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.
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
Winnipeg

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.

Thelma Forbes
Cypress

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.

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.
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.

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.

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.
**ROSEMARY VODREY**  
*Fort Garry*

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**  
*Swan River*

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**  
*Charleswood*

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.
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.

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.
Carol Bellringer
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.
**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.

**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.
An Act to amend "The Manitoba Election Act."

Passed the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on the 31st day of January A.D. 1916.

Assented to by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor on the 25th day of January A.D. 1916.

BILL No. 4