

June 8, 1992

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Education
Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — I was watching, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, the minister was quoting from a paper earlier when we convened. I wonder if she can table that document concerning the Oxbow School Division please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, since I read the paper in its entirety and it will appear in *Hansard* tomorrow, I don't see the necessity for tabling it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister has tabled all of the other documents that we have requested from her, and I request that she table that one also please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to undertake to the member opposite since we had some extensive discussions on the paper that we were reading from and we made some notes on it, and I'd like to undertake to give him a clean copy.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Chairman, that would be fine. Mr. Chairman, was the minister going to provide that copy now or later?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We would undertake to provide it later, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate it if I could have it though as quickly as possible. I was wondering if the minister would also provide the same document for the Arcola School Division that she had been quoting from prior to our discussions on the Oxbow one.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we will make that undertaking.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, another school division, Humboldt Rural No. 47, had a decrease on your list here of 238 students and yet we see a decrease of just over \$100,000. Can you explain that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the answer with respect to the member's question on Humboldt Rural would be the same as for the others, the other divisions, that the funding formula is extremely complicated and takes into account a great many factors besides the enrolment or enrolment change, including the equalization factor based on the assessment and the average weighted provincial average assessment, the transportation factor, and all of the other factors in the formula that were mentioned previously.

So the information that's provided on the summary sheet, as we've explained previously, which notes the enrolment change, is not the only factor that relates to the change between the numbers provided for 1992 budget as compared to 1991.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I find it very strange that in one case we have a school division that dropped one student, according to your enrolment, and you went on to explain about the tuitions coming in and out.

In Oxbow we have an increase of 30 and in Humboldt we have a decrease in student population of 238 students, and yet in proportion there's not that much change in the foundation grants to each of those school boards. The Oxbow one, in fact, has a larger decrease in their foundation grant, with a 30-student increase, compared to Humboldt that had a 238 drop and had less decrease in their foundation grant. And I just don't understand why that should be happening.

Perhaps you can explain the priorities that you have done in your department. We're having one student decrease for \$90,000 approximately; 238 student decrease for \$100,000 in their foundation grants. I just don't understand where you're getting your numbers from and how you're calculating your formulas.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I regret that the member opposite doesn't understand the formula system, but as we stated earlier, all of the school divisions . . . each individual school division has a complete explanation and understanding of the very complex factors that have been used in arriving at the funding that they received. Those school divisions all understand that.

We've attempted to explain how we did change the small school, the sparsity and the transportation factors, to try and make sure that we achieved our objective and the objective of the education system of providing for equality of opportunity for students no matter where they are, with particular attention to those rural school units that have had changes in population and other factors that affect them.

We've done our best to explain the complex formula. The school divisions do understand it. I'm aware that the member opposite did circulate a letter to all the school divisions in the province asking for that information. I'm not aware, of course, what kind of responses were received. But we would certainly be glad to discuss or answer any questions that school divisions have. But we have had none, so we assume that those people that are affected have a complete understanding of how the formula works.

The one thing I can assure the member opposite is that the formula is applied in an even-handed way across the province so that every school division receives equal treatment under the formula.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you may not have received any letter from the school board saying they don't like the way the formula is in place, but I am

sure you have probably received some for the amount of money that they are receiving. In fact, I will read a letter to you which was addressed to you so you will be aware of it. This is from Jim Wilm, chairman of one of the school boards up in P.A. (Prince Albert), a local board at Wesmor School.

Please find attached a letter that our Local Board of Trustees sent to the Chairman, Prince Albert Rural School Division #56 Division Board re the above topic. (It's the proposed closure of the Wesmor school).

The proposed closure of Wesmor Junior High is devastating. (Those are his words, not mine, his words — devastating.) This school allows our children from rural schools to adjust to coming from a small rural school into a larger rural school within the city of Prince Albert. Thus preparing them for entry into a large high school.

The second part of his letter, I will quote from him:

We recognize that costs have to be reduced in our school system, but not at the expense of education. We could accept low enrolments or a condemned school, but we cannot accept that this is due to dollars only.

This was a letter sent to you, Madam Minister. How do you respond to that? It's your priorities, your decisions to close these schools. Okay, I shouldn't say your decision to close the schools. It is your decision not to give the school boards enough money to operate these schools. It should be the priority of everyone in this province, your government, the people at large, and this opposition, that the students in this province receive the best possible education they can receive.

The members opposite, while they were in opposition, hollered and screamed continuously that the government of the day was underfunding education when they were receiving increases — 3, 4 and 5 per cent increases a year; over 70 per cent increase in the 10 years that this administration was in power. And yet your first year you come in and give them a 2 per cent cut and a 2 per cent cut next year.

How do you justify that after going around the province in the last 10 years and saying that education was totally underfunded, that you would do more and better, Madam Minister, when you've just given them a 2 per cent cut this year and a 2 per cent cut for next year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member opposite, I would remind him that the closure of schools or the configuration of the school system within a division is the responsibility of the division board.

I would appreciate if the member opposite would table the letter that he did read from. And I notice that the letter made reference to the fact that the decisions being made by the local board as outlined in his letter were not as a result of dollars alone. That was the words that was quoted from the letter.

I would also like to point out that in the 1992-93 school year it is projected that only . . . in the whole province only seven schools will close, whereas in the last year of the administration of the members opposite, 20 schools closed; the year before, 18; the year before, 13; the year before, 20. So we have less schools projected to be closed in this fiscal year than have closed on an annual basis for the last five years.

I would also like to say to the member opposite that we have done, as I pointed out earlier, our very best within the funding formulas to recognize the value of small schools, schools with isolated locations. And we also have some initiatives in the distance education with SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation), the correspondence unit of the Department of Education, SaskTel, and the audio-visual departments of the universities and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), working together in a project to try and consolidate their efforts so that we can provide a better range of programming at lower cost to help the rural school system in providing a wide range of curriculum and learning opportunities.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe that it's required of opposition to table any documents that they may have before them in the House. That is the necessity for ministers, mind you. But since this letter is addressed to Ms. Teichrob, I'm more than willing to give her a copy of it. But I assure you — or I would hope — that she has a copy of it and would have read this letter when it arrived in her office. It was sent on June 2, but I have no problem giving her a copy of it at all. And I'll quote again, Madam Minister, from what the letter said:

We recognize that costs have to be reduced in our school system, but not at the expense of education. We could accept low enrolments or a condemned school . . .

It didn't say that that's what was happening. They said they could have accepted that.

. . . but we cannot accept that this is due to dollars only.

And that's what they're implying in this letter, that the only reason their school is being eliminated is because the Department of Education did not provide enough money to keep that school in operation. If the minister wants a copy still, she can have one.

Madam Minister, the Estevan Rural School Division had over a 25 per cent decrease in its funding, yet it had a 44 per cent — excuse me, not 44 per cent — a 44 student increase in its enrolment. What particulars were involved in that cut? Why was that one cut so heavily?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the answer with respect to the Estevan School Division would be exactly the same as for the others, although the effect of the formula is not the same in all cases. It depends upon all factors: transportation, sparsity, local assessment, the whole range of factors that are used, of which the school enrolment is only one.

The one thing I repeat that the member opposite can be assured of is that the formula is applied in a completely even-handed way throughout the province in each and every school division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, will you give us a breakdown of all of the changes involved in the Estevan School Division that caused their funding grants to drop so dramatically?

(1915)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as in the previous two school divisions that we did go over in detail, we can undertake to provide the member opposite with that analysis at a later date.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Will the minister give an undertaking to provide that information for every school division throughout the whole system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in the interests of saving the forests of Saskatchewan, we were hoping to provide explanations of how the funding formula works that would satisfy the member opposite, but we certainly can undertake to provide that information because it is a matter of public record.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. We too have a concern over the forests of Saskatchewan but there's also jobs involved here which are very important.

An Hon. Member: — You could use recycled paper.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And as my colleague here says, you can use recycled paper to give us the information on.

Madam Minister, one of the new announcements that you made when you first came into office concerned French education and French governance. You put out a news release on February 17 of '92, indicating that you were going to go ahead with funding to a third school board in this province exclusively for francophone students. You also indicated in that news release that this school board would not create any additional funding costs to the province because of an agreement with the federal government.

Is the minister aware that this so-called federal agreement is signed in 1988, runs out at the end of 1998, and that it calls for decreases in federal funding levels in each of the last five years of that agreement? That there is currently no federal agreement in place to replace the existing agreement and that the federal government has made no indication that it is willing to fund this third school system beyond 1998, and that historically the federal government has not carried on such funding arrangements indefinitely?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question from the member opposite regarding the matter of governance for francophone schools, as the member opposite knows, there was a decision of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal some time ago, in 1988 as a matter of fact, which states that it is a constitutional right of section 23, francophone parents, to have provided for

their children this kind of education. However, we did say that we were willing to obey the law. Our government is willing to obey the law, which your administration was not.

The funding agreement that you refer to is a subsidiary agreement to a federal-provincial languages protocol. It did provide for the incremental funding and to incremental costs of introducing a francophone education into the system. The previous administration did not keep their commitment to institute francophone governance in 1988, so the first four years of federal funding were forfeited by this province.

We have been negotiating with the federal government, and negotiations are still ongoing, to provide for an amendment to that subsidiary agreement. And we have made it perfectly clear to the federal government and to anyone else who is interested in this issue that we will not proceed unless . . . at this time, unless we receive a commitment or a new agreement from the federal government which will pick up all the incremental costs for providing this form of government so that now or in the future there will not ever be a provincial incremental cost over and above the regular pupil cost in the public system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I believe that the previous government was willing to go ahead with the school governance if money had been available.

I don't believe that what you have just said is any change to that; that you're saying, yes, we'll go ahead, but only if the federal government will pick up all the costs over and above what the normal cost would have been in any other school system.

Has the minister made any studies or done any consultation with any of those groups concerning the funding for the francophone school boards?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we have had very extensive consultations with the parties concerned with this issue. We have initiated by ministerial order earlier this year the implementation task force which is working out the details.

But I would like to correct and make an observation on one comment by the member opposite, that their government . . . their administration was willing to go ahead with this if the money had been there. The money was there; the money was there in '88, in '89, in '90, and '91, and it could have been done with no incremental cost to the province.

It was misrepresented, and we intend, providing that the funding that your administration forfeited can be put back in place so that we can demonstrate that there is no incremental provincial cost in this initiative, that we will proceed with it.

But it wasn't lack of money that prevented your administration from proceeding with it — it was lack of courage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you talk about the previous government not going ahead when the money was in place. There were costs involved to the province which the province didn't feel at that time it could carry.

You're talking about giving up federal monies, and yet your colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, is giving up \$200 million this year in the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program. Madam Minister, there's where the money is, not the little bit that was in the federal budget for francophone schools in this province.

Madam Minister, can you table any of the reports or studies that you did your consultations with any of the groups concerning the francophone school question?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The consultations consisted of responding to requests to reinstitute the implementation task force. Those requests might have been made in verbal form from the people who support this initiative, being the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the league of administrators of education in Saskatchewan. Those are the members, in addition with representatives from the francophone community, who make up the implementation task force.

Now their deliberations are done in committee and we haven't received their report as of this time; they're still working out details. So their deliberations are not a public process, but their recommendations, when they come forward, certainly will be.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you stated that those you consulted with might have supported the third school board, francophone. How many of them did and how many of them didn't, of those people you consulted with?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I suppose it would be possible to table again the Gallant report, which was the consensus report of those education partners that I referred to that are members of the implementation task force. Beyond that, I can't imagine what further information the member opposite might desire.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, Madam Minister, how many letters of support have you received from the province concerning a third school board, and how many letters in opposition to that have you received?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I have received some representations from both points of view, for or against. But I think that is not the issue. The issue is that the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has said that in order to fulfil the constitutional rights of section 23 parents, that the province must provide for education for their children. We intend to obey the law.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you talk about section 23 parents, and by that I'm assuming you mean francophone parents. I have a stack of letters in my office, approximately 3 inches high, from exactly those parents from the Gravelbourg area who do not support the idea of

a third school board.

Madam Minister, have you received that kind of representation from Gravelbourg?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I know that there are differing points of view on this issue. The fact is that there is also a law and we intend, I repeat, to obey the law.

Mr. D'Autremont: — It sounds to me, Madam Minister, like you intend to go ahead with this project irregardless of its need, its cost, or its desirability in view of the parents in question.

Madam Minister, how much is it going to cost once the federal government will no longer fund the third school board? Have you done any studies to judge the capital costs and the operating costs of that school system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think that this an example of the gross misunderstanding of this issue. Francophone school governance would be available only to those parents who qualify under section 23 of the charter, of which in Saskatchewan there are a very limited number. I think that we have to keep a reasonable perspective on this and realize that a lot of those people who write in opposition or who speak in opposition to this initiative do not understand that it is limited to a small number.

And in terms of the cost, the amount . . . and the members opposite should know this because the subsidiary agreement providing federal funding for the francophone governance initiative wasn't negotiated and provided for during their administration. There will be incremental costs, costs above the recognized costs of educating a student in Saskatchewan, in the implementation phase only, perhaps in teacher training, perhaps in the acquisition of textbooks and resource materials, but once those are all in place within the six- or ten-year time frame, the implementation costs will be over and the cost then of educating a francophone student will be the same as the cost of educating any other student. So it's the incremental cost only that will be provided by the federal government and that is why when the agreement expires there will not be an additional financial contribution from the province required at any time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I have to disagree with you. I'm from a community and a constituency that has a large number of French . . . Je suis . . . je peux parler un tout petit peu de français aussi. (Translation: I am . . . I can speak a very little French, too.) And those people are not in favour 100 per cent — some are, some are not — of the third school board. And they have some very serious concerns as to what this third school board means to them.

