

# Achievements

Since its founding in 1893, the National Council of Women of Canada, one of Canada's oldest women's organizations, has played a leading role in reaching many of the milestones in Canadian social history. The Council has always been concerned with the welfare of women, children, the family, and the community.

## Key Achievements

**Instructions:** Click on the "+" sign to view more information on the topics shown below.

Here are some key achievements:

### Environment

Concern about the environment has also been a constant preoccupation. The National Council of Women of Canada began campaigning for more parkland in 1912; its most recent resolution on the subject was in 1992. NCWC has passed many resolutions about air and water pollution, and for better water management; its first resolution on the subject of acid rain was in 1978.

### 1880s

In the 1880s members were working to improve the lot of underprivileged groups – female prisoners, female factory workers, and female immigrants. Their efforts helped to bring about significant improvements, such as the appointment of women matrons in prisons.

## **1890s**

In the 1890s, members were working to establish the first free libraries and supervised playgrounds for children in cities across the land, as well as the teaching of domestic science and manual training in the schools. They also pushed for many public health measures, including a pure water supply, the pasteurization of milk, and medical inspection in schools. The situation of the native people of Canada, the treatment of prisoners, and the condition of immigrants have been the subjects of many resolutions. Child welfare has also been a major focus, including the prevention of child abuse, the education of children, and the need for good day care.

## **Early 1900s**

Due to the wide-ranging interaction of its federated organizations, NCWC has been a leader in bringing developing issues to the government. For example, the call for equal pay for work of equal value was first made at the annual meeting of 1907.

In the early years of the twentieth century, NCWC resolutions were calling for such public health measures as a safe water supply, pasteurized milk, and medical inspection in schools.

The Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association had been one of the first national organizations to federate with Council in 1893, and in the early 1900's, Council members began to work towards gaining the vote for women both provincially and federally. In 1917, a Council resolution demanded the federal vote for all women who had not obtained it through provincial legislation. Legislation to extend the franchise to all women was enacted later that same year, and took effect on January 1, 1919.

NCWC members have played an active role in the formation of many vital Canadian institutions, including the Victorian Order of Nurses, Children's Aid Societies and the Consumer's Association of Canada. Council also key to the formation of

the Women's Bureau of Labour Canadian 1954, and the Federal Bureau on Ageing in 1978.

Throughout its history, Council has supported having women appointed to senior positions within government and the judicial system. It played a vital role in supporting the five Alberta women, all of them Council members, whose appeal to the judicial Committee of the British Privy Council finally resulted in women being declared "persons" in 1929, leading to the appointment of the first woman Senator in 1930. The Council supported the call for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967, and the resulting formation of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

NCWC was active in having provisions against discrimination included in the Human Rights Act. The inclusion in the Act of equal pay for work of equal value was the culmination of Council urging on this subject, which began with a demand for equal pay for equal work, approved by members at the 1907 Annual Meeting.

Responding to the variety of interests embraced by its affiliates, the NCWC has often been a leader in presenting a wide range of information regarding developing issues to the government. From women's equality to children's rights, public health reforms to inner-city playgrounds, consumer protection to citizenship work, the concerns of the NCWC have been wide-ranging, and its influence far-reaching.

This pro-active instructional and educational approach continues, in the last few years, through its annual briefs to the government. Council has asked for gender equality in the judicial system, participated in budgetary consultations with the Minister of Finance, and made submissions to the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies and the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. Recent Council Policy includes statements on pornography prevention, workplace childcare, development assistance, and disarmament.

## **1930s**

In the thirties, the Council was involved with the study and prevention of the spread of venereal diseases.

## **1940s**

In the forties, it was again recommending equal pay for work of equal value, as well as opening training programs to women and a health insurance plan.

## **1950s**

In the fifties, it wanted pension plans adapted to benefit female employees, and promoted standards for clothing and the fluoridation of water supplies.

## **1960s**

The National Council of Women of Canada has not avoided controversial issues. In 1961, it recommended broadening the grounds for divorce. In 1964, it asked for the dissemination of birth control information.

## **1970s**

In 1971, it passed a resolution asking for the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. In the 1970s, it also asked for programs to protect prostitutes and to assist in their rehabilitation.

## **1991**

In 1991, NCWC worked with YWCA, the Girl Guides, and the Junior Service League to organize a national conference "Damsels in Distress" which examined the situation of the girl child in today's society, with special reference to self-image, health, and education.

