

May 30, 1985

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36

Item 1 (continued)

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I wonder, last day when we left off I had asked you about the cost of administration, and you were going to get me some facts and figures. And I wonder if, at this time, maybe it would be appropriate that you would read out the list of what the main changes were in the administration that would lead to, I believe, about a 250 per cent increase in the administration costs in your department in three years.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, there are a variety of increases, and I could read them all off. I'll just read some of them. As an example: from the '82-83 to the '83-84 year, there was an increase of \$490,000 relating to the system review study and the development of the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan automated system; the administration of the jobs program — \$121,000; the interdepartmental transfers from Health in northern Saskatchewan . . .

There are a variety of similar type changes. Perhaps the best would be if I sent all this information over rather than reading it all into the record.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Under the issue of, or under the heading of administration — I think this is where this would come in — but I do want a list of your personal staff in your office, if I could, with their salaries as well as the increase, Mr. Minister. Could you send that over to me now? I'd want to have a look at it and compare it to these other numbers that you have given me.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I'd be pleased to provide the member with information.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could tell me the effective date of the salary increases. You have May of '85 — you have ministerial assistant 3, a C. Hild, 3,160; and a Krahn, 2,455; and a Rayner, 2,355; and then the secretarial staff, an R. Wright, 2,179; and Klassen, 1,810; and Francis, 1,815. When were these salaries effective and what increase would that be over the last year?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I don't have that exact information with me but I will provide it to you. I can tell you that Mr. Rayner has just very recently joined my staff. Mr. Hild has been promoted to the senior staff person. A year ago at this time, approximately a year ago at this time, Mr. Krahn started. But I can get the exact dates for you, and I can do that for the secretarial staff as well.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I wonder if you would for me, Mr. Minister. Right now could you send someone to the office and get that? I would like to make the comparison as we have done in other departments on the salary increases. Could you get one of your staff to just run up and get that for me, because what I would like to do is do some comparisons between their salary in 1984 and in 1985. Could you do that for me, so we have it now to debate in the committee as opposed to getting it later?

And there are some things that I don't mind getting later, like the list of all the social service groups who get grants from your department. I don't mind getting some of those later. I will want to go through a number of those tonight. And maybe at the same time you could have one of your staff pick that up as well.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to provide at this time to the member all of the information pertaining to grants that has been made public to the organizations in question. And that's just about all of them, I believe, that have been OCed, or have received funds through ministerial orders. We'll get the information on salaries as soon as we have it.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I just want to get one thing straight here, Mr. Minister. You are saying that you'll get your staff's salary for me, like within the next few minutes?

What I would like now, Mr. Minister, is a list of your travel expenses. I don't have the *Public Accounts* here for last year, but can you give me that number that would appear in *Public Accounts* for your expenses for last year? Can you get that from your staff, what that would be?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — When you say last year, which fiscal year are you referring to? Up until what period of time?

MR. LINGENFELTER: — March 31st of '85.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The information on travel I could provide to the member. It's a very modest account over the year '84-85. In total, which would be my own travel expenses and that of people in my office, including some Legislative Secretary travel as well, something less than \$25,000. And I could talk about what trips were incurred, if you wish.

I might indicate that that figure included both in- and out-of-province travel.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The information that you've given me would indicate that your Legislative Secretary at the present time is the member from Moosomin. What was the date of that change from the member from Moosomin to the member from Riversdale, or vice versa — when that change occurred?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I don't recall the specific date. We'll have to get that for you.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — In terms of the travel expenditures that you've sent over, this would include your legislative secretaries and their expenses in travel that they might have done up until March the 31st or '85. I want to check on a trip that I have heard took place by one of your legislative secretaries to Boston. Did such a trip take place?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I requested that my Legislative Secretary attend a seminar in Boston dealing with work programs and training programs related to the independence of welfare clients. The program presently operated by the government in the State of Massachusetts is one of the most highly regarded in the United States, and I requested my Legislative Secretary to attend to find out as much as possible about that program, to see whether or not there were any transferable dimensions to Saskatchewan, and that trip has recently taken place.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Can you indicate to the committee who travelled with the Legislative Secretary, the member from Moosomin, when he went on that trip down to Boston?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — At government expense, himself.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The other thing that I would like to know — and I'm curious about this, and I'm sure many taxpayers are — a Legislative Secretary: do they have available to them a car at their disposal, one that is either assigned to them or access to the CVA (central vehicle agency) vehicle pool?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — That's a question which would pertain to the minister in charge of, of course, the central vehicle agency. But neither of the legislative secretaries that I've been involved with have had personal vehicles assigned to them.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — But the individuals may have access to central vehicle agencies?

(19:15)

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well, as you hear the members from the Assembly saying, the rules are not different now than they were in years gone by. They may have access to them in the same way that officials of departments may have access to them.

I understand that the legislative secretaries that I have had the privilege of working with have in fact been using their own private vehicles for travel purposes.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And when they use their own vehicles they would be able to charge that then to the department. Is that correct?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — When on government business, of course, yes.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The travel expenses here for the member from Moosomin: meals, accommodation, business mileage for private car — \$2,400. That wouldn't be included in the amount that he would get as an MLA. This would be over and above the automobile allowance that he would be paid out of Legislative Assembly for the use of his private automobile as an MLA. Is that correct?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — That's to cover expenses incurred by the member in the course of his duties on government business.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And so, for example, the member from Moosomin who may get \$10,000 as an MLA for his car allowance would then have in addition to that another \$2,400, and as well have access to a vehicle from CVA?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — He uses his own private vehicle.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Are you saying that then he doesn't use the central vehicle agency? On one hand you say they have access to it, and you say he doesn't use it. Has he used the central vehicle agency?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Not to my knowledge. When I say he has access, of course, he has access as all people do. Whether or not he has used it, I'd have to check the records of the central vehicle agency to determine that. My understanding is that he has been using his own private vehicle as one would expect. If there were times when his own private vehicle was for some reason not usable, and he was asked to do certain duties, then naturally the central vehicle agency would be there for him as one would expect.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well I just think it seems . . . Well maybe it isn't. Maybe it's not a little rich, but if he's getting 10 or 11,000 for his private vehicle as an MLA and then has 2,400 charged to the department, and then as well as that has access to the central vehicle agency, that seems like a fairly large burden on the taxpayers of the province. And it may not be. Maybe it's all perfectly legitimate.

But I think that there would be some who would argue that that is a very expensive way to operate, that either one or the other — that he would use a central vehicle agency which I don't know that it would cost him 15 or \$16,000, or the opposite. But I think to have both, I would wonder about it. And I don't want to argue that point a long time.

Mr. Minister, in another area, you will know about a day care review that was done by your department. And I believe that report was given to you by the member from Riversdale. I

wonder whether or not you can tell us now whether that report is available, and what the recommendations were coming out of the many, many briefs. And I can tell you I attended the hearings in Regina and Saskatoon and was impressed with the quality of briefs that came forward and the many hours of hard work that went into them.

I would ask you, Mr. Minister, what the main recommendations were; if you could review and highlight the main recommendation of the majority of the briefs, and give me a response as to what has happened to the brief done by the member for Riversdale.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The member will know that the report was made public some time last year. You indicated when it would be made public. In fact, it was made public some time ago. There were a number of recommendations which were brought forward at that particular point in time. I think the most significant, likely, was the need for increased day care spaces in the province of Saskatchewan, and in response there was a net increase of 217 spaces in 1984-85 and there will be additional new spaces developed, of course, in '85-86.

A significant recommendation had to do with providing more training to family day home operators and funding in the amount of \$56,000 was granted to the Saskatoon Family Day Care Home Association to fund voluntary training program for family day home providers throughout the province. There also was a fairly significant recommendation, in my estimation, relating to the provision of infant day care in the province. And as you will have heard, fairly recently there is a move to begin at least a pilot infant day care project here in Regina associated with the Balfour tutorial project. So I think those were some of the major recommendations and some of the responses to them.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Were there any other major recommendations that seem to flow through all of the . . . well not all of them, but the briefs that were presented to . . . Any other major recommendations that you might have been missing?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Some of the other ones — the current system of direct assistance only to those who need it should be maintained rather than move into some kind of a universally accessible free mode of day care; if there is going to be any increase in subsidies then it should be aimed at lower income families; that easily accessible training programs should be provided for day care providers; initiate discussions with education to use schools for school-age day care — those would be some examples.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — What about the issue of maintenance grants? Was that mentioned in the majority of briefs presented to you, or not?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It was an item that came up at some of the public meetings and in some of the briefs. I don't think it would be fair to say that it was mentioned in a majority of them, but it was a matter which was brought forward.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I was wondering . . . I had missed the hearings that were held in Prince Albert and I don't know what came out of those briefs, but I know the ones I attended — and I wasn't there for every moment of the hearings in Regina or Saskatoon — but it seemed to me, if I can recall accurately, that in the majority of the briefs one of the main concerns was the funding of the day care centre directly, and the position that many parents were finding themselves in, of simply not being able to afford to send their children to day care.

And it seemed to me at that time that one of the themes was that many of the day cares in fact had vacancies, and that unless you were going to pay a maintenance grant to the day care to make sure that they were viable and operated properly, and proper staffing put in place — and that would take a maintenance grant directly to the day care centre — that people would not be able to afford to take their children to day care unless they were either in the very high income, or in the relatively low income where they got the full subsidy. And there seemed to be a middle

class, the middle group of people, who were being left out.

And I suppose it's interesting that in the major tax increases that we have seen in the last budget, that that is aimed at the middle class again, and I don't know whether it's by intention or by accident that this government seems to be attacking the middle class parents — not the very wealthy people because of course they can afford to, if they have to, hire people to come into their home and pay them a good salary even in their own home, or can afford to take their children to day care.

