BACKGROUND PAPER

WOMEN IN POLITICS: BECOMING FULL PARTNERS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Conseil consultatif canadien sur la situation de la femme

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Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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> The country is yours ladies; politics is simply public affairs. Yours and mine and everyone's. The government has enfranchised you, but it cannot emancipate you, that is done by your own processes of thought.
>
> — Nellie McClung
> *Calgary News-Telegram*, 1917

INTRODUCTION

At the November 1986 conference on "Women and Politics" held in Toronto, Ontario, nearly 300 women listened to speaker after speaker describe the urgent need for more women to enter the political arena. Delegates reviewed women's struggles to gain access to power — the sacrifices, the nomination battles, the lack of financial backing, the importance of having an emotional support system, and the difficulty of balancing the roles of wife, mother, and politician. Delegates attended workshops focussing on the workings of all levels of government, on lobbying, on running, and on winning.

The tone of the conference was optimistic, with various speakers determined that a breakthrough in electing women at the federal level would occur in the 1990s. One of the organizers of Canadian Women for Political Representation (CWPR), a multi-partisan group of women whose goal is to get women elected to half the seats in the House of Commons by 1994, summed up the mood at the conference by saying she was hopeful a female political leader would emerge by the 1990s — "one who believes in and understands party politics".

This feeling of hope is being echoed across Canada as more chapters of CWPR are being established or planned in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Edmonton.[1] As party machines gear up for a federal election, as increasing numbers of women run in provincial elections, and as more and more women sit on city councils and are elected as mayors, there can be no doubt that women are involved as both candidates and legislators. Two recent provincial elections are evidence of this trend. In the September 1987 election in Ontario, 20 women were elected to the legislature, where they now account for 15.3

per cent of the seats. Seven of the 31 women who ran for election in New Brunswick in October 1987 were elected.

There are promising signs on the international scene as well. In comparison to western European countries and the United States, Canada's rate of female participation — 9.9 per cent at the national level — is higher. International figures for 1986 show that in Britain, for example, women account for only 3.6 per cent of membership in the House of Commons, 4.5 per cent of the United States Congress, and 4.4 per cent of the French national legislature.[2]

Recent signs are even more encouraging. In 1986, Norway elected the first woman prime minister in continental Europe, and seven women took their places in the Norwegian cabinet. In Iceland, in April 1987, the Women's Alliance party, the first feminist movement in the world to win parliamentary seats, doubled its seats to six in the Icelandic elections, giving it enough to hold the balance of power in determining the government.[3]

There is no doubt that women in Canada and the world over are devising ways to overcome the traditional barriers in the political arena. This paper reviews and analyses trends in female participation rates in politics at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. The objective is to provide a clearer picture of the kind of political power women hold today and how much they can expect to hold in the future. In addition, the paper briefly examines trends in legislatures around the world.

Finally, the paper examines some of the factors responsible for these political trends and identifies obstacles and strategies to support and encourage women to enter and participate in the political mainstream. These issues include sex-role stereotyping, the lack of financial support, the attitudes of political parties toward women, the juggling necessary to balance a political role with that of wife and responsibilities in the home, and the lack of support services, such as adequate child care, that enable women to pursue their goals outside the home.

The road to political power for women has been long and hard, a road paved with the untiring efforts of many dedicated women throughout history. The slow but inexorable march toward full equality will continue in the coming years. With each victory, Canadian women will savour their success and move on until they become full partners in the political process.

THE FEDERAL SCENE: MODEST GAINS

The headlines after the 1984 federal election proclaimed dramatic gains for women. Canadian voters elected 27 women to sit in the 282-seat House of Commons, almost double the number elected in 1980. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney set another record when he appointed six women to the cabinet.[4]

It is true that 1984 marked a large step toward full participation by women in the political process. However, a closer examination paints a different picture, one showing that half the population continues to be vastly under-represented at the federal level.

Table 1 presents the total number of women candidates and those elected in Canadian general elections between 1921 and 1984.[5] In the 66 years since 1921, when the first woman, Agnes Macphail, was elected to the House of Commons, only 65 women have been elected. Macphail, who was elected as a member of the Progressive Party and as a representative of the United Farmers of Ontario, was the only woman in the House for 14 years.

