

TIMELINE

1851 WOMEN ARE OFFICIALLY EXCLUDED FROM ALL LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

Before 1851, some women with property qualifications could vote in British colonies in what is now Canada. PEI officially excludes women in 1836, New Brunswick in 1843, the Province of Canada (Ontario and Québec) in 1849, and Nova Scotia in 1851.



1853

THE PROVINCIAL FREEMAN IS ESTABLISHED IN WINDSOR, ONTARIO, AND LATER MOVES TO TORONTO

▲ Mary Ann Shadd Cary, c. 1845-55 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-029977).

Black abolitionist **Mary Ann Shadd Cary** edits the newspaper, which links the anti-slavery and women's rights campaigns. As Canada's pioneering suffragist, she reminds readers that gender and racial equality are both fundamental human rights.

NOVEMBER 1876

THE FIRST SUFFRAGE ORGANIZATION IS FOUNDED IN CANADA

The Toronto Women's Literary Guild, founded by Dr. **Emily Stowe**, fights for women's rights, including access to higher education and the right to vote. In 1883, it becomes the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association.

1885 FEDERAL ELECTORAL FRANCHISE ACT

The Act defines those permitted to vote in federal elections as "male person[s]." Conservative Prime Minister **John A. Macdonald** raises the prospect of expanding the franchise to unmarried women and widows with property (and to property-holding Indigenous Canadians), but opposition ensures all his proposals are dropped. In 1896, PM **Wilfrid Laurier's** Liberal Government returns control of electoral lists to the provinces.

1885 THE VOTE FOR WOMEN FIRST PROPOSED IN THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

Liberal MPP John Waters introduces the first proposal to give women the provincial franchise.



MPP John Waters introduced annual suffrage bills from 1885-1893. Years later, Allan Studholme introduced a bill to grant women in Ontario the same rights as men to vote and hold public office, which he did each spring between 1910 and 1914. From the *Toronto World*, 6 March 1913.

1886 THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR URGE EQUAL CITIZENSHIP FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The Knights, a progressive labour federation, organizes men and women of diverse backgrounds (except Asian Canadians) and endorses equal citizenship in *The Palladium of Labor* newspaper. Suggesting that denying women the vote was "stupid and unreasonable," journalist and socialist Phillips Thompson insisted that male domination of women was nothing more than "a survival of savagery."

1892 - 1897 SUFFRAGE PETITIONS AND BILLS ENTER THE NOVA SCOTIA LEGISLATURE

The **Woman's Christian Temperance Union** (WCTU) and Halifax Local Council of Women lead the Nova Scotia suffrage cause. They organize 34 petitions and support six suffrage bills.

9 FEBRUARY 1893

FIRST MOCK PARLIAMENT HELD IN WINNIPEG

When a petition from pioneering doctor **Amelia Yeomans** and the Manitoba WCTU is ignored, they stage the nation's first mock parliament, with men appealing for the vote and women denying it to them. Other mock parliaments follow in Toronto in 1896 and in Victoria and Vancouver in 1910.

1893 Petition by Woman's Christian Temperance Union to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba (courtesy Archives of Manitoba/LA 0009 Sessional Papers/GR0247/32/G 7173).

8 MAY 1895

MOTION FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE FIRST PRESENTED IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

Conservative Saskatchewan MP **Nicholas Flood Davin** introduces a motion to allow women the vote. Opponents insist that a woman's "proper sphere" is the home. His motion is defeated, 105 votes to 47.

1898

FOUNDING OF MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FREYJA BY MANITOBA'S ICELANDIC FEMINISTS

Published until 1910 by Sigfus and **Margret Benediktsson, Freyja** prints articles addressing the "progress and rights of women" in Europe, the US and Canada. Margret later founds the Icelandic Suffrage Association.



January 1907 issue of *Freyja*, a monthly suffragist magazine (courtesy University of Manitoba Icelandic Collection, Elizabeth Dafoe Library).

MAY 1902 FIRST WOMAN TO RUN AS CANDIDATE FOR PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

Margaret Haile runs in North York as the candidate for the Ontario wing of the Canadian Socialist League. Formed in 1898 to campaign for cooperation, education and political change, the Canadian Socialist League had long endorsed women's suffrage.

1905 NEW PROVINCE OF ALBERTA IMMEDIATELY RECEIVES DEMAND FOR SUFFRAGE

Henrietta Muir Edwards (on behalf of the WCTU) requests "advanced legislation as regards women's rights in property, a measure of women's suffrage, and the recognition of a mother's parental rights and the raising of the age of consent."

24 JUNE 1909

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN HOLDS TORONTO MEETING

Hundreds of delegates arrive from North America, the UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and India. The Council resolves in favour of women's suffrage in every country with a representative government.

23 OCTOBER 1909

THE TORONTO WORLD ENDORSES WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

The newspaper urges Ontario to be the first province to extend the franchise to its female citizens. In the West, Winnipeg's *Grain Growers' Guide* and the *Vancouver World* actively support suffrage.

