
THE LONG MARCH FORWARD

A History of Women's Rights

In Québec, as elsewhere, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on past progress and think about what still needs to be done in order to achieve true equality in everyday life.

Women have made steady, if sometimes exasperatingly slow progress on the march toward equality, suffering occasional setbacks, but also making major breakthroughs on the way. This thematic historical overview retraces the milestones that have marked the journey while highlighting the remarkable contributions of women who have left their mark on Québec history.

THE VERY BEGINNING

At its founding in 1608, Québec was no more than a trading post where European women were virtually absent. Yet Europeans arriving in New France found Aboriginal societies in which women played a leading role. In some groups, both children's names and property were handed down along matrilineal lines. After marriage, a man came to live with his wife's family. Among certain Aboriginal peoples, women also exercised real political power.

In addition, Marie Rollet, one of the first European women to settle permanently in Québec, was a genuine pioneer. She arrived in 1617 and worked alongside her apothecary husband, Louis Hébert, the first settler. She was followed by hundreds of other women who raised children while clearing and cultivating the land and building their homes.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

1664

New France is governed under the Custom of Paris, its first Civil Code, which imposes the community of property regime between spouses. Property management is entrusted to the husband by virtue of the husband's authority, and married women are considered legally incompetent, with the exception of the women merchants. Rights are restored to a widow under the community of property, on the death of her husband.

1791

The Constitutional Act enfranchises all land-owners who meet a rather modest threshold, irrespective of sex. Some women therefore have the right to vote and exercise it.

1833

The abolition of slavery puts an end to the exploitation of African-Canadian and Amerindian women who, since 1709, had been used as unpaid servants in certain Québec families.

1849

Women officially lose the right to vote under legislation introduced by the Union of Canadian Provinces. As early as 1834, the Patriots—led by Louis-Joseph Papineau and behaving like true men of their time—had sought to have women disenfranchised in order to correct what they viewed as a historical anomaly.

1866

The Civil Code of Lower Canada is enacted. Based on the Napoleonic Code of 1804, it perpetuates the principle from the Custom of Paris declaring married women legal incapable. Married women are relegated to the status of children or outcasts. They may not act as legal guardians, defend or undertake a legal action, or enter into contracts. They have no right to the wages from their own work. This law has a profound affect on perceptions and attitudes.

1869

In order to limit the transfer of Indian status, the Canadian government decides to deprive Aboriginal women and their descendants of Indian status if they marry non-status men. In addition, Aboriginal women are shut out of political power in their communities.

1882

The Homestead Act (intended to protect family property) is enacted. It provides some protection to women in certain frontier areas in the event of bankruptcy by their spouses. Husbands are also prohibited from disposing of family property without spousal consent. This law is repealed in 1909.

1894

The Socialist Workers' Party demands, in its manifesto, the right to universal suffrage regardless of religious beliefs, skin color, or sex.

1899

On the education front, legislation is amended to ban women from voting or running for the position of school commissioner, after a group of feminists try to have a women elected to the Protestant Board of School Commissioners. It's only in 1942 that womens could regain theirs rights.

1902

Marie Gérin-Lajoie writes a legal treatise for women explaining civil and constitutional law in ordinary language. She becomes an important resource person for feminists.

1912

Carrie Mathilda Derick founds the Montreal Suffrage Association, the first organization primarily devoted to securing women's right to vote in federal elections.

1918

Women obtain the right to vote in federal elections. On the provincial level, women are granted the right to vote in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in 1916, in British Columbia and Ontario in 1917, in Nova Scotia in 1918, in New Brunswick in 1919, in Prince-Edward-Island in 1922, and in Newfoundland in 1925.

1921

The Comité provincial pour le suffrage féminin (Provincial Committee for Women's Suffrage) takes over for the Montreal Suffrage Association in rallying anglophone and francophone support for women's suffrage.

1927

The Comité provincial pour le suffrage féminin splits in two. The Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes du Québec (Canadian Alliance for Women's Suffrage in Québec) is headed up by Idola Saint-Jean, while Thérèse Casgrain leads the Provincial Committee that becomes, in 1928, the Ligue des droits des femmes (League for Women's Rights).

1929

Following a long legal and political debate, the Privy Council in London decides that women are persons and, as such, enjoy the rights and privileges that entitle them, among other things, to present themselves like members of the senate.

1931

A number of changes are made to the Civil Code after the Dorion Commission on the civil rights of women, is settled up in 1929, tables its report. Henceforth, women married under the community of property regime are entitled to use their own earnings as they see fit.

Women who are married under the separation of property regime acquire the right to vote in municipal elections.

