

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

May 27, 1980

EVENING SESSION

MR. McARTHUR (Minister of Education): — Perhaps I could introduce the officials who are with me. Mr. Ray Clayton, deputy minister of education; sitting behind me, Mr. Peter Dyck who is director of regional services; Mr. Ken Kirby who is director of school administration; to the front of me is Mr. John Moneo from administrative services branch; and Mr. Mike Pitsula who is director of curriculum development.

Item 1

MR. D.G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — Mr. Minister, I don't know what this represents, whether my colleagues have tremendous faith in my ability to take on the opposition or whether they think that education is in very capable hands. I see they're coming in now and I would say thanks for introducing your officials, some of whom I know. I'm sure going to have some very good questions because you have some capable assistants with you tonight.

Enough pleasantries; now we'll get into the meat of the matter, Mr. Minister. As we pointed out last night; and I won't belabour this point, we feel education and continuing education are two very important portfolios that certainly need scrutiny. The purpose of education are two very important portfolios that certainly need scrutiny. The purpose of the estimates is to see how the money is being spent by your department. We hope that it is being spent in the most judicious way to serve the needs of the students of this province and that their parents can be assured they are receiving the optimum and the best education possible with the constraints on money we have at this time.

The first thing I would like to point out, Mr. Minister, is that I think there is a bit of feeling of a cutback in educational financing. I place education as a very high priority in the expenditure of the public dollar. I remember the comments of my colleague in the reply to the budget speech in which he indicated that over the years since this government has taken office, the proportion allotted to education has been decreasing.

Mr. Minister, first and foremost, I would like to indicate that is a trend one should watch because I believe people put a high priority on education. The taxpayers would like to see a judicious and wise expenditure and not a decrease in comparison to some of the expenditures within the public purse (such things as investments in Crown corporations and land bank and so on). I would say we should keep battling for education because that's something that touches everyone. It touches everyone in our society. It opens the door for the future of our province. It opens the door for people to develop their potential. I think it is a priority item in the expenditures of any government.

To prove my point, Mr. Minister, I would like to indicate some of the press clippings and some of the correspondence we have been receiving. I am sure you have received this also. I'm taking the North Battleford School Division as an example, just picking that as one of the many in the province. In 1974 the amount of the provincial grant was 57 per cent of the budget and the amount of tax revenue was 41 per cent of the budget. Going down to the 1980 budget, Mr. Minister, we see that the amount of the provincial grant is 53.4 per cent of the budget of the North Battleford School Division No. 58, whereas the percentage of the budget from tax revenue has increased to 45.8 per cent. So I am

saying that perhaps the government on the opposite side is maybe a little mixed in its priorities. I don't think that all the increase should have to come from an increase in the revenue at the local level.

To add on this, I would just like to look at some of the press which came out this spring when the budget was announced concerning education expenditures. For expediency and to move the estimates along, I will just indicate some of the headlines. They say, Education Grants Claimed Insufficient, from the *Star-Phoenix*, pointing out that they figure the grant wasn't enough. Planned Hikes Plague School Board, again Dr. John Egnatoff, chairman of the Saskatoon School Board expressing his concern that perhaps the amount in the grant was not enough. Moose Jaw, School Supporters Face Five Mill Tax Hike; some more here in the Regina *Leader-Post*, indicating that the budgets are going to have to be increased a considerable amount; Weyburn, School Levy Set at 34.77 mills; Estevan, School Tax Going up:

Estevan Public School Division No. 95 requested a 6 mill increase to 86 mills in the operating revenue from the city in 1980.

That's just to list a few of them. There is no sense going through a large number of them but I think that makes the point, Mr. Minister, that perhaps not everyone in Saskatchewan in the various jurisdictions is totally satisfied with the amount of funding which they are receiving from the provincial coffers.

Another point I would like to raise at this time to just show where I think some of the weaknesses in education in this province are evident has to do with the negotiations, Mr. Minister. We have discussed this before but I would just like to point it out again: the negotiations of the present contract between the teachers and the school trustees. I realize that the trustees were away from the table. They chose to be away from the table but I think it is rather an important thing to consider when it is affecting such a large expenditure of moneys. I think it is \$295 million, which is the total estimates here for education, and a good portion of that is teachers' salaries. I would think to maintain good relationships and a co-operative spirit, which are so essential between these three major aspects in education — the teaching bodies, the government and the three major aspects in education — the teaching bodies, the government and the trustees — that any settlement of this type in the future should certainly be avoided. I can see nothing but trouble brewing on the horizons if this type of action were to be continued in the future.

There are a few sore spots in education where maybe local decision-making is not having the input that it would like to have. I know one of these is in the works right now so I'm not going to go into it in detail, Mr. Minister; that is the conflict between the Riceton ratepayers and the Milestone School Unit. I think when you see the sort of thing happening on the educational scene it must indicate that somewhere, somehow the ratepayers in those areas feel the funding is inappropriate, their control over program is inappropriate, or they are not getting the teaching staff that they wish. Another one that is being reported which I would like to point out is the Stockholm-Esterhazy conflict over the high schools, the desire by Stockholm to have its own high school. AS I say, Mr. Minister, one cannot be like an ostrich and stick his head in the sand and say, all is fine and great and we have the best education system in the provinces when we see there are these little canker sores or little trouble spots that I notice have been emerging over the last year or so.

I'd also like to talk about the movement toward the ward system, your latest proposal. I know it's in a study right now, but just looking again — Weyburn Board Opposes the

Ward System. There's representation there from Weyburn against it. Board Election System Under Fire is what Moose Jaw is saying. School Trustees Cool Toward System Examination; that is Saskatoon.

I think the one thing, Mr. Minister, that we have to watch very closely in the ward system, as I understand it, is the danger that the ward system would have of politicizing the boards of education. And I think that will be a very dangerous situation, if that comes about, I would like to quote from an editorial that mentions this, Mr. Minister. It says:

To make the ward system work as well as it can, elected individuals have to take a city-wide view of their responsibilities.

And I would agree with that. If you're going to be looking at education in a city, you should have a feeling of the complete spectrum. You know as well as I do that within cities there are various socio-economic groups and there are certain portions of the city that they settle in. And I think to have meaningful input one should have the global picture and not just be looking at the ward or the area from which you come. It goes on to say:

One of the potential problems is that it opens the possibility of party politics in the city school system, entailing details and joint approaches to subjects better left to a consensus not influenced by matters other than genuine concern for education. Qualified only by matching these demands
...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: — Order, order, please! I find it difficult and I believe the minister is finding it difficult to hear the member for Indian Head-Wolseley. So I'll ask the members to please confine their whispering to a whisper and no louder.

MR. TAYLOR: — That's fine, Mr. Deputy Chairman, thank you. I'll try to keep shouting above the rabble. Caesar had the problem; everyone did down through history, I think; so I'll go with it.

So anyway, I'm concerned about that, Mr. Minister, and I point that out as a danger and probably the greatest danger. We talked about academic freedom in the universities last night and I think we came to a consensus on that. But there is also a great danger, a very grave danger in politicizing boards of education. I think this is something that we have to look at very carefully.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to hinge on a few things that I think . . . In your case you have to be very careful because I remember the last convention of your party where your old disciple, Tommy Douglas said, we must teach socialism. I just want you and the department to guard against this. I have raised with you before the necessity of overhauling the complete social studies package, the complete program.

We have talked about the influence of the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development on the Department of Education and the programs that are being brought in. I'm scrutinizing and looking at these carefully, Mr. Minister.

I'm not making any accusation at this point in time but I am saying that you have a very sacred trust in your hands as Minister of Education and that is the education, the free education, the opening of the minds of the children of this province. For goodness sakes, let's not let any partisan political aspiration ever interfere with that type of operation.

At this point in time, I would like to mention a couple of instances which have come to my attention in the last week. You'll have to excuse my short memory but it hinges on the screening of films. The films are made available through the audiovisual branch; I suppose it's Sask Media now. I'm a little old fashioned in my terms. There are two films which have been brought to my attention, and I tried to screen them myself so first hand knowledge could be given to you but I was unable to find time to see them. I'm sorry, I've forgotten one name but one is called *The Coming of Darkness* or *The Night is Darkness*; strange as it may seem, I think I remember the call letter better than the title. I think it is 740.1. There are two of these; they are produced by a firm of which I haven't heard called Tricontinental Films, the Film Front.

Mr. Minister, I have talked to teachers in Saskatchewan who I think are objective and reputable people; they tell me there are very serious, heavy political overtones in those films. I would ask you and members of your department to comment on them, if you are aware of them. If you are not aware of them, I understand a lot of material comes in and the department probably does miss some of the things which should be screened from time to time. I think we all understand that can happen. I don't think in the Grade 11 social studies program (where I think these films are to be used) we have any place for films with political overtones.

To give you an example, the teachers who reported this to me, when they finished showing the films did say to their students: this isn't the viewpoint of this school; children, take a look at this because there are certainly overtones present. I would like you to look into this Mr. Minister. It is the type of thing that may be going on. I hope, unconsciously. If it is consciously, I say: shame, shame on anyone who would allow anything like this to happen. I think I have made my point. You have an important portfolio; you're the man responsible for what, who, where and how the students in this province are educated. I say, let's leave any political overtones or partisan movements out of the education system.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the hon. Member has covered a considerable amount of ground in his initial comments and I would like to make some brief comments about each of the areas to which he has referred.

First of all, I think he need not be concerned that this government will not place a very high priority on education. If there is one field of endeavour and one field of policy in which this government has a very enviable track record, along with health, economic development, and social services, it would certainly be education; so I don't think he need be concerned that we would look at giving a reduced priority to education. Perhaps to support that point, I should point out to the hon. Member that if you care to trace the financing of education in Saskatchewan over the last 10 years, you will find that the percentage of expenditures assumed by school boards on education spending in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system was about 54.2 per cent in 1971 and by 1980 that figure had dropped to about 44.3 per cent. The reverse side of that coin is that the provincial government is now picking up very close to 56 per cent of the school board expenditures for education in this province in the K to 12 system, as opposed to 45.8 per cent in 1971.

I might also point out to the hon. Member that in 1971 the grants to school boards were approximately \$73 million. In 1980, the grants to school boards will be approximately \$233 million. Mr. Chairman, that involves (if my calculations are correct) more than a tripling of the expenditures by this government on grants to school boards to operate

the K to 12 system. Granted there has been some inflation over that period, but the inflation in itself would not account for even a doubling of the 1971 figures.

So indeed one can see that in real dollars, in actual purchasing power, we have doubled the amount of real purchasing power that school boards had over the 1971 period. I think this indicates clearly that education has received a very, very high priority in terms of the funding provided by this government. I doubt if there was any jurisdiction in Canada which had that kind of record over the period of the 1970s, which I might point out to the member has been a period of declining enrolment in the school system. In many, many provinces there has been a period of tremendous restraint on their part in terms of spending. You will find that this province has, as I said, made a tremendous increase.

Now the hon. Member argues the point about declining enrolment. I will suggest to him that if he cares to look at the figures, he will see that starting in about 1971, the early grades began to decline. The decline has been moving through the elementary system and is now reaching into the high school system.

In any event, I think those figures indicate very clearly the tremendous emphasis that this government has given to educational spending. I just suggest to any hon. Member that he or she take the figures and look at them. You will see they are simply undeniable in that sense.

The hon. Member went on to suggest that school boards have been expressing dissatisfaction with the grants they've been receiving. He tried to pick out a few examples from the newspapers to support his argument. Mr. Chairman, he chose for instance the North Battleford School Division. I haven't been able to check his actual figures, but he indicates that in 1974 the percentage of expenditures by the North Battleford School Board, paid for by government grants, was higher than in 1980.

I should tell the hon. Member that you cannot, given our equalization system for providing school grants, pick one single school board and try to tell the whole story for the whole school system. The figures I have indicated to you tell you the story for the whole school system.

We do have in this province an equalization system for providing grants to school boards. What the system essentially does is provide, for example, that any two school systems which have the same assessment and the same student enrolment will receive the same grant. Now if, through time, assessment should change relative to the average change in assessments in the province or enrolments should change relative to the average change, then of course the proportion assumed by grants will change. That's a fundamental part of an equalization system.

