

Milestones in Women's Equality: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

As recently as 1970, women lacked many of the rights and freedoms that we enjoy today. In the past forty years, many women and men have advocated for women's right to equal pay, the right of married women to work and the right to be free from discrimination of any kind.

In 1967, women's organizations across Canada persuaded the government of the day to launch the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. It travelled across the country to hear what Canadians thought about the status of women. The commission discovered that while women's equality had improved, much was still left to do in the area of women and the economy, education, family, political life, taxation, poverty, citizenship and the law. The commission released its report, which contained 167 recommendations to improve the lives of Canadian women. These recommendations formed the basis of the women's movement for the next 40 years, and resulted in many improvements to women's equality.

Manitoba women and men participated fully in the commission's discussions, contributing their thoughts and hopes for the future of women's equality in this province. Here is a quick look at how some of the recommendations have changed the landscape of women's equality here in Manitoba. The recommendations chosen reflect issues that fall within provincial jurisdiction. Though there is work yet to be done, things have changed for women in Manitoba. See where we have been, where we are now, and what we can continue to work for in the future.

1970 RECOMMENDATION	2010	BEYOND
<p>Women and the Canadian economy: Men and women must receive the same rate of pay for the same work.</p> <p>In some provinces, women were paid a lower rate for doing the same job as men. Men were paid higher because they were seen as the primary breadwinners for their families. In Canada in the 1960s, women earned 54 cents for every dollar earned by men.</p>	<p>It is now the law that all people doing the same job, regardless of sex, must be paid the same rate of pay. Employers are expected to equalize and standardize wages in both the public and private sector. Women now earn approximately 71 cents for every dollar earned by men.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that women receive equal pay for work of equal value. This means ensuring that jobs traditionally occupied by women are paid at the same rate as equivalent jobs traditionally occupied by men.</p>
<p>Education: Post-secondary educational institutions develop programs to meet the special needs for continuing education of women with family responsibilities.</p> <p>In 1970, 38 per cent of women were registered as full time undergraduate university students in Manitoba.</p>	<p>Women now make up 59 per cent of university undergraduates. Of these women undergraduates, 15 per cent take part time studies to accommodate the demands of family responsibilities. Child care subsidies and programs provide students with families additional support. Programs like Manitoba Student Aid give financial assistance to women, including single parents studying part time.</p>	<p>Continue to create favourable conditions for women to pursue education and a full range of career opportunities.</p>
<p>Women and the family: Women should be free from discrimination based on sex and marital status.</p> <p>Women were often denied jobs because they were women, or were asked to leave their jobs because they got married.</p>	<p>In 1987, the Manitoba Human Rights Code became law. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender and family status. Most women do paid work outside of the home, in addition to caring for families.</p>	<p>Women now face the challenge of multiple roles and balancing work and home responsibilities. Continue to re-distribute care-giving and household work among women and men, and create work environments that support work-life balance.</p>

1970 RECOMMENDATION	2010	BEYOND
<p>Taxation and child care allowances: Ensure women's ability to do paid work outside the home is supported through the tax system.</p> <p>Families with two income earners were highly taxed, compared to families with one income earner. This was a disincentive for women to earn money outside the home.</p>	<p>Manitoba has many tax structures in place to help working families with children, including the Manitoba Child benefit, Manitoba Shelter benefit, prenatal benefits and child care subsidies. These subsidies help working families access over 1,150 licensed child care facilities with almost 26,000 spaces.</p>	<p>Continue to facilitate child care and income supports to enable women to participate in the workplace.</p>
<p>Poverty: Address poverty for women, who are particularly vulnerable to its effects, due to family responsibilities and unequal access to education and employment.</p> <p>In Canada at that time, 36 per cent of female-headed families were living in poverty.</p>	<p>There was a 48 per cent decrease in the incidence of poverty in lone-parent families in Manitoba between 2000 and 2007. Most lone parent families are headed by women.</p>	<p>Continue to work towards ending poverty for vulnerable groups of women such as female headed households, Aboriginal, immigrant and senior women.</p>
<p>Participation of women in public life: More women judges should be appointed.</p> <p>There were no women judges on the Provincial Court of Manitoba when it was created in 1973.</p>	<p>In 2009, Manitoba reached an equal number of men and women on the Provincial Court bench. Since 2001, The Provincial Court Act specifically includes diversity in candidates, in addition to merit and professional excellence.</p> <p>In Manitoba, 32 per cent of the Members of Legislative Assembly are women. This is highest percentage of female elected representatives in Canada.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that both elected officials and judges represent the diversity of all people in Manitoba.</p>
<p>Immigration and citizenship: Provide opportunities for training and support for immigrant women new to Canada.</p> <p>Women in immigrant families often felt isolated, due to insufficient access to language programs, social and employment activities.</p>	<p>Immigrants entering into Manitoba have access to settlement supports such as English classes, job search help and information about laws and services. Manitoba has a resource guide for immigrant women, which takes into account the unique settlement experiences of women as they navigate services and resources. We now have legislation to protect temporary foreign workers, such as live-in domestic caregivers, from exploitation.</p>	<p>Continue to identify the specific needs of immigrant women and work towards their full participation in Manitoba. Re-training and upgrading new Canadian professionals will help them to gain employment in their chosen field.</p>
<p>Criminal law and women offenders: Extend protection to everyone from sexual exploitation either by false representation, use of force, threat, or the abuse of authority.</p> <p>There were no comprehensive federal or provincial laws about sexual exploitation.</p>	<p>Manitoba instituted a Sexual Exploitation Strategy, new laws such as mandatory child abuse reporting and more avenues to prosecute offenders. The government of Manitoba works in partnership with the community to provide services for women and children experiencing violence and exploitation, including intervention, counselling and transitional housing.</p>	<p>Continue to work for an end to violence against women, including the safety of vulnerable and exploited women, missing and murdered women and human trafficking. These are of particular concern for Aboriginal and immigrant women.</p>
<p>Plan of action: Human Rights Commissions and advisory bodies to monitor implementation of the recommendations be established across the country.</p> <p>There were no formal government bodies to investigate human rights abuses, or to monitor women's rights.</p>	<p>Manitoba now has a Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council to monitor and advance gender equality rights.</p>	<p>The mandate of these offices continues to ensure that women's equality is a central concern in all areas of decision-making.</p>