



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Social Justice Evolution

1871

When BC joined confederation as the 6th province, we held our first Legislative Assembly election for 25 MLAs in 12 districts. Only men were allowed to vote and run for office if they were a British subject and owned property.

1873

*An Act to Extend the Rights of Property of Married Women* was passed allowing married women to own real estate and all women were allowed to keep their wages for their own purposes.

1891  
-1914

Sixteen women's suffrage bills are introduced and defeated in the Legislative Assembly of BC.

1917

*The Provincial Elections Act* is amended to grant women, who qualify as British subjects, the right to vote in provincial elections and to stand as candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly.

1918

**Mary Ellen Smith** elected as the first women to the Legislative Assembly in a by-election. The Legislative Assembly passes *An Act to fix a Minimum Wage for Women*, with the Minister of Labour crediting the legislation to the efforts of independent member Mary Ellen Smith. It received Royal Assent in April 1918.

1920

The Legislative Assembly passes the *B.C. Mothers' Pension Act*, the province's first social assistance legislation.

1921

The Legislative Assembly passes *An Act Concerning the Employment of Women before and after Childbirth*, providing up to six weeks of maternity leave for working women.

1947

Chinese and South Asian women and men are enfranchised.

1948

Mennonite and Hutterite women and men are enfranchised.

1949

Indigenous and Japanese women and men are enfranchised, and Frank Calder becomes the first Indigenous person elected to a provincial legislature in Canada; he would later become B.C.'s first Indigenous Cabinet Minister.

1952

Doukhobor women and men are enfranchised.

1964

The *Jury Amendment Act* stipulates that women cannot be excluded from sitting on juries based solely on their sex.

1973

The British Columbia *Human Rights Code* is passed, prohibiting discrimination based upon race, religion, colour, sex, ancestry, place of origin, and marital status. There's also age (between 45-65), political belief, criminal conviction.

2000

The *Legislative Assembly Allowances and Pensions Act* (now the Members' Remuneration and Pensions Act) is amended to grant the Speaker authority to approve leaves of absence, including maternity and paternity leave benefits for Members.

2007

Office of the Representative for Children & Youth opens supporting BC's young people and their families with the provincial child and youth welfare system.

The first Indigenous Lieutenant Governor of BC is appointed, His Honour Steven L. Point for a 5-year period. In 2010, he donated a hand-carved canoe to the people of BC that is on display in the Parliament Buildings called Shxwtitostel.

2019

Office of the Human Rights Commissioner is opened as an Independent Office of the Legislature to promote and protect human rights in British Columbia.

Passage of *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

MLAs can wear religious and cultural items in the House and the Opening Prayers at the start of each sitting day can also be reflections.

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