**O Canada: national anthem to be gender neutral after senate vote**

* Line ‘in all thy sons command’ becomes ‘in all of us command’
* Campaign backed by Margaret Atwood and ex-PM Kim Campbell

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Canada’s national anthem is set to become gender neutral, bringing an end to a decades-long push to ensure the English language version reflects all Canadians.

Senators passed legislation on Wednesday that will change the second line of the anthem from “in all thy sons command” to “in all of us command”. Once the legislation is given royal assent by the governor general, the tweak will become law.

The change has been more than three decades in the making, said Canadian senator Frances Lankin. “This may be small – it’s about two words – but it’s huge in terms of one of our major national symbols. It’s inclusivity and I’m proud.”

Amid bitter debate over the issue, the bill had been stalled for 18 months as Conservatives argued that all Canadians should be consulted in the matter. “This is an issue for the Canadian public to decide not just a couple of independent senators,” [Senator Don Plett told the CBC.](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/anthem-bill-passes-senate-1.4513317)

Recent decades have seen 12 bills introduced in the House of Commons aimed at ridding the anthem of gendered language. The French language version uses different lyrics and does not include the same line.

The idea began to gain traction in 2013 after a group of prominent Canadian women, including [author Margaret Atwood](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/15/margaret-atwood-feminist-backlash-metoo) and [former prime minister Kim Campbell](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/12/kim-campbell-canada-ex-prime-minister-trump-sexual-predator), took on the issue.

They argued that the anthem had once been gender neutral – using the phrase “thou dost in us command” – but had been changed to include the word sons in 1913.

“Restoring these lyrics to gender-neutral is not only an easy fix to make our anthem inclusive for all Canadians, but it’s also long overdue,” [Atwood said at the time.](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/10/01/margaret_atwood_joins_call_to_restore_o_canada_to_genderneutral_version.html) On Thursday, Atwood [expressed her delight](https://twitter.com/MargaretAtwood/status/958979864345923584?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.independent.co.uk%2Fnews%2Fworld%2Famericas%2Fcanada-national-anthem-gender-neutral-o-canada-senate-vote-a8189451.html) on Twitter over the bill’s passage.

The legislation passed on Wednesday was introduced by a Liberal MP, Mauril Bélanger, who had long argued that the small change “would ensure that more than 18 million Canadian women are included in our national anthem”.

His first attempt was shot down by Conservative politicians, who in 2010 [briefly toyed with making the same tweak](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/reaction-from-tory-base-forces-quick-reversal-on-anthem-lyrics-idea/article1209408/), arguing that [a 2013 poll that found 65% of Canadians](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/10/24/majority_doesnt_want_o_canada_lyrics_changed.html) were opposed to changing the anthem.

One year later, Bélanger introduced the same legislation. This time the Liberals used [their majority government to push the bill through.](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/15/canada-national-anthem-lyrics-gender-neutral-parliament) After being diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease, Bélanger died in 2016.