

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 23, 1982

The Assembly met at 7 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. SOLOMON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave of the Assembly I'd like to introduce some guests if I may . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There don't seem to be many opposition members in this evening! Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, some guests from my constituency who are here this evening in the west gallery. I refer, of course, to 13 seven-year-olds, called Beavers. They are associated with Pack Number 76, Faith Lutheran Church Beavers. They are accompanied by three chaperones, Vern Unruh, Terry Fox and Lorne Cunningham. I'd like to also introduce in the pack one young individual who is related to one of our members. His name is Scott Cowley, the son of the member for Biggar. I hope that you fellows enjoy the proceedings this evening and I ask all members to join with me in welcoming you to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATE

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) continued

HON. MR. LONG: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this evening to rise to take part in the budget debate. Unfortunately, the opposition benches at this time at least are empty, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure they will be along . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I mean, at this time, they're physically empty, Mr. Speaker.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to compliment the Minister of Finance on the fine budget he brought down the other day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LONG: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy has been growing at a rate above the national level. A good safe highway transportation system is essential to support the economic and social development occurring in this province.

The \$215 million allocated to the Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation will allow the department to continue upgrading highways. There are many challenges for transportation engineers resulting in the demand for good highway services to complement development in the North, activities occurring in the oil, potash and forest industries, the need to upgrade rural and secondary highways to meet the demands of the agricultural industry, and increasing demands for roadway improvements in urban centers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan transportation engineers and technicians, and support staff have provided our province with a highway system that is among the best in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LONG: — This has been achieved at a reasonable cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers. In 1981 the department improved approximately 1,200 kilometres of highway. Much of this work was done by the private road-building industry in Saskatchewan. They are to be complimented for their work in spite of inflation, high interest rates, and increased costs for fuel, equipment and materials.

Private road builders continue, Mr. Speaker, to provide good quality work at a reasonable cost. In the 1981-82 fiscal year, payments to contractors will be approximately \$50 million. Good construction progress was made throughout the province in 1981. The department has tendered many contracts this winter. Another busy year of highway upgrading work is anticipated in 1982. Last fall at the Saskatchewan road builders' convention I presented a progress payment to a contractor that brought the total public investment in Saskatchewan highways to over \$2 billion. Half of this investment, Mr. Speaker, has occurred in the last six years. At today's prices, it would cost taxpayers over \$3 billion to replace the entire 21,000 kilometre highway system to existing standards.

Mr. Speaker, the staggering costs that all taxpayers would have to bear if our 21,000 kilometre highway system had to be replaced supports the many arguments against the Pepin plan to abolish the statutory rate. Abolition of the crow would bring about overnight financial hardship to all of Saskatchewan.

The Pepin plan is not only unfair, but total unacceptable to the province of Saskatchewan. Except for cost sharing in the 1950s to build the original single-lane Trans-Canada highway and cost sharing in the 1970s to put an extra layer of pavement on certain interprovincial highways to support heavier truck traffic, Saskatchewan taxpayers have paid the entire cost of the southern provincial highway system. And it is a good quality system. Over 85 per cent of the provincial highway system contains a good quality oil treatment or a paved surface. Almost all of the gravelled surface roads in our provincial highway system are located in northern Saskatchewan. And even there, good progress to upgrade gravelled highways to higher oil treatment and paved standards is being made.

The crowrate debate is perhaps the most serious challenge we have ever faced. The federal government's subsidization of air travel and energy supplies for eastern consumers, compared to a user-pay concept for shipping western grain for export, is totally unacceptable. The federal government has refused to examine and adopt a meaningful national transportation policy that would include cost sharing for highways. Highway and transportation ministers from every province in Canada have supported the adoption of a national transportation policy to support the efficient and safe movement of people across this great country of ours. What we have received is an ad hoc approach to transportation which supports the huge annual subsidies for air travel for a minority of Canadians, while the majority who use highways for both business and pleasure are penalized. Railway abandonment in the past few years has shifted considerable burden from the railways to provincial taxpayers. Abolishing the crow would create a much greater burden on provincial taxpayers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LONG: — Mr. Speaker, at today's cost to build highways, it makes absolutely no sense to put in effect a policy that would provide a centralized rail system designed

by the railway companies in the interest of profits. The department's 1982-83 capital budget will be almost \$128 million. The capital budget includes approximately \$14 million from the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund and the balance from the consolidated fund.

Mr. Speaker, capital projects will include expenditure levels of approximately \$85 million for the southern provincial highway system; \$16 million for the northern provincial highways; \$9 million to improve urban access roadways, main streets in rural communities, upgrade roadways in provincial parks and undertake other roadway improvements. Another \$18 million will be allocated to assist urban governments to upgrade and expand the roadways, and \$300,000 will be allocated in the province for airport assistance.

Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation has an enviable record of accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, and the 1982-83 budget allocation will allow the department to continue the important work of providing for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across Saskatchewan. The department's capital budget has a significant impact on the provincial economy by generating employment and the purchasing of supplies, materials and equipment.

The demand for better highways in Saskatchewan will continue to increase. In 1950 there was one vehicle for every four people. In 1981 there were four vehicles for every five people. This trend of increased vehicle ownership is expected to continue. Similarly, motorists travelled approximately 2.1 billion vehicle kilometres in 1960, and in 1981 total travel was over 5.2 billion vehicle kilometres. This trend is also expected to continue as smaller and more fuel-efficient cars offset the increased cost of petroleum products.

These factors clearly demonstrate the importance of the work carried out by the department to meet the ever-increasing transportation needs of a province with an expanding economy. The department's project array, which I will table later, includes over 2,000 kilometres of grading, paving and oil treatment work. However, there will be a carry-over in 1983 because not all of the approved projects can be completed within a year. The number and extent of completions depend on factors such as weather, the nature of the work, and contractor progress.

The department will continue the thrust to upgrade secondary highways in our province. In the last five years the department has upgraded approximately 2,900 kilometres of rural secondary highway, and this trend will be continued in the future.

In the last three years, nearly \$7 million has been invested to upgrade Highway 13. This work included extending the highway west of Govenlock to the Alberta border, providing the only continuous Manitoba-to-Alberta highway link south of the Trans-Canada Highway. This year the department will oil-treat the new highway link.

The department has completed grading and paving work at Weyburn, Assiniboia, Limerick, Kincaid, Shaunavon and Eastend, and this year grading work is being planned near Redvers, Ogema and Hazenmore, and paving work is planned near Pangman and Meyronne.

On Highway 2, major upgrading work will be continued between Assiniboia and Rockglen. The work will be continued on Highway 37 between Shaunavon and Climax. Highway 40 between North Battleford and the Alberta border will be completed this

year.

It will be another busy construction year in Saskatchewan. Throughout the province, highway improvements will be under way on Highways 3 and 26 near St. Walburg, Highway 8 at Pelly, Highway 12 at Blaine Lake, Highway 15 at Melville and Leross, Highway 35 near Tribune and Colgate and north of Weyburn, Highway 312 at Wakaw, and many other locations.

