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Municipal Reference

# Municipal Franchise for Married Women

Proposed by Liberals in the  
Ontario Legislature.

Rejected by the Government.

Mr. Rowell's  
Speech in the Legislature,  
Session, 1914.

GENERAL REFORM ASSOCIATION  
FOR ONTARIO

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# MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE FOR MARRIED WOMEN

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE DEMAND

City of Toronto Municipal Elections, 1914, vote re granting Municipal Franchise to Married Women, otherwise qualified. For 26,288; against 12,575.

Requests for this legislation have also come from Ottawa, Hamilton, Port Arthur, Fort William, Etobicoke, Bosanquet, Arthur, Tisdale, Medone, Artemesia, Griffith and Matawatchan, Albemarle, Harley, Charlotteville, Bruce, East Zorra, Pittsburg, Blenheim, Strathroy, Ayr, Watford, Kincairdine, Welland, Matheson, Keewatin, Gosfield, Biddulph, Paisley, St. Mary's, Onondaga, Galt, Chesley, Mitchell, Midland, Haileybury, Paris, Renfrew and Saice.

Mr. Rowell: "With the possible single exception of Tax Reform we have not had in recent years a greater demand presented to this House in favor of any legislation than the demand in favor of this bill."

### WHERE THEY HAVE IT

Great Britain, and several European countries.  
Australia and New Zealand.

United States—9 States (complete women's franchise).

**WHO IS OPPOSED ?**

1st.—The Ontario Government, who voted it down.

2nd.—The Liquor interests. Why? If the vote is extended to married women in Municipal Elections it means the carrying of local option in many municipalities where, by reason of the three-fifths requirement, local option has been defeated by a few votes.

Mr. Rowell: "When the organized liquor interests of this Province undertake to oppose, and apparently successfully oppose, the extension of the Franchise to Married Women is it not time for every public-spirited citizen to arise and protest against such action, and against the Government yielding to the pressure to defeat this bill?"

**CORPORATIONS VS. WOMEN**

At the Session of 1913 the Government, while denying to married women the right to vote in Municipal Elections on money bills, granted that right for the first time to Corporations.

**OTHER LIBERAL PROPOSALS RE WOMEN'S VOTE  
REJECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT**

1. To extend the legislative franchise to those women qualified to vote in Municipal Elections.
2. The appointment of a select committee to consider the whole question of extending the Provincial Franchise to women and the Municipal Franchise to married women.

## MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE FOR MARRIED WOMEN

SPEECH OF N. W. ROWELL, K.C., M.P.P., LEADER OF THE  
LIBERAL PARTY IN ONTARIO, IN THE LEGISLATURE,  
MAR. 30, 1914

Mr. Speaker,—I must express my surprise and disappointment that this Bill so simple and so fair, namely: to give to married women who otherwise have the necessary qualifications the right to vote in Municipal Elections should be opposed by the Government. Apparently the Government has made up its mind to kill this and all other bills of a similar character, providing for the extension of the municipal franchise to married women. And to my Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer has been committed the responsibility of playing the role of Chief Executioner. Why he has been chosen we can only surmise. Possibly it is because he excels in the art of dodging the real issue and arguing about other matters with a degree of plausibility which would make the unsuspecting members really think he was arguing the question before the House. In this respect the Provincial Treasurer, I believe, actually distances the Provincial Secretary himself.

### NOT THE PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE

The whole argument of my Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer has been against extending the Parliamentary franchise to women. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not the Bill before the House. It does not deal with the parliamentary franchise at all; and any discussion of the parliamentary franchise, as applicable to the present bill, is quite outside the question, although undoubtedly many who believe in the present bill, also believe in extending the parliamentary franchise to women. My Hon. friend's objections appear to be three-fold. First he says the women themselves are not agreed in favor of the franchise; many influential and representative women are opposed to it; secondly, that the measure is too radical; and thirdly, that there is no demand for it. Mr. Speaker, I desire to challenge every one of these objections urged by my Hon. friend. I know there are women in this province who are not in favor of the parliamentary franchise for women—and they are entitled to their view—but I have not yet heard, (and if my Hon. friend can point

out any organization I shall be glad if he will do so.) I have not yet heard of any organization of women in this province opposed to the extension of the municipal franchise to married women. I am sure my Hon. friend cannot point to any representations made to the Government by any women of this province in opposition to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, if we desire to find out the real source of the opposition to this bill, we will have to search somewhere else than among the women of the province of Ontario.

