

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Public Service Commission
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 33

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, officials, welcome back. As we left off, Minister, I was talking about the student employment program, and I noted that last year there was 1,683 students hired from a budget of \$4,864,500. This year that budget is cut by half a million, to just over \$4.3 million. Does that mean, Minister, a decrease of 175 students employed in your summer employment program, from this student employment program in the Public Service Commission vote?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, we have the same amount of money in the blue book. The \$500,000, as I mentioned the other night, goes to the environmental program that's for students this summer. It's gone into the environmental department, but the blue book number is still the same in the Public Service Commission for summer students.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, in April of 1990 there was 806 young people between 15 and 24 years of age who fled from Saskatchewan because they didn't have any reason to stay, one can assume because there was no employment for them and no employment prospects for them. So 806 young people's hopes have been dashed and they fled from this province in April of this year. Since January 1990, this very year, there's been 2,678 young men and women left for the same reason. That is atrocious, sir.

While that is taking place, we see a cut in the student employment program, in the Public Service Commission student employment program. You're telling me that the same half million dollars has been moved into the Department of Environment. Well I'll bet you any amount of money you want that the Department of Environment is calling this brand-new money, and your government is going around telling young people that, oh look what wonderful people we are; we've found another half million dollars.

I laud the fact that you're doing something with environmental employment and young people. That's great. But you're going to be going around . . . On the Public Service Commission you're saying no, it's not a cut. When you get to the Environment estimates, you're going to say, oh this is new money; this is something wonderful we're doing for young people.

Minister, the numbers speak for themselves — nearly 2,700 young people having fled from Saskatchewan so far this year. That's not counting the month of May. That's the future and the hope of our province. Now why is it that you allowed a cut in the Public Service Commission budget of \$500,000 in the student employment

programs? Why didn't you find an additional 2 or \$3 million? You've got all kinds of money for Cargill and the fertilizer plant; you had \$5 million to blow on a Guy Montpetit computer scam; why couldn't you find one or two extra million dollars for a student youth summer employment program?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the total number is still \$4,864 million, which is in the blue book. As I explain now for the third time, the \$500,000 that is showing is going to be in the environmental fund is not a decrease of 500,000 or half a million dollars. It's the same amount as it was last year, and that \$500,000, Mr. Chairman, is going to be used for the student environmental program, and it's for students only, Mr. Speaker. There has not been a cut. It's the same amount of money as last year, Mr. Speaker, \$4.864 million.

Mr. Trew: — Okay, Minister, since we want to get into the Environment and Public Safety estimates, tell me how many student jobs are going to be created by this same amount of money that was in the Public Service Commission estimates last year. That amount of money which you have transferred into the Environment and Public Safety, how many jobs for students is that going to translate into? Tell me the criteria that you're using to guarantee the maximum employment of summer students.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the Public Service Commission allocates the dollars but the student employment pay will be depending on the collective agreement, Mr. Speaker. So in theory, Mr. Chairman, it would be the same number of students.

Mr. Trew: — Well that's interesting, Minister, because as we're flopping around in various departments, I see under Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Saskatchewan student employment program cut from \$3.11 million last year to 2.61 million this year. There's another half million dollar cut in your student employment programs. How do you square that with the unemployed students and the people who are desperately in need of summer jobs so that they can continue their secondary education?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, I repeat again that \$500,000 will be used in the environmental fund. The Minister of the Environment, Mr. Chairman, has advised me that the environmental program for students — and it will be a program just for students, Mr. Chairman — that that program could even be expanded as is warranted, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I can see we're getting nowhere in this. You've got a half a million dollars cut from the student employment program under the human resources labour program, half a million dollars cut there. You've got a half a million dollars cut from the Public Service Commission's student employment program, and you're adding a half a million under the environment. Well when you take away a million and you add a half a million, you're still a half a million dollars short.

And frankly, the students who desperately need this money to fund their post-secondary education, particularly in light of your nearly 10 per cent increase in tuition at the University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, at the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) institutes around the province — these students need employment. And what do you say? Oh it's not a cut.

We could start some elementary math, if you like. If you've got 10 apples and you take away five apples or, pardon me, if you cut five apples and take away 10 apples . . . I don't know, but you owe five apples somehow no matter how you cut it.

And I am saying to you, Minister, that you have let down the students and the young people, the young men and women in this province. You have let them down, sir, by allowing that half million dollar cut in the student employment program. Seeing we're into a harangue, you are saying, well, you know, when you take away a total of a million dollars and you add a half a million dollars, that's not really a cut. And I'm saying, when you take away a million dollars and you add a half a million dollars, you're still half a million dollars short — half a million dollars short. How many students, Minister, will be hired through the student co-op program this year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, what the member was speaking about earlier was the Opportunities '90 employment program, and I would advise him that he should be talking with the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment about that one. The \$500,000 that we have tossed around here this evening relates strictly to the environmental fund that's been established for students — only for students. The same amount of money that is being used through Public Service Commission to hire students this year is the same as it was last year. Five hundred thousand of that has been taken over to the environmental fund. And as I said, the Minister of Environment has said that if need be that could be expanded. As to the answer to your last question on the co-op program, the number is 77.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, if you want to get political, we'll get political. According to your answer you would have us believe that under the Human Resources, Labour and Employment student employment program — I mean read my lips if you can't read the blue book: student employment program — you'd have us believe that that money is for some employment other than student. If it is, it's clearly mislabelled in your blue book.

You cut half a million dollars from the student employment program in the Human Resources, Labour and Employment. You cut half a million dollars from the Public Service Commission student employment program. You tell me that you've added a half a million dollars to the — oh, but it's for students only. Well that's wonderful news. You took a million dollars from two students-only programs, and then you add a half a million to a new students-only program and you'll have those young men and women believe that somehow you're doing them a favour? They don't believe it, Minister.

Take a little trip out to the Regina campus of the university. Go to any of the technical institutes in this province. Go to the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Walk around the campus for a whole day.

An Hon. Member: — And listen.

Mr. Trew: — And listen, is a good point — and listen. Ask them. Take a personal poll amongst those students. Find out what they're going to be doing this summer. Find out what employment they've got, Minister, and then tell them, say, oh well we didn't really cut your student employment program by a million dollars; we're just, just . . . Well there's a half million dollars that kind of disappeared into thin air; we're not sure where, but it sure isn't going to go to providing you a job. You tell those young students that.

Who got the money? Is it Cargill?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't know how many times I have to say this for him to understand it. The blue book number is \$4.864 million, the same amount of moneys we had last year for hiring students, presumably the same number of students. Five hundred thousand dollars of that \$4.864 million was taken and put into the environmental fund to hire students this summer. So you add the \$500,000 — still comes to \$4.864 million. And presumably we'll be hiring the same number of students as we were last year because of the environmental fund that's available — the \$500,000 — plus the possibility that, as the Minister of Environment says, that there could even be more students hired if it warrants it.

(1915)

Mr. Trew: — Forgive me for not being reassured, Minister. I want to know the official line of the Conservative government now. The half million dollars that goes into the environment, does it come from the Public Service Commission, or does it come from the Human Resources, Labour and Employment student employment program, which was cut by the exact same amount? Now which did it come from? Did it come from Public Service Commission or Human Resources, Labour and Employment?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, what it shows is that the Public Service Commission was cut by \$500,000, which was moved into the environmental fund to hire students — \$500,000 for an environmental corps for students. It still amounts to \$4,864,000.

Mr. Trew: — It's very interesting to see the minister conferring with the Minister of Environment and saying that the half million dollars found for the Department of Environment in fact came from the Public Service Commission. You might want to tip off the member from Melville — the minister responsible for Human Resources, Labour and Employment — that he's going to have to answer to our critic, to the New Democratic caucus, and to the young men and women of Saskatchewan for the half million dollars that he lost them. And you haven't heard the end of this particular issue. You might as well tell that particular minister

because we've clearly got you on record after you talking with the Minister of Environment that the half million dollars you lost goes to the Department of Environment. So we've got that settled.

Minister, a few minutes ago I asked you how many students were hired through the student co-op program this year; you said 77. That's fine. I accept that. Who pays for these students, Minister? Do they come out of the Public Service Commission budget or do they come out of the budget of the respective individual departments for whom they are working? And could you provide us with a list of all student employment appointments by their political constituency, please?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — No, of course not. How could I possibly know that? I mean, I don't have that information — what political persuasion, what polls they're from. I don't have the list of the students, where they were hired from, what constituencies they're hired from.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, that stretches all kinds of credibility. You can sit there and be as pious as you want. I produced a list in the legislature last year, that very same thing. I do not have it for this year. I do not have it for this year. I . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. There's too many debates going on across the floor to be able to hear members put their question or the minister give his answer. I'd ask anyone else that wants to get into the debate later certainly will have all kinds of opportunity from either side of the House. So allow the exchange between the critic and the minister to carry on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I mean, frankly, it's unbelievable that you would not have that report. It has been done for years in the past. I know I produced a copy of that list this very past estimates, Public Service Commission estimates a year ago. I could tell you, sir, that from memory the constituency of Regina Wascana did very, very well — did very well.

And I can tell you that if you look at the list, by and large it was the ridings the Tories are sitting in that did very well. I wonder why that is. And I wonder, sir, why it is you're going to stand up and claim that oh, I have no knowledge of any such list. And you're going to say you don't have one. Well I'm asking you to produce it. Table it so that we can understand the information that you have.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, my interest is in hiring students. I don't know where they come from. I don't know what political party they belong to or what constituency they're from. I do not keep a list of what students are hired and where they're from. I do not have the list nor do I want to have the list.

Mr. Trew: — Well it's interesting that in year eight of the Conservative government, suddenly you no longer care who you hire. Suddenly it doesn't matter if there's a blue dot on the application or not. How do you code applications these days, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I've already answered that question, Mr. Chairman. I don't have the list.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I don't want to know the names of the young men and women that are hired by department. I'm just wanting to know the number of individuals hired and from which constituency they originate. That's all I'm asking. It's not a complicated effort. You're talking a relatively small number of young men and women. You know that and certainly the young men and women know that, because there is so precious few of them that do get hired in Saskatchewan. All I'm asking for is a list with the number that would say, for example, 15 students from Regina North, etc.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, we don't keep that kind of information. I don't have access to that kind of information; we don't keep those kind of numbers.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, two years ago that information was sent to MLAs just as a standard matter of course. Now why would you change that policy? I'm not asking for the names of the students; I'm not interested in that either. I just want to have the ability to see that my constituency doesn't get just 10 young people hired and yours 78, for example.

That's all I'm trying to protect, is to see that the jobs that are given to young men and women of Saskatchewan are distributed in somewhat a representative way by constituency. That's all I ask. And we're not insisting that each constituency have a quota so that each one only has 20 or 24 students hired. We're not asking that it be strictly adhered to. We just want to see it in overall broad terms so that the young people of Saskatchewan can have some appreciation that the jobs are spread around.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, I repeat again that my interest is in hiring students. Quite frankly, I don't care what constituency they come from because I don't keep those kind of records, nor do I want that information. We have \$4.864 million in the budget to hire students, the same as we had last year and presumably we'll hire the same number of students with the same amount of money. But I do not keep those kind of records, nor have I asked my officials to keep those kind of records. I don't want to know what constituency the students come from. So that's the answer, and I can't change the answer. So if you ask it again, you're going to get the same answer.

Hon. Mr. Gerich: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Gerich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the member opposite for his time.

I would like to introduce to you 13 students from the Saulsteaux Indian School in Cochin, Saskatchewan. They're from grades 5 and 6. They're accompanied by their teacher, Diane Lappan, and their chaperon, Julia Night. And I hope that their visit to the House this evening is educational and interesting, and I hope that they have a

safe trip home tomorrow evening. Please make our guests welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Public Service Commission Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 33

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Trew: — I'm at a loss, Minister, to understand why the shift in policy. You say you can't change the answer. You certainly can. You simply have to turn to any one of your officials and ask that that information be got. Give us on this side a timetable of when it will be. If you give us your word that it will be by June 15 we'd have those numbers, that would be perfectly all right.