Nearly \$2 million, Mr. Speaker, will be budgeted in 1982 to continue work under Operation Open Roads 2 and Operation Main Street 2. Under Operation Open Roads 2, access roads are being oil-treated in communities with populations of 50 to 100 people. This work will be done, Mr. Speaker, at 100 per cent of department cost. These communities are also eligible to participate in Operation Main Street 2, in which many main streets are oiled, treated on a shareable basis. It is a generous shareable program, Mr. Speaker, with the department paying 70 per cent of the capital cost and 50 per cent of future maintenance costs.

In 1981, the department oiled and treated 12 community access roads and oil-treated the main streets of nine communities. This work will be continued in 1982. Approximately 116 kilometres of access roadway to 19 communities is scheduled for oil-treating. The main streets on 15 of these communities will also be oil-treated at the same time.

Four-laning of the Trans-Canada Highway west of Swift Current will be continued. The section from the junction of Highway 32 west of Webb is planned for completion in 1983. Four-laning work in the eight kilometre section of the Yellowhead highway west of North Battleford is expected to be completed by mid-summer.

Three years ago the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta agreed to cost share two important transportation projects. These were the construction of a new airport at Lloydminster, and the construction of a new bridge to span the North Saskatchewan River on Highway 17, north of Lloydminster . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, that's the one you promised. That's right. We delivered. You delivered.

Last fall the airport was officially opened, marking the completion of the first half of the agreement. Earth work for the bridge abutments is expected to commence this spring. Because of the unstable foundation conditions common in the Saskatchewan River Valley, it is necessary to construct the earth embankments at least one year prior to construction of the bridge in order to ensure all settlement has taken place. Barring unforeseen circumstances and complications, Mr. Speaker, the bridge is expected to be open for public use by the fall of 1984.

In the last three years major funding has been provided through the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund to provide highways in the North. This funding will be continued this year, with almost \$14 million being provided from the heritage fund. Projects will be scheduled on Highway 155, 106 and 105.

In 1974, the department started improving Highway 155 from Green Lake to La Loche, a distance of 300 kilometres. We have now regraded 260 kilometres and oil-treated over 200 kilometres of this important northern resource highway. This year the department will be working on Highway 155, south of La Loche.

The department has been making steady progress to upgrade the Hansen Lake road,

Highway 106, from Smeaton to Creighton, a distance of 360 kilometres. This entire roadway required rebuilding. Work has been accelerated in the last three years, with more than 230 kilometres of grading work and nearly 170 kilometres of oil-treatment being completed. This year, oil-treatment and grading will be continued.

As work nears completion on these major northern routes, Highway 155 and Highway 106, attention will be given to the upgrading of other important northern highways.

Mr. Speaker, there are many projects in cities that are cost shared by the department. These are projects such as the Lewvan Expressway in Regina, where the department has paid half the cost for work already completed. The department will pay the total cost of the initial construction on the section between Regina Avenue and the Trans-Canada Highway. In Saskatoon, the department is cost sharing the \$36 million Circle Drive and 42nd Street Bridge project. Department funding is making it possible for the city of Saskatoon to complete this major transportation route through the city.

Major projects, such as Circle Drive in Saskatoon and the Lewvan Expressway in Regina, gain the most prominent attention, but there are many other important projects that are cost-shared in every city in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the department's 1982-83 maintenance budget is nearly \$68 million. The maintenance program includes many diverse activities. In recent years, the department has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance activities. Cost increases, particularly for asphalt, resulted in the re-examination of maintenance standards.

Department staff has experimented with using alternative materials to prepare highways. Such activities are vital in order to provide a good level of service. Maintenance staffs are to be commended, Mr. Speaker, for the good level of service that they have provided on the provincial highway system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LONG: — Timely and effective maintenance is critical to preserve the public investment of the 21,000 kilometre system.

Mr. Speaker, another important program assisting residents in rural areas is the department's rural transportation assistance program. This program will be expanded in 1982 and it is expected that six new routes will be added this year. This program, started in late 1978, is responsible for the establishment of local organized and operated passenger and express transportation services. It provides people with a public transportation connection to locations where they can interline with regular public transportation services. There are now six services operating, Mr. Speaker, under the program, and they are as follows: Beechy to Outlook-Central Butte, Elbow to Outlook, Archibald to Wadena, Wishart to Wynyard-Radville, Ceylon to Weyburn and Paradise Hill-St. Walburg to Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, since the first service started nearly four years ago, approximately 10,000 passengers and 2,500 express shipments have been handled. These services continue to be monitored by the department and assistance will be provided wherever necessary.

Energy conservation, Mr. Speaker, is a major challenge facing everyone and we will have to examine methods to encourage fuel conservation on the part of the travelling public, to develop new technology association with the construction and maintenance of highways and encourage greater use of intermodal transport.

The department is concerned about energy conservation and has undertaken several initiatives, such as purchasing diesel-powered trucks rather than gasoline units where replacements are required, purchasing a number of light trucks using propane fuel rather than gasoline, using recycled hydraulic oil and supplementing diesel fuel by adding up to 10 per cent used lubricating oil.

Tests are being carried out to try heating asphalt with solar heat rather than electricity. Our mobile communications system has been upgraded in the department to reduce travel costs. We will be improving equipment and preventive maintenance practices wherever possible, Mr. Speaker. We will be continually monitoring the state of the industry for new energy-saving technology.

These new innovations, Mr. Speaker, compliment existing energy conservation measures already undertaken by the department. In the past, this work has included activities such as recycling existing asphalt surfaces and using ground rubber tire material as a substitute for asphalt. Energy conservation is an issue of particular importance to everyone. There is an urgent need to create a greater awareness at all levels of society about the difference between a society of abundance and a society of scarcity.

Mr. Speaker, increased gross vehicle weights will also contribute to energy saving. On March 1, 1982, Saskatchewan adopted the recommendations put forward by the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. These regulations were not adopted earlier because the province wanted to assure that there were no major safety or public concerns to be addressed prior to implementation of the regulations. The issue was revealed by the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on Transportation to provide guidance for a system that would best fit the needs of Saskatchewan. The new regulations will provide direct benefits by lowering transportation costs, conserving energy, contributing to uniformity with Alberta and Manitoba and benefiting rural communities not located on the primary highway system, and will not adversely affect the safety of the travelling public.

Studies indicate that potential savings of \$12 million annually in shipping costs will be arrived at. These savings will benefit all citizens in Saskatchewan. Another benefit will be an annual saving of approximately 12 million litres or 2.6 million gallons of motor fuel.

Mr. Speaker, traffic safety will continue to be a major challenge in Saskatchewan. Transportation engineers have made significant contributions to improve traffic safety in the province. The results are encouraging. Traffic deaths in Saskatchewan during 1981 were 262, as compared with 265 in 1980. As well, in 1981, approximately 8,600 people were injured, as compared with 9,000 in 1980. This is the sixth consecutive year that injuries from traffic accidents have decreased. There have been only 1,200 fewer injuries and 270 fewer deaths since Saskatchewan began traffic safety action programs.

