

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We left off, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, this afternoon, doing an analysis of whether or not there has been serious cut-backs in the educational system. And I think in your own words that you have indicated that there has been. You set up a development fund which you said was going to be over five years. Of course, that was before the election - a great, big fund, you know, before the election. I doubt if you ever, every really had the money or budgeted for it. And as soon as the election is over, that five-year development fund suddenly becomes a 10-year program, I see. And you come in here and then have the audacity to start blaming it onto the division boards. Because you've deceived the educational system again. You didn't have the money. You've run this province into the massiveness of debt that it's now a have-not province, and previously, when we left office, it was a have province. So what you have done is with the development fund, you have staggered that over 10 years.

The second thing that you have done is imposed the gas tax, which is another burden on the school divisions, the E&H tax.

You admit yourself that there's been funding cut-backs in the operating grants to the school divisions. You've cut out a regional office, and you said it was done not by yourself but by someone else. You start blaming someone else, even though the trustees from the central divisions indicate to you that they weren't consulted and that they want their regional office.

Also what you have done is, during the course of the year, there was something like \$83 million in property improvement grants to help alleviate the taxation to the people throughout this province. Well it didn't take you long - \$83 million of property improvement grants was wiped out. And what you have done now is to continue to pass on the burden of education to the local school boards.

And so I want to turn to one other matter, Mr. Minister, and that is in respect to your capital funds. And I want to ask you specifically whether you have any contact from the Humboldt School Division board, the town of Lake Lenore, and whether or not they have asked you whether or not you would approve the construction of an elementary school in the village . . . town of Lake Lenore. And I want to ask you whether or not, after all of the information that has been tendered to you by the board chairman, Mr. Own Hopfner, from Lake Lenore, I wonder whether or not you have made a decision in respect to the capital expenditure for a school in the village of Lake Lenore. Could you provide me with an answer.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — As relates to Lake Lenore, we have received their request for a \$1.4 million school project, and it's been approved and it's in the planning stages, I'm led to believe.

Mr. Koskie: — I want to just be perfectly sure. Have you in fact, have you in fact, indicated to the division board and to the chairman of Lake Lenore that there has been an approval, and could you indicate, if that is the case, when is construction intended to proceed?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes, they've been advised. And in so far as the schedule, as I said, there are some plans to be drawn, etc., etc., and the time frame revolves somewhat around the board. But we would expect that they would be starting yet later this year.

Mr. Koskie: — Can you indicate, Mr. Minister, the date on which you advised them that there would be an approval of the structure - of the construction of a school?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't have the exact date that they were notified. Our best guess was that it was probably in late June somewhere.

Mr. Koskie: — The reason I'm pushing for this is it's very important, because you probably know the concern that they have at Lake Lenore. And I have a copy of the letter here. And I'm surprised that you're into your sixth year and we had this situation brought to your attention not just recently, but before that - a year ago at least - to the department, and nothing was done.

But I want to impress upon you, Mr. Minister, the absolute necessity of proceeding with this. And accordingly, I want to, for the records, to indicate to you a part of the letter by the chairman of the board. He said:

On March 4, 1987, Doug Sanders, the fire inspector out of Saskatoon, inspected our elementary school and condemned the building. He said there is only one school in all of Saskatchewan that is worse, and it is being closed down.

Last night we had a board meeting with the teachers that are working at the school. They are really scared. There are no fire escapes on the second level. There are no fire doors, and the building is completely constructed of flammable materials. The fire inspector said that if his kids were going to that school he would have the doors closed next day.

Would you please make a decision on our school as soon as possible about our building project and let us know. The parents and teachers in our community are very concerned about the situation as it is now. No one realized how bad the building was until last week. Now we have a real problem.

So that was the situation, Mr. Minister, and I want to say that I'm pleased to hear that you have in fact given a

commitment, because it is absolutely critical that that school be replaced and rebuilt. And while I . . . I think it takes a good MLA to get action, and that's why, that's why we're getting results. And it was . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. I got the communications, by the way, in respect to any communications that went to you.

So I say, Mr. Minister, I want that to be perfectly sure that it proceeds, and I don't want you to start putting it on the board's back now, that they're the delaying ones. I want your full and total commitment that the money is available because it's absolutely for the safety of the children necessary that it be replaced. And I commend you for proceeding with it. And I will be checking to see what nature of your commitment, because sometimes it's not as exact as what one would like. I'm very surprised that you wouldn't be able to pull correspondence with the board indicating the date of the commitment.

What I want to say to you in conclusion of this here aspect, Mr. Minister, is that there is a great deal of concern about your credibility in rural Saskatchewan as Minister of Education. And part of it is that you came into office here indicating that you were going to do a lot of consulting with people, and I think that to some extent, initially, that was carried out. But I think as your government continues in office, what we're finding is less and less consultation. And I think that the basic presence of lack of consultation was in respect to the closure of the regional office in Yorkton. I can't believe that a minister wouldn't have at least had some contact with the local school boards in that area.

And so what I ask you the, Mr. Minister, is to take the grin off your face and start realizing that there is concern out there. I have indicated to you, I have indicated to you the massiveness of the cuts in one school division; I've indicated to you the concern with the regional office. I've indicated to you the concern in respect to the lack of funding, or a decrease and cut-back in funding.

And so I say to you, Mr. Minister, while I am pleased that you okayed the construction of the school in Yorkton, I would ask you to reconsider, reconsider closing of the regional office in Yorkton. I would appreciate if you would take a look at that because, as I have indicated to you in the correspondence that you have received, these people feel very, very strongly about it, and I would ask you to reconsider that. Would you do that?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the rationale for the regional office configuration, I think I explained earlier to this House and to this member earlier on today, Mr. Chairman, it was done in consultation. And the services will be provided, albeit from a different location, and I think the people there have nothing to worry about.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I was kind of anxious to get into the Education estimates, and I am pleased to do so tonight.

The last few days, as I've watched the minister perform on the other side of the House, has indicated clearly to me why they are as low in the polls as they are in this province. They've lost their credibility; they've lost their

believability; and that minister is an example of why that's happened.

I've listened to his rhetoric as he's talked about members on this side clinging to the past, sticking heads in the sand, no vision of the future. And he portrays himself and his government as having this vision. He talks about the year 2001, but what we're seeing from 1987-88 and for 1990 is precious little in terms of education and the future of our kids.

The problem that his government has been creating has been shown that that government is becoming weird, weary, worn, and tired after only five years in government. No consultation. Same old speeches whether he delivers one on agriculture or whether it's on education. It's the same old stuff, the same half-truths, and indicates that he's lost contact with the people of Saskatchewan.

And it's clear why they're angry and why they feel betrayed and why they're disappointed with this government. It's clear that they've lost touch not only with the people of this province but with their own political party.

An Hon. Member: — Ask some questions.

Mr. Lautermilch: — I intend to ask some questions.

They've been scrapping local autonomy. And I want to talk tonight a little bit about the community college in Prince Albert and the kind of callous treatment that that board has received from this particular minister. And I'm going to ask the minister tonight if he'll not reconsider his decision to force that board into a position where they felt they had nothing to do but to resign.

I want to go back to 1982. The minister may not be aware of it but I want . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's in the past.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, it's in the past but it's in your present, the time that you've been governing.

And I want to talk about the former member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake when he was questioned at a chamber of commerce board of directors meeting as to what there's going to be in Prince Albert to replace the 200 jobs that they pulled out of that community shortly after their election. And what he said was, it's a matter of consultation and we need time; we need time to get our feet and to get ourselves together. And I want to tell you it was the same kind of consultation when we lost those 200 jobs as what you did with the community college board.

Mr. Minister, the former president of the community college board has indicated clearly what he feels of your government. He said your government is deaf and dumb and blind, and you're bent on a misguided course of destruction. And he also threatens that the people of Prince Albert are going to fight to get local autonomy for that community college again.

(1915)

And I ask you tonight, Mr. Minister, will you reconsider your decision? Will you now go back and consult with the people who are interested in post-secondary education in Prince Albert? And will you again consult with those people, bring back that locally elected board so that we can get on with having that school run in a fair and efficient fashion?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — No.

Mr. Lautermilch: — A good indication of why you're as low as you are in the polls, Mr. Minister.

I would like to know why you're not going to go back and consult with those people that you've treated so callously. What is it that you think you know about running of a community college that the people who've been involved, some of them for 20 years in Prince Albert, know?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member raises the question about consultation and who we met with, and I quite frankly have answered this question probably half a dozen times, if not a dozen times, in this legislature, Mr. Chairman.

The NDP questioning is getting very repetitive. We've gone over the issue of Prince Albert and the community college board on more than one occasion with more than one of those members. And now again the attempt to present the façade - and quite wrongly - that somehow what we did, we did in isolation, cooked up this scheme underneath the dome here in Regina. And nothing could be further from the truth. Because the truth is this, Mr. Chairman, I personally, and/or along with my Legislative Secretary, the hon. member for Regina Wascana - and a very good Legislative Secretary, I might add - had some 20 meetings this past winter with something like 550 associations and individual across the spectrum, if you like, and across this province.

And we heard a number of things, and that became the blueprint that we've talked about in this House before, *Preparing For the Year 2000*, as it relates to adult education. And now he somehow is trying to suggest that we never consulted.

I can tell him that on March 18, I was in his own town, Prince Albert, and met with an invitation list and a meeting list here that goes on for some several pages; the Prince Albert Indian and Métis Friendship Centre was there; the Saskatchewan Indian Technical Institute; Bernice Hammersmith; President of the Association of West Central Native Women; Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians; the YWCA; Prince Albert and District Learning Centre; Prince Albert Community Services Centre; Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Association - I mean the list goes on and on and on - the Prince Albert Comprehensive High School Board. I mean there are just pages of people who were there.

I would ask the hon. member who seems to have some kind of monopoly on sanctimoniousness when it comes to consultation, I would ask him how many meetings did he or his party hold across this province this past winter as it relates to adult basic education. And the answer is for

the most part, zero, Mr. Chairman, because they do not have a blueprint when it comes to adult basic education. That is the reality, Mr. Chairman. We have put together a blueprint and we stand by it.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, let's get firstly one thing straight here. This side of the House will ask the questions and it's your job to be answering them.

I want to, as well, mention to you why we keep asking of you why you didn't consult with them. You have not in this House stood up one time and indicated that you consulted with the community college board. You haven't said that yet in this House. You've avoided and skirted the question every time you've been asked, and that's why we'll keep asking that question, Mr. Minister.

You talk about speaking to the people associated with the community college in Prince Albert. Can you tell me then why none of those community college board members feel that your department has treated them fairly and that your department or yourself has been consulting with them? Can you explain to me why they feel one way and why you say another thing in this House?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the facts are these. At the March 18 meeting I referred to, there were two people there from the community college. So it's not as though in terms of putting together this very large group that dealt with community colleges, institutes, universities, adult basic education, that they weren't somehow a part of it, point number one.

Point number two, I can tell you as minister, I met with that board and/or parts of that board much more than I met with any other board across this province. And the reason I did is I wanted to walk the extra mile. I recognized that Prince Albert had been unique, and I wanted to walk the extra mile to make sure they were treated fairly and that all of their options were given a fair hearing, and that we did. And over and above that, my officials walked an extra 10 miles with them to try and address the circumstances that they felt were unique and peculiar to Prince Albert and area.

So any suggestion that we somehow did not bend over backwards to deal with that board would be totally erroneous - absolutely and totally erroneous.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, then am I to understand that you're telling this legislature and the people of this province that that community college board has dealt unfairly with your ministry?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the community college board up there, unfortunately, and to my disappointment, made the decision to resign of their own volition. I was quite happy to continue working with them in good faith and reaching a consensus, as we had done in three of the other institute locations. In three out of four locations it went, for the most part, smoothly. Not as though there aren't glitches and problems to solve, but the dialogue has been good, the effort has been sincere with all parties involved.

And somehow what you're trying to have me believe, and

the rest of the public believe, is that the process that worked well in the other three centres couldn't work well in Prince Albert, and I don't buy that.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, clearly you would understand that that board felt you were putting them in a position to be your hatchet man. That was the feeling of that board, Mr. Minister. I've met with those board members, and I know how they're feeling regarding the way you've treated that community college board.

I ask you again: given the fact that the community college in Prince Albert - and you've admitted that - was one of the most advanced educational facilities there are in this province in terms of that kind of educational delivery system, a board that was able to turn a \$50,000 grant into a \$7 million budget and educate hundreds and dozens of people, you are telling me that in this province that was the only board that you couldn't get along with, and that you couldn't come to some kind of an agreement with? I ask you again: are you saying that that board was dealing unfairly with you?

