrifice, people sacrifice for the future of their children and their grandchildren.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I find it interesting that you would say that the people of Saskatchewan are savers and that they're thrifty people and use their funds wisely. And I would agree with that, excepting when it comes to the previous governments — not just the previous government, but the previous governments, Madam Minister.

When I look at the debt that was in place in 1982, that money was spent without it being there. You yourself said, Madam Minister, that we don't spend the money we haven't got. Well the previous government spent money that they didn't have.

The teachers' pension plan is the perfect example. There's about \$3 billion sitting there of debt, Madam Minister, and that was

started a long time before 1982. And the debt since 1991, Madam Minister, has increased, increased under your administration.

You talk about wasting money, Madam Minister. Well it seems that those projects, those hundreds of millions of dollars that you claim was wasted, are now those very same examples that the minister of Elphinstone, the Economic Development minister, is touting as the saviours of Saskatchewan; that the Minister of Finance goes to New York and says, this is why you can afford to invest in Saskatchewan, because these companies are making money.

Well, Madam Minister, you can't have it both ways. The Minister of Finance can't go bragging about the Weyerhaeusers of Saskatchewan and have you turn around saying that they were bad investments, that they were wasting money.

When we look at it, Madam Minister, all those projects — Weyerhaeuser, Millar Western, Saferco — are the things that the Minister of Economic Development . . . Hitachi. He was up in the House here not that long ago bragging about Hitachi — how great it was doing, how great it was that they were expanding in Saskatchewan, Madam Minister.

So what does he turn around and do now? You were criticizing those projects, but you've gone into business with CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce); you've gone into business with Sears; you've given grants to Cargill; you've gone into business now — an announcement today — with MacMillan Bloedel; you're giving money, more loans, to Crown Life.

So, Madam Minister, those very same things that in your speech you criticized are the very same projects that the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Finance are praising as those strong points in Saskatchewan that allows you to provide investment in Saskatchewan. So, Madam Minister, you're wrong. Those items are part of Saskatchewan's heritage, indeed.

And if you're talking about spending money, it has happened prior to 1982; it happened from 1982 to 1991; and it carries on today, that there is money being spent that we don't have. I look at the budget — \$24 million surplus projected for the next year. But, Madam Minister, we find out today that there's a 15 . . . well actually it's more than that, 17 to \$18 million deficit in the health boards, the Crown corporation health boards that report back to the government.

That's not recorded in the budget because they're in Crown corporation. But it sure diminishes the amount of surplus that this government will have in place when you add it all together. So, Madam Minister, yes you have balanced the budget, or so you can claim, but it's been done on the back of each and every taxpayer in this province.

An Hon. Member: — Except the front bench there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — As my colleague says, excepting for the front bench with the million, \$2 million pensions. So, Madam

Minister, when you're cutting back on all these things that you were demanding as the critic, when you were the critic for Education, something has to happen in education in this province.

And that decrease means that there's less teachers available to do the teaching. It means that classrooms are increasing the number of multi-grade classrooms, not decreasing. I'd like to read to you a little bit of what the SSTA has to say in their April issue . . . February issue, excuse me, of their *Trustee News*. They're talking about expenditures. And I quote:

The survey found also that the reduction of expenditures was achieved in most budget categories. The number of personnel was reduced, not by replacing employees who left or retired, decreasing the number of work hours or days of hourly employees, reassigning duties to other employees, sharing employees, eliminating positions in administration.

Maybe that's why it's difficult for women to get into the administration area. There's fewer jobs there.

Removing the designation of vice-principal, reducing non-home-room professional staff, cutting the library clerk, discontinuing the school social worker position, reducing the consultant positions, reducing the numbers of teacher's aides, eliminating the computer system person, and reducing the number of teaching staff. Some schools and classrooms were closed. Grades were removed or added to specific schools. Divisions reported that they now have double, triple, and quadruple classrooms.

