



BALLOT BOX BARRIERS

**An action plan for engaging more women in
the municipal democratic process**

Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Task Force on Women in Municipal Government

Ballot Box Barriers: An action plan for engaging more women in the municipal democratic process

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Association of Manitoba Municipalities
1910 Saskatchewan Avenue W.
Portage la Prairie, Manitoba
Canada, R1N 0P1
Telephone: (204) 857-8666
Fax: (204) 856-2370
Email: amm@amm.mb.ca
AMM Web Site: www.amm.mb.ca

Task Force members:

Shirley Kalyniuk, Urban Vice-President
Chair

Alice Bourgouin, Interlake Rural Director

Russ Wyatt, City of Winnipeg Director

Research and Writing: Tyler MacAfee, Director of Policy & Communications

Design: Lynne Bereza, Communications Coordinator

Additional Support: Erika Rempel, Administrative Assistant, Policy & Communications

June, 2010

The Task Force would like to thank the membership of the AMM for giving the organization the mandate to study this issue and develop this report.

A special thank you as well to the Rural Municipality of Argyle for bringing forward the resolution that set the wheels in motion at the 2009 AMM Annual Convention.

Finally the Task Force would like to thank all the great women and men, past, present and future, who have stood for election and offered up their time and energy to make our province great. You have brought great pride to municipal government in our province. Thank you.

Pictured on cover, clockwise from top right:

<http://www.bigstockphoto.com/image-563374/stock-photo-real-women-1>
Councillors Heather Botelho and Louise Lawrie, Town of Churchill, Manitoba
Rwanda's Parliament - Credit: Stephanie McCrummen / TWP Kigali, Rwanda
Jeanette Sabourin and Kelly Johnston, Town of Emerson, Manitoba

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Convention Resolution # 4
Women in Municipal Government
Department: AMM

*Therefore Be It Resolved That
the AMM strike a steering committee to
identify barriers to women's participation
in municipal government and make
recommendations at the next AMM
Convention on how more women could be
engaged in decision making.*



To: AMM Board of Directors

As Chair of the AMM Task Force on Women in Municipal Government, it is my pleasure to present to you our report – *Ballot Box Barriers: An action plan for engaging more women in the municipal democratic process*.

At the AMM Annual Convention in 2009 the membership passed a resolution calling on the AMM to “strike a steering committee to identify barriers to women’s participation in municipal government and make recommendations at the next AMM Convention on how more women could be engaged in decision making”. The AMM Board of Directors appointed a three-member Task Force to explore this issue in depth and generate a report for the membership. The decision was made to share this report with the membership at the 2010 June District Meetings in order to have the findings available prior to the 2010 municipal election in October.

The AMM Board of Directors appointed this Task Force consisting of myself (AMM Vice President Shirley Kalyniuk, Mayor of the Town of Rosserburn), AMM Interlake Rural Director Alice Bourgouin, Reeve of the RM of Rosser, and AMM Director Russ Wyatt, Councillor of the City of Winnipeg.

The Task Force agreed that while the resolution asked for the identification of barriers, the mandate should be expanded to include possible solutions and an action plan to carry this issue forward over the next four years beyond the report stage.

As Chair of our Task Force I respectfully submit to you our report.

Shirley Kalyniuk
Chair

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.”

Aristotle

Ballot Box Barriers is not intended to be a critique of the last 100 years of municipal government in Manitoba, nor is it an attempt to replace any elected municipal official or disparage the amazing work municipal officials have done and continue to do every day in this province and across Canada. This report aims to do the very opposite by exploring how to get more people interested and engaged in municipal government to build better councils and better communities.

Right now in Canada women account for only 22 per cent of Parliament, 22 per cent of provincial legislatures (and only 25 per cent of provincial cabinets), and 23 per cent of municipal councils. While in Manitoba we fair a little better at the provincial and federal levels with women accounting for 5 of the current 13 Members of Parliament (38 per cent), and 18 of 57 Members of the Provincial Legislature (32 per cent), we remain far lower municipally. In Manitoba only 15 per cent of elected officials are women, and only 7 per cent of heads of council are women.

While women are clearly not equally represented at all levels of government, the problem seems to be more profound at the municipal level. So the ultimate question is what can be done about it?

Ballot Box Barriers is an attempt to lay the groundwork and offer options for councils to identify barriers and possible solutions to bring more women into municipal government. The report begins by laying a foundation by exploring the role of women in government in Canada, both historically and today, as well as the role of women in government around the world. The report then takes a cross-Canada look at what has been done in each province on the issue of promoting women in government. The report also offers up a more in-depth

review of the amazing work done by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in promoting women in municipal government across Canada.

The report then turns its attention to Manitoba with a recap of the excellent past initiatives done by various groups. This is followed by a review of the questionnaire done of the current elected municipal officials in Manitoba to get their firsthand thoughts and insights into this issue.

The focus of *Ballot Box Barriers* then shifts to synthesizing the research and offering solutions. Twelve major barriers are identified and outlined in detail, each based on the work highlighted in the previous section. This is followed by a presentation of possible solutions to overcome the barriers identified. These possible solutions should be viewed as just that – possible solutions. Municipal government has a long and proud history of adapting ideas to fit their unique situations and these should certainly be treated no differently.

The report concludes with a 3-point action plan to ensure the barriers, solutions and great work recapped in the report is carried forward. The report recommends a 4-year plan led by the AMM be implemented to raise awareness of municipal government and bring more women into the process before the 2014 municipal election. The plan also calls for the AMM to provide support for existing elected officials, women or men, interested in the issue. The plan further recommends AMM keep this issue front and centre throughout the implementation of the 4-year plan.

Ballot Box Barriers is our attempt to bring positive proactive solutions to the discussion of increasing women's participation in municipal politics. Ultimately the decision to act rests with you.



THE LANDSCAPE

BALLOT BOX BARRIERS

How to get more people interested in elections, government and politics has become an increasingly important topic. Voter turnout in the 2008 federal election was the lowest ever recorded in Canada.¹ In Manitoba only 57 per cent of registered voters turned out for the 2007 provincial election, which was actually an improvement on the 2003 election where only 54 per cent voted. Municipal elections have typically seen lower voter turnout as well. The decline of democratic participation has been debated in great detail, however we continue to see a steady decline in participation and interest. One naturally has to question whether those elected can truly claim to represent the whole community when only a much smaller portion of the population is participating in the selection process. In a healthy democratic society everyone should be actively engaged, however when staggering numbers of eligible voters remain uninterested we have a democratic deficit.

An obvious solution to this problem is to identify groups within society who are underrepresented in the process and encourage their participation. This is exactly what this report aims to do. By exploring the barriers that are keeping women out of elected municipal office, we can offer solutions to ultimately increase their participation and eliminate the democratic deficit.

Voter Turnout in Canadian General Elections	
1988	75.3%
1993	69.4%
1997	67%
2000	61.2%
2004	60%
2006	64.7%
2008	58.8%
Manitoba	
1995	69.2
1999	68.1
2003	54.2
2007	56.8
Source: www.elections.ca and www.electionsmanitoba.ca	

Before getting into what this report hopes to accomplish, it is beneficial to state clearly what this report is not. This report is not in any way intended to be a critique of the role of men in municipal government, nor is it a criticism of what has happened for the last 100 years in Manitoba. This report also is not an attempt to replace any elected municipal official in Manitoba or disparage the amazing work

“Upholding the equality of rights is not an act of benevolence by those in power. It is needed for the progress of every society.”

United Nations Report on Human Development, 1995, p. 99

municipal officials have done and continue to do every day in this province and across Canada. In fact the goal of this report is really the very opposite. How do we get more people interested and engaged so we can build better councils and better communities?

Ballot Box Barriers

This report aims to provide some historical and global context to the issue of women’s participation in elected politics, citing examples from both Canada and the world. The report also explores the work done in other provinces and through organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to encourage women’s participation in elected politics. The report offers a Manitoba perspective with a recap of the work done in our province and a synthesis of the feedback the AMM received from its members on the topic. This culminates in an encapsulation of the barriers and solutions offered through the research.

Most importantly the report concludes with an action plan to carry this issue forward. All too often reports and studies are done that highlight a problem and leave it at that. This report goes a step further by not only providing possible solutions to overcoming barriers identified but proposing an action plan to move forward. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to help build strong inclusive councils and healthy, vibrant, democratic communities.