The hon. Member has pointed out other school boards which have objected to this. I would remind the hon. Member that some of those very school boards are ones which have experienced very, very substantial and significant growth in local assessment and therefore in local tax base and therefore in local revenue.

Granted, they would probably prefer the situation if we wouldn't pay any attention to that. But I say to the hon. member that if you wish to respect the system of equalization between boards that takes into account the local tax revenue, then as this situation proportion of expenditures covered by grants.

So I simply say to the hon. member that I do not believe either that there is any foundation at all for the criticism he offers in terms of the priority we give education or in terms of the trend of spending towards education. Nor do I accept his implicit criticism of the equalization system for providing grants to school boards.

Indeed I believe (and this has been indicated by many, many trustees throughout the province and I might add many, many trustees from outside this province) that our foundation grants system, which provides unconditional grants on an equalization basis, is the envy of practically every school system in Canada, as far as the local school boards are concerned.

Some of the Conservative governments which exist elsewhere have not seen fit to go that way because they tend to want to maintain more control — centralized and direct control over school boards — than we have made it a policy to do.

I wish to refer to a couple of other points to which the hon. member makes reference. He makes reference to the negotiations with respect to the teacher contract for this year. And he recognizes the fact that the decision by the trustees to leave the bargaining session at which some critical decisions had to be made was regrettable, and I agree. I say to the hon. member that collective bargaining is always a difficult and sensitive activity that requires a degree of compromise and co-operation. We certainly agree that we must maintain a co-operative spirit. That we have tried to do. However, I also indicate to the hon. member that in the course of collective bargaining certain decisions have to be made. I find it regrettable that in this case the trustees chose not to remain in the room and to remain part of the bargaining at the time that certain decisions were being made. But I'm sure we've all learned something from that unfortunate incident.

I was interested in the hon. member's reference to certain sore spots in the system. Indeed, I would like to concede to the hon. member that I would be the first one to admit that there are many things we can do to improve our education system. I think we have a very good one but there are a lot of things we can do. I personally am committed to trying to make improvements where I can identify them as being needed and where teachers, trustees, professionals in the field, and parents identify them as being needed.

I do point out to the hon. member that it's interesting that the sore spots to which he refers are in each case (and he refers to two: the Riceton-Milestone controversy and the Stockholm-Esterhazy controversy — which are clearly a case of local decision making) boards making decisions that are within their power to make, causing a reaction from the community involved, and the community involved then criticizing those school boards.

Now, I say to the hon. member that we must be very careful in suggesting that the Minister of Education should do anything about those cases. If we do agree with the principle of local decision making, or school division board decision making . . . I know I've heard the hon. member, certainly from Rosetown-Elrose, indicate his support on many, many occasions.

There is simply no way of having a system of local decision making that does not involve, to a degree, certain difficult decisions. There is no way of having difficult

decisions that don't bring a certain amount of controversy. But I say to the hon. member that should be left to be worked out within the local jurisdiction, if that is indeed what we subscribe to, the system of local government within the school system.

I say to him, each of those sore spots is clearly within the framework of the legislation responsibilities and decisions that must be made locally and independently by those school boards.

The hon. member raises a couple of other matters, perhaps three or four more matters. One is the matter of the ward system. I want to say to the hon. member that what we have done is commissioned Professor Dan de Vlieger to undertake an inquiry into the possible introduction of the ward system into some or all of the urban school divisions in Saskatchewan.

I point out to the hon. member that something equivalent to the ward system has been operating in rural school divisions for years in this province. What this study is doing is posing questions about the advantages of a ward system so that we can have better information for everyone to look at — school boards, parents, ratepayers, departmental officials, ministers, cabinet and legislature.

I don't think we should in any way shy away from that kind of review. I don't think good sound investigation that provides information hurts anyone. We will certainly, upon completion of that review, give those findings very careful consideration in order to determine whether or not we should proceed with the implementation of a ward system within the urban school divisions. The decision will be made based on consulting with school boards and consulting with other interested organizations and people. But we are still very far from making any kind of decision. So, I would just caution the hon. member and those school trustees he's quoting who seem to have been rather excited, to recognize that no one has made any decision at this point and they might best turn their attention to looking at the merits and demerits of a ward system, and helping us in this kind of review.

With regard to the curriculum matters he raises, I would point out to the hon. member that the social studies curriculum has not been reviewed for quite some time. It is widely agreed in the educational community that we should have a review of the social studies curriculum; therefore we are undertaking a review of the social studies curriculum. I think that is an important thing to do periodically within our school program. The nature of knowledge, the nature of needs change through time, and I think it is certainly time to have a good, hard look at the social studies curriculum. We will be utilizing the normal procedures for curriculum development which are followed in this province, but we will be starting in this case right from scratch and looking at the basic objectives which should be pursued with respect to the social studies curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12. I would say to the hon. member that I believe the social studies curriculum is perhaps one of the most important parents of the whole school program; so this review is something I not only wholeheartedly support but I feel a certain degree of pride being involved with it.

With respect to the co-op program, I'm not going to go into that in any detail. I'm sure the hon. member by now has had an opportunity to look at the materials in the co-op curriculum. Once again, I think we've seen an indication of some overreaction. I am surprised, looking at the content of that material, that people find reason to object to efforts we make to introduce quality material to assist the teaching within the classrooms. The material is there for teachers to use. It is good material. It provides

great assistance to teachers. I don't think anyone who is serious can find any political overtones in that co-op curriculum, and I think it is regrettable that people have attempted to make some sort of political issue out of what is another step in trying to improve the teaching resources available in our schools.

With regard to the availability of films through SaskMedia, certainly we have films, I suppose, within the SaskMedia collection which some people would find less useful than other people. I don't intend, I should say, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to become a censor of the film collections within SaskMedia. I have no part in the decision-making with respect to the films which are placed within SaskMedia. The decisions are made, with respect to those collections, by educators; and the decision to use those films is made by teachers. I want to say to the hon. member that I don't think we should be afraid. I don't think we should have fear of materials which give different perspectives on different problems. I don't think there is anything of which to be frightened about truth and knowledge. The hon. members opposite may feel that education, as the pursuit of truth and knowledge, has some dangers. I don't believe so. I believe a good education system allows young people to read, to learn, to understand and to make decisions and judgments on their own. I don't think we need to stand here as people who make judgments about whether or not these films, in some sense, present one particular view of social change as opposed to another. Just to deal with one point the hon. member raised, I know for a fact there are no films, which present any particular political point of view of this government, within that collection, and there will not be.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Chairman, just to react to a few of the statements made by the minister, who says the government opposite places a high priority on education, one of the highest in Saskatchewan, and will continue to do so. For your information, the percentage of the budget (I noticed you skirted this) spent on education when you took power in 1971 was 32 per cent. That has decreased to 22 per cent. I say, if that's showing a priority on education, you studied in a different mathematical school than I. If you're decreasing by 10 per cent and putting that money into something else, then you have to convince me that's a priority of this government.

You pointed out that the tax base was increased on some of the examples I gave you. You said some of these areas had their assessments go up. One of the areas I listed for you was Radville. I don't know of any great assessment increase in the Radville area. Your remarks kind of indicated I was against the equalization program, Mr. Minister. I said nothing about that whatsoever, nor any condemnation of the equalization program for schools in this province. I think you must agree, (although it may have been an oversight, or it may have been a judgment by the school trustees) that if you do believe in free collective bargaining, and keeping good will by the bargaining process, then all the members involved in that collective agreement must be present when the agreement is signed. I said let's hope this is the only time this will happen because if it continues, you can rest assured that good relationships are not going to continue between the three parties in the collective bargaining process. Concerning Riceton, (and I said that I did not want to go into this one in detail because I believe they are meeting tonight on this), I do think Mr. Minister, that you can't just shrug it off as not being a sore spot when I read in the newspapers that attempts by school officials to meet with Education Minister Doug McArthur have failed.

Now I think if there is a concern by a jurisdiction within Saskatchewan and you're the Minister of Education, and you're not meeting with them, that indicates to me that there may be some type of problem you're not willing to address.

Concerning the ward system, I hope there is careful consideration of the recommendations of the report by the professor at the university. But I ask you, Mr. Minister, was this requested by the people on the boards? Was it the school board members in the urban centres who said they want to go to a ward system? I haven't had anyone express that desire to me, I think they are quite happy with the way things are working now; so I would like to know who encouraged you and who gave you this idea to investigate the ward system in the way of election for urban school boards. I would also like you to answer this: do you think the ward system can lend itself to political slates being run? Is it not dangerous to the freedom of education and the educational system of this province, if we get political groups running the schools in our urban centres?

Concerning the review of the social studies curriculum, I would agree that all curriculums need review from time to time. I don't think I was criticizing it being reviewed. I was cautioning (cautioning is the word, Mr. Minister) that we be very careful of the types of things we put into social studies curriculum because I share your opinion that probably social studies is one of the most important subjects in our school curriculum. It is where we can shape, influence, and develop the attitudes and the value scrutiny. As far as the co-op materials in the curriculum are concerned, I would just say that I understand there may be a cabinet shuffle coming up next month, so I would be a little careful of the fellow in the spotted jacket because I have some feeling that he wants to become the minister of education. So with those comments I'll let you respond.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Chairman, now you have me all flustered, so I'm not sure that I'm going to be able to proceed. You've scared me so badly about the coming . . . May I first of all say I want to make one additional comment about your analysis on the budget figures. I think the hon. member should take the time to put a little bit more work, or perhaps the researchers in your office should put a little more work, into the figures which should be used on a comparable basis with respect to the distribution of the budget.

The hon. member may or may not be aware that prior to approximately 1973 or 1974, we had in this province a system which is referred to as net budgeting. At that time, the estimates presented figures on expenditures net of transfer payments and payments under agreements from other governments. The government felt at that time that did not present the best picture of the spending and therefore did not give the legislature the opportunity to give the fullest evaluation to priorities.

As a result of that, we changed over to what is called a gross system of budgeting and now present our figures on gross expenditures. If the hon. member would recalculate his figures on a gross basis, he will find that the percentage of the gross budget that went into education in the early 1970s and the percentage that goes into education now, are approximately the same . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That is correct. The hon. member may wish to take some time to do his statistics. Perhaps an indication that he can say nonsense is an indication that the research people are not doing the kind of accurate analysis they should.

I point out to the hon. member that has taken place at the same time as we have been building and strengthening and developing new social programs in many fields which have added to our total expenditures. So education has been growing, as I indicated earlier. By figures there has been over a tripling of grants to school boards since 1971;

a figure that simply cannot be denied. If you take the estimates for 1971 and look at them now, you'll find that those figures are there. I think there is no ground for the criticism the hon. member makes.

With respect to collective bargaining, I've already indicated to the member that I agree. I hope that the incident in which the trustees did not continue at the bargaining table does not recur. The hon. member suggests that in the case of the Riceton group, I refused to meet with them. I've had for some time on my calendar a meeting with the Riceton group which will be taking place tomorrow morning; so his suggestion that I've refused to meet with them is not correct. It is true that I indicated to the Riceton people earlier on that the appropriate body to make the decision was the Milestone school Division and because I wanted to be honest with them, that I would not be in any way intervening in the decision of the Milestone School Division. I still maintain that position.

It is not my intent to try to abuse my powers as minister by bringing undue influence to bear on school boards. I think that the hon. members would be the first to criticize me for doing that. I think it would be wrong for me to do so. I do not intend to and I wish to make that absolutely clear.

With respect to the ward system, I should point out to the hon. member that yes, there were people who suggested that, given the experience with the high degree of interest in certain urban centres in the last election in the very long ballots and some of the confusion that went with that, we should have a review of the electoral procedures. If I'm not mistaken, there was an editorial in the *Regina Leader-Post* suggesting that it was time for a review of the electoral procedures. So therefore, I think that indicates there was indeed a public suggestion of a need for a look at the whole system and that is what we are doing.

