

**Female Legislative Leadership  
and the CCF-NDP in Saskatchewan**

by

Cristine de Clercy  
Department of Political Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
c.declercy@usask.ca

*Paper presented to the 2006 meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association.  
York University, Toronto, June 3. Session M9, Saturday June 3.*

## Female Legislative Leadership and the CCF-NDP in Saskatchewan

### Introduction

This essay examines the relationship between women and the public sphere in the course of Saskatchewan's first century, focusing on when, why and how women began participating in formal political institutions. It is interesting to survey the entry of women into formal politics because Saskatchewan's political culture is unique. Many citizens take pride in their province's socially progressive history, liberalism, egalitarianism and co-operative culture. The province's experience with social democracy, the labour movement, populist agrarian politics, state hospitalization and medicare have led some analysts to compare it with western European social democracies such as Sweden and Denmark. In these states the rates of female electoral participation historically have been very high among developed democracies, and it is often assumed that women politicians face less discrimination and enjoy more equality with men where social democratic parties hold power. Is this the case in Saskatchewan? Since the province's creation, have women here moved from the private sphere into the public sphere quickly and easily, and has this movement been expedited by the postwar dominance of the Co-operative Commonwealth- New Democratic party? What is the current state of affairs with respect to women's representation in the legislature and within senior political offices? Have women achieved political parity with men? These are excellent questions that merit answers as the province begins its second century.

The names of several women come to mind immediately when one thinks about Saskatchewan politics, such as Violet McNaughton, Marjorie Cooper, Sally Merchant and Sylvia Fedoruk. Certainly these women and others have been at the forefront of female political activity. However, focusing on a few well-known leaders does not help to illustrate how women as a group have fared in provincial politics since 1905. Toward this task the paper proceeds by analysing when women began to participate in the public sphere and measuring the rate of female legislative representation across time. This survey is divided into three chronological periods. The first spans the years 1905 to 1943, from the founding of the province to the end of the Liberal party's legislative hegemony. This section is titled "The Foundational State."

The second period, "The Modern State," surveys significant developments in the years 1944 to 1990. The party system changed dramatically in 1944 with the election of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to office. As well, in this period women candidates began to participate regularly in political campaigns and began to receive appointments to cabinet posts and important government offices. This was the era of the modern welfare state, marked by the expansion of social policy, the social safety net and government economic intervention. The third period begins in 1991 and anticipates some future milestones in the path toward Saskatchewan's bicentennial celebration in 2105. This section on "The Future State" summarizes the current level of women's legislative participation, and reviews some of the many areas where today's women remain excluded from full participation in public affairs. To complement the focus on female participation in formal political institutions, a final section briefly considers how change in provincial public policy has influenced Saskatchewan women.

This broad chronological approach is unique among analyses of women and politics in Saskatchewan, and the paper is distinctive in a second area. Two important

appendices have been created expressly for this study and it is worth mentioning their content at the outset. One is a brief summary of the handful of women who were the first to occupy particular offices or secure political positions, and these achievements are important because they signal the end of female exclusion in these areas. Appendix 1, “The First Women of Saskatchewan Politics,” is not exhaustive, but it is the most current account of such milestones in print. The second appendix, titled “Female Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, 1917-2005,” presents a thorough, up to date chronological summary of all the women who have been elected as Members of Saskatchewan’s Legislative Assembly. This information indicates partisan affiliation and also records those periods where no women sat in the assembly. While some of this information is available in other places, this appendix includes the 2003 election results, and its format allows broad representational patterns to be easily discerned.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Foundational State: Women’s Electoral and Political Participation, 1905-1943**

The initial set of electoral divisions created in Saskatchewan numbered twenty-five, and so the first election, held on December 13, 1905, sent twenty-five men to serve in the new legislature. At this point, only men were entitled to participate in the electoral process and stand for election: *The Legislative Assembly Act* stated in section 9 that “Any male subject by birth or naturalisation shall be eligible for nomination and election as a member of the Legislative Assembly unless otherwise disqualified under this act.”<sup>2</sup> As Saskatchewan’s population grew rapidly in subsequent years, and immigration brought suffragism to the prairies, pressure mounted for extending the franchise to women. In February of 1912, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association (SGGA) passed a resolution calling for women’s suffrage at its annual convention.<sup>3</sup> That December, the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) debated a resolution to give women the vote. June Menzies observes that here “For perhaps the first time in Canada both sides in a legislature expressed approval in principle of woman suffrage, although it must be admitted that the debate itself showed that the Government had no serious intention of enfranchising women.”<sup>4</sup> While the legislators agreed generally that women ought to be granted the franchise at some point in time, they did not act expeditiously. Rather, Premier Walter Scott’s government decided to grant female suffrage only when a considerable number of women had demonstrated to the assembly that they wanted it.

