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Reiter steals spotlight

While

Premier Brad Wall always knocks them dead at Saskatchewan Party conventions, the surprise hit Saturday was rookie Rosetown-Elrose MLA Jim Reiter.

Reiter had delegates rolling in the aisles as he described a conversation with a Regina cab driver shortly after the federal election was called in September. The cabbie, little suspecting what his passenger did for a living, said MPs had to be pretty well-educated and smart, "not like those MLAs."

Reiter's burst of laughter at the remark got the cabbie rolling on the topic, he said.

The MLA eventually tried to wheedle a good word for the Sask. Party members who had been first elected in the 2007 election. The response from the driver: "Maybe some of them aren't stupid. But most of them can't walk and chew gum at the same time," Reiter relayed to a highly appreciative crowd.

At the end of the trip, Reiter said, he let on that he was in fact an MLA to the mortified cab driver, who had one final comment.

"Well, you heard me, I said they weren't all stupid."



Reiter ended his address by assuring delegates they never had to worry about the Sask. Party government becoming "arrogant." His final word? That "if he so chooses," Wall will still be premier "three years from now, seven years from now, 11 years, 15 years from now."

That is apparently what Reiter referred to as "confident, not cocky."



The Saskatchewan Party may have been founded by Liberal and Progressive Conservative MLAs but you wouldn't mistake the convention for a hotbed of Grits.

When convention co-chair Joceline Schreimer told delegates Saturday morning she was going to quote former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, a low, unhappy-sounding murmur and a few nervous chuckles swept through the room. No worries though. The Trudeau quote? " 'I just think you westerners should take over this country if you are so smart,' " said Schreimer to laughter and applause.

"Yes, Mr. Trudeau, I think we are," added the Saskatoon Sutherland MLA.



Wall's speech naturally contained more than a few pokes at the Opposition NDP.

But his favourite punching bag in particular lately seems to be loquacious New Democrat Kevin Yates.

Wall told the crowd he's always looking for ways to get the message out about how well the province is doing.

"I'm thinking about putting together a couple of pages of bullets about what's great about Saskatchewan, stamping on it 'confidential.' I'm going to go over and see the NDP MLA for Regina Dewdney, Kevin Yates, a pretty good guy and he likes to share stuff. I'm going to give him this and tell him, 'Kevin, don't tell anybody and especially don't tell the media.' "

The Sask. Party has continued to reap great enjoyment from a recent column by The StarPhoenix's Randy Burton in which Yates not only laid out the preconditions for Dwain Lingenfelter's NDP leadership bid but also acknowledged he and other cabinet ministers had been pushing for Lingenfelter to replace Lorne Calvert in 2006 when Calvert was still premier.



Pamela Wallin, the former broadcast journalist and Canadian consul general in New York turned corporate director, spoke at the Sask. Party's Saturday evening dinner about the perception of the province in the United States and the prospects.

The native of Wadena, who describes herself as "Saskatchewan's unofficial ambassador," came at the invitation of Wall, whom she has worked with in New York.

But does she have any political ambitions of her own, such as a Saskatchewan Senate seat?

"I have I guess covered and watched politics up close and personal for too long," she said with a laugh to reporters earlier in the day Saturday.

"You just know how hard we are, and I mean journalists, on politicians. And so it's a tough row to hoe."

However, Wallin, who lives in Toronto and New York, also said "you want to keep your options open."

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