The *Toronto World* newspaper officially endorsed women's suffrage on 23 October 1909.

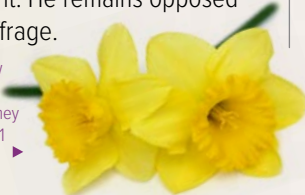
THE TIME HAS COME TO ENFRANCHISE THE WOMEN

4 MARCH 1911

DELEGATION OF WOMEN MEETS ONTARIO PREMIER

Hundreds of suffragists meet with Conservative Premier **James Whitney**, who listens to the women's request for enfranchisement. He remains opposed to women's suffrage.

Suffragists wore yellow daffodils when they met with Premier Whitney in Toronto, 4 March 1911 (Dreamstime.com/Tina Rencelj/149341).



27 JANUARY 1914

MANITOBA SUFFRAGISTS APPEAR BEFORE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

A delegation of suffragists gathers at the Assembly. **Nellie McClung** famously demands, "Give us our due!" Conservative Premier **Rodmond Roblin** replies that "most women don't want the vote."

28 JANUARY 1914

NELLIE MCCLUNG HOSTS MOCK PARLIAMENT

Suffragists hold a **mock parliament** in Winnipeg. Nellie McClung presents a devastating take-down of Premier Roblin, addressing men seeking the franchise in front of a packed, laughing audience. The event helps make women's suffrage more publicly acceptable.



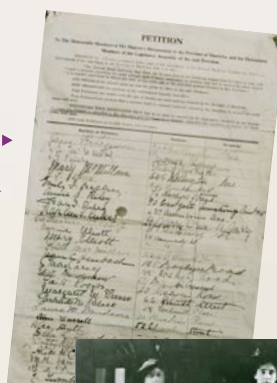
Newspaper clipping celebrating Nellie McClung as "The Heroine on the Campaign," 1914 (courtesy Archives of Manitoba/N8342).

Front page of the 1915 petition delivered to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba (courtesy Manitoba Museum/Events 173/5).

23 DECEMBER 1915

MANITOBA POLITICAL EQUALITY LEAGUE PRESENTS PETITIONS TO LIBERAL PREMIER TOBIAS NORRIS

The group of women and men presents nearly 40,000 signatures stating that there is no reason to keep women from voting.



The Political Equality League presents a petition for the enfranchisement of women, 23 December 1915 (courtesy Archives of Manitoba/Events 173/3/N9905).

28 JANUARY 1916

MANITOBA WOMEN GET THE VOTE

A map in the *Vancouver Daily Province*, 12 September 1916, criticizes BC as the last bastion against women's suffrage on the West Coast (courtesy Veronica Strong-Boag).

14 MARCH 1916

SASKATCHEWAN WOMEN GET THE VOTE

19 APRIL 1916

ALBERTA WOMEN GET THE VOTE

5 APRIL 1917

BRITISH COLUMBIA WOMEN GET THE VOTE

BC holds a provincial referendum in fall 1916. It passes with 43,619 in favour and 18,604 against.



12 APRIL 1917 ONTARIO WOMEN GET THE VOTE

20 SEPTEMBER 1917

WARTIME ELECTIONS ACT

The federal vote is extended to women in the armed forces and to female relatives of military men, while disenfranchising citizens of "enemy alien" birth and conscientious objectors. It disenfranchises some women previously enfranchised by provinces, who would have otherwise been able to vote in the 1917 federal election.



"The Canadian Mother" poster encouraging people to vote for the union government, 1917 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Heliotype Co. Ltd./e010697158).

26 APRIL 1918

NOVA SCOTIA WOMEN GET THE VOTE

24 MAY 1918

CANADIAN WOMEN GET THE FEDERAL VOTE

Female citizens aged 21 and over, not excluded under racial or Indigenous prohibitions, become eligible to vote in federal elections regardless of whether they have yet attained the provincial franchise.

17 APRIL 1919

NEW BRUNSWICK WOMEN GET THE VOTE

20 MAY 1919

YUKON WOMEN GET THE VOTE

JULY 1919

WOMEN GAIN RIGHT TO STAND FOR OFFICE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS



1 JULY 1920

DOMINION ELECTIONS ACT

The Act enfranchises many who were disenfranchised during the First World War. However, anyone disenfranchised by provincial legislation because of race remains disenfranchised from the federal vote.

Postage stamp featuring Thérèse Casgrain, a leading Québec suffragist (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Post Corporation/e000008202).

9 FEBRUARY 1922

500 QUÉBEC SUFFRAGISTS CONFRONT PREMIER LOUIS-ALEXANDRE TASCHEREAU

Liberal Premier Taschereau states that women will not get the provincial vote as long as he is in office. **Thérèse Casgrain** and **Idola Saint-Jean** emerge as key suffragist leaders for Québec.



AUGUST 1912

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHAMPION, BC'S FIRST SUFFRAGE MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Its motto was "The Woman's Cause is Man's."