### IN FORCE IN ENGLAND

My Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer says that many of the leading women in Great Britain, as well as the women here, are opposed to the extension of the franchise. Does not my Hon. friend know; does not the Government realize that married women in England have for years enjoyed the municipal franchise on the same terms as widows and spinsters? There is no controversy in England whatever over the question of the municipal franchise for married women—all the controversy there is over the parliamentary franchise. WHAT THIS BILL PROPOSES TO GIVE TO THE MARRIED WOMEN OF THIS PROVINCE IS THE SAME RIGHT WHICH THEIR MARRIED SISTERS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND HAVE ENJOYED FOR YEARS. In fact, in Great Britain they not only have the right to exercise the municipal franchise, but women have the right to be elected to public municipal positions.

When my Hon. friend says this proposal is too radical, I say on the contrary, it is simply a tardy recognition on our part of a right which has been granted by other British communities many years ago. We are not taking the lead: we are simply making a somewhat feeble effort to catch up in the procession of other British communities within the Empire. This disinclination to give married women the right to vote on their own property, is, as my Hon. friend the mover of this bill (Mr. Elliott) has already pointed out, but a survival of the old, and what now appears to be a most antiquated idea, namely, the right of the husband to control the wife's person and property, and the children of the family, and with this right of control of person and property went the right to vote upon her property.

### VARIOUS STEPS OF PROGRESS.

It is difficult for us to realize that it was only in the year 1882 in Great Britain, and I believe in 1884 in this province, that mar-

ried women obtained control over their own property. Prior to that time, on marriage the control of the property passed into the hands of the husband. It was only in 1884, in England, that a married woman obtained control over her own person; for it was not until that year that they abolished imprisonment as a penalty for refusing to obey an order for the restitution of conjugal rights. It was not until 1886 that the wife obtained a measure of control over her children in the limited right of guardianship granted her by the Act passed in that year. So that if we follow these acts for the emancipation of womanhood, we find in Great Britain in 1882, married women obtained the control of their property; in 1884 of their person; in 1886 in some measure of their children. And they went on in Great Britain and took the further, and I think, only logical step, of giving to a married woman the right to vote upon and represent the property which she owned, and which by law she was entitled to control. We in this province have followed the legislation of Great Britain with reference to the control of property, of person, and of children, but we have stopped short of giving to the married woman the right to vote on her own property.

#### SITUATION HERE TO-DAY

What is the situation in this province to-day? Not only do we deprive a married woman, owning property, of the right to vote upon it; but a married woman may be the breadwinner of a family; she may be earning a sum sufficient to maintain the family, and may be maintaining the family. She has an income qualification sufficient to entitle her to vote under the Municipal Act, and yet she is denied the franchise simply because she is a married woman. She may be providing the home in which the family is cared for, in that she earns the money and pays the rent, and yet here again she is denied the right to vote.

#### CORPORATIONS VS. WOMEN

This House last session even went so far as to deny to married women the right to vote in municipal elections on money by-laws, which in fact, put a mortgage on their property. And while this Legislature at the instance of the Government did this, this same Legislature, at the instance of the Government, granted the right to vote on money by-laws to corporations. I DESIRE TO SAY, MR. SPEAKER, THAT I BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN GIVING TO CORPORATIONS, WHICH ARE SAID TO BE WITHOUT SOUL, THE RIGHT TO VOTE

BECAUSE THEY HAVE PROPERTY AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE PERMITTED TO PROTECT IT. WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DENYING THIS RIGHT TO MARRIED WOMEN, HAS MOST UNJUSTLY AND UNFAIRLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST THE MARRIED WOMEN OF THIS PROVINCE. Surely this House will not deny to married women having property, rights which this House has already granted to corporations, and in so granting to corporations have departed from all past precedent in the legislative history of this province.

### WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Mr. Speaker, we must get away from that old and, I believe, antiquated idea, of the dominance and control of man over woman in political matters. We have got away from it years ago in social and industrial matters. Modern industrial conditions have forced us away from it; modern industrial conditions have forced women out of the home to be breadwinners themselves. I notice by the British Census of 1901 that in Great Britain, for every ten men employed, four women are employed.

