



## **SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

### **Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. Irwin Cotler June 1991**

Madam Chancellor, it is my very great privilege to present to you Irwin Cotler, lawyer and human rights champion, whose defense of human value against degradation seeks fair hearings for the disenfranchised and freedom for prisoners of conscience. His struggle to ensure that those who lay claim to their human rights are stronger than those who oppress them, takes sustenance from the words of Andrei Sakharov: "I may not know what will help the cause of human rights, but I do know that it will not be helped by silence." Because silence breeds the cruelest lies, Irwin Cotler lent his voice to former Russian dissident Natan Sharansky, labouring eight years to secure his release.

A teacher of constitutional law, the Canadian Charter and civil liberties at McGill University since 1973, Irwin Cotler is himself a graduate of McGill and Yale. An active civil libertarian at home and abroad, he serves as a member of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Chairman of the Canadian Helsinki Watch Group, and special counsel to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. He has worked on behalf of Soviet, South African and Latin American dissidents, Vietnamese refugees in Canada, and native Canadians. His pioneering service to international human rights law and advocacy has been recognized by a Killam Memorial Fellowship, the Sharansky Lectureship in Human Rights, and Honorary Degrees from Bar-Ilan University and York University.

In Herbert Spencer's words: "No one can be perfectly free till all are free". Irwin Cotler teaches us that freedom was never won through indifference, that the violated rights of others can be restored through individual action. Madam Chancellor, in the name of the Senate of this University, I am honoured to present Irwin Cotler for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.