So, woman began to organize petitions demanding the vote. Initially, the Women’s Section of the SGGA and members of the Homemaker Clubs took charge of the campaign, and later members of Saskatchewan’s Women’s Christian Temperance Unions (WTCU) lent their support.<sup>5</sup> The Premier received petitions with the names of 2,500 women in 1913, but still refused to act despite pressure from lead organizers Frances Beynon and Violet McNaughton.<sup>6</sup> Because most of the suffrage activists were located in rural areas, the organizers tried to entice women in the cities to participate through forming suffrage action associations such as the Prince Albert Equal Franchise League.<sup>7</sup> Another petition containing the signatures of eleven thousand women was presented in May of 1915, but the Scott government dismissed it as insufficient evidence of women’s desire for the franchise.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in the early spring of 1916, the Premier advised that his government was prepared to extend the franchise, partly owing to the passage of similar legislation in neighbouring Manitoba. On March 1, 1916, Attorney-General W.F. Turgeon introduced *A Revision of the Saskatchewan Election Act*. The bill

passed the house within two weeks, and Saskatchewan became the second province in Canada to legislate electoral equality between men and women.<sup>9</sup>

The first exercise of women's right to vote occurred later in 1916, when the Scott government held a plebiscite on liquor prohibition.<sup>10</sup> No women were elected in the 1917 general election, but Saskatchewan's first female MLA gained office in a by-election in 1919. Born in Minnesota, Sarah Ramsland and her husband Magnus moved to Saskatchewan, settling first in Buchanan and then in 1913 in Kamsack. Magnus was elected as the MLA for Pelly in 1917, but died suddenly one year later during a flu epidemic. Unsure about how to support her three small children, Sarah heeded the advice of a clairvoyant who told her that politics lay in her future. She accepted the Liberal party's invitation to run in her husband's seat in the 1919 by-election. She was elected handily, was re-elected in 1921, but was defeated in the 1925 election.<sup>11</sup>

Sarah Ramsland was an effective representative, but did not hold a cabinet position or circulate among the party elite. Indeed, she was largely ignored by the Liberal party brass and, once defeated, faded from the political scene.<sup>12</sup> Her defeat marked the beginning of a long drought in terms of women's representation in the Saskatchewan legislature: from 1925 to 1943, no women were elected to provincial office. This meant that women legislators were not available to be groomed in the practice of politics. There were no women in any party's caucus, no women serving in the cabinet or learning about parliamentary procedure through the experience of sitting in the legislature. Democratic politics necessarily draws neophytes into political practice, and then educates them about the art of legislation. In this way, from every class of parliamentary rookies the next generation of future leaders and cabinet ministers are recruited and trained. The absence of women representatives from Saskatchewan's legislature for almost twenty years meant that the entry of women in key legislative leadership positions was delayed for many more decades.

So, in the first part of the new province's history, women began to enter the public sphere. They fought for, and won, the right to vote and run for office in provincial elections. The first woman was elected in 1919 and then re-elected in 1921. However, she was "elected to the legislature not as a feminist reformer, not even as a candidate in her own right, but as her husband's widow."<sup>13</sup> The actual conditions surrounding the election of Saskatchewan's first female MLA contradicted the suffragist position that women ought to enter political life as equal, independent citizens. Despite the advances secured in establishing women's legal right to participate in government, in reality they remained excluded from the corridors of power.

### **The Modern State: Women's Electoral and Political Participation, 1944-1990.**

As mentioned above, from 1925 to 1943 no other women were elected to the provincial legislature after Sarah Ramsland left office. The year 1944 marked the beginning of several fundamental changes in Saskatchewan politics. In the general election the CCF party under the leadership of T.C. (Tommy) Douglas won 47 of 52 seats, inaugurating the start of a twenty-year monopoly on power. As well, this election marked the ascendancy of a "new" political party in Saskatchewan, one that embraced the ideals of social democracy. The CCF's goals and ideals dramatically influenced Saskatchewan's development during the postwar period. As well, the 1944 election

marked the return of women to the floor of the legislature, when CCF candidate Beatrice Janet Trew was elected in the Maple Creek constituency.<sup>14</sup>

As Appendix 2 below suggests, Trew's victory marked the beginning of a new period featuring the regular election of women in provincial constituencies. In three elections – 1948, 1967 and 1971 – no women were returned to the assembly. However, in every remaining election in the period 1944 to 1990, at least one woman was sent to Regina to represent citizens. Twenty-one women in total were elected in the twelve general elections occurring from 1944 to 1990, or 1.75 women on average per election.<sup>15</sup> After Trew's 1944 victory, another milestone was achieved in 1956 when, for the first time, two women won seats at the same time. Marjorie Cooper, who had already served one term for the CCF representing Regina from 1952 to 1956, now had company with the arrival of Liberal MLA Mary Jane Batten. As suggested in Appendix 2, the subsequent election in 1960 marked the first time that three women sat in the same legislative session: both Cooper and Batten were re-elected and were joined by rookie CCF member, Gladys Strum. However, in 1964 Batten and Strum did not run for re-election, so only Cooper returned to the legislature where she was joined by Liberal newcomer Sally Merchant.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that Marjorie Cooper's four back-to-back election wins spanning the years 1952 to 1967 distinguish her as the most electorally successful female politician from 1917 to 1990.

Considering women's representation among the three main parties during this period reveals some interesting patterns. First, from 1917 to 1978, women were elected or re-elected thirteen times. On seven of these occasions, the women elected ran as Liberal candidates, while the remaining six women represented the CCF. Second, in the same period, none of the elected women belonged to the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party, and this fact mainly reflects this party's poor electoral performance. For most of the province's first century the PCs were a rump party that remained on the sidelines. Only in 1982 did the Conservatives win a majority government. The first female PC MLA, Joan Duncan, won the Maple Creek constituency in 1978. Four years later, five female PC candidates were elected to the legislature when Grant Devine's party displaced the NDP under Allan Blakeney.<sup>17</sup> The 1982 election results established a new high point in women's legislative representation.