But why does this matter?

Before setting the context it is important to first ask the ultimate question of why does this matter? To be honest this question itself would be enough for a report as there is a long list of reasons why democracy is better when all segments of society participate. The United Nations has designated 30 per cent as the threshold of women in government needed for women's views to be properly represented. Numerous other works have explored the merits of having women involved in the democratic process. While there is some evidence that women are more actively engaged in social movements and other community organizations like daycare or school boards, the fact remains that while community groups can and should influence the municipal agenda, ultimately the decision-making power rests with municipal councils. Therefore there is little doubt that excluding women from the democratic process undermines the very foundation of democracy, or as academic Sylvia Bashevkin states, "From the perspective of democratic representation, women's presence as public actors confirms, while their absence weakens, the legitimacy of basic democratic principles."²

As well, municipal government has become a breeding ground in many ways for further careers in public service. Of the current 57 Members of the Manitoba Legislature, 13 have some local level experience and 6 have direct municipal experience, including Premier Greg Selinger who served as a councillor for the City of Winnipeg and Finance Minister Rosann Wowchuk who was a councillor and deputy reeve for the Local Government District of Mountain. Of the women MLAs only 3 have elected local level experience, with Minister Wowchuk the only one with a municipal background. Federally, only 51 of the women elected to the House of Commons throughout history have some local level experience (compared to 1,318



Finance Minister Rosann Wowchuk was a councillor and deputy reeve for the Local Government District of Mountain, and is the only Manitoba female MLA with an elected municipal background.

men), including current Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq, Manitoba MP Anita Neville and Canada's first female Prime Minister Kim Campbell.³ If municipal government is one of the gateways to provincial and federal politics as has often been suggested, all levels of government should have an interest in promoting more women at the municipal level.

Because of the importance of the work municipalities do and the very tenets of democracy, there is little doubt there is a need to have women participating in municipal government. The question remains what is stopping them and what can be done to overcome these barriers. Before this analysis can be done it is important to put this issue into both a historical and global context.

“Women’s presence as public actors confirms, while their absence weakens, the legitimacy of basic democratic principles.”

Sylvia Bashevkin

Democratic Deficit

One of the themes of this report is that the limited involvement of women in all levels of government has created a democratic deficit. But what do we mean by democratic deficit?

A municipal council, or any democratic governing body for that matter, should reflect the larger community it is mandated to represent. However when a large segment of that community is not engaged in the process we do not have a healthy system.

By definition a deficit is when we are short of what is required, so if we believe the democratic process should involve everyone then a democratic deficit exists when there is a segment of the community who is not engaged.

This is the case right now where women are underrepresented in all levels of our political system.

def•i•cit [def-uh-sit]

- 1. a lack or shortage; deficiency.*
- 2. a disadvantage, impairment, or handicap.*
- 3. a loss, as in the operation of a business.*

THE LANDSCAPE

Manitoba holds a special place when it comes to women's political rights in Canada as the province was the first to give women the right to vote in provincial elections in January 1916. This right was a result of sweeping changes brought in by the new Tobias Norris Liberal government which won the 1915 election after the collapse of the Rodmond Roblin Conservative government due to corruption stemming from the construction of the Manitoba Legislative Building. The impetus for this change was in part the result of the work of Nellie McClung and the Political Equality League, a group of mostly middle-class Anglo-Saxon women who had lobbied the Roblin government to extend voting rights to women. Roblin felt strongly that such action would destroy traditional family life and was adamantly opposed.⁴ Clearly in his view politics was no place for a woman.

And this view was certainly not Roblin's alone, as both men and women feared women would abandon traditional life and rush to elected politics. These fears proved to be unfounded. Edith MacTavish Rogers became the first woman elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly in 1920 as a member for the Winnipeg riding. However, it was not until she left in 1932 that Manitoba's second woman, Salome Halldorson, was elected in 1936. The role of women in provincial politics was very much a work in progress.

While it was not until 1916 that women had the right to vote provincially, and 1920 before most women had the right federally, Manitoba women had the right to vote municipally in 1887, provided they were landowners in the municipality, the same requirement as men. Women however were not given the right to hold municipal office until 1917, a year after the right was achieved provincially.

The right to vote municipally was not without its controversy however and was rescinded briefly in 1906 by the Roblin government due to the women effectively bringing about social change. That year the Town of Carman exercised its municipal right to ban liquor inside its boundaries, and women were credited with tipping the referendum vote in favour of a dry community. The Roblin government quickly faced pressure from liquor interests to rescind women's right to vote municipally in order to ensure this would not become common across the province. The decision to rescind this right was met with intense protest and opposition, and it was effective to the point that the Roblin government restored women's municipal voting rights the next session, claiming it was an unintentional error.⁵

TIMELINE OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

1887 – Women granted the right to vote municipally in Manitoba, however they cannot hold office until 1917.

1916 – Women granted the right to vote provincially in Manitoba, the first province to do so in Canada.

1919 – Most women over the age of 21 granted the right to vote in federal elections.

1920 – Edith MacTavish Rogers becomes the first woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature.

1922 - Mary McIlvride becomes the first female delegate at the Union of Manitoba Municipalities convention.

1931 – Agnes Macphail becomes the first woman elected to the House of Commons.

1936 - Salome Halldorson becomes the second woman to serve in the Manitoba Legislature.

1940 – Women granted the right to vote in Quebec, the last province to grant this right in Canada.

1948 – Mrs. Mabel E. Allen becomes the first municipal head of council in Manitoba with her election in the RM of Eriksdale.

1957 – Ellen Fairclough becomes Canada's first female cabinet minister.

1963 – Margaret Konantz, daughter of Edith Rogers, becomes the first Manitoba woman elected to the House of Commons.

1967 – Royal Commission on the Status of Women established by Prime Minister Lester Pearson. Report released in 1970.

1988 – Sharon Carstairs becomes the Provincial Leader of the Official Opposition in Manitoba, the first woman to hold this position in Canada.

1989 – Audrey McLaughlin becomes first woman elected leader of a major federal political party.

1991 – Rita Johnson becomes Canada's first woman premier after winning the leadership of the governing BC Social Credit Party.

1993 – Catharine Callbeck of PEI becomes Canada's first woman elected premier in January.

1993 – Kim Campbell becomes Canada's first woman prime minister after winning the leadership of the governing Conservative Party in June.

2006 – Quebec appoints 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women to its cabinet, the first such distribution in Canada.



Political Equality League, Edith Rogers. Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Compiled from <http://citizenshift.org/node/6931>, <http://www.equalvoice.ca/pdf/milestones.pdf>, "Inspiring Women: Making a difference in Manitoba" Government of Manitoba and "With One Voice: A History of Municipal Governance in Manitoba" by Gordon Goldsborough



WHERE
OTHERS
HAVE GONE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AROUND THE WORLD

A global analysis of women's democratic rights and participation is far beyond the mandate of this report, however a quick snapshot is valuable to provide context for a review of where we stand in Canada and Manitoba. Obviously it is an understatement to say women's participation in government varies greatly around the globe, as in some cases women have become full participants in the democratic process while in other countries women continue to be forced to the margins.

For example, women were excluded from running for office or voting in the 2005 municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, the first in that country since the 1960s. While the new legislation did not ban women's participation, the decision was made to keep women out of the process. While at the time there was hope that the right to vote would be extended to women in the 2009 elections, these elections have been postponed for at least a couple of years.⁶

At the other end of the spectrum is Rwanda, a country that should forever be ingrained on the global conscious as a result of the 1994 genocide that saw over 800,000 people killed in 100 days of violence. With a population of over 70 per cent women immediately following the genocide, ambitious policies were implemented to help women both economically and politically, including a new constitution in 2003 which requires at least 30 per cent of all parliamentary and cabinet seats to go to women. In the 2008 elections, women won 56 per cent of the seats, making Rwanda the world's first parliament where women hold a majority of seats.⁷

While Rwanda leads the way globally with the highest percentage of elected women in its national government, other countries are not far off. Sweden has 46 per cent women in its national Parliament, South Africa has 44 per cent, Cuba has 43 per cent and Iceland has 42 per cent to round out the top five.⁸

While in these countries women have become actively engaged in electoral politics, the reality remains that only 24 countries meet or exceed the UN threshold of 30 per cent. Roughly one-fifth of these are Nordic countries which have taken on promotional initiatives to encourage women's participation, while another quarter are post-conflict countries that have gone through recent fundamental restructuring where this outcome is the result of a radical change rather than a gradual transition.⁹ Fifty one countries have less than 10 per cent women and 10 countries have zero.¹⁰

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CANADA

Since Edith MacTavish Rogers' election to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly in 1920 and Agnes Macphail's landmark election to Parliament in 1921, Canada has come a long way. We have seen a number of women elected nationally, provincially and municipally. We have seen women head municipal councils, provinces and territories, the first being BC's Rita Johnson in 1991, a one-time municipal leader herself, and even a woman lead the country when The Honourable Kim Campbell became the 19th Prime Minister of Canada on June 25, 1993.