But it seems to me to be the people in the middle section who are having a difficult time affording day care in this province. And it's my recollection of the hearings that a maintenance grant of so much per year would at least go a long way to solving that problem. And I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you recall a similar request in many of the briefs, and whether or not you've reacted or whether you're considering injecting maintenance grants into the day care funding formula.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I believe that the issue of maintenance grants came up largely in the context of a concern on the part of some people for the stability of day care centres. And I think the argument could be mounted that if there was an injection of funds in terms of maintenance grants, that this would keep centres from going under, that that argument might have a fair degree of validity if in fact we had seen a lot of centres go under in the last two or three years. But I don't believe that has been the case.

And as well, of course, we know that there are significant numbers of children that do attend centres that do some from what we could call the larger middle class, whatever that income range is. And it's a fairly broad range, one would have to agree.

So the issue of maintenance grants is certainly an issue as far as people are concerned with the day care community. Recommendations were made in that particular regard. It's not something that the former government moved on, it's not something that we anticipate moving on at this particular point in time.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, obviously in this budget there is no maintenance grant that will be applicable to help day care centres in Regina, or Saskatoon, or in any of the cities or towns in the province.

And I just wanted to ask, in your role as minister, if you would point out to the committee or highlight to the committee your own personal view of maintenance grants, whether you're committed to working within cabinet to get maintenance grants for day care centres, or whether you are opposed to that concept. And I may not agree with what you say, but I think it's fair for all of us to state our opinion on how we would see day care developing in the province.

And you refer to the fact that the 1981 day care report, the provision — I forget what number, what recommendation it was, 36 or whatever — of the 1981 day care report which was received early in 1982, did not implement all of the recommendations, and there were some 90 or 100 recommendations.

But I can guarantee you that it was the commitment of the minister then — and there were many things I didn't get when I was minister of social services that I would have liked to — but I had made a commitment and would work for, and the principle that I believe in, is that maintenance grants should be available to the day care centres to stabilize them.

And I'm not arguing whether or not you can get every cent you need to maintain every day care centre, or whether you can get a much money as you would like for all your programs. Any reasonable person will know you can't do that.

But what I would like to know is whether you personally have a commitment and are arguing for it within your department and cabinet, or whether you see a different development of day care. And if you do see a different development of the day care, can you elaborate on it and point out to the committee how you would see day care developing in the province?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well I think the issue for the public at large in Saskatchewan is not whether or not centres have maintenance grants, but whether or not there are adequate day care spaces here in the province, and whether or not the public perceives that the government is, in fact, expanding the number of day care spaces available to people that really need them in the province. And that is the direction that this particular government, and certainly this minister, has chosen.

There are up sides and there are down sides to maintenance grants. I don't think that's the significant issue. I think the significant issue for the public is whether or not there is going to be a day care available, and whether or not there are going to be increased day care spaces. That's the emphasis that we have put in the last few years, and I think the figures very accurately bear that out in terms of the increased number of subsidized spaces available to people; and that's where we're going to continue to put our emphasis.

(19:30)

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I get back to the main point of the middle class families in the province. And what you're saying: as long as the spaces are available there isn't a problem for the people in the province. But I want to tell you that there is a problem for many people who can't obtain the subsidy and aren't wealthy enough to afford day care.

And I agree with you that spaces is a big issue, and that we have to have enough spaces. But the whole thing falls apart if you can't afford the spaces once they're put in place. And it seems to me that there are a large number of families in Saskatoon and Regina particularly, and in the Swift Currents and Estevans who, even though you may have day care spaces available, if the day care costs \$340 a month, and their income is too high to be eligible for the subsidies, if you have three children going to day care, then you can't afford it.

And the emphasis, I think, should be part on the parents. I don't disagree with you that the parents have a responsibility. I think that I would, though, argue that parents who are earning \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year would have a difficult time, if they have three children in day care, to scrounge up \$1,000 of tax paid income to put into one item in their budget, that being the day care for those three children.

And I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you really are being realistic when you say there's no problem as long as the day care spaces are available, without any question or any thought being put to whether or not the parents can afford it.

Now here again, I'm not arguing for people who can afford, who get all of the subsidy, because it seems to me that they are probably better off to put their children in day care than many people who are in the middle class group.

And I'm not arguing that the people who are wealthy, or a doctor, or a dual working family, where they're professors at the university who are earning a combined income of 120,000 — I think those people can afford day care as well.

But it seems to me that families who have a combined income between 30 and 50,000, and have two or three children in a day care centre, and are bearing the whole shot of it, are not able to afford day care.

And I wonder if you could confirm or elaborate on whether you see that as a problem. Maybe

you don't, and I will accept that. I won't agree with it, but I'm not going to dwell a long time. I would just like to get your opinion on it.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, we're just in the process of doing some calculations, and when we have that done we'll respond to the question.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, you may be right at this moment working out my next question, but that is the various levels of when the grants cut off. And I would think that you're probably working out for a family of three, if they're earning \$40,000 a year, where the cut-off line is. But that's my next question. Can you indicate to me for a family of — and I'll use just an example, a quick example — a family earning \$35,000 combined income, with one child, would they be eligible for a . . . Use a family working in Saskatoon with a combined income, the husband earning \$20,000 and the wife earning 15. Would they be eligible for a subsidy if they had one child in day care?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — They are doing a couple of sets of calculations. If I could just come back to the salary information which you wanted before: of the ministerial assistants, two of them are new, so there is only one there for which there is a comparison available. Mr. Hild was earning 2,810. Okay. Was earning 2,810 on November 1, and was promoted to the senior ministerial assistant in the office on April 1st, 1985, at which time his salary was set at 3,160. Okay. The other two were new; there are no comparisons.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Yes, I do want the secretaries', but the other two positions were new people, but they were probably replacing someone, and what I would like is the salaries that the other individuals were being paid.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — are you ready? Mr. Krahn's salary, that's a present employee, is 2,455. A previous ministerial assistant was receiving 2,695. Mr. Rayner, a new ministerial assistant, is at 2,355. A previous ministerial assistant, this was the senior ministerial . . . One of the ministerial assistants earlier was 3,293. So there have been considerable reductions.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And the secretarial staff, Mr. Minister?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — For the secretarial staff, Ms. Klassen is a new staff member so there is no comparison. Ms. Francis is temporary staff and has been there some time so there's very little change in salary; I think it was from 1,800 to 1,815. Ms. Wright was formerly a secretary at 1,894 on April 1, '84; on April 1, '85 was promoted to senior ministerial secretary at 2,179.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The one ministerial assistant who has a work record and has been with your department for some time then, the only one, is Mr. Hild, who received an increase in salary, here you say by reclassification, of about 12 per cent?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I believe the per cent promotion figure was 12 per cent.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And your two secretaries who have been with you for some time, Wright and Francis, Ms. Francis got almost no increase, and the other secretary got an increase of about 15 per cent. Is that accurate?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — When the former secretary retired, the former minister's secretary retired, then Ms. Wright was appointed to the position of minister's secretary so she received a promotional increase at that time. The exact percentage increase — we can work that out for you if you want.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well I just make the point on ministerial salaries, and it's not greatly different from what other members have been highlighting. And that is that out of your three individuals who have been with you for any length of time, they all have got increases. Now one,

apparently a very small increase or next to nothing; one, a 12 per cent increase; and one, 15, and through reclassification.

But I think the theme running through this whole area is that all ministerial staff — not all, but 80 per cent of ministerial staff — have got massive increases, in light of the fact that the rest of the civil service is being asked to take zero or 1 or 2 per cent increases, that the government of the day has seen fit to raise at least 80 per cent of their personal staff through reclassification in the area from 8 to 16.2 per cent.

(19:45)

And I'm not going to dwell on that either a very long time. But I think the public and the unions who are attempting to settle contracts and being told, whether they're teachers or nurses, that because we're in a time of restraint, there's no money — I think that's a little hard for them to accept. And it will be even harder for them to accept when they realize that the people who work for the ministers are all getting substantial increases in their salary.

Now you can explain it by: they work, and they're being promoted, or they're increments, or they're moving into new positions. But for the public and working people to realize that 80 per cent of them are getting increases through that method, it looks then, and it may be a perception, but it looks to the public at large that the government is using that method of reclassification merely to give increases.

Because in each of the minister's office, the job hasn't changed. The jobs simply don't change. And you may say they do, but I can guarantee you, you'll have a very difficult time proving that to the people who work in the department, who work as social workers and have massive case-loads and are being told that there's no money to increase their salaries, while you're saying the people who work in your office are working so much harder that they deserve a 16 or a 15 or a 12 per cent.

That is not fair. And you may stand and explain why it is fair, but I will tell you, you'll have a difficult time proving to the potash workers, and the nurses, and the teachers, that they should be taking zero per cent, when 80 or 90 per cent of the ministerial staff are getting massive increases.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well the member opposite was at one time minister of social services, and I'm sure he's quite familiar with how a minister's office works. There are various staff members in a minister's office, each who have individual responsibilities. And then, of course, there is a senior staff member who has overall responsibility for all of the staff in the minister's office.

And when you have a junior ministerial assistant who is working in one particular area and has responsibility only for certain items, and then that particular individual is promoted and now has responsibility for everything that occurs in the minister's office — in terms of the media, in terms of the department, in terms of the constituency, in terms of all of the secretarial responsibilities — then that particular person's responsibilities have likely doubled, if not tripled, and they have done so overnight. And that individual is very deserving of a promotional increase — very deserving.

In fact, to not give that person an increase would mean that the public of Saskatchewan would not be receiving the kind of service that they deserve. Because if they did not receive increases, in the same way that if principals did not receive increases in the public school system when they are promoted, or if a nurse does not receive an increase when she is promoted to become a nursing supervisor, those particular individuals would not do the quality of work that they, in fact, should be doing when they are promoted. When you are promoted, you receive a salary increase. That is what is fair. It was fair in your office; it is fair in my office; it's fair to the people of Saskatchewan.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well I think, Mr. Minister, what we're talking about is some people getting increments because of hard work and others in the province not getting increments or promotions because of hard work, and we're talking about 80 per cent of the people in ministerial staffs getting reclassified and getting increases. In the civil service you will know that 80 per cent of the social workers are not being reclassified and getting massive increases. And you may say that the people in your office are working harder than the social workers, or working harder than the people in group homes, but it just isn't accurate.

