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1997 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case

OTTAWA -- The Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), today announced the recipients of the 1997 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

The recipients of this year's Awards are:

Dr. E. Margaret Fulton of Salt Spring Island, British Columbia
Sheila D. Gosselle of Edmonton, Alberta
Hedwidge Landry of Caraquet, New Brunswick
Nancyruth of Toronto, Ontario
Dr. Marguerite E. Ritchie, Q. C. of Ottawa, Ontario

The Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case are awarded annually to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution toward promoting the equality of women in Canada.

The 1997 Awards will be presented at a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Monday, October 20, 1997 at 10:00 a.m. His Excellency the Right Honourable Roméo LeBlanc, Governor General of Canada, will preside over the ceremony, and will present the Awards medals to the recipients.

The Awards commemorate the lengthy legal and political struggle for women's constitutional right to be recognized as persons, undertaken in the 1920s under the leadership of five Alberta women -- Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Irene Paribby and Henrietta Muir Edwards. Their efforts, which became known as the Persons Case, were rewarded by the decision rendered by the British Privy Council on October 18, 1929, declaring Canadian women to be persons and thus eligible for appointment to the Senate. The Government of Canada established the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case in 1979 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this decision, and to salute the contributions of contemporary women to the advancement of women's equality.

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"Through their accomplishments, the recipients of this year's Award amply demonstrate the diversity of women's contributions to this country, through a wide spectrum of activities in many fields of endeavour, undertaken nationally, provincially and at the community level in all regions of Canada," said Dr. Fry. "Working in partnership with many other Canadians who believe in equality, the Awards recipients have bestowed a legacy of justice, fairness, compassion and hope for the future."

Nominations for the 1997 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case were submitted by individuals, women's groups and other organizations across Canada. The five recipients were selected by an independent selection committee.

There have been 97 recipients of the Awards to date, including: Thérèse Casgrain, who worked tirelessly to obtain the vote for women in Quebec; Marie Hamilton, champion of the advancement of Black women; Shirley Carr, the first woman in the world to head a national labour body; Mary Two-Axe Earty, Aboriginal women's rights activist; and Marthe Asselin Vaillancourt, who has challenged violence against women throughout her life.

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(Biographies of this year's recipients are attached)

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