Traffic deaths and injuries and property damage continue to be a concern. The challenge is to develop more effective action and to further improve the traffic safety

record on our highways and in our urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, last year I said that safety improvement must begin at the grass roots. This is just as important today as it was one year ago — improving traffic safety. It is not one person's or agency's job; it is everyone's responsibility. Grass roots participation can be effective. The department will continue to encourage local participation as well as providing leadership in other areas to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries from traffic accidents.

For example, some of the actions planned by the department in 1982 include:

1. Co-sponsoring with the Saskatchewan Safety Council five urban traffic safety workshops;
2. Participating in the public safety fairs;
3. Continuing cost-shared funding to assist urban centres to undertake safety improvements;
4. Encouraging the establishment of community traffic safety committees;
5. Continuing to build more safety into highways (this is work which has resulted in a 40 per cent decrease in the fatality and injury rate during the last six years);
6. Promoting the department's seat belt survivors' club, which now includes over 1,600 members who have personally testified that safety belts were responsible for saving their lives or reducing the extent of their injuries (this is an important part of the Department of Highways work);
7. Continuing to process and analyse traffic safety accidents through our unique traffic accident information system, which will also make an important contribution to safety in Saskatchewan.

Computerized traffic information data has been processed and analysed, providing timely information to cities, communities and other users so actions can be undertaken to reduce traffic accident losses. It is an important function that is helping to provide effective accident countermeasures.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a leader in traffic safety and this will be continued. We will provide traffic safety expertise to help urban centres take positive action and we will continue promotion to encourage greater use of safety belts. Safety belts remain the most effective method of reducing death and injury from traffic accidents. Mr. Speaker, about one-half of the 262 people killed in traffic accidents in Saskatchewan in 1981 would be alive today if they had been wearing seat belts. That fact alone is sufficient to continue, even more vigorously, the efforts to improve traffic safety in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan citizens have a huge investment in the provincial highway system, an investment which must be protected if it is to adequately serve a rapidly expanding economy. The 1982-83 budget allocated to the Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation will allow the department to continue improving highways throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at this time, to provide the Legislature with a copy of our

1982-83 project array.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LONG: — Mr. Speaker, I will be whole-heartedly supporting the budget presented to this House by the Hon. Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. HAMMERSMITH: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take part in this budget debate. Mr. Speaker, like other members of this House I grew up in the era when Saskatchewan was one of the have-not provinces of Canada. I remember the embarrassment occasionally felt in social studies classes when the provinces were ranked in order of their economic importance. The Saskatchewan of those days was indeed the 98-pound weakling. It was only our reputation as an agricultural producer that was a defence against the taunts and gibes of the more wealthy cousins in confederation.

Today, I must say that I take particular relish in our province's emergence as one of the have provinces in this union. That is not to say that I have not always been proud to call Saskatchewan home. But after many years of tongue-wagging from central Canadians, gloating over their relative importance to our country, it gives me a great sense of pride to see how strong we have become. It is a pride I am sure I share with all residents of Saskatchewan, and even with those members opposite, who must surely concede that the province has come a long way in a very short period of time. It is a pride born 77 years ago, molded by a determination and fortitude that turned the first furrows, honed by the desperate years of the depression, strengthened by the harshness of our climate, and polished by a resoluteness to work together to achieve the common good. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday was another proud day for Saskatchewan. At a time when residents of Canada are still reeling from the effects of ill-conceived federal budgets, cutbacks, and broken promises, and residents of other jurisdictions are faced with similar difficulties, your government has brought forward a budget of renewed commitment for the people of Saskatchewan.

It is not a budget which looks for scapegoats, Mr. Speaker, nor does it look to the poor, the elderly or others on fixed incomes to make sacrifices which they can ill-afford. It is a budget which would only have been possible through the sound fiscal management which has been practised by this government since 1971.

It could be called a proof-of-the-pudding budget. When other jurisdictions are faced with home-owners losing their homes, your government is able to provide relief in the form of grants to severely threatened mortgagees. When other Canadians are seeing their take-home pay stretched thinner and thinner, your government is able to eliminate the sale tax on children's clothing. When the backbone of our province, the senior citizens, are being squeezed tighter and tighter, your government introduces shelter allowances, expanded property improvement grants, and a continuation of programs which will assist the elderly to continue to live a life of dignity and independence. When the birdman of Ottawa is attempting to add the crow to the list of endangered species by further penalizing the prairie provinces, your government is able to offer farm assistance through the rural gas program.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, has those members opposite in quite a dither. They're truly between a rock and a hard place. They can hardly admit publicly their admiration for the effective and efficient manner in which this government is responding to the downturn of the economy. Yet, on the other hand, they know that to oppose the budget would be opposing help for Saskatchewan where it is needed most.

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the caterwauling of members opposite I cannot help but think of the definition of a fanatic given by the late American poet and philosopher, George Santayana. He said a fanatic is one who redoubles his efforts when he loses sight of his objectives. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have lost sight of the objective, which is to provide responsible and responsive government to the people of Saskatchewan. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what this government has provided and is continuing to provide. I must commend my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance, for the foresight and compassion which has been blended into the document we are discussing today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. HAMMERSMITH: — The fact that Saskatchewan is no longer a have-not province, and the fact that your government is able to respond in so able and just a fashion is attributable to the prudent forethought and fiscal responsibility which have been practised in this province for more than a decade.

This budget was welcomed in my own constituency of Prince Albert-Duck Lake, Mr. Speaker. I travelled there after last Thursday's proceedings, and the people I talked to spoke of it enthusiastically. And there's good reason for that. You have only to walk around Prince Albert to know that it has shared in the prosperity of Saskatchewan over these last 11 years. The signs are everywhere: a huge shopping mall which is among the finest in the province, a new police station, new motels and restaurants, the sod has been turned for a new city hall. And the Prince Albert Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences, which is scheduled to be ready for classes in 1985, will provide further economic benefits to our northern-most city.

But it is the area north of my constituency to which I wish to address the bulk of my remarks this evening, Mr. Speaker. But as Prince Albert is the gateway to the North, much of what I have to say will be of indirect bearing there as well. Nowhere in this province is the commitment of this government more in evidence than in northern Saskatchewan. And this year, 1982, marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. In those scant 10 years, Mr. Speaker, the change in northern Saskatchewan has been nothing short of phenomenal. I could scarcely begin to enumerate the positive developments which have occurred in that period - the school and housing construction, the installation of sewer and water, telephones, television, electricity, the new roads, the improved health care, the tremendous growth in local control and autonomy. And so, rather than pointing to past accomplishments, I will direct my address to the future of the North and what this budget will mean for northern Saskatchewan.

One of the most important things this budget will mean is the creation of at least 1,200 training opportunities, and I dare say that is a modest estimate. These opportunities will be employment specific. By that I mean they will be geared toward jobs which exist in the North right now, or will exist by the time the first trainees are ready to tackle them.

