

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

ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION
TO CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

OTTAWA
OCTOBER 18, 2011

Minister Ambrose,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the historic quarters of the Speaker of the Senate where we are gathered to celebrate Women's History Month. Each year since 1992, October has provided an occasion for individuals, families, communities and organizations of all kinds to both recognize and reflect upon the social, political, intellectual and economic contributions of women to our society.

The theme in Canada for Women's History Month this year focuses on the role of women in the military over the years. This was primarily in the area of civilian support in the early years, but the two world wars brought women to the forefront when women's sections were first created.

Women have always answered the call, accepting both the challenges and the risks, and are now able to serve in every occupation within the Canadian Forces, including combat. From Laura Secord's historic warning in 1813 right through to battlefield losses in Afghanistan, the history of women's participation in all areas of the military is a proud one which continues to be augmented with each passing day.

The first woman to serve as a Canadian Senator was Cairine Reay Wilson, who was appointed on February 15, 1930 following the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Person's Case. You will see a group of statues outside commemorating her and the other members of the Famous 5 for their efforts to bring equality to the status of women. There are currently 35 women in the Senate, including the Honourable Pamela Wallin, who is the Chair of our Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, as well as being the first honorary colonel in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Let us remember those who have served with distinction and courage, let us be mindful of the progress made to date, and let us celebrate the accomplishments of all those women who have become one with the history of our military.

I would now like to invite The Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, to share a few thoughts with us.