As you can appreciate, sir, just because a student is hired from a Conservative riding doesn't mean that that student will vote Conservative, nor if they're hired from an NDP riding does it mean they will vote NDP. It in no way, shape, or form reflects upon the politics of an individual being hired. We are just trying to establish with a degree of certainty that you're not loading up all of the hiring from one or a small number of constituencies that, in fact, those summer jobs are spread around. And I can tell you, sir, it is a matter of a great deal of interest to quite a number of young people, particularly in the north end of Regina, and I'm sure it's of interest to young people right across the province.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I say again that my interest is in providing jobs for students. That's my priority. And we're doing the best we can with \$4,864,000. I will not ask my officials to provide me with a list that states where these students . . . what constituencies they come from. I won't do it because I don't . . .

Mr. Trew: — Minister, why will you not provide us with a simple number beside each constituency which has been done in recent years certainly? Why will you not provide a simple list? It covers one eight and a half by 11 piece of paper that lists the constituency and the number of students. I don't want names. I don't want names — just constituency and the number of students — 64 constituencies and you got the numbers.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, by doing that, I would tend to politicize the hiring process, and that's the farthest thing from my mind with the Public Service Commission. Under the collective bargaining agreement, Mr. Speaker, it says:

No test or question on any application or examination shall be constructed to call for or lead to disclosure of any information concerning any political, religious, fraternal, or racial affiliation, preferences, or opinions. Any disclosure and any information therefore which may nevertheless be revealed shall be disregarded.

And I will not instruct my officials to do that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Trew: — What an 11th hour repentance on the road to Damascus — how absurd. Last year you had no qualms at all, last year your government had no qualms at all about producing that list and circulating it to MLAs. It's not political. It was circulated . . . to my knowledge all MLAs in the legislature in Saskatchewan got the list, Minister — all MLAs got it.

All we're asking is to . . . so that we can see that you haven't loaded up with young students from your constituency alone. Now I welcome young people from the constituency of Regina Wascana to get summer employment. They're certainly as entitled to it as are young people from Regina Elphinstone or I could name any other constituency in the province. But your reluctance to share this list which has been shared in recent years, your reluctance to share that list, Minister, really leaves us wondering. What is it you're hiding?

Now will you provide that list as I've asked for it or else will you tell us what it is you're hiding?

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not hiding anything. It's my understanding that the list was put out a couple of years ago, not last year as the member has suggested. Once I understood and heard that that had been done, I said it won't be done any more. I will not ask my officials to disclose the residence of anybody who's hired for the student summer employment program.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, what are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I'm not hiding anything.

Mr. Trew: — It's a simple matter of opinion. We have run out of trust, Minister. We have run out of patience. Young people . . . I mean you're saying, trust me, trust me. This from the man who allowed a half a million dollars to be taken from the student employment program under the Public Service Commission. And he says, trust me, I'll do right by you, trust me. Well sorry, it doesn't wash with the young men and women in this province.

Minister, we're simply asking for a list that has been tradition, it's been released in the past. You are accountable to the young men and women . . . well you're accountable to us and through us to the young men and women, the students of Saskatchewan, indeed to all the taxpayers. We're not asking for political information, just a simple, fair memo that will give us the confidence that, in fact, you are as you say, interested only in providing as many jobs as you can to the young men and women of Saskatchewan.

If we see that list, we will see some semblance of fairness, I'm sure, constituency by constituency. If we don't see that list, Minister, I'm not in the least bit assured that we're going to see any fairness whatsoever in the hiring practices and it will leave that question, what are you hiding. So will you provide that list?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, we do not ask any of our part time, temporary, casual, labour service, permanent, or students on any application as to what constituency they come from. Our students are hired based on knowledge, skills, and abilities. Location from where they come from is not a factor, Mr. Speaker, nor will it be a factor as long as I'm with the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, would you describe the application form or the employment commencement form? Does that include two items or, well, one item? Does that include such things as, say, an address?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Anyone that applies for a job with the Government of Saskatchewan probably puts an address on their application. We do not make a big issue out of it, nor will we determine that factor for you.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, using your computers, or failing that, maybe you should bring back Guy Montpetit and you could use his computers. I suspect they might even be able to tell from that address and get that information in probably about as much time as we've been addressing it this evening. Will you use the latest in technology, use your computer and prepare such a list with the numbers of students employed?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — No, I will not give the information that the member wants. He wants the addresses and the constituency of where these students come from. As far as I'm concerned the location is not a factor. We're interested in hiring students, Mr. Chairman, we're not interested in what constituency they come from. They're hired on the basis of ability and skill, not on the basis of what constituency they come from.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I hope that the young people . . . I'm sure their communication skills will be somewhat improved upon what we're witnessing tonight. Minister, I'm not asking for the student's address. I'm just asking for a constituency name — and the chief electoral officer has all of the constituency names there, if you can't remember them — and I do know that your officials can find that.

Now all I'm asking for, for example, Regina North East 12 — if that's the number of young people that's employed; Regina Elphinstone 10 or 20, or whatever the number is; Regina Wascana 50, or whatever the number is. That's all I'm asking. We on this side are not asking for the individual addresses. We just want to see that there is some equity in hiring, that it isn't as we suspect — and as it has been in the past — where the employment is very, very heavily weighted in favour of a very select few number of constituencies. All we want is to have some assurance that the fairness in hiring takes place. Now will you provide that list?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the Public Service Commission does not ask any employee what constituency they come from. They never have nor will they in the future. Mr. Speaker, many of the student applications that come in for summer employment have a university address on them, Mr. Speaker. Many of the students live in rural Saskatchewan or they're at

University of Saskatchewan, the University of Victoria, wherever. That's the address that they give, Mr. Speaker. And it would be very difficult to nail them down as to where they actually come from. And we're not going to ask them.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, how many students were hired from the constituency of Regina Wascana this year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I have no idea, nor do I want to know. I say again, Mr. Chairman, the location where the students are hired is not a factor in their hiring. The students are hired on the basis of knowledge, skills, and abilities, not how they vote, not what constituency they come from. I fail to see why they persist in trying to identify the students. Why would they care about that?

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I have no interest in identifying the students. I can tell you unequivocally that the number of students that were listed from Regina North last year, I didn't know the majority of them. Minister, a simple question for you. Certainly your officials will know the answer to this one. How was the list compiled in the past?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the list that the member keeps referring to has only been done once in the last 10 years. It was done by an inexperienced employee, and once the chairman of the Public Service Commission found out about it, the service was discontinued. And it will not be reintroduced, Mr. Speaker, as long as I am the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

Students are hired on the basis of skill, ability, and knowledge; not on from which constituency they come from, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trew: — And there will be no gas tax reintroduced either, as long as there is a Conservative government in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, let me take you back, not that many years ago, not as long as the promise that was repeated just prior to the '86 election. Let me refer you to March 19, 1990. You can appreciate we're now two months later, but in the Speech from the Throne it said — and this is a fairly short quote, but I think you will have a better appreciation, sir, of what it is we're asking for when you realize the commitment that you made in the Speech from the Throne — and I quote:

My ministers will continue to have open dialogue with the people of Saskatchewan to ensure programs and services are meeting their needs and that the public is receiving value for its hard-earned tax dollar.

Minister, will you practise a little bit of that openness. Will you practise a little bit of explaining to the citizens of Saskatchewan through this Legislative Assembly. Will you provide that list that I've been asking for — constituency and the number of students. I don't want names; I don't want addresses; I don't want any of that, just the constituency and the number of students, because anything less, Minister, is an abrogation, it's a cover-up. It's an abrogation of what you said, your government said in the throne speech March 19, 1990. I mean, how long

does it take you to break your word? Now will you provide the list or won't you?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the attitude of open dialogue that this government has been in for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, will continue to grow, Mr. Speaker, as long as this government is in power. I say again, Mr. Chairman, that parents do not want their children hired by constituency, they want them hired on their ability, on their ability, on their skill, and on their knowledge. The answer is clearly: I will not provide you with that information because it is not part of the Public Service Commission's mandate to do that nor will we do it.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, thank you. You've made precisely the point that I have been trying to make all evening. We want young people, students, young men and women hired on the basis of their ability to do a job, not on the basis of which constituency they live in.

Quite clearly we have, without directly attacking the hiring practices, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to know what we're getting at. We're simply looking, Minister, to assure the young people of Saskatchewan that there is fairness in the hiring practice, that young men and women can be hired on the basis of their ability to do the job. That's what we want. We don't want the political interference that says, oh you've got to hire, there's a quota of so many students that have to be hired from a constituency like Regina Wascana. We don't want that. We want the hiring spread around. And from your past record, from your past history we have to have that list so that we can see there's no interference. If we don't see that list, we can only assume that it's worse than our wildest nightmares and certainly worse than it has been before.

On the other hand, provide us the list and then we'll know exactly what the truth is. Provide the list, will you, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — You had my answer. There is no list. We hire the students on the basis of skill, knowledge, and ability, Mr. Chairman. There is no list nor will I put the list together.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I've asked the members before to allow the debate to go on between the critic and the minister. And if other members want to interfere, they'll certainly have an opportunity to rise and be recognized, but at this time I'd ask them to allow the debate to continue uninterrupted.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, you talked about the spirit of openness growing as long as you are in the government. I suppose this is the same openness that you are talking about when the Premier stormed out of a meeting with farmers in this very legislature since the legislature started sitting this spring — stormed out of the meeting because he couldn't stand to talk with some farmers. Is that the spirit of openness you're talking about? Is that the same spirit of openness that leads you to draw the conclusion that you have now? Is that the same spirit of openness, Minister, that will not allow you to share some very easy-to-get information?

You said in an earlier answer that it was a very junior employee that put it together on his or her own. I assume that that junior employee didn't take a whole year to compile that list. I would rather assume it was significantly less time than that.

In the spirit of openness, Minister, I mean show us, show us this openness. Give us the list that says the number of students hired by constituency. I do not want the names, the addresses, or anything. I just want a list that says, here's the constituency, here's the number of students that were hired; here's the next constituency, here's the number of students that were hired there. It's a very simple process. I'm asking you, sir, in the spirit of openness that you and your Premier ascribe to, that the throne speech was full of, in that new spirit of co-operation and openness, will you share that information with your colleagues in the Legislative Assembly?

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll repeat again, there is no list of what constituency the students are hired from and/or in which constituency they live. Students are hired on the basis of the qualifications based on skill, experience, and knowledge, as well as work experience and past experience.

And, Mr. Chairman, I will not — I repeat, I will not ask my officials to prepare a list of summer students from which constituencies they come. I will not do that, so there's no sense in continuing with this line of argument because there's not going to be a list. I will not produce a list because there isn't one. Nor will I prepare one.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, there's many people that think there's no sense in continuing what we are doing. They are simply waiting for the next general election so they can turf you out and get on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I talked about March 19 and the Speech from the Throne. Well let me call that ancient history and we'll move up a little bit to March 29 and the budget address.

And in the conclusion, Minister — I'm going to quote from the conclusion on page 15. Here it goes:

Saskatchewan will achieve its goals if we all work together. We will succeed if we avoid a narrow, partisan agenda. We must develop and implement policies that are good for all people — for today and tomorrow.

Minister, those are really, really nice words . . . wonderful words. But let's get done with this "narrow, partisan politics," as you would refer to it. Let's be done with it. Either show us the list or tell us that our fears are correct. Tell us then that the hiring has been done on the basis of constituency and that some constituencies such as yours have benefitted very much.

Minister, in the spirit of openness, non-partisanship — as

you talked about in the budget debate where you say, “we will succeed if we avoid a narrow partisan agenda” — well let’s avoid that narrow partisan agenda. Share the list. It’s a simple task. Not going to take very many person-hours to put that together, and then we’ll know the truth. Minister, share that list.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, location in the hiring of summer students is not a factor. If we needed a student with a geological background, we hire a student who studies geology. If we need a civil engineering student, we hire a civil engineering student. If we need somebody who works in biochemistry, we get a biochemistry student. We want somebody to work in the nursing profession, we find somebody who’s studying nursing.

I mean, the people are hired on the basis of knowledge, skill, and experience and past experience. It has nothing to do with where they live. And as I said prior to this, often the student will put on their address the university address and which university they’re attending. The location from where this student is from, the constituency from which they are from, is not a factor in the hiring process. I do not have a list nor will I have a list of that nor will I ask them to prepare a list. End of story.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, the young men and women who want jobs in Saskatchewan don’t believe you are non-partisan for a minute. Walk around the technical institutes or either of the two universities in Saskatchewan and you will find students that have been denied employment because they refused to play the silly little game. They refused to take out a Tory membership . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Regina South says boloney. I have one in my constituency, I’ve talked to that young woman.

