


The Canadian marriage at 150: A look back

 beta.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/mothers-day/the-canadian-marriage-at-150-a-look-back/article33962570/

2/9/2017



Marriage has gotten a rough ride in recent years. As Canadians live longer, many are having [second thoughts](#) about monogamy over the long haul. The divorce statistics are bracing: Some 41 per cent of marriages will [end](#) before the 30th anniversary in this country. Some partners are hoping to beat the odds by not marrying in the first place, opting to live common law or even in separate homes instead. We are starting to ask some hard questions of marriage: Does it really strengthen a commitment? Is the only sure thing about a wedding the ballooning price tag?

Despite the bad rap, most Canadians will end up marrying someone at some point in their lives – and many will spend at least [\\$30,000](#) doing it. [Today](#), they marry for love, often wedding their [best friends](#) and work confidants. The institution has evolved past strict duty and now means many different things to many different people. Still, some elements remain constant: A wedding confers social recognition and signifies "adulthood," ensuring that a shared estate pays forward to the children.

We have a sense of what matrimony means now, but what did it mean to generations past in Canada? Well, the stakes were infinitely higher than how the Pinterest photos turned out. For many years, marriage empowered husbands and suppressed wives, who would lose all of their property rights, earnings and custody of their own children to their "better half" when they put a ring on it. Marriage carried a heavy toll for interracial partners and gay couples, who were long denied the right to wed in peace, or at all. For these lovers, getting married was about much more profound recognition as human beings.

Ahead of Canada's 150th anniversary, The Globe and Mail delved into the major milestones, stunts and scandals of this country's matrimonial history – the heavy and the light. Did you know that prior to 1882, a man who tried to marry his dead wife's sister could be accused of incest? Or that Canadians divorcing before 1986 would often hire private investigators to spy on their cheating spouses? Or that many wives in Quebec couldn't get a bank account without hubby signing off – until 1964? The Globe traces the evolution of marriage in Canada and the spouses who fundamentally changed the institution.

1867: In the beginning



Government of Canada Archives

The British North America Act split up jurisdiction over marriage in Canada: The federal government was handed control over marriage and divorce, while provinces were left to handle ceremonies as well as marital property rights, postdivorce and remarriage. Officials were wary of the situation playing out in the United States, where marriage and divorce were left entirely up to individual states, resulting in a piecemeal system that allowed bickering couples to cross state lines in pursuit of quickie splits. After Confederation, Canadian newspapers would often set this country apart from the United States by invoking the "morality" of Canadian families, mocking the lax divorce laws of our supposedly more promiscuous neighbours to the south.

1872: Steps toward gender equality



Captain Perry and his wife, January 1871, Ottawa, Canada.

Topley Studio/Library and Archives Canada

The slow legalization of married women's property rights began in Ontario, which gave wives the right to earn and control their own wages in 1872. Before the law changed, they had to fork their earnings over to their husbands. Ontario also went first with the 1884 Married Women's Property Act, which gave wives the right to buy their own

property (other provinces and territories trickled along in the subsequent decades). Things were perhaps most dire in Quebec, where wives who hadn't signed a special marriage contract were infantilized as "legal incapables" and needed their husbands' permission for nearly every facet of adult life, from signing a lease to opening a bank account. This finally changed in 1964, when Bill 16 gave married women legal capacity to act independently of their husbands.

1882: Sister act

"People moved in smaller circles in those days and the range of marriage partners was less extensive," legal historian Philip Girard said, explaining why a man might want to marry his dead wife's sister. "Many people thought that this was actually the ideal situation: The deceased wife's sister would be familiar with the family and she'd already be an aunt of the children." But it was a touchy idea both for Anglican lawmakers, who considered the setup incestuous, and proto-feminists, who feared it might "complicate and sexualize family relationships, that even when his wife was alive, the husband might already be looking at the sister as a potential replacement," Girard said. Nonetheless, a Quebec MP appealed to have the laws reformed and, in 1882, husbands whose wives had died were permitted to wed their wives' sisters. Not surprisingly, the prospect of women marrying their deceased husbands' brothers was a bridge too far: That remained illegal until 1923.