1937

The Needy Mothers Assistance Act is adopted. To benefit, women are required to submit to often humiliating requirements, such as providing proof of their ability to be a good mother.

1938

For the first time, women attend a political party convention, that of the Québec Liberal Party. At the convention, Thérèse Casgrain has women's suffrage put on the agenda and it is adopted by the general assembly.

1940

As World War II rages, Québec women win the right to vote in provincial elections. For 14 years, feminists had been gathering every year in Québec City to demand it.

Widowed and single women property owners, who have had the right to vote in municipal elections since 1888, gain the right to hold municipal office.

1945

The Canadian government decides to introduce family allowances, which, in Québec, are to be paid to the head of the family. Thérèse Casgrain challenges the decision and wins, so that cheques are paid to mothers.

1947

With the implementation of the Canadian Citizenship Act, Canadian women who marry non-Canadians no longer lose their citizenship.

1954

The Act to modify the Civil Code abolishes the double standard under which a woman could not ask for a separation for adultery unless the husband brought his mistress to live in the family residence, while the husband could obtain a separation for adultery at any time.

1964

The Act respecting the legal capacity of married women is adopted. Championed by MNA Marie-Claire Kirkland, this legislation puts an end to the legal incapacity of married women, who no longer need their husbands' signatures for everyday transactions. This legislation absolves married women from the obligation to obey their husbands.

1967

The Bird Commission on the Status of Women is set up. It unearths troubling information on discrimination and poverty experienced by women. In 1970 it tables its report calling for institutional and de facto equality.

The Government of Québec brings in its own family allowance for children under 16.

1968

The National Assembly establishes civil marriage and the House of Commons passes the Divorce Act. Previously, marriages in Québec had been practically indissoluble.

A married woman living with a husband who owns or rents property is entitled to vote or run for municipal elected office.

1969

The Social Aid Act is adopted. This law makes it possible for single mothers to receive benefits without having to submit to the humiliations of the old Needy Mothers Assistance Act.

1970

The community of property legal regime is replaced by the partnership of acquests, combining the benefits of the separation of property during marriage and the community of property after a marriage ends.

1971

Women obtain the right to serve as jurors after a demonstration organized by the Front de Libération des Femmes (FLF) during the trial of Paul Rose, a member of the FLQ.

1973

The Québec government sets up the Conseil du statut de la femme, while the federal government sets up the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

1975

The United Nations (UN) declares 1975 International Women's Year.

In Québec, the adoption of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms outlaws sex-based discrimination.

1977

The right of paternal authority is removed from the Civil Code and replaced by the concept of parental authority.

1978

The Conseil du statut de la femme draws up a comprehensive policy on the status of women, *Pour les Québécoises : égalité et indépendance*, (Québec Women: Equality and Independence) comprising 306 recommendations. The provincial government institutes a secretariat on the status of women—the *Secrétariat pour la condition féminine*—to implement a women's rights policy.

1979

The UN adopts the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which will be ratified by Canada in 1981. The same year, Québec declares itself bound by the Convention.

1980

Wives working in family businesses are recognized as employees and their salaries become a deductible business expense.

A support payment collection system is put in place. Collection is not, however, automatic.

1981

The Act instituting a new Civil Code and reforming family rights takes effect. Spousal equality is recognized. Henceforth women will retain their names and have the right to pass them on to their children. The family residence is protected. The reform also recognizes the exceptional contribution each spouse makes to the other's material wealth by introducing a compensatory allowance. Courts, however, rarely recognize the value of housework.

1983

The Conseil du statut de la femme organizes the Forum sur la force économique des femmes (Forum on the economic power of women) in Montréal.

1985

With the passage of Bill C-31 by the Canadian government, Aboriginal women win back the rights they lost in 1869. Henceforth, women who marry non-status men retain their Indian status and can pass it on to their children.

1985

The *Conférence nationale sur la sécurité économique des Québécoises* (National Conference on the Economic Security of Québec Women), *Décisions 85*, is held.

1986

The reform of the Divorce Act takes effect. Marriage breakdown becomes the sole reason for divorce, thus eliminating the notion of fault. Spouses can apply for divorce jointly. The legislation also introduces new regulations governing support payments and child custody.

1989

The National Assembly adopts the Act respecting economic equality of the spouses. The legislation officially confirms marriage as an economic partnership and provides for an equal division of marital assets between the spouses in the event of marriage breakdown.

In its ruling on the *Daigle-Tremblay* case, the Supreme Court affirms that a third party, even the presumed father, cannot oppose a woman's decision to have an abortion.

1992

The federal government abolishes universal family allowances. Only low-income families are entitled to receive assistance.