Since Macphail, the proportion of women running as candidates and being elected has grown. As seen in Table 1, from 1968 to 1984 the proportion of women candidates increased from 3.5 to 14.5 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of women elected increased from 0.4 to 9.9 per cent. At this rate of increase, it will take decades before equal numbers of women and men are elected at the federal level.[6]

TABLE 1: WOMEN CANDIDATES IN CANADIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS AND FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL[7]

Election(s)	Female Candidates %	Elected MPs %
1921-1967[a]	2.4	0.8
1968	3.5	0.4
1972	6.4	1.8
1974	9.4	3.4
1979	13.8	3.6
1980	14.4	5.7
1984	14.5	9.9

Note: [a] Average for elections between 1921 and 1967.
Source: Reports of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, 1972-1984.

TABLE 2: FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, BY PROVINCE, 1984[8]

	Total MPs	Female MPs
British Columbia	28	4
Alberta	21	1
Saskatchewan	14	0
Manitoba	14	0
Ontario*	95	9
Quebec	75	14
New Brunswick	10	0
Nova Scotia	11	0
Prince Edward Island	4	0
Newfoundland	7	0
Northwest Territories	2	0
Yukon*	1	1

Note: In the July 20, 1987 by-elections, two women were elected, one in Ontario (Hamilton Mountain) and one in the Yukon.

Of the 27 women elected in 1984, 14 came from Quebec. Most of the women elected were Progressive Conservatives, part of the tide that swept the province. However, this was not a deliberate party strategy to get more women into Parliament. Rather, at the time they were nominated, it was assumed that the women would be easily defeated because of Quebec's traditional Liberal voting patterns.[9] The remaining 13 female MPs came from Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. Until just recently there were no women representatives in the other six provinces and two territories (see Table 2). However, the by-elections of July 20, 1987 saw the election of Marion Dewar in Ontario and Audrey McLaughlin in the Yukon.

Some 300 women sought nominations for the 1984 election.[10] But studies of women candidates reveal that women are often the sacrificial lambs in Canadian elections. In the five election campaigns between 1950 and 1975, 146 female candidates were nominated. Of this total, only 18, or approximately 8 per cent, were nominated in constituencies where their party had won at least three of the previous five elections. Men have a much better chance of winning a seat. Table 3 shows that about 1 of every 4 male candidates for federal office between 1972 and 1984 has been elected. By contrast, the success rate for women was less than 1 in 10.

TABLE 3: SUCCESS RATES AMONG FEMALE AND MALE CANDIDATES FOR FEDERAL OFFICE, 1972-1984[11]

Year	% of Female Candidates Elected	% of Male Candidates Elected
1972	7.6	25.6
1974	7.2	20.4
1979	5.1	22.1
1980	6.4	20.0
1984	12.8	20.6

In the 1984 election, more than half the women running for the New Democratic Party were nominated in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, or Alberta, where the party has traditionally fared badly. No female candidates were run

in Saskatchewan, an NDP stronghold. The Liberals ran about one-fifth of their female candidates in the prairie provinces, where the party is weak. In Alberta, where a PC nomination can almost guarantee a seat, only one Progressive Conservative woman won a nomination.

Overcoming the Barriers

It is evident from these statistics that 1984 was indeed a breakthrough in electing women to federal political office. The gains were modest, however, from an historical perspective. A great deal of work must be done to ensure that the 1984 numbers are improved upon in the next election.

Being nominated by a party, running as a candidate, and being elected present a number of unique problems that women must overcome. Chief among these is the barriers created by sex-role stereotyping. Society has definite ideas about the behaviour of men and women. Most women are socialized by their families, peers, institutions such as schools, and religious instruction to believe that there is an appropriate role for women and a different one for men. Although these roles are changing, politics at the federal level is still viewed as a male activity and therefore as inappropriate for women.[12]

Women who are able to overcome the barriers raised by society's view of women in politics find they must also clear another hurdle: the notion that family life and public life are not compatible. Society reinforces the belief that "good" wives or mothers do not abandon their homes, husbands, and children to chase a career in politics. Consequently, many women either forget their political ambitions or postpone becoming more active in politics until their duties at home are less demanding.[13]

Until very recently, society's view of women and sex-role stereotyping also affected the women who did run, won elections, and were then appointed to cabinet. Women who received cabinet appointments were assigned portfolios that are seen to draw upon women's caring qualities or nurturing abilities, such as social welfare or cultural responsibilities. It is encouraging to note,

therefore, that the most recent cabinet appointments — for example, the Hon. Barbara McDougall as Minister of State (Privatization), the Hon. Pat Carney as Minister of International Trade, and the Hon. Monique Vézina as Minister Responsible for External Relations — represent a departure from this pattern.