However, despite these achievements women still account for only 22 per cent of Parliament, ranking Canada 49th internationally.¹¹ While Canada made significant gains following 1920, these have appeared to stall. Sylvia Bashevkin, one of Canada's leading academics, notes that since the 1970s and 1980s women's involvement in politics has become stagnant. Women have enrolled in universities and are pursuing graduate degrees and law school at a greater rate, yet we are not seeing the growth of women in government.¹²

Parliament broke the 20 per cent threshold in 1997 with 20.6 per cent, yet we only managed to climb to 22.1 per cent in 2008.¹³ In 1997 Canada ranked 21st on the Inter-Parliamentary Union rankings, but fell to 38th in 2005¹⁴ and now sits in 49th place.

Rwanda's Parliament is the first in the world where women hold a majority--57 per cent. Credit: Stephanie McCrummen / TWP Kigali, Rwanda.



United Nations 30 Per Cent Threshold

30 per cent has often been cited as the threshold necessary to ensure women’s views are included in the decision-making process. This 30 per cent threshold is also the basis for FCM’s “Getting to 30% by 2026” campaign. But where does this number come from?

The 30 per cent threshold comes from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 1990 report which recommended a critical 30 per cent participation threshold be regarded as the minimum for decision-making positions.

This position is further advanced in the 1995 UN Human Development Report which includes the 30 per cent threshold as part of its 5-point strategy to accelerate the pace of change. The central message of the report is “human development must be engendered” and clarifies that if “development is meant to widen opportunities for all people, then continuing exclusion of women from many opportunities of life totally warps the process” (p.iii).

It should be noted that the 30 per cent threshold is a minimum target and not the end goal.

Source: 1995 United Nations Human Development Report

This trend has held at the provincial level as well, where women represent only 22 per cent of provincial legislatures¹⁵ with Manitoba leading the way at over 32 per cent.¹⁵ The last female provincial premier was PEI’s Catherine Callbeck from 1993 to 1996, the first women to lead a provincial political party to victory in a general election. Pat Duncan became the second woman to lead a political party to victory with her party’s win in the 2000 Yukon election. While all three territories have had female leaders, BC and PEI remain the only provinces in Canada to have had women premiers. And no territory or province has had more than one in their history.

Interestingly you would expect this trend to change at the cabinet level where positions are appointed. Quebec had achieved parity in 2006 when 9 of the 18 posts were held by women, however with a recent expansion of cabinet, women now hold only 12 of the 28 positions. Currently in Manitoba 8 of the 19 posts are held by women, including Rosann Wowchuk who is both Deputy Premier and Manitoba’s first woman Finance Minister. However, overall women’s participation at the cabinet level is not much higher than their electoral success, with women comprising 25 per cent of cabinet positions in 2007. As well, there was no real increase over the previous 10 years as women accounted for 23.1 per cent of cabinet posts in 1997.¹⁶

Unfortunately the same degree of data is not available at the municipal level, however there is no reason to believe this trend is false. Nationally in 2004 just over 20 per cent of elected municipal officials were women. In 2009 this number had increased only slightly to 23 per cent. This has lead FCM to the conclusion that there is an “electoral glass ceiling” for women in Canada as the overall number appears to have stalled.¹⁷

A review of the list of elected municipal officials in Manitoba for each election cycle seems to show the same trend. In 2000, of the 1192 elected municipal officials only 124 were women, just over 10 per cent. And only 5 per cent of the heads of council were women, just 10 in all of Manitoba’s then 200 municipalities. In 2003, just over 11 per cent of elected municipal officials were women, with only 5 per cent being heads of council. We did see an increase after the 2006 election as a

Elected Municipal Officials (last three election cycles)					
	# of elected officials	# of women heads of council	# of women councillors	total # of elected officials	%
2000 (1998-2002 election cycle)	1,192	10	114	124	10.4
2003 (2002-2006 election cycle)	1,180	10	125	135	11.4
2009 (2006-2010 election cycle)	1,182	14	143	157	13.2

review of the 2009 municipal directory shows 13 per cent of elected municipal officials were women, and 7 per cent were heads of councils. Clearly at the municipal level in Manitoba we remain well behind the national average.

With the volumes of material written on the history of women in government, both nationally and internationally, there is overwhelming evidence that women are underrepresented in the electoral process. While we have certainly come a long way from the historic achievements of 1916 and 1920, there is evidence to suggest the evolution has appeared to stagnate at all three levels of government.

So if we know the importance of having women involved and we know that women are underrepresented in the democratic process, the obvious question is what is standing in the way?

WHERE OTHERS HAVE GONE

The AMM is certainly not the first to identify the lack of women in elected politics as an issue, and many great minds have spent considerable time analyzing the barriers and obstacles impeding women's participation in elected politics. There has been a sustained national discourse on the need to elect more women to Parliament as well. Many of these discussions and initiatives have been translated to the provincial level, where efforts to increase women's participation in provincial politics are underway. As well, municipal elections have been seen as an excellent avenue to increase women's participation and several municipal associations have undertaken terrific work in this area, following the lead of their national organization. Obviously not every initiative can be captured but here is an overview of some of the excellent work being done across Canada.

Federally

While the issue of most women having the right to participate fully in democracy was legally resolved federally in 1920, women's participation was far from equal. In 1967 Prime Minister Lester Pearson called for the creation of a Royal Commission to examine the status of women in Canada and recommend steps to ensure opportunities for both men and women. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women's final report was released in 1970 and included 167 recommendations on all areas affecting Canadians' lives. The report raised awareness of the situation of women in Canada at the time and marked a new age of thinking on their role in society.

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One of the more recent reviews of this issue is a report from the Library of Parliament which questions why women are underrepresented in Parliament and the effects of the electoral system on women's representation, concluding with a review of how to make Parliament a women-friendly environment. The report finds that time is often an overwhelming barrier for many women, as they continue to have a disproportionate share of household and family responsibilities, as well as lower incomes which results in less financial independence. The report also notes that women often feel less qualified than men, even when they have the same qualifications, creating another reason to remain out of the process. The lack of a high public profile for women, often the result of holding lower level jobs, and the perceived adversarial nature of politics were also identified as barriers.

The report also found there were systemic barriers to women's participation, as the first-past-the-post system used in Canada tends to have fewer women elected, as opposed to the proportional representation system used in many European countries. The report notes that the challenge tends to be getting women on the ballot, as their success rate (once a candidate) is only slightly less than men. The report notes that in the 2006 federal election, 17 per cent of women candidates were successful while 19 per cent of men were.¹⁸

Provincially

Newfoundland

Newfoundland has done municipal election awareness campaigns for a number of elections and more recently have included a focus on women. Its 2005 campaign

included women in municipal government information sessions across the province. Seminars were held which enabled attendees to learn from other women's experiences, including current and former members of council. These sessions also provided information on what needed to be done to get elected in the 2005 election. The sessions, entitled "Women in Municipal Government – Become a Leader", were jointly sponsored by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and several regional Status of Women councils.

In 2009 Newfoundland launched its *Make your Mark NL* campaign which was "an interactive, innovative marketing campaign to encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to consider a run at municipal politics".¹⁹ The campaign's aim to encourage greater participation in the upcoming September election was deemed necessary because a 2007 study found up to 60 per cent of elected municipal officials were either not running or unsure about running again in 2009.

