

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The committee reported progress.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 68 — An Act to amend The Education Act

The Chair: — I would ask the Minister of Education to introduce the officials that are here with her.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to introduce Arleen Hynd, the deputy minister of the Department of Education.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I have an amendment to make on clause 4. I'll read the amendment and then I'll explain it.

Amend clause 4(a) of the printed Bill by inserting the number "92" between the word "subsection" and the number "(1)" where they occur therein.

Madam Minister, as I was looking over your notes and this Bill as they changed from the previous Act to this Act, you are making an amendment and it says:

Section 92 is amended:

(a) by renumbering it as subsection (1);

I talked to the Law Clerk to find out what was happening with this situation. And what had happened, I believe, when your people drafted the legislation they forgot to insert the number 92 in there, as 92(1). And what's going to happen with this, if the Bill passes as you have presented it, is this subsection is going to be lost into limbo some place, perhaps never to reappear again. So this, Madam Minister, is a housekeeping type of thing to correct a typo error.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we'll be glad to take the proposed amendment under advisement for the time being in the absence of having the complete Act here to see how it fits in. And we'll undertake to do that and consider the amendment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I believe that now is the time for consideration of amendments and that we either pass them or we do not accept them as we move through this Bill. So we have to make the decision now on this.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with the concurrence of the members opposite, could we move on to other sections? We are endeavouring to do the research on the whole Act, and if we could go on to others and come back to that in a few minutes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's not a problem, Madam Minister, because I have a couple more amendments to do with section 4 anyway, so I can present them now.

This amendment is similar to the one that we went through with the Minister of the Environment dealing with . . . when changes are made to the regulations dealing with the Act, that public hearings should be held to allow people to have input into those changes. Now I realize that if you're going to change a phone number within the regulations that there is really no need at that point in time to hold a public hearing about it.

But if you're going to make some substantive changes to the regulations, that at that point in time the public needs to be able to have an ability to have some input into what those changes might be. So this change, this amendment that I'm about to propose, is the amendment that the Minister for the Environment and I worked out last week. And it's exactly the same wording. So I'll read the amendment out to you:

Amend clause 4 of the printed Bill by adding immediately after clause (u) as being enacted therein the following:

(u.01) Except in circumstances that are considered by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be an emergency, the minister shall seek advice and provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be heard respecting any prescribed regulation or any prescribed amendment to a regulation under this Act.

And the term "prescribed" is dealing with those substantive regulations that your department would go through your regulations and say, this is a minor regulation. This deals only with housekeeping matters such as phone numbers etc.; or (b) that this is a substantive regulation and therefore would be prescribed as being one of those regulations which, if you were about to change it, would go and allow the public to have a hearing on it.

Mr. Chairman, at this present time I would like to move that amendment. I have copies here for yourselves and for the minister.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We have a problem here. We're asking the Clerk to check and make sure that the copy of the statute here is up to date, because the wording of the amendments as provided by the member opposite, some of the sections do not correspond with the copy of the Act that we have.

The Chair: — With the co-operation of the members, the committee will just pause to allow the minister to verify with the Act.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, could we ask for clarification from the member opposite on the second proposed amendment where he says:

Amend clause 4 of the printed Bill by adding

immediately after clause (u) . . .

Now there are a number, a large number of subsections in clause (u). Do you mean . . . Is it meant to insert the proposed amendment at the end of the section? Or can you give me the words preceding where you propose to insert the amendment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, from your proposed amendments to the Act, you have section 4(u.1) and then you go down (i) or (ii). It would be in there prior to that but after section (u.1). It would be section (u.01).

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, for clarification, is it between (u.1)(i) and (u.1)(ii)? Is that the proposition?

Mr. Chairman, that would be between the words where the end of clause (u.1) reads:

. . . grades or years taught in the school, as the case may be;
or

And then it goes on to section (u.1)(ii):

subject to subsection (2) . . .

I know . . . (inaudible) . . . to have it clarified what it is that we're talking about.

The Chair: — The Chair, in reading the amendment proposed, can see only one place where the amendment would be located. And it would be following the paragraph . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's not up to the Chair to get involved.

The Chair: — I'm sorry. Is the member for Rosthern challenging the Chair . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry. Is the member for Rosthern challenging the Chair? I'm asking, are you challenging the Chair . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Is the member for Rosthern challenging the Chair?

(1915)

An Hon. Member: — No.

The Chair: — The amendment would be located after the paragraph entitled (u) and before the one entitled (u.1).

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if we're to understand correctly where this proposed amendment is to be inserted, we couldn't agree to the amendment because the amendment refers to regulations, prescribed amendments to regulations, and within the language of the Act and the . . . changes the amendments that we propose. The proposed amendment is not relevant.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, we're dealing here in this section with a lot of parts that will eventually be in regulations, as to how and when schools will be closed or not closed, how grades will be moved or not moved. So I feel that this is indeed a proper place for this type of amendment to be placed into the Act. I don't know where in the Act it deals with regulations *per se*

because they come after the Act is all written. So really any place within the Act is perhaps a proper place to deal with regulations.

And this changes . . . this amendment allows people to have a say in what is going to happen when new regulations are proposed. And they're particularly interested in how new regulations deal with the closures of their local schools or the elimination of grades in those local schools. So, Madam Minister, I would suggest that this is indeed a proper place for this type of amendment.

The Minister of Education, excuse me, the Minister of the Environment worked on this very proposal with her officials and with lawyers from the Justice department to propose this regulation, not necessarily for The Education Act but for one of her Bills, and they found it acceptable.

So, Madam Minister, I would think that this is the proper place to use this kind of a regulation to give people the opportunities to have a say on how regulations will be implemented and used within the Department of Education, because this is also the section in which you're going to give people the opportunities to hold meetings and to be heard when it comes time to discuss the closures of schools or the elimination of grades within those particular schools.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure whether it's proper to discuss a proposed amendment that's not moved before us in the context of this discussion. But to go to the Bill itself and the amendments that are proposed, the amendments that are proposed are to provide exactly that process and to provide for public hearings and a public meeting of rate payers prior to the decision that the board of education makes.

And, Mr. Chairman, I submit with respect, that the situation with the school, The Education Act, and duly elected school boards at the local level is entirely different than the governance and the requirements for hearings and the rights of electors with respect to the environmental provisions and those in The Education Act. In the education system we already provide for elections of local boards of trustees, elections of the division boards, and we, through The Education Act, empower those boards to do certain things.

The amendment that we have proposed that is before the committee at this time is to expand upon the public consultation process and provide that that public consultation process shall take place through a notice to the electors in the school division that is proposed to be affected prior to the school board taking a decision, which would allow for and open up the public dialogue, the public consultation process, and allow for electors in a school division to have knowledge of what kind of decisions a duly elected board is contemplating prior to their decision being taken.

So I think that the proposals, the amendments that we are proposing to The Education Act that are before this committee, are adequate in this respect and are in fact designed to improve the consultation and input process of electors.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, that is indeed what this . . . your amendments to The Education Act propose to do. But what they don't do, what your proposals don't do is give people the opportunities for any inputs on regulation which is made within the bureaucracy. They're not made on the floor of the House here; they're made within the bureaucracy after the Bill is enacted.

My amendment would give people the chance to have some input onto those regulations. When you come with a new regulation that is a very substantive one and has a major impact on the education throughout this province, on how the boards operate, then people should have an opportunity to have a say, to express an opinion on it, to have some input before that regulation is drafted and implemented. And that's what this amendment would provide, is for that kind of an opportunity. And it says, Madam Minister:

. . . provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be heard . . .

So what it allows is for you to come forward with a proposed change to the regulations to allow the people to have some input. They can write you letters back or whatever it may be, but they have a chance to give you some input on it, and for you to hear what their concerns may be as to how that new regulation will affect the way the local school boards and the division boards operate, and how education is delivered in this province.

The Minister for the Environment found that to be a worthwhile amendment within her Bill to look how the environmental issues, the environmental regulations would be handled within this province. There are many times . . . if you read through that environment Bill that we just went through, no place in there does it say anything about underground gasoline tanks. It talks of underground tanks, but how the regulations are used to affect that operation within the province is very important. It's as important as how the Bill is written.

So this gives people the opportunity to have a say on how the regulations will be used to interpret the Bill as it affects everyone around the province. And I believe, Madam Minister, that it is a very worthwhile amendment. The Minister of the Environment and I agreed to this amendment in her Bill, and I believe it will be a substantial benefit to the people of Saskatchewan to have that in place. The amendment was changed a couple of times between the two of us to get an agreement on it. But I still believe it's a workable amendment, Madam Minister, and I would suggest very strongly that you take a serious look at it, consider it, and accept it, please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can only say that the provisions of the legislation that the Department of Environment operates under and the provisions of The Education Act are entirely different in this respect; in terms of public consultation have, I'm afraid, no parallels whatsoever.

As we did in these proposed amendments to The Education Act, the ones that are before the committee that we have submitted for consideration, we consulted

widely throughout the education community with administrators, school boards, the Teachers' Federation, and all of the stakeholders interested in the education system, which is administered at the local level by local, duly elected boards — entirely a different situation.

So I'm afraid that we can't agree to accept the amendment. We can't see it as being an improvement to the amendments proposed to the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you mention that you consult with various groups. Do you consult with parents of the children who attend our educational system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we consult with all of the groups in the province. I assume that the home and school association would be one of those, in addition to elected school boards, who in many cases are the parents of the children affected by the decisions of the board. And so the answer to the question is yes, we do consult widely, including parents and including students.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I think that there are a good many parents and students in this province who feel that they are excluded from that process when it comes time to make a change to, in particular, regulations. You may be consulting with the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) and the school trustees' association, but the parents at home, I think, Madam Minister, do not have an opportunity to have a direct input into the changes. If you're just changing a phone number it doesn't matter, but if you're making a very substantive change to the regulations dealing with education, I think it's important that the parents of this province have an opportunity to know what that proposed change to the regulation is. And right now I don't believe they have that opportunity.

The school teachers' associations may have an opportunity through their executive to get to know of it. The trustees' associations through their executive may have the opportunity to get to know it, but I don't believe that information is disseminated across the province, that the parents do not get that proper opportunity to have a say. And this type of an amendment would allow them to have that opportunity, Madam Minister.

The division bells rang from 7:27 p.m. until 7:35 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 6

Neudorf	Britton
Boyd	Toth
Martens	D'Autremont

Nays — 21

Wiens	Whitmore
Tchorzewski	Sonntag
Lingenfelter	Flavel
Teichrob	Scott
Kowalsky	Wormsbecker
Bradley	Kujawa

Koenker	Crofford
Hamilton	Stanger
Johnson	Knezacek
Trew	Jess
Serby	

when they do make that choice that they be aware that there could be a cost associated with it, that they may in turn have to bear a greater tax burden to support those classes that remain in their school or to support the school that remains open. I would move this amendment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — The minister had previously taken notice of an amendment proposed by the member from Souris-Cannington. Are you ready to deal with that now?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. It says Section 92 is amended by renumbering it as subsection (1).

The Chair: — Perhaps just for the information of the committee then let me read the amendment and then proceed from there if you're prepared to deal with it now.

Amend Clause 4 (a) of the printed Bill by inserting the number "92" between the word "subsection" and the number (1) where they occur therein.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it appears that the member is correct in pointing that out and we could agree to that amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, the last time you were before us, I talked with you about the idea of allowing electors within the school districts that are affected with school closures or with the elimination of grades within that school, to have a direct say in whether or not they approve of that type of an event happening — whether or not they approve of their local school being closed or whether or not they approve of grades being moved out of their local school and being taken some place else.

The amendment that I have to propose here will allow those electors to have that say within the school division. The people in the school district affected can therefore have a say and let the school district know what their opinion is in a formal manner. They can have a vote and let their opinion be heard whether or not they like the idea of having their school closed or having their grades reduced in that particular school.

