

**Remarks to the 2010 Lieutenant Governor's
Award for Excellence in Public Administration**

Friday, December 17, 2010

Room 200

Legislative Building

Winnipeg, Manitoba

By: Diane Gray

Your Honour, Premier Selinger, Deputy Mayor, Madame Chair, Colleagues, Friends and Family.

First, I would like to say how honoured I am to be recognized by my peers at IPAC and given this award. While I had always thought of this as a bit of a lifetime achievement award, I have to warn you that I still have some life left in me yet.

I also would like to thank those that organized and contributed to my nomination for this award – including Mariette Mulaire, former Premier Gary Doer, Premier Selinger, Jim Carr and my mentor, Jim Eldridge. It is a privilege to count so many talented and dedicated people among my friends and colleagues.

I also need to thank my incredible support staff both past and present - Jacquie, Miriam, Nicole and Kate. You all really know how to make me look good. I wouldn't be where I am without all of you.

What the people in this room know, is that working in the public service is a special opportunity. You can and do make a difference in peoples' lives. And while this award just recognizes the contributions of one person, in reality, this award is about the incredible team effort of so many people in the departments that I had the privilege of serving in and working with.

Few outside of the senior public service and the politicians they work directly for know the incredible time and personal commitment that government entails. Frankly, the public sector doesn't get enough credit for the contributions it makes to society. The floodway, the health care system, our schools, and even CentrePort Canada wouldn't function without the support of the public sector.

And given the nature of our federation, Manitoba's public servants get to work on issues beyond our own province and make a real contribution to national and even at times North American or global policies and agreement development. Trade, agriculture, environment, finance, energy and so many more areas are national and even international in scope.

It is the reality of our public sector that people work hard, are experts, and are often recognized as the Canadian or international leaders in their field. This was incredible company to learn from and work with.

When I was Deputy Minister for Gary Doer, people used to joke about the small size of our delegation when we attended Premiers' conferences. He used to reply – “we may only be 3 but we ride like a 100.”

But he could have been talking about any part of the Manitoba public sector. The public sector offers significant opportunities for advancement. Hard work is respected and rewarded. Sometimes by being given 3 Deputy jobs. We have lots of depth but not much breadth in numbers.

I had the opportunity to view up close some of the key moments in Canada's federation over the past decade. From the formal signing of the labour mobility agreement (yes we ARE making progress on internal trade) to the 2004 Health Care Accord that allowed Quebec to sign an asymmetrical arrangement, to the always popular, but little known and totally unimplemented, Social Union Framework Agreement. And there have been some fun times along the way. I have eaten pizza with Danny Williams at 24 Sussex at 3 a.m., travelled to Belgium with Jean Charest, danced to the Black Eyed Peas at a Grey Cup with former Prime Minister Martin, was offered a “petrified forest in Arizona” over a beer with Janet Napolitano, and met with Prime Minister Harper in the bunker of the basement of the current air terminal.

The nature of the work over the 13 years has been incredibly varied, diverse and challenging. The variety of policy areas in the public sector far exceeds what would be found in most private sector companies. The work has included preparing detailed cabinet submissions and plans to implement important government policies to writing up 5 point - potentially nation changing - plans on the back of the napkin over a breakfast briefing with the Premier.

And now, I see the public service from a new angle. CentrePort Canada needs the support, involvement, funding and engagement of the public sector. I now have a whole new appreciation for my former colleagues at all levels of government.

Clearly, I have not strayed far from the public service. CentrePort Canada is an economic development project. It is very much in the public interest as we work to attract new jobs and investment to the province.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my appreciation for this Award. There is much excellence within and across the public sector. And today, I would like recognize that it is the sum of the whole that makes Manitoba work, not the efforts of one.

Thank you.