

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditures – Vote 36

Item 1 (continued)

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Chairman, in the last few weeks it has come to light that the Legal Aid Commission has imposed a user fee on the individuals who use the services of legal aid lawyers, and this has been imposed with the agreement in sanction of the PC government. The imposition of such user fees, Mr. Chairman, greatly restricts accessibility to legal services to those with limited incomes.

And to begin with, only the most poor of people receive legal services, and many poor people can't afford the user fee that is intended to be imposed – the \$60 fee to a maximum, I think, of \$400. Many people can't afford that and may still not be on welfare.

I know that what I will hear and what we heard this afternoon, and what we've heard on a number of occasions from the members opposite, is that, for example, in the case of the drug prescription question, what's \$40 a month? What's \$30? What's \$40 a month to an individual? That's all . . . that's the 20 per cent that they're responsible for.

Well that's an easy thing for someone to say when they're earning a high income – \$40 a month is significant to someone on a \$60,000 salary, for example, which I understand is the cabinet's salary, what a cabinet minister would earn. But let's just take a look at what that means to somebody on a \$1,000 income for example — \$40 per month on a \$1,000 income is approximately 4 per cent of their income. Now if we take 4 per cent of a \$60,000 income . . . if we take 4 per cent of \$60,000, that's \$200 a month – \$200 a month on a \$5,000-a-month income – \$2,400 a year.

So when the members opposite say people can afford the \$60 for user fees on legal aid, or the \$40 on the prescription drug plan, they must remember that when they're talking about people with \$1,000 income, which is more than what somebody on minimum wage earns on a monthly basis, that's 4 per cent of their income, which would amount to \$200 of a cabinet minister's income if the percentages were taken into consideration. The other thing one has to consider is the fact that on a \$5,000-a-month income, the balance that's left over, \$4,800, goes a lot further than the balance left over on a \$1,000 income.

So I'm trying to put this problem into perspective, and it's easy to come out and say, well what's 60 bucks? They can afford \$60 for user fees, and that is just not acceptable when you think in relative terms with respect to the earning capacity that the dollars bring. It's not acceptable, and I believe the members opposite would scream and holler if they were asked to put forward that sort of money too, on a regular basis, in percentage terms.

So what it leads me to believe is that this government, in imposing these user fees and in their general attitude towards legal aid, that they are trying to say that legal aid is a charity and not a right. But, Mr. Chairman, it is a right. People have a right, and I would suggest that the law clearly sets that out in the charter of rights. They have a right to protection by a lawyer when they are in the courts or to legal representation, and without that representation, they are not equal before the law. It's a right, Mr. Chairman, it's not a charity.

And I suggest that the whole attitude with respect to making legal aid a charity is one of the reasons why they've moved it from the Department of Justice to the Department of Social Services. They are looking upon it as another social service as opposed to a legal right.

We also have to remember that when we're talking about legal service in legal aid, we are not talking simply about people who are defended against criminal charges in our courts – although that's a very valid and important function that the legal aid lawyers play – but we're also talking about women who are fleeing violent situations, Mr. Chairman, women who are fleeing violent situations. We're talking about parents whose children may be taken away from them, and these parents have to be defended in the courts. They have to put forward their point of view. And I would argue very strongly that when the government is trying to take children away from their parents, that these parents should be represented by a lawyer, and the fact that they may not be able to afford the \$60 user fee, for one reason or other, should not be an impediment to them being represented in the courts in a case like that.

And there's no question that the overwhelming majority of family law cases opened by legal aid are filed by women, and many are women in desperate situations, and they require immediate legal action for themselves. And if, for example, they fled a violent situation and don't have the \$60 up-front cost, or the \$400 – whatever the Legal Aid Commission may feel that they can ultimately pay – but because they don't have their act together, they haven't had a chance to make the arrangements and they don't have the necessary money available, they should not be denied representation in the courts. They should not be denied their day in court. And yet I understand that one-half of the poor people, both men and women, who qualified for legal aid, will face bills of \$60 or more, and perhaps up to a maximum of \$400 in some cases. And in spite of this, we've seen the Legal Aid Commission cut by an actual cut, I understand, of \$500,000, and I have been told that the effective cut amounts to close to 800,000 because of inflation and increased case-load.

So what we will see in the province of Saskatchewan is people who are forced to plead guilty, people who will be forced to plead guilty even though they may not be guilty, simply because they feel they cannot afford the \$60 user fee, or the \$400 user fee, whatever may be imposed upon them. The members opposite say, well if they can't afford it, you know, if they're on welfare, they're going to be getting assistance. But I remind you that there are

many, many people on salaries who are still on a sufficiently low income that they can't afford . . . That \$60 is a substantial amount of money to them. It may not be a lot of money to some of the members opposite, but it is to those people on lower incomes, because relatively-wise, it's very, very substantial.

So these individuals will be forced to plead guilty. Now I know that's not an unreasonable speculation on our part, not at all unreasonable because I'm sure the member from Melville, the minister responsible for the Legal Aid Commission, in his own law practice has had people come to him and say, I want to plead guilty and just get it over with, in spite of the fact they are innocent of the charge. They would rather get the thing over with than pursue it in courts, and I'm sure, like any lawyer, he advises them: no, you must never plead guilty to an offence that you're not really guilty of; you must defend it.

Well what do these individuals do who feel that they just can't take the \$60 out of their food money or their rent money that month in order to pay the user fees for legal aid? But in spite of this, in spite of the fact we have many people on low income who are finding it very hard to make ends meet, Mr. Chairman, in spite of that, we have the minister responsible for legal aid saying in this House words to the effect that prostitutes and drug dealers don't deserve free help from the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission. That's what the minister said. Prostitutes and drug dealers don't deserve this free help.

Now, Mr. Chairman, most of the people who receive legal aid are not prostitutes and drug dealers. The member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden says, are you saying that . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Allow the member from Lakeview to make her comments.

Ms. Simard: — The member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, former minister of Justice, says: are you saying they do deserve legal help? We are saying that the majority of people — and I believe that that is substantially set out; it's established by evidence — the majority of people who receive legal aid are not prostitutes and drug dealers. But what has happened is the minister from Melville has left that impression. The minister from Melville has left that impression with the people of Saskatchewan in a deliberate attempt to mislead them as to who receives legal aid in the province, and I say that's very, very unfair to those women who are fleeing violent situations and require the services of legal aid lawyer. I say that's very unfair to those people who have been wrongly charged with an offence. I say it is very unfair to those parents who may need legal services to attempt to prove to the court that they are a good parent and should retain custody of their children. I say that's very, very unfair to, by far, the vast majority of people, Mr. Chairman, the vast majority of people who use legal services in this province to suggest that prostitutes and drug dealers don't deserve free help.

That's an easy statement to make. But to say that's an answer for the imposition of user fees, when most of the people who use legal aid don't fall into that category, is very, very unfair. I believe it's playing up on a sentiment

in this province that it's very unfair to those people who legitimately use legal aid for purposes such as fleeing from violent, life-threatening situations — very unfair to those people, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to quote right now from a newspaper article dated August 6, '87, in the *Leader-Post*, that said:

The figures in the report give no indication that any prostitution charges were handled by Legal Aid in 1984-85.

That's what it's referring to and actually it's referring to the minister's comments.

Of the 11,483 charges dealt with during that period, only 389, or 3 per cent, were drug-related. And many of those would be simple possession charges, not trafficking cases, Lawyers for Equal Justice (said) . . .

And the title on the article is: 'Legal aid clientele unfairly portrayed.' I certainly agree with that sentiment. I believe that was very unfair to portray the legal aid clientele in that fashion — very unfair, Mr. Chairman, to label people in that fashion.

Now the minister may say that, well, he didn't mean to hurt anybody. That may be his explanation, Mr. Chairman. The fact is: the facts don't support his allegations, Mr. Chairman. The facts don't support his allegations, so he can't continue to make that sort of statement in the sense that he's attempting to let the public think that those are most of the people who are receiving legal aid.

And he may say, as I said before, that he didn't intend to hurt anybody. But that's a poor excuse, Mr. Chairman, that's a poor excuse because people were hurt by it. Even if he didn't intend it to, they were. I think, as a minister of the Crown, he should be much more careful about what he says that will impinge on people's lives and affect them in the eyes of others. I think he should be much more careful.

And obviously, Mr. Chairman, the Premier supports him in what he does and says because he has never been asked to apologize; he hasn't been asked to resign. Obviously, he's the Premier's hatchet man in that regard — there's no question about it in my mind — and he condones the insulting remarks that the minister makes with respect to the people of this province. There's no question he condones those remarks because there has been no apology or correction forthcoming from the minister responsible for the Legal Aid Commission in this case and the social service commission in other cases.

So in light of the fact, Mr. Chairman, that the allegations or the impression that the people of the province were left with, that most of the legal aid client are prostitutions and drug dealers, in light of that, in light of the fact the facts don't substantiate that, I would like to ask the minister whether he's prepared to acknowledge the fact that the facts don't substantiate that, and whether he's prepared to withdraw his statement in that regard to the extent that it may have misled the people of Saskatchewan.

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I am going to show for you what is misleading and who is misleading this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan. First of all, I quote from *Hansard*, July 24, 1987. The member opposite from Lakeview would want us to say that this individual, this Minister of Social Services, is on record as having said that prostitutes and drug dealers should not have legal counsel. And if you check the record, that's what she just said.

I quote from *Hansard*:

Surely the prostitutes of Regina and drug dealers, who have capital to deal in drugs, can come up with a little bit of money towards their defence.

That is a far cry from what the member from Lakeview has attributed to me. And I'm not going to raise it; I'll let the people judge. But I should be standing here on a point of personal privilege, not answering the question.

That member from Regina Lakeview wants to be credible, expects people to believe what she says. And I have read the quote exactly what I said. I did not say at any time that drug dealers and prostitutes in Regina, or anywhere else, should not have legal counsel. I said, surely they can come up with a little bit of money towards their legal fees — and if they can't, they won't have to pay, but if they can, they should pay.

If the member from Regina Lakeview thinks that I am going to apologize to the prostitutes and drug dealers of Regina, never, ever will that happen. She is in dream-land.

I was going to answer him before 5 o'clock, to the member from Regina North East. We were talking about social problems, and he suggested that I was cruel and insensitive, and he was concerned about my fate, whether I would continue as a cabinet minister in this province. The NDP should not be so concerned about Grant Schmidt. Grant Schmidt is not interested in saving himself. I am interested in saving Saskatchewan. And to suggest that it is cruel to expect people to work, to suggest that it's insensitive to ask people to feed their children is exactly the kind of nonsense the NDP deal with. If we have a social problem in this province, the biggest social problem is the NDP and their mentality. That is a social problem in itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — On legal aid. We have heard this all before, and I've answered all these questions before. And now the member from Regina Lakeview suggests that I should apologize to Regina prostitutes and drug dealers. First of all, I don't know any. How would I be able to apologize to them? Who do I apologize to? I've never met one. But wherever they are, I do not apologize to them, and that is specifically clear. And people suggest that I have gone out and insulted people or offended people — not intentionally — but if I offend drug dealers and prostitutes, I can tell you right now I'm doing it

intentionally. I intend to insult them. I hope that is clear, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Now here is the situation with legal aid. Legal aid has said that they are asking for people to contribute toward their legal fees if they are capable. People who are on social services do not have to contribute. People who have incomes equal to social services, the cut-off line, do not have to contribute. They are talking primarily here about people charged with criminal offences, and they are saying that it is discretionary with the clinics, and the clinics will determine whether the individual can pay something towards their defence.

Now to get on to a tangent that I said everybody who is served by legal aid is a drug dealer or a prostitute, that I have never said. They are quoting statistics that 3 per cent are. That may be the case. But what we're talking about here is, it was clearly indicated in the Regina *Leader-Post* about the same time this controversy arose that the Regina prostitutes were taking a legal issue to the Supreme Court, if necessary, when they lost their case. And I challenge the member from Lakeview to deny that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan were not paying the legal costs of their charter challenge. And I'm saying that if they can afford to contribute to that charter challenge, they should. And I do not apologize, nor will I ever apologize.

So I think what you have here is a clear-cut difference between the NDP and the PCs in this province, and the public can clearly tell who we stand for and who the NDP stand for.

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Chairman, what the minister actually said was, and I have this in quotes here:

Surely the prostitutes of Regina and the drug dealers, who have capital to deal in drugs can come up with a bit of money towards their defence.

But it was said in such a context that it was . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Just a second. The title to the *Leader-Post* article . . . And he knows what he was attempting to do in this House. He knows very well what he was attempting to do, and I will still assert that. The attempt was to leave the impression with the public — and he very successfully left the impression with the public — that the legal aid clientele were, for the most part, prostitutes and drug dealers. In fact, a *Star-Phoenix*, July 24 article, Mr. Chairman, a July 24 article started out with a paragraph to the effect that prostitutes and drug dealers don't deserve free help and with the whole general thrust that the majority of the clientele in with legal aid were prostitutes and drug dealers. There's absolutely no question that the people of the province were left with that mistaken impression.

And we're not asking the minister to apologize to prostitutes or drug dealers; we're not asking him to apologize to them. We're asking him to apologize to those women who are in need of legal aid, who are fleeing violent situations. We're asking him to apologize to those parents who are attempting to keep custody of their own children, who were branded by his unfair statements in this House, statements which left us and others with the impression that he felt that most people on

legal aid were prostitutes and drug dealers. And I suggest that that was what the minister was attempting to do. But, in any regard, I want to know whether or not . . . I believe that the minister also said that low-income families and single mothers would continue to get legal aid help, as has been the case in the past, or words to that effect.

And so I would like to ask the minister what he has done, what guide-lines he has set out, what sort of policy he has developed in order to ensure that those single-parent mothers, those women who are fleeing violent situations, those low-income families . . . You know, what sort of guide-lines and policies has he set out to make good on that promise that I understood him to make in this House.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am pleased to see that the member from Lakeview has now consulted *Hansard* and has, as they say in my constituency, pulled in her horns a little bit and now concedes that I did not say the things she attributed to me. I am pleased she admits to that.

An Hon. Member: — Accept the apology.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — There are suggestions I should accept the apology, but I think we've heard enough about apology.

The low-income and single mothers, I gave a commitment, would receive legal aid, as always in the past. The answer to that is: it is happening. I have received no complaints, not even from the NDP, and I'm sure they'll try to find some or have been trying hard.

Legal aid is to use their discretion. The member from Regina Lakeview is a lawyer. She knows what discretion means. And I believe they are exercising their discretion fairly and that only those people who can contribute anything towards their legal fees are being asked to contribute. There may be a dispute in some cases over whether a person can afford to contribute or not afford to contribute. There is an appeal mechanism. The challenge cases that the NDP and their friends have set up where they were going to take court challenges have been resolved by the appeal mechanism. They no longer have their test cases before them. They're still looking for test cases.

They are looking for trouble where there is no trouble, and things are operating quite smoothly. Therefore, the answer is that single mothers, low-income people, people on welfare, are receiving legal aid as always. I don't know if there's any statistics on the number of guilty pleas or the number of not guilty pleas, but I can tell you that, as a lawyer, people would plead not guilty if they weren't guilty. As a matter of principle they would not do it, and if that principle costs \$60 and the person can afford to contribute \$60 towards a principle that might cost \$600 to fight, but they have to pay \$60 or 10 per cent of the cost of that principle, that's not unreasonable.

And I have yet to see any of those cases, but you may see some cases where people are saying, well I can get a free consultation; I get a consultation from legal aid, and a legal aid lawyer advises what my punishment might be, and I know I'm guilty and I go down and plead guilty. But

if I want to fool around and adjourn it a few times, I've got to come up with \$60. So I say, well I'll take my punishment now.