What we are talking about here is incentives. And you're saying that the people who work for you in your office need incentive of pay increases. And the minister of mineral resources will say that oil companies need massive increases in profits to have incentives. But at the same time, Mr. Minister, you're saying that teachers and nurses need no increase. Where's the incentive for them?

I know many individuals in my constituency who work indirectly for the government, through grants from the government, in hospitals, who are being told there's no increase regardless of how hard they work — and they all work very hard. I'm not arguing that your staff isn't working hard, but I'm saying that it isn't being spread all through the system. And yes, I gave my staff increases, but I also gave the people who worked as social workers in the department similar increases.

What I see here — and I'm not particularly talking about your department — but it's a trend in every ministerial office that we are getting those kind of increases. About 80 per cent of the ministerial staff are getting increases between 8 and 16 per cent. Now this isn't the norm throughout the working population in this province. And if it were, I would have no argument with it. If it was consistent with all working people in the province, I would not argue with you giving 16 per cent or an average, I believe, in your office of the permanent people who are there, of 8 per cent. That's the average increase of your permanent people.

For the minister in charge of crop insurance, his was 16 for one, 16.2 for another. And when the public see that, who are working out there and being told there's no money to have increases, I think they could be led to believe that if these kind of things weren't going on, if oil companies weren't making record profits, if ministerial staff weren't getting 16 per cent increases, if cabinet ministers weren't spending \$62,000 on travel . . . There's an inconsistency in this government that is showing up everywhere we look. For example, what is the incentive for a woman, age 63, who you classified as unemployed, single person, who is widowed, who had her welfare cut by 40 per cent? What is the incentive for that individual? And I say to you, Mr. Minister, and I don't want to be argumentative about this, but this is an unfair government.

We have . . . and I'll be asking you this question later. When you cut the welfare by 40 per cent, there were many women between the age of 55 and 65 who fell into the group of unemployed employable, who had lost their husband. And you determined that they were employable, and they had their welfare cut by 40 per cent.

And I say to you that in many areas your government does not look fair. And you may be able to defend it, but it's becoming ever increasingly difficult for the people to accept it.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I would reiterate the points that I made previously, and that is that fairness means that if someone has been working in an organization for a year, and there is an increment scale that means after that year that you get your increment increase, then you should get your increment increase.

And that's what happens to teachers. That's what happens to nurses. That's what happens in the classified service in the civil service. There are thousands and thousands of civil servants in the province of Saskatchewan who get their annual incremental increase. To say that they are not

getting that increase, to lead the public astray as you are doing, is not proper. They get an increase.

The two assistants in my office who have been there a year would get an incremental increase. Now if their responsibilities were substantially increased, then it is only natural that they should receive an increase for those duties.

That would have happened in your office. It would have happened in the Leader of the Opposition's office. It happens in this government. It happens in the NDP government in Manitoba. It happens right across the country. When people are promoted, they get increases. When they go from one year to another year, they get an incremental increase. That's the fact in the province of Saskatchewan — always has been, and I hope it always will be. People should be adequately and appropriately remunerated for the work that they do.

Now you seem to be suggesting that that shouldn't be the case. And I don't think that really is appropriate. Adequate, appropriate, fair remuneration is what I stand for. Certainly it's what this government stands for.

As it relates to collective bargaining, of course, that's an issue that is settled at the collective bargaining table — whether or not salary increases should be 14 per cent as they were for certain groups in 1982 or 1983, or 7 per cent, or 3.4 per cent with a 30-and-out clause for teachers last year. Those are all issues to be settled at the bargaining table.

And I understand that the bargaining is going on at present, and we believe in free collective bargaining. It is a very strong tenet of our salary position, and we expect that that is the best way to determine what are appropriate salaries in the province of Saskatchewan.

So to sum up, there are salary increases for civil servants, for teachers, for nurses. They are incremental increases. Happens to everyone.

When individuals receive a promotion . . . When I received a promotion from being a class-room teacher to being a principal of a school, I received a substantial increase. And that was only appropriate. When you received your promotion from being an MLA to being a cabinet minister, you received a substantial increase. That was appropriate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well some are saying it wasn't appropriate. Certainly that's what the law of the land said, and that was only fair. Your duties were increase; your salary should be increased. That's been the case in my office and I am more than willing to share that information with the public as I have with you tonight.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The minister will attempt to explain how 80 per cent of the political people in the office of the minister should get 16 per cent increases or 8 per cent increases, and that that is the norm throughout the civil service.

But I can guarantee you, Mr. Minister, that the people who read the debate of this Assembly will not be caught up in the hype of the majority government who defend the raises to their political staff at the same time as they're telling teachers in the budget speech that they should be expecting zero. That is clearly written into the budget speech, that teachers should expect zero per cent increase, and here we have determined that about 80 per cent of the political staff are getting between 8 and 16 per cent increase. And that simply isn't fair and I think that will not be seen to be fair by the working people of this province.

I want to turn now, Mr. Minister, to the issue of the move of legal aid from the Department of Justice to Social Services. And I wonder if you could outline the process by which that took place, whether there was a consultation team set up and how that transfer came about.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It was a process that was carried out through treasury board; I'm not a

member of treasury board. I met with the legal aid people prior to the transfer and had a very good meeting with the chairman and all of the board members, and see it as an appropriate move for all concerned.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And when you say an appropriate move for all concerned, what does that mean? What are the advantages of having the legal aid program in Social Services as opposed to in the Department of Justice?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well first of all, if I just might correct the terminology of the member, if I may. The legal aid commission is not in the Department of Social Services. It has always been an independent, arm's-length agency. It was when its appropriations were under the Justice budget. It continues to be that way today.

I think the transfer, the rationale for it, could best be summed up if I were to read some information to you.

The target group served by the legal aid commission is generally the same target group as that served by the majority of the programs in the Department of Social Services. Many of these programs require determination of eligibility, and this will now be possible on a more efficient and equitable basis. The transfer will facilitate the finalization of negotiations concerning the funding of civil legal aid by the Canada assistance plan. Administration of the Canada assistance plan is a Social Services responsibility.

In addition, because Social Services has more experience in the administration of federal-provincial cost-sharing programs — for example, the Canada assistance plan and the young offenders agreement — this department is in the best position to administer those particular kinds of agreements, likely.

With the implementation of the Young Offenders Act for 16- and 17-year-olds, effective April 1, '85, the legal aid commission will become extensively involved in the provision of legal services in Young Offenders Act cases. And since the primary responsibility for the delivery of young offenders programs is with Social Services, the transfer of legal aid will likely facilitate the co-ordination of related services.

In all jurisdictions the legal aid clinics operate as independent or quasi-independent programs, and this particular practice will of course be continued.

MRS. CASWELL: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I must admit I'm very concerned about legal aid being an arm of the Department of Social Services. Consistently long before you became a minister and you were part of government — and this is no reflection on your role as minister — but consistently the Department of Social Services has been perceived as a law unto themselves — a department that lacks the usual checks and balances that other departments have.

(20:00)

Many parents who may receive social services or in some way come into the contact with the department by being welfare recipients or having a neighbour report that their child may be abused, etc., etc., are very much afraid of the department and don't know where to turn in terms of knowing where to receive their . . . what they perceive as their legal rights in a country that they perceive that is free and where our courts are safe for the innocent.

And many of them have talked to me that they are frightened that legal aid is even financed by the government, and now that legal aid has become part of the Department of Social Services, the perception appears to be that there will be not . . . that the mother or father, who may be

going to legal aid to protect their family and themselves from an action of Department of Social Services, have to ask another employee of the Department of Social Services to defend them. And I think this clearly to them is perceived as a conflict of interest and does not give them confidence that their needs, their rights, will be addressed. And would you like to comment?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I would like to thank the member for the comments. On a couple of occasions she used the terms, “part of the Department of Social Services,” and “an arm of the Department of Social Services.” I would simply stress, Mr. Chairman, that the legal aid commission is not part of nor is it an arm of the Department of Social Services. It was not a part of the Department of Justice or an arm of the Department of Justice when the funding appropriation was different. It is not part of or an arm of the Department of Social Services at present. It is an independent, arm’s-length organization that delivers a very important service.

Our concern is that the people here in the province of Saskatchewan be provided the best possible services, whether they be legal services or social services or health services, and it was felt that this was an appropriate move to facilitate that.

MRS. CASWELL: — If you were a legal aid lawyer and you’re receiving your monthly cheque, what department issues that cheque?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member’s questions, the solicitors that are employed are employed not by the Department of Social Services; they are employed by the legal aid commission. They are paid by the legal aid commission. They are not paid by the Department of Social Services at all. They are governed by their own legal aid Act, not by The Department of Social Services Act, and of course they have their own professional Act which governs their professional behaviour as well.

MRS. CASWELL: — You’re a legal aid lawyer, or you wish to work for legal aid, how would you apply for a job?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The applications are advertised by the legal aid commission, and the applications are received by the legal aid commission themselves.

It has nothing to do with the Public Service Commission, or with the Department of Social Services. It’s an independent body, and I guess that’s a good example of its independence.

MRS. CASWELL: — If you are a welfare recipient and you have a dispute with the Department of Social Services over your own child, and you need a lawyer, who authorizes that you have a right to get legal aid assistance?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It’s the legal aid commission that gives authorization for legal aid services.

MRS. CASWELL: — There was a child abuse conference in Regina. And at the conference — it was, I believe, sponsored by the National Action Committee Status of Women, but there were many local people involved, and people who were involved in the Department of Social Services. They talked about the need to get over the judicial system in dealing with child abuse, and going into more child-centred law instead of justice-centred law.

In other words, it’s time we got . . . They were discussing it’s time we got over this idea of guilt and innocent, right and wrong, etc., etc., but that we must look in terms of what is best for the child. And therefore then they were talking about how therefore we must get over these ideas about rights and wrong, guilt and innocence of the parents, etc., and only think in terms of what is, what they called is best for the child, and apparently they would know what is best for the child.