An Hon. Member: — Give me a name.

Mr. Trew: — Yes, give you a name so you can really get at her. Not a chance.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, there is no way that the young people will believe that there isn’t partisan politics entered into in the hiring practices. There are story after story after story about individuals who have not been hired and the individuals selected happen to have a blue card. And I’ll tell you, in most instances they just took out that blue card. And I’ll tell you this one step further, Minister, they laugh at that blue card.

They’ll take it out, they’ll use the summer employment which they desperately need because they have so little hope. They don’t want to join the 2,678 other young people who have fled from Saskatchewan so far this year alone. So they’ll play your silly little game because it’s so vitally important to them to have the opportunity to earn some money before they have to go back to their post-secondary education. But not for two seconds, sir, do the young people, the students in Saskatchewan, not for two seconds do the majority of them believe that there isn’t blatant political . . . partisan political interference

with the hiring and selection process of students for summer employment.

Now, Minister, will you simply, to alleviate some of this, these things we’re talking about, will you direct a junior member of your staff to go to work, put together the list that we’ve been after you for for some time now, put together that list, prove for once and for all either that we’re right or we’re not. But put the list together and then we’ll know where we’re at.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the students of this province do not want to be hired on the basis of what political party they support. Students want to be hired on the basis of their knowledge or skills and their abilities and their work experience, Mr. Chairman.

I will not ask them to prepare a list. There is no list of where these students live. Their location is not a factor in where they’re hired, and I will not ask them to prepare that list, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, on March 27 the Premier, in *Hansard*, said, and I quote:

We are going to implement a set of guide-lines for ethical conduct of cabinet ministers and legislative secretaries. I want to investigate the benefits of access to information rules (the Premier says) . . .

Well you don’t even need to investigate the rules, just start right here tonight. Come clean with us; provide that list. Do what your Premier said in this Legislative Assembly, or does this place mean that little to you people? Will you do what you said you would do in the Speech from the Throne, what you said you’d do in the budget address, and what the Premier said in his response to the Speech from the Throne? I mean, if it’s good enough for your Premier, sir, surely it should be good enough for you. Now will you provide us with that list?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, there is no list. Now maybe you and members of the NDP feel it’s important to hire people on the basis of how they vote and what constituency they come from. I don’t happen to feel that way. We hire students on the basis of their skill, their knowledge, and their training, and also on the basis of work experience.

Mr. Chairman, it’s becoming increasing . . . So, Mr. Chairman, I will not ask my officials to prepare that list. There is no list. I will not ask them to prepare that list.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, the hiring practices that you are describing bear no relationship whatever to reality in the hiring of young people in the student employment program, no relationship at all to the reality. What we want that list is so that we can assure ourselves and assure the public that, in fact, what you are ascribing to do is what you are doing. That’s the only reason we want the list.

Remember . . . I’ll refresh your memory. We don’t want the student’s name; we don’t even want the student’s address. We simply want the name of the constituency

and the number of students hired from each of the constituencies. A very simple request.

We are asking for that access to information because, sir, we want to be able to show that your hiring practice is what, in fact, you say it is. And if you refuse to show and share that list of student employment by constituency, we can only assume that you are really covering something up. And from your past hiring history, we have every reason to believe that to be accurate.

I ask you for the last time: will you share that list?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, our hiring practices for hiring students is based on their skill, knowledge and training, and work experience. They are hired not on the basis of from which constituency they list. I will not ask my officials to prepare that list. There is no list as it exists now. I will not ask them to prepare the list, Mr. Chairman, and there is no list. As long as I am member with the Public Service Commission that list will not exist, because it is not a factor in hiring the students, nor should it be.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, I can only assume the worst. The hiring of summer students is exactly as we have said. It is done with blatant political . . . The heavy hand of politics is in it. If you take the list that I shared with the Legislative Assembly last year, you will see, sir, that your constituency had between seven and eight times the number of summer students employed as the constituency of Regina North. It had, I believe — I'm speaking from memory now, and I believe that the discrepancy was even larger between your constituency and that of Regina Elphinstone.

Speaking purely from memory — I think I can lay my hands on that sheet but, sir, 10 jobs for students in Regina North, 77 jobs for students in Regina Wascana. That's what we're talking about here. That's what is so important about this new openness, this new caring and sharing government that you are trying to pretend to be. That's what this access to information is about, Minister.

When we talk of ethical conduct and things like that, it's not something abstract and it's certainly not something abstract to the young men and women of Saskatchewan. They want fairness. They understand you cannot create a job for every young person that needs one. They simply want to know that, regardless of the part of the province that they live in, that they have equal opportunity to that employment. They want, simply put, to have a chance. You have denied them that in the past, Minister, and I see no reason to think that you are going to change your stripe on that.

In fact, we've been at this for just about an hour now and you have steadfastly refused to come clean with us. You've steadfastly refused to come clean with the young men and women of Saskatchewan. You've refused to go to open government. You've just turned us down at every corner, Minister, and that is certainly to your discredit, sir. It is not a happy statement about you nor about your government.

It is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And no, it's not a

personal attack, Minister. Not a personal attack at all. But if you want . . . That's not where it's at. It is an attack on the lack of openness, the lack of fairness that your government is displaying.

And I can see that I am just not going to get anywhere. You are being very straightforward about that. You are saying: there will be no list. I see you nodding further. And, Minister, I have stated my case as clearly as I can.

An Hon. Member: — Beattie, we're very disappointed in you.

Mr. Trew: — And as my colleague from Regina Victoria says: we're very disappointed in you; very disappointed in your government.

I'm going to turn now, Minister, to staff development, because there are some other issues in these estimates.

I note in your annual report, Minister, that in the '88-89 survey of employee development needs included the ability to "respond effectively to organizational change." Now it's not surprising with the penchant your government has for reorganization of departments, particularly those relating to economic issues, that this is taking place.

(2000)

There is an importance in programs, ongoing training, Minister, and education, and career-related opportunities. The area that I have of particular concern right now is the ADP (administrative development program) designed for administrative, clerical, and stenographic employees. It's a long-standing program, and it's designed to benefit those employees who are often the least able to take advantage of training and educational opportunities.

As you can be aware, sir, and you would know that it's always relatively easier for a middle manager or a senior manager to take advantage of educational and training programs. Those opportunities are presented much more frequently for middle management and senior management.

Minister, why were only 18 people admitted to the ADP program, and yet I see there are 68 admitted into the management development programs, according to page 12 of your report? Can you tell us why the difference?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, only 26 people applied for the program; 18 were admitted but all 26 were interviewed and selected on the basis of the interview. This is an ongoing program, Mr. Chairman, and the intake is on an annual basis.

If I might just refer to the Public Service Commission program calendar, "administrative program enables employees and senior clerical stenographic and administrative support positions to enhance their knowledge and skills through selected formal university classes" and there's a long list of where they are chosen from . . . or rather who may apply, like clerk 3, 4, typists, bookkeeping machine operators, accounting clerks,

medical accounts, etc., etc., stock clerks, etc. Program participants are eligible for one-half day per week of education leave at full salary for class attendance or study and research. And it's a three-year program, Mr. Chairman. Does that answer the question?

Mr. Trew: — It answers the question as far as I had asked it to that point, Minister, and thank you for that.

How much promoting do you do of the ADP program in that, frankly, the number 26 having applied strikes me as a bit strange? How many people applied for the management development programs of which 68 people were admitted? I'd be interested in knowing how many people applied for that.

And the second thing is how actively the Public Service Commission is promoting the ADP. And thirdly, just a matter of curiosity. Why, if there was 26 applied, were only 18 admitted? There's a difference of eight, which eight is not a large number, but it's a large number when you're talking 18 plus eight. So those three issues, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — It may have been that the eligible permanent employees may apply for admission into the program if they have a minimum of three years government service and are within one of the following classifications: and I won't read them all to you, but there was a list here like laboratory clerk 2, land titles clerk, senior keypunch operator, a variety of positions from where these people may apply. But they have to have a minimum of three years of government service.

Mr. Trew: — Okay, we'll break our three-part question down into bite size pieces. How many people applied for the management development programs, Minister, of which 68 were admitted?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We don't have that number but we will get it for you. And I assure you we'll find that number for you and make sure that you get it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Trew: — Okay. And, Minister, we were talking about the vanished eight in the ADP program. There was 26 applied, 18 admitted. Just tell me if I'm correct on this. Are you saying that the eight people were in all likelihood not having three years experience with the government, or why was there such a high percentage of drop-out from the ADP program? That's really what I'm interested in, is why would eight people not be admitted.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I can't give you each specific case. It may have been that they didn't qualify under that list I gave you, under that qualification list. It may have been because this is somewhat of a stressful program in terms of time commitment, family commitment, and responsibility in that respect. This is a very demanding program; it requires a great deal of time; and when they're finished it is equivalent of first year university. Chances are that those others — the other eight — some of the eight may have fallen in that category and it was determined that perhaps they might not qualify under those circumstances. It may have been that they decided themselves not to continue once they understood the

intensity of the program.

Mr. Trew: — Thanks, Minister. The point I wish to make is that if there was a greater stress placed by the Public Service Commission on the ADP program, that would be a significant benefit to a much larger group than the management development program that I also addressed here, of which 68 people were admitted. I'm not advocating that you do away with the management development programs, not at all — don't misunderstand me.

I am simply saying that in the other group, if you were to stress that more, it would be a much greater advantage to some commonly referred to as target groups. Of course, I'm referring to women; I'm referring to native people; I'm referring to people with disabilities. And if you were to strengthen the ADP program, I believe, sir, that their usefulness, if you like, within the government, would be enhanced at a greater rate than through the management development programs. So I'd be interested in hearing your comment on that.

I'd also want to roll in a next question, Minister, because time is going on. And that is, what is the purpose of the ministerial assistants' program and certificate? How long is the program? How many participants are there in this program? Who pays for the program? And is it done during public service time? Is it voluntary? What is the perceived value to the government and to the public service as a whole?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — On the administrative development program, Mr. Chairman, the Public Service Commission holds a number of clerical conferences. There is no fixed number as to how many can be involved, and at the conclusion of it the employees are given awards for their performance.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, which program were you referring to, please?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — That was the administrative development program.

Mr. Trew: — Okay. And my comments to you had been that if you would put more emphasis on that, it would go some distance — certainly not a great distance — but it would be helpful to women who are underrepresented in middle and senior management positions. It would be of some benefit to native people and to people with disabilities. Why is it that you don't put more effort into the ADP?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, when the Public Service Commission employees do take the administrative development program and they've completed the program, they are often moved up into a higher position. That is why so many women are taking that program. And we've also added the supervisor certificate program, which is an add to that particular program, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Trew: — That's what I've been telling you, Minister, and I'm asking you why you didn't get more than 18 people admitted into the ADP. I'm telling you exactly

what you just said, that people who take the ADP are more promotable. The people who take those — if you look at the list of positions, people who are qualified for it — many of those are represented by minorities within the Public Service Commission.

I'm simply saying, put a little more jam, a little more effort into the ADP and, though that does not qualify as an affirmative action program, at least it's a step in that direction. It's a step to helping make some of the minority groups of people — certainly the people who are not earning what Chuck Childers is earning — it provides for those people a bit of an opportunity to move up within the civil service. So my comment is: spend a little more effort on the ADP. Now I assume, Minister, that you are in agreement with that from your last answer. I just urge you to get on with it and do it.

Do you wish to comment on what I've just said, Minister, or shall I go to my next question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You'll comment? Okay, I'll await the Minister's response.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, I certainly don't disagree with the member. He's right. The more programs you offer to employees the better it is for the employees, the better it is for the government, the better it is for the people of the province. And the record of this government has been very good in that respect, Mr. Chairman. But he's right, the more you . . . And we are continuing to look for new and innovative programs all the time to improve the public service of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Trew: — Well, I agreed with everything except you're doing pretty good, Minister. When you get 18 people enter that program out of . . . Eighteen people entered the ADP. You've got a questioning look on your face. We've been dealing with it for 10 minutes now.

An Hon. Member: — Only 26 applied.

Mr. Trew: — And the Minister says only 26 applied. That's correct. We have progress now, maybe we should rise and report it. Give you a little rest; take a little break. Minister, all I'm saying is that with 26 applications and only 18 people actually entered, it's not enough. You're making what initially was intended to be simply an urging of support, if you like, from the opposition for you to move further and faster and farther in that area, and you're making a big issue out of it. I'm saying, it's not good enough what you're doing; you're saying, you're doing a wonderful job.

