

# The evolution of breaking the glass ceiling



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With the uprising of the Voice of Women ( *VOW*), a voluntary nonpartisan organization created in 1960, the second wave of feminism took a turn and people began questioning the traditional roles in which females were expected to take on. Women had the same legal status as children, so they were unable to sign a lease for their own home or open bank accounts, they had to have men sign them. It was these limitations which led women to further liberate one another to “ smash the glass ceiling” and advocate for their rights to once again be altered and broadened. The first wave of feminism generally consisted of rights for voting, political rights, and getting more powerful jobs whilst men served in the war. The second wave of feminism had a profoundly positive impact on Canada because it supported women’s physical rights, advocated equality in the workforce, and legalized contraception.

At this point in time, abortions, the deliberate termination a fetus humans life, were illegal and strongly looked down upon (“ Abortion | Medical Abortion.”), so when women conceived an unwanted baby they would result to illegally performing their own at home rather than birthing an unwanted fetus. Not only this but in 1982, PM of the NDP Margaret Mitchell shared with theHouse of Commonsthat each year “ 1 in 10 husbands beat their wives regularly,” (“ Women’s Movements in Canada: 1985–present”), initiating hundreds of female activists to also campaign against violence. In a positive turn of events, in the following year of 1983 it became illegal for a man to rape his wife, and although it did not completely terminate the issue it has immensely decreased the numbers. As well as in 1978 it became illegal for

women to be fired for becoming pregnant, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the abortion law as a 'violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*' in 1988, and finally abortion became a legal right for Canadian women in 1988 ("Women's Movements in Canada: 1960-85") and is now a service considered medically necessary. With the support of women's physical rights advancing so greatly in such a minimal timeframe, shows that the voice activists were voicing were finally beginning to be heard. Prior to 1988 the *Canadian Criminal Code* had been used to charge medical doctors alike Dr. Henry Morgentaler and others who provided elective abortions, though as those doctors, and feminists challenged the right the government had to prohibit abortion services, they acknowledged this voice and began rallying harder for their beliefs and basic human rights.

Despite the rise of female job roles during the World Wars, women still faced many obstacles in enduring work opportunities and training for such jobs. They were still expected to prioritize household labour over earning money elsewhere, and even if they were employed, they made approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of what men were earning. With the unfair hiring process, and no maternity leave, women found it exceedingly difficult to find and keep jobs especially when in a growing family. Though in that day in age, there was The Service Sector (also known as the female employment ghettos) where women were sent to find jobs in clerical work, healthcare, and teaching. All very feminine jobs, with substantially lower wages and benefits as for what men would be offered. Though not all females were married, many women faced "triple day's" of waged, domestic, and caring labour (worker, wife/at home work, and mother), and were to balance all of which while making life for her

husband as easy as possible. In 1968, The Royal Commission on the Status of Women begins where a group of people observe women in society and make suggestions to the government and soon after it was formed these members discovered that “ although 8 of the 10 provinces had equal pay laws, women still remained being paid less for doing the same work” (Morrison, Jessica. *Canada Past, Present, Future: Women's Issues*). When in 1971 and women in the workforce began earning 58% a man's wage in completion of the same work, this was progression, though not even relatively close to what they wished to end with. Due to this, the fight for equality in the workforce is still a current issue and popular debate topic between activists. The perseverance and determination the feminists had, as well as the support from influentially ranked individuals (alike doctors), led to some major changes and steps forward for all the women of Canada. With the lack of privileges and power women were offered prior to these modifications, the feminists were unaware of their power and its effectiveness, as what was yet to come would baffle them.

With the invention of birth control in the early 1950's, this small pill taken daily for preventing unwanted pregnancies and control over the woman's fertility (Bishop, Mary F.. “ Birth Control”) was a spark of controversy around the world. Despite being looked down upon for being birth control users prior to WWII, after the baby boom the pill gradually became more publicly acceptable. The distribution of information regarding birth control was illegal and the disclosure of it could possibly lead to prison charges, though many people alike activists and members of the catholic churches often disobeyed this (the creation of the pill outraged catholic churches as

conception is supposed to be cherished and they were very pro-life). In the early years of its creation, only married women were enabled the opportunity to access the pill, deeming single women, divorced women (rare), and any other socially standardized women whom were not married to a man, ' unfit' to obtain the mechanism. Though in 1969, a time that many Canadians such as Aileen Hall, director of the Planned Parenthood Association in Toronto, says " was long overdue" (" Women's Movements in Canada: 1960-85"), conception was then removed from the criminal code by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau who, at the time, was leading the cause in Parliament. With the legalization of contraception, brings forth the increase of rights the women now have. With Trudeau in office he was able to legalize many of these rights, but being able to control their own fertility was a major step forward for feminists, as women of any relationship, religion, or social status may now purchase the contraceptive. With the initial removal from the criminal code, this stopped doctors from being arrested for disclosing the withheld information of the wonderful pill, though now they may sell and provide it to any women who request it, with no fear of legal backlash.

The years of 1976-1985 were declared the decade of women, and since 1975, March 8th has been named and recognized as International Women's Day, celebrating achievements, improvements, and activists all around in our current and past society. The second wave of feminism had a profoundly positive impact on Canada because it supported women's physical rights, advocated equality in the workforce, and legalized contraception. Whether it was the women who worked for the The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the doctors who challenged the government, the women who went

day by day dealing with triple day's, or the understanding view that Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had, the women of this and past generations were born with feisty, justice hungry blood in their veins. With all the developments that appeared in the second wave, it has shaped the society, laws, and lifestyles we live by as Canadian citizens in current time. Without these strong willed activists and rebellious individuals, we, as women in 2019, would not be permitted to do many of the things we take advantage of. We shall forever give thanks to the women who risked careers, safety, respect, and social exception in order to assure a better lifestyle for women of the future, and may we continue their fight for equality for women, and any other group facing injustices.

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