

EVENING SITTING

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 3 — University Tuition Fees

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was speaking when 5 o'clock interrupted our little conversation. I am delighted, now that we have reconvened, to stand up on behalf of Saskatchewan's university students. Basically what I'm saying is I'm delighted to stand up on behalf of our provincial future because a province that is going to succeed in the next millennium is going to be a province that has a very, very well-educated, well-rounded workforce and a well-educated citizenry. We owe that to our collective future and, if I might be so bold, to our collective retirement when the time comes — one at a time. I am so proud of the member for Regina South for moving this motion, and the reasons I enunciated earlier, but I want to recap them just briefly this evening.

It's somewhat of a hardship for a university student to go to university. It's hard on the student to put together the money and it's very difficult often for the families to help out as families in Saskatchewan will do to the best of our abilities — trust me, I know of what I speak, having had two of our children attending university. Things that cause a hardship are, of course, tuition fees, where at the University of Regina tuition fees are heading to \$2,640; room and board I estimated would be about \$3,200 for that time period; transportation about \$600; entertainment \$800; books — earlier I said 500, and everybody tells me that I'm incredibly low when I say \$500 for books — but I'll stick with the 500 just for the sake of creating this argument and knowing that my costs are low. Of course you'd need a telephone to call home to mom or dad or both, if you're so blessed, and that'd be another roughly \$400 by the time you get everything done. That adds up, Mr. Speaker, to over \$8,000.

Hardship, if I can describe it that way, for university students. While they're spending that money on their education, and their and our collective future, of course they're not working at a career job. They'd likely be working part-time at a relatively low-paying job that wouldn't come anywhere near to meeting these expenses. The reality for university students today is that they graduate with a degree, go out and get a career job, and what they're saddled with is a debt that's the equivalent of most people's mortgage payment — those of us who still have a mortgage.

University students graduate, immediately start their career employment with a mortgage payment, and no house. Then they have to rent or purchase. And of course there's transportation, and there's furnishing of whatever their accommodations are, and so on. It's just an unreasonable burden for us to expect it to ever grow. That's why tuition fees are an important part of the equation.

I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government in its last budget has done everything we humanly can. We increased the education funding for K to 12 from 542 million to 550 million — that's 8 million more.

I bring that education in only so that you can't say that the other education, the post-secondary education, got all of the gravy and the rest of the education got nothing. In post-secondary, the funding went from \$351 million last year to \$386 million this year — a \$35 million increase. Total increase for education — \$43 million, Mr. Speaker.

And with that, we're asking in this motion that the universities in Saskatchewan recognize that we have 100 per cent filled in the vacuum left by the federal government in their withdrawal of funding. We filled it in 100 per cent plus some more for capital — plus some more for capital. So we want the universities to acknowledge that and re-look at tuition fees, try and keep the tuition fees as low as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Now while the provincial government, while we were doing what I've just described in increasing our funding to universities and the education system, generally speaking, I pointed out and I point out again, the federal government, 1990-91 according to the *Estimates* book, the 1990-91 *Estimates*, you find this on page 8 of the *Estimates* book is the 1991-92, but the year I'm referring to is 1990-91. The total receipts from other governments: \$1.499 billion. That's \$1 million shy of a billion and a half dollars — that in the year 1990-91.

What's the situation when you go to the *Estimates* today? The *Estimates* for 1997-98, page 16, total transfers from the Government of Canada: \$650 million.

Mr. Speaker, this fact describes a cut in six years, a reduction in federal government transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan, of some \$849 million. Do we wonder why it's difficult to fund education? Do we wonder why our universities struggle with things like paying the salary of their people, why they struggle with tuition fees? Do we wonder why we struggle maintaining health care, social services, highways? — \$849 million cut, Mr. Speaker, and it is frustrating to put it mildly.

I am so proud of the people of Saskatchewan for the job they've done in making our economy grow, in helping things get better that . . . it's because of the million people in Saskatchewan that we are in the situation we are where we've been able to increase funding for education and post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, I think that says it all, and I will allow other members to participate. I'm most anxious to hear what other members, particularly those on the other side, have to say to this motion that we are hoping the Saskatchewan universities recognize the provincial government's decision to back-fill 100 per cent of the federal cuts to universities and to increase funding for capital costs at universities by \$6.8 million in the coming year.

And we hope therefore that the universities will cancel tuition fee increases. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the universities take a good, hard look at this, and I'm sure they will do everything they can to live certainly within the spirit. I wish them well in those deliberations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm really delighted to also take part in this debate this evening. We're discussing universities, and we're discussing education.