A third barrier women must overcome is financial. In the case of a general election, candidates have three sources of funds: their parties, private contributions, and their own money. Although the *Election Expenses Act* controls election spending by candidates and parties, those vying for nominations at the constituency level, as well as contenders for party office and party leadership, are not covered by the rules governing general election expenses. This means there are no real spending limits for party nomination and leadership campaigns.[14]

Because of generally lower earnings, women are less able to pour large sums of money into gaining that crucial first foothold: a party nomination. In 1985, for example, Statistics Canada reported that women's wages remained at 64.9 per cent of men's wages, reinforcing CACSW President Sylvia Gold's call for legislation to address this problem. As well, women working in the home are seldom able to contribute the large sums necessary to secure a nomination, because work in the home is neither recognized nor compensated. It is estimated that the average woman seeking a party nomination would have to put at least 40 per cent of her disposable income toward her campaign.

The lack of financial resources is compounded by the fact that women do not have an "old boys" network to tap for funds. As Toronto lawyer and CACSW member Jane Pepino recently observed, "Women are just not tied into the financial networks the way men are. Few women are independently wealthy and they have no fallback financially, while many male candidates have an ability to tap a supportive financial network."[15]

Men are also more likely to be able to take a leave of absence from a job to run for office and to return to the job if they are unsuccessful in an election bid. Many firms view this practice as not only good experience but also a way of giving the firm more prestige.[16] In the past, the same view

has not held for women. However, as the proportion of women in the paid labour force grows (43 per cent at present) and as more women seek elected office, this view is changing.

PROVINCIAL POLITICS: LARGER GAINS

Canadian women have had greater electoral success at the provincial level, but just as the nation as a whole has never elected a woman prime minister, neither has a single province chosen a woman for the top political job. However, unlike the federal parties, some provincial political parties have recently selected women leaders. Sharon Carstairs leads the Liberals in Manitoba and Alexa McDonough the New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia. When she ran for the leadership of the Parti Québécois in 1985, Pauline Marois was the first woman minister to run for party leadership in Canada.

TABLE 4: FEMALE AND MALE REPRESENTATION IN PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES, BY PROVINCE, 1986

Province	Total Male MLAs	Total Female MLAs	Total Cabinet (Males)	Total Cabinet (Females)
British Columbia	57	6	20	1
Alberta	79	6	30	2
Saskatchewan	64	5	19	2
Manitoba	57	7	19	2
Ontario	125	9	24	3
Quebec	122	18	27	4
New Brunswick	58	3	20	2
Nova Scotia	52	3	22	1
Prince Edward Island	32	2	10	1
Newfoundland	52	1	22	1
Northwest Territories	24	2	8	0
Yukon	16	3	5	1

Between 1920 and 1986, 155 women became provincial legislators. Of this total, 88 or approximately 60 per cent have been elected in the past 10 years. Today, just 60 of the 698 members of provincial and territorial legislatures are female, but a third of them are cabinet ministers.[17]

Despite the historical pattern of greater female political participation at the provincial level, the numbers still represent only a handful of women when compared to the number of women in the Canadian population. There are considerable differences in electoral patterns not only from province to province, but also from region to region. Statistics from the period 1950-1975 show that more women have been elected in the western provinces than in the east. All western provinces had elected at least one woman by 1920, but a woman was not elected until 1943 in Ontario, until 1961 in Quebec, and until as recently as 1970 in Prince Edward Island.[18]

Since 1975, the pattern of electing more women to western provincial legislatures has remained constant, although other provinces have made large gains in recent years. In the Quebec National Assembly, for example, 14.7 per cent of members were women in 1986, while 9.3 per cent of the P.E.I. legislature was made up of women.

