

## EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE  
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure  
Education  
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 5

## Item 1 (continued)

**Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Minister, we'll get started off in regards to your task force. Have you got the names of your task force members?

I guess, Mr. Minister, many of the people at the community level have heard statements about the possibilities of a commitment by the minister in regards to parental involvement, but many of the parents are still worried whether or not this is really, truly a commitment not only in record but in action. Can we get a real strong assurance from the minister that indeed what he says in regards to parental involvement at the school level will be followed up by real action. Can we get the minister to make a commitment to the action on the issues that I raised earlier on.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, yes.

**Mr. Goulet:** — I will now move on to another one of the major issues that parents have brought to the North, and maybe provide you with a little bit of a historical background on that — and that's the area of the importance of language. And for the record I will read in what I hear a lot of the parents saying and I'll say so in Cree, with due respect to all the languages in the provinces.

I'll say a few words in Cree and also have it in written form. I've done it in using the alphabet system of writing, you on the Cree language, you know for our record, so that it becomes not only a record in an oral view, but in a written view as well. So I'd like to read the following comments that are usually made by parents.

Most of the time I hear parents referring to the language question in these terms.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree. The following is a transcript provided by the member.

Meechet asuy nichuwasimisinanuk uti wuneetawuk otuyumihiniwaw. Noote wapumananuk weestuwaw tu guskeetachik oogomiwawu usichi omosoomiwawu. Egosi unisk pogo kuwes tu gee si gistenimewuk ketehiyu.

Nuwuch unisk minwasin neesuyek apoo nistuyek awinu tu isi uyumit. Pogo mahu ochituw tu gisteneetak unisiniw otuyumihin.)

And in translation, Mr. Minister, what many people will say is that many of our children are starting to lose their own language. We would like to see them to be . . . We would like to see our children to be able to speak to their own, to their own grandmothers and grandfathers,

because this is the only way that they will learn to respect them in the future. It is always best to be able to speak two or three languages, but first a person must learn to respect their own language.

So when I present the issue of language development, I present it in terms of real experience. I remember the university community when they introduced Cree language at the university in 1970, and I had the opportunity of teaching Cree language at the university in 1971. So it's been well accepted at the university levels.

At the elementary and high school level, we have seen Cree language development introduced by the former government in 1973-74 period, and the Cree language development was brought into the North. I also became involved with the five communities where Cree language was taught, and these communities included La Ronge, Beauval, Weyakwin, Sandy Bay, and Deschambault. A lot of the other band school systems at that point of time in history were getting Cree language being taught in the schools, and many of the people knew that they were losing their language.

So the issue became a very strong issue. There was even a Saskatchewan Indian language instruction association in the early '70s that was formed to be, more or less, a voice so that governments would hear of the funding requirements to help, not only to protect but also to promote, the Indian languages of the province. And when I looked at that in the more modern, we take a jump to the future and what the parents are saying is that we have lost a lot of these programs because due to the cut-backs in government the boards have been forced to cut away some of the programs.

And one of the programs that has fallen, particularly in La Ronge where this issue has been raised, you know, since the early '70s, is the need for Cree language development. A lot of people are saying it's very commendable to have French language taught in La Ronge, and that's very good for the department, and very good for the person and the children who are able to learn French in the school system in La Ronge. But what the people are saying at the same time is that we would like to see our own language, which is Cree, and also Dene in northern Saskatchewan, being taught in the schools. And there was money for a Cree language consultant before, you know, the cut-backs, and also that Dene language consultant. But these positions have slowly gone away with the cut-backs in education.

And we would like to, I suppose, hear from the minister, in light of the fact that the minister has now put in a position for language development — that there is indeed now going to be a person hired for languages — what degree of commitment he has to the Indian languages programs in the province of Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Minister, what commitment do you have in this regard?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Relative to teaching of Indian languages, we are very much of the view that it has a place. I mean, I think one would attach the caveats of where normal . . . where numbers warrant it, etc., etc. And indeed departmental officials have been quite busy

in this area, with others in the educational community, to the point where, although it's not yet a final version, we have a draft report entitled, "Rationale and Recommendation for the Teaching of Indian Languages in Saskatchewan Schools," and hopefully that will become a final report shortly.

The issues, as we see them, are the need for programs and teacher training and materials development, the special needs in the North. The need for special start-up I think would be an issue, implementation and maintenance grants, those kinds of things; I suppose even some guidance and direction for local school boards in terms of helping them with policy development and implementations.

If I was to, as well, give a bit of an overview as to where we're at, if you like, development work to date includes the fact that we are up to the point where we've got a draft report on it. A survey and needs assessment was done a couple of years ago, I guess now.

We've contracted a person to help to adapt the curriculum that was, I think, originally developed by Alberta Education. We hope to have a limited pilot in grades 1 to 3 for the next school year and a wider pilot by '89-90. And as well, we've advertised for position in Indian languages starting in September, and we have contacts with the various agencies and people involved in English-Indian language development.

So I think the framework is there — indeed more than the framework; there's a fair amount of work been done. I think as soon as this, as the "Rationale and Recommendations for the Teaching of Indian Languages in Saskatchewan Schools" is into a final report form, my sense is that it would become a public document.

So I think substantive headway is there and it's because the issue is the legitimate one.

(1915)

**Mr. Goulet:** — In regards to the different ways of teaching, there is teaching of languages as subject matter where you teach it, you know, either as Cree language or Dene language for maybe, you know, a certain part of the day.

There are other more core-oriented approaches where you use it as a language of instruction, you know, right to the areas where you have immersion at the younger grade levels.

So you see — and a lot of this has been experienced by let's say, other heritage languages in the province and most particularly in the area of French language instruction and French language immersion in the province — do you see a similar sort of commitment by yourself to move in this direction, into the future to not only look at Cree as a language, but also as a language of instruction and possibly going into the immersion road as the time goes along? Do you see that in the same light as you see other heritage languages in the province, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I don't know as I can maybe go as far tonight as the hon. member would like. What I can say, and what has been decided to date if you like, is it would be our view that Indian languages have a legitimate place in the school system. I think that has everything to do with the confidence and the self-esteem and the pride of the individual, etc., etc.

Of course the question that begs is, you know, this kind of core programming, or immersion programming, or second language programming — that kind of thing — that is yet to be decided. And of course is part and parcel why we have the report that's being put together and I suspect there, you know, it may well be something that one would want a feedback on as well. But the commitment is there, if you like, as far as the legitimacy of Indian languages in the school system.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Is the report that you talk about then going to cover the different modes that I raised in regards to, you know, the teaching of the language, the core approach and also the immersion approach? Are these also going to be covered in the report?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — In so far as that it's in a draft state yet, I think it to some greater or lesser degree covers the kinds of dimensions that you raise. And unless there was some substantial change between draft and report, the final report stage, I would think it would address some of these questions, yes.

**Mr. Goulet:** — When you're in a developmental stage, as I see, you know, talking about the report that's going to be coming up, there's also the next phase where you'll be looking ahead as to looking at mechanisms to make sure that there is not only a teacher involvement but parental involvement, as well as various other involvement processes. So you see yourselves making a commitment to provide resources for meetings and also for conferences in the future in this area?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I think the answer I would give relative to parental involvement is no different than what I had talked about this afternoon. I feel very strongly that parents — Indian, northern, southern, eastern, western, you name it, wherever in the province — ought to be involved, and quite frankly, obviously most parents do want to be involved, and it would be no different on this than on any other issue.

**Mr. Goulet:** — My question . . . I recognize already, you know, you made a commitment in regards to the issue of parental involvement. My question was more in regards to a commitment on the mechanism of action such as, you know, supporting the idea of a meeting and supporting even the idea of a conference in that area. And because conferences become very important during developmental phases of bringing people together and so on, do you foresee a commitment in the area of getting a conference in the future for Indian languages?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The suggestion that you make about maybe somewhere down the road convening a conference or something like that, just at first blush when I hear it, strikes me as a suggestion that might have some . . . a suggestion that might have some . . . If I could just get

by the hon. member from Regina Centre there. It's a suggestion that, I think, has some merit and I'd be prepared to give that consideration in the future.

**Mr. Goulet:** — I guess the reason why I asked that particular question was that this year there was an Indian languages conference with a request for funding from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians language program which does have an effect, you know, on the provincial schools in the sense that a lot of their resources that are developed through there are reutilized, you know, by us in the department.

There is substantive amounts of work. You mentioned, you know, the Alberta group, but there's already been substantive amounts of work done in dictionaries and in lesson plans and so on at the La Ronge Cree language program, and that in fact we already have resources there that can be brought together in a conference location.

And what I was looking for, you know, was precisely the mechanism to bring these people together for that commitment. But I think I can gather from your comment that you do support, you know, the idea of bringing the people together in the future to make sure that this is indeed not only one that looks good on paper, but it in fact is and can be carried through on an implementation phase which actually involves people at the parental level and also at the teacher end of the scale. So I'll take your previous answer as commitment on that. So if you don't say otherwise, I will proceed to the next level of questioning.

The other aspect that's very important for a lot of teachers is the issue of drop-outs. It's a really strong issue, and part of it can be addressed by a bit of curriculum change and that needed curriculum change for it and the change in programming. Part of it can be addressed by instructional practice and instructional methodology at the school level. And part of it can be addressed also by looking at a more intensive type university training program in counselling, in direct reference to educational counselling at the school level, which looks at the aspect not only of regular counselling in general. Because what we are starting to find out is that although we have regular counselling in some of the Northern Lights northern schools, it does not seem . . . while it does have certain positive effect to certain groups of students, in general the drop-out rate is still high.

In many cases what it seems to be missing in the approach is not only the fact that there is not a deliberate lack of consideration for the environment surrounding the child, but it is too individual-oriented in regards to the academic and career counselling aspect of it. And one of the new trends in counselling is to consider both the socio-cultural variables involved in counselling and the existing counselling programs. While some of the individual teachers attempt to try and tackle that problem, you still require a larger scale developmental approach to it, such as in the case of a teacher training program.

We mentioned NORTEP (northern teacher education program) teacher education. You know that's already well established in dealing with a lot of the regular core

curriculum items. But one of the aspects that I see is a possibility of shifting, you know, a counselling program. We know we had a teacher aid training program before we shifted to a teacher training program of a general nature, with specializations in a couple of areas. Now we're seeing the need for greater specialization in other areas such as counselling.

Do you foresee yourself making a commitment in that area to see that type of idea where you have counselling, not only of the general career and academic oriented counselling studies — a requirement in a school — but also the socio-cultural aspects of counselling to be integrated in along with your career and academic counselling aspects? Do you see that as an important development? And, if so, what is your commitment in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — This day, as to relates to this whole question of counselling, the Northern Lights school board and the Northlands Career College have a joint program under way to train counsellors, and the funding — just by way of background, as I understand at least — for the Northern Lights side is the educational development fund, and our education outreach fund is using their . . . There's some money from that fund being used on the Northlands Career College side.