Personally I didn't go to university, but I have had 5 children who have been through the system for the last 10 years. And I, like the previous speaker, know the costs involved in attending university. Tuition fees and the books and the travel and room and board — you'll be very lucky if you can get away with 9 or \$10,000 a year depending on which university classes you're going to.

And then there's the additional problems that lots of students have, especially ones that don't live in the city, in Saskatoon or Regina. Travelling homes on weekends is — or whenever we can talk them into coming home is — it costs money. Telephone calls cost lots of money. I think that in rural Saskatchewan, although we have many advantages, the disadvantages when it comes to go to university, we have the cost of the whole system as being a major one.

Mr. Speaker, there was . . . just before I move on, I would ask if the government had ever considered one of the proposals that we put forward in the last election, and that was to discuss using the interest that students use on the student loans as a deduction when they do work in this province. I think that having an opportunity . . . giving our kids an opportunity to work in the province should allow them some breaks when they're working here. It wouldn't be a lot of money, but it would show some commitment to our students from this government, and I think it's something they should consider.

Mr. Speaker, for the last hour or more, we've been listening to the members opposite talking about the federal cut-backs and problems of the funding from the Liberal government has caused to our students, and basically I'm tired of hearing it. I know everybody on this side of the House is tired of hearing it. I'm sure that everybody in TV land is very tired of hearing it as well.

Mr. Speaker, we had the member opposite talking about the money that came forward from the revenues that the provincial government had. In 1992-93 the provincial revenues in the *Estimates* books was four billion four hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars. In the '97-98 *Estimates* we have five billion and seventy-three thousand. Do you know that that's \$481 million more . . . \$581 million more than when they first came into power? That includes the transfers.

Now I don't know why we have to divide everything up and decide whether we're going to categorize things, because every day in the House we hear people, this government, talk about not having targeted taxes. We throw all the money into a pot and divide it out.

You've got over \$500 million each year more to spend now than you did in '92 and '93 and you've decided not to spend it on education. You've decided to spend it on any place but rural Saskatchewan and education.

So I'm sorry, I'm not listening to this any more. And I think

people out . . . that are watching also are saying tonight we have . . . this government has decided what their priorities are and education is not one of them.

Our expenditures in '92-93 was just over \$5 billion, and this year it's about the same amount of money. We also hear about the interest that we're supposed to be . . . that we pay on our debt. In 1992 they paid 760 million and this year we're paying 765 million — that's interest. That's not a big difference.

We have more money being brought in this year than we did three years ago, four years ago, and we've only . . . and there is not a large difference in the interest. So when we talk about the money that this government has to spend, they have decided, they have chosen, where to spend their money, and I know that it's not in education.

The provincial government, when they made their choices about their expenditures, we saw cuts to agriculture. We see huge cuts to municipal government. We see cuts to highways. We see cuts to tourism except when it comes to casinos — I guess there's no cuts to that.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that we're discussing tonight states that the universities should be looking internally to help students cope with the funding . . . or the tuition increases. Well I wonder why the government doesn't accept any responsibility at all for some of these cut-backs, not only in education but in many other areas as well.

Today I talked in the House about issues regarding education in rural Saskatchewan. We talked about school closures and of course we were delighted that . . . or I'm delighted that Weekes School is still open, but we have schools and places like Anaheim and Englefeld that are scared every day and have been for the last year that their school would not remain open.

But I don't think this government understands the relationship between economic development and the need for an atmosphere that's actually going to promote growth. I think the atmosphere that this government doesn't understand is that business has to prosper in an environment that does not rely on government grants, government hand-out, and government decisions. We can make it if the government stays out of our way.

Mr. Speaker, when this province was settled just 90 years ago, the pioneers that came out here had some priorities. Most of the things they had to do for themselves. But there was some things that they knew they had to work together for and that was for hospitals, for schools, and for roads. Everything else they didn't . . . they could do themselves. And now and 92 years later, we're seeing that those three basic, essential things that started this province are things that are no longer seen as responsibility or a major responsibility of this government. We see increases to things like the Department of Economic Development. Seems very strange to me when we know and the government members keep stating that they have . . . that businesses can . . . will be creating the jobs. We don't have to have government out there trying to buy jobs or create jobs. All we have to do is allow people to have it happen.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Englefeld counted on the Minister of Economic Development to make the Minister of Education understand that in order for small business, or businesses period, to operate in Saskatchewan they had to work together. We don't have any . . . it isn't a compartmentalized thing where we have Education and we have Economic Development — it all works together. We have to see everybody work hand in hand and I don't believe that the government understands this.