The campaign used both traditional and new social media tools like Facebook and YouTube to attract people and raise awareness. As well, the province worked with regional Status of Women councils to support a series of lunch-and-learn sessions in their communities. The campaign was supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador municipal association as well as the administrator association and other stakeholder groups.

Following the 2009 election Newfoundland did an analysis of the campaign comparing the results of the 2005 and 2009 elections to evaluate its effectiveness. What was discovered was an increase in both the number of female candidates and those elected, with 9 per cent more female candidates and 20 per cent more women elected.²⁰

New Brunswick

The need for women in municipal government was also front and centre in the last municipal election in New Brunswick where the Advisory Council on the Status of Women held lunch-and-learn sessions entitled "Running for City Hall 101". Resources were provided electronically, including a top ten list of things you can do to get more women in government. Their work seemed to pay off as more women ran in the 2008 election than in 2004.²¹

Nova Scotia

In 2004 the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities resolved to research how to remove barriers that hinder women's

involvement in local government decision-making. The result was *Untapped Resources: Women and Municipal Government in Nova Scotia*, an outstanding report on how to get more women engaged in municipal government. The goals of the project were to identify the opportunities to better involve women both as citizens and as politicians in municipal government, recommend measures to involve women in all their diversity in consultation and engagement activities of municipal government, and recommend measures for recruiting and retaining women in electoral politics.

Untapped Resources moves from the fundamental question of why we need more women in municipal decision-making through to the opportunities available to engage women in the process. By reviewing previous work, surveying municipalities and conducting focus groups, the report settled on 7 recommendations in response to a number of barriers. The report found that the reasons women do not run for municipal government range from a lack of awareness and appreciation of the work of municipal government, socio-economic factors like less financial independence and family commitments, lack of a community profile, greater public scrutiny and the very nature of politics itself.²²

The report explored what gets women to run, with one of the top reasons being they need to be asked, just the same as men. The availability of campaign financing and a smaller constituency were also identified as increasing the appeal of running for women. Women who held the belief they could make a meaningful difference in their community were also more likely to run as were those who see municipal government as a way to make a very real and immediate impact on the community. The non-partisan nature of municipal politics was also appealing to women.²³

The 7 recommendations of the final report were in response to these barriers. Communication was a central theme with the need for a public awareness campaign identified. Workshops for existing elected officials on diversity, gender analysis and affirmative action were recommended, as was providing administrators with training on why and how to apply a gender lens in policy development. The development of an action plan with other stakeholders was suggested, as was strengthening supports for elected officials, and greater support for dealing with workplace conflict. A final recommendation was to request the Government of Nova Scotia to "collect, tabulate, and disseminate publicly voter turnout in municipal elections by age and gender".²⁴

PEI

While there are only 75 incorporated municipalities in Prince Edward Island, work has been done to encourage more women's participation in elected politics. Leading the way is the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. Created in 2004, the non-partisan group's aim is to develop strategies to get more women to run for elected office. One of the Coalition's first projects was to study election data and international best practices for electing women. A number of conclusions resulting from the research were presented to the political parties, with some being implemented. The Coalition also did a gender analysis of the 2006 municipal elections and found that 25.3 per cent of the candidates were women with 30 per cent of the seats going to women, which was actually slightly down from 2003.²⁵

In February, 2010 PEI received federal funding for a couple of projects through the Women's Community Fund of Status of Women Canada. The bulk of the funding was directed to the PEI Coalition for Women in Government for its project *Supporting Democratic Participation of Prince Edward Island's Women and Girls*. The "36-month project takes a skills-building approach to provide 414 women and girls from across PEI with invaluable knowledge on work-life balance and the kind of support they'll need to run for elected office".²⁶ These workshops have already begun and will be continuing until 2013.

Quebec

Quebec has gone from being the last province in Canada to extend voting rights in provincial elections to women in 1940 to the first in Canada to have 50 per cent in its provincial cabinet. A great deal of work has been done at the municipal level as well to encourage women's participation. In 2004 Quebec's municipal association Union des Municipalités du Québec (UMQ) created a Women and Local Governance committee with the mandate to increase the number of women running and elected in municipal elections. Regional workshops were held to offer support to women in advance of the November 2009 municipal elections. Their efforts bore fruit as the 2009 elections saw the number of women elected rise to over 27 per cent, up from 25 per cent in the previous election, and jump to 16 per cent as heads of council, up from 13 per cent.²⁷

Quebec has also seen a number of regional groups form to support women in their districts. One example is RÉMME, the Regional Network of Women Mayors and Councillors for Montérégie Est in Quebec. This group provides a number of services to its members including legal and self-help guides, and holds

Australia's Year of Women in Local Government

While there have been a number of initiatives done to promote women in local government, Australia took it a step further by proclaiming 2010 the Year of Women in Local Government.

The focus of the initiative will be "to raise awareness of the opportunities for, benefits of, and the need for increasing the participation of women in leadership and management roles within local government".

Events will be held throughout 2010 offering women insight into the political process and support to advance their objectives.

An ambassador program has also been created where selected women and men will act as champions and role models for the advancement of women in local government.

Source: <http://lgwomen2010.org.au/>



2010 YEAR OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Equal Voice

With a number of regional chapters stretching from BC to Newfoundland, Equal Voice is a non-profit organization that aims “to promote the election of more women to all levels of Government and ultimately, change the face of Canadian politics”.

Equal Voice is a group of women and men committed to the belief that women belong in the ranks of government, as democracy should be a partnership between men and women.

While the founding chapter of Equal Voice was established in Toronto in 2001, there are now nine chapters in six provinces, as well as a youth chapter.

Equal Voice operates under the guidance of a national board of directors and seeks input from an advisory board that reads like a ‘who’s who’ of women in Canadian politics, including former Prime Minister Kim Campbell and Manitoba’s own Anita Neville.

workshops and training seminars as well as an annual conference. RÉMMÉ can boast of its success, as its region has a higher percentage of women mayors than the rest of the province and has seen the number of men-only councils drop by 50 per cent since 2003.

Ontario

It is only fitting that Canada’s most populated province would be home to a number of initiatives to promote women in municipal government. As the capital of Ontario and Canada’s most populated city, Toronto has done a lot of work in promoting women in government. Toronto is home to the founding chapter of Equal Voice (see sidebar), which also has a Toronto municipal chapter. These chapters hold events and networking opportunities to help promote the need to increase the number of women in government.

Toronto has also developed the Toronto Regional Champion Campaign which just launched its second campaign in 2009. The campaign’s aim is to increase women’s participation in municipal government. In an effort “to address the democratic deficit, Toronto’s women councilors will train 16 young women from diverse communities over a period of eight months on the job of a municipal councillor”.²⁸

The City of Ottawa has also become involved in promoting women’s issues at the municipal level and is a partner in the City for All Women Initiative, a partnership between women from diverse backgrounds, community organizations, academics and the city. The group’s aim is to strengthen the capacity of women and the city to work in partnership to create a more inclusive Ottawa. The group wears peach scarves when engaging city council as a way of showing that across diversity they share common concerns. In the fall of 2008 the group released a civic participation kit with the aim of providing information to women on how to become more engaged in municipal politics.²⁹

Saskatchewan

The City of Saskatoon has taken an active role by participating in FCM’s one-year national study aimed at strengthening women’s involvement in municipal politics. Saskatoon had specific interest in including marginalized women, such as Aboriginal women, in the study. The report found that these marginalized groups are certainly interested in becoming involved in the process, however barriers such as inadequate resources, their own qualifications, knowledge of government processes and how to get involved stood in their way.³⁰ The Saskatchewan Urban Municipal Association (SUMA) also hosted a workshop in 2006 to promote women in municipal government.

Alberta

Alberta is home to two active chapters of Equal Voice, split along north/south lines. The Alberta Urban Municipal Association (AUMA) has also taken on this issue and created a sub-committee of the board. It is tasked with raising awareness of the need to increase the number of women in



municipal governance and strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process. The Committee's priorities for 2009 include increasing communication to members on issues and initiatives related to women in municipal politics. The Committee has developed a newsletter and holds sessions in conjunction with the AUMA annual conference.

