

### Tributes

When somebody comes to Parliament Hill from so far away, they give up an incredible amount of their personal life. I know, Audrey, it is difficult to be so far away from home as you put many relationships on hold as you come here and serve the Canadian public.

I want to thank you on behalf of my party and on behalf of all Canadians who appreciate so much—maybe they do not say it daily—the fact that you have also given up much. We want to thank you and say that we appreciate all that you have done. Thank you so much for your contribution to Canadian life, to the Canadian political process and the incredible sacrifice that you have made to your country. Good luck in all that you do in the future. God bless you, Audrey.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend the NDP elected a new leader. My caucus colleagues and I were pleased to have our new leader, Alexa McDonough, recognized in the gallery today.

The NDP caucus looks forward to working with Alexa. It also looks forward to the day when she and many others join us in this House to put forward our vision of the country and the world.

For the last six years, that vision has been put forward on our behalf in this House and across Canada by the member for Yukon, the Hon. Audrey McLaughlin. As chair of the federal NDP caucus I am honoured to be able today to pay tribute to Audrey on behalf of my colleagues and I am sure on behalf of Hill staff, party members and many other Canadians, all of whom I believe came to very much appreciate the member for Yukon and her way of doing politics.

Audrey, like some of her predecessors, had some moments here in Parliament that will be recorded in the minds and hearts of New Democrats forever as richly symbolic of the dissent which we express in this place about what is regarded by the conventional wisdom as unacceptable or unavoidable, whether it is on matters like NAFTA, privatization, deregulation, a whole list of things. Your leadership in our opposition to the gulf war was such a defining moment for many New Democrats.

And if I may say so while I am talking about courage, I remember your support of the Charlottetown accord when you put what you thought was best for your country ahead of what you knew might be politically risky for your party.

As the first woman leader of a federal party, you made history and you made it in such a way that our party was able to elect another woman as leader without gender being an issue. Thanks to your history—making leadership bid, the time when gender is an issue in Canadian political leadership contests may well be history. This is as it should be and for this all Canadians who value the equality of the sexes are indebted to you.

The member for Yukon is no longer our leader, but we are delighted that she continues to be our colleague, having put behind her the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that sometimes come with the leadership of political parties. We know that the people of Yukon will be the real beneficiaries as Audrey will now be able to give her undivided attention to a part of Canada that she so clearly loves, and whose reality she brought home to us in the NDP caucus and elsewhere.

I venture to say that the phrase coast to coast to coast, which Audrey always insisted on, by way of recognizing northern Canada and the northern coast it represents, has changed the lexicon of Canadian politics in a way that brings recognition to northern Canada and the constituency which you so ably represent.

• (1520)

On a personal note I remember as well the joy which you took in having caucus go to the Yukon for a retreat. I remember even better the experience of mushing on the back of a dog sled, thanks to the care which Audrey took to make sure that we all had a taste of this great northern tradition. The dogs were a little bit tired after pulling me.

Since the election of 1993 and her announcement of her intention to step down as our leader, the member for Yukon has given much of herself and her energies to the renewal process in our party, a process which she gave impetus to originally and which has helped to invigorate the NDP.

In this, as in all things, Audrey has earned the affection of many New Democrats with her warm smile, her kind words and her ability to remember so many of the countless faces and names she encountered as a political party leader.

Finally, there is one word that seems to come to everyone's mouth when we speak of the member for Yukon and that is dignity: dignity in the day to day demands of politics. I remember Audrey patiently putting on my son Daniel's rubber boots in order to personally view the flooded yards and homes of south Transcona in my riding. But most of all dignity in the face of difficult circumstances, dignity in the face of electoral defeat, dignity in the face of criticism and dignity in the passing of the torch to a new leader.

For all these things and more, Audrey, we say thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the hon. member for Yukon. This distinguished and elegant member of Parliament was the leader of her party and the first woman to head a national party. For this, I offer her both praise and congratulations.