Or do you perhaps think that there was something special in Prince Albert, a special situation that you weren't willing to address, and that you weren't willing to allow function because you wanted to grab control of the community college boards through another super board here in Regina - a place where you could appoint a bunch of political hacks to do your bidding?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, the answer is no to everything.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me about the make-up of your new super board? Can you tell me that there's going to be regionalized representation? Can you tell me that there's going to be some input from some of the students? Can you tell me exactly how you're going to build that board, what type of people you're going to man it with, and how it's going to function?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I'm going to go farther than that because the hon. member hasn't been paying attention through probably 20 or 25 hours of our estimates. But I'm prepared to take the time and read into the record again, as I've perhaps done for I don't know how many members opposite.

When they try to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we somehow weren't prepared to recognize the uniqueness of the Prince Albert situation, when we were, and that we somehow weren't prepared to walk the extra mile in good faith with that board, because on June 4th I sent then a letter to the board chairperson, Murdine McCreath, and I said in that letter: "First, I propose . . ."

Now this is for a minister who . . . I signed this letter. Now he's trying to tell the world that I was somehow on some kind of power grab, trying to force this board to resign, and all the other ill-conceived notions he purports that I subscribe to. What did I say in this letter? And I quote:

First, I propose that the current board of the community college remain in place for a period of up to 18 months . . .

Now, does that sound like some minister who's trying to kick a board out of the way, Mr. Chairman? Would reasonable people listening to this debate tonight buy your line or buy what I said in the letter of June 4? And I repeat:

. . . I propose that the current board of the community college remain in place for a period of up to 18 months . . .

Why, Mr. Chairman? For this reason:

. . . to provide for continuity of programming in Prince Albert while the new institute becomes operational.

Point number one. Point number two.

Once the 18 month phase-in period is completed (I went on to say in my letter further) I propose that we establish a Regional Advisory Board for Prince Albert and region . . . The board will have the following powers:

(to) . . . advise the Board of Directors of the new institute on the appropriate array of programs and services provided in Prince Albert (and) region.

It will offer guidance and community input to the Institute board with respect to local concerns and interests.

And get this, Mr. Chairman, a member of the regional advisory board will be appointed to the board of directors of the institute, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, and he's just called the existing board, those appointments, somehow government hacks, and government flacks. I mean, he's totally inconsistent in his observations.

The people that have been served on that board, whether they were elected or appointed, have served this province well. And I've said it in this House on many occasions and I say it again, that that board, it's not that we're changing it because of somehow they've failed in the past, because clearly that is not the issue. Clearly, that is not the issue. And I've told them all of this on August the 5th. And if one wants to check *Hansard*, it would be page 1556. And the hon. member is using up the House's time, but I will finish the detail. And because I recognize the uniqueness of the Prince Albert board in so far as the tradition and practice of electing some board members, you know what I further said in my June 4 letter, Mr. Chairman? I said:

The practice of electing community representatives to the college board will be continued for the advisory board if this is desired.

Now does that not seem to be the words of a department and a ministry that's prepared to walk the extra mile, prepared to recognize their uniqueness, prepared to recognize all that they have done in the past, prepared to recognize that continuity of programming must go on and that we want their expertise, not only in a regional advisory capacity, but also to have somebody sit on that

new institute board?

Now how does the hon. member square all of this with his overblown rhetoric that he himself doesn't even believe? They don't have a plan when it comes to post-secondary education. And I'll tell you what, the two things that they never mention in this House when it comes to Prince Albert Regional Community College are these two things, Mr. Chairman. And that shows you how misguided they are when it comes to priorities.

Why did this government undertake this restructuring, starting back in about May, Mr. Chairman? Why did we do that? The reason we did that is there are two considerations here that are of prime importance. Number one, come this fall we want that new institute up and running for the students, for the young adult learners in this province. And that's why we've been doing it and started this May because we want to be up and running for this fall.

And the second point he never raised, Mr. Chairman, is in all this amalgamation, why did we want Prince Albert community college board to be tucked into the process and work with us? It's because we were interested in making sure that their staff and their faculty had a fair shake at the jobs in the new institute. That's why. Students and faculty come first, number one and two. And they can argue and harangue about administration process this versus that. I clearly wanted to accommodate these people as best we could.

They chose not to work with us. They chose; not us, Mr. Chairman. They chose to resign. And if they chose to resign, I can't help that. And the hon. member from Saskatoon University says I forced them. And, Peter, you clearly know that that is not true.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I meant to say the hon. member from Saskatoon University clearly knows that is not true, and he is an honourable gentleman. And I would like to know how he squares, saying from his seat that that's not true and that I forced them, when clearly I made the offer that they could stay in place for 18 months if they so wished. Now I'd like him to stand up and tell me how I forced them, when those are clearly the facts, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, again you talk about walking the extra mile. I'm telling you that you may feel you've got credibility in Prince Albert, but I'm here speaking for the people who tell me that you've got none. You've got no credibility with the students; you've got no credibility with the teachers or the board or the public at large. Mr. Minister, your actions were a wash-out, and you're going to pay the political price.

(1930)

I'd like to move on to another item that we might want to have a look at tonight, Mr. Minister. I would like to know from you when the decision was made to go ahead and when the okay was made, or if the school board in Prince Albert got any indication from your department that there would be a \$2.6 million renovation at Riverside school. Can you give me the information please?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, while my officials are getting that specific piece of information for me, I want to pick up on a couple of comments the hon. member made about the Prince Albert Regional Community College.

Once again he says that this restructuring and the refocusing and the changes that we're making in adult education in this province, that we have no support for it. Well let's remind him. He says the students do not support us, the faculty and staff do not support us. Well let's remind him what his own party is saying - the young people of his own party. What was their resolution at this past convention, this year, Mr. Chairman, of the NDP? What was the NDP youth wing's resolution when it came to technical institutes? They recommended one institute, Mr. Chairman, one institute.

I would suggest to the hon. member that it's he who is out of touch, not we who are out of touch. He is lagging behind the youth wing of their own party. They know there has to be a new agenda; it's just that the NDP opposite do not know there has to be a new agenda.

And I shouldn't be surprised that the NDP are so totally unhooked from things, Mr. Chairman. I refer to an article in the *Battleford Telegraph*, July 8, 1987. And we've got the NDP running around the province holding employment workshops. And you know what the headline says on this one, Mr. Chairman? It says, "No one shows up for employment seminar." That's what the people of this province think of the NDP and their idea of how post-secondary education, manpower, and training needs should be in this province. They are out of touch to the point that there's not even a . . . There's no sense even showing up for what they're putting on out there. The people recognize it, their own youth recognize it - they're out of touch. This is characteristic of the NDP in 19 . . . pre-1982, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, you may be well advised not to worry too much about what the Saskatchewan young New Democrats are feeling; you might be well advised to keep an eye on what your own party is saying about decentralizing government; you might be well advised to have a look at what the former chairman of that Prince Albert community college board told you about the kind of government that you're delivering; you might be well advised to talk with your party people who he spoke to. That's what you might be well advised to do.

Have you got the answer in terms of when that information was provided to the Prince Albert school board?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, the Riverside project is yet to receive formal approval. Obviously there was some . . . There has been discussion both in '86 and in '87, I believe, relative to that capital project. They've been given the indication that it's a very high priority, and as soon as it can go forward, it will. I don't know what more I can say about that.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, there seems to be some

conflict here with the director of education, Dennis Hockley, and I want to quote to you from the May 15 issue of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*. It says here:

Hockley said the decision to scrap the work came as a shock to the board which had already received written approval for the project.

I ask you again, Mr. Minister: did that board receive written approval or did they not?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — About all I can reiterate is that (a) the project has not had all and formal approval; (b) we recognize it's a high priority; (c) it has not been scrapped, at least unless the board has scrapped it. But like 50 or 100 or even 150 projects every year, some of them get deferred because of lower prioritization until funds are available, or based on further examination. So I think for you to use the word "scrap" would be inaccurate because we haven't scrapped it unless they have scrapped it. Just to give you the whole process here, because perhaps the hon. member, being a new member here, doesn't understand how it works . . . You do understand how it works? Okay.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, if that hasn't been approved, could you explain to this House and to the people of Prince Albert why it hasn't been approved.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well that was what I was going to attempt to do. Every year, the minister of Education as I understand it gets anywhere up to about 200 capital project requests per year. And that's not just not a phenomenon that's happened this year or last year, or the year before. It's been a trend throughout history almost, if you like. And every year, based on appropriation and the budget . . . And all those projects are prioritized, I might add. They're put in different priority categories and they're all prioritized and in any given year, if there's 200 projects and they represent a stack that deep, and you've got money to cover that many, that's what you build. If you got money to cover that many, that's what you build. And the list goes on and on and on based on as funding comes available.

And the way that projects are prioritized - or prioritized, whichever word Webster allows these days - is that there are valuation teams that go out and assess these projects, just as in the case of the Lake Lenore project. Some very, very critical factors entered into the prioritization there, not only from a student enrolment pressure but because of the physical conditions of the building. And hence, based on things like that, projects get moved up higher or lower on the list. And it's a process that I would suggest has served this province well for many years.

This project at Riverside, I suspect, is one of probably a couple of hundred that we received last year. I don't know what was built - probably 50 projects, which is not abnormal. And they weren't high enough on the list, if you like. I have every belief that, all things being equal, that project will come to completion - in which year I can't say, but as funding permits.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, I am still having a great

deal of difficulty. Mr. Hockley indicates in this issue of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* that they had received written approval for this project. They had it in their budget and they had it ready to go. And I'm just having a great deal of difficulty understanding why there would be this misinformation or miscommunication between your department and that particular school board. And I would like you to explain to this House, perhaps, if you have some information as to why he would feel he had written approval and you indicate he doesn't.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I think the hon. member would do well to probably talk to Mr. Hockley himself and not use the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* as your research source.

As far as I'm aware, and I'm advised by my officials, is the letter that that board would receive in '86, relative of probably around budget time, would be yes, we're aware of your project; it's a high priority; it may well be that funds will permit in '87, but they do not permit for this year. And certainly that isn't formal approval, if you like.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, let me be very clear about this. I talked with Mr. Hockley, it'll be a week ago tomorrow. All right? Can you explain - and you still haven't explained - why Mr. Hockley should feel that he had written go-ahead, and he had a written approval, and you indicate to this House that he doesn't. Can you perhaps clarify that for me.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I'm not going to try and second-guess what his interpretation may or may not be. All I can give you is the facts as I know them, and that is as I laid out to you in my earlier statement.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, if you have any written correspondence, would you be prepared to table it today?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I don't have any correspondence with us. You know, what my officials bring are brief-cases, not filing cabinets.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Ask your officials to go back to their office, find any written correspondence, bring it to this House, and table it.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I'll have my staff go and see what we have in the files, and if there is something of some use to you, I'll bring it to the House. I suspect if you've talked to Mr. Hockley, maybe there is some reason to believe there is some commitment. I thought you would have already had that.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, your job is to provide information to this House; it's my job to ask for the information, and I think we've gone through that again. But I want to say to you this, Mr. Minister./ The reason you've got no credibility is simply the kind of performance you're putting on in this legislature tonight, and I'll rest my case.

I have just one other question of you. And I would ask you about the Northern Institute of Technology, if you have any numbers in terms of the number of class-room instructors that are in place at that facility, the number of

people who are involved in management in that particular facility - if you could give us those numbers.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well it will take us a few minutes to dig that out but we'll send it over to you as soon as we can get it.

Mr. Kowalsky: — A couple of informational items I'd like to ask the minister about. First of all, Mr. Minister, could you indicate to us which subvote the special ed funding is under, and also, how much money has been allocated to the special ed under that subvote for '87-88.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — There would be two votes that would recognize expenditures relative to special education. I refer you to your copy of *Estimates* '87-88, page 28, Education, vote 5, item 14. And that would recognize the administrative component, if you like, of special education. And it's something in the order of \$20 million would be in the base operating grant, but not identified other than the global number of some \$330 million.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Is there any way of telling how much of the EDF (educational development fund) money was spent or was allocated this year by school boards to special education?

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well we don't have the EDF broke down that way. We could. It's a fairly exhaustive procedure, I think you can well imagine. There has been a number of projects.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Would it be possible to get a listing of the capital funding that has been approved this year for the school boards along with the amount of money per project? Would it be possible to get that within, say, by Wednesday? And would it be possible also, along with that, to get a list of those proposed projects that may be in the chute, say, for the next year, if possible?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — What we can do is give you a list of capital projects approved. I think we can have that for you by Wednesday.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I hadn't intended to become involved in these estimates. I know we're under the pressure of time to complete our review of departments.

Even as I listen to the minister muddle through on his explanation of taxes, property taxes, I restrained myself from becoming involved. But as I listened to the minister's sterile, technocratic, centralist vision for Saskatchewan, Mr. Chairman, the opportunity to participate is very clearly there.