So I'd like to read the proposed amendment, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 4(c) of the printed Bill is amended by adding immediately after the words "only where" where they occur in the general words preceding clause (a) of subsection 92(2) as being enacted therein the following words:

"a vote of the electors residing in that school district approves such closure or discontinuance and"

So this would give those electors the right to have a say on what is going to happen to their local school, whether it's closed or kept open, whether or not grades are moved out of those schools. I think it's incumbent on those people

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with regret, we would not be able to agree to an amendment of this nature. Our position is that the school boards that are in a position to make these decisions, whether they're popular decisions or whether they're ones that the board likes to make or not, is duly elected by those very same people. And I think an amendment of this sort would be tantamount to having a referendum on every single action that a duly elected body would take during its term of office.

And I'm afraid that we've done our very best in the amendments that we proposed, that are before the committee, to enhance the opportunities for consultation by the people that would be affected by decisions to close a school. But having a referendum or a vote of the electors on an issue such as the combining of grades or measures that duly elected school boards feel that they have to take in changing the configuration of the education system to benefit the people in the area they serve — we feel that the proposed amendment would go too far and we couldn't support it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the section that I'm proposing to place this amendment in deals exclusively with the closures of school or the discontinuance of one or more grades or years taught in the school. So I believe that those parents should have the opportunity to have a voice in it.

The larger school division makes the ultimate choice as to whether to close those schools or move those grades, but many times what's happening is that the larger communities in those schools hold the majority of positions on the school board and a small district may or may not even have any representation on that board. While they have the power of the vote once every three years, they are such a small group within the entire division that their voice is lost in the majority.

The taxpayers in the large division are saying, we don't want to pay any more taxes so close all the small schools down. Because they feel safe. They're sitting in the larger community and they feel safe that their school is not going to be closed, but it's fine to close the school 10 miles down the road because there's only 100 students there, or whatever it may be.

But those parents have a right, I believe, Madam Minister, to have a say on whether or not their small schools should be closed. But at the same time, when they take that right and use it they should also be willing to pay additional amounts, which is possible to do under The Education Act. It's already there that the school divisions can levy an additional fee within that school district. The RMs (rural municipality) are set up in a manner that they could handle the additional charges. It would simply be a matter of them adding on . . . If it's school division A they would add on school division A(1) with a new rate that

would be added on to the tax roll for those people affected.

So it's all possible to do, Madam Minister, but it's just a matter of the will to do it. And I believe that it's important that the people in the area where those schools are going to be closed, where those grades are going to be lost, that they have a direct say on what happens for their children and for their communities.

(1945)

If at the end of the day keeping that small school open is going to harm the educational opportunities of their children then I believe, Madam Minister, that the parents will make the choice on what's best for those children. If being better for the children means going to a larger school, that's what they'll do. If it's better for the children to remain in the smaller schools, then that's what they'll do. But, Madam Minister, the people need to have that choice.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that is the exact argument that we raised in support of the amendments that are before the committee in which we proposed to enhance the process for electors in a school district to have an influence on the decision making of the board.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, your changes give the people in the school district the opportunity to stand up and voice their opinion to the school board. But it does not give them the power to influence the school board in any manner other than debate. And if the school board has made up their mind that they are going to close that school then that's the end of it.

The same as in this House, Madam Minister, Mr. Chairman. If you've made up your mind you're going to reject the amendment then there's nothing that we in the opposition side can do with the ultimate end to push it through. So it's only the matter of debate. And a lot of parents want to have an opportunity to have a stronger voice than just to debate the issue.

Amendment negated on division.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — . . . to the first amendment proposed by the member opposite with respect to the renumbering of 92 . . . Where is it? It was the one which said:

Amend Clause 4(a) of the printed Bill by inserting the number "92" between the word "subsection" and the number "(1)" where they occur therein.

And we agreed to that.

The Chair: — The committee has already voted on that and the question before the House, is clause 4 as amended agreed?

Clause 4 as amended agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and her officials for being present today and aiding us in our deliberations on this Bill. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my deputy minister for being available for the discussion on the Bill, and for the members opposite for their co-operation and suggestions.

The Chair: — Thank you for your co-operation with the Chair. Thanks to the official.

Bill No. 29 — An Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act

The Chair: — And I will ask the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me for assistance for the House, deputy minister, John Wright, on my right; Len Rog, immediately behind him, who's assistant deputy minister; and Jim Nelson, immediately behind me. He's a manager in the E&H (education and health) tax field audit.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to make a few comments regarding the Bill that's presently before the Assembly. I don't think . . . It would be remiss if the opposition didn't take a moment to stand up and speak out on behalf of the electorate across this province whom, I believe, back in October voted for a party that they were led to believe all along was going to decrease rather than increase taxes.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions the present Premier was quoted as saying that no new taxes would be necessary, that indeed governments should be able to live within its means, that \$4.5 billion in revenue should be more than plenty or more than adequate enough to address the current budgetary needs of the province of Saskatchewan. And on many occasions . . . and certainly we can look back to prior to October where the Premier said, we believe in living within our means; we think \$4.5 billion expenditure a year is roughly enough, a sound enough sum in which to live within.

The Premier also indicated while in Prince Albert that no new tax increases were necessary, that the taxes that were available were more than adequate to address the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) and NISA (net income stabilization account) programs, and also said very emphatically in the *Leader-Post* of September 6, no new taxes would be imposed. Instead the NDP would cut wasteful spending and encourage new economic development.

All the time, Mr. Speaker, while we were leading up to and during and including the election time, Mr. Speaker, the NDP, under the leadership of the current Premier, were telling the people of this province that they wouldn't face new taxes. And I can see why they were doing it because the former government had indeed come . . . was being very honest and very up front with the electorate of

Saskatchewan, indicating that if we were going to tackle the deficit, if the deficit was ever going to be addressed, that you would have to set aside . . . or set forward a platform, or lay out some guidelines in which you would operate within.

And part of the platform of the former government was to harmonize the provincial E&H tax, the tax we're talking about today, with the GST (goods and services tax). Mr. Speaker, harmonizing the 7 per cent with the 7 per cent for a total of 14 per cent, and through harmonization . . . On some occasions some of the members opposite said harmonization wasn't such a bad way of increasing or bringing in tax revenue, but on more than one occasion, Mr. Deputy Chairman, many of the members said no, harmonization wasn't the right way to go, we didn't need more taxes.

And yet the government is now in this Assembly asking us to approve a Bill which gives them the authority to, I guess, legalize the increased taxes that have already taken place, increasing the tax revenue from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, and if you went in percentage factors that would be in the neighbourhood of 14 per cent; 14 per cent increase in taxation when the . . . What's the rate of inflation today? Less than 4, less than 3 per cent? Certainly . . . 1 per cent? A considerable increase, Mr. Speaker. And as a recent caller and a recent letter that came across my desk . . . really bemoaning the fact of the increases that men and women have been facing across Saskatchewan.

When we look back at the harmonization we remember the questions, the queries being placed by the opposition about the studies. Had we taken the time, did the government of the day take the time, to do some intensive studies and surveys to see what kind of impression an increase or harmonizing the E&H with the GST would have upon the province of Saskatchewan. And we're wondering today if indeed the government today did indeed take the time to assess the impact the increase in the sales tax would have upon people across Saskatchewan, what kind of an impact would it have on jobs?

One of the arguments that the opposition presented regarding the harmonization was by harmonizing would eliminate a number of jobs across the province. Well if you look at it very closely, Mr. Deputy Chairman, harmonization certainly would have been a major asset to a lot of the small businesses across this province which would have enabled many of them to continue to operate and indeed possibly open the door for an additional . . . or at least maintain the jobs that were already there. And many of these small businesses operate out in rural Saskatchewan.

Another platform the government had was the fact that not only would they not increase taxes but they would find a way of eliminating waste and mismanagement and they would open the books. And we all know of the fiasco that took place with Mr. Gass, and when everything was said and done he indicated, not only through his report but through the news media, that indeed the books were open if anyone really wanted to take the time and to sit down and review the books.

And I know that the department, I'm sure, was more than willing and capable of informing people of a lot of the decisions that were being made. And certainly when you talk about increasing taxes and talk about taxation, it's something that not . . . there isn't a person around that agrees to. However, people are more than concerned about the deficit and are talking about the fact that we should be addressing that fact.

Mr. Speaker, the former government laid out a plan, went to the electorate with a plan. The NDP (New Democratic Party) went to the electorate with a plan as well. They said, no new taxes. But what have we done? Today we've already passed three Bills or given third reading to three Bills that have increased taxes: personal income tax, surtax, corporate tax. And now we have the Bill before us.

Can the minister indicate what kind of intensive studies were taken to establish what impact the increase in the provincial sales tax would have upon individuals, businesses, and unemployment in this province.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for the question. It's the question that's been asked many times during the nine and a half hours or almost ten hours that this Bill has been debated, but I'll answer it one more time for the benefit of the member. And as I said, it's been 10 hours that this Bill has been before the House which is . . . I think it's an important Bill; it deserves a decent amount of time, so I will not repeat the debate. We've had a good debate on it.

But I simply want to say that we recognize that the financial situation of the province is not very good. We have to be responsible and address that situation. We have to have prudent management of the finances of this province. We have to learn to live within our means.

This Bill provides \$65 million of additional revenue. If it wasn't for the additional revenue, we would have had to find some other places in which we would reduce the costs. Now I don't know where else the government could have, in this budget, found more cost reductions. We reduced the costs by \$344 million. That is clearly an option, and it's something we have to look at the next time around in the next budget.

The member's question asks about what is the impact. Well I want to say what I have said all along. We did not analyse it on the basis of each individual tax Bill. We had to look at the total totality of the provincial situation in the economy. We concluded that a continuing growth of the debt of this province, at the rate that it was growing over the last several years, is not sustainable, that either we had to get that debt under control or the very future of this province was going to be in jeopardy.

(2000)

We can't continue to build on this mountain of debt where we are paying \$760 million of interest this year. I don't think anybody in this House will disagree with that. We might disagree on how we tackle it but nobody will disagree that we have to get that under control.

And so this is one means in which, in some small way,

we're getting it under control. And the bottom line is that if we don't get it under control, even though it meant making the hard decision of having some tax increases, it would have not done anybody any favours because the impact on the economy, the future financial liability of this province, the very future of our children, would have been just too great.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. And yes, the minister is correct; we have spent some time on it. And I've been looking through the *Votes and Proceedings* and just found the page and was just going to review it a bit, so I wasn't into a lot of the added debate. But yes, we can disagree as to how we're going to address the deficit. And there's no doubt that one of the ways to address the deficit is to . . . I'm not exactly sure how you do it. Because I don't think anyone wants to admit that we all have a place or a responsibility for that deficit and we're all going to have to learn to shoulder and carry the load.

But I think the biggest factor out there, Mr. Minister, is the fact that prior to the election, as I had indicated earlier, the belief was left in many people's minds that there wouldn't be an increase in taxes. And what has taken place, Mr. Minister, is certainly . . . The avenue the government has taken by increasing taxes and affecting everybody is totally opposite to what was being said. And certainly the former government was . . . The vote that took place on October 21 was an indication that people were fed up with taxes, and indeed elected for your government because you promised them no new taxes. And it will be interesting to see where we are two or three years from now, or even as the minister has indicated, whether or not the required revenue will be forthcoming to address the deficit that is before us.

And therefore, Mr. Minister, yes it is a difference in philosophy, a difference in views, but I still indicate and tell you that the electorate certainly believe that the increases in taxes weren't necessary. And I find that it was inappropriate to not be totally up front with the electorate prior to October 21.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

The division bells rang from 8:03 p.m. until 8:13 p.m.