They said it’s very important that we get the lawyers and the police and the social workers

thinking along the same lines, rather than being adversaries of each other. Now that may be very nice in terms of facilitating what they want to do to families of Saskatchewan. But for the parents of Saskatchewan, that is very frightening — if they know that if they have a dispute with a social worker, that there are moves to get lawyers and the police to think in those same lines and have the same philosophy as social workers. And the philosophy of a social worker may or may not be typical to what's accepted by other people, members of society. Many of us were very concerned about this philosophy because we saw it as an erosion of parental rights and the judicial system. And then we were, you might say, shocked when we heard the legal aid was in Department of Social Services, and we were very concerned that what we deemed as a dangerous synthesis was, in fact, taking place. Can you comment on this conference?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It's somewhat difficult for me to comment on possible comments that were made at a conference which I did not attend, other than to give a speech myself. I didn't hear those particular comments; I didn't read them in newspapers. I have heard second or third hand what some people may or may not have said at a particular conference. So I'm not going to comment on that.

I will say, however, that there are those people who believe that the potential for a conflict of interest was far greater when the legal aid commission was in fact funded under the old system, where the Department of Justice was responsible for the appropriation, and the Department of Justice may very well have been prosecuting certain cases at the same time which involved legal aid clients.

So I suppose one could always argue that there is a potential somewhere for a conflict of interest, and one will never be able to get away entirely, I suppose, from that kind of a potential, or perceived potential, existing. I think the fact that the commission has traditionally existed as an autonomous, independent organization; continues to do so; the present chairman has indicated that he sees no difficulty whatsoever; I think bodes well for the future, for the continued independence of the commission, and I think that it's a healthy move.

MRS. CASWELL: — I think the difference is that, of course, we know that a Crown prosecutor does prosecute parents for various reasons. But when it comes to the case where it may be abuse, as defined by the Criminal Code or whatever, then that abuse . . . then the parent immediately jumps into the category of being protected by the normal checks and a balance of justice, where one must establish innocence before you're proven guilty.

In the Department of Social Services under The Family Services Act, and I will continually address The Family Services Act as presently stands, that no such system, that the person is innocent till proven guilty, exists. It is assumed that those kind of . . . The whole law is based on the assumption that we can talk about reasonable probability, of vague terms of opinion and bias. And so we don't have . . . So I think this is where it is very frightening when we deal with the law, as under The Family Services Act, because a parent has no mechanism by which they can believe the normal fundamental justice system exists.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, if I just might briefly comment. That is one of the reasons why we are in the process of wanting to review and change the family services legislation in the province of Saskatchewan, because it does have some very significant deficiencies in terms of lacks in the way of checks and balances to ensure that fundamental justice and due process rights are in fact maintained and are strengthened. That is the reason why we have gone through the consultation process that we have.

That is why we will continue to go through that consultation process to ensure that eventually we do have a family services Act in the province of Saskatchewan that does provide appropriate checks and balances that you mention are presently lacking.

MRS. CASWELL: — I appreciate that you have seen fit to give people extra time to investigate

and review the proposed family service Act which was launched in the public on January 4th, 1985. But consistently as we are getting more and more critiques about that proposed family service Act, we are hearing one thing: that these issues have not been addressed; that more and more the parents are continued to be the victims of social workers' opinion.

I would just briefly quote from one brief that I just received today, and you will certainly be getting a copy if you haven't received it already.

Saskatchewan Association of Independent Church Schools:

We would propose that the entire child and family service Act is unacceptable, unamendable and should be discarded.

They are talking about the proposed when they talk about this.

We formally request to have input into the development of a social service Act that would enhance and maintain the family unit and would establish the Department of Social Services as a support mechanism to the family.

And it goes on to speak in very definitive terms how the checks and balance of fundamental justice are denied in the proposed family service Act. And so I think when we're talking about — we seem to agree with the problem. It seems to be, however, as long as we continue to go into the same system for the answers, we will start getting the same solutions.

And another one by The Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, and they were requested to do this because they have several lawyers on their organization. It continually talks of how the proposed family service Act violates fundamental justice.

(20:15)

And so I think I recommend and I heartily stress that we must give people time to investigate social services from the present social service Act, and to look and see what kind of legislation we need because obviously if we want to have something that addresses the issue of rights for the accused, the proposed family service Act is not going to do it consistent with the kind of reports we're getting.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, it's been my privilege to be involved in this process now for approximately a two-year period of time. During that time I have had the privilege of meeting with literally hundreds of individuals — many, many organizations and groups that have a variety of opinions about the changes that are needed to the present family services legislation: how best that legislation can be balanced to ensure that the rights of parents and families are upheld; at the same time, to ensure that children that are in need of protection do in fact receive that appropriate protection; to ensure that families that can benefit from assistance and that want assistance receive appropriate assistance.

It's been a very profitable experience for myself and for many, many other people in the province that have had to come to grips with some very fundamental issues relating to family services legislation.

Part of the process included striking a 15-member advisory council comprised of a variety of individuals from Saskatchewan who received over 100 briefs from individuals and organizations in the province, made over 150 recommendations. Based on those recommendations, we put forward proposals for consideration and analysis and review by the public.

I have received many, many responses to those proposals. There are some organizations and individuals who are very supportive of them, some who are supportive of some of the proposals

and not supportive of others, some who don't like the proposals at all. And that's what one would expect when you deal with a very complex and difficult issue such as family services legislation.

That's why the process has taken two years to date. And I'm sure that's why it will take a period of time yet before we come to that general consensus position which the vast majority of families in the province of Saskatchewan would say is reasonable and balanced and middle of the road, and is appropriate legislation for the province of Saskatchewan.

When I believe we have reached that particular point in time, I will make recommendations to my caucus colleagues and to my cabinet colleagues, and eventually there will be a Bill here in the legislature which will be debated. I'm sure that will take some time before that process is concluded.

MRS. CASWELL: — Mr. Minister, I think that the problem seems to be: we have created a necessary antithesis that the rights of parents are in contradiction to children being protected.

What we are precisely discussing is that parents are very concerned that their children are not being protected under the present and proposed family service Act. They believe that great psychological harm can be done by apprehending children. They believe that great psychological harm can be done by having children go into a foster home where they may or may not be treated worse than they are at present. They believe that a social worker interrogating children on the assumption that their parents are their enemy does a great deal of harm to the children.

And so when we continually pose the wrong question, we get the wrong answer. When we can say, how do we best protect children as well as give parents rights, we're missing the whole point because parents are asking for rights so that they can protect children. And I think this is why the people such as lawyer Ruth Pradzynski, who was on The Family Services Act, is saying the proposed legislation is unamendable and unacceptable, because it is on the assumption that the balance is between parental rights versus child protection where she sees that the parents must have the rights to protect their children, and she has not seen the children are protected by the kinds of actions of the Department of Social Services in many cases. And she has seen when bad decisions about children and family have been made.

In the Department of Social Services there is absolutely no mechanism by which parents can go to the courts, go to a board that is independent of Social Services and say, this is what happened to my child; this how an official abused my child, whether it was in good faith, or philosophical reasons, or whatever. And this is . . . I think my role in here is not to be an adversary to the minister, but my role here is to explain, as I was thought that after three years we no longer have to explain, that parents are not asking for the esoteric right to abuse their children. They're asking for the right to protect their children from state intervention. And until that issue is addressed, then clearly there will be no consensus in society of what kind of laws are needed.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite and I have had many opportunities to discuss these issues in the past, and I'm sure we will in the future. I thank her for her comments. Our goals are certainly the same. We want to have the best possible family services legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

MRS. CASWELL: — I have a few more things. I would just like to say in discussing . . . And I said at the beginning that we would not discuss the proposed family child and family service Act. And I would just like to add that some people are very concerned that that proposed legislation is being implemented by practice and philosophy in the department away from public debate. Now whether or not that is true, I just want to publicly say that the perception is there, and we are very concerned that all the public debate as to what policies are in the Department of Social Services want to be out in the public.

But I would like to read what we continually talk about, the charter, and some of us see the charter as a *bête noire* that may in fact take away some people's rights.

I think that it is very important that we have a mechanism by which people can protect their rights from government — not that I am anti-government, *per se*. Good government is necessary, but it is also necessary that people are protected from government, because government throughout history has been the biggest violators of human rights.

And so just in a brief skim through the present charter of rights, I would say that the proposed and present family services Act is a violation of the charter on these grounds.

On 8, that everyone . . . It violates that "everyone has a right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure"; and 11 (a), it violates that a person has a right "to be informed without unreasonable delay of the specific offence"; it violates a person has a right "to be tried within a reasonable time"; it violates "not to be compelled to be a witness in proceeding against that person in respect of the offence"; it violates "to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal"; it violates "if finally acquitted of the offence not to be tried for it again and, if finally found guilty and punished for the offence, not to be tried and punished for it again"; it violates "if found guilty of the offence and if the punishment for the offence has been varied between the time of commission and the time of sentencing, to the benefit of the lesser punishment"; and it violates, "Everyone has a right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment."

And I tend to think that disagreeing with the philosophy of a social worker, when that can mean the apprehension of your children, perhaps for life, is indeed a cruel and unusual punishment.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well I would simply reiterate, Mr. Chairman, we could spend a good deal of time here tonight talking about the charter of rights. We're here to talk about the appropriation for the Department of Social Services, in particular.

I'll be happy to discuss with the member, as I have in the past and will continue to do so in the future, as I reiterated a few moments ago, the full and detailed implications of any proposed changes, and eventually an Act for family services which will come to the department.

MR. YEW: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to ask the minister some statistics in terms of the total case-load for northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, could you give me the figures for northern Saskatchewan in terms of case-loads and total beneficiaries at present?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I can provide the member with the total number of cases in the northern region, but not the number of beneficiaries. We don't have that broken down by geographic region. The total number of cases in the northern region is 2,228.