A fourth pattern demands comment. After the CCF party became the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the later 1960s, it failed to elect any women for almost twenty years. From the 1967 election to the issuance of writs for the 1986 contest, there were no women among the ranks of the Saskatchewan NDP caucus. This gap is difficult to explain because the NDP was in power for eleven of these nineteen years (from 1971 to 1982) and so poor party performance is not a significant explanatory factor. Moreover, the late 1960s and 1970s witnessed the "second wave" of feminist activism in Canada, and so we expect to find more women entering formal politics in this period.

In terms of participating in legislative politics, women made great gains in this period. Women returned to the floor of the house in 1944 after a long absence, and their numbers increased steadily, reaching a high point of five women among 64 MLAs (or 7.8% of all provincial legislators) after the 1986 campaign. Toward the end of this period, the first woman to hold a cabinet position was appointed: Joan Duncan served as Minister of Government Services from May 8, 1982 to May 26, 1983. She went on to hold several other cabinet portfolios in the Progressive Conservative government.<sup>18</sup> As

well, in 1989 the Saskatchewan Liberal Association elected Dr. Lynda Maureen Haverstock as its leader, the first female party leader in provincial history. She led her party in the 1991 and 1995 elections and won her seat handily on both occasions.<sup>19</sup>

In other areas, however, women remained excluded or were severely under represented. For example, appointments to Canada's Senate are prestigious rewards normally given to the loyal supporters of a party in power. Owing to the office's prestige and economic value, there is much competition among partisans for this prize and it is fair to state that Senate appointments rank among the most coveted of patronage benefits. One way to consider these appointments is to survey the number of women who have secured them as an indicator of women's representation in political party hierarchy, because such awards normally are given to loyal party members who enjoy senior insider status. In the case of Saskatchewan the province was granted four Senators in 1905. In 1914, this number was increased to six, which has remained a constant quota. No women were appointed to represent Saskatchewan in the first eighty-five years of the province's history, although in the same period twenty-six men represented Saskatchewan's interests in Canada's upper house.<sup>20</sup>

So, Saskatchewan women were entirely excluded from holding senatorial office for most of the province's history. Moreover, if we accept that senatorial appointment can be treated as an indicator of women's representation within the elite ranks of political parties, female partisans historically have not been well represented within the parties' elite cohort. Similarly, across most of the history of the province, the office of Lieutenant Governor remained the preserve of male politicians. It was only in September of 1988 that the first woman Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, the Honourable Sylvia Fedoruk, was sworn into office. She served in this capacity until May 31, 1994.<sup>21</sup> The only other woman to serve as the Queen's representative, Lynda Haverstock, assumed office in 2000.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that in 1960 the federal government amended legislation that extended the franchise to treaty Indians. As a result, many First Nations women became entitled to vote in elections. This was a key event in the province's history because members of treaty nations were among the last groups of citizens to secure the vote. Important especially in view of Saskatchewan's significant aboriginal population, the extension of the franchise meant that First Nations women now had opportunity to participate as full citizens in the formal political process.

### **The Future State: Women's Electoral and Political Participation, 1991-2105**

Similar to the watershed election of 1944, the 1991 election marked a large change in the direction of Saskatchewan's government as Roy Romanow's New Democrats replaced the Devine Conservatives. Devine's defeat was not particularly surprising, owing to the Conservatives' unpopularity. However, the depth of the province's fiscal crisis caught the new NDP government off guard.<sup>23</sup> Romanow led the NDP to power again in 1995, but in the 1999 election the New Democrats won only a minority government. They governed with Liberal support for the next four years, but the NDP leader resigned and was replaced by Lorne Calvert. In the fall 2003 election Calvert's party hung on to power only by a narrow margin and remains in office at the time of writing.

As mentioned in the preceding section, in each of the 1982 and 1986 provincial elections five women were returned to the legislature. However, in the 1990s we observe a marked increase in women's legislative participation that reaches well beyond the gains realized in the 1980s. For the 1991 election, the size of the legislature was expanded by two seats, from 64 to 66 seats. The results of that vote returned twelve women to the Saskatchewan assembly. As indicated in Appendix 2, eleven NDP women and one Liberal woman won seats. To compare the change in women's representation across time, in 1986 7.8 per cent of MLAs were women, but 18 per cent of the legislative members were women in 1991. Moreover, a 1994 by-election in Regina North West sent another woman, Liberal Anita Bergman, to the floor of the assembly.

These thirteen women in office from 1994 to dissolution in 1995 constituted about twenty per cent of the legislature's membership. These gains were maintained in the 1995 election, when 13 women were elected or re-elected. Interestingly, the size of the assembly was reduced in 1995 to 58 seats. So, although the actual number of women elected did not exceed the new maximum established in 1994, now they accounted for 24.4 per cent of the legislature. So, in the span of thirteen years, women's legislative representation more than tripled, moving from 7.8 per cent to 24.4 per cent.

