

TRAILBLAZERS OF THE FIRST 100 YEARS

1916 - 2016



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



MANITOBA

On January 28, 1916, Bill No. 4 – An Act to amend “The Manitoba Election Act” received Royal Assent. The passage of this Act granted most Manitoba women the right to vote and to run for public office. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to win the right to vote for women.

Nellie McClung was one of the Manitoba women involved in campaigning for the women’s right to vote in 1916. She was also one of Canada’s Famous Five who initiated and won the Persons Case, to have women become recognized as persons under Canadian law in 1929.

In recognition of Manitoba’s centennial of most women receiving the right to vote, we pay tribute to a select handful of women trailblazers who achieved first in their field since that time.



TRAILBLAZERS OF THE FIRST 100 YEARS

Foreword by **JoAnn McKerlie-Korol**, Director of Education and Outreach Services of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba



On January 28, 1916, legislation passed that granted women the right to vote and to run for public office. On June 29, 1920, the first woman, Edith Rogers, was elected to represent the constituency of Winnipeg. This was just the beginning of the “firsts” for Manitoba’s women in the Legislative Assembly.

Celebrating the first 100 years since the passage of this legislation, only 51 women have been elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as elected MLAs and only a small number have served as Officers of the Legislative Assembly. The **Trailblazers of the First 100 Years** Wall honours, celebrates and uplifts the achievements of these women who have paved the way for future generations. These women are the first to occupy positions traditionally held by men or who have worked to forge new pathways for women. As trailblazers, they have changed the landscape of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly forever.

It is an honour to have been a part of the “**Trailblazers of the First 100 Years**” project. It is my hope that these trailblazers will be inspirations to all of our daughters and grand-daughters on what can be achieved!

EDITH ROGERS

Liberal 

Winnipeg



MLA from
1920 to 1932

On June 29, 1920, Edith Rogers made history by becoming the **first woman to be elected as an MLA in the Manitoba Legislature**.

During her political years, she was very interested in social welfare and pressed for the adoption of The Child Welfare bill. She represented the government on the Social Welfare Council of Winnipeg. She introduced a bill for censorship of motion pictures and a bill giving widows increased power over their husband's estates.

ELIN SALOME HALLDORSON

Social Credit 

St. George



MLA from
1936 to 1941

Salome Halldorson was the **first Icelandic woman** and the second female MLA to be elected into the Manitoba Legislature. She was a member of the Social Credit League.

In addition to her career in the legislature, she served as vice-president and president of the Manitoba Social Credit League in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Icelandic women's suffrage and community were instrumental in supporting the women's movement for enfranchisement in Manitoba.

THELMA FORBES

Progressive Conservative 

Cypress



MLA from
1959 to 1969

Thelma Forbes was elected into the Manitoba Legislature on November 26, 1959.

She was appointed the **first female Speaker** in the provincial legislature on February 28, 1963, making her the second female Speaker in the entire Commonwealth.

She was the **first female cabinet minister** holding the ministerial portfolios of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs.

She received the Manitoba Good Citizenship Award and was inducted into the Order of the Buffalo Hunt.

MURIEL SMITH

New Democratic Party 

Osborne



Muriel Smith was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on November 17, 1981.

On November 30, 1981, Smith was appointed as the **first female Deputy Premier** of Manitoba. She held several ministerial portfolios throughout her career.

Ms. Smith received the Order of Manitoba in 2008, became an Officer of Canada in 2007 and a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

MLA from
1981 to 1988

SHARON CARSTAIRS

Liberal 

River Heights



Sharon Carstairs was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on March 18, 1986.

Following the 1988 general election, the Liberal party became the Official Opposition with Sharon Carstairs becoming the **first woman to lead an Official Opposition Party** in a Canadian Legislature. In 1994, she was appointed to the Senate of Canada to represent the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2017 and is a recipient of both the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

MLA from
1986 to 1994

BONNIE MITCHELSON

Progressive Conservative 

River East



Bonnie Mitchelson was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on March 18, 1986. She is the **longest serving female MLA in Manitoba** with 30 years of continuous service.

Bonnie held several ministerial portfolios throughout her career as well as serving as Deputy Leader.

She was appointed as the Interim Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 2000, the **only woman to lead the Provincial Progressive Conservative party**.

MLA from
1986 to 2016

ROSEMARY VODREY

Progressive Conservative 

Fort Garry



MLA from
1990 to 1999

Rosemary Vodrey was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on September 11, 1990.

On September 10, 1993, she was the **first woman to be appointed as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General** in Manitoba, with responsibility for Constitutional Affairs and the Status of Women. Throughout her career, Mrs. Vodrey held several other ministerial portfolios.

ROSANN WOWCHUK

New Democratic Party 

Swan River



MLA from
1990 to 2011

Rosann Wowchuk was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on September 11, 1990.

She was appointed the **first female Minister of Agriculture and Food** on October 5, 1999.

On September 14, 2009 she was appointed the **first female Minister of Finance** and Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro while remaining Deputy Premier. Throughout her career, Ms. Wowchuk held several other ministerial portfolios.

She is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal.

MYRNA DRIEDGER

Progressive Conservative 

Charleswood



MLA from
1998 - present

Myrna Driedger was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on April 28, 1998.

Myrna is the **founder of the Nellie McClung Foundation** which was created through a Private Member's Bill that led to the Famous Five Monument on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature. Her other Private Member's Bills included establishing January 28, 2016 as the Centennial of Manitoba Women's Right to Vote, creating Sexual Assault Awareness Month as well as amending a liquor law to help prevent date rape.

Myrna was the first Manitoban to **chair the Canadian Region of Commonwealth Women's Parliamentarians** as well as being **Vice Chair of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians - International**.