With a name like "Peanut Butter, Pearls and Politics: Women in Leadership", you are sure to get attention, which is exactly what a group of elected women in Alberta were hoping for when they organized this conference in 2008. The goal was to get more women involved in leadership opportunities and because of the success of this initial conference another was planned for May, 2010.³¹

British Columbia

BC can proudly boast the Canadian Women Voters Congress, a non-partisan grassroots organization dedicated to encouraging Canadian women to become strong, effective voices at all levels of government. The Congress provides education and information to women and holds the longest running non-partisan Women's Campaign School in Canada. It has run every year since 1999. The Congress also holds workshops and other events to educate women about politics and leadership skills.³²

BC is also home to the Minerva Foundation for BC Women which runs the *Learning to Lead* program. This program provides young girls, emerging leaders and graduate students with the opportunity to be mentored by accomplished women in business, government and community roles. The program brings together 30 high school students, 30 graduate students, and 30 business and community leaders to interact and learn from one another through workshops and activities. The program's objective is to provide tools to all participants to achieve their personal, educational and career goals, as well as advance opportunities to pursue leadership roles in all facets of society. Since the program's inception in 2002 the program has seen over 1,000 participants.³³

Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut

In 2007 the Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories built a toolkit for the general territorial elections of that year. This toolkit was redistributed for the 2009 municipal elections as much of the information remained relevant. The toolkit includes a campaign starter kit, a list of expectations, key dates and other relevant information. This toolkit builds on the work of



A poster promoting the City of Ottawa's City for All Women Initiative.

the *Women's Voice in Leadership* project which began in 1997 with the aim of developing women leaders in the territory.³⁴

The Yukon Status of Women Council acts as an advocate for women in the Yukon and raises awareness of women's issues both locally and nationally. Over the last 30 years the group has been a strong lobbyist for political change through political activism, public awareness and education.³⁵

Nunavut holds a special place in Canada right now as it is home to Canada's only current female premier, Eva Aariak, who was also the lone female elected. Nunavut also boasts a woman as its lone MP, Leona Aglukkaq, who is Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for the North.

FCM Facebook Campaign

Designed as a place to meet, ask questions, get advice and share stories, FCM's Campaign for More Women in Municipal Government Facebook page has gained a lot of attention.

The initiative, which at the end of April 2010 had close to 1,600 "friends", is part of the "Getting to 30% by 2026" campaign and provides a wealth of information to anyone interested in the issue of women in municipal government. The page includes a list of regional champions, discussion forums and links to other valuable sites, as well as tips for using Facebook and other social media sites to get your message out.

The page, developed by InterChange Public Affairs for FCM, was launched June 7, 2009 at the FCM Annual Convention. It is the cornerstone of a larger social media strategy that includes a Twitter page and is exploring options like video to get its message out.

Source: "Women in municipal government campaign on Facebook, Twitter" InterChange Public Affairs, June 8, 2009 News Release. Available at <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/June2009/08/c4030.html>



Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Without a doubt the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is the national voice for municipalities and it stands to reason that it would be a leader in promoting women in municipal government across Canada. In 1999 FCM created the Canadian Women in Municipal Government Committee at the urging of both women and men engaged in FCM.

In June 2003 FCM launched a one-year research project to contribute to changing municipal practices and policies with the aim of better reflecting gender diversity. FCM's work built on the work of others like the United Nations and European Union but focused on change at the municipal level in Canada. For this project, entitled "Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision Making", FCM surveyed 152 member municipalities, interviewed 20 women organization leaders, held consultations and workshops, and did participatory research in six Canadian communities.

While many had speculated about women's involvement at the municipal level across Canada, FCM was one of the first to really examine this issue. Through this research FCM discovered that Canada is losing ground on women's participation in elected politics compared to other countries. FCM also found that women are underrepresented in most municipal processes. Not surprising FCM's research demonstrated that policies and practices promoting inclusive participation are not common in Canada.

FCM also found evidence of systemic barriers including evidence that women, especially those already marginalized, face more serious systemic barriers to participation than men. Perhaps most concerning, FCM discovered that many women are active in their communities but have given up on municipal government as the avenue for change.

FCM's research showed that women's organizations are a useful but untapped resource, and effective and inclusive consultation with women's groups lay the foundation for joint work later. Women also need more information about municipal governance and leadership and mentoring would be an effective way to enhance participation. The research also found that tools and resources were needed to increase women's participation. Further barriers included the lack of practical support such as childcare and transportation, a perceived lack of understanding of technical issues such as roads and wastewater, a lack of standing in the community and the timing of meetings.

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FCM's membership survey found that 86 per cent of councils surveyed did not have equal representation of elected women and men on council while 14 per cent had no women at all. Thirty-two per cent of councils had one woman and 40 per cent fell into the more than one women, less than 50 per cent category.

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While it is important to know what barriers women face, FCM also explored why women do participate in the process. FCM found that the quest for information and wanting to contribute with ideas and influence policy directions were among the top reasons why women become involved in the process and stand for election. Women also cited wanting to share information and expertise with their community, and wanting to take on a community leadership or role model position as reasons to participate.³⁷

The final report calls for three steps to occur next. The first is for a national strategy to increase women's participation in the municipal process. The second is an action plan that will focus on leadership, information and communication, inclusive politics and practices, and the development of partnerships. The final step is the development of an implementation plan for the national strategy.³⁸

In conjunction with the final report FCM also developed a companion resource kit. The kit is adaptable depending on the user, as it is useful in helping develop overall comprehensive strategies and if someone is looking for assistance in tackling a very specific issue. The kit is designed to help the user increase women's access to information about municipal government and services, as well as address barriers to participation and improve women's access to processes. The kit can also be helpful in

creating consultation processes that work for women and all citizens, as well as build partnerships between municipal government and women's groups.³⁹

Since the report and resource kit FCM has continued to push forward the women in municipal government agenda. In 2006 FCM released "Getting to 30% by 2026. The Goal: more women in municipal government". This report is the follow-up to the 2004 report and has several goals, including the need to get more women elected to local government, lay the foundation for community-based groups to bring about change, and develop and implement a National Strategic Action Plan to increase women's participation in municipal politics. The work includes both a mobilization tour led by FCM Past-President Ann Maclean and a series of workshops around the country, including one hosted by the Town of Virden.

The final report made a number of conclusions and recommendations for action. Among the conclusions was the need for greater advocacy, education and communication about the need for women in municipal government. As well, campaign schools were suggested, as was actively recruiting women to run for office. Making municipal government more accessible was suggested, as was ensuring equity through policies for board and committee appointments. Shorter terms for elected officials to reduce the time commitment, helping balance work and family commitments, reducing the financial cost of running, and greater employer support to allow employees to participate in the process were also recommended.

The need to highlight contributions women make to

Getting to 30%



by 2026

+ *The goal: more women in
municipal government*

FCM
Federation of Canadian Municipalities

municipal government and offer mentorship to women interested in participating, including young women, rounded out the recommendations.⁴⁰

In 2008 FCM publicly launched its Regional Champions Campaign at the Annual Convention as one of the ways to reach the 30 per cent goal. The aim of this campaign is to have a champion in every community in Canada, with the ultimate goal of having more women elected in municipal office. The champion's role is to recruit, organize, and provide information and support to women interested in running for municipal office. This is done by recruiting volunteers in the community to build a team.

Once 5 volunteers are found, the team will begin coordinating activities such as setting up campaign schools, organizing meetings and recruiting candidates to run. The champion is also tasked with recruiting champions in other communities. FCM has developed a toolkit to help both the regional champions and those looking to run in elections.⁴¹

In 2009, as a way of promoting the great work of women

in municipal government, FCM created the Ann Maclean Award for Outstanding Service by a Woman in Municipal Politics. This annual award is given to someone who has retired from elected politics, shown exemplary service to her community and constituents, and has mentored women already elected or wanting to run for municipal office.

Most recently FCM developed an election toolkit which was released in June, 2009. The toolkit is intended to give women interested in running for municipal government an overview of the job as well as tips and strategies for running a campaign. The toolkit is based on the experiences of municipal politicians across the country and includes an extensive list of additional resources that women can track down if they are interested. The toolkit also provides provincial resources and contact information.⁴²

The aim of FCM's Regional Champions Campaign is to have a champion in every community in Canada, with the ultimate goal of having more women elected in municipal office. The champion's role is to recruit, organize, and provide information and support to women interested in running for municipal office. This is done by recruiting volunteers in the community to build a team.