(2015)

Minister, we could bat that particular football back and forth all night I'm sure, but I don't see any purpose. You want to make a response on that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, in keeping with the government's value in developing human potential, Public Service Commission and departments offer numerous and varied learning and development opportunities each year to the employees. In 1989-1990 over 5,500 employees participated in training and

development events compared to 1,700 employees in 1981-1982, and that's an increase of 260 per cent — 260 per cent increase.

Mr. Trew: — And 18 went into the ADP program that we've been just talking about. Minister, what is the purpose of the ministerial assistants program and certificate? How long is the program? How many participants are in this program? Who pays for it? Is it voluntary? And what is the perceived value to the government and to the public service as a whole?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — When they were in the ministerial assistants development opportunities program, the department pays. It is of course, voluntary. There were 15 applications; 18 have graduated . . . 8 rather have graduated. There's a tremendous value to the government in this respect because we get new ministerial assistants and they are trained in a variety of skills. They attend a program orientation session, participate in at least eight seminars — five of which are compulsory and three which are selected from several options. The program includes managing and the decision process, developing leadership skills, managing communication, managing human resources, strategic planning, being creative in your work, issues influence in the public sector, financial management in government, negotiation skills — an interactive process, managing restraint, performance management, and using microcomputers to manage.

It's of great value to the government, as you yourself have said, to have the civil servants better trained and better qualified to serve the people of the province.

How's that?

Mr. Trew: — How was that the Minister asks. I'll leave that for the electorate to decide, sir.

Minister, what is your policy regarding educational leave? I understand that there was 46 people granted educational leave in 1988-89. How many would fall into the classification of senior management, how many into middle management, non-management, out of scope, in scope, and ministerial assistants? Further, what is the average length of leave? Is it six months, is it a year, is it five years? And how many would be for the completion of previously uncompleted courses such as a Masters in Business Administration or something like that.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We don't have that information with us tonight, but we will provide you with . . . Do you want to pass over the questions and we'll provide the answers for you on that? But we don't have it tonight.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, you can pick the question out of *Hansard* tomorrow, sir, okay? Because I have other questions on that sheet. I'd rather keep it for my own future reference. When will you provide the answers? Are we talking a matter of a week, two weeks?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We should be able to provide that within a week.

Mr. Trew: — Okay, thank you, Minister. A note on the report regarding the CUPE (Canadian Union of Public

Employees) 600 agreement on page 14 of your annual report. You enable employees to participate in a deferred salary leave plan. And I just want to go on the record as saying I think that's a good innovation. It's one of the things I think you're doing right. It's a very short list, but that's one of them.

Can you provide us with the assurance that this plan is not to supplant the educational leave program that is already in existence? You will know, Minister, that the method of financing educational leave in the federal civil service is very similar to the deferred salary leave plan that is contained in the CUPE contract. So will you provide us some assurance that this is not intended to replace the educational leave program?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Correct, it does not replace educational leave program nor was it intended to do so.

Mr. Trew: — Okay, thank you, Minister. Is it contemplated that the deferred salary leave plan will be extended throughout the public service to include non-CUPE employees as well?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — It applies to all permanent employees in the public service of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Trew: — So it does apply to all employees of the Government of Saskatchewan, Minister, okay? Thank you for that assurance.

Minister, I want to move into the area of affirmative action. We just sort of very loosely and briefly skirted the issue moments ago. In the '88-89 annual report, it shows that as of March of 1989, the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission had 11,080 employees. That was on page 5. It breaks down to 7,529 permanent, full-time; 1,156 part-time; 657 temporary; 1,738 casual.

Could you, Minister, through your automated system of employee counts, could you provide us with a similar breakdown as of March 31, 1990?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, we will provide you with that information but again it will take a few days, the better part of a week I would assume. But we will give you that information.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I am not sure again if you said when you would get back to us. Would you give me a date.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think it can be done in a week, if that's satisfactory.

Mr. Trew: — Yes, I guess that will have to do, Minister.

I have some indication, Minister, that you're shifting people from part-time or temporary employment, which will provide . . . Minister, I believe you're shifting people from part-time or temporary employment — those provide fringe benefits in the holiday time, that sort of thing — and I think you're switching them to casual employment. And when you do that, there's no protection for the employee. That is, the fringe benefits disappear, the holiday time, those things disappear.

And I'm wondering why it is that you are engaged in that shift. And surely you know that the shift is going on. I've seen some numbers to indicate it. I can't give you the exact numbers as of the date that I asked for them but I've seen a very, very clear indication that that's going on. Can you tell us why it is that you're making that shift.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The casuals are hired by departments for short-term employment only. There is no shift. As a matter of fact, the groups of employees remain basically stable.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, without the benefit of the numbers that I've seen, I'm not in a position to get into a harangue with you on that. My regret is I don't have those numbers at my fingertips.

Minister, different matter. How many employees in the Saskatchewan public service fall within the categories of — and these are just a few categories — women, native, handicapped? And if they fall in those three categories, they should be covered through an affirmative action program. How many are there?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — March 1990: persons of native ancestry up with 3 per cent of the total work-force. That's up 25 per cent since March of 1981. Is it good enough? No, we must continue to improve on that.

Persons with physical disabilities: 2.3 per cent of the work-force; March 1981 it was .7 per cent. That's an increase of 228 per cent increase. And again I say we must try to increase that number.

Women in management: 25 per cent of management are women, and they were 7.7 per cent in 1981. That's an increase of 225 per cent and it will continue to increase, Mr. Chairman, as the years continue.

Mr. Trew: — Well we agree on one thing — it's not good enough. Three per cent of the Public Service Commission is native — 3 per cent. That's a very, very dismal indictment. With all of the promises that your government came in with in 1982, and here it is eight years later and you're telling me 3 per cent are native. It's just not good enough.

You tell me 25 per cent of management is women. That certainly is some improvement. I would argue again after eight years, it's not nearly enough improvement, but some improvement.

With regards to the handicapped employment, Minister, your government's record is frankly dismal — nothing better than dismal. And I see the minister saying he has some more. I would be most interested in you further enlightening us.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think it's important to point out that when you say 3 per cent of the work force in the government of 3 per cent, as I say, it is a 25 per cent increase. You must bear in mind, however, that this is based on self-identification. The human rights does not

allow us nor should it allow us to ask on the application: are you a native? Or are you handicapped? You can't do that and nor should you.

And so there may very well be a number more of people employed by the provincial government who are of native ancestry but it's not determined on the application nor should it be. I say again that a 3 per cent — no — it could be, it probably should be and will be more than that.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, how many and what percentage of these individuals are found in senior management and in middle management and in supervisory positions?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Okay, let me — representation in management positions. Persons of native ancestry were identified, obviously — 1.6 per cent. That is actually an increase of 300 per cent since March 1986. A person who has physical disability — 3.3 per cent. In the last four years that's an increase of 1,000 per cent. Women total — a 44 per cent increase at 25 per cent.

I think it's interesting to note that of the 20 senior appointments in the public service — that's levels 10 to deputy minister — made in 1989-90, 40 per cent were women. You will take note of course of the appointments at senior management levels, for instance, the four deputy ministers: Dr. Eleanor Rourke in Education; Elizabeth Knebli (formerly Crosthwaite) deputy minister, Culture, Multiculturalism and Recreation; Judy Moore, deputy minister of Social Services; Marine Perran, deputy minister of Indian and Native Affairs. That's all within this last year.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, what is the government's policy regarding pay equity, and are you prepared, sir, to institute pay equity legislation?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The government continually strives to get fair and equitable treatment for all employees, Mr. Chairman. In 1985, the management and professional classification compensation plan covering nearly 2,000 non-union positions was implemented. This plan is based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In 1987, the management support group classification and compensation plan was introduced covering approximately 200 non-union support positions. It, too, is based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

Public Service Commission is currently reviewing the union classification system to ensure the system accurately reflects the value of all occupational groups to the government. Many unnecessary classes have been deleted and others revised to reflect organizational and work environment changes that have occurred in the public service, such as technological change. All pay ranges for union positions and occupations must be negotiated with the authorized employee representatives and they apply equally to men and women within the specific groups.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, pay equity is an urgent and pressing need in this province. Why is it that this issue isn't even addressed within the commission other than as

you state on page 5, that the commission assisted in developing an employment equity plan. Bingo. That's what it says. What is that, Minister? Is that pay equity? Is it affirmative action? Is it classification? What is that?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, we have modified both the management and professional classification and compensation plan which covers nearly 2,000 non-union positions. Also we modified the management support group classification — compensation plan, and this is equal pay for work of equal value. And in addition to that, Mr. Chairman, the unions have not asked for pay equity. They have not asked to negotiate pay equity.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, it's obvious to anyone that's watching that's familiar with pay equity that you don't understand what it is. Pay-equity legislation is found in many parts of this country. It's found in the Yukon, it's found in Manitoba, it's found in Quebec, it's found in Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

Now I'd be interested, Mr. Minister, in knowing whether or not your government has any plans to introduce pay-equity legislation, which would allow unions and other private sector unions to negotiate pay-equity provisions in collective agreements? As well, Mr. Minister, it would certainly assist unorganized workers.

As you may know women in this province and in this country earn about 66 cents for every \$1 that a male earns. It's not because they're uneducated or unskilled or have no responsibility in the work place, Mr. Minister, or that they are working in cushy working conditions. It's because, Mr. Minister, we have no pay-equity legislation in Saskatchewan. I'm interested in knowing: when is your government going to provide some leadership on this question; have you discussed it in cabinet; and what's the government's position?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the Public Service Commission continues to monitor this. I understand that Ontario is . . . Their pay-equity program is fraught with a lot of problems. I noticed in a recent report that, "Ontario nurses lambaste flawed pay-equity system." And we're continuing to monitor it.

As you know, The Labour Standards Act requires that employers provide equal pay for similar work. The government clearly adheres to that principle.

Ms. Atkinson: — What's interesting is that Conservatives are always the first to point out problems with pay equity. The problem in Ontario, Mr. Minister, is not pay equity, it's the way it's being implemented.

Now you haven't answered the question. Have you discussed it in cabinet? Have you discussed it in your caucus? What is the government's position on pay equity? Is it fair, Minister, that there are employees working for the Government of Saskatchewan . . . An example might be: a secretary working for the Government of Saskatchewan earns several hundred dollars less than the courier that drives that mail around from government office building to office building, Mr. Minister.

Pay equity is not equal pay for work of similar value. It's not equal pay for equal work. Mr. Minister, it is based on placing a value on the job that individuals do, based on skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

Now my question is: what is your position? Are you in favour of pay equity? Have you talked about it at the cabinet table? Have you talked about it in your caucus? What's your position?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the issue of pay equity is constantly under review and it's constantly being discussed by this government. I mean I certainly won't tell the member opposite what we discuss in cabinet, but I can tell her that it is constantly being discussed in the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, what is your position? Do you favour the concept of pay equity? Yes or no?

(2045)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We favour the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

Mr. Trew: — We believe in Santa Claus.

Mr. Chairman, I want to refer the minister . . . How does an employee become re-employed? I want to refer you, sir, to a letter to the Minister of Social Services from a former employee of that department who writes to the minister in frustration. Now this is somebody who is covered within the broad mandate of the Public Service Commission. And she writes:

Can you explain to me why the positions in Social Services are being filled on an ongoing basis with temporary, part-time, or casual persons? Why are these positions not being advertised on a permanent basis? There have only been four clerk typist 2 positions advertised in Saskatchewan since April 1989 (and I'll point out this was written October 4, 1989). None of these positions were in Saskatoon.

The writer goes on:

I am now off the re-employment list, so I'm not even allowed to apply for any competitions with any government department. I'm hoping this will be dealt with as soon as possible that I may get back to work.

Minister, I'm not anxious to have this particular person's name written into *Hansard*. I will share it with you if you will deal with it and promise confidentiality. I will quite happily share this with you, Minister.

But in general terms, how does an employee become re-employed with the Government of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — An employee is on the recall list for a two-year period and considered first for any permanent position.

Now if you want to share with me, on a private basis, the name of that employee, I'll look into it and get back with the information on her particular position. And I'll certainly give you that assurance. But I agree with you: I don't think you should put it into *Hansard* or read it over the television.

Mr. Trew: — Okay. Thank you, Minister. I will be with you shortly after these estimates conclude.