And as I'm advised, in fact, in this program, the dimension that you talked about, the recognition of the socio-cultural dimension is recognized or is inherent in that programming.

(1930)

So I guess not only do we agree with that as being at least part of this but indeed in an indirect sense we would be prepared to fund it, i.e., through the EDF on the one hand — albeit that's the school board's call — and as well the education outreach fund we've allocated to some money for that through the Northlands Career College.

I think what I hear and what I'm advised is that I think there's some significant sort of headway being made there. You know, have we got lots, you know, is there lots of . . . is it a big task? Yes, maybe it is. But I think what I hear is encouraging, and I presume you would see it the same way.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Could you get me then a bit more detail on the program in regards to how it is accredited? Is it accredited through a technical institute? Is it accredited through the university? And if so, what levels of accreditation does it have?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — It's a two-year program. The second year of which would be 60 per cent accredited by University of Regina and the other 40 per cent would be, the accreditation would be because it's delivered by the Northlands Career College.

**Mr. Goulet:** — While I do agree with you that's important in terms of a developmental context, you know, of moving something from really nothing in the area of training to something of a development, it does present a bit of a problem in terms of accreditation.

If the course is only 60 per cent acceptable, you know, to the university level, and that it would be hoped that it would be 100 per cent accreditable to the university level, because although there would be still that 40 per cent input in terms of training by the student, they would not be accredited if they went back to a full educational counselling program at the university level. And that, in fact, while a lot of that would not go all to waste, that it would be still important to try and figure out not only a strong, solid two-year university program, but that in the long run any accreditation system in education requires basically four years university, and that there should be a move to a four-year educational program, university accredited.

What is your position in that regard to getting a more four-year program of university accredited training on counselling in northern Saskatchewan? Do you see the existing program as only a developmental phase to move into this?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The context I would put this in would be . . . We would like to see this counselling and the training of the counsellors and the individuals themselves who undertake this get a good solid foundation underneath them, that is to say two years. That doesn't mean to say, of course, that some individuals or all of the individuals, if they so wish, couldn't carry on and do a year or two more, or whatever, and lead up to a degree. But we feel strongly enough about it that we are prepared to put some money in, whether it be through the education outreach fund or elsewhere, to at least provide that solid foundation I think one can establish over the first two years.

**Mr. Goulet:** — I think the experience of training throughout the province is that while two years may have been a foundation for people working in the technical institute level, the school system, the elementary and high school system, really does not recognize to a great extent, you know, two-year training programs. They only do it in special situations and a special circumstance situation that the regular route of accreditation is now, you know, at the four-year level.

All I'm asking the minister is whether or not he is committed to the idea of moving more towards a four-year training program as time progresses because that's where the real situation of where accreditation lies because a person with less than the proper accreditations and the proper credentials are looked down upon in a natural work situation. And these types of situations that we're involved in, therefore, are looked upon more as a developmental step rather than as a final step and as a final model. I would like to hear the minister, you know, speak in more precise terms of what he feels about a four-year program which is a proper level of accreditation at elementary and high school levels.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Yeah, I would see, you know, a full accreditation, if you like, of degree status or that kind of accreditation, I would see that as ultimately a goal. As I said earlier, we want to be fairly proactive in this to the point where we're prepared to be . . . help fund it and get it on that solid foundation. But obviously, I think from the

individual's standpoint and for what it can mean for the native community, it would make good sense to, as it does in any training situation, have the full credentials, if you like.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Okay, in the area of . . . I'd like to direct a couple of questions in the area of curriculum, curriculum and career development. Of course with the Directions and with core curriculum, there was a way to deal with curriculum development especially with the Indian-Metis people and especially in regards to the North on an approach where we intervene into the regular process of curriculum development so Indian-Metis curriculum goes in at core curriculum levels and not only as a specialized subject of instruction. And there's the old approach where we looked at curriculum development for Indian-Metis people only as, you know, a native studies class, very important in and of itself, and also Indian languages and so on.

But there needs to be a recognition, and it was recognized, you know, with the former minister's approval of the IMCAC (Indian and Metis curriculum advisory committee) report, that there was a more of an integrated approach to the core curriculum development, but at the same time to combine the specialized approach.

I would like to hear from you now as a minister and in looking back at the IMCAC report, whether or not your commitment is both at the specialized and core curriculum development on both Indian and Metis people and on northern education as well.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well the short answer, I think, would be yes. Your question is: are we following up on the recommendations out of Directions, the five-year action plan? And I think I talked a little bit this afternoon about what had been done there relative to curriculum development, teams being established, and a community education branch. And work is proceeding in social studies, language arts, health, native studies, arts education, science, and teacher in-service; and we have a number of Indian and Metis people have been named to several committees as this process continues and a number of developers working on curriculum development.

So, I mean, I guess it's a degree thing as to whether we are or not, but certainly it's . . . the action plan is in place and we're acting on it.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Okay, so I take it that there is a commitment there for not only a specialized approach but also for the involvement of Indian and Metis people, and also people from the North in regards to the core curriculum development. And I take that to mean, not only in terms of production, but also at any advisory committee level or any other developmental committee level, that the minister may time to time look upon. So I take that to mean that.

The other aspect that probably a lot of people have raised is the level of funding, the degree of materials. There's been quite a proliferation of knowledge in general on society in general, whether it's in science or whether it's

in the social sciences areas and so on. And when you look at the special situation especially in the North, you also recognize there's been developments in mining and developments in forestry and developments in wild rice. There's been developments in new methods of trapping; there's been new developments in this and that aspect in the North. And a lot of that new development, from time to time, is only brought in a bit in adult education and a little bit in elementary education and a little bit in the middle years, but really not a thorough education approach.

We looked at the early '70s where we provided much very similar to the EDF funding concept, moneys directly to teachers, you know, for curriculum project at the school level, and that was a good idea in and of itself. But there was no method of bringing back all that material on a centralized level to be redeveloped and reviewed and recirculated back. The level of staff was far too little to be able to do a proper job on a central capacity level even within northern Saskatchewan. And part of the reason was a limited aspect resources in regards to not only the development of materials but the distribution of materials, and not only the distribution of materials but the implementation of materials and the whole involvement process that that takes.

I know it's a problem, you know, for the province in general, but when you look at the real problem: if curriculum in general is not applicable to the South, well it's even more less applicable in the North because of the special situations of mining and forestry that you don't necessarily have in the South, and that a lot of the developmental work that is required to do the nitty-gritty of curriculum materials development simply doesn't have the . . . (inaudible) . . .

Do you foresee in the future a greater trend to tie in that EDF-type system at the local class-room level with a more centralized and adequate funding system, let's say, in northern Saskatchewan? Do you see that? Because part of it was already starting in before, but I noticed you retired the person who had been involved in the process, and the person was gone. And I heard the position was now up again and this type of thing, but everything was up in the air. I'm just wondering: where is that type of approach? Is there any consolidated approach that is developing in the North now after all this realignment stuff in adult education is behind us? What are you doing to see a more consolidated effort in elementary and high school curriculum development?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I don't know if there's anything that I disagree with what you said over the last few minutes, and specifically as it relates to one of the people working in this area, the fact that they took, I think it was early retirement, I'm advised that that position is going to be refilled, and in fact I think interviews are going on tomorrow. So there will be that continuation and that focus. As I said earlier, I think we're totally on the same wavelength on this one.

(1945)

**Mr. Goulet:** — One of the problems that I see though, Mr. Minister, is this: there is a commitment in terms of structure, there is commitment in terms of paper, but the

real key thing is the increase in staff. When you look at, let's say, Indian languages, and we look at our 26 schools in the North — just in the North alone — and you have one position. To me that's a very small commitment; it's only a very basic start. You need to do a lot more in regards to curriculum. I mean, one person alone . . . I've been involved in curriculum development; I've been involved in teacher ed. It's just simply not feasible to be able to do a large-scale expectation on one individual here and there. What type of commitment are you willing to make to come out with a greater team approach to curriculum development than a fragmented, piecemeal approach that appears on the surface?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I think I maybe left you with the wrong impression. We're going to fill the position that was vacated or became vacant because of the early retirement, but as well there is resources for one additional new position. I mean, I guess a political perspective on that, if I was to put a political twist on it, I could say we're going to double the number we had last year. But, in fact, it's gone from one to two.

I mean, just to reiterate what I said earlier in the day, that we do have about six, I think it is, staff working in the community schools branch in the northern division. So I think we are making some . . . I'm very happy with what I see happening in this area, to be honest with you, and I'm not trying to be naive and I know there's lots of ground to cover here. Whether it's on the post-secondary side or the kindergarten to grade 12 side, I sense that there's a definitive direction here, and we keep taking it a step at a time, and I think it'll result in some pretty positive results when one surveys it over a decade or so.

**Mr. Goulet:** — In the last statement the minister said he was going to get political by doubling the numbers from one to two. Well I would like to suggest to the minister that in terms of resources — and I mentioned this before, last week — there is . . .

**Mr. Chairman:** — Could we have order, please. The discussion is interesting but I think the member from Cumberland has the floor.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Okay. In regards to the politics, I would like to go to the politics of the lack of resources. I would say, when I raised the issue last week, there was a 17 per cent increase in the mill rate to the taxpayers in northern Saskatchewan — a 17 per cent increase. I suggested to the minister that even one corporation, like Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation, who made \$60 million profit this year — \$60 million.

We knew that about . . . In terms of resource development, approximately \$700 million comes out of northern Saskatchewan. When you look at percentages, in terms of real commitment, what you are doing is shifting the responsibility of government commitment which used to provide about 60 per cent of the resources on educational cost and it's now down to about 35 to 40 per cent, depending on the school area that one has to refer to.

And so a greater amount of the load on educational costs is now being put on to the taxpayers. What that is doing is

putting pressure between the taxpayers and their municipalities, and also the municipalities against the boards. It's creating friction at the local level because of your lack of funding and proper funding levels in education.

I would say that where you should get that money from, especially in regards to the North . . . The development in the North fluctuates in historical terms. Sometimes we make a great amount of money. And my predication is, probably the minerals phase is probably going to go up for another two years, but it's probably going to go down in about a three-, four-year period because of the problems of over-production.

But how does that affect education? It means that we have not been able to access part of that \$60 million that could be reinvested in the children of northern Saskatchewan so that the children could speak with their grandparents in Cree; so that the children could have proper scientific curriculum; so that the children could have good social studies curriculum that relates to the North, not only in terms of mining, not only in terms of forestry, but all these things.

And this is the point that I raise with the minister: what, in terms of politics, what kind of political pressure are you going to put with your colleagues to make sure that the children and their educational needs come first over the profit margins of the resource corporations in northern Saskatchewan? What can the minister say about that?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I, in so far as our financial commitment, if you like, to back up the direction, I like to think that we're on pretty solid ground there as well. And the basis for saying that is that, you know, we provided money for the task force, we are providing substantial dollars to Northern Lights to assist them with responding to the Scharf report and the Jack Lloyd recommendations and that initiative.

