

MARION BOYD – Queen’s Park, Ma6 11, 2023

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin:

If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements of remembrance of the late Ms. Phyllis Marion Boyd, with five minutes allotted to independent members as a group, five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s government and five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s loyal Opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed. Today, we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial legislature, the late Mrs. Marion Boyd, who was the MPP for London Centre during the 35th and 36th Parliaments.

Joining us in the Speaker’s gallery are Mrs. Boyd’s family and friends: her husband, Terry Boyd; her friend Joseph Addley; her siblings, Sheila Bauer, Marg Black and Dave Watt; her siblings-in-law Grant Black and Lin Watt; and her friends Nancy MacIndoe, Peg McArthur, Pat Schram, Kim Tessier and Dave Tessier.

Also in the Speaker’s gallery are David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; and Marilyn Churley, who was the MPP for Riverdale in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and the member for Toronto–Danforth in the 37th and 38th Parliaments. Welcome.

I recognize the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman:

It’s an honour to rise today to pay tribute to Marion Boyd, who sadly passed away in October 2022 at the age of 76 and was MPP from London Centre from 1990 to 1999.

To describe Marion Boyd as anything less than a trailblazer would not be doing her justice. Born here in Toronto, Mrs. Boyd was a proud alumna of Glendon College in my riding of Don Valley West, and it was at Glendon where she met her husband, Terry, as first-year students. Thank you, Terry and the rest of Marion’s family and friends, for being here today.

Mrs. Boyd was a proud feminist, organizer and believer in social justice, and it was those traits that resulted in her impressive and fruitful life. As an administrator at York University, she was successful in organizing the first union contract for faculty members. Afterwards she moved to London, where she served as the executive director of the London Battered Women’s Advocacy Clinic. In that role, and in many other projects, she fought tirelessly to support women facing abuse, a cause she would continue to fight for during and after her political career.

In 1990, she had a big win. She defeated sitting Premier David Peterson in a major upset and was immediately sworn into Premier Bob Rae's cabinet where she would remain until the NDP government's defeat in 1995. She was first appointed Minister of Education before serving as Minister of Community and Social Services, but of course she's most well known for being the first woman to serve as Attorney General. For most of her time in cabinet, she also served concurrently as the minister responsible for women's issues.

Her most famous moment, of course, was Bill 167, the Equality Rights Statute Amendment Act, which would have enshrined rights for same-sex couples similar to those of straight ones. While, regrettably, the Legislature voted against this proposed law, this bill was forwardthinking and one of the first of its kind in Ontario, in the country and in the whole world, and I commend Mrs. Boyd for taking the initiative to do what was right and stand up for the LGBTQ community even though this position was unpopular at the time. That kind of resolve is what inspires me and, I'm sure, many of us still sitting in the chamber today.

When the NDP government fell, Mrs. Boyd retained her seat and dutifully served as her party's critic for justice and native issues until her loss following redistricting in 1999.

Today, we remember Marion Boyd for her tenacity, her spirit, her commitment to fighting for what is right, and I thank her friends and family for joining us here today to honour her and her illustrious life.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack:

I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the Legislature today to give tribute on behalf of the government to former MPP Marion Boyd.

Now, Marion and I did not travel in the same political circles, as my friends across the aisle will understand. I didn't know her well, but I came to respect her immensely. In preparing this tribute, I was reading her obituary the other day and some of the tributes that came out after her death last fall, and the quote that stuck to me was simply, "Marion's life of service is a gift to be treasured." We hear that a lot: life of service. We all do it. I get it, but when you read about her life and what she advocated for and how she led, Marion's life truly was of service and a gift to be treasured.

When preparing this tribute as well, I don't think anyone can say that her life wasn't a commitment to community—London in particular—our province and our country. As was said, she ran provincially in 1985 as the NDP candidate and lost. She ran again in London North Centre in 1987 and lost. Persistent as she was, she ran for the NDP federally in London East during the 1988 freetrade election and lost. But in 1990, Ms. Boyd, through perseverance yet again, was successfully elected to the Legislature as the member for London Centre.

