

Statements by Ministers

It was my honour, Mr. Speaker, to lead the Canadian delegation at the World Conference on Women in Nairobi last July. I was pleased to have on the delegation representatives from a broad range of groups involved in the status of women, federal, provincial and territorial Ministers, Members of this House from all Parties, representatives of non-governmental women's groups and federal Government officials. I believe Canada played a key role both at the Nairobi Conference and in the crucial preparatory period preceding it. I think we can take credit as a nation, as a Parliament and as Canadians because, in addition to being heavily involved in drafting strategies, Canada proposed several key resolutions, including a precedent-setting resolution supporting the rights of indigenous women.

As well, Canada was the lead country in calling for a precedent-setting meeting of Commonwealth Ministers for women's affairs. This meeting took place just prior to the Nairobi Conference. It was once again an opportunity for preparatory work for the present meetings going on between heads of Commonwealth Governments.

Now as we begin to implement the forward-looking strategies within Canada, we must continue to increase the efforts we have already begun in a number of areas. As a first step, I am working with my Cabinet colleagues to discuss how the strategies can be implemented within each of their areas of responsibility. As well, yesterday I convened a special meeting of provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. Our discussions focused on ways in which the forward looking strategies apply within each of the jurisdictions within our nation. I will distribute this document widely, especially to women's groups. Indeed, I would suggest that the Nairobi strategies are required reading for all women and men who believe in Canada's future.

These forward-looking strategies need some interpretation. They comprise over 370 paragraphs divided into five broad sections dealing with equality, development, peace, areas of concerns and international and regional co-operation. Each section identifies obstacles to progress, basic strategies to overcome those obstacles and a range of measures for the implementation of basic strategies, many in areas not traditionally considered as women's issues. For example, in areas of energy, environment and transportation.

● (1210)

Some of the concrete measures proposed in this broad, global, forward-looking strategy, in the document from the World Government meeting to Governments, call for things which are close to home to Canadians. For example, I think of the resolution for an assessment of the impact of economic development policies on women, of the elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace, of the measures to reduce negative effects of technological change on women, of the health care which is accessible and available to women, of the increased attention to the need for girls and women to receive education in science and technology, of the integration of women's needs and views in the design and planning of homes

and communities, and of the promotion of women's roles as owners and operators of transportation. The list goes on. Far from being some kind of esoteric, international statement, it comes directly into the lives of Canadians and of Canadian women.

My Government is firmly convinced that women's concerns must be integrated in all of our ongoing policy work in order to remove or reduce any impact on men and women before decisions are made. In putting the forward-looking strategies into practice in Canada, our initial emphasis will be on the continuation of our economic integration strategy for women.

[*Translation*]

This strategy was the mainstay of the commitments we made in the Speech from the Throne. Through legislation and by setting an example we have already begun to meet these commitments.

[*English*]

Last night, we honoured six Canadian women at the seventh annual Persons Awards Ceremony—Grace Hartman, Marguerite Bergeron-Tremblay, Nazla Dane, Evelyn O'Bomsawin-Lamirande, Gemma Pelletier Caron and Pearl Steen. All these women have had long histories of involvement in activities to improve the status of women within their own communities and across Canada. Their actions echo Nellie McClung's vision of women's role, as she expressed it in 1910, when she said:

Women set the standards for the world, and it is for the women of Canada to set the standards high.

As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to create the conditions which will enable Canadian women, on an equal basis with men, to pursue their ambitions, realize their potential and discharge their full responsibilities in all spheres of society. I invite colleagues in the House to join with us in this high purpose.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to pay tribute to some of the winners of the Persons Awards for 1985. After 50 years of oblivion, this award is now being given in recognition of extraordinary contributions to the quality of life of women in Canada.

Marguerite Bergeron-Tremblay and Evelyn O'Bomsawin-Lamirande are honouring us today with their presence in the gallery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Pépin: Mrs. Bergeron-Tremblay is a militant of long standing and has been active in the Lac-Saint-Jean area. She has worked with the Cercle des Fermières and the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, to name just a few.

Mrs. O'Bomsawin-Lamirande has worked unstintingly for the cause of native women. She was among those who fought for the repeal of discriminatory provisions in the Indian Act.