It is my special privilege, Mr. Chancellor, to present Iona Campagnolo, a distinguished Canadian whose long and memorable career as politician and impassioned human rights advocate gives meaning to the words: "Life consists of action." Her fervent commitment to public service and to the principles of justice and equality has inspired many Canadians.

Born on Galiano Island, she was educated and has spent much of her life in Northern British Columbia where she worked first as a radio broadcaster. Here, she served as Trustee and Board Chair of the Prince Rupert School Board from 1966-72, then as Municipal Councillor for Prince Rupert. These were precursors to a national political career punctuated by remarkable high points.

In 1974 Iona Campagnolo was elected Member of Parliament for Skeena, and was named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. She quickly gave voice to the concerns of the North. Her talent and integrity were soon recognized, and she was appointed to the Federal Cabinet, only the fifth woman in Canada to be so honoured. As Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, she infused her portfolio with energy, developing Canada’s national sport and fitness policies, and attracting the attention of Canadians coast-to-coast.

In 1979 she left political office and returned to broadcasting as host of the CBC’s One of a Kind, while simultaneously maintaining a busy schedule as consultant and advisor. In 1982, in an expression of esteem and confidence, the Liberal Party of Canada elected her its first woman President, a position she held for two successive terms, the second by acclamation. As President, she championed equal participation for women and youth in the political life of the Party.

Indeed, it is as champion that we know her best. A formidable opponent of injustice and intolerance, she holds a vision of a world free of racism, sexism and classism. In her public and private lives, she determinedly pursues that vision.

She has served as a consultant for CUSO, and for ten years carried out assignments in Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Thailand, and Gambia. She was a member of the first official campaign delegation to visit Angola after its independence from Portugal in 1975. In 1990, as a member of the Inter-Church Committee for Human Rights, she investigated and reported human rights abuses in Peru.
For her devotion to public service, Iona Campagnolo has received many honours. Now Chancellor of The University of Northern British Columbia, she holds two honoured names given to her by the Tsimpsean and Haida nations. She is a Member of the Order of Canada, and a recipient of Her Majesty’s Silver Jubilee Medal.

Iona Campagnolo lived her formative years at a salmon cannery on the Skeena River. Her journey from that place has been an example of what talent combined with experience, passion and integrity can achieve. Mr. Chancellor, I take great pride in asking that you present Iona Campagnolo with the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.