

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to rise today to share an incredible story of an Albertan who is an inspiration for us all. Norma Bastidas lives in southwest Calgary, and she's a single mother of two.

Now, her 14-year-old son suffers from cone-rod dystrophy. It's a progressive condition that often results in significant vision loss. Rather than waiting for someone else to do something about this, Norma has taken it upon herself to search to the ends of the earth for a cure. Along with Operation Eyesight Universal, the Foundation Fighting Blindness, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind she has launched an initiative to help combat vision loss.

Norma is an ultramarathon runner, and to bring attention to a cause that affects more than 160 million people, she will literally run all over the world. Norma will compete in seven ultramarathons on seven continents in seven months, seven-on-seven-in-seven. She will run 1,400 kilometers through some of the most hostile environments: the thick jungles of Brazil, the subzero temperatures of Antarctica, and the hottest deserts on the planet.

When she completes her journey, the 777 Run for Sight, she will be the first person in history to do so. It won't be easy, Mr. Speaker. Ultramarathons are one of the toughest challenges in sports. The first race alone is equal to running up and down Mount Everest. In this effort Norma will express how lucky we are to have the gift of sight and how we need to share our good fortune with others who need support in dealing with vision loss.

The project will focus on helping to find the causes and ultimately the cure for inherited retinal diseases that cause vision loss. Twenty-five years ago finding a cure for retinal dystrophies was considered impossible, but today research has led to promising treatments to prevent and in some cases even restore vision.

People can follow along on normabastidas.com in her quest for \$100,000.