We have government actually seeming to go out of their way to ignore what we . . . some of the concerns that we've brought forward. And I really wish that the members opposite would see that out in rural Saskatchewan, we are struggling to make sure that we do survive.

Mr. Speaker, I of course hope the universities find a way to decrease the tuition for the students, but I also believe that as members of the legislature, we must stand up for the students. And not only ones going to university, but the ones out in public schools and that we should . . . that I hope this government really shows a commitment to students and funds education throughout the whole province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to enter this debate tonight. I think I may end up speaking quite extensively because this issue of university funding really affects my constituency in Saskatoon very directly inasmuch as the university community is in my constituency of Sutherland.

The basic motion that we're discussing tonight has to do with a desire expressed by members of the Assembly gathered here tonight that the Saskatchewan universities in Saskatoon and Regina would recognize the provincial government's decision to back-fill 100 per cent of the federal cuts, and because the federal government . . . the provincial government is back-filling these cuts that the university system would forgo large tuition increases that have been projected for students this coming year.

I must say that I have to give a lot of credit to the administration at the University of Saskatchewan for the rigorous examination of their expenditures and their budgetary priorities that they've undertaken these last months. Many people will know that the government commissioned a MacKay report, a minister's special representative in the person of Harold MacKay, to assist in the process of renewing our university communities in Saskatchewan, given the reductions in federal funding that we've seen last year to the tune of \$47 million, and similar decreases in federal funding for post-secondary education again this year.

This has really necessitated that not only the universities but the province itself come to terms with the future of our university system, engage in some proactive planning to see how we will deal with this financial crisis.

The university community itself, led by the president of the university, Dr. George Ivany, undertook a very rigorous,

extensive review of their academic programing and expenditures. This was contained in a report called *The Programme Audit and Framework for Evaluation of Programmes*.

They, in undertaking this review, looked at their budget. They looked at where they could cut. They looked at cutting back on faculty. The university has an ageing faculty. They looked at what they could do to undertake and encourage early retirements in the academic community. They looked at where they could cut funding for support staff and for auxiliary services in the university, where they could secure cost recovery for extension programs, for example. And as a result of this, came up with a framework based on this audit, to deal with the anticipated, the announced cuts in funding for Saskatchewan universities.

And we need to say, so that the public is very clear about this, that it was the Government of Saskatchewan that announced last year decreases in funding for the universities — 3 per cent cuts announced by the province because of the \$47 million in transfer cuts from the federal government for post-secondary education, as I'd indicated earlier.

So we have a situation here where we have two levels of government cutting back: the province cutting back on the university funding because of cut-backs to the province from the federal government. What we now have mercifully for the university system is a maintenance . . . a decision by the Government of Saskatchewan to maintain university funding at \$168 million, not only for this academic year but for the next academic year as well. And this is very good news for Saskatchewan's university system — stable funding for Saskatchewan's universities from the provincial treasury.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — But I want to say to the public of Saskatchewan that this is not only stable funding for ongoing operating programs. In addition the university will receive an additional \$10 million to support efforts in revitalizing the university communities. In specific terms, this \$10 million will be used to fund capital expenditures over the next two years.

Another dimension of this funding will be used for infrastructure within the university community, in addition to capital projects, infrastructure projects, to renew technology such as the computer networks on the university campuses and to enhance the application of technology in the university communities so that learning and teaching and administration can be supported by current technology. That in itself will amount to \$4 million over the next two years.

And then another \$3 million will be allocated for what's called special initiatives that are related to projects and programs that were identified by Mr. Harold MacKay in the MacKay report, which will help also to revitalize the university community.

And so we have a situation where in spite of ongoing, successive cuts in federal funding, the province of Saskatchewan has pulled back from its decision to cut the

university grants and has decided to honour our commitment to the university to build it and sustain it. And I think there's a happy coincidence here, I dare say, Mr. Speaker, and that coincidence is that undergoing the audit that I talked about and looking at the framework of where the university community wants to go in the future as a result of the cuts that had been announced last year, I think the university community is a lot stronger in terms of — and focused — in terms of where it needs to go and where it wants to go to meet the needs of Saskatchewan young people and the economy of the province over the next number of years.

