



## Milestones for Canadian Women in Politics

**1916**—*Manitoba* was the first Canadian province to grant women *the right to vote and hold political office*, followed the same year by Saskatchewan and Alberta.

**1919**—*Most Canadian women over age 21* got the right to vote in federal elections, although Indian women had to wait another four decades. Women's enfranchisement doubled the Canadian electorate to some 3 million people—a million and a quarter of them first-time female voters.

**1921**—*Agnes Macphail*, a 31-year-old school teacher running for the Progressives in the Ontario riding of Southeast Grey, became the first woman elected to the House of Commons. An advocate of prison reform and women's rights, she served until her defeat in 1940. "I want for myself what I want for other women, absolute equality," she said.

**1940**—*Quebec was the last* province to grant women the right to vote in provincial elections. Therese Casgrain, leader of the Quebec suffragette movement, ran nine times for Parliament but was never elected. However, as leader of the Parti social democratique du Quebec, from 1951 to 1957, *Casgrain was the first female leader* of a political party in Canada.

**1943**—*Agnes Macphail* was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in the suburban Toronto riding of York East. She and Rae Luckock were the first women elected to the Ontario Legislature and Macphail was the first sworn in. Defeated in 1945, she was elected in 1948 and was responsible for Ontario's first equal pay legislation, passed in 1951. She was defeated later that year.

**1957**—*Ellen Fairclough*, a Progressive Conservative, was named Secretary of State by John Diefenbaker, making her Canada's first female cabinet minister. She is remembered for eliminating racial discrimination in Canada's immigration policy.

**1960**—*Parliament abolished the last formal restrictions on the political citizenship of First Nations women and men*. Since Confederation, Indians had the right to vote in federal elections, but only if they gave up their treaty rights and Indian status. Inuit women and men had been able to vote in federal elections held after 1950.



**1963**—*Judy LaMarsh*, a Liberal, became the second female cabinet minister. She introduced the Canada Pension Plan and oversaw the drafting of what would become known as Medicare.

**1967**—*Mary Walker-Sawka*, a freelance writer, was a surprise last-minute candidate in the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada convention which ousted leader John Diefenbaker. She won only two votes, but became the first woman to seek the leadership of a major Canadian political party.

**1972**—*Rosemary Brown* of Vancouver became the first black Canadian woman elected, serving to 1986 in the British Columbia legislature. In 1975 she ran for the leadership of the New Democratic Party, but lost to Ed Broadbent, making her the second woman and only black woman to run for the leadership of a federal party.

**1984**—*Jeanne Sauve*, Liberal, who had been the first woman federal cabinet minister from Quebec and the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons, was appointed Canada's first woman Governor-General.

**1984**—*The first—and so far only-- televised debate on women's issues* between the leaders of the three major federal parties was organized by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and held in Toronto.

**1988**--*Ethel Dorothy Blondin-Andrew* became the first woman member of a First Nation to be elected to the House of Commons.

**1989**—*Audrey McLaughlin, MP* for the Yukon since 1987, was elected leader of the New Democratic Party, the first woman to head a major federal political party. In 1995, the NDP elected its second female leader --Halifax MP Alexa McDonough, former leader of the New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia.

**1991**—*Rita Johnston* won the leadership of the Social Credit Party of British Columbia, and briefly served as Canada's first woman premier.

**1991**—*Nellie Cournoyea* was elected Premier of the Northwest Territories, becoming the first aboriginal woman leader of a Canadian government.

**1993**—*Catharine Callbeck*, a former Liberal MP, was elected premier of Prince Edward Island, the first woman to be **elected** as premier. Callbeck later was appointed a member of the Senate.



**1993**—After being selected in convention as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, *Kim Campbell became Canada's first woman prime minister*, serving from June 25 until her party was defeated in the federal election in November that year.

**1993**—Liberal *Sheila Copps* became the first woman to serve as Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, holding the position for four years under then Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

**2006**—*Jean Charest*, Liberal premier of Quebec, appointed a cabinet that was half men and half women, a first in Canada. Charest found his gender-balanced cabinet was popular, and appointed a 50-50 cabinet again after the 2008 Quebec election.

**2006**—*Jack Layton's* New Democratic caucus was 43 per cent female, a still-unmatched record for a federal party.

**2008**—Liberal leader *Stephane Dion* pledged to run at least a third women candidates, and exceeded his target with 36.8 per cent. A record number of 445 women ran in the election, or 27.8 per cent of 1601 registered candidates. Sixty-nine women MPs were elected or 22.4 per cent, another record, finally breaking through the 21 per cent ceiling pertaining since 1993.

**2008**—*Leona Aglukkaq* was appointed Health Minister by Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, making her the first Inuk to become a senior federal cabinet minister.