The minister seems to have a vision that's based on an assumption that only he and his officials are the ones that know all the problems, know all the challenges, know all of the solutions that confront Saskatchewan people.

Citizen involvement. Citizen involvement seems to be to ask people to submit their ideas to central authorities.

Citizen involvement seems to be limited to central boards appointed by the government. Citizen involvement seems to be limited to advisory boards. But citizen involvement does not seem to really take into account the very real strengths that Saskatchewan people have, strengths that have been demonstrated over the years. And that is that reasonable men and women in their own communities, when elected, will make the right decisions for their community, will make the right decisions for this province.

And that seems to be something that is entirely lacking in your vision for Saskatchewan. And I think sadly so, because it means that we're going to have a Saskatchewan that's planned by your and your officials, does not involve Saskatchewan people to any meaningful extent. You do not trust Saskatchewan people. You seem to trust only your own technocratic solutions, your own sterile solutions for Saskatchewan and its future.

And, Mr. Chairman, I have a different vision for this future and a different vision for Saskatchewan - a vision that says that Saskatchewan people are intelligent, that Saskatchewan people are co-operative, and Saskatchewan people are sensitive to the conditions and to the challenges around them, sensitive to the challenges of adult education, sensitive to the challenges of advanced education, sensitive to the challenges that our young people face.

But the minister seems to take a position that only he and his officials, that only he and technocratic clique, are the ones that really know all the problems, really know all the answers to what ails Saskatchewan. And I wish the minister would recognize that there are real strengths in this province, strengths that are based on citizen involvement in education, citizen involvement in local government, a strength that is a strong tradition in this province, and that you would do well to recognize that and take that into account as you set out to plan the future for education in Saskatchewan. You will do well to do that, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I have a belief that people are far better educated than they've been before and therefore better able to participate in the challenges that face us. Because of conditions and changes in the work place, people have more time to be able to participate in the challenges and especially to be able to participate in education. And let's not forget that before education became a state responsibility and before it became a church undertaking, education was a responsibility of the family. And as the family has more time to become involved, I think it's only reasonable that we would throw those challenges to families, that we would throw those challenges to communities, and invite them to become more involved rather than less involved in advancing education in this province.

We should also recognize that far more than ever before people enjoy conditions, enjoy an environment where they can become informed about the problems that face them, about the potential solutions that are around them.

Mr. Minister, I submit to you that as in our past, and perhaps more so than in our past, Saskatchewan people

are better able, better equipped to deal with the problems of education in that they need to become involved, that they should become involved. And I think that for the health of education, that they must become involved in a real sense in order to advance education in this province.

If we can look back to the strengths of school boards, why cannot you look forward to a future that sees a real possibility for democratically elected people to become involved in handling education and in advancing education in this province?

Again, Mr. Minister, you have a sterile vision, a technocratic vision of what our future should hold and how it should unfold, as opposed to a future that recognizes that conditions are changing, that people are far better able to participate in our future. Yet you won't allow them; you won't let them.

Mr. Minister, I just have one question for you: will you look at the plans that you and your department have come up with and see if there's opportunity to get people far more involved than you propose, in a democratically elected way, in involvement in adult education and advanced education as it now the case with school boards in this province?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The hon. member, using some very high-powered eight-cylinder words amongst which was "technocratic", etc., etc., tried to suggest that - not unlike the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake - that we didn't consult with anybody in putting this blueprint together, that we designed it in the still of night in some back corner of some smoke-filled political back room. Nothing could be farther from the truth. And the stark contrast here, Mr. Chairman, is that they have no blueprint. That's why they're so ouchy about our blueprint.

Well let's go through the invitation list, and this may take a while, but let's go through it. And the hon. member is shaking his head because he doesn't want to hear it. Their party . . . It was not a feature of their party to consult, Mr. Chairman. It's a recipe that's worked well for us. It's a recipe that's worked well for us, and I'm going to take the time in the House to read in the invitation list for the consultation meetings that were held this past winter, Mr. Chairman.

In Regina: Provincial Apprenticeship Board, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Hotels Association of Saskatchewan, Canadian Petroleum Association, Independent Petroleum Association, Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association, Hotels Association of Saskatchewan, Regina Construction Association, Regina Real Estate Association, Saskatchewan Construction Association, Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce education committee, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture, Saskatchewan Health Care Association, Saskatchewan Trucking Association, Saskatchewan pork producers, Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association, Electrical Contractors of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Mining Association, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association,

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, the stock growers, the canola growers.

And I must say, Mr. Chairman, just when I see that one, the canola growers, I recall well their brief and their representative at that meeting - a well done brief, a well thought out brief. The farmer that presented it had some university teaching experience himself. A very thoughtful presentation on behalf of the canola growers.

Which goes to show you, Mr. Speaker, you know, when we think about consulting in education, we've haven't traditionally thought about groups like the canola growers. But they represent that ever-increasing group of farmers out there who are part of that technological era, that knowledge-based economy that's so important in agriculture, as it is to other areas. And while I was going through the list, I was reminded of that very thoughtful presentation.

Canadian Manufacturing Association, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, an invitation, along with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and I recall the meeting they were at. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, Construction and General Workers' Union, retail workers' and department store union, lifelong learning . . . sorry, Saskatchewan association of lifelong learning, Saskatchewan adult basic education council, home and school association, parent teacher associations, the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Saskatchewan advisory council on women, The Voice of the Handicapped, Canadian congress of learning opportunities for women, contemporary women's programs, Volunteer Information and Training Centre, Native Employment Centre, guidance and career counsellors' association, Regina Senior Citizens' Centre, Saskatchewan association of pensioners and pioneers, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, a number of professional associations, a number of them.

Then you've got major corporations who too often we've haven't hooked into the consultative process. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Credit Union Central, SGI, Sask Power, SaskTel, IPSCO. The city of Regina had representatives there. The Royal Bank, some very thoughtful presentations from them. The Bank of Commerce, the Bank of Montreal, the Co-op Upgrader, the Co-operators, Toronto Dominion Bank, Saskoil, United Grain Growers, Cargill, Pioneer, students' unions at both universities and technical institutes, faculty associations at both universities and technical institutes, staff unions, CUPE and SGEU, university women's association, academic women, University of Regina, Association Canadienne Française de Régina, Association Culturelle Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan, Multicultural Association of Saskatchewan, Regina Multicultural Council, Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations; Saskatchewan Organization For Heritage Languages, Regina Symphony, the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Globe Theatre, SaskSport Incorporated, Saskatchewan Library Association, Saskatchewan Arts Board, the YMCA, the YWCA, Saskatchewan Museums Association - and I recall in their presentation the pitch they made about what a very large group of employers . . . what a very large

group they represented in terms of the numbers of employees that they had across this province, Mr. Chairman - Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon Symphony.

And as I said earlier a number of professional associations: the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association, Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Nursing Assistants Association, the Society of Management Accountants of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Public Health Association, Society of Engineering Technicians and Technologists of Saskatchewan, Regina Personnel Association, Association of Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association, the law society, Saskatchewan Medical Association, and some old friends of mine, the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association.

And, Mr. Chairman, that only includes Regina. Okay? And I held 20 meetings, Mr. Chairman, 20; the invitation list for one. And the hon. member has the audacity to sit in this House and suggest that somehow we don't consult. Somehow we don't consult. The track record is we met with 550 . . . and sitting to my left, the member for Regina Wascana, my Legislative Secretary, and in some instances, the MLAs in the areas, the hon. member for Regina South and the Minister of Urban Affairs - a very good minister - were at these meetings, 20 of them across this province; 550 groups, associations, and individuals. And somehow you're trying to suggest we haven't consulted.

(2000)

Well, I'm telling you what, we consulted. We heard what the issues were; we published what the issues were, and we acted. Because, you know, if we hadn't . . . if we had merely consulted, Mr. Chairman . . . Let's take this a step further. We had the meetings. We heard what the issues were. Now we could have sat on the report for a long time and vacillated and delayed because it didn't always say that what . . . or people didn't always say that what we've been doing is totally right. In fact, they recommended some changes.

Well we could have put in another white paper or a blue paper or a green paper, or said we were going to take it to cabinet and then put out a white paper or a green paper, or then take it back out to the public to see what their view is - this way or that way. We could have vacillated and delayed. But the bottom line is, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we acted. This was not a case of paralysis by analysis.

We went out; we listened; we published what we heard so that everybody knew what our findings were. And then the next step within a month was to publish - not that we've got all the i's dotted and t's crossed - we published what we think can serve as the blueprint for the future. And more consultation will yet have to go on.

I have talked to this House about gathering a group of professionals and volunteers, business and labour, to examine how we best wage war on illiteracy in this province. And I've talked in this House about how I want

to consult and pull in all the professionals that have worked in STELLA (Saskatchewan Tele-Learning Association) or some of the SaskTel stuff, or even the Wheat Pool has done some stuff in this distance education and satellite technology. And I want to pull all the expertise in as it relates to distance education and have them give me some advice and let's lay down a provincial policy.

And that's not going to be done in isolation either, Mr. Chairman. So, much consultation has gone on, much more will go on, and it'll be for the benefit of this province, albeit that it means change, but not change merely for change's sake. And we're committed to moving forward, and move forward we shall, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for his recitation. I just want to point out that it's one thing to involve yourself in a one way exchange in which you get all the information from a variety of groups flowing to you, but you, and only you, are the one to make decisions about what it means and what should be done. It's something else entirely to enable people at the community level to elect from among themselves their own representatives who can not only seek out the information in the communities that they feel that they need to guide them, but are also in a position to act on that.

And I don't have any quarrel, Mr. Minister, with your department or you obtaining information from the people of Saskatchewan and their representative organizations about what should be done in terms of advanced education. I was trying to make the case, even if you choose to ignore it, that what you need to do and what you need to be sensitive to is the fact that we have a strong tradition in this province of allowing people at the community level to elect from among themselves their own representatives to provide direction and governance for their local institutions. You take the position that it's adequate to simply consult and to ask for information from organizations so that you and your technocrats can digest that and provide what you think are all the appropriate answers for tomorrow.

I would submit to you that you have not done enough, that you're going back on a tradition in Saskatchewan in that you're not making provisions for local people to become involved in a meaningful way, in a democratically elected way, which I would submit is something that will make adult education and advanced education all that much stronger in our future.

But, Mr. Minister, again I ask you: do you have plans? Are there provisions? Will you at least examine the possibility of involving local people in a democratically elected way in becoming involved in administering adult education in this province?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — As I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Chairman, much consultation has gone on, much more shall go on. It's a recipe, quite frankly, that's worked well for our government in the past and one that I'm sure will serve as well in the future.

And just to give you an example - and I've read this into the record before but I will read it in again - about the kind of thing we were picking up across Saskatchewan. And this was from the Moose Jaw board, the community college board there, and they distilled the key theme for this new mandate. I mean everybody sensed that there needed to be a new mandate. They wrapped these key themes of a new mandate around what they called "the three R's", the three R's being rationalization, redirection, and revitalization.

And as I've said in this House time and time again we can argue about what the new mandate should look like, but until the NDP opposite are prepared to accept that there has to be a new mandate we will get nowhere. While you want to cling to the rhetoric of the past and the ideology of the past, and support the . . . almost the establishment process when often you have been characterized as a reform party, it's totally inconsistent with the roots of your party. I say come with us, join us, and let's move forward.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to first start by thanking the minister for responding in writing to a number of the questions that I sent over to him and his officials the other day. I also want to thank him for the invitation that he extended to our caucus to have a position at the post secondary education forum coming up in October. We appreciate that very much.

I want to begin by asking a number of questions with respect to the provincial school for the deaf in Saskatoon, the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf, which is in my constituency. The parents and students at the school for the deaf are very concerned about the fact that your government has put the future of that school in question. The home and school association had an opportunity to meet with one of your senior officials, Mr. Peter Dyck, in the late spring of this year, and at that point Mr. Dyck made it very clear to parents and to staff at the school that the provincial government would not guarantee the future of the school beyond June of 1988.

Your official, Mr. Peter Dyck, at that time indicated that your government was considering a number of options, including handing the provincial school for the deaf over to a Saskatoon school board and having the dormitories at the school run by social services. That was one option that was indicated.

A second option that Mr. Dick indicated was that your government was considering establishing a board of directors to control the governing of the school and that that board would continue to receive grants and funding from your department. At the meeting on May 15, Mr. Dyck was very evasive about the consequences of each of these options in terms of the future for the children and their education.

Now, Mr. Minister, as you know this school has been established now and operating for some 55 years, and we on this side of the House believe that on the whole it's been operating over that period of time very effectively. And I want to emphasize to you the importance of this school for the families involved. As you know, many families travel from around the province and often relocate in Saskatoon just so that they can send their

children to the provincial school for the deaf.

In addition to that, for 36 children the school is their home. They live there in residence, Mr. Minister, and have probably more at stake in their school than most children do living around the province because it's their home as well as their place of learning.