1993

Having released its first annual governmental action plan in 1986, the Québec government adopts its first policy on the status of women including a proposed law on pay equity.

Canada becomes the only country in the world to allow women to claim refugee status if they fear persecution because of their sex.

1995

The federal government disbands the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Some of its activities are handed over to Status of Women Canada.

In Beijing, the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women ratifies a broad-based action platform, to be implemented on a voluntary basis.

The National Assembly unanimously adopts the Act to facilitate the payment of support, which establishes a system of automatic and universal support collection.

The Supreme Court of Canada decides that the state has the right to tax child support payments received by a former spouse.

For the first time, the Québec government includes gender equality in the mission statement of a government department, Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine. A few months later, it tables its Politique gouvernementale pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (government policy on gender equality).

The federal government revises the mandate to promote equality of the Status of Women Canada's Women's Program. The changes disqualify organizations that promote women's rights from receiving financial assistance.

1997

The Canadian and Québec governments decide to make child support payments non-taxable.

Québec adopts regulations for establishing child support levels.

The Act Respecting family mediation comes into force in Québec, facilitating access to mediation services for divorcing couples with children.

2005

A parliamentary commission studies the matter of equality between women and men on the basis of the recommendations of Conseil du statut de la femme in Vers un nouveau contrat social pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (Toward a New Social Contract for the Equality of Men and Women). Over a hundred briefs are submitted during general consultations.

The Government of Québec nominates a minister in title for the Status of Women and creates Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine (Department of Families, Seniors, and the Status of Women).

The National Assembly unanimously adopts MNA Fatima Houda-Pépin's motion opposing Islamic tribunals. The motion supports the position of Muslim women who spoke out on this issue following the Boyd Commission's report in Ontario.

2006

The Government of Québec announces that it will introduce public rules aimed at achieving gender parity on the boards of publicly owned corporations within 5 years.

POLITICAL PIONEERS

Although women obtain the right to vote in provincial elections in 1940, it takes until 1961 for a woman to be elected to the National Assembly and until 1962 for a woman to join the cabinet. Furthermore, it is not until 1976 that the number of woman in the National Assembly rises beyond one. From 1976 to 1989, the number of women elected increases with each general election. Women's share of cabinet posts corresponds roughly to their share of seats in the National Assembly until 1994. In that year, the proportion of women ministers rises well above the proportion of women MNAs. In subsequent elections, the number of women MNAs and ministers continues to increase. In 2006, 31% of MNAs and 38% of ministers are women.

1916 Emily Murphy becomes the first woman member of Canada's judiciary.

1921 Agnes McPhail becomes the first women elected to Canada's Parliament in Ottawa.

1930 Cairine Mackay Wilson becomes Canada' first woman senator and, in 1949, the first Canadian woman delegate to the United Nations General Assembly.

Idola St-Jean becomes the first Québec woman to run for federal office. She is, however, defeated.

1947 Mae O'Connor becomes the first woman to run for provincial office in Québec. She is defeated.

1953 Mariana Beauchamp-Jodoin becomes the first Québec woman appointed to the Senate.

1954 Elsie M. Gibbons becomes the first woman to be elected mayor in Québec in the municipality of Portage-du-Fort.

1957 Ellen Louks Fairclough becomes the first woman cabinet minister in Ottawa.

1961 Marie-Claire Kirkland becomes the first woman elected to the National Assembly in Québec and is named minister without portfolio the following year.

Thérèse Lemay becomes the first woman to be appointed to the bench in Québec. She is named at the Municipal court of the municipality of Saint-Georges.

1972 Despite women having won the right to sit in the House of Commons in 1920, Monique Bégin, Albanie Morin, and Jeanne Sauvé become the first Québec women to do so. Jeanne Sauvé also becomes Québec's first woman cabinet minister.

1973 Gabrielle Vallée becomes the first woman to be elected president of the bar of Québec.

1974 Senator Renaude Lapointe becomes the first francophone woman to be elected Speaker of the Senate in the Parliament of Canada.

1979 Claire L'Heureux-Dubé is the first woman appointed as a Superior Court justice, and, in 1987, becomes the first Québec woman named to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Lise Payette becomes the first minister of state for the status of women.

Christine Tourigny becomes the first woman assistant secretary general (equivalent of deputy minister) ever appointed by the Québec government.

1980 Jeanne Sauvé becomes the first woman speaker of the House of Commons.

1982 Bertha Wilson becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

1983 Jeanne Sauvé becomes the first woman to be named Governor General of Canada.

1985 Lise Bacon becomes the first woman named deputy premier in the National Assembly.

1988 Lorraine Pagé becomes the first woman elected to head a major labor body in Québec, the provincial teacher's federation, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ).

