

This situation is improving, however, mainly as a result of legislative action. The Federal Government and all the provincial governments except one, as well as the two territorial governments, have passed legislation specifically prohibiting pay discrimination based on sex for similar or comparable work performed for the same employer.

Furthermore, nine provinces and one territory have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex in employment or conditions of employment. In view of the increased number of women in higher education and on the labour market, and of the decline in the popular belief that certain jobs are by their nature suited to women exclusively or to men exclusively, such legislative measures will undoubtedly lead to changes in the "employment profile" of women in the labour force. In 1973, women constituted 73.3 per cent of all office workers, 57.6 per cent of all employees in service and recreation occupations and the majority of the teachers in primary and secondary schools.

One of the main problems facing working mothers is the care of their children. In Canada, as in most industrialized countries, it is very difficult to find domestic help, the demand far exceeding the supply. There has consequently been a growing interest in recent years in day-care centres. The need for these is becoming increasingly acute (most mothers who work outside the home do so for economic reasons), and the numerous studies on the subject indicate that not only are well-organized pre-school programs not harmful to the child but they often contribute to his development.

There are now 1,500 registered day-care facilities in Canada, most of them for children between the ages of three and five, and this number is expected to increase considerably. Through the Canada Assistance Plan, the Federal Government covers part of the cost to the provinces of setting up day-care services for children from low-income families, whose financial contribution is determined by earnings. However, day-care centres come under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments, which in some cases delegate this responsibility to municipal authorities.

Social security

Women, like men, are eligible for all federal and provincial social-security programs. They enjoy the benefits of provincial medical and hospital insurance plans, which are financed in part by the Federal Government and are universal in application. They are also eligible for old-age security pensions payable to anyone 65 or over who meets the residence requirements, and for a guaranteed-income supplement paid to pensioners who have little or no income other than the pension.