The hon. member I think need not be concerned that a ward system will bring what he calls politics into the school system. I think it's certainly open to any politician party that wishes to run a slate of candidates under a party name now to do so. I don't see that the ward system changes that. I think what a ward system potentially could do is lead to a closer identification of the school trustee with the people in that particular area. It would result in a smaller group of people having an individual representative from their area, much as is the case in the rural school divisions. Many of the rural people do say that does result in some closer identification of the ratepayers with their elected trustee and that they do not feel that it has led to any imbalance in representation. Nor has it led to any party slates in the rural system. So I think the criticisms the hon. member is suggesting are ones that will likely be made (seeing as he's repeating points made by other people) to Professor de Vlieger. But they are not ones that make me feel so fearful as to not proceed with the study. I think the study is important.

MR. R.L. COLLVER (Nipawin): — Over the last five years I have entered into the discussions at this stage of the game in terms of the Department of Education. I have made the same point for five or six years, and I hope to try to make the same point again.

In this legislature we continuously discuss the Department of Education from the standpoint from time to time for the teachers, from the standpoint from time to time of the department, from the standpoint from time to time of the amount that the department is expending, and even from time to time from the standpoint of the local school boards.

At no time does anyone every seem to take into account the standpoint of the parents in our educational system. I'm making the same speech that I have made every year since I've been in the legislature. The parents are the forgotten ingredient in the educational formula.

The minister is great at talking about the ward system as a means of involving local input. The only problem is that through the ward system it's once again the election process attempting to involve people. But surely the only possible way to involve people in the education of their children, for whom they are eminently and ultimately responsible, is to involve parents in the day-to-day operation of the schools.

Now we can talk forever about the amount of money which is being spent by the government with reference to education. We can say, for example, as the hon. member for Indian Head-Wolseley has attempted to say tonight, that the government's priorities seem to have slipped in the last number of years. And for what it's worth, the member for Indian Head-Wolseley is right. The government's priorities have slipped.

Someone opposite said nonsense. The Attorney General will know that the administration in 1971 committed next to nothing to education. He will know that the administration was probably the worst in Saskatchewan history with reference to the educational system, regarding both public schools and universities. He will know that his very organization fought an election in 1971 primarily on that issue. He had teachers throughout this province convincing every citizen of the province that the Liberal administration in 1971 was dreadful in its application to administration and with that I could not agree more. The Attorney General was right in 1971.

But the member for Indian Head-Wolseley is also right. He states that the priority of the government in 1972 to bring about this change in education, which it said it would in the election of 1971, was commendable and laudable, but has slipped in the intervening years to the point where less emphasis is being placed on education than it was in 1972, 1973 and 1974. The member is absolutely correct in stating that.

Now, whether you agree with the premise that there is more or less being spent on education, whether you agree with the premise that the NDP has committed everything it had to education, in the eight years or nine years that it has been in office, not one change has occurred toward having parents become more involved in the education of children, not one, Mr. Deputy Chairman. As a matter of fact, parents of the children in Saskatchewan today feel more alienated from the school system than they did eight or nine years ago. The parents of children today feel that the schools are acting more and more as babysitters and less and less as educators and quality educators at that.

And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the people in Saskatchewan and the teachers of Saskatchewan are telling . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You know, that was one I really approved of. One of the members opposite, during the course of my discussion to make people more involved and active in the education of the young in Saskatchewan., said: stick to Arizona. Now, Mr. Chairman, of all the nonsensical kinds of responses, I would tell the member that if I were a citizen of Arizona, which I'm not, I would spend every waking hour attempting to convince the department of education in Arizona, the educators in Arizona, and the people responsible for education in Arizona to spend more of their time concerning themselves about the parent input to education than they are presently doing. I would tell the member that the people in Arizona and the state of Arizona is being ill-served by the Dewey system which was presented some 40 years ago to the people of North America that said the educational system should

evolve into the lowest common denominator, and that's precisely what has happened.

I tell you, the ex-minister for social services, and now Minister of Health, interjects that is nonsense. Every year I have been in this legislature I have attempted to tell the minister . . . He was the minister of education I believe at one time. Oh, wasn't he? Just continuing. Oh, I'm sorry. He never became involved in the education of the young. It was only the continuing education after the educational system had flopped.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'll speak to the present Minister of Education for whom I have some respect and some admiration. I think he has some brain, and maybe he will listen because every other minister of education I have talked to in this Assembly has not listened. If the educational system in Saskatchewan would devote more of its resources to promoting the involvement of education, we would see a dramatic change in the commitment of the young to their education. Because if the parents become involved directly in the educational system, then the young would know that system is important because the parents would believe it's important.

Now what has happened in the last number of years? What has happened is that more and more the parents are telling the educators, the educational department . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'm not particularly worried about the comments from the member for Moosomin, but in my humble estimation it was his education that was lacking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. COLLVER: — And perhaps if he'd pay attention now . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Perhaps if he would listen . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't think I'm going to suffer too long, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I think if he would listen now, he might be a candidate for a continuing education course . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Deputy Chairman, it wasn't my intention to carry this debate on. There's a debate coming up which might carry on a little longer than this one.

What I am attempting to say to the minister is this. There are means by which the department could encourage the involvement of parents. For example, the department could suggest to local school boards, especially in the cities, that they implement a more localized regime in terms of running the schools. There is absolutely nothing which prohibits that, either in The Education Act or in correct and proper administration of the schools. As a matter of fact, if there were a more localized, if you like, neighbourhood operation of the schools, you would find the costs of operating those schools would go down because local people would become concerned and involved and active in the administration of the local school. Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have suggested for the last six years that if neighbourhood schools could become a reality in the province of Saskatchewan, we could set the tone for all of North America.

I agree with the member who suggested Arizona is not doing very well. No, it is not from an educational point of view, it is definitely not. They are attempting to run their school system out of a central authority as well, and they're not succeeding. Parents are becoming more and more alienated. Parents are not involving themselves, so those parents who have the money are putting their children into private schools.

The member for Saskatoon Buena Vista suggested that is nonsense. I could tell him

today that in his very own city the number of students enrolled in private schools has multiplied ten times in the last five years. Why? Because those people who have the money, who are concerned about their children, are putting them into private institutions because the public educational system is not meeting their needs. That's why, Mr. Deputy Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I wish the member for Saskatoon Eastview would understand that in his very own constituency there are a number who are attending the Saskatoon French School, as an example, which is a private school; enrolment of that school has increased some, as I understand it, 35 times from its inception. That's only one of the private institutions in Saskatoon that has grown as a result of the fact that our public educational system is not meeting those needs. Now surely with all the money which is being spent on education (whether it's an increase or a decrease) surely will all the effort which is being put forward, if the Government of Saskatchewan were interested in improving the quality of education and improving the scenario of education, surely it must say to itself, we are making a fundamental mistake. Now, I know, Mr. Deputy chairman — having given this same speech in this legislature for the last six years, having given the same speech in my former caucus for the last six years — all this falls on deaf ears. I am sure that perhaps I'm the one out of step, but I say to you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, there is something fundamentally wrong with an educational system when an ever-increasing number of people are opting out of it. Are we not taking a terrible gamble by allowing people and seeing people opt out of the public educational system? Perhaps we should create two standards of education as has happened, by the way, in many, many states in the United States.

By the way, this Dewey system started the system toward lowering of standards and lowering of levels. And we follow behind the United States relatively closely. Every trend in education in Canada has been a trend in education which occurred a few years earlier in the United States.

We now see exhibited in some states a system whereby substantial portions of the population are sending their children to private schools to get a good education. The bulk of the students going to the public educational system receive a crummy education.

I say to the minister, we are fundamentally wrong in our approach. There should at least be experiments — some are occurring in several states in the union with reference to voucher systems. There's an example of involving parents directly in your system by providing a voucher from the public treasury to the parents in certain districts to allow them to decide which school their child shall attend within the public educational system. It has a tendency to make the parents involved. Furthermore it has a tendency to make the teachers and the schools respond because if they don't, they're not going to have any students. The parents are going to go elsewhere.

That is being tried on an experimental level in several states in the union with considerable success. I'm not prepared to say it's an unqualified success at the moment but at least it's being tried. We are not even trying that in the province of Saskatchewan.

All I am trying to say is that from a parent's point of view, the public educational system is failing and failing miserably. It is not involving parents. It is not causing parents to want to involve their children in the educational system. Accordingly we're finding our standards dropping to the point where universities throughout Canada are now having to retrain students in reading and basic educational skills so they can take university-

level education. That's unacceptable and I honestly believe we should be trying something different in the province.

MR. McARTHUR: — I think the member for Nipawin has raised some interesting points in a very, very important general area. I want to say first of all that I agree with the hon. member, at least with the general thrust, with a considerable amount of what the hon. member is saying, I think it is true that we must always (all of us who are involved in education) recognize the critical interest of parents in the education of their children and the need to find ways of providing an opportunity for parents to have as much say, as much knowledge and as much participation as possible within the school system.

I would also say that I think we all consider it regrettable that the electoral system for choosing local school board members and trustees does not seem to lead to the kind of participation one would see if he had a high level of participation. I think most of us are familiar with the fact that the turnout for school elections is relatively low. That is partially a reflection of lack of participation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sure and I think the hon. member has pointed out correctly that there are reasons why people feel that does not give them a full enough opportunity or a comprehensive enough opportunity for participation.

I want to say to the hon. member that in just about every general speech that I've given on education, I have emphasized to educators and to trustees and so on my belief in the need to pursue innovative ways and to increase the degree of participation of parents in their school system.

I should point out to the hon. member there are some concrete things that have been done. I refer first of all to the relatively new education act, section 137, which provides that divisional boards of education may establish what are called local school advisory committees with respect to each or any of the operating schools in the division. What we had hoped when that was passed was that school boards would look, in the urban areas, to setting up school advisory committees which would function in relation to individual community schools, and that this would provide a means whereby you would get more direct parental participation.

I have been concerned, as I think the hon. member has indicated his concern, that we haven't seen this section of the act applied to near by the degree that it should be. I continue to, first of all, urge school boards to take a more serious look at the application of that section of the act. Secondly, I recently established a special action group in the department, devoted entirely to the question of parental participation, to look at this particular aspect of the act plus other aspects and other means of increasing parental participation in the school system. That group is currently reviewing that whole question and I hope to come up with some concrete proposals which might deal with increasing the degree to which school boards are utilizing this section of the act, as well as looking at other innovative means to increase parental participation.

I might also indicate to the hon. member that last fall I carried out a little experiment of my own in which I invited parents and school students to two conferences. They were drawn at random from the school system. I invited them to two conferences, one held in Saskatoon and one in Regina, in which we spent time talking about their concerns and their views and their perspective on the school system. One of the things that really impressed me was the fact I met for a considerable time with the group of parents in each case, and the parents who attended (who I emphasize again were drawn at random, and not because of any special interest), all indicated a high degree of

knowledge and interest in talking and giving their point of view on the school system and their frustrations.

What that told me was that people are willing to participate if you can find mechanisms that interest them and give them an opportunity. And so I agree with the hon. member that we need to be constantly working with mechanisms of that sort, to try to increase the degree to which parents can participate.

I might also indicate another thing we are doing this year. The hon. member will perhaps be aware that we are experimenting with some pilot projects in our urban centres in the poorer areas of our cities (in the city core schools more particularly) in order to improve the quality of educational opportunities within those schools. One of the important aspects of the pilot projects we are mounting and providing operating grants to the school boards to carry through is the provision of community-based committees which participate in determining the program and the activities within that school. The idea is that the school is part of the community, and the parents are part of that community and that school and you need that kind of participation to have a healthy environment within the school. So again we're working with that on an experimental basis in 10 individual schools in Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina, and we'll work with that concept to see how it works.

I want to say to the hon. member that I don't agree with his point that the quality of education is dropping badly. I think we do provide a relatively good quality of education to students in this province. Having said that, I believe that we must be concerned that not only is the quality as high as possible across the board, but also that we provide as much equality of opportunity within the system as well. That means looking at individual school circumstances and trying to do what we can where there are differentials in the kinds of opportunities provided to students.