You say there will be no additional costs. I would suggest, Madam Minister, that when it comes time to regulate the tax base there will be additional cost because that tax base will not be lumped together as the current school divisions are. It will be scattered out — a piece here, a piece there, and a piece some place else — and it's going to take additional costs to regulate that and to administer it.

The transportation costs, Madam Minister. Not all of these students come from one central location and go to school there. Currently in my constituency there are students travelling 20, 30, 40 miles, past a half a dozen schools, to get to the French school and it is the only school in this province that goes from K to 12 in French totally. Those people have some concerns, Madam Minister, about this French school governance issue.

They want to know what effect it's going to have on their school if you implement this program. Their school is in place and what effect is a third school board going to have on it?

(1920)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, I'd like to say that we will have the same number of pupils that we have now, the same number of schools that we have now. The francophone governance model does not contemplate — in fact prohibits — the francophone governing body from having any direct access to the tax base. And this is why it's so important that we understand that it is a consensus model, and in the limited areas where the numbers of francophone students, where they exist, there will be an arrangement made between the school division and the francophone governing body, based upon the consensus, based upon the report of the implementation task force and the Gallant report.

There is one area that you refer to where it's somewhat unique, where the people eligible for this type of governance don't agree 100 per cent with each other. On the other hand, there are some areas of the province that have a much more concentrated francophone population than the area you mention, and they are anxiously awaiting the establishment of this form of governance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, they may have a larger concentration than what they have in my communities, but yet my communities do have a K to 12 French school within an existing school division.

You say that the tax base will not be involved. How will this third school board be funded? Will it be funded 100 per cent with federal money, will it be funded 100 per cent with provincial money, or a combination of that? Or will there be any reliance on the tax base of the area as the local school boards do currently?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in order that I might understand the question better and make sure that we're talking about the same thing, because I would like to explain that there are two separate, completely separate types of francophone . . . Francophone governance contemplates the education of those people whose mother tongue is French who wish to maintain their language. And it's a totally different approach from the French immersion program; it's not the same.

But would it be fair to ask the member opposite if it's the Bellegarde school that's he's referring to? That's helpful if it is. He indicates yes. That those . . . there will not be an additional cost to that system because those students are already in the system, they're already in a school, and the

only thing that would be changed is the governance. And there wouldn't be, beyond the incremental cost which would be picked up by the federal government, an additional cost. There wouldn't be any change in the configuration of students and there is no — if people understand how the French governance component would work — there is no reason for those people to be apprehensive about its effect.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, maybe there's no reason for them to be, but they are. I talked to the chairman of the local school board last week. I talked to that school's representative on the Arcola school board. And they're both very apprehensive about what this would mean to their school. They feel that they have the proper system in place currently, that it's working properly, that their students are going up, and they're very afraid that if this third school board comes into place, they're in a position where they will lose their funding. And they like being where they're at, they like being in the Arcola school division, and they do not want to leave.

They want . . . they are concerned, Madam Minister, as to whether or not — if the third school board comes into place — whether or not they will lose their funding, their federal funding that they do currently receive now, under the third school board system.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, there is no reason for the people in that area to be apprehensive about what francophone governance would . . . what affect it would have on them. For one thing if this component were to come into place, it is entirely voluntary and if the people in that school district, the parents in that district, are satisfied with the arrangement they have now then nothing would have to change for them. And I think, with respect, if the member opposite would examine and make sure that he completely understands how the francophone governance structure would work that it would be more productive for him to meet with his constituents and explain it to them to allay their fears.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I would believe that since you're the Minister of Education and you're the one who is working towards the implementation of the French governance, that it should be your position and your job to make that representation to the people of Saskatchewan to explain it. I'm certainly more than prepared to meet with my communities, and I already have, to discuss this very issue.

The one issue that they are very concerned about at Bellegarde has absolutely nothing to do with French governance. What it has to do with is the cuts that you have made to the Department of Education and whether or not they can get an auditorium for their school, and that's their prime concern. They believe that they have a very good school in place providing the type of education they want and the type of education that the people in their communities want.

Madam Minister, how many students across the province would you estimate would be involved in a French governance school board?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member opposite's last direct question, the maximum number that could be identified that would be eligible to be served under this type of governance in the province would be approximately 800 students in probably not more — more than likely less — than a dozen locations. And that would be the complete extent of it unless we have a mass immigration of section 23 eligible people.

I guess I would just like to add that the task force, in response to the question, that the task force, the implementation task force, will be meeting with representatives from the schools that could have a potential to be affected. And they certainly have met on many occasions with the ACFC (Association Culturelle Franco-Canadienne) and the French parents' association. There will be ample consultation prior to any implementation.

And with respect to their fears about funding and the effect it has on their school, I can only say that the effects of the devastating budget and the devastating financial situation that we inherited from the previous administration cuts across all lines and everyone in the province is affected regardless of nationality.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the previous administration made those kind of judgements and choices also. They decided that they would continue to fund Education rather than cutting it as you have done.

You mentioned that the schools such as the Bellegarde school could voluntarily join the French governance school board or it could voluntarily stay out. What about all the other francophone communities around this province. Would they also be given that choice, to voluntarily join or stay out?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the model that is contemplated would make access to this system entirely voluntary by all schools and all parents.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What manner would you choose to test that, whether or not the people in that area wish to go into it? Will the parents be allowed to vote, or will it simply be a matter of choice of the school board?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the elements of the proposal that's now being worked on by the implementation task force contemplate that there would be a general council, a provincial board, which would establish criteria against which requests from local school divisions or local schools would be tested. And that would include a financial viability test and the warranting of the numbers, the numbers of students.

So it will vary on a local basis. How they canvas the population; whether they have a vote. It will be up to the eligible parents in the local district that is applying, how to prove their case to the provincial council.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, what is the requirements to be an eligible parent?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, eligibility is spelled out in section 23 of the Charter of Rights.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, would you mind explaining what that is so it's on the record in this House?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question. In brief, a summary of the requirements to be eligible under section 23 of the Charter of Rights would be that the language first spoken and still understood is French; that children are being currently educated in French, or have brothers and sisters who are being educated in that system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well using that as a guideline, Madam Minister, I think there is quite a large number of people who are currently taking French, including in my school of Bellegarde, that would not meet those requirements. I myself attended a ACFC school for 12 years, excuse me 10 years, 2 years I didn't. And yet my mother tongue did not start out as being French but I still understand it and I still speak it. I took it all the way through school.

And there's quite a number of other people in our communities who may have learned French at home but have not used it since then and may no longer understand it, but who now wish their children to go and learn French. And you would be excluding them from that system to which they are paying their taxes, either federal or provincial, and you never did answer how that funding was going to happen, whether it was all going to be federal money or provincial money, or whether there was going to be any local tax money involved in it.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the section 23, where it's language first spoken and still understood, as where French is the mother tongue, and that is the limiting factor.

And it's very important to note the distinction that I outlined earlier, where the francophone governance model contemplates the maintenance of that mother tongue. The immersion system, the French immersion system where people such as you referred to as yourself whose language first spoken was not French, but the immersion system is for anglophones who wish to acquire a knowledge of French, and they're two different instructional practices.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I have a large number of people in my constituency who would dearly love to change your mind on the fact that their mother tongue is not French. Even though they may never have spoken it, they still consider themselves to be French.

Madam Minister, would you please answer the question for the school boards as you see them: will they be totally funded by federal government? Will there be any provincial money involved or will there be any local tax money involved?

(1945)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I have difficulty accepting that one's mother tongue can be a language that they have never, ever spoken. Extensive surveys have

demonstrated that a maximum number of approximately 800 students in the province in a dozen or less locations would come close to qualifying for this form of governance.

As to the costs, I've said and I repeat that we are negotiating with the federal government. We need to have a commitment that all the incremental costs of introducing this type of legislation will be provided for through federal funding. And once the system is in place, I repeat again, there will be no provincial cost over and above what any other student in this province receives.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Therefore, Madam Minister, the province will be paying a portion of the costs. There must be some money coming from the local tax base then also, is there?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I must correct this. I did say that there will be no access to the local tax base and there will not be additional costs. The federal funding is to pick up the incremental costs of the introduction, the new textbooks, perhaps a few new teachers in the francophone model of instructional practice which as I point out is different from the immersion. The federal funding is to pick up all of those incremental costs.

And beyond the implementation phase, those students are residents of Saskatchewan now; we're educating them now, wherever they are, in whatever kind of school they are. They're now eligible for the basic per-pupil grant and they're counted in the foundation grant that every student is entitled to.

Beyond that, the federal government will be picking up the incremental costs, so I repeat: there is no additional provincial money involved in this initiative, not 1 cent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Not 1 cent of additional provincial money. Who is going to pay for the additional transportation costs to transport those students in from their homes and communities over a greater distance than what they would normally be transported if they were going into the regular system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, all of the students that are contemplated to be eligible for that system are in the system now, are being transported now. There will be no — I repeat — no additional provincial costs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Those students who are in the system now, indeed their costs are being covered for transportation by the federal government and you have said that that is an incremental cost which will be for the start-up phase of the program. What about the long term. What about 15 years from now, Madam Minister? Who's going to be picking up those transportation costs at that point?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the transportation of school children in Saskatchewan, whatever their origin or destination within the province, is now a provincial cost, totally. So that will not change.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I find that very surprising,

Madam Minister, when there are people in my own community who are transporting children from Alida to the Bellegarde school and who are receiving a federal subsidy to do so. Are you saying that you are now going to pick up that cost or are you not going to pick up that cost?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, to our knowledge there is no federal subsidy for transportation and the transportation of school students, K to 12, in Saskatchewan is the responsibility of . . . is a provincial responsibility, or the responsibility of the local school division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'm sure the people of my community are going to find that very interesting.

Madam Minister, including all of the federal government costs, what is your estimate of the capital costs involved in the French school governance and the operating costs for the school system, all the costs — federal, provincial, and local?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite should know if he could find out from his colleagues because they were in the administration when the original subsidiary agreement to the federal-provincial languages protocol was negotiated, the one that was put in place at the time that their administration committed to proceed with this initiative.

There's different components in the subsidiary agreement for the incremental costs. Part of it is capital cost, which would relate to the renovation, for instance, of existing class-rooms. There is not a lot of capital cost contemplated in this initiative. The total amount that would be required for implementation in the six-year period that's remaining in the subsidiary agreement is estimated to be approximately \$27 million. And that is the amount that we are requesting from the federal government and that is the amount that we expect them to commit.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And what is your estimate of the annual operating cost for that whole system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the operating cost is included in that figure and would not deviate, in the long run, from the operating cost of any school. In the short run, as we said, there might be some teacher training, some extra resource materials. That is what is provided for in the additional federal funding.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I still believe that there are going to be some additional costs associated with the French governance school system over and above the costs that you have today.

But we will go on to another issue now. Madam Minister, how many people have been fired since November 1 in your department, and how many of those positions have been refilled?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there have been since November 1 only one separation that could be described as involuntary; there have been 41 permanent, and six and a half non-permanent person years. This has

impacted . . . these were all budget driven and have impacted 13 permanent employees, 10 of whom were out of scope and 3 in scope; 4 non-permanent employees, and 2 people have had their hours reduced. There was also a reduction of 10 secondments to the department, mostly in the curriculum area where, as we said earlier, the level of activity has been reduced.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I apologize to the Minister and her staff that I was not quite aware that my colleague was going to divert momentarily to the more traditional questions.

I just wanted to pick up on the topic that you were on previous to his question. Madam Minister, you were talking about the third governance, the French school board and so on, and I would like to ask you one question: when are you as a government planning to implement a third school board?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier to your colleague, the implementation task force is working on the model, making some refinements. We are negotiating with the federal government in terms of the funding agreement, which must be fully in place before we proceed. So I simply suggest that the legislative schedule would be impacted by both of those processes.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, my understanding is, during the discussion and so on that you've been having with my colleague, is that you are anticipating that when the implementation will occur, it will be done as you've just said — after the agreement is in place. And what is the time frame that you're anticipating that to be? In other words, are we looking at a smoke-screen here that's going to take five or six years to accomplish, or is something that we could be looking forward to in the fall of 1992?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as we understand, there has been an indication that the federal House may rise approximately June 22. We hope to have a confirmation from the federal cabinet of an approved amendment to the subsidiary funding agreement prior to that time. That would still, if the implementation task force is able to complete their work and if we're able to accommodate the legislation in this session, it would make it possible for some — at least some — schools to be organized to elect their local boards and so forth by the opening of the 1992 school season. However, if that time limit passes, for instance if we don't receive that confirmation during this sitting of the federal House, we would not be able to put the governance structures and the required legislation in place in time for 1992.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, you were talking about the agreement that you're rehashing with the feds. Could you give the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan an idea of what you're talking about, this agreement that you're referring to.

(2000)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, I think that the member opposite should be intimately aware of the details of this agreement, since it would have been negotiated in 1988 by the administration that he

was a part of. What we refer to is a subsidiary agreement to the federal-provincial languages protocol that provides for some funding for the French immersion program. The subsidiary agreement was an agreement that was side by side with the main protocol, which is the reason it has the same expiry dates. Those agreements would have both been renegotiated when the previous administration would have been in charge of the negotiations.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, as you are no doubt aware, the agreement that we're talking about is an agreement that from 1992 to 1993, each year thereafter for five years, you're going to have a 10 per cent reduction every year on the federal government's willingness to pay the cost of this implementation of this program.

