

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, before supper we were discussing the government's work for welfare programs. And I was making the point, Mr. Chairman, that the current strategy of the government in which a single, employable social assistance recipient is effectively forced to take a job if they want to stay on welfare, in which they're asked to work two weeks on and then go two weeks off and earn only \$360 a month, Mr. Chairman, is a disgrace in this province. Mr. Minister, what that means is that someone who is working is not earning a penny more than they would have on social assistance — not a penny more.

Mr. Minister, their take-home pay . . . I've had an opportunity to visit with quite a number of people who are single employables on your work for welfare program, and their take-home pay — because I've looked at the cheques — is \$316 a month. And I say to the minister, shame, because no one can live on \$316 a month. And this is a person who is working, Mr. Minister.

I think it demonstrates the real intent behind your work for welfare program which I ask you to acknowledge now, and that is that that program is intentionally designed to prevent people from earning more than they would if they were on welfare. That person is making 316 a month, Mr. Minister. Not only are they working, but they also lose their Y card; they lose their ability to get prescription drugs at no charge; they face additional transportation costs while they're going to work — and that is fundamentally unfair.

My question to you is: first of all, how can you justify only paying someone \$316 a month while they're working? And secondly, Mr. Minister, my question to you; why don't you, instead of creating these short-term jobs where people at most are working 20 weeks and then are back on unemployment insurance, why don't you concentrate on creating permanent long-term jobs for people on a full-time basis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I disagree with the member opposite that working is unfair. I don't acknowledge at any time that it's unfair to expect someone to work to support themselves. We're talking here about single, employable people.

Our calculations are . . . I intentionally designed the program that you would make more by working half-time than being on welfare full-time, and we do not believe that asking someone to support themselves is unfair nor unreasonable. The NDP's view of, you have a right to welfare . . . Yes, you do but you also have a responsibility

to support yourself if you're given the opportunity. And that's what we're doing in this program, is giving people an opportunity to work rather than insist on their right to draw welfare.

I can't understand . . . Maybe there's something wrong with the way I was raised; maybe there's something wrong with the way my church taught me; and there's something wrong with the way my grandparents taught me values, and my parents; and even the education system under Tommy Douglas. There must be something wrong with that system because they made me into a person who believes that there is nothing illegal about work. That work gives you dignity to support yourself. And the NDP say that it is wrong to ask people to work, it's wrong to give them a job instead of paying them to do nothing. I just don't understand that. Maybe I'm old-fashioned; maybe the NDP have some new ideas that I can't comprehend. But it seems to me that if everybody insisted on their right to draw welfare, that nobody would eat. It seems to me that we would all starve if we all insisted on our right to draw welfare.

So I would only ask that those people who can work, work to the best of their ability and those people who can't work, we will help them to the best of our ability. I don't understand what's wrong with that. If the member opposite could tell me what's wrong with such a value system maybe I could change my mind, but I just can't understand it.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, to begin with, these people aren't on welfare any more. You cut them off welfare when they get these two-week-on, two-week-off jobs, which is why they lose benefits like their prescription drug costs.

I tell you, Mr. Minister, you may not appreciate it, but I suspect that you don't talk to many single employables on social assistance. Now I've taken the time since being Social Services critic, as my colleague, the member from Moose Jaw North did prior to myself, in spending a lot of time talking to social assistant recipients. Now I can assure you, Mr. Minister, that many of these people are not as well off financially when they're working as when they were on social assistance. And that's a disgrace to your government and nothing short of that.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to address another issue under this work for welfare program before I leave it, and that is your clear decision to violate the rules and regulations and federal legislation under which you get half the cost of social assistance paid for by the Government of Canada. As you're well aware, Mr. Minister, it's a cost-shared program between the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan, and under the Canada assistance plan 50 per cent of the costs of social assistance are paid.

Now, Mr. Minister, the Canada assistance plan is very clear about the circumstances under which assistance is to be given. I want to read, first of all, what the Canada Assistance Plan Act says. Section 15, subsection (3), Mr. Minister, of the Act says:

Every agreement made pursuant to this section shall provide that no person shall be denied assistance because he refuses, or has refused, to take part in a work activity project.

And, Mr. Minister, in contrast to that, the letter that you sent out to people who are single employables asking them —not asking them; telling them, in effect — that they will take these two-week-on, two-week-off jobs, in which they'll make less than they did on social assistance in many cases, says this:

If you do not take advantage of this job opportunity, your eligibility for social assistance plan benefits will be reviewed immediately.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: how many social assistance recipients who are employable have been cut off social assistance in the last 12 months as a result of receiving this letter and refusing to take one of these so-called work activity job projects?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — I'd need a clarification. I'd need to know whether he wants to know how many were cut off or how many we couldn't find. That is part of the question. I'll try to get you the information on how many we cut off.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, what I want to know is how many people, how many people declined to take on of these SEDP (Saskatchewan employment development program) projects or New Careers Corporation projects upon receipt of a letter such as the one I've made reference to from your department, and as a result of refusing to take that project were cut off social assistance.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have the statistical breakdown of how many were cut off for refusing to take a jobs when there was one available, or how many we couldn't find, but the total of those two would be about 300.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I thank you for providing a partial answer finally to a question that you've been asked.

But my next question to you is: how did you justify, Mr. Minister, cutting off those 300 people when the federal legislation is very clear? The Canada Assistance Plan Act makes it illegal for you to cut off social assistance recipients that refuse to take part in a particular work activity project.

And in addition to that, Mr. Minister, I want to read you a citation from the agreement that you signed with the Government of Canada in 1986. It's the Canada-Saskatchewan Accord on Employability Enhancement for social assistance recipients, and the accord states, and I quote:

Consistent with current regulations, the accord offers the opportunity for social assistance recipients to actively pursue on a voluntary basis employment and training.

Mr. Minister, this is the agreement that you signed with the Government of Canada, in which the Government of Canada agreed to the principle of cost sharing SEDP projects, Saskatchewan employment development program projects and New Careers Corporation projects that use SEDP money — your so-called work for welfare program. But it was done clearly on the understanding that social assistance recipients were not obligated to take a particular job.

I'm not implying, Mr. Minister, that in the event that someone is offered a choice of several jobs that at least would put them slightly ahead of where they were on social welfare, and they refused to take any one of them without a reasonable explanation, that their assistance shouldn't be reviewed. But that's not what's happening here. They're being asked to take work activity jobs in which, in many cases, they will make not a penny more than they did on social welfare, and your government is cutting them off when they refuse to do that. In some cases, Mr. Minister, you are forcing people to move from one community to another to take such jobs.

And my question to you is: how is it, Mr. Minister, that you can so flagrantly violate the Canada assistance plan and flagrantly violate the accord that you signed with the federal government for employability enhancement?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, let's have a look at the Canada assistance plan. In 1966 the Liberal government under Lester Pearson — and Lester Pearson was very liberal, bordering on being a socialist, but he was very liberal — set up this Canada assistance plan among other things that he did. It was a good thing, but in 1966 no one intended that Canadians should not ever have to work again. Even Lester Pearson didn't intend that. I respect the man. I didn't agree with all of his policies. But even Lester Pearson did not intend, when he set up the Canada assistance plan, that Canadians should not ever have to work again.

So what you had there was a plan that said, you do not have to work off your welfare like relief in the '30s. You do not have to work back the money that was paid to you specifically. But what the Act says is that you have to agree to take training or you have to accept jobs when they're available.

And so we are perfectly legal within section 6(b). Our regulation 6(b) is perfectly consistent with the 20-year old Canada Assistance Act, that says yes, you have a right to receive welfare if you need it and it also says that you have a responsibility to take training or a job if it's available.

And so, I don't know — the members opposite won't come right out and say it, but they seem to be suggesting, and I think maybe they have on occasion said it, that you don't have to work if you don't want to ; that someone else will support you in this country if you don't feel like working. And that is not an excuse. That's where we draw the line. If you can't get a job, we'll help you, but if you refuse — flat, outright refuse — to work, then show me any law in Canada, either legal or moral, that says you should be able to live in this country and refuse to work,

ever.

(1915)

Now here I'll give you some information on what has happened on these projects, and this will give you a clear indication. You wanted to know what happened on some of these projects. At Par Industries, 146 people left, and here are the reasons: 71 quit; 30 found other employment; 19 were fired; 18 decided to go to school or training; and six had illnesses that excused them; for a total of 46 who did not take the jobs that were offered there.

At Meewasin Valley in Saskatoon: 57 quit, 17 found other employment, and I presume that they were happy because they found other employment; 12 were fired; five decided to continue their education; and three were excused due to illness. The total of all that is 240, 11 of which were excused due to illness.

When you talk about our job search training program — which, I explained earlier, is three weeks of learning how to find a job — in February of 1988, 76 were invited to take the training; 50 did not attend or did not show up or were exempt for one reason or another; 26 were selected; 19 located employment. That's after taking the course.

In March of 1988, 46 were invited; 24 did not show up; 22 were selected and took the course; five — we have a default figure here — left the course while in progress, and we are pleased because those five would have found jobs or had a reason for leaving.

In April of 1988, 60 were invited; 37 did not show up; 23 were selected; seven defaulted — that means left course while in progress — and again, there were some who located employment. April, 1988, the next session, 55 were invited; 37 refused to show up or failed to show up; 18 were selected and took the course.

As you can see, you have all kinds of people in our society. You have some who are eager to improve their lives, and learn how to get a job. And some unfortunately have no interest whatsoever in learning how to get a job.

What should I do with people who have no interest in getting a job or continuing their education, but simply want you and I and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to support them? I say that is not a valid reason for refusing a job, because you do not feel like working. That is not a valid reason.

Now those people that took the course found it fulfilling. Those people who took the course, many of them have gotten jobs. But if the NDP insists that you have a right not to work in this province or in this country, then I say the NDP are wrong. I will say that for ever. Most people want jobs. Approximately 93 per cent of the people in this province are employed; 85 per cent of the youth are employed. Most people agree with me, that they want jobs, they're seeking jobs. The NDP have a view of the world that probably only 2 per cent of the population agrees with. So either they are wrong or I am wrong.

And as long as we are government, we will offer people

jobs in lieu of welfare. We will offer people the opportunity to do something rather than to do nothing. And people who are doing these things feel good about themselves. Most people given the opportunity to work will work. I have no qualms about cutting them off welfare. I have to take care of the needy and I have to take care of those people who want to better themselves.

But what do I do with the people that have no inclination at all to improve their lot? What do I do with them? You give me a suggestion. What do I do? Do I force them to go to school? What do I do with them? You have some ideas; you tell me what I should do with people who absolutely, flatly refuse to work.

Mr. Prebble: — You know, Mr. Minister, you have a way with taking an argument and misshaping it and misconstruing it so badly that it borders, Mr. Minister, on . . . well I'll just say, that it's incredibly misleading. I was going to make another comment and I'll refrain from doing that. But, Mr. Minister, what we're talking about here is an alternative, is a strategy that members on this side of the House put into effect with great success when we were in government. That is, that we concentrated on social assistance, and we had, Mr. Minister, less than half the number of employable people on social assistance under our government than you did under yours, which is an indication of the total failure of your employment strategy, Mr. Minister, and the total failure of your so-called welfare reform.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: Now, Mr. Minister, what we're talking about here is not a question of what you do with someone who's not prepared to take work. We're talking here about someone who refuses to take a job at slave labour wages that no one in this province should have to live on, namely, a take-home pay of \$316 a month. That's what we're talking about. And I say to you, Mr. Minister, that I think anyone, any fair-minded person in this province — with the exception of the members opposite — would say that it's unfair to expect someone to have to work for a take-home of \$316 a month, and I challenge you to say otherwise, Mr. Minister.

What's happening here, Mr. Minister, is that you are just choosing to flagrantly violate the terms of the Canada assistance plan, the terms of the accord you signed with the federal government under which you get cost sharing for your work for welfare program, and I think there's no other way to describe it.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another example of how you choose to violate your own rules and regulations. And that is with respect to your announcement recently that you are now requiring all employable people in this province, without dependants, to pay their rent cheque from their social assistance cheque directly to the landlords of this province. Mr. Minister, I take very strong objection to that, as do all members on this side of the House, because Mr. Minister, in so doing this, you are flagrantly violating the confidentiality provisions of your own departmental

regulations.

We just had a debate earlier in question period this afternoon in which you went on a great length about the need for client confidentiality and non-government organizations to respect that — which is a point that we agree with — and yet your own department, Mr. Minister, is clearly going out of its way to violate the confidentiality of social assistance recipients.