It is not clear why these regional and provincial differences exist. Part of the answer may be that throughout history, the Canadian political system has had to deal with particular problems created by our geographic size as well as cultural, religious, and language differences. Different areas or regions of the country have different needs, interests, and patterns of development. It may well be that variations in the number of women elected to provincial legislatures are simply another regional difference.

But the more likely answer may be that differences in the number of women elected are attributable to much more complex issues, such as differing political culture and party organizations. For example, as regards differences between east and west, it has been suggested that because the western provinces entered Confederation later, their legislatures were less formalized and entrenched than some of their eastern counterparts. This, perhaps, allowed

women easier access than in provinces where entrenched party organizations existed.

Further support for the political culture argument lies in the fact that the western provinces have always viewed the question of women in politics differently from easterners. Not only were the western provinces the first to give the vote to their female citizens, they also elected their first women legislators at least 10 years before the first of the eastern provinces did so. Some studies attribute this success to early gender equality on the frontier.[19] The hardships involved in settling the west meant that women tended to be more equal partners.

Overcoming the Barriers

The obstacles to participating in the provincial political process are similar to those found in the federal arena. However, success in legislative politics still depends almost entirely on getting the right riding. In Manitoba, the western province with the highest proportion of female MLAs, women of all parties make systematic efforts to pick up nominations in winnable ridings. That is not always easy.

One study suggests that the better the party's chances of winning a riding, the greater the bias against nominating a woman candidate.[20] It would seem that parties most often seek out or support women candidates in ridings where they will almost certainly lose. This point is illustrated by one woman candidate's comments: "When I ran as a candidate, the seat was hopeless. I was running in a constituency against the premier of the province. My party was discouraged and wondered if they should field a candidate."[21] Another reported: "It was a hopeless riding. I felt like a sucker for running there."[22] As lost-cause candidacies tend not to lead to elected office, the parties do not have a large supply of candidates from which to choose. Fewer people will offer themselves as candidates where there is little chance of getting elected, and when there is less competition for the nomination, women have a better chance of winning it. There is also some evidence that parties in or

close to power are less willing to field women candidates than are parties that do not expect to form the government following the election.

By contrast, parties with a good chance of taking power may be unwilling to let women stand for nomination in key ridings. Indeed, winning the nomination in these parties and ridings seems to be a more serious hurdle than winning the election. It is not clear why it is so hard for women to get nominations in competitive ridings, but research points to the issue of women's qualifications.

For example, a study of the backgrounds of more than 300 federal, provincial, and municipal female candidates found that service to the party was the most important factor influencing the selection of candidates in competitive ridings. The women who most often gained nominations were those who had a long history of party service, who were at the top levels of the party organization, or who were leaders of the party's women's auxiliary.[23]

It is important to note that it is not enough merely to be active in the party organization. Many women would be able to qualify if that were the case, since women are extremely active within political parties. However, much of the work women do is of a support nature. This means that very few women have the opportunity to gain the kinds of experience that would qualify them as desirable candidates in the eyes of the party.

Statistics also show that appointments of women to provincial cabinets follow the pattern at the federal level. A study of the recruitment of women provincial legislators between 1950 and 1975 shows that 14 women were appointed to provincial cabinets across the country in that 25-year period. Five women were appointed minister without portfolio, five were named to social services portfolios, one to consumer affairs, one to housing, one to public works, and one to education.[24]

Although this trend continued from between 1975 and 1986 in most provinces, there were some encouraging signs that women are being asked to take on what are regarded as the more powerful portfolios — finance, treasury, justice, and industry. In Alberta, in 1986, 4 of the 25 cabinet posts went to women; one of the women is associate agriculture minister. In Manitoba in the same year, 3 female cabinet ministers were appointed, with one woman in business development and another in tourism and housing.[25]

MUNICIPAL POLITICS: THE LARGEST PARTICIPATION

Women stand the best chance of political success close to home, running at the municipal level. Here, political parties do not play a dominant role and, in most municipalities, elections are not run along party lines. Where parties do exist, as, for example, in larger cities, the parties are municipally based and are not organized in the same way as at the federal and provincial levels.

