

Margaret Catley Carlson, who joined External Affairs in 1966, was the first female foreign service officer not to resign upon her marriage in 1970 to a colleague in the Department. She later pursued her career outside External Affairs, first as President of the Canadian International Development Agency, and then Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare. Earlier this year, she moved to New York to become President of the Population Council.

Other women who have held assistant deputy minister positions in the Department include Louise Fréchette, who later became Canada's first woman Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in 1991. Jean McCloskey was the first woman Assistant Deputy Minister for the Asia-Pacific Branch. She was subsequently appointed President of Investment Canada, and recently became Associate Deputy Minister of the Department of Finance.

Today's women in External Affairs and International Trade Canada share a legacy of determination inspired by the women I have just mentioned and many others over the years. Their determination has helped us become more sensitive to gender-based stereotypes and discrimination. Women in this Department have made historic contributions to Canada's social and economic development through their paid and unpaid work. But, many of their accomplishments remain unrecognized, unknown or ignored in our history books—or even our departmental folklore!

The goal of women's history month is to write women back into history. The theme this year is "HERstory" of Work: Recognizing Women's Contributions. It is also intended to highlight the importance of increasing women's participation at all levels of the Department's workforce, and the need for innovative ways in accommodating professional careers and family and home responsibilities. As well, the theme underlines the need to gain a better understanding of, and give greater value to, women's accomplishments.

This commemoration is a tangible reminder of Canada's leading international role in promoting greater equality for women. Canada was instrumental in drafting the strategies for the advancement of women at the 1985 World Conference on Women and continues to play a lead role in pressing for action in international fora.

Today, women in this country are a permanent and powerful presence in the workplace. Women currently make up 45 percent of Canada's labour force and almost half of the Department's workforce. They accounted for almost three-quarters of all growth in employment in Canada between 1975 and 1991.

Closer to home, I also want to remind you that last April I announced the creation of an employment equity strategy for this Department that was designed specifically to address the issues of importance to women and to redress gender