

Women in Canada
1914-2014

What was life like in 1914?

- British common law ruling states that "women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges".
- Women can vote in some municipal elections but not federal or provincial
- Women's suffrage organizations have been around since 1880s
- Limited professions open to women (1st women to receive university degree was in 1875)

The Victorian Female Ideal

- Belong to “domestic sphere”
- Second to husband—when married becomes part of a single entity with husband in the lead
- Chaste, pure and modest
- Delicate and frail



Women's Christian Temperance Union

- A “club” for women
- Central demand was for prohibition of alcohol—thought to reduce violence among men and towards wives and children, keep more money in the family, promote Christian values, eliminate poverty, crime and disease
- Wanted vote for women because women possessed superior moral standards, especially in relation to home and family life
- Supported charitable activities (very important in age before social welfare)

Labour Movements

- Beginning in early 1900s, women began to get involved in labour unions, advocating for equal pay for women.
- This continued throughout the century.



Feminism: First Wave

- Focus on suffrage (right to vote)
- Women being seen equally under the law
- Women participating in politics
- Property rights
- Access to education

Nellie McLung

- On January 28, Nellie McClung and other members of the Manitoba Political Equality League stage a mock "Women's Parliament" in the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg to debate the question of whether men should be allowed to vote. The mock parliament uses humour to point out the unfairness of not allowing women to vote.
- <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/nellie-mcclung>

Getting the right to vote

- In 1916 women got the right to vote in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. BC and Ontario follow in 1917, and other provinces in the next few years.
- 1920: *The Dominion Elections Act* recognizes that every eligible Canadian over 21, male or female, can vote in federal elections. This does not, however, include Aboriginal peoples, Inuit or anyone barred from a provincial voters' list including Asians and Hindus.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StF3_Mj0tBg

Emily Murphy

- First woman appointed as a judge (Edmonton in 1916)
- Faces opposition from some lawyers who stated that she was not a person under the law and should not sit as a judge. She begins a long struggle to have women legally defined as persons.

Agnes MacPhail

- First women elected to federal office (House of Commons, 1921—in first election where women are allowed to run)
- Advocate for prison reform—changed focus of prisons from punishment to rehabilitation
- <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/agnes-macphail?>

Famous Five and Person's Case

- 1927: Emily Murphy, invites four women (including Nellie McClung) to her house to consider petitioning the Supreme Court for a decision on the question of whether woman are persons according to the British North America Act of (1867).
- 1928: The Supreme Court of Canada decides that a woman is not a "qualified person" and therefore cannot be appointed to the Senate of Canada.

They take their case to *The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council* in England (Canada's final Court of Appeal at the time) which overturns the decision of the Canadian Supreme Court's "Persons" case and recognizes Canadian women as persons under the law. As a result, women are "eligible to become members of the Senate of Canada"



Women in the Wars

- Took over many jobs that men would usually do
- Farming, factory work, medical care
- Participated in charitable organizations to send supplies to men on the front (victory gardens, sewing clothes, scrap metal)
- Encouraged to be “soldiers on the home front” by being thrifty at home
- Especially in second WW, women’s units created in military for non-combative roles

Women and the War (England)

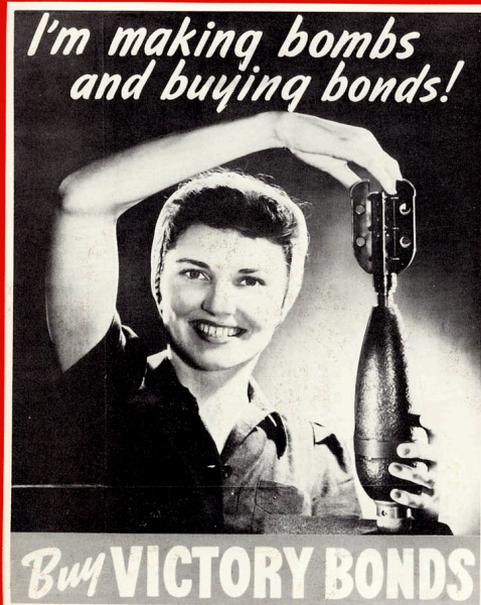
In numbers: women and the war

New job opportunities opened up for women¹



But women earned much less than men²





TO THE WOMEN OF CANADA

1. You have read what the Germans have done in Belgium. Have you thought what they would do if they invaded this Country ?
2. Do you realize that the safety of your home and children depends on our getting more men NOW ?
3. Do you realize that the one word "GO" from you may send another man to fight for our King and Country ?
4. When the War is over and someone asks your husband or your son what he did in the great War, is he to hang his head because you would not let him go ?

**WON'T YOU HELP
AND SEND A MAN TO
ENLIST TO-DAY?**

Post-War

- Women relegated right back to the “domestic sphere”
- Ideal woman is mother and housewife
- But too much had changed...more and more women were joining workforce, getting educated, etc.



Feminism Second Wave

- Focus on equal pay, maternity pay
- Reproductive rights (abortion), violence against women, women's "liberation," women having same rights and abilities as men
- 1950s: provinces and federal government began to pass legislation regarding pay equity

1970

- Royal Commission on the Status of Women
- The Commission discovered that:
 - in 1970 only 3.9% of managers were women.
 - although 8 out of 10 provinces had equal-pay laws, women were still paid less than men for doing the same work
 - two thirds of people that were on welfare were women

Recommendations

- "gender" and "marital status" be prohibited as grounds for discrimination by employers
- the federal government name more women judges and Senators until a more equitable balance between men and women were achieved
- Maternity leave and benefits
- Birth control
- Pensions
- Day care
- Educational opportunities

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- Women's organizations had to struggle to get anything about women's rights included
- National Action Committee on Status of Women advocated for this inclusion—but they were at first shut down by the federal government
- One senator said, in response to their presentation: I was just wondering why we don't have a section here for babies and children. All you girls are going to be working and you're not going to have anybody looking after them.
- After much protest clause 28 was added, which states: Notwithstanding anything in this Charter, the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

Women's Issues Today

- Violence against women (especially Aboriginal women)
- Pay equity
- Childcare
- Sexism
- Political representation

Status of Women today

- Less than 25% of MPs are women (although this is gradually on the rise)
- Men with doctorates are twice as likely to have full-time professor positions as women with doctorates.
- In terms of hourly wages, in 2011 women earned 87 cents compared to every dollar earned by men (an increase of ten cents since 1981).
- Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.
- Each year, over 40,000 arrests result from domestic violence—that's about 12% of all violent crime in Canada. Since only 22% of all incidents are reported to the police, the real number is much higher.
- https://www.nfb.ca/film/status_quo_the_unfinished_business_of_feminism/

Feminism: Third Wave

- Greater recognition of diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, class, and gender (not so focused on white middle-class women)
- Focus on abolishing gender roles and stereotypes (rather than on legal rights)
- Recognize gender as a construction
- <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/three-waves-feminism>