There are some landlords in this province who are renting to social assistance recipients who are well aware that they are on social assistance. There are many landlords, Mr. Minister, who are not aware that their tenants are on social assistance, and there is no reasons why any landlord should know that their tenant is on social assistance as long as that tenant is regularly paying the rent. And there is a ready procedure, Mr. Minister, in place for those who are not paying their rent.

If there is a problem with someone paying their rent, there is a trusteeship system in this province that works very well — about 2 per cent of social assistance recipients are on it. Payments are made by a third party on behalf of that social assistance recipient if they are not able to manage their own affairs properly. The other 98 per cent of social welfare recipients in this province have managed their affairs perfectly adequately; the landlords have been paid.

Mr. Minister, I want from you an explanation today about why you've chosen to violate the confidentiality of 8 or 9,000 social assistance recipients in this province who are now having to go through the indignity and the embarrassment of having their landlords find out that they're on social welfare, and how it is, Mr. Minister, that you can justify violating regulation 40(c) of your own departmental regulations which says:

Every unit of the Department of Social Services shall administer assistance so as to protect the recipient's right to confidentiality.

And that's a direct quote.

How is it, Mr. Minister, that you have one set of rules for yourself and another set for everybody else?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I hope everyone heard that, I hope people on television, if anybody is watching — I think there might be a hockey game tonight — if anybody is watching, I hope they heard that.

First of all, the member opposite has made a small error in that we are not paying the rent directly to the landlord, we are paying it jointly to the landlord and the tenant — just a small error. I will in this case say it was an error.

But once we look at that . . . First of all, tell me what is inherently wrong with paying your rent? Everybody agrees that you should pay your rent. Now what is wrong with a system that makes sure that the money paid by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan for rent is paid for rent? And the members opposite say, well there is no confidentiality.

Clearly they don't know much about being landlords because landlords do credit checks on their tenants. Landlords ask, where are you employed. Landlords have some concern that they are going to paid, and in the past there has been some degree of abuse with respect to the payment of rent. And I have got too many calls as Minister of Social Services saying, so-and-so didn't pay their rent and they owe me two months, they owe me three months; it goes on over and over again. I paid the money out on behalf of the taxpayers; that money did not go to the rent.

So if I could ensure in the same way that that money would go to feed the children, I would come up with another joint cheque system. But when it comes to paying the rent, I can come up with a system that works. And I did, and we are doing it, and it's working, and I've had no complaints from social services recipients. The only complaints I've heard are from the NDP MLAs — no complaints from anyone.

And so we believe that this system is working well and should be continued and extended. With respect to confidentiality there has to be a balancing between what's confidential and what's fair. And I say it's fair for people to pay their rent. I say that the members opposite are totally unrealistic.

It's hard to imagine . . . You know the members opposite would want us to build public housing for everyone in need. All right? And if we did build public housing for everybody in need . . . and we will try I see no wrong in trying to build public housing. Are they suggesting then that we pay social services to a citizen who lives in a government housing unit and does not pay the government, and that we do not deduct that from what's owing?

Well this is a similar situation, we are trying to get the best accommodation possible, whether it's public housing or whether it is private housing. And therefore we are saying that this is not a question of confidentiality; this is a question of whether you pay your rent or you don't. And I am pleased to say that social services recipients have not complained about this system, because they agree they should pay their rent and have no problem taking the cheque to the landlord, endorsing it, and it's paid. So only the NDP are complaining. I don't know where they get these ideas. Even the people who are getting the rent benefits are not complaining.

With respect to the system of reform that we have brought in, the members opposite say they did different things with single, employable people on welfare. They did not. First of all, they didn't even know how many single, employable people there were on welfare because they didn't count them under their system. They simply paid people to do nothing, and they didn't even ask whether you could do something. Their system would bankrupt this province, and it was starting to do that.

The members opposite do not understand that if we correct the abuses, we have more money to pay to the needy people that are on welfare and should be on welfare. They do not understand that.

There are 5 per cent fewer people on welfare this year

than there were last year. And the 95 per cent that are still there are receiving more per case than they ever were. So we're paying more per case than we ever were to fewer people. so we're getting it down to the needy people getting the money. And they want me to pay welfare to ghosts, people that I can't find. I should send them a cheque every month, and they don't even expect me to inquire as to why we can't find them.

(1930)

It is totally unbelievable that anyone would have a system like that. Socialist countries throughout the world have tighter rules than that. I mean, you look at the socialist countries of the world. They do not tolerate a system that says, you don't have to work if you don't feel like it. But somehow in a system like ours, driven on the work of workers and business people, they should support this kind of a system, but not in a socialist country where the government owns everything and the government insists that everybody pull their weight. But here, where farmers and business and labourers are out there earning a living, the members opposite insist that some people should have the right to do nothing. And I don't believe that is the will of the people, and we will not be doing that.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, once again you've misconstrued the arguments, and there have been two fundamental arguments here. One, Mr. Minister, is that under your own regulations, every social assistance recipient is entitled to confidentiality, and you have fundamentally violated their right to confidentiality by sending each landlord a cheque from the Department of Social Services, paying their rent. That clearly indicates that they're a social assistance recipient. And that is a form of indignity that no social assistance recipient in this province should have to put up with. And you've done it, Mr. Minister, despite the fact that there's a perfectly adequate system in place already — the trusteeship system — which ensures that if a landlord is not being paid their rent, they will be paid it by a trustee. And I say to you, same, because all your other attempts at arguing for your position simply misconstrue the argument.

Now, Mr. Minister, secondly, you have ignored the blunt reality that people in this province should not be forced — and under federal law, are not forced — to take work-for-welfare projects in situations where they'll make no more on working than they will on social welfare, which is the kind of system that you have set up and that you have created.

Now, Mr. Minister, you say that people are further ahead now who are on social assistance, in that you claim that you have increased the rates. You just made an argument, Mr. Minister, that those . . . that by cutting off people on social welfare who you claim — and we would dispute — are not entitled to it, that you have now more money to pay for others on social assistance. And, Mr. Minister, this is simply a bold-faced inaccuracy. It is simply untrue, Mr. Minister, for you to say that social assistance has gone up in this province.

What have you done, Mr. Minister? Yes, you've increased the rate for an adult by \$17 a month, and you've increased the rate for a child by \$13 a month. But at the

same time, Mr. Minister, you cut off their travel allowance, which was worth \$22 a month in the case of an adult and in some cities as much as \$27, Mr. Minister. And the children have lost their bus passes, Mr. Minister, as well.

And in addition to that, what else have you done? Well, Mr. Minister, you cut the laundry allowance of social assistance recipients by 2 or \$3 a month, and here's a man who's expecting people to look for work. And one of the things you need to do, Mr. Minister, when you're looking for work, is present yourself in a clean manner, and yet you cut the laundry allowance.

What else did you cut, Mr. Minister? You put a cap on the utility payments that your department will pay out for social assistance recipients. And many of them, Mr. Minister, were facing utility bills of 70 or 80 or \$90 a month. And you capped it at 55 — \$55 a month is the maximum now, Mr. Minister. So many people lost 30, 35, \$40 that you previously paid on utilities, that you no longer pay. They lost anywhere from 22 to \$27 a month on a bus pass, and they lost 2 to \$3 a month on laundry allowance, and you call that an increase, Mr. Minister.

I tell you, I've looked at many cheque stubs of social assistance recipients, and time after time I've seen social welfare recipients who are making less after January 1, 1988 than they were before because of the cuts that you have made.

And so, Mr. Minister, I ask you again: how can you say that you have increased social assistance rates when the reality is that you have in fact cut them even further than they were before? And a single mother with two children in 1988 is not earning one additional penny through social assistance that they were in 1982. Inflation has been 30 per cent, and yet they don't get a single dollar more.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, as far as I know, this information is accurate, but I don't know if this resolution was passed or not, but as far as I know from the 1981 convention of the New Democratic Party — New Democrats as they like to call themselves now and that they had a resolution 263 which read:

Whereas it is desirable to encourage landlords with suitable rental accommodations to make these accommodations available to those who depend on social assistance; and whereas encouragement to such landlords would be provided by acceptance, assurance of prompt and full payment; therefore be it resolved that the owners of dwellings who rent these accommodations to those who receive social assistance be paid directly by the Department of Social Services on behalf of the tenant.

This was a resolution before their convention in 1981. I say I don't know if it was passed or not. Probably not, knowing the mentality of the members of the opposition, but at least there is some original and bright thought over there, and I don't take credit for thinking of this first because I know that they did have this in their resolutions in 1981.

And so when I implement some of the policies that they used to advocate, it's interesting that when a Conservative does it, it's wrong, but when an NDP does it, it's right. It's just a question of that they didn't do it. So the members opposite should know that their party is not unanimous on what there's feeling on in the House today.

In addition we have a calculation of the cost of living index in Saskatchewan, in Regina, and the accumulative increased in welfare rates starting back to 1975 to 1988. And it turns out that the welfare rates have increased 134.5 per cent from 1975 to 1988, and it turns out that the cost of living in Regina has increased by 134.5 per cent in the same period of time. So between 1975 and 1988 — 1975, the NDP were government; 1988, we're the government — we, in conjunction with what the NDP did over that period of time, have kept the welfare rates increasing with the cost of living increased in the city of Regina for that 13-year period.

So the rates have really not gone up or not gone down; they have kept up with inflation since 1975. And if you will recall that in 1975, the price of wheat was very high — not too high, I might say — buy very high compared to today; the price of oil had just sky-rocketed. Uranium, which my learned friend opposite doesn't want to mine, was selling at a good price, or was being developed and the mines were coming in. Potash sales were excellent. And at that time the NDP had the same welfare rates that we have now when you take inflation into account.

In addition, as I've pointed out earlier, we have the highest welfare rates for children in Canada, in this . . . I don't know about the North West Territories and the Yukon because the cost of living is higher. But in the province of Canada we have the highest rate for children, for families, of any province in Canada. Now members opposite say it's not enough. Yes, if I can save more money by correcting the abuses, I will raise the rates further. They have that commitment. But I have to make certain that the money is going to the people that deserve it the most.

And I challenge the members opposite to say how much the rates should be raised. I challenge them. It's not enough; I agree they could be higher. Could they tell us exactly how much the rates should be raised.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to give you some precise statistics that will bury your case. First of all, Mr. Minister, these are put together by the University of Regina, the school of social work — and these are professionals who ought to know what they're doing. They have compared, in the tables I have here . . . This is two parents and two children on social assistance, 1981-82 figures, what they received prior to your welfare reform — \$1,127.17 a month. In 1988, Mr. Minister, after your welfare reform that same family receives \$1,126.20 a month, or 93 cents less while the inflation rate has been 30 per cent.

A single parent with two children on social assistance, 1981-82, received \$916.17, and in 1988 receives \$916.14 — 3 cents less, six years later, after 30 per cent inflation.

That, Mr. Minister, is one of the reasons why we have line-ups at food banks in this province. That, Mr. Minister, is one of the reasons why food banks are the fastest growing industry in this province.

I was in Lloydminster on Friday and, you know, Lloydminster is hardly the kind of community that you would expect to have a food bank, but they've been forced to open one last year, in large part because of your policies and the policies of the PC government in Alberta. And they're feeding 196 children a month, and 194 adults a month in the month of March. And if that doesn't show the folly of your policies, Mr. Minister, I don't know what does in a small city like Lloydminster.

Mr. Minister, you have argued that the rates for the food allowance are adequate. I want to ask you this question. Mr. Minister, you will . . . Your department officials must be aware that Agriculture Canada regularly publishes a retail food price report in which they look at the minimum cost of a food basket that could nutritionally feed an individual or a family. And, Mr. Minister, the latest figures that I have that compare your social assistance plan food allowance of \$108 for a single, employable person, that compares, Mr. Minister, with the estimate by Agriculture Canada that that same person would need at least \$125 to pay for food costs. Leaving them \$17 short. A single parent with two children, Agriculture Canada is estimating that they need \$311 effective in 1987, and your food basket provided \$287, leaving them \$24 short.

Mr. Minister, the most generous part of your social assistance rate structure is the food allowance section. Because what's happening right now is that people are having to dig into their rent money because they can't find shelter at \$200 a month, which is the most you allow for a single employable. They don't . . . A single employable doesn't even get a clothing allowance.