Jeannine Guillevin Wood becomes the first woman president of Conseil du Patronat du Québec (Québec employers council) and in 1997 becomes the first woman to chair a Canadian bank, the Laurentian Bank.

1991 Quebecer Louise Fréchette becomes Canada's first woman ambassador to the United Nations and in 1998, the first Canadian woman to occupy the post of Deputy Secretary General, the second highest position in the United Nations.

1992 Paule Gauthier becomes the first woman president of the Canadian Bar Association.

1993 For the first time in Canadian history, a woman, Kim Campbell, becomes prime minister of Canada after winning the race to lead her party.

In Québec, Monique Gagnon-Tremblay becomes the first woman finance minister in the National Assembly.

Sheila Copps becomes the first woman appointed deputy prime minister of Canada.

1995 Louise Gaudreault becomes the first woman appointed to the board of the Institut de police du Québec (Québec Police Institute).

1996 Lise Thibault becomes the first woman appointed lieutenant-governor of Québec.

1997 Marlène Jennings becomes the first African-Québec woman elected to the House of Commons.

1998 Linda Goupil becomes first woman minister of justice of the Government of Québec.

1999 Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré becomes the first African-Canadian woman appointed as a justice of the Court of Québec.

Beverly McLachlin becomes the first woman Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

2002 Louise Harel becomes the first woman president of the National Assembly.

Francine Ruest-Jutras becomes the first woman elected president of the Union des municipalités du Québec (Québec Union of Municipalities).

2004 Yolande James becomes the first black woman elected to the National Assembly.

Elsie Lefevre becomes the youngest woman MNA to sit in the National Assembly.

Diane Lemieux becomes the first woman House Leader in the National Assembly.

Françoise David becomes the first woman to lead a Québec political movement, Option citoyenne.

Louise Arbour is the first Québec woman named to the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2006 Eva Ottawa, elected grand chief of the Atikamek Nation, becomes the first woman in Québec's aboriginal history to assume such an important leadership role.

FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS

1833

The Patriot Women's Club, whose members include Julie Bruneau and the wives of other Patriots, is founded.

1893

Québec's first feminist organization, the Montreal Council of Local Women, is born. It brings together francophones and anglophones.

1902

The first organization of black women, the Colored Women's Club, is founded in Montreal through the efforts of Anne Greenup.

1907

Marie Gérin-Lajoie and Caroline Béique found the first francophone Catholic feminist organization, Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

1915

The first Farm-women's circle (Cercle des Fermières) is created in the Chicoutimi area.

1932

The organization Solidarité féminine is founded with the goal of protecting the rights of working women and mothers in need.

1952

The Cercles d'économie domestique (Women's domestic circles) are created on the initiative of the Catholic bishops to counter the growth of Cercles de Fermières (Farm-women's circles), set up by Ministère de l'Agriculture. The Union catholique des femmes rurales (Catholic union of rural women) is created in 1957 for the same purpose and by the same people. The Farm-women's circles will know a fall of membership.

1966

The Fédération des femmes du Québec (Québec Women's Federation) and the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (Women's Educational and Affirmative Action Association) are established.

1969

The Montreal Women's Liberation Movement is founded and supports the opening of Dr. Morgentaler's first abortion clinic.

The Front de libération des femmes (Women's Liberation Front) is founded. This revolutionary feminist group argues that women's liberation cannot be achieved without sweeping changes to society. The group publishes the first issue of the Feminist newspaper *Québécoises debout!* in 1971, which becomes the analytical tool of the Montreal Women's Centre's the following year.

1972

The Montreal Women's Centre is created. It organizes an abortion clinic and publishes, in conjunction with other groups, a manifesto for a policy of planned parenthood.

1986

The first women's farmers union is founded, the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec (Federation of Women Farmers of Québec).

1990

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of women's right to vote in Québec, the committee Femmes en tête (Headed by Women) organizes a series of events under the theme *Les 50 heures du féminisme* (50 hours of feminism).

1991

At the initiative of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, over 1,000 women gather in Montréal for the forum *Un Québec féminin pluriel* (A feminist, pluralist Québec) in order to draft the broad outlines of a feminist blueprint for society.

1995

The "Bread and Roses" March Against Poverty attracts significant interest and support and turns into a major event.

2000

Some 30,000 demonstrators from associations, community groups, and labor organizations join with the Fédération des femmes du Québec in Montréal to participate in the World March of Women 2000, denouncing violence and poverty. This mass demonstration of solidarity ends in New York, where millions of women from 150 countries deliver a petition to the UN demanding concrete action on their demands for women all over the world.