MR. YEW: — Mr. Minister, could you . . . Do you have the percentage increase from a year ago, the statistics of a year ago?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It would just take a minute to check. I don't know that we have that comparative statistic with us. If we don't, we will get it to you as soon as possible in the future. But I don't believe we have it here. We have the statistic by province, but not by the northern region.

MR. YEW: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I noticed that in February 1982 we had 1,400

case-loads in northern Saskatchewan, and a year later that rose to 1,926. And more recently, as at February 1984, it rose by 50 per cent — rose from 1,926 case-loads up to 2,105. And at the present you quoted me 2,228 people that are now on welfare in northern Saskatchewan. That's been a steady increase, Mr. Minister. I'm sure that's a huge percentage in terms of how that figure has climbed.

I would like to ask the minister what . . . How many people do you have on staff administrating, responsible for administration of this program, the social assistance program in northern Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know that we have that detailed specific figure here. We could break that out for you. It would take some time to do that. I don't know if we could do that this evening.

MR. YEW: — If you can, Mr. Minister, I'd certainly like . . . certainly appreciate getting your total staff as at '82-83, compared to what it is today, '85-86. Seeing as how this is your fourth budget, I'm sure that that . . . I have had a number of concerns expressed to me that your staff is understaffed and overworked, and the concern has been expressed to me that they are restricted from providing and administrating fair and adequate services to the recipients receiving social assistance. Now, I'd like you perhaps to comment on that, and if I can get those figures that I raised, I'd sure appreciate them.

(20:30)

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Recognizing the factor of distance in northern Saskatchewan that comes into play, the case-load for workers in the northern part of the province is comparatively reasonable for the southern part of the province. We'll have to provide you with the statistics that you wanted at a later time, but we'll get those for you as soon as we can.

MR. YEW: — Mr. Minister, we'll wait for that information which you will be forwarding to me.

I have a concern here that's been raised several times over the course of the last few weeks, Mr. Minister. My colleague from Athabasca also raised it today during question period, not specifically, but I wish to raise it with you specifically in terms of the concern I'm referring to. But since the food transportation subsidy was lifted as at January of this year, Mr. Minister, can you tell me whether or not the social assistance program has increased for the five communities that were applicable under the fresh food freight subsidy program that we had in northern Saskatchewan? What I'm referring to would be . . . Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring to Wollaston Lake, Kinoosao, Stony Rapids, Black Lake, as well as Fond-du-Lac.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — We don't have any evidence that there's been an increase in case-load as a consequence of the particular decision that you're referring to, and the minister responsible for that decision responded to that in the House during question period today.

With regards to the matter to increases in social assistance payments, or was that what your question was directed towards? We have not increased social assistance payments in the province of Saskatchewan and, of course, we look at the province as a whole, generally speaking. Our rates for families for food and clothing are among the highest in Canada, if not the highest in Canada. So I think the levels of assistance that we are providing are, indeed, appropriate.

MR. YEW: — I really can't see the logic to that, Mr. Minister, and I simply can't understand the mentality of your administration and your government.

My colleague for Athabasca just expressed today during question period that the essential foods are required by anybody. And in this instance the remote, isolated communities in northern

Saskatchewan that were applicable for this food subsidy program — the \$250,000 that was cut, eliminated altogether — has created some hardships for the people in those communities I've mentioned.

The rates, the food prices have drastically increased in many of the small, local stores in northern Saskatchewan. It is harder for the families to make do with what little bit they have. There is no jobs in northern Saskatchewan. There is no opportunity for them to advance. And they're stuck with a heck of a lot less under your administration than they had with the former government.

And I just can't see the logic and the mentality of your administration, Mr. Minister, for stating that their assistance is adequate as it is. You know, you lifted that \$250,000 program that had supplemented their meagre allowance as it was. And now you state to me and to this Assembly that that is adequate, and I just can't see the logic and the mentality of that, Mr. Minister.

Your colleague, the member for P.A.-Duck Lake, or the minister for Indian and native affairs, suggested to my colleague from Athabasca that we should come up with alternatives. Well my colleague did try to provide an alternative, and that was to reinstate the food subsidy programs for those five communities. And I wonder what your position is in regards to that, Mr. Minister.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — That was a program that related to the Department of Health, and I'm sure the minister responsible will be happy to talk to you about the impacts of that particular program.

The minister responsible for northern Saskatchewan talked about deficiencies in that particular program and gave a rationale as to why it was changed. I will respond and would like to correct you with regards to the job creation initiatives.

Under the present Progressive Conservative government, the total number of jobs created for our Saskatchewan employment development program in northern Saskatchewan, '84-85, was a total of, I believe, 665 which was well above the per capita percentage that one might expect given the small population in the North. In fact, 31 per cent of the total number of jobs created under that program, just by my department alone, were in the constituencies of Athabasca, Cumberland, and Meadow Lake; so we have in fact put a very serious focus on those particular parts of the province. And I would be happy to talk about the other significant initiatives that the present Progressive Conservative government is taking in the North which were in fact not taken by the former government.

MR. YEW: — Mr. Minister, I certainly welcome any economic development initiatives undertaken by any administration. And I'm sure that people throughout the province would welcome any type of initiative.

But the facts speak for themselves, Mr. Minister. The figures that I have in front of me by Statistics Canada indicate to me, and I'll just read them out to you, that in February of 1982, we had 1,400 people under welfare. And under your administration that rose to 1,926 in '83, and in '84 that rose again to 2,105. And now you just stated to me that in '85 and '86 the figure now has risen to 2,228 welfare case-loads, not mentioned total beneficiaries. I'm sure that there's a drastic figure as well in that area. Now those figures indicate to me, Mr. Minister, that your government has failed to provide a self-sufficient economic strategy for people in northern Saskatchewan.

You colleague, the member from Meadow Lake, suggested on a July 17th memo back in '82 when they dismantled DNS (department of northern Saskatchewan) that they were going to provide an alternative for dismantling government services in northern Saskatchewan, that they were going to provide a self-sufficient economic strategy. But where are people in northern Saskatchewan . . . It's three and a half years since you took administration or since you took office, and the figures are continuously rising in terms of welfare dependency. The figures are

continuously rising in terms of unemployment in northern Saskatchewan, and many of the communities that I'm referring to, there's unemployment as high as 95.

You were in La Ronge not too long ago, Mr. Minister, and you saw yourself that there was dire concern expressed and raised by many of the people in those areas. Unfortunately you weren't able to understand many of the Cree presentations that were questions that were raised.

But the concern is there, Mr. Minister, and the responsibility is yours to see that those figures are chopped down, see that there is some employment, training, and employment in those areas. You're responsible, not only for the southern half of this province, but you're also responsible for the top half of this province. Your administration talked about bringing the North into the mainstream of society, the mainstream of Saskatchewan. You were going to lift the jack pine curtain, or the buckskin curtain, or whatever. But seeing the figures in front of me indicates to me that your administration has totally failed in terms of providing adequate, fair, appropriate services to the people living in the top half of this province, people living in northern Saskatchewan.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well I would just remind the member opposite that in the province of Saskatchewan we have had the lowest unemployment for the last three years. And certainly the initiatives of the Progressive Conservative government have borne fruit in this province, and I expect that we will continue to lead the way in the future.

We all know that right across Canada unemployment is a serious issue in the northern parts. That is why we are taking the initiatives that I just mentioned recently in terms of job creation. And I can only add, Mr. Chairman, that I'm sorry the member opposite was not here in the House when the minister in charge of the newly formed Employment Development Agency was able to share the initiatives that his particular department is responsible for. I understand you were also not here when the minister in charge of Advanced Education was here talking about the various initiatives for training that were taking place, or the Minister for Small Business when he talked about the various initiatives that were taking place in northern Saskatchewan.

Likely there are more forward-looking initiatives today than there ever have been before. So while there certainly are problems that all governments across Canada are addressing, I think that the province of Saskatchewan as a province, taking a look at the entire scheme of things, is leading the way and will continue to lead the way.

MR. YEW: — Mr. Minister, you continuously talk about initiatives that have been undertaken by your administration. Could you specify for me, and for this Assembly, what initiatives you are talking about in more detail? What projects, what communities, and total amount of people employed?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, we're dealing with Social Service estimates. Had you been here when the minister responsible for small business, or Education, or Advanced Education, or employment, or the Employment Development Agency, or Economic Development and Trade had been here — they gave the specific initiatives. They gave the specific initiatives.

I would simply remind you and the public that the position of your party is to close down the uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan and throw hundreds of people out of work — the most sensible economic strategy that I have ever heard in a long time. Makes a lot of sense, doesn't it — to close down the uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan and throw literally hundreds of people out of work? That's not an initiative that makes sense in my estimation.

MR. YEW: — Okay. You, Mr. Minister, discuss continuously the initiatives undertaken by your department, and that is the specific information that I'm trying to get out of you. I noted in your estimates that you have \$11 million earmarked from some training and short-term employment. That is the area that I'm referring to. Can you tell me more specifically the number of people that

you have employed under this program and what type of projects have been undertaken for the people in northern Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I don't have specific examples of the actual businesses by name, or the municipalities by name, or the non-profit organizations by name, that were involved in providing work for social assistance clients in northern Saskatchewan. But the Saskatchewan Employment Development Program was put in place in order that the small-business community, the non-profit organizations, and the municipal organizations in the province — and that of course includes northern Saskatchewan — could, in fact, provide employment for recipients of social assistance.

I indicated that that was, in fact, done in the province and that 31 per cent of the total jobs under that program were in the three northern constituencies that I just mentioned.

MR. YEW: — Well the minister couldn't very well provide me with figures, statistics in terms of where those actual employments took place, which communities and which agencies or business entrepreneurs or business areas, but I would certainly appreciate getting that information later, Mr. Minister. If that is possible that would be extremely helpful, as time progresses here, to try and analyse or assess the type of programs and initiatives that your administration has been providing.

