

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**May 7, 1981**

**EVENING SESSION**

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY CASH OUTFLOW**

**EDUCATION**

**Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 8**

**Item 1**

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could just briefly introduce the officials that are with me in the Assembly. To my left, Ray Clayton, deputy minister of education; to my right, Ken Kirby, director of education administration; sitting behind me, Peter Dyck, executive director of regional services branch; and Mr. John Moneo, who is in charge of financial administrative services in the department and there are other officials at the back whom I will not take the time to introduce at this time.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for introducing your officials. I would say at this point in time that I think you have more support than I do, but we'll see how the night wears on. I must say I recognize many of your officials from my years in education. I am sure you have some very competent staff to help you out tonight. It may be that you will need them.

I think I'd like to just start off with a rather general discussion of education, and then perhaps we can get into some of the specifics as we roll along on the various topics. I would say at the outset of my remarks that if we can keep our discussion pointed and sharp and crisp I think there is a possibility we can complete the estimate tonight. I'll try to get to the point after my preamble, in my questions and I would expect that you will reciprocate by doing the same in your answers, and things should roll along quite smoothly.

Mr. Minister, what I'm going to say at the beginning I don't want you to take as a personal affront. I know you know me well enough, and I think we have enough rapport that you know I don't mean anything personal. But I am concerned about the image that you, as Minister of Education, are portraying to the various recipients of the very, very important department you head up. And if in any way, shape or form my remarks tonight can improve that situation that would be satisfactory in itself. As I said, we are not talking on a personal basis — estimates certainly are not.

I am concerned from the feedback that I get from people in the field of education — people within departmental ranks, within the teaching profession whom I am closely akin to, and within the board structure. But, perhaps, there are some serious concerns that are developing and if we can alleviate these concerns or change things around, then I think it would be for the betterment of education in this province. That's why I stand on my feet tonight offering suggestions, recommendations and criticisms and I hope, not too seriously, condemnations that will in the long run improve the education that exists in the province of Saskatchewan. That's my goal and I feel that probably that is the goal of you and your department. I'm sure it is of your department.

I think the thing that is probably being transmitted to me more often than anything else is that there is a developing — whether it be intentional or accidental — at the present time, a feeling of top-down domination in education. As I talk to locally employed superintendents and board members (now I don't know if it has anything to do with the local employment; I am a person who stands up for local employment and I think that's the route we should be going), I find that the same thing is being brought up to me — that kind of feeling of frustration or a feeling of dominance from the top down that is expressed in many concerns. As I've said in this House before (and you know this very well) it is also expressed in some concerns by parents — a feeling of helplessness, or "Where do we turn to next?" or, "How do we get our message across so that what we feel can perhaps be considered and if worthy implemented?" These are some of the things that I pick up as I go around.

I have serious concerns. I'm not reflecting on your officials who are here with you tonight. But, at the lower echelons in the Department of Education, is the morale at the level it should be to deliver, to develop and to bring into focus the programs that are needed to meet the challenges of today and, of course, to meet the challenges of the new Saskatchewan that we've talked about before?

I think that in many cases the career educators (and there are many of them whom you and I know) who are in the Department of Education are good people who have spent their lives in their chosen profession. They have risen from the ranks of classroom teachers to positions of administration and, because of their competence, have been selected by the department to head up various departments. I feel that there is probably a shift, causing a feeling of frustration, in which some of these people are being eclipsed by a bit of a triumvirate that exists in the field of education that probably hasn't come up through the grass roots from classroom teacher, to principal, to superintendent, to department official — which is really the training ground where you find out where it is at and bring forth the ideas that are expressed out there by the rank and file of society. These are the people who have the grass roots connection, who have come up through the system and have those connections and understand what is needed and can implement and develop the programs that will satisfy these needs.

I mentioned earlier the frustration of locally employed directors. I've had the occasion to meet with a number of them who feel that, mainly in the programs, they're having difficulty penetrating the higher echelons — the elite core — that probably surround you. I say in all sincerity that these are things which have been transmitted to me. I bring them to your attention, to give you a chance to refute these charges if they are not correct. If there is some semblance and some degree of correctness in them, and if they are appropriate suggestions, then I think it would be in your best interest to take these as serious concerns transmitted by me from people in the field.

I have expressed this to you before but I will touch on the viewpoints of the school boards. I will go back to the situation of the bargaining arrangement in the 1979 contract. The contract was signed without their presence. We have discussed this many times. You say that they had the right to be there. I am not disputing that. The very fact that they weren't there sowed the seeds of some dissension and some concern, and this is not what we want. We want the best co-operation that we can possibly get. Mr. Vice-Chairman, could you keep the babbling down?

**MR. VICE-CHAIRMAN:** — Order, order! It has been brought to the chairman's attention that the rabble is a little bit loud. Would everyone quieten down?

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Thank you; that's just fine. I have so many things to tell you people in education and I have only one voice. I just don't like to strain it because we want to get our thoughts out and it is hard talking over the rabble. I know Caesar put up with the rabble and so did everyone else. They will always exist, but I will try to concentrate on you, Mr. Minister, and ignore the people to the side.

The last thing we were talking about was the concern of the boards. I think you must realize that in the case of the urban boards with the ward system, there is one more concern, one more feeling of frustration and one more disappointment that they weren't listened to. Again, this causes a breakdown or a lack of rapport or co-operation within the working of the whole system of education in the province.

The next one would be the 200 days which the teachers and the parents were concerned about. I thought this probably was a move on your part to appease the boards. The boards have always thought that since we pay for 200 days, we want 200 days of work. This was often expressed when I was in teacher negotiations, and I think this year you were looking at the 200 days. When you saw the fallacy of that move, you knuckled under, seeing the concern of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and of parents and students in this province. I think you made the right decision. I think you did the right thing in going to 198. I am not sure if this was accident or design, because when I look at the political motives that could be behind this, it might have been a calculated move to come out with this bravado to act tough, and say that we are going to have 200 days. The school boards think that guy is really listening to us; he hasn't listened before, but he is in there now. When you see the mounting opposition, you say that you will go to 200. I wonder why are you strong on the 200, then you drop to 198. I have to be a bit condemning here and say that was more a political move than anything else.

The next thing I would like to point out, as my general concerns in the field of education, is the announcement of the consideration of what I will call pressure groups or groups with vested interests in the development of curriculum. I won't cite or read out your news reports; you will know very well what it was because you put it out. So I shouldn't have to read it to you. But I think there was some discussion of labor unions and certain farm groups, probably the National Farmers' Union, being brought in on curriculum development. I still think that the basis for curriculum development is professional educators, people in the field whose ideas are tried out with the parents who are closely connected to the consumers of the education. I would think that is probably the way we should be looking at it, rather than letting vested interests put forth their influence, regardless of what side of the political spectrum they may be on.

I think that's a dangerous thing to do. I think you can make the arguments that the people in the unions are parents also. But it would seem to me, if they're coming there to express the viewpoint of the vested interest or pressure group in those curriculum decisions, we are more apt to get that viewpoint than the viewpoint of Joe Shmuck, the ordinary parent in Saskatchewan. I think we have to be looking at the professional educator, the person who feels . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . After that brief interruption, we'll continue.

To have meaningful curriculum development, I think the professional educator, the people in the universities and in the teaching profession, should bring forth the ideas along with parents. That combination is going to be the one which gives probably the best possible education for the needs of students in Saskatchewan.

I've expressed this to you before, and I'm sure members of your department feel at times, that parents are having very little input into education. I don't know if all the blame falls on the education department in this case. I know under the new education act that provision was made for parent advisory councils. I understand, unfortunately that these haven't been picked up as well as they should have been. I put this forth as some other type of a vehicle that needs to be developed for parental input into education. Obviously, this attempt failed, but I think that we should continue in any way possible to get concerned parental input into education, blended with the input of professional educators.

So, Mr. Minister, I've been going for a few minutes now and I've laid out quite a few things. I think it's only fair to give you a chance to respond to these. It is with a heavy heart that I say this and I say it in sincerity, that, unfortunately, a lack of trust or sensitivity is being transmitted inadvertently by your department. I would indicate that you, as the figurehead of the department, are the focus of it. As I prefaced my remarks at the beginning as critic for education, I think it's only fair when I hear these things to express them to you. If you take those seriously and can mend the ways or stop this echelon at the top that seems to be surrounding you, and blocking out other professional educators, the trust that is lacking can be built into the Department of Education. I say fine and dandy. That's why I'm expressing these concerns; that's what I want to see happening. That's the situation out there — there is a lack of feeling of compassion or sympathy from the Department of Education to the consumers and the practitioners who are in the field.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I certainly appreciate the hon. member's undertaking to give me his frank and honest advice, however subjective and broad the brush he uses may stroke.

I want to say first of all (with regard to the general question that the hon. member raised at the end of his comments), I think it is true to say that the staff, officials and others related to the Department of Education are currently addressing with some degree of vigor, enthusiasm and commitment, a number of educational issues, which are with us as times and circumstances change. I think as a result of being prepared to address some of those issues, there is no question that there may, indeed, be some who disagree with the particular thrust or direction that is taken in addressing those issues. I don't think that, in itself, should be any reason to be afraid to deal with the problems and challenges that face us in education. Indeed, I think any one, who has to back down from facing the challenges simply because it will create, undoubtedly, some debate (which is healthy) and some discussion and differences in opinion, would not be fulfilling his responsibilities and duties as an official of a minister.

It's a little difficult to respond to some of the comments the hon. member makes because they are very subjective, and I find it just a little hard to get a precise feeling for exactly what the evidence is that the hon. member is mounting to support his point, or exactly what he is talking about.

I think with regard to the whole question of the style of administration if you like (or whatever it is that the hon. member was raising), we have a very, very dedicated and committed staff in the Department of Education, from the top throughout the whole of the department. I'm sure that, occasionally, there will be errors made. I don't think that happens very often and I'm pleased with that. But, I'm sure that on occasion there will

be certain things that will create hard feelings. But, I do not believe from my observations (and I have a very close and intimate connection with the department) that it is true at all to say that the administration within the Department of Education is pursuing the kind of approach to administration that the hon. member suggests.

Indeed, I have spent a very considerable length of time attending teachers' conventions and meetings and attending meetings of directors of education and trustees. And, I find it not unusual to have comments made to the effect that the participation of our staff in the meetings that take place and their openness and readiness to encounter the difficulties and to discuss them frankly is something that is very refreshing. Indeed, some say that there's more openness now than they can remember for quite some time. I think that's a tribute to the way the staff of the Department of Education, regardless of their position, are approaching the questions of education and the people who are in education.

So, I think that the hon. member, perhaps, has put a little bit of a false picture on the situation. Certainly I would conclude that from my own experience. We make every effort — and it may not always be full to the satisfaction of every one — to be as open and consultative as possible. That is certainly a policy we pursue. We have had to make some difficult decisions on a number of subjects, and I know that on occasion there has been disagreement about those decision. But that's quite a different thing, I think, from the whole point the hon. member is making. I don't think it is true at all, from what I can find in discussing with local directors of education, that they are having trouble finding people who will listen and from whom they can get answers.

The hon. member makes reference to something that I think is a little contradictory. He indicates that he does not believe we should be opening up the process of decision making to people outside the professional ranks — to quote him, "Curriculum should come from professionals." I agree certainly that professionals have a very important role to play in the development of curriculum, but I think if we are to assure the general health and vitality of the education system and assure that it meets the needs and interests of all our students we also need to provide some opportunity for parental and public participation at certain levels of planning and for certain levels of decisions with respect to curriculum.

For instance, the hon. member makes reference to the decision to establish a committee to look at the basic approaches and the basic underlying assumptions with respect to the social studies curriculum. When that committee was set up it was directed (and it has professionals on it as well as non-professionals) quite specifically to search out opinions and ideas. It was not necessarily to accept all of them, but it was to make a conscious effort to search out opinions and ideas from parents and people who are interested in education, whether they come from labor unions or farm organizations, school organizations or parent/teacher organizations or from political parties or whatever. All of those people, legitimately, I think should on occasion when you are asking basic questions about the overall approach have the right to be heard and to speak out and to speak their opinion.

The hon. member, I think, is being quite contradictory because I think that is the most open, most participatory way one can go in dealing with important issues and questions as they relate to education. Give people an opportunity to be heard and to speak their opinion. On the one hand the hon. member criticizes that and says that's wrong, and on the other hand he says that there is not enough openness in the process. I can't bring the two together and I must confess that I'm not sure the hon. member

himself has brought the point that he is trying to make into focus because he seems to be very contradictory.

Certainly, I have felt parents should have a role to play in decision making with respect to education; that is one of the reasons for this open process of consultation and discussion with regard to a number of matters relating to education. I, too, regret that there have not been more local school advisory committees established. That's something we may have to address at some time, simply by virtue of the fact that there are very few such committees existing now. I think they do provide an opportunity for parents to have more direct input into certain decisions and to communicate more directly with the school itself.

With respect to the hon. member's skepticism, if indeed not cynicism, about the question of the school year, I will say quite candidly to the hon. member that that act now says the school year is 200 days unless the minister judges it to be otherwise. I'll say quite candidly to the hon. member that earlier in the year when I made no change in the provisions the act sets out, I perhaps did not look at the situation as closely as I should have. I don't mind admitting periodically that I have made a mistake and I'm wrong. I believe on closer examination of the calendar, which accompanied the 200-day year and the matters related to that calendar, that indeed there was a very strong justification for the 198-day school year. And for that reason I made the change I did.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, I respect your candid reply on the 200 days.