For instance, the new chemical technology laboratory at La Ronge will open this year to begin training the first northern geophysical and chemical technicians. Our apprenticeship program will be expanded to include plumbing and pipefitting - skills which are much needed in the North. Other programs will provide training for teachers, truck drivers, resource officers, social workers, diamond drillers, and many others.

An important feature of this budget is the announcement of a training facility to be constructed in La Ronge. There is a need for specially designed facilities to serve as staging centres for the delivery of credit vocational programs in affiliation with the province's technical institutes. But before the first shovelful of earth is turned, we are going to the people of northern Saskatchewan, to the local councils, the representatives of native organizations, the schools, and the community colleges. We will be discussing with them the shape of this facility, the kinds of courses it will deliver, and the mechanism for delivery. We expect that construction of this vital facility will get under way next year. But, in the meantime we do not intend to relax our provision of training in other areas across the North.

Mr. Speaker, your government will be studying the possibility of a community college to serve the far northern reaches of our province — the Athabasca region. Should this prove feasible, it will be the fourth community college in the North. We will also be studying the feasibility of a third training facility on the east side of the North, and northern schools will have increased financing to assist them in ensuring that young people of northern Saskatchewan are better equipped to cope with the fast pace of development which is happening around them.

Grants to the four independent school boards will total \$17.8 million for the 1982-83 fiscal year, and an additional \$6.5 million will be expended on the construction of educational facilities. These projects include participation in the building of new schools at Southend Reindeer, Wollaston Post and Pelican Narrows. It will also include an addition to the high school in La Ronge and completion of additions to schools in Beauval and Pinehouse Lake.

Another area of significant progress, Mr. Speaker, is in northern economic development. This year will mark the beginning of the third major phase in your government's ongoing program to assist northern people to enter the economic mainstream of Saskatchewan. The initial phase began in 1974 with the creation of the northern economic development fund. Prior to that time there were few businesses owned or operated by Northerners. Almost every facet of northern economic life was governed either by outsiders or by non-northern entrepreneurs. The economic development fund, Mr. Speaker, coupled with management support from the Department of Northern Saskatchewan, allowed hundreds of northern people to start their own businesses. These efforts range from the little corner stores to trucking and contracting firms.

Your government's next step, Mr. Speaker, was to ensure that the people of northern Saskatchewan would receive maximum benefit from resource development. To ensure these benefits, this government pioneered the concept of surface lease agreements which tied approval of development projects to guarantees of employment and special consideration for the people of the North. Now, this year, the creation of the northern economic development corporation (NEDCO) will place Northerners in the forefront of development of economic opportunities. With its headquarters in La Ronge, NEDCO's mandate will be to support northern business development and to cultivate new job-creating opportunities. It will be supported by a \$3.5 million loan and investment fund.

One of the areas which this new development corporation and the department will focus on is the renewable resources of the North, particularly the forests. The utilization of northern hardwoods will be scrutinized intensively this year. Mr. Speaker, the introduction of The Northern Municipalities Act later this year will also usher in another exciting chapter in the growth of local government. When the Department of Northern Saskatchewan was created in 1972, your government pledged to facilitate northern control of northern affairs, and that promise was not idle talk. The ascent of local government and of local control in the North is unparalleled in the history of Saskatchewan. As an example, Mr. Speaker, at last count there were 227 northern residents serving on municipal councils, school boards and community college boards. Of that number 154, or 68 per cent, are of Indian ancestry. I consider that a remarkable achievement, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to note, Mr. Speaker, that a great deal of the credit for that impressive statistic should go to the people of the North. These people are no different than the people in the rest of the province. They do not want control of their development to rest in outside hands. They know that they are capable of managing their own affairs, and they are willing to do what must be done to ensure that that happens.

The difference, Mr. Speaker, is in having a government that listens, that is willing to respond to the wants and needs of its citizenry. The new Northern Municipalities Act is a product of that willingness to listen. It was only after lengthy consultation across the width and breadth of northern Saskatchewan that this legislation was developed. The bill will permit a restructuring of local government with municipal authority comparable to anywhere else in the province of Saskatchewan. And under this structure, Mr. Speaker, northern local governments will control grant moneys associated with the proposed act, and the revenue-sharing commitment of your government, totalling \$9.7 million. This is an increase from the \$5.4 million which local governments controlled last year.

I would just like to highlight some of the items in the local government grant package: \$1.1 million for new recreation facilities; a new land assembly program in which DNS will pay 79 per cent of the cost of upgrading sewer and water services - projects are already earmarked for Cumberland House, La Loche, Sandy Bay and Green Lake this year; additional funds for sewer and water maintenance; a 30 per cent increase in grants for the northern road ambulance program; and a new \$1.3 million capital grants program for major projects not funded under the DNS budget.

In addition, municipal governments will receive \$1.5 million from the northern revenue-sharing trust account, which received taxes and other revenues from areas outside of community boundaries.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the DNS municipal services branch will be bolstered to provide greater administrative and training support to northern municipal governments. And while I'm on the subject of northern control, I should also like to point out that, for the first time, grants from DNS to other northern agencies will exceed the amount that the department will expend on program delivery. That is a significant development, Mr. Speaker, and serves to reaffirm your government's commitment to self-determination in the North.

This budget also contains more good news for the North, Mr. Speaker. It includes a capital project estimate of more than \$18 million. Of that total, almost \$1.2 million is

earmarked for airfield construction, including a new airstrip at Southend. There is \$2 million for road construction, including the completion of the east-west artery linking Beauval and Pinehouse, which is funded through the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund. Residents of the west side will benefit from a new bus route announced by the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, which will run from Meadow Lake to La Loche. Initially, DNS will subsidize this route, including feeder services to several communities along Highway 155.

New fire halls will be constructed at Stanley Mission, Weyakwin and Ile-a-la-Crosse, and three communities will be getting their first fire trucks. There will also be sewer and water feasibility studies or designs for five more communities, and the construction of systems at Air Ronge and Denare Beach will be continued.