In the next two elections, however, this new level of representation was not repeated. The 1999 election, which produced a coalition government between the NDP and the Liberals, saw only 10 women secure their seats. As Appendix 2 suggests, in 1999 for the first time the new Saskatchewan Party fielded candidates and it elected three female representatives. This election marked the first time since 1986 that a female candidate from a conservative party won her seat. In the election held in the fall of 2003, the results were similar to the 1999 returns: 11 women won seats, and of these 4 represented the Saskatchewan Party while 7 were NDP MLAs.

To help illustrate the historical trend of female political participation in Saskatchewan, the percentage of women sitting as members of the legislature was calculated from 1919, when the first woman was elected, to 2004. These results were plotted across five year intervals, and the results are depicted in an area graph, "Figure 1: Percentage of Women in the Saskatchewan Legislature, 1919-2004." This illustration demonstrates the slow gains that women have made in legislative participation: only since the 1990s has women's participation regularly constituted ten percent or more of each legislature's membership. Moreover, the percentage of women holding legislative seats in the last decade, from 1994 to 2004, has remained just below the twenty percent mark, and so it seems that the trend in increasing representation has levelled off in the most recent provincial election returns.

[insert Figure 1 here]

Finally, note that the values on the "y" axis represent the percentage of MLAs that are women, and the maximum value is set at fifty percent. This maximum value was chosen because it roughly corresponds with the number of women in the Saskatchewan population. Therefore, one method of interpreting the historical trend in women's legislative participation is to compare the increasing percentage of the assembly's female representation with the number of women in the Saskatchewan population. This comparison demonstrates that the province's female population remains grossly under represented by female legislators in the assembly despite the gains of the 1990s.

In the last fifteen years or so, additional gains were made in other areas of female political participation. For example, in 1989 Saskatchewan Liberal Association members chose an educator and practising psychologist, Dr. Lynda Maureen Haverstock, as their leader. Haverstock thus became the first female party leader in the province.<sup>24</sup> Another high profile position in parliamentary government is the finance portfolio. It is a senior cabinet position that demands much mettle and political skill. Dr. Janice MacKinnon, an historian by profession and Saskatchewan's first female Minister of Finance, was appointed early in 1993. MacKinnon recounts how her legislative nickname, "Combat Barbie," indicated a personal toughness that was necessary to succeed in the rough and tumble world of politics.<sup>25</sup> Also, in 1993, the first woman to represent Saskatchewan in Canada's Senate, Raynell Andreychuk, was appointed on March 11 representing the Conservatives.<sup>26</sup> The only other Saskatchewan woman to be called to the Senate, Panna Merchant, was appointed nine years later on December 12, 2002 to represent the Liberals.<sup>27</sup> A year later, in the aftermath of the 2003 election, another milestone was reached when the first Aboriginal woman, Joan Beatty, was elected under the NDP banner in the northern riding of Cumberland.<sup>28</sup>

### **Women and Public Policy**

The analysis above focuses mainly on reviewing women's historical participation within Saskatchewan's legislature and some key political institutions. While these are central measures of women's activity in the public sphere, they do not inform us about the development of provincial public policy with respect to women. Indeed, it is worth emphasizing that relatively few people as a proportion of all citizens are elected or appointed to public office. So, most citizen-state interaction occurs where a broad public policy and its associate programs and processes affects the interests of voters. Analysing how the relationship between government policy and Saskatchewan women has developed over the last century is well worth more extensive treatment than current space permits. However, a few general observations on the development of provincial public policy helps to illustrate how policy change has influenced the lives and experiences of Saskatchewan women.

In the early part of the foundational period, from 1905 to about 1915, provincial public policy generally reinforced the differential treatment of men and women. As noted above, for example, women legally could not vote until the Scott government bowed to pressure for female suffrage and changed the law in 1916. Similarly, in the area of property law women were treated unequally as compared to men. The promise of free homestead land attracted hundreds of thousands of immigrants to the province. At the time, the homestead policy provided that all adult males were eligible to receive such lands. However, this was not the case for women, because most females were not eligible to secure such lands. Single women could not homestead; they had to purchase land for farming, often at inflated prices. Only mothers who were the sole supporters of children were eligible to receive free homestead land.<sup>29</sup>

As well, women's dower rights in newly formed Saskatchewan were inadequate: they did not protect women's interest in real property as it was protected in other provinces and some west European countries. A woman's husband could sell the family farm or will it to others without any consideration for his wife's material interest. The issue of changing the property law to protect women began to be debated in 1912

particularly in the pages of the *Grain Growers' Guide* (a publication whose women's section was edited by suffragist activist Frances Marion Beynon).<sup>30</sup> Ultimately the government changed its policy position and moved to protect the property interests of wives with the passage of the *Saskatchewan Homestead Act* in 1915. By the late 1920s, many such policies that treated women unequally and restricted their political and economic activities had been amended or eradicated.

