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Education Funding

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fallout of the province's budget has trickled out across the province. And we know now that, even after the expensive billboard ads and the radio ads, that Sask Party government is not convincing boards across this province that their choices don't have an impact.

In The Battlefords, the Living Sky School Division, the school board has been forced to dip into its reserves to fund day-to-day operations. And they were built up for emergencies, not day-to-day operations. Mr. Speaker, why has the Sask Party government left school boards no options but to dip into their reserves to fund education?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Marchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, our record on education funding is quite solid. This was not a status quo budget, Mr. Speaker, it was a 2.3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. And that increase took into account considerable monies for current enrolment. We made that promise, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite obviously are having a great deal of trouble with growth. They had trouble with growth for 16 years. In fact, there was no growth, Mr. Speaker. And our government is prepared to deal with the issues of growth. We promised current enrolment funding, Mr. Speaker; we gave that. We promised enrolment funding at the mid-year, Mr. Speaker; we fulfilled that promise, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we promised to address some of the infrastructure needs, Mr. Speaker. And to that degree this budget allows for the funding of up to 40 relocatables, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Next question.

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In The Battlefords paper, the school board Chair, Ken Arsenault, said, and I quote, "We have to speak to the minister. We have to let our

displeasure be known, but there's a reality here of our staff and our students that we have to support." And board member Kowalchuk said of the plan to transition the school divisions to new funding formula, "So all this time we've been hearing about this transition, but obviously we cannot believe what they tell us, because it's not there."

Mr. Speaker, the local school board, just like others across the province, are bearing the brunt of the government's lack of attention to real front-line education. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why does the Sask Party have millions, \$5.9 million for standardized testing instead of real front-line education?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Marchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I might attribute that to a bit of a rookie mistake. I haven't experienced that process before, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'll make it up in the middle of my answer, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, again our record speaks for itself. In fact there was transition funding expressed, explained in the budget, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that funding is in place for us to continue the good work that's going on in our school divisions, Mr. Speaker. A 2.3 per cent increase in funding is not a status quo budget, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.