A second important difference in municipal politics is that these legislative bodies are generally small. As well, mayors do not win office because they lead a particular party; rather they are elected directly.

In Table 5, it is evident that the percentage of women members on municipal councils varies considerably. Ottawa, Vancouver, and Toronto together account for almost half the number of women sitting on municipal councils across Canada.[26] Although the overall numbers are not large, in percentage terms, the figures are far higher than those for participation by women at the federal and provincial levels. Currently, none of the cities listed in Table 5 has a woman mayor.

TABLE 5: FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN CANADIAN CITIES, BY CITY, 1986

City	Total Council Members (male)	Total Council Members (female)
Toronto	22	7
Montreal	57	3
Vancouver	10	3
Edmonton	12	3
Calgary	14	3
Winnipeg	29	3
Quebec City	21	3
Ottawa	15	5
Hamilton	16	3
Regina	10	3

Although the information that would allow comparisons of participation rates over time is very limited, there is some indication that the number of women participating in politics at the municipal level is growing. In Quebec, for example, in 1981, 6.9 per cent of the elected candidates were women; by 1985, this figure had risen to 11.4 per cent.[27]

Women have had some success in winning election to municipal councillor positions, but less success in mayoralty races. Manitoba municipalities elected women to 5.4 per cent of the councillor positions, but less than 1 per cent of municipalities have elected women as mayors (2 of 201 municipalities in 1985). Similarly, in Quebec, only 5.6 per cent of the municipalities voting in 1985 elected women as mayors, but 14.8 per cent of the councillors elected were women.[28]

The proportion of women elected at the municipal level of government also differs across provinces. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island all have significant numbers of elected women at the municipal level, but this is not true for Quebec and Manitoba.

Overcoming the Barriers

There are a number of reasons why women find it easier to become involved in municipal politics. Some argue that there are more opportunities for women to participate at the municipal level because men are less interested in politics at this level. Men are seen as being more interested in federal and provincial politics, where the stakes, and the opportunities for gain, are higher. Because municipal politics is seen as offering fewer opportunities to participate in the big issues of the day than federal or provincial politics, men are less attracted to this arena.[29]

Another reason for women's participation at the municipal level could be that political parties do not play a central role in municipal politics. If federal and provincial parties do act to block women's candidacies, then the absence of partisan politics at the local level may make it easier for women to gain access to nominations and, ultimately, to office.

Political involvement at the local level is also often easier to manage in relation to women's other responsibilities. It is difficult, but possible, to combine a political career at the municipal level with the responsibilities of raising a family. Work for city councillors is often part-time and does not involve as much separation from families as travel to Ottawa or to a provincial capital might require.

Volunteer activity has also been a major pathway through which women are recruited into municipal politics. Through work and contacts in the voluntary sector, women develop knowledge about, and an interest in, municipal issues, experiences that may lead them to consider running for municipal office.

There are, however, some characteristics of municipal government that may make it more difficult for women to participate fully at this level. One relates to voting qualifications; for many years the vote in municipal elections was restricted to property owners. For example, tenants in Montreal were given the right to vote in municipal elections only in 1970. Since women are more likely than men to be tenants, this factor may limit their political

participation. Although voting qualifications have changed, the links between municipal politics and property ownership still remain strong in many areas of the country.

Women's involvement may also have been influenced by the nature of government activities at the municipal level. In Canada, municipal government has tended to concentrate on roads, transportation, water, sewers, police, and fire protection — all of which traditionally were not assumed to be areas of interest to women. Now, new questions are being asked: is there adequate street lighting and better street design to inhibit violence against women; do local transportation services meet the needs of women; are contracts given only to companies that demonstrate that they provide equal opportunities for all employees?

As well, local government has gradually expanded the scope of its activities to include delivering social services, and encouraging the development of cultural and recreational programs. There is no doubt that as the range and complexity of local government expands, running for local government may become more attractive to a broader range of candidates.