Mr. Speaker, another northern development involves the Department of Health. A new \$5 million hospital is to be constructed at La Ronge. When that hospital is completed, the present structure will undergo major renovations and will become northern Saskatchewan's first long-term care facility for senior citizens. In addition, the services to the elderly program will be expanded, as will our grass-roots approach to health education, the community health-workers program. Under the latter program, which has been operating successfully since 1976, northern residents received training in the North in such fields as nutrition, mental and environmental health. Upon graduation, they are employed by the local councils to work within their own communities. DNS will also provide some of the funding for two crisis centres to be located at La Loche and La Ronge. These are the first such centres in the North. They will provide shelter and counselling services in circumstances of family strife. The department is also participating in funding a new alcohol detoxification centre in La Loche.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other areas of this budget which are of particular interest to northern Saskatchewan include: new funding to upgrade fish packing facilities in local communities; the opening of a residential correction centre in Creighton and the training of Northerners to operate this facility; the employment of an additional 25 persons to beef up our forest fire prevention and suppression capability; increases in grants for day care, child care and home repair programs; the generation of approximately 700 new jobs through DNS, Saskatchewan highways, and several of the Crown corporations; expansion of the department's manpower secretariat, which will allow us to increase the monitoring of northern employment; and contracting benefits from construction and resource development projects.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that this budget strongly reaffirms this government's commitment to northern Saskatchewan. It is a budget with a clarity of vision that offers hope and opportunity for the residents of the northern half of our province. It is a budget which fulfills pledges made to the people of the North and which strongly indicates to them that this government has not lost its enthusiasm, its fervor for helping them to achieve a quality of life which the rest of us in this province have taken for granted for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, it has only been 10 years since this government created the Department of Northern Saskatchewan as a facilitator for change. But the changes which have occurred have far outstripped any other such efforts in this country, and I dare say perhaps even the world. After decades of neglect and despair, northern Saskatchewan is now sharing fully in the richness of our province.

Mr. Speaker, this government's new deal for Saskatchewan has also included a new deal for the North. I am proud to see that this province, both the North and the South, is flourishing under the careful and competent management of this government.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the contributions made to this new deal for northern Saskatchewan by my colleague for the constituency of Cumberland. He has made his intentions known to retire from this Assembly at the end of his term. Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland is the first, but certainly not the last, member who was born and raised in the North. His tireless efforts on behalf of the people of northern Saskatchewan have contributed greatly to the developmental process which has occurred in the North.

I am sure that members on both sides of this House will join me in extending best wishes to the member for Cumberland for a long and happy retirement.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. HAMMERSMITH: - Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of pride that I will be supporting this budget and opposing the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GARNER: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a real pleasure to rise in this Assembly tonight. I have a few comments on the budget. We could almost call it an NDP budget with PC policies in it. I think in order to sum up how this budget will be dealt with in all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read into the record, and for the members opposite, an editorial comment out of a weekly newspaper. It is by a non-political young man, just a man who can see what's happening in rural Saskatchewan. It's called *As I See It*, by Don Thompson:

There certainly is a smell, sweet or sour, I'm not sure which, of an election in the air. Several weeks ago the local NDP nominated their candidate and just last week the PCs followed suit. But those aren't the only indications. There seems to be a definite increase in the politicking of the various parties and the party hopefuls as well. Who knows? By the time you read this, the campaign may have become official.

Soon the parties will begin blaming each other for the province's economic or social problems, but an interesting factor has presented itself recently in Alberta - the Western Canada Concept Party. There has apparently been enough heat stirred up by this, by the recent win by this party in the Olds riding, that it has boiled over into Saskatchewan.

Three things could result from this development. One is Allan Blakeney could field a protest vote, enough to call an election quickly before the WCCP has enough time to get organized in the province. Number two is the Premier could see the WCCP as a spoiler. By this I mean a split in the more conservative vote between the WCCP and the PCs which could result in an NDP candidate winning. The third thing that could result is nothing, but I don't think this is very likely.

What I think is an election which we called earlier. I think the Blakeney

government is in trouble. Its popularity in other ridings is dropping. Their policy of resource management has failed. They have ignored, to a very, very large degree, the social programming that has gotten the NDP elected over and over again in the past.

It would be much safer for them to call the election now, when their popularity is dropping, rather than later, when it reaches the bottom. An interesting sign of this was the significant shift in the government's television advertising earlier this year. If you remember, we heard a lot about the provincial family of Crown corporations. Not any more. Now we hear about protecting the environment.

Various polls show a decline in the NDP's popularity, and an increase in that of the Progressive Conservative Party. The fight is on. I think it is going to be a good one.

Mr. Speaker, I think that just sums up exactly what is happening in Saskatchewan's political arena today. We have seen a budget brought down by a government that is not only broke of ideas but, I believe broke financially.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to deal with about 10 parts of this budget, and the first one has to do with what we'll call the Progressive Conservative Party's rural gas distribution system. I was noticing some comments in the statement by the minister, Mr. Doug McArthur. The other day in his announcement, he starts off, "Last Thursday the Minister of Finance announced that the provincial government will introduce a new rural energy."

Mr. Speaker, where have the government members opposite been? A new rural energy - it has taken them until now to realize that natural gas is an energy that has been around for a long time. But with an NDP administration, it would continue to be around and around and under the ground. Mr. Speaker, it is the Progressive Conservative Party that will, after the election, introduce and bring about a rural gas distribution system for the people, because, Mr. Speaker, when we come to trust, we come to trusting a government that is broke in ideas and broke financially. Talking about rural gas distribution on November 28, 1980, Premier Blakeney said:

... it is unlikely the provision of natural gas to farmers would in any way relieve their financial squeeze.

All of a sudden, here we are in 1982 and it's a new energy, a new real energy. Here we have him talking out of both sides of his mouth at the same time. Who, Mr. Speaker, are the people of Saskatchewan going to trust? A government and a Premier that does a flip-flop, whether it's the constitution or the energy agreement? Now he expects them to believe him on the rural gas distribution system. Mr. Speaker, I say to the people of Saskatchewan, beware of the Blakeney government. Beware! The crowrate is the camouflage. They have no real intention of introducing a rural gas distribution system.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other comments that the minister made the other day. The new rural natural gas extension program will commence immediately with a goal of extending gas to 150 communities and several thousand farms. Mr. Speaker, I ask you! The Premier said one day, "It's no benefit to the farmers." Now his government has introduced this natural gas to 150 communities and several thousand farms. When, Mr. Speaker, will the government opposite, when will the Premier ever be able to make a

decision? I don't think he's even got the courage to make a decision to call an election, because he knows they're down in the polls. He knows what's out there, but he's gone too far. He can't back up now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think I would like to just touch on this rural gas a little bit more. This has to do with another member of the government - not one of their heavyweights, but he has a seat over there - and this one is, "Tory gas plan doesn't work." Redberry MLA, Dennis Banda . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, that's who it is. He talks about an SPC study, showing that a complete system, including towns, villages, hamlets, and farms, would cost over \$19,000 per new customer to build, whereas the system including just farmers would cost about \$21,000 per new farm customer.

Banda labelled the Conservative promise to set up a comprehensive rural natural gas system, "simply Tory deception and economic quackery," saying, "The opposition never tells the people who they think should pay for the billion-dollar plan." Banda says, "Everyone could pay, but income taxes would have to double for the next five years."

There are all the gas customers, new and existing, who could pay, but the Conservatives want gas prices frozen. Spreading the cost of the new billion-dollar gas system over the entire system would cost every gas customer in the province \$500 a year for the next 10 years.

I'm glad we've come to that part, Mr. Speaker. I'm very glad we've come to that part. We go to the minister's press release the other day. There are just a couple of small points that should be pointed out, I think.

