

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTIONS

Extension of Crop Year

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture.

On Tuesday we were told that the Government of Saskatchewan wrote to the federal government on July 9 to request an extension to the end of the crop year, which is tomorrow, and it was stated that the federal government is considering that.

Since tomorrow is the last day, Mr. Minister, and many farmers are in difficult straits, can the minister update us on this? And can you tell us: has the federal government agreed to an extension so that all farmers can have an equal opportunity for delivery, so that they can make their deliveries before the drop of 20 per cent comes tomorrow? Can you tell us that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we have been concerned for some times — weeks and, frankly, months — that with the drop in prices that farmers should be able to deliver as much grain as possible in this current crop year, as opposed to the 1988-89 crop year.

As a result of that, I have been in frequent contact with federal cabinet ministers — both in terms of the wheat board, in terms of the Deputy Prime Minister, in terms of members of cabinet, federally — from western Canada advising them to be aware of the fact that farmers will want to deliver as much grain as possible and to allow for that flexibility.

Right now we have put together a position and an argument with the federal government that they will accommodate farmers who are facing particular problems, unique problems, so that we can get as much grain into the system as possible and have extensions on into August as a result of particular unique situations that would take place here in western Canada.

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the crop year ends tomorrow. Surely you have some indication from the government as to exactly what their position is on this. We've all had contacts saying, look, we need an extension. Farmers still don't know what's happening. Surely you in your position, talking to the federal government, have some idea and can tell farmers what's happening, because tomorrow is the day. Can you assure us through your correspondence, and vocally or written, with the federal government that there will be an extension on the crop year beyond tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon.

member that we have been in touch and in contact and in negotiations and informing the federal cabinet ministers of the deadline for some time now. We have been in contact with them; our members of the legislative have; our caucus committee, I have. We will be meeting and continue to meet with them to inform them of the need to extend it and to provide as much opportunity to deliver grain in this crop year as opposed to next year.

So the member can rest assured that members on this side of the House, and certainly my staff and my caucus and the agriculture caucus, from the minister to the Premier's office, has been in touch with both Mr. Mayer, the Minister of Agriculture, the Prime Minister, the deputy Prime Minister, and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Increase in Rates by Farm Credit Corporation

Mr. Upshall: — Yes, a new question, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the farmers again are left in limbo by the federal government and this provincial government, which is very disappointing.

My new question, Mr. Minister, is to do with the Farm Credit Corporation increasing their rates. They've increased their rates one and one-half, one and three-quarters per cent, which you will know, on a quarter section of land selling for \$100,000, which is roughly the average Farm Credit Corporation loan, that means \$1,500 out of every farmer's pocket for one-quarter section or \$10 an acre they're going to have to add to pay that loan.

Mr. Minister, my question: has the Government of Saskatchewan communicated its concern about this announcement to the Mulroney government? And if so, can you table that communication later today so the farmers will know exactly what position you've presented on their behalf?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member stands on his feet and says that we have again left the farmers in limbo with respect to interest rates and with respect to going to bat for them in terms of income.

Let me respond, Mr. Speaker, by pointing out that this administration protected farmers against high interest rates when the former members wouldn't even look at it. I want to make that very clear so when he stands up and talks about defending the farmers . . . the NDP have no idea what defending the farmers means. When it talks about farm credit interest rates, Mr. Speaker, they were running at 18 or 20 per cent and the NDP wouldn't do a thing for farmers. So he has no business standing up and saying that he will defend farmers with respect to interest rates, FCC (Farm Credit Corporation), or deficiency money, or any other kind of money, because when he had the opportunity and his party did, they neglected to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — And they can holler order all they like, Mr. Speaker, but they know it's the facts, that interest rate protection comes from this side of the House with the PC party here, and not from the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister may wish to talk about the past; I am interested in the farmers' difficulties of today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — I will repeat my question. With an average of roughly \$100,000 loan, which represents about one quarter of land in the past the way sales went, which represents \$10 an acre increase for a one and a half per cent increase, I ask you again, Mr. Minister, has your government communicated its concern to the federal government about the increase in the Farm Credit Corporation loan, and if so, what has that reply been?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, many people in Saskatchewan learned from the past, and that's why they want to have an administration that will protect farmers in the future. Now today, Mr. Speaker, at the last ministers' conference in Quebec City, Saskatchewan took the position with respect to lower interest rates and a stronger FCC role in providing interest and low interest measures to people all across Canada, and particularly the western farmers.

That position, Mr. Speaker, was presented and is published as a matter of course in the fact that we attended those meetings and we provided information on equity financing, we provided information on interest rate protection, and also reviewed the entire package with respect to low interest loans to farmers from various kinds of institutions.

We have met with the credit unions, with the financial institutions, with FCC, talked about it with the federal Minister of Agriculture. And it goes back for a series of years, Mr. Speaker, where our administration and this government has stood up and protected farmers and spoke on behalf of farmers against high interest rates.

It, Mr. Speaker, was responsible for us getting elected in '82 and again in '86, and we will continue to state . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, history shows us this: 1982 - 16 to 17 per cent interest rate, Farm Credit; Bank of Canada, 14 per cent. '84 - 14 to 15 per cent; Bank of Canada, 9 per cent. And it goes on, consistently higher.

That's the position the federal government has taken, and you have done nothing about it. Can you assure the people of Saskatchewan by telling them that the federal government . . . what your position is? Tell the people of Saskatchewan what your position is in relation to the federal government's interest rates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, let me just reiterate. I have put the position forward many times that interest rates have to be lower to farmers, both provincially and federally. And I've done it in Ottawa, and I've done it at national meetings with the first ministers, and I've done it at ministers of Agriculture meetings. I want to make that point very clear.

Mr. Speaker, let me also point out that when no other administration would do it here, we provided a billion dollars at 6 per cent interest rates — here, right in the province. And members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and members across this province know that 6 per cent interest rates were the best that they could find any place in Canada, one of the best in North America. As a result of the request for farmers, this administration acted, and we will continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Extension of Current Crop Year

Mr. Koskie: — I've a question to the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier. And again in respect to the crop year, current crop year, which closes on July 31, Mr. Premier, you indicated that you've made representation to the federal government, asking them to extend it.

I ask you: would you be prepared to table in this House what representations you have in fact made? Secondly, I ask you: did you indeed contact the federal government yesterday? And if indeed you haven't, will you contact the federal government today and come to this House and indicate what their decision is so the farmers will be advised?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I have been in contact with the federal government personally, at meetings with the Prime Minister, at meetings with the ministers of Agriculture. I have sent them correspondence. I have talked to them on the telephone. I meet with them quite often. And if there is anybody in Canada that talks to them more about agriculture, I'm not quite sure who it would be, except the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Minister of Agriculture talking to federal counterparts and provincial counterparts about low interest rate protection, about quotas, about income stabilization, about access to markets into the United States and other places in the world.

In fact, raising for the first time I believe in some history, if not in Canadian history, agriculture on the table at the first ministers' conferences, when we meet, is now a number one topic and a major issue.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. member: yes, we're in constant contact — in person, by telephone, in my office, in their offices, and through negotiations.

Mr. Koskie: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Mr. Premier, we agree that you do a lot of

talking. What we're concerned about is results, and I ask you very simply question . . . you have no decision from the federal government that's what you're saying to us here. You have indicated you made representations. I ask you, did you make representations yesterday, because today in the end of the crop year? If you haven't, will you do it today, and will you report to the House?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, again it shows, if I might, that the opposition are way behind when it comes to agriculture issues. We've been raising this issue for weeks and weeks and weeks with the federal government. It is now two days, Mr. Speaker, before they're about to change the crop year and the opposition jumps on its feet and want to show the media and everybody else how concerned they are with agriculture.

Well, they're way behind in agriculture. We're way ahead of you. We've been at that case for weeks and weeks and weeks. You just popped up and thought, well we better do something on agriculture because it's the close of the crop year. Well good luck!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increase in Rates by Farm Credit Corporation

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Premier, and it deals with the FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) increases. The Premier will be aware that, according to reports, interest rates charged by the Farm Credit Corporation are going up on loans approved after July 20 — that's a week ago. And the interest rates are going up by 1.5 per cent, and other figures even higher than that.

My simple question to you is: you will know about this decision by the Farm Credit Corporation to raise interest rates for farmers; have you protested that decision to the federal government so that that decision can be reversed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I have protested the high interest rate decisions by the federal government and by financial institutions. I have proposed alternatives. I have listed several things that they could do, including having new position taken by FCC to provide low interest loans to farmers and keep it low. And I have provided, Mr. Speaker, the lowest interest rate protection package in the history of Saskatchewan or Canada in my own jurisdiction. So on all three centres and in all three areas I believe that it's a reasonable response.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I didn't make myself clear. I wasn't asking for a review of interest matters with the federal government or with the chartered banks. I'd be happy to do that on another occasion and can discuss the dismantling of the farm purchase program and that sort of thing on another occasion.

Right now I am asking about the specific decision made

by the Farm Credit Corporation in the last 10 days, or at least announced in the last 10 days. Will you indicate to this House whether you have protested that decision and whether you have any indication that it will be reversed. I'm asking about this decision. This is the one which we can do something about now. Have you done it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, long before the decision to make a change in FCC rates, we were making representation. And again it goes back to my argument, Mr. Speaker. We have been making representation for weeks and months to the federal government with respect to low interest loans for farmers, new methods of equity and new methods of credit for farmers, for weeks and months — not just 10 days, not just a week, or not just before the crop year changes. So yes, I have been making representation continually.

Do I know what the federal government will do, or whether they will modify the program? I can only say I can't speak for them. I've given them representation. I have, Mr. Speaker, asked on several occasions to have various kinds of modifications made. Some cases they do, and some cases they don't.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Premier freely admits that he's made representations on a broad range of issues involving interest rates. And obviously the representations have not been effective with respect to the Farm Credit Corporation, because after your representations they've announced an increase in rates.

What I'm asking now is: in the light of the failure of your general representations, indicated by the fact that the FCC has paid no attention to them, will you now make representations with respect to this specific decision? Have you made them? If not, will you make them, so that the farmers of Saskatchewan can be protected against this further increase in their input costs, which we all know are causing serious difficulties for Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member premises his remarks by saying, in the general failure of my attempts to change policy in Canada, will I respond now.

I mean, I could say to the hon. member I have personally requested \$1 billion for farmers. I have personally put my reputation on the line to receive support for farmers in this province. I have asked for changes with respect to elevator tariffs, with respect to freight rate tariffs, with respect to interest rates, with respect to producer cars, with respect to stabilization programs, and I've got a long list of them.

So I would hate to have the hon. member leave the impression that: one, that I don't defend farmers; or, two, that I haven't been at least somewhat successful.

I will say, in this case, I've asked for lower interest rates. I will continue to ask for lower interest rates. And I do not

agree, and they know that I do not agree, with respect to the fact that FCC rates would increase. I've made that very clear. I will continue to make it clear. I have in the past, and I will in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Possible Strike of Grain Handlers

Mr. Petersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order! Order.

Mr. Petersen: — My question is to the Premier and it has to do with the movement of grain and our grain handling system. In past years, strikes at various places in the grain handling system have caused farmers a great deal of concern.

My question has to do with press reports of a possible strike by unions representing railroad workers. Mr. Premier, what action have you taken? What discussions have you had with the federal government at this time? And what assurances have you been given?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, if we could just get the co-operation of the members opposite, I'd be glad to address the question.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that farmers are concerned about the possibility of a general strike so that we would not be able to move grain. They want to be able to move grain, not only in terms of this crop year, but well into next crop year, because it's going to be extremely important, particularly if we have good growing conditions.

I can say this: I have been in touch with the federal government and, because of my concerns and others, that I will be meeting in my office with the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Mazankowski, with Mr. McKnight, and talking about the whole question with respect to agriculture, with respect to interest rates, with respect to the strike, with respect to moving grain and, clearly, about extension of the crop year for farmers here in the province. And we'll have a lengthy discussion at the highest levels we can in the cabinet office and in my office, Mr. Speaker.

Collapse of Investment Firms

Ms. Smart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, are you aware that some of the 3,000 investors who lost their money with the collapse of First Investors and Associated Investors have joined together to take civil action? But are you also aware that most of the people who invested in those firms have lost their life savings and they don't have enough money to join in that civil action?

Since it was your government's negligence that

contributed to the collapse of those two firms, my question is: will you provide free legal advice or financial assistance to the investors so that all of them will have the opportunity to join in this civil action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, we do not . . . we do not accept the premise that somehow the failure of these two companies are totally and . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. The member is trying to answer the question, and if we ask a question we should give him the opportunity to answer it, and I don't think we're doing that.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, first of all we reject the suggestion by the hon. member that somehow it was the fault of the Government of Saskatchewan for the failure of the particular two companies.

The second thing is, the solution to every problem that comes forward, as advanced by the member from Saskatoon Centre, is for the government to give free this or give free that or give free the next thing. Now there is in fact an action proceeding from people that have some of their investments. I understand that matter is proceeding before the courts, and that's their right to do that, and it will unfold, Mr. Speaker, in the proper way of the court system.

Government Assistance to Investors

Ms. Smart: — I have a new questions, hopefully to the Premier, but since he isn't answering the questions, then to the Minister of Justice.

I want to know if you're aware that British Columbia is considering this kind of assistance for investors. Lyman Robinson, the special investigator appointed by the B.C. government, says his inquiry will not only examine how the companies operated in British Columbia, but that he will, and I quote:

. . . make representations to the . . . (government) . . . about what legal action can be taken by or on behalf of investors.