1887: Making it official

A federal order-in-council legally recognizes traditional indigenous marriage, meaning these couples didn't have to go the Christian route to wed, the only option available to non-indigenous partners. Marriages performed according to indigenous customs were honoured, so long as they were not polygamous. In an era plagued with high anxiety over polygamous Mormons, who practised plural marriage until 1890, the Canadian government was desperate to protect monogamy.

1919: Female Refuges Act

A draconian amendment in this year to the 1897 Female Refuges Act allowed Ontario officials to incarcerate unwed and pregnant women between the ages of 16 and 35. It arose in the wake of the First World War, University of Ottawa law professor Constance Backhouse writes, when "anxieties about the disruption of gender roles and working-class female sexuality were running high." In her 2008 book, *Carnal Crimes: Sexual Assault Law in Canada, 1900-1975*, Backhouse notes that parents could haul daughters under the age of 21 before a judge if they proved "unmanageable or incorrigible" (other provinces used juvenile-delinquency laws to control young women in similar ways).

Hundreds of Ontario women were imprisoned for "morality offences" through the Depression and Second World War. Most were pregnant or had had extramarital sex with men who weren't white; they were often forced to raise infants in prison or lose them to Children's Aid. Many were poor and uneducated, and many had been victims of sexual abuse before being imprisoned. "They went from the frying pan and into the fire," Backhouse said. "It's a terrible history."

1920: Hollywood-bound



Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford

Library of Congress

Toronto-born actress Mary Pickford married swashbuckling actor Douglas Fairbanks on March 28, 1920, just 26 days after divorcing her ex in Nevada, where it was convenient to dissolve a marriage quickly. Local legislators contested the paperwork, a battle that would go on for two years. The public didn't seem to care and the celebrity couple were swarmed by fans on a honeymoon through Paris and London. They settled at Pickfair, a 25-room mansion in Beverly Hills and the first with a pool, through which the half-Canadian duo once paddled a canoe.

1925: Splitsville

For the first time, the new Marriage and Divorce Act let Canadian women divorce on the same grounds as men: adultery. Prior to 1925, wives had to prove their husbands were not just cheating but also engaging in desertion, bigamy, rape, sodomy or bestiality. Even the government's insistence on adultery as grounds for divorce was problematic, given that some couples were trying to split under less trying circumstances, such as falling out of love.

We have a lot to know about our background, in terms of how women were treated.

Velma Demerson, Woman deemed 'incorrigible' under the Female Refuges Act

1930: Miscegenation blues

Unlike the United States, Canada had no blatant laws banning interracial marriage. But while the stigma was more informal in this country, it could be just as terrifying. As Backhouse describes in her 1999 book, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*, much of this terror was at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1927, Klansmen congregated in Moose Jaw, where they burned a 60-foot cross and lectured a large crowd on the risks of mixed-race marriage.

Three years later, on Feb. 28, 1930, some 75 Ku Klux Klan men dressed in white hoods and gowns marched into Oakville, Ont., and burned another massive wooden cross. They had arrived to intimidate Isabel Jones, a white woman, and her fiancé, Ira Junius Johnson, a man presumed to be black but later found to be of mixed Cherokee and white descent. The woman's mother had summoned the KKK to separate them.

The Klansmen kidnapped Jones, 21, and dumped her off at the Salvation Army, where they would keep surveillance on her for days from a car parked outside. In front of the couple's home, they burned a cross and threatened Johnson. During the invasion, the police chief recognized many of the Klansmen as prominent business owners

from Hamilton as they plucked off their hoods to shake his hand.

It was only after several black Toronto lawyers pressured the Ontario government that four of the Klansmen were arrested for being "disguised by night," a trivial charge related to burglary. Just one of the four men – a Hamilton chiropractor and father of five – was convicted and given a measly \$50 fine. An appeals court eventually sentenced the Klansman to three months in prison. Undaunted, Jones and Johnson married one month after the ordeal.