With regard to whether there is a contradiction — I don't accept that. I pointed out, and I may have said in my first statement, that professionals should be involved in curriculum making, but I think if you listened to the next part I said professionals along with parents. And I thought that was the mix or the blend that was going to give you the most acceptable final product to fit the needs of Saskatchewan. I still maintain that if you are going to open it to all pressure groups and political parties and so on, then I think (by what I have experienced in life) you are going to find some domination by points of view which are strictly in the interest of those pressure groups or political parties. I think that is dangerous. Now, when you say there is a contradiction then I say that, on one hand, you are trying to be open. I say that there is top domination. I want to be very pointed in my remarks in this regard. This has been brought to my attention. I would be the first to say that you have a very dedicated staff, and many of the staff are well received.

I am told by many people in the field that there is a bit of a triumvirate surrounding you very closely. It is not always the Department of Education within the government opposite dictating, directing and dominating decisions in the field of education. They have no business to be doing that because they are cutting off the flow through those professionals, that dedicated staff and those good people in your department. I can't say with any degree of certainty if that is correct. I relate it to you because that is what educators and people concerned with education are telling me is happening. They are telling me that is happening all too often and that is destroying some of the morale within your department. I reiterate that. That is what I am being told.

I use the word triumvirate because triumvirate means three. I am not going to name the three individuals, but I think you know very well what I am indicating. I think many people in this House and many people in the Department of Education know what I am indicating. If that is so, Mr. Minister, it is time to do as they did in Rome, and that is to destroy the triumvirate and to listen to your lieutenants around you. Then, education in

this province will be better served. So there is no contradiction. There is a concern about a triumvirate which is running education in this province. If you want to reply to those charges, it is fine with me. If you don't, I'll move on to the topic of financing. It is entirely up to you. I would like you to come to your feet and disband or defend the first triumvirate in Saskatchewan.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I am having trouble even putting faces on this triumvirate, which the hon. member claims to have so much knowledge about. I might just say that the department is administered by a deputy minister. I know that the deputy minister has a management committee of five or six people. From reviewing the minutes of that management committee which the deputy minister very generously sends to me, I have an opportunity to review those minutes and I know that all members of the management committee participate in the discussions and the decision-making with respect to advice which they wish to give to me. Certainly, I think that the procedure which is used at that level is very open and provides for participation by all people with differing points of view within the management team.

There are decisions that I myself must make and which I do make. I get recommendations from that committee and I accept my responsibility to make those decisions. It may not always be that I agree with the decisions or the recommendations of the management committee. I generally do, but there are occasions when I do not. If that is interpreted, in any way, as taking advice only from one person, because that person happened to give that advice in the management committee, that would be regrettable. I can't think of any case where that has happened. Certainly, I get the opinions of all of the people who are involved. I think your suggestion of a triumvirate simply doesn't stand up to the facts, and I think you would have a great deal of difficulty if you were to spend two or three days in the Department of Education supporting that suggestion.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, we won't dwell on this. I've laid it out as a concern. I believe that you probably do have a management committee, and you do have a very able deputy minister. I don't blame you. If I were Minister of Education, I don't think I would always listen to the management committee if it were saying something that I didn't think was right. That's why you're the minister. I agree. But the triumvirate I'm talking about is beyond that, and that is what I'm concerned about. I don't think they're all within the Department of Education, and I don't think they're all the career educators that I respect. So, we'll leave it at that. I think in some cases they are maybe more politically motivated than they are educationally motivated. But at that, we'll drop it. I've laid the scenario out. You will know if it's true. I'm telling you that it's destroying education out there. If what is told to me is existing, I would ask you, as minister, if the triumvirate exists to disband it and go on with proper departmental administration which I am sure you are capable of doing.

One of the things that I am concerned about is the financing of education. I hear the Minister of Finance get up every year for the budget and say, "We are doing so well. We're giving so much on a per pupil grant." The per pupil grant this year I believe was a 12 per cent increase. Well, you know as well as I do that that is rather shielding it with the folks out there, because it comes down in every school jurisdiction that there still has to be a basic program that is not dependent on the number of students. So, to say that there is a 12 per cent per pupil grant is a bit of political jiggery-pokery I think and, really it would be better to come out and say it's a 10 per cent grant, which I think it was this year.

You always point out, "Well, the boards are pretty satisfied; they're pretty happy." If you

look at Saskatchewan in comparison to the other provinces in Canada and their expenditures in education in 1979, Saskatchewan ranked eighth in the Dominion of Canada — eighth. The ones that were below Saskatchewan were Manitoba and British Columbia — that's on per capita expenditure on education. Now, I know you'll come flailing back at me with the senior citizen rebate and the home-owner's grant and all the goodies that I hear from the Minister of Finance every time we question him on interest rates and inflation. I know that speech so well, that I could run across to his desk and give it any time. I'm guessing what your answers will be.

When you look at the people who have to expend the educational dollar to provide the services to the children out there in the schools, those are the school boards, I can tell you they are not very satisfied with the moneys put into education by the government opposite. I believe that the expenditure from the government opposite, as a portion of the gross expenditures of this province to education, is decreasing yearly. I wonder, as the head of the Canadian Teachers' Federation said about governments, "Is it because fewer adults have children in the school system now than in the 1960s and government, sensitive to where the votes are found, is consequently cutting down on education funding?" I think that boy kind of hit the nail right on the head.

I think what is happening is that your demographic studies are telling you that the voters out there, the families, don't have as many children in the schools, so, let's cut the old pie; let's cut back on education because we're really not getting to them with spending money on education. I say that if that is true, that is a very dastardly act for any type of government to take.

Now when I point out that boards are not satisfied, I want to read out a few statistics to you because you may say, "Well, it's a subjective remark by the hon. member." I think we'll put a little objectivity into this by looking at just a few — I mean, I could have a stack here that high of quotes, but I don't think I'll have to read the quote from every board in the province because you're quite a bright chap. With a few examples, you'll certainly get the message. So I don't think we have to go into a whole proliferation of them, but we'll look at Shellbrook — the *Shellbrook Chronicle*. The Shellbrook people said in their headline: "School Tax Hits 100 Mills — A First in the History of Saskatchewan for a Rural School Division." Department school division property tax hits the mill rate of 100. The school division stated to the *Chronicle* that provincial grants increased 7.7 per cent. This still left a deficit requiring an increase of 16 mills, which on top of the 1980 mill rate of 84 made it hit an all time high of 100.

I wouldn't think that was a glowing tribute to the funding of education in the Parkland School District.

Yorkton School Board raises the mill rate. Hardest hit will be the ratepayers in Yorkdale School Division No. 35, where the mill rate will increase by 24 per cent, from 75 mills to 93 mills.

So again, Yorkton is closing in pretty close to 100 mills.

School division raises mill rate (Weyburn). The 13 mill increase over 1980 is the highest mill rate increase in the division's history, according to a release from the division's board of education.



My colleague for Thunder Creek listed a number of them in this House a couple of weeks ago. This is the headline, "Grants to Rural Schools Under Revision, McArthur Says."

Thunder Creek increased its rate by 8 mills; Davidson by 14; Herbert by 20; Outlook by 14.

Education grants decreased, (this is the Kindersley school division).

Although the provincial government has increased education allowances by 12 per cent in its recent budget (which is wrong; it should have read 12 per cent per student), the grant for the Kindersley School Division has decreased . . . education has been getting a substantially shorter end of the stick each year.

Hawley also touched on staffing, saying that he expects the number of staff members needed in the division to stay fairly constant. So they have to keep the same number of teachers, but they are getting less money. The Saskatoon Catholic board says that its problems will mostly be in the area of instruction.

Mr. Minister, I've taught school long enough to know that the expenditure of that educational dollar is probably most suitable closest to the consumer. That means that the dollar is best spent in having the best teacher to teach those students. That is what the students in this province deserve. We set legislation that says they must stay in school until they are 16 years of age. If they have to stay there for that period of time, if we are doing these students justice, we will provide the best possible teachers for our students in Saskatchewan.

Now, if you're going to provide the best possible teachers and expend the dollars to do so, the boards have to get that money. At this time, to top off my discussion about mill rates, I would like to read a letter from the board of education of Oxbow, Saskatchewan. The letter is addressed to you, Mr. McArthur, and I will read it into the record. It says:

The board of education have requested that I prepare a report on the foundation grant formula as it pertains to the Oxbow School Division, No. 51. The present formula, with adjustments has been in use since 1973 and during that time the portion of the formula covering the basic program has steadily increased. The recognized expenditure portion has increased at a greater rate and as a result the net grant has not increased proportionately. The attached graph shows that if this trend continues, there will be an increased load on the local taxpayers,. We are all aware of the declining enrolments and, in 1975, this fact was recognized in the grant formula. The sparsity in enrolment decline adjustment was introduced to assist the rural jurisdictions. I would assume that the factor would increase as the enrolments decline. In our case it did not, as illustrated in graph 2. With the decline in enrolments there is also an increase in expenditures just to maintain the academic programs. Teachers' salaries increased over 8 per cent, but our grant increased only 2.33 per cent.

This board has a very light annual debt load so therefore it qualifies for the \$25 per student allotment. With the declining enrolments, this figure has steadily decreased from \$43,200 in 1973 to \$34,025 for 1980, whereas

the debt load is constant and current interest charges have risen from \$6,968 in 1973 to \$66,925 in 1979. Could not some consideration be given to current interest charges?

On the other side of the calculation it appears that the computational mill rate has increased at about the same rate as the assessment over the past eight years. Costs have been increasing by at least 10 per cent each year, but the net result of the grant formula is a 2 per cent to 4 per cent increase in our grant. If the grant formula is to be fair to everyone, then the net amount of our grant should increase by the same percentage that the recognized expenditures increase.

Now, those examples I have given you (and I'm sure there are many more, as you well know, and as I do) illustrate the plight of the school boards out there. Mr. Minister, I charge that any special programs (and I will give you examples of that) we want to have out there for our children have to be financed at the local level. Because these people have large mill rate increases they are either going to have to pay for them at the local level, or else they are going to have to drop them. Because of fiscal prudent management, in many cases programs such as band and things of that nature are dropped. I don't think that is in the best interests of the students of Saskatchewan.

I think the government opposite can find all kinds of money to put into their Crown corporations. We find time after time if we go through the management and the budgets, and the write-offs on loans (and I look at the minister responsible for Sedco) all kinds of money is being wasted in this province. But do we find the money to pay the school boards to give them the grants to provide the best education for the students of Saskatchewan? I'm sad to say that no, we don't. These documents are proof that these school boards are suffering in this province, and I say to you, as Minister of Education, "Get into that cabinet; use your thrust and your power. Don't let the educational pie be cut back year after year." I'm ashamed that we rank eighth in Canada. It is a very drastic situation that we (supposedly the province that is going to have the most growth this year, if you can believe the Economic Council of Canada) rank eighth in the Dominion of Canada in per capita expenditures in education. I say that is shameful.

I say to you, as the Minister of Education, "Get in there; do your job in the cabinet. You must have some clout over there. Fight for education in Saskatchewan so that each and every boy and girl in our school system and coming into our school system, can be provided with the best education possible." That's what a heritage fund is, that's what a heritage fund is for — to give these young people the skills they need to make their way in life.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, there are a number of comments I could and perhaps should make with respect to school finance, relating to the points the hon. member has been raising. I would certainly concur with the hon. member that there is no better expenditure to be made of any taxpayer's dollar than an expenditure on education. When we are dealing with our young people, we are dealing with our future, and that is what we must place as a priority in the way we spend our money and put forth our financial resources, our efforts and our energies. That is my own personal commitment. I think that is true of school boards, with their commitment of tax dollars and their readiness to recognize the needs of their school system, to provide through local revenue some of the cost. It is true of the provincial government with its commitment to support school boards in the educational programs that should be provided.

I would point out to the hon. member that I do not accept his figures with respect to the situation in Saskatchewan. If one wishes to look at the 10-year pattern of funding for kindergarten to grade 12 in Saskatchewan. In 1971-72 the grants to school boards in support of education were \$73.7 million; 1981-82 they were \$252.5 million. The increase over that period of time amounts to 243 per cent. You can see from those figures that while it would have taken a doubling of the 1971-72 grants to maintain the real purchasing power of school boards in order to provide educational services, we have tripled the grants.

We have jumped 100 per cent ahead of the rate of inflation, in effect increasing the real purchasing power and the ability of school boards to finance programs by that much after the impact of inflation. I don't think there is any jurisdiction in Canada that has a record over the 1970s and into the 1980s of increasing support to school boards at that level. I do not believe there is any other jurisdiction for which you can find evidence to support a similar level of commitment. I simply reject the suggestion that the record of this government has been one of reduced support to education. The figures show that is not true.

Other jurisdictions during that period have been attempting to reduce the real amount of support given to schools on the argument that there are few children in the system. We have not pursued that and have followed an enviable pattern of support in terms of the changes and increases that are provided. The hon. member attempts to draw out the cases of certain boards and to illustrate that there is something the matter with the foundation grant system. There is no question that the foundation grant system has its shortcomings and its difficulties. We will always attempt to fine-tune that system, and to make adjustments that will take into account certain difficulties as they appear.

Basically the foundation grant system undertakes to equalize the revenues that are available to school boards across the province. It tries to recognize that some school boards, because of the local assessment in their area, are not as well off and are not able to raise as much revenue as other school boards. It has an equalization system that relates to the value of local assessment. From one year to the next, there can be changes in the value of assessment relative to the general situation in the province that cause some difference in the percentage increases for one school board as opposed to the other.