It goes on further to say:

Programing for students was affected. Some divisions eliminated the alternate education school program, reduced the swimming program, reduced the skating and skiing program, conveyed more high cost students to other divisions and delayed implementation of core curriculum, eliminated the home arts program, cut guidance in the high schools, eliminated the band program, and terminated core French.

It sounds, Madam Minister, from their evaluation of it that the entire education of Saskatchewan is disintegrating under your administration, under the person who in the critic position stood here and demanded better, more, higher, faster, and more money for it all, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, under your administration the schools are facing a tough time. Madam Minister, our children are suffering lack of educational opportunities because of your administration. And what do we see as an alternative program? You put forward a committee to determine equity within the system.

But, Madam Minister, if the jobs are gone it's going to be very difficult to keep equity in the system because a significant number of those jobs are determined under union agreements in

which seniority plays a very large part, Madam Minister. So you're going to have to take that into account when you're doing your equity positions.

So, Madam Minister, I think that when it comes time to consider how the money is being spent and where it's being spent, it's going to be very, very important that the money be spent in an equitable position, not just the distribution of jobs.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well the member would make it appear as though the education system is collapsing around our knees. And I think it doesn't matter where we go in the province of Saskatchewan, everybody will tell you that our education system is second to none.

And if you look at some of the testing for instance that's been done in our province, our students do extremely well in comparison to their national counterparts.

If you look at the kinds of kids that we're graduating from our high schools in the province, they're going on to post-secondary institutions and they're doing exceedingly well and going on to master's programs, Ph.D's., and so on.

So the way . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and the . . . what's his name, the Leader of the Opposition says, and jobs in Alberta. Well that's not true. People are working here in Saskatchewan, business is locating here in Saskatchewan, business is expanding in the province of Saskatchewan, and our people are getting jobs here now.

Now the member talks about this debt. Just for your edification, our government was able to reduce the debt by over half a billion dollars . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order, order. Order, order. I recognize that members on both sides of the House are very enthusiastic about the review of the spending for the Department of Education, Training and Employment; and I'll remind all members that you will have opportunities to put your concerns and make your comments on the record. And I'll ask you to allow the minister to make hers now.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The member talks about all of these wise deals. Well Don Ching, who is the head of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), will tell you that a lot of those wise deals were renegotiated and they became more fiscally sustainable because of the renegotiations.

The other point that I'd like to make is that the member talks about some of these other great deals that they entered into. I remember some of those great deals. GigaText was one of them; that was a famous deal. High R Door. There were so many of them that you almost forget them all, because it went on and on and on and on.

The other famous deal that I remember is when they got rid of the gas tax. I think the gas tax cost the people of Saskatchewan about \$800 million a year in lost revenue. And they got rid of the gas tax, the gas tax, the gas tax. And then what did they do? They put it back on but we had to apply for a rebate, and then

they took the rebate away and they put it back on. So in the end we were paying the gas tax anyway, but the province of Saskatchewan lost over \$3 billion, according to the former minister of Finance, Wes Robbins. That contributed to the overall debt of the province.

(2115)

Finally, the deal that I really love is the deal for the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, where they transferred the debt from the Potash Corporation into Crown Investments Corporation, away from the Crown . . . Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan so it could be privatized. And those shares are doing very well now. Why? Because the debt of the company was transferred onto the backs of the taxpayers and we're paying it. That was a really wonderful deal.

And all we have to do is go back into Crown Corporations' records, member. Let's go back into *Hansard*. And we can reiterate deal after deal after deal after deal where we thought you people didn't know how to run a popcorn stand.

And it's obvious. It's obvious because when we left office in 1981-82, was there an item in the budget called interest on the public debt? Not one nickel was spent on interest on the public debt. In fact there was interest because of surpluses. And now there is an item; it's the third-biggest spending item, ahead . . . only two items ahead of it, Health and Education. Interest on the public debt — \$850 million, compliments of the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party of Saskatchewan, which will go down in history as the party that practically bankrupted the people of this province.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:19 p.m.