Women's financial disadvantages are as troublesome in municipal politics as they are on the national and provincial scenes. Although the amount of money spent on running for local office may be less, candidates usually have no political party to help ease the burden. Money must be raised through community groups, from business, family, friends, and from personal resources. One Alberta survey estimates that a municipal campaign can cost a candidate between $10,000 and $35,000.[30]

Women who try to raise money from businesses and individuals to fund a campaign for municipal office find it a difficult task. A large number of women running at the local level are homemakers, isolated from the business and economic communities and dependent on the family's income. As a result, only women with independent financial resources are likely to be able to launch a successful municipal campaign.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE: GLOBAL RATES VARY

To assess the progress Canadian women have made, it is necessary to examine the international scene. Here, the same general trends can be found: the participation rates of women have increased but are still considerably lower than those of men; women at the top levels of government are concentrated, for the most part, in portfolios that have been seen traditionally as "women's concerns"; and women's chances of gaining access to power are constrained by factors such as society's attitudes toward women, inadequate financial backing, and the lack of sufficient support services such as child care.

Table 6 compares the representation of women in the national legislatures of 12 countries. Women have the highest representation in the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark), the Soviet Union, and China.[31] Also encouraging were the results of the April 1987 general election in Iceland, where the Women's Alliance Party gained 10 per cent of the vote and now holds the balance of power in determining the government.

Some studies suggest that the reason for the impressive showing in the Scandinavian countries is its electoral system. Known as proportional representation, this system tries to ensure that the parties are represented in the legislature more or less in proportion to their share of the popular vote.

Although some studies show that women's participation is often higher in countries with this type of electoral system, the political success of Scandinavian women cannot be attributed solely to this factor. Rather, variables such as political culture and society's attitudes toward women in general must also be assessed.[32]

TABLE 6: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURES

Country	Proportion of Legislators who are Female	
	1975 %	1986 %
Finland	23.0	30.5
Sweden	21.5	28.9
Norway	15.5	34.9*
Denmark	15.7	25.7
Switzerland	6.2	10.2
West Germany	5.8	15.0*
France	1.8	4.4
United Kingdom	4.3	3.6
Canada	3.3	9.9
United States	3.4	4.5
Soviet Union	31.3	32.8
China	22.7	21.2

Source: Marilyn Domagalski, "The Role of Canadian Women in Federal and Provincial Politics: An Analysis", in *Canadian Legislatures: The 1986 Comparative Study*, ed. R.J. Fleming (Toronto: Holt Rinehart Press, 1987), p. 41. *Updated to February 1987 using figures from "Keeping a sense of disproportion", *The Economist*, February 28, 1987.

The Norwegians, for example, have adopted a bold affirmative action program, which has had a dramatic impact on its power structures. During the 1960s and 1970s, numerous women's groups lobbied all political parties to train, select, and promote women candidates. Women's caucuses within parties became an important source of pressure and are currently a training ground for women interested in politics.

Because of this pressure, in 1982, Norway's Labour Party adopted a rule that neither males nor females should occupy fewer than 40 per cent of the party's posts, including candidacies for local and national offices. Today, this party holds power in Norway, with a female prime minister, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland; 8 of 18 cabinet ministers are women.[33]

The Labour Party's 40 per cent rule is now well established and is helping to alter public perceptions about the role of women in politics. Women are encouraged to combine family responsibilities and a career in politics and receive support from all parties to do so. European women also have the opportunity to participate in politics at the trans-national level, through the European Parliament. The situation there contrasts quite sharply with Norway; only one of every 10 members of the European Parliament is a woman. A profile of a woman member of the European Parliament has emerged: she is between 40 and 50 years of age, married with children; she has a university degree and has engaged in previous political activities or held a post in the public or private sector; she resolutely defends the rights of women; and she appreciates the value of power.[34]

Finally, when compared to the other western European countries and the United States, Canada has a higher rate of participation. It is also heartening to note from Table 6 that this rate of involvement is increasing over time.