But I say to him, with respect to the thrust of his points, that I think they are well taken and I think we do need to continue to concentrate more and more effort toward getting an increased degree of parental participation right within the school environment.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I would agree with the point he has brought out; there is certainly a need for more parental concern and more parental input into education. I noticed you did mention the parent advisory councils or boards that are facilitated under the new education act. But, Mr. Minister, what action has your department taken? I asked this last year in estimates. How many of these parent advisory committees have been formed? I don't think there is one in the province of Saskatchewan. I tell you that many of the people in this province don't know that provision is in the act. They don't know that they have that possibility of providing meaningful input into the education of their children.

I cite as an example the recent conference held at Fort Qu'Appelle; a conference started by the school trustees' association on the drug and alcohol problems that are current in our schools, in our secondary schools and in our junior high schools. Now there, Mr. Minister, is something in which the parents in Saskatchewan, through these advisory councils, can certainly become involved. They can be involved very strongly and have a very meaningful input into the education of their children. What action has your department taken to acquaint parents with this possibility, with this avenue?

I don't think there has been very much action taken by the Department of Education. I

think your fall conferences were fine and dandy. That was one start but let's go further. Let's go further and let's get the parents involved in the education of the students. I believe what the member for Nipawin said is true, that we will see a great improvement in education in this province and also, probably, a reduction in the costs.

One thing I found very strange in your reply. You said you would hope there would be a higher participation in the electoral process in our school system. A few minutes ago, you told me that there was too long a list of people running for school boards in the urban centres. Now which one of those responses is the one you truly believe? Were there too many running? Are you disappointed that there were too many people running for school boards in the urban centres of this province, or do you not think that there is enough participation? It seems to me, Mr. Minister, in your recent reply you were going two ways at once.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy chairman, I think, first of all, I should make reference to the local school advisory committees and the point with respect to the formation of these committees. With the passing of The Education Act in 1978, which is just two years ago, the Department of Education and this government presented that section of the act to this legislature and this legislature passed it, on the assumption that we were providing an opportunity for school boards to have a method, to have a system, within statute which would permit them to provide for this kind of opportunity for parents to participate. We provided encouragement to the boards to do so and that is as far as we went. I think we are now at the point where we must assess whether that is adequate.

I have indicated to the hon. member for Nipawin, as a result of this concern, I have established what I call a special action group within the department which is looking at the very question you pose, and that is, how can we provide a further incentive or some additional leadership toward having more of these committees functioning and establishing? Up until this time we have worked on the assumption that is something for which we should provide the framework and we should leave the initiative to school boards. Now the hon. member opposite and the hon. member for Nipawin are suggesting that isn't good enough, that we need to exercise some leadership, if not indeed some authority from a departmental level.

I know the hon. member understands the care which must be taken in a decision of that sort because we do not want to create any imbalance in the proper relationship between boards and the province. But I do think we have reached a point where because it is true that there has been such a small number of these committees formed; we now need to look at providing additional leadership and additional incentive. The exact mechanism to look at providing additional leadership and additional incentive. The exact mechanism for doing that, given the sensitivity of the area, is something I think we have to very, very carefully review. So I am not one who wants to pretend that I have an easy answer as to how to provide that leadership, but I will tell the hon. member that I, too, am disappointed there have not been more of these local school advisory committees formed. With relation to the other point the hon. member was mentioning, the degree of participation within the electoral process, I was referring in my comments to the hon. member for Nipawin, to the low turnout on the part of ratepayers voting in school board elections, not to the low turnout of candidates who are willing to run. We have had a relatively low percentage of the total ratepayers across the province participating in school board elections. That is something which I think is of concern, and that was the point I was referring to when I mentioned the low participation in answer to the question from the hon. member for Nipawin.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'm glad to see the department is taking some action on these parent advisory councils. I was wondering if through the Chronicle, the

publication, there had ever been any articles pointing out to all the administrators and boards in the province that this is your means of communication, and asking why these are not being formed, or if one were formed to focus upon it and maybe its activities would stimulate others? But I understand from your comments you are going to be looking at that, and I hope sincerely that you can get these going because I think they can play an integral part in the educational scene.

The member for Nipawin also mentioned a topic I was going to bring up a little later on. What about the growth of private schools in this province, or alternate form schools? Do you have some statistics which would indicate, say in the last two years or so, what the growth has been of alternate schools — I mean schools other than the public schools or the separate schools?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, with respect to the private schools, there are at the present time somewhere around 2,500 students, out of a total school population of close to 200,000, enrolled in private schools in Saskatchewan. A very, very substantial number of those students (by far the vast majority) are enrolled in longstanding sectarian religious schools which have existed for many, many years. So while there is always a certain change in the distribution of students within that 2,500, there is not a significant number of students who are new in terms of numbers from say, five years ago. I don't know the exact figure, but we must recognize that the 2,500 is small; by far the largest number of those come from schools which have been established for many years in this province.

MR. TAYLOR: — It's a small enrolment probably, but the member for Nipawin was saying there was tenfold growth in the last five years. I would like to know, what is the growth? I understand that in Ontario (I know it's taking place in Ontario) and some of the other provinces there is a move toward private schools. My question is, has it hit Saskatchewan? How many have been developed in the last two years?

MR. McARTHUR: — I would have to get the figures and I will get them for the member. I don't have them here tonight on the actual change in private school enrolments in the last five years. I would say the tenfold figure certainly bears no relationship to fact. And I think (to be fair to the hon. member) he was suggesting there had been a tenfold increase in the enrolment in the Saskatoon French school. But the enrolment in the Saskatoon French school is approximately 175 students. I don't think there's been a growing in numbers in the last five years; not, I think, as a general result of the trend in development of private schools, but because of the interest of parents in having their children participate in a French language education program.

MR. TAYLOR: — A problem, which I think all the people in education admit is taking place in our society, is the declining enrolment, Mr. Minister. I believe from 1968 to 1978 in the 5 to 17 age group that the decline in enrolment in Saskatchewan was about 17.5 per cent, whereas the figure for Canada in that same period of time was 8.4 per cent. That is the average for Saskatchewan. I think you will realize that in south-western Saskatchewan, in the more sparsely-settled area, the enrolment decline is very serious. I think you also realize, Mr. Minister, that costs do not decline in proportion to enrolment decline. Teacher costs are likely to increase because teachers are training longer. Therefore they are going to be better qualified and demand higher salaries as their wage settlements.

I refer to a statement by yourself entitled "Declining Enrolments" where you state the

following, "Within my tenure as minister I intend to see that we will have some solutions to this provincial dilemma." As you stated there is a provincial dilemma in Saskatchewan — declining enrolments. What are some of the ideas you would have to combat this serious problem of declining enrolments? By the way it seems strange to me that Saskatchewan and Quebec are the two provinces in Canada which have the most serious problem in the Canadian scene involving declining enrolments.

MR. McARTHUR: — I should first of all say that going back to a period when our school system was very close to a peak in the early 1970s, our enrolments were somewhere up near 250,000 students. Today they have dropped down to about 198,000 students; that is over about a 10-year period. By any measure there has been a very substantial drop in the enrolment in the school system related to the decline in family size. We not see the result of the end of the baby boom and the oncoming of the smaller family having a very direct impact on the school system.

The process has been under way for perhaps eight or nine years now within the school system and has extended through the elementary system. Now we see a stabilization of enrolment in the elementary system. There will however be some significant decline in the high school system over the next three to four years, and then again that system will stabilize.

With respect to the situation as it has existed to date, I might point out to the hon. member that we have recognized the fact that there is not necessarily a reduction in what is needed in terms of teaching and other resources as a result of declining enrolments, because of the way they're distributed and because of the impact on the individual school. As a result of that we have pursued a policy of providing, as I have indicated already to the hon. member, financial grants to school boards which do not force them to have to cut back in relation to the declining enrolments.

In terms of the aggregate growth in the school funding, which as I have indicated to the hon. member has been tripling since 1971, we are now among the highest-rated provinces in terms of the proportion of educational costs which we assume as a provincial government. Associated with that was an opportunity for school boards to maintain their professional resources. We have seen during this period of declining enrolment an actual growth in the number of teachers within the school system in the province, which indicates that we have been successful in trying to cushion this impact.

Within the grant system itself, we have brought in some special measures which address the problems of differential impact of declining enrolment. Within the foundation grant system we have what is called a sparsity factor which provides an enrichment of grant for those areas which have a sparse school population relative to other systems. We have brought in what we call a declining enrolment factor, which cushions the possible change in grant that an enrolment decline could cause to an individual school board. It does not eliminate the impact, but it cushions the impact.

This year, recognizing that, we must now look at the impact of declining enrolments in terms of the smaller schools which must be operated. We have provided an experimental special fund to provide differential enrichment grants to school divisions in the province which operate an above normal number of small high schools in order to assist them to maintain the operation of the smaller school; that is one of the consequences of the declining enrolment.

In addition to that, we currently have under way a special study which will look at the

possible curriculum and school needs and other needs of the smaller school which is affected by declining enrolment. So all of those are things that we have been or are now addressing as ways to deal with the declining enrolment situation. I do think that if you look at just the past seven or eight years in the history of the school boards and the province that the whole declining enrolment problem has been handled; we have a rather enviable track record. For that I give credit both to the Department of Education and to this government but also to school boards.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, we were aware of the sparsity grants and how they operate. The program is what I was wondering about. Have you been looking at the program? I'll point out a few areas that I think you should be considering in this regard as we face the declining enrolments in some of our areas — such things as shared-service agreements. Has there been any study on shared-service agreements or on the purchasing of services in some areas? The move toward more itinerant teachers is a way that you can still keep quality of education in these areas. You might not only be moving teachers but you might also be moving students toward the multicampus concept in education.

I look with interest at a statement about the education in the community colleges where they're using television. I believe it's in the Biggar-Rosetown area where television is being involved. We know that we're on the threshold of a new communications breakthrough. Are you doing any study into using this type of thing and programmed learning as ways of keeping these students within their home communities but affording them, by such measures, with the best education possible? Also, are you developing new programs more geared to the multigrade school? The sparsity grants and the funding — we realize what's happening there. Has your department been focussing on these types of programs that would keep quality education within these schools and allow these students to stay within their home environment without vast bussing costs or moving young students over great areas during each day?

MR. McARTHUR: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman, those are a number of the things we are looking at in the review which I mentioned in my earlier answer. That is, we are looking particularly at the needs of rural schools that have been affected by the declining enrolments. Within that, we are looking at a number of things. We have a review of our correspondence school program at the present time with a view of expanding the concept of the correspondence school toward a distance education kind of program base. So schools that don't have the resources to mount certain kinds of specialized programs might be able to look to a distance education kind of program which might develop out of the correspondence school program. We're broadening the base of that.

We are looking at the possibility of joint service agreements. That is something on which our department has been experimenting or working with school boards in certain parts of the province already. We are currently examining ways that perhaps we might even encourage that or provide some support through the foundation grant formula. In addition to that, through our foundation grant formula, we provide support for the exchanging of students through tuition agreements and so on which can provide some interchange of students in programs between school divisions.

I might also say that a major part of the review I mentioned is a whole look at the appropriate school programs for the small, rural school, recognizing that the small, rural school is going to be a fact of life with the declining enrolments, we may have to look at the whole question of what should be, first of all, the basic nature of the school program when you have a relatively small student base and therefore don't have the

same scope for a very comprehensive set of program options. You may have to redefine what a basic education is in those schools and revise the curriculum which is needed to serve the needs of those schools. In addition to that we may have to look at ways in which we can support teaching programs in schools including the multigraded classroom, which is becoming a fact of life as well in some of our inner-city core schools I might add.

So we are looking at a whole range of possibilities in that sense. I think that the earlier thrust has been to provide financial support for the boards to cope more effectively with the declining enrolment fact of life. We are now moving the further step of looking at the school program itself and the appropriate support we might be able to provide for the school programs through all of these different means, including new technology and that sort of thing, in order to have a good quality education in those small schools.