And so you may see a few more guilty pleas, but the innocent are not pleading guilty, and nobody believes that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to hear that the minister responsible is going to be flexible with respect to low-income families and single mothers, and I hope that that proves to be true, because as far as the opposition is concerned we'll be monitoring it closely in order to ensure that he is flexible in how he handles, and that people don't go without a defence.

Now for him to say that people never plead guilty on the basis of principle, or words to that effect — I'm not sure exactly what he was saying — I would suggest, if that's what he was saying, that that's a very naïve statement because people do plead guilty because they can't afford legal fees. There's no question about it.

In many situations, if the judge determines that that is the case, the judge may direct a lawyer to take over, a legal aid lawyer. But the members opposite are saying, aw come on, aw come on; and it's clear, Mr. Chairman, it's perfectly clear that they don't have any understanding about what happens out there. Perfectly clear.

And I take it that the minister from Melville, the minister in charge of the Legal Aid Commission, has agreed with me that it's not prostitutes and drug dealers that, for the most part, use the legal aid plan. He's agreed, in effect, by his comments, by saying that he wasn't intending to offend all these other people. I take it he agrees that it's not the case that prostitutes and drug dealers are anything but perhaps a small minority of people who use legal aid. And this article says that there weren't even any in this one particular year with respect to prostitution charges. So I am pleased to see that he recognizes that that's not the case.

The other question I have for the minister is: what about young offenders or homeless people who may not be on SAP (Saskatchewan assistance plan), for example, or people who come in the province and who many not live here for a long period of time — transients, if you wish to call them — or people who may only be on SAP for a few months out of the year? Can the minister assure us that these people will not be hit with legal aid fees?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the transients would qualify for social assistance. If they don't have any money and they don't have any assets, they would qualify, and therefore they'd qualify for legal aid. And young offenders qualify because young offenders wouldn't have any means of support. We don't yet have a system where the parents have to contribute anything towards the fees. Maybe it's something we should consider. Where the parents can afford to contribute, the parents should. A lot of cases the parents are more at fault than the children. So that's something we'll have to consider.

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Chairman, another question I would ask the minister: as I understand it, the commission's guide-lines with respect to the user fees clearly state that money must be paid up front before services are rendered. And the guide-lines also state, Mr. Minister, if the client doesn't keep up the instalments, service will be discontinued.

(1930)

Now as I understand the agreement, the federal-provincial agreement in this regard requires that very flexible rules be applied as to whether or not an individual is entitled to receive legal aid. And I also understand . . . I'm also of the opinion that if you're requiring money to be paid up front or if you are saying services will be discontinued if they don't come up with the money immediately, that it is not flexible within the intention of that agreement that I referred to.

Now the minister had said earlier tonight that he's going to be very flexible with low-income families and single mothers, and I would like to know whether the minister is intending that these particular guide-lines, that seem to be rather inflexible to me, whether the minister is intending for these to be also administered in a flexible fashion and with discretion.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, it's the commission that exercises the discretion. You're talking about flexibility; I think discretion means more than flexibility. Flexibility means that you can change to suit the circumstances.

But discretion also has another element, the responsibility of the person making the decision to make a wise decision in exercising the flexibility. So that's what discretion is. Discretion is more than flexibility. There is flexibility and there is discretion here, so we have both of them covered.

But when the member from Regina Lakeview speaks of having to continue making payments as people are capable of making their payments — you might call it an instalment plan — that is nothing more than responsibility, the responsibility that people have everywhere: the responsibility to pay their power bill, the responsibility to pay their rent, and the responsibility to pay their lawyer the small amount that it is. You've got to remember, you're talking here about 10 per cent of what a regular legal bill would be. Surely you can have the responsibility to pay that small sum even if it's on a monthly instalment, or a weekly instalment, or whatever instalment plan it is. We're talking about responsibility.

And I have no problem with single mothers and with low-income families in domestic disputes, and civil cases in legal aid, because those people are responsible. When you're talking about . . . You're lumping everyone together. You're lumping the criminals with the mothers, and that's not fair.

When you're talking about criminal element of society, you have a certain degree of lack of responsibility, and learning a little responsibility will not hurt that element of

society. So I do not apologize for requiring some responsibility.

Ms. Simard: — You made a distinction between mothers and criminals at this particular point in time. Are you suggesting that people, who are not mothers, who have been charged with criminal offences are criminals before they've been convicted?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Criminals are people who are convicted. When I last checked, the ratio of acquittals to convictions was running at 90 per cent. So as not to generalize, we would say: 90 per cent criminal, 10 per cent innocent.

Ms. Simard: — Then how, sir, do you determine this before they've had a fair trial?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well unfortunately we're talking now about the fundamentals of our justice system. If a person with an income of whatever it might be — whether it is mine, the member from Regina Lakeview — but if a person is hiring their lawyer and defending themselves against a charge that is not properly laid and they are not guilty of anything, unfortunately, in our justice system they have to pay 100 per cent of the cost of defending themselves even though they may have been totally innocent. And we should maybe talk about that and whether the state should refund people's legal fees if they are acquitted. That's something I would consider.

But you're talking about something entirely different here. You're talking about people having to pay about 10 per cent of their regular legal fees. And there's always some degree of unfairness. The unfairness is that any person in our society who has to hire a lawyer — whether they pay full tariff or 10 per cent of tariff — and are acquitted have probably been treated unfairly. But that is the cost of justice whether you are rich or you are poor. If you are poor, your cost of justice is one-tenth of those that are rich, or maybe not quite poor enough to qualify.

Ms. Simard: — Now, Mr. Minister, you also made a statement that the Legal Aid Commission decides about the flexibility as to whether or not someone will have to make a payment, whether they'll have to pay it up front, whether they'll have to continue to make instalments and they proceed with the case. You said that that's up to the Legal Aid Commission to do that.

Well, Mr. Minister, I suggest to you — and I want to know if you agree with me or not — that this is ultimately your responsibility because the agreement, as I understand it, is between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada. And that agreement on cost sharing with respect to legal aid requires the Government of Saskatchewan to exercise flexible criteria with respect to the imposition of any sort of legal aid fee or with respect to the access to legal aid.

Now when you make a statement off the record, or very quickly in the course of others, that it's up to the Legal Aid Commission, I want to know whether you acknowledge the fact that you are ultimately responsible for how that agreement with the federal government is handled and therefore you are ultimately responsible for whether or

not a flexible criteria is implemented in determining whether or not someone has access to the legal aid system.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the law that we refer to in Ottawa was made by Liberals, is now being administered by Conservatives. And as long as the Conservatives, or at the very worst, the Liberals are in power we will be within the law. Should the NDP ever be in power in Ottawa, I don't know where we'll be.

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, you made a statement that I'm going to respond to. I don't intend to get into a long wrangle with you. I understand well enough the impossibility of ever achieving anything like a sensible debate with you, but I do want to respond to your comment that there's no innocent people pleading guilty.

Mr. Minister, that is happening, and I suggest that you ask anyone, any lawyer, who spends time in the provincial courts, in the criminal courts. It is happening. Everyone has seen cases where a person comes forward — the judge, as they often do, asks them whether or not they need counsel; they consider this matter, they say: I've been refused by legal aid, I don't have the 60 bucks or whatever it is, don't have the money. Everybody has seen it in court, and then they go and plead guilty.

Mr. Minister, anyone who has spent any time in criminal court knows that a percentage of those people are innocent but have no means of putting their case forward. There is no way a person with a grade 6 or 7 education, which is what some of these people have — some of them are illiterate — can go into court and, in the very complicated procedure that is in the criminal court, put their story forward. The system doesn't work without lawyers.

Without counsel, Mr. Minister, anyone who has spent any time in criminal courts knows, without counsel, innocent people are going to plead guilty because some of them don't have any options. There are people going before the courts who don't have counsel and who plead guilty. Mr. Minister, you know as well as I do that a percentage of those people are innocent. They just have no options.

So, Mr. Minister, when you say that innocent people are not pleading guilty, you are being naïve or you're being less than candid with this Assembly. And I don't think you're, on this particular subject at least, Mr. Minister, you're naïve.

Mr. Minister, you and I both know, I think, of one very recent case that the lawyers who came to see you and asked you to reconsider this — whom you branded a bunch of left-leaning lawyers, I think, was the way you endeared yourself to them . . . They, Mr. Minister, as you well know, took one case — it just happened to be the first one that came forward — took one case of a person who had pleaded guilty because he didn't have counsel, and the Legal Aid Commission gave him counsel. So that particular case is not a good illustration, but that group of lawyers isn't catching them all.

Anyone who is in criminal court these days knows there's people going there who are pleading guilty because they can't get counsel, and you and I both know a percentage of those people are innocent.

I say to you, Mr. Minister, if don't return this system to a more sensible footing, as it used to be, if you don't do it voluntarily, I really believe you're going to wind up doing it anyway because I think there's going to be a constitutional challenge to what you're doing. The charter of rights guarantees people due process. The American jurisdictions have all held that due process cannot be had without counsel, and I think you're going to find that the Canadian courts are going to say the same thing, and then you're going to wind up giving them all counsel.

Mr. Minister, you are wrong when you say that there are innocent people who are not pleading guilty, and if you don't believe me, I suggest you ask the Crown prosecutors because they'll tell you exactly what I'm telling you.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I've seen just about everything now. The member from Regina Centre says I should go out and interview people who pleaded guilty to theft, or break and enter, whatever, and say: did you do it? And they say: no, I didn't do it. Well why did you plead guilty? Well . . . I didn't know what I was doing.

Well, I mean, do we expect me to go out and interview people. I mean, I have dealt with more criminals than you've ever seen. I can come and document for you how many criminal cases I've had for either the prosecution or the defence. And I have dealt with criminal cases for years. It's not that I haven't seen any criminal cases.

And to the member from Regina Centre, can he prove that he voted NDP in the last election? Can he? He can prove that he voted. Well someone who pleaded guilty can prove that they pleaded guilty, but can they prove or can the member from Regina Centre prove that they were innocent? Or can he or they prove that they were not guilty. They don't have to. They admitted, they pleaded guilty. Now I'm supposed to go around and ask people who admitted they were guilty whether they still admit they were guilty. Well what do you expect for an answer from those people? They admitted they were guilty.

So this is a hypothetical point we're talking about whether these people are not guilty or innocent. These people have gone into court, stood in front of the judge and said: I plead guilty; I did it. All right. They've done that. No more can I prove that — or you or any one else prove — that they're not guilty in any way than you can prove that you voted NDP. And that is really the same kind of nonsense.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, I didn't ask that of you. Mr. Minister, I ask very little of you because I expect very little of you. But I think, Mr. Minister, you might consult with the Crown prosecutors because I suggest to you, in private, they'll tell you what I'm telling you, and that is that people are going before the courts without counsel and pleading guilty, and a percentage of those people are going to be innocent, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well the member from Regina

Centre has changed his speech a little bit. He's saying people are going before the courts without counsel and pleading guilty. That's a far cry from innocent people pleading guilty.

An Hon. Member: — A percentage will be innocent.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well now he suggests a percentage of them will be innocent.

An Hon. Member: — Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, I mean, that is really nonsense because how are you ever going to establish that any of them are not guilty?

As a prosecutor, and I was one once until the NDP determined that I was no longer competent, I think, was the term they were trying to use. I was no longer competent to prosecute due to a problem — and I don't complain about this — due to a problem in philosophy that, as a prosecutor, I didn't have the same philosophy as the NDP. I don't complain about that. I knew that. When I joined the PC party, I knew it would cost me about \$50,000 in legal work. I knew that; I don't complain about it; that comes with law and politics. I know that; I'm not complaining.

I just want to point out to you that when you're prosecuting, if you believe the man is not guilty, you should not even take . . . the guilty plea should stand up and say no, I don't . . . the Crown won't accept this plea; we insist this man get counsel. That is a duty of a Crown prosecutor — not to get convictions, but to get justice.

So why ask a Crown prosecutor. If any Crown prosecutor admitted to me that he took or she took a guilty plea from a person that they believe was not guilty, then they are not following the responsibilities of what a lawyer and a member of the law society should do. They should be dropping the charge. So I'm not going to get an answer like that from any prosecutor unless they admit they are incompetent, and I don't believe they are.

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, Crown prosecutors don't have all the information in every single case. There are often times — and you should know this if you acted as a defence lawyer — that there is evidence there that the Crown prosecutor does not know about. So when a person is unrepresented, Mr. Minister, when a person is unrepresented, the Crown prosecutor may have no way of becoming privy to this particular information. Not everyone may be as well educated as you, sir.

Now my question to you is: do you or do you not respect Canadian law that says every person is innocent until he or she is proven guilty?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, yes, I do. But if they admit they are guilty, should I argue with them?

(1945)

Ms. Simard: — The question is should they admit their

guilt . . . should I suggest they're not guilty if they say they are. Some people will put in a guilty plea even though they may not be guilty. If they were defended, sir . . . They'll put in a guilty plea because they can't afford it, or for misunderstanding with respect to what they've been charged with, or any number of situations. For a lawyer to suggest that that never happens is, quite frankly, the best I can say for it, naïve.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — How can I feel sorry for a person who believes in their heart they're not guilty, stands up in front of a judge and says, I'm guilty, who lies to the court and then somehow says that I'm not guilty. They're lying to the court right there. Surely they can say, I plead not guilty and I'll defend myself if I have to — and I don't think anybody has to.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, I want to ask you a few questions regarding the residents at North Park Centre in Prince Albert. The residents to whom you are paying no attention to at this time, and the residents to whose relatives you are paying no attention to this time — 180 weak and vulnerable people, who, when you announced this move, moving them out of North Park Centre by February, have resisted the move and are wondering why you did it.

They don't like the fact that you are doing it, and I am getting a great deal of letters, Mr. Minister, and I am sure you are getting a great deal of letters. I brought half of them here with me today. I want to read one sentence out of one letter, which I think you got as well, just to give you an indication of the extent of their discontent with your decision, your unilateral decision to do this.

The sentence that I want to read goes like this:

You, the government in power, do only as you please.

And later on it says:

I feel that it is only fair that you open your eyes and stop and listen to us for a change.

And this is from a family, signed by four family members, who have a relative at North Park Centre.

The letters that I have received, Mr. Minister — and my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake, and I suspect the member from Shellbrook-Torch has received some, and I suspect you have received some — are by and large sincere, well thought out, and responsible. My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: have you made yourself aware of the extent of the discontent of the relatives of the residents of North Park Centre?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is a particularly difficult thing to do to close an institution and have the residents go out and live in the community amongst us. It's not an easy thing to do. And I've said in this Assembly that it was not my idea, but I am convinced by the experts in this country, in Europe, by the Canadian Society for Community Living, the Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded, it is the right thing to do. And if it is the right thing to do, then it should be

done. And we are doing it, and it is not easy to do this because you are making change. Change is not easy.

On the whole, the transition to community living is going better than we had anticipated, and the resistance we get are from those people who resist change. We are getting it from concerned relatives, and I acknowledge that. They should be concerned. Slowly the problems are being worked out. Their fears are being allayed. Slowly this process is going on, and every day we have a new family that is satisfied with the new arrangements.

I haven't replied to this yet, but I stood . . . For example, in my paper, in *The Melville Advance*, I read a letter from a man in Calgary, Alberta, who was complaining about his uncle in North Park, having to leave North Park. As it turns out most likely that uncle will come home to Melville and will live with other people who are level 4 people. And I don't see what the problem is because if his uncle comes home, he will be closer to his relatives and live as a level 4 – he's now a level 4 – in the same manner as other level 4's who are not mentally retarded but are now all on level 4. I see no problem. I think his uncle has already been Melville to check out the facilities and was quite satisfied with the facilities.