1939: The colour line, continued

Four months pregnant and eating breakfast with her fiancé in their pyjamas at their Toronto home, 18-year-old Velma Demerson was confronted by her father and two police officers. Demerson's father had sicced the cops on his daughter for what was scandalous behaviour at the time: Demerson, a white, unmarried woman, was living with a Chinese man, Harry Yip, and was carrying his child. Under the Female Refuges Act, Demerson was deemed "incorrigible and unmanageable" and incarcerated for nine months at Toronto's Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women, where she was locked in a seven-foot-by-four-foot cell. While pregnant, Demerson was experimented on and mutilated by a female doctor who, disturbingly, believed the prisoners' genitals held clues about their purported immorality. "I blame the institution. The government allowed it, let's face it," Demerson, now 96, said from Toronto. "We have a lot to know about our background, in terms of how women were treated." Demerson brought a civil action against the Ontario government in 2002 for unauthorized imprisonment, pain and suffering. She was offered a settlement and a public apology.

1968: The blame game

The passing of Canada's first unified federal divorce law allowed divorce on the grounds of adultery, mental or physical cruelty, desertion, a spouse in jail or a separation period of three years spent living apart. In an earlier era, Canadian spouses had to publicize their intent to divorce in multiple newspapers over six months – including details of the demise of their relationships – then petition the government to let them go their separate ways. But while the 1968 law was more civilized, for feuding husbands and wives, three years of separation predivorce was an excruciatingly long wait.

Those hoping to speed things up had to prove to judges that they had been cheated on or abused. Toronto lawyer Philip Epstein remembers those early, extra messy days before no-fault divorce came into play in 1986. "They were interesting times," said Epstein, who started practising law in 1970. "You had to have private investigators hanging out of hotel windows and sitting in cars, watching people go in and go out, to prove the adultery. That was a whole industry. It was sleazy."

1971: Trudeaumania



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, 51, gazes at this bride, 22-year-old Margaret, during a quiet moment at their reception following their wedding Mar. 4, 1971 in North Vancouver.

It was Canada's royal wedding: On March 4, 1971, Prime Minister (and most eligible bachelor Pierre Trudeau, 51, quietly married Margaret Sinclair, 22, in Vancouver. The reception was intimate, with just 14 guests attending. The menu included turtle soup and pear flambé, but even the caterers were surprised to see who they were hosting, having been told it was an anniversary party. The wedding photographer was also left in the dark, as was Trudeau's entire cabinet: The PM liked to keep his private life private, and so they thought he'd gone skiing. When the unhappy marriage dissolved in 1984, Trudeau became Canada's first divorced, single-dad Prime Minister.

1972: Pioneers of love

The road to legalized gay marriage was long, and several couples paved the way. On Feb. 2, 1972, Montreal singer and journalist Michel Girouard and pianist Réjean Tremblay signed business partnership and personal union contracts in Canada's first widely publicized gay marriage ceremony, held at a downtown discotheque. Two years later, Richard North and Chris Vogel were married at Winnipeg's Unitarian Universalist Church. They were issued a certificate, which now hangs in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, but were denied an official marriage licence. As of 2017 – 43 years after their ceremony and more than a decade after Manitoba legalized gay marriage – the province has yet to register the men. Vogel, a retired civil servant, and North, a retired nurse, have launched a human-rights complaint against the Government of Manitoba, claiming it has discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation – then and since.

"We discovered back in 1974 that of all the things that people didn't want homosexuals to have, the one thing against which there was the strongest resistance, was marriage. Perhaps that's what caused us, in part, to do it," said Vogel, who is now 69. "There does seem to be an inexplicable but nevertheless lingering refusal to fully accept the notion of same-sex marriage. In nooks and crannies all over the place, people are still holding out."