So my question is, again, why won't you help these investors who have no money, thanks to your negligence in failing to adequately regulate these companies? Why won't your government help them to launch a joint civil action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, as I understand from press reports that there are a number of Saskatchewan investors that are . . . or at least have retained counsel and are planning to commence legal action as a class action, as I understand from the press reports, with regards to this.

Now the hon. member from Saskatoon Centre, as I indicated earlier, would have us believe, or would suggest somehow, that the Government of Saskatchewan

should cover everyone's legal costs in this particular action.

Now we suggest that that is not the proper function of government to cover everyone's legal costs, and as a result it would not be our intention to proceed that way.

Potential Abuse of Gas Tax Rebates

Mr. Solomon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. It deals with the 7 cent per litre PC gas tax. The minister has said many times that his gas tax rebate system is not open to abuse because the gas receipts will be closely audited. At the same time you claim that these cheques will not require a massive new government bureaucracy. You say the job can be done by no more than 100 students hired as a summer employment project.

Mr. Minister, there are 650,000 licensed vehicle registrations in Saskatchewan. If they purchase gas an average of once per week, they will generate and turn in at least 33.8 million gas receipts. That means that each of your 100 summer students would have to process 338,000 gas receipts. Minister, where do you propose to find these super students?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Well, I wish you luck, Mr. Minister, in finding them, and I hope you can find them. And if you can find them, you should hire them now to bail out this government because of its fiscal mismanagement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Minister, if each of the summer students is required to check 338,000 gas receipts, how can you claim that these receipts are being carefully audited? It isn't humanly possible. Why don't you just admit that you didn't think through how to deal with this red tape nightmare and that your rebate system is wide open to abuse?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, only an NDP would look at the hard way of doing something. Obviously those forms where the request for the rebate, the application for the rebate, is above the norm, would be pulled from the computer applications — very easily handled.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Telecommunications Service for Disabled

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, and I'll give a copy to the opposition critic, Mr. Shillington, please.

I'm pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan Telecommunications will begin operating an upgraded telecommunications service for the disabled

effective August 1, 1987.

On Saturday SaskTel will begin operating the relay service which was previously handled by Services for Hearing Impaired Persons, known as SHIP. As part of the improved service to the disabled, SaskTel will also administer and provide special telecommunications equipment previously handled by the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program. Registered hearing impaired persons or those wishing to communicate with the hearing impaired are able to do so through the SaskTel relay centre using a special telecommunications device for the deaf.

SaskTel will continue to provide registered hearing impaired persons with free use of these units as previously supplied by SAIL. Hearing impaired people have been requesting better telephone service for some time. SaskTel will add two more access lines to the relay centre as part of the package of improvements to the service. SaskTel will assist registered users of the service with 50 per cent discounts for certain long distance and special surcharge calls under certain circumstances.

There will be a 50 per cent discount on charges for volume control devices for registered hard of hearing customers, and free artificial larynx units will be supplied to registered speech impaired persons. SaskTel will assume the surcharge and administer the registration of telecommunication devices such as hands-free telephones, lightweight handsets, and automatic dialers, previously handled under SAIL.

Detailed information on the discounts and other changes have been sent to all registered users and to groups which have a special interest in the needs of the disabled. Employees of Saskatchewan hearing impaired persons affected by the changes will receive priority in hiring by SaskTel. Normal turnover rates among operators should open up opportunities for SHIP employees who wish to work for SaskTel in the near future.

I announced in the budget a monthly ability surcharge of 15 cents per month will be added to each phone bill. I believe this to be a small price to pay to help improve the communication abilities of the disabled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The problem to which the minister has addressed himself is months late in coming. I and other members of this Assembly have been receiving complaints about this matter for some months. If, as this indicates, the minister has now got around to finally dealing with the problem, I doubt that he's going to receive wide applause from those who use the service. I think their reaction will likely be: it's about time.

With respect to the transfer of the service, this has a number of troublesome aspects, one of which is that there's going to be a number of employees who will be out of work. The minister said they will receive priority. If my job were on the line, I doubt that that kind of an assurance would give me very much comfort. I suspect that rather few of them will be able to find the type of

employment which they had.

Once again, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, we find this government sacrificing the interests of workers who work for this government and not giving it very much consideration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Collective Agreement with Sask Power

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise as minister responsible for Sask Power to offer a brief ministerial statement relative to a two-year collective agreement that was recently arrived at between Sask Power and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2067. This agreement, Mr. Speaker, was signed yesterday. And this contract, Mr. Speaker, is the first major contract that conforms to the government guide-lines as stated by the Finance minister in his economic statement of March 5, 1987.

As minister in charge of Sask Power, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hard work and the long hours that went into the negotiations which led to this agreement. Meetings began, Mr. Speaker, in November of 1986 and continued until May of 1987 when the agreement was finally arrived at. We recognize that it was a difficult decision for union members, and it shows that, like management, they recognize the financial difficulties of Sask Power and are prepared to be part of the solution, part of the corporations' recovery plan, Mr. Speaker.

As the House is aware, Mr. Speaker, Sask Power currently carries a debt of \$2.3 billion. It requires 40 cents out of every revenue dollars, Mr. Speaker, just to service the existing debt. As minister for Sask Power, I appreciate the impact the union's decision will have on the financial recovery of the corporation. By their responsible actions, Mr. Speaker, they are allowing the corporation some time to operating without incurring additional financial burden which it cannot afford at this time.

I would like to thank the union members for their support of the corporation's decision. The team spirit demonstrated at Sask Power is the kind of team spirit, Mr. Speaker, that I would encourage other bargaining units in the province to use in their negotiations. Consideration must be given to the financial constraints under which departments and Crowns and in fact all businesses are operating in today's economy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has experienced some difficult economic times as a result of the prices of those commodities that we deal in — potash, uranium, wheat, etc. However, with our knowledge, determination, and ability to adapt, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will always succeed.

Commitment to Saskatchewan is everyone's responsibility, and actions such as those of the employees of Sask Power, Mr. Speaker, will eventually . . . whether the members opposite like it or not, the actions of the employees of Sask Power, Mr. Speaker, will eventually benefit everyone in the province. And for that, we appreciate it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to note initially that nothing the deputy . . . none of the facts that the Deputy Premier referred to are unknown. Indeed, this is all information that's weeks old. And I wonder about the limits of ministerial statements, when ministers simply comment on events that have taken place in the past.

With respect to the specific contract, let me point out to members of the House that the problems which SPC experience come about largely because of the mismanagement of that corporation, not the least of which is you have replaced career public servants with political hacks who don't know how to — at \$200,000 a year — who don't know how to run a corporation. And that is not, to put it mildly, the least of that corporation's problems.

It seems a trifle unfair, Mr. Speaker, that workers are asked to accept a disproportionate share of this burden, as they are being asked to do. The SPC employees probably had no choice. That doesn't make it fair. It doesn't make it fair that they should experience, in real terms, a decline in their wages while you people go on squandering public funds and managing that corporation like a bunch of drunken soldiers. They may not have any choice, but what we heard today, Mr. Speaker, is not fair; it's not fair to the workers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reduction on Long Distance Telephone Call Rates

Hon. Mr. Lane: — A second ministerial statement, Mr. Speaker. As minister responsible for SaskTel, I am announcing today that long distance rates for direct-dialled, out-of-province calls will be reduced an average of 5 per cent effective August 1, 1987. The new rates take into consideration the time and type of call and the distance involved. There will be reduction in rates for 11 of the 18 categories used by telephone companies to determine long distance charges.

These reductions apply to calls placed to points outside Saskatchewan. Most SaskTel customers will enjoy decreases of from 1 to 14 per cent under the new rate schedule. As part of the change, there will be a revision to the way costs are calculated for operator handled station-to-station and person-to-person calls. However, there will be no change to the discount hours and discount rates currently offered for direct-dialled, long distance calls, made in the evening, overnight, or on Sunday.

Details of the new rate schedule will be published in new SaskTel phone directories and will be available soon from SaskTel business office.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel customers have not had a general rate increase since 1983. The corporation is able to carry out its ambitious plans to be the first telecommunications system in North America to bring individual line service to virtually all of its customers, and the ongoing program

to convert the system to digital switching technology without requiring the kind of double-digit rate increases we have seen by some other telephone companies.

I'm proud to say that because of the commitment of this government and good management by the people at SaskTel, Saskatchewan people are being charged the lowest monthly rates for basic local service in Canada. And this was confirmed by a consultant study last fall which examined all the telephone systems across Canada, using a complex formula to even out the wide variety of conditions telephone companies operate under.

SaskTel will continue to provide high-quality communication services and to introduce improvements as new technologies become available, at the lowest possible cost to our customers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — I want to applaud the government on one humanitarian gesture. Parents who now have to phone their children because they had to go to Ontario to seek work will now be able to make use of this. And I know the minister . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — The province might have been as well served, Mr. Speaker, if the children hadn't had to go to Ontario in the first place.

I just want to make one comment with respect to this, and that is that these reductions in long distance rates are to come about and are taking place throughout Canada. It occurs, not because this government has managed this Crown corporation exceptionally well; it comes about because of changes in technology. Other telephone companies, including the Bell Canada system, have reduced their rates. This government is following on the heels of that.

We all, of course, applaud the technology which makes this possible. It's a bit, I think, silly for the minister to claim that this action which follows out of other companies comes about because of anything they've done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ROYAL ASSENT TO BILLS

At 10:42 a.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill:

Bill No. 25 — An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 1988

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 10:43 a.m.

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, with leave of the Assembly:

That leave of absence be granted to the hon. members for Last Mountain-Touchwood, Redberry, Shaunavon, Moosomin, Arm River, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw South from Monday, July 20 to Friday, July 24, 1987, for their attendance on behalf of this Assembly at the 27th Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Saskatchewan.

Motion agreed to.

(1045)

POINTS OF ORDER

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I wish to raise a point of order with respect to today's question period. It also relates back to at least two other question periods. And in specifics, Mr. speaker, it pertains to the recognition of the hon. member from Kelvington, a member of the government side — in fact, I believe, Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Premier, himself — in the midst of question period, to ask a question.

My point of order, briefly states, is based on these grounds. It is my contention, Mr. Speaker, that the question period is the forum, the primary forum, for the official opposition in the Legislative Assembly to ask questions of government members. It is not a situation which pertains for government members who have easy access to members of the cabinet, both in caucus meetings and in other forums. This is not a situation which is one that is recognized on a wide basis in any other jurisdiction. And to do so, I argue, Mr. Speaker, breaks the precedent and breaks the flow of question period but, more importantly, denies the official opposition its proper role of questioning members of the Executive Council.

More specifically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the specific case of the member from Kelvington . . . And I raise this although it's out of time, but by way of buttressing the argument today, in the case of the member from Wascana who, I believe, is the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education and continuing education, and to the member from . . . Gerich?

An Hon. Member: — Redberry.

Mr. Romanow: — Redberry, who also raised some questions, who is the official Whip; I argue that the authorities specifically deny their right to ask the questions.

I draw to your attention, sir, in particular, from *Beauchesne's*, page 134, point 370, questions by parliamentary secretaries:

Those such as Parliamentary Secretaries (and I

here now quote) who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the Government ought not to use the time of the Question Period for the privilege of asking questions of the Government. *Debates*, November 5, 1974 . . .

Now here is the incredible situation. In fact I would argue, Mr. Speaker, the ludicrous situation of the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture asking the Minister of Agriculture, in government time, on the legislative time, questions which could have been answered by simply release of a press release to the press.

And so I close my point, Mr. Speaker, by saying that what has happened heretofore, albeit out of time with respect to the member from Wascana, the member from Redberry, and in, today, the case from Kelvington, is out of order, and I say, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of thing which denies the opposition what it is intended and should be doing, and that is, asking the government questions so the government can answer the questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I just want to point out that while the leader of the . . . the government leader, I mean the House Leader for the opposition is eloquent as usual, he's not terribly accurate. In fact . . .

An Hon. Member: — As usual.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — As usual. In fact, Mr. Speaker, he knows that legislative secretaries do not answer for the government in this legislature. And in fact legislative secretaries never, never answer — never answer for government in this Chamber. And so the quote or the citation from *Beauchesne's* . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The citation from *Beauchesne's*, Mr. Speaker, is not particularly relevant in this case.

Secondly, he made the suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that in all other jurisdictions, back-benchers from the government side of the House were not permitted to ask questions. That's . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. The member from Saskatoon has made his point of order, and now we're getting a response, and we'll rule on it later.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I know that it bothers them to hear the facts as they really are, but I know that in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, back-benchers do ask questions. I know that in Alberta back-benchers on the government side of the House do, in fact, have an opportunity to ask questions, Mr. Speaker. And I would think that any reasonable person . . .

An Hon. Member: — Fair-minded.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — . . . fair-minded person that's had any experience in this House knows the past practice of this House has been that from time to time back-benchers

on the government side have been allowed to answer questions. And I would not want to see that change. I think that relevant questions from any back-bencher should be in order when they in fact get the recognition of Mr. Speaker.

And while I'm reluctant to inject any humour into this, because it's a very serious order raised by the member, I would say that most relevant, important questions, do come from the back-benchers on the government side, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the same point of order, the Deputy Premier has made reference to the precedents established in the House of Commons. And at least, in part, when those precedents were established in the House of Commons, I was there to watch it happen. And so I have a little experience with that particular situation.