The Champion, BC's first suffrage monthly magazine, was founded in August 1912. Its motto comes from the poet Tennyson. The first issue proclaimed "We stand to emphasize the fact that causes of individual cases of injustice can only be satisfactorily and finally dealt with by legislation in which women have a direct share." (Courtesy Veronica Strong-Boag.)

23 DECEMBER 1912

PRIME MINISTER BORDEN MEETS WITH SUFFRAGISTS IN TORONTO

Activists ask Conservative PM **Robert Borden** for federal voting legislation, hoping he will publicly state his position. Borden vaguely mentions future change but refuses endorsement.

3 MARCH 1913

CANADIAN SUFFRAGISTS JOIN MARCH IN WASHINGTON, DC

A Canadian delegation joins a suffrage parade with 5,000 marchers from American and international groups. Primarily male bystanders harass the women along the route. American leaders agree to a segregated march with African-Americans at the back.

Cover of the official program for the "woman suffrage procession" in Washington, DC, 3 March 1913 (courtesy Prints and Photographs Division, US Library of Congress/LC-USZC4-2996 DLC/LOT 5541/ LC-DIG-ppmsca-12512).



TIMELINE, CONTINUED

3 MAY 1922 PEI WOMEN GET THE VOTE

3 APRIL 1925 NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR WOMEN GET THE VOTE

18 OCTOBER 1929

THE PERSONS CASE (EDWARDS V. CANADA)

The Imperial Privy Council of England rules that women are legally “persons,” reversing a Supreme Court of Canada ruling. Women can now hold seats in the Canadian Senate. The “Famous Five” who pursue this case to the highest court are all suffragists.



A model of the “Women Are Persons!” statue, honouring the contributions of the Famous Five (Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Emily Murphy). The sculpture by Barbara Paterson was unveiled on Parliament Hill in 2000 (courtesy Famous 5 Foundation).

1934 DOMINION FRANCHISE ACT

The Act explicitly disqualifies Inuit and Status Indians from voting in federal elections, but makes an exception for Status Indian veterans, who were previously enfranchised in 1924.

25 APRIL 1940 QUÉBEC WOMEN GET THE VOTE

1947 THE CITIZENSHIP ACT

The Act extends the right to vote federally and provincially to Chinese-Canadian and South Asian-Canadian men and women, but excludes Indigenous peoples and Japanese Canadians.

Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lake Success, New York, 1949 (courtesy Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Archives).



10 DECEMBER 1948

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ISSUED

Article 21 of the Declaration states that elections “shall be by universal and equal suffrage.”

1948 ELECTIONS ACT IS REVISED

The federal Act removes race as grounds for exclusion from voting in federal elections, but continues to exclude Indigenous peoples.

12 JUNE 1951

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WOMEN GET THE VOTE

Prior to 1951, men and women are able to vote federally, but elections are not held in the territory until 1951.

1 JULY 1960

INDIGENOUS CANADIANS GRANTED THE RIGHT TO VOTE FEDERALLY

All Indigenous peoples in Canada are finally granted the right to vote in federal elections, though they are still excluded from some provincial franchises until 1969.

17 APRIL 1982

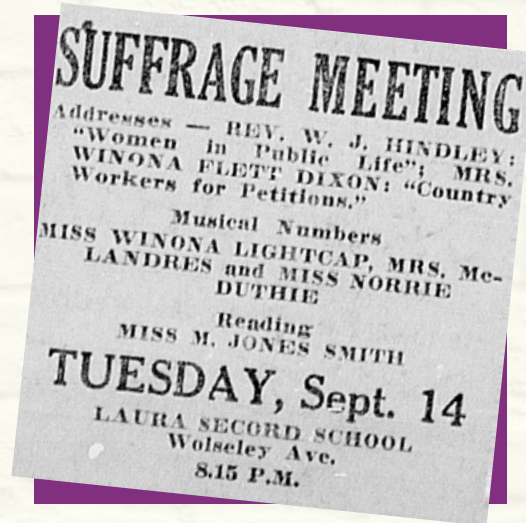
THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS BECOMES LAW

The Charter guarantees the rights of Canadian citizens, including the right to vote.

1 TIMELINE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Using the timeline as a starting point, consider the following questions:

1. There were differing views within political parties on the issue of women’s suffrage. Why do you think that women’s suffrage (and women moving beyond the “private sphere”) found both opposition and support in the Conservative and Liberal parties?
2. What role did newspapers and magazines play in supporting and advancing the campaign for suffrage? Do you think news media were a significant force for change?
3. Many Canadian women won the right to vote in 1918, but it was 1969 before all Canadians obtained the franchise. Choose one moment from the timeline that you think marked the most important turning point for Canadian democracy. Explain why you think that moment (a year, event or legislation) was critical. Is there an event not listed on the timeline that you think is most significant?



▲ The Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 11 September 1915 (courtesy University of Manitoba Libraries Digital Collections).

◀ “Some of the things women are allowed to do by men who say that to permit them to vote would destroy their sweet womanhood.” Cartoon showing women doing household drudgery, *Grain Growers’ Guide*, 26 May 1915 (courtesy Glenbow Archives/NA-3818-15).