Clause 5 agreed to on the following recorded division

Yeas — 24

Wiens	Serby
Tchorzewski	Whitmore
Lingenfelter	Sonntag
Teichrob	Flavel
Anguish	Scott
Atkinson	Wormsbecker
Kowalsky	Kujawa
Bradley	Crofford
Koenker	Stanger
Hamilton	Knezacek
Johnson	Kluz
Trew	Jess

Nays — 6

Neudorf	Britton
Boyd	Toth
Martens	D'Autremont

Mr. Toth: — I would just like to take this moment to thank the officials — even though they're not with us just right now, they may be back in a minute — for their involvement in the debate tonight.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 68 — An Act to amend The Education Act

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 51 — An Act to repeal The Heritage Fund (Saskatchewan) Act, to provide for the Winding-up of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund and the Farm Purchase Program Fund and to enact Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts and Regulations resulting from the repeal of that Act and the Winding-up of those Funds

The Chair: — I'll ask the Minister of Finance to have his officials return to the committee.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, if I could have leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — I'd like to introduce a couple from the Ryerson area who happen to have stopped in to observe the proceedings tonight, Ken and Muriel Moore, and I'd like to ask everyone to join with me in welcoming them to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 51 (continued)

Clause 1

The Chair: — Does the Minister of Finance have officials here he's not already introduced?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce the comptroller, Mr. Gerry Kraus, seated behind me.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 51 is a Bill to wrap up the greatest hoax of the century, Mr. Chairman. Of course I'm referring to the Heritage Fund, the pretend security fund the NDP of the '70s claimed to start.

They even gave it a name, Mr. Chairman, they called it the Heritage Fund. They said at the time they were going to start to build up funds for the future or future of our children, Mr. Chairman. They said they were going to set money aside for a rainy day. Well this side of the House remembers what it was like under those guys in the '70s,

that for the most part, they are for the most part an urban only, and it showed in their policies when they were in government and it shows in their actions today.

What the NDP did in the '70s, Mr. Chairman, should never be forgotten and it should never be allowed to happen again. Due to the members opposite . . . Do the members opposite remember the '70s in Saskatchewan? I sure do. Potash prices were soaring; uranium prices were high; oil was bringing a pretty fair dollar; and grain was the best price any of us had ever seen or received. Life was good. For the 960,000 people who called Saskatchewan home, life was good indeed.

The NDP raked in buckets of money from the resource sector. They took it in hand over fist and did what the NDP does best, Mr. Chairman. They stuffed it into their pockets of government and redistributed wealth to the bureaucracy.

They said they were setting loads of money aside in case Saskatchewan was ever hit with hard times again. They claimed they were securing money in case of drought or if oil prices fell or if potash dropped or other disasters. In fact the premier at the time, Mr. Blakeney, suggested that if all resources dropped at the same time — potash, uranium, and oil — it would be a disaster for this province. He said it would never happen simultaneously; those three things would never go down simultaneously. And yet we saw in the '80s that's exactly what happened. And that's exactly what happened; the result of it was a disaster just as he suggested it would be.

They said they were building a Heritage Fund in case the land of milk and honey came to an end. But the government was the only thing that got fat in the '70s. Saskatchewan Heritage Fund certainly didn't. While our neighbours to the West stashed billions of dollars away in the '70s, the NDP in Saskatchewan bought potash mines — holes in the ground. That's where the money went.

While Alberta was putting money away for tougher times, the Saskatchewan NDP were spending every penny in sight. The difference between Alberta and Saskatchewan and the way they were run in the '70s is still showing up today.

The Alberta government's heritage trust fund, a real heritage trust fund, last year brought in \$1.3 billion — \$1.3 billion in interest alone — to the government. We are talking about 11.1 per cent of their last year's budget, Mr. Chairman, from the interest gained on the heritage trust fund. Talk about a smart government, setting aside billions of dollars for when the bottom fell out on oil prices and things weren't great any more. I think congratulations should be in order to the Alberta government.

And in comparison, what did the NDP government of the late '70s leave our province with? Zero, absolutely nothing.

The former premier of the day, Allan Blakeney, said that the fundamental reason for the NDP's defeat in the early '80s was because the public believed the government was well-to-do, had lots of money. There was in fact not

lots of money. Well there is not lots of money in Saskatchewan after an NDP government.

It is hard to believe that in Saskatchewan, in the midst of high oil prices, high grain prices, high uranium and potash prices, that during a period of incredible wealth in the middle of huge boom, rural communities across the province were dying. The NDP government was getting fat and telling farmers to keep pumping out the grain. And oh, aren't things wonderful, isn't life good? Don't mind about the 22 per cent interest rates; just do your best to pay your mortgage. And the poorer cousin rural communities were mourning the death of another small town and yet another village.

Life was not as good as it seemed. Finally, Mr. Speaker, the '70s came to a close. The NDP had 10 incredibly prosperous years to build this province, to make it strong, to make it grow. And do you know what? After 10 years of wealth and good times in Saskatchewan, the NDP had not been able to convince one single, solitary person to come to Saskatchewan and make them stay. The population was still stuck at 960,000 people. And rural Saskatchewan was sinking in a sea of high interest rates and low prices for their products.

Mr. Chairman, the NDP had wealth beyond which we can scarcely imagine today, and the province was exactly where it started population-wise and further behind where it counts — in rural Saskatchewan. The NDP wasted the single greatest opportunity this province has ever witnessed. They blew their chance and they blew away any hope of quick recovery for the people of this province. You really have to wonder where all the money went. Billions and billions of dollars gone into things like potash mines.

Well everyone knows where the money went. Let's see. The NDP spent a billion dollars — a billion dollars — on potash mines alone. Then there were the oil fields. The NDP thought in the '70s, and they still think today, that if there was any money to be made it was going to be the government that made it.

I guess all we have to do is look at the NDP's own Anderson report to get the facts. Any way you look at it, Mr. Chairman, the idea of an existence of an NDP Heritage Fund is a parody itself and it is nothing more than political smoke and mirrors.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill on division.

Bill No. 62 — An Act to amend The Fuel Tax Act, 1987

Clauses 1 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 19 agreed to on division.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

The Chair: — Would the minister like to thank his officials.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Indeed, Mr. Chairman, before we conclude, I would like to thank the officials on behalf of the Assembly for their assistance in the Bills that we've done here this evening.

Koenker
Hamilton
Johnson
Trew

Knezacek
Kluz
Jess

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you also to the officials for their time this evening.

Nays — 7

(2030)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 68 — An Act to amend The Education Act

Devine
Neudorf
Boyd
Martens

Britton
Toth
D'Autremont

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

The Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Education Vote 5

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — By leave of the Assembly, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Chair: — Before we continue, would the minister introduce the officials who are with her this evening?

Bill No. 29 — An Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is the deputy minister of the Department of Education, Arleen Hynd; behind me is Rita Archer from the department finance division; and Robin Johnson.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — By leave, now, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Item 1

Bill No. 51 — An Act to repeal The Heritage Fund (Saskatchewan) Act, to provide for the Winding-up of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund and the Farm Purchase Program Fund and to enact Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts and Regulations resulting from the repeal of that Act and the Winding-up of those Funds

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, when the department funds school boards, do they have any requirements within the Act or the regulations as to how a student can transfer from one division to another, how the division decides whether or not that student has met the proper requirements for, say, if he's going from grade 10 in one division to grade 11 at the next . . . at the end of the school year? Is there any requirements that the Department of Education puts on the school boards as far as how that transfer takes place?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response that would be . . . Transfers of that type would be handled at the local level through arrangements between the respective school divisions. The department would not have a role in that kind of a transfer.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 62 — An Act to amend The Fuel Tax Act, 1987

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you're saying that the department has absolutely no play in the transfers between one division and another? Surely there must be some sort of requirements that a student who transfers from one division to another has to have met certain requirements to be able to go into a grade in another division. There must be some sort of requirements in there.

The division bells rang from 8:35 p.m. until 8:45 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 25

Wiens
Tchorzewski
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Anguish
Atkinson
Kowalsky
Hagel
Bradley

Serby
Whitmore
Sonntag
Flavel
Scott
Wormsbecker
Kujawa
Crofford
Stanger

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there is in the third-party funding. The funds that the Department of Education would transfer to each respective board of education is based in part upon pupil enrolment or student count. And so the student would be recognized by the division in which he is properly a resident unless some other arrangements are made between school divisions, in which case . . . there may be, for an example, one where a student would transfer to a different division

with the consent of both school boards, and tuition would be paid on his behalf by the transferring school division. And that would be recognized as a cost in the funding formula and so forth.

So there aren't a lot of examples of that kind of transfer, but there certainly are some. And as I say, the only role that the Department of Education would have would be to recognize either the student's place of residence or to recognize in the funding, in one way or another, the fact that this respective school divisions have agreed upon some arrangement for transfer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if a student and his or her parents move from one school division to another school division, what are the circumstances under the case where a student may be moving, say, from grade 10 in school division A to grade 11 in school division B, and the whole family has moved into that school division? Is there any requirements for school division B to accept that child into grade 11?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the receiving school division or the school division into which the family moves, if I understand the question correctly, would then become the school division where the student would be recognized for grant purposes and in the normal circumstances — I'm not sure if there's a specific case — that may be some kind of an aberration of what's usual, but certainly it's the responsibility of the school division to accommodate the educational needs of those people who are resident within their division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if that student had successfully completed grade 10 in the one school division, was moving over into a second school division, would that school division have to accept that student into grade 11 then?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if the member opposite is referring to a specific case that I'm not aware of, and we have provincial standards with respect to grades, and if a student in one school division has achieved a grade standard, in the normal course of events that grade standard would be recognized and accepted by the school division to which the student transfers.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Does that school division have to accept that that student has completed, if they completed it, through a regular school division accredited school? Do they have to accept the fact that that student has progressed from grade 10 to grade 11?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, based upon the provincial standards and upon the required number of credits for admission into courses of further study within the high school curriculum, it would be expected that the receiving school division, or the school division to which the family has transferred, would accept that student and provide for their educational needs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What if that school division though, Madam Minister, said they were not prepared to accept that student as a grade 11 but would accept them as a repeat in grade 10?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it seems apparent that the member opposite is referring to a specific case on which I don't have the particulars. If he wishes to bring more detailed information to our attention, we're certainly prepared to look at an individual case.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I have an individual case in mind, Madam Minister, but the questions are generic to any student that may be transferring.

If a student is to attend a private school, a private accredited school, would a transfer from a private accredited school to a school division be accomplished in the same manner as a transfer from one school division to another?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, the eligibility to qualify for further courses of study are based upon provincial standards. So that the student who is wanting to advance to a further grade would have to demonstrate that they have achieved and met those standards in their previous course of study.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if they have completed their course of study in either a school division or an accredited private school, when they transfer into another school division they may be asked to provide some support or demonstrate that they have indeed reached that level of capability?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure what . . . exactly what the member opposite is referring to in terms of burden of proof. But a transcript, if the student was a student in Saskatchewan that had met provincial standards, there should be . . . there would be a transcript of the marks and the subjects in the previous courses of study that would provide the proof, if you like, or the documentation as to what level the student had reached and so to what level he was qualified to advance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And a private accredited school would meet the same requirements as a school in a regular division, would they?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if it's accredited and if it meets . . . The key is, no matter what kind of a school it is or where it is in the province, if it meets the required provincial standards, then the transfer could be effected.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What happens then in the case of a student that has met those requirements who transfers into another school division and is refused advancement? What recourse do the parents have to try and alleviate that problem?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it's really impossible for me to hypothesize on this. As I've said, if the provincial standards are met, the transfer should be effected. If there is a specific case, which seems apparent, then I would appreciate being made aware of the particulars of that individual case so that we might deal with it and communicate with the school boards in order to determine what problem there seems to be.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister.

This was a case that I had brought to your attention a while back from the Milestone area and I'll give you the name in private if you wish, later, but in this particular case there seems to be a problem where the parents are not being given the hearing they feel they deserve before the board and the superintendent. And my question is, what recourse would they have if they cannot gain satisfaction with the local division board and the local superintendent of education? Can they appeal to the minister for some assistance?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can't say for certain whether there is a specific section of the Act that provides for such an appeal. I think not. But I certainly would undertake, if we were apprised of the particulars of the case, to communicate with the school boards and to be of assistance in any way that we could.