And as I recall the situation in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, with respect to questions being asked by government members of the government during question period, the precedent was as follows:

First of all, the question had to be clearly legitimate and not a set-up. And I recall in this question period today, one of the members of the official opposition shouted, "set-up," across the floor, and the Deputy Premier responded, "Of course it is." That, I think, Mr. Speaker, undercuts the issue of legitimacy in terms of the particular incident that occurred today.

The second matter that was emphasized in the precedent of the House of Commons, is that parliamentary secretaries or their counterparts here, legislative secretaries, would be specifically ineligible — not exclusively, because on occasion they would be called to answer for the government, but because of their obvious closeness to cabinet. And, Mr. Speaker, the simple fact that they are paid additional salaries because of their closeness to cabinet and their additional responsibilities because of that closeness to cabinet, I think makes the point that their questions in question period would not be at arm's length and therefore legitimate in the understanding of that term in this place.

And the final part of the precedent from the House of Commons, as I recall it, Mr. Speaker, is that in the case of government back-benchers as opposed to parliamentary secretaries. In the case of government back-benchers asking legitimate arm's length questions which would be proper and allowed, that they were allowed to ask the question, but as I recall it, Mr. Speaker, there was never an opportunity for supplementaries to follow upon the initial question being asked by a government member.

In terms of a back-bencher, legitimately defined as such, at arm's length from the cabinet, at arm's length from the government, Mr. Speaker, I think those questions can be regarded as legitimate. But in the case of questions being asked by legislative secretaries, Mr. Speaker, I think the precedent from the House of Commons would indicate that those are traditionally not allowed.

And in any case where a government question is regarded as in order, no supplementary would be allowed. That is the precedent from the House of Commons, as I recall it.

Mr. Petersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to this point of order briefly since I was one of the people who was mentioned by the House Leader on the opposition. I, first of all, make the point that my question was a supplementary, following questions by the agriculture critic on the opposition benches. And secondly, I was elected by a body of people largely agricultural, and I feel that I have a right to ask questions on behalf of my people. I would really feel very, very hurt if this Assembly would try to deny the right of any member to ask a question on behalf of the people who . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also participate and make a brief intervention.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Obviously this point of order is capturing a lot of interest, and I intend to allow hon. members who wish to make a statement, make a statement. But I'd like to ask you to allow them to be heard.

Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also make a very brief intervention. The hon. member from Saskatoon Riversdale of course referred to *Beauchesne's*, and I think it's very accurate and very clear in *Beauchesne's* that legislative secretaries do not ask questions in this legislative forum.

And since the House of Commons was used as a precedent, and that's been mentioned by another member of this Assembly, I would like to say that in my experience there — in the four and one-half years I spent in the House of Commons — I never once saw the Speaker recognize a Legislative Secretary, or in that case a Parliamentary Secretary, to ask a question in question period. It's non-existent and such an individual rising in their place in the House of Commons would not be recognized to ask a question.

The only time that I, in my experience in the House of Commons, in the four and one-half or so years that I was there, the only time I ever saw the Speaker recognize a Parliamentary Secretary, which is the equivalent to a Legislative Secretary here, was to answer a question on behalf of the government because the minister, in fact, was not there.

And I believe that it's very, very clear that the precedents for this legislature is drawn from the British parliamentary system, originating across the water, and from there from the Parliament of Canada, and that's how some of this tradition is built up for this Assembly as well.

And I find it flying in the face of the democratic and parliamentary institutions across Canada that the government members opposite think that they can change hundreds of years of tradition that have been built up so that the people's voice can have a place in a forum in the Legislative Assembly such as this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise in support of this point of order. For me, as a member on the opposition bench, it's very important to have the full question period for us to have the opportunity to question the government. But obviously the members on the back benches, on the government side, are having as much trouble getting answers out of the Premier as we are on the opposition side.

And so I would support you . . . to have a ruling in our favour, but I want to point out that obviously they're having trouble on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: — I thank the hon. member for Saskatoon Riversdale for raising this issue, and it's an issue which I will study carefully, and review, and bring back my decision to the House.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and it deals with the supplementary by the member for Kelvington-Wadena. And I would like you to check the record to see, and see whether in your judgement a supplementary dealing with — was it strikes? — is an appropriate supplementary to the particular question we were dealing with, a narrow question with respect to Farm Credit Corporation interest rates.

If supplementaries are going to expand the ambit to that extent, then it strikes me that the question period is going to become quite unstructured as supplementaries wander all over the map, as I suggest that one did, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing that matter to my attention, and I will review the record.

(1100)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure

Education

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chairman, as we proceed into these education estimates, I want to advise the minister about the methods that he has been subjected to by his government that has led to a situation where, for the first time in my lifetime, at least, that education has been deprioritized by a government.

Several months ago and several years ago we had a statement by this government that said that education was going to become one of the pillars of this government. This whole approach has been abandoned, Mr. Chairman. We are finding that at this stage the government has abandoned their plan on education as a

priority, and they've made cutting the deficit as their priority.

This has resulted of course, Mr. Chairman, not be a desire by the people of Saskatchewan or the educators of Saskatchewan; it has resulted because of the government's mismanagement and the result of being a \$3.4 billion debt. They have betrayed the education system, Mr. Chairman. Money has been diverted from education to pay for the shortfall in oil revenue, to make up for the shortfall in oil revenue of \$1.5 billion; to pay the likes of Peter Pocklington, total of \$20 million; to pay for the shortfall of the money that has not been received from Weyerhaeuser, a total of \$248 million, where the mill was sold, nothing has come back. And where's the money's coming from?

Instead of the Minister of Education standing up and speaking for — speaking for the children of the province, and speaking for improving programs in the province, we have had cut-backs. cut-backs to school board of 1 per cent; cut-backs to the educational development fund, which was originally announced as a five-year plan, extending the time, inconveniencing school boards. Many school boards have had to borrow additional money as a result of that. Cut-backs to the university, to the extent that university enrolment had to be limited in the College of Arts & Science for the first time. Cut-backs to the University of Regina to the extent that they are now forced to scrap some of their programs, in particular the School of Human Justice and the School of Social Work in Prince Albert and in Saskatoon.

It's a betrayal. It's a betrayal of education. It's based on the mismanaged fiscal affairs of this province.

I didn't hear, during the campaign, Mr. Chairman, anybody — let alone any cabinet minister — asking that school grants be cut. Asking . . . Or I didn't hear any minister saying that school grants would be cut. I didn't hear that educational development fund was one of the proposals, an extension of that from five years to ten years. I didn't hear, in the campaign, that the community college system was going to be usurped, was going to be taken over. I didn't hear, in the campaign, that university enrolment was going to be limited because as the result of the mismanagement of this government.

No, the public was deceived. All we heard was, keep on building Saskatchewan. Well there are two projects in my very own constituency where the people did want to build. The schools — the Riverside School and the St. John's School are still not started; the renovations are still not started. The understanding was that they should have been started. We started . . . This government started by mismanaging the financial affairs, and it turned then to deceit during the time of the election.

Now I'm saying that those cuts did not have to be made, Mr. Chairman. Those cuts did not have to be made. The minister had, as a duty, to uphold the adequate and substantial financing to the Department of Education. There was no reason to ask the Department of Education, as there was no reason to ask the Department of Health, to take less money so that we could pay for the \$1.5 billion

shortfall from the oil companies; so that we could pay for the Peter Pocklingtons; so that we could end up paying for the likes of the Minister of Justice to fly to a wedding in Calgary.

An Hon. Member: — What has that got to do with these estimates?

Mr. Kowalsky: — The minister says, what has it got to do with these estimates? It has everything to do with these estimates, because if that hadn't have happened, if this government wasn't mismanaged, then Education wouldn't be cut the way it's been cut. Mismanagement of the Department of Education starts right at the top, Mr. Minister. Last day these estimates were being talked about, the minister indicated to us that three out of the four top aides in his department, after the firings, have limited experience in education in Saskatchewan. The continuity has been broken. Why? Because their priority is the deficit, not education.

That move was not based on sound educational principles. The move to do that was based, and I repeat again, on a \$3.4 billion deficit. It was made as a result of the \$1.5 billion shortfall in oil. It was based on selling the Weyerhaeuser plant for . . . plant to Weyerhaeuser for 248 million and not getting a dollar in return. And because they would prefer to give money to the likes of the Minister of Justice to fly to Calgary, or Peter Pocklington — 20 million, or former minister Dirks to do a study for 30,000 when there were a lot of people in the department that could have done it.

The minister says he's accelerating the development of the core curriculum. I say you're mismanaging what's happened in the core curriculum. The corporate memory belonging to all the people that were working on that in the department, that you got rid of, are gone. You are switching horses mid-stream. And I call that mismanagement, because if you really had a commitment to follow through on the goals established in the *Directions* guide, then you wouldn't have gotten rid of the top people involved; you wouldn't have gotten rid of the continuity in there.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is: how could you let the children of Saskatchewan, how could you let the educators in Saskatchewan and the parents of the Saskatchewan, how could you stand there as Minister of Education and let the priorities be switched from education to paying for a deficit that was not created by education?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, in his opening remarks and question, the member from Prince Albert talked about these kinds of things. Talked about, in his mind at least, how I and our government have, to use his word again, depriorized education. And I thank the Clerk's Table there for allowing me the use of their dictionary to check on the word "depriorize," and I don't find it in there.

And even if I had, how does he really stack that kind of rhetoric up against the record . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Moose Jaw North talks about, let's get serious. Well I ask any fair-minded person, any

fair-minded person in this legislature, or watching these proceedings on television, what would a fair-minded person conclude if he was to pick up the *Estimates* document which we are studying today, and when it comes to Education, we're going to vote approval for something over three-quarters of a billion dollars — the highest number ever in the province of Saskatchewan's history when it comes to Education.

Now certainly some will argue, some will argue, but yes, Mr. Minister, but the new Department of Education is larger that it's ever been. It's a combination of the traditional K to 12, plus now the post-secondary education, plus Saskatchewan libraries. So I'm prepared to submit to the test of comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

And when that fair-minded person takes a look at what was spent last year on the K to 12 side, and what was spent last year on post-secondary education and on libraries, and compares that total number, this year's blue book, the last year's book, you add it all up and you make the fair comparison, the number comes out larger, Mr. Chairman.

So it seems to me when a fair-minded person stands back and say, well if the government is deprioritizing, to use the member from . . . a word that may or may not exist, deprioritizing education, how does that stack up with the fact that we're spending more on education that we ever have in this province before? How does that stack up with the fact that we're spending three-quarters of a billion dollars on education this year?

And I'll tell you why we're spending it, Mr. Chairman. It's because the people of this province view education as a priority. They view it as a priority. And that's why we're prepared to put the dollars behind it. That's more than we collect in income tax. Because if that same fair-minded person was to look through that budget document, Mr. Chairman, they would find that that amount of money spent on education is more than we collect from the single largest source of revenue from the public purse in this province.

So when the hon. member from Prince Albert . . . In fact, when you talk about deprioritizing education in this province, that is the typical, inflamed, distorted rhetoric that has become a trade mark of the benches opposite. Every fair-minded person knows that that doesn't make sense. In fact, they would argue that that's a nonsensical statement.

I mean, I'm prepared to stand here, Mr. Chairman, and debate common sense. I'm prepared to stand here and debate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Minister, why didn't you increase the budget by 10 per cent in this area if there's a 10 per cent demand, or 2 per cent here. Or why didn't you drop that if there was no more use for it, or why couldn't you have had a 4 per cent increase here, or a 6 per cent, or whatever?

But to stand here and make a blanket statement that is absolutely nonsensical, that somehow education has been deprioritized, a word that Webster is not familiar

with, does simply not make sense. It absolutely is a silly argument.

And he went on to further say that we aren't somehow standing up or speaking for the children of this province. He went to say that we are somehow not standing up or speaking up for the children of this province.

Well, I would ask all members of this legislature to check the something close to nine hours that we have had for Education estimates in this province and check the record, check *Hansard*, and let's see who has talked about teachers in the classroom and the students and the children. Has it been the opposition critics on the occasions that they've been here? And the answer clearly, Mr. Chairman, is no.

What have they been concerned about? What has the focus of their questioning been? Well, did this administrator lose his job? Well, did these six administrators lose their jobs? Mr. Chairman, I am in total agreement that we have to have administrators, and we have very good ones. But I am even more concerned about what's happening at the front line. I'm more concerned about what's happening in the classrooms. I'm more concerned about whether we have teachers in front of the chalkboards. I'm more concerned about what the students are having in terms of programming, what are they getting in terms of an education.

(1115)

And I'll . . . you could check through *Hansard* for the last nine hours on the debate in the estimates in Education. You've got to look hard to find the words: student, education, excellence, accessibility, standards, quality — the kinds of things that I think the public out there are wanting to be reassured about, Mr. Chairman, and rightfully so.

If I was the public out there today, a parent, and I stood before my television or sat before my television on a given night, or read the newspapers — certainly there is much talk of cut-backs, Mr. Chairman; not rightly, but there is a great deal of talks about cut-backs. And it doesn't stack up when you look at the record, and I've put some of this into the record before: a 60 per cent increase since our government took over; pupil-teacher ratios are lower than they've ever been.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, let's look at the K to 12 system — let's look at the K to 12 system — and what have we done for the children of this province in the K to 12 system? Well first of all, when the NDP were in government, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in government, their last year there was something like 204,000 people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member from Moose Jaw North wants up, I'll sit down and we can take his question.

