

SPEAKING NOTES
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE OTTAWA
DIPLOMATIC ASSOCIATION AND WOMEN AMBASSADORS OF
OTTAWA TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

OTTAWA
MARCH 8, 2011

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you today as we gather to celebrate International Women's Day 2011. Each year, March 8 provides an occasion for individuals, families, communities and organizations of all kinds to both recognize and to reflect upon the social, political, intellectual and economic contributions and achievements of women.

It was one hundred years ago on March 19, 1911, that International Women's Day was honoured for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. The Day was a focal point for the many inequities faced by women, particularly in labour related matters such as working hours and wages. It is well to remember that women in those days did not have the right to vote and, in Canada, were not considered to be eligible for appointment to the Senate.

Progress on all fronts has been made since those days, although much remains to be done to address social injustices and biases which continue to this day. We have been fortunate in Canada to have had many strong women over the years providing the strong leadership required. Among the best known are the Famous Five, whose statues grace Parliament Hill. The names of Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby have become those who followed.

Given the strength of character and leadership exhibited by many women over the last century, this year's theme in Canada for International Women's Day seems particularly appropriate. "Strong Leadership. Strong Women. Strong World: Equality."

Let us celebrate those who have worked so hard to bring about change, let us be mindful of the progress made to date, and let us continue to work each and every day to bring about equality for women in every forum and in every part of the world.