


Women in Politics


It took fifty four years after the birth of Canada before the country elected the first female federal member of parliament. Fast forward 100 years and still less than a third of Canada's House of Commons seats are held by women (Lorespub, 2020). Canada is also a member of the embarrassing club that has never seen voters elect a woman to its highest political office.


Like so many institutions, politics was created by men and for men. Despite the fact that more women are in politics now than ever before, politics has been and continues to be a male-dominated space. A disproportionate representation of men in elected offices means that women's issues are neglected. This also means that policies benefiting families and children are not tabled and don't get passed into legislation. (Criado Perez, 2019).

Perhaps most alarming are the reasons why women tend to stay away from public office. When women do run, they are more at risk of public scrutiny than their male counterparts. Focus tends to be on their appearance and not their policy. And they are more at risk of violent attacks on their character and in particular, sexual violence than male politicians (Criado Perez, 2019).

The nine women included in this section are warriors. Despite the odds of being elected, despite hostility from political opponents, despite discriminatory work environments, these women fought their way into legislatures and onto Parliament Hill. They and many more of their political sisters battled to have women declared 'persons', they constructed policies around prison reform, they created a novel way of gathering data that encouraged women to take part in the political process and they chaired and steered committees that insisted that women's voices be heard.

	<p>Emily Murphy 1868-1933</p>  <p><small>Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Murphy</small></p> <p>Lead the Suffragists in Canada. Is best known as being one of "The Famous Five" (others include: Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby).</p> <p>In 1908, when her children were grown, she began to organize women's groups and became increasingly aware of the poverty and poor living conditions of women and children.</p> <p>In 1916, Murphy and other women are not allowed to sit in the court room because the judge states the subject matter (prostitution) is not suitable for</p>

	<p>women to hear. The inequity fuels Murphy on to become the first woman police magistrate in the British Empire.</p> <p>In 1927, the "Persons Case" was launched- contending that women could be "qualified persons" eligible to sit in the Senate.</p> <p>She is now seen as a controversial 'hero' because of her beliefs in the reproductive rights of people who were deemed "mentally deficient".</p>
	<p>Agnes Macphail 1890-1954</p>  <p><small>Image: http://www.iamaw.ca/iwd-2021-agnes-macphail-1890-1954-canada/</small></p> <p>Born on a farm near Owen Sound, Ontario; her family struggled as many farming families did at the turn of the century.</p> <p>A clever student, she fought with her parents for two years before they acquiesced and allowed her to go to secondary school. Macphail became a teacher and thrived until illness and exhaustion forced her to take leave.</p> <p>While at home recovering, she became interested in politics because her own family and all surrounding farms were struggling to make ends meet. She was determined to change things.</p> <p>Despite ridicule and criticism, she ran in the federal election in 1921 and won! Making her Canada's first woman member of parliament.</p> <p>Now recognized for her work in prison reform; she fought for better treatment of prisoners as well as better training for the staff and guards who worked in prisons. She was also seen as the champion of the working class – supporting miners in Nova Scotia when they called on her for her help to improve working conditions.</p>

	<p>Heritage minute: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ALgilFMkug&t=6s</p>
	<p>Thérèse Casgrain 1896 – 1981</p>  <p>Image: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thérèse_Casgrain</p> <p>Born in Saint-Irénée-les-Bains, Quebec. Father will not allow her to go to university and instead told her to focus on becoming a good wife and mother.</p> <p>In 1918, she accompanied her husband who was an MP to Ottawa and realized the importance of women needing the right to vote. This spurred her on to lead the suffrage movement in Quebec for the next 20 years. Although women were now voting federally, each province had their own laws for provincial elections. Women in Quebec finally earned this right in 1940.</p> <p>Thérèse Casgrain was a leading woman in Quebec politics. She was instrumental in bringing the right to vote to women in Quebec and was the first woman to lead a provincial political party.</p> <p>In 1948, she became one of the federal vice presidents of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which would later become the New Democratic Party. Casgrain led the Quebec wing of the party, as President from 1951 to 1957.</p> <p>Casgrain was a campaigner against nuclear weapons. In the 1960s she created the Quebec wing of Voice of Women, an organization dedicated to promoting world peace. She was a founder of the League for Human Rights and the Fédération des femmes du Québec.</p> <p>In 1970, she was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.</p>