The only concern at this juncture — and this is what the resolution is all about this evening — is that in honouring the commitment to fund the University of Saskatchewan and in adding incremental funding for capital programs that the university itself is asked by this Assembly and the members who are debating this issue tonight not to raise tuition fees as they had projected in their framework and in their audit of their financial circumstances.

We're asking that the university community continue their reflection on their circumstances in light of the new dispensation that they've received from the province. In the light of the assurance over the next two years that funding will remain stable and that there will be increased funding for capital costs and for technological programs, that the universities would work diligently both in Saskatoon and in Regina to see that tuition fees on the poor students do not increase inordinately. I think this will result in a real opportunity for the — as I say — the university to clarify its own mandate, to renew its faculty, and to collaborate in applying technology to learning on both campuses here in Saskatchewan.

The federal government, as we know, has reduced funding to post-secondary education. The simple fact of the matter is that we have replaced part of that funding for 1996, and we're able to replace 100 per cent of it for 1997. And the universities say this is good news, and I say this is good news, for the university community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — And I want to commend Dr. Ivany for the work that he and the faculty and staff of the university community have done over these last months in the face of federal cuts; the work that they've done to maintain their standards of research and teaching, their commitment to academic excellence, and the role that they have focused on in terms of their relationship to the Saskatchewan economy.

Many people would not understand the vital role that the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina play in our provincial economy. In Saskatoon it's estimated that the impact of the University of Saskatchewan on the Saskatchewan economy is in excess of \$800 million annually. This is a very significant part of our provincial economy. Even more important, it's a very significant part of our future since we're dealing in large measure with our youth.

(1930)

And that's why we're asking, in this motion tonight, that the university systems recognize the provincial government's decision to 100 per cent back-fill federal cuts to the universities and also to increase capital funding for the two campuses in the coming years, and that they hold the line on tuition fees for Saskatchewan young people.

This is a cooperative sort of approach that has characterized Saskatchewan government and Saskatchewan people at their best over the years, working in partnership, working in the context of often difficult decisions that come from governments in Ottawa. And this is just another testimony to the character of Saskatchewan people to — in the face of the adversity that they have known — to hunker down, reflect on their future, seek some redirection and redefinition of the tasks at hand; and lo and behold, provincially to come up with some reasonable increases for university funding and to address the problems that are there and to start to rebuild our province and the university communities.

So I'm very pleased that there's been a change in circumstances here in Saskatchewan with response to post-secondary funding; that there's been a change in the province's relationship to our universities and I commend them for the efforts that they've made. And we look for good things to happen as financial security from the province is now established once again.

So with that, I will take my place and wish all students as they conclude their exams a lot of hard work in the next few days so that they conclude their year in a good fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased as well at this time to enter into the debate on a motion and on an issue that is very, very important to the, not only the people of Saskatchewan, not only to the opposition, but as the government members have indicated, to them as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the fact that there is an ever increasing burden on students in Saskatchewan — an ever increasing financial burden that includes more than just tuition fees. And as my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena pointed out to begin with, I think when we start to look at the overall picture of university education in Saskatchewan, we know that we have two very, very high-quality universities that exist within the province. But when we start to look at the student that enters the university program, we must remember that students from all across Saskatchewan are subject to very differing costs.

We know that people from rural Saskatchewan automatically must incur a high cost for room and board. There's transportation costs, as my colleague has pointed out. So when we talk to students, we hear, yes there's great concern about tuition fees and the fact that they are increasing. But we also hear about the other costs, the kinds of things that the students must incur on a regular, daily basis. Those are of grave concern

to us as well, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to say a little bit more about some of those fees that the universities are responsible for that students pay.

Two words that my colleagues used, Mr. Speaker, that I think are very, very important for students in the province — they were “affordable” and “accessible.” Those two words I think, are very important to students. Over the years of course, we've seen at both universities, we've seen program restrictions based on quota systems. We know that the number of students that could enter a particular college or a particular program was restricted, and the restrictions usually were met by looking at of course the grade average of an individual, looking at various other factors that came into play.

What we're very concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is that indeed the education that people need is affordable. The kind of education that we're seeing in terms of university education I think has even become more and more important with the release of some very important statistics.

One document that was released last week, Mr. Speaker, by *The Saskatchewan Training Strategy* was a graph that showed how very, very important university education is in respect to just a high school graduation or for that matter maybe not even the completion of high school. And I found it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to compare the years 1991 to the current 1995-96 year for which these statistics are available. The difference between a university graduation and some high school training in terms of the ability to secure employment was a difference of about 15 per cent. That was the kind of situation that people faced if they didn't have a university degree and they were looking for employment.