I have one other individual I want to deal with. This gentleman has given me permission to use his name, sir, because he has been . . . well he's exhausted all avenues. You should be familiar with it. It's the case of Mr. Mike Nelson from the Kelsey institute in Saskatoon, a 20-year employee. Are you familiar in general terms with that?

Okay. The minister shakes his head no. Why then would you have refused, Minister, to meet with Mr. Nelson? Why would you have refused to meet with him if you're not familiar with the case?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, Mr. Chairman, to answer the member's question, I don't know the man personally, I've not met the man personally; however, I've had some correspondence with him. I recall at least two letters he's written. There's a big file on this. And the last letter that I signed and sent to him said that we had exhausted all efforts on his behalf. I understand, however, that he has now written another letter to the Premier. But I think as far as I am concerned, the Public Service Commission, we've exhausted all efforts with the man.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, you're talking about a loyal 20-year employee here. We're talking about a very serious matter. Mr. Nelson has worked 20 years for the government, yet you refuse to meet with him. Initially this evening you didn't recall having dealt with him; you have told others that you have reviewed the case.

Mr. Nelson has gone the political route and been stonewalled on previous occasions. Your predecessor told him much as you are — so much for open and accessible, Minister — but your predecessor said, no, not going to look at it. So Mr. Nelson went to the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman made a recommendation that sided with Mr. Nelson. Mr. Nelson also went out and at his own personal expense sought legal opinion, paid for by himself. That legal opinion agrees with, in general terms — I don't want to say that they agree on every t that's crossed and i that's dotted — but in general terms agrees with the Ombudsman's recommendation.

Why is it that you would ignore those? Why won't you give a 20-year employee the right to a fair hearing? And to put the matter to rest tonight, what I'm really after, Minister, is: will you meet with the Ombudsman's office, Mr. Nelson's MLA, Mr. Nelson, and yourself? Will you meet, find out what the issue is, and deal with it?

I could tell you what the issue is, but I don't think we need to parade everything about this case in public. But I did feel it important to get this much in public because I'm looking for commitment from you, sir, that you will meet with Mr. Nelson, with his MLA, and with the representative of the Ombudsman's office. Will you give

that undertaking?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I have no problem whatsoever with meeting with the man personally. As I said, I don't know him personally; I had some correspondence with him. And I have no problem with sitting down and talking to the man. I'm not particularly interested in meeting with him and his lawyer and four or five advisors and his MLA, but if he wants to meet with me personally, I'd be more than happy to do that.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, will you meet with Mr. Nelson and a representative from the Ombudsman's office? That's what we're asking — someone that supports this 20-year career civil servant, the Ombudsman, which is . . . you can't get any more non-partisan than that in Saskatchewan. And I'm just asking: will you meet with Mr. Nelson and someone from the Ombudsman's office and yourself and deal with this case with some haste?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Our legal advice was that . . . our legal advice did not agree with the Ombudsman. And I say again, that I will be more than happy to meet with this gentleman. I don't particularly want to meet with him with the Ombudsman or a representative from the Ombudsman's office, but I'll be more than happy to meet with him and sit down and listen to his problems and then take it from there. And perhaps he has some new information.

An Hon. Member: — Oh come on, Beattie, that's just a brush off.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — No, it's not a brush off. I'll sit down and talk to the man. You ask him whether he wants to do it or not. If he wants to do it, fine. If he doesn't want to do it then that's his decision. But if he wants to . . . He can make a decision if he wants to meet with me and sit down in my office, or I'll go and meet him in Saskatoon and we can talk about. He lives in Saskatoon today. And I'll meet him in Saskatoon and talk to him there. But I say, I don't want to meet with him with a coterie of people or with a representative of the Ombudsman's department, because our legal advice did not agree with the Ombudsman's report. So you can give him that information.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Minister, if you're afraid of meeting with somebody from the Ombudsman's office because you can't personally stand up to it, bring in your own legal advice. All we're asking in the name of some semblance of fairness for a 20-year, loyal to the government of Saskatchewan employee, is a fair hearing.

Your story has changed somewhat from when I first broached this tonight until now. I'm not asking for a coterie of people. I'm asking for Mr. Nelson and someone from the Ombudsman's office — someone who happens to agree with Mr. Nelson. As it stands, if he were to come and see you it would just simply be a brush off and nothing but. I can't guarantee what the outcome would be, but if I had to bet some of my own money, sir, I would bet that Mr. Nelson would be denied; he would be brushed off.

I want simply again for there to be some justice. If you are correct and your legal opinion is correct, then it surely

can't do any harm to state that opinion in front of someone from the Ombudsman's office. If your legal opinion is worth anything, surely it will stand up to somebody that is reasonable — people from the Ombudsman's office.

Now I want to get off of this matter but I'm not prepared to because we're dealing with somebody's future here, Minister. Now will you and somebody from the Ombudsman's office meet with Mr. Nelson? And you can have anyone else in the meeting that you want, but I want Mr. Nelson and somebody from the Ombudsman's office and yourself. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well you bring somebody from the Ombudsman's office, so I got to bring a lawyer, he's got to bring a lawyer. That won't work. I'm giving you my assurance tonight, and you can tell Mr. Nelson he can make the decision. If Mr. Nelson wants to meet with me in Regina or Saskatoon, I'll be more than happy to sit down and talk to him. We can talk one on one. If he has a fair case, I'll take it beyond that. I'll guarantee he'll get a fair hearing from me.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, I don't know what you're so afraid of in this case. Well it's a simple request. I mean, we're not talking somebody that's perhaps got three months of experience with the government. We're talking about a 20-year person that feels very seriously aggrieved.

Now with your government's record in how you deal with civil servants, please forgive me if, on behalf of Mr. Nelson and other civil servants, if I don't totally and openly embrace that. What I'm wanting is Mr. Nelson to have the ability to have someone of his choice there. I'll back away; it may not be somebody from the Ombudsman's office. Maybe it's his own lawyer, or maybe it's a union representative, somebody from the union. I understand he's out of scope, but perhaps he would want somebody with some knowledge on labour legislation.

Will you agree to a meeting with Mr. Nelson and the person of his choice, yourself, and whoever else you want? Will you agree to that?

(2100)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well from the letters I've seen from Mr. Nelson, he's quite capable of expressing and explaining his own particular situation. I've told you — and you can take this message to Mr. Nelson and perhaps he's even watching tonight — that I'll be more than happy to meet with him. If he wants me to meet him in Saskatoon, I'll meet him in Saskatoon. But quite frankly, we start getting other people involved in this, then I've got to have legal advice. He's got legal advice; I've got to have legal advice.

Why would it not be appropriate for me just to talk with him one on one?

An Hon. Member: — You've already brushed him off a couple of times.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I have never brushed the man off. As

I said, I don't know the man personally and I've dealt with some of his letters. But I'm giving you my assurance tonight . . . Well you ask him, you ask him. If he wants to meet with me one on one, I'll be more than happy to do it and I'll even go to his house or to some office in Saskatoon and meet him. And if that's not good enough for him, then that's all I can do. But he has my assurance that I will do that. But I don't think we should have other people involved because then it's just going to get out of hand. Get a couple of lawyers in there and neither one of us, neither Mr. Nelson or myself, are going to get a word in edgeways.

Mr. Trew: — Certainly justice might not be done if it was more than just you and Mr. Nelson. Minister, you're dealing with his future, for Heaven's sakes. In the name of compassion, allow the man to have some representation there.

Minister, because I had agreed to be done these estimates 15 minutes ago, I'm going to conclude. I just want to say . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry. I will take that to Mr. Nelson. I don't feel good about taking that to him, but I will do that and hopefully you'll hear from him.

Minister, we've seen the Public Service Commission decimated by your government's political interference. We've seen the morale deteriorate to an all-time low in our lifetime. We have seen a Public Service Commission full of civil servants, many of whom hate to go to work in the morning. They're ashamed of their employer now and it need not be that way. What they need is to be removed from the political interference. They need to be given the task and the tools to complete that task. That's all they're asking for. Indeed, it's what they deserve.

We've seen the student employment program cut by half a million dollars. We had quite a harangue about that earlier this evening, and all I can conclude from that is that the young men and women of Saskatchewan are half a million dollars short from your government's actions. I know you tell me your half million dollars goes into the Environment, but the Human Resources, Labour and Employment is also short a half a million dollars.

You can only pull the same rabbit out of the same hat so many times. The students are half a million dollars short. It may not be from your budget, but then it's from the Human Resources, Labour and Employment budget that they're short. And what they know is that translates into 175, give or take, jobs gone, lost. That's a shame. So we've seen all of that happening.

Minister, I want to know . . . A final question and I will be done. What assurance can you give us that civil servants can participate in the political activity, not during Public Service Commission or employer time, but after hours, on their own time? If they choose to work for a candidate or candidates, if they choose to put up a lawn sign or give some other indication of where their political allegiance is, if they choose to take out a partisan membership, what assurance will you give to the civil servants of Saskatchewan that you will in no way, shape, or form penalize them? You won't stop them in their career path if you get the opportunity. You won't demote, fire, transfer, or any of the other unkind things that . . . well, such as my

colleague for Regina Victoria experienced. What assurance can you give the civil servants of Saskatchewan that you won't mistreat them as you have in the past?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, all government employees have the same political rights as anybody else does. However, they have to adhere to section 50 of The Public Service Act which was passed in 1947 and remains unchanged since that date. The legislation has, as its objective, non-interference in the legitimate political rights of employees and the maintenance of an impartial public service. The government will continue to rely on the present legislation as to the previous administration.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have one question tonight. I've been asked by several civil servants in my constituency to put the following question to you. They are under the impression, sir, that your government is contemplating the introduction of an early retirement program for members of the civil service in Saskatchewan that fall under the PSC (Public Service Commission) agreement.

I wonder, could you tell us tonight, sir, whether it's your intention, within the next 12 months or so, to introduce an early retirement program for members of the public service of the province, or whether in fact you've made a decision not to introduce that early retirement program?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We are not contemplating an early retirement program. We are not contemplating an early retirement program. However, one must always keep their options open. But one is not being contemplated at this time.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 33 agreed to.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to thank the officials for providing the information for the minister. I regret that we weren't able to get a few more answers, but I enjoyed the Public Service Commission estimates and look forward to being part of the government when next we review the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the member and members for their questions tonight. And I particularly want to thank my officials: John McPhail, Ray Smith, Mary Kutarna, Jim McKinlay, Dave Atkinson, and Will Loewen for their competence and for the competence of the Public Service Commission, and for a matter of fact, for the entire Government of Saskatchewan civil servants.

I noted when we first opened these sessions that civil servants win honours for quality. It's a national award, Mr. Chairman. So I want to thank my officials for that and the government employees. Thank you all very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
New Careers Corporation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 59**

Item 1

Mr. Chairman: — Would the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, on my right is Terry Lyons and Tony Antonini behind me. Mr. Chairman, I can't introduce you to either one of them as a chief executive officer because we're just in the process of hiring a new chief executive officer, but I'll bet you Lyons has been the assistant chief and Mr. Antonini is one of the administrators.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to ask you a few brief questions concerning the work-for-welfare project in the Midale area on the Rafferty dam. I wonder if you could tell us the precise nature of the work that's been going on down in the area, whether or not that that work, in your opinion, violates the federal-provincial agreement as to the inappropriateness of work-for-welfare programs? And could you tell me whether that work has been contracted to the Souris Basin Authority? I'll ask you all three, so I'll expect that you can answer those.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, New Careers is not a work-for-welfare program and the member well knows that. It may be called the work in lieu of welfare program. It is above all else a training program, a part of a welfare reform program, but it is not work-for-welfare.

As to the question of the Rafferty-Alameda dam, we are, yes, the New Careers is contracted to the Souris Basin Development Authority.

Mr. Lyons: — Well, Mr. Minister, we can disagree over whether or not it constitutes work-for-welfare or work in lieu of welfare. But there is one thing that I can say about that is when you have people who are trained, skilled craftspeople, journeyman electricians, journeyman plumbers, people who haven't got work in this province because of the economic failures of your development strategy, and we have people with those kind of skills, the last thing I'd want to dignify the title for the New Careers for is a skills development program. Seems to me people involved in clearing brush, if they're journeyman electricians, are downgrading their skill levels as opposed to upgrading their skill levels. So we'll forget that kind of political rhetoric.