Just let us pause a moment, and think of what a mighty army of employed women there is in Great Britain. Four to every ten men—earning their own wages; paying their own way; working out for themselves their own future—and nearly all compelled to do it under the stress of modern industrial conditions. And is it any wonder, with these great changes going on, socially and industrially, that the women who are forced to work and to take their part with men in the social and industrial life of the nation, should ask a share in making the laws that govern this social and industrial life?

### WHERE THEY HAVE IT

I have already pointed out that in Great Britain married women have had the municipal franchise for years, the same as widows and spinsters. In Australia they have had the vote for years. In New Zealand they have the vote; and in a number of other countries of Europe they have this same right. In the United States the idea of the right of women to vote is steadily gaining ground, and there are now no less than nine states which have conferred the full franchise upon women, married and single, irrespective of property. I simply refer to this movement in the



United States, as well as to the movement in Great Britain, with a view of emphasising the unprogressive and reactionary attitude which the Government has assumed on this matter.

### GENERAL DEMAND IN ONTARIO

The last excuse offered by my Hon. friend for opposing this bill is, that there is no demand for it. I beg to differ entirely from my Hon. friend on this point. My Hon. friend treats as unworthy of consideration the vote of the electors of the city of Toronto, the representations made to the Government by the Mayor, and other representatives of the municipal corporation of the city of Toronto, by the women's organizations of Toronto, and by the representatives of other municipalities of the province. The Government apparently does not consider these even worthy of mention. Not only has there been the request from large bodies of women to extend the municipal franchise to married women, but there has come a direct request from many of the municipalities of the province. How can we ignore, Mr. Speaker, and why should we ignore the vote in the city of Toronto in the last municipal election where the electors declared in favor of granting the municipal franchise to married women by a vote of 26,288 to 12,575? I believe the vote in the city of Toronto fairly represents public sentiment in the other sections of the province, and if a similar vote had been taken in other municipalities, we would have found equal unanimity in favor of extending the municipal franchise to married women. We do find, Mr. Speaker, that after the vote was taken in the city of Toronto, the councils of many of the foremost municipalities of the province passed resolutions urging the Legislature to grant this legislation. I hold in my hand a partial list of these municipalities— a list which was published in the Press some three or four weeks ago. I do not know how many requests have come in since that date, but I find on this list that not only has Toronto asked this legislation, but Ottawa, Hamilton, Port Arthur, Fort William, and the following other municipalities:—Etobicoke, Bosanquet, Arthur, Tisdale, Medone, Artemesia, Griffith and Matawatchan, Albemarle, Harley, Charlotteville, Bruce, East Zorra, Pittsburg, Blenheim, Strathroy, Ayr, Watford, Kincardine, Welland, Matheson, Keewatin, Gosfield, Biddulph, Paisley, St. Mary's, Onondaga, Galt, Chesley, Mitchell, Midland, Haileybury, Paris, Renfrew and Saice.

I VENTURE TO SAY, MR. SPEAKER, THAT WITH THE POSSIBLE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF TAX REFORM, WE HAVE NOT HAD IN RECENT YEARS A GREATER DE-

MAND PRESENTED TO THIS HOUSE IN FAVOR OF ANY LEGISLATION THAN THE DEMAND IN FAVOR OF THIS BILL. AGAIN I REPEAT, THE TROUBLE IS NOT THAT THERE IS OPPOSITION ON THE PART OF THE WOMEN TO THIS BILL; THE TROUBLE IS NOT THAT THE BILL IS RADICAL; THE TROUBLE IS NOT THAT THERE IS NO DEMAND FOR IT; THE TROUBLE IS, THAT THERE ARE UNSEEN FORCES WORKING AGAINST THIS BILL AND ENDEAVORING TO COMPASS ITS DEFEAT, WHICH MY HON. FRIEND HAS NOT NAMED.

My Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer has asked the question: Would this legislation, if enacted, do good? Would it be for the benefit of the State? And he has apparently come to the conclusion that it would not be to the benefit of the State, or otherwise I take it he would not oppose the bill. On these points I find myself at direct issue with the Government. I believe that not only is the proposed legislation right, but that it would do good, and that it would be for the benefit of the State.