I would also point out to the hon. member the foundation grant system takes into account certain costs of the school boards, such as capital expenditures and the debenture payments on capital expenditures. You can have a situation that when a debenture has been paid, it is no longer added to the grant, so the increase won't look as significant from one year to the next. There are other recognized costs of that sort. Our foundation grant system is different from many other provinces, and certainly from provinces in which the hon. member's fellow party governs in Canada. Our school boards under our foundation grant system have the power, ability and the right to be able to enhance their program (or do whatever they wish to do with respect to financial management) through adjustments in their mill rate, based on their reasons which need only be justified to the ratepayers within their school division, and not to the Department of Education.

I note that in certain cases to which the hon. member makes reference, where he bemoans the mill rate increases, (I don't say this critically because that is certainly up to

the boards) in the case of the Parkland School Division, for instance, at Shellbrook (one of the cases he is critical of) the operating surplus in 1975 was \$193,000 and in 1980 it had gone up to \$363,000. I assume the school board had made a decision, for whatever reason, that it wanted to build up a bit of a surplus and that of course, would be reflected in the mill rates themselves. So, perhaps that's at least part of the explanation, not the whole I agree, but it could very well be part of the explanation. I defend the right of the board to make that kind of decision and to justify it to the ratepayers.

I notice that there are other cases. Kindersley, I notice in 1975 had a surplus of \$571,000; in 1980 it had gone up to \$773,000. So obviously our boards are neither broke, nor are they necessarily in a situation where they are not making choices to increase their mill rates as part of a larger financial management program, or whatever reasons they may choose. I believe, certainly during times of inflation, there will be increases in mill rates just as there will be increases in grants. Those mill rate increases occur a bit unevenly. You will see boards on occasion maintain low rates of increase in one year and then have to make some large adjustments in a following year, not only to take into account the rising costs in a given year, but also, to catch up on an under estimate or whatever in a past year. Some of that is reflected in some of the larger mill rate increases that are mentioned.

But I would say to the hon. member that if you look at the general state of finances in our school system, you will find that compared to a few years ago we had a lot fewer boards in deficit positions than was the case five and 10 years ago, which indicates, generally, that their financial position is improving and they're not facing difficulties in that regard.

I would point out to the hon. member that almost without exception our boards are offering, I think, better and improved programs rather than lesser programs. There may very well be cases where boards have made a decision to cut out individual parts of their program. But I say, generally, if you go around the province, Mr. Chairman, you will find that what boards are now offering in terms of enrichment and programs in our schools has been improving steadily through time. That's a credit to the boards and to the educational system in the province. I think that there certainly are concerns in that respect that we need to address. Some of them are rather particular to our rural areas and that's the reason why we are currently discussing rural education options and challenges with school boards, teachers, parents and others and looking into the 1980s and some of the changes that will be taking place in the school system.

But I, again, say to the hon. member that I think if you look at the facts and figures, you really can't advance the kind of argument that the hon. member has been attempting to advance.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — That was quite an explanation. Let's get one thing straight right off the bat. You made a little reference to other governments that my party is akin to. Please do not take unfair advantage of me because, you know, I can't make that comparison for you, because there's no other government that has the same philosophy you do. So let's stay on an equal basis. Don't be so mean to me, getting me on grounds where I can't have a comparison, because there just isn't any of your type around, you see, with whom to make a comparison. So we'll keep this non-political and educational. But I just wanted to point out that you're taking unfair advantage of me. You say that things have improved and that boards are in a better financial position than they were in the past. I say, my goodness, they certainly should be, because a few years ago when I was

teaching in the school system the baby boom was coming and you were building schools — I remember classrooms of 44 students, 44 in a classroom. So therefore, Mr. Minister, it's quite conceivable that many boards were in a tough position at that time because they were having to put out very large capital expenditures. They were having to enlarge their teaching staff and to have more educational hardware, more consumables; they were in their peak expenditure periods at that time. So to say that today they are better off relative to 1960 or 1963 really doesn't wash because the conditions have changed. I don't think that is a correct assumption on your part.

Secondly, I would think that the economy of the country is better off than it was in 1963 or 1965 or something of that nature. Now, we won't look at areas; we're just talking about the country as a whole. You were giving me figures of the great increase. When you talk about these total expenditures and so on, I often wonder are you talking about the expenditure right to the school, or are you hooking in that senior citizens rebate and all these other things that you like to bring into that education bailiwick? Just grants to the school, you say. You haven't answered me yet as to where we rank in Canada on per capita expenditure to education. I haven't heard the answer to that question yet.

Now, you tried to twist things a little bit. Maybe it was because of this letter that I read out from Oxbow when I was ticking the foundation grant. I don't know if the foundation grant is the all encompassing be-all, end-all way of financing education. What I want to get across to you is that I don't think you fellows at the government level are dumping enough money into the pot. That's where my condemnation is. I would ask you: is the percentage of expenditures of the provincial Government of Saskatchewan on education vis-a-vis all the other expenditures — or as a piece of pie out of the budget — increasing or decreasing?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I can say to the hon. member quite honestly that I have not done a study of the comparisons of programs and expenditures on an interprovincial basis. Those kinds of studies would be very complicated to do because of the different financing arrangements, the different programming arrangements, the different approaches to education, and so on. I simply do not have figures at hand to tell what the results of a study would be of the kind that you talk about in terms of interprovincial comparisons.

I do know that when I talk to the school trustees and teachers in other parts of the country, the general impression I'm left with (and I'll agree, it's an impression) is that our education system — including our legislation, system of financing, professional teaching staff, trustees and administrators — appears to stand up in comparison to any other province very, very well. But that's a general impression from discussions that I have had.

I will say to the hon. member, concerning the figures he was comparing in 1971-72, I believe that on the average across all school boards (it would not be the same for each

individual board) approximately 45 per cent of the costs of education through the school system was covered by grants from the provincial government. Now, it's in the range of 54 to 55 per cent. I can't give you the exact figure this year until we have the figures in for costs and so on. It has been ranging in the 54 to 55 per cent range in terms of the level of support or proportion of costs that we now cover through grants. I think that while there has been some fluctuation in individual years, by and large we have been maintaining a pretty steady position with regard to the proportion of costs that we cover directly through grants.

In addition to that (seeing as the hon. member brought it up, I should mention it here) we do provide another approximately \$74 million in property improvement grants, which is a relief against the educational property tax. That's over and above the figures I've been talking about. When you take together the direct grants and the property improvement grants as a relief against property taxes as they apply to education, the share of the cost of education covered by the province is approximately 80 per cent. That is a figure I don't think can be equalled anywhere else.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, I don't feel bad about bringing it up, because if I hadn't you would have been quick to jump to your feet and tell me about it. I just wanted to pre-empt you a little.

Be that as it may, the concern of these school boards may be in some cases assessment change but I don't think it would be assessment change in all cases. It may be capital in some cases. I think if you go out there and talk to the school board members you won't see them jumping up and clapping their hands or thinking that they're getting too much money from the government. I know there is always an empty jug and people can put forth unrealistic demands. But I do think there is a concern that they are being squeezed. I think the problem resulting (as I said earlier) is that it's bringing about cuts in programs, cuts in some of the special things — I guess band is an example of what's going on. I think Sturgis is one of the school units at this time that is going to look at cutting back on band and a band instructor.

I think (and I think many people in this province feel this way) that we should be able to afford the best education for our students. I know the money is available in this province. When I hear the Economic Council of Canada saying (and you fellows must be very proud) that we are going to lead next year, I expect to see a tremendous improvement in education. If that is the situation, let's put the money where it is deserved. It seems strange to me you haven't made any interprovincial comparisons. If you haven't, I'm sure you are the only cabinet minister over there who hasn't. Your colleague sitting beside you, the Minister of Health, seems to always be able to skate over into another province with a comparison. I think maybe you are the only minister over there who hasn't made a comparison on expenditures. I would advise you to get up bright and early tomorrow morning and put your staff at it; you might have a rude awakening as to what your expenditure is per capita in comparison to the other provinces of Canada.

Mr. Minister, I think I will pass to one of my colleagues for a moment and then we'll go back to some more questioning.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I might just have a brief item of information. It is my understanding that while Sturgis had discussed the possibility of deleting ab and instructor from its program, that decision does not stand and Sturgis will be continuing with its band instructor.

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Mr. Minister, my questions will take you into a totally new field, but none the less they are concerns of mine and I should think concerns of the whole educational system.

What I'm concerned with right now in our society is that we have a large percentage of young people. We have a large number of people under the age of 21 and therefore going through the educational system. I suppose it's fair to say that number is decreasing in terms of enrolment in the schools, at least. Consider that and consider the problems we're having with youth. Wherever you look in terms of local government you never see the youth represented, yet they make up such a large segment of our society.

I could take our own town council in Moosomin, if you like, or in any other town. That council is made up primarily of individuals who are in the business world. When they are having council meetings and making decisions, more often than not they fail to recognize the needs of the youth in the particular region. So, my comments are directly related to the young people. I feel that there is a necessity for a youth advisory council, if you like.

I just wonder if you have given any thought to a youth advisory council for the province of Saskatchewan, whereby the youth of the province have a mechanism, a means by which to voice their concerns. It could be directed at legislation that happens to be current in the legislature; it could be an advisory council to affect urban development or uranium development. But, whatever, it could serve as a very useful and effective mouthpiece for the youth in the province of Saskatchewan.

I suppose the other things, Mr. Minister, that it would do, would be to make the young people aware that they have a real meaningful role in society. As politicians, we can best relate to that because the young people don't seem to be too interested in politics until they have to pay taxes. Then they become interested. I think if we had a youth advisory council, we would have young people being more aware of the kinds of things they should be aware of, which they don't think that they should be.

I know that in the springtime, there are young people who gather right here in front of the Legislative Building. I go out there and say, "Why are you people just hanging around here? Why don't you go in? There's lots of room in the galleries. Go in, sit down, and see what those politicians are debating." The comments come back such as, "Oh, they're not discussing anything in there that is going to affect us." I say, "Oh, yeah? Is that your car over there?" They say, "Yes," and I say, "Do you like the back end jacked up like that?" They say, "Yes, that's real nice, that's cool." So I say, "They might be in there making regulations to prohibit that." "No," they say, "they wouldn't do that." I say, "Yes, they would, and they could if they wanted to."

So, what I am saying is that the youth are not aware of the important role that they have to play in society today. I think if we were to take a serious look at a youth advisory council for the province of Saskatchewan, they then would have that meaningful mechanism — a vehicle by which they could relate their concerns to whatever level of government they wish or whatever concerns they may have. It could be done through that youth advisory council.

So far, I have been talking about the positive aspects of such a council. It could also address itself to some of the negative things. Some of those negative things could be

the problems the young people get into. You would be familiar with the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan. I'd like to go on record as saying that I feel that the John Howard Society has something to offer young people. They are just on the verge of moving into their adult years, and many of them are in a position (I know very well) where, if they have one offence after they turn 16, they could well be thrown in jail. And if the parents desire to leave them there as a form of penalty, there would be no recourse. It would have a tremendous effect on their lifelong ambitions and potential.

I know of a great number of young boys and girls who are very intelligent in school, they have a great potential. They are interested in aerodynamics, science, computer technology or what have you. But in their free time they seem to find a way to get into trouble. They get into so much trouble that when they turn 16, one or two minor raps added to their past record put them in the clink. We talk about the people of Saskatchewan being the province's number one resource. That's easy to say, but having said it, we have to recognize that the youth have to be the most important aspect of our society in terms of the future of the province. After all, the future is the young people; it's certainly not my father, who is 69 or 70 and moving on in years. He's not going to get caught up in the day-to-day problems of society and of politics. He's had his go through that. It's the young people who are moving into the future and we have to rely on them to carry this province in the years to come.

I've made two suggestions. First consider a youth advisory council. Secondly, I would like to hear your comments with regard to societies like the John Howard and similar organizations which provide a meaningful service by guiding youth when they go through those troubled years. I know I went through them, and I look back and wonder, "Why did I do that? It sure was fun."

Notwithstanding that, I was very fortunate; I'm alive; I'm here today; I wasn't killed in any automobile accident. I didn't get caught for .08; I didn't have those problems. That's not to say I didn't deserve to; maybe I was just lucky. But a lot of youth aren't lucky and they are the ones I am looking at. I think there is a very meaningful role in society for an organization like the John Howard and similar organizations. I would like to give you a moment to reply on those two subjects; maybe you could advise me what steps you have taken in those particular directions.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Perhaps first I could just comment in general about the theme the hon. member is pursuing which I think is certainly important and relevant.

I think it's a goal of the education system in general to assist young people to prepare themselves for responsible living, both for today and for future years. I think some of the questions concerning the difficulties, confusions and challenges which young people face can be made an integral part of education. Indeed, I think if education does function well, it sets an example for young people. It helps young people develop the ability to think about problems and to challenge those problems in their thinking. It helps young people to come to grips with not only the technical and academic aspects of the life they live, but also with regard to everyday living and many of the situations which they face.

It is certainly one of the things our schools try to do, both in terms of the curriculum and in terms of special programs. They try to integrate themes into the educational program so they can assist young people to develop attitudes and thinking skills to deal with the problems of living responsibly as a mature young person.



For instance, look at the development of the new health curriculums and the development of the social studies programs and some of the other special programs which are brought into schools. Look at the safe graduation program, which is being developed as a provincial program involving trustees, teachers, the Department of Education and others. Look at the defensive driving programs, safety programs, recreation and physical education programs; all of those attempt to deal (and some are more successful than others) with the kinds of questions you are raising. I think the schools have an important responsibility for youth and an important responsibility to do those things.