Each community is expected to sign up 65 per cent of its potential. What happens if they don't get 65 per cent? They don't get natural gas. So, then the government can say, "Well I'm sorry, we didn't receive the application; you don't get natural gas." Now, each customer applying during this period will pay a \$200 deposit, which will be refunded if gas is used within two years. So if the socialist government, which won't be in power, but we'll let them think that tonight, just for tonight alone . . . In two years, if they don't get the natural gas program in, who will keep the \$200? It will go right in to the NDP coffers, that's where it will go.

Mr. Speaker, let's got a little further to the rural gas distribution system. This says, "Gas Feasibility Study Incomplete Despite Bravo from NDP Ranks." Now this is the member for . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Estevan.

MR. GARNER: — Estevan, the member for Estevan - there's not too much input from him; that's why we have a hard time remembering his name, Mr. Speaker. This is Estevan's Jack Chapman:

He used the debate in late November to heap scorn on the Conservative proposal to establish a natural gas distribution system in rural Saskatchewan.

Incidentally, this is dated January 7, 1982.

A complete feasibility study done by SPC on a comprehensive rural natural gas distribution system indicates it would cost about \$1 billion, he told the legislature. In a telephone interview Wednesday, Chapman said he actually hasn't seen the natural gas study he spoke about in the legislature. "I do not have a copy of this study," he said. Chapman said the information on which

he based his remarks was provided by Doug McArthur, the minister in charge of SPC.

Judy Thompson, an information officer in McArthur's office said she doesn't remember anybody in the office referring to a billion dollar figure, although she is aware of the SPC study. It is as yet an internal document because they are still working on it. She said McArthur was in a cabinet meeting and could not be reached for comment.

That's just the depth. They stand up, Mr. Speaker, and throw any figure on there and by the time the media does an excellent job of running it down, all of a sudden nobody said that or the minister wasn't there. Is this the government the people of Saskatchewan are going to trust to implement this program? No, I don't think it is, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there's much chance of that.

Tonight we have a project array from the Minister of Highways hit the table. Once again we're going to talk about trust - trusting and believing in an NDP government. We flip this open and we look: Highway 21, Kerrobert to the north - once again he's gone to the well. That Highway No. 21 needs to be built from Kerrobert to Unity and completed in one year. Last year it was promised. Any promises fulfilled? No. Does he expect the people of Saskatchewan to believe that this one is going to be completed? Not a chance, Mr. Speaker, not a chance. But under a Progressive Conservative government, which we are going to have in this province, Highway 21 will be built, and will be completed from Kerrobert to the town of Unity in the Wilkie constituency.

Mr. Speaker, we hear the government opposite talk about its concern for people. How can they talk about people when their priorities, I believe, are wrong? We have the Premier and the Attorney General buying out Norcanair. That's a priority; is that going to help the people of Saskatchewan? I don't think so; in fact, I know it's not. We have the Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources going to construct that surfing pool of his and the big long slide to slide the government right into the wave pool. That is just exactly what is going to happen, because it's another priority by the NDP government which is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to the subject of agriculture. What has this government done for agriculture in this budget other than trying to pull a sham, trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the farmers of Saskatchewan that they're going to stand up to protect the crow? I think we discussed this before in another speech, Mr. Speaker. We know what they're going to do with the crow. We know who is going to make the deal. It's going to be made in the backroom and the following are going to be there: Mr. Pepin, Mr. MacMurchy, Mr. Romanow . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Mr. Chretien.

MR. GARNER: — . . . and I think maybe Chretien could show up, and at about 3 o'clock in the morning, you know what's going to happen? By the time the water glasses are getting low, that old crow is going to fly by the window and the deal is going to be made and that crow is just going to drop and so will the farmers of Saskatchewan. The Progressive Conservative Party which is going to be government in this province won't be making any backroom deals. There will be no closed-door meetings. It will be a Conservative government that will stand up for the people of Saskatchewan, that will stand up for agriculture and try to retain family farms that are being eroded by the government opposite. Mr. Speaker, why are those family farms being eroded? Well, we

take a look down the list for agriculture - the elimination of provincial fuel tax on tandem-axle trucks. It's a good policy and I hear the members opposite going "Hear, hear." Thank you gentlemen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GARNER: — Thank you, thank you. You know one of the very few good things that is in here for agriculture comes from the Progressive Conservative Party. We take a look further down and see over \$10 million for our province's beef and hog stabilization programs. Mr. Speaker, since the beef stabilization program has been introduced in the province of Saskatchewan, we hear the Minister of Agriculture saying, "Beef prices are on the rise." Hey, that's how much in touch they are with the people.

Mr. Speaker, cattle prices have dropped down 10, 20, 30 cents a pound - 30 cents a pound they have dropped since we have had a beef stabilization program. I remember the minister rising in this House and stating, "Beef prices will rise with the stabilization program," Mr. Speaker, beef prices are not on the rise in Saskatchewan. They're sliding and with them so is the cattle industry in this great province of ours.

Mr. Speaker, we go down a little further in their agriculture commitments - major improvements to FarmStart with total loan limit increases from \$150,000 to \$200,000. That's mickey mouse, a band-aid, not enough. The subsidized loan limit increases from \$90,000 to \$100,000 - \$10,000; that's nothing. But the real problem with FarmStart, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when the net worth limit increases from \$144,000 - they think they've done a lot by going up to \$185,000. One quarter section of land and one tractor and what's he got? He isn't eligible for a FarmStart loan. Mr. Speaker, that's not the direction farmers of Saskatchewan want. The farmers of Saskatchewan do not want to be controlled. They would like to have their costs controlled. The costs to farmers in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are rising at a rate that is going to cause many, not only young farmers but older farmers, to be not only out of the cattle business but out of the farming business in the near future under an NDP administration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn now to the topic of the heavy oil upgrader. What happened in the heavy oil upgrader? What was dealt to the people of northwest Saskatchewan where the oil is? You know, they were pretty sharp - two sites, Moose Jaw and Cloan. Why was Cloan selected - selected and deemed to fail? It has nothing to offer the heavy oil upgrader: no water, no natural gas, no oil pipeline, no super-power grids.

So when you are comparing apples and oranges, what have you got? You've got the NDP pushing for an upgrader in the South; once again the people of northwest Saskatchewan are left hung out to dry. People of the Northwest, Mr. Speaker, are not going to forget this. Once again they have been passed over by a socialist government.

You know, we dig into it a little bit further and there's been some meetings held, Mr. Speaker. They talk about power, power to select where the upgrader goes. Well, who is the Chairman of Saskoil? Could it be the member for Biggar? Oh, I see the member for Biggar puts his hand up. Very good. Who is the vice-chairman of Saskoil? Wouldn't put his hand up.

Anyway, we talk about power to select it for the Northwest, but we know that one little man made the decision. It was the Premier of Saskatchewan. That's where the decision

was made. He is the one that left the people from the northwest area out in the cold.