Now we take a look at that graph, Mr. Speaker, for 1995 and we see that the ability to secure employment for someone who is at the university graduation level versus someone who has some high school training is nearly 50 per cent — 50 per cent difference, the ability to secure a job. Now I think that speaks very, very highly of the university program that we have in Saskatchewan and the fact that it must continue to be affordable. It must continue to be accessible.

My colleagues have made reference to the MacKay report, Mr. Speaker, and I want to make some comments later on about some of the recommendations in the MacKay report. But one of the things that I found very interesting about that report last year was the fact that the two universities that we have in Saskatchewan are depended upon by the people of Saskatchewan; so much so that indeed there is a reason and there is need for the two university systems to continue to exist.

But one of the recommendations that Mr. MacKay pointed out very, very clearly was that the university community must be ensured that they have long-term funding commitment from this province. Now that's a statement that I think we must take to heart, Mr. Speaker, in that when the government of the day decides that funding must be increased or decreased, they are dealing with the budget of a third party, in this case the two universities.

Budget has announced some increase, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the amount of money that will be within the university's control. But I want to point out to the members opposite that there is increase for capital funding. And yes, it is not enough for capital funding because we know that there are many facilities at campus that require upgrading, require improvement, or for that matter require totally new construction.

But the thing that has been pointed out, Mr. Speaker — very much so by the people that we've talked to — is that there is no new operating money. What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that there was an announcement last year that there would be a \$5 million cut for post-secondary education institutions — the two universities — this year. Universities over the course of the last year have been looking at that scenario and have been trying to cope with that. And they have looked at various means.

We've talked to the two presidents and they have had meetings within colleges; they have had meetings within departments; and they are looking at restructuring and reorganizing, and thus becoming more efficient and being able to save some money. But the end result, Mr. Speaker, is that all this budget has done is reinstate the cut that was projected. In other words, there is no new money. All we're seeing is the return to last year's level of funding for operating.

I want to point out a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. And I note that the members opposite — I think it was the member from Regina South — who indicated that, you know, there has been a lot of downloading from the federal government to this provincial government. We do not dispute that.

We are looking at the fact that the federal government must — must — get its house in order, Mr. Speaker. Financially, Canada must get its financial house in order. And we're starting to see that. We've gone from a \$42 billion deficit, I believe, down to one that may be projected in that 16 to \$19 billion range. We see spin-off. We see economic spin-off for the province of Saskatchewan in that we have lower interest rates. And we see mortgage rates that have dropped now to a level that seemed to be more that the people can afford.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in 1994 the grants that were paid by this government to post-secondary institutions totalled \$293 million. The estimate for this year, Mr. Speaker, is 270 and that's with an increase of \$13 million. So you see, Mr. Speaker, since 1994 to today we have seen the grant to post-secondary educational institutions drop by \$23 million.

So is it little wonder that there has been an increase in tuition fees by the universities? I don't support increases to tuition fees because the university requires some special programing or some need. But this is a third party. This is a group that is responsible for a balanced budget.

I'm sure members opposite who have sat on school boards, or town councils, or city councils — have a responsibility to deliver a balanced budget — you take a look at the revenues, and you have a look at your expenditures, and in the end you are responsible for coming up with a balanced budget.

What the universities have had to deal with in the last couple of months is the fact that the knowledge about a proposed decrease in their grant was not there. In fact that decrease has become revenue neutral for operating.

Now we've had the opportunity to talk with Dr. Wells from the University of Regina, and Dr. Ivany from the University of Saskatchewan. And I noted very interestingly from Dr. Wells that he said that as far as the operation of their campus, they have a brand-new building that they've just opened — a terrific building, a great addition to the University of Regina. There is no new operating money as far as paying the costs of operating that building. There are increases to the various staffs, whether they're professional staff in terms of the professors and all the other people that instruct or whether they're members of CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees).

Those kinds of salary increases have taken place. There is no new money. And I quote Dr. Wells when he says: "We have no increase in the provincial grant but we do have higher costs."

Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the various press releases over the last month and a half, I note that Dr. Ivany from the University of Saskatchewan stated — back at the end of March when the budget was out and he had a chance to look at it — and he said that universities cannot do without some kind of tuition increase. The quotation that he used was: "We can't afford to wipe it out."