Mr. Minister, social assistance recipients are having to pay utility rates that are far higher than you will allow them, so they have to dig into their food budget on all those accounts. But even in addition to that, if you just take the straight food budget that you have allotted, Mr. Minister, it's very clear that when you compare the Agriculture Canada food price report with your figures, that social assistance recipients are not receiving enough even from your food allowance to cover their basic nutritional needs.

And my question to you is: will you, for goodness' sake, Mr. Minister — for the sake of the children in this province who are on social assistance — increase the food allowance and increase the rates. And you have asked for a suggestion, and I would say personally 25 to 30 per cent.

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, our government has had a policy of finding people jobs under welfare reform, and since we've started with the jobs, what we've found, with the jobs the federal government has provided in co-operation with us through Canada Jobs Strategy and New Careers Corporation, we have had a total, in the last

three years, of 11,200 jobs for people who are on welfare. And now they are no longer on welfare; they have jobs, and they are very happy.

The member opposite does not know that we have an 8 per cent, on average, and 8 per cent per month turnover rate, which is good. What's bad about it is that the turnover rate matches. The number of people becoming self-sufficient each month is about 8 per cent, but we seem to have about another 8 per cent who require assistance each month. So, very gradually, we are bringing the statistics down over the last year.

The number of welfare is down 5 per cent. That's because of two reasons: of that 5 per cent, some have received jobs and some are off the system because they were abusing the system. So it's a twofold plan: take those people who are abusing the system off the system; give those people who want to get off the system an opportunity to get a job, an opportunity to get education.

With respect to the rates that we pay, yes, we would like to pay more, and we will raise them as time goes on.

However, as I indicated earlier, we have the highest rates in Canada for families, and yet the member opposite says that there is not enough to eat. Well how do people get by in other provinces? How do people get by in the province of Manitoba, where under an NDP government they were ninth in Canada in their welfare rates to families? Under the practising NDP in Manitoba, the people that say in Saskatchewan they would do more, they did less than we do in Saskatchewan. Here we have the theoretical NDP in opposition. They would do more but when they become government they do less for the poor.

The members opposite talk long and loud for the poor but when given the opportunity, do nothing — well not quite nothing but ninth in Canada with the last NDP government in Canada is not a very good record to be proud of. And I would like the member opposite to defend that kind of a record — ninth in Canada, for Manitoba, for families and first in Canada, for Saskatchewan, for families.

And there is no limit to the amount of money I will give to families to feed their children but that money has to go for food. There is no limit. I will find it one way or another. As long as I know that money is going to food, that money will be there, but it's got to go to the children. We cannot have that money going elsewhere. That money for food for the children must go to the children so they get to eat properly.

And that is what we have to solve — make sure that the children are properly fed, properly clothed, that they have an opportunity to wash, an opportunity for education, an opportunity to learn some values, whatever they are. I would hope they are not socialist values, but some values, some basic human values in life — the respect for human life, kindness to others — the kind of things that our society is built on.

But the members opposite says, pour money on the problem and it will be solved. Well in Manitoba they didn't pour any money on the problem and it was not

solved. In Saskatchewan we pay the highest rates in Canada for families and children and it's still not solved. I will try to find ways to solve the problem.

But certainly the member opposite proposes a rate increase of 25 to 30 per cent. Yes that would be nice and I would do it right away if all of that 25 or 30 per cent went to the assistance of those children, to get those children a fair break in life and a good start in life.

The member opposite must realize that would cost \$60 million. He must realize that our share would be one-half per cent in the sales tax, assuming that we could still get cost sharing from the federal government which he is trying to destroy; which his friends are saying they are going to sue because we are not following the agreement, and they are going to try to stop federal cost sharing. I say to his friends: sue if you think you are right in law. Go ahead. But we are following the laws of Canada. While following the laws of Canada, it would cost \$60 million to give a 25 or 30 per cent increase in the welfare rates. We are the highest in Canada. We will consider some increase, but we cannot raise the sales tax 1 per cent just to cover that expenditure at this time. So we have had a policy of jobs.

And the member opposite quotes statistics, not from Statistics Canada, but from the University of Regina. And I don't believe that the University of Regina has objectively calculated the total calculations with respect to what our benefits are. In Saskatchewan, a family of two adults and two children receives, if they are long term on welfare, \$1,240 per month as their maximum allowance. They have \$1,240 per month to live on. That is not, I agree, a great deal of money; but that same family if employed, paying income tax deductions and those other kind of expenses of employment, would have to earn in the nature of 19 to \$20,000 per year to have that same amount of money clear to live on.

And I say to the member oppose, there are many families out there who are struggling to earn \$20,000 per year and have that same amount to live on. And I can say to the member opposite that he should look at rural Saskatchewan, where half of the families on farms have less cash to live on than \$1,240 per month. And they are getting by, and they are feeding their children — and they're feeding them on their own, and they're proud of it. And you come now and say to them that they can't feed their children. They are feeding their children and they're personally sacrificing their own clothing and their own benefits and their own life-style to take care of their children first, because the first priority of a family is the responsibility to their children.

Mr. Chairman, I was in Europe about 10 years ago and I noticed a big difference in Europe between . . . in Canada. I saw, in southern Europe, families that were visibly poor, families that had mended cloths and torn clothes. And I saw those same families with children in the hand, and their children were dressed twice as good as the parents. I saw those families with nice strollers for their children. Those families throughout southern Europe were poor, but their first priority was to their children, not to themselves. And that's what has to be done.

Every parent owes their first responsibility to their children before they start thinking about themselves. And I appreciate the difficulty that rural families are living under in these agricultural times. When these people in rural Saskatchewan are sacrificing — I see them in my constituency — they are sacrificing so that their children, first, have food; and secondly, so their children can play hockey and baseball. They will do everything first for their children, and their children are not going hungry.

And I say that everyone in this province who puts a priority into feeding their children and taking care of their children will be able to feed their children. And if they cannot, the government will assist them. But that money has to go to the children, and we will have no other policy than that the money must go to the children and not be spent on anything else.

Mr. Prebble: —Well, Mr. Minister, I remind you that half the persons on social assistance are children, and so the first thing you can do is give the families who already have the misfortune of being social assistance recipients under your government, at least give those families enough so that they can feed their children.

Mr. Minister, I tell you, I believe you're correct when you say that people in rural Saskatchewan are prepared to sacrifice to feed their children. I want to assure you that people in urban Saskatchewan are also prepared to sacrifice to feed their children, and we on this side of the House see that every day, Mr. Minister, and for you to somehow imply that that's not the case is erroneous.

Now, Mr. Minister, if you were really serious about supporting families, as you talk about, you wouldn't deduct the family allowance from social assistance recipients before you issue the cheque. We're the only province in Canada where that's the case. If you were serious about supporting families, you wouldn't have frozen the family income plan funds in the way that you have for working families, who get no increases as a result of this budget when they are low-income and their family size is large.

Mr. Minister, time and again you can see where you have consciously cut back support for families in this province. Look at your cuts to the family service bureaus in Regina and in Saskatoon — cuts of 10, 15 per cent in many cases. Look at your cuts, Mr. Minister, to family service positions in the Department of Social Services — six positions lost in Saskatoon, for instance, in the 1987 budget.

Time and again, Mr. Minister you have been cutting back services for families in crisis, not giving those families support. So don't talk to this legislature about how your government is supporting families, because your record, Mr. Minister, is the reverse.

Now if you're serious, Mr. Minister, about addressing the problem of hungry children in the school system, then you will institute a school lunch program in all inner city schools in the major urban centres where it's required, where there's clearly a hunger problem. And, Mr. Minister, I venture to say that you could do that for less than \$1.5 million.

If you're serious about addressing the problem of child hunger, why don't you institute a school lunch program in all the major inner city schools in Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well the member opposite wants me to institute a school lunch program in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. And if I did that, how would that be fair to everyone else in Saskatchewan who is already sending lunch to school to feed their children?

Why should there be a school lunch program in Regina and not in other places? And why should the state prepare lunch at school so that the parents don't have to, either have their children come home for lunch — in the cities they usually do come home for lunch — or so that the rural parents don't have to pack lunches as they have for years and years?

I have not had any rural parents complaining about having to pack lunches and send them to school. I have not had any urban parents complaining about having to pack a lunch and send it to school. I have not had any urban parents complaining that we should feed their children at school so they don't have to come home to eat.

I agree there are some isolated cases where there is a problem, that the children are not eating regular. I agree with that; those cases do exist. And I've said to you many times that when those hungry children are identified, we will act to make sure that they receive food and are not neglected.

I challenged you in the legislature to give me, privately, a list of names of hungry children. You said there were thousands. I received one. And I instructed my department to deal with that case to make sure that that child was eating regular and was not neglected. You said there were thousands. You sent me one name.

Because you can name one person that is not eating properly, you think that we should have a school lunch program for every person. That is the kind of dependency that the NDP stand for — a school lunch program, then an after school program, and after a while the NDP would have a system where you have your child and you give it to the NDP and they will raise it for you. That's what they want to get to. They want to get . . . Somebody mentioned womb to tomb socialism. Yes, I believe that is exactly what they have in mind. Step by step, they want your children and they want to raise them the way they think they should be raised, as good socialists. That's what they have in mind. They do not care about people. If they cared, they would send me more than one name, if there is more than one person. I said it was irresponsible for the members opposite to know of children in need and not to give me the information so I could assist them — and they sent me one name, one name.

Well, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Chairman, with respect to family allowance and how it's deducted in our calculation, first of all we should know this, that the system of taking family allowance into account in welfare payments was started by the NDP, and I have not

changed it. Now if it was so bad, why did they do it that way?

Secondly, Mr. Deputy Chairman, our rate calculation takes into account the family allowance deduction, and even when you take that deduction into account, we still have the highest rates in Canada for families and children. So yes, I would like to change that system, but the NDP started it that way and built up a system of deducting family allowance, and it's very difficult to change it in a fair manner at this stage.

(2000)

The NDP talk about helping families; they talk about creating jobs, about raising income, about giving more money for the people who need it most, yet they are opposed to freer trade so that we can build our economy. They are opposed to diversification of Saskatchewan. The NDP are opposed to anything that will earn this province money. I say to the NDP that this province has social programs that we all agree should be maintained and increased, but no amount of rhetoric or will-power or desire will generate the money to pay for those social programs unless we as a province and as a country get out into the world and earn that money so we have it to pay for our social programs.

Now the member opposite believes in social programs, and we believe in social programs. But if he were running this province and if their party ever ran this country, we would all be poor because there wouldn't be any money for anyone to pay for any social programs. They expect this country to build a wall around it, hide.

They have policies like a made in Canada interest policy and currency controls. They have policies like, be opposed to deregulation, have regulations so that you cannot ship goods in and out of the country freely. They have all those kind of policies that would turn this country into an Albania. And you compare the social programs of Albania — the hermit of the socialist world that refuses to trade with anybody in any meaningful way — if you want an example of what being a hermit country is, look at Albania. And if you want a good comparison of trade — free trade — West Germany trading with the European Common Market, or East Germany only allowed to trade with the socialist world. There is a comparison for you of what NDP policies would bring you and all of us with respect to prosperity and social programs.

The members opposite mean well but are idealistic. When I was member of that party, I discovered that they did not know what makes the world tick. They still do not what makes the world tick. They are social dreamers and they will always be social dreamers. And I hope I don't ever see the day that their dreaming is leading this province.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I'm only going to say, in closing off this debate on the question of general welfare rates and child hunger, that we on this side of the House believe that a school nutrition, school lunch program should be established in any school in this province where there is a demonstrated need, whether it be rural or urban. And we urge you to do

that with all haste, Mr. Minister. And I will let it go at that and turn to another pressing issue which is your government's inadequate support for physically handicapped persons.

And I want to particularly, Mr. Minister, focus on two issues that are affecting many physically handicapped people because a goodly portion of the physically handicapped find themselves on social assistance, Mr. Minister. And one of the things that I was particularly disturbed by was your recent decision, Mr. Minister, to cut the travel allowance for physically disabled people in the city of Regina from \$27 dollars a month, Mr. Minister, to \$20 a month — from \$27 a month to \$20 a month — at the same time, Mr. Minister, as the cost of the transportation service had increased for \$1 a month to \$1.10 a month.

Now, Mr. Minister, in effect what this means on a round trip basis is that each physically handicapped person who's on social assistance — and there are a large proportion of the physically handicapped who are — are now eligible for three less round trips a month to look after their basic needs. And in effect, Mr. Minister, what your policy of cutting back on their travel allowance has done is simply increasing their social isolation. They still have money to travel for a doctor's visit or for doing grocery shopping or picking up prescription drugs, but the visits that are going to be lost, Mr. Minister, are the visits to friends or the visit for an evening out to a movie or a social gathering of some kind.