Mr. Prebble: — Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to change the focus of the Education estimates to look specifically at the community college system this morning and to debate what's happening in the community college system in this province.

It's our view, Mr. Chairman, that we are seeing a fundamental change in the approach to education in Saskatchewan that the government is choosing to take. And we are also seeing what is in effect the abandonment of the mandate that the community college system in this province had prior to the re-election of a PC government in this province in 1986.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that we are seeing in this province a switch towards an education policy that is more focused on the job market and that is less focused on education as a life-long experience. A move away from things like education for personal enrichment. A move away from the colleges' role to promoting community development. This government, Mr. Chairman, has essentially narrowed its approach to education in this province. It's narrowed it to focus primarily on training and to move away from the view of education for citizenship and for community betterment.

Now we on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Chairman, do not object to seeing more university and technical institute programs being offered through the community colleges throughout rural Saskatchewan. In fact if the government proceeds with this action, we commend the government for it. We haven't seen much of that to date, Mr. Chairman. In fact what we have witnessed in this province has to date been a significant cut-back in university and technical institute extension courses.

And one needs only to look at the role of the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina in this province to see that because of the underfunding of this government because of a two-year budget freeze to those two university institutions, the number of courses that they are able to offer through the community college system in many centres in this province has been significantly reduced.

I say to the minister, the cuts that he and his government have forced upon the University of Regina has in effect forced the University of Regina in turn to very, very substantially cut back on the role of the School of Social Work and the School of Human Justice in Saskatchewan to the point where the community education centre which offers social work programs in Prince Albert faces the prospect of being phased out, as does the one in Saskatoon.

And the School of Social Work in this province will almost certainly have to pare back the extension courses that it offers throughout Saskatchewan in centres like Swift Current, Uranium City, Yorkton, almost certainly, Mr. Minister, as the School of Human Justice and the School of Social Work have made very clear, extension courses will be cut back, not advanced, as you claim.

And one of the things I ask the Minister of Education to address when he next rises to his feet, is how many new university and technical institute courses through the community college system are we going to see offered this fall? Because to date we've seen little evidence of this new extension program that you talk about. All we've seen are consistent examples of cut-backs in extension.

And we saw another very good example when the

University of Saskatchewan was forced to announce as a result of its budget restraints that 41 medical staff, most of whom were teaching staff in Regina, were going to have to be fired because of the funding cut-backs of your government, sir. So we've seen extension services in Regina cut back. We've seen the community education centres in Saskatoon and Prince Albert being forced to phase out. We've seen the School of Social Work indicate that it will have to cut back on its extension programming.

One of the most . . . I think one of the most excellent examples of a good extension service in this province, sir, was the service offered by the School of Social Work at the University of Regina, in conjunction with the community colleges of this province. And as a result of your funding cut-backs, what we're seeing is not an advance in extension programming, but a cut-back in extension programming in the area of social work.

Now, Mr. Minister, it's also our view that your government in conjunction with the federal government is also taking a more narrow view to education. And this is largely as a result of the agreement that you have signed - the Canadian Jobs Strategy agreement - that you have signed with the Government of Canada. You are in effect taking a more narrow approach to adult basic education as well. It's the view of members on this side of the House that we ought to be taking a broad approach to education, and that in grade 1 to 12 training, students ought to be encouraged not to pursue education with a view to a specific job until they finish grade 12, but rather that they ought to pursue education as a broad-based experience, and when they complete their grade 12, then they ought to train for a specific job.

And what the Canadian Jobs Strategy agreement that you have signed with the federal government is all about, sir, is narrowing the focus of education and requiring students to specifically focus on training for a particular job before they complete their grade 12. And in fact, if they don't have grade 10, they're not eligible for Canadian Jobs Strategy money at all. And we think that's a very, very unfortunate aspect of the agreement.

We believe, sir, that your government is moving away from the original principles established when community colleges were first set up, moving away from a decentralized community-based college system, particularly in the urban centres, towards a centralized system that's going to be run out of Regina. And we say that that's a very, very negative move.

Now you, sir, as Minister of Education, have claimed that you are going to have a new emphasis in areas like battling literacy, for which we commend you. But we do not see how that squares with your decision to dramatically cut back funding to the provincial library system in this province, which was to be the key resource base for the community colleges. And your attack, particularly on the library systems in Saskatoon and Regina, does not square with your commitment to fighting illiteracy in this province, and it does not square with the fact that the library system was to be one of the basic resources for the community college system in Saskatchewan.

Now we say that you are fundamentally altering the mandate of community colleges in Saskatchewan. And I want to, in substantiating that point, provide a little bit of history with respect to the development of community colleges in this province.

And I want to take the minister back to the time when we last had a right-wing government in this province, prior to the election of your government, sir, and point out that originally in 1944, in fact, in Saskatchewan, an adult education division was established in this province. And I think that the role of that adult education division is very informative.

It was the . . . Its aims were to fight illiteracy and, particularly, to . . . The department was charged with providing appropriate and acceptable study material on any topic of interest to a group of citizens who aim at constructive action in the community. In other words, it had a very strong community development focus.

The adult education branch, that was set up in 1944, gained national and international recognition. From 1950 to 1955 there were expanded efforts in regional co-ordination, and extensive programs in the arts, public affairs, international affairs, and human relations were all set up, all the kinds of things, by the way, Mr. Minister, that you are no longer encouraging in the current college system.

But something very interesting happened after the election of the Liberal government of the 1960s, because in 1966, Mr. Minister, that branch, which had gained international recognition, was phased out by the Liberal government. It was phased out of existence, and the emphasis in adult education shifted away from community programming and focused on technical training in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, when the New Democratic Party was re-elected in 1971, we were committed to establishing a community-based, decentralized education system, adult education system, again in this province. And we undertook, in contrast to the actions of your government, we undertook, at the time, a very, very extensive consultation process to put that system in place. There were over 1,900 people who came to specially organized meetings around the province to have input into the establishment of the community system in the period 19 . . .

An Hon. Member: — When was this?

Mr. Prebble: — The minister asked, when was this? And I say to the minister, in the period 1972-73.

There were 1,900 people who attended community college meetings, and another 1,000 people who were involved in other public meetings that discussed the establishment of a community college system, a system, sir, that you have now chosen to dismantle after organizing a few consultation meetings around the province, none of which were open - none of which were open, that were organized by invitation only. Any of the feedback that I've had as a result of those consultation meetings demonstrates that you have no mandate from

those meetings to essentially dismantle a large part of the community college system in this province. I suggest to you, sir, that you had already decided to do that before those consultation meetings ever took place.

But, Mr. Minister, I want to remind you for a minute what the purpose of the community college system in this province was to be. The purpose, Mr. Minister, of the community college system was largely in . . . was first of all, it was a system largely set up to meet the needs of rural Saskatchewan. It was to be a decentralized system. The community college was to act as a co-ordinator of learning resources in the community. It was to provide essentially a central base to ensure that community educational resources were not underutilized but rather were fully utilized. It was to be a system that was to emphasize non-credit courses and that was to emphasize personal enrichment courses.

(1130)

And I say to you, sir, that you are essentially dismantling a large part of that system, particularly in the urban centres today. And in rural Saskatchewan, you have basically done away with all personal enrichment courses. And in many rural community college systems, those courses constituted anywhere from 30 to 50 per cent of the college's activities.

And therefore, sir, your actions, the actions of your government, are essentially setting about fundamentally changing that system. And we say, sir, that that system has been serving rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan well. We have not heard any requests from either the community college boards or from the public that the mandate of community colleges ought to have been fundamentally changed.

On the contrary, there was strong public support for the mandate of community colleges. And we say that it was simply a desire of your government to change the system, and not a desire of the public, that has led to the current changes.

We want to raise another concern that relates to community colleges and a fundamental shift in your approach to education, because one of the fears that we have on this side of the House is that the actions of your government are leading towards encouraging the privatizing of adult education in this province. And we on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, strongly oppose that approach to privatization.

We say that education ought to be publicly funded, ought to be a publicly accessible service, and that your government and the federal government ought not to be in the business of encouraging private educational institutions, setting up educational programming for profit. We say that that's not in the interests of the students of this province, and it's not in the interests of the Saskatchewan public generally.

And this, Mr. Minister, relates directly to the decision that you have made in conjunction with the federal government to sign an agreement for large pools of money through the Canadian Jobs Strategy program to be

made available to private profit educational institutions in this province.

And what we are getting into in Saskatchewan at this point, Mr. Minister, is a situation where your government and the federal government are in effect encouraging small private companies to get into educational programming. And that, if course, that move is directly connected with the decision of your government had made to cut back on technical institute programming that is offered both at the institutes and through the community college system in parts of rural Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, we say that that move jeopardizes educational quality in this province. We on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, think that it's absurd to set up a system in which community colleges are going to be bidding with private educational institutions for educational contracts through the Canadian Jobs Strategy funding offered by the federal government. We think it's absurd that you signed a contract with the federal government that sets that system in place.

And, Mr. Minister, I want to point out to you what some of the obvious weaknesses of this system are going to be.

First of all, Mr. Minister, there are inadequate provisions to ensure that quality education is going to be offered under these Canadian Jobs Strategy contracts. In fact, Mr. Minister, we on this side of the House say that in many cases it won't be. There are no provisions, Mr. Minister, to ensure that fair salaries are paid to the employees of private companies under these contracts. In fact we say that many contracts will go to private companies only because they pay their staff far less than the staff of the community college system would be paid. And when you pay your staff significantly less, you can expect significantly reduced educational quality.

We on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, say that there's no assurance that the programs offered through the Canadian Jobs Strategy program, that those contracts run by private companies will necessarily ensure that qualified staff are hired. I've seen some of the ads that have been running lately in the *Star-Phoenix* and the *Leader-Post* for people in areas like life-skill training to be put on by private companies. And I note that those ads often don't require very specific qualifications for the people who are doing the instructions, certainly no requirements for university degrees.

We say, Mr. Minister, we say that the diplomas and certificates that are offered by these small, private, profit-oriented educational institutions that you are encouraging to be established in this province will have . . . the diplomas and the certificates that those companies offer will have no national recognition in Saskatchewan.

What is it going to mean, Mr. Minister, if a hairdressing salon that puts on a cosmetology course, not that it's been cancelled at Kelsey or Wascana, what's a diploma by that hairdressing salon going to mean to a student who moves to Winnipeg or moves to Montreal?

Or if . . . you've cancelled things like truck driver training

and heavy equipment operation at Kelsey, so a private trucking company puts on a trucking course instead. What kind of recognition is the diploma that that trucking firm offers, what kind of recognition is that diploma going to have in Vancouver?

We say, Mr. Minister, that you're making a serious mistake in moving towards the privatizing of adult education in Saskatchewan. And we say it's a move that pits the community college system of this province, and to some degree the technical institute system of this province, against a new set of profit-oriented educational institutions that you're going to be encouraging to spring up around Saskatchewan. And we say that that is not in the interests of Saskatchewan residents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to turn specifically to the issue of your decision to merge the community college and technical institute systems of this province. And we on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, say first of all that the community college system of Saskatchewan was working very nicely. It was a cost effective system; in fact, you couldn't have put on more courses for less money in this province. From my point of view, Mr. Minister, it was the most efficient and effective part of the adult education system that we had here in Saskatchewan. It put on tens of thousands of courses around this province for a total cost of about \$8 million. It largely used rented facilities. The demand on facilities, as a result of the work of community colleges in this province, was highly efficient indeed. Each of the college boards set up small offices where they rented facilities around Saskatchewan, and apart from that, most of the courses were put on in existing facilities. You couldn't have had a more efficient system.

And your government, sir, has never explained to the people of Saskatchewan what you thought was wrong with the community college system. Now certainly there were areas for improvement, and certainly there was a need to ensure easy transferability of courses from one college to another, or from one institute to another, but those objectives could have been achieved without dismantling the community college system in the way that you've chosen to do.

And I ask you, sir, to explain in this Assembly today what your rationale was for fundamentally changing the mandate of the community college system, and for feeling that the college system needed to be integrated with the institute system. Now we think, sir, that that may have some merit, that there may on a pilot basis, you may have wanted to try in one particular community an attempt to better integrate the services of the community college system and the technical institute system. But what you have done is made a decision to bring about this amalgamation, and to do it in a matter of weeks, with no consultation with the community college system involved at all prior to your decision to announce the amalgamation.

One of the things that we wonder about on this side of the House is: what was the rush? Why did you need to announce an amalgamation after three or four weeks of

consultation meetings, and then attempt to bring that amalgamation about in a matter of weeks over the summer, and in a manner that has thoroughly disrupted planning for the fall in university courses that are offered through the community college system, in technical institute courses that are offered through the community college system? You have thoroughly disrupted the process of student enrolment in both the college and the institute system as a result of your actions.

But we say further, sir, that while you may have wanted to try on a pilot basis in one community to amalgamate the community college and the technical institute system to see how that integration and amalgamation worked on a pilot basis, to which we would have had no objection, that we believe on this side of the House that you are making a serious error by hurriedly running into an amalgamation of two adult education systems with fundamentally different purposes and with fundamentally different philosophies.

The focus of the community college system was to be an emphasis on lifelong learning for all members of the community. The community college system is to focus on accessibility for all members of the public. No one should be denied access to the community college system in this province.