I remember this very well, Speaker, because I lived at that time in London Centre. And who was our MPP, but none other than—and actually a very good friend of mine—then-Premier David Peterson. So what was so significant about that night was, obviously, there was a change in government; a pretty big swing. And I remembered the then-Premier-elect saying, “I guess it wasn’t such a bad idea for an election after all.” I think somebody else was elected in that election, if I’m not mistaken, Speaker, but those of us in London were really taken aback by the defeat of the Premier in that seat, and a significant defeat it was. The upset sent shockwaves through the city and the province and, I can say, as a Tory knocking on doors in that election in that riding, which we knew we weren’t going to win, it was astounding. It was an amazing upset; it was an amazing victory. And her perseverance certainly showed the way.

As I said, I met her a few times—not a lot. But, again, when I did talk to her and when we did speak, she really wasn’t as partisan as you might think. She really cared about the community and we’ll hear, I’m sure, about the many things she advocated for.

As we all know, she was appointed Minister of Education on October 1, 1990, by then-Premier Bob Rae. While holding this position, Premier Rae decided to add the minister responsible for women’s issues to her portfolio in 1991. It was a great addition to her responsibilities as she was widely known as a feminist, which—okay. But forget that. I’d like to take the word “feminist” away. She advocated for things she truly believed in and was an organizer.

Before becoming an MPP, she was the executive director of the London Battered Women’s Advocacy Clinic—that I remember being on and sat on the committee—to end woman abuse. While holding the position of minister responsible for women’s issues, she led a campaign against domestic violence. In many ways, she was ahead of her time.

Back to politics: She became the Minister of Community and Social Services in 1991 and remained in that role until 1993, when she became, as was said, Ontario’s first female Attorney General, paving the way for future women to hold this position, such as Ministers Madeleine Meilleur and Caroline Mulroney. As well, Ms. Boyd was the first non-lawyer to hold that position—I don’t know if that ever happened before or since in this House, but I rather doubt it.

She was once quoted as saying, “So many people don’t have the same opportunities, yet when you get to know them as individuals they have just as much potential.” This must have been what Premier Rae and her colleagues experienced when they got to know Marion. I’ve been told from people who’ve sat in this House that at the time they saw her as a capable and well-respected leader.

After the 1995 election, Marion went on to serve as the MPP for London Centre until 1999. Impressively, she was one of only 17 NDP members who retained their seats in the 1995 provincial election and went on, while in opposition, to hold key positions within the NDP caucus, highlighting again her strong advocacy skills and leadership abilities.

As I wrap up, I'd like to take time to recognize her family members, who I'll come up to and say hello to in a few minutes if you would allow me, please, and thank you for your attendance. After politics, I think everyone knows Marion continued her life of community service. In 2000, she was appointed chair of the Task Force on the Health Effects of Woman Abuse. She also served as a bencher on the Law Society of Upper Canada and as an adjudicator with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Marion Boyd served her family, her constituents, her province and her country with excellence and distinction. God bless Marion Boyd. Her treasured gifts of service will be missed.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler:

I rise today to honour the life and legacy of my friend and mentor Marion Boyd: Ontario's first woman—and first non-lawyer—Attorney General; former Minister of Education, Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues; a bencher at the Law Society of Upper Canada; a licensed lay worship leader in the United Church; and a lifelong champion for social justice. 1430

It's always a privilege for MPPs to pay tribute to those who came before us, but it is a rare opportunity to be able to publicly thank and celebrate a former MPP who had such a profound influence on my own life and my standing before you today.