Mr. Minister, I want to hear your justification for why you cut the transportation allowances of physically disabled people in the city of Regina? And I want you, Mr. Minister, to tell me what the reduction per month has been to the travel allowance of physically handicapped persons in other parts of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the physically handicapped, the member opposite probably does not know or does not wish to know that in 1982, his government spent \$7.4 million on the physically handicapped, and in 1988, our government is spending \$15.6 million. That is an increase of 111 per cent, Mr. Deputy Chairman. So they would try to mislead the world and say, no, we're not doing anything for the physically handicapped, but a 111 per cent increase in expenditures for the physically handicapped in the last six years suggests to me that we are doing much more than keeping up with inflation.

With respect to travel, the member opposite is again trying to distort things considerably here. The handicapped in Saskatchewan are not paid a travel allowance but are paid their actual travel costs — their actual travel costs, whatever they are.

With respect to mobility restricted people — that's people who are older, have a little more difficulty getting around but are not actually handicapped — we pay \$20 per month towards their travel, a straight \$20 per month.

Certainly the member opposite is mistaken again when he says that we've reduced the travel for handicapped. We pay actual, whatever it is. It's a special need and we

pay it — doesn't even show up in the calculation of the welfare rates. It's on top of the rates that we pay.

So the member opposite again is trying to play little games here, trying to scare people, trying to mislead the public. And now I have given you the full information, I would expect that he should now acknowledge that he didn't understand that handicapped actually receive their actual travel costs.

With respect to other matters. And we have increased spaces in sheltered workshops; we've increased spaces in the term of our government from 827 to 1,073; in activity centres, we've increased them from 612 to 801; in group homes for the handicapped we've increased the spaces from 384 to 506. And I think anybody with a pencil can see that those percentages are in the ranges of 30 to 50 per cent increase; 25 per cent in some cases.

And so don't let the NDP try to tell anyone that we have made cuts to the handicapped. Nobody will believe it. I have these figures right in front of me. They are audited by the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor would know if the figures are correct or not. They are examined in public accounts. They cannot deny those figures. They cannot deny all of the group homes that are being opened in Saskatchewan right now. They cannot deny the increases in the workshops of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, they cannot deny when they hear of the programs that we will bring in in the near future to show that the handicapped under the programs of this government will be receiving actual jobs.

The members opposite, I told them yesterday to be patient; I asked them to be patient for a little while longer and they will see a massive program in handicapped employment. And the members opposite doubt, they shout from their seats and they double that we will do anything for handicapped. The fact is that we have a record here that is very, very respectable with respect to assisting the handicapped. And based on the record that we already have, the handicapped can be assured that this government will take major measures to assist them in employment. So therefore the members opposite need not worry. We will take care of the handicapped even though they deny that it exists; we will continue to take care of the handicapped.

And in addition, Mr. Chairman, we phased out North Park in Prince Albert for the benefit of the handicapped who are now living in new group homes throughout Saskatchewan. Initially some people said it could not be done; some people said it should not be done. The NDP had a plan to do that but they wouldn't do it because CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) told them they should not do that. And we regret the loss of jobs in Prince Albert. But we have to first of all take care of the handicapped; whereas, the NDP were first of all taking care of their friends. We were taking care of our friends the handicapped, and I do not apologize for it.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, when you closed down North Park Centre how many of the residents of North Park Centre were transferred to Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the following is a breakdown of the locations of people who moved out of North Park: four went to their extended families; 58 went to new group home locations; 17 went to community living residences; 41 went to private service homes; two went to special care homes; seven went to small hospitals in level 4 facilities; 47 went to the Valley View Centres; one went out of province — for a total of 177.

In addition, during the period of time of the phase out of North Park, 20 to 22 people moved out of Valley View and into the community in order to make room for the people from North Park who were coming in and also to move as many people as possible out into the community.

Of the 47 that went to Valley View Centres, we will try to move as many as possible out of Valley View if they can possibly live in the community and outside of the institution, and we will continue to try to shrink the size of the institution at Valley View, so that in the future more and more people will be living in a community and fewer people will be living in institutions.

And I say, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that this government had the courage to do what was right. The NDP when they were government did not have the courage to do what was right; they did what was expedient.

I have been in the group homes throughout Saskatchewan and seen these happy people who are now living in communities. I have one lady that lives in my constituency who is 77 years old and was able and allowed to bake cookies for the first time in her life. And those are the kind of experiences, the kind of experiences . . . And the members opposite laugh. When I heard that I had tears in my eyes. They don't believe that I have a heart. When I heard that, I had tears in my eyes, and the members opposite laugh. There's the party, the party that say they have compassion and they care. And when I say that this woman, who is like an ordinary granny of 77, has now had an opportunity for the first time in her life, by her own words, the first time she's had a chance to bake cookies.

There are other examples of people. I was in a group home in your constituency, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and I heard a woman play the piano for me — and I can't play the piano. She played the piano, she is very happy living out in the community.

I saw the new group home that we're building. And I was on the street . . . It's in a brand-new suburban neighbourhood with the biggest houses in town, and the biggest house on the street is the house that is being built as a group home for the handicapped from North Park, where they will live with all the other citizens in town. And what really impressed me, Mr. Deputy Chairman, was that the citizens on that street were pleased to have them for neighbours. It is truly amazing how the citizens of Saskatchewan have taken these people in as their neighbours. And members opposite still laugh. They didn't have the nerve to do what was right; they did what was expedient.

(2015)

Now I've given you the breakdown. We will do everything possible to make sure that everyone can live in the community as normal as possible, and we will not be putting people in institutions unless there is absolutely nowhere else for them to live.

The members opposite can be assured that we will not change this policy, that we will continue to put the handicapped people into society to live as independently as possible.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, at the risk of another long answer — for anyone that may have wondered what the question was — the question was: how many who moved from North Park Centre relocated to Valley View Centre? And I gather that in the long rhetorical answer, Mr. Minister, the answer is 47.

My question, Mr. Minister, is this: of the 177 folks who moved out of North Park Centre, how many are living at Valley View Centre today?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I already answered the question; at last calculation 47. Now my officials advise that one or two may have moved out since, but initially 47 moved in. and for the period of time those numbers will go down as we find other locations for some of those people.

Mr. Hagel: — And so there has been none who moved to community who subsequently went from community to Valley View Centre?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, two people went into the community and have since gone into Valley View: one was for medical reasons and the other one was for emotional reasons. both of them were similar type of situations where they . . . because one was medical and the other one was because of behaviour, that person couldn't function in the community and had to go to Valley View.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, out of the approximately 130 then — give or take a couple who moved from North Park Centre to community — how many of those people would be of an age category that we would consider to be a working age? I guess I would be assuming here, Mr. Minister, how many of those people would be under the age of 65?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, my officials don't have an exact breakdown but they can give you quite an accurate guess, I might say. About 70 per cent were senior citizens, about 30 per cent were under the age of 65. That's an approximation.

Mr. Hagel: — So it would be approximately 39 people then that were under the age of 65. Of those, Mr. Minister, how many are then involved in some kind of community placement? Would that be all of those people? and would you please describe for me, Mr. Minister, what kinds of placements, and again by number. Would some perhaps be during the day attending or participating in activities at a sheltered workshop, for example, or other kinds of

work-related activities?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, my officials have sort of calculated this out, and to give you a picture of the situation, there were 36 day programs developed in Prince Albert; 10 in Moose Jaw; six in Hague; two in Maple Creek or in the regular workshop; seven in Nipawin have a day program, and a new group home; in Porcupine Plain four are in the regular workshop; in Grayson eight are in a senior citizens' day-care program — they're all over 65; Biggar has a similar program. And, in all, total about eight to 10 are the number that are not involved in a day program.

All of those were developed in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded, and wherever possible these were developed. And In those eight or 10 situations, there are some people who just aren't all that interested in a day program or going to the workshop. So for the most part everyone was accommodated where they were interested in some kind of a program, or else a program was instituted at their home because they may be over 65 and then they have sort of a seniors' day program to give them things to do. And as I indicated earlier, you know, baking cookies is part of the things that they do.

Mr. Hagel: — I wasn't clear from what you said, Mr. Minister, then how many of these people are now involved — of the 39 under the age of 65 — are involved in some kind of a work or training-related program. I quite understand and accept and concur that for those who are at the age of 65 and over, consistent with the normalization principles and the normal life-styles for people in our society, that it's really quite appropriate that they should be involve din some kind of retirement life-style.

My question to you again, Mr. Minister, is: how many of those folks have been accommodated in some kind of a work activity program, of those approximately 39, the 30 per cent of the 130?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, as far as we know all of the 39 are involved in a day program or an activity of their choice, sort of thing. Everybody that wanted one got one, sort of thing. So as far as we know all 39 would be, but if there's one somewhere that's not participating that would be outside of my knowledge. But for the most part, the information we have is that everyone who wanted to have some sort of a program or take part in a workshop or have some activity was able to get that kind of activity. My officials remind me that it was regardless of age. We didn't make them retire at the age of 65. If they wanted to work at the workshop, that was fine with us.

Mr. Hagel: — I certainly accept and respect that, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the phrase you used a few minutes ago in describing the objectives in moving folks out of North Park Centre whether they wanted to or not, at that time you said the purpose for doing that was to, and I believe I'm quoting you precisely here, Mr. Minister, make them normal as possible. Now I assume by that, Mr. Minister, that you're making some reference, or an oblique reference to the principle of normalization.

And you've spoken earlier in these estimates and earlier this day and in these past few days, about the importance of work and the relationship between dignity and work. Certainly people who are physically or mentally handicapped should not be deprived of the opportunity to earn dignity and self respect through employment, as would the rest of our citizens.

I think I've heard you several times this evening making reference to the fact that you don't want to see people getting something for nothing, and I assume by that, Mr. Minister, you're operating from a philosophy that there is a relationship between work and dignity and self-respect.

Consistent with that, Mr. Minister, I put a question to the Minister of Labour, just a couple of days ago, about the inclusion of handicapped persons who are working in sheltered industry in the labour standards coverage for minimum wage. Now, Mr. Minister, it seems to me to be a desirable objective that our mentally handicapped citizens should be given the opportunity to participate in society as non-handicapped citizens. And it seems to me, Mr. Minister, that there is something to be said for the relationship between work and dignity. And, Mr. Minister, we do happen to live in a society in which to a large extent people make . . . There is a relationship between income, or the value of our work, and the dignity that we experience.

Now, Mr. Minister, I expressed to you a couple of days ago some of my feelings about the inappropriateness of the sixth highest . . . the fact that Saskatchewan now has the sixth highest minimum wage in the nation, and we had a little hear-to-heart on that one. But I ask you, Mr. Minister: in light of the fact that there are a good number of citizens in this province for whom working for minimum wage would be a dream come true . . . It would be a dream come true, and I'm simply reflecting the sentiments of many of the members of People First. You would be familiar that in this province we have many outstanding citizens, in my opinion, who are members of People First, for whom it is an extremely important principle that they not be denied the same rights as other citizens of this province when working, that they are not included in coverage for minimum wage for their efforts.

Now, Mr. Minister, before you stand on your feet and say, well we can't afford to pay handicapped people minimum wage because they're not producing enough and all those sorts of things, you and I both know that we have administrations that can easily accommodate that and it's simply a matter of rethinking how we administer the public moneys that are spent.

And so I ask you, Mr. Minister: in light of the fact that you saw it so important to close down North Park Centre, to move a number of people out of that centre who had no desire to move because, in your words, you were going to make them normal as possible, and in my words, Mr. Minister, were going to simply follow the principles of normalization — I ask you, Mr. Minister, when are you going to carry through that commitment to allow the dignity for reward for work to handicapped citizens in this province who work in sheltered industry, to have the privilege to permit for them the dream come true that they would be able to make minimum wage? When will you

do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I agree with the NDP that that would be desirable and I will work in that direction. It's unfortunate that the NDP didn't work in that direction when they were government, but now that . . . And I know this member's not responsible. He wasn't here when they were government, so I don't chastise this member specifically. And I say I agree with him that that would be desirable.

It would be desirable to have at least minimum wage paid to people in sheltered workshops. I don't think we can do that in activity centres because they are activity centres rather than workshops, and I'd like to look at that, first of all, in workshops.