You know, we've put extra people in place to do curriculum development. I think . . . you know, and whatever the front, I see us taking some pretty significant steps, dollars-wise and, you know, with human resources. So I think that the commitment is there in every way.

**Mr. Goulet:** — Just a point of that last statement. There's where I would beg to disagree, that I think that the level of commitment has to be a lot greater, that indeed one position here and there simply isn't going to resolve the issues that we raised today.

You know there is issues of parental and teacher involvement that require resources. There is resources required for curriculum; there is resources required for building playgrounds for the children; there is resources for this and that. There are resources there, though, and what you need to do is take a bit of strength and courage to be able to say yes to the children and to be able to say yes, we will take a bit of maybe 1 or 2 per cent from the resource base from northern Saskatchewan and shift it back for their educational development. And I think we could stand here all night long to debate the point, so maybe I will pass it on to my fellow member to ask you,

you know, a few more questions.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Chairman, I have some questions tonight, Mr. Minister, regarding the Prince Albert Rural School Division No. 56. And as you may be aware, that school division has been quite actively involved in programs and developing programs for special needs students. And in a meeting that my colleague from Prince Albert and I had with the board a few days ago, it was indicated to us that a lack of funding was causing problems in terms of the programs, or the inability to deliver the type of programming that they were working on and being able to bring forth for the kids in that area.

They indicated, Mr. Minister, that they've cut staff — six regular and three from the special education class — simply because they don't have the money in order to maintain the level of funding required to keep those teachers employed. And I would like, Mr. Minister, a response from you in terms of how, in light of the fact that this particular school division has been laying people off and reducing the number of teachers — how does that fit in line with any programming and any future you may see for children with special needs in that particular area?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well Prince Albert rural is one of the school boards in the province that, when the equalization formula is applied, come out ahead relative to the global budget increase. There was 2 per cent increase for operating grants, so it was equally distributed just based on 2 per cent more for everyone. They would have got exactly that, 2 per cent more.

But when you apply the equalization formula based on the number of pupils and the assessment, whether that goes up and down, etc., etc., they in fact ended up with a 3 per cent increase which represents a \$201,000 increase on a \$6.5 million budget. Of course, the fact that that went up probably indicates that their assessment is relatively stable or slightly down. And that's the case; it's holding in around six-fifty-nine, seventy-six, sixty millions of dollars. So there's a 3 per cent increase there.

I guess your question is, you know, could they use five, could they use 10. I mean, I think I've talked often about the fact that, you know, in education certainly one could always use more money. That doesn't mean to say that one doesn't spend the money prudently, that we don't examine carefully how we spend the money, as I'm sure that board does. But certainly if you look across the piece they're one of those school boards that got an increase, if you like, that was larger than that budgeted, larger than the 2 per cent that was budgeted globally.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, numbers are numbers, but what I see is the fact that the school board, whom you yourself admit are managing their finances quite capably, and I certainly have no reason to doubt that there's wasteful spending going on in that school board. But the fact is, the simple fact is that there are three instructors, three places that used to be there to deliver services to the children with special needs in that particular school division, that are no longer there.

I guess what I was asking you is: how, in light of the fact

that this school division has had to decrease their staffing by three people in terms of special needs teachers, I would like to know how does that set with your goal — if you do have a goal, in fact — of helping these special needs children develop?

(2000)

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I hear what the hon. member is saying. I think you acknowledge, as well, what I am saying in that there has been an increase relative to the operating grants.

I have no doubt that that board — no matter what decisions that they have made on how they spend that money and how they administer that money — I have no doubt that those children in that school division will receive a top-notch education.

The numbers I don't have here that might be helpful in the discussion is whether enrolments have gone up or down as well, because that may explain some of what you have raised. But I have no doubt that that local board, given their local autonomy, will run a first-rate school system in this next year. I know that a year ago when we cut the operating grants globally by 1 per cent, boards responded in spades. They said, yes, I guess we do have to tighten our belts. You just can't go to the people constantly for more money. They tightened their belts and I don't know of a place in Saskatchewan where education quality was jeopardized. They responded, they responded in spades. It was a very positive attitude.

In fact what I heard a lot of directors saying, because of the budget lateness ultimately, was, you know, just give us the number, Mr. Minister, and we'll make it work. And I think that they did make it work and I think school boards will make it work again this year. So I fear not for quality of education.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, you may fear not, but I want to tell you that there are a lot of school boards and there are a lot of parents and there are a lot of teachers who are fearing for what's happening in terms of the educational system in this province.

And you talk about funding. And if we want to talk about funding maybe we should be talking about the percentages that your government is putting into those local school boards and what's been happening to those percentages. In the P.A. rural in '86 it was 67.8 per cent; in '87, 65.1; and in '88 down to 63.9 per cent. And you talk about elected officials having problems going back to their taxpayers and to the ratepayers for more funding. Well that's exactly what you're going to be forcing this school division into doing. The local tax burden is increasing because you're cutting back on the provincial funding, and you know it.

And this school division, this particular one . . . And we were talking about special needs children and the fact that there are three less educators in that system than there were. And I asked you and I still haven't got an answer out of you as to how you figure that the reduction in the number of staff people serving these children is going to enhance their educational opportunities. And so

I'm asking you again, Mr. Minister: how do you feel that's going to enhance the opportunities of children with special needs in this school division?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member suggests that I don't have a sense of the P.A. rural board and what's happening there. I think I made the statement just a few moments ago that the P.A. rural board and other boards across Saskatchewan continue to deliver high quality education with the resources available to them, whether it be locally raised or from the provincial government.

And I would just share with the hon. member a story our of the P.A. *Daily Herald* on March 31, '88. And I share this with him because the hon. member said, well I say the quality was maintained, but nobody else is — parents and teachers, etc., etc. But what did this story in the P.A. *Daily Herald* say, Mr. Chairman? And I'll read you one of the . . . I'll read you a quotation. In fact I'll read you a couple. The fourth paragraph in the story says:

Over 65 per cent of revenue came from government grants which totalled over \$7.5 million while close to \$3.5 million was generated through property taxes paid by rural supporters.

And it further went on to say, and I quote:

The board of education was well aware of the economy in rural Saskatchewan and examined every area of the budget in detail in an attempt to limit any increases in taxes to the bare minimum without affecting the quality of education of our students, he said.

And that's attributed to the board chairman.

So we have the board chairman saying, yes we know it's the farm economy — the rural economy is not booming. And we've examined our spending. We think we've come up with a budget that is sound and indeed will not affect the quality of education of our students. So I mean you may say one thing but you may say it as well for political purposes.

And that was with a minus 1 per cent decrease in the global budget last year, and this year there's a 3 per cent increase to that board specifically, so I'm not saying it's easy for boards, but I'm saying to you that they are responding and they continue to deliver high quality education with the funding that's available to all of them whether it come from government or come from the local tax base.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I hear your quotes from that paper and I will have to agree with you that I think that board did attempt to come up with a budget that wouldn't affect the quality of education in that school division. And I think they've done an admirable job given the fact that your government has been consistently squeezing that board and others.

I'll quote the figures back to you again. Your percentage of revenue is down from 67.8 per cent in 1986 to 63.9 per cent. And I think, clearly, you will understand that if

that trend continues, that there's going to come a time when that board isn't going to be able to deliver a budget that isn't going to drastically reduce the quality of education in that area. I think they know full well that they can't keep going to the local taxpayers for money as you will have them do through cut-backs to the funding to their school division. And that's the long and the short of it, Mr. Minister.

You want to talk about where tax dollars should come from, and I'll tell you where they should come from — not from the wage earners in the proportion that you've been taking them; not from the small-business men in the proportion that you've been taking them from, but you're going to have to start looking at your friends in the oil companies to share some of the revenue. You're going to have to start looking at the Peter Pocklington deals, the tens of millions of dollars that you've given to them and the hundreds of millions you give to Weyerhaeuser.

That, Mr. Minister, is where you're going to have to start reassessing the role your government is playing in terms of directing tax dollars in this province. That's what you have been doing since 1982, and I would suggest to you, because of that kind of mismanagement and incompetence, you're putting school boards and local governments in a situation where they've got to go to the local people and pick their pockets, because what you're doing I abrogating your responsibility as a government to generate revenue. And that's why you see decreases from 67.8 per cent to 63.9 per cent in that particular school division.

And I want to say, Mr. Minister, as well, not only has that school board had to cut three places in terms of teachers dealing with special ed, they've also had to cut six regular staff members. So what that tells me is that student-teacher ratio is going to increase, which means the quality of education is going to go down. And I don't how else you would explain the end result of your cut-backs to the school divisions.

And I would like to as well, Mr. Minister. . . I would like you to respond to that. I would like you to respond as to why you've been throwing the tax burden to the local people and to the school boards to collect for you, and I would like to ask you why you're not willing to go to your friends in the oil companies and ask them to share. I think, Mr. Minister, you have a responsibility to the children of this province to answer that.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The hon. member has raised two points. He's suggested that we're squeezing the Prince Albert rural board, and the second point he says is that we should be going to the oil companies for more revenue.

Well relative to the first point, Mr. Chairman, and I've made this observation on more than one occasion, what would be the indices or the measures that one might use to determine whether we're squeezing — to use the hon. member's terms — squeezing the local jurisdiction? Well if we were, I think the first sign of it would be the fact that they've had to increase their mill rates. If they weren't getting enough money from us, the only other option they would have is to go to their local taxpayers and raise the mill rates to generate more revenue.

Well what do we find, Mr. Chairman, if we look over the last three or four or five years — and I'll put the mill rate on the basis of the new formula because it changed between '85 and '86 for this board. In '83 the mill rate was fifty-six and a half, or 113 on the old, but fifty-six and a half, to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. Did they increase it in '84 because of this government squeeze, Mr. Chairman? Well I doesn't look like it. It was the same again in '84. Well what about '85? Did this big, bad, rotten, Tory government in Regina put the clamps to them to such a degree that they had to raise the mill rate by a horrendous amount, Mr. Chairman? Well guess what? We find in 1985 that the mill rate was fifty-six and a half for the third year in a row.

Now we did have an increase in '86. We did have an increase in '86, Mr. Chairman. It went up to 61. But guess what happened in '87, Mr. Chairman? The mill rate went down to 59. Now how would the hon. member explain how the mill rate went down if they were getting squeezed? I wonder if he could explain that to us, Mr. Chairman. I'd be intrigued to hear his explanation of that one. That . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — You spent the reserve, that's how.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Oh, oh, so he says it's reserves. That they drew down on the reserves, Mr. Chairman. Well what did the P.A. Daily Herald headline say this spring? What was the headline based on the school board reporters . . . or the report of the school board meeting? And guess what the headline said, Mr. Chairman: "Rural board records surplus despite decrease in grants."

Well here we have now '83, '84, '85, they held the line on the mill rate — no increase; an increase in '86; '87 the mill rate went down. Yes, a jump in '88 again by the looks of it. But even through all of that, even last year when the grant was cut by 1 per cent across the entire province, "Rural board records surplus despite decrease in grants."

