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## WOMEN IN CANADA

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

Major changes have taken place in Canada since the Second World War. Advances in medicine and technology, the development of mass communications, growing urbanization and wider educational opportunities have had an effect on the lives of both men and women.

Women represent about 50 per cent of the population of Canada, which in 1972 was 21,830,000. This percentage increases in the over-50 age-group, of which women make up about 56 per cent.

### Women in rural and urban areas

The second-largest country in the world, 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 as far as the Arctic Ocean. This vast area includes mountains and wooded areas, wide prairies where cereals are the main crop grown, 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 where the majority of the inhabitants are engaged in mining, lumbering or energy development.

On the whole, the social and material condition of women in rural areas is the same as that of women living in cities. Nearly all Canadian families have radio, running water, telephone, television, an electric or gas stove and a refrigerator. Approximately three-quarters have a car and nearly 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, except in very remote regions, women in rural areas are much less isolated than before.

### 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 noted in recent years. In 1962-1963, women represented

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27.9 per cent of Canada's B.A. graduates. Ten years later, this has increased to 39.3 per cent. During this period, the percentage of women with M.A. degrees increased from 18.1 to 24.7, an increase also observed at the Ph.D. level, where the number of women graduates increased by 1.2 per cent.

In addition to the increase in the number of women graduating with degrees and diplomas from institutes of higher learning, there has also been a change in the courses women enrol in at post-secondary institutions. Although most enter disciplines traditionally reserved for women (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 wishing to enter traditionally masculine professions is increasing.

Thus, between 1963 and 1972, the number of women among those receiving their first professional degrees in medicine, law and pharmacy increased from 7.8 per cent to 17.3 per cent, from 4.0 per cent to 12.8 per cent and from 25.5 per cent to 50.3 per cent respectively. This was also the case in other areas, particularly dentistry (1.9 per cent to 3.7 per cent), engineering (.2 per cent to 1.26 per cent) 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 in a wide variety of subjects offered by various institutions of learning. This program enables men and women who find it difficult to enrol in full-time courses because of their family or professional responsibilities to take courses with the aim of obtaining a diploma or certificate or simply because they are interested in a particular subject. In 1969-1970, 46 per cent of the part-time students at the B.A. level and 24 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 hold jobs. Of these, more than half -- 56.7 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 considerably and reducing the amount of time spent on them, and, in industry, decreasing the importance of physical strength in quite a 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 babies, 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 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 (Prince Edward Island is the only province in which the minimum wage for women is lower than that for men), maximum hours, unemployment insurance, days of rest, holidays, annual vacations and workmen's compensation.

However, certain provisions in these laws were written exclusively with women in mind, or contain terms that vary depending on whether they are applied to men or women. Thus, in almost every province, women are forbidden to work in mines, except under certain circumstances, which vary from one province to another.

In five provinces, women are permitted to work at night only if their employers meet certain conditions, such as providing free transportation for night employees between home and place of employment. Other provincial laws impose certain standards of hygiene and safety that apply to women only. Under existing legislation on workmen's compensation, the wife of an employee killed on the job is entitled to an allowance and the 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

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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 have passed legislation specifically prohibiting discrimination based on sex when work done is identical, or virtually identical, and performed for the same employer.

Furthermore, nine provinces have laws prohibiting discrimination on account of sex in hiring or promotion. In the light of the increased numbers of women in higher education and on the labour market, and of the decline of the popular myth that certain jobs are by their very nature suited to women exclusively and or men exclusively, such legislative measures will undoubtedly lead to changes in the percentage of women in the labour force. In 1971, women represented 72.1 per cent of all office workers, 60.1 per cent of all employees in service industries and approximately two-thirds of the teachers in primary and secondary schools.(1)

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 exceeds the supply.

There has 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 centres 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 aged 65 or

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(1) See *Women in the Labour Force, 1971: Facts and Figures*, Women's Bureau, Department of Labour.

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 70 earning more than \$600 a year as an employee or \$800 a year as 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 eligible on his death for 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 also 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 may receive a pension only if he was wholly or substantially dependent on her for financial support at the time of her death.

Since 1971, the federal program of unemployment insurance, which covers all Canadian employees, men and women, provides 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 female employee who has completed 12 months of continuous employment with him maternity leave for a period that varies by province but is generally about 12 weeks.

**Citizenship** The Canadian Citizenship Act places no disabilities upon the married woman. She neither acquires nor loses Canadian citizenship by marriage. In addition, 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.

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

Under the Common Law of England 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 that of her husband. Since 1968, when the new Divorce Act was passed, she has been considered to have 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 Common Law of England. 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 the same legal capacity as women in other regions 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 female members and six female ministers in provincial legislative assemblies, and four female members and one woman minister in the Federal Parliament.

**Women's organizations** There are many 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 1954, the Federal Government set up the Women's Bureau, a division of the Department of Labour, and assigned it the task of studying the situation 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 fight discrimination against women, and promoting the acceptance of women in all sectors of the labour force.

Five provinces -- British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Manitoba -- later set up similar bureaus in their respective departments of labour. Quebec has just passed an act to create a Status-of-Women Council.

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 was established, 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.

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 various federal departments and agencies to implement the recommendations of the Commission. 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.

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