(2100)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I will indeed pass on the information I have to you.

On another issue of school repairs, you stated on June 8 in a news release that there were 64 schools that would receive some emergency repairs. And later you stated that this was only a partial list. Now have any other schools been added to this list, or are you contemplating any other schools being added to this list?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in the last session that we had at estimates, we tabled a supplementary list to the original one that would contain the response to the member's question.

If I may at this time, we also have available to table a volume of information, if we could have the assistance of a page — a large page, strong page. This is travel accounts and individual expenses that were requested. We also have a breakdown of the expenditures since November 1 of each agency, board, and commission as requested. And that is appended hereto.

Then we have some information that was requested on August 6 dealing with student loans, secondment complements, and aboriginal industrial training. At least one of these questions, I think, was asked by the independent member. But I'm sure the member opposite would be interested in this information as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister, for your information that you're supplying us.

I don't have my copy of the report you gave me on the additional schools that would receive funding for renovations. I wonder if . . . is it a substantial list?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if I could have the assistance of a page to provide a copy; this one is dated August 6. It's a list of projects that were added since June 8. There are only seven entries; it's one page. I'd be very happy to provide it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are you contemplating any other additions to that list at the present time, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there is still a contingency, even with the additions in the latest list. The amount that was originally budgeted, there still is a balance available there because there is always the possibility that emergency situations will arise, and we have to be ready to correct deficiencies that will affect the working conditions or the occupational health and safety of students or staff.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, what do you classify as an emergency when it comes time to receive funding for renovations? How do you determine what's an emergency and what would be normal renovations in the course of the operation of the school?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, normally such things as the atmosphere . . . well anything that related to the occupational health and safety of the occupants of the building. The most recent cases that have received some publicity is because of air quality, that kind of situation. There are . . . where enrolment pressures require additional class-room space and transportation to another school is not a feasible alternative; that there are major structural modifications to prevent deterioration, for instance if a roof started to leak and it was doing damage to the insulation and to the structure and so forth, where it would be more expedient to do repairs than to allow the deterioration to continue. And basically that would describe the type of projects that would be considered of an emergent nature.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, when repairs are done to a school, does the department provide them 100 per cent funding or what's the formula involved when you provide funding for renovations?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it varies slightly from one project to another. There is a requirement when the subject of the project is roof repairs that the local division pay the first \$5,000. In most other projects the sharing is split, province and local is approximately 80 and 20 in most circumstances.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I notice on the list you gave me for the last seven or eight repairs, Fort Qu'Appelle on here, \$22,000 for accessibility. Is that providing ramps for wheelchairs or what was the project involved in?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the accessibility at Fort Qu'Appelle would address the requirements of handicapped students to access the school.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, when you're looking at designing a school or renovating a school, are there different requirements for elementary schools versus high schools? What I'm thinking of is, like your door handles. If you have kindergarten and grade 1 children going in the door, they need doors at a different height, handles at a different height, and doors that'll open under a different pressure than say, somebody in high school. Now are there different requirements?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question would be that yes there are different

standards depending on the age of the child and the people who have to have access and use the building. And these are recognized by the architects that the boards engage to do the design work. And costs and those variations are recognized by the department when they arrange for the funding with the local board.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if a school doesn't meet those standards, what happens if say you have a school designed for high school and you're going to put elementary school students in it, kindergarten, etc., and they don't meet the proper standards. What happens in that case?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware whether the member opposite is referring to a specific case or whether it's hypothetical. But it would depend again on whether the structural changes or the modifications were of an emergent nature or on whether it was related to occupational health and safety and those considerations that make funding for modifications a priority.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, would emergency situation include the fact that a school board does not wish to fund a school any longer and wishes to transfer students to another school? Would that be classified as emergency situation when it comes time to look at renovations to a school?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if there is a specific case, it would make it so much easier if the member would refer to it. I'm not sure that the location of a doorknob, for instance, could be a reason or a justification to close or not to close a school.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it may seem like a joking matter to you, but to the parents in this particular community it's not a joking matter. And it's not just the location of a doorknob in a school, but it's also a matter of the access that those younger children will have to this particular school. It's a matter of whether or not the space in that school meets the current Education department's standards, whether there is enough space for each student, whether or not those students have the proper amount of library space available or the proper amount of lab space available.

So that's why I'm asking these questions, Madam Minister, is to try and determine whether or not there are some standards in place in the department that each school has to meet, and what happens under the circumstances where a particular school may not meet those standards.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, indeed there are standards for construction and for renovations. And the facilities branch of the Department of Education works closely with the school board requesting funding or prioritization of their proposed project, and with the architects and the designers of the renovations with the objective being of meeting those standards and having the facilities that teachers and students use be suitable.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the circumstance I'm referring to is the closing of the

elementary school at Quill Lake and the moving of the students over to the high school in the same community. And the parents in that area have contacted me, and their impression is — and this is the local school board has contacted me — is that the high school does not meet the educational standards required for the education of their children, that the lab space is not there. The library space is not there, that the blackboards are too high for the kindergarten-grade 1 students because the school is designed as a high school, not as an elementary school.

They're concerned that the far end of the playground does not . . . the playground is not fenced. At the far end of the playground, there's a creek running through the property, that that poses a danger to those young students that will be attending this school. While it may be a danger also to the high school students, the high school students are much more aware of the circumstances that they should not be in that neighbourhood. But the younger students, the kindergarten and grade 1, are at risk when that area is not fenced off.

The community . . . The school division has said renovations to this school are only going to cost us 7 or \$8,000. Well you have renovations here, Madam Minister, of \$78,363 that you have approved for the Quill Lake High School. Even at 20 per cent, that amounts to almost \$15,000. So, Madam Minister, are you aware of the circumstances in that school? Have you been contacted by those parents, and what are you doing about the situation?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I am aware of an indication that there are some changes proposed for the schools in that division in the area of Quill Lake. But specifically what they are, I haven't been apprised of . . . or what the details might be. And I will certainly undertake to discuss it with the facilities branch of the department and be of assistance wherever possible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, what was the reasons given for the renovations to the Quill Lake High School?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the indication on the print-out here that we have that's provided by the facilities planning branch says that the allocation that was requested is to accommodate K to 12 access — which would address some of the points that the member has raised — and washrooms and resource facilities.

(2115)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, when you receive this kind of an application, what process do you go through to judge whether or not that is actually an emergency situation? The people that have contacted me, the local school boards, say that the elementary school is in very good shape in their community, that there is no emergency need to close that school down. Now what do you go through as a department to determine whether or not that is actually an emergency situation to renovate the Quill Lake High School into a K to 12 facility?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the local board of education would look at the situation, the enrolments

throughout the district, the transportation costs, and a number of other factors. They would make their decision based on that without any interference from the department.

Then if a renovation or a capital cost was involved in making the changes that they deemed to be appropriate to provide the educational service that they're mandated to do, they would contact the facilities branch of the department who would assist them in making estimates in evaluation. And they would evaluate the application from the school division for funding on the basis of some of the points we mentioned earlier. Whether there's health and safety of students endangered by the condition, whether there are program requirements that can't be met in one location, whether there's additional class-room space required and transportation is not feasible. I'm not saying not impossible, but where it costs more. Those are some of the factors that the board would take into consideration.

If the project met the criteria for emergency funding that the facilities branch of the department has set out, then it would be approved and the work would go ahead.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, if a school division was to approach the department, the facilities group, and say we can't afford to keep school X open, but if we can move all our children over to school Y, will you pay for the renovations to it? Is that a feasible question to ask? It seems to me that's what's happening in this case.

The school board doesn't wish to fund the elementary school in Quill Lakes. From what I'm told, the school is in very good shape. It's not that old of a school. Transportation can't be a factor because they're in the same community. They're about two blocks apart. So transportation is irrelevant in this particular case.

Programs, those same number of students are going to be attending the schools, whether it be in the elementary school or a combined elementary and high school situation, so the teaching staff is really not going to change that much. You may be able to supply some better phys ed classes because you'll have a teacher in the high school that could supply it also to the elementary school, but I see very little possible change in the program.

The only real change that I can perceive in this particular case is the funding situation. The school board does not have to fund two plants. In this particular case they can get by with funding one plant. And the parents in this particular school don't wish that to happen. So if a school board comes in to you and says, we want to close school A because it's costing us too much money to operate even though it's in good shape, will you fund renovations to another school for that purpose?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we don't ... the department does not interfere in the decision-making process of the local board.

It could very well be, and I don't like to comment on this particular case because I'm not aware of the details of the case in every single school in the province, but if there were two schools in a town and they both had a very low

enrolment, it might make sense to combine them.

And there would be other factors, not only that factor, there would be other factors that would come into the decision as to whether a project like that qualified for emergency funding. But I certainly can't comment on the details of each and every decision made by a school board in the province, but I have said, over and over in this House, that we do not interfere with and we do try to facilitate the decision-making power of the local school boards.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, if every school division in this province was to submit an application for either renovations or construction of a new school, based on the criteria you've outlined as an emergency situation, that they have some sort of a problem with health or safety, programs or class-room space, or as indeed as would appear in this particular case, funding, how do you determine which ones you're going to fund? You're funding 64 the first time and another 7 this time. There are other applications in there that are seeking assistance for construction. So how do you determine which ones are going to get it?

Is it the ones that happen to be in the NDP constituencies? Because that's what happened in this particular case. So how do you determine? This one looks to me and to the people in those communities that it's strictly based on funding. So how do you determine what's an emergency situation and what isn't?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with 55 out of 66 constituencies in the province represented by the NDP, it's a little difficult to miss funding some schools in some of those ridings. But I think you will find if you look at the whole list that geographically the projects are fairly evenly spread and there are quite a number of them that are in ridings not represented by the NDP.

But apart from that, we would have to prioritize those applications based on the funding that is available, the funding that has been budgeted. And certainly whatever the reason, if there was to be a surge of applications for improvements, renovations, or anything other than new capital, we couldn't approve them all. We've stated what our budget is. We've said that we've approved a number but left a contingency for emergencies that may occur that we're not aware of yet, and we couldn't fund them all. We'd have to do it with priority as funds become available.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, on the list that you provided me tonight, I see four schools with roof repairs. To me that is a legitimate emergency renovation need. You can't have water running all over the place and ruining the books, making the students wet, and destroying all your equipment that's in the school. That's a legitimate expense as far as I'm concerned, an emergency situation.

Accessibility, if you have students coming into your school where you haven't had handicapped children coming in, they need access, fine. Fund it.

Now you're putting relocatable schools into Bruno. That

one I kind of wonder about, and I know nothing about the circumstances in Bruno. Now were they closing schools down? Why do they need new class-room space in Bruno? Is all of a sudden the population of Bruno increased such that they need students. . . not students, that they need class-rooms? Or are they closing schools down and bringing the students in from some other location?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the repairs at Bruno, the relocatables at Bruno are as a result of some very extensive consultations with the local people in that area, with the local school division with some capital problems and structural problems and changes in enrolment. The people in the area have worked it out to the satisfaction of — from the letters I get — a great many people.

It's a different decision than was proposed in the first place, which shows that when there is consultation and when the division board listens, that the right solutions will emerge. And I want to point out that there are, this year in '92-93, less schools being closed this fall than there have been for the last six years, considerably less.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I don't disagree with you that there may be less schools closing because those changes have already taken place in a lot of communities, but there are changes still to occur with a number of schools' populations dropping.

Now back on the Quill Lake one again. That renovation bothers me. I didn't expect to see this. I knew that there was applications in, or potentially applications in there, but from all information I had on that circumstance was that it was simply a matter of funding, from the school board not wishing to fund the elementary school any longer. And I find it surprising that that would be classified as an emergency situation.