Now, Madam Minister, after 1998, what then? There is no more agreement after 1998. It was a five-year agreement that was reached. Having said that, you talk about incremental costs and so on. Who's going to pick up the tab for this third board after 1998, because there is no further agreement at that stage?

What I'm anticipating, Madam Minister, that this is going to have a dramatic impact upon the taxpayer of Saskatchewan, because with the trend that the federal government is in, with off-loading and so on, what guarantees would you have, Madam Minister, that the federal government is actually going to continue to pick up their fair share of this particular cost?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm very glad to see that the members opposite share our concerns with the lack of responsibility that the federal government shows in a great . . .

An Hon. Member: — Oh don't get into that now. Let's stay with the issue.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The member opposite is the one who raised it.

Also you refer to a five-year agreement and I'm not . . . and I really do believe that from 1988 to 1998 is 10 years; it used to be.

I think that the member opposite should be aware — and it's unfortunate that there was only one representative in the House at the time the questioning started so we have to repeat all these answers over again — but I think that you should be aware that the federal contribution is in three parts. It is for the incremental costs in the implementation of this style of education that there will be . . . It is acknowledged, and that's why this subsidiary agreement is in place, it is acknowledged that there will be some start-up costs in terms of teaching, of training some teachers; of acquiring resource materials and textbooks; and some capital costs, mostly in the form of renovations to existing buildings. Those are the costs that are identified that the federal government will pick up.

At the time that the system is fully implemented and those small number of schools that are eligible to be established in the province are operational, then the per-pupil costs in that system will be the same as they are in any other part of the system. So the need for supplementary funding

from the federal government, while always welcome, will not be necessary and there will be no provincial costs associated with this system. And there will be no access to the property tax base by this form of governance.

Mr. Neudorf: — So you're telling me, Madam Minister, that there will be no cost to the Saskatchewan provincial taxpayers. The provincial taxpayers also pay to the federal government as well. These are my tax dollars just as well as if I'm paying them to the provincial government. So let's make sure that we understand that, and keep that in mind while we're going through this.

And talking about costs, Madam Minister, would you explain to me how you propose to implement this system? Does this mean now that an entire school and its entire population is going to be deemed to have been put into a third governance? Or will there indeed be people brought from neighbouring schools, collected in the central system, which would of course mean an additional busing and transportation problem?

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce some guests tonight.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, in the Speaker's Gallery are several friends of the members of the Assembly. Chief Roland Crowe of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, Ray Ahenakew with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, and Percy Derocher, who are here tonight to observe the workings of the committee of Education. I'm sure all members will want to join with me in welcoming them here tonight and wish them an enjoyable stay.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and on behalf of the opposition, I would also like to welcome the distinguished members here this evening. I've had — I know with Chief Roland Crowe — many occasions to meet with him and we've had some interesting sessions together, no doubt. So welcome here gentlemen.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Education Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, I asked you a question prior to the introduction. I would now wait for the answer.

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Sonntag: — I ask leave of the Assembly to introduce guests as well.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you. I would also like to welcome especially the two members . . . or two individuals from my constituency, Mr. Ray Ahenakew and Mr. Percy Derocher, and also Chief Roland Crowe as well. Welcome this evening . . . (inaudible) . . . If we get a chance to chat with you later. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Education Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question of the member opposite just prior to the break, we had answered these very same questions previously actually.

With respect to transportation and the responsibility of the local taxpayer, this form of governance doesn't contemplate any access to the local tax base, which is why it's so important to note that this is a consensus model. Because in the limited number of areas — less than a dozen are contemplated throughout the province — where this type of a school would be established or has the potential to be established, the funding would be worked out between the local elected francophone governance board and the existing local school board. There would be no access to the local tax base.

In terms of the transportation factor, let us not forget that all of these . . . any of these students that are potentially eligible for this style of education are already in our system. They're already occupying class-rooms. They're already being taught, and they are in many cases already being transported.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, could you indicate to the Assembly the 12 schools that you are referring to as being potential candidates for this new third school board?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question: I said maximum of potential, and some of the locations might not have been identified. We're just looking at where there is population. But it would be entirely on a voluntary basis.

The ones that have expressed . . . the areas that have expressed the most interest and the ones that we would expect to receive applications for this style of education from would be Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Gravelbourg, Belbutte, Vonda, and perhaps Bellegarde — it would be one that would be eligible.

Mr. Neudorf: — You didn't answer the other part of my question, Madam Minister, which was: is this going to then be one school that is already in existence with the population, for terms of reference let's say 250 kids, that those 250 kids then would become part of this program?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it's possible, but because it is voluntary at the local level, it would . . . And I think it's premature until the task force reports, until the parents and students that would be eligible can see exactly the kind of framework that's recommended, so that they would be in a position to know whether they wish to participate. Once that is all in place, then we'll have a better indication.

We have an indication now identified for us by the francophone organizations — how many, what the maximum potential number of students who would be eligible in the province are. But whether they would all volunteer or want to be part of this system would be up to them, and they won't be in a position to make that determination until they know what all the rules are, when the implementation task force has completed their work and made their recommendations.

Mr. Neudorf: — In our hypothetical school of 250 kids from grades 1 to 12, Madam Minister, let's say there are 13 that don't want to; the other 237 say, we want to. What happens to those 13 kids?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question, it's difficult to deal with hypothetical situations, but if there were an area where there were some people, students that didn't want to volunteer into the system, they would go to the regular existing school. And part of the test as to . . . that the provincial governing body for this system would apply, would be the viability of the school system upon the approval of the application.

Mr. Neudorf: — I'm not sure I follow the last part of that question, but, Madam Minister, I'm assuming that this is the regular existing school that has now voted — the parents, except 13 kids — that they're going to go to this third French governance type of school board. What happens to these other kids now that are not going to it, whose parents don't want to be part of that system? And there's only one school in this small town. Now what are you going to do with them? Are you going to bus them? Are you going to bus others in? How do you propose to handle that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, again we're dealing in hypotheticals and I'm not sure that the potential for the situation that the member opposite describes exists. But if it did, there is very likely . . . and if it was that kind of community that was limited to that population, then it's highly likely that a number of those students are being bused now so that the transportation cost would not be an incremental increase; it would be there now.

Mr. Neudorf: — You keep talking about the fact that this is a hypothetical situation, but it's hypothetical until you start. But what I'm asking you is, what is your plan? How are you going to be handling these kinds of situations? Because surely, Madam Minister, you will admit that there's not that kind of homogeneity throughout Saskatchewan that you're going to get one particular community that's going to be entirely willing to go over to the French population. But there's only one school there. Now what are you going to do with the others? Are you

proposing to do busing back and forth, or how will you handle that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is the reason why the work of the task force is so difficult and detailed, and it is the reason why it's so important that the members of the task force, being the major partners in education, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), why all of these important stakeholders in the education community are involved in designing the model so that it will be flexible and it will be able to accommodate the kind of situations, if they arise, that the member opposite is describing. How, I can't specifically answer the question on this hypothetical basis until we receive the report of the implementation task force; until their work is complete and they have determined, in their wisdom and with complete consensus and agreement by all the parties, how these cases will be handled as they arise.

(2015)

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, I'm still trying to get my head around the fact that you said a few moments ago that the implementation could start as soon as the fall of 1992. And for someone who's planning to embark on a rather ambitious program, it seems to me that you're tremendously void of some pertinent answers here. And that is a concern that I would have. Because surely you would admit, Madam Minister, that once you do one school for one community in the province, you're committed to a course of action here that you're going to have to follow up all over.

And that's why I'm kind of surprised that you haven't got some more firm answers for us here today, given the fact, by your own admission, that you're contemplating very well, very likely, that you will begin this program in the fall of '92, unless I misunderstood you. But to me it seemed as if you said it could start as soon as 1992 in the fall.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question from the member opposite, previously when he asked about the expected time frame I said that subject to the work of the implementation task force being complete, subject to receiving written confirmation and a signed agreement from the federal government, that the fall of 1992 was the earliest that could possibly happen. So the qualifier was that the work of the implementation task force and their recommendations would have to be complete in time for those details that the member opposite refers to, to be in place.

I think that we have to remind ourselves that if applications were received from school divisions for the establishment of this type of governance prior to September, that they would likely be from schools that are fairly well established and operational now, and there wouldn't be incremental costs associated with those.

Mr. Neudorf: — Could you enlighten the House and the people of Saskatchewan what your driving force is. What is the motivation behind the course of action that you're

contemplating now in pushing the third governance.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the member opposite should be very well aware because the Court of Appeal decision in Saskatchewan, the Wimmer decision, was rendered during their administration, I believe in 1988. And in response I would simply say that while their administration declined to obey the law, this government believes in obeying the law.

Mr. Neudorf: — At what cost, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think we've addressed this in several different ways in responses prior. We have said that the implementation of this model is subject to an agreement, with the subsidiary agreement, with the federal government which will provide for all of the incremental costs so that there will not be a provincial cost component in addition to what a regular student would receive.

Mr. Neudorf: — That's a bunch of nonsense, Madam Minister, and I think the people of Saskatchewan recognize that and realize that. It's a smoke-screen. There's going to be a lot of incidental costs. And I know that you're not an educator and perhaps you don't understand what kind of cost this is going to have to the kids.

How can you, for example, take some kids out of one class-room — two here, three there? What impact is that going to have on the teacher-pupil ratio for example? What's going to happen to the quality of education in the class-room or in a school that has lost one teacher because they've lost kids that have gone to somewhere else? What happens to the pupil-teacher ratio there? What happens to the abilities of the teachers to deliver programs when the staff has been cut and there are no longer 12 teachers on staff to deliver the program, but now only 10?

Madam Minister, I've taught in situations like that and I know the impact that that can have, not only on the morale of the teachers that are now teaching eight subjects instead of the five that they were before, picking up subjects that they don't have a specialty in. It creates a lot of stress and a lot of strain. And you're going to be busing people all over. I suggest to you, and I think if you look at the situation, there's no other way in which this can happen, that that is exactly what's going to happen.

So there are costs involved. There are costs involved to the quality of education that the kids that remain behind. There has to be. That's part and parcel of the component of teacher training, of teacher ability to access relatively small classes. And if you're going to start cutting out the kids, you have small classes all right but you have them grouped together. I suggest to you you're going to have schools where grade 6 and 7 and 8 are together instead of separate grades. There's a lot of cost involved. And I'm not only talking about the monetary cost that's going to be involved here. Have you considered those options and those implications?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the member opposite is drawing a pretty long bow here in

looking for obstacles, the kind of obstacles that would have prevented them from obeying the law. We have complete confidence in the excellent educators and qualified people who are members of the implementation task force, who are diligently working to work out exactly this kind of detail. And we will certainly pay heed to their recommendations. I certainly as a taxpayer am sensitive to the need to demonstrate to the people of this province that there will not be an additional tax burden; that the quality of education will be enhanced by this initiative.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, I spent over two decades in the class-room, and I think you're the one that's drawing the long bow, if you're trying to pretend that this will not have an impact upon the quality of education. Now, Madam Minister, would you tell the Assembly how many letters you have received in your office that oppose this initiative.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I have not kept count of the numbers of letters of representations . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, I can count higher than you can. But I have not either a number of the expressions of support that we have received, and they are legion.

Mr. Neudorf: — What is the location in the province where you would have received most of the letters urging you not to go ahead with it? Is there a concentration of letters?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, I would say that we certainly haven't done that kind of a survey. But it was interesting that the letters, both pro and con, come from all parts of the province.

Mr. Neudorf: — So you're saying that there's no one community that's more interested in this issue than any other community; they're all scattered across the province evenly. Because in my short tenure as Education critic I know that I have received — and this is a ballpark figure, I could be out 10 or 20 — I must have received at least 150, if not more, letters that were addressed to you, Madam Minister, and I got a carbon copy as a critic.

And they were all — the ones that I'm talking about right now — are all from the Gravelbourg area, concentrated in Gravelbourg. And almost invariably, they all had French-sounding names. I'm not a Frenchman but I think I can spot a French name pretty easily. And they were all from people living in the area who said, leave us alone; we have immersion classes; we're doing very well, thank you; we don't want this place, or this thing being uprooted and changed. How did you respond to those, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the members question, our responses to all letters, either favouring or questioning the wisdom of this initiative, were replied to on the basis that we would and were re-implementing the task force, and that we would take careful note of their recommendations and the concerns that were expressed to us in their letters before making a decision on this issue.

Mr. Neudorf: — Since, Madam Minister, you received the original of which I receive copies, I'm in the ballpark,

would you admit, when I say 150 letters coming from that one community. And you can correct me if I'm wrong. That's the impression that I had; it was a three-inch pile of letters.

Madam Minister, what does that do to you? What does that do to your line of reasoning when you say, we're going to implement this. When from one of the most renowned French communities, one of the most renowned French communities in our province, we have 150 families saying, no, we don't need this; we don't want this. Doesn't that tell you something? How are you reacting to that kind of thing? I'm surprised that you're just kind of ignoring that particular community and its wishes.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's very important that the member opposite should study the model that was previously recommended and be aware that the implementation of this model of governance and the participation of a community in it will be entirely voluntary.

So if there is a community in Saskatchewan where there are enough section 23 parents, as defined in the charter, to constitute a viable unit under this system of governance and they don't wish to do so, then that is their option. It is entirely voluntary.

