

Retirement Gala for the Chief Justice of Manitoba, Richard Chartier

R E M A R K S F R O M
J U S T I C E F R E D A M . S T E E L •

It is my pleasure to bring greetings on behalf of the judges and staff of the Court of Appeal. I have been given only three minutes to do so, which as you know is an impossible task for an appellate judge.

I will not be saying anything about Chief Justice Chartier's significant contributions to the jurisprudence. Our legal counsel will be writing and publishing an article on this topic in the Manitoba Law Journal sometime in the future.

I will not be saying anything about his leadership role in the Canadian Judicial Council, or his many achievements as chair of the Judicial Education committee of the CJC, or the fact that he was instrumental in the passage of the new Judicial Ethical conduct guidelines. I imagine that Chief Justice Wagner will speak on those many accomplishments. Let me just say as a member of the Judicial Education committee under his leadership, this man gets things done!

Nor will I speak to his role here in Manitoba as Chief Justice of the Province and as part of the triumvirate with Chief Justice Joyal and Chief Judge Wiebe.

No, I stand here tonight as representative of the judges, legal counsel, registry, and all staff at the Manitoba Court of Appeal who worked with Richard Chartier day after day since his appointment as Chief Justice in

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- The Honourable Justice Freda Steel currently serves on the Manitoba Court of Appeal, to which she was appointed in 2000. She was initially appointed to the Manitoba Court of Queens Bench in 1995.

2013. To act as such a representative, I actually went around to everyone and asked them what they wanted me to tell you, Richard. I want you to know, that the flow of affection was significant.

As you all know, the climate of an institution is affected fundamentally by its leadership. Richard Chartier is a man who knows how to lead both with his head and his heart. For those who know him, it will not come as a surprise when I tell you Chief Justice Chartier is a Type A personality and an excellent administrator. He is not afraid of confrontation and challenging problems, or trying new ways of doing things. He actually had the gall to introduce performance indicators into our court system, a system not known for adhering to up-to-date management techniques. And so, when he became Chief Justice, he instituted protocols, streamlined the rota system, cleared away the backlog, introduced regular bench meetings, developed a mission statement (“delivering quality judgments in a timely manner”), and attended to the development and reclassification of staff. He was also the person responsible for having the old portraits restored and displayed at the courthouse. Even I - as someone who went into law to escape the mandatory statistics course in my sociology program - have come to appreciate the way in which his statistical analysis of the work in our court allows us to focus on (as he would say) “continuous quality improvement.” He is a wonderful judge, but as Chief Justice, he takes the administration of our court very seriously, as evidenced by his motto, which he shares with new staff: “Disciplined people who engage in disciplined thought and who take disciplined action create greatness.”

But, more important than all of that, perhaps, is the way in which Richard encourages a collaborative culture in our court. Our Chief has a very high level of emotional intelligence, which is a quality that is sometimes hard to find in the legal profession. He is transparent, fair-minded, approachable and enthusiastic. Everyone commented on his level of caring.

New staff members who began their tenure at the Court under Chief Justice Chartier were impressed by how personable he is; calling everyone by their first name, regularly stopping by to say hello or goodbye and asking how people are doing. He invites new staff into his office for welcoming remarks, which helps to build-up and strengthen our team. Others remarked about how kind, patient and understanding he is during times when staff experience personal difficulties. Except, of course, any difficulties arising from the Court of Appeal hockey pool.

I can do no better than to share with you the comments of one staff member, which sums up the way many of us felt:

“The Chief is a class act who always makes you feel welcome. He’s funny, kind, has a tremendous work ethic, never makes anyone feel as though they are beneath him. If people are stressed, he works out a plan to help. He is going to be greatly missed!”

What can I say after that except, Chief, we forgive you for the April Fool’s jokes, we love you and we are going to miss you!