Like many Ontarians, I first learned of Marion Boyd on September 6, 1990, when she gained fame as the NDP "giant-killer" who defeated former Liberal Premier David Peterson in the riding of London Centre. Shortly afterwards, I came to Queen's Park myself, as a staffer in the NDP government, where I was in awe of and definitely intimidated by Marion Boyd. She was so strong, so principled, so competent, so inspiring, so clear-eyed and unwavering in her vision and commitment to social justice.

To many of us—and, I'm sure, to the leader of the official opposition—Marion was already a feminist icon when she arrived in office because of her remarkable record of advocacy and achievement as executive director of the London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre.

Irene Mathyssen, elected alongside Marion in London– Fanshawe in 1990, remembers Marion's incredible courage, integrity and leadership in the London community. Marion was at the table when the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse was established, Ontario's first VAW coordinating committee. Marion worked tirelessly with the London Police Service to make London the first community to implement mandatory charging, raising local, provincial and national awareness of domestic violence as a criminal offence. Marion was there to march in London's first Pride parade. She helped organize London's first Take Back the Night march.

Here at Queen's Park, Marion continued to make a difference for women, children and marginalized communities in this province, especially in her role as Attorney General. In 1992, the Morgentaler Clinic was firebombed. Death threats were made against doctors, and women seeking abortions were intimidated and harassed. As Attorney General, Marion worked immediately and closely with her cabinet colleague and then-health minister Frances Lankin to initiate and implement a legal injunction for no-protest zones around abortion clinics and hospitals that protected women's access to health care until provincial legislation was passed in 2017. This was, her family told me, one of her proudest accomplishments.

Recalling that experience and their time together as MPPs, Frances Lankin describes Marion as brave, strong and tough, someone whose positions on issues were always carefully considered and well thought out.

Of course, Marion will forever be remembered for her courage in bringing forward Bill 167, legislation that prohibited discrimination against same-sex couples. Although the bill failed in a free vote, Marion paved the way for recognition of equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community and was delighted to be vindicated five years later by the Supreme Court ruling. I was here for Marion's leadoff speech on that bill, in which she brilliantly referenced the Canadian family known to the world as representing the best in family values: Matthew Cuthbert; his sister, Marilla; and their adopted child, Anne Shirley. In using the example of Anne of Green Gables, Marion spoke to the obligation of recognizing that families come in many different forms and all are equally deserving of support. I knew in that moment that Marion was more than a feminist icon; she was also a kindred spirit.

After the 1995 election, I moved into Marion's riding and was excited to become involved in her NDP riding association. I came to know her warmth and her kindness, her generosity and compassion, her deep connections with the NDP volunteers who had helped her through six campaigns, from her first three runs for office to her electoral successes in 1990 and 1995 to her final campaign in 1999.

Marion had a smile that could light up a room, often with a twinkle in her eye and an infectious, impish grin.

Another of her cabinet colleagues, Marilyn Churley, said, "Marion was a saint among us, but a saint with a wicked sense of humour and a lovely, sparkling laugh."

Marion was also deeply committed to supporting and encouraging other women to stand for elected office, and I was a direct beneficiary of that when deciding to run for the school board in 2000. She said, of course, I should, and took out her chequebook to write me my first campaign donation. Although she had moved out of London by 2013 when the by-election was called in London West, she was one of the first people I talked to about running. Her confidence and steadfast support were instrumental in my decision.

Marion's passion for social justice was matched only by her deeply held faith and her love of family. Family meant everything to Marion: her loving husband, Terry; and dear friend and confidant, Joseph Dunlop-Addley; her cherished daughter, Tina, who sadly passed away in 2017; her parents, and especially her mother, Dorothy, who Marion shared an

apartment with in Toronto while serving at Queen's Park; her siblings, their spouses and their children; and her large close-knit extended family circle. I want to welcome all of Marion's family members and friends who have joined us today, and especially my own long-time friends Terry and Joseph.

On behalf of this Legislature, I offer our deepest condolences for your loss and our profound gratitude for Marion's distinguished life of public service which made life better for so many Ontarians.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We give thanks for the life and public service of Marion Boyd