You missed the first question I asked you and that is: could you tell me the precise nature of the work that the people under this scheme are doing right now at the Rafferty-Alameda project? What precisely are they doing?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the main job in the Estevan area this last year has been tearing down the recreation centre. At the same time however there has been a crew clearing the basin, the lower part of the

valley for the Rafferty dam, clearing brush, taking out old fence posts, and doing that type of work.

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Minister, you said that that's what they were doing. Is that what the type of work that they're involved in at the present time and what are the future plans? Is New Careers going to continue on doing that type of work in the future or when do you anticipate that work from New Careers to be finished?

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The work that we're currently doing is under contract, Mr. Chairman. And they are at this time, in addition to clearing the floor of the valley, they're also putting up fence right now, doing some fence work.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we had a good discussion not too many days ago in the Crown Corporations Committee about the New Careers Corporation. I want to follow up just a little on that discussion.

At the urging of my colleague from Saskatoon University, in discussing the matter of travel allowances being paid to participants in the New Careers Corporation project, Mr. Minister, you said and I'll just quote from the *Hansard* of our Crown corporation of May 17 of this year. You said regarding providing travel allowances to social service recipients on the program, you said:

... I'll bring it up to the board again and ask them to reconsider (that matter.)

And then further that day you said, Mr. Minister:

I will recommend to the board that until they get their first pay cheque they should get travel allowances.

Mr. Minister, have you done that? Have you recommended to the board that people involved in New Careers projects will get travel allowance up until their first pay cheque?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I believe that I recommended to the board that they consider it, not that I recommend to the board that the ... (inaudible interjection) ... Well okay, and that's what it says, that I recommend it? All right, I requalify that then. If I said that I recommended to the board that they consider for their first pay cheque, then that is what I recommended to the board. And it will be on the agenda of the next board meeting. The board will consider it, the board makes that decision. However it is as I said, I recommend it to the board that they do that until they get their first pay cheque. That's how it stands. The board will make that decision however.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I thought the issue was very clear until you stood up. Mr. Minister, in Crown corporations you said, and again I quote: "I will recommend to the board that until they get their first pay cheque they should get travel allowance." Mr. Minister, have you recommended that to the board, when will it be discussed, and when might we expect a change in policy?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — It will be on the agenda for Thursday. They're having a board meeting on Thursday, and it will be on the agenda Thursday recommending that they consider it that the employees get travel allowance until they get their first pay cheque where required.

Mr. Calvert: — Then, Mr. Minister, can I ask you to commit to provide perhaps to the critic himself, as soon as the board has made their decision, will you provide that information to the opposition?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, then just to wrap up. Mr. Minister, the member from Saskatoon University on the day we met in Crown corporations provided to you a list of, I think, 23 separate questions regarding the activities and the work of the New Careers Corporation. Mr. Minister, are the answers prepared to those questions? Have they been forwarded now to the critic?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well some of the answers have been prepared but they're still preparing the answers and they will be forwarded to the critic, to the member from Saskatoon University. I think it's going to be a couple weeks however because there's a lot of detail involved in those questions. However you have our assurance that he will get the answers to those questions just as quickly as they are prepared.

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 59 agreed to.

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Seniors' Secretariat
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 42**

Item 1

Mr. Chairman: — I'd ask the minister to introduce his guests.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, Dan Perrins is the secretary of the Seniors' Secretariat. He's also the president of the Family Foundation. Behind me is Brenda Righetti who is assistant secretary to Dan Perrins in the Seniors' Secretariat. And Del Fuchs who will be joining us shortly, is the manager of seniors' programs.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the investigation of the Seniors' Secretariat is an important one to many people in Saskatchewan. Although it's not large by budgetary measures in the governmental scheme of things, it certainly does impact on a large number of our citizens and an increasingly large number of citizens, Mr. Chairman.

Certainly, as we look ahead in Saskatchewan, what we see is a growing seniors population, and that becomes more pronounced with the loss of young people that we're currently experiencing, with it being anticipated that two generations from now, somewhere between one out of four and one out of five citizens of our province will be over the age of 65. So I'm very interested in proceeding through these estimates, Mr. Chairman.

I'll direct the first question to the minister and, Mr. Minister, these are the list of standard questions. If you like, what I'll do is simply read them into the record for you and not require a response this evening if you would commit to me to provide a written response. And so to put it on the record and for the benefit of your officials to respond to that, I'll just read them into the record, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, number one: would you provide the name, title, and current salary of all of your personal staff associated with the secretariat as well as any change in those salaries in the past year?

Number two: the name and salary of the secretariat head, any change in that salary in the past year, and is the secretariat head serving under a personal services contract; and if so, what are the terms of that contract.

Number three, Mr. Minister: for 1989-90, the number of out-of-province trips taken by the minister responsible for the agency, by yourself, identifying in each case the destination, persons accompanying yourself at government expense, the cost of the trip and the purpose of the trip; number four, for 1990-91, the total amount budgeted for out-of-province ministerial travel for this budget year; five, for 1989-90, the total amount spent by the agency on advertising, and for 1991, the amount budgeted for advertising; number six, for 1989-90, the total amount spent by the secretariat on polling and market research, and for 1990-91 the amount budgeted; and in number seven, the amount spent by the agency in 1989-90 for the use of charter aircraft and the amount budgeted for 1990-91.

Mr. Minister, if you will commit to me to respond to those in writing by a certain date, then we can proceed through the estimates and step past this point.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — We could answer several of them now, but I agree with your procedure. We can get them to you in a couple of days with no problem.

Mr. Hagel: — That will be satisfactory, Mr. Minister, and I will await your response to those.

Mr. Minister, as I look at the Seniors' Secretariat function, it would seem to me that the secretariat does provide some direct assistance to seniors as individuals and also as members of organizations. I make the assumption as well, Mr. Minister, and I would ask that you would confirm for me whether you also see it as a significant role for the secretariat and personified specifically as a significant role for yourself as the minister responsible for the Seniors' Secretariat to act in an advocacy position with other provincial departments, with federal government as well as with municipal governments, in the interest of seniors of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, do you see that as a significant role that you play as minister for the secretariat?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes I agree with that. I see my role as being an advocate in many respects for seniors. I find that as I travel around the province and speak with seniors'

groups that seniors could play a much larger role in community activities within the province. So I would certainly encourage that. But yes indeed, I will respond to seniors' wishes as they ask.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I concur and endorse that role for yourself. I do see that as most appropriate. In light of that then, Mr. Minister, I'd like to spend the bulk of our time this evening dealing with a large number of issues that do impact directly on the lives of seniors in Saskatchewan.

I would ask that you would advise the Assembly, and through your advice to the Assembly — the seniors of Saskatchewan — your actions, the actions of the secretariat, lobbying or advocating on their behalf in a number of areas with different levels of government.

Perhaps we can begin, Mr. Minister, with the goods and services tax. The goods and services tax technical paper on pages 24 and 25 indicates that for single persons over the age of 65 — and interestingly enough the technical paper did not provide an analysis for couples over the age of 65. But it indicates that for singles over the age of 65 with an income of \$12,500 the introduction of the goods and services tax will bring about a net reduction in their income of \$13; at \$15,000 income a net reduction of \$35 for that single senior; at \$20,000 income a net reduction of \$10; and at \$30,000 a net reduction of \$360 for that single senior.

Mr. Minister, I know that you will be aware because I'm aware that you've had a large number of conversations with seniors about the goods and services tax and the potential impact it has on them personally. This is of particular concern I believe to all of us, Mr. Minister, because many of the seniors in Saskatchewan are living on fixed incomes and obviously their ability to negotiate for higher incomes is nil, and they are strapped with having to absorb the increased costs of taxes and in this case the goods and services tax.

(2130)

Mr. Minister, given that this is an important issue to a large number of seniors who have been part of petitioning, making presentations to Ottawa, to Brian Mulroney and company — your Tory cohorts in the federal government — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you would advise the House what you have done in terms of lobbying in the interest of the seniors to have the federal government readdress its goods and services tax proposal? What actions have you taken on behalf of Saskatchewan seniors to lobby in their best interest to defend them from the increase cost and the concurrent reduction in their incomes because of the introduction of the goods and services tax?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think as the member knows the provincial government has opposed a GST (goods and services tax) as it now stands. We are assessing the impact the GST as it relates to lower incomes as well as to seniors. The federal government has told us that in some cases it will have a plus affect on seniors and in lower incomes. However, on behalf of the seniors of the province I have written to the Minister of Revenue recommending that they find new ways to ensure seniors that they will not

suffer as a result of the GST.

And I might add too, that the Department of Finance within our own government is assessing this situation all the time.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I read into the record what the federal government says will be the impact on single seniors, and as we know from past experience that the reality to be anticipated is always more negative than forecast by the federal government when it has to do with the GST.

Mr. Minister, you say that in lobbying for Saskatchewan seniors you've written a letter, and I would ask, Mr. Minister, if you are of the view that that has been successful in some way that would be meaningful to Saskatchewan seniors?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, I would certainly hope so. I would think that the federal minister would take into serious consideration a letter that he receives from a cabinet minister in Saskatchewan. He knows how we in Saskatchewan feel about the GST, and particularly my reference to how it might affect the seniors. I would sincerely hope that he would take it as a serious letter.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, do you have any reason to believe at all, that your letter to the Minister of Finance has resulted or will result, but preferably has resulted in some changes being made of benefit to Saskatchewan seniors?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I haven't heard back from him as yet, but I think perhaps only in time will we know whether or not my letter had an impact on him or not. But I repeat that I would hope that he would take it seriously and I'm sure he will, but I have not heard back from him on the letter as yet.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I'd like to move to another issue affecting a good number of Saskatchewan seniors that has to do with your relationship with the federal government. I refer, of course, to the New Horizons program which as we are both aware, earlier this month it became known that the \$15 million for New Horizons, of the last fiscal year has now been cut back by some 25 per cent. The consequence for Saskatchewan New Horizon funds means that whereas previously Saskatchewan received \$750,050 in New Horizons funding, it is now going to be scheduled to receive some \$488,943 in New Horizons funding; a reduction of 35 per cent for Saskatchewan organizations, Mr. Minister. We contrast the reduction of 35 per cent of New Horizons funding in Saskatchewan with Quebec which had absolutely no reduction whatsoever in their New Horizons funding.

And so I ask you, Mr. Minister, again on behalf of Saskatchewan seniors: what action have you taken to defend the New Horizons funding for Saskatchewan seniors? And if you'd like to comment, as well, Mr. Minister, the degree of success that has been seen so far as a result of your action.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well my office tried to contact and did contact the minister responsible for the New

Horizons program and did get in contact with the office. And they told us at that time that the \$15 million for New Horizons had not been cut and that \$15 million was in the budget. They are, however, reviewing the criteria for the New Horizons grants. However, the \$15 million that is in the budget remains in the budget but they are reviewing the criteria for it.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, the federal minister has made it quite clear that there's a freeze on the spending of that budget. And at this time — and he's stated that publicly, I can read that into the record if you like — but has stated that there is a freeze on the spending and that the intention to spend that money has been cut-back by 25 per cent.

I ask you again, Mr. Minister, specifically with special interest for the impact on Saskatchewan. I hear you saying that you've talked to the federal minister but still, to the best of my knowledge, what Saskatchewan projects funded by New Horizons can expect is a reduction of 35 per cent from \$750,000 last year to some \$489,000 this year. Mr. Minister, do you have assurance from the federal minister that the Saskatchewan funding from New Horizons will be at least at \$750,000 for this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I would certainly oppose any cuts. Health and Welfare Canada indicated to officials in the Seniors' Secretariat that they are reviewing the grant criteria for both New Horizons and the new program that they're introducing, called the seniors' independence program. However, officials in his department did tell the people in my office that the \$15 million from New Horizons program is in there for the budget. They're just reviewing the little part that they're holding back. I think it was \$4 million they're holding back. They're just reviewing the criteria because they're introducing this new seniors' independence program. But the \$15 million is in the budget.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, then have you had assurance that Saskatchewan will see \$750,000 of New Horizons funding this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I haven't received that assurance, but that's certainly what we're seeking.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, then do you intend to do anything else to get that assurance? If you'd just answer that question first of all, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well, yes, for sure.

Mr. Hagel: — Well then, what?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well we will continue to consult with the minister's office in Ottawa to make sure that, on behalf of the seniors of the province, that they're going to get the best deal they can from the federal government.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, then are you . . . It sounds as though it's tenuous at best at the moment that there would be an assurance that Saskatchewan seniors can expect 489,000, but the remaining \$261,000 is really up for grabs at the moment.