In contrast, Mr. Minister, the technical institute system is fundamentally different. It's intended to offer diplomas and certificates for successful completion of training that is highly job oriented — training that is supposed to be directly tied to attaining a job after graduation. And access, by nature, to the technical institute system is limited. Access, by nature, is limited. Only about one out of three or one out of four people who apply are going to be accepted.

Now what you are trying to do is you are trying to hurriedly meld two fundamentally different systems with different philosophies and with different objectives. And one of the fears that we have on this side of the House have, sir, is that your attempt at amalgamating the community college system and the technical institute system is going to result in the community colleges being swamped by the technical institutes in the amalgamation.

We fear, sir, that community colleges are simply going to end up being brokers for courses that technical institutes and the universities put on, and that the lifelong learning component of the community college system in Saskatchewan is going to be lost.

And we're not surprised at that move, frankly, because that was precisely the approach that was taken by the Liberal government, the last right wing government we had in this province prior to yours, in the 1960s when the department of adult education was at that point phased out in 1966, and the focus turned to training for job-related functions only, with all the other purposes and aspects of adult education being ignored.

So in summary, let me say this. We ask you first of all, sir, to explain to this Assembly why you felt ... why you fundamentally altered the mandate of the community college system. Why you've chosen to so hurriedly

amalgamate community colleges and technical institutes. Why you undertook that amalgamation with no prior consultation with the colleges and the technical institutes involved, and with no provision for public hearings on whether or not it was a good idea to amalgamate the two systems.

We ask you to explain why you had to do this in such a rush. What was the hurry? Why did you force this amalgamation through in a matter of weeks, instead of going through a process of extensive public consultation before you made a decision on whether or not the amalgamation was desirable or not? And finally, why you've chosen to fundamentally alter the mandate of community colleges in rural Saskatchewan and cancel the very low cost and very inexpensive personal enrichment courses that were offered in those rural areas, sir.

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. members, both critics have given us some fair statements this morning in so far as their views on why we ought not change. And in fact as I sat here and listened, the reality of what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, is whether we ought to change or not. And the arguments that have been put forth are those arguments put forth by people who really, as evidenced by their rhetoric this morning, want to cling to the past. That the status quo is good enough. That we can simply rest on our laurels. That we can stick our head in the sand and pretend that the world is not changing around us.

To do so would be to let the people of this province down, Mr. Chairman. That's what it fundamentally comes down to. Every area the hon. members have raised, whether it be the K to 12 system, the regional college system — as we refer to the community colleges — the institutes, the universities, whatever area, they are saying, do not change anything. Never mind that enrolments are going up. Never mind that the people are asking for more and expecting more in the way of sophistication. Never mind that our economy must diversify. Never mind the demographics. Never mind the fact that the 18 to 24 population is going down, the 24 to 65 is going up dramatically, and going to go up dramatically over the next few years. Never mind that the world economy is changing. Never mind that we're moving from a resource-based economy to an information-based age. Let's stick with what we've got. Let's support the establishment.

These are the arguments of people who want to cling to the past. These are the arguments, Mr. Chairman. Let's pick the first one. He says the community college system was doing a good job and it should stay the way it is. Well what did the community college trustees association report to myself say? And the report was entitled *A Better Tomorrow* and was presented to myself shortly after I became Minister of Education this fall, Mr. Chairman.

Now the hon. member from Saskatoon and the Education critic, Saskatoon University and the Education critic, says: no, do not tamper with the community college

system. It is okay. It is running fine. Well why did this report to me recommend that we should look at 105 areas? On page 1 of the executive summary it says, and I quote:

It goes beyond identifying and describing problems. It contains 105 recommendations designed to solve those problems.

The community college trustees said: yes, we have had an illustrious 10-year history, but the world is changing and we must change. And here are 105 recommendations on how we can, yes, be different; yes, change; but yes, be better, Mr. Chairman.

Now how can that hon. member stand here; how does he square that? I mean, if he pretends to speak with some authority for the community college system, who am I to believe? Him that says we should not change, or the community college trustees who commissioned this report and said, you know, what can the better tomorrow be, as their title suggests?

Well it seems to me I would be irresponsible if I was to ignore this, Mr. Chairman. And I would not ignore it, and I have not ignored it, and I will not ignore it. And in fact many of the changes that we've made have already addressed some of these 105 recommendations.

And it's typical in terms of their arguments that they've advanced about, let's cling to the community college college system of the past. It's typical that the world has passed the NDP by. The community college system knows the world has changed, and they want to change with it, to continue to be relevant as they have been.

The hon. members says: why have you decimated the hobby courses in the community college system? Why have you thrown out the hobby courses? Why have you eliminated the aerobic dancing programs and the basket weaving? Why have you thrown those out? Because, Mr. Chairman, the community college system and the participants in those systems saw that kind of programming as less important to their well-being in 1986 and '87 than they did in 1976 and '77.

The people in rural Saskatchewan, the people in urban Saskatchewan, who used to come out and enter those hobby course type programs, as they're called, or hobby arts and crafts programming, 10 years ago there were large enrolments there — 80 per cent, probably, of their hours at the community college programming were devoted to that area. Well what has it been most recently, Mr. Chairman — 4 per cent? 4.1 per cent, my most recent numbers, Mr. Chairman.

Now I would say if the hon. member says somehow the community college trustees' association is wrong, and now, based on these numbers, the NDP would try to be suggesting that the people are somehow wrong. The people who used to want to take those courses 10 years ago, back in the past, came out in droves — 80 per cent. Now in the last years it's been 4 per cent. And why has it been 4 per cent? Because what have the people been wanting and viewing as a higher priority? They've been wanting adult basic education to upgrade those

individuals that never had a chance to get that 10, 11, and 12. And they've been wanting more institute courses. And they've been wanting more university courses.

And I'll tell you, here's one that the hon. member ought not be proud of, because they failed on every measure. And our government did not, because we put it in place.

I ask the members of this Assembly, and of the public in Saskatchewan, in 1981 and '80 and '79 and '75 — when these people pretended to be so relevant to society — I ask the members of society today in this province and in this legislature; if you had wanted to take an institute course by extension when the NDP were in government, could you take one? And the answer is a resounding no, no, no, no.

And they talk about accessibility in rural Saskatchewan. Did you deliver one institute program into rural Saskatchewan when the NDP were in government? And the answer is no, again. And I'll tell you why it's no. Because when Premier Grant Devine came along and recognized the needs for education . . . adult education in this province throughout rural Saskatchewan, we put in place a program — an extension program, the Saskatchewan skills extension program — to deliver programming into rural Saskatchewan.

And I'm proud to stand here today, Mr. Chairman, and advise you and other members of this Assembly that we expect enrolments in that this year — participants will number some 2,600. And that budget, Mr. Chairman, is over \$4 millions. Now that's what I talk about when I'm talking about accessibility to rural Saskatchewan, and delivering programs to rural Saskatchewan, and delivering relevant programs to rural Saskatchewan.

And the 1,900 people that you referred to in the consultations of the community colleges 10 years ago, I have no doubt that what they told you is true. But this is not 10 years ago. This is 1987. And I want to tell you what the 550 groups and individuals and associations told me in their report, and what the universities told me in their report, and what the several other hundreds of people I met with told me in their report.

Yes, what we have done in the past has not failed. It has not let us down. We can be proud of it. But the world is changing, and we must change. We want more accessibility to more programs. We want to get rid of this duplication. We want to get rid of out of date programs.

They said to me: what is the sense of me putting my daughter or my son into a program when 70 per cent of them come out of it and don't get jobs? It frustrates my daughter. It frustrates my son. It frustrates my pocket-book. That's why you get people today talking about dropping out of society. They don't feel useful. We're programming them and pushing them into programs that weren't relevant. Yes, they were relevant 15 years ago, 10 years ago, six years ago.

Or what is the sense of having 20 training spaces in an institute when the people themselves have figured out that society doesn't need 20 of those particular kinds of

employees. Only four were entering some courses where there were 20 spaces. Now what sense was that? Twenty spaces, and four were taking it. Or 20 spaces full, with a 200 people waiting to get in. And when they graduate, 70 per cent don't get jobs. Now, what kind of a favour are you doing the young people of this province when you do that?

And consistently the members opposite have clung to the past and they say, don't cut this program and don't cut back on that one. Have they look at where the jobs of the future are? As I said to the hon. member from Cumberland, the NDP member from Cumberland, the other night, more properly your questions, Education critic, should be these. Because I'll tell you, if we don't change, I could sense our children, your children — and I might congratulate the hon. member from Saskatoon University on the birth in his family. I hope mother and child are both doing well. Your children, if we don't make these changes, may ask these questions. They may ask things like this. They may say, dad, 20 years ago when you were sitting in the legislature . . . and we're talking about the year 2000.

To put this in perspective, the young person today who enters kindergarten, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the young person who enters kindergarten this fall in our K to 12 system will graduate in the year 2000. And what do we know already about the year 2000? Well we know some things like this. His child is going to be facing in the year 2000 some of these kinds of things. We know that between now and the year 1990, for example, the number of children in that age category of 18 to 24 is going to go down. We know that the baby boom that put tremendous pressure on the K to 12 system over the past decade, and now more recently on the university and technical institute system in terms of enrolments, is decreasing.

And I suppose that's what the Hon. Mr. Blakeney, then NDP premier, was so out of touch with when he sent that infamous memo to his minister of Education that day in 1980. He hadn't read the numbers somehow. The reality was the enrolments were going up during that period. What we see in the future is enrolments going down. And certainly in the K to 12 system in the last five years our enrolments are down 2 per cent. We had something in the order of 204,000 in '81-82, and this year I think will be around the 200,000, 199,000. Enrolments have gone down. Budgeting has gone up 60 per cent, and yet they continue to talk about cut-backs. But I'll get into that another time.

So what do we know, Mr. Chairman? We know that the baby boom that put pressure on the K to 12 system, and the baby boom that's putting pressure on our universities and technical institutes in term of enrolments, is now going to start going into that greying area, what they call the . . . What do they call it? Not the over-the-hill crowd; over-the-thrill crowd. And what do we know about these 35 to 50 year-olds? Whereas our 18 to 24 numbers are going this way, our 25 to 64 numbers are just going to go up dramatically over the next two decades, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Now you take that fact. You've got less people in the K to

12 system; you've got less people probably going to be entering your institutes and universities, although in the latter half of this century those numbers should go up again. The baby boom will be in that 35 to 50 year-old mid-career bracket, and what do we know about this? Well one of the things that we know is we're really a little bit uncertain about all what they are going to face because the future is difficult to predict. And that's why I'm so happy that we're going to have that conference here in Saskatchewan that talks about post-secondary education, and I hope will give us some guidance in terms of the signposts of the implication of the new economy.

But here's some things we can glean, I think, fairly and conclude fairly safely. The economy . . . as the economy restructures, their jobs are at risk. And without retraining, their employability may diminish. Jobs and job security will become the issue. Clearly then, upgrading and retraining becomes the new priority.

And current estimates, Mr. Deputy Chairman — and they never addressed this point once in all their lengthy remarks — the point is this, Mr. Chairman, that there are now several studies around that would suggest that where you and I, or our fathers before us . . . Let's pick it up right there. Whereas our fathers and grandfathers before us, if they probably got a great education or whatever, it probably served them well because there was the pressure to return to the farm and quickly take up farming as quickly as they could. I mean, the agrarian life-style in this province. Okay.

Our generation came along, and if we got our high school, that was good; you were probably going to get a job. If you took on a post-secondary education — universities or a technical institute — that was good because it probably meant you were going to get a better job. Okay, but what of our children? What of our children? And the Education critic's children?

What studies tell us is that they can do all of those things, and it won't be good enough because they'll come out of college or come out of grade 12 or come out of the technical institute with their diploma or their degree or their certificate, and much as it served my father or you or me well, the reality for them is that they're going to maybe within a year or two or six, find that the requirements to do their job have changed because the technology keeps changing. And they've got to retrain and upgrade and retool — not just, you know, go and take a two-week course and say that that'll be it for the rest of their life. They might have to do that five or six or seven or eight times.

So what are we going to do about it? Well the first thing we started doing, Mr. Chairman, some several - four years ago, was we started delivering institute program into rural Saskatchewan. And why is that important? Well I'll give you an example. If I'm a welder and I want to weld on the new NewGrade upgrader out here, I might have a certain kind of certificate or a certain kind of knowledge, but it may not be good enough for that kind of welding. But I've got a job in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I can't be driving to Regina or Prince Albert or wherever they teach this welding technology because I've got a job. I've got a family to feed. Can I get that course in Weyburn? And

there's 10 more guys like me.

(1200)

Well that's the kind of thing we've been talking about with taking institute programming right into the communities. And we're going to do more of that, not only at the institute level but the university level, because you've got to acknowledge the realities of what's facing us. The baby bulge is getting older. We're going to need more upgrading and retraining. And we've got to be able to provide it across Saskatchewan.

And that's why, when it comes to the new institute changes, the single institute, the one-stop shopping centre, if you like. When they walk in that door at Moose Jaw campus or Saskatoon campus or P.A. or Regina, they're going to have access into the entire range of programming at that new institute . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the hon. member from his seat . . . I didn't say one word while he talked, and now he wants to interrupt me. But he says, come on Lorne, you've cut the programming. Well what are the statistics on this so-called cut programming?

First of all, Mr. Member from University — Saskatoon University, did you deliver any institute programming in rural Saskatchewan? No. Okay, so not only have we not cut that, Mr. Chairman, but we were delivering it when the NDP were not delivering it.