We are working extremely hard to solve these problems. There will be further solutions announced in the not too distant future. Slowly the families and the people are being won over to the idea that change is not necessarily bad. We are getting a fair amount of resistance from John Weldon and the CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) union. And I expect that; it's his duty to try to preserve the jobs. But even there, the staff is being reasonable about the whole thing.

It's not easy because staff will be displaced. But I have the difficult decision of weighing the welfare of the clientele and the welfare of the staff. And we have to remember that North Park institution was built not for the benefit of the staff but built for the benefit of the clientele that lives there. And North Park is being closed not to punish the staff but for the benefit of the people that live there.

And so while there is no easy solution, we have to pick what we think is the priority of the people who live in North Park, and we have to stop putting people into institutions. They will be spread throughout the province as close to their community as possible; the plan is falling into place. We will be making further announcements as we go. Gradually people are getting used to the idea, and more and more cases, they're happy with the results.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, I would suggest that you are not aware to the extent of which the relatives are reacting to this particular position, to the position you have taken, the position that it has to be closed by February. There . . . I think the position which you have put – the rational end of the position you have put – would be brought very, very, almost totally, by people who have members of their family who are retarded but not yet in the institution, who haven't spent 20 years in the institution but who were maybe now at the school age or just getting into their early twenties.

They're looking for a place to put them, because if you

would receive the extent of concerns and letters that we have – my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake and I have – then you would realize your error and you would abandon ship and try to lengthen the stay or provide for those people, at least, not to have to move under such quick and rapid . . . under such a rapid condition.

Because the way they feel, Mr. Minister, is that you have given them an ultimatum, a forced choice. Eight people already that had, at least to my understanding, that had been moved out have not been given the choice of staying at North Park Centre. You see it's like putting a gun barrel to their head; one barrel says, you get shot to Valley View, and the other one says, you get shot out to a private institute or to a private home.

Now a lot of those folks that are in there were in private homes 20 or 30 years ago or 50 years ago, hidden in closets, and that is no place for them to go back to. When you accelerate, when you accelerate this thing to that extent without having the community prepared to meet those people, that is what is liable to happen again, and we'll be full circle to where we were 30 years ago or 40 years ago.

You've taken a very dogmatic position on it and I would give you a comparison. If you went to one of your senior citizens' homes in Melville or any town in Saskatchewan and you said: you've got to move, you've got to move back to a private institution or to someplace in Moose Jaw or Swift Current or Lloydminster or wherever, how would they feel if they didn't have that choice?

And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is: why don't you get them out of this double mind? Why didn't you give them one of the options as staying in North Park Centre by, say, considering it and making it into a geriatric centre or something like that?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, what the member from Prince Albert is suggesting is that we simply leave the people hidden away at the institution until they die. And I believe that they have some good life left yet, that they can do some things that we don't even know about, that while the change is not easy that they will enjoy the change. Some of them have been out in the van that the government provided going to check out the facilities they're going to go to.

But to simply say . . . Remember you're talking about people here who don't have the legal capacity to make their own decisions. And you're saying to them: do you want to stay here or do you want to go to some new place? And then the question is . . . Anybody, any person, including myself, would say: well what's this new place like? Gee, you know, I'm kind of used to it here so I'll stay here. And even if you say, well it's a very nice new place, you'll be very happy there – it is a change. And people even who have the capacity to make their decisions will most likely not want the change.

I recall that when my grandfather went to the nursing home or when my grandmother moved off the farm and into town, they didn't want to make the change. But it got to the stage where they had no choice. They made the change and they found out they liked it. In both cases,

where my grandfather moved to the nursing home, he liked it – didn't even want to go back to his house to visit. My grandmother moved off the farm into the city and then liked it. But change is something that's hard for people to make, but once it's done they usually appreciate it.

And so I would expect in this case most of those people will get used to it and enjoy things. And the alternative is that we can't run a half an institution or a quarter of an institution. We have to get on with the plan. We have a large institution that operates in Moose Jaw and therefore we can't run a half an institution in each place. And so the Moose Jaw one was first, North Battleford was an overflow. We no longer need the overflow and so change has to be made. The change will be for the better.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well, Mr. Minister, you mention that you have to get into one institution. I'll come back to that in just a minute.

In my discussion with the professionals and also with relatives there and with the local branch of the SAMR.(Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded), my best estimate is that there will be 100 of those people, plus – over a hundred of those – that will have to be transferred to Valley View. Now I have no . . . that you will be very unlikely to find group home for or be able to place in a private institution, or in a private home, rather.

Now I visited Valley View and I say the Valley View . . . And I admit to you I have nothing against Valley View. They have the facilities equal to the facilities in North Park Centre with the two exceptions, the exceptions being that the maintenance of the place just is not comparable to North Park Centre. And anybody that visits the place will walk up to it and you can see immediately that the grounds at North Park Centre are better kept and that the paint is not peeling all over the place in North Park Centre. That doesn't mean that Valley View can't be put into better shape and I hope that you will allow some budget money to get it into good shape that way.

The other thing, of course, is the proximity and the smallness of the place, the proximity to people in the northern area. Now when I was in Valley View, I kept asking myself the question: what advantage will there be for those people, whom I approximate at 100 plus, that will have to move? Is there any distinct advantage? Could I think of one advantage? And unfortunately, I couldn't. And I went back to your statement that you said, well we're not doing it for financial reasons. You have been quoted as saying that, and if there's no financial reason, then it just makes it more of a conundrum.

Now today, however, you state that, well we should be having only one institution. So I ask you, Mr. Minister: what is the real reason that you're doing this? Is it for financial purposes? Is it for a financial saving of \$100 per person or \$200 per person per year, or is it because of your sort of dogmatic approach that, heck, you've got to try to privatize or at least use a disguise of privatizing when you know full well that less than half of them will be able to go into private institutions?

(2000)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that my staff advises me that many of the residents — I'm not saying all of them – but many of the residents are saying when can we go? When can we go see our new place? When can we move to our new home? That's the information I've gotten from our staff.

The member from Prince Albert suggests that 100 out of the 180 will have to go to Valley View. I can assure them that we will do better than that and we will get a greater percentage than that living out in the community. And so we are not as pessimistic about that figure. We are optimistic.

With respect to Valley View, if it is deficient, we will get it into shape, and I can guarantee you that. There is no reason for deficiency there. The staff at Valley View is paid the same as the staff at North Park and there's no reason why they can't do their job in the same manner. And I don't accept the fact that Valley View is not as good an institution as North Park was. And I use the term "was" because North Park is being phased out and the people moved into the community.

And so if there . . . We are now in the process of advertising for a new director at Valley View and the first criteria for that new director is to make Valley View the best institution possible. But it's still going to be an institution and the second criteria is to try to limit the number of people in Valley View and have those people out in the community. So it is not a matter of dogma, it's not a matter of money. It's a matter of doing what is accepted throughout the western world as the right thing for the retarded people to live in institutions.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now, Mr. Minister, a lot of the relatives feel that the right thing for them is to remain where they are and they have been happy. And I think what's happening, and I commend the staff for it, that they feel, well this is part of our job so we are going to create the atmosphere where the people certainly should feel happy about going out. And they're going a good job of that, and I commend them for it, although when you talk to relatives, they wish they weren't being put in that position.

But the other question that I've had residents ask . . . And I wrote you a letter on July 22 and I'm wondering whether you will reply to this letter at any time. I ask you that question: are you going to give me a reply? And, specifically, to the one question which I asked in here about the legal rights of the residents, what is the department's position regarding the legal rights? Suppose they say, no, we won't sign. The relative says, we won't sign to be moved out of the centre to go to a private home or to go to Valley View. What is their legal position? And will you answer my letter?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I could just generally lay out the proposal.

Our planning process recognizes and supports the rights of the residents as follows: (a) The residents have the ability to decide where to live, and will decide for themselves where their new home will be as much as possible. Okay? As much as they can decide. All residents

will have access to an external advocate, in this case the Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded.

And when necessary, we would get them legal advice. But the Saskatchewan Association of the Mentally Retarded are their advocate and represent them.

The residents are involved in site visits. That means they go out, they have been out in other parts of Saskatchewan, in a van taken out to visit their proposed location.

The residents who do not have the ability to decide for themselves where to live – we take a consensus approach, conferring with the relevant parties. In the end result, if a guardian or if a parent refuses to have the individual live elsewhere, and when the time comes that the institution in North Park is closed, they will have to make a choice of either finding their own accommodation, providing for that individual, or co-operating in helping us locate a place.

So I can say that anyone who intends to be so stubborn that they say, I will not take my relative out and I will not take my relative anywhere else, when the final day that the institution closes comes along, will have to decide if they're going to care for the relative themselves or make their own arrangements. We will co-operate at all times in finding new locations, but certainly we can't in the end have people sitting in an empty institution; they have to be cared for. So if the relatives won't make the decision on how they're to be cared for, then in the very, very end of the bottom line, the government will take over and care for those people.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some more questions regarding North Park Centre. And it's pretty clear from your statement referring to North Park Centre as being a "was" that you're not willing to change your mind, Mr. Minister. Clearly you've made your decision and that's where it stands.

So let me ask you about the future of the facilities that were known as North Park Centre. And I don't know what you might do to title them, or the new owners if there are any. And so I would ask you, Mr. Minister: are the facilities, are the buildings and the equipment at North Park Centre being sold? I would like to know if there are any ongoing discussions, if there have been any ongoing discussions with any interested parties, and I would like to know as well, Mr. Minister, what your department would value those assets at.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, when the department no longer has a need for the facilities then they will become the responsibility of the property management corporation. The property management corporation will lease out, sell, or otherwise dispose of the facility for whatever public or private purpose suits the property management corporation and is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan. That's the only answer I can give on the future of the particular building.

Mr. Lautermilch: — So, Mr. Minister, you're suggesting that none of the . . . that Extendicare or Ranch Ehrlo or Jubilee have not purchased the assets. Is that what you're

saying?

Mr. Minister, another question, I ask you: surely you must have a dollar value on those facilities. Given the fact that you're paying lease rates to the property management corporation, you must have some idea of what those assets are valued at, as well as what the assets at Camp Thunderbird are. And another question I would say is: what about the future of Camp Thunderbird?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, with respect to the assets, I wouldn't have any idea what the assets are worth. There's a general rule in real estate that a piece of property is worth what someone is prepared to pay for it. From what I can see of the assets there, you would have to consider the specific use of the property and what it is capable of being used for, and there is not a big demand for institutions these days.

I would think that the assets don't have a great deal of value. They're getting to the stage where they need considerable renovations, and a change in use would cost an awful lot of money. So I don't believe the assets are anything significant that the government would take into account in reducing a deficit, or in saving money in any way with regard to converting them to anything. But I am not opposed to them being examined as for what future use they could be put to.

With respect to Camp Thunderbird, our proposal is to operate it next year through our community living division, which is headquartered in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Lautermilch: — I think clearly, Mr. Minister, by your statement that that's relatively a worthless piece of property, indicates to me another example of what you people do with public assets when there's some negotiations going on. I think it indicates to me pretty clearly another example that your government is incapable of handling public funds.

We haven't, Mr. Minister, had satisfactory answers as to the future of North Park Centre, but I'm going to put that aside because you haven't given satisfactory answers to any of the questions that have gone on during your estimates, Mr. Minister. And I merely stood up this evening to confirm in my mind, and in the people's mind of this province, that you're incapable of handling your department, Mr. Minister.

Some other statements that you made earlier tonight – that the staff are accepting your decision and that the families are accepting your decisions and that the residents are accepting your decisions – well, Mr. Minister, my colleague has indicated that he feels your position regarding these three different groups of people has been callous and uncaring. And it tells me that you aren't in touch with what's happening in Prince Albert. It indicates to me why you've got such a problem with your Department of Social Services or Human Resources, and why the number one problem in every member's constituency office comes from your department and the biggest case-load comes from your department.

I want to say, Mr. Minister, regarding your decision, that the people – the staff, and the families, and the residents

— are waiting to make their decision, and their decision, Mr. Minister, will come when the next election comes. I want to quote to you from the red book the results of the 1986 election, and it shows the member from Shellbrook-Torch River as having won that particular poll to the tune of 51 to 35.

An Hon. Member: — How many spoiled?

Mr. Lautermilch: — There were . . . How many spoiled ballots, my colleague asks? Let me look — 27. But the point, Mr. Minister, I want to make is that those residents are not going to be in there to give support to the member from Shellbrook-torch River next time. They're going to spread throughout this province.

But I want to also indicate to you that they're waiting to make their decision as well. And I would suggest rather than 51 to 30-some, you'll see 80-some to nothing, because that's the kind of respect that they have for this government that would treat people as callously and uncaring as you have.

And, Mr. Minister, you deserve no less than to be soundly defeated because of this kind of a callous and uncaring treatment. And I just simply want to say to you that the people out there are willing to make their decision. They're waiting to make their decision, and I want to say that come election morning next that we'll be standing up and applauding their decision to dump you as unceremoniously as you have dumped them from their homes in North Park Centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to tell you that on behalf of the people of Prince Albert and behalf of the residents of North Park Centre — wherever they might end up — that the members on this side of the House want to wish them best and wish them well, in spite of what you're doing. And we hope that the families will be able to settle their people in, to settle their family members in, and to make them as comfortable as what they are in North Park Centre.

Your decision was made for nothing for monetary reasons. You're cutting back. You want to chastise the members of CUPE that work at that facility, and in doing that, you're chastising 180 residents and their families.

And, Mr. Minister, I have no more questions of you, but the people of this province will continue to have questions of you. I rest my case. I think it's clear where you are. You are a heartless man. You are a heartless man that doesn't deserve to serve the public as a minister of the Crown.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, if you'd see what's happening in this area in 1974, and that's not that long ago, Valley View has 1,100 people living there and a waiting list of about 600; North Park had 300 people living there and a waiting list of about 200. North Park now has 180 people — nearly half — about 60 per cent of what they had in 1974, and really no waiting list at all.

This province under the NDP, North America, and the western world have been going away from institutions. And now the member from Prince Albert comes out here with what I detect to be a very calloused attitude that somehow how the people voted has something to do with what's best for how the people should live.

You know, if . . . I don't think the voting has much to with it, but if those people voted Conservative, then they're a lot smarter than a lot of other people in Prince Alberta. And if those people voted Conservative, we are rewarding those people with their freedom to live outside of an institution. So if I'm accused of rewarding Conservatives then, I don't know, that has nothing to do with the whole plan, but somehow he ties this into it as to how people voted.

(2015)

What we're doing here is what is best for the people that live in the institution and will no longer live in the institution. He is trying to go contrary to the trends for the last 15 years, and we are not going to turn around now. This province, North America has gone too far in community living to turn around now and start reversing back to institutions, and we're not going to do it.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, there have been some trends in care for mentally handicapped persons in the province of Saskatchewan that have been established and developed over the past 15 years, and I think there are some positive lessons to be learned from those trends, Mr. Minister. Some of the principles, some of the principles in the movement towards normalization to allowing handicapped people to live in communities, as opposed to institutions, have been done in a very calculated and a very humane, a very sensitive kind of way for the past 15 years.

I think Saskatchewan has been recognized — let me change that — I know Saskatchewan has been recognized as a jurisdiction over the past 15 years to have provided a leadership in this kind of community living model for mentally handicapped persons, some of the mentally handicapped residents of our province.