The schools, I agree, do not have the whole responsibility. Obviously we need strong community organizations; we need support groups which are outside the school and educational programs. We need the support of church, family and community organizations and so on. It is through the general youth programs of the government which are not at all within the Department of Education, that support goes to organizations of the type you mention. I think that while we have many active community organizations which are being well-supported, it certainly is a theme which can be developed. Perhaps we need to be look at further expansion and support of the work of those kinds of very worth-while organizations.

I cannot honestly say to the hon. member that I have given a lot of thought to the possibility of establishing a provincial youth advisory council. The idea itself, I think, is an appealing one. However, I should point out that what we have been supporting is more involvement, if you like, of the student directly in many of the aspects of decision-making which affect the in-school and out-of-school life, rather than attempting to have a council which would advise on some single central aspect of the education system.

As a result of this, for instance, through the initiative of teachers, students, and school, there has been formed in the last couple of years a provincial organization for student representative councils to develop the leadership to help the students become leaders in the school life, and in their life outside the schools. We have been providing provincial support for that program. The upcoming annual meeting is being sponsored in North Battleford this year as a training and meeting session in order to develop those very kinds of skills, which we are talking about in terms of leadership. We will be supporting that particular program. I think clearly there is much we can do to give youth that kind of active participation in what they are doing. That is both good education and good social policy. I do not think that an advisory council at the provincial level would necessarily be the best way to go, but I think through the more decentralized student councils and so on, we can give youth both direct involvement and an important advisory role.

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Yes, that leads me to an expansion of my concept of what a youth advisory council could be and how it could very easily be put together. I don't suppose there is a school in the province which doesn't have a student council body. You could take all of those student council bodies and have a representative from each of them on the youth advisory council and include other responsible individuals in that particular school district, and the MLAs (for that matter), and possibly doctors and other professional people in the community. They could be a part of a total program which would not centralize and distract from the local autonomy of student councils. It would use that very base to form a nucleus which could be, in fact, a youth advisory council. That would be a very influential group.

If that youth advisory council had the membership, as I say, of other responsible adults as an independent provincial committee, I think it would just have a tremendous clout. It would be able to negotiate with SARM, the urban municipalities, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association). What I am saying basically is that through that instrument and that vehicle (that is how I could perceive it as being put in place, if you like), it would be a very influential and powerful organization in the province speaking strictly on behalf of the young people of this province.

Now, I don't know, maybe a government would be afraid to have such a powerful group lobbying them and other organizations in the province. But I tell you, I firmly stand behind the young people. I, for a long time, have believed that they have never had their rightful place in terms of meaningful programs. They don't have, as I've said, any representation on urban councils. They don't have any representation there whatsoever. All of the decisions (and I know because I've been at council meetings) of local councils affect those members who are on the board, and are affected by the pressures which are applied to them by that centre of the line group or the working class people. There is nothing said about whether or not you should have a tennis court for the young people or a roller rink, or what have you. Those concerns are not really met head on. They are things that come down on the orders — very low on the orders, in most cases. But I've thrown the suggestion out and I'm sure with the partial agreement that I have with you on that concept, that if we speak to the young people, they may want to put that idea into practice on their own. If that were the route they wanted to go, I'm sure I could support that.

Just expanding somewhat with reference to guidance counsellors in the schools, I know one personally who deals with a lot of the problems I have outlined that young people run into through their teen-age years. It would be my belief that the one I know happens to be a very effective guidance counsellor, but it would seem to me that they need an expanded role in this educational system. They need a role in which they can address themselves to the questions of irresponsibility of youth, where they have the odd student in a particular school who is having difficulties. They should be able to address those problems. It would seem to me that there isn't enough emphasis there. I don't think the role of guidance counsellor is expanded to the extent that is necessary to be effective. I should think that my colleague, the member for Indian Head-Wolseley, would want to elaborate on that so I'm going to leave that for now, but I did want to make those comments.

The only other comments I wanted to make are on the question of the handicapped. I suppose that in all probability, and understandably, you would not have had an opportunity to look at the report of the special committee on the disabled and the handicapped. I would like to see a greater emphasis through your Department of Education placed on the handicapped. I have taken a look at the committee's principles and objectives. I think it's meaningful for me to just read you one paragraph right at the outset from the introductory part of the report:

This report deals with two major kinds of obstacles faced every day by more than two million Canadians. One kind results from the fact that many men, women and children are deprived of good health or have disabilities which deprive them from using their feet, legs, arms, hands, voices, ears, eyes and minds in a way that Canadians take for granted. The other kind of obstacle results from the attitudes of non-disabled Canadians who tend to disregard

the needs of disabled persons when planning Canada's protection of human and civil rights, health care services, employment opportunities, and the various facilities and systems of housing, shopping, education, recreation, communication and transportation.

The report is undertaken to address a very broad spectrum of problems related to the handicapped, and I'll just say that having looked it over very briefly, I find some very meaningful recommendations in the report. Without getting into any details, I would ask that you, as minister, take a very close look at this report. It was an all-party committee that put the report together, and judging from its contents, its thickness alone, a lot of work must have gone into it. There are a number of good recommendations. Just flipping through it, I didn't see any recommendations that I couldn't agree with. I would just ask that you take a look at the recommendations and wherever possible that you incorporate them into the educational system. With those few remarks, I thank the committee for its time.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, if I might just comment on two of the points that the hon. member raised. I concur with the hon. member that the whole area of guidance, whether it relates to career choices, lifestyle choices, problem solving by the individual student, or by groups of students, is an important area to be dealt with in the school system. I should mention to the hon. member that we have been placing some emphasis upon a new career education program and we also support the efforts of schools to provide effective guidance and counselling within their schools.

The hon. member, to an extent, poses something with a bit of a dilemma, however, with respect to the actual decisions about how to staff and at what level to staff such things as counselling and advisory services to students. That, under our decentralized system, is a decision that is left in the hands of school boards. So, the most that we can do under the current system is to try to provide leadership and encouragement to do so. The boards, by and large, and the school trustees' association neither want us giving direction about employing such people and the choices that should be made with respect to that kind of personnel in the schools, nor are they particularly excited about us using special grants to try to achieve the same result. So that presents one with a bit of a dilemma, for inasmuch as we may wish and want to have that kind of thing happen in schools, as long as we continue with the degree and the extent of board responsibility that currently exists, it's not as easy as all that to get the desired results unless boards and schools themselves are convinced about that matter. So, while we do our very best to try to convince them, we have not yet gone the step of trying to go beyond that and enforce any kind of decision of that sort upon boards, either through special grants or directives. That would be quite a major step.

I should say with respect to the question of education for people with disabilities and handicaps that that's a subject which, in our province, is a relatively painless exercise. Indeed, it's relatively enjoyable to talk about that subject, as unfortunate as it is that people do have handicaps and disabilities. Saskatchewan, I think, was certainly the first province (and I think is still one of the very few provinces — there may only be two others) to require, in our legislation, that the educational needs of those with disabilities and handicaps are to be met through the school system. Indeed, we provide schools with very substantial numbers of grants to ensure that boards have the resources to provide educational opportunities to young people with disabilities and handicaps. We have had our expenditures in that area growing very rapidly. I think our projection for 1981 is that our increased expenditures will be in the range of 22 to 23

per cent over last year in terms of grants to support the education of those with disabilities and handicaps.

I think we have come a long way. One only needs to travel around the province to see developmental centres and special programs and mainstream programs where students with disabilities are functioning within the classroom and receiving special support and so on, so that they can receive an education appropriate to their needs. That is something that is happening here and in very few places anywhere else in Canada. While it's true that we've come a long way, we still have some way to go. I look particularly at some of the older students and, perhaps, some of the students with milder handicaps and the whole question of what would be appropriate programming for those students. I would look at the older students and ask questions about vocational life skills and those sorts of things. I think it is true that we can still go some way further and that there is room for improvement and development yet. I would be the first who would want to pursue that. It takes time to introduce that kind of change in the school system, but I think that change is coming and is something we definitely want to encourage.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Mr. Minister, I think my colleague raised a couple of good points here. I would still like to continue on a bit on the cost and then move on to some other topics.

One thing that didn't sit right with me (and I don't think sat right with too many school boards) was the increase in the utility cost. I understand for some of the elementary schools in the city and so on, they've gone up about 28 per cent. Now that seems very strange to me when you wear two hats. You wear the hat of the Minister of Education and you also wear the hat of the minister in charge of the SPC. I can't see, when we've been talking for an hour here about the financial crunch that boards are feeling, why the government opposite would see fit to increase the utility and power rates by about 25 or 28 per cent. That just doesn't seem to wash right with me. I fail to see the rationale in this.

Mr. Minister, you said some of them would be assessments and that there could be building programs and so on. I took the time to phone a number of educators throughout my constituency. I think that's what a good MLA should do. I phoned teachers, board members and principals. I'm just going to give you one or two of their comments. These weren't solicited by me. I said to them. "I'm going into education estimates, what are your concerns?" I think it spells out pretty dynamically what the concerns are out there. I think it fortifies what I said earlier.

Here is a statement from a principal of an elementary school. "Where is the funding for high-cost students? No end of average students are rather left without help." Here is a statement from a principal of a high school. "Enrolment is decreasing. The budget is not sufficient to pay the salaries."

Here is a statement from a member of a board of education: "Enrolment is declining. We are not happy with the budget, a little unhappy to say the least." Here is a statement from a school board chairman who complained about the 4.6 per cent increase as a diminishing rate. He said, "It's a burden on the local taxpayers. School programs have to be cut back because of the budget." Here is a statement from another board member: "Grants are not enough — 7.5 per cent increase for teachers. I'm disappointed in the number of school days." Here is a statement from a principal: "Grants re education — it is 12.6 per cent, but turns out to be more like 10 per cent."

Here is a statement from a teacher, “. . . know the budget was approved; therefore, it can’t be changed. All teacher grants made by the government should at least match the teachers’ salaries.”

Another said, “I attended a meeting at Miller High School to listen to the government say that rural schools should be improved. Then, in the next breath, they say that the granting will be lower. There is less money to do the job.” There is a very unhappy man.

I could go on. I have more of them. Those are just off-the-cuff remarks by educators. Again, along with the clippings and concerns that have been suggested to me (and I’m sure they’ve been suggested to you), I condemn the government opposite for not putting enough of the dollars into education. There is the crux of the problem.

I would like to turn again to special education. My colleague mentioned it. I raised this with you in question period the other day. I may have taken unfair advantage of you, although you are the Minister of Education. I don’t think you are knowledgeable about all the various tests. You have your support staff here tonight. I would like to know why in the field of assessing the people eligible for special education, the Woodcock reading achievement test and the Stanford-Binet diagnostic reading test were cut out as instruments for establishing the criteria. I’ll wait and hear the reason.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is a fairly complex educational matter. There has been a temporary suspension of two tests, but not for the reasons the hon. member has suggested. There has been a temporary suspension of the Woodcock reading test and the Stanford reading inventory, which are tests used to measure student achievement from a variety of standpoints. The results of those tests are used to determine the level of disability that a student may or may not have, and the categorization of that student for programming and other purposes.

It is true that in February the director of special education indicated that the two tests should be deleted from the list of achievement tests that are used in the case of the high-cost learning disabled students. It should be pointed out that teachers were not discouraged, where appropriate, from using the tests and making certain diagnostic and prescriptive decisions.

The reason these tests were withdrawn was, I am advised by my officials, that they produce anomalous results in relation to other tests that have been used more extensively. Particularly at the lower age level, the norms employed by the department to identify severely disabled students, when applied to the results of these tests, indicated that severe learning problems existed. In fact, when more comprehensive tests were applied, it was discovered only mild forms of reading difficulties were involved. So the tests were not giving accurate results, and thus led to incorrect decisions about programming and categorization of students. The tests were withdrawn when upon further examination, it was found there were inconsistencies that can arise in the way the tests are applied. Therefore, you can get biased and unfortunate results in terms of conclusion drawn by students that can lead to inappropriate decisions about the educational programming of the students.