Despite this trend toward greater involvement both as candidates and in legislatures, the percentage of women in the western European and North American political systems has remained at less than 10 per cent through the 1980s. In Britain, although Margaret Thatcher is prime minister, only 3 per cent of members of Parliament are women. In the United States, women make up only 5 per cent of the House of Representatives and only 2 per cent of the Senate.[35]

Appointments to ministerial or cabinet positions show the same trend: increasing participation rates but with numbers still far from equal. A further examination of international data shows that the few women who are present at cabinet tables tend to have ministerial responsibilities that are confined to the traditional women's domains: health, welfare, education, and consumer affairs.[36]

The pattern of higher female representation in legislative bodies below the national level is also consistent in the other countries examined. At the local or municipal level, the rate of women's involvement is usually

greater, especially in countries such as Australia, Canada, France, West Germany, and most of eastern Europe. Curiously, women in countries such as Norway, Finland, Sri Lanka, and Japan break the pattern and fare slightly worse at the local level.[37]

THE FUTURE: BECOMING FULL PARTNERS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

The evidence to date shows a definite pattern of ever-increasing numbers of women who have decided to enter the political process and who have done so successfully. Yet women's involvement in politics is far from being equal to that of men. Obstacles range from political party structures to societal attitudes to the lack of financial resources and support services.

A concerted approach to overcoming the barriers is under way. One of the major efforts is aimed at political parties, which maintain firm control over opportunities for achieving legislative office. They act as recruiters, seeking out and encouraging selected candidates to run for office. They also raise money for candidates and provide a training ground for prospective candidates "to learn the ropes".

Many women have chosen to work within existing party structures to bring about change. A number of recent challenges to the traditional recruitment biases of parties have been launched, and an increasing number of winnable ridings are being given to women candidates. In the 1984 election, for example, the Progressive Conservatives nominated two women to safe seats where they were practically assured of success and five women to seats where the party had a chance, while the Liberals offered at least seven safe seats to women, and seven seats where they had a chance of winning.[38]

Pressure from women within parties has resulted in priority being given to increasing female representation in party decision-making structures and party activities. Women are also devising formal and informal affirmative

action policies, which will no doubt bolster the number of women in party organizations and as electoral candidates.

Organizational changes within parties have also occurred. Each of the major parties has set up a special fund for women. The Progressive Conservatives have created the Ellen Fairclough Fund, in honour of the first female PC cabinet minister. This fund was first set up after the 1984 election to raise money to help women with their election expenses. The fund is used both by women running for office and by women already within the PC party structure. The aim of the Ellen Fairclough Fund is to teach the skills (such as communications) necessary to win elections and to advance within the party structure. The amount of money available from the fund varies according to individual need. Child-care costs and household expenses are taken into consideration where appropriate.

The Liberal Party established the Judy LaMarsh Fund in the spring of 1984. During that year's election, each female candidate received a lump sum of $500 to $600; in subsequent elections, the sum may vary, depending on the amount of money collected through donations and fundraising. Each candidate is free to spend the money as she sees fit.

In the New Democratic Party, the Agnes McPhail Fund pays money to a riding association and not specifically to the female candidate. In the 1984 election, each candidate received approximately $500. Child-care expenses are now treated as part of campaign expenses, thereby allowing a candidate to receive a 50 per cent rebate on her expenditures. The NDP also have campaign workshops and regional and provincial schools to introduce women to and to help demystify the campaign process.

The emergence and growth of organizations that encourage women to become involved in the political process is another positive sign. Canadian Women for Political Representation is one such organization. The work of community associations should also be mentioned, because these voluntary groups often provide an environment in which women are encouraged to develop the skills and confidence necessary to run for public office.[39]

The 1984 campaign in Canada revealed a small but significant shift in the way the major parties approached the question of women in politics.[40] When the leaders of the three parties agreed to participate in a televised debate on issues of concern to women, each party was trying to make special appeals to women voters. It was the first time in a western democracy that an electoral debate among major party leaders focussed solely on these issues. It is difficult to predict whether this small shift indicates the dawning of a new era. But there can be little question that the parties have set a precedent that they will be hard-pressed to ignore in future campaigns. The gender gap may indeed become a reality.

Despite the gains women have made in political participation, substantial barriers remain. One of the most serious continues to be women's financial inequality. Running for elected office is a difficult decision to make, in a world where women still earn 64.9 cents for each dollar paid to men, where there is no recognition of the work women do in the home, and where there are no supportive financial networks for women.

Despite some obstacles, the indisputable fact remains: women are running for office and are being elected. This suggests that the barriers faced by women are not as insurmountable as they first appear. Conventional ideas may delay political candidacy and put women at a disadvantage in their struggle to build successful political careers, but the barriers do not prevent all women from becoming politically active.