Now I think very, very, very clearly we know that universities originally — after the announcement of last year of the \$5 million cut — universities were looking at tuition fee increases of 10 per cent. And I think there was a lot of panic. Students said that was too much. How were they going to handle a 10 per cent increase when indeed other costs are rising as well? So when there has been a reduction or a change in the level of funding by this provincial government, universities are still left paying all those additional costs that I've indicated.

The University of Regina states that the total operating expenditures for this year will increase by about 4 per cent to a total of \$84.6 million. So as a result of not getting any increase in operating revenue, the fact that there are expenditures that have increased — those salaries, cost of the utility rates increases, all the little things that add up in the end — there is still a need for a 6.5 per cent increase. That is an increase that has produced for them a balanced budget. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the University of Regina president and the board of governors is very pleased that indeed this is the eighth consecutive balanced budget. And we know that there were many difficulties. There were many difficulties prior to eight years ago when the University of Regina incurred deficits and those deficits were things that to a degree weren't in their control.

(1945)

I note one of the other recommendations in the MacKay report that talks about student enrolment projections. And I understand that years ago there was a situation where the projected enrolment never materialized and all of a sudden the

plan that was in place resulted in deficit budgeting. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this fall when we see student registrations at both campuses — both University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan — that indeed that kind of situation doesn't occur again because we do not need to have a deficit financing at either of our institutions, Mr. Speaker.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to look at, of course, university tuition fees and university costs in the whole picture. And I note that back in the early part of February we had a report that was released that indicated provincial averages of tuition fees. I was quite pleased to see that Saskatchewan was in the bottom four as far as the tuition fee costs. That means that Saskatchewan students are getting a better deal than in some other provinces if we look at the cost of tuition.

One other point, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very glad that having a son who's in grade 12 and is possibly looking at a university education that indeed we have two very good, efficient, and quality universities here in Saskatchewan. Because if we are to send our children to a university outside of this province, because indeed we don't have an adequate system here in Saskatchewan, it will be a further cost to parents. And those are the kinds of things that we fear for in terms of what might happen to the students, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at the comments of the university presidents and the university board of governors and the reaction to the budget this year, the reaction to the budget last year, and of course the analysis of what the universities are doing, I want to make the point here, Mr. Speaker, that both universities have reacted the same way, in terms of the board of governors. They have said that tuition hikes are unavoidable because of rising costs. They have not received any new money. And as a result of not receiving any new money, they have looked at other things to ensure that there is a balance, that indeed a 10 or 11 per cent increase in tuition fees has been cut to 6 per cent — still high but has been cut to that amount.

We talked to Dr. Ivany, and we found out that the University of Saskatchewan is attempting something outside of the boundaries, not only outside of the boundaries of Saskatchewan and Canada, for that matter, but internationally as well. There is a move right now by the University of Saskatchewan, and it has been one that has been in progress for awhile, is that they would like to increase the number of foreign students that take education and university training in Saskatchewan.

What this does, of course, is bring in a source of revenue. We know that Saskatchewan students receive a subsidized education. We're also informed that the cost relative to what the student pays and what the total cost is, borne by the whole system, we're getting into that 30 per cent range. Thirty per cent of the actual cost is borne by the student in terms of tuition fees; the rest is picked up by the taxpayer in general. Now when we start to get university applicants from other countries who are paying the full cost, we know that that of course becomes a source of revenue.

One of the things that is also occurring at the University of Saskatchewan and I found this rather interesting in my

discussions with the dean of the College of Education, Dr. Jacknicke — the dean indicates that what will be occurring in this year and will be gradually phased in is that the number of students entering the college will be restricted. There will be a very specific quota and in fact their goal is to move to strictly post . . . not post-graduate, but after there has been some university training in one of the other colleges.

He indicates and I quote, Mr. Speaker . . . that possibly the best way to indicate what he has said is to give you this quote. It says that:

This is all in response to budgetary constraints. The funding has been inadequate over the last number of years. Now some kind of restructuring and downsizing is necessary to meet the budget crunch. By September of 1998, only the post-academic program will exist in the college.

So you see, universities have been aware that there was a projected cut, and they looked at rising costs, and they knew that of course revenues may not be stable. And as a result they've talked about what they can do differently. We see the College of Education in the University of Saskatchewan who is looking at doing something different. Will it save them some money? I think the dean is very hopeful, and what it will do of course is restructure how post-secondary education and the training of teachers occurs in this province.