In order to deal with the problem that the director of special education identified (and legitimately reacted to because of the potential problems that can arise from these kinds of misleading results from tests), we have structured within the department (also involving some local school personnel) a committee to look at those areas where the shortcomings have been identified. The committee is to identify ways in which

consistency in the use of these tests can be assured and where we should continue the restricted use of the test or eliminate them. It is thought there will be restricted usage of the tests after the study has been completed to avoid the use of the tests on certain age groups where the anomalies are produced. The withdrawal of these tests indicates the sensitivity of our department staff to potential difficulties that can arise with procedures. I think the staff is to be commended for recognizing those difficulties and the steps which should be taken, until we can be assured the application of these tests leads to desired results and good educational decisions.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — How long were these tests used prior to being withdrawn?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — We have been using these tests approximately two years and have had the opportunity to observe their applicability over that period

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Will the students, designated by those tests in the last two years as being eligible for high-cost funding, remain eligible or since you are changing the criteria, will these students be cut off?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I am informed that we did not withdraw any students from designated programs as a result of the withdrawal of these tests. We are continuing to apply other tests in the meantime which have always been used. There is always a combination of tests that are used to determine the eligibility and qualifications of students for special programs. It is expected that with some restrictions and some changes, the tests can be re-introduced. But there has been no change in general as a result of the withdrawal, either in numbers or the pattern of categorization or students for special programs. There is no visible change in pattern. There may be (as a result of withdrawing these tests and eliminating some of these anomalies) a reduced need to do more complicated checking and testing because of the problems that have arisen.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Are the tests which you are continuing to use the Peabody individual achievement test and the wide-range achievement test? Have you just dropped two of the original tests you were using?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Yes, and those are basically the two tests that are being used. I might also mention that for more general diagnostic and program planning purposes, we are still encouraging knowledgeable teachers and professionals to use these other two tests as well, where appropriate.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Knowledgeable teachers can use them. It's in the interpretation of these test scores that you're running into this problem; it isn't the test in itself then?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I think the answer is that both were identified as problems; there were problems in administration of the tests and we found that the tests were not being applied uniformly and in the same pattern. That obviously required us to have a further look at the advice and the support and so on that is provided in terms of the application of these tests — the actual testing procedures. We also found that there were certain problems with interpretation. Once we tested the application of the tests, there were problems that arose.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — It is not the practice of the department before you allocate high-cost funding to have these tests administered by your educational psychologists? Any that I've seen there have to be assessed by the educational psychologist.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Certainly, there are occasions when, say, professional educational psychologists from the Department of Education will be involved in the administration of these tests or will provide assistance with the administration of these tests, but the more common case is that knowledgeable people within the school system (classroom teachers and consultants involved with school boards) will be involved in the administration of these tests.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, I thought that was the role of the educational psychologists, but I'll take your word that teachers in the system do do it and that probably lends itself to misinterpretation, in some cases, of the results. Be that as it may, the concern that I have is changing the criteria. There may be students in the province who are now under special programs because of being diagnosed by these tests and boards which have these programs set up because of the high-cost funding that they have been receiving for those students. Those may at the end of this school year go because of the new criteria. Are you going to retest and will certain programs be in jeopardy?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, I should first of all emphasize that the goal in educational terms is to ensure that the placements are adequate and correct in relationship to the identified disabilities. It is potentially possible because under any circumstances both with these tests and now with the temporary suspension of these tests, there is an annual retesting done. I don't suspect it'll occur in any substantially large numbers, but it is certainly possible that there will be some students who are identified for some programs who, as a result of the anomalies that arose from these tests, may be appropriately involved in other programs. I don't suspect the numbers will be large, but that could potentially happen. We will only know that when we do the reassessments under the new testing regime and see what the results are. The knowledgeable people in the system say that they wouldn't expect it would be very large in number and that the goal is to make sure that we have appropriate placements. So, if there are some alterations in placements of those students, that would be done in relation to good assessments, recognizing the appropriate educational programs for those young people.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — It seems to me that if you're going to be changing horses in the middle of the stream, you're really going to have those school boards in a predicament come fall . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, No. Hear me out. If you do some reassessing and that person doesn't meet the criteria, that board doesn't get the funding. That parent is still going to want special education for that child if he isn't able to fit into the mainstream and those boards are really going to be in a jackpot. You have every right to change your criteria but I suspect that by your tests you are finding out that there are far more students needing high-cost education than you ever thought there were.

I suspect that there are more; my sources tell me there may be one-third of the students who are on programs now. That could be one-quarter or one-third. Now, that may not be right but there is that possibility. Are your new tests going to be correctly assessing the ones who need it and are you not going to be putting boards in a very dicey situation come fall when there will be no high-cost funding and no appreciable change in that student's capabilities thereby having him come back into a regular stream? Don't you think the parents are going to be really pressing those boards at that point?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I should point out to the hon. member that I'm a little surprised at what he's saying because surely the first and most important consideration is to do an appropriate, adequate and good job of assessing the educational needs of

that student. And it is surely not particularly relevant to say that because there may have been an expectation that there would be so many high-cost students, we must go out and find that many high-cost students. The number of high-cost students in a system changes quite often because of students leaving the system or the development of the student in such a way as to provide for a different placement, which is the goal. The goal is to help the student develop and move on to other levels of education or to participate in other ways in the system. It's a changing situation at all times in that way. I'm surprised that the hon. member would not be supporting the view that it's important here to recognize the child and the child's family to make sure that they feel absolutely secure that what we are doing is the best we can in terms of identifying programming needs and disabilities.

Certainly the hon. member exaggerates beyond possibility with his figures of one-third and 25 per cent and so on. We know that there is absolutely no way that the anomalies in these tests could lead to that much bias in the results. We know that's not the case. We do know that there were some identified concerns and difficulties and we thought, being judicious, that we should take care. We withdrew these tests temporarily until we could identify exactly how we might be able to reapply them if they should continue to be reapplied. But they are not the sole tests, as the hon. member has indicated, and we are continuing to use the other forms of tests in order to do the placements.

There is nothing that I know of and that any of my officials know of, that would support anything close to the wild suggestions the hon. member makes with respect to possible changes. But there may be individual young people, just as there are after the end of each year, for whom it is deemed desirable, based on assessments, that their programming needs and the form of programming should be changed. That's a responsive educational system that does that and I hope that our education system does that too. I want to say to the hon. member that there is not in terms of funding just one level of funding. There are different levels of funding, and shipping students from one type of programming to another can lead not to the elimination of funds, but to some changes in funding because of the changing nature of programs. Boards that are participating in these programs have, to my knowledge, proved to be very interested in the educational question and have been very adaptable to those changes as they have taken place. I think that is to their credit because that is what is necessary if we are going to do a good educational job for these young people, which is what the whole exercise is about.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, you attempted to explain what you're doing. I'll say that the concern I have is that the improvements you are making be for the benefit of these students who need this high-cost help. We will wait and see; time only will tell. I just say that the problems will be on your doorstep come the fall if you haven't made the right move, and if people have lost the programs they need.

We will leave that topic. I would like to turn to the rural education study you are doing. There are a few questions I have with regard to rural education. I'll start with the one that intrigues me the most in this rural education study.

You are talking about equality of opportunity, mentioning that we have moved through two phases of providing equal educational opportunity as identified by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Phase one is universal access and phase two is compensation programs.

You go on to talk about phase three of education, the new rural education (and I think



this is just education in general) social programming. I would like you to enlarge on what you mean by the phase of education that is called social programming.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, what is being referred to here, and is being introduced in the report in the early discussion of an historical review of educational opportunities, is a general discussion of some of the patterns of change that one sees occurring in school systems as time develops. One of the things we have seen, as school systems enrich the opportunities for programming within the school programming, is that there often tends to be a further linkage between community needs, home needs and student needs, in a broader sense than has been traditionally called the bare academic needs. Often these are part of a larger developmental program for young people. I cite, for example, in Saskatchewan (the clearest example, with which the hon. member is familiar) the introduction of the developmental needs of disabled and handicapped youth.

There was a time when we said that we provided educational opportunities to those young people who met some basic academic standards in terms of participation in the school system. We have come to recognize that education is part of the development in a larger sense of our young people. So we have moved on to recognize the needs of parents and community, and the wish and interest of young people with disabilities to live in their community and to participate in educational opportunities in the community. We have extended the scope of the school, in one sense, to meet the educational needs of those young people. When you look at those kinds of needs, you often are looking at the life skill needs of those young people. That is, after all, one of the things you are aiming for.

Similarly, when you look at communities (I think of the inner city schools in our urban centres) and recognize that linkages between school and community can be a strengthening feature in the overall educational program, bringing in the participation of parents, (getting parents involved in identifying some of the needs of students and the things their schools can do), then you start to get a greater connection between community and school and the broader development of the young person. This is a pattern I think we see ourselves leading toward; it's a progressive stage of development which should be supported.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — In your rural education study, you talk about changing grade 12 graduation requirements. This may be a possibility. You talk about students dropping in (drop-outs dropping back in). I was wondering if you could elaborate a little further on just what is envisaged in the difference in graduation requirements, and how are you going to facilitate this dropping in concept.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, as the hon. member knows, the purpose of the rural education paper was to identify some concerns (not all of which everyone is going to agree have particular priority) that are developing, and to establish some types of options that might be considered in order to deal with those situations. With respect to the question of changing high school graduation requirements, one of the things that has been recognized is that the small rural school often is not in a position under the current structure of the curriculum to provide certain aspects of school programming that would be appropriate to certain student needs, that the larger comprehensive school is able to provide. We have suggested that we should try to supply, even within the small school framework, some types of programs that help those students who have a particular interest in relating school to the world of work, or to the life of the

community. Through some change in the structure of curriculum and the requirements for graduation and the credit system, it may be possible to provide an integrated kind of program that meets some of the needs of those students.

I've had it suggested to me many times in rural communities by the council on rural development in Saskatchewan and by many parents that some are dropping out because they see the schools providing to them, basically, a pre-university academic program. It has been suggested that if we were to look at some changes and modifications in the program, including the structure of the curriculum and the requirements for graduation, that some of those students who drop out for that reason might continue in school and might further develop their basic skills as well, which is an integrated approach to education that I would favor. That is one option. Now, some of the specific details on how those changes would be made are outlined here but they would need further refinement and development. What we are doing now is putting them out for discussion as possibilities.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — The one concern that one would have to safeguard against (and I put out a word of caution) is that we wouldn't want to see an almost dual level of graduates, the urban graduate and the poor country cousin who wouldn't qualify for much. What do you see in the future of the new technologies in education, for example, the use of the fibre optics network in the sparsely settled areas of the province? Is the sheer cost of the hardware for such a thing prohibitive? Or do you see this as a supplement to the sparsely settled areas where enrolment decline is certainly affecting the viability of these schools?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I think our view is that this is a subject that certainly needs pursuing — the possibilities of some of the new technologies, in terms of computing and information distribution, and the distribution of resource materials and so on. The potential of some of the new electronic and communication technologies appears to be quite great. We currently have as part of this rural education review, a review of the possible application of these technologies, looking at perhaps a redevelopment of the correspondence school, tying in with SaskMedia, tying in with fibre optics and that sort of thing.

I think the hon. member, from my understanding of the situation, has raised an appropriate point, that is that these new technologies can be very costly and must be very carefully assessed to see that we are providing technology as a support to learning and to teaching and not as a substitute for learning and for teaching. I do not say that frivolously, but I think that has sometimes been the result of applying new technology carelessly — one becomes enamored with the technology and forgets about the goal and purpose of what we're doing. So, cost is one concern; the appropriate use of that technology is another.

I do believe, however, that when we look, as you mentioned, to the smaller schools and the more sparsely populated areas and so on, through time we may be able to see the teacher as a facilitator of learning able to draw upon some of the information and so on that can be brought to the school and the student through the applications of those technologies. I don't think that day will be here tomorrow but it could be here very soon. We are pursuing that question and do need to pursue that question.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Thank you. I'd like to turn now to curriculum. Mr. Minister, one thing that has been brought to my attention many times — we discussed it last year at the elementary level — is the co-op curriculum that has been superimposed by the

Department of Co-ops upon the school system. I hold in my hand the Co-operative Outlooks. Now if we thought the one at the elementary level was a bit of an indoctrination, I would think that the one at the secondary level is a complete umbrella curriculum. I open to the table of contents here and I see the areas in which it can be used: social studies 30, 30H and all the social studies, both the economics, psychology, home economics and the consumer education. They point out the appropriate levels at which it is to be used in each case.

Now, we've been through the philosophical argument of this before. I think you know my stand on this — it's fine and dandy — but if we're going to start getting into economic modes of operation and so on, let's look at the whole picture. I can see where this one is. Although I know it is a resource unit, it is designed to touch on all the social studies or social science areas of the division 4 curriculum. If you were wanting to get this in it at each year — grades 10, 11, and 12 in economics and in history — there could be quite a bit of this material brought in.

Now be that as it may, the thing that certainly disturbs me is that this is an umbrella that was superimposed upon the school systems. My understanding is (and I stand to be corrected) that they had about seven people out in the field. This is not your department but the Department of Co-ops. I bring it to your attention because they were out there in the field of education visiting the schools. I understand that there were very few requests from the superintendents for them to come in and demonstrate their materials. In fact, I understand that you couldn't get the books unless you had the whole show. You had to have the whole indoctrination before you could even have any of the books, if you wanted the books. I wonder if you have statistics on how many schools they visited and how many of them had to take this demonstration before they got the books at all.

I question the expenditures of the government opposite. I would ask you how many special consultants you have working out of your department in the province of Saskatchewan. Do you have seven? Do you have 10? In what areas do you have consultants? We could start with that. In what areas do you have special consultants?

I can remember when I was teaching there was a fellow in physical education. He did good work. He was a special consultant. There was one in consumer education. I think she moved up to a deputy minister or something. She must have had a really good job. But I would like to know how many consultants you have in the field today and what field they're in?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that I can give a full count of all of the consultant staff that we have available, but I believe the number would be somewhere in the range of about 30 who are involved in curriculum work in the Department of Education in one way or another. There would be other staff who are partial consultants who are doing curriculum development or program development and also consultant work. Not all people are in the category of strictly curriculum implementation consultants, but I think that figure would be a rough estimate.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, probably we can zero in on this a little finer. How many of these curriculum consultants did the Department of Co-ops have running around through Saskatchewan with the two packages of books that were available? This is the type of consultant that I want to know about. How many consultants do you have visiting with teachers in the classrooms? Don't worry about some guy who is sitting in there writing a course in the department. I want to know how many are out there delivering the goods

to the teachers upon request. I remember there was a fellow in guidance, one in consumer education and a fellow in physical education. I can remember some seconded or part-time English ones when the new English curriculum was coming in. I want to know what the department has in the way of people who are out there? What subjects are they involved in?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I think that the number of consultants that would be working in the category that the hon. member talks about would be approximately 25. I should point out to the hon. member that it depends — each year we will shift consulting expertise to a particular area. There are years when we've had three or four or more consultants working on an implementation of a physical education program or curriculum. In the co-op program they've had, I think, three people or consultants working on the implementation stage or the introduction stage. A number of the consultants that we have will be working on particular priorities that a particular region has picked at this time, because we don't have any major projects of introduction, such as the physical education one of a few years ago, or such as the co-op one now. But the people working in the regions cover music, art, science, English, physical education, French language instruction, and a number of areas of that sort. It shifts and changes depending upon the identified curriculum and whether that is reaching a stage where it needs some implementation work and upon the identified needs within the region in terms of curriculum.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — I think there were about seven of them running around out there with the co-op curriculum, weren't there? Three in the office, I think, but out in the field there were more than that, were there not?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I am informed that perhaps the Minister of Co-operatives in his estimates could give you . . . I don't have the records here in front of me, but I'm informed by my officials that this year three consultants have been involved in the implementation work with respect to the co-op curriculum.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, I wasn't here for the Minister of Co-ops' estimates. I had to be out that night, or I would have asked him. I won't hold you responsible for what he was doing. But even if there were only three, and I suspect there were more than three (we aren't going to argue over the number), that just indicates the priorities opposite. I have people coming to me saying, 'We have a great need for speech therapists.' I wonder how many speech therapists the Department of Education employs, if any. We look at rural schools, and we look at new courses coming in.

