

Kim Campbell

Canada's nineteenth prime minister

Quick Facts

Term(s) of Office:

- June 25, 1993–November 3, 1993

Born

- March 10, 1947, Port Alberni, British Columbia

Education

- University of British Columbia, B.A. Political Science 1969, LL.B. 1983
- London School of Economics, Soviet Studies 1970–1973

Personal Life

- Married 1972, Nathan Divinsky (b. 1925)
- Divorced 1983
- Re-married 1986, Howard Eddy (b. 1937)
- Divorced 1993

Occupations

- 1975–1978 Lecturer, Political Science, University of British Columbia
- 1978–1981 Lecturer, Political Science and History, Vancouver Community College
- 1980–1984 Trustee, Vancouver School Board
- 1983 Chairwoman, Vancouver School Board
- 1984 Vice-Chairwoman, Vancouver School Board
- 1985–1986 Director, Office of the Premier of British Columbia
- 1986–1988 MLA British Columbia
- 1993–1996 Taught at Harvard University
- 1996–2000 Canada's Consul General in Los Angeles

Political Party

- Progressive Conservative
- June 13–December 13, 1993, Party Leader

Constituency

- 1988–1993 Vancouver Centre, British Columbia

Other Ministries

- 1989–1990 Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)
- 1990–1993 Justice and Attorney General
- 1993 National Defence, and Veterans Affairs

Political Record

- Criminal Code Amendment (firearms control) 1991
- Criminal Code Amendment (sexual assault) 1992
- First woman prime minister of Canada

Biography

In a democracy, government isn't something that a small group of people do to everybody else, it's not even something they do for everybody else, it should be something they do with everybody else.—Kim Campbell, March 25, 1993

Kim Campbell spoke of the "politics of inclusion," a style of government she had demonstrated as Minister of Justice, in hopes of persuading Canadians to vote Tory one more time. However, like other new prime ministers inheriting a long term of office, she was unable to shake off an unhappy legacy. As did Tupper, Meighen and Turner, Campbell led Canada for only a brief period before going down to electoral defeat.

Avril Phaedra Douglas Campbell was born in Port Alberni, British Columbia, in 1947. Her parents moved to Vancouver soon after she was born, where her father studied law at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The marriage was not a happy one; her mother left the family when Campbell was only 12 years old. It was at this point that she changed her name to Kim. Despite the family distress, Campbell did well in high school and involved herself in politics at an early age, running for and winning the presidency of her student's council. Kim Campbell became the first female student president of Prince of Wales Secondary School.

In 1964, she went to UBC where she majored in political science. Here again, Campbell met with political success and was elected the first female president for first year students. After graduation, she took some graduate courses at the Institute of International Relations, before winning a scholarship to the London School of Economics (LSE). At LSE, Campbell began a doctorate in Soviet studies. She returned to Vancouver in 1973, her thesis unfinished, and began lecturing part-time at UBC and Vancouver Community College.

In 1980, she returned to UBC to study law, and at the same time, got involved in local politics. Campbell was elected to the Vancouver School Board and served for four years. Her platform of fiscal restraint caught the attention of the governing Social Credit party and she was asked to run as a Socred candidate in the 1984 provincial election. Although she lost the seat, Campbell was offered a job as a policy advisor to British Columbia Socred Premier Bill Bennett the following year. When Bennett resigned in 1986, Campbell ran for provincial leader but lost to Bill Vander Zalm. In the election held that year, she won a seat in the legislature. Here she made her mark by publicly opposing the premier's restrictive stance on abortion. By 1988, Campbell was being wooed by the federal Conservative party. Their star British Columbia Cabinet minister, Pat Carney, was retiring from politics and a candidate was needed for her seat in Vancouver Centre. Campbell agreed to run and won in the 1988 election.

She was offered a Cabinet post in 1989 as Minister of State for Indian and Northern Affairs. The following year she became Canada's first female Justice Minister. It was here that she proved her mettle as a politician. Campbell introduced a bill amending the gun laws. In the wake of the

1989 Montréal massacre, she had to satisfy a widespread public outcry for more restrictive gun laws and get support for the legislation from a determined lobby of gun-owners within her own caucus. Campbell was also praised for Bill C-49 which was drafted when the Supreme Court struck down the 1983 "rape shield" law as unconstitutional. She made the unprecedented move of consulting with women's groups and law associations, as well as ministry officials, in drafting the new law. By focusing on the principle of consent, Bill C-49 remained constitutional and still protective of a victim's rights. It passed second reading in the Commons with a rare vote of unanimity by all three federal parties.

In 1993, Campbell became Minister of National Defence and was immediately embroiled in the debate over the EH-101 helicopter contract and the deaths of four Somalis at the hands of Canadian paratroopers. By this time, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had announced his retirement, and Campbell was encouraged to run for party leader. Her only strong competition was Jean Charest, and she won in a close contest at the convention in June. Kim Campbell became Canada's first female prime minister.

However the Conservative mandate to govern had expired and Campbell had to call an election for October 1993. She was unable to overcome her party's nine-year legacy and bore the brunt of voters' dissatisfaction with free trade, the GST, the Constitutional fiascos and the economic recession. The Conservatives suffered an unprecedented defeat, reduced to just two seats in the House of Commons they lost their status as an official party.

Campbell, having lost her Vancouver seat, returned to academia and accepted a fellowship at Harvard.

International Relations

Before becoming prime minister, in her role as minister of national defence, Campbell had been active in international affairs. As prime minister, she attended the G7 Summit meetings in Tokyo in July 1993.

Under Mulroney, the government had arranged to purchase 50 state-of-the-art helicopters for the Canadian military. This plan was widely criticized as too expensive. Campbell had to defend the deal, but, in the heat of the election campaign, decided to reduce the number of helicopters that would be purchased. This issue was one of the causes of the Progressive Conservative Party's defeat in the election.

Campbell served as Canadian Consul General from 1996 to 2000 in Los Angeles, California. She is still active in the Club of Madrid, an organization of former presidents and prime ministers of 51 countries.

Anecdote

The singing prime minister

In order to become the first woman in Canada to serve as Justice Minister, Defence Minister and prime minister, Kim Campbell had to maintain a reputation as a tough politician. But a talented entertainer lurks behind the combative exterior. From a very young age Campbell displayed musical ability; she plays the piano and the guitar by ear. As a child she joined the Pentecostal Church of a friend, preferring gospel music to the staid hymns of her parents' Anglican Church.

Whenever there was a school production involving dance, music or unusual costumes, Campbell joined in. At the University of British Columbia's law school in the 70s, she wrote, produced and performed in satires and skits lampooning the legal and political establishment, for the entertainment of her fellow students.

It was probably this taste for the theatrical that led Campbell to pose for her infamous photo as Justice Minister. Wearing a strapless evening gown, she appeared bare-shouldered behind the robes of office.

Bibliography

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