(20:45)

I would like to go on now, Mr. Minister, and ask you in terms of day care: I notice that you have no increase whatsoever in terms of day care from the last fiscal year to the present. If at all your administration has earmarked any program allotments, funding allotments for this particular program for northern Saskatchewan, and if there's any increase for the North, could you provide me with that figure?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, we're presently spending a fairly substantial amount of the taxpayers' money in northern Saskatchewan on day care. My understanding is that there are no organizations at present that have applied from the northern regions to establish new day care facilities. Perhaps if the member is aware of a particular group or organization that's interested, he could forward that information to me.

Certainly our government has taken a variety of initiatives to meet the social service needs in northern Saskatchewan. I could just give you some examples, and then provide you with more detailed information later. For example, \$63,000 for the Dene Kwan self-help council in La Loche to establish a family support centre; first-time funding of \$38,000 to the La Ronge native women's family crisis centre — recently the news was made public that there will be an expansion of that particular facility in northern Saskatchewan, something that they've been asking for for some time; providing first-time funding to the Buffalo Narrows native women to establish a family worker program; provided start-up and operating funding of over \$200,000 for the Alex Bishop child care centre. There are a variety of initiatives that have taken place over the last year which have been very positive to the people of northern Saskatchewan.

MR. YEW: — I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you have received any inquiries or submissions by the Sandy Bay group home, boys' group home at Sandy Bay; and also by a group called Woscottaga group (Kinoosau Sapi Cultural Survival Camp) from Lower Foster Lake, Mr. Minister?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Would the member please repeat the name of the last location for me?

MR. YEW: — It's a group organized by La Ronge. They're proposing to build a home for children at Lower Foster Lake, and the name is Woscottaga Association.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I'm not aware of the interests of this particular organization at Lower

Foster Lake, but if you would like to advocate on their behalf, I certainly would be more than willing to listen to their concerns if you would voice them to me at a later date. And perhaps they would want to make a formal presentation to us.

With regards to the Sandy Bay organization, I'm pleased to say that through the joint efforts of the community board there, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, and my department, that work is progressing on the replacement of the group home facility at Sandy Bay, and indications are that the new facility will be opening this summer.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I'd asked you about some day care data on where the subsidy cut out for a family with one child earning \$35,000. Would they be eligible for the subsidy or not? And you said you were working out two or three examples for me. Can you give them to me now?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — We'll take a couple of scenarios here. At a salary of \$30,000 in a family of three children, average fees would be in the range of \$810 a month, average subsidy would be \$525, so the cost to the parent of the \$30,000 salary would be \$285 a month, total.

If we had a family earning \$35,000, which I expect would be substantially in excess of the average family income, not only in Canada, but in our province, there would be no subsidy available for that particular family if they're earning \$35,000, which would likely be, you know, above average income.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — So then the cut-off line is somewhere between 30 and 35,000, and when you're talking about the 35,000, I assume you're meaning with one child, as opposed to three?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The cut-off, of course, depends on the number of children in the family, but in the particular case that I was talking about I was referring to a family with one child, 35,000 income.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, I just . . . I'm not going to dwell a long time on that point, but I would say again that it seems to me that there seems to be a problem for the middle income group, and we have here a family with one child with a combined income of 35,000, which is not a high income, and I don't know where the subsidy would kick in, whether it would be 30,000 with one child, or 29, or 28.

Can you tell me at what level they run out of the subsidy, and at what income they would get full subsidy? I just want to get that scale. Where would the subsidy run out for a family with one child, and where would they get the maximum or the full subsidy?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I don't have the actual cut-off figure here for you, but the maximum subsidy per child, regardless of the number of children, would be available to someone earning approximately 18,000 or less. Once you exceed 18,000, then the subsidy of a maximum of \$235 a month per child begins to scale down. And of course, that depends on your gross salary, on the number of children that are in the family, and upon the fee charged by the provider, of course, as well.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Would you get for me the number of where it cut out for the family with one child? Can you give me that? Can you get somebody to get that for me because I need that one number?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — At about \$30,000 and a fee of about \$240 a month, the subsidy would be completely relaxed; there would be none there.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And so then an individual earning 25,000 with one child, what would they be getting in subsidy — \$50, \$60? What would be that number?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — They would get \$135 a month. Did the member hear that? A hundred and thirty-five dollars a month subsidy.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Okay, I'll get off that point. And I'll just once again reiterate that I would encourage you, although I know that you are opposed to the implementation of maintenance grants, that you would reconsider and re-evaluate where we're coming from on day care because it's important, I think, to the family structure in this day and age that a high quality, affordable day care, and accessible to all families, is something that we should not only strive for, but should insist on.

And I don't think that that is the case right now in Saskatchewan. I think that, in particular, the middle group between 25 and \$40,000, that there's a gap in there where we have a problem. And I think maintenance grants would go a long way to solving it because it would mean that the rates that day care charge to the families could be reduced.

I have another question here, Mr. Minister, and it has to do with a group known as the Ad Hoc Committee to Protect Families. I wonder if that group has approached you for funding, and what your response has been.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The name is a name of an organization . . . I'm not all that familiar with that particular name. If you can give me names or places. My department has not received an official request for funds from that particular organization.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Could the minister tell me whether or not he has met with this group and whether informal discussion have taken place in terms of funding and recognition by the department?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well you're going to have to be more specific in defining the group that you're referring to. There are a lot of groups in the province of Saskatchewan, and many of them have the word "family" attached to them. So if you can be more specific, perhaps I can be more specific in my response.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The official name of the group, as I understand it, is the "Ad Hoc Group to Protect the Family." And what I'm asking you is whether or not you've met with a group by that name, and whether or not they've asked you for funding, and what your response has been?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I have met with many organizations and many individuals. You're going to have to give me the principals that are involved in that particular group because the name does not ring a bell with me. But if you could give me names of individuals, I could indicate to you whether I have met with those individuals. I don't recall meeting formally with a group under that title.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I believe the group — and I'm not totally familiar with it, and I don't have a list of what their criteria are, or what their mandate is, or the structure of the group — but as I understand it, it is a group that has met with you dealing with certain sections of the new, proposed family services Act. And I would ask you whether or not that would help you along in whether that group has met with you.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I've met with a lot of groups and a lot of individuals pertaining to the proposals under the family services legislation. You're going to have to give me names of individuals before I'm going to be able to supply you with a more specific answer.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well we'll leave it at that, Mr. Minister. I'm not sure why you don't know them. I think that you have met with them, but I'll just leave it at that.

The other point that I want to raise with you, Mr. Minister, is the number of dollars that we're spending on welfare in the province at this time. I think, if you're to look at the figures that we are now spending on social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan, the estimate is now close to \$200 million, or \$192.895 million. Mr. Minister, at what level of welfare in the province was that estimate based on?

(21:00)

You will now that, in the past couple of months, the total number of families and dependants on welfare have been fluctuating around 64,000. Can you indicate how many families you are planning on? What would be the number that you would expect to be on welfare during the coming year?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I believe the forecast is 31.1 — 31,100 is the estimate case-load used for forecasting for budgetary purposes. Did you get that figure? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 31,100 case-load figure.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The number that I'm referring to is the families — that's the 31,000 in dependants which is now at 64,000, and as I understand it what you're saying is: you're anticipating a levelling off, that the drastic increase that we've seen sine 1982 will now end, and will be at a plateau that will stay at 64,000, including dependants?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — We based the projection on cases and case costs, not the numbers of dependants or the number of beneficiaries.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, when you say 31,000, is that present level?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — As of March '85, I believe it was 31,572.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — So then the drastic increase in the number of people on welfare that we've seen in the last two years, under your government, we're anticipating that it will not go down but will basically stay the same. Is that the prediction that you would be making now: that the record number of people we have on welfare will not change, and that we will see the welfare numbers in this province stay about the same, where we have 64,000 people — families and their dependants — depending on your department and the government of the province for their total income?

And the reason I bring this up, Mr. Minister, is because during the time that . . . Before you were in government, the argument was that the number of people on welfare in the province was too high at 40 or 42,000, and I agree that that number, in itself, is alarming enough. But what has happened sine your government took over is that number has gone from 45,000 to 64,000, or an increase of 40 or 50 per cent. We have seen, in particular, the number of people who are in the group of unemployed employables change very drastically — people who are able to work, but unable to find jobs, has gone up by well over 100 per cent.

And the total number of dollars being spent on welfare has increased from an estimate of 106 million in 1982, to 198 million in 1985, or almost a doubling of the amount of money we're paying out in welfare.

And Mr. Minister, you will know how costly this is for the people of the province. First of all, in terms of dollars, it's obvious \$100 million plus interest is a lot of money. But the human tragedy associated with families unable to find work, in particular young families, is devastating.

Family abuse, alcoholism, family violence, suicide — all of these things that are associated with people out of work. I wonder whether or not your government has a strategy to bring the unemployment rate in this province down to the level it was when you took office?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the question perhaps should be more appropriately placed to the members who are responsible for such portfolios — such as Economic Development, and the Employment Development Agency, and the minister responsible for Small Business, and for Education and Advanced Education.

I will, however, say that in my department, we take very seriously our responsibility to provide people on assistance with as many opportunities as possible to, in fact, become independent, to become self-supporting and self-sustaining. And that's why we have implemented the wide array of productive opportunities that we have during the past two years, which include hundreds of training and education and job preparation experiences for welfare clients in the province of Saskatchewan. Something which was not done previously, I might add.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The minister will know that under the heading of Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, you just have the one broad number of 192 million. You will know that previous to your coming to office, the public assistance subitem was broken down into aged, ill-health, single parents, unemployed employables, insufficient employment income, so that the committee could see exactly where the money was being spent.

What I would like from you, and I'm sure that the members of your staff would have it, but is a breakdown of the \$192 million into those categories. Have you got those numbers, and will you give them to me now?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Because we budget on a cost-per-case and a macro number, and because we no longer classify cases according to the criteria that you just talked about, we don't have that information here.