Chicken or the Egg?

So what do you do if the system is the problem? Research shows that the system of electing representatives can be as much of a challenge to getting women elected as anything else.

Evidence shows that countries with a proportional representation (PR) system (a system where you have a list of candidates to choose from with the total number of seats being assigned to the top candidates) have a higher number of women elected to office than those with the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system (the system we use federally in Canada to elect MPs where the winner takes the single seat).

The argument is since candidates do not have to win any single race, they are more likely to be elected to office in a PR system where they can be the second, third or even fourth most popular choice and still win office.

At the municipal level in Manitoba, municipalities have the option of holding elections for council through either an at-large system (similar to the PR system) or a ward system (similar to the FPTP system). When you compare the voting system in Manitoba to the number of women elected, you can see the numbers are interesting:

- 35 of the 97 ward systems (36 per cent) have at least 1 woman.
- 69 of the 100 at-large systems (69 per cent) have at least 1 woman.

While this would seem on the surface to prove the hypothesis that the electoral system poses a barrier to women getting elected, it should be noted that the use of wards or at-large slates also fall closely along urban/rural lines. Of the 97 ward systems used, 93 are rural municipalities while 78 of the 100 at-large systems are urban. In Manitoba 60 of the 81 urban municipalities, or 74 per cent, have at least one woman on council while only 44 of the 116 rural municipalities, or 38 per cent, have at least 1 woman on council.

So much like the age-old quandary of the chicken and the egg, the question in Manitoba is whether it is the ward system that is the barrier or whether you run in a rural or urban municipality that is the barrier.



Sylvia Bashevkin's books include, among others, "Women, Power, Politics: The Hidden Story of Canada's Unfinished Democracy".

Additional Research

The topic of increasing women's participation in the democratic process has been heavily studied at the academic level as well. There are literally thousands and thousands of works on the topic and it is obviously well beyond the scope of this report to provide any kind of comprehensive review of everything that is available. It is valuable however to take a brief look at what is being suggested in this area.

One of the leading academics on the topic of women in government is Sylvia Bashevkin, a University of Toronto professor and renowned scholar in the field of women and government. In her recent work "Women, Power, Politics: The Hidden Story of Canada's Unfinished Democracy", she takes a comprehensive look at the issue of women's participation in the democratic process and draws a number of conclusions. One of these conclusions is mandatory voting, which she believes would act as the catalyst to renew and reinvigorate participation in the democratic system. This would also give those elected a more robust mandate as all eligible voters would participate in the selection process.⁴³

Legislative quotas are also offered as a possible solution, which have had varying success in other countries. As previously discussed, many of the national governments with the highest rates of women participating have quota systems. While Canada has not seriously considered quotas, this does occur at the party level. The New

Democratic Party has done this nationally, and it is perhaps no coincidence that in 2006 they hit the 40 per cent threshold for women in caucus.⁴⁴ Arguments against quotas include the possibility of women being put into unwinnable ridings or against heavy favourites just to meet quotas, which may have the end result of providing fodder to the argument that women cannot be elected.

Quotas may also promote less qualified women, again providing fodder to the argument that women are not qualified to hold elected positions. However, if quotas can help get qualified women into the electoral process perhaps they should not be completely discounted.

The role of the media is explored in Bashevkin's work, with her suggesting how the media often portrays female candidates differently from male candidates. While it is difficult to do in a formal way, a review of this should be done as negative images of elected women certainly act as a disincentive to attract more women to the process. Balanced reporting would go a long way in encouraging women to participate in the process.⁴⁵

The issue of the electoral system is questioned by Bashevkin and the need for a change away from the traditional first-past-the-post system to proportional representation is cited. She also calls for a renewed push to encourage women to become involved in politics as well as a review of the intentions behind some of the anti-feminist groups that have emerged.⁴⁶

Often the media portrays female candidates differently from male candidates. Negative images of elected women certainly act as a disincentive to attract more women to the process. Balanced reporting would go a long way in encouraging women to participate in the process.



**MANITOBA -
RIGHT HERE
AT HOME**

MANITOBA – RIGHT HERE AT HOME

In Manitoba there has been work done to promote women's involvement in politics. Three conferences were held between 1986 and 1992 by Winnipeg Women, a joint project of the Junior League of Winnipeg and the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The aim of these sessions was to help women develop political skills. Winnipeg Women also published a helpful guide for women who were interested in gaining political influence through appointments to boards and commissions. The guide walks women through deciding whether they are ready, choosing their committee, assessing their qualifications, preparing their resume and the application process.⁴⁷

Intent on building on the conferences of the 1980s, Anita Neville, an attendee of the 1980s conferences, and other women from all three major Manitoba political parties, organized the See Jane Run Conference in September, 2002. The goal of the event was to “inspire women to consider making a difference by getting involved in politics at local, provincial and federal levels”.⁴⁸

Workshops were held throughout the day to share success stories and experiences with successful women, as well as workshops to learn the nuts and bolts of political organizing and campaigning. Topics such as designing a winning campaign, leadership skill development and young women in politics were on the agenda. Speakers ranged from



Provincial MLA and Minister responsible for women
Jennifer Howard.

Members of Parliament, provincial MLAs and municipal leaders. The session also brought in speakers who marked milestones for women in elected politics. Manitoba's own Sharon Carstairs, the first provincial official Leader of the Opposition in Canada, was a speaker, and Canada's only female premier at the time, Yukon Premier Pat Duncan, was the keynote speaker for the event.⁴⁹

Over 150 people attended the 2002 session, and due to this success another conference was discussed for 2004 as the expectation was this would not be a one-time thing. Work

Over 150 people attended the 2002 “See Jane Run” session, and due to this success another conference was discussed for 2004 as the expectation was this would not be a one-time thing. Work had begun for an event in 2004, however it was postponed due to an inability to secure funding commitments. The expectation was there would be another session, but this never took shape.

INSPIRING Women



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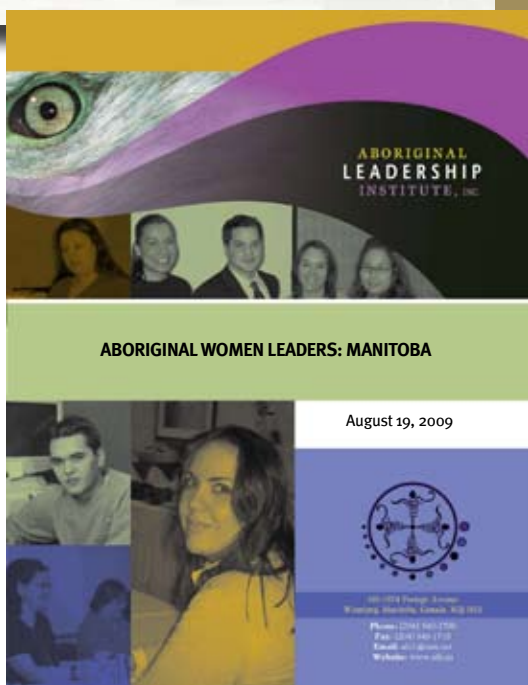
On November 5, 2005 the Town of Virden hosted a session to promote women in municipal government, sponsored by FCM as part of its "Getting to 30% by 2026" project. The session was promoted in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and open to both those currently on council and those interested in running for office. The day-long event included networking and learning opportunities and featured Karen Caldwell as the keynote speaker, then Reeve of the RM of Pipestone and youngest female ever to serve on the AMM Board of Directors.

The Aboriginal Leadership Institute has explored the issue of barriers facing Aboriginal women's participation in positions of influence. The Institute, whose mandate is to build leadership capacity in Canadian Aboriginal People, undertook the Aboriginal Women Leaders: Manitoba project, a one-year initiative to increase the representation of Aboriginal women in positions of leadership. The project looked at the causes of under representation of women in positions of influence and possible solutions.⁵¹

Another organization that has been active in promoting women in leadership roles is the Business and Professional Women's Club of Winnipeg Central (BPW). This group aims to develop the professional, leadership and business potential of all women. This is done through advocacy and mentoring programs and projects. One of the core mandates of the group is women in politics, which ranges from promoting greater understanding to encouraging active participation through voting and becoming more actively involved. BPW holds a number of events throughout the year, including sessions on women in politics. In January 2010 an event entitled "Celebrate Women in Politics" was held. It featured a panel discussion which included Provincial MLA and Minister Responsible for Women Jennifer Howard and City of Winnipeg Councillor Jenny Gerbasi.⁵²

Top: Manitoba's Legislative Assembly has the highest percentage of elected female representatives in Canada.

