Mr. Chancellor, it is with great pleasure that I introduce to you The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada. The great jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that the law embodies the story of a nation’s development. A profound new chapter is about to be written in Canada’s story, and Chief Justice McLachlin undoubtedly will be one of its principal authors. We honour her today for her exceptional service to the law and to Canadians.

Surely few careers in the law have been as awe-inspiring as Beverley McLachlin’s. Since her days as a student at the University of Alberta, where she earned top honours, to her elevation to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, she has excelled at all aspects of the law. A formidable and respected litigator, she was also an inspiring professor of evidence in the Faculty of Law at The University of British Columbia. This wealth of experience with both theory and practice made her admirably qualified to serve as a judge.

Her talent was recognized with an appointment to the County Court of Vancouver in 1981; five months later she sat on the bench of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. A few short years after, she was appointed to the Court of Appeal for this province. Her performance was such that she became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 1988 and was elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada the following year.

And indeed, her swift ascent through the courts reflects the breadth and depth of her knowledge, experience, and intelligence. An astute jurist, she quickly earned a reputation for the cogency of her judgments, for her superb administrative talents, and for her writing, especially in constitutional law. Never one to shy away from making difficult decisions, she has dealt with a broad variety of daunting issues. She has earned a deserved reputation for the kind of research and analysis that results in decisions of exceptional clarity.

Mr. Chancellor, the Supreme Court of Canada will play a pivotal role in many of the profound issues facing this country, issues of significant social, political, and cultural consequence. In Beverley McLachlin we have a Chief Justice who possesses one of the finest legal minds in this country, and an individual who has proven herself both fearless and fair in exercising her judgment. We are in the most capable of hands.

Several universities have presented Chief Justice McLachlin with honorary degrees for her superb work. Let us, too, show our deep respect for her remarkable contributions to the law and to society. Mr. Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate of this University, I ask that you confer upon Beverley McLachlin the degree Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.