

OPINION

WOMEN & LEADERSHIP

Famous 5 Ottawa tries to inspire courage, leadership in young women

The inclusion of young women in meaningful roles with real responsibilities encourages the idea that public service and public life is a viable career option they might wish to consider.



BY ISABEL METCALFE

OTTAWA—How appropriate for Canadian women that the first International Day of the Girl Child was marked in the month of October, the same month we celebrate becoming “persons” thanks to the efforts of The Famous 5, the courageous Albertan women who in 1929 secured the right of women to serve in the Senate of Canada by having the Queen’s Privy Council in England declare that indeed, “women are persons too.”

Colourful, courageous, controversial, commanding, cogent and compelling. These words were used to describe Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby—the Famous 5—in 1929. They also appropriately describe professor emeritus Caroline Andrew, professor emeritus Corinne Gallant, community activist Régine Alende Tshombokongo, researcher Saara Bjanji, and youth advocate Joanne Cave, the recipients of the Governor General’s Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case, in 2012.

How fitting that the latter two of these women are certifiably young, and began their amazing accomplishments when they were in girlhood themselves.

Famous 5 Ottawa is the volunteer group that came together in 1998 to successfully persuade the government to place the *Women Are Persons!* Monument on Parliament Hill and ensure the placement of the Famous 5 on the \$50 banknote. In 2007, we reconvened to celebrate the successes of Canadian women and to honour them as nation-builders through the sponsorship and partnership with Enbridge. It is in this manner that each year, in October, our luncheon honours the Persons Case Awards recipients.

We come together two more times each year to celebrate other Canadian women’s accomplishment in public life; women like Flora MacDonald, Sheila Cops,

Pamela Wallin (before her elevation to the Senate), Sheila Fraser, Louise Arbour, and Hazel McCallion.

In conjunction with our luncheon series, our honourees participate with us in visiting local high schools to educate students on that women are nation builders.

Today, we have expanded our efforts and partnerships to build new programs that provide opportunities for young women.

Our highly-successful Norton Rose Mentorship Program helps young women develop the skills necessary to successfully pursue public life by pursuing speaking opportunities and presence at events. Mentoring and coaching them, we believe that young women should be in front of the room speaking and not at the back of the room organizing. Over the last year, five young women have been given the chance to get national media attention, speak at local high schools, and play a prominent role introducing our speakers at the Enbridge Luncheons. Norton Rose honourees join the Famous 5 Ottawa Committee and gain valuable volunteer board experience and skills.

We have also developed a rewarding partnership with Christie Lake Kids—an Ottawa-based organization that provides recreation opportunities for young people from lower incomes—inviting girls to attend every event hosted and organized by Famous 5 Ottawa. This past week, five Christie Lake

Kids attended the ceremony for the Persons Case Awards at Rideau Hall, meeting with former prime minister Joe Clark and his partner Maureen McTeer. The Christie Lake Kids also accompany our nation-builders to local schools working to command the attention of an auditorium full of their peers, sit at corporate tables during our luncheons and, more importantly, we take them to incorporate pitch sessions to gain the experience of presenting in the boardroom.

Our focus on young women and girls has sparked up Famous 5 Ottawa, enhanced our work, brought diversity, energy and vibrancy to our organization. The inclusion of young women in meaningful roles with real responsibilities encourages the idea that public service and public life is a viable career option they might wish to consider. The Famous 5 were politicians, activists and doers. Their traditions lauded courage, hard work and integrity. We continue the dreams of equality for women and girls in significant and substantial ways. If you would like to know more about Famous 5 Ottawa, or join our organization, please visit our website at www.famous5Ottawa.com.

We are always looking for ways to help build our country and make it a better nation.

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OPINION

FOODSERVICES & GOVERNMENT

Food for political thought: restaurant and foodservices deserve to be recognized by feds as an industry in its own right

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BY GARTH WHYTE

TORONTO—If I were to ask Members of Parliament and Senators for a list of the best restaurants in Ottawa, they could probably come up with one pretty quickly. But if I asked them to name the fourth largest employer in Canada, I bet the answer wouldn’t be so forthcoming.

The restaurant and foodservices industry sees more than \$65-billion in annual sales and directly employs more than a million Canadians. That represents about 6.5 per cent of the country’s entire workforce which is more than agriculture, forestry, auto manufacturing, oil and gas extraction, and mining combined. An additional 250,000 Cana-

adians are also indirectly employed by our industry as suppliers, distributors and consultants. And that doesn’t even include the economic spin-offs that come from the restaurants in our communities. According to Statistics Canada—for every dollar that is spent in a restaurant, another \$1.85 is spent in the rest of the economy. That’s more than the retail sector.

Restaurants also give many Canadians their first job. One in five young people between the ages of 15 and 24 work in foodservices and nearly 32 per cent of us have worked in the industry at some point during our lives. We also open doors for new Canadians as they look to establish themselves in this country and gain important employment experience.

It sounds like a cliché, but the restaurant industry is still a business where you can start at the bottom and work your way up to the top. I’ve met prominent independent restaurant owners

and chain executives who started their careers washing dishes or bussing tables. A CEO recently told me he gave a franchise to a Canadian who immigrated here several years ago and started out scrubbing pots.

Good things happen when you work with an industry filled with entrepreneurs. And this will be one of the main messages that our members will be taking to Parliament Hill this week.

As one of Canada’s largest employers and one of the largest contributors to our economy, restaurant and foodservices deserve to be recognized by the federal government as an industry in its own right.

Currently, restaurants are treated as an afterthought in economic, social, health and agri-food policy discussions. For example, despite the fact that restaurants account for over 50 per cent of the jobs in the tourism industry, we are little more than a postscript in Canada’s tourism strategy.

Now—while a minister for Restaurants and Foodservices would be wonderful, many of our challenges could be addressed by simply assigning responsibility for our sector to an assistant deputy minister within a key

department such as Industry Canada. This way, someone in the federal government will be looking out for our interests. It would also give restaurants somebody to coordinate with on issues like tax policy, regulation and the recent XL Foods meat recall.

Other matters that our members will be raising in Ottawa include—food tax unfairness, supply management, the growing labour shortage and our commitment to informed dining.

Over the past several years, the grocery industry has introduced thousands of new “heat and eat” products that are virtually identical to what can be found on restaurant menus. The difference is that the grocery products—many of which are processed off-shore—are GST exempt while those prepared in Canadian restaurants are taxed. This is unfair and must be changed.

It is also unfair that frozen pizza manufacturers are allowed to pay for Canadian mozzarella at market prices in the United States. Fresh pizza makers, on the other hand, pay up to 30 per cent more for their mozzarella. Canada needs to level that playing field.

The federal government will also have to address our looming labour

shortage. By 2030, we will be scrambling to fill more than 135,000 jobs. The government must continue to reduce barriers and disincentives to work; align immigration policy with demand; and improve programs that will help employers respond to this growing problem.

Finally, our members will be telling MPs and Senators about the comprehensive nutritional information that chain restaurants are making available to their customers. This includes calorie counts, fat and sodium values. We are committed to providing Canadians with the best that nature has to offer.

It is easy to take restaurants for granted, but parliamentarians shouldn’t. We are an industry that brings people together. We touch the lives of Canadians in every part of this country. Restaurants create communities and build neighbourhoods. They are an important part of what makes Canada great.

Garth Whyte is the president and CEO of the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association which represents more than 30,000 restaurants, bars, cafeterias, coffee shops, and caterers across the country.

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