And I can say to you that I will be moving in that direction, and in the near future you will see a major initiative in that direction, and I'm sure you will be very pleased; and you will agree, when you see it, that the government is doing the right thing. So I say, if you're patient you will see in the very near future a major move in that direction.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, you're quite correct. I wasn't a member of the New Democrat government in the past, but I anticipate, Mr. Minister, that some time within the next three years I will be a member of a New Democrat government that will come to Saskatchewan.

(2030)

Now, Mr. Minister, I have not in the past, and you know that . . . In this Assembly I have not in the past hesitated to give my approval or endorsement of initiatives that your government has taken for which I approved. I must admit that hasn't been frequent, but that's happened. But that's perhaps the world of politics and represents some of the differences between your party and mine. And Heaven forbid — Heaven forbid that we should ever live in a world in which there is not freedom of speech and the freedom for people to have differences of opinions, contrary to what seem to be some of the policies coming out of your government and your actions in dealing with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and the like these days, and that's been under discussion in these estimates, Mr. Minister.

But I simply say to you, sir, that if you do undertake initiatives that do improve the opportunity for handicapped persons in this province — to not only be employed, to be gainfully employed, meaningfully employed, but to be employed under the same working conditions as the rest of the society, as the rest of the people in this province, Mr. Minister — if that occurs then I will certainly feel quite free to express my approval of that.

But as we stand here this evening, Mr. Minister, I note, Mr. Minister, that, given that you had a commitment to a philosophy that said it was appropriate to move people out of North Park Centre who did not want to move because you believed that was right, I simply ask you again, Mr. Minister: you're telling me here today that you believe it is the right thing to do; to provide coverage under the labour standards legislation so as not to exempt

handicapped persons who work in sheltered industry. If you believe that to be right, when will you . . . Don't give me this business about some time or when it's practical or when it's possible — I'm asking you a very specific question. You did not hesitate to take that action affecting handicapped persons when you literally forced some, some of the people from North Park Centre to move who did not want to.

I ask you now, Mr. Minister: when will you act on this belief that you believe to be true? And when will you consult with the Minister of Labour? I recognize that that may be a difficult task for you at times, to consult with the Minister of Labour, but it should be easier than consulting with some others. When will you consult with the Minister of Labour, and together — the Minister of Social Services and the Minister of Labourer — put your collective minds together and bring to this province legislation that provides protection under the Labour Standards Act for handicapped persons who work in sheltered industry?

Please, something a little more definite than when it's possible or when it's practical. This is an extremely important issue for a good number of our citizens, as I said before, who are members of People First, and a good number of our citizens who are working in sheltered industry and who recognize fully that the value given to their efforts because they work in an industry that is described as a sheltered industry are, by law, less than everyone else who works in this province.

I ask you again, Mr. Minister, please be specific and tell us when.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I can assure the member opposite that later this evening the Minister of Labour will consult with the Minister of Social Services and will come up with a plan later this evening to employ more handicapped people and that I will have it implemented very soon. And so I could assure him that that consultation will take place later this evening.

I can also advise him that while it is desirable to have people in sheltered workshops earn at least minimum wages, there are many cases where they are receiving from the province of Saskatchewan a sum well in excess of the minimum wage in that it costs, in some cases, up to \$2,000 a month to care for them. So I will examine that, and I will consult this evening. And very soon, I promise you, I will take action, and it may not be complete, but it will certainly be more than you've ever seen under any government.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, not a question but a comment. I commit to you, sir, that when the Minister of Social Services is consulting with the Minister of Labour, that the member from Moose Jaw North would be most willing to participate in that conversation if, as a matter of fact, it is toward the objectives that you stated here tonight. So that's not a question but simply a statement, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The member from Moose Jaw North and the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Social Services do not communicate on the same wavelength, so it would be rather difficult to do that, but

certainly he will be advised of the result.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I know the strong support that the Minister of Social Services gives to the free enterprise system. I know how strongly he supports that and promotes it. As a matter of fact, the Conservative Party does because I have their *There is a Better Way*, the Progressive Conservative Party policy manual. It has a section entitled Small Business. And the first ten words, Mr. Deputy Chairman, say:

Taxation policies, government interference and regulations are hurting small businesses.

And I think the minister must subscribe to this because it's in his policy manual.

I want to now refer the minister to a memorandum that was issued by his department on November 23, 1987. This memorandum regards taxi usage in the city of Saskatoon and I want to read the points on this memo into the record, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The first one:

On today's date (that means November 23, 1987) accountants in each office (and the two offices referred to are the child and family services, and the income security, Saskatoon region) will split out all taxi accounts by establishment, number, client name, and service cost for the most recent taxi billing.

The second point:

The above noted information is being given to each supervisor, who will be held accountable for assuring a 60-40 split in favour of United Cabs company.

The next point is, point 3:

Supervisory realignment of taxi use by the required 60-40 split must be in place by Friday, November 27, 1987.

The fourth point:

Until further notice, approval for all use of taxis will be at the supervisory level in order that the supervisor can monitor taxi use by the 60-40 split.

And there's a fifth point which is irrelevant to this particular comment of mine, but the sixth point reads:

Supervisors must consider the above a priority.

Now the background to this situation is this, Mr. Deputy Chairman: there are two cab companies in Saskatoon, United Cabs and Radio Cab — Radio Cab being the smaller, small business of the two. And I think we would rightly regard them both as small businesses.

Radio Cab, through its diligence and good service to the clients of the Department of Social Services, had obtained the majority of the work of the Department of Social Services. In fact, they had the majority of the work; consequently the minister had issued as statement saying

that he would interfere in the division from the Department of Social Services to make it a 60-40 split in favour of United Cab company, which is the larger of the two.

In view of the policy of the Conservative Party and the oft-stated policy of the minister in support of private enterprise and non-interference in the private enterprise field, I wonder if he could explain why this was necessary in Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, there's nothing new about this. This was one of their little controversies they tried to raise here about six months or so ago. And there's a very simple explanation.

In the city of Saskatoon the Department of Social Services spends about a quarter of a million dollars a year on taxi fares. And I say that quietly because people are wondering what we are doing when you say we have cut the transportation allowance, and we're spending a quarter of a million dollars a year on taxi fares in the city of Saskatoon alone.

But I say that these taxis are used to take children — the ones that you are concerned we've cut their travel — to their medical appointments, to take foster-children to school, to take foster-children to their medical appointments. Most of these taxi trips are for children — to take children to day care so that their parents can get an education, all of those kind of things. We spend about a quarter of a million dollars a year on taxi-cabs in Saskatoon.

And there are two companies in Saskatoon. The one company has 60 per cent of the cars and the other company has 40 per cent of the cars. And I told my department in no uncertain terms that our business was to be divided 60-40, in the same percentages as the number of cars.

Now I don't care what colour those taxi-cabs are; I simply want it divided 60-40 to those taxi-cabs in the same percentage as the licences in Saskatoon. That seems reasonable.

Now if one of those companies does not provide adequate service or should happened to charge more than the other company, which is not the case that I know of, then I would have to review that policy and have that taxi that provides the best service, or that taxi that provides inferior service would have to lose some of that business.

As far as I know, both of those taxi companies in Saskatoon provide good service. They have cars in the ration of 60-40. I believe that is a fair distribution of the business in Saskatoon, and I can't see why the NDP would have any objection to a mathematical calculation and a *pro rata* division of the business in Saskatoon.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, the minister's explanation flies in the face of his policy. His policy is non-interference in small business, and I read the policy of the Conservative Party.

The Radio Cab in Saskatoon, through its diligence and

good service conquered 60 per cent of the business of the Department of Social Services in Saskatoon. Now this minister arbitrarily, on his own, said no, that's not the way it's going to be. He said, I'm going to divide it fairly.

That cab company, Radio Cab, earned that business. The parents by choice chose Radio Cab. But the minister said, my wishes are superior to their wishes, and my wishes are superior to the policy of this department — of my own policy about non-interference in private business. So he interfered, and he said that the large cab company should get 60 per cent of the business, which means it had to be taken away from the smaller cab company, which had earned the business.

And I say that's wrong, and I don't go for the facetious explanation that the minister gives us as to the reasons why he did it. I'll tell you what the reasons are why the minister did it, and it's this — that friends of the Conservative Party own the United Cab business in Saskatoon.

(2045)

Now the member will squirm around and try to get out from under this, but I have some facts for the minister to consider. By federal order in council in 1985, and the order in council number if PC1985-774, the appointment of Helen Swan to Via Rail Canada Inc. was ordered by that order in council. By order in council, PC 1987, 917, the reappointment for a further three years, effective March 12, 1987, took place for Helen M. Swan, Saskatoon. Now if a person looks in the *Henderson Directory* in Saskatoon under Swan, you will find Swan, Garth and Helen, manager, United Cabs. You will also find under United Cab, Garth Swan, manager. Now I have no objection whatsoever to the Swans being Conservative — that is fine, somebody in Saskatoon has to be Conservative. But what I object to is the minister coming in with some phoney excuse why he's interfering in small business in Saskatoon so the United Cab, his friends, can get the business.

Everyone knows that the Swans are good friends of the Collvers, and they're good friend of the present government. And it was thought by the minister that United Cab therefore should get some of the business — more than they earned. More than they earned. They did not earn that business. They're taking business away from the other cab company that earned it, and it's running into many thousands of dollars per month.

And, Mr. Minister, I want to know: is that policy still in force in Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, that policy is still in force and that policy will remain in force because it is a fair policy. It's a fair policy and there is no reason why someone who might be a member of the Conservative Party should not be allowed to do business in this province.

I don't know who owns Radio Cab, but I can't see why Radio Cab would complain about receiving their fair share of the business. Now if you can tell me why Radio Cab should receive all the business, you can tell me

whether they are friends of yours or whose friends they are, then I might consider giving them all the business.

But it seems to me there should be a fair distribution of the business and there will remain a fair distribution of the business. And I will not penalize anybody because they happen to be a Conservative, nor will I give them unfair treatment — and unfair treatment is not giving them any business — nor will I give them all the business. I will give them a fair amount of business because they have 60 per cent of the cars, and I will give the other company 40 per cent of the business because they have 40 per cent of the cars. And if either one of those two companies doesn't provide proper service, then they will get no business at all. But they are giving good service they will continue to get the business in a fair basis.

And I will not apologize to the member opposite because he likes to drag the names of people through the muck in the legislature. Because somebody might be successful, he thinks they should be dragged down. I will not drag anyone down because they are successful. I will divide it fairly, and I will continue to divide it fairly.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I accept nothing of the minister's explanation. That has got to be the phoniest bit of shilly-shallying around. What this minister has done is he's taken business away from a small business that earned the business and given it to a bigger business that did not earn the business. And he has some phoney excuse about dividing up the business.

What I want to know: has this minister got a similar policy in Regina?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, here's another example of the inconsistent Social Services system that the NDP left me to try to correct. My officials advise me that in Regina, taxi-cab rates are built into the foster-parent system, but in Saskatoon they are not built into the system. And therefore, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. It's difficult to hear the minister's answers. I'd ask members to allow the minister to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, members opposite don't want to hear the answer. The answer is that this is another example of the kind of Social Services mess the members opposite left for this government to clean up.

I'm advised that in the city of Regina the foster-parents have built into their rate transportation for taxi fees and they hire the taxis; in Saskatoon they are not built into the rates that we pay directly for the taxis rather than have them built into the rates. Therefore, the amount of money we actually spend in the calculation in Saskatoon appears much higher because in Regina it's built into the rates.

Somehow they had a system here. The member for Regina Elphinstone, newly-elected, was minister for two years, and he had a system that had a different policy and different rules in Regina than in Saskatoon. So in Regina I haven't had this problem because it's built into the rates and the people are hiring whoever they want to. In Saskatoon, I am hiring the taxis and paying them directly.

And either I have to get Regina and Saskatoon working the same to continue the silly system that the NDP started. And every time I turn around one of their other silly policies comes ahead and say, oh, this didn't work.

They had the same system in transportation. They paid transportation in cities, and they didn't pay in rural areas. They paid to some people and not to other people. The people that needed the transportation most that were not in walking distance got no transportation. That's the kind of inconsistent system they had. Because they had no management everything ran amok in the Department of Social Services. Every office did as they pleased. Nobody listened to any superiors. It was a system that was totally out of control under the NDP.