So, Madam Minister, I hope that you will indeed look into this — I had contacted you on this one before — and look and see just exactly what is happening at the Quill Lake School as to the real reasons why this additional funding is necessary for renovations, whether they do actually have an emergency situation there or if it's simply a budgetary matter with the school division.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'll certainly be glad to investigate and make inquiries as to the exact breakdown. I've attempted to give the rough breakdown, being such things as washrooms, which could very well be a plumbing emergent repair. But I will attempt to discover in more detail and I'd be happy to advise the hon. member of what I learn.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. We'll go on to another topic now. I have here a memorandum dated May 28, where the deputy minister has created a small committee to review the mandate, role, and objectives and organizational structure of the department. For what purpose, what real purpose, has this committee been struck for, and what is it costing the department?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would assume

that the member opposite is referring to . . . it would be an internal document, really, with respect to the internal reorganization of the department. And we've spoken earlier about some positions that were . . . some secondments that were terminated and some positions that were terminated that were redundant or that were vacant and were not to be filled; and as an example, I guess, to school boards and those third parties that we fund, in ways to reorganize our administration so that as many scarce dollars as possible get down to the student and the class-room level. We're asking school boards to look closely at their administration so we think it behoves us to look very carefully at ours and to make sure that the organization within the department and all the roles that people are playing in their jobs are as well co-ordinated as possible in order to be as efficient as possible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Were any additional people hired for this particular committee or were they drawn from the department?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there was one part-time facilitator who was engaged to lead the exercise and to work with the employees in the department in looking at a reorganized structure.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, who was this part-time person that was hired?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the consultant who was hired is a very well-known expert in this field. It's Alan Scharf, formerly with the Saskatchewan Research Council and now operating a company called Creative Leap.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, the bottom paragraph on this memorandum states: the committee will be meeting on a weekly basis throughout June and July and will submit recommendations to the deputy minister in August. Has that indeed happened?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, there have been several meetings but certainly not on a regular weekly basis. I did receive a report. I think perhaps . . . probably bi-weekly would be more accurate, maybe about seven or eight meetings maximum since that memo. And their work is not yet concluded and I have not yet received a report.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, would you be prepared to table the report of the committee when it is finally submitted to you?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that a document like that would be an internal working document. It would be developed by the committee within the department, the employees there that are working with it. It would be a recommendation to me in terms of the reorganization. Without having seen it, I don't know whether I would follow the recommendations or not. So I wouldn't agree to table it until those deliberations are complete and some recommended course of action has been decided upon.

(2130)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan are funding that study and I believe they should have access to that information when it is appropriate. And once the study has been completed, once you've had a chance to review it, I believe that is probably the appropriate time to submit that for public viewing.

Because some of the questions on this memorandum that they're asking is: What is the role that the department should carry out? What is the broader purpose of that role? And then they go on with some sample statements. Some of these samples may be too broad and others may be too narrow: monitor the delivery of education in Saskatchewan; provide funding and resources to educational organizations; give support and direction to educational organization; ensure that educational standards meet requirements; ensure that all citizens have needed education; educate citizens for work life; upgrade career opportunities and skills for Saskatchewan citizens; prepare citizens for work life.

That covers a pretty broad area, Madam Minister, and I think the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know what kind of recommendations your internal committees are providing you with. Will you please table that report when it is available?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we will certainly make public any actions that are taken as a result of a report that comes out of this exercise because it will affect people in the department. It will affect what their role is in their job, which we are in the process of redefining.

It would appear that what the member is reading from is a list of suggestions and, if you like, probably from a brainstorming session that occurred within the department about looking at their role. I think there is . . . Certainly it's healthy from time to time within a department or a company, and certainly businesses, particularly in times of change as we're living through right now, do this on a regular basis, is to do strategic planning, to redefine the roles of the people in their organization. And that's what the department is doing.

We certainly aren't going to table internal working documents that are not going to result in recommendations or action. When there is action to be taken, when there are going to be changes in job descriptions that will affect people, certainly that will be public knowledge.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, then earlier today we went through an exercise with An Act to amend The Education Act, and where I asked for public hearings to be held or the opportunity for the public to be heard, dealing with changes to regulations.

Here you have a committee in place which will be recommending changes with either regulations or the internal operations of the department or perhaps even recommendations to the Act, and I believe that the people . . . You talk about a corporation going through this exercise once in a while, and that is good and healthy. But at the end of the day, the shareholders have the right to have a look at it. The chairman of the board has a right to

look at it. The board of directors looks at it. And ultimately the shareholders have that right if they wish to exercise it. And I believe the shareholders in this case — the taxpayers — should have the opportunity to have a look at this study when it's completed.

Madam Minister, on a different topic, there are general proficiency awards available within the department. Will these be carried out at a comparable level to last year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if the member opposite is referring to the grade 12 high school graduation, the answer to the question is yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, while your colleagues were in opposition, they continuously criticized the previous administration for cutting bursary programs. They promised to reintroduce those programs when they became government. Is there any provisions in this budget to reintroduce the bursary programs within the student loan system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in this budget there are no changes projected in the amounts available for student aid. We have kept it at a level amount equal to last year. What we are doing is looking at the student aid policy to try and determine what is the fairest way to allocate those dollars to allow students the maximum accessibility to post-secondary education in this province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, I may be wrong, but did you not make an announcement last fall or early winter about a bursary program for medical students that would remain within the province? Will that be taking place?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there may be some confusion here. This may be a bursary program within the universities. The University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and the University of Regina have some programs within their own funding where bursaries are supplied, but there is not that kind of a specific bursary program within the provincial student aid department at the moment and has not been for some time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if this kind of a program for medical students was in place, it would be funded strictly from the university level, through the funds that they would have available for their operation of the entire university?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, before I could answer the question I would have to have more specific information. I wouldn't know the exact nature of the bursary that the hon. member refers to, whether it's one that would be within the university, whether it's one that would originate with another organization or perhaps in the Department of Health. I just know that it does not originate within the student aid department.

If he could give me more information on the nature of the bursary or the name of it, I might be able to discover an answer for him.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I'm going

from memory on this — that there was an announcement made some time in the winter months that the government was looking at bursaries for medical students that took their education in Saskatchewan, to keep them in Saskatchewan. Perhaps it's a forgivable student loan, that if they remain in the province of Saskatchewan for X number of years the student loan will be written off. Is there indeed something along that line?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can't speak for other departments but there isn't such a program within the Department of Education or the student aid department.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, are you considering such a program?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I've said, we are studying the whole area of student aid, looking closely at how other provinces dispense aid to post-secondary students. We're looking at the VRDP (vocational rehabilitation for disabled persons program), all the different programs. We're co-operating with the Department of Social Services in an analysis of the training on the job funds and other access to education in training programs that are in other departments besides Education. We want to take a comprehensive look at the kind of aid that is available to students for post-secondary education, so that we can try to make sure that we honour priorities to allow students with ability to not be prevented from having the training that they could qualify for.

But it's difficult in this atmosphere of just not having more dollars, and growing numbers of students attempting to access post-secondary education. We have a committee that is reviewing the current practice, that's reviewing the practices of other provinces, and trying to come up with some recommendations for improvements to our programs in time for the next budgeting cycle. But at the moment, it's still in a state where we're consulting with outside groups, with student unions, with the universities. And we haven't made a determination as yet. But we hope to make some changes in time for the upcoming budget.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you stated that you're studying the whole question of student loans, that you have a committee looking at. Last year the federal government introduced a 3 per cent administration fee on federal student loans. The previous government opposed that and was working to have it removed. What is your government doing about the 3 per cent federal student loan administration fee?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we also opposed the 3 per cent administration fee at the time it was levied by the federal government. It's collected up front which makes it in a sense even more than 3 per cent. We have asked the federal government to review not only the administration charge, the 3 per cent, but also all the elements of their program, like the weekly loan limits, all the elements of which haven't been changed since 1984, although there's been inflation and different conditions that students have to contend with.

We attended, along with other provincial representatives, a meeting with the Secretary of State, Robert DeCotret, in March of this year, where all the provinces presented papers with requests for those changes, including the elimination of the 3 per cent administration fee. And the response that we got from the federal government at that time was that they were considering dropping the 3 per cent administration fee and making the other changes, but not likely until the fall of 1993.

So we have repeated our request for them to eliminate it for this year, but so far we haven't got a positive response.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I'm glad to hear that you're continuing on with the previous government's opposition to that fee.

Madam Minister, I'm also glad to hear that you're looking at the student loan program and with overhauling the whole process, because when I look around this province, we have a large number of middle class citizens who are having problems getting their children into the universities, of funding their children into the universities. They have an asset base such that once you take that into consideration they're very low on the scale when it comes time to have loans available to their students. And I believe there needs to be some re-evaluation dealing with that, because while they may have an asset base that would indicate that they could afford to pay for that student, they don't have the cash flow. In a lot of cases, farmers may have a larger asset base but, Madam Minister, as I'm sure you're aware, cash flow is almost negligible on a lot of farms.

So the whole process needs to be updated and changed to take into account . . . to add some flexibility into it. So I'm glad to hear that the minister has said they are reviewing it, but when can we expect to see the results of those reviews so that there are some changes available for those students?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we have reviewed the provincial program on a management and systems, the operational basis, and we've made a number of important, positive changes to the application process, cutting the length of the application in half, simplifying it. And with respect to the criteria that's considered in the approving of a loan, I'd just like to correct the impression that the hon. member has left with respect to the asset base of a student or the student's parents being considered. The asset base is not considered. Income is the criteria.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, there seems to be a lot of people out there that are still having problems getting their student loans.

I'd like to change topics again, Madam Minister. This year it has been directed by your government that \$7 million be cut from the operating funds, and it seems to indicate a general lack of commitment to the K to 12 level in this province. More than 70 school boards have found it necessary to raise their mill rates in order to maintain the minimum level of service to their communities. Not only have these mill rates been forced up, but school boards are faced with having to cut staff and reduce programs

and services. And part of that we are seeing, we discussed earlier tonight I believe, in the situation with the Quill Lake School. The cut in funding is perhaps part of the reason why that elementary school is being closed in that community.

In the months leading up to the last election, Madam Minister, you and your colleagues went around the province assuring everyone that would listen that education would be a major priority to you, to your government. You claimed that the previous government was underfunding education and you promised more money. Now that you have attained power, Madam Minister, what has your response been to educators, to parents, and to the students who believed what you said when you said you would do more?

Well, Madam Minister, you and the NDP have responded by turning your back on the promises that you made in October. You promised more money for education. The member from Saskatoon Broadway was always criticizing the previous government for not spending enough money — 3 per cent increase in a year was not enough. She was criticizing the previous government for not providing enough money for the universities, that tuition fees were going up.

Well, Madam Minister, tuition fees are going up 13 per cent this year, and that was what your members were fighting against previously, and you have not followed through on what was promised at that time. You cut operating funding to the schools by more than \$7 million, and 83 school divisions have been forced to swallow decreases; 47 school divisions had their funding cut by more than 5 per cent.

(2145)

Madam Minister, what advice do you give to those school boards who find themselves underfunded and betrayed by your government's lack of financial commitment to the education of this province?

Now I'd like to read to you a comment from a school board and this is from the North Battleford catholic schools: although grant increases will not keep up with such additional costs as higher unemployment insurance, higher Canada pension contributions, and tax increases — gasoline, provincial sales tax — we have not reduced programs. We have however eliminated planned initiatives in Cree language and in resource-based learning and have generally reduced allowances for supplies, materials, maintenance and repairs, equipment, and professional development. We have allowed no provisions for teacher salary increases.

What do you say to these school boards? What are you going to say to them when the teachers come to them and ask for a salary increase?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would just like to point out that in previous years, if we refer to school closures for instance, in 1988-89, 20 schools closed with an increase in funding; in '89-90, an increase in funding, 13 closed. The following year with a further increase in funding, 18 closed. In 1991-92, the last year of the

previous administration, 20 schools were closed with an increase in funding.