E DUCATION

1639

Marie Guyart, the manager of a shipping company in France, founds the Ursuline Convent in Québec City. Better known under the name Marie de l'Incarnation, she is the first in a long line of pioneering women who develop in New France what we now call a system of educational and social services.

1657

Marguerite Bourgeoys opens the first school in Ville-Marie (Montréal).

1878

Women flock to the teaching profession in growing numbers, but men teach the advanced classes and occupy the administrative positions. Female teachers' salaries are 40% of those of their male counterparts.

1888

McGill University awards its first bachelor's degrees to women. The university only admits women, however, to its Normal school and Faculty of Arts. Other faculties are closed to them. Francophone universities refuse outright to admit them. They are only permitted to attend lectures.

1890

Gertrude Elizabeth Livingston, a registered nurse, opens a nursing school at Montreal General Hospital.

1898

The Grey Nuns of Hôpital Notre-Dame found the first French-Canadian nursing school.

1900

Women can no longer attend medical school in Québec. The faculty of medicine of Bishop's University, which had accepted women, is merged with McGill University's, which does not.

1904 At Université Laval, Marie Sirois becomes the first woman to receive a degree from a francophone university.

1908

At the instigation of Sister Sainte-Anne-Marie of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, Québec's first classical college for young women is opened. In 1926 the institution takes the name of Marguerite-Bourgeoys College.

1911

McGill University's Faculty of Law opens its doors to women.

1911 Marie (Joséphine) Gérin-Lajoie, daughter of the feminist of the same name, is the first graduate from École d'enseignement supérieur pour les jeunes filles, opened in 1908.

1912 At McGill University, Carrie Matilda Derick becomes the first woman professor at a Canadian University.

1914 Annie McDonald-Langstaff becomes the first woman to receive a law degree from McGill University, beginning a battle for the right of women to practice law that will continue until 1941.

1916

The Montréal branch of Université Laval awards official recognition to young women having completed the arts and sciences program at leading boarding schools. This is the highest level of instruction available to girls in Québec.

1918

Following the Faculty of Law in 1911, McGill University's Faculty of Medicine opens its doors to women.

1921

McGill University is the first to offer a university program in Nursing Science in Québec.

1922

McGill University's Faculty of Dentistry begins to admit women.

1923

Across the province, a network of home economics schools is set up in the public school system.

1925 At Université de Montréal, Marthe Pelland becomes the first woman to be admitted to the faculty of medicine of a francophone university.

1937 Agathe Lacoursière-Lacerte becomes the first woman member of a university faculty.

1940 Scientist and botanist Marcelle Gauvreau is awarded the Prix de l'Association canadienne-française pour l'avancement des sciences (Award of the French-Canadian Association for the Advancement of Science).

1946 Mary B. Jackson-Fowler is the first woman to receive an engineering degree from McGill University's Faculty of Engineering.

1951

Training in home economics reaches an unprecedented level of development. Female students can extend their education to a total of 11 or 13 years by attending home economics schools— called Instituts familiaux.

1961

Classical colleges for girls finally receive funding. Boys colleges had been funded since 1922.

1962 Alice Girard becomes the first woman dean of a university faculty in Québec, Université de Montréal's Faculty of Nursing Science.

1964

The Parent Report spurs increased access to education for girls. It recommends mixed classes and free tuition.

1974 Sister Marguerite Jean of the Congregation of Good Shepherd Sisters of Québec becomes the first Canadian woman to receive a doctorate in canon law.

1976

The first university research group in women's studies is established at Université du Québec à Montréal, the Groupe interdisciplinaire pour l'enseignement et la recherche sur les femmes (GIERF) (Interdisciplinary Group for Teaching and Research on Women). It becomes the Institut de recherches et d'études féministes (IREF) (Institute for Feminist Research and Study) in 1990.

1981

An assessment protocol to check for discriminatory stereotypes becomes part of the approval process for new textbooks.

1995 At Bishop's University, Janyne M. Hodder becomes the first woman to be appointed principal of a university institution.

1996

Ministère de l'Éducation establishes Hats Off to You, a contest encouraging girls at the high school level who choose traditionally male-dominated occupations. The following year, the program is extended to technical training in colleges. In 2001, the university component, Excellence in Science, is established for women studying science and engineering.

HEALTH AND PUBLIC SERVICES

1642 Jeanne Mance, the co-founder of Montréal with Maisonneuve, is recognized as the first lay nurse in North America. She goes on to found Montréal's Hôtel-Dieu hospital.