I have had to clean that up. We are slowly cleaning it up and the members opposite ask why is it different. It is different because they made it different, because they weren't smart enough to do it right in the first place. And now you have examples, still six years later, examples of how those people opposite couldn't run a system. And we're still trying to take the bugs out of it.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I think, Mr. Chairman, the record will clearly show that the minister evaded answering the question. Whether he had made a similar arrangement in Regina, the record will show that. And the minister stands condemned by the record. I have no further questions for this minister.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to come back briefly to the question I asked the minister, about three-quarters of an hour ago now, on cuts to — and perhaps I used the wrong phraseology, Mr. Minister — but cuts in the travel allowance to the mobility handicapped in the city of Regina. Mr. Minister, will you confirm that you have cut their travel allowance from \$27 a month to \$20 a month, and will you justify that cut?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I answered earlier the same question that the handicapped receive their actual transportation costs. I have a new category of people called mobility restricted, that is people who have a little difficulty in getting around. I pay them \$20 per month extra for transportation.

So the member can go and tell the world another deception, that the handicapped do not receive money for travel. The truth is they receive their actual amount. That's the truth. I don't care what the members opposite are going to tell the public. That is the truth.

Mr. Prebble: — Once again, Mr. Minister, because you just won't answer the question: have the mobility restricted been cut from \$27 a month to \$20 a month in the city of Regina? And what other cuts have that same group suffered in other parts of the province with respect to the transportation allowance?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, on transportation, there is no consistency as to who got an increase or a decrease because there was no consistency on who was paid in the first place. So some people will receive less; some people will receive exactly the same, and others

will receive more because if they're handicapped we pay actual, and whatever their actual costs are that's what we pay.

We feel that the handicapped should be paid their actual transportation costs. Mobility restricted get \$20 a month plus special needs, and single employables only get transportation for special needs. And that is how it is. That's how it's going to stay. The NDP may not like it but that is a fair system and that's how it's going to stay.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, it's obvious, since the mobility restricted were getting \$27 last year a month and now are getting \$20, that they've been cut \$7, whether you want to acknowledge it or not.

And, Mr. Minister, I want to say that I think that once again shows the insensitivity of your policies. The travel allowance symbolizes, Mr. Minister, what your government is all about. Here we have mothers and children not able to get travel for grocery shopping; not able to get travel to go to church. I've seen, Mr. Minister, in the city of Saskatoon and in the city of Regina, mothers and their children having to walk more than a kilometre in the winter-time carrying heavy groceries from a shopping centre as a result of having their travel allowance cut. And we have seen, Mr. Minister, families unable to get their travel cost to church covered because of the cuts in your travel allowance. And clearly, Mr. Minister, that is insensitive and inappropriate.

And I urge you again to restore the travel allowance for all those who have lost it in urban Saskatchewan and to extend to rural Saskatchewan so that all people can have the basic right to travel in this province. This is a province that's cold in the winter; geographic distances are often significant, and all people in this province should have a basic allowance for travel as a basic right, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask you another question with respect to the physically disabled, and that is, I want to ask you why, Mr. Minister, you have consciously ignored the request of the federal minister of Health and Welfare, the Hon. Jake Epp, when he increased Canada Pension Plan benefits last year: you very consciously deducted the entire increase in the Canada Pension Plan benefit that each physically handicapped social assistance recipient received — you deducted that off their cheque.

Now Mr. Minister, I know that the Hon. Jake Epp, your counterpart in Ottawa, requested you, as he did every minister of social services in Canada, to pass along that increase in the Canada Pension Plan benefit, that the federal government adopted, to physically handicapped people in this province who were on social assistance. And yet, penny for penny, you're deducting that increase from the social assistance cheque.

And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is: why are you not passing that benefit on to disabled people in this province so that those who are disabled and are eligible for Canada Pension Plan benefits can live in some kind of dignity instead of having every penny of the Canada Pension Plan benefit deducted by you if they're on social welfare.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we went through

this all last year, and the members opposite should know the answer because they can read it in *Hansard*. I'll explain it again.

Canada Pension Plan is income like any other income. All other provinces in Canada treat Canada Pension Plan income as any other income. If you have Canada Pension Plan income because you're entitled to some income allowances, you will receive more income than if you were on welfare alone without Canada Pension Plan. Yes, it's deducted, but it's also taken into account as income for the income exemption allowance. I explained this all last year, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and the members opposite have forgotten the explanation. We are doing this the same as all other provinces.

It would be unfair to have different welfare rates for different people, and so therefore I don't really know many different rates the members opposite would want to have. But people on Canada Pension Plan and welfare would be receiving more money than people who are just on welfare and didn't have the benefit of having Canada Pension Plan. And so then you have people that were handicapped all of their life, and through no fault of their own couldn't work, would be receiving less than some people who were fortunate enough to be employed during part of their life and then receive more once they come on to the welfare rolls in their older years.

So it's for fairness. In fairness to everyone the rates are the same, income is income, and the deduction is allowed as part of an income deduction. So you could still have some more, but yes, we do take it into account like all other provinces.

(2100)

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, we regret your decision in that regard.

I want to move on to another topic, and that is general funding through non-government organizations, just to alert your officials to that.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could tell us how many non-governmental organizations have had their budgets frozen at last year's 1987 levels in the year 1988? And also I'd appreciate if I could receive in writing a copy of all funding for each non-government organization that your department finances. If I could receive that in writing for the 1988-89 fiscal year, I'd appreciate that, but I wonder if for now you could indicate how many NGOs have had their budget cut over the last fiscal year for this fiscal year? And how many NGOs in the province have had their budget frozen at last year's 1987-88 levels?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, of the contracting agencies that our government contracts with for services provided to the government, there are 166 to whom, I believe, we pay in excess of \$27 million. Is that a correct figure, or is it up to 32 now?

There are 166 agencies, of which 55 per cent, or 91, received an increase this year, and the other 45 per cent, or 75, received the same amount as last year.

Mr. Prebble: — Is there any cut-off completely, Mr. Minister, and if so, which organizations were they?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, all of the agencies that were receiving money last year are receiving money this year. none of them are receiving any less. There are a few that we have written letters indicating that we have to do a continuous review of the services they are actually providing, and we will be discussing with them, this year, whether we are satisfied with the services they are providing, but none have received less so far.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in effect, if I'm correct, I understood you to say there are 78 organizations that are receiving the same as last year. is that correct?

An Hon. Member: — Seventy-five.

Mr. Prebble: — Seventy-five. So that means, in effect, Mr. Minister, that there are 75 non-government organizations that have received, in real-dollar terms, a 5 per cent cut in their budget again this year. and this gets, Mr. Minister, at the fundamental problem that many non-government organizations are facing.

Last year, Mr. Minister, as you know, you cut the budgets of some 57 non-government organizations in this province. Their 1987-88 budgets were substantially less in many cases than their 1986-87 budgets. Many of those same organizations, Mr. Minister, now, I suspect, are among the 75 whose budgets have been frozen this year. Last year, for instance, every friendship centre in the province received budget cuts; every family service bureau in the province received budget cuts; many of the big brother and big sister organizations in Saskatchewan suffered budget cuts; and the Welfare Rights Centre in Regina and the Saskatoon Self-Help Council each lost about \$13,000 in funding; native family service agencies were badly hit; the Metis Society in Saskatoon lost over \$40,000 in funding; the Regina Native Women's Association lost over \$70,000 in funding.

Mr. Minister, my concern is that many non-government organizations are virtually at the breaking point now, Mr. Minister, in terms of being able to function under the funding cuts and funding freezes that you have imposed upon them.

In general, the staff of non-government organizations is not well paid, Mr. Minister. Many of the staff have now had their salaries frozen for at least the last three years. A lot of the staff — and they're doing very important work as I'm sure you will agree in the community, working with people in all walks of life who are in need — and these staff have few pension benefits or other benefits over and above their salary.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: would you not acknowledge that what is in effect happening now is that these non-government organizations, and the volunteers on the board of these organizations, and the staff who have had salary freezes in these NGO's for several years are in effect picking up the work and carrying the financial burden that results from your governments' cuts in the social safety net right across this province. And

therefore, Mr. Minister, don't you think it's time that at least you began to fund non-government organizations in this province at at least the inflation rate, so that these staff salaries can at least increase at the rate of inflation, and so that they don't have to consistently, year after year, to curtail their services?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: —Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all let me explain to the member opposite that non-governmental organizations provide contract services to the government. They provide services on behalf of the government on a contract basis, services that we do not wish to deliver ourselves, or possibly they can deliver better than the government could deliver. You might say they are private agencies. You might say they are privatized. You may say they were always privatized.

Now that you understand how they operate, I want you to also know that they should not consider these contracts as being some sort of a continuous funding for their agency. They are contracts; we buy the service. For the most part we are satisfied with the service. In some cases we are reviewing the service because if we find that we are not getting our money's-worth for the service that we are buying, we will have to consider contracting with another agency to provide that service. Now you believe very strongly in tendering out. We have to also look at what other people can provide if the service that we are receiving is not suitable or we believe that that taxpayers are not receiving full value for their money.

So in almost all cases we are satisfied with their services, and in 91 cases we've increased the amount of their contracts. We have raised their contracts to 55 per cent of them.

Now that doesn't say that all of them were in equitable position. I had extra money in the budget this year, and I allocated that money to what I felt were the most needy groups. And so some of them will receive increases greater than others. I didn't go across the board. I allocated on the basis of need. Those that had lowest wages, I considered to be highest priority.

Now some of the things that you say — and I realize you weren't the critic last year — are totally inaccurate. For example, you talk about Big Brother and Big Sisters having their budgets cut. We buy a service for them and we pay on a per case basis, so the more youngsters they help, the more money they receive. If they help fewer youngsters, they receive less money. If, hopefully, there are fewer youngsters in need, then the amount of service they provide would go down. And it varies from year to year, depending on the need for their services. They provide contract services for our department.

With respect to the friendship centres, last year we standardized their grants at \$27,000 per counsellor. Some were at 30 plus, some were down at 21 — we standardized. So last year they had an adjustment on that basis at \$27,000 per counsellor. We felt that that was a reasonable sum; we feel that under the circumstances, considering the educational level of the workers, considering the status of the economy, that \$27,000 was a reasonable sum per person. If they can raise additional funds, they can pay more. We decided we would

standardize all of them at \$27,000 per counsellor, and that's what we did.

So I want you to understand that these are contract services; that we are satisfied with them in almost all cases; that we are having them sign contracts this year so that they know exactly what is expected of them; that in addition — in addition, we value these services. We could not function without these contract services, and we will treat these contract services very well.

And I want you to understand that when you talk about massive cuts, that is simply your political terminology and not the reality.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, it would be nice if many of these organizations, instead of having to devote much volunteer time to raising money through bingos and raffles and other fund-raising projects, could devote their volunteer time to getting on with the service that they want to provide to the community, and that presumably your government wants to provide to them, but that they can't provide through your consistent underfunding of their organizations.

I want to urge you again, Mr. Minister, to look at funding levels on an annual basis that at least reflect the rate of inflation and to look seriously at three-year plans or five-year plans for many of these non-government organizations so that they can establish a long-term plan for the delivery of service.

But, Mr. Minister, I want to move on to another topic, and that relates to your decision, effective January 1 of the year, to institute a new set of fees for post-adoption services in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, we object strongly to these fees. We say, Mr. Minister, why should your government be charging to reunite birth parents with their children or to provide adult adoptees with personal information about themselves.

Mr. Minister, I was really quite appalled when I saw the order in council laying out the new rate structure that adult adoptees or the parents of adopted children now have to pay to get information — personal information about themselves — or about their . . . or in the case of parents with adopted children, about their adopted children from your department, Mr. Minister.

For instance, Mr. Minister, if someone, if an adult adoptee now wants to know something about the ethnic origin or the vocational background of their natural parent, they have to pay \$60 to get that information from your department. And your department, Mr. Minister, I might remind you, has a monopoly on this information. The only way that the adult adoptee can get access to those personal records is through your department, Mr. Minister. And there's simply no basis for charging someone \$40 to get a xerox copy of information that is on file with your department, Mr. Minister, and that is personal information that they ought to have a right to, without charge. After all, they are already taxpayers in this province.

So maybe you can explain to me, Mr. Minister, why it is that you've decided to charge adult adoptees a fee of \$60

to obtain personal information about themselves and about their birth parents that they ought to have a right to as a citizen of this province.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, let me explain to the members that prior to us becoming government under the NDP, you couldn't receive information about your parents or about your children that you are trying to trace. They didn't charge any fees, and they wouldn't give you any information — they forgot. That was their closed policy.