We have to keep in mind, as we're looking at North Park Centre, that we're not dealing with any immature, naïve notion of little children in big bodies; we're dealing with adults who have the same right to expect dignity and respect from those who deal with them from their government. And, Mr. Minister, at North Park Centre we have a centre with — I would take it from your numbers now — 172 people. One hundred and seventy-two people who have a handicapped condition, all of them adults with an average age of 62 — seniors by anybody's definition, Mr. Minister. Many of those residents having been living at North Park Centre for a large number of years. Many of them having been living there and calling it home since it was opened back in the '70s.

Mr. Minister, there have been some suggestions come forward, some suggestions made to you that consistent with the concept of normalization and the integration of handicapped people into our society in Saskatchewan —

and I think that's a noble objective – that North Park Centre could be transferred to a geriatric centre to allow those people who live there and who are in their sixties and seventies to maintain that home that they have now, and at the same time integrate that living situation with others who may not have the same kind of handicaps but who require some care in their senior years. And that appears to have been rejected.

You made reference, Mr. Minister, to external advocates and the role that the SAMR.(Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded) could play in serving as external advocates for many of those residents of North Park Centre. And many of those residents have family members who are more than happy, in fact they quite willingly, to accept the responsibility of acting as an external advocate for their family member who has called North Park Centre home for many years.

And you've said in this House this evening that come February 28, contrary to the principle, to a very, very important principle – for those who are delivering services in this province sometimes a frustrating principle but always a very, very important principle – that it would be the right of those external advocates who are family members to have significant say, to have significant say as to where their family members would live while the Government of Saskatchewan carries out its obligation to provide homes for our handicapped citizens . . . And, Mr. Minister, what I've heard you say here this evening, is that if family members, after consultation, conclude that the best place to call home is where they are now, is the place that they've called home for a number of years in North Park Centre, what I've heard you say is the bottom line is come February 28 the door will be closed and they will be kicked out. And so as not to mince our words, Mr. Minister, that's my interpretation of what I've heard you say.

And there has been confusion, there has been fear, and there has been frustration experienced by many family members of handicapped residents of North Park Centre. Let me read to you just in part a letter that was written to me September 6 by a family member of one of the North Park residents, and I think she very aptly sets out the reason for the confusion and some of the frustration that has been felt by very many of those families. She says:

In May, I got a letter telling me the North Park Centre would be closed on February 28, 1988. This was announced on the news before I got my letter, which was very upsetting to me and my family. This letter was sent to me from Mr. Bastian, director of North Park Centre.

She goes on to say:

I'm also sending you a copy of a letter that was read to my son without my family or I being notified.

And I underline that phrase, "without my family or I being notified." He would be unable to understand any of this," she says, Mr. Minister, and then she goes on to say that she had a conversation with John Marckoski, a social worker for mentally handicapped.

And at that time I told him we do not want our son moved to Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw. We wanted him to stay at North Park.

And she concludes by saying:

The residents there in North Park Centre got very good care and my son really is happy there. Why take this away from him?

And I think the lady has a point, Mr. Minister. She's nothing more, be nothing more, nothing less, than a good mother who is expressing concern for the proper care for her son.

Now, Mr. Minister, you've outlined here in the House this evening how you intend to deal with people, whether they agree with your plan or not, your resistance to considering a normalization of North Park Centre by allowing the community to integrate with it. You've rejected that suggestion out of hand.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister: can you assure me – and more important than assuring me, Mr. Minister, I ask if you can assure the families of the residents of North Park Centre – that there will be homes available to them and that those homes will have the proper resources in order to provide quality care, and that all of those things will be in place by February 28, 1988? And can you also, Mr. Minister, tell me how you will determine that the quality of care that those people receive in homes around the province of Saskatchewan will be acceptable, and most importantly, acceptable to the families of those handicapped people, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — I'm pleased that the member from Moose Jaw North acknowledges that we are doing what has been the trend and that there is acknowledgement that this is the right thing to do.

Now we were discussing about how to go about closing an institution. And the NDP had planned to close North Park, but the NDP did not have the nerve to get on with the job because they had a conflict between CUPE union and the welfare of the residents there. And when they had a choice to make between what was best for the mentally retarded people of Saskatchewan and what was best for their CUPE masters, they chose CUPE ahead of the mentally retarded people.

And now it falls upon me to do something that should have been done quite a long time ago, and I don't relish the idea of doing this. The member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake was very put out. He said I was incapable of running my department. And what he really meant was that we are here governing and he is standing over there criticizing, and that grieves him greatly. That's really what he meant, and so much so that he couldn't stand it any more and he won't listen to this because he grieves greatly that he is not government.

But it falls upon us, the government, to make the decisions and proceed with what has to be done. And if doing what is necessary and what is right shows an incapable way of running a department, then I let the

people be the judge.

I have also indicated that the very absolute fewest number of people required will go to Valley View in Moose Jaw. I've heard accusations that Valley View in Moose Jaw is not as good of an institution as North Park in Prince Albert. I've heard allegations here today from your colleagues that Valley View in Moose Jaw – and I believe he toured Valley View – that Valley View is somehow an inferior institution. Well I can tell you this: that in the city of Moose Jaw, the budget for Valley View is \$17.1 million a year. And I can tell you this, and you will agree, that for the benefit of the residents in Valley View and the benefit of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, those people that will have to go to Valley View, that remain in Valley View should get the very best care for that \$17.1 million. And I challenge you, I encourage you to point out to me what is wrong with Valley View, and we will make the necessary changes if that is the case.

So now the question is we've agreed that the institution should be closed and that retarded people should live in the community. It costs approximately \$28,000 per year to keep a retarded person in an institution now, whether it be Valley View or whether it be North Park. And I would be more inclined to spend that \$28,000 per year or whatever it takes to have them in the community. So if there's anything wrong with Valley View, please let me know as soon as possible.

I've heard allegations, I've had TV reports, I've had everything, and I don't disagree that Valley View can be improved, and I will do everything possible to improve it. But if you have any specific problems with Valley View, then let me know. I mean nobody's ever suggested that we close Valley view and leave North Park open as the provincial institution. But if you give me the slightest suggestion, I would consider it if it's that bad of a place, but I don't believe that that is accurate. I believe for that \$17.1 million, that the workers there down in Valley View are doing a good job, and if they can do a little better, I'm sure they will try to do a little better.

You've read me a letter. Again you haven't given me the name, but I tend to detect who that letter is from because I've probably received those letters myself, and I've read all of those. And what I am saying is the person is telling you – and I don't know the date on that letter – that they would rather have their relative live in North Park than in Valley View. But have they considered the option and the other possibilities? And is it possible that they would rather have their relative live 30 miles from where they live today?

Some of the people that are sending those letters will turn out to have their relatives living either with them, right in Prince Albert, or within 30 miles of where they live now, or in some cases, 50 miles, instead of 200 or 300 miles. Tell me that is wrong.

Tell me that mentally retarded adults in North Park should not live with other people who have their same capacity in a group home-type situation or in a private-care situation. Tell me that they should

not be able to sit out on the front lawn in the sun and see other people in the community drive or walk by. Tell me that they should not have those small pleasures in life. Tell me that some of them should not go into other homes and places where they . . . Some of them play piano. Some of them can do some things that they are not encouraged to do right now. Tell me this is wrong.

I don't believe it's wrong and you don't believe it's wrong. And you do not believe that an institution should not be phased-out. You are caught between your brain and your heart, and I suggest that you follow your brain because your heart lies with CUPE.

Mr. Hagel — Well, Mr. Minister, the woman who writes the letter is one of the lucky ones. I don't know whether she wrote a letter to you or not, but if she did she's one of the lucky ones that didn't get a snide postscript at the end of it.

Mr. Minister, you tell me that your government is spending \$28,000 a year to provide care for residents of North Park Centre. I ask you: do you commit that amount of money to provide proper quality care to people, to adults, to handicapped adults who will be leaving North Park Centre to go to other parts of the province? Do you give me that firm commitment? I'm afraid I'm going to have to repeat the same question I asked before because you refused to answer it. And the question I asked you, Mr. Minister, let me repeat it, is this: will you give your assurance that homes will be available, quality care homes for all those people who leave North Park Centre, and that those will be available by February 28, 1988?

(2030)

I assume that you have some plan in mind that you said already does not involve the saving of money but a rechanneling of money. You have ruled out, Mr. Minister, I think, a very credible option. I said to you before, and if you would listen, then you would perhaps learn a thing or two, I don't know. What I said to you is it's possible to carry out normalization in two kinds of ways. One, is to have people move from institution to community, and there are also – out of respect for people who are seniors, who have called North Park Centre home for many years – there is the option to, through attrition, to phase out, and you referred to phasing out. And clearly you're not talking about phasing out, you're talking about slamming the doors shut on February 28, 1988.

You have an option to phase normalization into that institution, if you chose to do that. You've chosen not. Mr. Minister, will you assure those families that the homes will be in place to provide quality care, that you're going to be spending \$28,000 per person to assure that? I want to know how you will guarantee the quality of care for those people in those homes?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that every effort will be made to have the North Park residents closer to their homes, their originating homes, than they are now – or at least as close. The Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded will monitor all the placements to be certain that they are satisfied, on behalf of the residents, that the

facilities are adequate. I can also assure you that there will be new group homes built in various places in the province. I can assure you that the commencement of these will start very soon.

I would like to see the phase-out completed by the end of February, but should there be any unforeseen delay outside of the institution, that would be taken into account. But we would not tolerate any delay caused inside the institution.

Now we expect people there . . . I know it's not easy for them to do their jobs knowing that their time in that position is limited. I know it's not easy, but we expect them to do their jobs to make life as comfortable as possible for the residents of North Park for as long as they do live there.

So the target date is the end of February. I said earlier that the plan is proceeding better than we had anticipated, and that is in part due to the excellence of the staff that I have in that department, in that branch. It's due to the co-operation we're getting from the staff in North Park, the co-operation that we're getting from the parents and relatives, and the co-operation that we're getting from the Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded, and, above all, the co-operation that we're getting from the community — that is, the people of Saskatchewan, here, there and everywhere, who are ready to accept these people nearer their homes, in their communities, as part of the normal world.

So things are going well. I didn't say they were going easy, but they're going well, and you have assurances that we'll do everything possible to continue to have things go well.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, would you try answering my question please. Let me rephrase it very simply for you and ask you to answer the question.

You said that you're spending \$28,000 per resident for care. Now will you give me your assurance that you'll spend that same amount of money to guarantee the quality of care that they will receive when they live in the community.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, we will spend what is necessary to allow these people to live in the community in as normal a manner as possible.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I will be watching, as will many others, and I would certainly anticipate and hope that there will be no cases, as a matter of fact, where individual program plans for individual residents have as their objective to move to community living, who, as an interim, as an interim prior to community living, move from North Park Centre institution to Valley View Centre institution. If that happens, that is clearly a violation of your commitment to those residents and to their families in the province of Saskatchewan.

Let me ask you, Mr. Minister: what steps have been made? There is more to life than the home in which you live. What steps have been taken? What facilities or resources have been put in place to assure that those residents of North Park Centre who move to community

will have employment and recreational opportunities so that they're not simply moving into homes in communities and, in effect, just putting in time or vegetating in homes? What steps have you made to ensure their quality of life in all aspects beyond simply residential care?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, we're not just moving the people. We are setting up day programs for them. They will have new social workers. They will have occupational therapists. They will be receiving services wherever they are going in the province of Saskatchewan. We are arranging so that they take part in the community as much as possible, attend as many functions as they are capable, attend sporting events if possible. But we're not going to force these people to go out into the community and do everything that you or I may like to do. We will try to let them pick and choose the things they like to do. And if there are some things that they could do, but they don't want to do them, I see no reason why they should be forced to do it just because that's what other people are doing. Not everyone in our society does the same thing.

So it will depend also on their interests as to what they want to do. But they will be given the opportunity to be as much a part of the community as possible, and they will receive services and facilities, and we will do what is necessary to make their life as enjoyable as possible.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, that's not an unattractive principle. I would suggest it might be one that you would consider applying to the residents, in terms of their opportunity to pick and choose whether they'd like to continue calling the same place home that they've called home for the last number of years. However you seem to have rejected that option, Mr. Minister. You have rejected that option and have determined that come February 28, 1988, if they have not chosen one of the options that you give to them, that you're going to kick them out the door. And, Mr. Minister, I suggest to you that there is a bit of contradiction in what you say in this House this evening.

Will you assure me, Mr. Minister, that the necessary sheltered workshop and activity centre placements are in place to provide those people who are going to community the opportunity to work in community?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, North Park may be their home but when you walk down the halls it looks like an old hospital, because it is an old hospital and the facility is ageing. It would need an awful lot of work to bring it up to modern standards. I'm not saying that it is now a dangerous institution, but it's not up to modern standards. And it will always be an institution; it's always going to look like an old hospital. And so you're saying to people: this is your home; this old hospital is your home.

Now the staff there have done as much as possible to make a comfortable home for them, but it is not a home. And we will try to find homes for them that look like homes and don't look like old hospitals. Okay. I think that that is a reasonable thing to do.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I fully support providing

options to mentally handicapped people and people who would happen to have the option of moving out of the institution in community. I would endorse and support and concur with that opportunity.

But that's not really what you have decided their choices shall be in this case, Mr. Minister. And I simply am standing here to say, it does not always make sense to throw out the baby with the bath water. And if you want to encourage and allow for people to live in community who are living in an institution, that doesn't mean you have to close the whole darn thing down and send all of their lives into tail-spins, and by that I'm referring of course to those who prefer not to be making that choice.

Mr. Minister, as we're talking about community services for mentally handicapped persons, I would ask you whether you would support movements towards not exempting mentally handicapped persons from labour standards when they're employed in sheltered industry. As you're aware, today mentally handicapped persons who work in sheltered industry are exempted from labour standards. Mr. Minister, would you endorse a movement away from that to include mentally handicapped people to be covered by labour standards who are working in sheltered industry?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — What you're saying is, do I support the concept that the state should pay people in sheltered industries, sheltered workshops, and activity centres the minimum wage of 4.50 per hour. It is a noble concept but it has to be paid, you recall. I will look at the possibility and see what can be done at changing the operation of the sheltered workshops, and in some cases I believe that it's possible, but I can't say that it's possible in all cases.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I understand and I . . . First of all, let me say that I appreciate your response. I understand that such a move would have administrative complications. It is my belief, as a matter of fact, many of those complications are less than we might first anticipate. And I can say to you, Mr. Minister, that there have been a number of presentations made to me by a number of mentally handicapped persons employed in sheltered industry who would think it would be heaven on earth just to have minimum wage and live in the same kind of workaday world as the non mentally handicapped population in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I say to you, Mr. Minister, as I have said on other occasions during these estimates, that if you undertake initiatives to provide equal opportunity for employment and coverage by labour standards for mentally handicapped persons in the province of Saskatchewan that you can count on my support and co-operation in undertaking that initiative.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to raise another issue with you. You will be aware that many of the group homes in the province of Saskatchewan were put in place some 10 to 15 years ago, in that period of time, and that one of the factors that they wrestle with and that has become a particularly painful point over the past number of years is the ability to upkeep the homes in which mentally handicapped persons are living. And I refer specifically to the budget items that would be referred to as home repairs

and home maintenance and that sort of thing.