If you say you have 25 in the field in proportion to the number of courses that certainly still isn't putting the emphasis, the consultant, or the expertise on the academic subject matters that is put on the co-op resource kit. Now, I'm not complaining to you entirely. I'm just saying, as I've said all night, that the government opposite is not giving the true emphasis in dollars to education that it is to other things. I think if you went out and asked the ratepayers or the taxpayers of this province or the parents or the school boards or the teachers or the pupils, "Where would you like to have the resource money spent on consultants, in the field of science, in English, in physical education, in art, in music, or in co-ops?" the answer would be, "Take those jokers out of the co-ops and the resource curriculum and put them into the fields of education where it really counts."

I say the government opposite is negligent in that regard. They're great at sticking the money and the dollars into putting these fellows out. Did you see the kits, Mr. Minister,

that came out? By golly, I could hardly carry the box full of stuff — two huge boxes, that I'm sure I could tour around Saskatchewan to the schools, are sitting in the libraries in many cases collecting dust. Although it is a great waste of money, if they are collecting dust at least the indoctrination process isn't taking place as I think they were totally designed for.

That is a waste of dollars. Those dollars could be put into the high-cost funding, if we need it. Those dollars could be put into consultants in the field who are going to give those children the life skills to make their way. I would like to know what the cost of all this indoctrination from kindergarten to grade 12 in the co-op principles has been to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. You can't answer that; the Minister of Co-ops probably could. I think it would be a very interesting thing to find out. If you took the moneys that were put together in buying these programs that Manitoba threw out (Manitoba's discards, Saskatchewan's gems of wisdom), programs reprocessed and developed into these heavy boxes of stuff that you can hardly lift, you could have brought a program into the education of Saskatchewan that would have really helped someone out much more than this stuff here.

I want to tell you where you could spend that money, and I have told you three years in a row and I will tell you again. It shocks me, you being a Rhodes Scholar, that you haven't come up with this yourself. You have done virtually nothing for the gifted people in Saskatchewan. You heard me say that I'm happy to see what is happening with the handicapped and those who suffer from learning disabilities. I would be the first to congratulate you, and I express my concern tonight about changing the criteria. Here the government opposite is willing to see good money spent on this. The superintendents told me it was just about pushed down their throats, all this gobbledygook. These good dollars could have been there to help the bright minds that are not being challenged, because we won't bring in a meaningful program for gifted students in this province.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, the tirade of the hon. member with respect to the co-op educational materials is both constructive and interesting. The cost of materials that have been distributed with expect to co-op education (I don't know the exact figures), I don't think has been all that high relative to the quality of material we have obtained. I would indicate to the hon. member that these materials were reviewed by both the social studies curriculum committee and the economics curriculum committee, which are made up not of departmental personnel, but of teachers and people from the university faculties and trustees as well. Both curriculum committees identified these educational materials as an excellent resource; they identified the lack of these kinds of materials that deal with themes that are relevant to Canada and Saskatchewan. They recognized that the themes being dealt with in terms of the co-op form of economic organization have been important historically and are very important in the contemporary life of Saskatchewan and the prairie region. They felt it was an important step forward in terms of providing access for the schools to quality material that deals with Canadian and regional and provincial themes. That the hon. member should (as a teacher) take part in the kind of tirade he has is absolutely surprising to me. A curriculum committee made up of people who have a great deal of ability and who are professionals in the field has recommended this material highly. It has been recommended as resource material (it is not a curriculum) to be used at the discretion of boards and teachers consistent with the policy of the boards. It has been shoved down no one's throat.

It is certainly my hope that boards and teachers (and I know by and large this is true) will

be objective in assessing the kinds of materials that are available and will not become engaged in emotional elimination of material for reasons that aren't associated with the content of that material at all. I can see that the hon. member would be influenced by that kind of judgment, but by and large, it's not true that teachers, directors of education and school boards are influenced in that way in their decisions with respect to this most important question of learning and the educational materials that are appropriate to assist in learning.

I should say to the hon. member that when there are materials available, it is important that there be some level of staff assistance provided to assist teachers and school personnel to see what's there and understand its application and so on. That is something that is done all the time. I don't think three people travelling around the province with the large number of schools and the great distances we have, is a large number of people at all. I think they have done the job very well, given the limited number of people available. It is my general impression that schools and teachers have appreciated access to this material and they will, in their good judgment, use it in an appropriate fashion to support their programs. And it is generally felt on the part of schools and teachers that they can do this very well with this very high-quality material which does deal with Canadian, Prairie and Saskatchewan themes. That is something that has been lacking. I see the hon. member for Rosetown, by his expression, would not be interested in using this material. But it is true, by and large, that those interested in education are using this material in a constructive way.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Well, I don't think they're just rushing up to the library for it, but we'll go on to some other things here. I say that those dollars came from people through taxation to be used by the government. My contention is that those dollars could have been used in instruction and in helping people much better through the Department of Education in such things as . . . Have you a science consultant? Have you? Well, that's something new. You didn't have one when I was teaching. There is certainly a need.

We're looking at a new technology. You and I both agree that the basis for the new Saskatchewan is the new technologies, not just instruction. That's how the people out there are going to make their money. I hear talk every day about a heavy oil upgrader, new thermal plants and ethanol. On this side of the House, we talked to you about value-added agricultural industry processing. We don't see much of it, but we're hoping someday this will come about. Now those things are high technology pursuits and those things are going to need people who understand science. I would say rather than having three jokers running around pushing the co-op philosophy, if you really want to satisfy the needs and help the people in the future, then you could put out some more science consultants. I just cite that as an example of how I feel on this regard.

The other thing, too, is computer education. I noticed announcements, I think, that the school at Grenfell in my constituency won a computer in some type of little contest. I think that's great stuff. I wonder how many schools in this province have computers in them now. I wonder if you have a course designed for computer technology. The last one I know of (and there may be an upgrading) was the 1964 course in data processing. I'll ask you, have you upgraded that? If you think 1964 data processing is what is needed today, you're sitting under a toadstool. I want to know if you have those kind of courses?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I'm advised by my officials, Mr. Chairman, that an interim course of studies in this area will be in place for the coming school year and we now are in the course of structuring a . . . because of the rapid development of this technology,

we have been doing it in two steps. We first developed an interim course of study. Now we are putting together a fully developed curriculum committee to work on the development of appropriate approaches to curriculum in this whole area. There will be an interim program of studies available to schools, which I think is a good program and will meet most of the needs. Granted, with the rapid changes that are taking place and the assessments that need to take place, perhaps we need to give it more in-depth work before we can say that we have an established curriculum.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — So actually, you are telling me that data processing '64 is still the course, but you are working on something. I'm glad to hear that you are working on something, but there is another area where you could have been spending the taxpayers' money in a better fashion. You could have had consultants out there. You're going to need in-service for the teachers because there aren't very many teachers out there who are trained in computers at this point in time. I'm trying to get across to you the way you could spend the educational dollar or the people's dollar better than through consultants running around with two boxes of heavy co-op curriculum.

We will now turn to this Operation Lifeboat. You've probably read about it; it's the little exercise in grade 10 social studies. This is a dandy. It's designed for decision making, Mr. Minister, and you know how you make the decision? You have six or seven guys in a boat. They're out in the middle of the ocean and the boat will only hold six, so one has to jump. That is the decision the students have to make. Now if I ever heard of a stupid exercise, there's one. How are they going to make that decision? Upon sturdiness — who's the strongest? Upon intellectual ability — who's the smartest? Upon race? Upon religion? What are you trying to do in the school systems? Why haven't you taken this type of course and thrown it right in the garbage? That type of decision making shouldn't be forced upon students at the grade 10 level.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I'm not sure that I got the full specifics of the member's question, but I believe it was with reference to the use of certain learning techniques with regard to values clarification in the social studies program. Was that correct? Well, it is certainly true that there are portions of the grade 10 social studies program that deal with decision making, the processes of decision making and choices, etc. I am not aware of any recommendation, and recommended lists of anything from the Department of Education that recommends the application of these decision-making models, or whatever you call these rather macabre ones that have been talked about periodically. There is no recommendation of that kind for use in the social studies program.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — I think it is an optional thing you can use. But let's face it, if we were kids in grade 10, and you and I and five others were in the boat, and we had to make the decision that one had to get out . . . What kind of education is that? I don't think we need that sort of thing. I don't know if you know about it. It was written up in the *Leader-Post* and has been under discussion. I think it's a foolish exercise and a type of exercise that we shouldn't be subjecting young people to. Although it is optional, you have the authority to remove it from the curriculum and I would suggest that you do.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, our records do not show that there are any local development courses of the type you refer to, values clarification courses, currently in place. There are local options, as you know, for developing programs. There is no Department of Education values clarification program in existence.

There are local options whereby local school boards may authorize the development of programs. Now, there has been a lot of talk about the use of these programs in other settings. They have been used (I think) in Ontario and other places very extensively. We've had some people around speaking about this but we don't have any record of the development at the local level of any values clarification program.

Certainly it may be that individual teachers (we obviously don't police and control the entire operation of the school system) are introducing certain values clarification sub-programs within the social studies curriculum. But it's not something that we have any record of as a specific local program having been developed, nor one that we have approved, in the recollection of my department officials, for any school in the province.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — If you will just check, it was covered in the papers. I guess it's being used in Regina. I remember their interviewing some of the directors. I think Mr. Robb gave a talk on it. I think anything that is used in the schools has to be approved by you. It may be a locally developed course. I'm not going to get into this argument, but I know it is being used in classrooms. I think it is wrong. There are certainly better methods of developing decision making than that scenario of seven in a board and six are to survive. That is only going to teach discriminatory decisions. So, I won't push it any further. I've brought it to your attention, Mr. Minister, and you can look into it. I think it's part of the social studies package. I know it has been used in schools in the city of Regina.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm informed, to the knowledge of my officials, that in grade 10 social studies they are aware that certain teachers do use values clarification strategies. But I'm also informed (specifically in relation to the statement of Mr. Robb) that he indicated that the rather macabre choice strategies to which you are referring — the seven people in a boat or whatever you referred to it as — are not being used in the social studies program in Regina. That particular approach is not being used as part of the general introduction of certain values clarification strategies within the grade 10 social studies program.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — I don't want to prolong it. It just said that in Saskatchewan:

Simon's(?) book was listed as a reference material for teachers and in Department of Education's curriculum guide for health at the elementary school level in '77-78. Following pressure from parents and teachers the department removed it in 1979, however, it reappeared as a reference material for teachers in the department's curriculum guide on career education.

So we won't prolong it, but if you would just take it and make a check. If it's there, I think it should be yanked. If it isn't in there, fine and dandy. But I'm just saying that those are the kinds of things we have to guard against, because I think it's rather a foolish way of decision making.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to pass to my colleague for Rosetown to ask a few questions.

**MR. SWAN:** — Mr. Minister, I'd like to deal for a while with the decline in population in rural Saskatchewan in particular, but in Saskatchewan generally, and the grant formula that was set up to take a look at that sparsity factor. It would appear from talking to school boards this year that this sparsity factor is not responding rapidly enough to the changes in population. I would like to know what the department has done in the past year to bring into line the sparsity factor portion of the program, which many of the school boards consider is one of the main contributing factors to their dilemma of



trying to raise enough funds to operate their school system.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I should, first of all, point out that the sparsity factor calculation per se in the grant formula was not introduced specifically to deal with the question of declining enrolments. The sparsity factor was introduced to provide some additional grant assistance to areas that have a relatively sparse population distributed over a relatively large area. Basically, that factor, having been introduced, has not been changed in any significant way, because if the sparseness of the student population increases, that factor will add money to that school board's grant because it takes into account the sparsity of the student population.

There is that factor; then there is a second factor which is the declining enrolment factor, which, essentially, was introduced to try to cushion the impact of declines in enrolment, recognizing that the basic calculation of grant entitlement is done on a per student basis under the foundation grant formula. Recognizing that that placed some burden on school boards in which there was declining enrolment, there was introduced a few years ago, the declining enrolment factor, and that has been enriched somewhat through the years. Last year we made the decision that what we were facing as another element of all of this, was the development of a substantial number of relatively small schools. In particular, at the high school level, there were some difficulties being encountered (as the numbers decline) in being able to maintain a program at the high school level, given the breadth of program that is required for a good division 4 program. So, as a result of that, last year we introduced what we call a small schools factor which, based on school size, provides for the boards the opportunity to earn some additional grant entitlements to help support the operation of their small schools. So, we've introduced that third factor into the system as a way of helping to deal with this problem.