The key to women obtaining full equality in the legal, economic, and social spheres will be their increasing participation in the political process at all levels — federal, provincial, and municipal. Nothing less than full partnership with men in politics will be accepted. Agnes Macphail, the first woman in the House of Commons put it succinctly: "I do not want to be the angel of any home; I want for myself what I want for other women, absolute equality."

NOTES

1. Canadian Women for Political Representation, "Draft proposal for a national conference on 'Women in Politics'", March 1987, p. 1.

2. Marilyn Domagalski, "The Role of Canadian Women in Federal and Provincial Politics: An Analysis", in *Canadian Legislatures: The 1986 Comparative Study*, ed. R.J. Fleming (Toronto: Holt Rinehart Press, 1987), p. 41.

3. Recent statistics on the situation in Europe were provided by Brigit Ask, a cabinet minister in the Norwegian government, during her visit to Ottawa in April 1987.

4. Library of Parliament, Information and Reference Branch, "Women Presently Sitting in Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures", compiled by Denise Ledoux, December 1985, pp. 1-5.

5. M. Janine Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1985), p. 4.

6. Canadian Women for Political Representation, "Draft proposal for a national conference on 'Women in Politics'", p. 2.

7. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 4.

8. Library of Parliament, Information and Reference Branch, "Women Presently Sitting in Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures", pp. 1-5.

9. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 124.

10. Linda Goyette, "'Big federal win' a model step into power circle", *Women and the Vote*, special supplement to the *Edmonton Journal*, April 20, 1986, p. E5.

11. Domagalski, "The Role of Canadian Women in Federal and Provincial Politics", p. 41.

12. Margaret Stacey and Marion Price, *Women, Power and Politics* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1981), p. 181.

13. This is well documented in the literature. For example, see: Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 82; Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 156; and M. Janine Brodie and Jill McCalla Vickers, "Canadian Women in Politics: An Overview", Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) Papers No. 2 (1982), p. 37.

14. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 103.

15. Stevie Cameron, "Hustings beckon, but vault is closed", *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], September 17, 1986.

16. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 108.

17. Domagalski, "The Role of Canadian Women in Federal and Provincial Politics", p. 40.

18. M. Janine Brodie, "The Recruitment of Canadian Women Provincial Legislators, 1950-1975, Part I", *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2 (spring 1977), p. 9.

19. See, for example: Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

20. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 107.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

24. Brodie, "The Recruitment of Canadian Women Provincial Legislators, 1950-1975", p. 9.

25. Statistics from the *Canada Year Book*, 1980 and 1984, and the *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1987.

26. Linda Goyette, "Political grass greener at home", in *Women and the Vote*, special supplement to *Edmonton Journal*, p. E8.

27. *Canada Year Book*, 1980 and 1984.

28. *Ibid.*

29. For two discussions, see: Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines*, pp. 70-74 and Jill McCalla Vickers, "Where are the Women in Canadian Politics?", *Atlantis*, vol. 3, no. 2 (spring 1978), pp. 40-51.

30. Goyette, "Political grass greener at home", p. E8.

31. Domagalski, "The Role of Canadian Women in Federal and Provincial Politics", p. 41.

32. Stacey and Price, *Women, Power and Politics*, pp. 143-144.

33. Conversation with Brigit Ast, Norwegian Cabinet Minister, April 1987, and with the Norwegian Embassy, Ottawa.

34. Commission of the European Communities, "Women in the European Parliament", Supplement No. 4 to *Women of Europe*, Luxembourg, April 30, 1980, p. 7.

35. Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 76, note 2.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

38. Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada*, p. 125.

39. For guides to getting involved, see: New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women, "Being There: Everywoman's Guide to Political Action", August 1986; "Fédération des femmes du Québec, "Femmes et pouvoirs politiques: une greffe impossible?", *Petite Presse*, May 1-2-3, 1987; Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues, "Municipal Politics: What's In It For You?", Toronto, no date; Suzanne Zwarun, "Getting Political — How to Run for City Hall", *Chatelaine*, vol. 58, no. 7 (July 1985); and Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, "Not How Many, But How Few" (Ottawa: 1980).

40. Penney Kome, *Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1985), pp. 139-151.

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