Mr. Minister, there was a program that I recall was introduced by your government last September with a great deal of fanfare that provided the opportunity for Saskatchewan residents to upgrade their homes, to do renovations and get a matching \$1,500 grant. You've described that in this Assembly many times as a job creation program that justified the elimination of the student employment funding for this year, because you said the home improvement program was creating all kinds of jobs.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me why it is that group homes in Saskatchewan who are badly in need of funds to upgrade their facilities, who have not been granted increases — if they have, they've been small and certainly insufficient . . . They're homes for permanent residents in many cases if not all cases, permanent residents in those homes. Those permanent residents happen to be mentally handicapped. Mr. Minister, can you tell me why it is that group homes are not eligible to apply for the home improvement program grant of \$1,500? And can you give me your assurance, Mr. Minister, that you will take to your cabinet colleagues — most specifically the Minister of Urban Affairs who I believe has resisted this initiative — will you give me your assurance that you will take to your cabinet colleagues the recommendation to allow group homes in Saskatchewan to be eligible for the \$1,500 matching grant?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, it's an interesting concept. I'm not really opposed to the idea, but it's simply government money chasing itself around in a circle. We have to put up the money to maintain the group homes in any event so it doesn't really matter to me whether it comes out of the Urban Affairs budget or out of my budget. I really don't know why we have to bother chasing the money around in a circle. Our department will budget, into those group homes, the necessary repairs. I realize that you need some day-to-day maintenance and some year-to-year maintenance. I'm a home owner. I know the first thing you learn when you buy a house is that you have a mortgage to pay and constant painting and maintenance to do, and I realize that group homes are about the same.

It's an interesting concept; I'm not opposed to it; I'll take it up with them.

Mr. Hagel: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. There, I suppose, could be two options. One would be, out of your budget, to grant an extra \$1,500 per home, this year, for each group home in Saskatchewan to go to renovations of homes.

(2045)

The other would be, and quite frankly I would prefer, I would prefer to see group homes entitled to operate under the same rules as normal society, where if many . . . if people who do home improvements can go to the Minister of Urban Affairs and submit their receipts and for a \$3,000 expenditure and get the \$1,500 rebate, I think it would be a nice gesture for normalization, in the interest

of normalization. And also recognizing that, yes, we know we've underfunded you for a period of time, these are tough times – I mean, we've been through that whole story – but we'll give to you the same opportunity that we're giving to other people in Saskatchewan, the \$1,500 matching grant.

Mr. Minister, I will take you at your word, that you will raise that with your colleagues. I would look forward to a positive announcement at some time in the future, when group homes in Saskatchewan can look forward to participating in the home improvement program, and I thank you for that assurance.

Mr. Minister, you will know as well that many mentally handicapped people in Saskatchewan are living in approved homes around the province, and you'll be aware of course, as am I, that approved home operators who provide homes for mentally handicapped people in their own private homes for a fee have not had increases since 1985-86. It's been over two years now – or been exactly two years now, I'm mistaken. I don't want to make alarming statements in this House. It's been two years since they've received an increase, Mr. Minister.

Could you tell me, Mr. Minister, whether you would see it in order to provide some increase to group home operators – I'm sorry, to approved home operators – something at the very minimum that would reflect inflationary costs, because that's something that clearly they have to bear in providing quality homes for mentally handicapped persons in their homes.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the NDP, for months now ... I think the record now calling for my resignation is: NDP, 13 times; various other assorted groups, eight or 10. They shouldn't wish for my resignation so much because at least I do have the strength to stand up for what I think is right. And what you're suggesting, I believe, is correct, that there should be an increase there, and should I still be the minister next budget year, I will do my best to get an increase there. So don't wish for my resignation. Don't call for it so often. I can be very useful, and you and I agree on some things. So should I, contrary to your wishes, still be the minister coming into next budget year, I will work hard to try to get that increase because I think it's justified.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, I too am a person who says what I think, and there have been occasions on which I've thought that you've not carried out a specific part of your responsibilities very responsibly, and I've said that, and I will continue to do that. As a matter of fact, that is my responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan as Social Services critic, to hold you accountable to the objectives of the department and it's a job I take very seriously and that I will continue to do the best of my ability.

I certainly can't claim ownership of all 13 calls for resignation that you have been notching in the handle of your six-shooter, Mr. Minister, but I would take it that, as you make an assurance in this House, that that would be something that would apply to your successor, should, for some strange reason, you not be in the chair that you're in when we come to Social Services reviews next year.

Mr. Minister, while we're on the topic of approved homes, would you consider in recognizing the difficulty that ... the difficult situation that approved home operators often find themselves where there may not be a lot of security in the numbers of people or the consistency of their clientele who are staying in their homes? And, Mr. Minister, would you consider a movement towards a funding for approved homes which would allow for some base rate, for some base rate to assure the availability of the approved home, plus a certain amount for each resident, depending upon the needs of that resident. Would you give some consideration to that kind of funding proposal, which is a departure from the current practice.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the approved rates are level 1 – and they're based on the level of care needed – \$424 per month; level 2, \$536 per month; level 3, \$684 per month. And there is a suggestion from some people that we consider a retainer type rate, where you can operate no matter how many people you are caring for. And it's a bit complicated because you then are paying for care that you're not receiving, and there are arguments, you know, to say that, well we're a stand-by situation and we're prepared to take more people, but when you look at the overall situation it's quite hard to justify a retainer rate type system. We'll weigh it and see what's reasonable, but it's quite hard to justify it. When you're paying a retainer, you're really paying for the service being available but not for the actual service being provided, and if there is a compromise possible, we'll look at it, but you understand that it's complicated.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, clearly, I do understand it will be complicated. And I guess I'm trying to do my best, Mr. Minister, to put forth some constructive suggestions to deal with the problem that you're faced with, having made the decision to close North Park Centre and to have to scramble to find some 80-odd community placements for people, for mentally handicapped people within the next, I guess, we'd be talking about six months or so now. And that's a problem that won't go away, Mr. Minister.

I guess I simply want to recognize in this House as well the fine work that approved home operators do, because in many ways without being dramatic, Mr. Minister, they are unsung heroes. They operate their homes and provide a good quality care of service and do that without a lot of financial remuneration. And in the interest of the security, of the resources for mentally handicapped persons in our province, I think it makes sense to look at the funding system to make it possible for approved home operators to consider making their homes available for a long period of time and sometimes without falling victim to the whims of people who move and make those decisions, and I endorse that, but it often makes it difficult for the home operators when their clients are coming and going.

Now, Mr. Minister, I'd like to move to a different part of the operation of your department now. And to deal very briefly, I admit very briefly, in light of the time this evening, I don't think we can do justice, but perhaps, with a statement or two, we can attempt to address that. I have some concerns as I know the Ombudsman had that were

presented to you in January.

I have not heard a lot from you or from your department since that time, Mr. Minister, in terms of constructive acts to provide protective care for children who are abused. And most seriously, Mr. Minister, I think of children who are not only physically but sexually abused. It's an unfortunate reality, Mr. Minister, that is just starting to get a higher public profile. Not, I don't think, to say that it's a more common problem, but simply one that is attracting more public attention.

Sexual abuse is a devastating experience for young children. And I'd simply like to first of all, Mr. Minister, share with you and with the public of Saskatchewan some statistics that very briefly outline a stark and alarming reality for little children.

I quote from a *Leader-Post* article of June 30 of this year, and in reference to a report by The National Coalition of American Nuns offering chilling statistics about sexual abuse, Mr. Minister. A book, the report I should say, points out that 92 per cent of women in alcoholic recovery therapy have suffered from incest at some time; 70 per cent of adolescent female drug addicts have been sexually abused; 75 per cent of adult female prostitutes were sexually abused; 90 per cent of women in prison have family histories of sexual abuse.

And it goes on, Mr. Minister, to point out that 50 per cent of incest crimes are committed against girls 10 years of age or younger. That, Mr. Minister, is a reality that I must admit, and my human instincts caused me, first of all, to do as the ostrich does and stick my head in the sand and pretend it didn't exist. But it is a reality, and it is a reality in Saskatchewan as it is in other parts of Canada and North America. And I simply want to ask, Mr. Minister, what kinds of initiatives your department has in mind to deal with the problem of child sexual abuse. It's not something that I've heard from your department since you've become minister, and it is a problem that, as I've said, I don't know if it's becoming more prevalent – it's certainly becoming more obvious, publicly – and I would ask, Mr. Minister, what plans your department has in place to deal with them in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — With respect to child care, I'm prepared to crack down and get tough on sexual abuse of children and anyone in particular. And when I'm ready to make announcements and when I'm ready to do that, I would hope that I get the co-operation from the opposition and I don't hear human rights, the civil liberties association, jumping up and down and saying that I'm getting too tough, infringing on rights. I'm prepared to do that as much as the law of Canada allows, and I'm prepared to look at something like a child protection squad. I'm prepared to sit down and negotiate and discuss the problem with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation because we have to be able to detect this, and children are in schools and that's where they are found.

How far can we go on this? I would be prepared to consider that all children in Saskatchewan be interviewed by the most professional of people, but this is not yet government policy, and I don't think it is yet your

policy. I'm prepared to look at all possibilities, and I'm prepared to crack down. But you have to realize that whenever you crack down on detection, somebody's rights will be infringed on a little here or there, and we'll have to balance and weigh whether the rights of the children override, maybe, the rights of the parents.

As soon as we complete these estimates, I'm going to immediately go to work on the finishing touches on a new child care Act, and we'll look at the aspects of child protection. We've got a constant debate there between parents' rights and children's' rights, and I lean towards children's' rights. But as soon as you start saying "rights," all of a sudden are you saying that children have a right to take their parents to court, or what happens? I use the word "rights" in a broad concept. But clearly children should have the priority over parents, and yet you understand the complications of prosecutions, of criminal law. All of those things will have to be taken into account. So we will work on the new Act. I hope to have it here for you before a year has expired. It's been talked about for a long time, and I hope to have it ready for the spring session. We'll see how things go.

The foster parents' care, we've made improvements there. We're going to have better training for foster parents. As you know, a lot of the problems end up in the foster home, so that's where they need the extra assistance.

We are in the process and very near to completing some Indian child care agreements because not much has been happening on the Indian reserves. The province has jurisdiction, the federal government has financial responsibility, and the Indians on the reserves want some control over their own affairs and the protection of their own children, so we have to give up our jurisdiction. The federal government is prepared to . . . and we won't give it up but we will assign our jurisdiction for the bands, and they will do it on behalf of the province. We will keep our jurisdiction of course.

We are prepared also . . . The federal government is prepared to live up to their financial responsibility. And so in the case of child protection with treaty Indians, we expect to see some progress in the near future. As you know, of the 2,087 children in custody right now approximately 65 to 70 per cent are of Indian and native ancestry, so there's a lot we can do in that area. And I've already suggested some form of a child protection squad or some initiative beyond the usual information campaign because I don't think that is really solving the problem.

I'm prepared to take stern measures. Hopefully we can have some agreement when we proceed with sterner measures to protect children. I think the first step would be to discuss it with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to see how their group could take part in that, that and the medical profession and those. And we have taken some measures and some joint measures, interdepartmental, and we've set up some protocols as to how these things could be detected.

I don't know if you agree with me, I think you will, that merely setting up these interdepartmental measures and

everything else . . . we're going to have to get out into the field, find the problems and get them solved. And I'm prepared to take stern measures, and I hope you'll go along with that.

(2100)

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, believe me, I do understand that the issues in addressing changes to the child and family services Act are complicated. It's really in anticipation of the introduction of a new Act that I said that I felt probably we could get by with a relatively small attention to that here tonight, because I assume it's something that we will have an opportunity to discuss and debate in this Legislative Assembly in much detail when a new Act comes into place.

It's a long overdue Act, Mr. Minister. You know as well as I that the review started in 1982-83 and that there's been a draft Act in place for two years now.

Mr. Minister, just for my clarification, could you advise me, when you say that you would be presenting it in the spring session, are you talking about this spring session we're in now, or are you talking about a spring session in 1988, which could start, I suppose, sometimes as late as, if we're to repeat this year — as June 1988. So are you anticipating bringing in that new Act in this session that we're currently in now, or after it is prorogued and we have a new Speech from the Throne, bringing it in at that time.

Before answering that too, Mr. Minister, please, I would give you my assurance again that I would be more than happy to work in co-operation in advance of the introduction of a new Act, if you would provide that opportunity. And I would also encourage you, if you haven't already got it in your plans, to provide for some public input into the revision of a new Act. It's a very complicated process, and I would hope that both you and I and our colleagues on both sides of the House could keep in context our debate on that Act, recognizing that even though children, even though we're politicians and even though children do not have a vote, that we all, as legislators in this province, owe responsibility to children to provide for their safety and their security in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, just a simple question then: is it your intention to introduce that new Act in this spring session or the spring session that we will be anticipating some time next year?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, on the topic of child protection and the new Act, it being near 1988, I would expect that we'd be looking at the spring of 1988. The problem we've got with the new Act is that public consultation is all right; we've already had a lot. If we have any more, we will have lots of consultation and no action. I am prepared to get down to action now, so we'll see what we can do about that.

Mr. Hagel: — Well so am I, Mr. Minister, so am I. Quite frankly, I had anticipated that Act coming before this Assembly in this spring session, and it does get confusing when the spring session doesn't start until June, I will admit.

And so I just wanted to ask that question for clarification because spring sessions, the meaning of that term doesn't seem to mean today what it once did. So we'll look for that in 1988, I would conclude that you're suggesting.

Mr. Minister, as we've discussed the whole range of services, and there are some, unfortunately, we haven't yet discussed — services delivered by your department — it is normal in the life of government services to, every generation or so, to rethink the delivery of social services, period, in the broadest sense. And I think you will recognize, as do I, Mr. Minister, that it was 1973 when that last kind of an initiative took place in the province of Saskatchewan.

I would ask, Mr. Minister, if you would be considering that it is about time to review the delivery of social services in the broadest sense, and whether you would support an all-parties committee of the legislature to undertake a review of social services to provide for input and review of delivery in other jurisdictions, and to bring to this House recommendations for updated delivery mechanisms for social services that represent modern-day values, modern-day problems, modern-day concerns, and modern-day solutions for the problems of the '90s and the turn of the century. Mr. Minister, would you endorse that kind of initiative from the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy . . . Mr. Chairperson, welcome to the Table. Only if I wanted to get nothing done would I endorse an all-party road show going around Saskatchewan listening to all of this and discussing it and debating it and politically arguing about it. And that would be a good way of doing nothing for a few years.

But I want to get some changes made, and I don't really want to use that as a forum to do nothing. So it's best that we get on with the job and not have the political debate leave the Assembly and go on a tour of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have three or four questions for the minister. I have provided him with a copy, in advance, of my questions. Mr. Minister, my concern is that with the introduction of The Young Offenders Act, Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon, which was the stabilization and assessment facility for youth in crisis in Saskatoon, has been taken over and used essentially as a jail. It has not been replaced, and that's the primary concern that I have. Its original function has not been replaced in the city of Saskatoon.

The Department of Social Services is now using a group home in Saskatoon as a short-term receiving home for youth in crisis. It has only five beds and it is not staffed or designed to be used in this manner. Presently many, many youth from the Saskatoon area are having to be transported to Regina or to Prince Albert because of the lack of availability of resources in Saskatoon. This takes them out of the community, and it makes planning with their families virtually impossible for social workers in your department.

There is also a critical lack of other resources for youth in crisis in the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Minister. For the whole

of the Saskatoon district there are only 15 treatment homes which house a total of about 35 young people. There is a monthly average of about 570 youth in care. The balance of youth are housed in foster homes which may have up to 12 occupants at any one time in the city of Saskatoon. Some are housed without supervision in hotels or motels due to a lack of resources.

And, Mr. Minister, I should say that I find that situation to be particularly unacceptable. Your department, as you well know, has regularly been using the Colonial Motel, and I assume other motels in Saskatoon, for the purposes of housing youth in crisis in our city, essentially with no supervision to speak of or counselling to speak of for the young people involved.

Mr. Minister, I believe that the situation in Saskatoon has become so serious. There's such a critical shortage of homes for young people in crisis in our city, and because there is no assessment and stabilization centre for young people in our city — the function that Kilburn Hall used to serve — it is virtually futile as a result of that for social workers to find homes for youth in crisis in a situation, shall we say, such as child abuse unless the abuse is of a very, very serious nature.