So if there is a community where there's a preponderance of feeling that they don't want to change the style now, that they have now, and they don't want to take part in the new governance if it's available, then that will be their choice. There certainly will be no pressure upon them.

It's incumbent upon us in keeping with the Court of Appeal decision to provide the framework for the governance and beyond that the participation of any community will be entirely voluntary.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, to another topic. I want to talk a little bit about a few of the schools that I have in my constituency. And as you may be aware, although there is some concern, the French governance is not a major concern in terms of it being implemented in that area. However, there are other concerns and I want to deal a little bit about the capital projects in my area. When schools are decided, when it's decided for example that Martensville got a new school which just opened last year, I'd like you to go through the process that determines the prioritization procedure that the Department of Education has in order to determine, yes this school is a priority, it's going to be in the "a" budget, it's going to be built this year, and no it's not, it's in the "b" and so on down the line. I'd like you to go through that process for me and don't . . . I know what it is but I'd like you to verbalize it for me from your impressions.

The Chair: — Why is the Minister of Agriculture on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I would like leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, we're honoured by the presence of some friends and guests and public-minded citizens who are with us tonight. Marj Skotheim is the chairman of the Ag Credit Corporation Board, and Muriel Conacher with her is a member of that board and Muriel's son Quinn Conacher, who is a student and presently working in the city of Regina for the summer, is with them. Welcome to the legislature and hope you enjoy your stay in Regina on your business.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'd like to introduce Mr. Brady Salloum who is the director of the operations of student aid within the Department of Education. And I would like to say that within the last few days we have had students coming into my office thanking us for the turnaround time on student loan applications which has been reduced to mere days and I think the efforts of Brady and the people in the student aid department are worthy of note.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Education Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — In response to the question from the member opposite regarding the procedure for capital, I would like to comment. I think it wouldn't be necessary or desirable for me to describe the convoluted process that has been used in the past, including the approval in principal of \$51 million worth of projects just prior to the election for which not 1 cent was budgeted, Mr. Chairman.

What we do have now is a proposal that is being circulated and discussed within the education community and the stakeholders who are interested in the allocation of education capital, which will create a funding model, if approved, that will be a great improvement, a vast improvement over the procedure that was previously used — will completely depoliticize the process; and will do completely away with the different schedules and the process that the member opposite refers to that has been in place in the past; and, if approved, will rank projects as the applications come in with a single number system so they'll know whether they're number one or number ten on the list, and depending on the capital that is available, how soon they might be able to proceed.

(2030)

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Madam Minister, that will require a little beefing up on your part to explain to me exactly how you mean. The way I read what you just said is that the people will be ranked according to the time, chronologically speaking, of their application, as opposed to someone else. And then they would be ranked. Or is there a different criteria of the ranking? And if there is, would you please expound on that a little bit.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, bearing in mind that at the moment this is only a proposal, it's been approximately a month now, I think, since we started the consultations with the people in the education community and who would be interested in the allocation of capital for education. But there will be a different kind of criteria applied. And the date or chronology of the application will certainly not be the major criteria. There will be such things as need, enrolment, for example.

There will be, in this proposal — and I stress it's strictly a proposal at this stage — there would be points or warrants, if you like, that the application would be judged on, the need based on enrolment and perhaps overcrowding of an existing facility, something like that. There would be extra points awarded for the joint use of a building or a multi-purpose facility, for example. There would be points awarded for a relocatable type of construction, and so on. There are a number of criteria. I hesitate to spell them all out because as we're doing our consulting within the community that's interested in this, they may indeed have other ideas and they may add other criteria.

It will also be in the proposal, judged in a regional context rather than within a school division, so that the facilities in a region and the rational use of capital throughout a region will be not only more possible but will receive more points and move up in priority, rather than having one school division making a decision in the absence of knowledge about what the neighbouring school division is doing just a few miles down the road. We think it's important to do it in a regional context.

Mr. Neudorf: — It sounds like greater centralization to me, Madam Minister, and I would have some concerns expressed with such type of a blanket statement as you're making now. I'm at least pleased to hear that ranking in terms of chronological application dates is not going to be a major factor, which obviously it should not.

You made a startling statement, Madam Minister, that you are going to completely depoliticize the process. Now according to that statement, what you are telling the House is that up until this point schools have been built on a political basis. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I can only judge by events of the recent past. But when I look at what we inherited being approval in principle or commitments, promises made, just prior to the election by the previous administration for almost \$51 million worth of new school construction, I can only assume that there had to be some politics involved in this.

And the ranking system that we are proposing would not allow for approval-in-principle announcements to be publicly made until the ranking had been done and until funding arrangements were complete. We don't intend to spend money that we don't have.

Mr. Neudorf: — Heaven forbid, Madam Minister, that you would ever play politics with anything. Your party has never done anything like that.

So having said that, Madam Minister, you have just outlined some of the variables and some of the options that would be considered in terms of ranking a capital project. How does this differ from what you just told me from the existing system of ranking of priorities, where my information is that in order for a school or a school division to be eligible for a building project, it would be based first of all on need? If there's no school and there are kids, you obviously need a school.

A second criteria high on the list was safety factors. If the building was dilapidated, if the building was creating some hazards or dangers for the staff and for the students, that an upgrade, renovation, or a new building would be in order. So there were points allotted in that system as well.

Now what you told me, overcrowding, extra points for multi-purpose; these were factors I believe that were always in place. We've had over the last number of years a lighted school house program, which was an effort on the part of communities, spearheaded by the Department of Education, to utilize to the full extent public property such as schools; where people in the communities would be invited and in fact encouraged to use the school facilities for meeting places and so on, so that we could avoid having to build extra buildings to accommodate that kind of need.

So, Madam Minister, I'm not quite sure what you're just saying now that this depoliticization has taken place. What you're telling me now is that the Department of Education is not going to have any say as to what groups get or do not get, what communities get or do not get new schools — that will be out of the hands of the Department of Education.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not saying that at all in response to the member opposite. I am saying that Saskatchewan Education, the department, will always, by virtue of the large role that they play in providing funding for these facilities and the limitations of that funding, which the previous administration had little regard for, and by setting the criteria of course, we will always have control over the allocation of education capital.

But I would also like to remind the member opposite that in their lighted school houses, some of the lights are already out. And we have got schools — not even relocatable construction — schools built of concrete and block that are less than five years old that are now closed because of low enrolment.

Now I'd like to know, you know, what kind of projections were made in the allocation of that capital. That's the kind of planning that we're not going to do.

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, my constituency over the last four years, if I am correct, I could be a year out . . . Martensville, for example, has had two new schools built in that location. Warman has had a new school being built. Hague has had major, major renovations. So there has been a fair amount of construction in the Rosthern constituency as far as educational facilities are concerned.

And, Madam Minister, those schools are full. As far as the Rosthern constituency is concerned, Madam Minister, I really don't know what you're talking about.

Furthermore, when I take a look at a news release that you . . . on June 2, your news release: "Emergency repairs for 64 schools announced," Madam Minister, you were just now condemning this previous government for making commitments that in your opinion were not necessary, that your opinion . . . in your opinion were just window-dressing for an election.

When I take a look at the 64 schools, and I've gone down this list very, very carefully, and unless my eyes deceive me and they're growing dim as my age increases here, but I can't find one school — and I have 10 communities in my constituency — I can't find one school here, one community that is affected in the Rosthern constituency on this so-called . . . what do you call that here? In emergency repairs and so on.

One of the schools that we were committed to spend money on last year was Waldheim, and yet when I look, I can't find Waldheim on here. And the reason Waldheim was included on it was because the board members in the Rosthern constituency — made up of the 10 communities in my constituency — decided Waldheim was indeed in desperate need for renovations and additions because of some of the problems that they were . . . health hazards, quite frankly, Madam Minister. Yet I don't see it on here. For the sake of the people in Waldheim, could you explain to me why they have been omitted on this list . . . from this list.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all I'm very glad that in the Rosthern constituency and the area north of Saskatoon that the population is growing and that there is a need for schools, which has been fulfilled, and there are many good schools that I am very familiar with in that area. But since most of the schools have been replaced it seems as if there might not be an imminent need for repairs.

However, the announcement that we made on June 2 is only a partial list or will likely be a partial list. We did budget a total of \$14 million this year for maintenance and repairs to the school system; 3 million of that being to the universities and 11 million being available for the K to 12 system. What we did was select from the applications that we had, the most emergent cases of occupational and safety health issues and we announced \$8.8 million in total. That included the local contribution. So there is approximately . . . between 3 and \$4 million left of the provincial contribution to allocate before this fiscal year end.

So as other projects emerge, we will be in a position to meet those from current approved funding. There are projects included on the list — well you've seen the list — things like the situation in Eston, Assiniboia, and those emergency repairs. But we do have remaining a contingency to take care of situations which might arise in the balance of the fiscal year of which quite a fair amount is left. So we felt it was sensible and reasonable to not allocate all the funds at this time in case situations

occur that require immediate attention.

Mr. Neudorf: — Was your decision to omit Waldheim from this list based on your new guidelines or on the old guidelines?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I indicated there is still a balance left to be allocated and it's a possibility because Waldheim was identified earlier as a reasonable priority.

But the things that we had to do were real emergencies where there were already citations by occupational health and safety, such as I mentioned the Eston situation, the Assiniboia situation, and the Pike Lake situation, where there were two very old buildings and they are being replaced. They were ordered to be closed and there's a substantial population at the resort village of Pike Lake, so arrangements were made to move the relocatable school from Fulda, which closed voluntarily, to Pike Lake. Otherwise those children would have had to be bused, primary children K to 4 would have had to be bused a fair distance to Delisle. So those were the kind of emergency situations that have been addressed in this first cut.

(2045)

But as I say, there is a balance left and we'll be ranking these situations. Occupational health and safety, the safety of the students and staff in the schools will be paramount. And the other consideration will be whether substantial deterioration will occur if repairs are not made.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well thank you, Madam Minister, for confirming the fact that the decision was made based on the old system, that highly politicized system that you were just talking about, that your new method is going to avoid. So I would assume, Madam Minister, that that perhaps could have been part of the reasoning for your decision since you were using the old system of this politicized mechanism.

And I certainly hope, Madam Minister, that I don't have to report back to Waldheim that they were victims of some of the ideas of this present government here.

Madam Minister, I would like you to tell me now, when will I be able to bring back a response to Waldheim saying that, yes, their deplorable conditions in their school are going to be rectified, and yes indeed, you are going to live up to the commitment to allow for renovations and for the new addition that those people so desperately need.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we have tried with great care to go over the list of applications. Where there is — and I'm not aware at this moment whether that's the situation in Waldheim — where there is a citation or an order to close from occupational health and safety, it has to take precedence over a situation where there is simply some discomfort and a wish of the local board. We have to look after emergency situations first.

As I say, there is a contingency left. We want to make sure

that we don't spend the allocation before the year is out. There may be other situations that we don't foresee and we want to be prepared for those. So we will be reviewing the availability of funds and the applications and the situations that arise with school capital and maintenance, and we will do our best to be fair and even-handed no matter what system is applied. We hope to . . . What we're talking about in the new system, which is still a proposal at this stage, is the allocation basically of new capital.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question to the minister will be with one specific school. However, I would like her to . . . I listened with interest to your comments on the different criteria that would occur on having a capital plant either renovated or replaced. What does a negative report from the Fire Commissioner usually do within the department? If the Fire Commissioner comes in and says that a building is basically unsafe for human habitation, what is the normal process?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question, on the basis that the health and safety of the staff and students in our schools is of paramount importance to us, if we . . . Similarly to the health and safety inspections and reports, we would act on a report from the Fire Commissioner's office to try to rectify the situation and to make it safe as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, you probably know the school that I'm referring to. It's Mortlach. I'm sure your officials told you about it. That particular school has been trying for, I believe, it's about the last four and a half years to have the old 1911-12 wing replaced.

There's no point in renovating it because it's a fire trap, and I think the Thunder Creek School Board went through the appropriate motions of attempting to make their arguments. They did have the Fire Commissioner's letter in order to have their structure rectified.

I doubt if you've had the opportunity to be in there, but I have many times and I can tell you that since that initial report there has been nothing done. The kindergarten class in that school is up on the third floor of a long, winding staircase. That particular school has three heating plants in it, if you can believe it or not. I found it utterly bizarre that you would have three separate heating systems in a building that you could fit into one wing of this legislature.

And that is what the concern of the, I'm sure, Fire Commissioner was, and it's the concern of every parent that in an unforeseen situation there's no way to evacuate that place other than throw the kids out a third-floor window.

And I know they were granted . . . or were led to believe last year that they were one of the very few, and I believe there was only two or three in the province, of capital projects of that nature that were on the drawing boards. Now they've been told that they're on hold. My information is of last week that they've been told that there is no hope.

And I would just like to know from you tonight, a structure

in that type of condition, that has had many independent verifications of the state that it's in, why they would suddenly be removed from the list? They aren't on the press release. I checked it out, and they're not there.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, in response to the member from Thunder Creek, if the need is as urgent as he is describing, that under the new proposed system a school with needs of that nature would rise to the top through the measurement in those criteria very quickly. If emergent repairs were required, there is nothing to preclude the local board from undertaking some remedial action on their own in the interim.

But this year we will not be expending any new capital; that the maintenance and repairs is the only amount that we're able to allocate and because of the desperate financial situation that we were left in, we simply don't have the money.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, I think the considerations last year when this particular project was discussed were in the view of most people, at least within the Department of Education, just as desperate, as far as funding went, when they were facing a modest increase in budgets.