Now we are giving information. This province started that; other provinces have followed. Since then . . . Here's the situation in Canada: Alberta has reunion by mutual request only, implemented in 1985; B.C. has reunion by mutual request only, implemented very recently; Ontario is similar to Saskatchewan, prior to 1987 reunions occurred only by mutual request; Manitoba is similar to Saskatchewan and their policy was implemented this year.

(2115)

We were the first to assist people in finding their parents or in finding their children. We allowed this, and it worked so well that our staff couldn't keep up. The backlog was developing up to 16 to 18 months to do the research and find this information. And we found that also the costs were mounting because we had to have two and a half or three staff working on this full time.

So we felt that there should be some cost recovery because this is non-essential information. If it's essential information, we'll go and find it for people for medical reasons. but the non-essential information . . . And we don't just go and get the information; we also try to make sure that it's the kind of information that should go out. I get requests constantly to my desk asking that I allow extra information so somebody can go beyond the normal rules and find their parents or find their children that they've given up year and years ago or they were separated from.

So we implemented these fees and they do not recover all of the costs. But they do recover some of the costs of this service provided by our department, which is not an essential service, but is a great convenience and a great peace of mind to people. and we find that most reasonable people are prepared to pay these fees to get this information. And if people can't afford to pay those fees, I have the power in hardship cases to waive those fees.

We have very, very low fees if you're on social assistance. For example, non-identifying background information for adoptees or birth family costs \$60. If you're a client of Social Services, it costs \$10. I don't think it's unreasonable for someone who wants to find their family to pay \$10 to get that information. I don't think it's unreasonable for somebody who can afford to pay \$60, to pay \$60. And if somebody has a hardship case, I have the power to, and will, waive the fee.

But it's not correct if all of this information is Saskatchewan taxpayers. A lot of it is from other

provinces — people from all over. I get letters from people who want to find their relatives. I get letters from British Columbia; I get letters from the United States. And they're not concerned about the paying of a small fee to help cover the cost. They think it's worthwhile to find their relatives for whatever reason they want to be reunited.

And so, therefore, I don't believe it's unreasonable to ask people who can afford to pay, to pay for a service that they are requesting, that the public as a whole does not need.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, first of all we on this side of the House do want to commend your government for initiating this active search at the request of the adult adoptee. That was a positive move. I want you to know that we support that. That's not what we're criticizing now, Mr. Minister.

What we are criticizing now, first of all, is that people are having to pay for personal information about themselves. You made reference to the \$60 fee, as I did, for requesting non-identifying information about their natural parents. Now, Mr. Minister, that same service was available when the NDP was in government, and it's available to my knowledge right across Canada. It's available in every other province free of charge, and it was available under the NDP free of charge. And now you're asking people to pay \$60 in this province for simple information that is already on record with the department. And that, it seems to me, Mr. Minister, sets a very dangerous precedent nationally across the country. I don't think we want to see a situation where other governments institute that policy. It would be very unfortunate indeed.

Similarly, Mr. Minister, there are many working people, low-income people who are working full time in this province who can't afford your \$300 fee for an active search. They can't afford it. And I've already talked to three or four who have phoned me up and have told me that that will be hardship for them to pay. They're not social assistance recipients, but they can't afford the \$300. If you're serious, Mr. Minister, about actively working to reunite families, then you will make this service a public service.

Mr. Minister, in addition to that, there has always been a service in this province where the natural parents and the adult adoptee mutually express a desire through your department, each by writing in, to be in contact with one another. There's always been a policy on the books that the department will facilitate that contact. Now even when you know where the adult adoptee and the natural parent are, you're charging \$180 to facilitate them coming together. Now that's never been done before either. And I ask you: how do you justify those kinds of new fees, that are not charged anywhere else in Canada, for providing a service that surely these taxpayers are entitled to by virtue of being citizens of this province?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I know that the free, universal, everything party does not believe in anyone paying if they can afford to pay. We know that, and we doubt very much if they will ever change. And I say to them: nothing is free; someone has

to pay. And so therefore we believe that those people who can afford to pay for this service should pay for this service. It is a once in a lifetime service. It's not a re-occurring service.

An Hon. Member: — And you will pay when the general election comes.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The members opposite shout for an election. They should be patient; there will be an election. There's no need for them to get impatient. They said the same thing five years ago and the same thing four years ago, and we had an election. They weren't satisfied with the results; now they want another election. They will get one in due course.

What I am saying is that the free, universal, everything party does not understand that nothing is free.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I want to ask you some questions now with respect to the pressing issue of the safety of foster-children. I think we're very fortunate in this province to have a lot of outstanding foster homes, and it's very much to the credit of foster-parents in this province, many of whom are prepared to take on many foster-children and provide a home for them. That's a service that all of us in this province very much appreciate.

Mr. Minister, on the other hand, there are a few situations in this province where we know that children who have already been physically or sexually abused in their natural homes and have been removed from their natural homes by your department are in care, and are in care in foster home situations that are not satisfactory.

One of the concerns, as you will be aware, that the previous ombudsman, Mr. David Tickell, expressed, was that he recommended, in his January 1987 report to you, that your department should change its policy on corporal punishment, and that you should not longer permit the use of corporal punishment by foster-parents.

The ombudsman, Mr. Minister, also recommended that this issue of corporal punishment ought to be the subject of public discussion and public consultation. Your government has taken no action on that recommendation by the ombudsman since his report came down. And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is: are you prepared to act on that recommendation, and are you prepared to provide an opportunity for public comment and public review of this policy with respect to corporal punishment for foster-children?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I have stated clearly on past occasions that I expect foster-parents to treat foster-children the same way other parents treat their children. I have said, as a last resort, that the government policy does not prevent spanking if necessary, but not necessarily spanking, to use an old liberal terminology. And, Mr. Chairman, the Foster Parents Association backs me on that position.

I can say that the former ombudsperson, Mr. Tickell, did a great disservice to the foster-parents of Saskatchewan when he put out a report based on very old information

that tried to paint all foster-parents, or did have the effect of painting all foster-parents as abusers.

He did a great disservice to foster-parents; they resented it. I took up their cause. I agree that they are doing a good job. It's only on the rarest of occasions that they ever go over the line, and you have to understand that they are dealing with very difficult children. This is not a situation like 20 years ago when orphanages — or 30 years — when orphanages where closed and all children went out into foster homes.

The only children that they're getting in foster homes now, for the most part, are the very difficult ones. And more and more children are staying in their own homes; more and more children are being adopted out; they're getting the very difficult ones; they're doing a good job with them. We have increased the funding to foster-parents. We have brought in a training plan for them. we've funded it for them.

We have in many, many ways enhanced and will continue to enhance foster-parenting. We have turned around the loss on foster homes so that last year the trend was turned around and we now have more foster homes than we had last year. We had a declining balance for many, many years. Last year we made foster-parenting more respectable. We countered what the ombudsperson had to say that reflected badly on foster-parents and was unfounded with respect to foster-parents in general.

And therefore, foster-parenting is doing better than ever. Their association is stronger than ever, and you will see initiatives in the future that will make foster-parents even stronger because we feel they are a very valuable resource, and we feel that they were slandered by a report that was out of balance.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I agree with you that large majority of foster-parents in this province, as I've said, are doing an outstanding job. We were pleased to see that at last you increased the rates that are paid to foster-parents, and we support that initiative.

But that does not take away, Mr. Minister, from the problem that Mr. Tickell identified. That problem was not aimed at the large, large majority of foster-parents in this province. But that does not mean that the problem goes away, Mr. Minister. And the problem is that there is abuse taking place, of foster-children, and that that abuse needs to be dealt with by your department, and that we need, Mr. Minister, action to ensure, as a departmental policy, that corporal punishment will not be used — that the strap, for instance, will not be used.

Children who are abused, Mr. Minister, and who are not like the natural parents in a . . . are not like the natural children of foster-parents in a foster home, they are already children who've been physically or sexually abused. They deserve special care. The responsibility for that care rests squarely on your shoulders.

And the question is, Mr. Minister: are you going to change your policy and make it clear that corporal punishment is not appropriate on children who have already suffered physical and sexual abuse? This is not to say, Mr.

Minister, that the large majority of foster-parents aren't using corporal punishment — of course they're not. We're talking about the few who are, and we're asking you whether you are prepared to change your policy.

We're not talking about somebody occasionally giving a slap on the bottom to an abused child, we're talking about situations that the ombudsman identified, where in effect an abused child was being abused again in a foster home. Those are a very, small minority of cases but they are taking place, and I'm asking you what action your department plans to take to deal with that problem?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, there's a difference between discipline and abuse. In no instance will we tolerate child abuse, whether it's in a foster home or in a regular home or any other place. If the members opposite have evidence of child abuse, they should in confidence send that evidence to myself and my officials and we will investigate that. If they do not send that information to us, they are guilty of the same offence as the person who is conducting the abuse. So if they have any evidence, I would insist that they send it to us and we will investigate.

But you are confusing discipline and abuse. We do not tolerate abuse. Discipline will be allowed — physical discipline, if necessary. We discourage it, but if absolutely necessary, we will allow it.

And the members opposite say, read the report. I have read the report. I know what was on the mind of the former ombudsperson, and I know that he was more interest in sensationalism than he was in taking care of those children. And I'm telling you that that ombudsperson was indulging in politics, and he slandered the foster-parents of Saskatchewan when he did that.

And I am saying that that was not fair to the foster-parents of Saskatchewan to take information that was four or five years old and bring that information . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And then the member here repeats, foster-parents, he says, are abusing children. Well if he knows about it, tell me, and I will put a stop to it.

(2130)

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I simply can't believe what I've just heard in this Assembly. You, as Minister of Social Services, are accusing the former ombudsman, a legislative officer of this Assembly, who's in no position to defend himself, I might add, from your comments, you are accusing him, Mr. Minister, of being political when there is absolutely no evidence to support that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And I ask you, Mr. Minister, table that evidence in this Assembly now or retract those remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to raise a point of personal privilege. I heard the minister make those comments. *Beauchesne's* describes a point of personal privilege is anything that brings this institution

into disrepute, and I think those remarks did. I think it is contrary to the rules of this institution for members to be attacking legislative officers. And I ask you, Mr. Chairman, to rule on it.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I will take the member's point of privilege into consideration and bring back the ruling next time in committee.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I ask you again, you have directly attacked the integrity of a legislative officer of this Assembly and I ask you now: will you retract those remarks that you've made, which are totally inappropriate?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite gets very touchy when you talk about people they appointed, that they appointed. They get very touchy about that. There seems to be a lot of shouting over there on the other side; they are very sensitive about this.

I will give you, Mr. Chairman, a list of the improvements we have made in foster care in Saskatchewan. We've developed a standardized introduction to foster care, delivered by joint foster-parent teams to all new foster-parents. We've recruited another 65 foster homes and increased the number by 9 per cent in the last year. We've assisted with the Foster Parents Association to initiate local training initiatives of foster-parents through their association. We've made a 6.5 per cent increase to the basic maintenance rates. We've established experienced foster-parents as local support parents. We've established a buddy system which matches foster-parents with experienced foster-parents. We've introduced an overall insurance rider for foster-parents.

And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we have changed the system so that foster-parents now believe that they are working in co-operation with our department. They do not have the apprehension that they once had from our works; they feel that they are working together with our workers to help these children; they do not feel that people in the department are constantly watching them and threatening them. And when I was first appointed minister, the foster-parents as a whole felt threatened. Now we are working in partnership, and they are doing an excellent job in helping the children that they have under their care.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, you failed to retract your remarks. That has to be a big disappointment to all members of this Assembly. The former ombudsman conducted himself with honour and with integrity. When he, Mr. Minister, filed his report last January, he did so in a highly professional way. He was a servant of this legislature. He did not cast aspersions, contrary to what you have claimed, on foster-parents in general.

Instead, Mr. Minister, he identified a crisis in child protection that largely your government must take responsibility for. He identified a number of specific issues which he wanted to see incorporated in a new family services Act in this province, which you have yet to introduce, despite the fact that you've been talking about it for three years. And you have absolutely no business, Mr. Minister, whether you agree with his

recommendations or not, to criticize an official that conducted himself in a highly professional manner and that tabled his report in this Assembly in the service of all members of this Assembly. You have simply no business questioning his professional integrity. That is what you have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And I ask you one final time, will you retract those remarks?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the foster-parents of Saskatchewan with whom I met were not of the same opinion.