#### WOMEN'S VOTES AND TEMPERANCE

My Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer in the course of his argument against the bill, has raised the question as to whether this legislation would help the cause of temperance. He has evidently felt it necessary to deal with this point, and by certain references to what has taken place elsewhere he apparently feels justified in suggesting that it is doubtful even if it would help the cause of temperance. As my Hon. friend has raised this question, I desire to deal with it very briefly. The members of the House will recall when my Hon. friend from West Northumberland was speaking in support of this bill, and stating that married women would exercise the municipal franchise if given to them, the Hon. member for North Huron said: "Yes, in local option contests." I desire to say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the reasons why local option has been successful in many municipalities, notwithstanding the three-fifths' handicap, is because of the vote of the women—the widows and spinsters entitled to vote under the existing law. And I say unhesitatingly; for every intelligent man knows the truth of what I say that IF THE VOTE IS EXTENDED TO MARRIED WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, IT MEANS THE CARRYING OF LOCAL OPTION IN MANY MORE MUNICIPALITIES WHERE, BY REASON OF THE THREE-FIFTHS' REQUIREMENT LOCAL OPTION HAS BEEN DEFEATED BY A FEW VOTES. I say with equal unhesitation

that the Liquor Interests are opposed to this bill. They are opposed to it because they know that it means the carrying of Local Option; they are opposed to it because they know it means their defeat in municipalities where hitherto they have been successful. No one can question this fact. My Hon. friend the Provincial Treasurer has introduced the question of the effect of this vote on the Temperance Question. Let me pursue it a little further. I DESIRE TO POINT OUT THAT THE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE HAVE NOT ONLY ASSERTED, BUT HAVE SUBMITTED EVIDENCE IN PROOF THAT THE ORGANIZED LIQUOR INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES ARE FIGHTING AS STRONGLY AS THEY CAN AGAINST WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE THERE. And I hold in my hand pamphlets issued by the Women's Suffrage Associations in which they not only make this charge, but they give their evidence in support of it. Let me read you but one or two brief extracts:

During the closing days of the Michigan campaign for Women's Suffrage in 1913, the text of one of the campaign leaflets of the Michigan Association opposed to Women's Suffrage, bearing the name and address of the Association, and the names of its officers appeared as a paid advertisement in a number of papers. It read as follows:—

### AN APPEAL TO MEN!

“You should vote against woman suffrage for ten thousand reasons.

We mention but six.

As women, we do not want the strife, bitterness, falsification and publicity which accompany political campaigns.

We women are not suffering at the hands of our fathers, husbands and brothers, because they protect us in our homes.

We have woman's greatest right—to be free from the political medley. We do not want to lose this freedom.

We have refrained from protest heretofore, depending upon men to protect women from the ballot.

We now ask the men of Michigan to defend us and vote No on suffrage.

Don't vote for suffrage.

Don't start something which you can't finish.

You are not sorry now, but if women are given the ballot you may regret it when it's too late.

Keep mother, wife and sister in the protected home. Do not force us into partisan politics.

Put a cross before the word “No” on April 7, and win our gratitude.”

It was later proved that this advertisement emanated from the Retail Liquor Association, and the proof is the following letter:—

“Macomb County Retail Liquor Dealers’ Association.  
Office of the Secretary, Mt. Clemens, Mich.,  
March 31, 1913.

“To the Publisher:

“I enclose herewith copy for an advertisement which I wish you would insert in this week’s issue of your paper, making ten inches in depth, double column, on your local page or front page, if possible.

I will thank you to see that this is done, and mail statement of charges, and also marked copy to me, and we will remit for the same.

Thanking you in advance for your attention to this matter, I am,

Yours truly,

Joseph Matthews, Secretary.”

Why do the Liquor Interests oppose the extension of the franchise to women in the United States? Why are the Liquor Interests in this province opposing the extension of municipal franchise to married women? Because they fear that their craft is in danger, and it is one of the factors in considering this bill which the members of this Legislature cannot afford to ignore, that the Liquor Interests are opposed because they fear the results.