1973: Women's work

Irene Murdoch

Lost ranch battle, woman gets divorce

CALGARY (CP) — Irene Murdoch, the Alberta farm woman who battled for a claim to the family ranch all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and lost it, was granted a divorce yesterday from her husband, Alex.

The divorce action comes as a last step for the Turner Valley woman to gain a monetary settlement in lieu of a property interest that was turned down by the Supreme Court of Canada two years ago.

A hearing to determine monthly maintenance or a

lump-sum payment for Mrs. Murdoch will be held Dec. 1. The couple has been separated since 1968.

Her fight for property rights gained her national recognition and created a rallying point for women's rights groups across the country. It is seen by some as the landmark that could ultimately lead to new laws for more equitable sharing of matrimonial property. The Law Reform Commission of Canada has said the Murdoch case shows "simple justice" is absent from the law.

The Irene Murdoch case in The Globe and Mail on October 11, 1975.

The Globe and Mail

The case of an abused Alberta ranch wife named Irene Murdoch served as a potent catalyst for the overhaul of matrimonial property rights in Canada. Murdoch had reportedly been beaten so severely by her husband that her

face and speech were permanently damaged.

She divorced him after 25 years of marriage, requesting a share of their ranch. It was a prosperous operation she'd helped build, but the title remained in her husband's name. Murdoch insisted that she had paid for part of the ranch and was responsible for all the haying and raking, driving of tractors and trucks as well as dehorning, branding and vaccinating cattle for five months out of every year. She was initially awarded a pittance (\$200 a month in "maintenance" payments) and denied any share of the property. The Supreme Court of Canada gave her ex-husband all the ranch land, the home and its furniture, the horses, cattle and machinery equipment; the wife was also ordered to pay a portion of his legal costs.

In a much-maligned ruling, Justice Ronald Martland argued that Murdoch's free labour hadn't saved her husband any money. What followed was mass public outcry demanding nationwide reform of family law to treat spouses as equal. The Murdoch case "shocked the consciousness of Canadians," Mysty Clapton, assistant dean at the University of Western Ontario's law school, wrote in 2008. It also helped unify wives under one movement: When a skit about Murdoch's nightmare toured through rural communities, "It struck the farm women like a thunderbolt," one of the performers had said. "Each of them suddenly realized, 'I am Mrs. Murdoch.'"

1974: The stuff of gossip



Edgar Bronfman Sr.

WILLIAM E. SAURO/NYT

In a highly publicized case, Seagram's tycoon Edgar Bronfman Sr. sued to annul his marriage to Lady Carolyn Townshend on the grounds their union was never legally consummated. During the bitter trial, the distiller testified that they'd had sex more than 25 times before the wedding, but never after. Bronfman demanded the return of several prenuptial gifts, including a million-dollar trust fund, \$50,000 of jewels and a baronial mansion in New York.

His wife balked at the story, claiming she had instigated sex with her drunk husband on their Acapulco honeymoon, thereby consummating the marriage. The pair eventually reached an out-of-court settlement and their stormy marriage was annulled, but not before all of Canada cringed.

1983: No means no

A disturbing fact: Just 34 years ago, rape was considered to be an offence only outside of marriage. "Husbands could do with their wives as they wished: Women were deemed to be sexual property," said Backhouse, who holds the University Research Chair on Sexual Assault Legislation in Canada.

On Jan. 4, 1983, Bill C-127 came into effect and, for the first time, the Criminal Code made clear that spousal sexual assault was now a crime. Still, Backhouse argues, "There's a legacy here that we haven't been able to shed." In 2015, a survey from the Canadian Women's Foundation found that [more than 10 per cent of Canadians still believe](#)

spouses do not need to get consent from each other before having sex.

[My father] told me, 'You're marrying someone who's different from your own nation. You're going to lose a lot.' I was in love and I didn't care. ... The elders told me that I had betrayed them by marrying a white person. They told me I no longer belonged here.