And I might point out to you, Mr. Minister, that after consulting with professionals in the health and social services field in the city, I am told that there are over 100 children in Saskatoon who are in crisis and who are literally living in garages or in homes with other children. I find that to be an appalling situation, Mr. Minister.

I think that one of the very serious problems in the city of Saskatoon is that there is a lack of any real safety net in the city for young people who are not succeeding in high school, who can't cope with high school, who leave school and, literally, have nowhere to go.

And so, Mr. Minister, my questions to you as a result of that are as follows, and as I say, I've given them to you in writing in advance, so that you'll be able to answer them more easily.

Number one, what are we . . . When are we going to receive a stabilization and assessment unit for young people in crisis in the city of Saskatoon; and number two, whether you are prepared to establish a series of new group homes for teenagers in crisis in Saskatoon, geared at an independent living situation but in a very supportive environment with professional counselling services available to those young people? Will you answer those questions, sir?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, with respect to the Colonial Motel, we haven't used that facility in the last five months. What we have done is with respect to . . . There is a need for some form of stabilization of youth, we agree, in the interim we have taken short-term measures providing 10 spaces at Carmel House — facilities operated by Youth for Christ. It has taken the immediate pressure off the situation.

We are looking at whether we should go to an institution-type route or whether we should develop specialized stabilization foster homes. We are trying to

work that out with the Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association, and come up with a system where we would have super foster homes that would specialize in this type of thing. And they would not be in your traditional foster homes, but would really be a unit that would be based in homes with families because we think these children should see how . . . what you might say "normal" families live and should have the benefit of a normal family atmosphere rather than a group home, if at all possible.

So we're going to try that as a new concept and we're working on the details of that. If we can't get that finalized, we'll have to go to the second choice, which would be a stabilization unit.

The answer to your second question on new group homes for troubled youth, the answer is yes, we're looking at that and we will be making some final decision in the not too distant future.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm glad to hear that at least you're giving some serious thought to the problem. I'd urge you to put a solution into effect as quickly as possible because it literally is a crisis situation in the city of Saskatoon, and I don't agree with your assessment that the 10 units at Carmel House have taken the pressure off the situation. On the contrary I think the situation is far more grave than you suggest but I'm glad to hear that at least you're doing some consulting and thinking about it.

I want to raise one other issue with you very briefly, and that is, that as you will know, sir, people with special health problems under SAP are only eligible for a maximum of \$25 if they have special dietary needs or special medications such as vitamins that they need to take as a result of their illness. And, Mr. Minister, there are many patients across this province who are suffering from things like cancer, or ARC (Aids Related Complex), or AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) who need a great deal more than \$25 to meet the needs for their special diets and their special medications.

And my question to you, sir, is whether you will increase that limit of \$25 to meet the dietary and medical needs of people suffering with problems like cancer, ARC, and AIDS in our province?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, I suppose the answer is, yes. But really it's not necessary because there is no \$25 limit. It's a guide-line. We pay the actual special dietary needs. Those are considered to be a special need. It's based on a doctor's recommendation.

The information I have from my department is that if the doctor's recommendation is that a certain type of diet be followed, based on the doctor's recommendation we will pay the actual cost of the special diet. And I have a chart here that gives us an indication, and it goes as high as \$80 . . . the examples on the chart go as high as \$80 per month, special needs. Pregistimil rate includes cereal, juice, etc., and that one is the top of the chart at \$80 per month, and it varies depending on the calorie levels, the type of diet required. You have a bland or ulcer diet, \$11 a month; high protein diet, \$24 a month; high calorie diet, \$40 a month; pregnancy, \$30 a month. And it goes on and on that way. So that it is not an upper limit but only a

guide-line.

(2115)

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, your social workers in many cases — certainly in the dealings that my constituents have had with your office — have been indicating that \$25 is the limit. I'd be grateful if you could give us a copy of that chart. I'd be grateful if you could send it over.

I just want to conclude by asking you whether you'll give me your commitment that you'll provide a written answer to my final question there. Will you provide in writing the number of young people in Saskatoon who were housed by the Department of Social Services at the Colonial Motel or at other motels in Saskatoon in the past 12 months; what does it cost per youth per night at the Colonial Motel; what was the total cost to the Department of Social Services of housing young people in Saskatoon motels in the past 12 months; and how many contract hours did the department purchase? Would you provide that to me in writing, please.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, we don't have that available, information available right now. We will be giving instructions for them to get the information and send it to you so that you have it.

The chart that you refer to, you have a . . . I sent a copy of the policy manual to your caucus office. If you look at chapter 13, section 1, page 5, you will have it there, and it's right in the policy manual. I give you the citation so that you have it, easy to find. I suppose we could find a photocopier and get it copied for you, but it's right there. And it says:

Special food needs. An allowance for special food needs may only be granted on the basis of a doctor's recommendation. The doctor should indicate the length of time the special diet is required. The actual cost or the following guide may be used in addition to the regular food allowances.

And then it goes on and sets out the chart.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Mr. Minister, on September 3, my colleague, the member from Regina Lakeview, spoke to you at length about some of the difficulties that interval and transition houses are experiencing in the province. And as you will remember, interval houses or transition houses are used to house battered women and their children.

Mr. Minister, I just want to relay to you a situation in Saskatoon at Interval House, and I suspect that it applies to all transition houses across the province as a result of your budget brought down on June 17. Mr. Minister, many of the budgets were struck for these interval or transition houses and they have now received some of their funding. Unfortunately, with your change in the gas tax, many or all of those transition houses or interval houses have to pay an additional 7 cents per litre for a litre of gasoline, and as you know, the transportation costs at these houses are part of the overall budgetary process.

Consequently, Mr. Minister, the boards of directors did not budget for this increase in cost — the 7 cents a litre increase in cost — when setting their budgets, and I'm advised that because they're not eligible for any rebate that in some cases they are looking at the possibility of having to find an additional 2 or \$3,000 in their budget in order to transport these battered women and children to doctor's appointments, to find new housing, etc., etc.

I'm wondering whether or not your department has made any provisions for increased funding to the boards of directors of the interval or transition houses to take into consideration your increase in transportation costs as a result of your 7 cents a litre gas tax that was implemented in your June budget.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairperson, we don't have an exact calculation on what percentage of their operating budget gasoline costs would be, but we don't expect that gasoline costs would be a large proportion of their budget and should not be a major factor in the operations.

With respect to Saskatoon, the number of beds in the last four years has increased from 16 to 30, plus four emergency spaces. And surely this is not a new phenomenon in our society, so we were making progress in trying to solve the problem.

In addition, the Department of Health funds a treatment program for men who batter their wives or women, and that's one out of the Pastoral Institute. So in addition Interval House in Saskatoon did not receive a reduction in their funding this year; they received the same amount as last year. And, in addition, we have a Saskatchewan employment development program where we pay for the wages of people hired off the welfare rolls to assist there, and they received an additional \$21,753 as compared to last year. And certainly not consistent with the cuts, cuts, cuts that the member from Lakeview keeps talking about, so they have the same amount of funding plus a Saskatchewan employment development project which pulls another \$21,753.

We agree that that more will be done in the future, and it will be done, and it should be done but we also have to weigh where the needs are and which city and which location.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, just in response to that. Any time you don't increase the budget, and we do have inflation here in Saskatchewan of about 4 per cent this past year, that in fact is a cut. And when you increase the gas tax by 7 cents a litre and don't make any provisions for that in the budget, that in fact is a cut — a cut which Interval House in Saskatoon is going to have to somehow find the money for. So I wanted to bring that to your attention, Mr. Minister. It's obvious that you're not prepared to make any kind of adjustments in your budget to interval houses or transition houses to take into account your government's tax increase of 7 cents a litre, which people should note non-profit organizations are not eligible to receive the rebate.

Now, Mr. Minister, you did talk about this batterers' program that the Pastoral Institute has in Saskatoon. Mr.

Minister, I note in this final report of the federal/provincial/territorial working group on wife battery, Saskatchewan's position is laid out in that particular report. And one of the 1984 recommendations was to examine ways of developing discreet counselling services for victims of violence.

And I note, Mr. Minister, that there was one support project in 1984-85 or '85-86, and a second one was to be funded in 1986-87. And I gather from your remarks on September 3 that those two support groups are, in fact, the family service bureaus in Saskatoon and in Regina. And I note in your remarks that they receive a grant of approximately \$25,000 per year. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can advise us whether, in fact, those two family service bureaus have received an increase in grant for the '87-88 year.

And, Mr. Minister, you refer to the pastoral counselling for batterers — men who batter — and I would be interested if you could tell this House how much the Pastoral Institute in Saskatoon receives in grants, and how many batterers they're involved in treating. And I would be interested in knowing how many women who are battered are being treated by the family service bureaus in Saskatoon and Regina, for \$50,000, if you combine the two programs.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, the statistics are as follows: the Family Service Bureau of Regina for counselling, this year's budget, \$105,500, teen-parent, \$24,720, for a total of \$130,220; the Catholic Family Service Society of Regina, counselling, \$78,910, teen-parent counselling, \$24,720, for a total of \$103,630; Saskatoon Family Service Bureau, counselling, \$106,810, teen-parent, \$24,720, for a total of \$131,530; Catholic Family Services of Saskatoon, counselling and the teen-parent, total \$102,000; Minto family life in Moose Jaw, education centre, counselling and teen-parent, total \$97,430. Total of counselling budget, \$435,570; total teen-parent counselling budget, \$129,780. The total in that area for counselling is \$565,350. In addition to that, there is \$25,000 to the Family Service Bureau of Regina for the wife battering service and their special needs there, and there's another \$25,000 in Saskatoon added onto that total sum.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, you didn't answer my question, and I understand why you didn't answer my question. I just want to point out to people of this province that there are six treatment programs for batterers of women and children in this province, and there are two treatment programs for victims of violence in this province who are women. More money is spent to treat batterers than money is spent to treat women who are victims of that violence. And as far as I understand, very little money is spent in terms of treating the children that come out of violent situations, who often become the batterers of tomorrow. But you don't want to answer the question, you don't want to address the question, so we'll go on.

Mr. Minister, on August 4, the Children's Community Co-op Day Care wrote your department, and in that letter they applied for an after school on-site day care program. In addition, I wrote you as well and asked what your

response was going to be to their request. Now you have said in these estimates that there are going to be an additional 225 spaces created for new day care in this province, yet in your letter of August 20 you advised me that you are presently in discussions, and you're not making any decisions until the federal initiatives are announced. Now my question is simply this: are we going to get 225 new day care positions or spaces in this budget year or are we not? Are we going to have to wait for you to continue your discussions with the federal government before we see any new initiatives in Saskatchewan when it comes to the creation of new day care spaces?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I'll answer your other question. I forgot about it because the battering Pastoral Care Institute part of the budget is paid out of Health. I don't know what is paid out there, so I can't answer your question. I don't know. You can ask the Minister of Health when we get to the estimates there. That's why I didn't answer it. We don't have the answer; it's not our department.

(2130)

But certainly you must agree that whatever the cost, you're not opposed to prevention and cure. Last time I was accused of not doing anything about solving the problem, then I find out that Health is spending money on solving the problem. Now you're saying Health is spending too much money on solving the problem. So I don't know. You can take that up with Health when you get to the Health budget.

The day care that you refer to, a request for after school day care, is a particularly complicated question because you're talking there about after school day care, so you have before school starts, possibly noon hour, and then you have — and I don't think you have to have a noon hour. And then you have after school day care. And it's a very expensive type of day care because The Labour Standards Act provides that they must pay for a three hour shift when they call their staff out. So to have day care run before school they would have to run it then from six in the morning until nine in the morning to have their three hour shift because they don't have the children there during school hours. If you did it over noon hours, another particular complication. And after school you would have to run it from 3:30 to 6:30. So it becomes a very expensive form of day care and that's why we're taking our time trying to consider whether that is most appropriate, or if the need is not greater with the pre-school age children.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, just in response to your assumption on my position on where money should be spent, I just wanted to simply bring to your attention the fact that there are six programs in this province for men who batter their wives and children, and there are two programs in this province for women who are victims. All I'm doing is pointing that out to you and suggesting that perhaps you should allocate some additional funding in order that women in this province can also receive counselling. It's not an either/or, it's both, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, in response to your day care position.

If that is in fact your view, why don't you simply just tell people that. If that is your view on day care, just tell them. Don't lead them down the garden path with some form of expectation when in fact you're simply going to do nothing. I think people in this province want to be levelled with.

Now on another topic, Mr. Minister, I have written to you on a couple of occasions bringing to your attention the problem that teenage girls have when it comes to your department. And these teenage girls are under the age of 18 years of age, and they have children. They are teenage parents. And it is your department's view that if they were 18 years of age, or if they were on their own, that they would be eligible for some form of day care assistance in order that they could continue their high schooling or continue their studies. I'm wondering why, Mr. Minister, it is your view that if a young girl, teenage girl who is under the age of 18 and has a baby, and she's living at home, and even though her family circumstance is such that her family cannot afford child care in order for her to continue her education, why is it the department's view that she should not be eligible for any kind of baby-sitting assistance or day care assistance in order that she can continue her education?

Mr. Minister, I'd simply point out to you that one of the most important things that we can do as a society to assist teenage parents is to do everything that we can to support them in the continuation of their schooling. To do otherwise, Mr. Minister, means that those young people are going to end up on social assistance, and all I can say is Heaven help them if they do. Heaven help them if they do, because they will be subjected to the inappropriateness and the inhumanity of your government when it comes to young people on social assistance.

So I'm asking you now, why can't you and your government assist those young people to continue their education, with a little bit of money for child care for their young child or young children?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, let's say that the mother there is age 17: she would receive family income plan of \$100 for the child; the family allowance is \$30. If that child is placed in a day care, and when you take the subsidy into account, her out of pocket costs would be \$110. She would have \$20 a month beyond the day care costs. Then you shake your head and you say, well okay, you can't live on \$20 a month. But what we're saying then is she also qualifies . . . if the family qualifies, it goes on families; if you're under 18, you are considered to be part of your family. And so then you go the question of how much her parents can assist, and these are the grandparents of the child. If they cannot assist, Social Services would pick up the cost. If they can assist, then they should assist.

And here you have the grandparents of the child. If the grandmother is working outside of the home, there's some income coming in there — and we have a two-income family — and they should be in a position to assist their daughter and their grandchild.

I have had situations that, I agree with you, are special

situations and we've tried to look at those. But I've also had situations where the grandmother and the grandfather of that child are both employed in the work-force and will not assist their daughter in completing her education. What I'm saying to you is that the costs, with the subsidy and the family income plan, would cover the baby-sitting, and we would be asking the parents to assist for the other necessities of the child, if possible — that's the grandparents. And if not possible, the family would be considered on their total needs and the Saskatchewan assistance plan would cover those needs.

So I'm not saying it's easy, and certainly anybody who thinks about it, it's not easy for someone to go to high school and care for a child at the same time, but we are saying that it is possible to continue with education. Nothing can replace the assistance of two parents and larger incomes, but certainly with a little help from the parents, they can carry on.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, if that young person that you're referring to were to move out with her baby, she would be entitled to social assistance. Mr. Minister, she would be entitled social assistance. So in effect what your policy is doing is forcing that young person out into the world, or into society, without the support of her family. And really when you're in that position, you need the support of your family.