This year with a decrease in funding of — depending which sector it is — between 1 and 3 per cent in the form of third-party grants, only 7 schools in the province are scheduled to not reopen this fall.

What we say to the education community and what we said at the time that we announced the level of third-party funding at a reduction of 1 per cent for the universities, 2 per cent for K to 12, 1 per cent for regional colleges and 3 per cent for SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts and Technology), was we asked them to consider the fiscal reality that the province finds itself in.

We asked them as citizens of this province and as people who are committed to the very best educational opportunities, for the children, the students of this province, possible, to join with us in looking at their administrations, in looking at their operations, trying to contribute to the recovery of this province from \$15 billion deficit we found ourselves with, to work together to effect a recovery and at the same time not to impair the opportunities of our young people to an education.

And they have done that in most cases in a very admirable way by making reductions in administration, by trying not to affect programs. They have done, in most cases, an excellent job. There have been some exceptions. There have been some instances where people have said, institutions have said, oh well, we need to have more; it's the government's fault. Very rare. Most people and most institutions have joined with us and want to make a recovery from the abysmal fiscal situation that we face without damaging the opportunity of access to education, quality education in the province.

And for that, all the professionals, the professional leadership, the teachers, the administrators, the trustees, the boards of governors in this province, are to be commended for the excellent job that they're doing in coping with the fiscal realities of the day.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the administrators and school boards are doing an admirable job in handling the situation as they find it today because you have indeed cut them back significantly. You talked about school closures taking place over the last numbers of years. The student populations were dropping. The schools were closed. And the government provided assistance in allowing other schools to be renovated.

But what's happening now is, in most cases you're not providing that assistance when the school divisions and those parents involved wish to have their students moved, wish to have their students moved into a larger school.

I know of a number of circumstances across this province where the student populations in a particular school are getting down to the area where, under previous circumstances, those schools would be closed and moved into another school, but that's not happening today because the department is not providing any funding to provide renovations to those other schools. So they have to keep them open and they have to swallow it

themselves — the added costs.

I have a letter here from the Prince Albert School Division: the factors that affected the difficult decision arrived at, at this budget, include the overall decrease of 2 per cent in educational funding from the province; legislated employee cost-increases including salary increments; uncontrolled cost increases included natural gas, power, telephone, and automotive fuel — a total of \$36,000.

And here's what they did to look after the situation for themselves. They set the 1992 mill rate at 76 mills, an increase from 73 mills in 1991, a 3 per cent mill increase; utilized \$166,100 from their accumulated surplus and reserves; reduced existing teacher staff by five.

So they've cut their teaching staff. I'm sure the STA loves it . . . or the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Sorry . . . studying and reviewing information regarding the educational and financial implications of operating Wesmor School. Well they study them, and they're going to close the Wesmor School, Madam Minister. So what do you say to the parents of the Wesmor School when your funding, your tax increases, is one of the factors included in the closure of their school?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I've said before, I'm not prepared to comment on the details of the decisions that individual school divisions make. I can only reiterate that in most cases across the province that school boards and educational institutions, educational professionals, are going with us in attempting to deal with the fiscal realities that we all find ourselves in, in the most constructive way possible so as not to affect the quality of education, and in most cases — there are some exceptions — in most cases without passing on the reduction to the local taxpayer.

This was one of the comments we made at the time that we announced the third-party funding. We said to the education partners, please be more creative than looking for the perceived shortfall in your funding from the local tax base because it's all the same taxpayer. You know, please try to be more creative. And in many, many cases, they have. And most of them have done their best.

And we realize that it's not even-handed across the province because there are some school divisions that did have reserves that found it easier to cope this year than others. Next year, as we've already announced, there'll be a further decrease. That will make it more difficult. But we know that the leaders in education are doing their best to cope, and we're confident that they will continue to do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I've received quite a number of letters from different school divisions across this province. And in most cases they were not able to follow your advice, and they did indeed raise the mill rate for those different schools.

Madam Minister, 83 school boards are carrying on the provision of education in their divisions this year in the face of major funding decreases by your government. Your government saw fit to cut back on education at a

time when quality education has never before been more important to the future of our province. The roles of schools and teachers is expanding and the need for adequate funding has never been so great. The cost of providing education is increasing, if for no other reason than because of inflationary pressures, and yet the NDP responds by cutting funding back.

Let me quote something from a colleague of yours . . . that yours said during a debate in this House on educational funding. And I quote:

. . . I have to ask, Mr. Minister: don't you have any kind of strength in that cabinet? Don't you have any kind of capacity to convince your cabinet colleagues that educational funding in this province is important — that education in this province is important?

Madam Minister, those were the comments of your colleague, the member from Saskatoon Broadway, during estimates on April 30, 1990. And it's ironic that she was responding to the previous government's Education budget that called for a \$12 million increase in operating grants to school divisions.

So I ask you, Madam Minister, the same question that the member from Broadway asked the previous Education minister. Don't you have the capacity to convince your cabinet colleagues that education funding is important, in the light of the fact that your NDP government has actually cut school division operating funds by more than seven and a half million dollars in this budget?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the remarks that the hon. member has quoted from April 1990 with respect to the funding of education in this province preceded two huge operating deficits in the years of '89-90 and '90-91, including 900 million in the last fiscal year alone. So events that have taken place that have affected the actions of the government, the administration prior to October 21, 1991, have certainly precipitated some changes in the viewpoint — not in the importance of education but certainly in our ability to respond. And as I say, the education community is working with us in attempting to recover from the situation we find ourselves in.

The other point I would make is that it is true that not only is the distribution or the demographics of the population in the province changing but there has been a net loss in pupils. At the same time, although some teacher positions have been lost, the teacher-pupil ratio is as high as it has been for the last five years. So I think that the quality of education and the access of students has not been affected in spite of the events which have taken place.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I find it very interesting that once you and your NDP colleagues came to power that the previous commitments and promises you made became unimportant to you all of a sudden. Isn't it interesting that in opposition your NDP colleagues railed about how difficult it would be for school divisions to meet their responsibilities with the kind of funding increases being provided to them by the previous government. Madam Minister, again I would like to quote

for the member from Saskatoon Broadway in one of her contributions to the debate in this House. And I quote:

I ask you . . . Mr. Minister, what are you going to do . . . with the fact that your government only increased educational spending, on average, by 3 per cent? (Only increased it by 3 per cent.) As a result of that, Mr. Minister, school divisions across this province have had to increase school taxes dramatically . . . what you've simply done . . . is shifted responsibility for educational funding . . . onto the backs of the local taxpayers . . .

You talked about huge deficits in the years of '89 and '90. Well, Madam Minister, there was indeed a huge deficit there, and that was in the budget. The member from Saskatoon Broadway knew it was there, and yet she was still demanding that more monies be supplied to education even though they did get a 3 per cent increase.

During the '90-91 educational budget, the funding for operating funds for school divisions was increased by \$12 million. At least you owe the member from Saskatoon Broadway and the taxpayers, the parents and the students of the 83 school divisions in this province who have had their funding cut — in some cases by as much as 25 per cent or more — an explanation as why you chose to ignore the promises you and your NDP colleagues made about funding education.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, there are a couple of observations I would like to make. One is with respect to the amount that provincial mill rates went up, and in same way the 2 per cent reduction in K to 12 funding through third-party grants wasn't even across the piece. Some school divisions received an increase. Some received a decrease, more or less than 2 per cent. At the same time the increase or decrease in the mill rate works the same way, but the average across the province, the average mill rate increase was one and a half.

I'd also like to point out that in comparisons with previous years where, while there may have been some percentage increases in third-party grants, the previous administration, of which the colleagues of the hon. member opposite were responsible, they failed to fund the teachers' pension plan in an appropriate way. When you take that into account, in 1992 the provincial share of funding to education is fifty-four and a half per cent of the total cost as compared to 52.8 in their last year of administration and 53.6 the previous year. So the provincial share of the cost of education has gone up substantially.

Also the total budget, including the contribution to pension plans this year, the total budget for the Department of Education is \$920 million. If you compare the . . . take the \$760 million that is allowed for in the budget to pay interest only on the provincial debt and the approximately \$218 million shortfall in federal transfer payments, you have \$978 million which is . . . those two factors alone — the interest and the federal off-loading — would more than fund the total education system in this province for a whole year. That's very significant when servicing the debt is our third biggest department, Mr. Chairman.

(2200)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I find it interesting you would bring up teachers' pensions because I believe that plan came into place about 1930-something and it was underfunded right from that time. Your government has been in power for a good portion of that time, the Liberals were in power for a portion of that time, and the Conservatives were in power for the last nine and a half years of that. And that underfunding has gone on right from the very beginning of the teachers' pension plan. It has never been funded properly. And we started to increase the funding necessary to bring that up to where it should have been.

It's also interesting that you talk about the interest necessary to support the deficit. Well, Madam Minister, interest was part of the budget in 1989 and 1990 and 1991 that was necessary to support the budget. And yet your member from Saskatoon Broadway didn't seem to be worried too much about that. She was demanding at that time more and more funding for education. She wasn't concerned about paying the interest or whether or not the deficit would be increased by her demands. It didn't matter to your party. You were simply demanding that more and more funding be spent.

Madam Minister, all your political rhetoric doesn't change the fact that you have cut funding to education — you cut it. We didn't cut it. Previous governments didn't cut it. You cut it.

So I just don't understand how you explain that to yourself, to your own colleagues back there — that they were demanding in previous years that funding be increased. How do you explain it to the member from Saskatoon Broadway, but sorry member from Saskatoon Broadway, we can't increase funding to education, we can't support the universities any longer. The Minister of Finance won't give me enough money.

Don't you stand up in cabinet and say something about this, that these people need the funding? We need more educational opportunities in this province. And you're denying people that opportunity.

You haven't increased the funding to student loans and yet you turn around and say there's more people applying for them. So how do you justify that? How do you juggle those two things? Some place in there you're going to have to supply some more money, Madam Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I guess all I can say is that we will provide as much money within the fiscal realities as we can towards education and training which is a very high priority for our government. But I think that to say that there has to be more, there's only so much. You can't keep borrowing. I think my preaching on that subject would not fall on very fertile ground, because the members opposite just didn't seem to understand the meaning of that. And to keep on saying that you need to have more when you know it has to come from somewhere else, is the same kind of voodoo economics that got us into the problems that we are.

And the problems that the education community is working together to overcome — and it will be hard and it's too bad that the education community and perhaps some opportunities in this province will have to suffer as a result of the deficit that we face — but I think the education community deserves credit for working with us, for joining with us and supporting us in effecting a recovery together from the gruesome situation that we were left with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you can criticize the previous government for the monies that they spent but they spent that money to help people.

Madam Minister, I would like you to enlist . . . I want to enlist some more help from your colleague, the member from Saskatoon Broadway, but quoting her in a debate over the previous government's 1 per cent increase to operating grants to one particular school division in the 1990-91 budget. And this is what she said, Madam Minister, and I quote:

Well, Mr. Minister, how do you even pay the heating bill when your grant . . . goes up by less than 1 per cent? How do you even pay your teacher salaries, Mr. Minister . . . How do you pay the potential . . . teacher wage increase that's going to occur once your government negotiates the teachers' salary increase . . . How do you pay for transportation costs, library costs, the costs associated with implementing core curriculum with an increase of less than 1 per cent . . .