MR. P. PREBBLE (Saskatoon-Sutherland): — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I would just like to make a few remarks with regard to educational policy and I have a couple of questions for the minister. I'd like to begin, though, by congratulating the minister for some of the initiatives which he has outlined here this evening. I think that one that has especially been long overdue and which he's to be very much congratulated on, is the review he is now undertaking with respect to the social studies curriculum and the material which I understand his staff are gathering with regard to the preparation of educational materials with respect to Saskatchewan history. I want especially to urge the Minister of Education to introduce a full course on Saskatchewan history into the school program to make it a fundamental part of the curriculum. Mr. Deputy Chairman, and I believe that a course in Saskatchewan history during the high school years should be a required course in all schools in Saskatchewan.

During the course of our years at school all members will know that we study a great deal about history in United States. We study a great deal about the initial origins of Canada and history in Canada during the 1700s and 1800s. We learn a lot about British and European history, and yet we spend very, very little time looking at the history of our own province. I think that if we're to have a sense of our identity as a people, it's essential that we have a sense of our history. I think, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that this history course should also give some attention, and provide flexibility for teachers to give attention, to the history of the students' own particular community and own particular region as part of the course, so that students during their school years gain some understanding of the local community and region which they're a part of and what the history of its development has been. As I say, I think this should be a required course and not just an option.

The second proposal which I would like to make to the minister is that I think we have very much underestimated play as a means of learning and that the opportunities which come with using play and looking at play as a part of the curriculum in the school is something that has received little attention and which I think has great opportunities, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I think particularly in the younger years, kindergarten through to Grade 4 or 5, research has very, very clearly demonstrated that play is probably the most important way that children learn. I think, therefore, we need to be looking at ways of assisting teachers. The Department of Education needs to be encouraging teachers to consider how to help children learn during their play activities at how to use play as a means of learning. I think, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the Department of Education should be encouraging all schools in the province to look at their playgrounds, and to consider how playgrounds can be used as a means of helping children to learn. I know in Saskatoon there has been a considerable increase in the number of creative

playgrounds in the last few years. Research has shown how useful these creative playgrounds can be as a means of helping children to learn. I think the Minister of Education and the department should give encouragement to all schools in Saskatchewan to construct this kind of playground.

The third minor point I want to touch on, which I think is quite important, is the problem of teenage pregnancies in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy chairman, and the responsibility I think the Department of Education has to assist in attempting to come to grips with this problem. We now know that approximately \$1 million in medical and hospital costs is spent each year and is directly associated with single teenage pregnancies; I think this is an extremely serious problem.

If you look at the statistics, and if the members opposite would consider the statistics, you would realize we have the unenviable first of having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Canada. I think that's a problem, therefore, which clearly must be addressed. If you look at statistics with regard to the number of students who are taking optional courses in family life education, you find that only about 16 per cent of Grade 12 students in 1979-80 took a course in family life education. I think, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that clearly one of the reasons the Department of Education has been cautious about moving into this area is that there are strong feelings in communities on the part of parents who have questions about whether or not this sort of thing can be taught in school.

I think the discussions which must take place with school boards, and the discussions I would urge the Minister of Education to initiate, are challenging school boards as to whether we can continue to ignore this problem. I think school boards need to be encouraged to implement family life education programs on a much more comprehensive basis in the curriculum, and I think part of that course must clearly include information on sex. The social and economic costs of not dealing with this problem are very serious. The Department of Health clearly has some of the responsibility; the Minister of Education and his department also have responsibilities in this area.

I want to talk, Mr. Deputy Chairman, before closing, about two other areas which I think are important. I want to say that I agree with both the Minister of Education and the member for Nipawin when they talk about the importance of involving parents in the day-to-day operations of the school. I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that I think the minister is to be congratulated for the initiative he has taken in implementing community school programs in some of the course centres in our urban areas, and also for the special action committee which he has set up to examine how parental involvement in the school can be increased.

I want to say to the minister that I think the Government of Saskatchewan should look at providing special grants to schools which are interested and willing to initiate what has become known as the community school concept in North America. This concept, of course, was begun in Flint, Michigan; it has now come to be adopted in many schools in Canada. One can look at Thunder Bay — a school which I visited two to three years ago — elementary schools in Thunder Bay have initiated this concept. I know that the Kensington High School in Toronto has initiated it; I know that Pincher Creek, Alberta has initiated it.

I think it's a concept worthy of adopting, not just on an experimental basis in Saskatchewan but as a fundamental part of the Saskatchewan school system. This

concept needs to be something that receives a great deal of discussion in educational circles in the years to come.

It has a number of fundamental tenets that I think are worth noting. The first one is the encouragement of extensive parent and citizen involvement in the regular school program, not only in terms of administering the school but more importantly playing an active part in the curriculum.

I think the Department of education needs to encourage school boards and support local schools in encouraging parents and citizens to become active resource persons in the classroom. We need to draw on the wealth of knowledge that exists out in the community and is currently not being tapped. I think one of the things we might want to consider is looking at courses in community research and community work as part of the credit system in the schools. Again, this is something that I don't think has been implemented in Saskatchewan schools. I think it would be worth while if credit were given for community research work and community development work that was undertaken by local students as part of their high school program.

I think in addition to that, work needs to be done with regard to encouraging the community to make maximum use of the schools. I know that's a concern in Saskatoon. Many of the schools that the school board in Saskatoon is considering closing are schools which could be used by the community for many activities — from a day care to various community functions, from community college courses to a variety of other uses that the community might wish to identify.

So, as I say, I would like to see the Minister of Education and the Department of Education offer special grants to local school boards and to particular schools to assist them in initiating this concept.

And finally, this is the point I feel most strongly about. I strongly believe that the school system in Saskatchewan needs to move away from operating on the basis of competition. I made this point briefly in the estimates during co-operation. I want to elaborate on it specifically as it relates to the school system now. We need to be trying in our attempts to build a more co-operative society. We need to focus on how we can change the orientation of the school system so it in turn operates on a more co-operative basis.

Now this can involve many things and I'd like to mention a few. I think one of the ones that came up in the estimates on co-operation was the initiatives that the minister is beginning to take in terms of co-operative games being introduced to the schools.

I think that can be expanded considerably. I think a number of other things can be added. Students could be encouraged to purchase their school supplies on a co-operative basis. We could have school lunch programs in Saskatchewan run on a co-operative basis.

I want to say once again that fundamental in the curricula, should be a study of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan, its history and its present day function. I think that there is absolutely no reason, given the fact that co-operatives are such a basic part of our society in the provinces, why their history and their activities shouldn't be part of our studies in the classroom. I think the school boards and local schools need to be given more encouragement to look at classroom programs based on children helping each other in the school. A lot could be done in terms of fostering co-operative values

and assisting students by establishing programs that encourage them to help each other with their work a great deal more.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the most important point of all is that the method of evaluation, particularly in the elementary schools, needs to be changed. And it's high time the system of grades that we currently have in the elementary schools in Saskatchewan was abolished. Mr. Chairman, it's my personal view that we should not be grading children in the way we are now during the first eight years of school, because the very foundation of our school system right now, what makes our school system fundamentally competitive, is the fact that we choose to grade students in their early years of learning.

There is a considerable body of evidence at the present time to show that there are many more effective ways of evaluating students and many more effective ways of providing them and their parents with feedback on their progress in school, other than the system of formal grading. And I think we need to move away from that evaluation system, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I would like to see the Minister of Education initiate a study that would involve consultation with the school boards, with teachers and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and with parents as to how we could move toward a more co-operative school system; specifically, how we could move away from the current system of evaluation in the elementary schools toward a system of evaluation that is far less competitive. Thank you very much.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Chairman, if I could just respond briefly to a number of the comments the hon. member has made, many of which I find myself in sympathy with. First of all, the hon. member has made reference to the social studies curriculum and the social studies curriculum review. Certainly I think the questions he raises are questions that are being posed to the group that will be involved in the social studies curriculum review. Certainly I think the questions he raises are questions that are being posed to the group that will be involved in the social studies curriculum review. I think there is no question at all but that we want the social studies curriculum to provide the best possible basis of education, not only in terms of the history of our province and our country, and the historical forces that work in the development of our province and our country, but also to provide the most comprehensive and the fullest possible education into the contemporary social realities in which we live.

That is basically the kind of direction being given to the social studies curriculum review group and I think it's going to be important as they work through this and as guidance is provided to them that we have a good hard look at the scope we cover within the social studies curriculum and the degree of emphasis that we can provide within that.

I might point out to the hon. member that we do now have a full credit program in the high school system for Canadian history but there is not (as he points out) a full credit program for Saskatchewan history. And exactly how we deal with the Saskatchewan history within the total stream of the social studies program is going to be looked at in that review.

The hon. member makes reference to something that I think is quite important, and that is the whole question of teenage pregnancy within the province and the degree to which our educational system should be addressing that question. I want to indicate to the hon. member that we have a review just beginning on our division 3 health program, and one of the directives I have given that group is that we are to have a good, hard look at the whole question of the challenges adolescents and young teenagers

face in our society today, and the nature of the approach we should take within our educational programs addressing the challenges of adolescent living and the need for adolescent lifestyle programs. I believe that not only addresses the questions related to teenage pregnancy and associated matters, but also deals with such things as drug abuse within our society, alcohol abuse, and many, many other difficult kinds of situations which young adolescent teenagers face in our society, and which our school system cannot ignore in terms of treatment within the school program.

The specifics of how, within that division III program, we might address those questions is something which has not been decided at this time; but there is, I think, a very competent group of educators, teachers, university people, and others involved in looking at this question at the present time.

The hon. member makes reference to the question of play as a means of learning. I would want to say to the hon. member that I don't think he should underestimate the degree to which our system has a commitment to that concept. It's true that it is not as widely based within the system as we might like. However, we are dealing with a question of teaching methodology, and introducing new concepts and new philosophies with respect to teaching methodology. It is often a slow process and requires a lot of education itself. But I do point out that, for instance, the kindergarten program is very much an activity-based program. Particularly in the elementary schools, you will find the whole learning centre concept being used very extensively today, and a good deal of that approach involves the combination of both play and creative activity as part of the learning process. Also, the movement education program is very much involved in utilizing the concept of recreational play and creative play as part of the development of the young person.

With respect to the suggestions regarding community schools, I will point out to the hon. member that the community school projects we are now experimenting with are indeed receiving special grants in support of those programs, as well as special guidance and assistance from our department with regard to the appropriate processes for developing community schools.

I should also say with respect to the competition within the school system, I think it is certainly true that basic to our school philosophy we encourage co-operation and co-operative development among our young people as important values. I should point out that we are again dealing to a degree with teaching philosophy and teaching methodology. We do underscore our whole program with the idea that it should be a program of continuous progress for students, not based on a standardization of grading system, but rather on the full development of the individual young person; that person should develop in the learning program and in their educational program along a continuous path which challenges the student to reach his or her fullest potential, but in no way sets the student up in competition with another student. Now I again say that I recognize that is basically a methodological and philosophical question with respect to the approach to teaching. I think we do need to keep pressing that particular point of view with respect to the appropriate approach of the teaching program. I think we may need to have a look at reaffirming our commitment to that whole approach in some new and innovative way. That is certainly something I am taking into consideration at this time.

MR. H.J. SWAN (Rosetown-Elrose): — Mr. Minister, I want to touch on a few of the things you were saying earlier. I would like to start in the area of grants. In your comments you said the foundation grant program was the best grant program you had

been able to find across Canada. I'd agree with that statement because we've done a fair bit of research and indeed, that's what it says. But I think in any program there have to be some adjustments to keep the program up-to-date. As the enrolments declined you have to some extent adjusted your ratio to take into consideration the decline, but I don't think it has adjusted to the extent that the decline has taken place. Now, even though your foundation program may be very good, it is only as good as the amount of money that you are willing to put into it.

In Saskatchewan we have seen inflation take its toll. We've seen the decline of students and your grant is basically based on students. We've seen the escalation of the assessment of land values of properties within the city boundaries, and we are still seeing the mill rate rising very rapidly. Over the last number of years it has been running 5 mills, 6 mills or 7 mills in most of the school divisions around the province. So though your grant formula may appear good on the surface, I believe there is a need for an injection of larger amounts of money into the grant formula if you are going to keep up with the inflationary trend that we have been experiencing along with the declining enrolment. I would like some comments from you in that area.