Second question, Mr. Chairman, for the hon. members of this legislature: did the Devine government build the new institute, new campus in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, since they took office in 1982? The answer is yes.

The third question, Mr. Chairman, is this. The hon. member says there were cut-backs. The third question is this, Mr. Chairman: are there today, in this province, 1,700 more training spaces in Saskatchewan at our institutes than there were in 1982? And the answer again is yes.

Now how does that translate into cut-backs, Mr. Chairman? How does that translate into cut-backs? Oh yes, the hon. member will get up here shortly, I'm sure, and say, oh my goodness, you've cut out the nursing assistants, or you've cut out the refrigerator guys, and the reality is, Mr. Chairman, there are very good reasons for those cut-backs. There were not full-time jobs at the end of the day, after they'd spent several weeks and months and years of training. And who are we doing a favour? In some of these cases the associations came to us and said, we're just flooding the market. There just isn't the jobs out there.

And so, as I was getting to some time ago, Mr. Chairman, and as the hon. member from Cumberland and I talked of the other night, the questions that these people across the way should be asking is: are you going to have that system geared up to handle this greying adult population, as well as the young adult population; are you going to have the training program in place?

The questions they should have been asking are these: are you going to have the training program in place for the

wild rice industry in northern Saskatchewan, or for the uranium mining, or for the gold mining, the instrumentation people, the diamond drilling courses?

I mean, the questions that they should have been asking in this House for the last four years, Mr. Chairman, are where are those courses for the Northerners?

They should have been asking, why haven't you changed . . . you know, we don't need the hobby courses any more, or not to the degree we did. Those in the community can deliver them, as we expect they will, Mr. Chairman. But they should have been asking — gold drilling and gold mining is taking off in northern Saskatchewan — and I want to know, Mr. Chairman, or Mr. Minister, what are you doing about making sure Northerners get those jobs? That's instrumentation . . .

You know, what was their style? When the NDP were in government, Mr. Chairman, they would rather pay . . . they would rather pay Northerners \$12,000 a year to build roads in the South. Well, what's happening today? We've got diamond drillers engaged in \$5,000 a month-\$60,000 a year occupations in the North, Mr. Chairman, economic activity, economic diversification, and jobs for Northerners, training for Northerners. Mr. Chairman, they consistently gave them lip service.

But, Mr. Chairman, the reality of what we're talking about today is, are we going to be change-resisters? Mr. Chairman, are we going to stick our heads in the sand? Are we going to fail to acknowledge what the numbers tell us about ageing in this population; about what the requirements are going to be of that population?

And as I said before in this House . . . I mean, there are a dozen futurists out there who can give you some view of the future, but there are some hard, cold facts about what we know. And we know that we're moving from a resource-based economy into a knowledge-based economy, Mr. Chairman. And we know that adult education must respond to two emerging challenges in the next two decades: it must meet and master the needs of the information age, first and foremost, and it must adapt to a ageing population in need of frequent retraining. And it also must achieve a higher success rate with the 18-to 24-year age group, Mr. Chairman.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to community colleges . . . when it comes to community colleges - although the emphasis in the past has been on hobby and arts and craft courses, 4 per cent of the hours now were in the hobby area - and what the people were telling me, what the community college trustees were telling me is, yes, we have been happy with what we've done in the past, and now we want to change and go forward and continue to have that better tomorrow. We want more adult basic education, we want more institute-related programming, which was up 13.9 per cent for the year - up to 13.9 per cent of the hours in the year '85-86, which is that last one I have numbers for - and we want more university programming.

And that gets me into the discussion of the community colleges, or more properly . . . And I would advise the hon. member that really what we're going to be talking

about here is not community colleges; what we're talking about is the regional college network now. And what is this regional college going to do, Mr. Chairman? Well, it's going to do that — it's going to do that adult basic education. It's going to deliver institute programming into rural Saskatchewan, and it's going to deliver more and more university programming into rural Saskatchewan.

And what are we talking about in university programming, Mr. Chairman? Well as the hon. member and I discussed in question period some time ago, enrolments have risen dramatically over the last four or five years at universities. And it's no good to sit back and say a problem doesn't exist, or to try to tackle it. And that's what, Mr. Chairman, we're looking at delivering more and more programming at the university level into rural Saskatchewan. And for a couple of reasons.

Number one is it makes . . . the people want it — the people want more. Just as 20 . . . 15 years ago they wanted hobby courses . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member for Saskatoon South wants to cling to the past. He says that they want hobby courses in rural Saskatchewan. I'm tell you, they want institute programming and they want university programming. And I'm telling you that the communities in rural Saskatchewan, whether it be aerobic dancing, photography, or cooking, that the community will deliver it. I have a lot of faith in the people of this province. And I'm telling you, in my own community of Weyburn I've already seen it.

The young . . . the people in the recreation boards there are delivering programming. They are taking up the challenge. It's going to be delivered. But if you want to cling to the past, that's fine by me. Because what I clearly heard out there . . . And you can tell me that 20 meetings with 550 people is garbage, and I'll tell you it's not. I'll tell you this is what they wanted.

But let's pick up the hon. member from Saskatoon South's arguments a little further. He says, as does the member from Saskatoon University, that I've got no mandate, that when I had these meetings with 550 people, that this is not what I heard. So let's read into the record, Mr. Chairman, let's read into the record some of what I did hear. And this is a brief I received from the Coteau Range Community College board.

Did the hon. member catch that? The hon. member from Saskatoon University and Saskatoon South, as well as Prince Albert and Regina Centre the only four members from the NDP in the legislature, Mr. Chairman, have suggested . . . they have suggested that . . . the hon. member has asked about the chairman who resigned, and I am advised the chairman did resign, Mr. Chairman, but for quite different reasons.

Well, I'll put it another way. Let's hear . . . Mr. Chairman, let's read into the record what the board's submission was to me, the Coteau Range Community College board, what was their submission to me in February of this year? The hon. members say we ought to cling to the past, that there's no need to change community colleges and their focus. But what did they say to me? Well they said things like this, Mr. Chairman:

At this juncture, recommending a tough, even courageous, course of action that will result in significant change within the entire post-secondary system may meet with considerable internal resistance.

What they're saying there is, Mr. Deputy Chairman, is yes, change is always difficult. The status quo, you know, you're bathed in, I suppose, the warm reality of knowing one day to the next that the next day will, in fact, be the same, until that time comes when all of a sudden people find they aren't trained and retrained and don't have the skills for the future. So what they're saying is that any time you undertake change it's difficult.

They acknowledge that. But even acknowledging that, they recommended that we build a new mandate with key themes being these. And they called them the three R's. They called it rationalization, redirection, and revitalization. And they went on to suggest to me that when it comes to rationalization, that a duplication, a duplication should be eliminated. Duplication should be eliminated.

And they talked about extension courses in the arts and sciences, education and administration, need to be offered in smaller cities and rural areas on a cost-recovery or greater user-pay basis. Now that's a contentious recommendation, Mr. Deputy Chairman, but one that deserves some examination, and in terms of consultation, that's the kinds of things we're going to have to examine in the future.

They recommended to me, Mr. Deputy Chairman, when it came to the University of Saskatchewan, for example, that it allowed to build on its strengths. And what eminent good sense that makes, and I would suggest that that's exactly what they're doing. And, as well, the same recommendation there was for the University of Regina.

As well, Mr. Chairman, they recommended a consolidation of technical institutes. Now in their mind the consolidation might have been to have four separate institutes in the four separate areas as opposed to one new institute. And that's a point we can debate, certainly.

But nevertheless everyone recognized the sense of consolidating the community colleges and technical institutes. And why, Mr. Chairman? Well this is what they said to me: "It is expected that the above action," which I referred to, and I quote — I quote again. I'll start again:

It is expected that the above action should address the issues of greater responsiveness, less bureaucracy, and faster program turnaround by combining under one management the flexible, responsive delivery system of the colleges with the programs of the institutes.

Now could I stick my head in the sand? Here are the trustees of that area — intelligent, reasonable, reasoned people; been working in the system; know its strengths; know its weaknesses, and said there ought to be change. There ought to be some rationalization. There ought to be some consolidation.

It went on to further talk about eliminating some of the duplication and facilitating delivery to rural Saskatchewan.

And when it came to the question of redirection, what did they have to say? You remember there are three R's, Mr. Deputy Chairman? Their three R's were rationalization, redirection, and revitalization.

When it came to redirection, what did they have to say? Talked about redirecting our programming to concentrate upon a major thrust in illiteracy. A major thrust in illiteracy. And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, just some several weeks ago, when I announced the post-secondary education restructuring, I announced that we would be launching not only a provincial campaign, but pushing for a national campaign to fight illiteracy. It's a silent enemy.

And I'll tell the hon. members across the way, the one thing that I heard that really — I suppose the best word is — shocked. But one thing that shocked me when I held those 20 meetings across the province this winter was when I heard the tales, the sorry tales, quite frankly, of illiteracy and the impact of illiteracy and the depth and the breadth of illiteracy in our province, it shocked me. And I suppose it shocked me . . . and I think when all members of society — and many have called me over the last few days wanting further information as it relates to our drive against illiteracy.

And using one definition of illiteracy, we come up with numbers like this, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

In this province, we're the worst in Canada when it comes to illiterate . . . In western Canada . . .

An Hon. Member: — That has nothing to do with the question.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The hon. member said that it had nothing with the question, Mr. Chairman. I'll tell you what. It has everything to do with adult education and providing opportunities for people in this province. And I will not be muzzled when it comes to the question of illiteracy. You cannot muzzle us.

I know that your government and your party when they were in power, failed to recognize it. You paid lip-service to it. You paid lip-service to Northerners; you paid lip-service to the province. But I won't be muzzled on it and I will talk about it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Because the stark numbers are these; the stark numbers are these. And I'm not proud of these. I am not proud of them, but I'm not going to somehow sweep it under the table.

The stark numbers are these: 24.9 per cent of those aged 15, over 15 in this province are what they call functionally illiterate. And you can use different definitions. And another definition might have 15 per

cent or 16 or 14 or 19. But I don't care what definition you use for illiteracy, we have a big problem in our midst.

And why it's so shocking is I, like probably everyone in this House, couldn't believe those numbers when you see them. Because we've always thought of ourselves as a well-educated society, as a society that has provided opportunities. How can those numbers be? Well there are a number of reasons. And we can get into them at some later time, as I expect a literacy council will do for me, to help me, give me some advice and guidance on this.

But the reality is, we've got a lot of human wastage there and a lot of people that don't have opportunities to take retraining and to upgrade themselves and to get jobs because of it. And we have got to tackle it.

Our record is the worst in western Canada, Mr. Deputy Chairman. And I'll tell you what. The rest of Canada is not off the hook on this one either. And I intend to raise it with my ministerial colleagues across this country.

And I say it shocked me because I too was a member of the public who didn't think we had that big a problem when it came to illiteracy. I didn't think we had that big a problem, Mr. Deputy Chairman. But when I was at this meeting — never mind these cold, clinical statistics like 24.9 per cent — the kinds of things that I heard that shocked me were those kinds of stories, stories from members of the banking community who suggested to me that on a regular basis their tellers would deal with three to four people on a daily basis who weren't totally conversant in the English language.

And now these people . . . and I'm not picking on these people; I want to make that clear. But this is a silent enemy in our midst. In many instances they never had an opportunity or a chance, or they dropped out of school. We want to help them, Mr. Chairman. We want to help them because we know . . . because we see that as an investment in their future and in our province's future.

I know some, including the occasional testy editorial, would suggest ah, yes, this is nothing more than politicians' rhetoric. Well I'm tell you, Mr. Chairman, and I make this commitment to the people of Saskatchewan, this is going to be something more than mere lip-service. And I would suggest to you that the initiatives and the recommendations that will come forth, and the advice and the guidance that I will receive from the literacy council that will be put in place very shortly, in fact, will have my support and my back-up.

And I'm not so naive as to suggest, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that is something that you solve overnight, because it is not. And I know already in Saskatchewan we've had a number of groups — volunteers and professionals — . . . (inaudible) . . . Saskatoon, our community college system, volunteers, many levels in our education system have been putting effort into this. What I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, is the problem is much deeper than I had been led to believe or had thought, for that matter, and we're going to tackle it.

And I'm not suggesting that we'll solve it overnight, but we're going to give it a good shot. Because we can talk

about rights and privileges all we want in this province and this country, but it seems that there is nothing more basic than the right to read and write. And we're committed to that objective, Mr. Speaker, because we want to see those people have opportunities that you and I and those members opposite enjoy. So that will . . . as was recommended. And I don't apologize for getting off track, but one of the recommendations from the Coteau Range Community College board to me was a major thrust in illiteracy. We're acting on that, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

They also said we redirect in adult basic education to ensure that each adult has a generic set of skills to enable them to participate fully in the world of work. They talked about university transfer credit programs, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and on and on and on.

I'll pick revitalization. And what did they have to say under revitalization? Well they said this, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and I quote:

The third "R" in the new mandate will be a by-product of the excitement and enthusiasm generated by the positive changes outlined in the first two areas.

The narrowing of mandates, the clearer definition of purpose, the need for cost-effectiveness in every area of activity can, and does, have a revitalizing effect . . .

You see, Mr. Deputy Chairman, or Mr. Chairman, this board that has worked in the system, the people that almost on a daily basis have been dealing with adult basic education and people's desire to have institute training and university courses, are making these recommendations to me and to my colleagues, and I will not turn a blind eye to them.