For service to her community Myrna received the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal.

THERESA OSWALD

New Democratic Party **NDP**

Seine River



Theresa Oswald was elected to the Manitoba Legislature on June 3, 2003.

In 2006, she was appointed as the **first female Minister of Health** in Manitoba. Throughout her career, Ms. Oswald was appointed to several different portfolios, including a brand new departmental portfolio, Jobs and the Economy.

She is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

MLA from
2003 to 2016

FLOR MARCELINO

New Democratic Party **NDP**

Wellington/Logan



Flor Marcelino is the **first visible minority** woman to be elected into the Manitoba Legislature on May 22, 2007, for the constituency of Wellington. She was re-elected in 2011 and 2016 for the revamped constituency of Logan.

She is the **first visible minority woman to be appointed to cabinet** holding the position of Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism and Minister for Multiculturalism and Literacy.

She was appointed as the Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party in the Manitoba Legislature on May 7, 2016, the **only woman to lead the Provincial New Democratic Party**.

MLA from
2007 - present

AMANDA LATHLIN

New Democratic Party **NDP**

The Pas



Amanda Lathlin is the **first indigenous woman** elected to the Manitoba Legislature on April 21, 2015.

Amanda worked at the University College of the North (UCN) and was involved in creating educational and career opportunities in northern communities that help families thrive. She also served as a band councillor for the Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

MLA from
2015 - present

CAROL BELLINGER

Auditor General from 1992 to 1996 and 2006 to 2014



Carol was the first female **Provincial Auditor for the Province of Manitoba**, a position she held from 1992 to 1996. She was appointed as **Auditor General** of the Province of Manitoba holding this position from 2006 to March 2014.

Carol served as the City Auditor for the City of Winnipeg, and held management positions with KPMG in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, Media One International in Warsaw, Poland, and as Director of Private Funding at the University of Manitoba.

She is currently the Auditor General for the Province of British Columbia.

PATRICIA CHAYCHUK

Clerk from 2000 to present



Patricia was appointed as **Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly** on January 10, 2000, the first woman to hold this position.

From 1989 to 2000, she served as Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees with the Manitoba Legislature. Patricia was a Manitoba Legislative Intern and a former Premier and Speaker of the Manitoba Youth Parliament.

Patricia is a past President of the Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada and a past President for the Canadian Study of Parliament Group. She currently serves as Chair of the Editorial Board of The Canadian Parliamentary Review, and is a member of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments.

IRENE HAMILTON

Ombudsman from 2005 to 2012



Irene was appointed **Provincial Ombudsman** for Manitoba on March 31, 2005, the first female to hold this position. As Ombudsman, she was also the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the Province. She was re-appointed for a second term on March 2011.

Previously, Ms. Hamilton was Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice, Courts Division. She was the Public Trustee of Manitoba from 1991 to 2000. She had previously been the Vice President, Licensing and Corporate Counsel and Secretary for the Liquor Control Commission.

She is past president of the Law Society of Manitoba.

JANET MIRWALDT

Children's Advocate from 1999 to 2006



Janet Mirwaldt was appointed **Manitoba's first female Children's Advocate** for the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

She has authored and coauthored several public reports concerning such areas as child welfare, youth corrections, adult corrections, provincial income security and health services.

SHIRLEY STRUTT

Legislative Counsel from 1988 to 2001



Shirley Strutt was the first female **Legislative Counsel** appointed on January 1, 1988. This position was also an Assistant Deputy Minister and the **Law Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**.

As Legislative Counsel, Shirley was responsible for the preparation, in both French and English, of all Manitoba bills, regulations, consolidated statutes and regulations. This included drafting of all laws and regulations required by government departments and giving advice to MLAs on the preparation of Private Members' Bills. She also provided advice to the Speaker and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on matters related to the Assembly.

SHIPRA VERMA

Chief Electoral Officer from 2013 to present



Shipra Verma was appointed as the **Chief Electoral Officer of Manitoba** on July 10, 2013, the **first woman to hold this position**.

Shipra joined Elections Manitoba in 2004 and, in 2009, she was appointed to the position of Deputy Chief Electoral Officer. She took on the additional role of Acting Chief Electoral Officer in 2010. Ms. Verma is a Chartered Accountant with credentials in Canada, the United States and India.

TRAILBLAZERS OF THE FIRST 100 YEARS

Cap. _____

An Act to amend "The Manitoba Election Act."

Passed the Legislative Assembly
of Manitoba on the 27th
day of January A.D. 1916

J.H. Stearns
Clerk of the Legislature, 3126-675

Assented to by His Honour the
Lieutenant-Governor on the

28th day of January
A.D. 1916.

BILL No. 4

No. 4

BILL

1096

An Act to amend "The Manitoba Election Act."

HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, enacts as follows:—

1. Section 14 of "The Manitoba Election Act," being
chapter 99 of the Revised Statutes of Manitoba, 1912, is here-
by amended by adding after the word "person" in the first
line thereof the words "male or female, married or unmarried."
2. Paragraph (a) of section 15 of the said Act is hereby
amended by striking out the words "of the male sex" in the
first and second lines thereof.
3. Section 16 of the said Act is hereby amended by adding
after the word "person" in the second line thereof the words
"whether male or female, married or unmarried," and by
striking out the letter and words "(a) is of the male sex" from
the sixth line thereof.
4. Section 218 of the said Act is hereby amended by striking
out the 5th line thereof, namely, the letter and words "(a)
persons who are not of the male sex."
5. This Act shall come into force on the day it is assented to.

Assented to by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor

on the 28th day of January A.D. 1916

S. A. Cameron
Lieutenant-Governor

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



MANITOBA