This particular school went through all of the hoops that the department could put in place, and at the end of the day was one of a few, a very, very select few that had that need attached to it. There was nothing there to repair. They've had engineers in, they've had all sorts of people in looking at this thing. It would be an absolute waste of the taxpayers' money to put a dime into that place.

What needs to happen is the old wing has to go. We have a disaster waiting to happen there. It's gone through the hoops. It was judged as being that high on the priority list, and now I find that all of a sudden it's shuffled off to the side again. And you're absolutely right, Madam Minister, it isn't on the repair list because I would be ashamed of the taxpayer putting any more money in a repair of something that can't be repaired. That wing has to come off of there.

And at least find other accommodations for those students somewhere else in the vicinity if you can't fix the school. That's the situation they're in. I am having phone call after phone call on a continuous basis from parents in that community who are afraid to send their children to that school because of the hazards.

And I just invite the minister to go visit it, see for herself the situation they have before them there, and know that there has to be some mechanism for a decision that was already made to be carried on. And I would hope, Madam Minister, that the fact that Mortlach is in my constituency has nothing to do with it.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to assure the member from Thunder Creek that the location of the school in a constituency is not a consideration. I've received many letters from the member's constituents in the Mortlach area with respect to their school. And I repeat that if the need is as described, that when our new criteria or the new capital plan is in place, that it should

rise to the top fairly quickly.

But this year . . . In fact it's possible — and I don't know whether the school district has generated that kind of a request — that it might be a consideration for, under the emergency funding, for a partial . . . For instance relocatables instead of taking on the whole project.

We are not expending, as you can see in the budget, any new capital at all this year. We're using this time to re-evaluate the way we allocate capital. But the member opposite refers to the school situation there being a disaster waiting to happen. And unfortunately the economy of this province brought on by the actions of his administration is a disaster that has already happened.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, you and I can probably stand in this legislature and debate various economic initiatives of the past government or the one before that, and I'm sure we can all find fault with those initiatives. But one thing is for sure: that when we're talking about our children and their education, the former government in that area maybe was a little too loose with the change.

Now that's not what I used to hear from the members of the New Democratic Party but at least there were increases in education on an ongoing basis. And I would like to think that I might go short somewhere else as a taxpayer to make sure that my kids got a good education and they weren't going to school in a school that might burn down around their ears. Those are the kind of priorities that you sometimes have to put above the political rhetoric in this place or anywhere else, Madam Minister.

I'm not going to belabour the point tonight, but when you're back again before us in estimates I would like you to bring all of the analysis that your department has done — the analysis that they, I'm sure, have been aware of, both by the Thunder Creek unit, the Fire Commissioner's office — and bring it back to table in this legislature when you come back to estimates at the next available opportunity. Because I would like to be able to assure the people of Thunder Creek, and particularly Mortlach, that their interests aren't being subverted in some way when they were already at the threshold of having a new facility, or a partially new facility, built in their community. And I would ask, Madam Minister, that you have that undertaking to bring that information here.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in the interests of the honest and open government that we are committed to be, we have no hesitation in undertaking to table the relevant information that the member opposite requests.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, while we're talking about capital funding and capital construction, and certainly the fact that there are very few dollars . . . in fact most of the dollars possibly given to emergency aid.

And I think members on this side of the House and people across Saskatchewan have for the last numbers of years this idea of capital and funding for capital in the province of Saskatchewan has been something that has raised a lot

of concern in light of the fact that a number of schools in rural Saskatchewan are certainly facing situations where major renovations are taking place. And I think some of my colleagues have mentioned the fact — and I don't know; maybe you agree, Madam Minister — that when we start looking at renovations, in some cases it might be a lot more efficient use of the taxpayers' dollars to look at new construction rather than renovation.

And I note that through the school districts that I represent there has been substantial dollars in renovations. Mind you, the structural . . . a number of schools that were structurally sound, although back in the early '60s and '70s there were a number of designs and schools, flat-roof schools that certainly created a problem, and over the period of the '80s substantial dollars were needed to address the fact that these flat-roof schools were creating a problem, were leaking, and we had to take a fair number of dollars and put them into redesigning or reroofing these schools.

And I guess at the time it probably would have been more appropriate if officials that were designing the facilities would have taken a more serious look at the environmental conditions in our province. I'm not sure where the flat-roof system came in, but we see it in a lot of our buildings and it creates a problem.

In a situation that has arisen is the school in Kennedy, and the area I happen to live in, we have two small schools that have amalgamated to actually form one of the larger schools in the division as far as numerical numbers within the school, Madam Minister, and up . . . at least the last figures that we've got laid before us in the neighbourhood of 18 to 23 students in the kindergarten system right through till 1996.

(2100)

But, Madam Minister, it took a number of years for the people of these two communities to finally come together and realize that it would be more beneficial for the education of their students to combine the two schools into one and maintain the facilities. Langbank actually did have adequate, more than adequate, facilities for the student population base at the time.

However after the amalgamation we all of a sudden found the numbers on the lower levels increase quite dramatically in the K to 6 system and two years ago an add-on class-room was developed with the fact that down the road maybe the numbers wouldn't be there and an add-on class-room would be something that would be transportable to another location.

The problem arises however with the Kennedy School with the grade 7 to 12 where we have an older facility that has . . . structurally is not that sound a building. I guess it's still usable; but it has been creating problems. They've been having problems with the sewer, and problems with — I'm not exactly sure all the details behind it — with regards to gassing problems within the school.

And over the past number of years we've been working with the department and many officials have been out from the department to bring the concerns . . . or to listen

to the concerns of the school in Kennedy. And I understand as of last year it had been gradually been moving up, but of course with the capital funding in other areas and certainly based on the emergency needs that were . . . and I would also probably differ with my colleague from Rosthern in suggesting maybe my school is in greater need than his is.

But what I'm wondering, Madam Minister, is where the capital funding for a school like the high school in Kennedy would be sitting at the present time. If the minister would have an answer for that question.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to particular projects, there is a backlog in the current process of applications for allocation of capital, to the Department of Education, of some \$350 million. That's the backlog of current applications that we already have on file and that are being ranked, and will be re-looked at within the parameters of the new proposal when it's approved.

So just exactly where Kennedy School is in the scheme of things, I wouldn't be able to tell you at this point. But I think this is an example of where . . . And you did mention the value of relocatable construction, especially in rural Saskatchewan where the school populations are fluctuating, that in many cases it's a good solution. And that's why in our proposal relocatable construction, which can be very attractive and versatile, is given extra points, if you like, in the ranking system.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I understood you to mention that there's something like \$350 million in requests that basically are sitting with the department — or certainly facilities, the structural facilities that possibly would be needed in the rural areas.

You've also been talking, Madam Minister, about an overall plan, and I'm wondering if you have some thoughts in mind, or if the department has anything in mind, or what's the process the department and your government is taking right now regarding the ongoing capital costs. Certainly we have the ongoing capital costs, but certainly structural costs that we will be possibly getting involved in.

What is the government looking at down the road to address like the Waldheims, and the Kennedys, and these schools? Because we all realize it can't be done in one year, but certainly you must be coming up with some kind of a plan or maybe you have something in mind of how we address some of the problems. I realize you acknowledge that relocatables is certainly one avenue to follow, and I believe that as well, and the fact that a relocatable was put into the Langbank School to accommodate the student enrolment at the present time. But what's the ongoing plan for say the next three, four, five years, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, in response to the member from Moosomin, it's difficult at this point in time to talk exactly about the plan for the next three or four years in terms of specific numbers, but what our plan is from here forward, as far as we can project, is for the

\$65 million this year that is budgeted which is the contribution to capital that's already been spent, if you like, the mortgage payments on building that was done prior to this year. And then there is the \$14 million that we talked about that is for emergency repairs and maintenance for the post-secondary and the K to 12 system. That is a total of 79 being the provincial contribution. There would be local contributions added to the \$14 million or to the 11. Local boards would put up something in addition to that.

So those projects are being tendered now so there would be some level of activity. We have our new proposal for future allocation of capital, is out in the community being discussed and refined and hopefully will be approved by the caucus and cabinet in the early . . . well before fall so that we can take those applications that are now in the system, those 350-odd million dollars worth and we could begin to rank them according to the new criteria. We would be able to, by the time the fiscal year is, say half over, October 1, November 1, we should be able to project how much capital will be available. Then we should be able to notify those projects that have come to the top of the list, that they can go ahead with the balance of their planning so that construction can start in '93-94.

So we have sort of an even flow of projects tendered now and work being done through the summer; people employed, materials being bought; then in the fall architects and planners can be employed and getting ready for the following cycle.

Hopefully as the economy improves, as our economic development strategies begin to take hold and as the current annual requirement goes down from the \$65 million as more commitments are fulfilled, there'll be money available and we plan to keep renewing the capital in the education system in this province on a rational basis as expeditiously as we are able to with the dollars available.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, and Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to the governance, French governance third school — school governance program and talk to you a little bit about that. On the south side of my constituency and on the west side of my constituency are significant French communities. What both the member from Rosthern and the member for Souris-Cannington were asking you were questions as it relate to additional costs and this, as you indicated earlier is not hypothetical.

If Gravelbourg becomes a centre of that focus and as it becomes the school where French has the majority of students for your third school division then we're going to have some very major transportation problems from Cadillac through Ponteix, all the way east, through Lafleche and into Gravelbourg. And all those people there will say, well I want to participate in that school. So then what we've got is we've got maybe 75 per cent of the kids in Ponteix leave to go to Gravelbourg; then Lafleche, let's say 50 per cent of Lafleche goes into Gravelbourg to go to school. What is the 50 per cent in Gravelbourg who are perhaps not willing to participate in the French, are you going to ship them to Lafleche or are you going to ship them to Kincaid or Glenbain or to Vanguard? How are you going to deal with that?

And that, Madam Minister, is where the increased costs come from. You now are transporting students 30 miles. You could be transporting kids 60 miles one way and that is where the additional costs come in and I want to point that out, that unless you're going to put a school in Ponteix and one in Kincaid and Lafleche and in Gravelbourg to handle all the French students and then you're going to turn around and deliver the education in the English system through Vanguard, Kincaid and Glenbain . . . Is that what your plans are or how are you going to handle that? Because there is a significant change in venue for those people in those school divisions today and it will be a significant one if you want to implement that kind of a process in those communities.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member from Morse refers again to the third school division as if the proposal for francophone governance model is an exact parallel of the systems that we have now and it is not. It is entirely different and it is entirely voluntary. And if there are as many negative effects as the member describes by adopting this model in the area that he describes then surely the people in that area will not volunteer to put themselves in that situation.

We are not, you use the word implement, we are not planning to implement this style of governance anywhere. It will be if the framework of legislation is provided for. That's the end of what our actions will be. Whether people in local communities want to avail themselves of that style of governance will be optional and will be their choice. We will not be doing any implementing.

Mr. Martens: — Where then, Madam Minister, will the children in Ponteix go to school?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I have travelled in that area and I've been in all the towns that he mentions. I'm not exactly sure where the school division lines come with respect to all of the towns he names. They may not all be in the same division. But with respect to the situation in Ponteix, they have a school there now. They're perfectly happy with their school now. I don't know of any reason why, if they're content with the situation the way it is, they would want to volunteer to put themselves into a situation such as the member describes.

And I think that we shouldn't be shadow-boxing with problems that hypothetically could occur. We should rely on the implementation task force and their expertise to try to provide us with advice that will lead to as flexible a framework as possible so that wherever people — parents and students — volunteer or opt for this form of governance, that it will be flexible enough to accommodate their wishes.

But there has to be a proviso that there has to be financial . . . The numbers of section 23 students has to be warranted and they have to pass a financial viability test and it has to be optional.

(2115)

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, they are

probably going . . . You could probably have, let's say, 10 families from Ponteix deciding to send their children to a governance school in Gravelbourg. What are you going to do with those people when they decide to do that? They're going to travel to Gravelbourg — or when you have 10, are you going to set up a school in Gravelbourg to handle those 10 and deliver the classes the way you anticipate in that governance?

And just to show how complex it is, Vanguard is in Swift Current rural, Glenbain is in Wood River, Ponteix is in Shaunavon, and Gravelbourg is in Gravelbourg . . . or Wood River. And so you've got a corner there with at least three school divisions and perhaps even the fourth one coming from Thunder Creek, coming from the top end, and so you're going to cause a very serious concern to the two groups of people who you're prepared to serve. One is the regular . . . And three I'll grant you. One is to the system, the public system, one is to the Roman Catholic system, and one is to the French one. And you're going to create the third one in that group.

And what it has caused in the southern part of the province there, in Mankota and Ferland and those areas, is a very, very serious problem in transportation. Because the buses pass each other travelling to deliver education when one family insists that their education is supposed to be delivered in a different format than is being delivered in the school that they're adjacent to. And so they travel that extra distance.

So you're going to say to me that the French governance isn't going to be allowed to travel from Ponteix to Gravelbourg. Now you choose which it's going to be because you're going to have to make that decision.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite prefaces all of his comments and his very long question — I think it was a question — with probably. And I think it's not a productive use of our time to try to invent problems that haven't happened. And he talks about problems that we are going to create. We are not going to create those situations. What we will create, if we do, we will create the umbrella under which those communities can find solutions to accessing the style of education to which the law says that they are entitled.