I raise these points, Mr. Chairman, only to show that the hon. member's arguments are, in fact, fatuous and have no fact and basis. But I would also want to add, because it may well be that some members on the P.A. board are listening, I wouldn't want to suggest for moment that it's easy for them in their budgeting, because it's not. And I think they have been very cognizant of what it's like in the rural economy by holding the line three years and then decreasing it one year. I'm not trying to suggest that it's easy for them and that they haven't had to make tough decisions. But what I'm saying is, as the chairman of the board said, we recognize what's happening in rural Saskatchewan. We're not going to go back to them and ask more dollars unless absolutely necessary, but in so doing, we are also going to maintain a quality of education.

I take my hat off to them. And so by whatever measure that you would want to use to . . . with you inflated rhetoric, it just doesn't add up when you look at the statistics, Mr. Chairman.

(2015)



**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, maybe we should be dealing with something a little more tangible than the numbers that you concoct. Maybe we should be talking about the school buses that they haven't bought this year that they had replaced on a regular basis so that wouldn't all lump up in one time and catch the taxpayers all at once, and some planning that they had done, some long-term planning in terms of keeping their fleet of school buses in a very up to date and in good condition. And maybe we should be talking about the fact that they originally planned for seven new buses and they've cut that back to four.

And yes, I agree with you that that school board should be commended because having to deal with a senior government like yours that has been so top heavy with graft and corruption and deficit budgeting and deferred taxes — as your Premier likes to refer to as a deficit — and the fact that they're going to have to be dealing with that some way down the road. I think the fact that this government . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, I distinctly heard the hon. member suggest that this government was engaging in graft and corruption, and I think that's — the loud noise that speaks the vacant mind, Mr. Chairman — I think that's unparliamentary in this Chamber, and I would ask for your direction on that.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Order. Order. I find the point of order not well taken because a point of unparliamentary language is found when it's directed directly at a person, not a group. Order. Order. The debate continues.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — I thank you for your ruling, Mr. Chairman. But I want to say to the minister that the kinds of thing that they've cut back on because of your mismanagement — and if you don't like the terminology I used, let me use others: mismanagement, patronage, there are a number of other adjectives to describe your particular government — but they're cutting back on maintenance to the buildings, to the school. That's how they're holding the line, Mr. Minister.

Unlike your government, this government feels, this local government feels some responsibility for the taxpayers that it represents. And I just want to point out to you, Mr. Minister, that there is fear in the educational system for what you've been doing.

And I would like to mention a well — and I was talking about high cost funding for special needs children — I think perhaps you might agree with me that the rural school division in Prince Albert is in rather a unique situation in that in that particular area there are five special placement homes in that region of Saskatchewan, and they're all in that division.

And I think you will agree with me as well that there has been some freeze on funding for some categories of special ed children. But the influx of special needs children in that area is creating an extra burden on this government. And I would ask and I would like to know,

Mr. Minister, if you would be willing to reassess your government's position, have another look at the needs, and I would indicate to you, special needs of that particular school board, and reassess your funding.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — There is one point, I think, that you and I can agree on, and that is relative to special education. We do see it as a priority. I personally see it as a priority. There's additional moneys, new moneys in this budget for the issue of special education.

But getting back to the Prince Albert board and the issue of they've had to let go some teachers, I think you raised. So I had my officials do some research for me and give me some numbers relative to the pupil-teacher ratio there. Because if, as you have suggested, that they've had to let go a number of teachers, then is the pupil-teacher ratio way out of whack compared to the rest of the province? And what do we find, and this is as of September 30, '87, Prince Albert Rural School Division No. 56 — 16.3 is the pupil-teacher ratio there, which is ahead of the provincial average which is at 16.4. So I think that board there is obviously pretty much on the mark with their decision-making relative to the rest of the province.

So if you're suggesting somehow there's going to be class-room overcrowding there in a very dramatic and major way relative to the rest of the province because some board decision, I would suggest you're wrong. I would suggest maybe that relative to this board you're wrong again.

And I also had the department officials provide me with the numbers relative to the surpluses or deficits that that school board might have to run once again because of the squeezing and this mismanagement that you talked about at the provincial government level. You know, the first index I suggest that we might use to measure whether we're off loading our responsibilities on to any rural board or any board at all, including that one, was well did they have to respond by raising taxes locally? That is to say, did the mill rate go up? And what we found there when we examined that question was that in three of the last five or six years they had either . . . or four of the last five or six years, they had either stayed the same or gone down.

Now the other question that was raised was, well then all they did, you said, was if they had kept the mill rate the same or they lowered it, they had to dig into their piggy bank. Well what do we find there? Is the piggy bank today smaller or larger than it was five or six years ago? Well what do we find if we examine that question, Mr. Chairman? Now the member is suggesting that they had to go into their piggy bank because we weren't giving them enough money.

Well in 1981 they had a surplus of \$82,920; in '82 it went to nearly 150. Yes, in '83 they ran us a deficit of \$57,000; in '84 they had a surplus of 125,000; in '85 a surplus of 89,000; in '86 a surplus of 292,000, and in '87 a surplus of 144,000.

So I ask myself, well compared to '81-82 when this big, bad, rotten, Tory government — at least according to the opposite member — took over, their surplus then, or their

piggy bank, had \$82,920 in it. As of '87, in the year 1987, it had 144,000. That's — what? — \$42,000 more in the piggy bank. So what I would conclude from that, Mr. Chairman, is that they haven't necessarily had to raid the piggy bank.

Yes, they've had ups and downs, but generally speaking their surplus probably, as a percentage of their budget, has stayed relatively stable I would argue. It's increased in absolute terms but in relative terms it may not have — but in relative terms it certainly has. I think this board is doing a good job, personally.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, you can talk again about student, pupil-teacher ratio, and your figures may in fact be correct, but as I indicated to you I think you should be looking at the Prince Albert rural school division in perhaps a different light than you would at a lot of other school divisions across this province simply because of the high proportion of special needs children in that particular division. And I didn't hear you address that.

And in terms of funding I believe you know full well that your government's share has dropped substantially, not only in that particular division but in others throughout this province, and I really feel you're doing a disservice.

I asked you in my last question if you would be willing to have another look at the Prince Albert rural school division because of its special — and I would suggest probably disproportionate number of special ed children, and I didn't hear an answer. So I'll take my place and I'll wait for your answer.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, the two questions relative to the hon. member who said he didn't hear me address the special education question. I said at the outset, in my last response, that we view that as a priority. I view it not only as a departmental and a government priority, I view it as a personal priority. There are some additional funds in this budget to that end albeit probably not as much even as I would like to see, but it's a bit of a fresh injection.

Secondly, relative to the funding question. Yes, next year as we go through budget deliberations everything will be reviewed again. But I think you have to remember when you make the sweeping statement about shares dropping, etc., etc., unless the story I read was an inaccurate one — which could well be — I don't necessarily trust, unlike the NDP research office I don't necessarily trust everything I read in the newspaper. But you have to remember, you know, that if the school board's share goes down it's based on the equalization formula and it just means your assessment went up or your pupil numbers went down.

So you can't have it both ways, because the hon. member the other night read into the record the numbers of school boards where the provincial grant share went up as opposed to down. And it was substantially more went up as opposed to down, so you can't have it both ways on that one. If you're a richer community in terms of your assessment base then you can expect to get less from the government. If you're a community that has very little and by way of assessment base you can expect to get a larger

share.

And yes, I would suggest to you that Prince Albert rural compared to many school boards across the province with a — I think their assessment was around \$60 million, is probably quite a bit richer than, for example, Northern Lights may be. Okay? And I think to be fair, as you would want to be, and to give to those based on their ability to raise cash locally, the formula reflects that. And unless I hear some major, major outcry from the school trustees association to change that formula it will remain as is.

**Ms. Simard:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have in my hand some correspondence that refers to the Departments of Education and Health considering an extensive restructure of the medical laboratory, medical radiological technologists' and certified combined technologists' programs. And I'm wondering if the minister can confirm for us that it is the intention of his department and the Department of Health to change to the existing training program for laboratory and radiological technicians in such a way that there will be a one-year moratorium on entrance to the program when this is implemented, and that hospitals in Moose Jaw and Prince Albert will be dropped from the practicum end of the program, because I understand that's what the recommendation is. So I'd like to hear from the minister whether, indeed, these changes are being anticipated or planned.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — To respond simply and directly: no moratorium; program is being reviewed; there will be an intake of students this September.

**Ms. Simard:** — So, Mr. Minister, what review is being undertaken? Can you tell me who is doing the review and the extent of the review?

(2030)

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — There is a review team that's doing the review — professionals from health, education, universities, the hospitals. How long would the review take? I don't know as I can say without handcuffing the committee; I suppose 90 days, 120 days, something like that.

Of what I understand of this I think it's a positive step to be reviewing this, and the model I would see almost, at least — and I'm not trying to impose my view on the committee, but it sounds to me like this is candidate for a situation where you may have some common programming for all the professions and then have some separate tracks at the end as opposed to all being on a separate track from day one. And I think there's some basis for that kind of model, at least in my mind, if you look at the dental health sciences, for example. So I, you know, that and of course the other overriding goal would be meeting the employer requirements.

So I think there's a lot of merit in reviewing this one, and it may even be long overdue.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, you talk about the need for review. Are you aware that this program, the radiologist technology course, was reviewed by the Canadian

Medical Association on March 7 or 10? And at about the same time that the Department of Health and your department was announcing that there were severe problems with the program, the Canadian Medical Association was giving it its stamp of approval and, in effect, stating that it was an excellent program. Are you aware of that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I don't argue with the point that you would make nor, I think, the point that the Canadian association made in terms of the technical value of the program. The issue was one of the organization and arrangement of it, of the material, or the pedagogical, if you like, side of it. And that's what this would be addressing. If you like I can give you the entire rationale for the proposed curriculum redevelopment. It doesn't fly in the face of . . . Excuse me, Mr. Chairman.

A rejuvenation of curriculum in three programs. Increasing student retention — this was a particularly important one because of the, as I said earlier, the pedagogical . . . disarray is probably a bit too strong a word, but we had a 50 per cent attrition rate in these areas. And it seems to me, from your standpoint as a critic I would have said, Mr. Minister, aren't you going to do something about a program that has a 50 per cent attrition rate? And the answer is, yes we are.

**An Hon. Member:** — Now he's asking and answering the questions.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well that's the kinds of question that seem to me are relevant. And so that's the rationale, or one of the rationale for the curriculum redevelopment.

