

PEI Coalition for Women in Government

Research Summary



PEI in 2013

- 29.3% of municipal councillors are women
- 25% of MPs are women
- 22.2% of MLAs are women
- 50% of Lennox Island First Nation Band Council are women
- 0% of the Abegweit First Nations Band Council are women
- 50% of appointed senators are women

Beginning in 2004, to assist in identifying issues and strategies to elect more women, the PEI Coalition for Women in Government has spent time analysing election data, researching innovative strategies for electing women from around the world, and talking to women in workshops and focus groups. Following are highlights of that research.

- Women have never represented more than 31.1% of candidates in Provincial general elections or 25.9% of elected members of the Legislative Assembly of PEI.
- **A total of 24 women have been elected to the Provincial Legislature** in PEI's history.
- The Conservative Party of PEI has nominated 5 women for federal seats in it's history. The Liberal Party of PEI has nominated one. Three of these women won seats: Mary MacDonald, Catherine Callbeck and Gail Shea.
- **Women are more likely to be municipal councillors in communities which do not hold election polls.** In 2009, women held 31.2% of the seats in smaller communities which hold special election meetings, and just 19.5% of council seats in larger municipalities which hold election polls.
- **PEI voters do not discriminate against women at the polls.** In the 6 Provincial General Elections held between 1993 and 2011, women were successful in 58.3% (28) of the 48 races in which the Liberals and PC Party pitted a woman against a man.
- **PEI voters make their decisions based on candidates' party affiliation, not their gender.** Despite the fact that women statistically have won more against men, analysis of the data suggests that voters care more about a candidate's party than they do about their gender. In 89.1% (57 of the 64 races) of races between genders, women lost or won in tandem with their party.

- **The problem does not lie with electing women, it lies with getting women's names on the ballot.** Women are not being nominated by parties in high numbers, nor are they entering their own names for municipal elections. In the past 6 Provincial elections, women have made up between 22 and 27.7% of candidates, with women nominated by the Liberal and PC parties averaging 19.9%. In the past 4 elections in election poll municipalities, where candidates run as independents, women were 20.3% of candidates.
- **There are many barriers to women running for elected office in PEI.** Some highlighted by women in our focus groups include the challenges a PEI politician faces in having work life balance, the traditional care giving role Canadian women play in their families, and the competitive nature of politics and government decision-making.

Women in Canadian Government 2012: How Does PEI Compare? (April 27, 2012)
Percentage of Women in Provincial, Territorial and National Legislatures.

rank	Province/Territory	% of women in legislature
1	British Columbia	31.0% (26/84) ¹
2	Province of Quebec	28.8% (36/125)
3	Manitoba	28.1% (16/57)
4	Ontario	28.0% (30/107)
5	Alberta	26.4% (23/87)
	CANADA	24.7% (76/308)
6	Nova Scotia	23.1% (12/52)
7	Saskatchewan	22.4% (13/58)
8	Prince Edward Island	22.2% (6/27)
10	Newfoundland and Labrador	16.7% (8/48)
10	Yukon	16.7% (3/18)
11	Nunavut	15.8% (3/19)
12	New Brunswick	14.6% (8/55)
13	Northwest Territories	10.5% (2/19)

After the 2011 Provincial General Election, PEI fell from the number five spot to number seven in terms of the percentage of women elected in Provinces and Territories in Canada. After the 2007 election, PEI briefly held the top spot in Canada, with 25.6%. British Columbia, at 31%, is the only jurisdiction to currently have more than 30% women in its Legislature. The average percentage of women in Provincial/Territorial Legislatures has increased from 18.2% in April, 2007 to 21.9%.

¹ one vacancy

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Significant Dates in the History of Women and Politics in PEI

- 1888 Unmarried women in Charlottetown win the right to vote in municipal elections.
- 1892 Unmarried women in Summerside win the right to vote in municipal elections.
- 1899 Women win the right to sit on School Boards in Charlottetown and Summerside.
- 1917 Women with close relatives in the armed forces win the right to vote in federal elections.
- 1918 Women over the age of 21 who are Canadian citizens win the right to vote in federal elections, with the exception of Aboriginal women.
- 1921 Island women win the right to vote in provincial elections.
- 1929 British Privy Council declares women to be "persons" able to serve in the Senate.
- 1951 Hilda Ramsay (CCF) from Indian River is the first female candidate to campaign for a seat in the provincial legislature.
- 1955 Elsie Inman is the first Island woman appointed to Senate.
- 1960 First Nation peoples living on reserve win the right to vote in federal elections without losing their registered Indian status.
- 1960 Mary Bernard is the first woman elected chief of the Lennox Island First Nation.
- 1961 Mary Margaret Smith MacDonald (PC) is the first Island woman, as well as the first woman east of Ottawa, elected to the House of Commons. To date, only two other PEI women have followed in her footsteps.
- 1968 Dorothy Corrigan is the first woman elected mayor of Charlottetown.
- 1970 Jean Canfield (Lib.) is the first woman elected to PEI's Legislative Assembly.

- 1972 Jean Canfield (Lib.) is the first woman in PEI appointed to Cabinet, responsible for the P.E.I. Housing Authority.
- 1972 Margaret Bernard is elected first chief of the newly formed Abegweit Band.
- 1972 The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is created to bring about political action on issues of concern to women, including the election of women. Other similarly focused organizations, such as Women's Network PEI and East Prince Women's Information Association are later formed.
- 1979 Frances Perry is the first woman elected mayor of Summerside.
- 1983 Marion Reid (PC) is the first woman in PEI to hold the office of Speaker of the Provincial Legislative Assembly.
- 1990 Pat Mella (PC) is the first woman in PEI to become Leader of a provincial political party.
- 1990 Marion Reid is appointed the first female Lieutenant Governor for Prince Edward Island.
- 1993 Catherine Callbeck (Lib.) is the first woman in PEI and Canada to be elected Premier.
- 1993 Pat Mella (PC) is the first woman in PEI to hold the position of Leader of the Official Opposition.
- 1993 A precedent setting 25% of the PEI Legislative Assembly are women.
- 2004 Lennox Island First Nation elects an all-female Band Council which includes Chief Darlene Bernard, Emily Bernard, Tabatha Thomas and Mary Moore Phillips.
- 2006 Olive Crane (PC) wins a by-election to bring the percentage of women in the PEI Legislature to a record breaking 26%.
- 2008 One third of PEI candidates in the 2008 Federal Election are women. Gail Shea (PC) becomes the third female MP in PEI history.
- 2010 Two of four political parties are led by women, including Olive Crane as Leader of the PC Party and Sharon Labchuk as Leader of the Green Party.

Prince Edward Island in 2013:

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- * 50% of Lennox Island First Nation Band Council are women. No women are members of the Abegweit First Nations Band Council.

The PEI Coalition for Women in Government is a multi-partisan coalition of individuals and organizations committed to increasing women's opportunities to be elected to government in PEI. For more information visit our website at www.womeningovernmentpei.ca