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## WOMEN IN CANADA

(Prepared by the Women's Bureau, Department of Labour, Ottawa.)

Since the Second World War, advances in medicine and technology, the development of mass communications, growing urbanization and wider educational opportunities have had an important effect on the lives of Canadian men and women.

Women represent about 50 per cent of the population of Canada, which is approximately 22,500,000. This percentage rises in the over-50 age-group, of which women make up about 56 per cent.

Women in rural and urban areas

Canada covers an area of over 3.8 million square miles, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and, in the north, extending as far as the Arctic Ocean. This vast region includes mountains and wooded areas, broad plains where cereals are the main crops, areas that are highly industrialized and others that are almost uninhabited.

Most of Canada's population lives in a corridor 100 to 200 miles wide along its southern border. Three hundred miles to the north are isolated centres most of whose inhabitants are engaged in mining, lumbering or energy development.

On the whole, the social and material conditions of rural women are similar to those of city women. Nearly all Canadian families have radio, running water, telephone, television, an electric or gas stove and a refrigerator. About three-quarters have a car and about two-thirds own their own homes.

In addition, now that new highways and improved means of transportation have made travel easier, contact between the country and the city is more frequent than in the past and, thanks to radio and television, women in rural areas are much less isolated than before, except in very remote regions.

Education

For several decades it has been compulsory for boys and girls to attend primary and secondary school until the age of 15 or 16, depending on the provinces in which they live. However, a considerable increase in the number of women entering university has been observed in recent years. In 1962-1963, women represented 27.9 per cent of Canada's B.A. graduates. Ten years later, this figure

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had increased to 39.8 per cent. During the same period, the percentage of women with M.A. degrees increased from 18.1 to 26.8. At the Ph.D. level, the percentage of women graduates increased from 8.1 to 11.2.

In addition to the increase in the number of women graduating with degrees and diplomas from institutions of higher learning, there has also been a change in the kinds of course women enrol in at post-secondary institutions. Though most women still enter disciplines customarily reserved for them (in 1970-1971, more than 80 per cent of the degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded to women at the master's level were in education, the social sciences, the humanities and related areas), the number of women entering the professions usually regarded as masculine is increasing.

Thus, between 1963 and 1973, the number of women among those receiving their first professional degrees in medicine, law and pharmacy increased from 7.8 per cent to 18.3 per cent, from 4.0 per cent to 13.8 per cent, and from 25.5 per cent to 49.2 per cent respectively. This was also the case in other professions, particularly dentistry (1.9 per cent to 7.2 per cent), engineering (.2 per cent to 1.3 per cent) and commerce and business (3.9 per cent to 7.8 per cent).

One of the newer developments in Canadian education, the importance of which is still increasing, is continuing education, sometimes called adult education. This consists of post-secondary classes in the evening or during the summer, or correspondence courses, offered by a number of institutions, in a wide variety of subjects. This program enables men and women who find it difficult to enrol in full-time courses because of family or professional responsibilities to take courses with the aim of obtaining a diploma or certificate or simply because they are interested in the subject. In 1972-1973, 55.9 per cent of the part-time students at the B.A. level and 25.8 per cent of those at the M.A. level were women.

Work The most radical changes in the position of women in Canada have occurred in the working world. During the last ten years, the number of women in the labour force has increased by 64.3 per cent.

At present, almost three million Canadian women are employed. Of these, more than half - 56.9 per cent - are married and 23 per cent have young children. Women represent 33.2 per cent of Canada's manpower.

There are numerous reasons for the greater number of women entering the job market. Automation has been a major factor, lightening

household chores and reducing the amount of time spent on them and, in industry, decreasing the importance of physical strength in a large number of occupations, thereby opening them to women in general. As a result, the notion, once generally accepted, that there are certain jobs suitable for men and others suitable for women is no longer as widely held, particularly since, during the two world wars, women demonstrated their skills in a great many tasks previously considered exclusively masculine.

The traditional view of the role of women has also changed. Ten or 20 years ago, most women gave up their jobs when they married or had their first child, and, with the occasional exception, did not re-enter the job market, whereas today a large number of women work until they are married, resign for a few years to raise a family and take a job again when the last child has entered school or a nursery.

**Working conditions** On the whole, labour legislation, which, except where federal employees are concerned, comes under provincial jurisdiction, applies to men and women equally in the areas of minimum wages, maximum hours, unemployment insurance, days of rest, holidays, annual vacations and workmen's compensation.

However, certain provisions in these laws apply exclusively to women, or stipulate conditions that vary depending on whether they are applied to men or women. Thus, in most provinces, it is forbidden to employ women for underground work in mines, except under certain circumstances, which vary from one province to another.

In five provinces, the employment of women at night is authorized only if their employers meet certain conditions, such as providing free transportation for female night employees between home and place of employment. Other provincial laws impose certain standards of hygiene and safety that apply to women only. Under most existing laws on workmen's compensation, the wife of an employee killed on the job is entitled to the allowance and pension provided for in the legislation whatever her financial situation, whereas the husband of an employee is not entitled to a pension unless he is an invalid.

Although the working woman's contribution to the economy is generally recognized, the principle of equal pay for equal work is not yet universally applied. (It is, however, the rule in the federal Public Service, where salaries are determined according to position, regardless of the sex of the incumbent.) In a number of jobs and occupations, women are often less well paid than men for the same job or one of comparable importance.