Others would include increasing accessibility to certified combined technician training to rural resident candidates with transferability to credits towards further upgrading as a registered technologist, who I talked about earlier. There's some cost savings and probably, most importantly, improved employment opportunity for former graduates relative to upgrading and that kind of thing.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, with respect to the attrition rate, I have been advised that this is very common in the first term in these programs right across Canada, the 50 per cent attrition rate, and that this isn't a cause of the particular program; that this is what happens in these programs across Canada with respect to the attrition rate; that the so-called blending of practical work and class-room work isn't going to prevent the attrition rate in the manner that you're suggesting; and that that is in effect a blue herring, if you like. This is what I've been advised and I would like your comments on that.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I disagree. It seems to me that I have a responsibility, or departmental officials, the institute, has responsibility in the face of a 50 per cent attrition rate to determine what the problem is and to review this entire professional area relative to the curriculum to get to the bottom of it. And that's exactly what they're going to do. It may well be that it's satisfactory for everybody else in the country to go along with the 50 percent attrition rate; it's not satisfactory for this government, nor for its

post-secondary education institutions. I'm happy that they're doing something about it. And I guess that's where the hon. member and I will have to agree to disagree.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, the letter of Mr. Babiuk indicates perhaps the real reason for the restructuring of this program, and that is that as a consequence of the proposed changes the students could lose the status of employees within the meaning of The Trade Union Act. And therefore there would be a saving to the government of some \$2 million in that their wages would not be paid for in the manner in which it is occurring at this point.

I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that that is probably the real reason for your restructuring a program which has been highly successful in Canadian standards and which has been approved by the Canadian Medical Association, not the attrition and the restructuring of an obsolete program or rejuvenation of that program as you indicate, when you know full well this program has been approved and very recently given very high marks by the CMA (Canadian Medical Association). Could you please comment on that.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, I think I already did comment. I said we don't disagree with the analysis in so far as what the CMA analysis covers. The technical part of this or the technical dimension is one issue; but the pedagogical dimension is quite another. And as a result of that, or at least because of part of that dimension, we have a situation where we have a 50 per cent attrition rate. I don't think that's acceptable. I'd like to see us see if we can't do something about it. To that end, we have a review committee of professionals, equally . . . And I think some of those professionals are probably constituent members of the Canadian Medical Association, for all I know. And so why would I argue with the professionals?

**Ms. Simard:** — Is it true, Mr. Minister, that *The Trade Union Act* will no longer apply to these students? Is that true? Is that going to be the end result? Can you tell us one way or another?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I don't have a report from a review committee to know. In fact, I don't quite frankly understand where the member's coming from relative to trade unions and whatever. I'm going to be getting, I suspect, or the institute will be having a report relative to this, and take some action based on whatever recommendations come out of it. It's a little tough for me to sort of preguess or prejudge or predetermine what might be in that report. I gave you my thinking on sort of what I think maybe would make sense, based on what I've seen happen in some other areas of the health sciences. And I also prefaced that remark by saying that I didn't want to handcuff or bias the committee, but I thought there was some sense in what I heard there and what I've seen in some of the other health sciences in so far as what might make some sense here.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, quoting from an official of your government, as a consequence of the proposed changes, students could lose the status of employees within the meaning of The Trade Union Act. That, I am advised, amounts to approximately a \$2 million saving for the government. Is that a possible consequence or was

this official misinformed?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well if the official said it could, I don't know as I would disagree with that. But I don't know because we don't have anything to act on yet.

**Ms. Simard:** — Obviously, Mr. Minister, that is the end result of this restructuring and that's the underlying purpose. And I'm suggesting to you to consider it very carefully because what you're proposing to do is to fiddle around with a program that has been very successful in Canadian standards. And you can give us your rhetoric about 50 per cent attrition. If we can improve the attrition rate, great. I am advised that this is something that occurs naturally in these programs. And therefore to suggest that you can improve the attrition rate by fiddling around with an excellent program, you better be very sure, Mr. Minister, that you are going to improve that attrition rate before you start meddling around with a successful program. And you better be sure that your objectives are above-board, Mr. Minister, and that you advise the public of this province the real reasons for your playing with a very good program.

Now what is going to happen . . . because part of this proposal as I understand it is to move the practicum part out of the Moose Jaw and Prince Albert hospitals. What is going to happen to these hospitals with respect to the need for workers in this area if the practicum part is being removed from these hospitals?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — My hesitation in answering is that I would be starting to comment . . . when I start to comment on practicums and roles of hospitals and the Health department, on an area that is probably outside of my jurisdiction, as well, perhaps, as outside of my understanding.

Secondly, the point you raised may well be one that's covered by the review. I don't know as I can say much more than that, except that you may well want to pursue that with the Health ministry. I'm starting to get into territory that is outside of where we come from in Education, which is more the pedagogical sort of dimension.

**Ms. Simard:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I will be pursuing it with the Health minister, but I also think that since your department isn't involved, you should be fully cognizant of all the facts. It's not an excuse to the public of Saskatchewan to say, I don't know anything about it, it's the Health minister's job, when your officials are making recommendations and making decisions with respect to this problem. So I suggest that you do inform yourself on these matters so that you can talk intelligently about it with the Department of Health.

Now I would like to bring to your attention, Mr. Minister, if you will quit chattering and listen to what I have to say, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that the hospitals who will be losing these workers on the practicum end are concerned. There is concern. There's also concern that if they're not practising in that hospital, they will have to be retrained because hospitals tend to train them according to their own procedures that they use in the hospital.

(2045)

So this restructuring of this education program, Mr. Minister, is going to cause problems for the hospitals in Saskatchewan as well as problems for the workers and students themselves inasmuch as you will intend to decertify them, and that it'll also cause problems inasmuch as we have a program here, Mr. Minister, where the students are doing amongst the best in Canada. The final exams of the Saskatchewan students rank amongst the best, if not the best, in Canada. And you're proposing to change this program for who knows what reason. The attrition rate reason is not an adequate reason. It is something to strive for a better reduced attrition rate, but it's not an adequate reason because I believe you're not going to be able to demonstrate that there is an improvement in this because I've been advised that this happens in this particular kind of program.

So, Mr. Minister, I want to bring those problems to your attention and I want to suggest that when your committee comes in with its recommendation that you consider the comments we made here tonight, because they are comments that have come from members of the medical profession and members who are very concerned about your activity in undermining this program.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm just going to comment briefly on this as I think I've said all that I can say of a technical nature in response to the questions.

This is another example, I think, where the NDP still haven't got it around their heads, if you like, that the institute programming is now determined and managed and administered and run by a new board of governors or a board of directors for the Saskatchewan . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Provisional board.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — No, it's not provisional. There is a board of directors for the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology. There'll be an announcement on that very shortly.

And, you know, the questions that they raise, relative to how a program should be structured, with me, you know, they would never think to raise relative to a university. They haven't figured out yet that the institute is no longer a part of the Department of Education.

And I say this sincerely for the hon. member's information because that is a significant change that we made to post-secondary education in this province last year in this very House with two Acts: The Regional Colleges Act and An Act for the formation of the Saskatchewan Institution of Applied Science and Technology.

Now why would the hon. member keep asking me to interfere in their autonomy? Yes, over the last year there's been an interim governing council with some departmental people and some outside people, but that is part of the past. The world is changing and so must we.

If I took all of our advice and this government took all of our advice from the NDP, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we'd

never do anything. Every change that we propose, they're against them all. They're against them all. They're against them all!

You see, Mr. Deputy Chairman, why I raise this is this party used to be known as a progressive party. The NDP were always known as a progressive kind of a small "p" party. Now they are an establishment party — don't change anything, you know, we want the department to continue to run the institutes; don't let us have a board of directors there, but last year they were arguing we should have.

These have become, on the Saskatchewan horizon, on the Saskatchewan landscape, the change resisters. And that member from Saskatoon Lakeview is a prime example — whatever you do, don't change anything.

I can't believe this. The world is changing and so must we. And I've said before and I say it again in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, we're going to bring the NDP Party — those little band of socialists over there — we are going to bring them into the 21st century whether they want to come or not. It may well be that they'll come in kicking and screaming, but we're going to bring them into the 21st century whether they like it or not, Mr. Chairman, and I know they'll enjoy the ride once they get a chance to see how good it is.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, the correspondence I have talking about restructuring this program and outlining in detail how it's going to be changed comes from the Department of Health and starts out with the words:

The departments of Education and Health are considering an extensive restructuring of the medical laboratory program (so forth).

So you've got your foot right in it, Mr. Minister. You're dealing with it, Mr. Minister, and to try to hide behind various cloaks of secrecy is just ridiculous. This letter was written, Mr. Minister, without any consultation with the people, with the people involved in the present program.

Now, Mr. Minister, can you advise me whether this new committee that has been restructured will be consulting or have on the committee people from the hospitals that are involved, people from the program, who sit on the program? Can you assure for me that these people are on this committee, or if not on the committee, have been consulted, because they weren't consulted before that proposal was made from the departments of Health and Education? And I know that there was some concern about that, and so I'm glad that you struck a committee as a result of that concern, but I want to be assured by you that these people are represented on that committee.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Yes.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question, Mr. Minister, relates to a document called Poverty Profile 1988, a report by the National Council on Welfare, April of 1988, and it deals with the large number of people who now live in poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, and also reflected in the large number of students who live in families that try to exist below the

poverty line. And I want to relate it to the students who are attending school in much of the inner city of Saskatoon and Regina particularly, but it's not related only to those areas. But in this regard, Mr. Minister, you will know that 25.7 per cent of the students in the province of Saskatchewan live below the poverty line with all that that implies. You will also know that in many cases the extreme of this situation is that many students are forced to go to school without proper nutrition and in fact go to school hungry.

I'm wondering what the policy of the government is in that regard. If a school board wants to sponsor a lunch program or a hot meal program or some food for children in the school, what is the policy of the government, your Conservative government, when it comes to dealing with that if there was a request made by a school board?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Deputy Chairman, there have been some preliminary discussions between Social Services and Regina school board officials about ways to improve the situation using existing services, as I say, things like procedures to identify hungry children in schools and refer them to social workers. The nutrition component of the community schools programs involves providing students with daily snacks and nutrition education. And by way of education, or by way of background, Saskatchewan Education provides special support for 16 community schools in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Many of these schools, eight to be exact, run a nutrition program for students and in '86-87 approximately \$200,000 was allocated to community schools for nutrition programs.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — What is the process that a school board or the people who are concerned about getting a program going in a school, what would be the process that would take place? Would the apply to the department for funding? Would it be put forward in the budget when it was being prepared? What is the process that would have to take place?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I can't speak at this point in time what process might be forthcoming as a result of the preliminary discussions I talked about between Social Services and school board officials an ourselves. So I can't comment on what future processes might be, but currently if you're one of the 16 community schools, well that's an established program; if you're not, than other than that, it would be sort of how you allocate your operating funds. If they so chose to do something in that area or something more in that area, it would be out of the general operating budget.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well I understood from your first answer that there was special funding from the department for nutritional programs. I guess what I'm asking you is: if another school wanted to start such a program, how would they go about accessing money, not from the board, but how would they get extra money from the department?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — It's as I said, the 16 community schools in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert — that's special funding, if you like, a separate program. Okay? If you're one of the several other however many hundreds

of schools in Saskatchewan in any given school board area, then they would use dollars out of their regular budget.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — So then there isn't a meaningful program where a school who wanted to serve up such a lunch program or breakfast program could tomorrow start one up with funding coming from the Department of Education. Is that what you're telling me?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well yes, but I also said that I couldn't comment on . . . I mean, we talk about tomorrow. I can't talk about tomorrow two weeks or three weeks or six months down the road, because at this point in time, I don't know what will become of these discussions that are ongoing and set up as a result of this joint review process.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Minister, we know that the welfare reform that has taken place, or so-called welfare reform that was started under the previous minister, Mr. Dirks and is continuing on under the present Minister of Social Services, has led in part to the problems that we're now seeing of hungry children going to school. And, of course, I don't hold you responsible nor am I trying to do the estimates of Social Services here, but I think there is a distinct connection between the problem and the cut-backs in welfare programs. And I think you have admitted this now too, that you're having to go the Minister of Social Services to see whether or not we can get some sort of a program that will try to re-establish the social net that has been ripped apart by the Minister of Social Services.

