

Timeline of The Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island

1769 – PEI's first Governor, Walter Patterson, is appointed. The position would be reclassified as Lieutenant Governor in 1784.

1770 – The first Act passed by the Prince Edward Island government aims to protect the walrus fishery, but is unsuccessful.

1773 – The first members of the House of Assembly are elected. The House joins the Legislative Council, whose members are appointed, to form a bicameral, or two-house, legislature.

1774 – The Quit Rent Act is passed in an attempt to force absentee landlords to pay fees toward civil administration and infrastructure on their land, but it is largely unsuccessful. This is the first attempt to resolve what came to be known as the "Land Question".

1781 – Through a process called escheat, Governor Patterson expropriates almost half of the Island from landlords who have not paid their quit rents. Three years later the Crown overturns the Governor's actions.

1792 – The Island's first Criminal Code is passed.

1806 – Five members of the Loyal Electors are elected to the House of Assembly. The Loyal Electors is the first organized political party on PEI, and possibly in all of Canada.

1812 – John Plaw completes a building in Queen's Square to house the legislature and courthouse. Until this time the legislature had met in private homes and taverns.

1825 – Slavery is outlawed on PEI, nine years earlier than it is officially abolished in the British Empire.

1830 – An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects is passed, allowing Roman Catholic males to hold public office and to vote.

1833 – The term of members of the legislature is set to four years. Prior to this time the term was determined solely according to the will of the Lieutenant Governor. Today the term is a maximum of five years after the return of the writs for a general election.

1838 – The Escheat Party, lead by William Cooper, wins a majority in the legislature, on a platform of repossessing the lands of proprietors who have not fulfilled their commitments under the land grant of 1767 and redistributing those lands to tenants. Cooper takes the cause to the Colonial Office in London, but it is unsuccessful and the Escheat Party soon disintegrates.

1839 – The Legislative Council is separated into the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, and some members of the House of Assembly also serve on Executive Council.

1840 – A request is made to the Queen that Prince Edward Island be granted Responsible Government (self government).

1847 – The legislature meets in the newly constructed Colonial Building for the first time. It later came to be known as Province House, and remains the seat of the legislature to this day.

1851 – Responsible Government is granted. George Coles, a strong supporter of Responsible Government, becomes the first Premier under the new system.

1852 – The Free Education Act is passed, and is the first Act in British North America to require that students should not have to pay tuition to attend school.

1853 – The Land Purchase Act is passed with the intention of solving the Land Question. It empowers the government to purchase land from proprietors (who often did not live on the Island and did not meet the financial responsibilities of land ownership) for re-sale to tenants (who live on and worked the land, but had no legal claim to it). But proprietors can not be forced to sell and there is a lack of funds for purchasing, so the land issue continues.

1862 – A new Act requires that the Legislative Council no longer be appointed, but elected.

1864 – The Charlottetown Conference, which lead to Confederation and the birth of Canada as a nation, takes place.

1873 – Prince Edward Island joins Confederation.

1875 – The Compulsory Land Purchase Act finally resolves the Land Question. Proprietary estates larger than 500 acres are forced into sale to the provincial government, made possible by a loan from the federal government. By the early 1880s the province had purchased 844,000 acres and resold 624,000 to farmers.

1893 – The Legislative Council and House of Assembly are merged to form the Legislative Assembly, with 30 members. Each of the 15 electoral districts elected an Assemblyman and a Councilor, a system that was unique in Canadian politics until its abolishment in 1996.

1896 – Married women in PEI gained the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property, as well as to enter contracts, to sue and be sued.

1900 – The Prohibition Act is passed, which bans the sale of alcohol in all but a few cases. It is the first Act of its kind in post-Confederation Canada.

1908 – A bill is passed to outlaw cars on Island roads, as they are considered dangerous to horse carriages and their passengers.

1913 – An Act is passed to require secret balloting for provincial elections.

1916 – A special War and Health Tax is imposed by the provincial government, and renewed in 1917. The province also expropriates vacant farms for the use of soldiers returning from the War.

1919 – The government lifts restrictions on automobiles on Island roads.

1923 – Through a new Election Act, women vote for the first time in a PEI election.

1935 – For the first time in the Commonwealth, one party sweeps an election: the Liberals win all 30 seats in the PEI legislature, leaving the Conservatives with none.

1948 – In a provincial plebiscite Islanders vote to replace prohibition with government-controlled liquor sales.

1964 – The legislature creates the provincial flag.

1965 – The Lady Slipper, *Cypripedium acaule*, is named the provincial flower.

1966 – The riding of 6th Queens is created, meaning that the Legislative Assembly increased to 32 members from 30.

1966 – Whereas the 1935 is the only election sweep in Island history, the 1966 election results in another rarity: a tie of 15 seats to 15. Through a by-election victory of both the remaining Assemblyman and Councillor seats, the Liberals went on to form the government.

1968 – The University of Prince Edward Island is created through a bill that merged St. Dunstan's and Prince of Wales Colleges.

1970 – Liberal candidate Jean Canfield becomes the first woman elected to the Island legislature.

1974 – The provincial and federal governments sign an agreement in which Province House will continue to belong to Prince Edward Island but will be leased by Parks Canada, which will in turn be responsible for its maintenance and interpretation.

1979-1983 – Province House is restored to an 1850-1860 appearance.

1983 – Marion Reid becomes the first female Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. In 1990 she became the first female Lieutenant Governor.

1990 – Pat Mella becomes the first female leader of a provincial political party.

1993 – Catherine Callbeck becomes the first female Premier of PEI, and in all of Canada.

1994 – The Election Act and Electoral Boundaries Commission recommends a shift to single member representation for each district. In the same year, a bill is passed to redraw the electoral map with 27 districts.

1996 – The 1996 general election is the first time an Assembly is elected under the system it continues to follow today: single member representation for each of the 27 electoral districts.

2000 – The ceremony in which the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod taps on the door of the Chamber to request permission for the Lieutenant Governor to enter is added.

2002 – Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, presents a Full Achievement of Arms to Prince Edward Island, and the Legislative Assembly establishes the Island's Coat of Arms via the *Coat of Arms Act*.

2011 – The Legislative Assembly celebrates the 160th anniversary of responsible government (1851).

2014 – Prince Edward Island celebrates the 150th anniversary of the 1864 Charlottetown Conference.

2015 – Province House closes for extensive structural repairs and restoration. The Speech from the Throne for the First Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly is delivered on June 3rd in the neighbouring Honourable George Coles Building, marking the first time since 1847 that the full legislature has sat anywhere but Province House.