1685 Catherine Jérémie is among the first midwives to practice in Nouvelle-France. Her work as a herbalist helps introduce French botanists to the flora of Québec.

1773

Obstetrician-surgeons appear in cities.

1845

An ordinance is issued requiring special permission from the governor for anyone other than a physician with university degree to practice as an obstetrician in Québec City and Montréal. Midwife training comes under the control of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The 1871 census lists some forty midwives, though in reality there are many more. By 1891, midwives are no longer included in census returns. By the turn of the century, midwifery appears to be a thing of the past.

1848 Rosalie Cadron-Jetté founds Sainte-Pélagie Hospice to care for destitute unwed expectant mothers.

1858

The Grey Nuns establish the first daycare centers, known as "asylum rooms." Located in Montréal's working class neighborhoods as well as in Longueuil, Saint-Jean, Québec City, Saint-Jérôme, and Saint-Hyacinthe, these facilities allow mothers to work for pay and families to survive difficult times.

1892

It becomes illegal to provide information on birth control, contraceptives, or abortifacients. Legislation prohibiting birth control and contraceptives had existed since 1869. Abortion is a serious offence: those performing or procuring abortions face life imprisonment; a woman causing her own miscarriage risks seven years in prison.

1903 Éva Circé-Côté founds Montréal's first public library and becomes its curator.

Irma Levasseur, who obtained her medical degree in Minnesota becomes the first woman permitted to practice medicine in Québec, thanks to a private member's bill. She founds Québec City's Hôpital-de-l'Enfant-Jésus in 1923.

1908 Justine Lacoste-Beaubien founds Sainte-Justine Hospital in Montréal. In order to run the hospital, she must ask Québec's National Assembly to exempt the married women on the board of directors from their status as legally incompetent.

1912 Caroline Leclerc-Hamilton founds Assistance maternelle in Montréal to help poor mothers.

1932

Dr. Elizabeth Bagshaw defies the law to open the first birth control clinic in Canada.

1962

Flouting the law banning any written birth control information, Renée Rowan publishes information on the subject in the magazine *La Revue populaire*.

1969

The federal government amends the Criminal Code (section 251) in order to legalize abortion when performed in a hospital and authorized by a therapeutic committee for the protection of a woman's life or health. Otherwise, abortion remains a crime. The promotion of contraceptive products is legalized.

1970

The Morgentaler private clinic opens, offering abortion services in defiance of the law.

1971

On March 8, Front de libération des femmes (FLF) launches a national campaign for publicly funded abortion on demand.

1974

The Government of Québec adopts its first daycare policy, the Bacon Plan, named for the minister responsible.

1977

The Government of Québec announces a plan to establish a system of family planning clinics with abortion services in hospitals.

1979

The Office des services de garde à l'enfance (Child Day-care Board) is created.

1987

The Conseil du statut de la femme organizes the International Forum on New Reproductive Technologies. For the CSF, reproductive technologies are a new field where women's rights had to be protected.

1988

In the case involving Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the Supreme Court rules that Section 251 of the Criminal Code, the law against abortion, is unconstitutional. The section contravenes the Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms by infringing on women's right "to life, liberty, and security of the person."

1990

Québec authorizes the practice of midwifery on a trial basis in hospitals and facilities affiliated with health centers.

1994

The first birthing house opens its door as part of a midwifery pilot project. Projects like this lead to the recognition of the profession in Québec in 1998.

New provisions in the Québec Civil Code take effect to deal with certain medically assisted reproductive practices. Surrogateship contracts are declared null and void.

1997

The Government of Québec's new family policy leads to the introduction of full-time kindergarten. For children 4 years of age or under, daycare fees are set at \$5 per day. Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance is created to take responsibility for family policy.

2004

In Québec, midwives are authorized to supervise deliveries in hospitals. In addition, the new regulations allow women to give birth at home under a midwife's supervision.

WORK

1887

The Knights of Labor, a union organization, publishes a manifesto demanding "equal pay for equal work, for the two sexes." The Socialist Workers Party adopts a similar resolution in 1894.

1891

Nearly one woman in ten holds paid employment. The most common occupation for women is that of servant. The choice of occupations is limited to servant, factory worker, or teacher. In the cities, nearly one third of factory workers are women.

1917

Québec's National Assembly adopts the first minimum wage act for women. However, it remains inoperative until 1925.

1934

Women are at the forefront of the first major strike in the garment industry.

1937-1960 The history of union organization among women in the garment industry is marked by activists like Madeleine Parent and Léa Roback. Genuine pioneers, they struggled for better working conditions for women and men.

1937 Yvette Charpentier becomes the first woman employee in a Québec garment factory to sign a union contract, making her a pioneer in the labor movement.

