

# A victory over a madman

## Women honored for work after Polytechnique massacre

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THE GAZETTE

Two women honored yesterday for their academic and social work in the wake of last year's massacre at Ecole Polytechnique said simply that it was a victory.

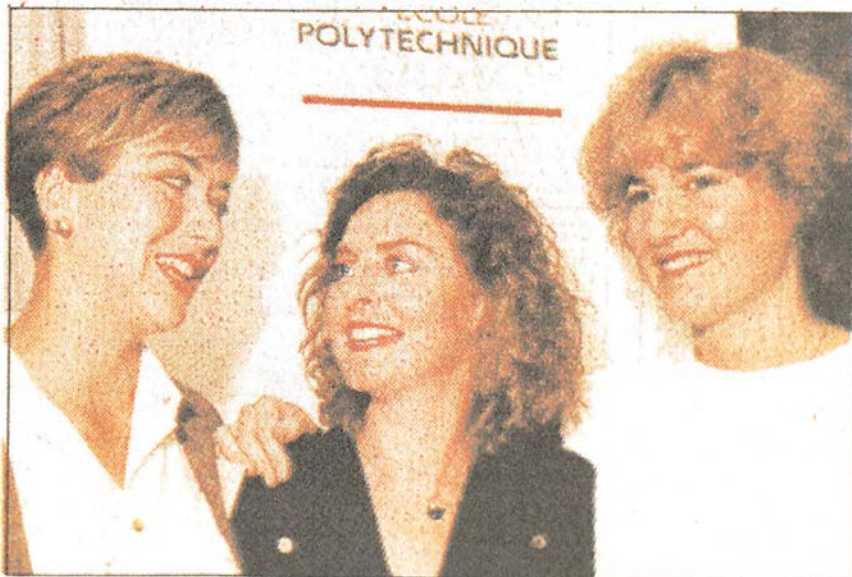
"For me, it is a way of saying to Marc Lépine that women will continue to be present and active in the fields of science and engineering," Nathalie Provost told reporters.

"Because I lived through the shooting, it is important to me that he doesn't win," said Provost, one of 13 people wounded after Lépine entered the engineering school last Dec. 6 with a semi-automatic rifle and a searing hatred of women he called feminists. Fourteen women were killed that night.

Provost, 23, noted with pride that one in four first-year students enrolled this year at the engineering school affiliated with the Université de Montréal is a woman.

Lépine, who killed himself to end the rampage that sent waves of horror and revulsion around the world, left a legacy that he could not have imagined, said Heidi Rathjen, who also was given a \$3,000 award yesterday.

"We are more determined now to change society for the better," said



GAZETTE, RICHARD ARLESS JR

**Nathalie Provost (left), Heidi Rathjen (right), received awards yesterday from Jocelyne Légaré of sponsor Alfred Dallaire Funeral Homes.**

Rathjen, 24. "We are all responsible for society. So let's do something right now. All of us."

Rathjen helped handle media requests from around the world after the shooting, organized a tribute to the victims and co-ordinated a Canada-wide campaign against the sale of automatic weapons.

About 500,000 signatures were

collected on a petition that was forwarded to Ottawa.

The women were the first to receive money from the fund set up by Alfred Dallaire Funeral Homes, the firm which handled the funerals of Lépine's victims. The firm put the money it received from the

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THE GAZETTE, MONTREAL, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1990

## WOMEN 'A Marc Lépine could still get a semi-automatic'

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university into the Women Engineering Students' Memorial Fund and turned it over to a committee that will handle the fund, solicit more money and select deserving female students. The fund now stands at \$53,000.

Interest from the fund will go to women who distinguish themselves on the academic level and by their degree of social commitment, said Jocelyne Légaré, vice-president of Alfred Dallaire and a member of the fund committee.

Provost, who tried to reason with Lépine seconds before he embarked on his deadly rampage, was wounded in the leg.

She said women have to continue breaking down traditional barriers and entering the professions.

"I think that in that way, we will have a better world. It is important that men and women, everyone

work together," she said.

Rathjen, who begins work at Bell Canada in two weeks, said the shooting proved to her that the time to work for social change is now.

Rathjen, who plans to pay off some debts with the \$3,000, said she will continue with her volunteer work at the Montreal Centre for the Prevention of Aggression, a non-profit agency that takes its message to children and provides self-defence courses for women, the elderly and the handicapped.

She also pledged to continue her fight for better gun control. The proposed law does not go far enough, she said. "They are tightening control but a Lépine could still get a semi-automatic."

Following the massacre, Ecole Polytechnique also received about \$200,000 from an array of sources to encourage women to enter engineering, said school official Michèle Deguire.