Many students at the school face additional handicaps in addition to being deaf. Some are blind and are enrolled in a special deaf/blind program.

It's obvious that students and their families have a very large part of their lives wrapped up in the school, and for your government to put the future of the school in question without consulting with students and with families and with staff is, in our view, very insensitive, Mr. Minister.

Now the parents whose children are attending the school for the deaf have been telling me that they are not in favour of the school being transferred to the public school board, especially given the uncertainty about future funding. They're nervous about a situation in which the school for the deaf would have to compete for scarce dollars in the kindergarten to grade 12 system that is already suffering from provincial underfunding. And they're also nervous because the recommendation from the Department of Education that the school be transferred to the public school board has come forward without any consultation whatsoever with the parents, with the students, with the staff.

I'm also concerned about the uncertainty that your provincial government is creating for the 73 staff who work at the school and who have a long record of excellent service to the children who attend the school and to the people of this province.

Now my question to you is very simply this. I say to you first, the uncertainty created by your government for the future of the children and the parents at the provincial school for the deaf has got to stop. And I ask you: will you make a commitment to these families and to the members of this Assembly that you will not make any changes in the status of the provincial school for the deaf without full involvement and consultation with the families, specifically the parents, the students, and the staff involved? Will you give us your assurance of that?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well a number of comments I want to make on this point relative to the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf, and I know it's a topic that you have a great deal of interest in, given its location relative to the city you represent.

And the first point I would want to make is that our commitment to programming for handicapped children such as are served there, our commitment there is clear and unwavering. I want to be very clear on that. In fact, I would go so far as to say we want to make sure that we've got the programming and the service available in the future in the best possible format and in the format that will serve them best in the future. Not even a question of just maintaining the status quo and resting on our laurels, so to speak.

There is some debate, I think, though, that one would have to admit to in terms of the approach one uses, especially given in this area the new technology that has come along in the last 20 years and relative to the whole question of integration versus segregation. And not that I would want to say I've come down on one side or the other on this, because I have not. In fact, I could go so far as to say to you have not seen any reports or anything on this subject.

(2015)

But it's also a historical fact and a demographic fact, if you like, that the rubella outbreak which was the basis for many of the initial bolus of children, if you like, that were affected with this malady, that that was the cause and that that has largely moved through the system, the rubella outbreaks of the '60s.

I know there has been some discussion. And I guess the request I would make of you, given that I state before you and before all members of this legislature and before all of the publics, including those who might have children there, that our commitment is clear and unequivocal to see that programming does continue. But little use is served if there is going to be some fear mongering incited. And I guess that's what I would ask of you, is that we not engage in scare tactics, and that if you are ever asked - and I ask this in all sincerity, because it's not fair to these people to frighten them.

I know there was a press release put out talking about - and I think you referred to it now - a recommendation to transfer. Well I want to tell you that I have seen no report. I know that there has been some discussions go on, I don't deny that. But it is for the better. It's not to try and chip away or reduce the programming or the needs of those people. It has nothing to do with it. It's to make sure we've got the right program for the next 20 years.

And I know when that press release went out, my mail was deluged with anxious parents. And it's not fair to them, and I know the hon. member does not subscribe to that kind of tactics. And that's why when you're asked, or any of your colleagues are asked, I would ask that you in your answer, however you wish to frame it, say, I raised this question in the House with the minister and he was clear and unequivocal in his commitment to programming the deaf children. And I would ask that you would do that because little is . . . well, no one is well served if we get overstated cases, and inflamed rhetoric, and putting reports out of context. And I think you know that.

I know you as an honourable person, and I would ask for your assistance in terms of as we look at that school and its role for the next 20 years and how best we can provide for these children. Because you have to admit, you have to admit that we all recognize what a sensitive area this is. And even to address it, as you've right pointed out, I mean, can create uncertainty.

But to not address it would also be to be probably a little bit irresponsible here for some of the historical background I laid out. So I ask you to ensure those who

might contact you relative to this school, that we're clear in our commitment to programming.

Yes, there are discussions going on, and yes, will there be full involvement and consultation with those involved. And I can say yes there as well, because that's the only way I think one can undertake even looking at this and asking questions relative to how can we do it better, if everyone is involved fully. Otherwise we get scare mongering and that kind of thing, and one is well served.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, I welcome the minister's commitment to consultation. It'll represent a significant change in the way the decision-making process is being conducted. Because I would point out to the minister that it is his official, Mr. Dyck, who created the uncertainty for parents and students at the school, and certainly not members on this side of the House. We were only approached by concerned parents after the uncertainty had been created by your department.

But I want to make a specific proposal to the minister and ask for an indication of his commitment to it. And that is that we on this side of the House share your concern about future programming and improving it. And to take you at your word, I want to suggest to you that time has come to open up the decision-making process with respect to the future of the provincial school for the deaf and the role of the provincial government in operating that school. It's time to involve parents, students, and staff in that decision-making process right from scratch.

And I suggest to you that a task force should be set up by you to examine how educational services for deaf students at the school can be further strengthened. And it's my suggestion to you, sir, that the task force should be made up of representatives from the home and school association at the provincial school for the deaf, representatives of senior students attending the school, representatives of staff at the school, and representatives of the larger deaf community in the province.

And your government should ensure that the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf is fully funded while the task force does its work. Would you be open to that kind of an initiative, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, yes, I would, and in fact I would congratulate the hon. member. I've said all along in this House that if there were constructive proposals came along, that I would give them serious consideration. And what you have suggested in so far as a task force here seems to fall exactly into that category as a constructive proposal in terms of dealing with the future of this school and its programming. So I will give that serious consideration. And obviously I'm not going to make a decision tonight on it, but in the days and weeks to come, I certainly will.

Just for the record, I'm also informed that, you know, in terms of consultation and trying to keep everybody informed, the officials have held a number of information meetings - April 15, May 14, and May 15 - with the school for the deaf staff, the adult deaf community, and the school for the deaf home and school respectively on

those different dates. So despite your attack on one of my officials, which I really consider unfortunate, there has been consultation, and we continue to do that, and I'll take your option under consideration.

And I want to be clear again, we certainly have absolutely no intention of terminating educational services for deaf youngsters, and I want to underline that.

It's worth knowing as well, of course, that for example, Regina public, Saskatoon public, and Moose Jaw have instituted programs for hard-of-hearing youngsters. So we have some . . . We're not consistent in the way we handle it right now in the system, and perhaps that's one of the reasons why it's being looked at.

And as you will know, there is some who are of the view that service should be provided as close to home as possible. And I think it addresses that issue I talked about earlier of those who will favour integration versus those who favour segregation. And I think that's probably why you're prepared to look at the issue, at least through a task force.

I don't know as we're on a terribly different wavelength here, but I ask once again, and I say to you once again, I think the important thing is we ought not create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty as we examine this, and I ask for your help and your consideration and your doing what you can on that part.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, we welcome your willingness to look at the idea of the task force that's been suggested.

In wrapping this up, I want to simply ask you one more question, and that is that I have some concern, as do other members on this side of the House, that your government is not properly advertising the services provided by the provincial school for the deaf.

Many people have indicated to me that the families of deaf children are not always being advised of the existence of the provincial school, and that in many cases your government is not even sharing with the provincial school for the deaf, information about the number of hearing impaired children in Saskatchewan and their place of residence.

It's my view that enrolment at the school could be significantly increased if the services of the school were properly advertised. And I ask you: would you give the Legislative Assembly your undertaking that you would ensure that advertising for the provincial school for the deaf is significantly increased in the coming year?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the point that you raise, I have some sympathy with it even as it relates to what's available in terms of educational services for the deaf. But in the larger sense, and it's something that I've been giving some consideration to, not even to the point where I've raised it with my officials, but I'm concerned that generally in Saskatchewan we don't do as good a job as we could of making the public aware of what we do offer in the way of educational programming and educational institutions. And I'm not even just talking about what's

available through regional colleges, for example, or in this case, the school for the deaf, or technical institutes, and now the new institute, or universities - not any one, but all of them.

As I sit back . . . and I made reference to this at some of my meetings with, oh for example, the university, the president, and some of his officials when we met relative to the *Issues and Options* paper that they're into. I felt that, you know, we have such fine educational institutions that we almost keep them a secret. And I don't think it matters which one you're looking at.

Now of course the horns of the dilemma that we find ourselves on as politicians, I think as you can appreciate, is the minute that I was to start an informational campaign out there to let people know about educational services available for the deaf at the school in Saskatoon, not you maybe, but some of your colleagues might accuse us of government propaganda. And so I think you see the difficulty we have in addressing that.

And I guess I would look to your support if it happens to pass down the road, or if it comes to pass down the road, that if we get into an informational campaign that I would have your support, because I mean, I'm doing this in a very non-partisan sense. I mean, I'm doing what's right for the people. And I really think they're not being as well served as they could. We need to let them know about what's available and the high quality that's available out there.

And I was particularly reminded of it as I watched the . . . Last December and through the New Year, through the holiday season, as you watched American television and the college ball was on and you'd see the college ads on there about, you know, we're the best in high tech; we're the best in this; we're the best in that; send your kids here. And I thought, you know, what a tragedy that we're not that proactive here.

I mean, you look at the University of Saskatchewan, the seat that you represent. I mean, an extremely fine institution. and I almost think we ought to let the world know more about that. We'd all be better served by it.

So I have some sympathy for what you're saying, but similarly, I would hope that you don't gang up on us and call it a bunch of propaganda, if one was to undertake that initiative.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to change the focus of the discussion to student loans and bursaries. And I want to say to the minister that one of my greatest regrets for students with the budget that he brought down was what I consider to be dramatic set-backs to the student bursary provisions that have long been part of the history of education in this province, and that have for so many years helped young people gain access to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. You, sir, have unfortunately destroyed the student bursary program in Saskatchewan, and we on this side of the House believe that's very unfortunate.

In 1981, I would remind the minister, students in Saskatchewan were eligible for a bursary on an

eight-month course of study if they were eligible to borrow \$1,100 in the form of a student loan.

In 1983-84 your government increased the amount that needed to be borrowed before a student was eligible for a bursary, to \$2,230 for an eight-month course of study. Then in 1986-87 you again increased that amount to \$2,640. And in this year's budget, sir, the amount is \$5,940. That's the amount of money that a student in Saskatchewan has to borrow for an eight-month course of study at the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, or Saskatchewan's technical institutes before they are eligible for any bursary assistance. And in fact, it is no longer bursary assistance. You have abolished the student bursary program. You've chosen to replace it with a forgivable loan program, and in taking the action that I've suggested, you have cut thousands of Saskatchewan students off from being eligible for bursaries in this province.

I ask you: in light of all the talk in the last election about enhancing accessibility to post-secondary education in this province, and in light of all the talk about that from your side of the House in these estimates, how can you possibly justify the situation in which the students of Saskatchewan have to borrow \$5,940 in student loans from your government and the federal government before they're eligible for a penny of bursary if they're pursuing an eight-month course of study?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — As relates to student aid, and this is a question worthy of some discussion because there's no question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Ought I wait or would the member from Saskatoon Riversdale like to say something from his feet? Is he going to get up, Mr. Deputy Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Prebble: — Are you going to answer my questions, sir? Would you do that, please.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, the issue, as much as some would like to make light of it, is a serious one. In fact, at the Canadian ministers' most recent meeting that I attended, as you have rightly pointed out . . . The college graduate today too often is faced with 10, 20, 25, and perhaps even higher . . . 25,000, perhaps even higher, in terms of loans that they've accumulated over the course of their career or of their studies. And my view, as I've said in the past on this, is that the system hasn't been all that creative when it came to dealing with the question of student aid.

Certainly we've made some very positive changes here in recent years, but the reality is that what we do still focuses around the student loan bursary, or what I call the student loan bursary mentality. And I think we need to be somewhat more creative. And to that end, all Canadian ministers have put together a committee to look into this issue for us, and perhaps they make some recommendations.

Now when I was across the province this winter, I did hear of some interesting twists and turns, if you like, or some other options that we could pursue, some of which,

I think, are worthy of investigation, and I'm hopeful that the committee that's looking into that for the Canadian ministers will have something to say on those options. I expect that we may see some report back to the ministers yet this fall.

Yes, we have made some changes relative to the programming, though to talk about what we're dealing with today as opposed to what we might be dealing with in the future. And one of those examples that we don't deny is that, yes, we've turned the bursary concept into, at least in some areas, into one of forgivable loans. And I don't think any reasonable person or student, in fact, argues with that, once they understand the logic. And I don't think it's an unfair expectation that if you take your course and you pass, then it becomes a forgivable loan. I don't think that's unreasonable. Take the course, attend the studies, attend the classes, pass the class, and it becomes forgivable. That seems quite reasonable.