Well, Madam Minister, that's a good question. And I think it's a legitimate concern, Madam Minister. And I wonder how you explain it to the member from Saskatoon Broadway and to the people of Saskatchewan, how school divisions are supposed to pay for all those things with no increase in funding at all. And while you're at it, Madam Minister, I wonder if you could explain to the member from Saskatoon Broadway and to the rest of us how those 83 school divisions whose funding was cut by your NDP government are going to be able to continue to provide education in their communities.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can only say that I'm sure that I know that the member for Saskatoon Broadway was a very effective critic for the ministry of Education during the previous administration. But I know that those institutions of which he speaks . . . and in fact her viewpoint has to be tempered by today, in 1992, the fiscal realities that we face and the budgetary deficit that we were left with that we were trying to cope with and so is the education community.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, she mentions wage increases for teachers. What can we expect to happen in the next year because all these schools are going to have to deal with potential wage increases and a good number of them have not included any wage increases in their budget because they simply don't have the capabilities to do so? So what kind of an answer are you going to supply to those school divisions that are concerned about wage increases for teachers?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as the hon. member knows, the teachers have been without a contract since the end of 1991. They did have some bargaining sessions at the beginning of the year, and I believe the bargaining will resume again shortly. But I certainly wouldn't comment, while the collective bargaining process is under way, upon the likelihood of the outcome.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, there's an awful lot of school divisions around this province that have budgeted on the concept that perhaps because you have cut funding to them, that you will not be providing a salary increase to teachers. I believe in the end, when it comes to negotiations, the government holds the major hand at the bargaining table, that they represent 50-plus-1 per cent of the Saskatchewan Trustees Association bargaining unit with school teachers. So in the end, it's the government who ultimately decides how much money is going to be spent on teachers' salaries.

So, Madam Minister, when the time comes, it's your department that's going to have the ultimate say on whether or not teachers get a salary increase. So if that is indeed the case, how are these school divisions going to fund that increase if you do indeed give the teachers a salary increase? And there are some teachers out there, Madam Minister, who deserve a salary increase.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the bargaining team is made up of four representatives from the School Trustees Association and five on the management side. But it will be the . . . It'll certainly be, not the Department of Education, but the Department of Finance that would be involved in the mandate. But I wouldn't comment. We believe in the collective bargaining process. We believe in letting it take its course and work. And beyond that I wouldn't comment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, collective bargaining is indeed a very important aspect of our society. But there's also a concern as to how, if you agree at the end of the day to provide an increase to teachers, how it's going to get paid. Either you're going to have to come up with some more money or at the end of the day there's going to be less teachers. Because the money, as you say, doesn't grow on trees. And the school boards can't run deficits like the provincial government can.

So somebody's going to have to pay for it at the end. And perhaps you can convince the Associate Minister of Finance to give you some additional funds . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I know he's a very difficult man to deal with at times.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association has lobbied the government of Saskatchewan for a number of years for a 60/40 operation funding split between the province and the provincial boards. That would be, 60 per cent of the operating funds required by school divisions each year would be provided by the province, and the remaining 40 per cent would come from the local tax base.

Madam Minister, what is the total amount of operating

grant the province will provide to school divisions as a percentage of overall operating funds that school boards will receive this year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I repeat the figures from earlier. In the 1992 year, 54.5 per cent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, prior to last fall's election, the NDP critic for Education, the member from Saskatoon Broadway, demanded many times during estimates that . . . during question periods and in debates on various Bills that the government accept the position of the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and moved to a 60/40 operating funding split for division schools.

In meetings with stakeholders, including the SSTA and the STF, the member from Saskatoon Broadway pledged the support of the NDP to the 60/40 proposal. Now in government the NDP have performed yet another about face and have not provided that support.

The member for Saskatoon Broadway said her government would do better. Yet as this year's budget so graphically shows, the NDP neither is able to meet their commitment nor do they have any intention of doing so.

Would the minister now come clean with the SSTA and other stakeholders in education and admit that the NDP have no intention of increasing government share of school division funding to 60 per cent, and that, even worse, the NDP intends to off-load their funding obligations onto the shoulders of local taxpayers.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in 1991 under the previous administration, the provincial share was 52.8 of educational costs. In this budget, the provincial share is 54.5, which is already an increase of 1.7 per cent. That's a fairly good step in these fiscal times towards the goal of 60/40 that we support as a goal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, some of the school boards don't seem to take too kindly to it, and they are not as impressed with your comments and your running of the Education department as some of your colleagues are.

I have a letter from one of the school divisions. This is from the Rosetown School Division. And I can tell that this school division is a well-run school division, Madam Minister, because they're very efficient and they believe in recycling. They took the letter that I sent them and sent their reply back on the same letter. They just typed it in at the bottom. And I would like to read to you the first couple of sentences: we've been taking a kicking since 1975. The down-loading onto local taxpayers started with the last Blakeney term, continued through the Devine years and now into the Romanow regime.

So, Madam Minister, they're not very impressed with your performance as the Minister of Education. They weren't impressed, from these comments, with the last two previous administrations. They are looking for something better, Madam Minister, and that's what your

government promised them, and that's not what you've been delivering.

Another school board, Madam Minister, and I think this particular school board has wrote a very . . . a letter that really provides a telling point. Because it's not just in education where this point needs to be taken, but it's right across the board when it comes to dealing with your government.

This particular school board has reduced their staff by 2.3 full-time teachers. But the last paragraph is the telling one: in conclusion, I would ask that you use this information with caution. We would appreciate it if you would not identify our school division by name since we must continue to do business with any government that is in power. Additionally I would caution you that the information I have given you, while accurate, can also be misinterpreted.

(2215)

So this note on the bottom, Madam Minister, indicates to me a fear of your government, that if they speak out there will be retaliation against them. And, Madam Minister, that's not the first time I've run into that circumstance. I've run into it in other situations also, where people are afraid to speak out, because what else will they do to us?

Madam Minister, while some of your colleagues may try to put those remarks into disrepute, that is indeed the circumstances out there. There are a large number of people in the public who are afraid to speak out for fear . . . well they took away half my pension, maybe they'll take away the other half now if I say anything about it.

So I think, Madam Minister, you need to take a look at what you're doing in the Department of Education to see that the people have the right to stand up and speak about what you're doing, without fear of retaliation from your department or from other departments.

Meadow Lake School Division: In our case the recognized expenditures were actually up \$151,000 and this was accomplished even with a reduction of 23 pupils from the previous year. However the increase in the computational mill rate took most of that away from us.

So while you gave them some money with the one hand, you took it back it with the other. But there's also one other thing that happened in the Meadow Lake School Division: In addition to that, our assessment was up over \$5 million due mostly to the construction at the pulp mill near Meadow Lake and the 41 new homes in the Meadow Lake area.

So while there's been a lot of criticism of the previous government, some of the actions taken by the previous government have indeed been beneficial to the province of Saskatchewan. Here the mill rate is up by \$5 million . . . excuse me, not the mill rate, the assessment is up by \$5 million in the Meadow Lake area and there's 41 new homes in that area. If there's 41 new homes, there must be 41 new families living in that area . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . this was done before the new MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) was in the area.

And if the new MLA has anything to say about it, they'll probably sell all those homes and move them out to Alberta.

The Gravelbourg School Division: A 2 per cent cut in 1992 resulted in an amount of approximately \$15,000. The mill rate did not rise; however cuts had to be made to the physical education department, maintenance and janitorial department, school materials such as textbooks, academic supplies, and audio visual equipment, support staff.

Madam Minister, you can say that everybody is doing quite nicely, thank you, with your cut to education, but the school divisions and the students are taking it in the neck.

Moose Jaw Roman Catholic School: We have not had to cut any programs; however we will be operating with two fewer teachers with a projected increase of 30 students.

Well I would have to guess that their student/pupil ratio has changed a little bit from what it was previously. If they eliminated two teachers and have 30 more students, somebody's got to be doing some more work there, Madam Minister.

So your programs, you say you've cut here and everybody is quite happy about it and nobody is complaining very much. Well Madam Minister, I'm getting some complaints about it, that they're not too appreciative of your cuts to education. The member from Saskatoon Broadway was complaining with a 3 per cent increase in other years, and yet today we're taking a 2 per cent cut and these people are complaining about it, Madam Minister. And they feel that their educational services that they can supply to their students are being impaired by it.

So, Madam Minister, will you go back to your cabinet colleagues and ask them to review your budget, to provide some additional fundings necessary? You're going to have to go back to them anyway when it comes time to get your money for student loan programs. You've already said that there's a limited amount there, but you're getting more applications and nobody is going to be turned away.

So, Madam Minister, you're either going to have to go back to the Associate Minister of Finance and the Minister of Finance to get money, or you're going to have to cut some place else. And nobody else can afford to take those cuts.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can only repeat that it's unfortunate times that we find ourselves in, trying to dig ourselves out of a \$15 billion hole. We have asked for the co-operation of the people in . . . the education partners in working with us to do that with as little damage as possible to the education programs or accessibility to post-secondary.

And of course everybody isn't happy. It's not a happy time. It's a time to make the most of what we have and to work together to improve things in the long run. And in general and in the main, that is what is happening. And we appreciate that kind of support that we're getting from

the education community.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it seems they're giving that support to you very reluctantly. And perhaps it is because of the one letter that you're not getting a lot of complaints, is because they're afraid to complain about it. They're afraid to complain; that if they say, you're harming our students, you're harming our school division, that the rest of their funding will be cut off. Perhaps they're the ones that aren't going to get the emergency funding for renovations. There is a genuine fear out there, Madam Minister, that that will indeed happen.

If the NDP do not intend to off-load the cost of education onto the local taxpayers in the forms of property tax increases, would the minister please explain to the people of Saskatchewan why more than 70 school divisions in this province were forced to increase their mill rates this year as a direct result of your underfunding?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to refer to a pattern here. I don't have the figures for every year, but in 1982, which was the last year of the NDP's administration, the provincial share of educational funding was 58.5. Throughout the years from 58.5 per cent. That's very close to the 60 per cent which the SSTA states as a goal. From 1982 on the provincial share of funding declined year after year after year, and the only increase in that share has been again from 1991 to 1992 — this budget. So that does represent an increase in the share.

And I think that the references that the member opposite is making to people in the education system being afraid of vindictiveness and retaliation is a reflection on the situation that has prevailed over the last 10 years, where that was the kind of atmosphere that people had to operate in.

They have no fear of that kind of action from this administration. We do have compassion and understanding for their needs and their representations, but we don't have money and they understand that. They have problems, they discuss them. I didn't say it was all sweetness and light out there. I said that we're all working together to make the best of a very bad situation that we were left with.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, if people were afraid of the previous government retaliating when they complained about government procedures, the previous government would have had a lot of opportunities to exemplify that vindictiveness because there were a lot of complaints at different times. But that didn't happen, Madam Minister.

We had students marching on the legislature because funding was not increased as expected or as wanted for the universities. And yet all of a sudden they have an increase in tuition fees of 13 per cent, and I haven't noticed any students marching on the legislature. Why? They can't be happy about a 13 per cent increase when they were unhappy at other years when tuition increases were very small. And yet all of a sudden there's nobody marching on the legislature when they get a 13 per cent

increase. What's the reason for that, Madam Minister? Is it that they are afraid to say anything? That funding will be cut even further?

Madam Minister, your colleagues made a commitment to go to 60 per cent funding — 60/40 split. When do you expect to reach that goal?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the provincial average changes in mill rate and the provincial averages share of . . . the provincial contribution to education do not look particularly favourable. In fact exactly the opposite to the previous administration because the mill rate increase that is affected in this year by this current budget is the smallest in years.

There were 2.2 per cent, 1.5 mills in this year; last year, 4.1; the year before, 5.1; the year before, 5.2; the year before, 4.2. This is the smallest mill rate increase in years in spite of funding changes.

The other remark with respect to the tuition at the post-secondary institutions, they're saying . . . or anyone saying or trying to leave the impression that the funding cuts, third-party funding cuts from the province to the post-secondary, to the universities resulted in tuition fee increases . . . Let me tell you this: that the total amount of reduction in funding to the universities was approximately 1.7 million, 1 per cent on the total of \$178 million. Their tuition fee increases raised 5 million. So they weren't making up only for the shortfall that they perceived in the cut-back of 1 per cent. They also increased their budgets. And people are trying to leave the impression, including the member opposite, that the increases in tuition are as a direct result of the cut-backs, and those figures certainly wouldn't bear that out.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you talk about the mill rates increasing at 4 to 5 per cent over previous years and that they're only increasing by 2 per cent or so this year. But yet I think you have to stop and take a look at the inflation rate. In previous years the inflation rate was running at 5 to 8 per cent, and this year it's running from zero to one and a half. So your mill rate increase exceeds the rate of inflation; whereas in previous years, it was more or less at the level of inflation. So there has actually been a net increase in the costs to the school boards because of this mill rate increase.