Mr. Minister, can you assure those agencies which have been funded in Saskatchewan by New Horizons that they will for this fiscal year, through one source or another, be that federal or perhaps replaced by funding from your secretariat, that they can be assured the same level of funding for their projects at least for this year as they had last year? Can you provide that assurance for Saskatchewan groups, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I certainly want to get a reassurance from the federal government that it will continue to fund the New Horizons programs as they have in the past, and that's what I'm working towards.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, you've said that, Mr. Minister, but that wasn't my question. My question was: can you provide assurance to Saskatchewan groups receiving New Horizons funding that in some manner, and I won't hold you to the manner tonight, but that if you're not successful at getting New Horizons federally to continue to provide the funding at last year's level, that you will ensure the same level of funding for this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I will continue to press the federal government on the issue. If, however, there is no response, then I guess I'd have to take it to cabinet.

Mr. Hagel: — Would that be your intention then, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well as I say, I will continue to press with the federal government. This is, after all, a federal government initiative. It's their program; they have responsibility for it, and they have the obligation to fulfil that commitment. They say there's \$15 million in the budget for New Horizons programs. They're holding back \$4 million because they want to review the criteria and because of this new program that was introduced last year. And I will continue to press for that. However, as I say, if they won't come through for us, then I'll have to take it to cabinet.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. I thank you, Mr. Minister, for that assurance for the Saskatchewan groups funded by New Horizons that if you're not successful in getting the federal government to ensure the same level of funding, that they can expect some form of action from the provincial Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, we're making good progress here and I'd like to move along to another issue of concern to seniors, having again to do with the federal government, and that has to do with the federal government's stated intention to engage in a claw-back of seniors' pensions. Mr. Minister, I'll just simply quote from the *Leader-Post* of December 6 of last year in an article entitled, "Tax back plan has seniors upset," which begins with the statement:

Seniors, upset with what they say is a discriminatory plan to tax back old age pensions from those earning more than \$50,000 a year, have urged the government to drop the idea.

It would be my view, Mr. Minister, that that would represent clearly a majority senior point of view or opinion here in Saskatchewan. And I would ask, Mr.

Minister, first of all, whether you endorse the federal government's claw-back of old age pensions or whether it is the position of the Saskatchewan government that you oppose that action on the part of the federal government.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The tax bracket affects only those seniors, as you mention, with incomes of \$50,000 or over, and that affects very few Saskatchewan residents. I think most people would agree that anyone in the higher income tax bracket should pay their fair share of taxes, and when I brought that question up to seniors around the province they have agreed that people in a higher income tax bracket should pay their fair share of taxes. However, the Minister of Finance has raised the question with the federal government on whether this should be based on family income instead of individual income.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I'm talking specifically about the claw-back of the pension benefits. And I assume from your answer, Mr. Minister, that you do not have objection to the reduction of the principle of universality. In other words, income at \$50,000 this year, if that principle were to continue, some 20 years from now, \$50,000 of course, would be equivalent to, who knows, to maybe in today's value some 20 or \$25,000. Once it's implemented, of course, over a period of time, it continues to deteriorate the pension of seniors. Mr. Minister, I take it from your answer then that you do not object and you have not raised concern about the stepping back from universality providing the pension plan.

Mr. Minister, you've said to me that the Minister of Finance has simply sent off a letter to the federal government asking for some information. And I would ask you, Mr. Minister, if you have personally done any lobbying on behalf of Saskatchewan seniors to protect them from the claw-back of the old age pension.

(2145)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think I should point out that it is of course indexed, so therefore you'd have to make substantially more than \$50,000, say \$75,000, in order to lose all \$4,000. But I assure you that we will continue to press the federal government on these issues.

It seems most of everything we talked about here tonight has something to do with the federal government and what they're doing for the seniors. And I constantly hear that when I go out and talk to seniors, you know, talk to the federal government for us. And I assure you, we do do that, and I will continue to press the federal government on all of these issues, as will the Department of Finance, I'm sure.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, yes, these do have to do with federal issues, and I'm asking what you are doing as an advocate for seniors because you assured me at the beginning of estimates that was a role that you had. And I agree, I concur, I support that role that you have. All I've heard you say is that the Minister of Finance has written the federal minister asking for some information. I haven't heard you refer to any advocacy that you have carried out, but that you will continue to do whatever you've done. Mr. Minister, if you'd like to take a moment just to be a little more explicit and comment on whether you

think it's been successful in getting the point across to the federal minister.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think in many of these issues have been dealing with financial issues like the GST and tax back and all the rest of that sort of thing, having to do with the federal issues. It's better that the Minister of Finance and his officials deal with it because they understand fully the implication as it relates to seniors. But as I say, I have written . . . spoken to them personally on the new horizons issue.

But I think in many of these issues it's important that the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance represent the interests of this government and the seniors in their dealings with the federal government. They probably have more ears down there than I would, say, as an individual.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, you have been granted two ears, and your Premier announced back in the fall that he was enlarging the cabinet to give your government more ears. I would assume from that that you've been doing more hearing than listening. However I am disappointed to hear you say that in essence the provincial Government of Saskatchewan has not been lobbying on behalf of Saskatchewan seniors to protect them from deterioration of pensions over a period of time.

Mr. Minister, we've talked about federal issues and we've been talking about financial issues obviously because that troubles a number of Saskatchewan seniors. I would like to ask then, Mr. Minister, what advocacy you have done regarding then provincial government funding cuts which have had impact on seniors as well?

You will be aware, Mr. Minister, that in the budget your government has eliminated the transportation grant to municipalities, and you will also be aware, Mr. Minister, that a very significant percentage of ridership of public transit in urban centres is the seniors of our province, many of whom don't own cars or don't have an operator's licence, and for whom cut backs in transportation are very, very significant or consequently that offset by increases in their property taxes.

Mr. Minister, could you please tell me in this Assembly what you personally have done as the Minister for Seniors to lobby with your Minister of Finance regarding the granting of transportation allowances to municipalities and the fact that that was eliminated? And then can you tell me, Mr. Minister, how successful your lobby has been in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I think like most everyone I am concerned about the impact of the elimination of the municipal transportation assistance program. But public transport is a municipal responsibility and choices have to be made at the local level as to which priority. Senior citizens' secretariat does provide information and guide-lines on establishing volunteer driver programs and do provide financial assistance to 17 transportation projects for community groups, for instance: the Craik Pensioners and Senior Citizens No. 10 Inc.; Assiniboia "55" Club Inc.; Biggar New Horizons Projects; the Lloydminster Senior Citizens Society; SMILE (The Society

for Maintaining and Improving Life in Estevan) Services Inc. of Estevan; Humboldt Senior Citizens Club Inc.; Watrous and District Pensioners and Pioneers Co-operative Association; Wheatland Plus 50 club of Eston; Melville and District Pensioners and Senior Citizens Association; Moose Jaw Senior Citizens Assistance Program — which I know you have a particular interest in, \$16,590 — Vanguard Senior Citizens Association; Zenon Park Community Health and Social Centre; Kamsack Harmony Centre; Prince Albert and District Community Service Centre Inc., \$14,000 there; Leroy Union Hospital Community Services; Yorkton Senior Adult Development, \$8,424; town of Kindersley, \$3,000 and something; a total of \$83,158 to local transportation projects grants for senior citizens from the Seniors' Secretariat.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, what was the increase in the transportation grants allocated this year?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — It wasn't increased this year.

Mr. Hagel: — So what you're telling me, Mr. Minister, is that there was no increase in funding this year in grants for seniors' transportation in Saskatchewan, but at the same time, the Minister of Finance cut \$1.8 million from the urban transportation grants. Mr. Minister, would you be of the view then that your lobbying on behalf of access to transportation for seniors this year has been successful?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The Minister of Finance made his decisions. He had some choices to make and he made his decisions. I certainly feel that I'm comfortable with our representations to seniors in so far as we are targeting to special groups. I talked about the \$83,000 that's going to local transportation projects. And I think that in lobbying on their behalf in cabinet, we got a 1.3 increase in the SIP (Saskatchewan income plan) grant this year, which is an 8.2 per cent increase overall from last year, and I think that's substantial.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I suspect that a good number of seniors in Saskatchewan would not feel it's been a successful lobby in terms of ensuring access to transportation for seniors.

Mr. Minister, again on a provincial matter having to do with the relationship with municipal government: there has been, over the past number of years, Mr. Minister, reductions in the provincial funding to municipalities. And the consequence of that, Mr. Minister, has been, as you and I have both heard over and over again around Saskatchewan, an increase in property taxes for seniors — an increase which is very difficult for many of them to absorb because of their fixed incomes.

Mr. Minister, have you done any specific lobbying with your Minister of Finance to improve the funding to municipalities and therefore to lower the property tax for seniors in communities around Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, I feel that my lobbying has been very effective in cabinet in terms of seniors, targeting seniors for the most part, low-income seniors. We have increased the SIP grant, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, 1.3 million, which is an 8.2 per cent.

I can't take credit for the heritage program, but I would like to point out that the heritage grant program is an extremely successful and very popular program with the seniors, and this government can be very proud of that initiative. Total income of \$25,000 to \$30,000; a single gets \$250, a couple gets 350. If the income is \$25,000 and under, the single gets \$500 and a couple gets 700. Public housing, those living in public housing because they are substantially supported by the provincial government, single gets 200 and a couple gets \$400. So yes, I would say that in relation specifically to the SIP grant I think we've done very well lobbying on behalf of the seniors of the province.

Mr. Hagel: — I take it then, Mr. Minister, by your avoidance of responding to my direct question as to the effectiveness with which you've lobbied to see senior citizens property taxes reduced, that you prefer not to comment on it and don't consider that to be a successful part of your advocacy on behalf of seniors, and for the Seniors' Secretariat.

Mr. Minister, if we can move then to another area having to do with provincial responsibility. I want to refer just briefly to a *Star-Phoenix* article of March 2 of this year entitled, "Physical Health Main Concern of Seniors Responding to Study", and I want to quote Madge McKillop who, as you know, Mr. Minister, is on the seniors provincial advisory council, and she says, and I quote:

Seniors want to remain independent, fully functioning individuals, Madge McKillop said Thursday.

(2200)

Mr. Minister, I concur with that statement of Mrs. McKillop, and so I ask you, Mr. Minister, in that regard, given that health is a main concern of seniors and that desire to remain independent, you will be aware of the changes made in the prescription medicine plan some — well I guess we're talking 1987 — some three years ago and the deductibles that seniors now have to pay.

Mr. Minister, I would ask if you would advise me as to whether you have done any lobbying with your Minister of Health or the Associate Minister of Health — and I see that the Associate Minister of Health is whispering sweet nothings into your ear at the moment, so I'm sure that this will be a concise and forthright response that you'll provide. Mr. Minister, then what lobbying have you done with the Minister of Health to provide improved protection for seniors who require prescription medicine to reduce their costs of prescription medicines by either making changes in the deductible that they are required to pay or providing some special assistance, or do you have any plans to lobby with some special objectives in mind, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — It's my understanding, and certainly seniors have told me this, that there is a general understanding in the province that there was too much use of drugs by seniors and by the general population. Now people had requested that a safe use of medicine

committee be set up. Seniors certainly asked for that, and the government complied with that. A committee is being set up and there is a senior represented on that committee. So when I go out and talk with seniors, very seldom do I ever hear anything about the drug plan except to say that it's an improved drug plan, and they're delighted with the way it's working. I just don't get any criticism of that and I say that in all honesty.

Mr. Hagel: — Well obviously, Mr. Minister, you and I are talking to different seniors. It seems to me that if seniors are concerned that doctors are prescribing too many prescription medicines, that you don't ding the seniors. What you do is you deal with the doctors who are prescribing the prescription medicines. And, Mr. Minister, the financial hardship for those who are simply taking medicine as prescribed by their physician for their illness — it seems to me, Mr. Minister, that it's a little faulty logic to say by making it more expensive for them to have access to prescription medicines will somehow impact on doctors' habits of inappropriately prescribing.

And that's a debatable point and we won't deal with that here tonight. But I take it from your answer, Mr. Minister, then, that as Minister responsible for Seniors, you feel completely satisfied with the prescription medicine plan as it currently exists and have no intentions of lobbying for any changes in the prescription medicine plan.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I think it's important to point out that the deductible for seniors is considerably less than it is for other members of the family.

