
Introduction

As the women of Canada know, there is some distance between the principle of equality, widely accepted, and its reality, still far short of achievement. It is the duty of Parliament and government to help ensure that Canadian society travels that distance as quickly as possible.

*Speech from the Throne
November 5, 1984*

As a national priority, we must continue to remove the barriers that have prevented women from participating freely and equitably in the mainstream of Canadian society.

*Speech from the Throne
October 1, 1986*

The first session of Canada's 33rd Parliament opened in 1984 with a clear statement of the federal government's commitment to equality for women. This ongoing commitment was reinforced almost two years later in the Throne Speech opening the second session. It is thus an appropriate time to review the government's progress in addressing issues of concern to women and to examine its course of action for the future on behalf of the women of Canada.

Following the commitments made in the 1984 Speech from the Throne, the Government has built a solid record of achievement on issues of concern to women, among them the repeal of sections of the *Indian Act* that discriminated against women; employment equity legislation; pension improvements; legislation to facilitate the enforcement of support orders; and an employment and training strategy that is built on the principle of women's fair participation.

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.

The federal government's commitment to women reflects this interplay of economic and social factors in women's lives. The key to economic equality will be a strong and growing economy in which all Canadians can participate. The formulation of government policy and programs reflects this fact.

Many issues of concern to women fall under provincial or territorial jurisdiction; therefore regular consultation between both levels of government is essential. Federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women meet regularly to discuss issues of shared concern, such as child care, family violence, and training and skills development. Federal-provincial-territorial consultations and discussions are also being pursued in the areas of social assistance, pension reform, and the special needs of native women and immigrant women.

Women's concerns were given national prominence at the First Ministers' Conference on the Economy in Regina in February 1985 and figured significantly at the National Economic Summit in March 1985. At the 1985 Conference of First Ministers in Halifax, the Prime Minister and the Premiers endorsed a framework for economic equality for women, which has set in motion the development of an intergovernmental labour force strategy for women. This discussion led to agreement that Economic Equality for Women