**MR. SWAN:** — Mr. Minister, the sparsity factor was introduced, and I may be wrong by the year, but I believe it was 1973 or 1974. It was about that time, and it was beneficial to some systems for a period of time. But I believe that with the change in population where more and more have gone to the larger centres within each school division. We are seeing now that the sparsity factor is not taking a quick enough recovery of the number of people dropping in the actual rural part of the division. The costs of transportation are a major cost out there. I believe on a year like this when you have your calculations mainly on the number of students in the school that the rural part of Saskatchewan will indeed face a very serious blow when it is time to assess mill rates.

I look around the province and see some areas where the reassessment process is in place and they have seen a 16 per cent to 18 per cent increase in assessment, and on top of that a 13, 14, or 15 mill increase in school mill rate — it gets to be a pretty heavy load. So, I think the department is going to have to look at some of these adjusting factors if we are going to maintain our rural school programs. I don't want to see us come to the point where the only choice that a board has is to cut staff in order to keep a school open, because then we indeed will get to the point where we don't offer the type of program that most of us would be satisfied with for our own children.

Are you prepared as a department to sit down this year and take a very serious look at the effect that the declining enrolment is having and the urbanization of the population is having? Those two are having a very serious effect on rural Saskatchewan and I believe need to be looked at again at this point in time.

I know that the grant formula at the time it was developed was perhaps as good as any in

the nation; studies we have done have shown that. But I believe there comes a time when a program has been good but needs changes. I don't say throw it out, but I do say that it needs adjusting.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I don't disagree with the comments of the hon. member at all.

As part of the review we are doing of rural education we are recognizing the very real possibility that these factors either will need to be modified or enriched somewhat — or expanded upon or something — to do the job that the hon. member is pointing out. Certainly, I have stated virtually the same thing as the hon. member just stated, and that is that while we don't want to throw out the system in its entirety (because I think it's basically a good system) it has room for these kinds of adaptations and these kinds of adjustments that can help deal with some of the unique developing problems in the rural schools and in particular in the smaller rural schools. As we carry through our consultations on the rural education discussion paper, the question of finance and the question of how we might make some of those adaptations and modifications are going to be addressed and looked at very seriously. We have some internal studies going on as part of the process right at this moment. I think it clearly will mean that we are going to have to, while not separating and saying we have two education systems, say that rural Saskatchewan does have some unique and special problems and we can be aware of those problems and make provisions to help deal with those unique problems. I am hoping that will be broadly accepted as a view, recognizing that there are some unique problems in rural Saskatchewan that need to be dealt with if we are going to maintain a quality program.

**MR. SWAN:** — That other area of the formula that is having a significant effect on what is happening to mill rates for education purposes in the province is the continual upward adjustment of what is commonly called the computational mill rate. It's a formula perhaps that has been needed, but I think you will agree with me that every time you increase your computational mill rate you place an additional burden on rural Saskatchewan or on Saskatchewan as a whole because of the increase in that computational rate. It has the effect of moving tax dollars back to the local tax base the instant that you change it. So when I hear that the computational rate has gone up 5 or 6 mills, I can guarantee that out in the country that's going to have a very significant effect and in the city system as well. This year we have seen across this province an average of at least 10 mills levied. Now, it goes from a 5 mill levy up to as high as 24 mills in some situations. There are of course other factors that are adjusting those. But I believe that the department should give pretty serious thought to holding that computational mill rate pretty much stable from here on in, because I believe you pushed that tax base about as hard as you should push it and for a long period of time.

When you had a decline in students and you tie your grant formula to a 10 per cent increase to the student base, you're not being fair at a time when your teachers' salaries have increased by 11.75 per cent plus other fringe benefits that are added (I think if you were to add them all together you're probably somewhere in the neighborhood of 14 per cent, maybe 13.5 or 13.6 per cent). These figures have to be looked at. It's fine to stand here and say we're paying 70 per cent of the cost. Maybe you are and maybe you aren't. It's a little difficult sometimes to say.

But I would like you to tell me how much the total education cost is out there and how much you are actually paying — those two figures. Then we'll see whether it comes out to 70 per cent or not. I think it will come out to something less than that and probably

closer to 67 per cent.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Perhaps I can give the hon. member a little breakdown of the estimate of the cost for the coming year — the estimate and the total cost. The estimate of total school operating costs that we have for the coming year directly assumed by school boards is approximately \$470 million. The costs of superannuation contributions on the part of the employer, which are all made by the government, is \$148.6 million. But \$470 million is the estimated budgeted costs by school boards, I believe. The grants to schools for the current year will be \$260 million.

**MR. SWAN:** — You must have other figures than that. Well, I mean you have operating grants. You must have capital grants and so on. You have been in this House two or three times saying that from the department you're paying 70 per cent of school costs. Well, if you're looking at the figures you gave me, that doesn't add up. So, I'd like to have the rest that you're paying.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Okay. The additional figure I gave earlier, the property improvement grants (which provides a property tax relief for the educational component of property taxes) is \$74 million. I believe our capital grants for the coming year are \$10.5 million.

I should point out to the hon. member the figure I was indicating about the total proportion and when it includes the property improvement grants. The higher figure included the property improvement grants. When you take the direct operating budgets and operating grants of schools, the figure is about 54.5 per cent. You then add the property improvement grant and get the higher figure.

**MR. SWAN:** — I believe that is a rather unfair figure then, when you say we're paying that portion of the education costs of the province. How many schools receive \$74 million of property improvement grants? That goes to individuals, not the actual system. The school system receives the \$260 million. If you were to give me a figure of what the property tax is raising, it should be the difference between those two or \$210 million. All right, when you're talking about what you are paying toward the education costs, we should stay with that kind of figure, because you're distorting the amount of money that the government is really putting out that's usable by a school board. It's just not going to the school board; it's going back to perhaps lessen the tax load to the individual but it's not falling into any school board's hands. So I feel you have misled the general population by throwing out this 70 per cent figure continually.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well I should have indicated to the hon. member that both figures have been provided and there's no secret about them. I should also point out that in this province, we directly grant the employer costs of superannuation, which is also a substantial figure. That's an employer cost, and in other provinces that will appear in the budgeted costs of school boards.

So, I agree that you need to take all the figures into account. When you do take them into account, you cannot draw any conclusion other than that there is a very substantial contribution of provincial taxpayer money to support the school system through direct grants to schools for operating costs and for capital grants to taxpayers through the property improvement grant as a tax relief on educational taxation and, lastly, a direct grant to the superannuation commission for the employer share of the superannuation and other benefits.

**MR. SWAN:** — Can you tell me what the provincial liability is to the teachers' superannuation plan?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Could you clarify what you mean by the liability? Obviously we have all of the employer contribution to the superannuation.

**MR. SWAN:** — This has been a non-funded plan as you know, and the province has a liability hanging over its head. It's quite a few dollars and I want to know how much that is. How much is the provincial liability to the teachers' superannuation plan?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — This estimate is based upon actuarial assumptions which can and do change. The current estimate of the present value of the potential future obligations of the province to the teachers' superannuation plan is about \$980 million.

**MR. SWAN:** — And as your medicare scheme helps people to live longer, that liability is going to rise. I would understand then . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm not recommending that we shorten the lives of teachers, generally.

I would like to know what the government is preparing to do to try and provide for the liability. You know, that's a fairly heavy commitment. Is the government prepared now to start to set up a fund that is going to gradually meet that, or are you just going to take your risks and leave it to the future generations to pay it off?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I should indicate, first of all, that about a year and one half or two years ago, I believe, a new money accumulation plan was introduced for all teachers coming into the teaching force, as of that date. That's a fully funded plan, so we are now under the new plan, fully funding all obligations so as to guard against the whole problem of unfunded liabilities. In addition to that, we are now matching, as I indicated, all of the employee contributions out of the consolidated fund, in order to start building up the funding of the liabilities against the people who were on the formula or the earlier plan.

**MR. SWAN:** — So the government is, in a sense, setting up a funded plan for the people on the old program as well, and it's on a 50-50 basis. It won't cover, but it will start to offset to some extent. I think that's a step in the right direction, and I commend you for it. I think it should have been done long ago.

A while ago you mentioned that you had a formula that you were putting in place to help fund the small school. Could you tell me at what level you consider the school small and where it comes into the funding? Also, at what level do you consider that it's too small and should be discontinued? Those are two easy questions.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — With respect to the small schools factors (as we call it), or the small schools aspect of it, I want to indicate that it is experimental. We are trying it. We have provided a supplemental grant to division 4 schools. We are only applying it at this stage to division 4 schools. We provide a supplemental grant to division 4 schools which have fewer than 20 students per grade. Under this factor, schools are earning an additional \$601 per student for each student fewer than 20 per grade in those schools.

**MR. SWAN:** — Do you have no program in place for the small elementaries? You know, by the time you get to grade 12, or division 4, I can see a number of schools dropping

below 20, but there are a number of grades 1 to 6 or 1 to 9 operations that are having every bit as much trouble operating as division 4 schools.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — There are two things about that. When we were working with the possibility of introducing this factor — and I think it is working relatively well — we weren't quite sure how it would be received by school boards. We weren't quite sure about the impact. We recognize that at divisions 1 and 2 and also largely at the division 3 level, at the time we were considering this, which is just about a year ago, the student numbers had large stabilized, not entirely, but had largely stabilized, and that the big impact, in terms of declining enrolment because of the nature of the moving of the baby boom through the school system, was going to be felt within the next three or four years at the division 4 level. So, we thought, given that situation and given that that's where schools are facing the biggest challenge in terms of their planning problems, that's where we would have the most impact in terms of experimenting with this program. We are now considering as part of our review the possibility of extending it beyond the division 4 level. But we wanted to have a good assessment of its impact. We recognized that division 4 was where the biggest changes were taking place in terms of school size, and we thought that was the most appropriate place to start off with in experimenting with this approach to funding which has never been tried anywhere else that I know of before.

**MR. SWAN:** — You never answered the second part of my question. What do you consider to be the minimum level student-wise, for elementary or high school? How far down the rung can you go before you say it's just not possible to operate any more? It's a tough question, I know, but I think there has to be somebody coming to grips with it.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Well, I would say quite candidly to the hon. member that we have not pretended to have an answer to that question. The decision with respect to when a school becomes too small to operate a program is, under the legislation and the approach, made locally. As you know, different boards make very different decisions in that respect. We have not attempted to try to influence those boards in those decisions. What we've attempted to do with this is to say to boards, "If you have made a decision that you wish or need to operate a relatively small school, we will recognize that in order to maintain a quality program there are going to be some additional costs, and we will try to ship through some additional grant assistance." We do not, at the lower end, have a cutoff point, other than under this average of 20 to qualify. They can earn this grant however small they wish to go.

The question of what is appropriate in terms of an education in a small school is something, as you said, that is very debatable. It is a very hard question; different people have different ideas about it. I think it does depend upon how a board in a school can organize its program — the kind of approaches it can take to multigrading, using itinerant teachers, resource sharing and a whole pile of other things of that sort. That can differ very much depending on the attitudes, beliefs, convictions and so on of the individual board members and teachers.

**MR. SWAN:** — The other question I asked you, that you didn't answer for me dealt with the computational mill rate. You never touched that.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I would say to the hon. member that the adjustments in the computational mill rate are essentially the mechanism within the whole foundation grant system. That is the mechanism that (if you like) permits the sharing of some of the inflationary increases in costs of operation. Basically, if the computational mill rate

were not to change at all, then the provincial treasury would be in a position where it would be picking up all of the additional costs and expenditures, whether they be inflationary or real in terms of increased programming, or whatever. I think it's generally accepted that there does need to be some share of that. We can, of course, debate (and I think there is room for debate) how much should be shared by whom. The adjustments in the computational mill rate are essentially the mechanism whereby that takes place.

**MR. KATZMAN:** — I've just one question for you. In my constituency the growth factor in schools is still growing and the additional classroom space needed is causing a burden. Have you any suggestions on how you're going to handle the growth (because it's one of the few areas of the province that's growing in students). Secondly, the interest that is being paid by the school boards on the funds that they need to operate until they get their grants. Are you giving any consideration to picking up this interest?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — First of all, with respect to the growth in enrolment which is taking place in the Rosthern School Division, it is quite true that is one of the few actual divisions in which there is fairly rapid growth. I should say that under the foundation grant formula there is a very generous provision of assistance to those school divisions (in terms of operating costs) that are experiencing growth. By the nature of the formula they earn not just the average share that the province contributes but all of the full recognized cost out of grants for those students. So that means they are getting the full cost from the grant program in order to provide for those students.

In addition to that, there are capital needs. I had a meeting with the school trustees from the Rosthern School Division not very long ago. We were looking through the record of capital expenditures. The record shows that school division stands first in terms of approval of new capital projects, of which we pay 90 per cent of the cost through our grant program. I think the general feeling has been that we have been successful in meeting the needs that have developed over the last few years in that school division. Of course, there continues to be a concern about the future and whether we can keep meeting those needs. We certainly are going to do our level best but it does put a very heavy strain on the capital funds that are available. I don't think we have neglected those needs at all. I think there has been a major new school project under construction there this year, in each of the past few years, and in some years two or more projects. So I think the needs are being met very adequately.

With regard to the interest cost question, the interest costs are calculated in the overall recognized budget costs of the school divisions across the province. So we estimate the recognized cost, which becomes the rate that's in there, and for the purposes of the grant calculation interest costs are taken into account. In addition to that, when there have been unusual delays in payments because of the session dragging on, we have also attempted (as we did last year) to prepay some payments in order to provide a little buffer to the boards.