The period 1944 to 1990 marks the rise of the modern state and a concomitant cascade of new policy initiatives as the social safety net expanded. Saskatchewan women were influenced by the policy change in many areas such as labour law. Policies regulating women's labour force participation date to the province's early history and have not always worked to the advantage of women. For example, the government's response to the onset of the Depression was to dismiss proposals for further enhancements of labour standards and reduce the minimum wage for women in 1931. However, the arrival of the CCF into office and the passage of the *Trade Union Act* of 1944 marked a sea change in labour policy and its implications for women. The provisions of the *Trade Union Act* helped many women, particularly those in areas where women constituted a majority of the work force such as teaching and nursing, through enshrining their rights to bargain collectively and also in supplying an organizational structure for collective political action. In this period, several sectoral unions as well as the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (an umbrella group for unions which held its first convention in 1964) became powerful interest groups within the province's political environment.<sup>31</sup>

As more and more women entered the work force in the 1960s and 1970s, the Department of Labour established a Women's Bureau in 1964. Its mandate was to represent working women within governmental policy making circles, and also educate women's organizations and the public about women's particular problems and challenges in the workplace. In 1971, the Bureau employed a single person and the lack of resources was heavily criticized, but by 1982 the demand for more resources had expanded the Bureau considerably.<sup>32</sup> Along with expanded resources came enlarged responsibility: the Women's Bureau was made responsible for investigating violations of a new section of *The Labour Standards Act* addressing pay equity that was passed in 1973. Twenty years earlier the provincial government had created *The Equal Pay Act*, which provided for "equal pay for work of comparable character to that performed by men in the same establishment."<sup>33</sup> The 1973 *Labour Standards* amendment sought to strengthen the concept of equal pay in the workplace partly through changing the language. The new amendment provided for "equal pay for similar work," towards addressing the persistent wage gap between men and women. By the early 1980s many women were demanding full, unmitigated wage equality through seeking "equal pay for work of equal value."<sup>34</sup>

The shape and content of public policy in Saskatchewan changed dramatically as the modern welfare state matured in the postwar era. In many policy areas, the presence and activities of the provincial government addressed the needs of women through facilitating their economic participation and supporting individual and family welfare via enlarged and enhanced social policy initiatives. Whereas provincial public policy in the foundational period had maintained social and economic inequalities between men and women, the orientation of the modern state was to ensure women secured more equality

with men. This sea change in provincial public policy underscores the importance of the state in the everyday lives and experiences of Saskatchewan women.

In the third period of provincial development, which I have termed “The Future State,” the province’s public policy orientation has again been altered largely owing to economic exigencies of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Provincial finances were in dire straits as years of accumulated annual deficits produced a large debt. Pledging to balance the books and reverse Saskatchewan’s deficit financing trend, the Romanow government adopted a broad mix of tax increases and spending reductions. Although budgetary balance was achieved fairly quickly, this was accomplished partly through reductions in key social services and programs.<sup>35</sup> As sources of government funding were reduced and social programs were eliminated, many women – particularly those who were single parents – bore an increased economic burden.

Lone parent families have continued to increase in Saskatchewan since the 1970s: from 1996 to 2001, the number rose by 20 per cent. Women are the parent in eighty per cent of such families.<sup>36</sup> These statistics are significant because women-led households are more likely to suffer from poverty, poor quality housing and poor health. Women as a group have been disproportionately affected by fiscal restraint policies because they are more likely to be represented within the low-income brackets and so are more vulnerable to the program cutbacks and spending reductions necessitated by fiscal restraint policies.

In the 2000s the provincial government has not pursued budgetary balance as relentlessly, although its decision-making remains constrained by a lacklustre financial outlook, unpredictable oil and gas revenues, and labour force problems that are fuelled by continuing youth out migration. In some areas, small policy changes have expanded or enriched social programs for women. For example, in 2001 the provincial government followed the federal government’s initiative in expanding insured maternity, adoption and parental leave periods. Birth mothers and primary caregivers of adopted children now enjoy job protection and increased employment insurance benefits of up to 52 weeks.<sup>37</sup> In October of 2003, the Calvert government released a plan containing an ambitious list of areas requiring governmental action. Titled the *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women: Moving Forward*, the document succinctly reviews some persistent areas of inequality between men and women. For example, it notes that whereas women accounted for 37 per cent of people with paid employment in 1980, by 2000 women this figure had climbed to 46 per cent of employed persons, or almost half of the provincial workforce.<sup>38</sup> Yet, “in all areas of the work force wage gaps between men and women still exist. On average, women who worked full-time in Saskatchewan in 2000 earned 73 cents for every dollar earned by a man - \$28,691 compared to \$39,495 [in annual wages].”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, women with disabilities and Aboriginal women remain under represented in the work force. This is especially true for Aboriginal women with small children. For this group, more than one in three women is looking for a job but remains unemployed.<sup>40</sup>

A large portion of the government’s plan for action centers on strategies to increase women’s economic participation. In view of sobering statistics such as the trenchant wage gap and the high unemployment rate among Aboriginal mothers, this agenda for change is necessary and meritorious. At the same time, the province’s pressing fiscal problems clearly limit the government’s ambitions. Judging from the Plan’s lists of future action items, most policy goals are to be achieved through using

existing programs and services in a more strategic, efficient and targeted fashion. Few new funds are committed to securing future goals set out in the Action Plan and therefore in the near future at least, the government seems committed to incremental policy change designed to secure moderate, achievable and carefully targeted policy objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Since 1991, women's representation in the legislature reached new levels. As well, women began to enter other areas of political participation for the first time, such as serving in the Senate, as party leader and as the Queen's representative. The growing cohort of female legislative leaders began to become more diversified, and so more closely represents the ethnic composition of the province, particularly its significant First Nations and aboriginal citizens. Despite these gains, one century after the founding of the province women remain a minority group in the legislature, accounting for merely 19 per cent of its members. Moreover, with the exception of Lynda Haverstock, no other female has led a provincial party in Saskatchewan. Every premier since 1905 has been male. The bulk of Saskatchewan's Senate appointments are men, most legislators are men, and almost all of the most powerful positions within parties and the legislature remain the preserve of males.