And it seems to me that this community that you're now working with, that is talking about food programs in the schools, may want to look at the possibility of suggesting to the Minister of Social Services that proper funding and proper welfare payments be made to those people who are in need, so that the family can be kept intact and that the school not take over the role of the parents, and that is providing food for the children. It just seems to me that we're going in the wrong direction. Here we have a Minister of Social Services who continues to cut back on the food allowance or doesn't increase the food allowance in order that families can feed their children, and the Department of Education is now being called on to provide lunches and food programs in the school.

And I wonder if you could outline for me the structure of this committee that is now dealing with this disastrous problem that we're seeing in the inner core of the cities, and that is poverty; and then directly related to it, hungry children going to school.

There are many people in the province who simply can't believe that a province where we have a surplus of food . . . Every kind of food imaginable, we have a surplus of in this province. And yet we have a government that is so heartless that we have 25 per cent of the children in this province living below the poverty line and many of them going to school hungry.

And I want to know about this committee that you have struck to deal with the Minister of Social Services. Who is on that committee? What is the mandate? And is one of

the suggestions that you reject the welfare reform program of the previous minister, Mr. Dirks, and the present minister, the member for Melville?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Relative to your last question, the answer would clearly be no. Rejecting welfare reform that's seen by every rational, reasonable person who's prepared to give it an honest look as a very sensible policy, a very positive one for individuals . . . I know that the socialist approach is to try and keep people subservient to the state. That is not our approach. I have talked about that before.

(2100)

I recall well the day that Par Industries, with the contract relative to clearing the brush north of Prince Albert . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You were in this legislature pooh-poohing it in typical socialist fashion, and yet I watched the television that same night, albeit it's not my portfolio, the very positive commentary of the individuals who for the first time maybe in their lives were able to have some on-the-job training, a chance for some gainful employment. They were feeling good about themselves, and you continue to pooh-pooh it. And that's your right; and it doesn't surprise me because I understand, you know, the ideological position that you come from and the fact that you have these ideological blinkers on.

So, you know, to mix this up with welfare reform and that the committee is going to instruct the Minister of Social Services to ban that course, that's, you know, that's political nonsense that you're raising here. And you know it; and I know it; and I suspect the people — if anybody's watching tonight — would also know that.

So that's not even reasonable to suggest that that would be part of the committee's mandate. It's simply Social Services, along with the school board officials, ourselves, to have some discussions on this whole question. I have to admit, as recently as this week, school trustees have raised this issue with me in a sense that they, too, have the same feelings as you expressed in the earlier part of your statement, which maybe had some sense to it — that it, you know, it doesn't seem to make sense in today's society where we have all this food, that we would have hungry children. The fact of the matter is we do. The issue becomes one of, where does the responsibility lie? There is some school boards that would . . . There is some trepidation, I would honestly have to say, amongst school boards, relative to the whole responsibility question. And it's not as though they are hard-hearted about this either. They are as compassionate as anyone, but they do have some trepidation. I say that sincerely. They do raise that with me.

And having said all of that, just to make sure the record is correct for anyone watching, you know, the other point that's relevant in all of this, Mr. Deputy Chairman, is that . . . And I don't pretend to have the exact numbers because we're getting into examination of Social Services estimates, but as I recall it I think Saskatchewan has the . . . What is it, the second highest rates in the country? So if you're asking me if we're committed to helping those who do need it, the answer is yes.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well I was asking you who was on the committee and what the mandate of the committee was. You conveniently avoided answering that question, but I think it's fair to say that there are many people not only in the New Democratic Party caucus and in the New Democratic Party but about 77 per cent of the people in Elphinstone agree with us, when we talk about the disaster that you people have caused in the lives of families in the inner core of the city.

And I think it's difficult to believe a minister who would stand up and have us believe that there's no connection between cut-backs in welfare in the core of urban cities and the fact that we have hungry children going to school and that that's becoming a problem. Now you can make fun of it all you want, Mr. Minister, but I'll tell you: if you've been out canvassing in the Elphinstone constituency, and I think you were, you would not be laughing today and talking about the issue in such a flippant manner and in a jocular way talk about the issue as if it didn't exist. But I want to say to you that it's very clear to the people — who are wiser than you, sir — that the welfare reform issue has everything to do with hungry children in the schools; it has everything to do with it.

The simple fact is, is that there's families in the inner core of cities who can't afford to feed their children. I only try to make the point that it seems to me that rather than continue to cut back in that area and make families dependent on the school board to provide food for their children, that we look at a better way. The better way — it's not a perfect way — would be to allow food increases in the welfare departments so that school boards didn't have to become part of the welfare system. That's the point I'm making. Because I think when you take that kind of independence away from families where they're able to provide for their . . . food for their children, you also destroy the family.

And I'm saying to you, quite seriously, that you as the Minister of Education, rather than going to the treasury board for money for hot food programs in the school, should be assisting the Minister of Social Services because that's where many of this 25 per cent of the children who live below the poverty line fall into, fall into the welfare system; that we wouldn't be gutting the welfare program and moving that money over to the Department of Education. Because it seems to me a wrong-headed move. And that's why school boards are reticent and hesitant to become involved in much the same way that many people are reticent to become involved in food banks; because many of us would rather not that there be food banks in this province.

And we've gone over this before, but the fastest growing industry in this province at the present time is the demand for food in the schools and the food banks. In the '30s they were called soup lines and soup kitchens. And you people have a lot to do with creating them. All I'm asking is, what is the mandate of the committee; what are the proposals that you're putting forward; and can you give us a report on when you expect a report from that committee to be delivered to this Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The Health, Social Services, Education minister, we're involved in the ministerial

level. There's three ADMs at the committee level, at the officials' level that are involved in it. As well, as I said, there has been discussion with school board officials. I take what you have said under consideration and will have to see what comes of these discussions. Relative to the mandate, probably fairly wide ranging, and I suppose the, you know, children at risk, I suppose, would probably encompass virtually all of the issues that they might, at one time or another, look at.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you could as well outline your own personal view of the situation. Are you in favour of expanding the food program in the schools at this time? Is that going to be the recommendation? What are the proposals that you, as minister in charge of the areas, are going to be taking to that committee for approval, or recommendations that you'll be taking there?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well I'm not going to espouse a personal view. Obviously, I'll have my input at the ministerial level.

I think what our policy is has been relatively clear in many of these areas, at least in terms of the fact that we want to address some of these issues to a greater degree. I could think specifically like: when we talk about children at risk, talk about the whole question of drug and alcohol abuse amongst our young people, our young children, just to mention but one category where I think it's safe to say we have probably been, our government has been showing a leadership role across Canada on. And that's only but one area, as I mentioned, in terms of this entire category of children at risk.

And in so far as what may come of these discussions, we'll have to wait until that time. And any announcements will be made in due course, if you like, and I'll give you my feelings relative to the government position at that time.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I was wondering on the time line, too. You say, in due course, but can you give us any indication when we can expect some decision coming out of this committee as it would relate to poverty and children going to school hungry. Is there any time line that you have set for your department to come forward with some recommendations? As we approach now next year's budget and budget development, which usually takes place in the fall of the year, have you got some time lines when you'll be coming forward with a policy that would help deal with the issue of poverty and hunger in the schools? Because as you will know, as Minister of Education, that it's very, very difficult to teach children, to keep their attention and to get the most of children, if they come to school and they are facing hunger as the first item on their agenda.

And I say again that it's very much a new phenomenon in Saskatchewan. It's not one that we have seen since the 1930s. I might add, the last time we had a Conservative government in Ottawa and Saskatchewan back in 1929 to 1935, the last time we had a right-wing government in Ottawa and a right-wing government in Saskatchewan, we had similar circumstances. There are many people who wonder if there isn't more than a passing coincidence that every time that happens in this

province, we have the same kind of situations in our schools with children going hungry.

And I'm not suggesting that's the only reason, but I think some of the wrong-minded things that you people do when it comes to cutting taxes for corporations . . . And we saw it again in this budget, where we saw corporate taxes cut by 2 per cent and the flat tax for individuals going up by 25 per cent, going from 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent. And some of these people who are below the poverty line, believe it or not, are expected to pay that increase in the flat tax while corporations have a reduction.

And I say as well, other things that impact on food in the home in the inner city is the drug plan and the changes and the elimination of what was a world-class drug plan in this province. People who are below the poverty line are making decisions on whether to buy very much needed antibiotics or drugs for their children to put food on the table.

And I say to you, can you tell me what kind of time lines have you set for this committee to report? Will something be in place to deal with this severe issue before the next budget is put together some time in September or October?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well two comments I would make here relative to some time lines. A best guess, or at least it seems to me what would make sense would be to have something in place for the new school year, so that would take you to the end of the summer. And the second point is, yes, you have raised the whole question of hungry children but, you know, the issue is larger than that, as I suggested earlier. I mean there's the whole, the social phenomenon of the double income, no kids, that kind of thing; both parents working, nobody at home when the children come home, that social phenomenon as well, and what are the implications of that. There's a myriad of issues that we're examining that are something more than just poverty because it's hard to suggest that, you know, double income parents might . . . that the issue there might be poverty. So we're looking at something more than just the narrow focus that you're suggesting.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, I listened with, I may say, growing concern to the discussion — if one might be so generous as to describe it that — between you and the member from Regina Elphinstone. Mr. Member, I listened with annoyance mixed, perhaps, with some amusement, to your expression of concern about school lunch programs, and somehow or other attributing to trustees the concern that if you fed the children, they were going to, in some fashion or other, get to enjoy their poverty and hunger and they'd never want to change.

Mr. Minister, there's nothing new or startling about school lunch programs. Not more than a few weeks ago, perhaps a little longer than that, I was discussing with someone who had grown up in Georgia . . . That was Ron Lancaster, the former Roughrider — grew up in Georgia. He got breakfast when he got to school, for two reasons: (1) a long bus ride; and (2) a concern that some of the children might not be well fed when they got there. Mr.

Minister . . . And this in the heart of cracker barrel country in Georgia.