**MR. KATZMAN:** — Mr. Minister, in my constituency I also have Saskatoon East and Saskatoon West which are growing. I think those three in total are growing more than any other part of the province, pretty well. They have a capital project problem again. How are we working that one out? Grasswood School, I believe, was a new one last year and we are looking at expansion in that area. I know you've got troubles in the area of Vonda where they want the French school and so forth. But leaving that one aside because the local board is involved in making that decision, how are you handling the

other areas?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I think you are quite right. I neglected the other two school divisions. I think in all we have been meeting the growing classroom needs. There may be, because of growth, certain pressures that develop as you try to keep pace, but I don't think, from any of the discussions I've had and from our records, that we have left any of those school divisions short of classroom space for anything except very temporary periods because of certain delays in getting the projects underway and developed. Basically, I think we are keeping up to the demands that are admittedly there. I think you're right. Those three school division probably have the fastest growing school populations of any school division in the province.

**MR. KATZMAN:** — Mr. Minister, there is a study being done out there by, I believe, your department to change the boundaries of the Rosthern school unit vis-a-vis Saskatoon West and so forth. I understand that study is to be done this year to rationalize the boundaries for travel for the students. Is it done and may I have a copy of it?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — As you may or perhaps may not know, the educational boundaries commission reviewed the boundaries in question and provided us with a report, which I believe we have adopted. The recommendations of the report have been adopted and I can give you a copy of the report.

**MR. KATZMAN:** — I've seen the interim reports. They made one move in the Warman-Martensville area, but there were possibly others coming. That's why I'm asking for the final report.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — I believe that, from my recollection and from the advice I'm receiving from staff, we have the final report now. I can provide you with a copy of that.

**MR. MUIRHEAD:** — Mr. Minister, I just want to ask you a few questions about Liberty School. I'll try to make it as quick as possible because you want to get finished here tonight. I know your department was contacted quite a few months ago about the closing of the Liberty School and the people out there are quite disappointed that there has been no action taken. Mr. Minister, they contacted the department when they wanted to close this school. About two or three months ago they contacted me to come over to a board meeting. I went with them to the school unit meeting. They presented this brief. I think it's a very good brief. So I would like to table it so you can look at it. It will give you an idea in your department. I'd like to table this and have the copy back, please.

Mr. Minister, they took a petition and 94 per cent of the people in the Liberty community wanted to keep that school open. They didn't know which way to move. The unit board decided to close the school. The town has been growing in the last few years. They've opened up a bank. They've opened a new garage this year. It seems not to be one of these towns that's going downhill. It's starting to come back. The people are showing great concern.

They've heard, Mr. Minister, that you've made the remark that you believe in the decentralization of schools, where possible. I agree — where possible. There is getting to be community dissension out there and I do think that they need some guidance from your department. Any time that you have to take children two towns away (they have to travel 42 minutes extra a day and leave home 21 minutes earlier), I think it's really serious.

The people in the community were very disturbed when I related back to them that several months ago I contacted a Cathy Mathews from your department and she sent me to an Ivan MacKay (I believe it is) and I discussed the problem with him. Then I went to a Mr. Clayton. Then I received a letter from Mr. Clayton saying a Mr. Drozda would be looking after it. Weeks seem to be going by, the farmers out there have gone into the fields and they're very disturbed that they have not had anything happen. They were going to bring the whole hundred and some people in here to a meeting. I suggested to them that there's no way that these big meetings are successful. I pleaded with them just to have the board meet with somebody here. So that's all we're asking, that someone go out and try to talk to them and talk to the unit. Now, maybe something has transpired that I don't know of, but I can tell you in these last few months in the Liberty area your popularity and trust in you have gone down.

Mr. Minister, I would say that the people know about this part of the act. You say that you can't move on such a thing as this, but these people are serious when they say that if they don't get some action, they want to form a school division of their own. The Liberty area is the largest tax area in the whole school unit. They know that you have the power, Mr. Minister, to let them do such a thing, but they don't want to do that. Their first concern is to get some guidance from your department. You are the minister, you are the one to do it. Mr. Minister, I would like to get your remarks to see what you know about this situation.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — These are matters that have to be dealt with, with some care. As the hon. member is aware, there is no authority resting with the Minister of Education to direct a school division to keep a school open that it wishes to close. That is what the legislation says and we must all be bound by the legislation. The hon. member says that people are losing their confidence in me because I will not direct something to happen. I simply am not in a position to direct those kinds of things to happen. Those are decisions that are part of the system of local democracy, which has become such an important aspect of the operation of our schools.

We certainly do act when disagreements arise between local communities and school divisions. We try to provide some mediation. We try to have our staff talk to the people involved to see if there has been a breakdown in communication, and if there is some way we can assist in the communication process, bringing the facts out on the table and helping people to deal with those facts in a constructive manner.

Mr. Drozda, I am informed, has been in that area, discussed the subject with the divisional trustees, and is currently engaged in undertaking to determine whether mediation of one sort or another could be helpful in this situation. It is not possible for us to impose ourselves on to those situations and give direction, one way or another, to the locally elected people and the ratepayers who elect them about what they should or should not be doing.

I certainly am concerned about the impact of closing schools. We are approaching the question of the support we provide for school programming with an open mind in order to provide an opportunity, where smaller schools should remain open, for those schools to remain open. It is not my intent at this time to be pursuing amendments to the legislation that would give me the power to impose decisions upon school boards on these or other important matters.

**MR. MUIRHEAD:** — I agree with your statement that you want to have this settled in the local areas. But the local school board has contacted your department; has anyone contacted them? Mr. Drozda said he has contacted the school unit people, the



representatives. But have you tried to talk to the people on the local school board? They are the only ones who ever contacted you. The school unit has never contacted you yet. The people in Liberty are very upset because they have never been answered by your department or given any guidance whatsoever. Don't tell me you have sent someone out to talk to the school unit and that answers the people in Liberty; it doesn't. You must send someone if you are going to satisfy these people one way or the other. I am not telling you to use your powers but if this section cannot be used, for goodness sakes take it out, burn it, or throw it away. I will table it. Read it, if you don't know your own acts. It is section 20 of The Education Act. I will table it so you will know your own act. You don't know what goes on over there.

But you do have the power, and if you say you can't interfere, then, for goodness sake, burn that thing and get rid of it. The people know you have the power to let them make a subdivision of their own school unit. It says so right in there. If you can't do it, don't send your representatives out to the school unit to talk to people they've never contacted. They never contacted you. It's the Liberty School Board. Send somebody out to them. Don't leave it months, because it has been months. I'm telling you that all they've asked for is some guidance. They didn't ask for your power. But you're going to leave it until there is panic out there.

I'm telling you about mothers of little children who have to get up and leave at 7:45. Don't smile, Mr. Minister. How would you like to have some little children who have to get on a bus at 7:45 and now are told they have to go 21 minutes earlier to go two towns away? Now, if you haven't the power to do something, go talk to them.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, first of all, it is my understanding that Mr. Drozda has also talked to members of the local board of trustees, although I don't have those facts before me and I could be wrong. But I would be surprised if he has not done so.

Any efforts at mediation in disputes like this have to be handled in a very, very sensitive way. I have to rely and put my confidence in persons of the ability of Mr. Drozda to use good judgment as part of the mediation process. There is no way a Minister of Education can sit in his office and direct the steps that should take place with regard to mediation. And mediation has no guaranteed results. There is no way that we can guarantee that through the mediation efforts of the regional director of education we can lead to a successful resolution of the disagreement that exists there. We certainly make every effort to do that, and in many, many cases we are successful. But, I don't want to mislead the hon. member in any way by suggesting that I have any magic solution to the dispute that exists in Liberty. I do not and I have to rely upon the possible success of the mediation efforts of skilled people like Mr. Drozda, and his judgment about whom he should contact when and how he should follow the steps through, and so on. It may be that he won't be fully successful and satisfy everyone. It may be that he won't satisfy anyone. But, that is a chance you have to take.

I should say that section 20 of the act that the hon. member is referring to has nothing to do with the powers to disallow the closing of a school. Rather it is a much different kind of thing — that is the establishment of new school divisions, that is, the breaking apart of school divisions that exist, and the reorganization of school divisions.

It is not my intention to take apart the school divisions that currently exist in Saskatchewan. I suspect if I were to take steps in that direction, I would need to engage in some very, very in-depth consultations with the Saskatchewan School Trustees'

Association, just for starters. I also expect that I would have to engage in some very extensive consultations with ratepayers and interested people in the field of education. It is simply not credible to suggest that when a difficulty arises between a local community and the local board of trustees of a school division the minister should step in, take apart a school division, and reorganize the divisions. I would be very surprised if that's something that would be supported by very many members of this Assembly.

**MR. MUIRHEAD:** — Yes, Mr. Minister. All I ask you is will you have someone go and explain to the Liberty School Board what you said here about section 20 and how it can be used. They think that it can be used. Explain the situation.

I just want to say in closing, because we want this wrapped up here, that this is just a latter part of a letter that I received from Mr. Clayton:

However, in an attempt to assist as indicated earlier, I will request that Mr. Don Drozda, regional director of education, make the appropriate contacts. Following Mr. Drozda's discussion, I will forward to you further information on concerns that you have raised.

Now, I haven't had any answer back. So, if anything has happened out there, please bring me up to date. That's all I ask. And communicate, please, with the board in Liberty. You don't have to respond.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — As I indicated, we do have staff attempting to mediate this matter, and certainly I will provide the hon. member with a report on progress to date.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Mr. Minister, there are a number of things we could discuss. I suppose we could go on all night on a topic as interesting as education. We haven't touched on the ward system, but I think we'll have a discussion on that when the amendment to The Education Act comes up. We won't touch on that tonight. There is one question I want to ask you, if I can get a quick response. I have a couple or three suggestions for you, and then we can run the subvotes.

I just wonder what your position is with regard to extra-curricular activity as it pertains to The School Act. Are extra-curricular activities part of the teacher's instructional duties?

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I don't believe the act has anything specifically to say about the responsibility of schools with respect to extra-curricular activities. Certainly, extra-curricular activities form an important part of many of the general programs of schools, and I would support them in that. But I don't think the act places any particular requirement on schools as to the nature or types of extra-curricular activities that they should support.

**MR. TAYLOR:** — All right, you didn't really say whether it was part of the teacher's duties. We'll let you off the hook tonight. It's late. That could be a long argument. In closing, we've had a fairly good discussion. There are a few suggestions I could put forward for you and your department to consider.

First of all, we questioned last year the growth of private schools. You gave me the document on how many there were in Saskatchewan. I can quote Mr. Rongve of the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) who this year in the STF bulletin said the number had doubled. I see a concern there. I don't know if there are any guidelines in place for

the development of private schools. If we become too fragmented, Mr. Minister, the control factor or the standards could be fragmented.

I won't ask you to respond to these, Mr. Minister. I'm just going to point out to you that I see this as a growing concern. I see it for two reasons. I think we should be looking at whether there is something lacking in the public school system that this phenomenon is taking place. And if it is taking place, I think we should have some guidelines so that the standards of education in Saskatchewan are not weakened. I'll put that one out.

Secondly, I'll put out the need for vocational guidance. I'll just reiterate that. Especially in rural Saskatchewan I see a need for good vocational guidance programs. At the present they seem to be lacking. I don't think you need guidance personnel per se to do it, but I think that the principals who do this in many of the schools, or a designate teacher, should be kept up to date by the department. Then they can let those students who do not have as much access to the job market know exactly what is available in this province and what they need to get into the job market. In talking to students there is a real vacuum there.

I noticed in the Hughes report that in six years about 50 per cent of the students in the city of Saskatoon will be native students. I think you're making a conscientious attempt to try and address the serious problem of native education, especially at the elementary level. Have you looked at the acceptability of the Montessori method as a method of instruction at the elementary levels for native students? I put forth that as another suggestion.

I've touched on this briefly — there certainly is a need for speech therapists in the whole program. I find more people calling for this and that is another area we could look at.

Finally, in view of the declining enrolments, I ask you to look at the possibility of itinerant teachers. I know it's not that popular with the teaching profession, but it may be the point where we are at. I ask you to look at the portable classroom in dealing with facilities.

Those are just a few suggestions I'd like to end on. We've criticized some of the things you're doing and I think it would be only fair to end with some positives because I still remember the early days in this House when the Premier urged us to come forth with suggestions and that's how I'd like to end the estimates.

I'm quite willing now to run the subvotes and I'd like to thank you. I think you've done a good job in trying to answer our questions. They're not always acceptable to me, but I didn't expect them to be. I thank your staff for the support they gave you in supplying the answers.

**HON. MR. McARTHUR:** — Mr. Chairman, I can appreciate the hon. member's words, and I think we have had a constructive exchange. Perhaps, I can just make two short points. With respect to private schools, we do have three superintendents who are involved, almost exclusively, in providing a superintendency function for private schools in order to oversee the general standards of education. I should also mention that we did announce in the budget a program to develop speech therapist services for school systems in the province. We will be introducing that.

Item 1 agreed.

May 7, 1981

Items 2 to 16 inclusive agreed.

**Item 17**

**MR. TAYLOR:** — Will you give me a list at our yconvenience?

Item 17 agreed.

Items 18 and 19 agreed.

Vote 8 agreed.

**CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS**

**SASKATCHEWAN POWER CORPORATION — VOTE 52**

Item 1 agreed.

Vote 52 agreed.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:32 p.m.