Laure Gaudreault, founder of the Association des institutrices rurales (Rural Teachers Association) becomes the first paid female union employee in Québec.

1940

The war forces governments to call on women to work in factories. They are told they can do any job they choose and are offered training as mechanics, welders, and electricians. Three years later, housewives are encouraged to accept part-time work outside the home. Six daycare centers are set up in Montréal to help them do this.

1942 Lawyers Suzanne Raymond Fillion and Elizabeth Monk become the first women called to the bar in Québec.

1945

With the end of the war, the government encourages women to return to the home. Public daycare facilities are shut down.

1948 Suzanne Coallier becomes Québec's first woman chartered accountant.

1950

Federal member of parliament Ellen Louks Fairclough presents the first bill requiring equal pay for work of equal value in areas under federal jurisdiction.

1958 Louise Dumoulin becomes Québec's first woman notary.

1971

The federal unemployment insurance regime provides 15 weeks of paid maternity leave.

1975 Nicole Juteau becomes Québec's first woman police officer.

1978

To protect the jobs of working women, Québec's National Assembly amends the Minimum Wage Act to provide 18 weeks of maternity leave. In addition, it institutes a program of maternity benefits to cover the two-week waiting period.

1978 Judy Evan-Cameron becomes Québec's first woman airline pilot.

1981

The Act respecting occupational health and safety grants pregnant or breastfeeding women the right to be transferred to other duties if their working conditions are considered dangerous to their health or the health of their child. As a last resort, they may stop working with compensation from CSST.

1982

The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms is amended to include discrimination based on pregnancy and prohibit sexual harassment. The Charter permits the establishment of affirmative action programs.

1985

The articles of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms that authorize the introduction of affirmative action programs are enacted. The law requires the government to implement such programs in its own departments. However, private companies are exempted from such programs unless discrimination on their part can be proved.

1988 Thérèse Gouin Décarie becomes the first woman to receive a Prix du Québec in the sciences, the Léon-Gérin Award.

1989

Public sector negotiations are marked by significant progress towards pay equity.

With the entry into force of all phases of the policy, corporations will have a contractual obligation to implement affirmative action programs in order to qualify for Québec government contracts or grants.

1990

Amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act entitle fathers and mothers to receive 10 weeks of paid parental leave.

1991

The Act respecting labor standards is amended to allow fathers or mothers unpaid parental leave of 34 weeks in the event of a birth or adoption.

1992

The Government of Québec withdraws maternity allowances for working women with a gross annual family income of \$55,000 or more.

1996

The Pay Equity Act is passed by the National Assembly. This law requires companies with ten employees or more to correct labor-market-generated pay inequities imposed on their female employees because of their sex.

1997

The Labor Standards Act is again amended to extend parental leave from 34 to 52 weeks.

1999

The Federal Court upholds a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision in favor of some 200,000 federal civil servants demanding pay equity.

1999 Julie Payette becomes the first Québec woman in space.

2001

The Act respecting access to equal employment in public bodies (Loi sur l'accès à l'égalité en emploi) comes into effect. This bill requires programs to be set up to eliminate barriers to the hiring and promotion of women and to seek equitable participation of women in different job categories and professions.

2004

The Superior Court of Québec strikes down certain provisions of the Pay Equity Act. Employers who drew up pay equity plans prior to passage of the Act in 1996 are now obliged to comply with its provisions.

2005

The Governments of Québec and Canada sign an agreement on the funding and implementation of the Québec Parental Insurance Plan.

2005 Francine Décary, CEO of Héma-Québec, becomes the first woman to receive the Prix du Québec Armand-Frappier Award.

2006

Ten years after the adoption of the Pay Equity Act, the Government of Québec comes to an agreement on pay equity with public sector unions. Some 360,000 women receive a currency adjustment after this agreement.

Bell Canada's telephone operators win their pay equity case, 14 years after filing the complaint.

The Supreme Court dismisses an appeal by Air Canada in a pay equity dispute, thereby allowing the union to prove that flight attendants, a predominately female group of employees, suffer discrimination.

VIOLENCE

1968

The Divorce Act recognizes physical and mental cruelty as grounds for divorce.

1975

The first shelters for abused women appear through women's personal or collective initiative. Previously, only religious communities offered shelter for women who had to leave their conjugal home.

1977

Funding is provided for battered women's shelters.

1980

Regional seminars on violence against women and children are organized throughout Québec, helping raise awareness among stakeholders and frontline workers.

1982

Federal member of Parliament Margaret Mitchell is ridiculed in the House of Commons when she brings up the issue of violence against women. The outcry among women focuses the whole country's attention on the problem.