Evelyne St-Onge, exiled from her Innu community in 1968 after marrying Gilles Audette, a white Québécois man

1985: Status update

Indigenous women who married non-indigenous men faced prejudice well before Confederation. In 1876, the Indian Act made this discrimination legal, decreeing that indigenous women would be stripped of official Indian status for marrying non-native men. This meant women (and their children) lost the right to live on their ancestral reserves, among other legal and societal losses.

Evelyne St-Onge was exiled from her Innu community in 1968 after marrying Gilles Audette, a white Quebecer man she met while looking for a date for her graduation from nursing school. "When I met him it was like I'd known him for a long time," St-Onge, now 71, said through a translator. Their marriage six months later was met by a warning from her father: "He told me, 'You're marrying someone who's different from your own nation. You're going to lose a lot.' I was in love and I didn't care." When their daughter, Michèle, was born in 1971, the family moved to St-Onge's parents' reserve near Schefferville, Que., where the exclusion grew palpable: "The elders told me that I had betrayed them by marrying a white person. They told me I no longer belonged here," St-Onge said.

St-Onge and her husband split in 1979, and she moved Michèle and son Benoît to Malinotnam, an Innu community on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Here, St-Onge had a son named Sylvestre with an Innu man.

The prejudice persisted: This boy was refused vaccination because of his mother's prior marriage to a white man, which had legally stripped her of native status. "I was considered white," St-Onge said. "They said in order for Sylvestre to be considered Innu, his biological Innu father had to adopt him." Her mixed-race children, meanwhile, faced racist taunts in both provincial and Innu schools in Quebec. "It caused me a lot of pain as a mother," St-Onge said.

In 1974, St-Onge co-founded Quebec Native Women to fight the discriminatory clauses in the Indian Act. In 1985, when the laws finally changed, she re-registered as an Innu in Ottawa and got her status back. "It meant my children would be protected in the future," St-Onge said of the victory. "It was a war. It was my story, but it's also the story of a lot of native women."

1986: At last!

The advent of no-fault divorce meant most spouses no longer needed to get into the nitty-gritty of their dissolutions before a judge. Now, after living apart for just one year, they could simply pen in "marriage breakdown" and get out of Dodge.

1988: He shoots, he scores



Wayne Gretzky gives a thumbs-up as he and his wife Janet Jones leave St. Joseph's Basilica July 16, 1988 after being wed before 700 friends and relatives in Edmonton.

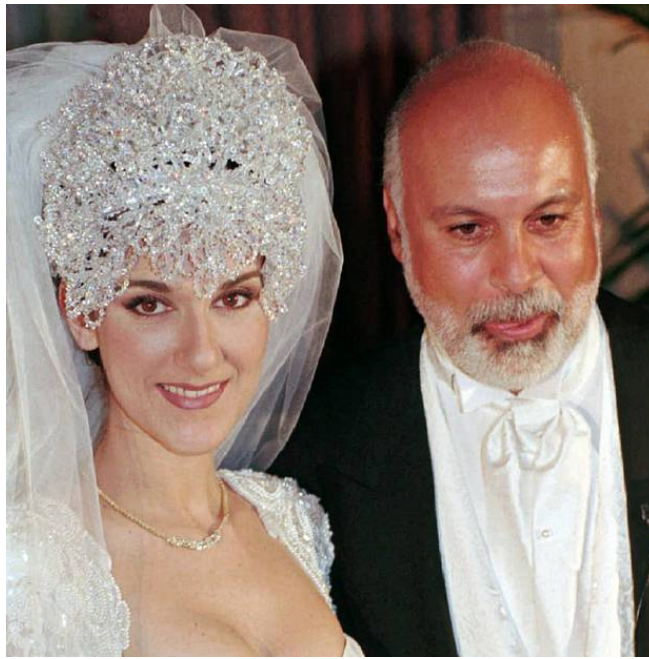
DAVE BUSTON/The Canadian Press

Wayne Gretzky and bride Janet Jones set off wedding fever in Edmonton with their 1988 nuptials, as 5,000 well-wishers crowded outside St. Joseph's Basilica to get a glimpse of the Great One – and Jones's gown. Memorable for its enormous leg-of-mutton sleeves, Jones's dress reportedly cost \$40,000 and took 1,500 hours to sew. The wedding gifts filled three rooms at a local hotel, the Toronto Star's Rosie DiManno reported, and included a gold swan from Soviet goalie Vladislav Tretiak (swans are good luck, the Russian explained, because they mate for life).