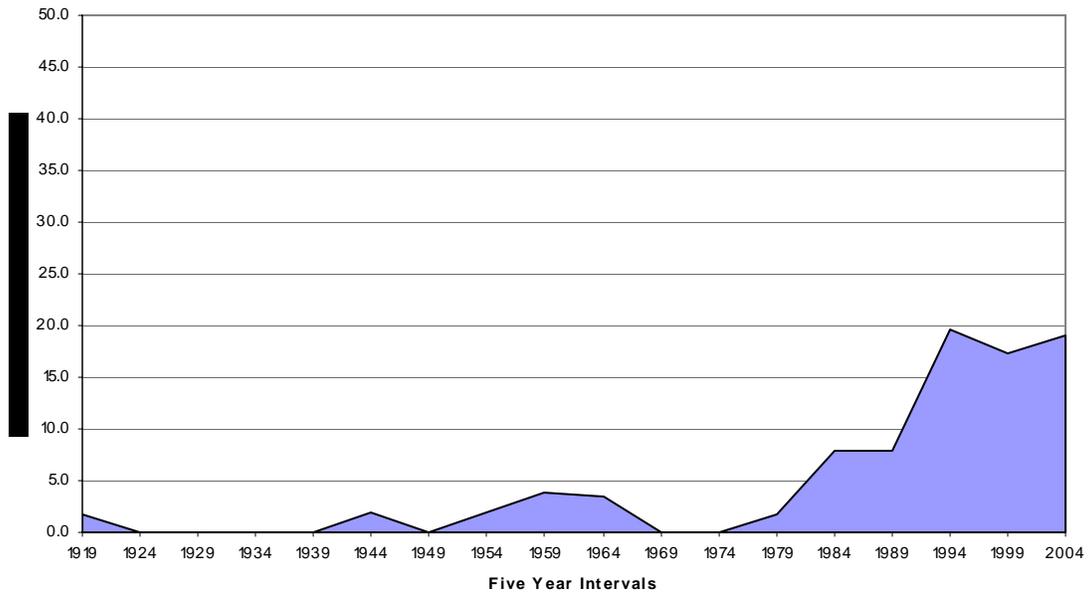
To address the questions posed at the beginning of this paper, Saskatchewan women today remain excluded from many areas of political activity and office despite being able to participate in elections since 1916. Moreover, it does not seem that Saskatchewan's unique political culture, liberalism and social democratic tradition have produced unusually high female representation rates in the legislature. The political experience of Saskatchewan women in the last century has been very similar to that of women in the other provinces. While the rates of female legislative representation have increased over time, these gains have been secured slowly and now seem to have stalled.

Similarly, the orientation of provincial public policy has changed dramatically over the last century. Whereas many sorts of inequalities between men and women were produced or reinforced via government policy in the early foundational period, this changed as the Depression eased and the modern welfare state expanded. Social support programs aimed at individuals as well as families benefited Saskatchewan women directly, as did policies facilitating women's entry into the labour market and promoting equality with male workers. However, the close of Saskatchewan's first century has been marked by a reduction in provincial benefits and support as the necessity for fiscal restraint dominated the government's policy agenda.

Looking forward to what sorts of gains women may make over the next one hundred years, many new milestones challenge women to secure them. When will a woman lead her party to power in a general election; who will be Saskatchewan's first female premier? When will women leaders representing Saskatchewan's Métis, Chinese, Filipino, Guatemalan and Thai communities win seats? At what point will women be represented in the legislature in proportion to their share of the province's population? When will cabinet comprise a majority of female ministers? When will the wage gap between male and female workers disappear? Importantly, when will women cease to be an under represented group in this province's politics? These are the new challenges facing the next generations of Saskatchewan's citizens and legislators. As we begin the province's second century, it is helpful to acknowledge progress in women's

political participation and representation since 1905. At the same time, we may well require another century to pass before we can say with certainty that women here participate equally in politics alongside their male counterparts.

Figure 1: Percentage of Women in Saskatchewan Legislature, 1919-2004



## Appendix 1 The First Women of Saskatchewan Politics

The First Woman MLA: in 1919 Sarah Katherine Ramsland was elected in the riding of Pelly under the Liberal party's banner; she was re-elected in 1921 but was defeated in the 1925 election.

The First Woman Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan, Dorise Winnifred Nielsen, was elected in 1940 in North Battleford.

The First Woman Cabinet Minister was Joan Heather Duncan, Minister of Government Services from May 8, 1982 to May 26, 1983. She held several subsequent portfolios in the Progressive Conservative government.

The First Woman Lieutenant Governor: Hon. Sylvia Olga Fedoruk was appointed September 7, 1988, and held office until May 31, 1994.

The First Woman Party Leader: Dr. Lynda Maureen Haverstock, elected in 1989 to lead the Liberals.