I will try and break out for you, and we won't be able to do that this evening, but as soon as possible I'll get that to you, the data according to our present criteria system.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The other thing that I would like to know, Mr. Minister, is in your welfare reform, or the process whereby you cut the welfare for a number of individuals by 40 per cent, the group that I'm interested in are the women between — single women who are classed as unemployed employables, between the age of 55 and 65. Can you tell me how many of those people were affected by the cut of 40 per cent?

The reason I want to know that is I've had probably 10 women, who are widows in my constituency, come to me and tell me very clearly that the cut-back that you made in that area has made it almost impossible for them to buy food to put on the table, and clothes to wear, and have a house to live in. And I wonder whether or not the criteria of your department in classifying that group of people as employable, unemployed employables, is wrong-headed, because we have a large group of people in that area, and not only female, but single males as well, who are not able to find jobs. They are not employable, not because they are not able to work but because no one is hiring. And I wonder whether or not you can give me a number of people who would fit into that group?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Generally speaking, Mr. Chairman, women in the age category that you referred to are not classified as single employable individuals, so I am somewhat surprised that you would talk about that particular number of clients in your constituency.

I'm more surprised that you would have not have come to me during the period of a year and talk to me specifically about those particular cases, because I'm very interested in whether or not there are elderly people who, in fact, do not have adequate income; that's the reason why we increased the Saskatchewan Income Plan by 100 per cent for low income seniors last year. So if you would be willing, you know if you would be willing to provide me with detailed information on those particular cases that you're referring to, be certainly more than willing to look into them.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, Mr. Minister, I have been able to solve most of the problems simply by going to the social workers in Swift Current who have been good enough to alleviate the problem that you have caused. But what I worry about is that there are many people out there who are not able, for one reason or another, to get to yourself or to me — who simply have taken the 40 per cent cut and are not saying anything. And I find it hard to believe that you haven't heard that there is a problem out there of those people who had a 40 per cent cut in their income, at the same time as you're defending 15 per cent increases for your personal staff because they need an incentive.

On the other hand you're saying that the people at the bottom need an incentive of 40 per cent cut. And I guess the . . . What is hard for the people of the province to understand is this whole thing about incentives that the Conservative party believes in.

That oil companies need massive increases as an incentive . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. That political staff, that political staff need massive increases. But when it comes to people who are poor, their incentive is a 40 per cent cut. That's their incentive. And Mr. Minister, I think that it's difficult for the people of Saskatchewan who aren't used to this kind of thing, where the people at bottom have incentives of cut backs and the people at the top have incentives of increases.

But that — it's Tory policy, I understand that. And when we elect radical right-wing governments, we should expect that.

But I think, Mr. Minister, you would agree that the church groups, the *Prairie Messenger*, and the many church groups who have come to you, are having a difficult time accepting that the people who are poor need a cut-back of 40 per cent as an incentive to make them work, and others, who are rich, need an incentive of 40 per cent increase in income to make them work. That doesn't add up.

And Mr. Minister, I think that you should explain to the people of the province that fairness has nothing to do with the mandate of this government.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, fairness has everything to do with the mandate of this government. And that's the point that you seem to miss. That's the point that you seem to miss.

Let's talk about incentives for a minute. Let's talk about incentives for a minute. What was the NDP incentive to get people off of welfare? How much of an incentive was it for a single employable to provide them with welfare, almost the equivalent of minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan? What kind of an incentive?

When I went around the province and talked to the people in my riding and talked to the people in the province of Saskatchewan, they said single employables are getting too much in the province of Saskatchewan. What they need are opportunities for training and education. That's what they need. That's what they need. And the response that I have received from the people that have been involved in that has been very, very positive.

Training and education and job preparation experiences is exactly what they want. That wasn't available to them before. It is available to them now.

And let's talk about incentives as it relates to the oil patch and tie it into welfare. Because under your government, the oil patch was stale. It was stagnant. In fact the oil companies and the oil rigs were leaving the province. Now that was really some help for those people that were on social assistance in terms of providing them with job opportunities and job possibilities, wasn't it? I mean when the rigs are going into Alberta and when the rigs are going into North Dakota, that really helps the social assistance recipient in the province of Saskatchewan. That does

absolutely nothing for them.

Well today we have got two to 300 oil companies drilling in the province of Saskatchewan for oil and gas. There are thousands of jobs that have been created. There are thousands of families that benefited from that. And you can't tell me that that hasn't been a benefit to the people of Saskatchewan in terms of providing them with opportunities that would not have been there before. That's an incentive. That wasn't there before. Training and education is an incentive. That wasn't there before. That is sound social policy.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, can you outline for me the cost-saving you have made in social assistance in this province? Can you tell me what was paid out in the last year, seeing as you want to talk about the NDP administration and the chairman allows you to? What was paid out in the last year that we were in government, and what are you estimating this year? I would just like to get that straight.

You are saying that under the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan you have done a great service to the people by saving them money. Now what I want to know from you, sir, is clearly what was paid out in the last full year we were in government and what you plan to pay out this year. I would just like to see how much you're saving the people of the province.

(21:15)

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well if the member from Quill Lakes would relax, I would be happy to provide it to him. The first full year that this administration was in power, and I think we should take a look at that particular year, because the previous year was under your budget and your particular policies, and we were living, of course, with part of that for part of our year. So we'll take a look at '82-83, which was the first full year, and that was \$151 million, '85-86 the estimate is \$192 million.

Now I would remind the member opposite of a number of very important considerations. We, of course, increased the social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan in October of 1983. We increased the social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan in October of 1983. So you have to factor that in to the increased amount of assistance that you're paying. All right? And that of course is significant.

In addition you have to take into account that when your administration was in power, the population of Saskatchewan was static. Indeed people were leaving the province of Saskatchewan. And if the member wants to brag about an unemployment rate which was not necessarily the lowest in the province of Saskatchewan, and brag about an unemployment rate when people were leaving the province of Saskatchewan, then it's no wonder, then it's no wonder, then it's no wonder that you're going to have lower costs.

Today, Mr. Chairman, today people are coming to the province of Saskatchewan. The population is increasing and is increasing significantly. We know that, because the economic climate in Saskatchewan is a very positive climate in comparison to the rest of the province. We know that, because our social assistance rates are higher here in the province of Saskatchewan. We have attracted people to the province of Saskatchewan, and we have also attracted social assistance recipients to the province of Saskatchewan. We know that as a fact.

So when you take into consideration the higher welfare rates that we are paying now than were paid previously, when you take into consideration the fact that people have come to the province of Saskatchewan — and under the former administration they were leaving the province of Saskatchewan — one would expect that there's going to be a higher pay-out under your social assistance blue book figure.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I asked you very clearly for the last full year that the NDP

were in government, which you referred to, and I would like you to give me that number.

What was the total amount of welfare payments the last full year the NDP were in government? You referred to it as being extremely high, and I would like you to give me that number. The last full year the NDP were in government, what was it?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The key figure is what your administration estimated was going to be spent. The key figure was what your administration estimated was going to be spent in the last budget that you brought down prior to the election. All right, okay. We don't have that here.

AN HON. MEMBER: — I have it.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well then maybe you'd be happy enough to tell the administration. The figure that I quoted for 1982-83 that this administration spent was 151 million.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I will ask you one more time. In the last full year that you refer to that the NDP were in, you said it was a very high number. Now I know why you're avoiding answering the question, and I will tell you because you seem too dense to know. But in the last full year that we were in government the number was 89 million. Now you can write that down if you can't understand it, but we paid out in welfare 89 million in 1981.

You are estimating this year to pay out \$198 million, Mr. Minister, an increase of over \$100 million. Over a 100 per cent increase, and you are bragging about the job that you have done as minister in lowering the number of people on welfare. The number of people on welfare has gone from 44,000 to 64,000. Now how do you brag that you have done such a great job? Because I can tell you that it's costing the taxpayers of the province an additional \$110-odd million to pay for the blunders and the lack of job creation by your government.

And so you can carry on and say what a great job you're doing, but it simply isn't accurate. And, Mr. Minister, when you're giving answers in this committee, I wish that you would try to be a little more accurate.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well, I would remind the member that the key figure was what your administration expected you were going to spend, all right? But if you want to go back one year beyond that, and go way back into the past, that's fine. Your administration lives in the past. All right?

Your estimated figure, your estimated figure, your estimated figure was 89 million. That was your estimated figure. What was spent was 105 million. Oh, okay? A 15 per cent increase over what you expected you were going to spend. Right? The estimated increase this year over last year — \$4 million, \$4 million. So here we are in 1985-86 expecting an estimated increase of \$4 million. And six years ago your increase was in fact a 15 per cent increase over what you expected you were going to pay . . . (inaudible) . . . So if you want to play with statistics, anybody can play with statistics.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, you have just made the point. In our last year the estimate was 89 million, we spent 105. Use your number, 105 million. You are this year saying you are going to spend 198. So let's accept it. We spent 105, you are spending 198, an increase of 90 per cent. Now those are the simple facts. You have increased the amounts spent on welfare by 90 per cent. So I think that one would question whether or not you have done a great job of creating employment in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I would say to you, Mr. Minister, when you say about the population dropping in the years we were in power, there was an increase in population in 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 — every one of those years there was a population increase. And for you to try to make the Assembly believe that here was a population drop from '75 to '81 simply is misleading the

Assembly. You're simply not telling the whole story because if you have any statistics you will know that the population was growing during that period.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, I'm more than pleased to remind the Assembly that under that administration, under the CCF, and then under the NDP, the population of the province of Saskatchewan stayed virtually static for almost 40 years. For almost 40 years. You had 40 years to reach the one million plateau — 40 years. And you crawled, and you scraped, and you never got close — 40 years. Where did everybody go during those 40 years? Where did they go?

Where did they go? I suspect they went the same place that the oil companies and the oil rigs went when the oil patch was shut in under the NDP. I wouldn't brag about your population record if I were you; it didn't go very far. It didn't go very far.