Madam Minister, I'd like to ask you a few questions now about the teachers' superannuation fund. This year's budget for Education indicates an increase of more than 100 per cent in the government's contribution to the teachers' superannuation fund. This year's total contribution to the fund amounts to \$120 million. Madam Minister, the overall budget for the department was slashed by 2 per cent. Funding has been reduced to school divisions, operating grants, capital projects, core literacy, educational development fund, university operating grants, SIAST operating grants, regional college operating grants, and the list goes on. One of the only areas to receive an increase is the teachers' pension fund. What does this say about the priorities of the government, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think that this

speaks more to the priorities of the previous government than it does to the priorities of this government. We didn't raid the teachers' pension plan. We don't believe in finding money and finding revenue by raiding the pockets of teachers who have devoted a lifetime to teaching the students in this province. We are for the first time in many, many years providing the full contribution to the teachers' pension fund, and that's the reason for the increase. It is the amount that should have been paid year upon year that the previous administration failed to contribute.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, the total contribution from the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to the teachers' fund was \$120 million. How was the contribution that the government is required by . . . what is the contribution that the government is required by statute? What is that fund? How much money should be put into there, based on the requirements of the statute?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the amount that's allocated in the budget this year is the proper amount to provide for the matching the employer as . . . the government contributes as the employer's portion to match the teachers' contribution.

There was a draw down on what is called . . . the previous administration deemed whenever the interest rate was over 7 per cent, whenever the yield was over 7 per cent that there was a draw down on those funds. And that's what we're not prepared to do. We're making the full contribution to make sure that . . . As the member opposite knows, there are two separate plans, the new plan and the old plan, the money purchase plan, the other one. We are committed to make on an annual basis full matching contributions to the teachers' superannuation fund.

(2230)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I'm glad to hear that and I imagine the teachers are also, that you're prepared to make a full matching contribution. But is it required by law, by statute, to make that full matching contribution?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it certainly is our understanding that it is. But the reason, there's also a moral obligation because there is an agreement, and that's what we're obeying. Beyond that, I won't comment because, as the member opposite is aware, there was a legal action commenced with respect to the actions that the previous administration took with respect to teachers' superannuation fund. So I won't comment any further.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, how is this contribution calculated?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this is the current plan. The funding required is . . . We have to make payments on the annual superannuate payroll, those teachers that are already eligible for pensions. We have to match current teacher contributions. We can deduct from that amount, monies credited to teachers who superannuate during the year and fund earnings in excess of 7 per cent. And that's the rate at which interest is

credited to teacher accounts. So if there was a rate of higher than seven, we would be entitled to take that out.

But I hesitate to get into detailed discussion on anything except the history of this because the teachers' pension plan in Saskatchewan is very unique in that it is a subject of the collective bargaining agreement and it's subject to negotiation. That collective agreement is currently on the table and elements of the pension plan are a part of those discussions. So I would prefer and in fact will decline to comment further on the teachers' pension plan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you mentioned that funds in excess of 7 per cent, that you were entitled to take them out. Therefore I'm assuming that if you're entitled to take them out that it's not illegal to do so. Is that indeed the case?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is . . . we're getting into heavy water here. This is the area that was the subject of a lawsuit. The lawsuit has not been concluded. It's not active at the current time, but it's certainly out there, and it's also on the matter of the collective bargaining agreement which is currently on the table.

So in light of those two proceedings, I would not wish to engage in further discussion about the future. We can talk about the history at length, but what's happening now or what will happen I decline to comment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you made accusations that the previous government was withdrawing funds from the teachers' superannuation fund. And then you turn around and say that the government is entitled to withdraw funds over 7 per cent. So if they were entitled to do so and they did so, that doesn't mean to say that they did anything illegal. If they were entitled to withdraw it and then they could do so.

So what's the problem with it? The teachers may argue about it, and that's what the court cases are all about. But if the Act says they are entitled to, well then, Madam Minister, it's legal for them to do so. And when you criticize them for having done so, you may do so on a political level, but you can't do so on a legal level.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this is the area that is the subject of a lawsuit and I decline to comment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, let's assume that the department is entitled to withdraw funds over the 7 per cent. If that is indeed the case, what would be the surplus in the fund at the present time?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there is no surplus in the fund. There's a \$1.7 billion deficit in the fund and this is one of the . . . Well I'm not going to get into it. This is one of the reasons for the lawsuit. It is the subject of a lawsuit. There is a question as to whether what the previous administration did was illegal or not, which is before the courts. And so I decline to comment further on the subject.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you didn't seem to have a problem making comments about it when

it suited your purpose, to imply that the previous government was doing something wrong. You brought it up into the discussion. I didn't.

Madam Minister, I'd like to turn now to curriculum and special education. And I would like to ask the minister for some clarifications with respect to the figures that appear in this subvote. The curriculum and special education subvote was originally allocated a total of \$10,544,700 in the 1991-92 *Estimates*. And the revised number in the '92-93 *Estimate* document is \$10,136,100. This is a difference of \$408,600.

Would the minister please explain why the funding allocations for the curriculum and special education subvote for 1991-92 is different in the 1991-92 *Estimate* document than it is in the 1992-93 *Estimate* document?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the difference of \$1.3 million in the 1991-92 financial plan and the '92-93 budget, one of the problems with making those comparisons is that the figure for 1991-92 was budgeted but that wasn't what was spent. And so the figures estimated to be spent this year and what was actually spent last year are really quite close together. And there were some items, such as the computer for the evaluation students' record program, where \$237,000 was budgeted for in the previous year, and it's paid for and there's no need to expense that money. So it isn't the magnitude of reduction that those numbers would appear to show because \$10 million is not the amount that was spent last year. It was restated.

So basically, except for some decreases in cost because of slow-walking the implementation of the core curriculum, there's actually very little difference in what was actually spent in the restated figures for last year and this year's budget.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, assuming that the original budget figures for curriculum and special education was 10 million-plus for 1991, this year's funding allocation has experienced a decrease of 17 per cent. This amount is a cut of more than \$1.7 million.

Even if we use your figures for the 1991-92 figure, taking into consideration the curriculum and special education, it still is a funding decrease of 14 per cent, or 1.4 million — you use the figure of 1.3.

Before I get into any other questions, Madam Minister, about why you chose to cut so deeply into this important area of education funding, I wonder if the minister would provide a breakdown of how the \$8.7 million that you have allocated this year will be spent. And I'd ask you to include spending allocations in the area of curriculum and instruction, student services and evaluation, special education and communications funds as well as other areas where funds were allocated in the subvote.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there were a number of projects in this area that were completed, like the northern initiatives task force, that was done, doesn't have to be done again. There was the PALS (Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System), that literacy program that was piloted, that was done, doesn't have to be done

again. There are projects ongoing but the up-front cost, the incremental costs of starting it are no longer there.

A very significant amount also was the closure of the school for the deaf which was carried out at the end of last June, the last school year, by the previous administration of which they would be aware. So there is not — when you take all those factors into consideration — there is not the dramatic increase; in fact there is very little decrease between what was actually spent last year and programs that are carried on this year. They're very, very similar.

This is an area where we wouldn't want to make cuts. It's an area where with mainstreaming children with various kinds of disabilities into the regular school system, we want to do a good job of this so these figures have to be taken in light of all of those factors.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I'd like to ask you a question dealing with help for visually impaired children around this province, and I've discussed this with you before. I'm just wondering where is that program, that project now in the current educational system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that program is still — if I understand the question correctly — it's still housed within the special education area. As the member opposite indicates, and as we have discussed previously, our method of delivering this service and co-ordinating it has changed, but certainly not our dedication to it, and our wish to keep improving the system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, that's a very important program. And I would encourage you to continue it and to provide the quality of service that was previously being provided in that program.

I'd like to go back to the question I asked before, about where the \$8.7 million is being spent. How is it being broke down? Where is the money going to?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the breakdown of the curriculum in special education would be in curriculum in instruction, there would be \$3 million including payroll and development expenses in that. There would be \$300,000 in the education development fund support for that. There would be in assessment and evaluation, 640,000. In provincial examinations and student records, there would be over 1.2 million. And the northern education task force would be 850,000. Communication funds, which would be to promote public involvement in education and include priorities such as reading and literacy campaigns, 382,000; and administrative expenses, 143; computer development fund and contract funds, that would be 915,000; and special ed would be 1.242 million.

(2245)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, in 1988 all the provinces and territories of Canada agreed to take part in a national school achievement indicators program. The purpose of the program was to develop a base of information from which provincial departments of education could access the

performance of programs offered in their schools on a nation-wide basis.

This kind of program, Madam Minister, seems to me it would provide valuable information to educators as to whether or not the programs offered were meeting the educational needs of our students, and how those students fared in relation to the counterparts in other provinces. Would Madam Minister update us as to where this program is within your department and whether you're going to continue it?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this was an initiative that was undertaken by the Council of Ministers of Education. It had a bit of a checkered history with provinces opting in and out in principle until last December.

We attended our first meeting of the Ministers of Education Council at that time and found this to be a subject on the agenda which we were asked to make a decision. So we came home to the province and we carried on some extensive consultations with the business community, with the home and school association provincially, and we made a decision that at this point in time we would monitor the results of the testing program as it's carried on in the other provinces, but that we would not actively participate because we are devoting our own energies to developing an evaluation system for our own core curriculum which is in the process of being implemented. So we haven't ruled out ever taking part in this kind of an initiative, but for the time being we have other priorities and we're simply monitoring that program at the moment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I would like to encourage you to take a serious look at that program and get back into it again. I believe it has some value for this province.

On the educational vote, item number 1, down at the bottom of the page it says, "A portion of this subvote is included in the vote Executive Council in 1992-93." Madam Minister, what portion is included in Executive Council?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, just as a point of clarification, I guess, the question by the member opposite made it seem as if we have an increase that's not accounted for, where actually the budget in that area is decreased by the amount of someone — I have no idea who — whose salary was paid from Executive Council, or someone in Executive Council whose salary was paid by the Department of Education last year.

That is no longer the case. We don't have legislative secretaries. And we have a situation where people are paid by the department in which they are working so that the payment of those funds is completely transparent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, if it was in last year's circumstances that would have been covered under the '91-92 budget. This clearly says, "included in the vote Executive Council in 1992-93." This is your government's budget, not ours. So you're the one spending the money on it.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the note 2 is with an asterisk and the asterisk appears opposite the 1991-92 estimate. And since there's a reduction from '91-92 to this current budget, I can only assume that when you follow the note through that it refers to a situation that happened last year, not something that's taking place this year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if that was the case, Madam Minister, wouldn't it say 1991-92, not '92-93?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it goes on to say that, "The 1991-92 estimates . . . have been reallocated on a comparative basis . . ." So that would account for the differences: that there has been a restatement of the previous year. So it's dangerous to draw that kind of conclusion, where, in fact, personal services within the department are in the payroll of the department and Executive Council will account for theirs in their own estimates.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 27 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 5 agreed to.

**Consolidated Fund Loans, Advances and Investments
Education
Vote 141**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 141 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 5**

Items 1 to 24 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 5 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Education
Education Development Fund — Vote 64**

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

Vote 64 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Loans, Advances and Investments
Education
Vote 141**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 141 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1991
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 5**

Item 1 and 2 agreed to.

Vote 5 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Family Foundation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 31**

Items 1 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 31 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1991
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Family Foundation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 31**

Items 1 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 31 agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the people from the department that have been over here to assist us, and I'd like to express my appreciation to the members opposite for their questions and their co-operation. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and her officials for providing us with the answers that they did and their co-operation. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 11:09 p.m.