### WOMEN'S VS. LIQUOR INTERESTS

Now, Mr. Speaker, I desire to ask this question: Is that any sufficient reason why we should deny to a married woman who has property in the municipality a right to vote on that property? I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, who has a better right to express an opinion in the local municipality whether the bar should be closed or remain open than the married woman who is the mother of a family, who is largely responsible for the care and training of the children? If there is one person (if she has the other necessary qualifications under the law) I submit it is the woman entrusted with the rearing of a family; and I submit that we will do a great wrong and injustice to the married women otherwise qualified if we deny them this right. WHEN THE ORGANIZED LIQUOR INTERESTS OF THIS PROVINCE UNDERTAKE TO OPPOSE, AND APPARENTLY SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSE THE EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE TO MARRIED WOMEN, IS IT NOT TIME FOR EVERY PUBLIC-SPIRITED CITIZEN TO RISE AND PROTEST AGAINST SUCH ACTION AND AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT YIELDING TO THE PRESSURE TO DEFEAT THIS BILL? The municipal voters deal, not only with the question of local option, but they deal with many other questions in which women are equally interested. Married women, otherwise qualified, to-day have the right to vote

for School board trustees; they have the right to sit as members of public school boards. This bill simply proposes to give them the same right in municipal elections. My Hon. friend says: Is it in the public interests? I should like to ask my Hon. friend this question: Who can be more interested than married women in such questions as public health and sanitation, proper housing, the moral atmosphere of the city; all these questions touch the highest, the best interests of the community. What would be the position of women on such questions? What would be the position of the mothers on such questions? We know that their influence would be for good—for the highest and best interests of the community. Then why deny them the right to vote? My Hon. friend has spoken of the good work women are doing outside. They are doing splendid work outside. The work done by the National Council of Women in the cities and towns of this province; the work done by the Women's Institutes in the rural sections of the province, is something of which we cannot speak too highly. They are working unselfishly and whole-heartedly to promote the highest interests of the communities in which they live. They are giving of their ability, their sympathy, and their social influence to benefit the communities where they dwell. What is true of these organizations is not less true—some might say more true—of the numerous women's organizations in connection with churches of all communions, in connection with their organizations for Temperance and moral reform; in connection with the work of our hospitals; our charities; our benevolent enterprises. Who can measure the extent and beneficence of the work of the women's organizations of this province? They have proven their interest, their sympathy and their capacity: now they ask that those of them who are wives and mothers, and have the qualification, may have the right to take a share in determining the character of our municipal government, which after all, has so much to do with these questions in which women are so vitally interested.

### LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISE

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to-day to discuss the larger issue upon which my Hon. friend has dwelt at greatest length, namely, the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women. I only desire to say this, that personally I can see no reason why women entitled to vote in municipal elections, and who now have the municipal franchise, should not have the legislative franchise also. We deal here with the same classes of subjects as are dealt with by municipal councils, and I believe their vote and interest provincially would be equally beneficial to their

vote and influence municipally. I do not think anyone will question that the women who have been entitled to exercise the franchise municipally for years are not also thoroughly well qualified to exercise the provincial franchise.

This question, however, is not before the House. I only refer to it because my Hon. friend has dealt with it at such length. We are dealing with the simple and concrete proposition against which no public opposition has been offered either by women or by men—a proposition most influentially supported both by women and by men. And I do earnestly hope that the Government which has taken so long to consider the course it will take on this bill, and has delayed its discussion for so many weeks in order to decide the course it would take, will still hesitate to kill this bill, but on the contrary will turn away from the influences which are apparently dominating it, and give to married women who have the necessary qualifications, the right to vote in municipal elections.”

[Details of vote on next page.]

### DETAILS OF GOVERNMENT VOTE

By a straight party vote (with the exception of Allan Studholme, Labor Member for East Hamilton, who voted with the Opposition), the Government voted down the Liberal Bill to grant the municipal franchise to married women. Totals—58 to 17.

List of Government members voting against the municipal franchise for married women:—

Anderson (Essex)	Ferguson (Grenville)	Jessop Lucas	Preston (Lanark)
Armstrong	Foy	McElroy	Pyne
Black	Fraser	McFarlan	Rankin
Brower	Galna	McGarry	Reaume
Cameron	Gamey	MacArthur	Regan
Carscallen	Gooderham	Macdiarmid	Ross
Crawford	Grant	Mathieu	Scholfield
Dargavel	Grigg	Milligan	Sulman
Devitt	Hanna	Mills	Thompson
Duff	Hartt	Morel	(Simcoe)
Ebbs	Hearst	Nesbitt	Thompson
Eilber	Henry	Norman	(Peterboro)
Fallis	Hogarth	Owens	Torrance
Ferguson	Jamieson	Peck	Vrooman
(Simcoe)	Jarvis	Pratt	Whitesides