CELEBRATING WOMEN

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (SECTION 15)

OVERVIEW

When the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was proposed in the 1970s, lobby groups formed to ensure that marginalized voices were heard and that their needs were reflected in the Charter. Some of the major groups included a publicly funded lobby group comprised of women, the Ad Hoc Conference on Women and the Constitution, and women lawyers.

WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THE FIGHT FOR THIS ACHIEVEMENT?

In 1970, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau began a constitutional renewal by proposing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A publicly funded lobby group comprised of women was then formed to provide leadership in the constitutional process. They pursued three main objectives for the Charter: broad language of equality, stringent review of all distinctions based on sex, and inclusion of a general statement of equality between men and women. This work resulted in the creation of section 15 of the Charter, which ensures equality for all persons, no matter race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ACHIEVEMENT?

Section 15 of the Charter is significant to all marginalized people because it promotes a society in which all are secure in the knowledge that they are recognized at law as human beings equally deserving of concern, respect and consideration. It also provides legal standing for fighting discrimination in Canada.

WHAT DOES THIS ACHIEVEMENT LOOK LIKE TODAY?

After creation of section 15 of the Charter, the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) was founded. This group continues to monitor adherence to the Charter by conducting audits of federal and provincial legislation. They also engage in public education and produce academic texts on equality. Additionally, though the Charter does not apply in most employment contexts, it has inspired many anti-discrimination policies and therefore has had an important, indirect effect on equality in the workplace.


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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This project aims to present significant achievements for women over the last 100 years. It was developed specifically as a poster series to be displayed at International Women’s Day events in Guelph, ON.