One other new program that we noticed, Mr. Speaker, was from the U of R (University of Regina) and I think this is an example of the two universities getting together and seeing who can best deliver this program. We see that the petroleum engineering program might be reality for the University of Regina. Dr. Wells has indicated that after discussions with the . . . between the two vice-presidents of the two institutions, it is determined that the University of Regina would be the best place to begin an engineering — a petroleum engineering — program.

Now that's great news. That's great news for people in Saskatchewan. We have a growing petroleum industry. We have one that is expanding I think, and only the future knows how large it may become. And we can train these people right here in Saskatchewan and have quality people trained here, at I think a reasonable cost. So I take my hat off to the University of Regina for beginning a program like that.

One of the other things that we found interesting as well is the fact that Regina is noted for the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) training depot. The heart of the RCMP training program in Canada is here in Regina. Now there is a program that may be put in place between the University of Regina and the police training association, and that program may be right here in Regina that will be under the coordination of the University of Regina.

Also I think meeting the changing needs, looking at costs, looking at the fact that to train police officers we don't need to send them to Vancouver or to Toronto. We can do it here in Saskatchewan and in that way probably save some money. So another accomplishment by the University of Regina.

The area of agriculture biotechnology, Mr. Speaker, is so very important to Saskatchewan residents. And I think the kind of program that is in place at the University of Saskatchewan is one that is first-rate. We see that there are great accomplishments in the area of biotechnology and I think that the people of Canada will benefit from the advancement in the area of biotechnology. There will be changes in that field, as the university has indicated. Some of the programs that have been in place in the area of agriculture training and vocation agriculture training, those are constantly changing. They're keeping up with the times, Mr. Speaker.

And at the same time of course, they're incurring additional costs. And those costs must be paid by various sources, either through government grant or through tuition fees that the students will pay or through some other partnership method, Mr. Speaker. So the university funding is not a very simple kind of thing. It's not just a grant situation that says here's the grant and you administer it. I think the universities do a good job in terms of evaluating what they must provide and try to do the most economical job that they can do.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that is very relevant, that is very relevant today is the MacKay report, as it's referred to in the university realm. The report that was released last fall, Mr. Speaker, I think very clearly indicated that, firstly, there are two very good quality universities in Saskatchewan — there's a need for both of them; and the other thing that was very clear, Mr. Speaker, is that the two universities must be autonomous.

And I know that in speaking with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education last night during estimates, he reiterated that position, said that yes, there is a role for government to play in terms of ensuring that somewhere down the road that maybe there is a need for government intervention.

But he wasn't thinking that way, and he was saying, that's a last resort. We know the universities are very capable. We know the institution is very capable and the board of governors that direct them.

So the kind of situation that we're looking at, Mr. Speaker, is in this motion that we have before us tonight is indeed a bit of a contradiction. What we're saying to the universities on the one hand is, we appreciate the fact that you are autonomous, that you are planning, that you are planning a good educational program in terms of delivering quality university training and education. But on the other hand, if you'd make a decision that is contrary that the government will try to interfere.

And I don't think that that is something that the universities appreciate, and I know that when we have the ability for the universities to set tuition rates, they must spend countless hours trying to determine what is the best for their students. We know that the enrolment, the enrolment numbers, may vary by the fact that tuitions will be up. And I'm sure that they've taken that into consideration as well.

So when I see the editorials, Mr. Speaker, that have been in the papers in the last couple of weeks . . . and I note the editorial

from April 1 of the *Leader-Post* and the reaction there in the editorial, Mr. Speaker, it says that:

Any other attempts to get the universities to reverse the increases would be stepping onto dangerous ground in terms of university autonomy.

That's the reaction of someone who has written that editorial saying, it's fine for the Minister of Finance to say last year I told you that you were going to get a 3 per cent or a \$5 million cut.

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, that \$5 million cut, because the two universities share in that \$5 million, that's distributed not on an equal basis. And I want to make that point for those who would be interested, that indeed over \$3 million of that money would have been cut from the University of Saskatchewan, and I believe it's about 1.4, 1.5 million from the University of Regina.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, when we start to look at what the MacKay report has said as well, he's indicated in his report that there is no way that we can get around an increase in tuition fees because rising tuition is consistent with nationwide trends. So I think in terms of what Saskatchewan tuition rates have done, in terms of where we're moving for the future, I don't think that we have out-of-the-ordinary increases.

As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, we were in the bottom four, and I know that other universities across Canada are facing increased costs as well, and I'm sure some of their tuition fees will be going up as well.

