

Nationally, our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in sections 15 and 28, formally guarantees the equality of rights and freedoms for male and female persons in Canada:

Equality Rights

15.-(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

28. Notwithstanding anything in this Charter, the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

Last year, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, Minister responsible for the Status of Women, prepared a Government Work Plan for Women which the Prime Minister presented at the Annual Conference of First Ministers in November. It states, in part:

For women, equality goes far beyond a definition of rights. Women's equality has a number of dimensions and applications in every field of activity -- political, economic, social, legal and cultural. Equality is freedom from discrimination; it is also the adjustment of social and cultural patterns and attitudes that perpetuate discrimination. It is men and women assuming equal responsibility for home and family. It is equal rights for women in political and public life, equal access to education and choice of curricula, and equal opportunities in employment -- in hiring, advancement and pay. Equality is women receiving their fair share of the benefits society derives from their participation in all its endeavours.

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