1993: Who needs a piece of paper?

Before Catherine Peter moved in with William Beblow, he was spending \$350 a month on a housekeeper – money he saved when they decided to live together. The couple never officially married, but she cared for six children (four hers and two his) and tended to the pigs and chickens on the property. When the relationship dissolved 12 years later, Beblow's lawyers claimed his girlfriend had been doing the housework out of "natural love and affection," that he hadn't been enriched by his partner's housework and that she didn't deserve a share of the family assets. Supreme Court Justice Beverley McLachlin disagreed, writing that this attitude about gender roles "systematically devalues the contributions which women tend to make to the family economy." Peter got the family home as a result. It was a powerful statement about the value of domestic work: Peter's toiling in the home had distinct economic value.

1994: Power of love



Quebec pop star Celine Dion and her husband, Rene Angelil, pose for photographers at a news conference following their wedding ceremony in Montreal in 1994.

Marcos Townsend/CP

With a towering, seven-pound crystal tiara perched on her head and a 20-foot-train behind her, Quebec pop goddess Celine Dion wed her manager and long-time flame, René Angélil, in an over-the-top ceremony at Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica. Hundreds lined the streets to gawk and scream at Dion, 26, and the husband twice her age. The whole spectacle was broadcast live on Canadian TV.

2001: Trail-blazing down the aisle

Elaine and Anne Vautour's wedding day was extraordinarily nerve-racking. The officiant, Rev. Brent Hawkes, wore a bulletproof vest, having been accosted that morning by a woman in the front pew of Toronto's Metropolitan Community Church. Anne, then a daycare teacher, and Elaine, a counsellor for homeless men, were picked up by a private security firm in an armoured Yukon SUV and then driven around the neighbourhood.

"I found it intimidating," remembered Elaine, now 59. "Every minute, they'd say, 'Estimated time of arrival: Eight minutes. Seven minutes. Six minutes.' When we got to the church there was a whole row of police officers from our Yukon to the door, congratulating us all the way in."

The Toronto ceremony – a double wedding that also saw two men, Joe Varnell and Kevin Bourassa, marry that day – was a key contribution in the early fight to legalize gay marriage in Canada. Hawkes had cleverly used the Marriages Act, a traditional, religious holdover that allows a marriage licence to be issued if "banns" (or announcements) are published on three consecutive Sundays without a valid objection. Even so, Ontario's Registrar-General refused to certify the Vautours' licence and the women had to wait until the province legalized gay marriage in 2003 to have their marriage officially registered.

"We did it because we both come from families where people had been married for a very long time; we believed in the long-term stuff of marriage. But a lot of it was also about the community," said Anne, now 54. She recalled a gay Russian man who approached them at church a year after the wedding: "He had heard about our event when he was suicidal and it gave him the hope to keep living. This is why we did it."

2003: Ontario goes first

Canada's first legal same-sex marriage was officiated on June 10, 2003, mere hours after Ontario's Court of Appeal declared the Canadian law on traditional marriage unconstitutional. The couple was Toronto's Michael Leshner and Michael Stark – dubbed "the Michaels" – who landed the title of Time Canada's Newsmakers of the Year.

2005: Same-sex marriage for real

With the passage of the gender-neutral Civil Marriage Act on July 20, 2005, gay marriage became legal across Canada. Just three other countries in the world had legalized gay marriage up to this point: the Netherlands in 2001, Belgium in 2003 and Spain two weeks before Canada in 2005. Some 3,000 same-sex couples had already married in the eight provinces and one territory that had legalized gay marriage before the federal decision.