MR. McARTHUR: — I should first of all say that I don't disagree with the hon. member at all that we need to constantly reassess the foundation grant system to look at possible appropriate changes to maintain not only an equalization in the funding, but also to maintain the basic concept of equal opportunity to education of equal quality for all of our young students. The two may not necessarily fully correspond. I should say that the grant system, as you know at the present time, is not solely tied to student numbers, nor is it solely tied to assessments, but it's tied to a combination of those two things. It tries to provide an equalization between systems largely on those two factors.

I recognize the point that the hon. member is making: as enrolments decline in some parts of the system more rapidly than other parts of the system, or in some schools more so than other schools, that can cause some differential impact because it is difficult to adjust down to the smaller size. That is the reason we have introduced some of these factors into the foundation grant system up to the present time. I am certainly amenable to looking at further adjustments that would bring about some further changes of that general sort within the grant system.

Indeed, this year when I brought in the small schools factor in response to the differences among school divisions in the size of their enrolment, as enrolment changes take place, I indicated to the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association that I was going to bring it in on a relatively small and experimental scale. I wished to get their response to that kind of approach, as well as to other kinds of adjustments and changes we might make to the grant system with a view to pursuing that very problem. I don't think I have immediately the exact answers to that problem and I don't think any of us has a corner on the answers, but I think we do need to engage in some experimentation and some dialogue. That is, in essence, what we are undertaking to do at this time.

I indicate again to the hon. member that I don't think it is fair or correct to attribute some of the difficulties we are experiencing in relation to declining enrolment to the fact that our overall level of funding has in some sense been insufficient. When I look at the comparative records and the comparative figures, I say to the hon. member that I think the overall funding has grown very rapidly and at a rate that should satisfy the general needs of the system. I think the problem is more in the kinds of adjustments we need within the foundation grant system itself to provide equality of educational opportunities. That's basically the thing we are looking at in this review.

I want to say to the hon. member that with respect to the mill rate changes, I don't think we should react to a few cases where mill rates have changed significantly. Rather we should look at the overall picture because by the nature of the equalization principle there will be some changes in grants and boards may respond to that with some patterns of change in the mill rates.

I point out to the hon. member that the total change in mill rates for three years in this province on average has been no more than 10 mills or 12 mills. When you look at what's happened, there have been different rates of change in different years. One of the factors, I think, is that the boards sometimes lag in their changes in mill rates and go into catch-up periods.

If you look at last year, for instance, there was a very large number of boards which made very small, if any, changes in mill rates. This year some of those boards have found, because of the changes in costs, that they perhaps underestimated the need for a change in mill rates and so they're doing some catch up. That perhaps has accentuated some of the individual changes taking place this year. That's perhaps a result of not being able to adequately foresee what's happening, or perhaps a lack of full and adequate planning. But our system is such that we do not try to tell boards when they should make their mill rate changes, and who knows, perhaps we couldn't even foresee it any better than they could.

I don't think the hon. member should attempt to indicate that there have been major changes in mill rates in this province over the last two or three years. The facts simply do not bear that out.

MR. SWAN: — I would like to refer you to one particular system and you can respond as you wish. I raised with you the school system at Rosetown and I raised with your as well the one at Eston-Elrose. These are both fairly high assessed areas and I believe your grant formula is not really treating these people fairly.

If land is high assessed, a quarter section that's assessed at \$4,000 on the computational mill rate will bring in a lot more dollars than one assessed at \$2,000. That's only common sense. But your formula does not, in a sense, recognize that as far as it should.

The people on the \$4,000 land have quotas that are exactly the same as the people who are on \$2,000 assessed land. They might be able to produce a few more bushels, but they can't sell any more. So the structure is indeed penalizing those people, and they're feeling it very severely. I believe that needs to be looked at, to adjust your formula so they do not go out of balance as far as they are at the present time.

I mentioned that the mill rates were climbing. In the Rosetown district they have gone up significantly both of the last two years. In Eston-Elrose, again they have gone up very significantly in both of the last two years. Both are fairly high assessed, but with very, very high mill rates. So your system is really not picking up the needs of the people in those two areas in particular. I'm sure that if I were acquainted with some of the other mill rates around the province I could extend that to a much wider circle of people.

I'm asking you if you are willing to look at the grant formula and see if you can make an adjustment so the increases will be fairer to people who are on high assessed land. Because they're high assessed you should have picked up the difference to begin with

without penalizing them a second time in the grant formula.

While you're on your feet, I hope you will tell us what your thoughts are with these special grants the member for Saskatoon-Sutherland was asking about. I hope your statement that you were in agreement with many of the things he was saying did not pick up the idea that you were going to make special grants to special people around the province, because that would indeed throw away the value of the foundation grant program.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, with respect to the member's comment about the impact of the foundation grant formula on high assessed land, he makes the point that a small change in computation of mill rate will raise more computational revenue on high assessed land than it will on low assessed land. I would point out to the member that a small change in the mill rate will do the same thing. So that is essentially the result of applying the mill rate concept to the assessment base. I think we have no choice really, if we are going to use a foundation grant type of system but to use the assessments which are provided through the assessment system for the land that exists in the province.

If there is a problem in applying a mill of taxation against that high assessed land, a problem in the sense that it somehow creates more hardship for the landowner than it does on low assessed land, then I think you are challenging or raising a question about the assessment and not about the method (if you like) of applying the mill rate to assessment to raise revenue. That is really a problem, I think in all fairness, that goes beyond anything we can do within the Department of Education. I am not even sure I agree with the hon. member, but I am not well enough schooled in the intricacies of assessment and the relation of assessment to earning power to know whether the hon. member's comments are correct. But presumably if the assessment system is fair and assessments take place on an equalized basis and if the assessment system is really based on the earning power of the land, then it is equally fair to treat the computation of mill rate in the same way on high assessed land as low assessed land unless there is a problem with the assessment itself.

Now, I want to say to the hon. member I think the greater concern is with the problems of declining enrolments in some of those rural school divisions. Because really if you look at the problem they are presenting to you and to me, it to a very considerable extent, arises out of the fact that their enrolments have declined so substantially. Because our equalization principle recognizes enrolments, that takes down their recognized expenditures quite considerably and has an impact then on the grant payment because of the way the grant is calculated. We are looking at that enrolment question. So I think that would essentially be my feeling on that question.

I do want to say, in response to the second point the hon. member made, that while we basically operate on the principle that grants are not tied to anything in particular, I think in order to deal with certain special problems, it is sometimes necessary to look at providing specific and particular grants in support of particular programs. With respect to the community school program which we are operating in the urban core schools on a pilot project basis, we are providing, under a kind of contract arrangement, special payments to those schools to experiment with those projects. That may not be a long and continuous process. We may normalize that within the foundation grant system at some point, I don't know.

But I also say to the hon. member that any of these adjustments, which you and the hon. members opposite are suggesting he developed to deal with special problems in small rural schools experiencing declining enrolment at a rapid rate, do require looking at a particular problem and focusing the grant system in some way toward that problem. So if you are going to address some of those particular problems, you can never get away with having a certain degree of focus within parts of your grant system. I think the main thing to try to avoid is to get into determining such things as the number of teachers and the kind of optional programs and so on that will be offered in schools. I don't think we want to get into that.

MR. SWAN: — I don't think you quite caught what I was trying to get at in the adjusting of the grant program to take into account the high assessed land. I believe you are paying too much attention to assessment and not enough to other factors in the grant formula, and I believe you have to look at that soon; otherwise you're going to price education out of the reach of a lot of these people.

I think that the student side of it has to be looked at; the teacher side of it has to be looked at and the number of programs that you want offered in the school have to be looked at. You can't offer a good education program if you tie it only to students. The students drop, so you find that you're in a bind because you haven't enough dollars then to hire enough staff to teach the wide variety of programs now being proposed. So I think you could begin to look at that area of the grant formula and make some adjustment. This grant formula has been ongoing for an umber of years and when you look at the student population in the province, we've lost about 20 per cent of the students over the same period that the grant formula has been in operation. So I think there is a serious need for a look at this one. I'm not going to belabour it any further, but I'd like you to consider it when you are taking a look at the structure of that grant formula.

I'd like to ask you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I've had about five minutes, Roy . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's fine, just keep talking. You're stretching it; you just keep talking as long as you like.

I would like to raise a concern with you that was raised by one of the school divisions and I'm sure you've had a copy of the letter. The concern they raise is indeed the one that I have raised with you a number of times and it relates to the negotiation of teachers' salaries. They're in opposition to the idea that the government should be at the bargaining table. They feel it should be a case of negotiating between trustees and teachers (in other words, the employer-employee relationship).

Now, you have used the term for a longer time, that he who pays the piper calls the tune (or I should say one of the former ministers used it). You don't apply it in the university setting and I don't think you need to apply it here in this setting. So what I'm asking you to do is to respond to the request of this board (and I'm sure it applies to the boards throughout this province) that the government get away from the bargaining table to give teachers and trustees an opportunity to get along with the work of educating students without government interference directly at the table. I'd like to know what your decision is.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think the system which has developed in this province under our legislation, providing for joint bargaining involving the government and the trustees, is one that has worked relatively well and recognizes the reality that education is a joint responsibility of the boards and the province, not just in

terms of the program but also in terms of the financing. Indeed I have indicated that to the hon. member and other ministers apparently have. The hon. member knows the degree to which the provincial government supports education financially in this province.

I think that recognizing the workability of the provincial bargaining system and the involvement of the government in school finance, it is appropriate that the government be at the bargaining table with trustees when bargaining with teachers.

MR. TAYLOR: — No, Mr. Minister, I have a series of questions here. I'll try to keep my questions short. You make your answers concise and to the point and we should be able to move right along.

Senior citizens free tuition correspondence courses — how many were enrolled in and completed that program?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I don't have that answer at my fingertips. Could I send it over to you and proceed to the next question?

MR. TAYLOR: — Right, you can get your staff going here. What about guidance counselling? I questioned the Minister of Culture and Youth. It was drawn to my attention that he had two men out in the field. These individuals were doing a very credible job, the school principals were telling me. He pointed out that you were going to be taking that service over. I think you and your officials know that there has been a serious shortage of guidance people as an asset to the small, rural high schools. Are you considering expanding this program and, if so, how many people will you be putting in the field this year?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, we have two people in the department who provide support to the guidance program under the Department of Education. We also have a student services branch in the department of Continuing Education that provides centralized support and consulting services to the school guidance program. We also have curriculum support for the guidance program. Essentially, the provision of the guidance program within the schools, just as with the other educational programs, is the responsibility of the schools and the school boards.

MR. TAYLOR: — I'm very much aware of the materials that you have and I've worked with them. What I'm pointing out is that under this other department, there were two women out there in the field. They were out calling on the smaller high schools which, due to budgetary restraints, can't afford to take on a person. You must understand, they can't afford to have a full-time guidance person. Now, the Minister of Culture and Youth indicated in his estimates that this service was going to be picked up by the Department of Education. Now is he talking through his hat or are you going to have some people out in the field going from school to school? These people were doing an awful job, as I understand, in job recruitment, in showing the students just what the job potential is on the Saskatchewan labour scene.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I believe what my colleague was referring to was the fact we are putting into place a new guidance program. Within each of the regions in the province we have special consultants who are seconded to the regional offices for a period of time to assist with the introduction of programs. We are looking at the likelihood of those personnel being used to assist in the introduction of this program and therefore to assist schools with this program. But I again point out to the

hon. member that as far as the actual provision of the guidance services within the schools, just as with provision of industrial arts training or whatever, the school boards have been quite insistent that that is something for them to determine from their own priorities. We are honouring that system at the present time.