And although the NDP opposition will cast the narrowing of mandates, a clear definition of purpose, the need for cost effectiveness in every area, they will cast that in some kind of scenario and paint it as devastation — and the hon. member from Regina Centre, I think he used the word "decimation" of the education system. They will paint it in this scenario of cut-backs and doom and that by doing things different is worse.

Well what are these people saying to me? By redirecting and rationalizing and revitalizing, by doing things different, it can be better and it will be better. And that includes cost effectiveness, attention to cost effectiveness, and narrowing of mandates, of not trying to be all things to all people.

And not that that trend that developed in the '70s — the NDP were in government — was a bad trend necessarily. It was natural. It's natural, it's a natural human phenomenon that you try to deliver as much as you can for your constituency — in this case, the province.

Kelsey wanted to deliver as much programming as they could for all of Saskatoon and area. I mean, that was a natural phenomenon. But what happens at the end of the day is you get every centre wanting to do everything, and

at the end of the day you just can't do everything as well.

Now if you set up some centres of excellence and say, you shall concentrate and be the best on this, by having a single centre do it, you can have the best equipment, the most up-to-date equipment, the best teachers. And rather than trying to spread it all over and be all things to all people, you know, instead of trying to have a peanut butter sandwich, we want to have caviare. We want to have it in every spot. We'll have their best in each spot, have those centres of excellence. And that's what we're doing with the new institute campus arrangement.

And I think that's what these people are saying here: narrow the focus, do what you do and do it well. If you happen to discard some of the past because it's out of date, or you have to discard some because of duplication, or if you have to discard some because the opportunities that were there a decade ago just aren't there now, but there are opportunities in different areas and you have to refocus, then do it. And that is, Mr. Deputy Chairman, exactly what we're doing.

And they ended this brief by saying this, Mr. Chairman. They ended this brief by saying this — and it's in part and it's what they said in their opening statement — that it's going to take some courage, and it's going to take some action to prepare the system for the 21st century.

And although members opposite will catcall from their seats and criticize me and my colleagues for talking about the 21st century and the decades ahead and the tomorrows and the better tomorrows that our community college system talked about in their report — and they will criticize the University of Saskatchewan for looking at the future and their *Issues and Options*, and the University of Regina for doing some studies, and our department for preparing the blueprint for the future called *Preparing for the Year 2000* — I tell you that we are not going to be deterred in our goals. We are going to stick to our guns because it's right.

And I have no difficulty in arguing about whether in terms of institute governance, for example, whether we should have a board at each site or one overall board, or you know, this versus that. But the reality is we've got to change, Mr. Chairman. We cannot be merely change resisters, we must continue to go ahead.

We must continue to go ahead because to not go ahead would be to let down the people of this province, and that includes our K to 12 system as well, Mr. Chairman.

If one steps back and looks at our K to 12 system, as I've said in this House before, it has set us apart. I think I can safely say without engaging in rhetoric that can't be substantiated, Mr. Chairman, I think I can safely say that our K to 12 system has been as good as you'll find across North America — not just across Canada but across North America.

But some three or four or five years ago, they too recommended that the winds of change were blowing, that we had to make some changes, that we needed to raise standards, that we needed to put in place a minimum expectation, a standard of expectation — a

core curriculum if you like — that would include . . . certainly ensuring that our young people were literate not only in the language arts side, not only that they had the basic mastered, the reading and the writing and arithmetic, basic literacy and numeracy skills, but as well, that in the world of the future, computer literacy might be a reality.

And so because they recognized there were some changes taking place and winds of change were blowing, they undertook the process called *Directions*. And the hon. member from Prince Albert, the other night here, tried to suggest that somehow we were changing direction in the K to 12 system because a half a dozen administrators have lost their job. There was no mention of children, teachers in the class-room, or those kinds of things. But somehow because six administrators which he referred to at some length had been laid off — not fired, but laid off — because of duplication in our system, that somehow we had changed direction.

And when I challenged the hon. member from Prince Albert to give me one concrete example of a change of direction in the K to 12 system, he couldn't come up with one. He couldn't come up with one example, Mr. Chairman — not one example of a change of direction. And I'll tell you what. Before this estimates is over, before this estimates is over, I'm sure that he will try to suggest there's been a change in direction again.

Well what has changed, Mr. Chairman? Nothing, other than we're going to continue to go forward with that *Directions* process. We're going to continue to go forward with implementing that core curriculum. It's going to take lots of work; it's going to take consultation and co-operation with the teachers of this province; it's going to take curriculum writers and it's going to take a tremendous effort; but we are going to go forward with it. And if anything, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, the only change that we will make is we're going to pick up the tempo there a little bit.

As it relates to the education development fund, or that fund that we set up . . . we set up under Premier Devine, because he recognizes that education's important. It wasn't set up under the NDP. The fund that was set up — an excellence fund, you really might call it, Mr. Chairman — certainly the numbers of dollars that we've had in there are the same. It's intact, but we're going to stretch it out, instead of over five years, I think something closer to 10 years, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to have been able to continue to deliver at the pace we were, Mr. Chairman, but the important thing is that teachers and the students of those class-rooms are going to have those benefits. That fund, those dollars, are intact and it will come. Perhaps we're not going to be able to do it as quickly as we would have liked, but we ought not to forget about what we have been able to accomplish with that new fund, that excellence fund, Mr. Chairman.

There was no fund when the NDP were in government. There was no fund to . . . available to school boards to buy computers, to set up and revitalize resource centres, to stock those resource centres with books and other kinds

of library materials. There wasn't a special fund that school boards could come to to look at getting funding for career counselling. There wasn't these kinds of things, Mr. Chairman. I've picked a few examples of what's happened across the province with that excellence fund, to make sure that our students have the best available to them in terms of quality education.

And you pick an example here from the Kindersley School Division — basic skill enhancement through computer-assisted instruction. And it's intended to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills. Now what an excellent example of maintaining all that is of the best of the past, and acknowledging the future. Everyone in this province probably recognizes that we must maintain excellence in our three R's, and yet we also know that there's the new realities of the computer age. And so here is the Kindersley School Division — and I applaud them for it — they're taking the technology of the computer of today and using that to improve, if you like, the three R's: reading, writing, and arithmetic. Basic literacy . . . one-tenth of a million dollars, over a tenth of a million dollars for that project.

Here's one at Martensville primary school in the Saskatchewan Valley School District division. What did they do with the funds that were made available through the Premier Devine's excellence fund, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: — Order. I'd caution the minister not to use members names in the House. Refer to the members by their constituency or by their position.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Your point is well taken, and I apologize for straying from House protocol, Mr. Chairman.

Well, what did Martensville primary school get from our Premier's excellence fund, Mr. Chairman? Well, they got a learning lab; they got an addition of a learning lab, and that consists of written material, computer, computer software, enhanced students word skills, develop reading and writing skills. And that to me, Mr. Chairman, is going to very much enhance the education of those young people in that Martensville primary school.

(1230)

In another area, Mr. Chairman, career counselling and education. And this one, I might add, is very typical of what a number of school districts across the province did. They took this money from the special fund that was established by the Progressive Conservative government, of this Premier, of this province. They took that money, and it was very typical of many across the province, and put in place career counselling and education, the objectives of which are these, Mr. Chairman: to assist students to improve job searchability, resumé writing, interview behaviour, identify suitable career paths in relation to their own skills and interest, and assist students to see the correlation between schools and vocations.

Career counsellors to help keep track and provide this information and counsel them. That's been one that been very widespread across the province. And it's consistent with the results of a survey that the SSTA (Saskatchewan

School Trustees Association) did three years ago where people . . . parents felt that there ought to be a better connection between the education process and the jobs down the road, Mr. Chairman. And so many have responded — many school boards have responded of those parents wishes and views by undertaking that career and counselling program.

Here's one, the Saskatoon public school division — Indian and Métis Friendship Centre home and school liaison program, a tenth of a million dollars — provides for native home visitors and program co-ordinators to act as liaison between parents of native children and school-based personnel. And I could go on, Mr. Chairman, about that one.

Here's another one from Saskatoon public school division. Computer Braille equipment to help those who are handicapped and disabled — to me, a very wise and sound purchase, Mr. Chairman. Another one that was widely received across the province, and as I referred to earlier. Many, many, many schools use these dollars and this education development or excellence fund to acquire resource material — books and film-strips and videos and library technician services; or even to provide for teacher-librarians and to establish computer library services, computer searches.

I think these examples show, Mr. Chairman, how well our school boards, our parents, our teachers have responded out there, that when there was a fund made available to improve the quality of education in their schools, they responded, not only in terms of making sure that basic literacy and numeracy continued to get covered off, but to acknowledge that libraries could be updated with books, and that computers, which are so much a fact of life today for our young people, were available, and the software and the teaching.

And more than that, they took it one step, to make sure that those young people have some sense of the world ahead after they leave grade 12. And so I applaud them for what they've been able to do in the K to 12 system with that fund.

And I want to assure them here, although we have not had this question from the opposition, and I've been quite frankly surprised, because, yes, we are stretching that fund over 10 years. But I want to assure the school boards, the parents, and the teachers, that although that fund is going to be stretched over 10 years, Mr. Chairman, the important thing is the money is still there, and it will be spent, and you'll have more projects like the Martensvilles and the Saskatoon school board and the Kindersleys of the world, Mr. Chairman. Because, as our Premier has said time and time again, when it comes to quality of education, there's always money. And that's the way it will continue to be, Mr. Chairman.

I will pick up . . . I will finish briefly with . . . The hon. member from Prince Albert, in his first remarks, referred to depriorizing, and I suggested that, you know, how do you . . . First of all, Mr. Webster doesn't acknowledge that word in his dictionary. But how do you stack it up against a three-quarters of billion dollar expenditure in education this year? And that's only by the government. That doesn't

include the several hundreds of millions of dollars that universities will raise independently and that school boards will raise through property taxation.

And he said: you know, we aren't spending enough money in education, and the reason we're not spending enough money in education is because . . . And here's the old boggy man NDP arguments. What was his first one? Well, education doesn't have enough money because you gave it to Peter Pocklington; and you gave it to the Weyerhaeusers of the world, okay; and you gave it to the oil companies, okay.

And their arguments to this point in time have been . . . The other NDP tired old favourite is, you know, you down-size government. Oh my goodness, you shouldn't have done that. We need more government; bigger government is better government.

And then the hon. member from Saskatoon University added one other of the favourite NDP boggy man, and that is, now all of a sudden, Mr. Deputy Chairman, or Mr. Chairman, we're privatizing the post-secondary education system — privatizing. I mean, that's the other favourite boggy man. I mean, they want to nationalize everything — from banks on down to the . . . I mean, I think in education, Mr. Chairman, I think if the hon. member from Saskatoon University had his way, the piano teachers of this province would be turned into a Crown corporation. They'd be turned into an arm of the Department of Education. That you can't teach piano lessons after school to the young people because you're not an arm of the government. I mean, that's what they want. They want everything run by the government.

Well what about this privatization? Now where did this boggy man argument come from? Well, yes, Mr. Chairman, it's true. We're going to take the institute structure, which is now an arm of the Department of Education, run by department officials, and we're going to take it out and put it away from government and give them autonomy, give them their own form of governance.

Many good arguments that were made for this as I listened in my consultation this past winter. Even the NDP have recognized that the institutes wanted it. As I've said in this House earlier, the NDP youth want it. And we're going to do that. Now, how does that — what the NDP youth want, what the institute students want, what the institute faculties want, and what people across Saskatchewan want — how does that somehow turn into a privatization exercise?

They, this new institute, will be run by a board, like a board of governors — not unlike the board of governors at the University of Regina, not unlike the board of governors at the University of Saskatchewan, not unlike the board of trustees that run our regional colleges. But somehow when we take the institutes out of government, when we take it out of government and give them self-governance, the hon. member from Saskatoon University tries to suggest that we're privatizing. It defies logic.

Well maybe I've got a wrong argument. Maybe he's saying that he's not talking about that, Mr. Chairman.

Maybe what he's talking about is, well, you're taking these hobby courses or you're taking aerobic dancing, expecting the local rec board to put them on, or a local interest group to put it on. And that's privatizing. Well I would argue that that's been going on for the last 10 years. We went from 80 per cent to 4 per cent of the hours.

The local photography club is quite prepared in Weyburn, Saskatchewan to put on photography courses for the hobbyist if you like. So I don't know how that would stack up to privatization. But then he talked about haircutting. And we've had a number of beauty colleges in the province that have served the public well for 20 years or more — 30, 40 years, I'm not sure. They have a long, illustrious history. Is he suggesting that somehow they haven't done the job? I doubt it. So where . . . I don't know where this privatization boggy man argument comes from. But really, Mr. Chairman, the point I'm trying to make — it doesn't matter whether you're standing in this House discussing whatever issue, the NDP have not come up with one alternative suggestion to restructuring adult education.

No, they try to create the smoke and mirrors. Instead of saying, Mr. Minister, you're wrong, you should look at this, what do they say? Well you're wrong because we think big government is better. You're wrong because you shouldn't be doing it for Weyerhaeuser; you shouldn't be doing it for Peter Pocklington; you shouldn't be doing it for all these reasons. But they never address the question of education. They never say, well, instead of doing this, you should do that. They have never addressed the issue of restructuring once.