2011: Couples only



Winston Blackmore, the religious leader of the polygamous community of Bountiful, B.C. shares a laugh with six of his daughters and some of his grandchildren on Monday, April 21, 2008.

JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Six years ago, the B.C. Supreme Court upheld a 127-year-old criminal law against polygamy, condemning the practice for endangering women and children. The decision followed an investigation into Winston Blackmore, who was bishop of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS), a Mormon splinter group that holds polygamy as one of its tenets.

In Bountiful, a small community in southeastern British Columbia, Blackmore had 27 wives and fathered 145 children; he is now awaiting trial on polygamy charges. In his 335-page decision upholding the ban on polygamy, Chief Justice Robert Bauman wrote about the practice's harms "to women, to children, to society and to the institution of monogamous marriage."

Critics of the decision took issue with its emphasis on monogamy over all other types of relationships, including benign, polyamorous liaisons between consenting adults who have no intention of marrying.

2013: So, about that piece of paper

Canadians are increasingly choosing common-law relationships over marriage, and property rights are a bit of a legal Wild West in the court system. Many co-habiting partners are unclear about what they owe and are owed should their live-in relationships dissolve.

Two 2013 provincial decisions took opposite approaches to the problem.

In January, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that common-law partners in Quebec were not on the hook for spousal support or property division in the event of a breakup. While the majority of the judges agreed that parts of the Quebec Civil Code discriminate against common-law couples by not extending the same legal protections doled out to married couples, they ultimately decided it was more important to protect freedom of choice, in this case common-law partners choosing to remain outside the legal rules of marriage.

Women's rights groups criticized the decision, saying it leaves women in such relationships – including women who may have wanted to marry their long-term partners but were denied – particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Later that year, the opposite scenario played out in British Columbia.

A new Family Law Act decreed that living together for two years or more gave common-law partners the same rights and obligations as married spouses, including mandatory sharing of properties and debts they accrued during their relationships.

"It's a momentous change because it attaches life-changing consequences to what are in some cases informal living arrangements," The Globe and Mail warned at the time, calling the ruling "state interference."

Some common-law partners protested, too, saying they hadn't consented to being "married." For those who were disgruntled, British Columbia offered opt-out contracts – but couples would need a lawyer for that.

2014: My Big, Fat Gay Wedding



Dayna Murphy, left, and her partner, Shannon St. Germain, dance after getting married during a mass LGBTQ wedding at Casa Loma in June 2014.

Fred Lum/The Globe and Mail

Three thousand hors d'oeuvre, 4,000 glasses of sparkling wine, 12 officiants from 12 different faiths and 120 LGBTQ couples graced the grounds of Toronto's Casa Loma for an epic same-sex wedding when the city hosted WorldPride in the summer of 2014. Couples from all over the world, from Australia and Brazil to Texas and Taiwan, descended on the kitschy castle on a hill, saying "I do" in unison.

Some had been together for decades; others had travelled from less-progressive countries, where their unions would not be legally recognized. "We hope that ... couples here today will take this energy back to wherever they come from," Toronto city councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam told The Canadian Press, "and that they will continue the fight for equality back home."

2016: Annulment, 2.0

Frozen-food heiress Eleanor McCain launched an annulment case against her husband, Jeff Melanson, former CEO of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In court filings, McCain alleged that she'd been "tricked" into the nine-month marriage, which ended, she said, with an abrupt e-mail from him.

She alleged that her estranged husband was a philanderer with an Ashley Madison account who'd harassed female staff at Alberta's Banff Centre, where he'd previously been president. McCain claimed there was no "free and enlightened consent" in the marriage, which wouldn't have gone down "had she known the truth about him."

Instead of handing her ex a divorce, she pursued an annulment to freeze him out. Melanson disputed McCain's claims, [telling The Globe they are "incredibly undignified."](#) This heated legal battle continues.