Mr. Prebble: — Your position is clear, Mr. Minister.

I want to ask you a couple of other questions about the Ombudsman's report. One is that the Ombudsman, Mr. Minister, recommended a code of rights for all children in the care of the Minister of Social Services. He pointed out, Mr. Minister, that this suggestion has come from many professionals in the field of family services. I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, is it your intention to include such a code of rights in the new child and family services Act when it's introduced in this legislature, and can you give us, Mr. Minister, an indication of when that Act will be introduced in this legislature? Will it be in this spring session?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the current Act was introduced by the member of the NDP and their government in 1973, and I will soon be introducing a new Act to bring the Act up to the standards of current thinking in current society. Society has changed quite a lot since 1973.

I can tell the member opposite that his friend, the ex-ombudsperson, was recommending policy in his report, and to recommend policy is to engage in politics. And therefore I want you to advise him for me that this government makes policy and not the Ombudsman. And therefore we will follow the policies that we believe are correct. And that making of policy is politics, and that's what this government has a mandate to do. We will be introducing a children's code of rights. Children are covered by the existing laws of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, we want to urge you, on this side of the House, to look seriously at the implementation of a code of rights for children who are under your care. I think that that would be a very appropriate part of amendments to The Family Services Act.

You are incorrect, sir, when you suggest that the Ombudsman is not entitled to make recommendations with respect to policy. That's precisely part of his mandate, Mr. Minister. And it's obvious that, despite the fact that you're responsible, the minister responsible for the Ombudsman, you don't understand what the purpose and the role of the Ombudsman is.

My colleague, the member for Regina Lakeview, has kindly given me a copy of the legislation that outlines the powers, functions and duties of the Ombudsman. And, Mr. Minister, I want to read section 12 of The Ombudsman Act to you:

It is the duty of the Ombudsman and he has the power to investigate any decision or recommendation made, including any recommendation made to a minister, or any act done or omitted, relating to a matter of administration and affecting any person or body of persons in his personal capacity . . .

Mr. Minister, it's clearly part of the responsibility of the Ombudsman to recommend policy changes where the existing policy is impacting negatively upon individuals who are suffering some unjustified abuse in this province, and that is part of the responsibilities and duties of the Ombudsman.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask you one other question with respect to the Ombudsman's report, and that is with respect to the question of mandatory reporting on child abuse. Mr. Minister, the Ombudsman pointed out to you that at this point in time it is unclear who must report child abuse and under what conditions child abuse is to be reported.

Mr. Tickell, Mr. Minister, cited two examples to you: first of all, he cited the example of a mental health worker who did not believe that she had an obligation to report a case of child abuse when she witnessed that; and secondly, he reported the case of a day-care worker who did report abuse at her place of employment and was fired for doing so.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: can we expect in the new child and family services Act that a formal child abuse register will be established in the kind of detail set out in the legislation in Ontario and Nova Scotia? And can we expect from you a clear set of rules on who is responsible for reporting child abuse, and what form that report must take, and what fines will be levied against people who fail to report child abuse in this province?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I am please to hear that the members opposite are in favour of mandatory reporting and that . . . I am surprised that the ombudsperson would recommend that we make a law that everyone has to report, because I quote for you section 16 of the existing Act that says:

(1) Every person having information that a child is in need of protection shall report the information to an officer or peace officer.

And I say that that is the law since 1972 when your party put it in, and the ombudsperson should have known of the existence of this law, and that if you have information that children are being abused right now, it is the law that you report it, and I suggest that you do that.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, what's not clear in the existing legislation is what the penalties are for not reporting child abuse, and that is anything but clear. Nor,

Mr. Minister, is there any provision under the existing law, as I pointed out before, for a child abuse registry. And as the Ombudsman has pointed out, there is no provision in the existing law, Mr. Minister, for people to be able to find out whether their name is on that registry or not.

In some cases reports of child abuse are inaccurate and people have the right to have their names removed from the registry or removed from the internal list, rather, that your department keeps on cases of child abuse. And at this point in time people don't have access to finding out whether their names are on there.

(2145)

So is suggest that you establish a registry as the Ombudsman has proposed, that you establish some clear penalties for not reporting cases of child abuse, particularly with respect to professionals who would be expected, in the course of their duties, to report on cases of child abuse. I suggest that you provide a mechanism as the Ombudsman has recommended, Mr. Minister, for the removal of names of persons who are not guilty of child abuse but whose names have been given to your department and may be on lists that your department keeps. In other words, establish a registry in the same manner than Nova Scotia and Ontario have done.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I agree that the legislation brought in by the NDP that now exists is guilty of sloppy draftsmanship and that there is no clear punishment for breaking section 16. And I can assure the member opposite that when we bring in an Act, there will be a clear punishment. I can assure him of that.

I suggest that if he has any knowledge of child abuse, he report it immediately. But there is no punishment now, but there will be after we pass the new Act. So he should take heed of that, and I will follow his request.

With respect to a registry, there's a problem in that most provinces are going away from a registry because, for example, in Manitoba the courts struck down the registry. And the member opposite should know that to keep sort of a secret list, without convicting anyone of anything and to move them off and on, would be contrary to human rights and the principles of natural justice. And therefore we have a difficulty in trying to set up a registry system. We try to take precautions, but we're not going to set up the kind of black list that you're calling upon, where people have no recourse as to who might be on it or why they might be on it. It's already been struck down by the courts in Manitoba. We don't intend to get into that.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I want to move to another issue in this large area of family services and child protection. And, Mr. Minister, I want to express to you a concern that I raised with you last year, but I want to express it more forcefully this year, with respect to the very serious situation that exists in Saskatoon right now, where Kilburn Hall and the some 35 spaces that it used to provide to children whose relationship with their families had broken down in some way — primarily teenagers, Mr. Minister, who either are no longer living at home, are out on the street, or are living with a friend, or in some other way, Mr. Minister — for whatever reason, the

authority relationship and the natural relationship that exists between parents and children has broken down, and these teenagers who are no longer living at home, and who used to be able to be housed at Kilburn Hall where there would be an assessment of their situation and the family situation — some stabilization being provided and counselling being provided for the young person — and then either appropriate measures would be taken to either place that child in a group home or in some other situation that would be beneficial for the child or to reinstate them with their natural family. Those were the services that used to be provided by Kilburn Hall, Mr. Minister.

My concern, Mr. Minister, is that those services are no longer being provided in the city of Saskatoon. Kilburn Hall is now, in effect, being used as a jail under The Young Offenders Act. Young offenders are being housed at Kilburn Hall, and there is no place for these young people, who are not in trouble with the law — they have not broken any laws, but they are no longer living at home, and they need stabilization and they need protection, Mr. Minister.

And I want to know, Mr. Minister, what your department is planning to do immediately to resolve this very serious problem where literally, Mr. Minister, many people who I have talked to in Saskatoon, many professionals advise me that there are now hundreds of young people either out on the streets, or living in garages, or separated from their families and living with friends, who need this kind of support and service and it is not available to them, Mr. Minister. You talked last year about super foster homes — we've yet to see any action being taken on that. When are you going to establish a stabilization and assessment unit to help these young people in the city of Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we have taken new initiatives and we will try to do more. I agree that more has to be done. We have done quite a lot in the last year for . . . First of all, we've enhanced the foster care system. We have approximately 60 new foster homes. We will be announcing in the near future some changes in the foster system that will give a more specialized care to some of the people that you refer to that need specialized care. And we will have some higher quality — and I'm not saying the quality is low in foster homes now, but I'm saying we'll have some specialized foster homes.

We, as a matter of fact, do have 15 community homes operating now that we didn't have operating last year, which I called super foster homes last year. We have 15 in place already. We have . . . and they include native families operating these homes so that native children can be raised and try to be corrected in native foster homes where there are native children. We have signed at Meadow Lake, with the Meadow Lake district chiefs, 10 bands, the first Indian child care agreement in Saskatchewan, giving them jurisdiction over child care in their area on their 10 reserves.

We've placed a greater emphasis on alternative measures, which means rather than taking the lesser cases to court, we try to have a mediation process where the young offender either works off some of the harm that

was done, if it was property damage, or makes amends to the victim in some way in lieu of having that child brought before the courts. We have also enhanced native participation in the foster home system because, as you may not be aware, about 68 per cent of the children in care are of native origin. So we're trying to get more native foster-parents involved.

We are negotiating for land in the Saskatoon area to get a new facility in that area, and we will see how we do on those negotiations. We have put another 225,000 into intensive home parent support services to maintain youth in their own homes, to assist with parent-aid type programs. We have budgeted in this year's budget for a new families type of program — I believe it's \$500,000.

In addition, we have budgeted for family services in this year's budget an increase of two and one-half million dollars — from 32 million to 34.5 million. To put that 34.5 million into perspective, a half per cent of sales tax is going into — if it existed, but it's irrelevant — one-half per cent of the education and health tax is going into family services budget. So the increase there is two and one-half million dollars.

We are trying to do everything to assist these families. Certainly you can't blame the government for all of the problems in society. I have no control over the amount of family breakdown there is. I have no control over abuse, other than to try to stop it. But I have no control over a lot of the things people are doing to each other that are damaging their families and that are damaging society as a whole. We try our best to prevent these things and to correct them.

But society as a whole has to meet the challenge of trying to have our society operate as a better society with respect to less violence, less drug abuse, paying more attention to our children. And I might say that is difficult in the position you and I hold here where we work evenings until ten at night and have less time for our children, and I would hope that at some stage we wouldn't have evening sittings so that we personally can spend more time with our children. These are the kind of things that society has to look at. And so the government is doing everything possible; we're all in this together; society has to try to assist in this area — the government cannot do it alone.

And I think you will agree that we have the most educated society in history, and yet we seem to have more social problems than we ever had. And it seems to me that academic education isn't enough; we have to learn to love our neighbours and our families a little bit more.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to say first that one of the very, very serious problems is that there are simply not enough resources put in place by your department to respond to the urgent need that we face in this whole area of child protection and family support.

Mr. Minister, I point out to you, for instance, that in the . . . if you take the Catholic Family Services Bureau or any of the other counselling services like just the regular Family Service Bureau in Saskatoon, you'll find, for instance, that there is a six-week to two-month waiting list just to see a counsellor for a family that is in stress.

So you've not put the resources at the front end of the system, Mr. Minister, to take the sort of preventive steps that could readily be taken in the early stages of family stress to provide resources to families when they need it quickly, Mr. Minister, you have cut back on your family service positions in the department. I recall, for instance, last year, if I'm not mistaken, in the Saskatoon region alone you eliminated six front line family service worker positions.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is: since the 1986 budget, how many family service worker positions have you reduced between 1986 and 1988 in the Department of Social Services? Can you tell us that.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, first of all I just indicated earlier that we've increased the family services budget. And I believe what the member opposite means by, we haven't put enough resources into this — he really means we haven't put enough money into this. He's afraid to use the term, money. What he's saying is, put more money into this. I'm saying that we've put \$2.5 million more into it than last year, and we have six more employees in family services this year than we had last year. that's in this year's budget.

With respect to — you say, cuts. We have not made any cuts. With respect to the Family Service Bureau of Regina, we have budgeted them this year for the same as last year — \$130,220; Catholic Family Service Society of Regina — \$103,630; Saskatoon Family Service Bureau — \$131,530; the Catholic Family Service Bureau of Saskatoon — \$102,540; the Minto Family Life Centre in Moose Jaw — \$97,000. And you know, this involves teen-parent counselling, it involves family counselling, family support groups — these are family support services that provide a range of direct support to individuals. Humboldt is getting \$23,000, the same as last year; Saskatoon Society for the Protection of Children — \$107,000; the Cornwall Street Tutoring Project — \$130,000; the SCEP Centre Society — \$53,000; the Merici Centre in Regina — \$206,000; Saskatoon Christian Counselling, for counselling — \$10,000; the Friendship Inn in Saskatoon — \$31,000; Christian Counselling in Saskatoon, for counselling and adoption — \$104,000.

So we are spending a lot of money on counselling, and you'll note that most of it is spent in the large cities. You'll notice that none of it is in many other constituencies. We are doing everything possible to help the cities with these family problems. How many resources — or money, as we should really say — how much money does it take to solve this? We will try to put more into it, but it seems to never end. So we are trying. We are putting in resources, which really is tax money, and we are getting results, but we can't keep up with what is happening in society, so we have to see what we can do about improving our society.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:01 p.m.