MR. TAYLOR: — What I am pointing out is, I remember when the department came out with the new phys ed program for Kindergarten to Grade 12. Consultants were hired under the direction of Mr. John Campbell. They came around to the schools to provide assistance, to look at the programs that were taking place in physical education. When the new Division III English came in, the same sort of thing took place. What I'm saying is that there is a great need, and it has been expressed to me by principals that the Department of Culture and Youth was supplying this need. These people have been requesting that it not be cut off. I'm not asking you to supply guidance counsellors in the schools, but why not have this consultative service in a field that has been overlooked and neglected in rural education in Saskatchewan for many years?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, that's what I was referring to when I spoke about the regionally based consultants who have been involved in some of these other programs. While we haven't finalized the priorities for this year in terms of the work of those consultants, I am confident that some of that consulting time will be devoted to this particular program.

MR. TAYLOR: — So in other words, if these fellows phone me up tomorrow morning and ask, are we going to have this, did you bring it up with the Minister of Education, I can tell them that there will be consultants coming around to their schools to help them with the guidance program. Is that correct?

MR. McARTHUR: — I think what the hon. member can tell them, is that within each of their school divisions they have either a director of education or departmental superintendent of education. Those people meet and determine the priorities of the application of those consultants' time. It would probably be helpful, if they place a priority on that particular need, for them to communicate with their director of education or their departmentally employed superintendent, whatever the case may be, in order to urge them to place a priority on that need in determining the application of those consultants' time.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I taught school for a number of years and I'm not going to tell any principal to go through all that bureaucratic rigmarole, because as soon as I say, you start going to your assistant superintendent, they're going to say, well Graham, we're not going to get it. What I'm asking you is, do you realize there is a need? I see you have quite an extension on policy, planning and special projects, and so on. What I am suggesting to you is that there is a need which was being supplied by culture and youth, on a very limited (but really appreciated) basis. I understand the personnel they had were excellent. I would hope that maybe you could track them down and hire them and put them out in the field, where they're certainly going to be giving a good shot to an area of high school education that in rural Saskatchewan is suffering, and has always suffered in this province.

MR. McARTHUR: — I shall certainly communicate the point you're making to our regional directors, to avoid the need for principals to carry their communication in the direction you indicated.

MR. TAYLOR: — Take it one step further; see what you can do to try to get some good guidance support staff out there in the field.

The next thing is the assistant regional superintendents. We talked about this in question period. You said there was some attempt being made to reallocate these people. I pointed out to you that these people have a lot of educational expertise. They were right up there at the top. They worked their way up the educational ladder. Where are these people reallocated to?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think I can assure the hon. member that, depending on the particular preferences of the people involved, if indeed they agree we can proceed, opportunities are open to all people involved who wish to take advantage of those opportunities by the end of June.

MR. TAYLOR: — Will those opportunities and positions which they will be able to be transferred into mean a reduction in salary? Will these people be laterally transferred, and will their expertise be used within the field of education? I can see where you could put some of these fellows out as your guidance consultants. Lord, they came right up through the rural schools and high schools, and worked their way up as many people in the department have. They have a good grasp of the scene. They can relate to students. Maybe you could put them into the suggestion I was giving you a minute ago.

MR. McARTHUR: — Certainly. I can assure the hon. member that by and large the opportunities provided to them will be equivalent to the superintendency 1 level at least, which is the classification they were at.

MR. TAYLOR: — . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, we won't worry about that, Gordon.

Mr. Minister, we've discussed education for the handicapped and we have some degree of unanimity on that. I am not great at giving bouquets to your side of the House, but I do think you are concerned in this regard, Mr. Minister, and are doing a very good job. I see there is a need, a great need, for developmental centres. I've seen the proof of what these can do; I see from an article here, and I quote from Dr. Beke on the Regina board:

If society insists on looking at the cost of providing services for the handicapped in dollars and cents, it should also look at the cost of not providing such services.

I think that's a very wise statement. I think early intervention for the multiple-handicapped child is the right route to be going, stepping in at three years of age with high cost funding is exactly what is needed for good developmental programs. But, Mr. Minister, I wonder, as is the case in Regina where we've had the developmental program under the guidance of Mrs. Mitchell for some time, if there is some movement to bring this under the school boards. And, as you have stated yourself, next year is the year of the disabled or the handicapped and looking at statements in your reply to the budget indicated to me that perhaps this is the route we would be looking at in Saskatchewan.

The only thing I say to you in this regard, Mr. Minister, is that to have these developmental centres work well and satisfy the needs and growth and development of these students, we certainly need to have the funding. I know it was raised to \$5,300 or

\$5,400 per student. That is really a minimum and if you're contemplating this shift under the school boards, I would say, fine and dandy.

But the thing I would hope to see is that there would be adequate funding for these developmental centres so that the ultimate goal of these people who have some strikes against them could be reached. Hopefully, with this extra stimulation and training, eventually they could be phased in somewhere along the normal stream, I would want to hear your comments and plans for developmental centres and handicapped students.

MR. McARTHUR: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we consider it a very important part of our educational program in the province. The whole idea is that handicapped children should be provided a quality educational program in order to maximize their individual development within the educational system. We believe that an important part of achieving this that those children should be able to attend school or take part in their educational programs as much as possible within the regular educational system. We encourage in every way we can this particular philosophy so there is an opportunity for them to socialize and be part of the general school environment.

I indicate to the hon. member that our funding for the education of handicapped children is quite generous. I suppose with more money there's always a chance to do a little more but I think we do have a very generous approach to funding. We do now have as a basic matter of policy and a matter of legislation the position that all handicapped children have a right to an educational program appropriate to their needs and I think that's important.

We also say that the school boards in this province have a responsibility to provide an educational program to those young people. We say that no young people are to be disregarded or ignored by the school system. Those children have a right to an education. The other side of the coin is that there is a responsibility to provide the education.

So as a part of this policy, we are encouraging and doing everything we can to see that school boards are taking on the responsibility for development centres as well as other educational programs for the handicapped. We do recognize there is a difficulty of time and so on — getting boards used to the approach and getting boards used to the philosophy. So we are working on this through time. We now have situation where the majority of the children in developmental centres are in centres operated by school boards.

I think the trend is more and more toward school boards assuming responsibility for those developmental centres. I think our hoped end point will be when all developmental centres are operated by school boards. That is certainly the direction toward which I am encouraging school boards to go. But I think we do have to recognize that there is a certain learning period, a certain breaking-in period. We can't force it through to the final end point too quickly or we might have a detrimental effect on the programs themselves.

MR. TAYLOR: — There is the other end of the spectrum, Mr. Minister, and I have spoken of this before. I do feel that we in Saskatchewan to some degree do not get the maximum potential out of what I would call the gifted. But since gifted is very hard to define, let's, for discussion's sake, say students with superior learning capabilities. I would hope that with your own rather encouraging academic record as a student, you

would see there certainly is this need in Saskatchewan. We should be focusing attention on some way of enriching our program so that these students can have their maximum potential developed.

I'll give you an example of a student I know of — a Grade 12 student in my home town who has had this opportunity. He has attended four Canadian national science fairs and that has just sparked that boy and stimulated him. I don't want to get on another subject, but on the controversial Bill No. 13, this fellow was writing letters to me day after day with a grasp of that technology which is almost as an expert level. And that is the kind of development I would like to see. I think you have heard me speak before; I'm not going to go into detail. You and I can talk about it. Your officials have heard that I feel when continuing education and education are under one ministry, you have the opportunity to dovetail these two things.

At this time of the year, when many of the schools are having field trips and things of this nature (which I am not opposed to but in some cases there is a bit of marking time going on as we get toward the end — the university I believe is in intersession or something) I would encourage you and your department to look again at using some of that expertise at the universities to stimulate these minds, to give them this academic treat shall we say, and provide this opportunity for a bit of enrichment that is not possible within the school system, I believe the Saskatoon system has embarked on something like that now on Saturdays. I think it's taking place in Saskatoon but again I come from a rural seat. Looking and knowing that these minds are out there in rural Saskatchewan, where unfortunately some of them are dropping out of school I feel that this type of stimulation may encourage them.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think that we do indeed recognize that there are special needs on the part of gifted children. One of the things that has long been hoped in our system is that the whole philosophy of continuous learning and of individualized programming would provide the basis for schools themselves to provide the best opportunity possible for gifted children. However, we recognize there are some difficulties in that respect. I mentioned before I had an action group within the department looking at another question; I have also had an action group looking at the needs of gifted children. We have made a decision that we are going to provide some basic policy and program leadership to schools with respect to gifted children. The final determination and consultations on developing that policy framework are now under way.

MR. TAYLOR: — The next thing I would like to raise with you on these estimates is the physical safety of schools. I know that you have done a fairly exhaustive study into the asbestos and you have reported that certain schools have to make improvements that you are monitoring. We have been discussing the insulation (urea formaldehyde) and I don't know if you are contemplating doing such a study in this regard or not. I know we have listed Kennedy, Lipton and McClurg Schools where there seems to be some undefined problem. I was mentioning this to you that day in response to your statement about lighting in the school but the Speaker saw that it wasn't on the topic so I didn't get a chance to mention all the concerns.

There has been a study by a Dr. Peter Quandt in Edmonton who indicates that perhaps there is a need for looking at natural lighting in the schools. He points out that public buildings are increasingly depriving people of natural light, causing either physical, psychological or other kinds of damage. In going on a little further he says that among other symptoms, glare can also produce headaches, nausea, fatigue, running eyes,

giddiness and decreased ability to concentrate.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you are considering any further monitoring of the physical plants in which students are required to attend school in view of, shall we say, urea formaldehyde and lighting in the school. It seems to me when I was teaching that all of a sudden they came around and said the rooms were too dim, so we had to fix up the lighting. Then, about three years later, a fellow came around and said, gosh, this is far too bright; it's hurting the students' eyes. I wonder if you are taking a look at this and just what the new rules for lighting are in schools at this time.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, there is some considerable concern about the question of the impact of lighting on student health and student psychology. I might point out to the hon. member that the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association is now engaged in a fairly extensive review of this problem. While we generally take a considerable amount of interest and responsibility for monitoring and trying to provide leadership with regard to general health conditions and environmental conditions in the school, we feel at this time that the work being done by the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association is, indeed, an exhaustive piece of work so we haven't undertaken anything separately and independently, but rather are maintaining a liaison with them and are awaiting the results of their review. We will then review the recommendations they make and hopefully take the appropriate steps which should be taken in response to this lighting question at that time.

MR. TAYLOR: — O.K. Fine. Another concern I would like to express at this time, Mr. Minister, is the fact of teacher redundancy. As we see the enrolments going down, unless we expand programs it's inevitable that staff cuts are going to have to take place. I would suggest, having searched in some of the other provinces, that perhaps a suggestion which could be worked in, in the future trustee negotiations, or a type of program which could be looked at, is where teachers are allowed to take 80 per cent or 90 per cent of their salary over a four or five year period and then have a year in which they could take off for travel or further study or whatever it may be. This, I think, would help alleviate some of the problem and it would give the teachers who have been in teaching for 10 years, 15 years or so, a breath of new life. It would give them another viewpoint, a chance to visit Europe or somewhere of that nature and come back with refreshed batteries. In some cases, it may lead to teachers finding other means of occupation allowing new people to get into the profession.

I would suggest that this is being undertaken in some of the other provinces so it would seem to me to be a feasible type of thing. As far as transferring and shifting, if you are in a small jurisdiction it's pretty limited. In a larger jurisdiction maybe you can; but in a small one it becomes inevitable, you have to let the teacher go. In most cases it's the younger teacher who goes. This would give an opportunity to let that older teacher out for a year or so and bring another person into the teaching profession.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I might say first of all, in response to the hon. member's comments, that in terms of overall teacher supply and demand we do not anticipate we will have a surplus of teachers in this province. I don't think the general concern is one of an excess of redundant teachers within the educational system and a shortage of teaching positions. But with respect to the suggestion which I think is more aimed at providing the teachers an opportunity for self-improvement and professional development through special measures of that sort, (which aren't fully perhaps available in smaller school areas). I should point out to the hon. member that the whole question of sabbatical and educational leave for teachers is something provided for in

our Education Act under section 232, and is something school divisional boards are required to bargain with teachers on in the local teacher contract. So it is not an area where we can become part of the bargaining, rather it must be bargained by the boards and the teachers. Certainly that section of the act encourages that kind of bargaining. However, the exact position boards are taking is something of which I am not generally aware and certainly not able to influence in any direct way at least.