Mr. Minister, American cities have had school lunch programs for decades, there's nothing new or startling about it. It does not rot the social fabric of society. It doesn't cause children to love the hunger and poverty in which they live. It doesn't do a whole lot of harm.

(2115)

I'll tell you what it does do, Mr. Minister. School lunch programs allow children to learn. You could ask any teacher how much you can teach a child who's hungry. Very, very little; you cannot learn on a hungry stomach. Mr. Minister, the problem may not be a very visible one. I doubt, Mr. Minister, if it's going to elect us or defeat you people, but it's nevertheless a serious problem in education. There are a large number — my colleague used the figure of 25 per cent — a large number of children who arrive at school hungry. They can't learn and I suspect very, very few of those children ever make it through high school. I expect a whole lot of them don't make it to high school. It is a serious problem.

So, Mr. Minister, I wonder if we could set aside this myth that somehow or other if you feed children that's going to destroy the moral fabric of society.

Mr. Minister, let me see if I can characterize your progress in the following fashion. You're hurtling towards a solution, I think, as follows: the discussion began in the last calendar year. I think that's accurate; they didn't start after January 1. Mr. Minister, you have had a lot of time to discuss it, ample time to include something within this year's budget. And I gather from what you say, there's nothing in this year's budget which specifically covers the program.

You will say that well we'll rob from some other fund, we'll get it from somewhere else. You might, but if I were a hungry child or a trustee trying to deal with hungry children I wouldn't be very encouraged at a government which has had knowledge of the problem for some months and has done nothing about it.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you would tell us when the discussions began. What has kept you from arriving in a more timely fashion to such a solution? I gather it's not an expensive program in relative terms. I gather it's at least . . . What is being proposed by the trustees is relatively cheap. Mr. Minister, would you tell us when it began; what your commitment to it is — you think it's a good ideal or a bad idea; who sits on the committee; and I really would like some more definite idea of when you think there might be some announcements.

I think, Mr. Minister, I have the uncomfortable feeling that this program is going to come to fruition after the next general election when you people are defeated.

I get the uncomfortable feeling, Mr. Minister, that you agree with the Minister of Human Resources in his attacks on the poor and those on welfare. I get the feeling that that is some sort of a moral falling and all you



really have to do to solve the problem of hungry children is to make their life a little more difficult and they'll realize the error of their ways. But to state it, Mr. Minister, is to refute it.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, will you tell us when the discussions began, why you been foot-dragging as long as you have, and when do you think you'll bring this problem to a conclusion?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Point number one is we're not foot-dragging. As I said earlier, we've got three ministers involved, school boards involved, officials involved, and that discussion has been — or at least that structure — has been in place for some several weeks now.

Secondly, as I told your colleague and seat mate, a best guess at least perhaps some recommendations would be — or at least a sensible time in my mind — would be have something in place for the next school year.

And I guess I would just wonder if the hon. member has really touched base with school trustees on this issue, who, yes, are concerned about hungry children just as you and I might be, but also have these questions in the back of their mind about, you know, the school's first function is: (a) teaching our children and, you know, society keeps off-loading its responsibilities on to it, and where does it start and where does it stop.

And they have legitimate concerns there. And I don't know whether you're speaking for some that I'm not aware of, but I can you tell as recently as this week they recognized the issue in its fullest dimension — probably, with all respect to you, maybe even better than you. And they want us to be very cautious here, and whatever one might do as one must carefully . . . do it carefully. And I suppose on that point I could see us having some fairly extensive co-operation, consultation, and collaboration on this issue.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, I listened to your colleague. I will use his proper title in defence of his office, if not the current incumbent, the Minister of Human Resources.

Mr. Minister, I listened to him running at welfare recipients — the people he's supposed to be speaking on behalf of. On every conceivable occasion, to listen to the member from Melville, one would think that if you gave the people on social assistance any more help, it wouldn't go to pay for lunches for children, it would go to pay for cigarettes or alcohol. And I know precisely how the member from Melville would respond to any suggestion that you give the parents more assistance so they can feed their children. He would have you believe that every single one of them would rather pound it down a rat hole then use it to assist children.

Mr. Minister, even if you accept those . . . Even if those ludicrous views were yours, it seems to me that this problem escapes all of those sins. This solution had lunches provided in schools where presumably it can't be misused by all these errant and immoral parents. There's no possibility of it being misused or spent for something else. By common agreement, you cannot teach children

who are hungry, and those children who come to school hungry in large numbers are not learning anything, are likely to be drop-outs, are likely to present a very serious cost to society in future years.

So, Mr. Minister, I wonder if we could get beyond the concern. I'm sure you could find some trustees who are as conservative as you are. I'm quite sure that that's possible. But I believe, Mr. Minister, the bulk of the trustees in urban school districts want to do something about this; I'm not so convinced you do. I'm not so convinced you don't share the views of your colleague from Melville, that poverty represents some sort of a moral failing and is not to be encouraged by any sort of compassionate approach. I think that's a reasonable — it's not reasonable, but it's a fair summation of the member from Melville's views.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you'd admit that — that there's no danger in providing lunch to children; it's not going to be misused; it isn't going to go to buy cigarettes or alcohol or televisions or whatever else the member from Melville thinks they're wasting it on.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you'd admit that there is hunger; and if you deny there is hunger, I have a suggestion to you. I made an offer to the member from Rosemont — that was in a less happy era when the member from Rosemont had a different identity — the former minister of Social Services. I offered to take him on a tour of my riding. If you don't believe hunger exists in large measure in Regina, how would you like to come for a tour? I'll show you people . . . I don't think you'll come back here and deny hunger exists; it most certainly does. If you don't believe it exists, if you want to see it, let me know. I can give you a tour that will leave you speechless, I'm quite sure. I'm certain that we can.

Will you admit hunger exists? Will you admit children can't learn when they're hungry? Will you admit that there are no dangers of such a program being abused? Will you therefore admit that we've got to get on with the job and do something about it and quit procrastinating? Quite frankly, if there are trustees involved who want to see the government move cautiously, well they're not going to be disappointed with this government. If there's any merit in procrastination, you will satisfy any conceivable yearning that anyone might have in that regard.

I ask you, Mr. Minister: will you admit those three things? There is hunger in the city of Regina; a large percentage of those hungry people are children; they cannot learn when they're hungry; if they're going to learn they got to be fed; and will you admit that you could do that at a relatively modest cost — relative to the size of your budget?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Mr. Chairman, the argument is not whether there are hungry children. I have already said . . . we acknowledge that there are children at risk for a number of reasons. The issue is then what does one do about it? What do we do about it? Your suggestion is that somehow the school, who most trustees see as a place for teaching, are they to pick up all of this and what society would off-load onto them? That, too, is a legitimate

question. I have already said at the ministerial level we have Social Services, Health and Education prepared to look at this large question of children at risk. I don't know as I can say much more without being repetitive.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Children are going hungry in Regina. Mr. Minister, I honestly believe . . . I agree with the member from Lakeview. I honestly say if you'd bring yourself to say it, you'd do something about it. These are not children at risk — no risk of a broken leg, no risk of an injury, no risk of abuse, there isn't any risk at all. They are hungry. The risk is 100 per cent if you want to put it that way. If you just say, Mr. Minister, there are hungry children in the city of Regina and I can feed them, I think you'd do it.

Mr. Minister, one of the oldest injunction given to any ruler is to feed thy people. If you won't follow the injunction — if you won't follow the biblical injunction to feed thy people, will you at least feed thy children?

I really do not understand, Mr. Minister, why you would in any way want to associate yourself with the member from Melville, who I suggest, the name of the member from Melville will long be associated with a bizarre mixture of buffoonery and cruelty when it comes to dealing with people.

Mr. Minister . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well if you think it's out of order — if you think it's out of order, call it. If you don't, sit and listen, Mr. Minister.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, to admit that there are hungry children; admit that you can do something about it at an affordable cost, and then tell us why you think great caution is needed in dealing with the problem.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — I said the last time I was on my feet, we don't disagree or argue that here aren't — I would use the word "children at risk" to cover a large category — hungry children, neglected children, abused children, children that suffer from drug abuse and alcohol abuse. I think all of those exist out there. Some of them maybe have certain demographic characteristics. Some of them certainly, when you look at drug and alcohol abuse, have absolutely no demographic — consistent demographic indices when you look at those.

We agree there's an area here that needs examining. It is being examined. But I also would ask you again, and I would ask the member from Regina Lakeview, who seems to be quite knowledgeable on the subject, at least in her mind, how much discussion you have had with school trustees on this very question? Because it's not nearly — it's not nearly as simplistic as you would suggest. They have some legitimate questions about what is the role of the school and are we merely going to have society off-load all of its responsibilities on to the school? Is that what we're going to do?

And the hon. member raised the question of abuse. Well what are you going to do? Are you going to follow those children home to see what their mom and dad make . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The hon. member, I'm talking about the point that was raised here relative to the poor.

You see, the hon. members think it's quite simple, and yet the trustees themselves don't see this as simplistic as you do. And I would ask you: have you talked to trustees, including the school trustees' association, to get their view on this? Because it's not nearly as simplistic as you would suggest, not nearly as simplistic. And I will encourage you to do that.

(2130)

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, the answer is, I have talked to trustees, I've talked to teachers, I've talked to a goodly number of parents, and unlike, I think, the member opposite, I've talked to some poor people as well. And I think that puts me, at least in that latter comment, one step ahead of you.

Mr. Minister, there's no problem that can't be made so big that nobody could solve it. You want to drag in abused children, children who are subject to alcohol abuse and drug addiction. Mr. Minister, there is no simple solution to abused children. There is no simple solution to drug abuse, to alcohol abuse. But, Mr. Minister, there's a very simple solution to hungry children: feed them in school — feed them in school.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear! Hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I am not for a moment suggesting that it is a role of the school to deal with abused children. I don't know how on earth they'd do that. It is not the role of the school to deal with drug abuse and alcohol abuse among children — I have no idea how they'd do that. But, Mr. Minister, I know precisely how you deal with hungry children. As I say, it was done in the state of Georgia two to three decades ago; it has been done in most American cities for many, many years; it's very simple: take some food into the school cafeteria and feed them.

**An Hon. Member:** — That's all you do?

**Mr. Shillington:** — Yes, amazingly it works. The kids aren't hungry and they have some enthusiasm for mathematics and literature.

So, Mr. Minister, I ask you if you'll stop dragging in red herrings of drug abuse and alcoholism and child abuse and sexual abuse and all the other things you mentioned. Nobody is asking the school to deal with that — they can't — nor can society, but that comment is quite beside the way.