And as well, it's worth nothing that during our administration - it is this government, because we do believe assistance is important, because it broadens the accessibility to the system - we have put in place 6 per cent student loans. Single parents were eligible for special assistance, and I think that's been particularly useful for women. And I know you and some in your party have criticized us for what we've done in adult education as it relates to the women in society. And I think this too is another one of those initiatives that speaks well for the special place that they enjoy in society in terms of the difficulties, if you like, that they face.

We made some changes relative to parental assets, as you'll recall. And I think that was a good change. We had some farmers out there, for example, who might have been . . . had a net worth of a million dollars, but the cash flow was virtually zero. And they were being penalized, or their children were being penalized, because of what they were worth on paper, and yet the money was not in the bank.

Well to sum all of what we have done for students and student aid out there, I would give you some facts, and they are these. If you look at what we've done over the last five years, provincial assistance will now be eight times what it was five years ago. Three times as many students will get aid as did five years ago, and the average student receiving assistance will get more than twice as much as they did five years ago.

To sum it up, I think then one can say is that, yes, we've made some strides forward, but yes, there are some issues there, and one of them being the high debt load that many are faced with. But certainly if you look at the numbers over the last three or four years when it comes to student aid, they've gone up dramatically. And I don't have any difficulty with that because it's a sign of the fact that our young people are getting into colleges and institutions and we ought not be ashamed of that.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I notice that you skirted around the question that I asked. The question, I would remind you, was simply: how can you explain to members of this Assembly that last year under your government, students had to borrow \$2,640 for an

eight-month course of study before they were eligible for a bursary, and this year under your government, despite all the claims you make about enhanced assistance for students, a student has to borrow \$5,940 in loans for an eight-month course of study prior to receiving a bursary? I note you didn't answer that question. I'm not surprised you didn't answer it because I think you simply cannot justify that kind of an attack on the young people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, we think that the forgivable loan concept is fraught with problems. And we call on you, on this side of the Assembly, we call on you, first of all, to change the student loan and student bursary provision back to last year's provision at the very least, so that instead of having to borrow \$5,940 for an eight-month course of study, students only have to borrow \$2,600.

And second, sir, we ask you to drop your notion of the forgivable loan program, and instead, reinstate the student bursary program as it's long existed in this province. You are placing an additional obstacle in front of many young people who want to pursue a course of studies in this province by saying to them that, yes, they can go ahead and borrow money and if they manage to be eligible for a forgivable loan - and very few will be if they have to borrow \$6,000 before they can get any of it forgiven - but if they do qualify for it, then you're saying to them, listen, you have to pass at least 60 per cent of your classes before you're eligible for any of that loan to be forgiven.

And we on this side of the House say that the universities and the technical institutes of this province can do a perfectly good job of deciding who should return following a year of study and who should not - who passes and who does not. You don't have to get into that business, sir, in our judgement.

We think that particularly for young people who've been out of school for many years and who then decide to, say, pursue adult upgrading, or go back and take a technical school course, and have not studied for a long period of time, you're creating an additional barrier - as well as the tuition increases that you've imposed, as well as the cuts to summer job programs that your government has brought forward, as well as cutting back on spaces that are available to young people at our technical institutes and our universities, you've now imposed an additional obstacle to young people going back to school, and that is that they can't be sure when they begin their course of studies at the beginning of the year, whether or not they will be eligible for a forgivable loan because they may be uncertain about their ability to pass their courses. And there is no need to put that additional obstacle in the fact of so many young people, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I would want to say again that this whole question of student aid and student assistance is one that I take very seriously and our government takes very seriously, and I suppose, did we not, such numbers wouldn't be read into this record in so far as our commitment here.

Let's look at what's happened over the last five years. We've gone from a situation where we had, in terms of provincial assistance, 4.25 million to now where we're at 34 million - that's '86-87. Total assistance - let's see, if you look at federal plus provincial - has gone from 12.8 million to 76 million. That's in five years. And the numbers that I find particularly heartening - not in so far as I'm happy that this many people have to get assistance, but what it means in terms of how many people, because they get assistance, can in fact go to university or technical institutes, or whatever course - if we look at that same five-year period, we've seen the number of recipients triple. They've gone from 5,400 under the NDP years to now 17,000.

So if you're asking me, do I want to go back to where we were when we had no special programs for single mothers, etc., etc., no, I do not. I don't want to go back to a situation where we only had \$12 million in the budget as opposed to \$76 million. I don't want to go back to the situation where we were only helping 5,400, whereas today we're helping 17,000.

But that doesn't mean to say that what we have is a perfect system either, because we do not. I suppose if we did, we wouldn't have asked this committee to take a look at it for us.

And as it relates to the forgivable loans specifically, I'm not going to retreat on that point either. I think any fair-minded person when they examine this - and I can honestly say that a number of students have been talked to about this - any fair-minded person when they examine it, does not think it is unreasonable.

You mean to say if I go to school and I attend my classes and complete my studies and pass the course, that it's a forgivable . . . I get my money back, so to speak. And the answer is yes. I don't think that's unreasonable. Now obviously if there is special circumstances or illness or whatever, I'm sure there is provision for that. So I don't think the forgivable loan concept is unreasonable at all - not at all. And until I see something to change my mind, the decision stands.

But I reiterate again that Saskatchewan, compared to the rest of the provinces in Canada, can hold its head very high in terms of what it's done for students - can hold its head very high. I mean, we've got the 6 per cent money, special programs for single mothers and others who need a leg up, if you like, in terms of gaining accessibility to the system, and all of this come in since our Premier because . . . spearheaded very much of these initiatives. We're not going to go back on this stuff and, in fact, I would think we probably can set somewhat of a model for the rest of the country, but not that though there aren't some issues that need to be looked at here.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'd simply say to the minister he's head our views on this. It's our position that the student bursary program ought to be reinstated and it's our position that your cut to the forgivable loan program that you've now instituted by requiring students to borrow almost \$6,000 before they're eligible for a penny of it to be forgiven, for an eight-month course of

study, that you ought to drop that policy; that that's policy that's standing in the way of many young people taking post-secondary education; and that what you ought to do instead is institute a policy in which students only have to borrow \$2,000 in loan before they're eligible for a bursary. I remind you again that in 1981 when the New Democratic Party was in government, students only had to borrow \$1,100 in loan before they were eligible for a bursary and you have now taken this province a long way from that very, very reputable accomplishment in 1981.

I want to ask you a couple of specific questions with respect to the forgivable loan program that you've instituted. And they touch on something that you briefly mentioned with respect to special circumstances - instances in which students are sick, instances in which there is a death in the family just prior to exams, those kinds of situations.

(2045)

I want to ask you why there are no formal guide-lines or why there is no set appeal mechanism for the very many exceptional instances which are going to arise in which students cannot pass their classes because they are sick, because there's a death in the family, or because of a host of other possible unforeseen circumstances. What kind of an appeal mechanism are you planning to set up? And why is no mention of this appeal mechanism set out in the 1987-88 student loan application?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, two points that I would make here relative to somebody who . . . I think I used the example myself of chronic sickness or something like that, where the student just hadn't been able to attend although he might have enrolled - the very next day he ended up hospitalized for the rest of the semester or something like that.

It might be useful to set the stage for what we view as successful completion, and that means that a student passes 60 per cent of a full course load. And, of course, each educational institution rules on its own students. For example, at the University of Regina, four classes each semester is considered full time so students must pass three classes each semester; at the University of Saskatchewan, five classes, five full classes per academic year is full time and a student must pass three full classes each year.

As it relates to the special circumstances, I . . . What I would recommend to you . . . And in fact the process that's in place is twofold: number one is that if this point was made known to the department, I think we have the flexibility internally to deal with it. But such that the individual thought, or it was perceived, or in fact we really did not deal with the issue in their eyes fairly, the scholarship, bursary, and loan committee that's already established as an appeal - if you like in quotation marks - committee who deal with sundry issues as it relates to student loan applications could deal with these matters as well.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, could I first point out to you that you ought to be making it known to students, if you're

going to use this appeal mechanism that you talk about, that that appeal mechanism is available - something that you've not done. I'd suggest that you write to every student who's got a student loan and make it known to them, particularly if they're eligible for a forgivable loan, what the appeal mechanism is in the event that they do get sick, or in the event that there is a death in the family just prior to exams, or a host of other situations that can occur.

And I further . . . I further ask you, while you're doing that, if you wouldn't also inform students by letter that they must submit a copy of their transcripts indicating that they've passed their courses to the department before they're eligible for the forgivable loan - something that you also fail to do, elaborate on in any detail, in the student guide. There was just very, very brief mention of it - one sentence only. So would you take that under advisement?

I want to ask you another question and that is with respect to an initiative in the area of student loans that I would ask you to consider. We on this side of the House believe that the time has come to institute a policy of repayment upon employment with respect to student loans. In other words, set up repayment upon employment schedule for student loans instead of the current system where repayments starts six months after studies are done, even if the student is without work. Students are not in a position to pay off their student loans until they secure a job. And with youth unemployment in Saskatchewan sitting at fourteen and a half per cent, many Saskatchewan students who are actively seeking work have to wait a lot longer than six months before they secure a job.

That creates a lot of financial difficulty for them in repaying their student loans, and it's our view, therefore, that you ought to establish a policy whereby student loans will be paid once the student secures a job - providing they're actively looking for work throughout the period immediately after graduation - and not until they find a job will they be obligated to repay their student loans. Would you be prepared to implement that kind of a policy?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I think I have some good news for the hon. member relative to the issue he raises.

With this budget we've put in a program, an interest relief program for students unable to find work on graduation, whereby payments on both Canada student loans and Saskatchewan student loans may be suspended for up to 18 months. And I think that covers the very point that you were making about some who might have some hardship, given that they do not find employment immediately upon graduation.

So it may not exactly have the right spin on it. I guess there is different ways a guy could come at that problem. But this is what we chose and I think it seems reasonable enough. And I suppose if we find that it's not working acceptably, we can look at making changes, but I'd like to give it a chance.

Mr. Prebble: — I'd like to ask you another question, Mr. Minister, with respect to student loans, Mr. Chairman, I'd

like to ask if the minister has taken steps to pressure the federal government to reduce the age of independence under the Canada student loan program to 19 years of age. And if so, if he has, I'd like the minister to table the correspondence in which he's taken that initiative.

It seems to me, Mr. Minister, that in every other aspect of life for young people, the age of independence is recognized to be either 18 or 19 years of age. But when it comes to the Canada student loan program, the federal government and the provinces in effect discriminate against students by setting the age of independence at 21. I think the time has come to change that, and I would ask the minister if he has taken any steps to pressure the federal government to reduce the age of independence under the Canada student loan program to 19 years of age.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, as much as the observations that you make and the point that you make about the age of independence - that's not quite the right word, but 19 versus 21 if you like - although on the surface it may look like it has some merit, I think it flies in the face a little bit of all that is Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan heritage, in that my sense is that parents are keenly interested in their children's education, not only up to the age of 19, but beyond the age of 19, and want to contribute to their children's education. They're keenly interested. I don't know as one would want to uncouple it, as you suggest.

Traditionally parents have been involved, as I said. It's been the Saskatchewan heritage. I mean, they're very proud to have their children receive some education. In the many instances it's been very traditional for them to help out as best they can. And I don't know why we would want to tamper with that particularly, albeit that as I say, on the surface some of your arguments seem to have some validity, I think, as one examines them. What we would be talking about here would be a disintegration almost of a Saskatchewan tradition.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, we on this side of the House are very, very interested in supporting Saskatchewan families and in maintaining the strong family tradition of this province. But for you to suggest that making financial assistance available to a student by recognizing him or her as an independent under the Canada student loan program at 19 years of age somehow flies in the face of that family tradition as something that we have a great deal of difficulty understanding. It's our view that the age of independence under the Canada student loan program ought to be 19 years of age and that you, as Minister of Education, ought to do the best you can to pressure the federal government to reducing the age of independence.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you another question with respect to the Canada student loan program and your bursary program. Because not only have you taken the step of forcing students to borrow a lot more money before they're eligible for a bursary, forcing them for a eight-month course of study to borrow \$5,940, when last year, they only had to borrow \$2,640 before they were eligible for a bursary, by, in effect, forcing them to borrow twice as much before they were eligible for any form of

bursary.

In addition to that, you have also failed to take account of the needs of students who are parents, who have children, who inevitably have child care expenses as a result of needing to study and therefore needing to have their children cared for during their period of study. And I would point out to you, Mr. Minister, that for some time now, the amount of assistance that is available under your forgivable loan program and under the Canada student loan program for students who are also parents and have young children under 12 years of age is that they are only eligible for a maximum assistance of \$275 for child care over and above any subsidy they may be eligible for through the provincial day-care program. If they're not eligible for that subsidy, the maximum assistance that they can claim a month by way of student loan and your forgivable loan program is \$275, regardless of how many children they have.