They have never said well, Mr. Minister, we see what the numbers are saying about the ageing population; we see the studies that say you're going to have to be retrained three and four and even eight times in your lifetime, and this is what you should do about it. But not one word has come from them. Not one word, Mr. Chairman.

Well the final point that I would make is why not one word from them in terms of how to make change? Well as I said the other night in this legislature, Mr. Chairman, they have become pro-establishment. They are no longer the reform party in this province and, in fact, the only characterization that I can really put on them in one single word is, Mr. Chairman, they have become change resisters.

They want to bury their head in the sand. They want to pretend that the world is not changing. They want to pretend that we're not moving from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy that's going to require diversification, create new opportunities and new challenges. They want to pretend that the baby boom is not becoming the . . . is not greying. They want to pretend that we're not going . . . that the world economy is not changing. They want to pretend that the information-aged economy is not coming upon us. They want to pretend there's no technological era happening. They want to pretend that we're still in the industrial economy.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we cannot do that. We cannot do that because of the fact that he's got a new baby in his

house; I have young children, as do others, and we must position ourselves for this next two decades. Not because what we've done in the past is wrong, but because there's going to be changed circumstances in the future.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, I am undeterred in our goal. We're on the right track. I'm quite prepared to debate the fine points. There's no question that there's always one or two ways you can do things. But the reality is, Mr. Chairman, change must be made. We can debate how. We can debate why. We can debate the "what." But the reality, Mr. Chairman, is change must be made, and changes will be made. Changes will be made.

Every advice I get, whether it be the universities, the technical institutes, or the community colleges, there have to be change. Change is different, and we're going to do it, and we're going to do it better for the people of this province, Mr. Chairman. That's my commitment to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chairman, in answer to a fairly specific question, the minister has taken 60 minutes. He reminds me of watching a monkey walk around from place to place, not knowing exactly where he's going, but interested in everything at the same time and not making any sense about anything.

Unfortunately, Mr. Minister, what it does is it reveals the lack of discipline he has with his own speech pattern, and I'm afraid it's reflected also on the Department of Education.

The minister has clearly shown that he is not prepared to listen to any of the questions that have been asked. He's using an approach very similar that he used to the requests in my constituency when the Prince Albert Community College board was forced to resign. In the amalgamation that the department has set up and organized — the take-over of the community college in favour of a super board, including the Northern Institute of Technology and the community colleges and the institutes of technology in the other centres of Saskatoon, Regina and Moose Jaw — the question of self-governance was put to the minister, and he stonewalled it.

And he stonewalled it and he stonewalled it till eventually the enrolments in the community college in Prince Albert, which ordinarily would be for approximately 50 university classes per year . . . and they were expecting 50 this year as they had last year and the enrolments had been climbing year after year after year, except for this particular year because of the uncertainty created by the minister and his department.

We find that even at this stage, community college . . . the enrolment in the university classes in Prince Albert is down to under 50 per cent. Why? Because the minister spent all his time talking instead of listening. And he could have well listened because there was a well-founded institution in the community college system in Prince Albert.

The system there had been in place for 20 years. It had a

component in it which was unique to Saskatchewan. That was a component of local government, and a component of local government consisting of partially an elected board and partially an appointed board — a board which was very sensitive to the needs of the community, and was providing service that not one person that I knew of in our district ever, ever complained about. And they were prepared to carry on with the suggestions from the department, and prepared to integrate the knowledge and the experience that they had to carry on the adult education section in the district of Prince Albert. But the minister refused to listen.

And today I was given a sample, we were given a sample, of the kind of attitude that the board must have been facing. Complete arrogance — complete arrogance. The problem is this, Mr. Chairman: in education, never before, never before in my lifetime have there been cut-backs. Never before has a minister of Education yielded to a minister of Finance who said, the problem is going . . . our objective is going to be in one year, or in two years, to cover up the mess and the mismanagement of a government that I have made. Never before.

(1245)

And as a result, he's caved in, so that the money is being taken from education, from community colleges, from school boards — 1 per cent cut in grants from the educational development fund has been taken — so that they can pay their friends \$3.4 billion of debt. Accumulated how? It should have gone to education; it should have gone to health; but it was accumulated by paying the likes of Peter Pocklington \$20 million. It was accumulated by not collecting any money from Weyerhaeuser in the sale, not collecting one cent. We're waiting for that report; we're waiting for that report — \$248 billion.

The member — the critic for Energy — has pointed out to the Energy Minister a loss of 1.8 million in revenue . . . 1.5 billion in revenue, in oil, oil revenue. No, they are not as interested in putting all the money and continuing the priority for education. They would instead support, and the Minister of Education would instead support, the transporting of the Minister of Justice to a wedding in Calgary.

Let me talk about, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chairman, let me talk about the Prince Albert (Regional) Community College, and how this all happened — how the people of Prince Albert were betrayed by this minister.

There were 300 people that attended a meeting that the college called when they found out that the minister was going to take over the college. And this meeting included students, teachers, board members, past board members, interested members of the public. What did the chairman of the board have to say at this meeting? The chairman of the board said:

We feel, as a community, betrayed. We feel we were not consulted, that the decision came as a surprise to us. That although we knew amalgamation was one of the things being considered, we were told as late as two weeks ago

that it was just one of the things being considered.

That is recorded in the May 5 edition of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*. Those were the words of the chairman of the board. The minister went around and set up these consultations, these questions — these consultations around the province, Mr. Chairman, consultations by invitation. He talked to who he wanted to talk to. I maintain that the plan was set up ahead of time, Mr. Chairman. I maintain it was set up ahead of time and this was mere camouflage — those consultations were mere camouflage.

The amalgamation plan was already under way. They wanted to destroy . . . The minister wanted to destroy local programming, and he wanted to destroy local boards because he doesn't believe in local boards.

I wonder why, in proceeding in this direction . . . and we're trying to find out, Mr. Minister. What did the college staff have to say about the proposed merger to the technical school? They wrote a letter to our Premier, and it says here, in the May 20 edition of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*:

"One of the objections in the letter which has not been elaborated (long) enough, is the economic losses," said (the) association chairman . . .

"Our contracts we've had with local suppliers now may be handled (only) through provincial control."

Loss of local control — very important to the people of Saskatchewan. A tradition in Saskatchewan to have local control. School boards across Saskatchewan have enjoyed that tradition. The community college in Prince Albert was developing that tradition; it could have been built upon. No, it was taken away. He wants the power. It was taken away.

The article goes on to say:

When tenders and job applications are handled out of Regina, the association fears the local suppliers and contractors will be hurt. Another factor which could affect the economy of Prince Albert, says Karoly, is the potential loss of job security of individual in this city . . .

The association has stated the Prince Albert community, through various councils, committees, boards and liaison with business and community contracts has had a 20 year history of successful participation in adult education.

Successful participation. It wasn't a case of something needed to be fixed, and it wasn't the case of not being flexible. It was a case of not being listened to. It was a case of the minister talking and the minister not listening.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, what it was that the community colleges did and what they were doing and what their mandate was, not only in Prince Albert — particularly, in this case, because it's worth noting.

I have a list here of 23-some categories of work that the community college did and the programs that they provided, not only to Prince Albert but to the rural areas as well: counselling and information centre; full-time basic literacy program; full-time, adult, 5 to 10 upgrading in both rural areas and in Prince Albert; full-time, adult, 11 to 12 upgrading in both rural areas and in Prince Albert; basic job readiness; French learning centre.

Now these are but nine of the programs: agricultural short courses; power engineering; computer short courses; university off-campus program, from the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, Athabasca University, University of Oregon; general interest classes in rural and urban areas — that's cancelled. The university off-campus program, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Chairman, and you should know this; this is close to your riding — only half the enrolment this year.

People feel very uncertain. They don't know if the programs are going to be continued or not continued. So they're trying . . . Instead of coming to the college, they are now looking to go to the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. University of Saskatchewan in Regina. Tremendous costs to the parents. Why? Due to the uncertainty by this take-over. No other reason, Mr. Chairman, no other reason.

The college provided general interest classes in rural and urban areas. They provided institute credit modules, home care, special care aid, waiter/waitress training, building maintenance. Do you think for a moment that this was developed overnight? It took 20 years to develop a program that was accepted by the community, a growing program. It took 20 years to develop personnel and to have a board with a commitment to serve 1,200 people - 1,200 people per year in the community. All of a sudden it's taken over.

It's interesting to look at the procedure that was used to take over. Here is a memorandum dated April 28 from the deputy minister of Education to institute principals. It talks about process for the amalgamation of technical institutes and community colleges. And in the memorandum it talks about college amalgamation teams. It says:

Four urban teams will be responsible for providing advice and helping guide the amalgamation. These teams will be comprised of current college board members.

They didn't ask the board. This is a board which was elected and was responsible to the community. This is a take-over. Nobody asked. It was a take-over. Now what would you, Mr. Chairman, do if you were faced with the situation where you had been elected by the people but you've got a Minister of Education that's got a completely different agenda and issues a take-over?

So I'm saying, Mr. Minister, that what has happened is the minister, instead of listening to the residents and to the college board, the representative of the residents, and the college board, the representative of the students of the college — instead of listening and providing an option as

did the Minister of Education when the community college system was set up . . . Because the Prince Albert regional community college was set up prior to the setting up of the community college system in the province. And they had the unique position of having an elected board and of having a partially appointed board. And the minister at that time agreed that what was working should not be tampered with at that time.

But this Minister wouldn't, wouldn't listen. He offered . . . what did he offer? Well he offered a consultative a process. He wanted them to do their dirty work for him. He wanted them to first of all fire those people that were no longer needed under the amalgamated system, and then he would take over in the hole.

I have here an article from the P.A. *Herald*, May 1. The headline is:

Merging community college with Northern Institute of Technology ends a community adult learning link. Two decades of community involvement in education have been ended.

This has been a . . . this is by a statement, a statement issued by the Prince Albert Regional Community College. It states:

The statement issued Thursday says the government, by dissolving the college's board, is wiping out a lengthy tradition of community-based decisions and local autonomy.

No respect for democracy, Mr. Chairman. No respect for democracy. That college had a staff . . . has a staff of 300 part-time and 88 permanent employees. What guarantee did they have? They had no guarantee that these people would remain employed.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move we rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

Mr. Chairman: — I can't accept the motion.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try to conclude my remarks just in a minute.

One of the biggest losses to the entire community, besides the loss of local control, Mr. Chairman, is the loss of personal development courses in the college. I've had people tell me that in rural Saskatchewan those personal development courses were one of the best forms of therapy — best form of therapy. Not only therapy, but the personal development courses led to an enrichment of their livelihoods.

Now these courses are no longer under the mandate of the community college. In fact, they're no longer under the mandate of anybody in this province. That's a result of this take-over, and that is the reason that the people are objecting to the take-over, Mr. Chairman.

It goes against the grain of the most accepted principles in education. Indeed, it goes against the grain of the

principle stated in this particular document, *Directions* — the objectives, the goals for Saskatchewan. The second, the third, and the fourth objectives after the first one of basic skills — the second one talking about lifelong learning, the third one talking about understanding and relating to others, and the fourth one about self-concept development.

The cancellation of these courses ignores the very document published by this department. That's why this minister has no confidence . . . has lost the confidence of the people of Prince Albert and the people that are in the community college system.

Mr. Minister, I have a question for the minister. Will you, Mr. Minister, will you reconsider, in view of the continued opposition of the amalgamation of the community college with the Northern Institute of Technology? Will you reconsider?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, relative to the Prince Albert Regional Community College board, the hon. member said quite pointedly, point-blank in fact, that I had forced him to resign. That is absolutely wrong. They resigned voluntarily, in fact caught me quite me by surprise when they did, Mr. Chairman. I had nothing to do with their resignation. They voluntarily resigned.

And I want to add one other point, and I want to make it again because I've made it in this House before. That board can hold its head high in terms of what it has accomplished in Prince Albert area over the past several years. Because as I told them in my . . . and I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, as well, that I myself and officials have had many meetings with that board over this past summer and late spring.

As I told them when I met with them, that the changes that we are contemplating, they ought not take it personal, they ought not interpret that somehow we're doing these changes because what they've done in the past has been wrong, or somehow failed us, and all those reasons I presented before. What we were talking about is making sure we were positioned for the future, and I talked about that at some length earlier today.

Now, the hon. member, if you cut through his comments, Mr. Chairman, and he went through, I think it was, 26 program areas and tried to suggest that somehow these programs that have gone on in the past are not going to go on in the future. Well I'm going to tell you that with the exception of the hobby courses, virtually every one of those courses will continue and we expect to have the same kind of programming this year as we had last year.

Now I know, as was said over here when he was talking about and decrying the fact that some of these general interest courses may not go on, the question was raised, you know: how many cakes will go undecorated? And that really is a substantive part of his argument. Certainly those hobby courses have played a useful role but the time is here to move forward.

I've got one more comment to make on this. The programming that those people want in that area will go on. And I'll tell you what, Mr. Chairman, they continually

avoid the issue. They get into talking about the hobby courses. They get into talking about Weyerhaeuser. They get into talking about oil companies. But that, Mr. Chairman, has been a feature of this session of the legislature. The issues that Saskatchewan society today are facing is, are we going to have an education system that we need for the 21st century?

What about what's happening in agriculture? Well what have we seen? They've avoided the issues there. They're on a 143-day cycle when it comes to raising issues of agriculture in this legislature. The issues of today are the things like . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. The member is somewhat straying from the educational reference.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 1:06 p.m.