I think a point too, that by introducing a health card, it made substantially easier for seniors to acquire their drugs, rather than fill out all the forms and everything. And they've easy access to the drugs with the health card. And as I say again, seniors have not been complaining to me about the drug plan. They seem to be very comfortable with it.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, it surprises me to hear you say that but so be it. I understand that that is your position and your perception of the issue as it affects seniors. I don't agree but again I accept that is your position.

Mr. Minister, it will be recognized by seniors across Saskatchewan that one of the most valuable services delivered to seniors to assist in that process of independent living, which is very important to our seniors understandably, is the provision of home-care services. Mr. Minister, obviously many of us have talked about this and have looked at the funding problems that we have in health care, and it seems that there's really a dominoes kind of affect because of restrictions in some areas for access to home care. There's a greater demand in nursing homes and because of that a greater demand on the use of hospital beds for people who would be more appropriately and less expensively living in nursing homes.

It seems to me therefore, Mr. Minister, that one of the ways of opening the bottle-neck, so to speak, in health care, and one of the most cost-effective ways as well as one of one of the most human-effective ways for our seniors is to address the access to home-care funding. Mr.

Minister, as minister responsible for seniors' issues then, I ask if you have been doing any lobbying with the Minister of Health to increase the funding for home-care services in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Most people I talk with agree that home care is extremely important, and indeed the health care commission which just reported indicated that there should be increase in home care.

I'd like to point out that the budget for 1990-1991 was thirty million four hundred and five, two hundred thousand dollars which is an increase of 128.6 per cent since 1981-1982 — an increase of 126 per cent. And I think that the indication I get is that there's going to continue to be increases in home care. Because it is, after all, a very effective way to keep people in their homes where they want to be.

Mr. Hagel: — So I take it then, Mr. Minister, that you consider your lobbying to have been effective to date?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, and of course, there's ongoing discussions with seniors' groups.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, again I'm a bit surprised by your answer because it's not everyone will agree, of course, but again I accept that that is your view.

One final question on the matter of home care, Mr. Minister. It's been stated to me a number of times that one of the inequities or failings of the home care system in Saskatchewan — and I realize this is not Health estimates; we're talking about yourself as minister for seniors, advocating on behalf of seniors — has been the communication between hospital and home care as people, and particularly seniors, as large users of home care, make that transfer from hospital care to their own home.

Mr. Minister, have you taken any action to assist or to promote in the enhancement of the communication between hospitals and the home-care boards, in terms of providing that provision to enable seniors to move comfortably, and in many cases more quickly, from hospital to their own homes with the proper care in order to recuperate from their hospital stays in a comfortable manner, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The biggest role that I can play, having represented the Seniors' Secretariat, is the ongoing discussions I have with them and take these questions and their problems to the cabinet table.

For instance, your friend Jake Knelson from Moose Jaw, when I was there just a few weeks ago, spoke to me about convalescent homes. And, you know, so these things are going on all the time. The best role I can play is to carry the message that seniors give to me to the cabinet table.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, many of the seniors that I talk to have a very specific concern, and it relates to the matter of door to door sales, the direct sales that affect seniors particularly.

Mr. Minister, in your role as minister responsible for

seniors, have you been working with the Minister from Consumer and Commercial Affairs? Have you been lobbying that department to develop more protection, greater protection for seniors in our province from the unscrupulous direct sellers?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — This issue was brought up at the first senior citizens' meeting we had in Saskatoon last fall and one of the ladies there spoke very passionately about this specific issue that you have brought to our attention this evening.

And certainly my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs, and I share this concern. Seniors are very vulnerable to unscrupulous salesmen. Our departments have worked co-operatively to provide a new emphasis on education through a new series of workshops for seniors. I know that in Moose Jaw the senior citizens' Action Now provides some assistance on a voluntary basis in this regard advising seniors on unscrupulous salesmen, etc.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, would you support, as the minister responsible for seniors, would you support a toll free line at the Department of Consumer and Commercial Affairs where seniors could be in direct contact with the department to check such things as the licences held by direct sellers? Would you support that kind of a service available to Saskatchewan seniors and indeed to all Saskatchewan residents?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Chairman, the Seniors' Secretariat has its own toll free number: 1-800-667-7161. We field over 1,200 calls a month. Many of those calls have to do with unscrupulous salesmen or whatever, and we connect then the seniors directly to the Department of Consumer Affairs with that particular issue. It may be better that they work through us than work right directly with the other organization.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, just one final area of concern to seniors that has been reported to me by some, having to do again with the advocacy action of yourself and the secretariat. There are a number of seniors who have become quite concerned, and particularly in the latter part of 1989 and early 1990, about the cut-backs in VIA Rail passenger services in southern Saskatchewan. I would say quite frankly, Mr. Minister, that this is a concern for two things, I believe — transportation, both by way of tourism, transportation for themselves as well as for other personal needs or wants. But secondly, Mr. Minister, because seniors perhaps more than you or I or those who are younger than us, appreciate the historical significance of passenger transportation in our nation and see it as a unifying force at a time in which Heaven only knows that our country could use one or two unifying forces these days — Mr. Minister, have you undertaken at any point in time, again as Minister responsible for Seniors, to lobby in the interest of the protection of the VIA Rail passenger services in southern Saskatchewan? And if so, how successful do you feel that you've been in doing that?

(2215)

Hon. Mr. Martin: — The seniors that I have spoken with

... it certainly was not a primary issue with any of the seniors that I have spoken to. However I take your word that seniors have spoken to you about it and are concerned about it and I respect that. I see the VIA Rail cut-backs as not a seniors' issue any more than it is just a total family issue because I agree with you on the tourism aspect of it. I know that the Minister of Highways and Transportation spoke very passionately and very strongly on behalf of this government to the federal government when they were making the decision to do the number on VIA Rail.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I noted with interest and some sadness, I would say, when being out to the yards in Moose Jaw for the last VIA Rail train through heading east as well as heading west, that a fair percentage — I would say the majority actually — of those citizens who came out to express their concerns, and I think in some ways their sadness about the cut in services, as a matter of fact, were seniors from the city of Moose Jaw.

Mr. Minister, I have before me the *Senior Citizens Provincial Council Annual Review* of 1988-89, and I would just like to ask a couple of things of you regarding that. First of all, would you provide a copy of the papers described in this report? I refer specifically to the study of unmet needs of off-reserve Indian and Metis elderly; secondly, the review of literature on intergenerational conflict; and thirdly, the study on grants to seniors' organizations. Mr. Minister, would you be willing to provide me a copy of those documents?

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Yes, I will certainly get those to you just as quickly as possible, probably tomorrow. I do want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to say publicly that I think that Ted Azevedo and Ernie Crow did a marvellous job on the unmet needs project, and they are to be congratulated on behalf of all seniors in the province and specifically the natives of the province for that work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — But I assure you will get those to you very quickly.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I endorse the comments you made about those two gentlemen.

Mr. Minister, finally then I simply would ask for consideration by the Seniors' Secretariat to undertake study in a number of areas that impact on seniors. Time does not permit us to get into dialogue or debate — pick your term — on these this evening.

But I would like to put on the record and bring to your attention the request of the opposition to consider studies by the secretariat in the following areas, all of which I believe are of concern to a significant number of seniors in Saskatchewan.

Number one, the impact of the Principal Group failure on Saskatchewan seniors; number two, the implications of the federal government's budget cuts to the New Horizons program on provincial programs, particularly, Mr. Minister, if you find yourself in the unfortunate position of having to take recommendation to cabinet to

respond to shortcomings, if that should be the case; number three, the future needs of seniors in the area of housing, considering present population ageing trends that we're going through in Saskatchewan; number four — and I know previous estimates have gone into this topic in some detail — but the issue of elder abuse, which I think is a growing concern and an alarming one for many of us. I think it would be an overstatement at this stage to say that we see that as a large problem, but it is one that our sensitivity is certainly increasing upon and which we hope is not a growing, enlarged problem. But the opposition clearly sees that as an issue of concern for the Seniors' Secretariat.

And finally, Mr. Minister, consistent with the trend these days, reviewing the Murray commission report, a focus on New Directions in Health Care but with a particular concern for the impact that they have on seniors and particularly from the point of view of seniors and their access to quality, universal, accessible health care consistent with the principles of medicare.

Mr. Minister, I would appreciate it if you could advise me as to whether all of those would be matters that you would see of concern and study for the secretariat or if there are any of those with which you see it being a problem to commit some time and resources.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Those are the very issues that we are looking at. The seniors' provincial council has brought those forward and they want us to look at those. So yes, we will certainly consider those. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, then I appreciate that very much. I would just like to make one final comment before we go to the vote. I have just one question on item 2 in the vote, Mr. Chairman. As we've done review this evening, I've appreciated your sincerity and your commitment and I've also appreciated very much the assistance of your personnel here today and the ongoing efforts of the Seniors' Secretariat to contribute to improvement in quality of life for Saskatchewan seniors.

We have touched on a number of areas regarding the advocacy role of yourself as minister and your secretariat both in terms of the impact of the goods and services tax, the new horizons cuts in funding, the claw-back of Canada pension, transportation grant cuts to municipalities, reductions in Urban Affairs funding to increase the property tax of seniors in communities around Saskatchewan, the prescription medicine plan for seniors, the access to home care, to receive good consumer protection from unscrupulous salespersons at the doorstep as well as VIA Rail. Obviously any group of seniors or any individual senior will have those in their own set of priorities. I would have to say in all honesty, Mr. Minister, that it is my view that in the past year the success, the advocacy success, of the Seniors' Secretariat has been less than outstanding at times. I do appreciate that a number of the issues are difficult ones to deal with. And, Mr. Minister, I would wish that in the year to come that the advocacy success that you would have as minister on behalf of seniors will be greater than it has been in the past year, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Well I would have been surprised if

you'd said I was doing a good job. However, I know by your tone of voice that you think some work is being done out there. We will continue to listen to seniors. I enjoy meeting with the seniors. They're fun to be with; they're bright and have a lot of good ideas. And as I said in my opening remarks, I would hope that communities throughout Saskatchewan would recognize the senior citizens' week coming up June 3, that they would involve seniors more in their community activities and recognize the value that seniors can bring to us. I mean, seniors are great with young children. Why aren't seniors doing more work with young children, as a matter of fact even with babies, in opportunities throughout rural Saskatchewan as well as urban Saskatchewan? I really enjoy being with the seniors because I can learn a lot when I'm with them. Thank you very much for your questions tonight.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, item number 2, payments to Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation — I see the budget here is a reduction from \$243,000 last year to \$220,600 of this year. Mr. Minister, earlier this day one of my colleagues asked another minister why there was the cut in the reduction in payment to property management corporation and if you can believe this or not, I mean they really got . . . I know you will find this hard to believe, but believe it or not what he was told by the Minister is that it was to do with new efficiencies by the property management corporation. Now, Mr. Minister, both you and I — and I notice many of your colleagues on the other side chuckled at that comment — both you and I recognize that that's simply not the case, that the property management corporation has engaged in absolutely no new efficiencies and it does cause one to suspect, Mr. Minister, that there is a bit of cooking of the books going on here or perhaps previously going on here unless there is a reasonable explanation.

Mr. Minister, have there been a reduction in the rental of facilities or do you have another explanation as to why there is less in the budget? And please, something a little more serious than increased efficiencies by the property management corporation.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — At the risk of ruining your evening, I must say that it is because of increased efficiencies in the property management.

Item 2 agreed to.

Item 3 agreed to.

Items 4 and 5 — Statutory.

Item 6 agreed to.

Vote 42 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Seniors' Secretariat
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 42**

Items 1 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Items 5 and 6 — Statutory.

Vote 42 agreed to.

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

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, I would also like to thank the minister for his responses this evening. Obviously, the responses were not all as I would have wished right down to the bitter end, but they are what they are. I would also, Mr. Chairman, officially on behalf of the opposition, like to thank the officials for their assistance in these estimates tonight and to wish them every success in the current fiscal year in addressing the issues that impact on the quality of life of our Saskatchewan seniors. Thank you to the officials.

Hon. Mr. Martin: — I would like to thank the officials and also the member from Moose Jaw North as well as the member from Moose Jaw South who asked some excellent questions here tonight, and I appreciate the good dialogue that we had. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:29 p.m.