1983

The Canadian Government amends the provisions of the Criminal Code concerning sex offences. Sexual assault is to be judged according to its violent and sexual aspects. Sexual assault within marriage is recognized as criminal.

The Cinema Act leads numerous women's groups to issue statements and take action to denounce pornography.

1988

Statistics reveal that family violence affects one household in ten. The Government of Québec reacts by launching a major information and awareness campaign under the theme La violence conjugale, c'est inacceptable (Family Violence Is Unacceptable).

1989

On December 6, a man kills fourteen young women engineering students at École Polytechnique de Montréal, shouting “You’re all feminists. I hate feminists.” The tragedy sparks renewed debate on violence against women.

1991

As a result of the tragedy at École Polytechnique, December 6 is proclaimed National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

1992

Amendments to the Civil Code introduce new rules governing the use of the plaintiff’s sexual history and define the notion of sexual consent, to ensure fairer treatment of the victims of sexual assault.

1993

The United Nations (UN) adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the first universal instrument that specifically recognizes violence against women as a violation of fundamental rights. In addition, the UN appoints a Special Rapporteur to gather information on violence experienced by women around the world.

1995

The Government of Québec adopts a policy on conjugal violence, the result of work begun in 1987 by an interdepartmental committee charged with developing a framework for government action to deal with this issue.

1998

Long awaited by groups concerned with violence against women, the Firearms Act takes effect in Canada.

1999

The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously rules that sexual consent must be voluntary and communicated. This means that there can be no implied consent in sexual assault.

2006

The Civil Code is amended to recognize domestic violence or sexual assault as grounds to terminate a lease.

SOME FIRSTS IN ARTS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND LITERATURE

1697 Sister Marie Morin is considered the first woman writer born in New France.

1878 Laure Conan, writing under the name of Félicité Angers, is considered Québec’s first woman of letters.

1891 Robertine Barry (pen-name Françoise) is the first woman journalist in French Canada. Throughout her career, she champions social justice and women’s rights.

1893 Joséphine Marchand-Dandurand founds Québec’s first women’s literary review, *Le coin du feu*.

1939 Marcelle Barthe becomes Radio-Canada’s first woman announcer.

1947 Novelist Gabrielle Roy becomes the first French-Canadian winner of the Prix Fémina, one of France’s most prestigious literary awards.

Judith Jasmin is the first woman in Québec to establish herself as a senior reporter in a profession traditionally dominated by men. She also becomes Canada’s first woman foreign correspondent.

1970 Novelist Gabrielle Roy is awarded the Prix du Québec David Award.

1976 Les Éditions Remue-Ménage becomes the first publishing house to specialize in women’s issues. This same year, the first issue of the journal *Les Têtes de pioche* appears, founded by a radical feminist collective.

1979 The Conseil du statut de la femme launches its magazine, *la Gazette des femmes*.

1980 The first issue of feminist magazine *La Vie en rose* hits the newstands.

1980 Ludmilla Chiriaeff is recognized for her contribution to the performing arts with the Prix du Québec Denise-Pelletier Award.

1983 Painter Marcelle Ferron is honored with the Prix du Québec Paul-Émile-Borduas Award.

1988 Film-maker Anne-Claire Poirier receives the Prix du Québec Albert-Tessier Award.

1993 The aboriginal museologist Carmen Gill-Casavant is awarded the Prix du Québec Gérard-Morisset Award.

1997 The journalist, Katia Gagnon, is the first woman elected president of the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

2000 Marie Chantal Lepage becomes the first woman to be named National Chef of the Year in Québec.

2002 TVA's Sophie Thibault becomes the first woman news-anchor on a major Québec television network.

2006 Véronique Rivest becomes the first woman to be declared Canada's best sommelier.

Linguist Marie-Éva de Villers receives the Prix du Québec Georges-Émile-Lapalme Award.

SOME FIRSTS IN SPORT

1928 For the first time, women are allowed to enter the Olympic Games. Canadian women compete in track and field.

1932 Hilda Strike becomes the first Québec woman to win an Olympic medal at the Los Angeles Games.

1984 At the Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Sylvie Bernier becomes the first Québec woman to win an Olympic gold medal.

1991 Manon Rhéaume becomes the first woman to play in the National Hockey League (NHL).

2004 Chantal Petitclerc, the first Québec woman to win a medal at the Paralympic Games, in 1992, achieves a remarkable feat when she wins five gold medals in wheelchair racing at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens.

2006 Women athletes stand out at the Olympic Games in Turin, winning 16 of Canada's 24 medals.

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