

The businesses on these pages support the Heart & Stroke Foundation annual appeal to find a cure for heart disease.

# Heart disease is leading cause of death in Canadian women

The Hon. Michael Chong, P.C. M.P.



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*Please give generously*

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February is Heart Month. Many people think of heart disease as a male health problem. However, heart disease is the leading cause of death in women.

Women tend to be safeguarded from heart disease prior to menopause because of the protective effect of estrogen, but not always. For example, pre-menopausal women with diabetes have similar risk to men of the same age because diabetes cancels out the protective effect that estrogen provides.

In the past, it was believed that women had different warning signals than men. This may not be the case. Both women and men may experience typical or non-typical symptoms such as nausea, sweating, pain in the arm, throat, jaw or pain that is unusual. However, women may describe their pain differ-

ently than men. Nevertheless, the most common symptom in women is still chest pain.

Since heart disease and stroke are Canada's leading cause of death in women and men, it's important to understand how to take steps to lessen the chances of these serious illnesses. A great place to start is to learn to identify and control your risk factors.

While you can't control your age, family history, gender or ethnicity, there are many other risk factors – obesity, diabetes, smoking, high blood pressure and elevated blood cholesterol – that you can control. In addition, women sometimes may ignore warning signs of heart disease – often with devastating results. But the reality is heart disease doesn't discriminate.

To protect themselves, it is important for women to

recognize all of the warning signals of a heart attack and seek immediate medical attention. Signals may be mild

or severe and may come and go, so don't take chances – seek immediate medical attention.

## Heart Month Making a difference

Every February during Heart Month, something heart-warming happens – tens of thousands of individuals, businesses and community organizations come together to show their support for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

In February of 2006, these volunteers, businesses and community organizations came together again to make a remarkable difference. The Foundation has come a long way, thanks to you.

### History of Heart Month

In the early 1950s, the American Heart Association (AHA) introduced a new campaign called Heart Sunday. Heart Sunday, the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day, allowed communities to collectively demonstrate their support for the AHA by collecting donations.

This idea was slowly adopted in British Columbia in the mid-1950s and then later in Ontario in 1958, and eventually across Canada. The idea of dedicating an entire month to raising funds grew from this campaign and has led us to where we are today, almost 50 years later, with a strong door-to-door campaign during Heart Month. It raises almost \$10 million annually in support of research into the root causes of heart disease and stroke.

From the 1960s through the early 1990s, door-to-door fundraising was the primary focus of Heart Month. Today, Heart Month is a much larger campaign that spans the area of fundraising, community engagement and awareness generation. Through any one of these activities, Heart Month is a campaign that mobilizes Canadians to rally together in support of the mission. Below see how.

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**Margaret and Bob**