## **1994**

In 1994, NCWC held a national consultation on social security reform with its entire network, including some 750 local, provincial, and national groups. The recommendations, which were developed as a result of this consultation, were presented to the Parliamentary Committee on Human Resources Development.

## **1995**

In the years leading up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, NCWC was extensively involved in planning for the Conference, with representation both on the government Canadian Beijing Committee and on the non-governmental Beijing Preparatory Committee. At the Beijing Conference, a representative of NCWC was on the official Canadian delegation, two other NCWC members held official Observer status, and several others attended the NGO Forum. In 1995, NCWC took the lead in plans for the National Symposium on Women as Family Caregivers, held in Ottawa in November 1995. Recommendations from the Symposium called for government social policy to recognize the unpaid work of the woman family caregiver, and to provide the support she needs, including respite care and financial security.

## **1996**

In 1996, NCWC organized the Triennial Conference of the International Council of Women, held in Ottawa, June 1997. NCWC and its affiliates welcomed 300 delegates from 40 countries. The theme was "Towards the New Millennium", and the Conference provided an excellent opportunity for delegates from around the world to discuss issues of common concern.

## **1997**

In 1997, NCWC received Consultative Status General(II) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, and established an important connection for members of the National Council of Women and its affiliates nationally and internationally. NCWC presented submissions to the Government of Canada regarding the future of the Canadian Financial Services Sector and to the chief Canadian negotiator on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

Also in 1997, NCWC joined with twenty-three other national women's organizations in the "Fair Share Campaign", to recommend that the federal government increase the funding to the Women's Program to a minimum of \$2 for every woman and girl child in Canada.

## **1998**

In 1998 NCWC established a Task Force on World Trade Organization Treaties to study and monitor the impact of these agreements on political, social, cultural and environmental issues, with particular attention to the effect on women.

From 1998 to 2007 NCWC has actively supported Campaign 2000, a cross-Canada public education movement to increase awareness of and support for the all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.

1998 marked the end of the NCWC five-year Strategic Planning Initiative, reflected in an increased emphasis on membership. [/toggle

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## **1999**

In 1999 NCWC participated in the Cross-Canada Roundtables sponsored by Project Ploughshares and Nuclear Disarmament 2000 to increase support for nuclear disarmament, and in the International Conference on Policy and Development (ICPD+5)

consultations in Hull, immediately preceding the ICPD+5 Forum at the Hague.

In addition, NCWC submitted a resolution on the remission of the unsustainable debt of less developed countries to the International Council of Women for approval and action.

Another highlight in 1999 for NCWC was the inauguration of le Conseil provinciale des femmes du Québec/the Provincial Council of Women of Quebec in May 1999.

## **2000**

In 2000 NCWC formed part of the Canadian delegation to the 6th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting (WAMM6) held in New Delhi India in April, was represented at the Regional Council of the Americas Conference on Health held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and participated in the 29th General Assembly of the International Council of Women, held in Helsinki, Finland.

Together, with 114 or more other countries, NCWC took part in the Women's World March Against Poverty and Violence. The original idea and inspiration for this March came from the Bread and Roses Marches held earlier in Québec.

## **1999-2002**

From 1999 to 2002 NCWC co-ordinated a major project, Securing Our Future. Modelled after the British Project "The Economics of Later Life", Securing Our Future focused on young women 16 to 25, but involved women of all ages across Canada, who met in a series of workshops and forums, to discuss the barriers to women's economic security and the solutions. The project was funded by Status of Women Canada and Human Resources Development Canada.

## **2005**

In 2005, NCWC launched the Celebrating Women Project. The art show toured across Canada and thousands of Canadians have admired the work of artist Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn, which honours the passion, pride and perseverance of Canadian women and is a dynamic statement about the impact women have had on Canadian history. The art, prints, catalogue, greeting cards and other items are available through this web site and are also being sold at 'suitcase shows' by NCWC affiliates.

In 2005 NCWC was recognized as a Canadian 'Institution' by the Parks Canada historic Sites and monuments Board. A plaque was installed at the Allen Gardens in Toronto, site of NCWC's historic founding meeting in October 1893.

## **2010**

In 2010, the new Governor General David Johnston, following a lengthy tradition dating back to the late 19th century, became Honorary President of NCWC.