So I just wanted to, once again, Mr. Minister, draw to your attention the inconsistencies of your policy and how, in fact, your policy can be quite harmful to young teenage parents with children and their families.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, if the 17-year-old girl with a child moves out, she is more or less in the same situation. The government will then pick up her food and shelter costs, which, if she stays at home, the parents are picking up her food and shelter costs. It's a question of whether the parents or the grandparents of the child pick up the food and shelter costs at home, do something for their own daughter, or whether she goes out and the government does the same thing for that girl. But she can continue her education, and I think everyone will agree that they should continue their education.

Ms. Smart: — Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Mr. Minister, the cruelty of your social assistance policies is sometimes too painful to even face in terms of talking to constituents in Saskatoon Centre who are so very badly hurting. And just this weekend I talked to a single, employable male who . . . UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) payments came to an end and he had to get emergency service.

I'm asking you for clarification of your policy regarding food vouchers because this young man was told that he was not entitled to a food voucher, that the policy for single, employable men was that they should go to the Friendship Inn or to some hostel where they could get a free meal, but they were not entitled to food vouchers.

Now there seems to be a conflict in the Department of Social Services in Saskatoon regarding this policy, and I'm just taking a moment to ask you to clarify it for me,

please, so that I can get back to the people in Saskatoon immediately. What is the policy regarding food vouchers for single, employable men?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, I didn't hear closely. Did the member from Saskatoon Centre, is it . . . yes. Did she say that this person was actively looking for a job and needed some food? I didn't quite hear the total facts on this but there are some jobs available in some places. He maybe needs some assistance on where to look, and as a matter of fact we could probably help him out at our department. We do have some positions that he could probably fill.

But my understanding is that everyone who is in an emergency situation would get assistance and would get assistance for food and that that would also apply to the individual involved. If you'll send over the name, we'll check over the case, and we'll see what we can do to assist him if he's having any problems.

Ms. Smart: — My question was regarding the food vouchers. Do you mean assistance for food means that he's entitled to a food voucher, or is he told that he has to go and get his meals at the Friendship Inn? Which is the policy?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, there are short-term \$25 food vouchers for everyone who is in a position to qualify for assistance. Most likely our workers did not feel at the time that the individual was qualified for assistance.

I cannot look into the case unless the member from Saskatoon Centre sends over the name — I won't make it public — but we will try to do what we can to help this person. If she doesn't send over the name, I will then have to assume that the need is not as great as she suggests, or that this person can help himself. But if she sends over the name, we will quietly try to help solve this person's problem.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, I just have a question that's related to something the minister was just saying in response to my colleague from Saskatoon Centre who brought forward the case of an unemployed person; the minister said — and I paraphrase here and I want him to correct me if I was wrong — but he indicated something along the lines of: this person might come see my department; we may have a job for him; there are positions we need to fill here. Am I correct on that? Is that what the minister is saying?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — I don't really know what the member for Regina Victoria is asking. It's not a position in the Department of Social Services. What we are looking at here is positions through the Saskatchewan employment development program. Examples would be at Par Industries in Prince Albert; another good example would be the Meewasin Valley Authority in Saskatoon. And there are other examples that go beyond, across the whole province, except we haven't had any uptake in the city of Regina. And we will try to encourage the city of Regina in this area to get on with some community work as well.

So there are positions where this individual could be fit in. And with respect to trying to look for a job, it is a requirement of the Canada and Saskatchewan assistance plan that you be looking for work before you can qualify for social assistance, and therefore I asked whether this individual was looking for work. I still haven't got the name of the individual sent over, so I assume that he's going to solve his own problem, or the member from Saskatoon Centre is going to solve the problem. But that was what I was referring to.

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have questions in two particular areas that I wish to address to the minister this evening. And I know there is an anxiousness in the House to see if we can make progress on this set of estimates tonight, and I'll try to limit my questions to the essentials. But I hope the minister can provide me with some information in these two particular areas.

(2145)

First of all, with respect to the Saskatchewan assistance plan and the program changes that the minister has announced to be effective on October 1. Mr. Minister, I am anxious for a little more information about the impact of those changes on the current case-load of some 30,000 clients of your department. The bottom line of the changes, by my analysis, will indicate that some of the existing clients in that 30,000 case-load will stay basically at the same rate of benefit which they now receive, but that most will lose substantially in the changes that you have proposed, especially the working poor who are trying to help their own situations with some part-time earnings. And in studying the changes, I can detect really only one category of winner, if you wish to use that term — that is a person who would be actually better off — and that would be a single, unemployable person with no other income and no other benefits except for a rehabilitation allowance.

And I wonder if the minister could confirm that that is essentially accurate with that one exception which I have just mentioned, that essentially all others in the case-load will either stay the same or be reduced in the level of the benefits which they presently receive; and that generally across the board, that for the typical family unit of some four persons with an SAP entitlement now of something like \$1,200 per month, and for example, part-time earnings of about \$400 per month, that for that typical case there could, in fact, be cuts in benefits ranging from 15 to 20 per cent, and that that is the general experience that we can anticipate after October 1 when the changes come into effect. I wonder if the minister can indicate that that is essentially the gist of the changes that he will implement at the first of next month?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, I don't believe the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg was present the last time I explained this for the official opposition. I'll try to explain it again.

In brief, this time, we do not accept your calculations as being accurate. Maybe in one instance . . . we'd have to analyse your situation. But I did read into the record earlier, and you can check the details in *Hansard*, that a

single mother with two children, living in subsidized housing, on assistance for more than three months, who has some income – works part-time or whatever the case might be – receives maybe some maintenance from her spouse, but an income of \$500. When all is said and done under the new formula, this individual will have an extra \$23.75 – no, it would be \$23.25 per month, over and above any sum that she had before we made these changes.

The second example was two adults with two children on assistance for more than three months, living in subsidized housing with an income of \$600 per month – possibly a part-time job or who knows what their income might come from – but they have this income where one of them can work part-time, maybe the other one is disabled. In that case again, that family will have an extra \$23.25 per month.

As far as your example, we would have to go through the calculations and see where they would apply and where they wouldn't apply. As I indicated earlier, the object of the reform is to give an incentive for people to earn more income and over a period of time to be able to become self-sufficient and work themselves off of the welfare rolls, and we believe that this will happen under the new reforms.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Minister, I would submit to you that the arithmetic, in most of the cases, will in fact run exactly contrary to the very objective which you have just mentioned in the House. By the calculations that I've been able to do, that others in this House have been able to do, and many of the general public have been able to do, it would appear that where you may be able to identify perhaps a case or two of possible advantages under your new system, that there will be far more cases of disadvantages, actually reduced incentives and more difficult circumstances, and that there are far more losers than winners in the type of arrangement that you have proposed to implement on October 1. I suppose we could argue the arithmetic for some considerable length of time, and probably will do that on other occasions other than this evening.

But I want to ask you a specific question about the changes, Mr. Minister. I think you would have to concede that there will be many on October 1 who will actually find themselves worse off on that date as a result of the changes. You and I may argue about exactly how many, and of those people, how much worse off they would be, but I think you would have to concede that there will be a great many who will find themselves in a more difficult position as a result of the change. And my question is this: for those of us in this House, a reduction of \$100 or \$150 or \$200 a month may not sound like a very big thing. But for people who are struggling to make ends meet on the Saskatchewan assistance plan, that kind of a budgetary change for them in terms of their own personal budgets is a very big thing, and potentially a very painful thing. And I'm wondering, in anticipation of these changes, what you have done specifically within your department to communicate with your clientele on your case-loads to alert them specifically of the changes that are coming, and to give them detailed information as to how the changes will affect them.

You have indicated in statements in this House, and elsewhere, the general nature of the changes. There have been some media reports about the changes. But I wonder if you have made an effort to communicate specifically with the people on your case-load to advise them in advance of what the changes are going to be. Because come October 1, some of those people could be in for a very rude and a very painful surprise if they suddenly discover that what they had expected would be their income level is dramatically and suddenly, and for many of them without warning, reduced. They obviously have to plan and budget their personal situations with great care. And I think it's only fair to give them advance notice in detail about what the impact is going to be with respect to their own individual situations.

And I wonder if the minister could indicate what advance notice has been communicated, apart from general public comments carried in the media.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, the member is correct about one thing. There was an extensive press release announcing the changes. He should also take into account that this area is so complicated that it is difficult for the members in this Assembly to understand all the details or remember all of the details, so it's going to be somewhat difficult for the clientele of Social Services to understand all of the details.

In addition to the information that has gone out, there will be a letter enclosed with the October cheque giving an explanation of changes. There will be a toll free number where they can phone and get information and have their questions answered. I don't doubt that the Liberal/New Democrat opposition will trot out examples of people who have had a change, and I don't doubt that those people who have increases will not come forward and cheer so that we will have all the negatives and very few of the positives. But what we are doing here is not decreasing the rates but changing the calculation on how earned income in addition to welfare is calculated into the welfare system.

We are changing it to make it consistent with Conservative provinces in Canada, with Liberal provinces in Canada, and with one NDP province in Canada. We are making it consistent with the balance of Canada. I agree that there will be a change, a few people may see a lesser sum, a few people will see a greater sum, but the basic rates will go up on January 1 which will be a change in basic rates. There is no reduction now, and there will be an increase on January 1

So taking that all into account, we will await the usual criticism. But I challenge the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg to go into his constituency and see whether the people are satisfied with the welfare reform that we are bringing in in this province. And I believe that in his constituency the people will be satisfied that we are making progress, and we are trying everything possible to help those people in need and still not have people take advantage of the programs. If there are people who take advantage of welfare, then we have less money to pay the people who should really be getting the money. And that's what we're trying to achieve, have

the money go to the deserving.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Minister, could I ask you about one thing in your extensive press release which I don't have before me, but I read with care when it was published. Do I remember correctly that you indicated that the changes announced to become effective on October 1 will result in a certain saving to the government over a period of time?

I believe you mentioned a figure in your news release. It seems to me that might have been \$2 million, but I don't recall the precise figure. Could the minister please indicate if that is exactly the figure that he referred to in his press release as the amount of money that would be saved as a result of those changes to be made on October 1 and only explained to your clientele after that time?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well just the postal strike alone, if we follow up on what we learned from the postal strike, will save the taxpayers \$2 million.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Minister, but I don't believe that is the same \$2 million that you were referring to in your press statement about this particular program. Perhaps your officials could search out the release if it's not immediately available, and we can look at it a bit later.

The second matter I wanted to raise with you, Mr. Minister, has to do with certain administrative matters within your department. And would the minister, first of all, confirm that on a reading of the blue book, those pages relating to the Department of Social Services, pages 87 through 89, would you confirm that the cost of administration is the biggest single beneficiary of these estimates for 1987-88 compared to 1986-87? Is that not, Mr. Minister, where most of the increment this year is going — to administration, and not to the benefits for people in need?

When you look at the bottom line of your estimates, they increase by some \$17 million, and I think it's clear that administrative costs take up 15 million of the 17 million if that's not correct.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, we answered this question on the very first day that we started the estimates, and we gave the explanation that the matter is how you do your accounting. Some of that increase is for staff training, for the costs of implementing the computer system, which have been substantial. And I insist that we see some progress in the near future; it's been taking too long to get this computer system going. And in addition you have other costs that are included this year that were not included other years, so administration has not risen excessively.

I explained this earlier; it's in *Hansard*, and the detailed explanation is there. And I don't really think we should go into the details again.

Mr. Goodale: — I'm delighted the minister mentioned his famous computer because I would like to ask him just a question or two about that as my final part of discussion in these estimates.

It's my understanding, Mr. Minister, that in 1983 the Bureau of Management Improvement in the Department of Finance issued a report on the Department of Social Services and especially the Saskatchewan assistance plan, and that report, the so-called BMI (Bureau of Management Improvement) report, called for a massive computerization of the social assistance plan.

But to achieve any savings, or other benefits that computerization might offer, the BMI report suggested that very large managerial changes had to take place. The people had to be trained to use the new system properly, and it had to be constantly monitored and so on and so on. While the BMI report was very strong on the idea of computerization, it was also couched in terms of a number of safeguards that had to be implemented before the computerization was brought on stream in order for the whole system to work.

I understand that the new computer was brought on stream somewhere in the 1985-86 period. And I gather from what the minister has just said, that the costs associated with that are included in the administrative items in the first part of his estimates, in those headings that are mentioned at the very beginning of his estimates. I wonder if the minister can describe, at least in summary form — or if he can't do it in summary form on the floor of the House tonight, if he could provide in written form, at some reasonable future date in the next couple of weeks — could he describe the preparation done, in advance, to get the department ready to properly use that new expensive computer system. And were all of the BMI recommendations about advanced preparation, and planning, and monitoring, and so forth, were they followed in order to make this system effective and not just very costly for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

(2200)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, it was about November 14, I think it was, of 1986, that I inherited the Social Services department, and I inherited an army, and it's my duty to make it march. I also inherited a computer, and it's my duty to make it run, and we're doing everything possible to make it run.

What we've done so far — what I've inherited — is that the client base is now computerized, and the department is working the Saskatchewan assistance plan system into the computer. We have Regina, Estevan, Weyburn ready to roll in the not too distant future. There will be computer benefits that will be quite visible, but I ask you to wait until we start the computer up and have it crunch out some of the things that it can do. You will be probably quite pleased with some of the improvements that will be made as a result of the computerization.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I wonder if he would be so good in his explanations of this new system to take the suggestion I have made to him and to — not tonight if it's going to take too long, but within the next short while, say, for example within the next two weeks — if he could provide for us a written explanation of what it was that BMI recommended and how those recommendations have been followed in order to properly implement a computer system within the

Department of Social Services. It would appear, for example, that the computer system has had to be done and redone and redone again at least a couple of times.

It would appear that a very large contingent of outside consultants have been hired on almost a permanent basis to try to get the thing up and running and functioning and not just costing money. And it would appear, Mr. Minister, on a quick look at the situation from the outside, that this whole process of implementing this new scheme was rather poorly planned and poorly implemented, and quite frankly botched up from day one.

I appreciate the point that you only arrived on the scene last November and may well not have been responsible for what went on in the year before that and the year before that, but none the less you have the obligation now to make some sense out of it.

I wonder if you could give us that explanation as to just exactly what transpired during that period of time that this brilliant machine was supposed to work miracles; and how is it that still at this late stage it's not properly functioning, as I think one could conclude from your previous answer that you yourself are not satisfied with the level of functioning of the computer and the preparation that went into bringing it into the department. I would think, Mr. Minister, it would be helpful if we could have your written explanation of just exactly what transpired and where we stand now with that computer project.

I would ask you in that answer, Mr. Minister, to include what was the original estimated cost of the computerization project; how much in total has been spent on that project to date; specifically, how far are you along in the implementation of the computerization project? Who was in charge of that project from the beginning? And who is responsible now for monitoring and controlling the project and making sure that it is in fact bringing some useful results, and not just added expense to the cost of the Department of Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, this computer system is the first of its kind in North America — Systemhouse. The consultants are now using it throughout the United States, a system that they are developing here. I should probably get in touch with them about paying us royalties or something for developing this system in Saskatchewan. But they've given us a lot of free services and the procedures that were taken . . . there was consultation with field staff. I've told you about the client index files that were done first as was recommended, was fuel tested on pilot-project basis — we have Estevan; Weyburn is a pilot project; it is ready to go; Regina city is now ready to go. And then we have to standardize and simplify the system so that it's easy to run through the computer.

And as I recently announced, we are reducing the welfare application form from 16 to 6 pages, so that gives you an indication. I'm not going to give it to you in writing; you can read it in *Hansard*. That is the explanation.

