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MADAME GISELE CÔTÉ-HARPER ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

The Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister for External Relations, is pleased to announce that Mrs. Gisèle Côté-Harper from Quebec City was elected a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The election took place in New York at a recent meeting of the States Parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Government of Canada had nominated Mrs. Côté-Harper to succeed Mr. Walter Surma Tarnopolsky, who was recently appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal, having served on the Committee from 1977-1983.

The Human Rights Committee, composed of 18 experts from an equal number of countries, each sitting in their personal capacity, is the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on December 16, 1966 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Covenant came into force on March 23, 1976 and has now been ratified by 76 states; Canada ratified on May 18, 1976. The Committee also has a quasi-judicial role when it receives complaints in accordance with the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. The States Parties to the Optional Protocol, who now number 30 (including Canada), recognize the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications from individuals subject to their jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Covenant.

The Committee holds three sessions annually either at U.N. Headquarters in New York or at the Office of the U.N. in Geneva where the U.N. Centre for Human Rights is located.

Mrs. Côté-Harper, who is a professor of penal law at Laval University, will be the first woman to sit on the Committee.

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