And many of those students are being transported now. It's the responsibility of the local school division to arrange the configuration of their education system, the capital, the transportation, in the most effective possible way in the interests of the people in the school division who elected them to serve them. We do not interfere with those decisions. We are not planning to impose any style of education on anyone. I repeat, it would be optional and voluntary, and surely no sensible, rational people, which I know the taxpayers of Saskatchewan all are, would want to inflict the situation, such as you describe, upon themselves.

Mr. Martens: — Well, if I hadn't lived there as long as I have, and understood the situation . . . And my brother has been the chairman of the Swift Current Rural School Division for many, many years, has served on that for 17 years and probably provides me with the most basic information about the kinds of things that go on down in

those school divisions, and understands it. And the fundamental problem is this, that there will be families who will say to you, provide me with that education at any cost, and then you just told me that the school division will make that decision. Earlier you said that the federal government would carry it, or the taxes would not carry it. But they're carrying it.

If they have to deliver that student from Ponteix to Lafleche or Ponteix to Gravelbourg, they're carrying the cost. Those school divisions are carrying the cost. They did it in immersion classes from Mankota to Ferland and back and forth in that.

And, Madam Minister, there were serious, serious problems develop between neighbours that had significant impact and caused a whole lot of irritation when that was there. And I am just telling you that there is a problem. And you better be prepared to deal with it, not only in the way that you conducted yourself to this point, but you better be prepared to deal with it in the context of what is there. And this is not hypothetical, because it's been going on for the last 15 years.

It's not hypothetical. There are parents there who will want their children educated in the language of their origin in Ponteix. And what are you going to do with them? And what is that school division going to do with them? Are they going to say, we'll room and board them in Gravelbourg because the transportation costs aren't high enough? Will we pay tuition in delivering those students to Gravelbourg, to have the education costs decrease so that they won't have the transportation?

All of those questions, Madam Minister, you better have some answers for, because those people down there are going to demand that from you. Because I live down there and I know them and they've told me this.

In fact, one gentleman told me, he said, I wish . . . and he's French and his mother language is French and he told me this in 1988 when this ruling came down. He said, I wish you would leave me alone, because I love my mother tongue, I love my French heritage, but leave me alone. And he's a business man in the community and he understands that sense of urgency and dealing with the kinds of things that you're talking about. He doesn't want irritations to come.

And, Madam Minister, what is going to cause an irritation is the imbalance between the delivery of a service for one person versus another person, and that's the cause of the problem. And you better have a solution to that because it is going to create a major problem for you in those areas.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I repeat again that access to this system and this form of governance, should the provincial government provide the framework legislation, will be entirely optional. And I think that it's important to note that the member has acknowledged that there are problems; there are transportation problems. There are problems in rural Saskatchewan with the changing demographics, of making sure that rural schools can remain viable. And I just hope that when the time comes that we introduce the legislation with respect to the francophone governance

factor, that the members opposite don't try to visit all the ills of the system, that they say have already been apparent for more than 15 years, upon the implementation of an initiative this year.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, I have some very, very strong supporters who are French Canadian, and I am representing them here today. And they say to me, don't change what we've got. If you make too many more changes it will upset the balance that has developed between the well-meaning people in the community. And what you're doing by putting this in there is setting different standards for different people; and what is, is going to cause a very serious problem if you have 10 students left in Ponteix.

Now Ponteix is the majority French-speaking; in fact it's their mother tongue. They have learnt it right from childhood, and in fact lots of them go to an English school — they have to learn English. And so you're going to take and that's going to become a French school. If you move that, are you going to pull all of the English-speaking children out of there because they're not going to be allowed to be funded? So you've got to deliver a different service.

And I'm asking you to absolutely, seriously, consider and reflect very seriously on exactly what you're doing. I think you're causing more division in the communities than you're really helping. And I have had this expressed to me by people who are in those areas, and that's why I raise it to you. I know them, I understand them, and they tell me this over and over again. And I have . . . I could list you names of people — I won't do it here — but I could list you names of people who have told me that they do not want to have it changed. And yet there are people who will say yes, I want it. Okay. Now what do you do with them when they've got 60 miles to drive to deliver that child to that education system? And that's what's going to cause a problem in a very serious way.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question specific to Ponteix, the people in that area have access now to a type A immersion program if they desire it. And they have opted not to take that opportunity.

We will not be imposing anything different upon the students and parents in that area. We will simply be providing a provincial framework for them to opt for that kind of system if they want it. If they don't want it, they won't be asking for it. If they do ask for it in an area where it can't meet the numbers warranting and the financial viability test, they won't have it.

We will be changing nothing at the local level. We will simply be providing for people at the local level who want to volunteer for that type of governance, to have it available to them as the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has said that the Government of Saskatchewan must do. Your government heard that decision; you did not heed it. This government intends to obey the law.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, the criteria that you've described to me, if 10 people from west of Cadillac, and then the next town is Ponteix, if 10 people from there decide that they want to have a school, are you going to

deliver them to Gravelbourg?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the answer is no.

Mr. Martens: — At what volume of students is it going to be made viable? When is this going to be a viable condition that exists, that there then becomes a school there?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure how many times I would have to repeat this as members opposite go in and out and we have to keep saying things over again.

But we will be providing a framework; we will not be forcing anybody at the local level to opt for anything that they do not want. There will be a two-tier system, if it's established, according to the recommendations of the implementation task force.

And actually I would really urge the members opposite, before they get worried about hypothetical situations that might develop, for them to wait until we have the recommendations of the task force, because those are precisely the kind of questions that they're addressing themselves to, is how much flexibility will be available and how it can be exercised.

But there will be . . . it's proposed that there be a provincial council which will receive applications from the limited number of local areas where there are eligible parents. And they will be the ones who will determine whether the numbers warrant, and whether the local situation that would be created by the approval of the application would be rational and reasonable and whether or not it would require a contribution of additional provincial cost, in which instance it would not be approved.

Mr. Martens: — Well, you go round and round. That's why we have difficulty feeling that we've got the answer. You just skirt some of the basic problem areas. And I think that you need to rationalize them out in your own mind.

And as relates to obeying a law, Madam Minister, you're going to ask, your Minister of Agriculture's going to ask this Assembly, and all of the members opposite are planning on voting in favour of something to break the law. Are you going to stand in this Assembly and honour the decision by the Minister of Agriculture to break the contract and say he deemed to send out 50,000 . . . (inaudible) . . . letters that wasn't, they weren't sent out? You're going to validate that and break the law.

And that, Madam Minister, is what we're concerned about. You can talk all you want about breaking the law and upholding the law. There's a contract with 50,000 producers that that minister is going to ask you to change a contract on and he's going to deem to have sent a letter out and this Assembly's going to vote on it and that, Madam Minister, you better have a clear conscience when you sit down or stand and vote in favour of that.

(2130)

I go to another question. The Swift Current rural school

division have asked, there was a Cabri school is on that list of improvement. They've also asked for a school to be built at Vanguard. They have a high school and elementary school in separate buildings. The elementary school is almost in exactly the same condition that the member from Thunder Creek was describing Mortlach. Only these kids, these kindergarten kids are in the basement. And the floor probably has about as many levels in it in the basement of that school as this building right here, and this was designed that way.

Not only that, Madam Minister, the electrical is in very serious condition and I would like to ask you to provide to this Assembly the same assessments that they have been provided with regarding fire, electrical, the potential for leaving the building and the opportunity for avoiding a major disaster. And I would like to have that tabled here as well as what the member from Thunder Creek asked.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, before we make any undertaking, could I just clarify? Was the member opposite referring to the Vanguard school or the Cabri school in terms of their condition?

An Hon. Member: — Vanguard.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Vanguard, okay.

Mr. Martens: — Will you provide that for me?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We undertake to do that.

Mr. Martens: — Is there any construction in new schools going on at all this year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that this could possibly be a serious question. Perhaps the member opposite hasn't noticed that we don't have any money. And we're not going to spend money we haven't got. We're committed to make a \$65 million contribution to past financial commitments for new capital in the education system, but we're not planning to . . . there is no provision in this budget and no plans to do any other new capital construction this year.

Mr. Martens: — I have a question as it relates to the observations made by the member for Thunder Creek and the observations from Rosthern and my constituency: who carries the liability of a serious incident happening in one of those schools if in fact it would happen, that one of those schools would collapse or burn down?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the school divisions, of course, carry appropriate insurance coverage on all of their buildings. And we do and we are . . . this is why we have the new proposal for the allocation of capital and why we have provided in the budget for \$14 million worth of emergency repairs, because within the fiscal framework that we were left, which was full of a lot of holes, the health and safety and providing a good atmosphere for our students and the staff people who work in our schools is a very high priority for us.

Mr. Martens: — Well I just want to indicate to you, Madam Minister, that some of these schools are in very serious condition. And it wasn't a matter of we wanting to

spend money just because we thought it was necessary to do. It was a matter of significant urgency that some of this money be put into the educational system out in rural Saskatchewan because it wasn't being done. And that Madam Minister, is why we decided to do that.

In fact I'll give you an example of one of the schools. One of the lady teachers there taught at that school for 32 years, and I won't tell you which school it was, but it was the first, in 1989 I believe it was, the first time she ever had the opportunity to teach in that school where all the classes were in one room, or in one building. That was the first time in 32 years.

Now, Madam Minister, I was honoured to be a part of that opening ceremony in that school area, and that was the kind of thing that was necessary to be done, and I'll tell you why, because in 1970 to 1982, there was nothing done, and prior to that, there was nothing done. So what did you have? You had some urgency. You had some relevant urgency in delivering some of the construction projects that were delivered. And as I said before it was based on an investment. That's what it is — it's an investment in the future of your children and my children and that's what's important in this discussion too. You always have to remember that. And dealing with education has far more return than any other area and we have to always consider that.

And, Madam Minister, that's why it's of significance to us as members on this side of the House that some of these construction projects be very seriously looked at.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can't believe, or find it difficult to believe, that the member opposite is suggesting that we totally renew all of the capital in the education system every 10 years. I thought that was what I heard, that 10 years previous . . . or did he mean that in the 10 years previous nothing was done in one particular school? We can't replace every school every 10 years if that's what the member is suggesting.

And with respect to some of the conditions that are being described in some of the schools, unfortunate as this is, this degree of deterioration didn't happen in the last seven months while we've been in office. There must have been some need for some repairs and replacements in some of these situations that are being described and perhaps the criteria for the allocation of capital could have been included, those situations that are being described prior to 1991.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, I didn't say that. And if you check of *Hansard*, you'll probably find out that I didn't.

However I will make this point: there has to be an investment in the future. And in the '70s in the south-west part of the province there wasn't an investment made outside of the city of Swift Current in the future education of the people of that part of the province. And that, Madam Minister, is a fact and that is necessary to have some adjustment made and that is the reason why it was done.

You have to think about it as an investment, as I said

before. And if we don't invest, then what's next to go in those rural communities in the south-west?

And we're going to be talking with the Minister of Health about the same kind of problems with our hospitals and the criteria she's going to push down our throat in level 2 care funding and all of that. And that's going to erode more of that out of the south-west.

And that, Madam Minister, is what we're talking. We're talking about an investment in the future made by those people who are living there today, and they're very serious about it and they want it to continue.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well we certainly agree, Mr. Chairman, that educational spending should be regarded as an investment. It's a very high priority for us. It's very important for the education and training of our young people in Saskatchewan, is the key to our economic recovery and survival. And we recognize the importance and it remains a very high priority for us.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, my colleagues have been talking quite a bit and asking a lot of questions about building programs and schools and what not and renovations and things like this. I want to get into something a little different.

I do have . . . in my line of questioning tonight I do want to talk a little bit about what's become a crisis now and what I was talking to you about the other day about the Loreburn, Strongfield, Elbow area. At least they think it is, and we have to do some discussing on that because they're having a meeting there tomorrow night.

But first, Madam Minister, I'd like to ask you this question. Education is costing a lot of money in this province of Saskatchewan. A question I ask, like many people when I'm speaking to them at meetings, what not, openings of schools or whatever, wherever I be, I ask this question: do you think that we're getting a bang for our buck for education? Our children, when they're through grade 12, are they educated in a right and proper manner? What's your views on that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that judging by the demand for the graduates from our education system, both our university and at the post-secondary technical level, speaks for itself. At our universities, many of the undergraduates in a number of the colleges are already being recruited a year or two before graduation. So I think that we have a very fine long-standing tradition of quality education in this province and I certainly think that we are committed to continue that.

I think evidence of that would be that we are reviewing the operations of SIAST as mandated in The Institutes Act, provides for a review every five years. The review panel is working now and will be reporting likely to me approximately the end of July.

We have announced that there will be a panel reviewing the operations of the universities. We also . . . We haven't provided for it yet, we haven't named people to it, but The Regional Colleges Act also provides for a review every

five years. The Act is five years old. We plan to carry that out.

We are doing a review of the high school curriculum to address the articulation between the high school and the post-secondary system to make sure that the high school graduates have the proper kind of training to access the post-secondary education where they will have the best and most relevant job opportunities.

We are also . . . As indicated earlier today, we have developed a new timetable to complete the implementation of the core curriculum in the K to 12 system, with a view in this era of scarce resources, and it being a resource-based curriculum, to make sure that we do that job of moving into that type of instruction wisely, better than quickly.

And we announced in the throne speech, the creation of the Premier's educational council which will be an umbrella organization with representation from the whole education community — from students, from business, from labour — to take a comprehensive look at the results of all these reviews and their recommendations and to develop a new strategic plan, if you like, for the whole education system in Saskatchewan, with a view to continuing the tradition that we have of good, solid education.