Last year in the province of Saskatchewan the population, under a Progressive Conservative government, increased substantially — the only province in western Canada to experience such an increase. The province of Saskatchewan has consistently had the lowest unemployment record of any province in Canada over the last three years. The cities of Regina and Saskatoon have had the best job creation records of any major western Canadian cities, and the third and fourth best job creation records of any cities in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Why is it that people are saying Saskatchewan is the place to be? Why is it that people are saying Saskatchewan is leading the way for the rest of Canada? It's because of the policies of this Progressive Conservative government.

And I fear greatly what would happen to this province — and I know my neighbours and my friends and my colleagues fear greatly what would happen to this province — if every the stifling policies of the NDP were to be prevalent in this country again. This province would once again be driving people away, and you know why they would be driving people away.

(21:30)

They would be driving people away because the uranium mines would be shut down. The Leader of the Opposition, his party wants to shut down the uranium mines. That's sound economic policy. He wants to shut down the incentives in the oil patch. That's sound economic policy. Nothing, nothing could be worse for the economic and social future of the province of Saskatchewan than an NDP government.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — If the member believes all that, maybe he could convince the Premier to call a by-election in Regina North East.

But Mr. Minister, when you mentioned about how many of the families in your constituency were fearful of an NDP government, there was a great burst of laughter out there in TV land because one of the things in Regina that people want the most is to get rid of this government. You know that, and that is why, out in your constituency, the people who might be watching tonight are laughing when you get up and say how well you're doing in Regina North West, or in Regina Rosemont, because in that constituency, sir, you are in a great deal of difficulty.

And I want to tell you that if you believe that there should be an election in Regina, try to convince the member from Estevan that you need a by-election here to fill the vacancy that has been there for a couple of months. And the reason that you won't call a by-election is because you're very fearful of losing the by-election.

Now Mr. Chairman, you will know that the minister talked about elections and talked about how well things were going for the Conservatives. But I can tell you that in Regina and in your own

constituency that you are talking very brave in this Assembly. But I want to tell you that, having gone out in your constituency and spoken a couple of times, that you'll have a difficult time winning the next election.

Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I want to ask you a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order, order. That means order for all members, government and opposition. We have to have a little more order. I can't really tell if the debate is on the topic because I can't hear it. So could we have a little more order, please?

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Excellent rule, Mr. Chairman, and I would just ask the minister on another topic if he can give us an idea when the new family services Act will be before the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. Caution the government members to come to order, and try not to disrupt the debate. It's getting out of hand here.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I wonder if the minister can give us an indication when the new family services Act will be brought before the legislature. Do you think that it will be ready to bring in this session, or will it be next fall? Can you give us an indication when that might happen?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It won't be before the Assembly this particular session. There is still considerable work and consultation to be done. It's possible this fall or in the spring of the following year. It's difficult to give an estimate of the time frame at this point in time.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I was interested in one of the comments of the member for Rosemont having to do with the estimate of Sask Assistance Plan payments, and the actual in the following year.

He was somewhat critical of the fact that there was an overrun in one of the years to which you referred. And I noted that in 1984-1985 he had estimated the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan at \$162 million, and I would ask him to tell the House what, in fact, he spent in the year ended March 31st, 1985.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Mr. Chairman, in view of the unanticipated drought in 1984, which, of course, hit Saskatchewan with a vengeance; and in view of the fact that shelter costs increased by about 13 per cent, '84 over '83; and in view of the unusually cold winter weather, the long winter, which impacts upon utility rate costs. The expenditures were about 188 million, which was an increase of about 26 million over the actual estimate.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I think that is . . . We heard a long litany of excuses, but what we have is an estimate of 162 and an expenditure of — did he say 188? — 188 million? And that I think will indicate that there's a certain amount of elasticity — some might say fiction, but let's call it elasticity — in the figure that is there.

How confident is the minister that \$192 million will be the amount spent in the current year? Are you expecting further overruns? Are you expecting the hot summer, or alternatively the cool summer, to increase your costs? Or are you expecting that winter will come and that will increase your costs? Are there any reasons to believe that the \$192 million may suffer an overrun?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — Well, as the member opposite knows, forecasting in this business is a difficult science. If I could predict that there was not going to be a drought next year — and of course, we hope that there will not be a drought next year; if I could predict that there was going to be a four month or a three and a half month long winter, instead of a six or a six and a half month long winter, than we could provide you, likely, with a greater degree of assurance or confidence that, in fact, our estimate for expenditures will, in fact, be the actual expenditures.

But based on the fact that the case-load has levelled off, and we are going through the normal ups and downs of the annual cycle, and, not anticipating a drought and not anticipating a long or extreme, abnormally severe winter, we would expect that the expenditures would be close to the estimates.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Item 5

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not clear whether we're voting what you're saying, or what's in the book. When you're saying rehabilitation services, 22 million, is that the vote, or is the vote \$22,879,840? I don't mean to be difficult, but I'm just asking you, Mr. Chairman, what you're asserting is being voted?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — We are voting what's in the vote, and there's been a practice at times not to call any figures at all. I think since these proceedings are published, the public should have some indication of what's being spent so that we're not frivolous with these sums. And so, if the member wishes, I can read them to the exact cent. Otherwise I will approximate them to the nearest million dollars.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I'm not aware of the exact cent. So just to take you up on your offer, would you read the rehabilitation services to the exact cent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Fine, that's not difficult.

Item 5 agreed to.

Item 6

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, if I may make a suggestion. If you would read the heavy blacks without the breakdown into personal and other expenses, that would be satisfactory so far as I was concerned.

Item 6 agreed to.

Items 7 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

Item 16

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if on the family income plan, if you can indicate the number of families over the last three budgets — the number of families that there were in this year that you're estimating to be on the family income plan, and for the two previous years. Is that number going up or down? I would like to get that number from you.

(21:45)

HON. MR. DIRKS: — We estimate the following year's case-load on the previous year's actual, and because there is virtually no difference between the years, we anticipate that this would be the appropriate sum that would be spent. You will recall that last year there was a 10 per cent increase in the FIP allowances.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I guess what I would point out to you here is that at a time when you're referring to the massive drought that we had last year as a reason for — at least in

part, I think is what you were trying to say — the increase in the Sask Assistance Plan that it would seem strange that if the program were being run fairly, that you wouldn't find a large number of low income farmers who would fall onto the family income plan.

Now I think I understand why that isn't happening. Because of their asset level, the value that you limit or place on their land, that even though their income has dropped substantially, there are a good number of farm families who could use the family income plan but are being excluded because their asset level is too high.

And what I would like to know is: how does that formula work? Is it based on the assessment of the land, and has that assessment, or the multiplier factor on the assessment of their land, has that been changed in the last two years?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — It's always been based on the market value of the land, and continues to be so today.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — And Mr. Minister, the market value of land, who decides in a given area what the market value of the land is?

HON. MR. DIRKS: — The municipal secretary-treasurers or the Department of Agriculture would be used to assist in those determinations as it always has been.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, can you give more detail as to . . . When you say the R.M. secretary or whatever, what would that have to do with it? Would you go there and get some recent sales and then use an average? It's my understanding that they have a factor, and I could go to my office and get a letter from the . . . I could a letter from your regional office, and I believe it was in Swift Current, where they used a number, a factor, times the assessment of the land came up with the value of the land based on so many times the assessment.

Now you may be saying you're doing something different. But it's my understanding that they have a 20 or 25 or 30 times the assessment of the land to determine the value. And this may be different in different areas of the province. And I'm not complaining about it. I just would like you to outline very clearly for me how you arrive at what a quarter of land is worth, for example, in the Swift Current area.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — For the member opposite, the client in question would put an assessment on their own land and then, of course, would make the application. Centrally, the determination would be made by applying a formula — which I don't have here and, not being a farmer, which I wouldn't understand anyway — to that particular assessment, to determine whether or not it would be appropriate. But I'll certainly get you that detailed information as soon as we can.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, if I could, I think the way the process works is: if a quarter section of land is assessed at \$2,800 or \$3,000 — use 3,000 for example — they use a factor of 30 times the assessment to arrive at \$90,000 a quarter. And that factor of 30 is what I'm referring to. And in some areas you will know that, as the land prices went up, that factor went from 15 to 20 to 25, and is now at 30.

But what has happened in the last two years is the price of land has dropped considerably, but your factor of 30 in the family income plan has remained a constant. And as a result, a large number of people have land assessed, according to your formula, much above what it is in the real world, as a result of the recession that farmers now find themselves in. And therefore, they're unavailable for the family income plan as a result of your formula.

And if you're not aware of it, it's fine. But what I would like you to give me a guarantee is that you'll check into it. And I will pass the letter that I have from an individual, because his land is being assessed at something like \$90,000 as a result of your formula, when there's no way in the

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world that it's worth any more than 60 or 65. And I think it's basically a result of the formula not being kept up with what is happening to the price of land.

But if you give me the commitment that you'll check it out for me and get back to me, I would appreciate it.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I would just bring to the member's attention that the farmer, of course, does have a right to appeal if he believes that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. And we will provide the information on the formula to the member.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I would like you to do more than just report to me the formula, because I think I have an understanding of how it works. What I would like you to do is to review whether or not you shouldn't be changing the formula to allow for the new influence in rural Saskatchewan. That is that land values, by everyone's estimation, have been reduced by 20 or 25 per cent, and that trend is still continuing. And what I'm saying is that, for farmers, the family income plan is becoming irrelevant, because the formula isn't keeping up with reality.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I would thank the member for his point. It certainly is something that needs to be reviewed from time to time, and we certainly will give the undertaking to do that.

Item 16 agreed to.

Item 17 agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1986

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36

Vote 36 agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1985

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36

Vote 36 agreed to.

HON. MR. DIRKS: — I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to take the opportunity to thank my officials who are seated with me, and those who were present who assisted in these deliberations, and also thank all of the very professional staff in the department of Social Services for their assistance in preparing these estimates and in delivering programs to the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:58 p.m.