One of the other things that was highlighted in the MacKay report — and I had the Minister of Post-Secondary Education also make reference to that last night — is the re-evaluation of block funding. And in fact there is going to be a government commission, study, that's going to take a look at block funding, take a look at how grants are provided to universities. Whether or not we have an even system of distribution based on colleges, based on the costs of providing that education — those are the kinds of things that must be considered.

Mr. Speaker, of course the most important concern that we have is not whether or not the university professors are going to have an increase in terms of salary or whether or not the building is going to have, you know, new windows in it. The most important thing is the concern that the students of the province have raised.

Tuition fee increases are a concern to us. There's no question. But we must look at it and see that whether or not the cost of a university education becomes so expensive that it is no longer affordable and accessible to the people of Saskatchewan.

(2000)

Students have been . . . I've met with a number of students, and they have been telling me that they would like to have the re-examination of the student fees.

Mr. Speaker, I found it very interesting that the University of Regina has released its budget; as I indicated before a very . . . a balanced budget; eighth consecutive balanced budget. And they've indicated increase in several fees areas. And I think this is of great concern to me as well. When I look at the tuition fee increase of 6 per cent, and then I see that we have for instance — and I'll name a few of the fee increases — application fees, the fee will increase from 35 to \$50. That's slightly higher than 6.5 per cent. The service fees for a full-time student will go from \$30 per semester to \$40 per semester. The recreation and athletic fees will also increase from 25 to \$35.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what I've heard from many students in my area is that tuition fees are a known thing. They're not a surprise when you get there because that fee has been set. What does become an overburden for many students, Mr. Speaker, are these fees. These additional fees that students find out as they enter the university picture and all of a sudden there's a fee for recreation use, there's a fee for the service use, and those kinds of things begin to be a bit of a problem.

The other concern that students have raised, Mr. Speaker, is around the actual cost of materials and books at the university. And I think it is here that the university does have some control. The board of governors and the president probably do have some control here.

I think all of us have heard about someone who has been forced to buy a brand-new \$150 text for a particular class at university, and it is used for one semester, and then the professor decides that that class or that particular text is no longer relevant and says we're going to be moving to another text also worth another \$150.

I've heard that from so many students, Mr. Speaker, that said the investment in terms of costs and materials . . . and I know . . . I believe it was the member from Coronation Park was indicating that materials and books are in that \$500 neighbourhood. That is very low, Mr. Speaker, because those costs are rising. They are rising very dramatically. And students are finding those costs to be a very, very serious burden.

Post-secondary education is so essential to developing Saskatchewan's future, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the kinds of . . . the ability to secure a job if one has a post-secondary degree, a university degree, we have to ensure that the price of getting that education does not deter people from seeking out the training.

Mr. Speaker, with rising costs of education, it is very important of course that students have adequate access to financial support programs — student loans, Mr. Speaker. I think what's been bothersome to many, many students, Mr. Speaker, is that because they're in a four- or a five-year program and when you start to look at the cost of a year of university being anywhere from 8 to \$10,000, students are coming out of a university training program after four or five years with 40 and \$50,000 student loans. And the problem, Mr. Speaker, is that as my colleagues have pointed out — and I know that the members of the government have also this as a great concern — is whether or not there is a job available, whether or not there is a job

available at the end of such a training.

We've had some changes to the different programs, Mr. Speaker. But those kinds of things that have occurred in the area of student loans by the federal government in terms of providing an additional repayment plan, in terms of extending the time that students have to repay, have been met very, very favourably by students. Students have comments by saying that it has been difficult to secure a job, and as a result, with these changes, they are very, very pleased.

Mr. Speaker, while there is so much to say about the post-secondary education and the university training in this province, I want to say to the member opposite that a third party, a university board of governors, has taken a good look at whether or not they want to see tuition fee increases. Those increases are dictated by a number of reasons. As I've indicated to the members, there have been no changes to the actual operating revenue to the university, neither the University of Regina nor the University of Saskatchewan. There are very few other changes that the universities can do. They have made significant changes in terms of costs, in terms of reducing some expenditures that they have control of.

But as I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, there are many things that they do not control. They do not control the costs of operating buildings. They do not control those hidden things that they have no control over. So as a result they have reduced possible 10 or 11 per cent increases in tuitions to 6.3 or 6.5 depending upon which university. Are we, as an opposition, in favour of tuition fee increases as an example? No, we're not. But when we have an autonomous body deal with that kind of a situation and propose those changes, I'm sure that they have not done so lightly.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

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