As for the staff and the people in the department that were responsible, very few of them are still with our

department, and there is good reason for that. And therefore, I said I inherited an army, and we're going to make it march, and we've got a few new generals that are getting the training and the marching down to a science, and we expect progress from this computer in the very new future.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Chairman, will the minister confirm that the cost of this computer will run his department somewhere in the neighbourhood of 150,000 to \$200,000 per month to operate? When you calculate that over a year, you're talking in terms of \$2 million a year, which is roughly equivalent to the cuts in services and benefits that you've imposed under the Saskatchewan assistance plan, so that the most needy of the poor in Saskatchewan are seeing their benefits in this province reduced in the order of \$2 million a year. And your department is spending something like \$2 million a year more in administrative costs associated with the computer project that has been a complete foul-up from day one within the department presided over by yourself and your predecessor — both cabinet ministers in a Conservative government.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, I certainly deny presiding over any foul-up. I said that I was going to make the army march, and it's starting to march. And I said that we would get that computer rolling, and we're going to get it rolling. And the cost of the continuous operation of the computer is going to be approximately \$1 million per year, which is one-half of 1 per cent of the total money paid out in the welfare system in Saskatchewan.

We have to get into the modern age with this; we cannot have people with quill pens and ink keeping track of a modern system. We anticipate that that \$1 million cost will be saved in errors; that it will be saved in efficiency.

And there are other benefits that we hope to implement in the not too distant future that will be of particular benefit to people on welfare. And if we can get the system running more efficiently, then maybe it won't be necessary for people — or desirable for people — to go to cheque discounters and take 15 per cent off their welfare cheque and pay it to a cheque discounter so that they can get paid three days earlier.

We may eventually be able to get to a direct deposit system where the deposit could be made by the computer to their bank account on a very, very regular basis — even daily, if we wished. So that, in itself, would save some people the 15 per cent they are paying to the cheque cashers and discounters right now, the biblical money-changers of the world. And there will be future benefits to everyone. So don't get so down on technology, it's with us to stay and we might as well get on and use it. And I'm pleased that Saskatchewan has tried to be one of the first places in North America to get it down to a science.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to make a brief final statement before moving to vote on item 1, Mr. Chairman. As we've gone through the review of the services of the Department of Social Services, Mr. Chairman, we have obviously seen a department in stress, I think reflecting the stress that is facing

Saskatchewan people, and that's very clear to understand, given the mandate of this particular department.

As we've gone through the review, Mr. Chairman, some questions have been raised that have had less than total and satisfactory answers. We see that when we compare apples to apples, the planned expenditures for last year – and eliminating the smoke and mirrors related to the property management corporation and so on – that as a matter of fact, the planned expenditures for Social Services for this year represent a reduction of \$16 million – a reduction of 4.4 per cent. And also I am still convinced after we've reviewed these estimates something very, very close to \$4 million of the total expenditures being earmarked for severance payments for the like that have to do with the reduction of 73 staff positions from the Department of Social Services.

But the challenges for the department, Mr. Chairman, are immense. These are tough times; that's been repeated in this Assembly many, many times. And most importantly, they're tough times for people. And it is the obligation of the Department of Social Services to address tough times for people and to do that with a sense of responsibility, with a . . . always keep in mind that the two most important commodities any Saskatchewan citizens have are hope and dignity.

The challenges, Mr. Chairman, are far-ranging within the department. Within the community living division, the challenge to facilitate normalization in community living for handicapped citizens in Saskatchewan, and to do it in such a way that we don't make little, or slight, of the right that Saskatchewan handicapped citizens have to respect in being dealt with by their government and its agencies.

Legal aid is certainly an issue that appears to be unresolved in the review, as the access to the right to representation by counsel in court for Saskatchewan's poor has been jeopardized.

Transition houses are still more necessary than they're available in Saskatchewan. The protection for women and children who are living in battered situations is certainly not being met anywhere near the degree that I believe the government has a responsibility to respond.

In the area of day care, we still don't have a sufficient number of spaces available; the funding for a subsidy for people who are using day care who are low income is still a problem that has to be addressed, and there lies another challenge for the Department of Social Services.

In the area of income security, we're finding that it's getting tougher and tougher to live on social assistance for those people who have been forced to depend on public assistance in order to meet their daily needs. That is a matter of fact, as we've talked about in this House today, the benefits available, the amounts available to families to function have gone down.

We've also, as we've been here, reviewed the reason for that, and it's my view that the primary reason for our problems in social assistance are the abject failure of the

government to deal with the employment issues of the day. We see over the past five years that there are 14,000 more people living on social assistance and that, as a matter of fact, is exactly the same as the 14,000 more people over the past five years who are unemployed and looking for work. I think that's more than just pure coincidence. And unfortunately the \$200 million, which is a doubling of the budget being spend on social assistance, doesn't reflect improved benefits; it simply reflects a failure of the government to deal with employment.

We've also reviewed some issues related to non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, to provide social services to men, women, and children in communities and delivered by communities – their need for security that is long from being addressed; many of them, as a matter of fact, having either been experiencing reduced budgets, or zero per cent increase, which in light of inflation is a reduction as well.

The area of child protection – the minister assures us that he'll bring forward sometime in approximately a year a revised a Child and Family Services Act. I suggest that's long overdue and look forward to the opportunity to address that. And I also encourage the minister to review the social workers who are available to deal with those kinds of issues. It's been reported to me over and over again that families in crisis, children in crisis, simply do not have access to the sufficient amount of help that they need from social workers and that they've come to expect in the past.

The services to northern Saskatchewan are sadly lacking. Those of us here in the southern part of province oftentimes think that times are tough, but compared to northern Saskatchewan, in many ways this looks like heaven. And I think the department has to address those particular problems related to poverty in the North, and problems that really go across the . . . sweep across the whole range of services that are delivered through the Department of Social Services.

The department also has the challenge of involving native people more in the delivery of services to native people, and also the challenge of responding to the needs in rural Saskatchewan, many of which are just becoming more clear to people than they've ever been before.

And so we have to ask in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, who is responsible . . . who is responsible to address these very, very important issues, these people issues, these issues that require human sensitivity; they require human priorities on the part of the government.

(2215)

And let me respond to that, Mr. Chairman, first of all, by saying who I believe is not responsible. And I'd just like to read two very brief paragraphs from a brief presented to the Government of Saskatchewan in May by leaders of the Anglican church, the Evangelical Lutheran church, Presbyterian church, Roman Catholic church, Ukrainian Catholic church, and the United Church of Canada.

And what do they say about social services in Saskatchewan, Mr. Chairman? What they say is this, and I quote:

We have real concerns at suggestions in the part of some that gaps in social services created by the cut-backs can be filled by the churches and other voluntary organizations.

And let me underline and repeat that, because that's a suggestion that's been made in this Assembly, that it's a responsibility of the church and social organizations to pick up where the government has fallen back in the delivery of social services.

And let me repeat then:

We have real concerns at suggestions in the part of some that gaps in social services created by the cut-backs can be filled by the churches and other voluntary organizations.

And that's the churches speaking, Mr. Chairman.

We see this as a dangerous assumption. The non-governmental organizations simply don't have the skills, time, or money to replace trained professionals or to supply enough material aid.

And they go on to say:

The cut-backs and grants of the non-governmental agencies themselves, ranging from transition houses, John Howard Society, native court worker program, and Voice of the Handicapped, to name only a few, will have a devastating impact on those people who depend on their services. Clearly these people are in no position to fend for themselves.

We have some concern when we try to determine in dollars and cents where these cuts really affect a significant reduction in the deficit. For us, financially speaking, these operations tend to be minimal ones. As well, fewer donations from the private sector could be anticipated as the economical downturn continues. The question that remains is: who, once again, will have to pick up the pieces?

And I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that it is very clearly the responsibility of the Government of Saskatchewan, under the direction of the Premier of Saskatchewan, to make sure that it is the Department of Social Services that picks up the pieces.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we've covered many, many items as we've reviewed item no. 1, and I think that will facilitate – with some few minor exceptions – going through the votes rather rapidly. And having made those comments, Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to vote now on item no. 1 and proceed through the budget of the Department of Social Services.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Item 8

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, some time ago, specifically on July 27, I sent you a letter raising certain questions about the property management corporation and the amount of space that's allocated to the department from the property management corporation; and secondly, requesting a number of answers for questions about consultants used by the department in the year under review and comparisons from the previous year.

And I wonder if the minister has the information in that form which I requested, and if he does, I would be prepared to accept it in written form and expedite the passage of this vote.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, it's probably simpler if, when we get to the estimates of the minister responsible for the property management corporation, that you get all of this information at once and get it over with. So that would be the simplest. We have some of it, but it's not all totally compiled here, and property management is not part of our department's mandate. So you should probably ask that question to the minister responsible; he could give you everything at once.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I have a letter dated August 10 from the Minister of Social Services:

Thank you for your letter of July 27, 1987, concerning two matters you will be raising during estimates for the Department of Social Services. I am having the department review the relevant information in order that I can respond during estimates.

This is August 10; the minister received the letter from me July 27. Other ministers have provided the information which I've requested, and I thank those ministers for that. I see no reason why the Minister of Social Services can't undertake to supply the information that other ministers have supplied for which he's had ample warning that the question was coming; it's the space that is provided to his department from the property management corporation.

Mr. Chairman, if the minister, when he suggests that I get this information from the minister of property, or the minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, is undertaking on behalf of the entire Executive Council to make sure that I receive that information from that minister, I will.

That deals with space, but that doesn't deal with the second question that I asked the minister with regard to all consultant studies. I'm sure that will not be provided by the minister in charge of the property and management corporation.

An Hon. Member: — Why is it, Mr. Minister, every time I get up you get up?

Mr. Brockelbank: — I have the light, Mr. Minister. If the minister will assure me that the information I requested in

the request of July 27 will be forthcoming in a reasonable length of time, that will be sufficient for me.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, if the page will come over, I've got a sheet of personal service contracts. As I indicated, I took over this department part way during the year; I've only heard of two of these people before, but we'll send it over.

I believe that the consultant expenditures I read into the record. I have no problem with sending that information over; I think it's already in *Hansard*. I'd ask the page to send that over.

I have locations here of offices and the square metres involved for all of our offices throughout Saskatchewan. I can send that material over and then you can study it, five legal length pages. That's all the information I've got.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I am unsure as to whether all the information I requested in my letter of July 27, to which the minister responded, is contained in the three pieces of paper that the minister sent over. And if the minister would give me his assurances that if any of this information is not supplied, that I could come back to him and receive it in due course, I would be prepared to move on. I don't want to hold up the estimates, and I know the minister doesn't want them held up.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairperson, I believe we've provided the information we've got. If there's anything else that we can provide that seems fair, we will try to do it.

Item 8 agreed to.

Item 9 agreed to.

Item 10

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 10 is grants in day care, and my question, Mr. Minister, in light of your announced increase of 225 spaces for day care, can you explain to me why the budget allocation for this year is identical to that of last year?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The new money is in subvote 15.

Item 10 agreed to.

Items 11 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

Item 16

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, back in March or April — I think it was in March — there was a situation occurred which involved placing of foster children in Saskatoon in motels, and my understanding was that that was due to a shortage of foster placements being available in the province.

My questions about that, Mr. Minister, are these: can you tell me why; just what caused this decision to be reached to place foster children in motels and provide care for them there — what the cause of that was. Can you also advise the Assembly as to whether that problem has been

resolved? Can you also tell me how much that cost in total, and how much it cost per child per day? If you can, give me a way of calculating that.

And also, Mr. Minister, would you please advise me as to how many children were placed in these motel rooms and whether they are properly placed. Now that's a whole series of questions, and I give them to you together so that you can respond to them together.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, most of those questions were answered in *Hansard* about one hour and twenty minutes ago from the member from Saskatoon University. I think those questions have been answered. It was the Colonial Motel; none have been placed there in the last five months. We don't have the details of the exact cost. You can sort of check through *Hansard* and you'll get that information tomorrow.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, when will you provide the details about exact cost, and will you please tell me how many children were placed in that situation, and are they now placed in foster homes, or is there still care being provided for foster children in hotels or motels?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, the answer's in *Hansard*. That was five months ago in a short-term emergency situation. It's quite common that that happens in some provinces. It happens in Manitoba; I read articles about it. It happens in Saskatchewan from time to time.

There is a temporary facility there, Carmel House, which handles 10 people. I answered that we were looking at a more permanent facility; I answered that we were planning on having super foster homes for intake. We felt that a family situation was better than an institution. If we could not get the family situation concept that I felt was superior into place, then we would go to the institution. It's all in *Hansard*.

Item 16 agreed to.

Item 17 agreed to.

Item 18

Mr. Brockelbank: — With regard to item 18, income security. The question that I have for the minister, Mr. Chairman, has to do with enforcement of maintenance orders. Now I realize that that comes under a different department, the Justice department; however, the consequential effect of poor or good enforcement of maintenance orders may mean in the neighbourhood of 3 to \$4 million more or less to the Department of Social Services.

(2230)

I'm wondering whether the minister is satisfied with the manner in which this is operating; that it is taking some of the load off of the Department of Social Services and putting it where it rightly belongs, on the maintenance enforcement.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, finally from the NDP a somewhat conservative idea that fathers should

pay for the maintenance of their children. I agree with you. We're satisfied with the start that has been made, but we think much more can be done.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, I think that much more could be done as well because I'm not satisfied with the performance by the Minister of Justice at this point, and I cite a case where a constituent of mine is several thousand dollars in arrears on payments that should have been received.

And part of this is due, in fact, to the reciprocal agreement with other provinces, in this particular aspect the province of Alberta. I suspect there are many cases around the province of Saskatchewan, internal to the province, and others external to the province, where reciprocal agreements should be effect, and should be operating, that are not operating smoothly. And the consequence of this is that there's an additional cost to Saskatchewan welfare; and if, in fact, the minister is not satisfied, he's pressuring the Minister of Justice to improve the system, I wonder what . . . if he could state what steps he's taken to attempt to improve the system within the Government of Saskatchewan so that it operates more efficiently.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairperson, I said to the Minister of Justice: get after those men who aren't supporting their children, and you can take the balance up with the Minister of Justice.

Item 18 agreed to.

Items 19 and 20 agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1988
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditures – Vote 36**

Mr. Chairman: — Any questions? Carried.

**Supplementary Estimates 1987
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditures – Vote 36**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1987
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Employment Development Agency
Employment Development Fund – Vote 65**

Item 1 agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: — I'd like to thank the minister's officials.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairperson, I, in particular, would like to thank the members of my department, those in the chamber and those out in the field. All of those hundreds that work in our department

have been very helpful to me and to the Government of Saskatchewan. In those months that I have taken over as minister, we have made some changes. We're constantly making changes, and, as indicated earlier, a change is sometimes difficult.

These officials have had great patience and have worked long hours, not only tonight but other nights. I want to thank them, and I ask for their continued co-operation. I'm sure that they will continue to implement the changes we have made in the department for years to come, and the people of Saskatchewan will benefit from it. So I thank them, and I thank the members of the Assembly for the patience they've had in going through the details of this complicated department.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, I want to join with the minister in thanking the officials who have participated in this *Estimates* review. As we've gone through, obviously both this side of the House and that side of the House have found some differences in philosophy and policy, suggestion and so on, but . . .

An Hon. Member: — I certainly hope so.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, the Deputy Premier says most of them, and that may, as a matter of fact, be statistically accurate. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize the officials who have sat in this Assembly for many hours over a number of days and participated in a meaningful and democratic review of the operations of the Department of Social Services.

I would also like to recognize, Mr. Chairman, that within the department there are 1,888 very dedicated and professional civil servants who carry out the delivery of social services to the most important commodity that we have in Saskatchewan, and that's the people of this province, and addressing their very real and very human needs.

I want to compliment the officials for their participation in this Assembly, and in particular, as well, the field employees around the province who deliver those very important services to Saskatchewan people. And I would ask all members of this Assembly in expressing appreciation with a round of applause.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:39 p.m.