Now, Mr. Minister, someone with three children or four children won't go very far in terms of covering child care costs with assistance of \$275. Can you give this Assembly your commitment that in next year's budget the provision for \$275 will be changed, and that you will bring forward a provision that recognizes the number of children that a student has in their family, and that therefore increase assistance depending on the number of children in the family.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well let's examine a little bit where your logic would take us, and I don't think you would subscribe to it if you examined it to its fullest extent. You talked about the independence factor, and I talked about the Saskatchewan tradition. Well if we were to subscribe to your logic, we would end up with a situation where perhaps . . . which you often referred to as those awful capitalists. You know, those doctors and such who make \$100,000-plus a year who, I think, probably do want to (a) and (b) have some obligation to support their children in terms of their education, would not be obligated and would get off scot-free, if you like.

The basis for student aid has been this throughout time: (a) it's meant to supplement the parents' contribution and the student's contribution, if you like, so that there can be accessibility to the system. But there also has been in terms of . . . given that we can't be a tooth fairy for everybody obviously, that we provide the need where the need is greatest. And I could talk about 6 per cent loans, and I could talk about our single parent special programs, those kinds of things, and I don't think one would argue with. But why we would let some who you might consider the obscene wealthy off the hook, I can't understand that. Maybe I'm missing some point.

(2100)

Mr. Prebble: — To answer my question, with respect to the inadequacy of the allowance for child care provisions under the student loan program and under your forgivable loan program, a student right now is only eligible, as I point out to you, for assistance of \$275 a month for child care expenses regardless of how many children they have. And you have simply failed to deal with that issue, sir.

I'd like to ask you two or three other specific questions before leaving this topic of student loans and bursaries. One, Mr. Minister, is that I'd like to ask you why it is that the Saskatchewan student loan program is only available to students for a five-year period. As you know, many university programs require six, seven, eight years of study. Obviously graduate work will involve a student in at least six years of university. Courses such as medicine will go well beyond that in terms of their course of study, and yet the Saskatchewan student loan program is only available for five years. Mr. Minister, would you take a recommendation from this side of the House that the number of years that the program is available to young people ought to be extended?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I mean, your point that you make about the fact that some programs do last longer and longer is one that's going to receive, and will have to receive, more attention as time goes on, especially given the lifelong learning concept, etc., etc.

The two points I would make here is that I'm not so sure that the student loan, bursary kind of mentality is the right one for some of the scenarios you paint. And I've had some options put forward to me, and I suspect this committee we've got to work on it will address some of those. And it's tax credits and things like that for both employees and employers. There are a number of different twists that we can put to this.

In so far as why a Canada student loan is that way, obviously it's universally that way. I think the thinking behind it would be this: that, you know, if we can't provide assistance for nine and 19 years . . . I mean, if nothing else let's make sure that we provide assistance to that basic core, if you like, four or five years of university schooling. And much as it might be desirable to provide more, let's make sure that we give as many people as possible, or as need it, that assistance in that basic four or five years that is not uncommon in undergraduate programming.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I'd simply point out to you that it's my sincere view that government has an obligation to continue to assist students who pursue graduate work or who pursue courses of study that are longer than five years, and there are many examples of such courses. And I would point out that it make no sense, Mr. Minister, to provide a student with loan and bursary assistance for a five-year period, and just as they get to a point where they are about \$25,000 in debt after five years of study - particularly now that you've virtually eliminated the bursary program in this province - it makes no sense to leave them without assistance in the final years of their study and force them to go to a bank or credit union to arrange a private loan.

I want to ask you another question, and this is with respect to portability of student loan and bursary assistance. And this is specifically with respect to your new forgivable loan program. Because one of the things that has significantly changed with your new forgivable loan program is that the portability provisions for students have been very, very substantially reduced. It used to be that a Saskatchewan student graduating from grade 12 in

this province was eligible for a bursary if they wished to study abroad or to study in another part of Canada. And when your government was first elected, you cut in half the amount of bursary that a Saskatchewan student studying out of province was eligible for. Now you've eliminated forgivable loan assistance to students studying out of province entirely, unless that student is taking a program of study not available in Saskatchewan or unless the program they wish to enrol in in another province is over-subscribed here.

Now we have always taken the view on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, that Saskatchewan students who have grown up here and graduate from high school here ought to be encouraged to study abroad and to experience the variety of cultures this country has to offer, if they so wish. And my question to you, therefore, is this: will you restore the portability to your forgivable loan program and make it available to all Saskatchewan students who graduate from grade 12 here and who choose to study out of province?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I don't think it's . . . I mean, I think there's the two issues here. The one of the choice that a student should have, and that's clearly uninhibited. And secondly, in so far as that the public purse is going to make some contribution here, I don't now as it's unreasonable for the public purse to expect that, well, if you could take that course here, that's one thing, but to go out of province or out of country and take a course that might be available here and have that additional cost and expect the public purse to pick it up, that might be an unreasonable expectation.

I think the way it is is that if that course isn't available here and you have to go out of province or out of country to take it, then that's not the student's fault, and so the public purse is prepared to pick up some responsibility there.

However . . . I mean, to look at it from the other end of the pipe, if you like, to just suggest to the taxpayers that even though that student could have taken that course here, he chose to go elsewhere and that you should pick up the bill, I don't know as that's fair to them. I think in this case, we have the best of both worlds. It's fair to the students and it's fair to the taxpayers.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, clearly we disagree again.

But I want to ask you one final question in wrapping up this section on student loans and bursaries. And that is, Mr. Minister, whether you can explain why it is that for both the Canada student loan program and for your Saskatchewan student loan program there is no provision for inflation for any of the allowable educational expenses. The allowance for board and lodging, for local transportation, for return transportation from home, and for a host of other expenses are not a penny higher than they were last year. What representation have you made to the federal government in this regard, and will you table it in this Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the question that you ask is that as the student's cost changes are any reflection in the loans. For some things there are, yes. It's indexed to

actuals when it comes to things like tuition and books. And in the other instances, as you well know, given that we basically piggyback on the federal program, then whatever they establish as the criterion of the day is what we go with.

As it comes to tuition and books, which I think most . . . and certainly books, as you well know, is a big cost for students. And I think those . . . I suppose that's why it's indexed to actual because those are pretty key ones, those two.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, once again you fail to answer my question which was whether you had made any representation to the federal government to have those allowable educational expenditures increased. It seems clear that you did not. We on this side of the House urge you to do so.

I want to switch to . . . Did you want to make a comment, sir?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I just want to make one point there. I don't want to leave you with an erroneous impression.

When I was at the ministers' meeting and we have struck this committee, much of this can come under their mandate, if you like. I only raise this because of this. Because the thing that I clearly raised at the meeting was this: is that I think we're letting our students down generally in terms of somehow propagating this notion that simply the student loan and bursary mentality is the only one that'll serve our students well. And I raise it in that standpoint because I'm not so sure that we've been very creative here. And I'm not so sure that just propagating more of the same, or fine tuning the dial is somehow going to help the students.

So if you're asking me if I've raised with Canada and/or with other ministers my general dissatisfaction about some areas as it relate to student assistance generally, the answer is yes, and in several areas.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, as you can see, we are not proposing changes that fine tune the system. We are proposing fundamental changes that first of all reverse the unkind cuts that you have brought down to the bursary program, and secondly, we are proposing some substantive changes in the system that would make far more students eligible for student loans.

And just to recap, I want to emphasize that number one, we call upon your government to reinstate the Saskatchewan student bursary program which has been an important part of our heritage for many decades and which you have eliminated. We call upon you, sir, to do away with your provision where you are requiring students to borrow 6,000 and, in some cases, \$7,000, depending on the length of their course of study and loans, before they are eligible for a penny of forgiveness or bursary from your government. We call upon you to urge the federal government to reduce the age of independence under the Canada student loan program to 19 years of age. Those are fundamental changes that we're calling upon your government to initiate, and I

hope you will, sir.

I want to move the area of questioning to another topic. And at this point I want to . . . Several days ago we gave to the Minister of Education a copy of our final report on technical institute autonomy, the questionnaire results that you asked to see, based on a survey that we conducted as a caucus at Kelsey Institute and the Northern Institute of Technology in March and April of 1986. I want to now lay that study on the Table, if I could get one of the pages to come and lay this on the Table for me, I would like to table it.

And I would like to point out to the minister that the results of this study are very, very clear. First of all, of the 70 people who responded to the study from the two institutes, 65 of them supported the principle of autonomy for Saskatchewan 's technical institutes.

The point I want to make, Mr. Minister, is that only seven of the 70 people who responded to this survey supported your notion of establishing one large board to serve all four institutes in this province. Only seven of the 70 people that responded supported your notion of centralization. Forty-four people who responded, Mr. Minister, indicated that they would like to see local governments for each of the technical institutes, and another 15 suggested local governments for each institute, with an umbrella organization that provided overall co-ordination for all four institutes.

So, Mr. Minister, the point I want to make to you is this: while it's clear that the respondents to this survey support autonomy, they don't support the kind of autonomy that you're proposing to implement. They support local governments for each of the institutes involved, with perhaps some provision for a central co-ordinating function, which we would be not at all opposed to on this side of the House. In fact, we would support that kind of provision.

Now, Mr. Minister, the respondents to this survey, as you will have noted from reviewing it, also feel that the most important advantage of autonomy is an opportunity for increased input by staff and students in the designing of programs to meet local needs.

And my question to you is: will you give your promise to this Assembly and to the students and staff and faculty of the technical institutes of this province that when you establish your new super institute board, there will be maximum participation on that board from local community groups and from faculty, students, and staff, and from local employers? Will you give the Legislative Assembly your commitment on that point, sir?

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — In so far as the configuration of the board of governors - call it what you will - for the new Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, and I suspect this is some detail we may . . . some ground we may cover again when we get into the legislation.

And you're asking me for a promise, I think to use your

words. I think conceptually we're coming from the same place in so far as we want to touch all bases, if you like. We want broad representation. And quite frankly, I would suggest to you that if you look at what we're doing and why we have the one-institute board, as opposed to what your survey shows, the reasons why we have the differences is because our sampling, our consultations, were with a much broader cross-section of the public, not only in terms of users and players, but culturally and socially and economically in every dimension. I think your focus was somewhat narrow. And I'm being critical of it; I think it was a good attempt, but it was somewhat narrow. And, in fact, I read into the record earlier tonight, just the group of invitees, if you like, in Regina.

In so far as promising you what they will look like, I think conceptually we're coming from the same place. I mean, I envisage this board to be not unlike the board of governors that we have at the University of Saskatchewan. It is responsible for, and reflective of, all of Saskatchewan. And I have given the additional commitments, for example, to the existing community college boards that they shall have a representation, if they so wish, on this new board, to recognize the importance of each of those campuses.

Why I'm hesitant to start giving you any promises or guarantees is for this reason, is that there's a fine line between drawing in all the players and having this board representation and ending up with a board that can in fact function. I mean, you might end with a board of 106. I don't think that's in anybody's best interest, and I don't think that's what you would want. If we're both agreed that we want this as broad a representation geographically and every other which way as possible, I think we're not that far apart.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if I could beg leave of the Assembly to introduce several guests who are here in the Speaker's gallery tonight.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to the members of the Assembly several guests who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery tonight. One member certainly needs no introduction to members of the other side of the House, as well as this side; that's Mr. Gordon Dirks, the former member for Regina Rosemont, and sitting beside him . . .

A Member: — A constituent of yours.

Mr. Lyons: — And a constituent of mine. And seated beside him is the chairman of the Regina Public School Board, Mr. Ray Matheson, who is here to enjoy, I think, the kind of debate over educational policy which is being presented here in the House this evening. And I ask all members to welcome the two visitors here tonight.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, I too would add

my words of welcome to both Mr. Matheson, and as he discharges his role as chairman, and does it very well, I might add, and to our former colleague, Mr. Dirks, for joining us here tonight.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Education Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, it's precisely the points that you made about the fact that you can't really get grass roots participation if you only have one large board governing the technical institutes for the whole province. That leads me to suggest to you, will you not now drop your proposal for one centralized board operating out of Regina to govern Saskatchewan's four technical institutes and go instead with the principle of local governance, but local governance that also provides for a guarantee that employees' salaries and benefits, who were working at the institutes, will be fully protected when the transfer of responsibility is undertaken.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, no, I would - and we can get into this further when we get into the legislation - but I would yet have to be convinced to change what we are proposing relative to the single board and governance. And the reasons for it are many, not the least of which is to have the proper co-ordination. Because to adopt your logic would say this, then, that the University of Saskatchewan board somehow can't operate on behalf of the entire province, or that somehow we should have four or five regional boards feeding into the university board. And I would further suggest to you that if we were to adopt your model, we would still end up needing an umbrella board to co-ordinate, as your own critics, you being one of them, said in a newspaper interview in May, I believe it was.