Once again, the only thing that we get to export from the Northwest are children to Alberta. And I hear the member for Biggar hollering about it. What power does he have in the cabinet? I thought he had some. The only power is following, following like a sheep, because he hasn't the courage to stand up for the people in northwest Saskatchewan. And that's where the heavy oil upgrader lies right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we could talk about a public utilities review commission that the people of Saskatchewan want. We have many facts to back it up, with Alberta cutting its natural gas price because of the regulatory board. A recent example was in B.C., where Crown-owned B.C. Hydro was ordered to repay \$22 million plus interest to its industrial customers after the B.C. Utilities Commission rejected the company's bid for a 20 per cent rate increase to bulk users of electricity . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, for you to get the drift you'd have to out there in a coal bin. That's the only way you'd get the drift. I mean I don't expect you to understand it; it's fairly deep.

Mr. Speaker, back to our public utilities review commission. Sorry about that. The people of Saskatchewan want it. What did the NDP come up with? It came up with a one-man commission. Did we hear anything about a rollback in the natural gas increase in February? No. When is the next one going to come? August? How much natural gas is used in August in the province of Saskatchewan? I mean, we could talk about the natural gas wells that are capped in Saskatchewan. We're still sending tax dollars to Alberta's heritage fund, not using our own gas. Is that a government, Mr. Speaker, that has the right to administer the affairs of the people of Saskatchewan? They're nothing more than tax collectors - nothing more than tax collectors. They're not concerned about people. We have Sask Tel turning excessive profits; we asked for a freeze on Sask Tel rates; they answered no. We asked why the \$14 million went to Crown investments. What did that do to help the people of Saskatchewan out with their phone bill? Not a thing - not a thing.

Mr. Speaker, this government has not only lost touch with people; it has lost touch with itself.

AN HON. MEMBER: - You've got to have a point. Let's get to the point.

MR. GARNER: - Well, the point is right on top of your head -that's where the point is. Mr. Speaker, we had called for a freeze on utility rates in the province of Saskatchewan; the NDP went part of the way. Under a Progressive Conservative government we will take it the complete route. We will freeze all utility rates in the province. That will put dollars, and keep dollars, in taxpayers' pockets. That's the direction it should be going - should be taken. Mr. Speaker, there is no way that the people of Saskatchewan can continue for another four or even two years under the NDP government.

Many other things I could add, Mr. Speaker, but I think we will let some of the other members enter the debate. And without a doubt I cannot support the motion and I will be supporting the amendment.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: - I'll just get rid of this amendment now. Nothing to it.

MR. KATZMAN: - I believe moment ago you recognized the Attorney General on his feet. Therefore, is now out of the debate. Is that correct?

MR. SPEAKER: - Not really. Order, order! The Attorney General is no more out of the debate than you are. Order! If the member had been watching, I never took my seat when the Attorney General was on his feet. The Attorney General did not have the floor as far as I was concerned. Order! Just so there'll be no doubt about it.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

YEAS - 10

Garner
Taylor
McLeod
Swan

Birkbeck
Andrew
Katzman

Lane
Pickering
Hardy

NAYS - 37

Blakeney
Romanow
Robbins
McArthur
Banda
Kowalchuk
MacAulay
Long
Koskie
Skoberg
Johnson
Lusney
Miner

Pepper
Smishek
Baker
Rolfes
Vickar
Dyck
Engel
Cowley
Matsalla
Poniatowski
White
Solomon

Snyder
Tchorzewski
Feschuk
Mostoway
Hammersmith
Thompson
Byers
Cody
Shillington
Prebble
Nelson
Chapman

HON. MR. COWLEY: - I see this is a command performance for the member for Moosomin. But I know, in his last session in the legislature, he dearly wants to have an opportunity to hear me speak once more. So I am certainly going to accommodate him this evening.

This has been a very interesting evening, Mr. Speaker, in that we started out the evening minus the opposition. I might say it was very tempting. I think in nine minutes, if we had worked hard, we could have put the budget through, the estimates through, and most of the legislation on the paper. But, of course, being hon. gentlemen we didn't do that, although it did cross my mind.

Mr. Speaker, as you noted earlier this evening my son was here with a group of Beavers from Regina North-West, meeting and being looked after by their good MLA, John Solomon. As I was telling some of the members here, I talked to him on the phone a little while ago and he wanted to know where the other team was. My only response could be that, well, had they been here, he probably wouldn't have noticed much difference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Mr. Speaker, the people of this province, of course, are aware of the calibre of our opposition. Undoubtedly, they will make their views well-known at an appropriate time in the reasonably near future.

Mr. Speaker, it was also very interesting this evening to hear the members opposite call for the question rather early on their amendment. I haven't been in the House as much as I should be, Mr. Speaker, and I missed their amendment. But having heard it, I knew why they wanted the question called and have it out of the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - I must say that being the co-operative government that we are, we did our best to get it out of the way with due dispatch this evening. It is now gone and will disappear from the blues tomorrow, from the whites the day after, and we will all be much happier with that gone.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a very interesting budget debate from what I have seen of it and from I have read about it in the newspapers and heard on the newscasts. The opposition seems somehow a little (I don't know) disconcerted by this budget. I understood that the member for Regina South was considering voting for it and his leader in the gallery obviously missed his hand signal because he is voting against it. You really should get someone to run back and forth with messages over there so you don't have these kinds of mix-ups. But I suppose an election would solve that because then that would give you real occasion to get rid of the member for . . . Where is he for? He hoped to be for Saskatoon Nutana; he didn't quite make it there. He hoped to be for Estevan, but he took the largest Conservative majority in the last election and turned it into a defeat. He is rumored to be trying it again in Estevan. I don't know. How anybody can expect to be premier of the province when he's been turned down twice by the people who know him best I don't know.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in looking at the Conservative's record as an opposition in this legislature, one really does have a difficult time figuring out how, on the basis of their performance on the budget debate and other debates, they have any hope of forming the government of this province, even two or three elections down the road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Now, Mr. Speaker, this is rather interesting. From time to time in my spare time when I have nothing to do, I like to read a little bit about election polling and that sort of thing. And sometimes I even find scattered here and there some stuff that's relevant to Saskatchewan. And there are some fascinating things that come out of that.

You know the opposition likes to talk about its poll that it did. I think if I remember correctly, Mr. Speaker, they gave the results to Dale Eisler, obviously hoping that he would publish them, so that they could buoy up their candidates, who undoubtedly on the doorstep are getting the stuffing knocked out of them, and feeling a little down. But I believe it was 42 per cent for us and 39 per cent for them and 11 per cent for the Liberals and the rest they lost somewhere.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that even the Conservatives making up their own poll

didn't think it was credible to put themselves ahead. You know, if I were going to make up my own poll, I'd have done a good job of it and put myself ahead. How anybody can believe, credibly believe, that there would be a poll taken in the province of Saskatchewan that would show the Conservatives a scant three points behind us, I don't know. That person obviously has never been out in the constituencies, he has never been on any doorsteps, or talking to any people in the last 12 months. Conservatives simply aren't a credible alternative. They don't have a credible leader; they don't have any credible policies; they're just not going anywhere.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know who the Conservatives used for their polling, whether . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Well, he's the fellow Sterling Lyon used, and he went into the election there thinking he was 10 points ahead. I certainly hope they've had equally good advice this time.