The First Woman Senator From Saskatchewan: Raynell Andreychuk, who was appointed March 11, 1993, as member of the Progressive Conservative Party.

The First Woman Opposition Leader: Dr. Lynda Maureen Haverstock led the Liberals in the House in 1995.

The First Woman Minister of Finance: NDP MLA Dr. Janice MacKinnon, held this portfolio from January 8, 1993 to June 27, 1997.

The First Aboriginal Woman MLA: NDP candidate Joanne Beatty, was elected to represent the riding of Cumberland in 2003.

## Appendix 2 Female Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, 1917-2005

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of women in the Legislature</b>	<b>Number of seats in the Legislature</b>
1919 *	Sarah Katherine Ramsland	Pelly	Liberal	1	59
1921	Sarah Katherine Ramsland	Pelly	Liberal	1	63

1925	-	-	-	0	63
1929	-	-	-	0	63
1934	-	-	-	0	55
1938	-	-	-	0	52
1944	Beatrice Janet Trew	Maple Creek	CCF	1	52
1948	-	-	-	0	52
1952	Marjorie Cooper	Regina City	CCF	1	53
1956	Mary John Batten Marjorie Cooper	Humboldt Regina City	Liberal CCF	2	53
1960	Mary John Batten Marjorie Cooper Gladys Strum	Humboldt Regina City Saskatoon City	Liberal CCF CCF	3	55
1964	Marjorie Cooper Sally Merchant	Regina West Saskatoon City	CCF Liberal	2	58
1967	-	-	-	0	59
1971	-	-	-	0	60
1975	Linda Clifford Evelyn Edwards	Wilkie Saskatoon Sutherland	Liberal Liberal	2	61
1978	Joan Duncan	Maple Creek	PC	1	61
1982	Evelyn Bacon Gay Caswell Joan Duncan Patricia Smith	Saskatoon Nutana Saskatoon Westmount Maple Creek Swift Current	PC PC PC PC	5	64

	Jo-Ann Zazelenchuk	Saskatoon Riversdale	PC		
1986	Pat Atkinson	Saskatoon Nutana	NDP	5	64
	Joan Duncan	Maple Creek	PC		
	Rose Marie Louise Simard	Regina Lakeview	NDP		
	Anne Smart	Saskatoon Centre	NDP		
	Patricia Smith	Swift Current	PC		
1991	Pat Atkinson	Saskatoon Broadway	NDP	12	66
	Judy Bradley	Bengough-Milestone	NDP		
	Lynda Haverstock	Saskatoon Greystone	Liberal		
	Carol Carson	Melfort	NDP		
	Joanne Crofford	Regina Lake Centre	NDP		
	Doreen Hamilton	Regina Wascana Plains	NDP		
	Pat Lorje	Saskatoon Wildwood	NDP		
	Janice MacKinnon	Saskatoon Westmount	NDP		
	Suzanne Murray	Qu'Appelle Lumsden	NDP		
	Rose Marie Louise Simard	Regina Hillsdale	NDP		

	Violet Stanger	Cut Knife- Lloydminster	NDP		
	Carol Teichrob	Saskatoon River Heights	NDP		
1994* (to 1995)	Anita Bergman	Regina North West	Liberal	13	66
1995	Pat Atkinson	Saskatoon Nutana	NDP	13	58
	Judy Bradley	Weyburn-Big Muddy	NDP		
	Joanne Crofford	Regina Centre	NDP		
	June Draude	Kelvington- Wadena	Liberal (95- 97) Sask Pty (97- 99)		
	Doreen Hamilton	Regina Wascana Plains	NDP		
	Lynda Haverstock	Saskatoon Greystone	Independent		
	Arlene Julé	Humboldt	Liberal (95- 97); Sask Pty (98-99)		
	Pat Lorje	Saskatoon Southeast	NDP		
	Janice MacKinnon	Saskatoon Idylwyld	NDP		
	Suzanne Murray	Regina Qu'Apelle Valley	NDP		
	Sharon Murrell	Battleford- Cut Knife	NDP		
	Violet Stanger	Lloydminster	NDP		

	Carol Teichrob	Saskatoon Meewasin	NDP		
1998*	Judy Junor	Saskatoon Eastview	NDP	14	58
1999	Patricia Atkinson	Saskatoon Nutana	NDP	10	58
	Brenda Bakken	Weyburn-Big Muddy	Sask Pty		
	Joanne Crofford	Regina Centre	NDP		
	June Draude	Kelvington-Wadena	Sask Pty		
	Doreen Eagles	Estevan	Sask Pty		
	Doreen Hamilton	Regina Wascana Plains	NDP		
	Deb Higgins	Moose Jaw Wakamow	NDP		
	Carolyn Jones	Saskatoon Meewasin	NDP		
	Pat Lorje	Saskatoon Southeast	NDP		
	Janice MacKinnon	Saskatoon Idylwyld	NDP		
2003	Pat Atkinson	Saskatoon Nutana	NDP	11	58
	Brenda Bakken	Weyburn-Big Muddy	Sask Pty		
	Joan Beatty	Cumberland	NDP		
	Joanne Crofford	Regina Rosemont	NDP		
	June Draude	Kelvington-Wadena	Sask Pty		
	Doreen Eagles	Estevan	Sask Pty		
	Doreen Hamilton	Regina Wascana Plains	NDP		