So I've thought about this, I can tell you that. We've given all options serious consideration, and quite frankly, I think, you know, our consultation process was so exhaustive that I doubt that there were stones left unturned. And I'm not trying to suggest that yours was a bit narrow in its focus, but what did you say, you had 70 respondents? And I would suggest to you that 70 respondents, given that technical institutes have 1,200 staff and 2,500 students, your sample was pretty small. And as you will know, your New Democratic youth support the one institute concept.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I want to change the focus again and turn to the question of cut-backs at Wascana technical institute. And I want to ask you three specific questions with respect to these cut-backs that we've not covered in the legislature today.

First of all, as you will know, as a result of your decisions to phase out accounting and administration at Wascana Institute, as a result of your decision to eliminate those programs at Wascana, you have in effect forced students who were taking those programs at Wascana Institute to

transfer to STI at Moose Jaw if they want to complete their second year.

Now my question to you is, Mr. Minister: will you provide financial assistance to Wascana students who are taking business and accounting, to allow them to move to Moose Jaw to complete their program of study at STI? You have, in effect, Mr. Minister, forced these students to relocate. They will have to relocate at very considerable expense. In many cases they are married; their spouses will often have to give up jobs here in Regina in order to be able to move to Moose Jaw. In many cases students had part-time jobs in Regina and have to look for new part-time jobs in Moose Jaw.

In effect, Mr. Minister, you have caused these students a great deal of inconvenience and you've cost them a lot of money. And my question to you is: will you provide them with the financial assistance that they require to locate, a relocation that is forced by your government and is no fault of their own?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well a couple of points, and the first one is one that I made in this House before. There's 42 new spaces created to recognize the transfer, point number one, because there was a fair amount of rhetoric and erroneous reporting, quite frankly, relative to whether these accounting students would be accommodated. And the reality is there are 42 new spaces.

Now your second point is not well taken, particularly in that you're trying to make the case that somehow we've forced somebody to move from Regina to Moose Jaw. And I ask you to examine in your own good conscience and in front of the public of Saskatchewan, why is it . . . And I mean, I appreciate that there is a move involved, and I don't want to sound unsympathetic, but why would you focus on the fact that some might have to move from Regina to Moose Jaw to take their studies, and yet make no acknowledgement of those who might live in Meadow Lake or Nipawin or North Battleford or Estevan or Swift Current or Lloydminster, who accept travelling and moving to another centre always as part of the reality of post-secondary education.

As a matter of fact, because we think they have some legitimate concerns, that's why we're getting into distance education in a bigger way; that's why we're getting into the technical institute extension programs in a bigger way; that's why you heard on the news the other day that universities are going to deliver to 14 communities more programming - English and history, I believe it was - across this province. So rather . . . While you want to focus on the hardships - and I recognize there are some - of having to take a course, the final year which you were going to take in Regina and now move to Moose Jaw, how can you look at that in isolation and not have some sympathy, or some regard, or some initiative in place to deal with those who always have had to travel from all over this province.

I think you're taking somewhat of a narrow view here. But

to show you that the system can accommodate and cope with it, the student loan program does recognize travel cost.

So I sympathize with the individuals. I mean, there is some dislocation here, but in terms of the larger picture, I think if you see what we're trying to accomplish with these other initiatives, you'll see that we're trying to address the problem - not merely a knee-jerk react, if you like, to a single situation.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, can I just ask you a simple question. There were approximately 60 students studying at Wascana who were going to be going into their second year of accounting or administration. You decided in your wisdom - and we disagree with your decision - that you would eliminate those programs at Wascana, and that you, in effect, force the students to move to STI. You can make the point that they weren't physically forced to go, but let's put it this way: if they wanted to continue their course of studies - since they'd already completed their first year and had their second year to go - you gave them no choice but to go to STI.

My question to you, sir, is: why on earth do you simply not let the program at Wascana in accounting and administration continue on for one more year so that those students who have to take their second year can complete it in Regina instead of being forced to Moose Jaw to complete it there?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, in answer to your second question first, there's more than one track they can take. And so to that degree, it's a separate course, albeit it's a second year for some. But some after one year might take another track, as you might understand from the system. But I want to come back to your basic point, this whole business of us forcing - which isn't particularly true - and the hardship created by somebody having to go from Regina to Moose Jaw. You know, how is it that all of a sudden, if they do have to drive from Regina to Moose Jaw, that's an issue? Yet two years ago the same student living in your city or in Prince Albert or in anywhere else in Saskatchewan, who had to drive to either Moose Jaw or Regina when it was offered in two centres, that that was not an issue. Do you see what I mean when I say, you know, some of this political rhetoric is really not all that meritorious in terms of debating?

What we're talking about here is do we want a change? And do we want to establish centres of excellence? And the answer is yes, because if it's an issue that you should have to drive from Regina to Moose Jaw today, why was it an issue two years ago when people had to drive from Meadow Lake to Moose Jaw or from Moose Jaw to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well there was a course in Moose Jaw. It was more a case of driving from Saskatoon or Prince Albert into Moose Jaw or Regina.

To us, to our party, to our government, to our Premier, the larger issue here is accessibility of education across this province. And that's why the initiatives we put in place that I'm so proud of, and our party is proud of, and our caucus is proud of - of delivering more and more programming, whether it be institute or university, across the province so nobody has to drive.

Because tonight we have discussed here about the costs in education and student loans. The biggest cost facing students is not tuition fees, it's the room and board bill. It's the cost of moving from Meadow Lake to Moose Jaw. And what can we do, and what can we deliver into Meadow Lake and Nipawin and into North Battleford? That's what we're examining, and I think that's where some of this debate should centre tonight, because I think we're being a bit short-sighted if we just concentrate on whether . . . I mean, I for one would have loved to have been raised in a university city. It would have saved my parents several thousands of dollars. I loved schooling so much I took six years of post-secondary education. Some might argue that it wasn't all that successful, but I took six years, and it was expensive for them and for me. And how they dearly would have loved to have some of that programming delivered into our community.

(2130)

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, it's precisely our concerns about accessibility and you're decisions to cut accessibility substantially in the technical institute system that have led to so much debate about the future of technical institute programming in this Legislative Assembly.

We're talking here about administration, office education, accounting. I point out to you that students in Saskatoon or a student in Biggar last year was able to take off his education at Kelsey in Saskatoon. Now, thanks to your drive for accessibility, they're going to have to go to NIT (Northern Institute of Technology) in Prince Albert or to Wascana to pursue it.

A student in Moose Jaw used to be able to take office education in Moose Jaw, or if they lived in Swift Current, they only had to move into Moose Jaw to pursue their course of studies. Now that program's been cut in half. They'll likely have to come to Wascana. The decisions that your government has taken again and again and again in this province have served to reduce accessibility to technical institute education in Saskatchewan, not to expand it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now I say to the minister, there's been a lot of talk in this Assembly about distance education, which we support. There has been talk about moving technical institute courses into rural Saskatchewan. We'll commend him for it when we see the courses there. But we've yet to see very much, Mr. Minister; however, time will tell. And we ought to give your government an opportunity on that account, but in terms of seeing accessibility in the four major urban centres, you have chosen to dramatically reduce accessibility, not to expand it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to conclude this section on technical institutes by asking you a question on competency-based education. Very simply, there have been widespread rumours that you do not

favour competency-based education. As you know, particularly in the trades programs, we support competency-based education. We think that it's a very important vehicle for women, particularly for single parents or for people working part time, to gain access to a technical institute education.

And we ask you, will you give this Legislative Assembly your commitment that competency-based education will be continued in the province of Saskatchewan at the technical institutes, particularly in the trade areas?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes. And I wish the NDP caucus would get their act together on this because its only two or three nights ago in this House that I had to defend the competency-based program at NIT with one of the members, albeit he wasn't from Prince Albert, who was taking quite a run at that institution up there, much to the chagrin, I'm sure, of the Prince Albert members.

So I wish you would have some solidarity on your policies as it relates to competency-based education.

Mr. Prebble: — I want to ask the minister a series of questions now with respect to the University of Regina. And my first question to the minister relates to his decision this April to renege on his commitments to fund at 5.5 million, of which he was to contribute 3.4 million, the building of a new student union centre at the University of Regina.

And I would remind the minister that in April of 1986 the Premier went to some lengths to announce this project. He promised the students at the University of Regina that a new students' union building would be constructed; that it would get under way by June of 1987 - a month that has now passed. There was a reception with approximately a hundred guests invited for this gala announcement. The Premier indicated, at that time, that it was an example of his commitment to students and to post-secondary education in this province.

A year later, you, as Minister of Education, went to the University of Regina, and you indicated to the students at the University of Regina that you had reneged on that commitment; that they would have to wait at least a year before this construction proceeded. And I ask you, Mr. Minister, will you now honour the election promise that was made in 1986 and follow through on your government's commitment to the students' union at the University of Regina, and to the board of governors at the University of Regina, to build a new students' union building at the University of Regina?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, just in response to that question, Mr. Chairman. As it relates to the student union building at the University of Regina, I have to admit that when I went to the University of Regina this winter, I would dearly have loved to announce that the project had a green light, but in all fairness, and being responsible to all parties concerned, that would not have been the right move.

I would, as well, tell you and the members of the

legislature and the public that the project has not been cancelled - it has not been cancelled, only deferred, and will come up for consideration as we look at next year's budget.

I also want to tell the hon. member this, that even with the deferral of the student union building, the government provided the University of Regina with \$5.2 million in capital grants in '85-86 - 5.2 million in '85-86. And for your information that was more - that 5.2 million was more than the NDP provided in their last six years of office. In one year 5.2 millions more than your government in six years of office. In '87-88 the University of Regina will receive 2.199 million in ordinary capital plus 3,040,000 for special projects for a total of 5.239 million.

Now our Premier was clear on this as well, in question period this summer. He said, we will build it - referring to the student centre - but we're going to defer it until we can have the money. And I think that seems like a reasonable enough course. Certainly projects like the library are going ahead, but this project will go ahead, too, albeit that its been deferred for the time being, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: — Item one agreed?

Mr. Prebble: — No, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to simply ask you. You've indicated to the students' union a number of times that the project was being delayed for a year. Will you give them and this Legislative Assembly your commitment that in the fiscal year 1988-89 there will be a full provision for construction of a new students' union building at the University of Regina?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, what we have said is that it is deferred until finances allow, and I will be as precise as I can be in so far as my commitment for next year. I will be as precise in that commitment as I can be in determining (a) the price of wheat next year; (b) the price of oil next year; (c) whether it will rain or not next year; (d) what potash will do next year; (e) what uranium prices might do.

Because the reality is, in a resource based economy we are dependant on all of those things, and it would be irresponsible for me to suggest that and to write next year's budget now when we won't have a good assessment on - or we'll have a better assessment on all of those things as we move into next year's budget preparation closer to that time.

But let me be clear. We will go ahead with that project as soon as we can. It's not been cancelled.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I take it from your statement that you're certainly not making a commitment to pursue it next year.

I want to ask you now a question with respect to your funding decisions for the University of Regina. You will know, sir, that in 1984-85 your grant to the University of Regina was 1 per cent below the rate of inflation. In 1985-86 your grant was one-half per cent above the rate of inflation. In 1986-87 your operating grant was again 1

per cent below the rate of inflation. This year your operating grant to the University of Regina is 4.6 per cent below the rate of inflation because, in effect, you've decided to freeze operating grants to the University of Regina, not only in this fiscal year, but in the next fiscal year as well.

In effect, during this time period, sir, that means a net loss of 6 per cent in the operating grant to the University of Regina if you simply compare it with the consumer price index. However, I would point out to you that a comparison with the consumer price index is not applicable in this situation, because in fact the University of Regina legitimately has much, much higher costs than the consumer price index would indicate.

I would point out to you that enrolment has risen since the fall of 1981 by 57 per cent at that institution - by 57 per cent, Mr. Minister. What that in effect means is that the grants to full-time students from your government in terms of the operating grants to the University of Regina has in effect declined to 65 per cent of what it was five years ago.

Now, Mr. Minister, I would point out to you as well, that in addition to the major, major increase in enrolment, there's obviously been no funding in place for an expansion of faculty or an expansion of staff that in any way corresponds with this increased enrolment. In fact, teaching staff have only increased 7 per cent during the last five years, and a significant portion of this has been sessional and term appointments.