MR. TAYLOR: — There are very few sabbaticals offered at this time. I think it has decreased quite a bit over the years. This would be a way in which it wouldn't be a burden on the taxpayer. It would be the teacher who makes this agreement with the board itself to take a reduced salary for some time and build up so that he could have this year at partial salary to undertake whatever he may wish to do.

The next thing I want to mention to you is the school bus driver improvement plan that was offered. One of the members put a motion in on that and was speaking on it. I think it is great that there has been (and I believe it was brought on by the school trustees and the department of the federal government) a lot of funding coming from the federal government for this study. And of course it is put together for upgrading the capabilities of school bus drivers. I think that's one step in the right direction. However, Mr. Minister, I think that there are other steps to take in the direction of making the transportation of students in the school buses of this province even safer than it is now.

I know that critics will stand up and say, well the incidence of accident is very low and so on. Thank goodness it is. But I've had occurrence right within my area of nearly serious accidents with school buses and I believe, as do many people in Saskatchewan, that there is a need to look at the design of school buses. They've been almost the same design since they first came on the market, without many improvements. I think if you look at the interior of them and if you rode on them, there's a real chance of injury. I would ask if there is any interest or any plans within your department to look at a study on the design of school buses?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, with respect to the whole question of school bus safety, including drivers as well as the vehicles themselves, the regulatory power with respect to school buses does not rest with the Department of Education. We do work on a co-operative basis and consultative basis with the highway traffic board, which carries out the implementation of the regulations on school bus safety both in operational terms and for basic equipment.

However, one of the things that has been a great concern over the past few years is, as the hon. member has pointed out, the basic design of school buses. I think we have to recognize that there are a limited number of school bus manufacturers that would lead to an improvement in the design and equipping of school buses. I think there are improvements with respect to utilization of seat belts, design of seats and other safety aspects of seats on new school buses that have been needed for a long time, are perhaps a bit late, but are now coming.

MR. G.S. MUIRHEAD (Arm River): — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'd like to say to the minister that I've appreciated the way he's answered his questions today. I think he does a very good job as Minister of Education but I don't want him to leave here tonight feeling too good. I know it's not his fault but I'm very disappointed with the educational system in Saskatchewan; not just in Saskatchewan, I would say it's right across our nation. He

may not agree with me, but the complaints I receive from the schools in my own constituency — and I don't think it can be the same all over — indicate that there is getting to be too much of a tendency for the students to discipline the teachers instead of the teachers disciplining the students. Now I think this should come to an end.

We have decided teachers; let's see that they keep rule in their schools. Laugh all you want, but I'll tell you, when I watch the students in our school who get to Grade 8 or Grade 9 and can't even spell and still pass, something is going wrong with the educational system in this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I know that he happens to be a dedicated teacher. So is the member for Meadow Lake. There are many more of them in this province who are dedicated teachers and principals who keep rule in their school. But I can tell you I have a few of them in my constituency who are a disgrace to the school system. I'm not blaming you, =m, but I say there has to be someone on your staff, in your department, who must improve the school system and the school discipline.

I had lots of questions I did want to ask, but it's getting late so I'll just ask three or four questions here. Could the minister tell this House how much money the Department of Education receives from the federal government for bilingual education and how is the money disbursed?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, first of all, with respect to the question of discipline in our schools, as the hon. member has pointed out, we don't operate the schools and we don't employ the teachers. We don't set the policies with respect to discipline within the schools. That is something that under our legislation school boards have a responsibility to do in conjunction with their schools. Policies must be stated.

However, we have provided some general guidance within our programs to the effect that schools should provide as much assistance as possible for students who are having behavioural or other difficulties in the schools, in order to maintain a basic functioning of the young person in the schools. We now require that, for instance, there be attendance counsellors and so on to work with children with whom they are having problems.

I don't think I would go so far as to agree with the hon. member that there has been a general breakdown in discipline within our schools. I can remember as a young person being in a school which for some years had a very serious discipline problem of one sort, I guess, I think that has always been a possible problem. It is a really of the school system and something our teachers are always faced with and being challenged by.

I think, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I should move on to the question with respect to bilingualism or French language education within our schools. The federal government has a program of providing financial support to the provinces for the operation of French language programs within our schools. I think the French language programs are the major second language programs in our schools and are something that greatly enrich the school program throughout the province.

The money is essentially distributed in the following ways. For schools operating what is called French as a second language — that is a basic French course for school students who are in a normal English speaking school program — there is a basic supplemental grant on the per student grant. Then there are schools which operate a

concentrated French language program; we provide a differential supplemental grant to those school boards on a per student basis, depending on the proportion of time in which there is French language instruction within those schools.

MR. MUIRHEAD: — Mr. Minister, I have a couple more questions, but just answering your remarks about your authority in the schools – you might be right there, but as far as the different classes taught in school and the different curriculums taught in school, you must have something which comes from your department that leads to a situation like this. In one school in my constituency, every year the Grades 9 and 10 group has taken a bus. They went down to Maple Creek last year, and they were doing some studying and playing around. The kids enjoyed it, but the complaint from the parents was that 12 out of 18 failed their algebra and English exams when they got home. I'm not blaming you for this, but why send them on a holiday in June?

Another group, Mr. Minister, spent 13 days in the month of June last year, in the town of Holdfast, at their school building (some little building) learning how to pound nails. Most of them were having fun playing ball. The complaint from the parents was that the kids failed their main classes. They failed. This is the stuff I'm telling you to look into. This has to be your responsibility, but you're just a typical minister.

In estimates I asked you a question about this bilingualism money, and you never answered my question at all. I asked, how much money? Now answer the question and never mind the grandstanding.

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the amount of money is approximately \$1.1 million, which is transferred from the federal government to the province under the agreements. That is an estimate. It is not necessarily totally utilized.

MR. MUIRHEAD: — Is any of this money used for school construction?

MR. McARTHUR: — No.

MR. MUIRHEAD: — My last questions, Mr. Minister. You can answer them all together. There are four or five of them. Approximately 40 per cent of the gross provincial product in this province is agriculture. What percentage of the education budget goes to agricultural education? I'll list five or six areas here; you can answer then all together and I'll be through; animal science, veterinary medicine, crop science, agriculture crops. Am I going too fast? I want you to write these down and give me an answer on them all . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon? Yes, of course it has to have something to do with the school system. Animal science at the university has to be hooked up with the school system and no other way. Where's our money, in education all going? This is an agricultural province and we want some of this education money going to improve agriculture. How much money goes to animal science, veterinary medicine, crop science, agriculture crops, soil science and agricultural economics?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think the hon. member is asking a question with respect to the division of the university budget by those programs. Can I ask for a clarification? Are you asking for the amount of money spent within the universities on those particular facilities? That perhaps should have come up yesterday. I don't have the figures. I will have to inquire of the university, and I will attempt to do so and send that information to you.

MR. MUIRHEAD: — I'm sorry if I should have asked this under continuing education. I

have a few more questions I want to ask, but it's getting late and I will see you personally with some personal problems in my constituency. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, there was a group going around in the schools when I was teaching called the dance works or dance lab or modern dance lab. They're now called the Prairie Dance Lab. I questioned it in culture and youth estimates; they said it was funded by the Department of Education. I'd like to know how much funding this group receives and what divisions you have this group performing in?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, it is true that we provide some basic, very basic, minimal financial support to these organizations so they can provide some resources to the movement education program. There is approximately \$10,000 divided among the provincial gymnastics association, the Regina Modern Dance Works, the Prairie Dance Lab, and also some other small amounts out of that \$10,000 for some other groups which get involved.

MR. TAYLOR: — How much does the Prairie Dance Lab receive, where do you have them going and to what level of students are they giving this movement instruction?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I can't answer how much money the Prairie Dance Lab would get for the coming year. I could perhaps get our department to dig out the records for a past year and send them to you. The way the system works is we do not tell them, or suggest to them, or sent them to any school system. Rather, a school system must invite them to come into the school and then we will share some of the costs; that is the way the finances go.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I think you have to check into this one so I'll just give you a little advice. You don't request them because I had to throw them out. I would encourage you not to let this group into any Division IV school in the province because if you do, you're wasting your money and you're certainly wasting the kids' time. I think if you would ask the Regina Board of Education, who were enticed to go through some of these snakelike movements, they would endorse what I'm saying. I'd look into this if you want to put it in Division I fine, but with a minimal funding. Certainly do not put it in high schools where it's just a laughing stock. That's what happened in many schools, so I would just give you a little advice on that.

Item 1 agreed.

Items 2 to 4 agreed.

Item 5

MR. TAYLOR: — There is quite an increase here in staff; you add nine people. You're going from \$57,000 up to \$672,000 in one year. You mentioned it briefly in your reply to the budget speech. Just what are you planning to do? What are some of these special projects? Could you give us a little overview of how you're spending this \$620,000 which you weren't spending this year?

MR. McARTHUR: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I would point out that within this division there is the increase from two to 11 positions. A substantial number of those positions deal with support people associated with the urban school program, the community school program, and the native school program, which we are developing and implementing at the current time in the province. That is where the largest number

of those particular employees rest and the largest amount of those funds is being utilized in addition to that there is a position for a director of policy and planning and a secretary in that division.

Item 5 agreed.

Items 6 to 8 agreed.

Item 9

MR. TAYLOR: — On your other expenses, Mr. Minister, there's about \$100,000 decrease this year over the last year. Why is that?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, that refers to a period of assessment we're into with respect to the physical education program. We have decided to take this year to do an evaluation of the implementation of the physical education program. As a result of that we will not be seconding three consultants into the program for this year who were previously seconded into the program.

MR. TAYLOR: — That doesn't mean that you're thinking of cutting back or dropping the physical education program in any way, shape or form, does it?

MR. McARTHUR: — No, it does not. Rather, it relates to the fact that the pace of implementation of this program in terms of a pick-up by schools has declined very significantly, and we want to take a look at why that is so in order to see if we can pick up the rate of implementation again.

Item 9 agreed.

Item 10 agreed.

Item 11

MR. TAYLOR: — I notice you've dropped about 20 employees. Is it the design of the department to phase out the departmental superintendents and have complete local employment?

MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the education act provides now that for educational reasons, because the boards have such a considerable amount of responsibility for educational programs, they shall employ directors of education. When they do move into employment of directors of education, the position of departmental superintendent of education is no longer required, and this largely reflects the degree to which boards are moving along that change to board employed directors of education.

MR. TAYLOR: — How many departmental people at the district level do you have?

MR. McARTHUR: — We have 14 remaining at the present time.

Item 11 agreed.

Items 12 to 16 agreed.

Item 17

MR. TAYLOR: — There is a considerable increase in these grants to educational agencies, organizations, associations and institutions. You've gone up \$400,000. Where are these extra grants going that were not there last year?

MR. McARTHUR: — Except for perhaps some very minor changes in the grants last year, the reason for that increase is that this is the item the new urban native teacher education program, the off-campus education program, is going to be funded from. That accounts for the increase in the grant.

MR. SWAN: — You just said that the native teacher education program is going to be funded from that grant. Now, we were in continuing education last night and educating teachers should have come under continuing education. Why do you have it here?

MR. McARTHUR: — This is part of the general program we are mounting within the Department of Education to provide additional resources and programs for native education in our urban centres. The choice is to fund it here versus continuing education. There is nothing cut and dried about where those funds should come from, but because this is a program that's applicable to our school system, our K to 12 system, the decision was made to include it within the overall Department of Education program.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, any time you are educating teachers you must consider it as continuing education. You have that department under the same minister. Why then would you not put this grant in the continuing education department?

MR. McARTHUR: — I'll take your view into account and perhaps next year we can put it in the other vote. It's of no consequence to me.

Item 17 agreed.

Items 18 and 19 agreed.

Vote 8 agreed.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:01 p.m.