But in the era of having scarce dollars and resources available to make sure that, yes, the students of this province are well served and that the dollars that we have available, scarce though they may be, are appropriated as wisely as possible and that we get the best results for the clients of our education system, being the student.

I would also add in this respect that although the funding that was available to the third parties, being the K to 12 system, was reduced by 2 per cent; the universities by one; regional colleges and SIAST, pardon me, by three; that we are trying to reorder the priorities. And we are trying to send a message to the education system in this province, being all of those institutions, to try and make sure that they arrange their affairs in such a way that as many dollars as possible find their way into the class-room and the program level and that we don't spend unnecessary dollars in the governance structures and in the administration and the delivery system.

So I think that our commitment to our education system at all levels, I think, should be clear and we certainly intend to make it a high priority.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, I agree with the things you're saying that's happening. There's so many things happening out there in education. But I ask you: is our students, when they're through grade 12, have they got a bang for their buck for education?

Now there isn't any place you can go in Saskatchewan and you can talk to parents, after they're through grade 12 or anywhere from grade 1 to 12, you ask them . . . What I call education is the basics, and that's reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling.

We teach so many things. And I'm not blaming you

people as government because you're just a new government here.

(2145)

I asked this question when you were in government before and this was something we discussed very readily the nine years that we were in government, that maybe we've got to change our curriculums, do something different, because we're teaching so many things to our children.

There's so many programs. Because you spent a long time going through all the programs of all the money spent, and that's what I'm saying. You won't find very many . . . there's always some exceptionally good students out there that will learn and have help at home and they'll make sure that they understand the basics, but the majority do not have the basic education.

And to back up my statement, there was a university professor from the University of Toronto came out to Saskatchewan, I believe it was '83 or '84, 1983 or 1984, and he did a study that summer in education in Saskatchewan and the headlines in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* — some of your officials may perhaps remember this — when he said: grade 12, grade 4 level.

And that's just about where we're at, because when I went to school — I finished school in 1949 — and myself and my colleagues, or my fellow students, we called ourselves well educated when it come to the basics. We were all drilled and well drilled.

Then I can take you to my oldest son who is 23 years younger than I am, and he's pretty good, but not quite as good as his father. Then I've got another son that's 10 years younger and he's almost a disaster; it's almost a disaster. And then I've got grandchildren that don't even know the phonics in school.

And I don't mean to say to you, Madam Minister, that this is, that this is a problem with the government of the day. It's been a problem we're facing all over North America.

We're teaching so many things to our children that I'm asking my question to you now, Madam Minister: is the department — because I've talked to many people in the department through the years, and so have many of our colleagues and many of your colleagues, and this is a serious word because no matter where I speak, I've opened a lot of schools and have been at a lot of functions at schools in the last 15 years and no matter where you say it — do you people think you're getting a bang for your buck for education, and boy I tell you, you've got the people on your side that we're not.

Because wherever you go — and I'm not blaming you, Madam Minister, because you're a new minister any more than the past — but this has been a build up for the last 30 or 40 years, that we're teaching our children so much in school that they end up coming out of school knowing very little about the basics.

Now you yourself would be the age group that would be taught how to add, read, write, and spell, but you're much

younger than the generation that I am, Madam Minister, so you can smile. I'm talking about this last 20 to 30 years, especially the last 10. Our curriculums have changed so badly that you will not see the teachers take the time to teach phonics to children and teach the soundings, so they can read properly. Unless they have special studies at home and special consideration, they're not educated when they get out of grade 12.

Now what I'm asking you, Madam Minister: will the department or is the department looking at the serious threat? Not just Saskatchewan, it's upon us, all around us, and you can't overlook it. You can't get up and say we're spending all this money for this and all this money for that — And I appreciated what you said. I did, I truly did, because it's right. We're spending a lot of money. But I'd just like you to answer: are we looking at something to look at this serious situation that's being talked about out there in the basic educations?

I have delivered a paper to the Commonwealth when we met in Saskatoon on education. And when I talked about this, the professors from all over that came to that meeting, they said: you know what you just said nobody wants to talk about; that we're so overly educated, we don't want to talk about these little things, but it's time we did. So that's why I bring that to you, Madam Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to what I think might have been a question, I hesitate to comment on the effects of heredity on the ability to learn and I regret to hear that the member opposite's grandchildren are not able to read and write, but I have five grandchildren and they have no problems at all.

I think one must be . . . And I'd like to make a further comment on the quality of graduates. As an employer in this province in several different areas and pursuits, I have had occasion to hire a number of students, high school students, university students and graduates from our system. And I have never found a deficiency in any of the graduates that would make them less than highly suitable employees. So where all these people are that can't read and write, that graduate from our system, I'm really not quite sure.

An Hon. Member: — They're all in Arm River.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — They must be all in Arm River, my colleague points out. I think this bang for the buck business is something that we have to be very wary about. I think when people have been around as long as the member opposite from Arm River and myself, we have lived long enough to see a number of fads come and go. And we see these hobby-horses go by every once in a while and people feel compelled to get on them.

And I think we have to be very careful because the latest one in the education field is, get a bang for your buck. And if you recall, the latest report was the Economic Council of Canada, which talked about having longer school days and chastising us and telling us that we needed to get back to basics and all of this and it was . . . I'm old enough to remember with great clarity that this very same body, made in their second recommendations after the Economic Council was formed in 1966, they

issued a report that ranked the spending of education in Canada and compared it with other countries. And they chastised Canada and the education community and said, you're not spending enough money. And so everybody heeded that call all across Canada and it became obscene to even question a cent of spending upon education because it was so stylish to keep throwing money at it.

Now that very same council comes back 26 years later, they didn't mention that it was at their recommendation that we started spending money, but they said, oh, now you're spending so much money and you're not getting results, so we want you to have a longer school year. Well we're saying, that if it's true that we're not doing some of the right things with all that money, well then is the answer to do them longer? Perhaps we should have a better analysis of what it is that we're doing.

And so that is the reason that we are . . . we're not spending inordinate amounts of money on these studies that we're doing. They come with relative economy. But they're good people doing them that are working very hard.

But I would like to raise another example of these hobby-horses that go by. And one of them was, if you recall, the new math that came out in the 1960s whereby people were going to be taught . . . students were going to be taught to reason their way through all their problems. And it wasn't going to be necessary for them to learn anything by rote.

And so we produced . . . it was a few experts got on this bandwagon and everybody became afraid to bell the cat and to say . . . to admit that the emperor had no clothes. And all across North America this system was adopted for math and a whole generation of students was totally ruined because they were, unless they got their schooling at home, because they were taught that they could reason their way through problems and they didn't have to do boring things like learning the multiplication tables. And in the early '80s finally an announcement was made that this initiative was dead, that it hadn't worked.

So I think you have to be very careful not to adopt something just because it's new and not to discard something just because it's old. And that's why we're looking carefully at our education system through all of these reviews to see how we can improve upon it and how we can assure people that we're getting the most value for the education dollar that's spent and how we can make sure that the outcome for the student, who is the client of this system, will be the best there is.

But it's very important, we feel, not to jump on these bandwagons that go by, but to do the analysis very carefully and implement on the basis of good study and good judgement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well, Madam Minister, as you recall when I was speaking before, I spoke to you in a very nice manner and said it's not blaming your government. I was only talking about the basics of education. And when you get up and made the statement that you said, that means that I misjudged you. I misjudged you completely. That

means that you must have been in a real young group of the younger generation because I don't think you're educated at all.

You haven't even got any manners. You haven't even got any manners to get up and say that it's too bad that my grandchildren can't read or write. So I mean if you want to give out insults, Madam Minister, you'll have to take them back. You'll have to take them back . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, and takes a long time at it too. But I'm quite good at taking a long time too.

If you didn't understand my question, then you don't understand what people all over Saskatchewan are talking about, is basic education. Now I was able to sit down with your last minister of Education — and I forget who it was — back in early 1980s and talk about these things, and they agreed. And I talked to our ministers all through the years. And we could talk about it, how we're going to deal with the basic education so our children and our students, when they graduate, know how to read, write, spell, and add.

And I'm telling you that our children can learn all these educational things out there. They can go to all the extra curriculums that we have — everything that you talked about — but they still don't know the basics.

I very nicely asked you, Madam Minister, your view on just the basics. But you had to get up and get sarcastic, and go on into a long speech, and you won't touch the basic education — the basics. Now you can't find . . . you go out and drop an umbrella on 1,000 homes in Saskatchewan just at random and ask 1,000 people in the city of Regina if they agree with what I said, and they said yes, our people are not educated in the basics.

And as I said, I was not being political to blame this government. I'm saying that that's been something that's been creeping upon us for a good many a years. It's been coming upon us that our children and students have not got the basics when they're through. They have to go to . . . when they go to university, they've got to go back, because that . . . I'm sorry, I can't remember the name of the professor from the University of Toronto that spent his whole summer in Saskatchewan, and it wasn't me saying it — it was him that said it, after a whole year's study, or a whole summer's study. Grade 12, grade 4 level — that when your students go to university they have to go back and learn the basics.

That's all I was talking about, and that's all we need to talk about, Madam Minister, is just those basics. And will you and your officials look at something to answer the real question out there? We can talk about all the money being spent on education, the schools being built, and how wonderful facilities we've got. We can teach welding to a boy over here, and how to a girl cook over here. And we teach all these things, but some of those things could maybe be better taught at home and teach them how to add, write, and spell. Those are some of the things that I call the basics.

And that's what you didn't respond on. You just went on about all the money that your government's going to spend — the same thing as we did, and the same thing as the

government before you and the government before them. And nobody here, not one person sitting in this here room, will not agree with me and haven't said it themselves. They've all said that statement, that our kids are not educated when they come out of a grade 12. Now as I said before, not all, because some get special training at home and some pick it up, and some . . . But the average student going to school has to be pushed a little, and you know that. You went to school — you all know that you have to be pushed a little bit to learn.

Nowadays the philosophy out there is to, here it is; take it or leave it. You learn it or leave it. You didn't get a little bit of a paddling when you didn't get your exam, you didn't get a decent exam, or a decent mark on your exam. Now that's happening out there. It's happening all over, and we're all going to suffer for it. Because I don't care whether you go to Manitoba, Alberta, or across the line — you're seeing it all over.

(2200)

And it's the basics I was talking about, but we have the leader, the member from Estevan wants to ask some questions, so I'm just going to go on and ask you about Loreburn and Strongfield school, Madam Minister. This is after I met with you, I met with the people in the area. I see it to be maybe a crisis coming. It's going to cause a whole community uproar. And I'm going to be going through something here, so I'm going to ask the page to deliver what was faxed to me tonight from Elbow. If you'd give that to the minister, please.

Madam Minister, the philosophy of your government and any government is to have schools out there as reasonably . . . spend as least reasonable money as possible. We all know that. But in this case, what's happening at Loreburn is, in Loreburn, Saskatchewan they're in a little, dying town, and they admit it. Elbow is in a growing town and that's to the south, and Strongfield is to the north and it's only got one business left — 20-some students. And they have an elementary there; and an elementary school, 1 to 6, in Elbow. Loreburn has the 7 to 12.

Now that's been a good arrangement. But what's happened, Madam Minister, in that community is what is happening in several communities in the province, where you have your unit director that's voted in by the people but he happens to live in one town and serves three or four, and in this case it's become very evident, right from Outlook to Elbow, that we have a director that's been pushing to have the other schools closed and save his own school. It's very evident. That's why I'm bringing it here to you, Madam Minister.

And why it's serious, because we're going to spend a lot of money. You'll see . . . I'm going to go through a little bit of this with you, Madam Minister. The provincial government — I'll go through this with you. The provincial government has approved emergency funding for roof repairs and two relocatable class-rooms for Loreburn Central High School for a total expenditure of 438,000. The Elbow local school board is totally in favour of the expenditure to repair the roof as it has been in need of repair for at least 20 years.

There's no problem with that, Madam Minister, as we talked about the other day, and I didn't understand the whole scenario then. But now what they're upset about is they're going to be . . . 204 or 5,000 of that is for the relocatable class-rooms when they've already got a class-room in Strongfield and a real good school in Elbow. And those towns are only about seven miles apart. So it's only a 10-minute drive to drive the children or students down to Elbow. Because the growing town, the only one in the whole Outlook district, the only one that has had an increase in students will be Elbow since '86 till now. They're the only ones, I should say, holding on; the rest are dropping fast.

It would only cost, Madam Minister, \$8,000. This is all over an \$8,000 problem at Strongfield. And I know as I talked to you before that the minister . . . and I don't blame you, don't want to get mixed up in local problems — but in this particular case, I ask the minister if she would get involved because there is a problem here. When any time that you're going to spend 200-and-some thousand dollars just to take in 20-some students from Strongfield, only 20-some students . . . but once you do that it automatically will close in the next year or two, the Elbow school, which will mean another two or more, if not three more relocatable class-rooms, which is going to run maybe up to half a million dollars or at least 400,000 just for relocatable class-rooms.

I've been in the Loreburn school. It's badly in need of repair. And to squeeze in all these students, there will not be a proper school. It just won't be. They're talking about . . . and I got it right from the officials there that they have to use a stage to make it into a class-room just for emergencies. They haven't enough room. So if we start doing this, and I'm not here to talk about one town against the other or what not, but in this situation there's a school in Loreburn, one in Elbow and one in Strongfield, and if we're going to close them we should do it, I do believe, for the least dollars as possible and do the right thing.

When Elbow has a school that's only asked for \$500 worth of repairs to keep it open for another year, and that's for paint and 8,000 for a furnace — something wrong with the furnace which is not even too serious — but to replace it, for \$8,000 everybody can stay the way they are.