In addition to that, Mr. Minister, the university faces very, very significant cost increases well above the consumer price index in areas that it has no control of, such as purchasing library books from the U.S. where the exchange rate has sky-rocketed. Last year alone, the increase in library acquisitions for the University of Regina was 16.5 per cent, in effect four times the consumer price index. In addition, the universities had to make a number of equipment purchases and expenditures to repair buildings which, once again, have significantly exceed the consumer price index.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is in light of the major, major increase enrolment that the University of Regina has faced; in light of the fact that it has been impossible for the university to hire many new additional faculty or staff to keep pace with this increased enrolment; and in light of the fact that the university has faced many costs, particularly in the area of library acquisitions, equipment renewal, and repair to buildings that far exceed the consumer price index, will you now lift the freeze on the operating grant to the University of Regina?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, the answer to university funding . . . It would be very simple for me to stand in my place, as I've already done in this estimates process, when I addressed the question of the provincial government's commitment and funding to the universities, and merely say that the record speaks for itself, and it's a record that we're all proud of.

Between '82 and '86 the funding for student rose by 25 per cent in Saskatchewan. And if you check the record,

Mr. Chairman, across this country, we're second to none. We ought not . . . So one could say the commitment has been clear. It's been better than any other jurisdiction in the country. And we could compare that with places like Manitoba.

And I already read into the record about what we've done in capital funding for the University of Regina - what they did for six years. And I could talk about how, between '82 and the present, we've increased the share of the provincial product provided for university funding by close to 20 per cent, while under the NDP it decreased by 30 per cent.

And I already read into the record about what we've done in capital funding for the University of Regina, what they did for six years. And I could talk about how between '82 and the present, we've increased the share of the provincial product provided for university funding by close to 20 per cent, while under the NDP it decreased by 30 per cent.

I mean, I went through in the early part of this estimates, line by line, our commitments, and if you look at the university numbers during the NDP times, there was a definite curve there - starvation, except in election year. And it was clear - '77-78, '81-82 - a clear pattern of starve the universities, except during election years, and then you give them some lip-service.

I could talk simply . . . I could dismiss the question simply with those answers, Mr. Chairman, but that would be a simplistic analysis of the situation, because what are we facing there, and what did the *Issues and Options* paper address at the University of Saskatchewan? And what did we recognize when we put together that blueprint for the future?

Here was the situation we saw. The demographics told us that enrolments had gone up. There was pressure on the system. Courses were jammed, so there was apprehension amongst the students, and the soon-to-be students, albeit, as some administrators would tell us, that enrolments weren't necessarily a problem for them. They provided . . . They were cash, they generated revenues in the per pupil grant, the full-time equivalent. But the reality was, here was what we saw, was tremendous enrolment pressures. The taxpayer had anted up, unlike any other province, and they were proud to put that money up, Mr. Chairman.

(2145)

So here we had the public purse making a tremendous commitment, second to none across this country; enrolments were going up; there was student apprehension, or soon-to-be student apprehension, and the faculty weren't terribly happy.

Now I can stand here simply and say that we've put more money in than any other jurisdiction, that the capital funding has been second to none, and certainly far above what the NDP did, and just rest on the record and rest on our laurels, but that would be a simplistic analysis.

It was because of that, exactly, that we undertook the

dialogue we did, and why we put together a new blueprint, because to do anything different would be to not acknowledge what's really behind those numbers. And it's not simply good enough to talk about the problem; you have to do something about it. And that's why, if the hon. members would examine that blueprint that I distributed for the House the other night, they would see that a very integral part of that is the development of the regional college system.

And that's why we heard the announcement the other day, and I read it into the record, and I'll read it again. It was a *Leader-Post* story, "Classes beamed across province", and it talks about students in 14 Saskatchewan communities being able to take history and English course from the University of Saskatchewan without ever setting foot on the campus. And not that you can deliver everything off campus, Mr. Chairman, I'm not so naive as to think that. But there's no sense denying what has happened. The public purse has delivered in spades under the Progressive Conservatives. In some instances the universities were quite happy with the enrolment, the increases, because it meant more money. It was a cash generator. Faculties were unhappy, and to just give it . . . To not examine the issue something more than superficially would have been unfair and irresponsible, and we've taken it a step further, and the people of this province and the young people of this province will be well served by this blueprint, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, I want to take exception to some of the points that the Minister has been making with respect to university operating and university capital grants under the NDP versus under his government, under his PC government.

I just want to read these . . . You know, we have had for the past couple of weeks while we've been on the estimates, Mr. Chairman, a constant string of claims by the Minister about his increases versus our increases. I'm not trying to say that our increases were perfect or wonderful, but I think, Mr. Minister, that the record will stand up well. And I just want to put this on the record because I'm growing weary of the minister's unfair comparison.

In the fiscal year 1980-1981 under the NDP government, there was an 8.5 per cent increase in the university operating grant to the two universities of this province. In 1981-82, Mr. Chairman, there was a 12 per cent increase in the operating grant to the two universities, 3.1 per cent above the inflation rate. In 1982-83, there was a 17 per cent increase to the two universities, 11.7 per cent above the inflation rate, Mr. Chairman.

To the credit of the members opposite, they continued with that budget proposal after they assumed government. IN 1983-84 there was a 7 per cent increase in the university operating grant to the two institutions. In 1984-85 there was a 4.9 per cent increase under the PC government, 1 per cent below the inflation rate. In 1985-86 there was a 4.9 per cent increase to the two universities, half a per cent above the inflation rate. In 1986-87, there was a 3.2 per cent increase to the two universities, eight-tenths of 1 per cent below the inflation rate. And in 1987-88 there was a zero per cent increase, four and a half per cent below the inflation rate. Those are

the statistics, and I challenge the minister to suggest that those statistics are any different.

Now, Mr. Minister, you've also claimed that somehow the universities were starved for capital funds under the NDP era, whereas under your era there's been a great flow of funding. And once again I don't want to pretend that we had Havana under the NDP years, but if you take the years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, during those years, there was an average in each year of \$14,775,000 in capital funding to universities in this province.

If we take the period fiscal year '82-83 to fiscal year '85-86, with respect to capital, we find that the average was \$11,957,250 under your government. Mr. Minister, I suggest to you that those statistics put to end your rhetoric about how your government somehow funded universities while ours did not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to ask you several questions with respect to a March 13 memo that you distributed on the University of Regina campus, a memo, Mr. Minister, that I suggest was a very, very direct ... represents direct interference with the autonomy of the University of Regina. In fact, Mr. Minister, I can't remember in all my time in following university politics when such a memo was circulated that so directly interfered with the autonomy of the university. I think we've not seen such interference since the Liberal government was last in office when we saw the attempt by the then premier Ross Thatcher to attack the autonomy of the universities. And I suggest to you that you are choosing to do the same today.

Mr. Minister, I want to refer specifically to a number of points that you make here with respect to programs that you believe the University of Regina should be emphasizing. You indicate that, in this memo, that the university ought to be emphasizing programs that primarily focus on high-demand areas like administration, arts, science, and education. And you go on to say in the memo:

The government would prefer to see these programs maintained in a high quality, if need be at the expense of withdrawing from other program areas.

By inference, Mr. Minister, you clearly indicate to the University of Regina what programs you do not consider to be priority areas. Programs like the School of Journalism, the School of Social Work, the School of Human Justice are the obvious programs that your government does not consider to be a priority. That was very clearly implied in the memo that your circulated.

I say to you, sir, that you have no business telling University of Regina what programs it shall emphasize and what programs it should de-emphasize. I suggest to you that that's a direct interference with the autonomy of the University of Regina, and I ask you to withdraw that March 13 memo.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: Well as it relates to my brief to the University of Regina and to the University of Saskatchewan boards of governors, you have suggested that I have stampeded over, or neglected to respect, their autonomy. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I'll give you the two views here.

And in fact when I was at the convocation at the University of Saskatchewan, if what you had said is true, it flies right in the face of what the president said before 2 or 3,000 people at that convocation. Because I distinctly recall while I was sitting on that platform, in the president's address, he turned to me directly during part of that address and said he quite frankly appreciated that we respected their autonomy, albeit there was some obviously broad provincial view in that brief. The president - and I suspect he's reflecting the view of his board of governors - turned in his address and said quite succinctly that he appreciated the fact that we respect their autonomy. And we do. And we do more than just so in a lip-service sort of fashion.

At the board of governors at Regina, if I was to share you what had happened at my first meeting with that board of governors, is they explicitly asked for some larger direction; give us some sense of where the province, in our view, is going and is heading. And so, quite frankly, they asked for some direction in very concrete terms.

So I would suggest to you that your view of what that brief was intended to do was not trample over the rights or the autonomy of the university - not at all. Not at all. And we do respect their autonomy, and we didn't tell them that they should cut this course or that course. That is not our role. We said, above all, do not try to be all things to all people; maintain that core. We're not saying what you should not have. That's for you to decide. We're not going to start making the decisions under this dome.

I like to think that we have a very good working relationship with the boards. I'm very excited about the future for our universities. I don't know what more I can say.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, we suggest to you that by indicating clearly to the university that, other than the priority areas that I identified earlier, that other areas were to be de-emphasized. You very clearly laid out the areas in which you expected that cuts would be appropriate, and we think it's entirely inappropriate, on this side of the House, that you should interfere in university program considerations in that manner.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to ask you one final question tonight, and that deals with another part of this memo.

This is a two-part question. First of all, you spell out in this memo a suggested plan for deficit retirement, or debt retirement for the University of Regina. And you suggest to them, sir, that despite a two-year budget freeze, and despite uncertainty about what the budget shall be beyond there - you indicate in the memo somewhere between zero per cent and the inflation rate - that you expect them to eliminate their cumulative deficit of \$5.5 million by 1991.

But the first part of my question to you is: will you give us a similar undertaking that, in the view that you're forcing the University of Regina to do that, that your government will also eliminate its cumulative deficit of some \$3.5 billion by the fiscal year 1990-91, too?

And the second part of my question to you is very simply this: one of the areas that I was most alarmed about in this memo, Mr. Chairman - and I want to read this to the House - is your comments with respect to admission policies. You say, Mr. Minister, and I quote from your memo:

With respect to admission policies, the government believes it may be timely to open up a dialogue on what qualifications are required to gain admission to university. A number of factors are relevant here:

(1) The probability of the individual succeeding in university studies. We cannot afford to allow someone into university just to let him in, or to let her in, and then have them fail.

To continue quoting from the memo:

(2) The effect of extra students on the overall level of quality in the university;

and

(3) Access of socially disadvantaged groups to the upward mobility that has traditionally been afforded by university education.

My special concern, Mr. Minister, is with your words, "We cannot afford to allow someone into university, just to let him . . . or her fail."

And I want to ask you: as you know, the University of Regina has had a very excellent program for some years, called the university entrance program, which allows students that don't have their grade 12, or do not have the marks to meet the entrance requirements for university admission, to gain admission to the University of Regina on a one-year trial basis through this program as a result of demonstrating maturity and commitment to pursue a course of academic studies.

And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is in light of this memo, as you can well appreciate, this memo casts some doubts about whether your government supports the continuation of the university entrance program at the University of Regina. And my question to you, sir, is: will you give your Assembly this commitment, your commitment that you will not, in any way, urge the University of Regina to cancel this excellent university entrance program.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the hon. member is asking me to do something just moment ago he was criticizing me for attempting to do, at least in his eyes.

What programs the university runs will be determined by the board of governors, along with the administration.

Now why . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . because I respect their autonomy. Now you're asking me don't respect that autonomy, try and run the place out of this legislature. You are inconsistent in your logic. Simply, you're inconsistent.

The other point I want to make here, when it comes to universities, and in fact I would make it relative to all of what we're doing in education, because if one looks at it as we've examined several areas - we go to the K to 12 area, technical institutes, community colleges or universities - our record is one of accomplishment. And as was pointed out in this blueprint, in purely objective terms this record of accomplishment is one in which we might all take pride. More students are being taught, more courses offered, more money provided than at any other time in history.

And yet if one examines this and gets past the simple objective analysis, the prevailing outlook on campuses across the country is more negative than positive. The struggle to meet society's ever-widening expectations has left many professors and administrators, and I might say teachers and parents, with a sense of frustration rather than satisfaction. The very open-endedness of our standards has deprived us of a meaningful sense of accomplishment.

So what I'm saying is: in pure objective terms, if you want to engage in a simplistic analysis, this record and the record that I've put into these debates over the past several days is one which we can be very proud of. And yet, having said all of that, using simple black and white analysis isn't good enough, I guess, is what we're saying, and that one has to look beyond that, and I guess that's what I'm asking of you. And it seems clear to us at least that an effort must be made to re-create a shared understanding among all parties of the roles and the responsibilities, whether it be at the universities or the institutes or the regional colleges, or so on and so forth.

And I recognize that this can't be accomplished overnight. But I would suggest to you that we've made a start, and that it's no good trying to suggest that complex issues have simple yes-no, black-white answers. Because they do not, and to try and apply that logic, you're doing a disservice to the public of Saskatchewan.

That is a paraphrasing of what was laid out in page 8 of this blueprint. And I would recommend it to your reading because it really says it all.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:04 p.m.