	Donna Harpauer	Humboldt	Sask Pty		
	Deb Higgins	Moose Jaw Wakamow	NDP		
	Judy Junor	Saskatoon Eastview	NDP		
	Sandra Morin	Regina Walsh Acres	NDP		

\* indicates a by-election

**SOURCES:** The Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Directory of Saskatchewan Ministries, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Elections*, (Regina and Saskatoon: The Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1954); Government of Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, *Members of the Legislative Assembly*, (Web directory accessed July 14, 2004, at [www.legassembly.sk.ca/members/members.htm](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/members/members.htm)); Government of Saskatchewan, Legislative Library, *Saskatchewan Women in Politics*, (Web listing accessed July 14, 2004 at [www.legassembly.sk.ca/leglibrary/library/libwomen.htm](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/leglibrary/library/libwomen.htm)); Howard Leeson (ed.), *Saskatchewan Politics Into the Twenty-First Century*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center/University of Regina, 2001), *Appendix A: Electoral Results, Saskatchewan, 1905-1999*, 407-410.

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> A central source of information about women legislators is the Legislative Library's website, *Saskatchewan Women in Politics*, located at [www.legassembly.sk.ca/leglibrary/library/libwomen.htm](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/leglibrary/library/libwomen.htm).
- <sup>2</sup> David E. Smith, ed., *Building a Province: A History of Saskatchewan in Documents* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 100.
- <sup>3</sup> June Menzies, "Votes for Saskatchewan Women," in *Politics in Saskatchewan*, ed. Norman Ward and Duff Spafford (Don Mills, Ontario: Longmans Canada Limited, 1968), 81.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Nancy M. Sheehan, "The WCTU on the Prairies, 1886-1930: An Alberta-Saskatchewan Comparison," *Prairie Forum* 6, no. 1 (1981): 22.
- <sup>6</sup> Menzies, 84.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 88.
- <sup>8</sup> Christine MacDonald, "How Saskatchewan Women Got the Vote," *Saskatchewan History* 1, no. 3 (1948): 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Menzies, 92.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Candace Savage, *Foremothers: Personalities and Issues from the History of Women in Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: not known, 1975), 42.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Kalmakoff, "Naturally Divided: Women in Saskatchewan Politics, 1916-1919," *Saskatchewan History* 46, no. 2 (1994): 5-6; 15.
- <sup>14</sup> See Appendix 2
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Chief Electoral Office Government of Saskatchewan, *Provincial Elections in Saskatchewan, 1905-1983*, second ed. (Regina: Chief Electoral Office, Province of Saskatchewan, 1983), 104-07.
- <sup>17</sup> Susan Dusel, "Politics Still a Man's World," *Network of Saskatchewan Women* 4, no. 4 (1986): 14.

- 
- <sup>18</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Saskatchewan Executive and Legislative Directory*, (Saskatchewan Archives Board, [cited June 8 2004]); available from <http://www.saskarchives.com/web/seld/2-03.pdf>.
- <sup>19</sup> Lynda Haverstock, "The Saskatchewan Liberal Party," in *Saskatchewan Politics: Into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Howard Leeson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center/University of Regina, 2001), 222-228 passim.
- <sup>20</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Saskatchewan Executive and Legislative Directory*.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Cristine de Clercy, "Leadership and Uncertainty in Fiscal Restructuring: Ralph Klein and Roy Romanow," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 38: 1 (March 2005), 175-202.
- <sup>24</sup> Haverstock, 222.
- <sup>25</sup> Janice MacKinnon, *Minding the Public Purse: The Fiscal Crisis, Political Trade-Offs and Canada's Future* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 110-11.
- <sup>26</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Saskatchewan Executive and Legislative Directory*.
- <sup>27</sup> Library of Parliament, *Women in the Senate- Current Members* (2004 ); available from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/Senate/WomenSenIdx.asp?lang=E&Hist=N&param=nm>.
- <sup>28</sup> CBC Saskatchewan, *Calvert Names Van Mulligen to Finance* (CBC Saskatchewan Online, November 21 2003, available from <http://sask.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=cabinet031121>).
- <sup>29</sup> Margaret E. McCallum, "Prairie Women and the Struggle for a Dower Law, 1905-1920," *Prairie Forum* 18, no. 1 (1993): 19.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.: 22.
- <sup>31</sup> Gordon T. Snyder, "Social Justice for Workers," in *Policy Innovation in the Saskatchewan Public Sector, 1971-9182*, ed. Eleanor D. Glor (North York, Ontario: Captus Press, 1997), 140.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 14.
- <sup>33</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Status of Women Office, *History of Saskatchewan Policy and Legislation Affecting Women and Children* , online document available at <http://www.swo.gov.sk.ca/Women's%20History%20Month.html>

<sup>34</sup> Snyder, 147-48.

<sup>35</sup> De Clercy, 177-180.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women* (Regina, Sk.: Status of Women Office, 2003), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Department of Labour, "News Release: Parental Leave Increased," June 14 2001, available at <http://www.labour.gov.sk.ca/standards/Mat-leave/parental-leave-increased.htm> .

<sup>38</sup> *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women*, 38.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*