	<p>Flora MacDonald</p> <p>1926 – 2015</p>  <p>Image: https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/women-impact/politics/flora-macdonald.html</p> <p>Born and raised in North Sydney, Nova Scotia and trained as a secretary. She joined the PC party and throughout the 1950s and 60s, held a number of positions within the federal Progressive Conservative Party, one of which included secretary to Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker. In 1972, she was elected to federal government and served for 16 years. In 1976 – was one of the first women to run for the federal party leadership; but lost to Joe Clark.</p> <p>When Clark became Prime Minister of Canada in 1979, he appointed MacDonald the first female Secretary of State for External Affairs in Canadian history. She oversaw the Vietnamese refugee crisis that followed the war and granted more than 60,000 refugee status in Canada. She also signed the false Canadian passports of the six American diplomats being held hostage in Iran in 1979, leading to their escape and freedom.</p> <p><i>“Because women do not perceive themselves in the role of the leader, it [is] difficult to perceive of another woman in the role of a leader. The more [the] position is tried for by women, the more it explodes that myth.”</i></p> <p>Losing her seat in 1988, she devoted her time to international humanitarian projects.</p>
	<p>Rosemary Brown</p> <p>1930- 2003</p>



Image: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rosemary-brown>

Born in Kingston, Jamaica

Moved to Canada in 1951 to attend McGill University

She served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the British Columbia legislature as a part of the New Democratic Party from 1972 to 1986, making her the first Black Canadian woman to be elected to a Canadian provincial legislature

In 1956, Ms. Brown helped in the founding of the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (BCAACP). The BCAACP worked to open up housing and employment to Black people in British Columbia

She served as an MLA for 14 years; she also ran for the leadership of the federal NDP in 1972; with the slogan "Brown is Beautiful". She was the first woman to run for leadership of a federal political party.

She also held the position of Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Monique Begin
 1936-



Image: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/article-monique-begins-memoir-ladies-upstairs-my-life-in-politics-and-after/>

Born 1936 in Rome, Italy. In 1941, Family fled home in France to escape German occupation.

Arrives in Quebec City as a refugee. Her large family scraped by and lived in a tiny apartment. Bright student, she studies and has dreams of going to university but cannot afford tuition. She subsequently trained as a teacher, but eventually earned a degree in Montreal.

In 1972, she won the election and headed to Ottawa to represent her riding in Montreal. She is the Executive Secretary for Canada's first ever commission of The Status of Women. Their novel data gathering methods take them across the country, speaking to 'everyday' women about the gaps and inequalities. It is considered one of Canada's most successful commissions ever. The brief creates an uproar with one reporter saying the brief is 'more explosive than ...'

In 1984, Bégin was appointed Minister of Health and Welfare – the federal government created Canada's Health Act – which attempts to create accessible and equitable health care across the country for all Canadians regardless of province of residence.

Satinder (Sindi) Hawkins

1958-2010



Image: <https://mhfh.com/tribute/details/12360/HAWKINS-Sindi-Kaur/obituary.html>

Born in New Delhi, India. Her family moved to a small town in central Saskatchewan in 1963.

Originally trained and worked as a nurse for twelve years. But decided to get her law degree in 1994. She opened her own law firm which focused on medical cases.

Ran for provincial office in the Okanagan in 1996, won three consecutive elections and sat as MLA until 2009; making her the first Indo-Canadian minister in Canada and the first Indo-Canadian woman to hold a cabinet post in a provincial government.

She is appointed Minister of Health Planning, Minister of State for Intergovernmental Affairs and Deputy Speaker of the Legislature.

Sheila Copps



Image: [https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMDc-TSPA_0040241F&R=DC-](https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMDc-TSPA_0040241F&R=DC-TSPA_0040241F)

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1952 –

Born in Hamilton, Ontario.

Obtained a degree and worked as a journalist before going into politics.

Entered provincial politics in 1977 and then federal politics in 1981.

Following the 1984 election, she and some other young and scrappy politicians challenged the Mulroney government head-on. Their fearlessness earned them the nickname the "Rat Pack".

Just two years into her federal political career, she wrote and released an autobiography, *Nobody's Baby*. The book came out after Minister of Justice told Copps to "just quieten down, baby".

She was the first sitting Member of Parliament to give birth in 1987.

Served for ten years in the federal cabinet, both as Minister of the Environment and Minister of Canadian Heritage. Sheila Copps was the first female Deputy Prime Minister in Canada.

In 1990, she vied for the leadership of the Federal Liberal party.

Mumilaaq Qaqqaq



Image: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/inuk-woman-successful-canadian-parliamentary-election>

November 4, 1993

At 17, she was part of a political youth group. Mumilaaq was presented with the opportunity to speak in the House of Commons. She stood and spoke about high suicide rates in her territory in the House of Commons. Qaqqaq received two standing ovations for her speech.

At the age of 25, ran and won in the federal election in 2019. She is the first NPD MP to be elected in Nunavut.

It is the largest geographic riding in the world and includes three time zones. Qaqqaq is calling on allies and on the federal government to fulfill their promises for the human rights of people who live in Nunavut. Her focus is to draw attention to the disproportionate rates of suicide in her territory and to the substandard

	<p>housing.</p>

She feels that despite being one of the most easily recognised MPs on the Hill (because of her face tattoo), she is often questioned by Hill security as to why she is on the property; something she sees and internalises as racism.