The schools . . . not the schools, the Department of Education can deal with child hunger. They have done it in jurisdictions which I don't regard as anywhere near as innovative in social terms as this one for a very long period of time. It doesn't cost very much. Mr. Minister, I ask you to deal with the problem of child hunger, not children at risk. These children are not at risk of being hungry — the risk is 100 per cent — they are hungry, and you can deal with it.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, feed thy people — if not the people, at least the children.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Minister, I want to go back to the

amount of money that you say you have in the food program at the present time. Can you give me that number again?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The community services program, I think that's what it's called, is \$200,000.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Minister, recently there was a sod turning for a power plant at Estevan, the Shand power project. I think the opening ceremony cost \$250,000 for the opening. No, correct me if I'm wrong, correct me if I'm wrong. Give us the papers . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, you table the documents of how much that sod turning cost.

But I want to say to you that in the constituency of Elphinstone there aren't 25 per cent of the children hungry, there would be over 50 per cent in that constituency that go to bed every night hungry and go to school hungry. And I say to you that the sod turning at the Estevan power plant, Shand, cost more money than all the food programs in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I say to you that that is indictment of this government that we're not going to let you forget. It is bloody criminal that you would allow that kind of spending of money on self-promotion and political promotion — political promotion in Estevan, in the Premier's riding; spend more money on a sod turning than we have for a lunch program for all the children in the province. That's what I say to you.

Now all it would take is one one-hundredth of the amount that was spent the other day in terms of contracts that were given for the power project down there — one one-hundredth to put forward a program that would put a lunch program into the schools where they're needed in this province.

To put it another way, the advertising that this government does, a million dollars, one-tenth of the advertising . . . I'm not asking you to take away all of the advertising. Take one-tenth of the advertising and put it into food for children and you'd solve the problem. You don't have to have a committee set up of the Minister of Social Services, because I'll tell you if you have that bird involved, you're never going to get anything done because he'll attack the families; he'll attack the children; he'll say they don't need any more money. They don't need food because they can grow vegetables in their backyard.

Now if you could imagine something so ridiculous as having apartment dwellers on welfare trying to grow a garden in Regina Elphinstone, I mean, the people in Elphinstone were laughing at that minister quite openly. They were laughing at him. And I'll tell you, he reflected on the Premier because they were laughing at the Premier as well for having a minister who would make such an absurd statement.

They would know, and you should know that the lots . . . for example, most lots in the Elphinstone riding are 25 foot lots — that's the frontage. The houses basically cover the lot. The people out there were laughing. In a strange way they were laughing because it hurt to cry, but they

were laughing at that minister that would say to the people in that constituency that they should grow gardens to solve their problem of not having any income. Because if they didn't laugh, they would cry.

And I say to you, Mr. Minister, that this problem of hungry children . . . 50 per cent of the children in the Elphinstone riding go to school hungry, and you could solve it tomorrow. It's not an issue of whether there's money in this province or not — there is money. We found that out the other day when you had the opening of the . . . sod turning of the Shand project where you spent more money than we are spending in a year on a food program for children. And I'm saying to you, Mr. Minister, that it's your responsibility to stand up and fight for that kind of money in your department and put that program in place. We have found that you can't depend on the Minister of Social Services to do it so we're asking you, and the reason we're asking you is because I believe you have more integrity and I believe more because I know your background. I know where you come from, and I know the kind of things that your family believe in. And I just say to you that we're asking that because we know that you have the wherewithal, if you believe it, to get that kind of money and get that program in place. And if you do, we would be the first to stand up and agree with you and thank you for doing it.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all, the hon. member for Saskatoon Centre asks if his colleague has been guilty of some indiscretion.

**An Hon. Member:** — Regina Centre.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — From Regina Centre. There was certainly a goodly amount of newspaper reporting about that relative to the new member for Regina Elphinstone. If the hon. member's statement is indeed true, in a country that is as rich as we are, that 50 per cent of the children in Elphinstone are going to school hungry, then there's something far deeper here than I am aware of. I would wonder about that statement quite frankly.

Relative to sod turning and costs, I have no information for you there because that's not an area that I have responsibility for, and quite frankly don't know what the numbers are, but I doubt that it's anywhere what you have suggested.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I would ask you then, Mr. Minister, if you think it's reasonable that you would spend more on a sod turning for the Shand project than you would spend on a lunch program for all the children in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that was about 3,000 people turned out and that the cost of the sod turning was something less than \$10,000. I guess you were a little bit out on that one — \$240,000 out. If you want to set the record straight on the factual standpoint relative to that, that would be the numbers.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well I would challenge the minister to table the bills from the Shand opening, because the reports that came out that were around, and that no one refuted at the time, were in excess of 200,000.

And I say to you that if the member from Souris-Cannington wants to table them, we have documents of his spending records as he's flown around the world in the last six years, and we could compare the lunch program to those spendings as well, if we want to have someone run out and get those documents.

And I say to you that there's no question, we have the money to put the program in place. I don't think there's any question that we have the money to put the program in place. It's the question of whether or not the minister has the will and the integrity to do it. And that's what we are asking you to do.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear! Hear!

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Yesterday when I was discussing with you the case of funding of the universities, we had talked briefly about the amounts that the university students were paying and comparing that the amount that they had been paying percentage-wise in years previous. And if I just review some of the remarks, one of the things that we got to discussing was how much money you'd put into the university, and you'd established that, yes, the provincial grants had kept up with inflation or, yes, the provincial grants had kept up with increase in the number of students.

But when we put together the situation, we really had both of those happening at the same time, that there was inflation, and also there was also a tremendous increase in student, or the number of credit hours that the universities were funding. Then we took all that into consideration.

Calculations that I had done showed me that the average payment or funding per student had decreased by 23 per cent since your government took place. And I believe the Premier acknowledged that, that if you did a calculation on that basis, that would be true.

Now what has happened then to make up the shortfall is that the amount that the students had to pay in tuition has gone up. It's gone up so that the amount the students have been paying, which used to be in the vicinity of 11 per cent around 1979, is now in the vicinity of around 18 per cent of the total revenue of the universities.

Now what is this doing to the full-time students who are taking the programs? The full-time students that are taking the programs now have to borrow up to \$6,000 a year, up to \$6,000 a year before they get some type of bursary, or in this case we call it a forgiveness of loan.

That means that my daughter or anybody else's daughter or son that goes to the university now and is borrowing money will end up with an unprecedented debt — \$6,000 a year, possibly more; \$6,000 a year, possibly more — and the worry that I have here, Mr. Minister, is that we've never had students, I don't think, except for possibly for some of those in the medical profession or dentistry, some of six-year courses, that would end up with that kind of a debt. And we're now getting into that kind of situation. We've never had that, students that are being faced with that kind of a debt when they're finished.

I asked you some questions with respect to how many people are taking loans, and you gave me the numbers. And I want to ask you now some questions related to the numbers of students who took loans and who got bursaries. And could you supply me with the numbers of how many students in each of the last three years had loans forgiven.

Now in the last, I guess, two years previous it would be bursaries, they would have been called bursaries, and right now they would be called forgive loans, but I'm looking at it the same way. So for 1987-88 how many of the 17,600 that you told me that got loans actually had anything forgiven for 1986-87 of the 17,000, and also for the year previous to that.

(2145)

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — The hon. member covered a fair amount of ground in that question. And relative to the fact that as one takes on a . . . undertakes a post-secondary education where, unlike the K to 12 education system, it is not free. The student and/or the student's family are expected to contribute something. And 30 or 40 years ago the student was responsible, or ended up paying for about 25 per cent on the cost of his education. Today that number at universities is down around 15 per cent, and at technical institutes it's down around 4 per cent.

So there's been a significant easing, if you like, in a relative sense to the student, and maybe that's so as it should be. Although, quite frankly, I can't understand why the taxpayers would on the one hand think it's acceptable to pick up 96 per cent of the cost if you go to a technical institute but only 85 if you go to university, and that's something that we've been turning our head to some degree in conjunction with the boards at all those institutions.

The average debt load, and this is I think will be of interest for all members of the Assembly. A regular student graduating this spring after four years of post-secondary education, on average, will owe approximately \$13,000 in federal and provincial loans. And so I ask you, and all members of the Legislative Assembly . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — How much?

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — After a four-year program the student, perhaps my child, will owe \$13,000. Now I ask you . . . yes, 13,000 is a substantive sum of money, but is that an unreasonable investment for that young person to make in a career that's going to have tremendous returns, not only to him as an individual but as well to society.

Yes, 13,000 is a substantive number but, when you think about it, not an unreasonable investment for a student to make in his future. Certainly, if one was to undertake farming, even at today's low land prices, you certainly couldn't make an investment of \$13,000 and think that that was going to somehow set you up in farming. Now certainly there will be people, perhaps individuals in the health sciences where that number might be larger, some would be lower, but it's worth keeping that number in mind because we hear a lot of numbers.

And I might add that the Canadian ministers of education council, the task force, or the officials committee, or the sub-committee that we have working on this, also came to the conclusion, at least in a preliminary fashion, that although we hear a great deal about student debt — and I wouldn't want to minimize it as an issue — but they came to the conclusion, as well, that student debt load in a relative sense, you know, hasn't necessarily been kept in proper proportion. Or another way of putting it, the headlines are sometimes twice the magnitude of the issue. But our numbers are \$13,000, and I think that's significant and that all members would be interested in knowing that.

Another point that we haven't raised in the Assembly that's worth noting is that our government has consistently been very committed to scholarship and scholarships. And if you look at the history of funding there at the two universities, in '81-82 there was 1.8 millions of dollars for university scholarships, in '88-89 that number has risen to over 6 million. And that's a substantial form of assistance via the scholarship route to students as well — from 1.8 million seven years ago, to now over 6 millions of dollars. I think that's worth noting as well.

And in fact when I was up speaking to the grad students' association after last year's budget, I suppose it almost came as a pleasant surprise to myself when the person introducing me to the group had very kind things to say about the scholarship track record relative to funding. And I thanked him for it and they are very appreciative of it.

The points that I have made here before about the university funding: over the past six years it's increased 36.4 per cent. Our tuition fees are not out of line with the rest of the province . . the rest of the country, rather.

And to answer the question about bursaries and forgivable loans, I would offer this to the hon. member: since '81-82, the average free assistance through Saskatchewan student bursaries, forgivable loans, is projected to increase 60 per cent from approximately \$1,000 to \$1,600. The 4,000 students projected to be assisted will be approximately the same number as assisted in '81-82, which was 4,420.

Having said that, the special incentive bursaries, forgivable loans, since the first year of the program in '83-84 to '87-88, free assistance to disadvantaged students through special incentive bursaries, forgivable loans, is projected to increase over six times — that is from half a million to three and a half million. The number of students will increase over seven times from approximately 230 to 1,600; seven times and six times respectively, Mr. Chairman. Free assistance under this program is anticipated to be yet another 25 per cent higher in '87-88 than in '86-87.

So I'm proud of our record on student assistance. I'm proud of the new initiatives that have been pioneered by my colleagues and previous advanced ministers of Education, and I'm also proud of where Saskatchewan stacks up across the rest of the country in student aid

because it speaks directly to the question of accessibility. And the numbers, are there. There are more and more young people having access to post-secondary education. There are more and more young people receiving some form of assistance, and certainly when it comes to those who are most needy this has been a very successful program.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:55 p.m.