

Speaking Notes for  
The Honourable Frank Quennell, Q.C.  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General,

Supreme Court of Canada Retreat - Luncheon

Friday May 11, 2007

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Good afternoon,

I want to welcome the members of the Supreme Court of Canada to our wonderful prairie province. I hope all of you have had the chance to visit some of our impressive heritage sites and watch a Saskatchewan sunset – they are truly amazing.

I am very pleased that the Court decided to hold its retreat here in Saskatchewan this year.

I applaud you for your decision to move your retreats around the country. I think this affords the Court a real opportunity to expand its understanding of regional issues.

It also provides local members of the bar with the opportunity to expand their understanding of the Court!

It is a great honor for us in Saskatchewan to host such eminent members of Canada's judiciary. You have all made significant contributions to this country.

I am very pleased to be able to note that Saskatchewan has in the past contributed some extremely worthy members to the Court.

- Justice John Lamont, who served as a Supreme Court of Canada Justice from 1927 to 1936, was the Member of Parliament for Prince Albert in 1905, and was instrumental in the passage of the *Saskatchewan Act* and the *Alberta Act*, which created the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

He then served as Saskatchewan's first Attorney General, before being appointed to the Supreme Court of Saskatchewan, and then the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan.

- Justice James Wilfred Estey, who served on the Supreme Court from 1944 to 1955, was an active member of the bar as well as a lecturer at the College of Law.

He subsequently became provincial Minister of Education and as well as Attorney General for Saskatchewan, before being appointed to the Court in 1944 directly from the bar.

- Justice Emmett Hall, who served on the Court from 1962 to 1973, had been the Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench and then Chief Justice of Saskatchewan.

He chaired a royal commission on the national health system in 1964. His commission recommended adopting Saskatchewan's model of public health insurance. It led to the establishment of Canadian Medicare - one of Saskatchewan's greatest contributions to the nation.

There were also four other members of the Supreme Court with Saskatchewan roots. Even though they showed questionable judgment in moving away from Saskatchewan in their youth, we are still proud to claim them as our own!

- Brian Dickson, a Justice of the Supreme Court from 1973 to 1984, and then Chief Justice of Canada from 1984 to 1990, was born in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and was raised in Regina.

He said in later life that his interest in the law was sparked as a teenager by attending evening debates in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan!

- Justice Wilfred Zebedee Estey, who served on the Supreme Court from 1977 to 1988, was born here in Saskatoon. He was the son of Justice Wilfred James Estey.

He earned his degree at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Law, and briefly taught there before moving to Ontario.

- Justice William McIntyre, who served on the Supreme Court from 1979 to 1989, was raised in Moose Jaw.

He also took his law degree at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Law, before moving to British Columbia.

- Finally, Justice John Sopinka, a member of the Supreme Court from 1988 to 1997, was born in the town of Broderick and lived there for eight years before moving with his family to Ontario.

We're very proud in Saskatchewan of our history in relation to the Court!

Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, Canada's Supreme Court has played a very important leadership role throughout the world in relation to human rights legislation.

Many high appellate courts have looked to Canada as they developed their own jurisprudence in this area.

South Africa has reviewed Canadian decisions to help them interpret their new Constitution.

Israel has also looked to Canadian case law on human rights largely because the Canadian Charter is much more modern than others, including the American Bill of Rights.

I am very pleased to be able to note that Saskatchewan, in small part, played a role in the Court's successes in this area.

The Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, enacted in 1947, was the first comprehensive human rights legislation created in Canada.

It first played an important role in the development of the Canadian Bill of Rights, which was introduced by another prominent Saskatchewanian, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

It then played an important role in development of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms!

It is fitting that you have chosen to hold your retreat in Saskatchewan now, as 2007 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saskatchewan's historic Bill of Rights.

2007 is also the Centennial year of the Law Society of Saskatchewan.

We are very fortunate to have a group of extremely skilled and committed members of the legal profession in this province.

The Law Society's theme for the year, a "century of integrity" is very fitting.

Saskatchewan is not one of Canada's most populated provinces, although that appears to be changing, but we have contributed much to the development of the nation.

I hope that the clean air, fresh water and sunsets which may have helped to inspire among many other things, the creation of Medicare, the first Arts Board in Canada, and the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, will help to inspire you, and ensure success in your discussions here today and throughout the rest of your time here.

Thank-you.