All I can tell the member opposite is that I think someday in the province, in the reasonably near future, in the next 27 months or so, there will be an election. I guess it's less than that. It's 21 months until October 1983. I can assure the members opposite, that when the election is called, it won't be because we're 10 points behind in the polls. And so if Grant makes up another poll for them to bolster their spirits, and fixes it up real good the day after the election's called and says, "Boys, we've got them; we're 10 points ahead," you can believe him if you want. But I can tell you that fairy tale is only going to last for 28 days. Then you're going to see the real results - and the real results are going to be a resounding defeat for the Conservative Party opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Now, Mr. Speaker, I've been looking at this budget and I've been out in my constituency talking to the people. I have been really very pleased with the reception that I've been receiving on this budget. I'll tell you that people are impressed that here's a government which passed The Home-owners' Protection Act - the only one in Canada. Here's a government which has now introduced legislation or a program to deal with mortgage interest rates - the only one in Canada that's any good. Now here's a government that's really responding to people's needs - the senior citizens' program and other programs to deal with senior citizens on lower incomes who are having difficulty meeting their shelter costs. Mr. Speaker, I've been impressed with how many people have said to me that they like our budget, who have good things to say about it, and I think they're going to have real good things to say about it at the appropriate time in the reasonably near future, when they have to cast their ballot for one candidate or the other.

The people out there are wiser than the opposition might like to believe they are. The government understands how wise the people are and we respond wisely to their wise concerns, member for Kindersley.

But you know, one of the issues in any election is obviously leadership, and I must say there that in Saskatchewan the New Democratic Party can be rightly proud of our Premier, Allan Blakeney.

I'd like to believe that everybody votes for me in the Biggar constituency. I know that the fact that I have the New Democratic Party tacked on after my name has a fair bit to do with it, and I also know that the fact that Allan Blakeney is our Premier and our leader

has a fair bit to do with it too.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - It's interesting in my bedtime reading as I wander through some of those polls and look at how people are voting and what they think, some of the interesting things I come across. You know, Mr. Speaker, the people who identify themselves as New Democrats have no question about who would be the best premier of this province, who'd be the best premier to speak out on behalf of the province and the crowrate and that sort of thing. Even the Liberals, few that they are, believe that their leader, Ralph Goodale, would do a reasonably good job on the crowrate. There are a few of them who slip over and think Blakeney might do a little better job, but they don't do too bad. It's just the poor people who've decided they are going to vote Conservative (heaven knows why, and there aren't very many of them either) who have some difficulty there.

The interesting thing there, Mr. Speaker, is that while Grant Devine is the favorite among Conservatives in terms of speaking out on behalf of the crowrate, he's only the favorite by a vote of three to two, and you've got to feel a little insecure when your supporters, 40 per cent of them, are looking to the guy leading the other party as the best spokesman.

Well, I know the members opposite are going to say that a lot of them don't know Grant Devine. They don't know he's their leader. Well, I don't know, but perhaps that's an asset. I don't know whether they're going to hide him like they did their last leader or not. I remember during the last campaign we started looking for him. We thought he's maybe already left for Arizona, but no, I guess some strategist had decided it's a little hot for the hon. member for Nipawin, and so they sort of buried him for a while. They had him speaking in Podunk and places like that, and they burned his itinerary so no one could find out where he was. I don't know whether they're going to bother sending their present leader anywhere or not. He may be in Estevan. My impression of the Hon. Leader of the Conservative Party is that for Jack Chapman's sake I hope he spends all his time in Estevan, because the more time he spends, the better we seem to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Well, Jack must be back from another WCC meeting. I refer, of course, Mr. Speaker, to the Hon. Mr. Harrington who sits in the gallery with the Hon. Mr. Devine. I'll tell you, there's one thing about the Tories - they've got more brains in the gallery than they have on the floor.

If you notice that the Hon. Mr. Harrington looks tired, it's because he's been going to a lot of meetings lately and he has to carry this fire extinguisher with him. And every time he walks into one of those WCC (Western Canada Concept) meetings, he tries to put it out. I was reading . . . I lost my paper here; I had a copy of the Wilkie something-or-other. Oh, here it is . . . I almost had forgotten the WCC . . . I'm glad you dropped in, Jack. I'd have forgotten the best part of my speech. But I was interested here, in "Your Business," by Jim Garner. Well, it's quite good actually - the picture, I mean.

AN HON. MEMBER: - It's rather flattering.

HON. MR. COWLEY: - "Tory MLA Sees Minister not Consistent on Crowrate." Then some of his other supporters brought an ad right beside it. It says, "If you are fuming

over what the Trudeau Liberals are doing to the West, and if you are turned off by the prospect of yet another Blakeney election farce" That must mean we are going to win again. They take polls too, the WCC. "If you want to do something about it then the Western Canada Concept Party needs your help." Well, they need help all right. "A pro tem. organizing office has been set up at Luseland for the Wilkie constituency. Phone Art Meyer, president of the pro tem. committee, or write to him in Luseland."

AN HON. MEMBER: - I hear he was on Garner's executive.

HON. MR. COWLEY: - It's all right; he quite Garner's executive. Anyway, it's interesting to notice that they are out there working in the Wilkie constituency and here, there and everywhere. It's also interesting to note how desperate the Conservatives are to try to stop them. Mr. Speaker, look at the new Leader of the Western Canada Concept Party. He is one Ray Bailey from Weyburn. It wouldn't be any more than a year ago that this same Ray Bailey stood for the Conservative nomination in Weyburn.

AN HON. MEMBER: - Birds of a feather . . .

HON. MR. COWLEY: - Now, he's a separatist. I remember a member for Nipawin who was the Conservative leader. Now, he's a separatist; in fact, he's already separated. He's a different kind of separatist; he's separating with a purpose - to join the United States. These guys just seem to be separating - perhaps with a purpose. I don't know. Well, Mr. Speaker, of course there was the member for Swift Current, a former Conservative, who also decided to separate along with the member for Nipawin and form a new party. And, of course, one wonders who is next over there. I don't know if this is accurate or not, but I understand there was a nominating convention last night in the Thunder Creek constituency. I haven't had a chance, Mr. Speaker, to ask the hon. member for Thunder Creek how it turned out, but I hear there was a contest and I hear that the vote was 180 for the member for Thunder Creek and 150 for his opponent. I don't know if that is accurate, Mr. Speaker, but if it is 170 to 160 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, it was? Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to speculate on who won that nomination and why, and whether or not we would have had another member sitting, or whether we would have four parties in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we have now dispensed with the amendment to the budget, and we're dealing with the budget itself. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be a part of the Blakeney government and very pleased to be taking part in this debate. I do have more I would like to say on this debate and, therefore, I beg leave to adjourn, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:54 p.m.