However, this situation is improving, 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 the light 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 represented 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.

In addition, they may receive family allowances, payable for every child under 16 years of age, and youth allowances payable for children of 16 and 17 who are receiving full-time educational training or are prevented from doing so by physical or mental incapacity. Allowances are paid monthly, usually to the mother.

The only exception is the Canada Pension Plan, in which only persons between the ages of 18 and 65 earning more than a specified annual amount as an employee or a self-employed worker may participate. This means that women who are not part of the labour force are excluded from the Plan. However, the wife of a contributor is entitled on his death to a widow's pension, which varies according to her age and whether or not she has dependent children.

Women who receive widow's pensions may have contributed to the Canada Pension Plan themselves and consequently may be entitled to retirement or disability pensions in their own right. However, the widower whose deceased wife contributed to the Plan could receive a pension only if he was wholly or substantially dependent on her for financial support at the time of her death. But under an amendment to the Plan, passed in November 1974, the widower of a contributor has the same rights as the widow of a contributor.

Since 1971, the federal program of unemployment insurance, which covers all Canadian employees, men and women, has provided for the payment of maternity benefits for a period of 15 weeks, subject to a two-week waiting period.

In addition, in six provinces and in establishments under federal jurisdiction, the employer is required by law to grant any woman employee who has completed 12 months of continuous employment with him maternity leave for a period that varies by province but averages 15 weeks.

**Citizenship** The Canadian Citizenship Act imposes no disabilities on the married woman, which means that she neither acquires nor loses Canadian citizenship by marriage. A female alien who marries a Canadian citizen and has been legally admitted to Canada may obtain Canadian citizenship after living in Canada for only one year, instead of the five years normally required. On the other hand, a married Canadian woman cannot pass on her citizenship to a child born to her abroad. However, an amendment recently introduced in the House of Commons provides for equal rights, conditions and privileges for all Canadian without distinction on grounds of sex.

**Legal rights** Single women have the same legal rights as men in every part of Canada.

Under the British Common Law and the Quebec Civil Code, a married woman's domicile, upon her marrying and as a result of her new situation, is the same as her husband's. Since 1968, when the new Divorce Act was passed, a married woman has been considered as having a domicile separate from that of her husband in order to permit her to file a petition for divorce.

In every province except Quebec the civil law is based on the British Common Law. A married woman has full legal capacity to own, purchase and transfer her own property, to enter into contracts and to dispose of her possessions in a will, and she and her husband have equal rights and obligations with respect to the care and custody of their children.

In Quebec, where civil rights are governed by the province's Civil Code, the legal rights of a married woman were different from those of married women in other provinces. As a result of the Act Respecting the Legal Capacity of Married Women, passed in 1964, and the establishment of partnership of acquests under the Act Respecting Matrimonial Regimes, in force since 1970, married women in Quebec have acquired similar legal capacity to that of women in other parts of Canada.

**Politics** Canadian women were first given the right to vote in 1916 in the Province of Manitoba. This example was soon followed in the other provinces, with the exception of Quebec, where women did not obtain the right to vote until 1940.

Women obtained the right to hold public office following a decision by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England in 1929.

Canada now has eight women in the 102-member Senate, eight women members and seven women ministers in provincial legislative assemblies, and seven women members and one woman minister in the Federal Parliament.

**Women's organizations** There are many women's organizations in Canada involved in public-service activities or activities of particular interest to women. In addition to these volunteer organizations, there are several created by the federal and provincial governments.

In 1964, the Federal Government set up the Women's Bureau, a division of the Department of Labour, and assigned it the tasks of studying the status of women in the Canadian labour force, preparing reports on this subject, making known the conditions encountered by working women, informing the public about legislation passed to combat discrimination against women, and promoting

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the acceptance of women in all sectors and at all levels of the labour force.

Five provinces - British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Manitoba - later set up similar bureaus in their respective departments of labour.

The creation in 1967 of a royal commission to inquire into the status of Canadian women marked a major step in bringing to light the condition of women in Canada. In 1970, the commission published a report containing 167 recommendations, some aimed at the Federal Government and others aimed at provincial and municipal authorities.

To a large extent, this report served as a rallying-point for the activities of numerous women's organizations in Canada. Shortly after its publication, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which represents several organizations such as the National Council of Women of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Canadian Federation of University Women and the Fédération des femmes du Québec, was established to promote the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations.

At the federal level, the Office of the Co-ordinator on the Status of Women (Privy Council) was established in 1971 and charged with co-ordinating the efforts of the various federal departments and agencies to implement the recommendations of the commission. The same year, an Office of Equal Opportunities for Women was established within the Public Service Commission to promote and ensure equal opportunities in recruiting, training and promotion for women employed by the Federal Government.

In May 1973, the Federal Government appointed an Advisory Council on the Status of Women, responsible to the designated minister and charged with informing the public and the Government on matters relating to the condition of women in Canada. Also in 1973, Quebec and Ontario established advisory councils whose attributions, similar to those of the federal Council, aimed at the improvement of the status of women in their respective provinces. The following year, such an advisory council was established in Saskatchewan and, in Ontario, the provincial government instituted a Women's Crown Employees Office to promote the status of female provincial civil servants.

Apart from organizations such as these specifically designed to help improve the status of women at both the federal and provincial

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Levels of jurisdiction, many provinces have established a human rights commission that is responsible, among its other duties, for promoting the principle of equal opportunities for all, including women.

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