But as you go through that document I gave you, Madam Minister, it says in there, other solutions. And why I bring this to you tonight, because I won't be able to get a chance to talk to you, there's a meeting tomorrow night at Elbow where they're bringing all the local school boards from three or four towns, that's just the local school boards and their one representative, Lorne Ulvan, is going to be there to listen to their stories.

So what I'm asking you, Madam Minister, that I think there's something's happened out there. They've been dealing with Glen Penner out of Saskatoon, and with Mr. Brunas, I believe it is from Regina here, and I think there's a little problem. I don't think the right information may be getting through to your officials and to yourself. I just ask you if you will look through the material, and what I bring you back tomorrow night from this meeting, and give it

your consideration. That's all that I can ask you, Madam Minister: give it your consideration to look at what's happening with our tax dollars.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that there was a question there, but I would like to rise in any event and thank the member opposite for the information that he has provided with respect to this question. We did, as he mentioned, have a discussion about this the other day, late last week, about a situation that was developing there and some fears again that people have that may or may not be based on fact. So I hope that the meeting tomorrow night will be an airing of those views and that people will come to understand what the real situation is.

I will certainly undertake that myself and the department will follow these events closely and I would suggest if I may, and I certainly will be in touch with the regional director for that area who you mentioned has been contacted, but to make sure that he's aware of the meeting and that we make sure that we have a good line of communication so that we all understand what's happening to assist the local board in solving the problem.

Mr. Muirhead: — I understand what some of the problem is, Madam Minister. They thought it was good news at first when I told them — And I thank you for giving me quick attention to get that information for me, that Elbow School wouldn't be closing, like, this summer. They'd have at least the other year.

But it's agreed upon by the unit board that — and they've been told that it will close — that's the last year, that's it, that's the move. And so they're saying that if the relocatable class-rooms go ahead with . . . if they go ahead with that, that will lead to the next year of the closing of their school. So they are not fighting for just the one more year, they are fighting and pleading for their town to be able to hold that school there . . . by spending . . . building the relocatable class-rooms, and that only takes care of the move for Strongfield for this year. Then when they move to Elbow the next year — they have a lot more students, they will need another at least two more relocatables. So it is talking about a lot of money here.

I understand it has been approved so that is why I am quite sure, Madam Minister, that the people know what they are talking about. There is not any . . . The people in the local area, they are quite clear what is happening. It is very evident, very evident in this case, and that's what bothers me — that there is one director that has caused all this problem because where he lives there is a little group of one to six students that would mean going ten minutes farther to the Elbow school and his children, and a few neighbours where he lives, want to have it for Loreburn and it is only going to be for a year or two and then they are going to have to go to a different school perhaps anyway.

It is an awful thing for the . . . I am going to put in right on the record, as I see it from the whole area, the greed of one man has been pushing and pushing for his children and his little neighbour's children instead of looking at the overall picture. That is why I do believe that it will not get cleared up. I hope I am wrong about the accusations I

made, I really do but it is what I am bringing from them. They feel that the greed of one man in a little local area can affect the whole scenario for a good many years to come.

I don't need to ask any more questions on it as long as I have got your commitment, Madam Minister, that you and your officials and your department will please keep a close handle on this, that it is handled in a right and proper manner.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we will certainly undertake to make sure that the regional director for the area is aware of the meeting and we certainly don't get involved in the decisions of the local boards because that's where these decisions should be made. But I hope that there will be a good attendance and an active interest by the rate payers in that school division in this public meeting so that they can attend and apprise themselves of the facts so that the best decision can be made.

Mr. Muirhead: — That's the problem, Madam Minister, just as you said, that you don't want to interfere in the local. But the department still must pass the money to build what they're building now.

That's what the local people . . . I believe the majority. The big tax base comes from the Elbow area. That's where the good land is, the big tax base. It is more money coming from taxes from Elbow than all the other area put together. And it's those people saying, that have the tax base, that were asking you not — your department I mean — not to approve what they're doing.

That wouldn't be interfering because you just don't have somebody say . . . no local school board or a unit board can just have a meeting and say, well now we're making a move that we're going to build a new school. Now that's local autonomy all right, but they still have to get approved. So we know this has been approved, but what we're asking is to put it on hold or do something that it doesn't happen until this mess gets straightened out.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we will certainly undertake to review the whole situation and take the most responsible action that would be expected of the department in this situation.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you very much, and the member from Estevan is going to ask some questions.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions to the minister with respect to universities in education. I know, Madam Minister, that you would like to have more money for education — I'm sure you would — and for universities. And I'd like to ask you a couple of personal questions with respect to your philosophy about generating money for universities.

I know for a fact that you're spending about 100 million more than the previous administration in terms of total budget. I believe our budget was 4.9 billion; yours is about 5.1 billion, something like that. So you got about 100 million more. Now I would like to know whether you've considered allocating more of that increase in expenditure to education, and particularly to some of the

post-secondary education facilities.

Secondly, you obviously made the choice . . . and I know it's part of a cabinet decision, but you might want to comment on it — about why you turned down 190 to \$200 million associated with tax harmonization. I know the Associate Minister of Finance has said on more than one occasion here in the House that the one-tax system made sense in terms of efficiency, and obviously it made a couple of hundred million dollars worth of sense that you could have applied to universities and some others.

And you probably know that that method of generating money was supported by SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), the board of trade, and the chamber of commerce, and others. And I wondered if you might have some personal thoughts about generating that kind of money, a couple of hundred million dollars, for education — universities, technical schools, and so forth — by harmonization, and whether you had any personal concerns about it. In fact, how would you explain why you didn't do it, perhaps to students and to faculty members and others?

Secondly, you might comment, Madam Minister . . . and I can do these one at a time but I'll just throw them out and we can get into some detail.

You might want to comment whether in fact if you could generate 2 or 3 or \$400 million in terms of Saskatchewan share offerings, whether it's in bonds — and I know you're considering a bond for the province to help keep some of the interest here — or whether you'd look at bonds associated with education; whether you'd look at maybe even public share offerings associated with generating revenue, whether it's in things as controversial as in public utilities or in something else, to generate money. And I know that's a cabinet decision, but you might want to make some comments about that.

And for now, just a question on whether you would think the university and the academic community might really benefit from an AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.) agreement, particularly in Saskatoon with the university there.

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I know the president of the university was talking to me the other day and several other people who are concerned about building an academic infrastructure.

And I wonder, Madam Minister, if you would comment about the benefits to the university in terms of education and students with an AECL agreement that would put research, millions and millions of dollars of research, into something like the University of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to attempt a response at the member for Estevan's remarks, wherein I didn't find a lot of questions that related to the estimates for the Department of Education, I would respond first by saying that post-secondary education which he referred to is a very important priority for us, which is the reason that we are carrying out the reviews

that we referred to earlier, to make sure that any available funds are targeted as well as possible.

If we had raised some money in the manner that he suggests, I suppose that . . . or I know that the first priority in the allocation of those funds would be to make a contribution toward the \$760 million that we are first obliged to pay on the public debt before we have money for any kind of programs. That's the unfortunate circumstance which makes it necessary for us to reluctantly reduce the third-party grants to the educational institutions.

As to the other references for how money should be raised, the bonds, agreements, harmonization, and so on, I suggest that the member opposite should reserve those questions until the estimates for the appropriate departments, being I suppose the ministers of Finance, and Energy and Mines, will appear in this House.

Mr. Devine: — Well, Madam Chairman, I . . . Mr. Chairman, excuse me. Madam Minister, I had made the assumption already that you would say that you are going to allocate your money to the deficit rather than to education. So I was trying to find out from your vantage point whether you thought \$200 million through tax harmonization was such a sinful or evil measure, particularly when it's recommended by such a broad cross-section of people in Saskatoon and across the province.

And goodness knows, education needs it for this generation and the next generation. And as the Minister of Education, I would suspect that you would be interested in that kind of money.

Now fair enough, you've thrown the ball over to somebody else and say, well I can't really comment about that because it's just your decision to talk about your budget. Well your budget is a little short. And that's the concern because university students are being turned away, tuition is going up, you're cutting back on universities and technical schools, and you're spending 100 million more than we did last year and you've obviously made some decisions to put the money some place else. And secondly you've made the decision, and you're the minister responsible, to say no to the universities and no to the students and no to the technical schools because, let's say for an example, you wouldn't go for a couple of hundred million dollars in harmonization — \$200 million.

Now, as a minister of the Crown, you are going to have to defend that to the university students and they would like an answer so even those students who are not going to get access to the university, could you provide an answer of why the Minister of Education in the province of Saskatchewan wouldn't want to have access to a simplified tax system that generates \$200 million in additional revenue and one that was recommended by the Associate Minister of Finance when he stood on this side of the House and said one system makes sense.

So I'd just maybe ask one more time and you probably won't want to answer this, but just in case you get up enough courage, would you explain to the students and

to the university why you as a Minister of Education wouldn't want access to \$200 million that you could get through something like tax harmonization.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member from Estevan I would like to say that even if, even if \$200 million, your estimate, was raised through harmonization or any other means, there would still be, because we're committed to pay \$760 million in interest this year on the public debt, we would still have a \$560 million shortfall, over half a billion shortfall just to pay the interest. So that kind of action wouldn't yield any additional dollars whatsoever for the education system or any other program. And you mentioned, you talked about the chambers of commerce and people being in favour of these measures and asking me if I thought it was sinful, if harmonization was sinful. What I think is sinful is that we've got a \$15 billion deficit that we have to pay interest on, and that's why we have to ask everybody in the Saskatchewan community — including students, including financial . . . or educational institutions — we have to ask them all to share in the recovery program and to put this province back on a sound financial footing so that we can reorder our priorities and give the financial attention to education and the kinds of initiatives that will always be priorities for our government.

Mr. Devine: — Well, Madam Minister, what I want to know is some indication for the students and the people of Saskatchewan — professors, academics — where you might change course, where in fact you might consider that education is a stronger, bigger priority, particularly post-secondary, and that you would say, yes we are going to increase funding there because of the demand for knowledge, technology, in an information-based society.

Now you said \$200 million wouldn't do it for you. Would you give us some indication of where you might decide to increase. Would it be 300 or 400? Is there anything in the next budget, or the budget after that, or the budget after that, that would lead you to believe that students could have some hope, or professors could have some hope, or colleges, departments, research labs, and others, that you might look at allowing them to stay abreast of the current demands for education? Or are you going to say, at all costs, you will not increase funding to education?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we seriously regret the circumstances that we inherited from the previous administration in terms of the \$15 billion deficit. You will notice that in the provincial budget the largest portion of spending is to the health area, in terms of about \$1.5 billion, education about 920.

Servicing the debt, which didn't even appear in the budget of 1982 because there was no debt to service, is now our third biggest department. If we didn't have to pay that \$760 million before we devote a single dime to programs or to the priorities that are important to us, we would be able to say yes to those people in the education community that want more funding.

As it is, we have to find, within the scarce dollars available, what are the best priorities and the best balance between undergraduate, postgraduate, technical, research, and make sure that whatever funds are

available are prioritized very carefully so that our education system suffers as little as possible while we attempt a permanent recovery so that we can return to a healthy fiscal situation.

Mr. Devine: — Well, Madam Minister, I obviously have a series of very specific questions, but I just want to go back at this approach you're taking one more time to see if you can give us some indication of whether you would seriously look at increasing funding to one of the most important parts of the next generation, and that's education.

And it's simply to recall, if you will, the demands for increased spending in education in the last decade from members opposite, when as the Minister of Finance today pointed out, in 1982 there was a \$3.5 billion debt in the province of Saskatchewan and interest rates were running at 22 per cent.

Now you can imagine, Madam Minister, 3.5 billion for 10 years at 20 per cent. Now that's there facing us regardless of other circumstances. And the demand for education was going up, and under those circumstances, you found a real commitment to universities — new geological sciences building, new administration buildings, new facilities, new agriculture facilities. And increased numbers, and we stayed with it to help keep up with inflation, to fight 18, 20, 22 per cent interest rates.

And you're saying in your first time in your administration that, oh my goodness, I'm going to have to cut back in education and cut back in facilities because the Finance minister says, well we told them that we were going to spend less but we're actually going to spend more, and whoops we've got a \$517 million deficit and on top of that we're spending a hundred million dollars more than the other people did, but we've got to now cut Education.

Well, Madam Minister, I want you — and I've got a series of questions — I want you to tell this Assembly how much you cut the operating grants to the universities. How much you cut the operating grants to both universities, the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, each of the four campuses of SIAST, and each of the regional colleges in the province. And I want you and your officials to please compare those changes, where the percentage changes in the last five years, and if they want some homework, in the last 10 years, and compare that to the rates of inflation and the rates of interest rates and the number of students to find out how you're doing. And if you're not going to change your mind on your philosophy — and it looks like you're not and we can ask other ministers about the same thing — then we're going to have a pretty good picture of the slope of the line that you're going to level and leave with education over the next three and a half to four years.

So I want the percentage increases or decreases on operating grants for universities, for colleges, and regional colleges, technical institutes, and some comparison.

And I know your officials will work very hard. But they might have some of that from the years, so that you might be able to compare and help us compare how we're

doing from year to year.

And then perhaps you might even add that we'd like to have some indication interprovincially how you compare to other jurisdictions.

Would the minister just answer yes or acknowledge that she could provide that kind of information or something like that so we'd have an indication of where she may be taking education here in the province.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise and report progress.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:30 p.m.