Right: The Aboriginal Leadership Institute's Aboriginal Women Leaders: Manitoba report.



THOUGHTS FROM MANITOBA'S MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

One of the immediate actions of the AMM Women in Municipal Government Task Force was to find out what barriers and solutions current municipal officials in Manitoba could identify. The AMM sent a general questionnaire to all elected officials in Manitoba, asking them if they believed there were barriers to women's involvement in municipal government and what possible solutions could be found. A total of 160 officials responded, or 13 per cent. Ninety-one responded there were no barriers to women interested in running for office, with many noting women were free to run just like men. But 43 of those who responded, or just over 25 per cent, indicated that indeed they believed barriers exist for women looking to run for office.

Appendix A provides a comprehensive overview of the questionnaire responses. The number one issue identified was the belief that women did not have the time to become involved in municipal government as they had family commitments and responsibilities. A close second was the perception that municipal councils are an "old boy's club" where women were not entirely welcome or at least not encouraged to join. The perception that women are not qualified for the job was cited as was a lack of understanding of what is required for the job. The sometimes adversarial nature of politics was also mentioned as a possible barrier to involvement.

The AMM sent an additional questionnaire to all elected women currently on municipal councils to get a sense from them directly as to what they see as barriers and to share what they faced in getting elected. A total of 26 women responded, with 5 indicating there were no barriers and 21 citing specific barriers.

The number one issue identified by the women was the sense of municipal council being an "old boy's club". A lack of time was also cited as a real issue preventing women from becoming involved in the process. The perception of not being qualified and not understanding the job was also highlighted, as was the fact no one was encouraging women to run.

The questionnaires asked the respondents to identify possible solutions to overcoming the barriers identified. The top issue for all respondents was to provide greater information and education opportunities to those interested in running for municipal office. The need to encourage women to run was also identified as a solution to getting more women willing to run for election. Support for women after their election was mentioned, as was providing social supports like daycare and providing greater flexibility like adjusting meeting schedules. The promotion of role models and success stories was also cited, as was the need to raise awareness of this as an issue.

While the results of the questionnaires are illuminating, there are limitations that should be drawn from the sample. Those women who faced barriers and were unable to overcome them would not have been elected and thus could not provide their views. The Task Force understood this in drafting the questionnaire, however the information provided is certainly valuable and contributes to the report. A wider survey of all female candidates, victorious or not, would be a worthwhile effort and would certainly provide excellent insight to move this initiative forward.

Pictured top to bottom: A few of Manitoba's women municipal officials, including Mayor Doris Moore, Town of MacGregor; Reeve Alice Bourgouin, RM of Rosser; Mayor Shirley Kalyniuk, Town of Rosburn and Councillor Karen MacKinnon, City of Flin Flon; Councillor Janet Shindle, City of Portage la Prairie



The number one issue identified by the elected women who responded was the sense of municipal council being an "old boy's club".





BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

BARRIERS TO INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

While this report does not pretend to have reviewed all of the material available in this field, it is certainly with a great deal of confidence that the Task Force can identify the top barriers facing women's participation in municipal government in Manitoba. The research done can be synthesized into 12 major barriers impeding women's participation in municipal government. It should be noted that many of these barriers identified cut across gender and are also applicable to men interested in running for municipal office.

BARRIER: Lack of time due to work and family responsibilities and a lack of support to overcome these

Issue: The reality remains that women still do the majority of household work, and are most often the primary caregiver in the family. Women are also working outside of the home, leaving little available time to pursue other interests like politics. Often municipalities do not offer any support to offset these responsibilities, such as daycare during meetings or flexible meeting times. The result is women must choose between family and politics, as both cannot be balanced.

BARRIER: Municipal politics is an old boy's club

Issue: One of the most common responses to the AMM questionnaire was the perception that municipal politics remains an old boy's club where women are not welcome. Women identify not being respected by their male cohort, their views not being heard or accepted, being held to a different standard or being outrightly excluded from full participation. This perception certainly is a barrier to women seeking involvement in municipal politics and perpetuates the myth that municipal council is an "old boy's club" where women are not welcome.

BARRIER: Less financial independence

Issue: Women generally make less money than men and often hold more junior positions. Often pursuing elected politics requires a degree of financial independence and women are sometimes unable to achieve a level of financial comfort to allow them to run for elected office or to reduce work hours to compensate for time allotted to municipal work. In most municipalities the cost of running an election campaign is minimal, however the time commitment may well restrict the number of hours available for a career.

BARRIER: Women feel less qualified for the job

Issue: Women often feel they do not have the qualifications for the position, even when they are more qualified than males who run. Also women too frequently do not give themselves credit for the unique qualifications they bring to the table. This perception leaves women on the outside of the process. This was seen often in the questionnaires from rural municipalities. A lack of knowledge of roads and drainage were mentioned as possible reasons why women are not interested in rural municipalities, or as one elected official stated, "women are intimidated" by what they think the job requires which keeps them outside the process.

BARRIER: Women have less profile in the community or constituency

Issue: As a result of some of the other barriers identified (time commitments, junior positions in the workplace) women have not had the opportunities to raise their profile in the community. Often those elected are local business owners or have a profile due to their careers, or are members of numerous community groups or boards. Often women do not hold these kinds of positions, and do not have the time to invest in community work that raises a profile to enhance a run for elected office.

BARRIER: Women do not see the value in running, or are not interested in the nature of politics

Issue: Often, rightly or wrongly, politics is portrayed as a win-at-all-cost cut-throat profession. This perception, amplified by media coverage and movies, makes elected office less appealing to women who often work better in cooperative environments. The end result is women do not see the value in running for office.

BARRIER: Systemic impediments

Issue: The very structure of government and elections poses barriers to women. For example, women typically are more successful in at-large elections than in wards or first-past-the-post systems. Research has shown that the electoral system does impact how easy it is to get elected. The challenge of beating an incumbent is also an impediment, and often getting elected for the first time requires beating an incumbent. The length of the term of office is also a barrier as many women see this as too great a commitment.

BARRIER: Lack of information about the process and a lack of role models or mentors

Issue: It is obvious that if you do not know what a municipality does, you are not going to be interested in running for council. Often a lack of information about how to become involved has been identified as a barrier to getting women interested in running for office. A lack of role models or mentors are also barriers as they do not see women in leadership positions.

Often women become engaged in the electoral side after becoming interested in the issues or policy development. By reaching out to women in the policy development stage, you can attract more to run for office. Without this connection it is less likely women will become interested in running or encouraged to run for office.

BARRIER: No connection between municipalities and women

Issue: There are women's groups in nearly every community, yet in many places there is no strong connection between municipalities and these networks. All too often municipal policy directions lack consideration on their impact on women because there are none on council and no connection to the groups in the community. Often women become engaged in the electoral side after becoming interested in the issues or policy development. By reaching out to women in the policy development stage, you can attract more to run for office. Without this connection it is less likely women will become interested in running or encouraged to run for office.

BARRIER: Negative public perception of women in leadership positions

Issue: Women in powerful positions are often more highly scrutinized than men, which creates a disincentive to run for those types of positions. This can happen anywhere, ranging from the media to the local coffee shop. When women are judged and evaluated on a different set of criteria, most often having little to do with job performance, other women are less likely to become involved in the process.

BARRIER: Women do not see value in municipal work or see greater value in investing time elsewhere

Issue: Time is valuable and often women see greater value in participating in other areas than municipal council such as daycare or school boards. This may be a result of not seeing their main issues being addressed at the municipal level, and other times simply seeing other venues as a better allocation of their time and resources or being more flexible to their needs.

BARRIER: This is not perceived as an issue at all

Issue: The AMM questionnaire certainly showed that for many current elected officials there is a belief that there are no barriers impeding women's participation in municipal politics. Questionnaire responses like "anyone can come to the municipal office and pick up nomination papers" or "men and women have an equal opportunity to run for office" were common. However, the overwhelming support for the resolution at the AMM Convention, along with the remaining questionnaires and research shows that indeed there is a widely held belief that barriers do exist.



SOLUTIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN MUNICIPAL POLITICS

While the AMM resolution directed the Task Force to review the barriers impeding women's participation in municipal government, the Task Force felt strongly that simply identifying the problem was not enough and there should also be a discussion on solutions. The work of other provinces, FCM and others highlighted in this report shed light on the possible solutions. The Task Force has synthesized what it sees as possible solutions below.

SOLUTION: Promote why women should become involved and what they can offer to the process

Barriers addressed: Old boy's club, overcomes perceived lack of being qualified, lack of knowledge, connection with women's groups, negative public perception, do not see value, do not see as an issue.

Issue: One of the ways to combat some of the barriers identified is to actively promote why women should become involved in municipal politics. All too often municipalities struggle to find anyone to run for office or sit on boards and committees. One of the ways to increase participation is to reach out to women in the community who have been largely left out of the process. By showing what they can bring to the table and showing an appreciation and acceptance of their unique perspective, municipalities can attract more women to run for office. This promotion will also dispel the image of municipal government as an old boy's club and show women they should have a seat at the council table. This promotion can be done at many levels, ranging from school-age children to seniors groups.

SOLUTION: Run campaign schools and provide greater information for women who are interested in running

Barriers addressed: Old boy's club, feel less qualified, lack of knowledge, connection with women's groups, negative public perception, do not see value, do not see as an issue.

Issue: It has been shown that one of the most effective ways to encourage women to run for elected office is to provide them with information about the process. Lunch and learn sessions have become very popular for a

“Women have few role models because of the low number of women in politics of any kind. Politics is no different from any other profession - people have a tendency toward following in the footsteps of family members or others they admire.”

number of policy issues and have proven to be successful for encouraging women to run for office as was shown in Newfoundland. Groups like Equal Voice and Business and Professional Women's Club of Winnipeg have put on sessions encouraging women to become active in elected politics. FCM also has a wealth of resources and has held a single session in Virden, Manitoba. The resources are available and many groups would be willing to work with municipalities to host these sessions. By providing women with more information they are likely to see the value in municipal work. These sessions are also an excellent opportunity for municipalities to showcase their great work to the community at large.

SOLUTION: Promote role models, success stories and connect women with mentors

Barriers addressed: Lack of knowledge, lack of role models or mentors, feel less qualified, connection with women's groups, negative public perception, old boy's club, do not see value.

Issue: One of the barriers identified is the perception from women that municipal politics is not for them. However, we have seen a number of excellent women hold municipal

office, many of whom have become leaders in their region. There are a number of success stories of women who have overcome barriers and sharing these stories with other women can help promote interest. As one elected official stated in response to the questionnaire, "Women have few role models because of the low number of women in politics of any kind. Politics is no different from any other profession – people have a tendency toward following in the footsteps of family members or others they admire." By showcasing the women who have been successful, other women will become interested. As well, connecting women who are interested in entering municipal politics or are new to municipal office with women who have been involved would certainly be beneficial.

SOLUTION: Promote gender training and a gender lens for municipal policies

Barriers addressed: Feel less qualified, negative public perceptions, no connection with women's groups, old boy's club, do not see value, do not see as an issue.

Issue: While the concept of a gender lens or gender training can seem cumbersome and difficult, it does not have to be the case. Sometimes it can be as simple as asking the question, "how will this policy decision impact women in our community?" There are opportunities to open dialogue with women's group in a community to make sure council is making decisions that benefit everyone. There are also opportunities for training sessions to be held throughout the year for elected officials and administrators alike.

SOLUTION: Directly encourage women to run, including young women, and offer a supportive environment

Barriers Addressed: All of them.

Issue: Perhaps the best way to get women to run for municipal office is to ask them. By encouraging women to run, councils can show women they are wanted in the process and not only are their views wanted but they are valued. Young women have also been identified as facing not only the gender barrier but also age discrimination, so encouraging them to run would go a long way to helping them overcome these barriers. However, it is important that women are not just encouraged to run for the sake of having a woman on the ballot. Councils should be cognizant of all barriers and offer a supportive and respectful environment.

While the solutions presented here are options they should not be interpreted as requirements that any municipality must follow. They should be read and interpreted for what they are, options.

Some or all of these might be applicable to your community and the decision of what fits rests with your council.

Municipal government has a long and proud history of making things work for their own circumstances and this issue should be treated no differently.

Perhaps the best way to get women to run for municipal office is to ask them. By encouraging women to run, councils can show women they are wanted in the process and not only are their views wanted but they are valued.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AN AMM ACTION PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

It is clear that women indeed face barriers when looking to enter municipal government. While identifying the solutions to overcome these barriers is an important step, it is obvious that an action plan is required to move forward. The next municipal election will be held in October 2010, which is fast approaching. The Task Force recognizes that while the release of this report will hopefully generate greater interest in running for office, a more comprehensive strategy is required although it cannot be implemented properly in time for the October municipal election. Therefore the Task Force has identified the 2014 municipal election as the focus for future action.

The Task Force recommends the following:

- 1. The AMM lead a comprehensive 4-year plan to attract more women to municipal government culminating with the 2014 municipal election.**

This plan should include workshops and learning sessions in communities to promote municipal government and provide greater information about the role of municipal government in citizens' everyday life. Workshops should also be held to promote the work of groups like FCM and the support they offer women interested in running for office. Social media opportunities will also be included in the 4-year plan, with opportunities like Facebook being explored. Advertising will play an important role in the campaign to help promote the initiative. The AMM website will also be a focal point of the campaign. Progress on the plan will be reported back to the membership through AMM communication tools including the quarterly magazine and annual report.

- 2. The AMM provide support to existing elected officials, women and men, interested in this issue.**

The AMM should provide opportunities for existing municipal officials, women and men, to share experiences and insights in their role as elected officials. Opportunities exist through AMM regular events such as the annual convention, special workshop sessions and tools already developed by groups like FCM. AMM communication tools such as the website can be used to promote success stories and help connect newly elected officials with those veterans of many years. Social media tools will also be explored.

- 3. AMM Board to continue to move this issue forward**

The Task Force recommends the AMM make women in municipal government a standing issue on the AMM Board agenda to ensure the 4-year plan moves forward and innovative ideas can be shared.

SO DOES IT MATTER?

At the beginning of the report we asked the question, “Why does this matter” and why should we be concerned with attracting more women to municipal government?

At the very heart of this issue is the question of democracy. In a democratic society officials are elected to represent all citizens within their constituency, and in return elected governing bodies are to be reflections of the society they govern. And this is the ultimate question every elected council needs to ask itself – do we reflect the whole of our community?

If the answer is indeed we do, you should take a moment to congratulate yourselves and then take measures to ensure this continues.

However, if you are like the overwhelming number of municipalities not only in Manitoba but across Canada and around the world, you know a democratic deficit exists because women, who represent 50 per cent of the population, are largely excluded from the governing process.

Hopefully if you have made it to the end of this report you see that it does matter. And we hope that the material presented within this report has started you thinking about steps you can take in your community to attract more women to the process and make your community more inclusive.

Ultimately the decision to act rests with you.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - AMM MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRES

A general survey was sent to all elected municipal officials asking:

1. Do you believe there are barriers to women's involvement in municipal government? Yes or No?

If Yes, please identify what you see as barriers:

2. Do you see any possible solutions to overcoming these barriers? Yes or No?

If Yes, what do you see as possible solutions:

A second questionnaire was sent to all elected women on council asking:

1. Please describe your personal experiences in becoming involved in municipal government. Did you encounter barriers and if so what were they?
2. What solutions do you think could be explored to remove the barriers you identify?

Responses:

Total of 160 responses

Full Questionnaire – 91 said no barriers, 43 said there were barriers

Women Questionnaire – 5 said no barriers, 21 said barriers

Barriers identified

Barrier	Full Survey	Women only survey	Total
Old boy's club	11	6	17
Lack of time/family responsibilities	14	3	17
Not qualified (real or perceived)	6	1	7
Don't understand what the job is	5	1	6
Don't like the nature of the job (confrontational)	3	0	3
Financially unable	2	0	2
Career responsibilities will not allow	2	0	2
No one encouraging them to run	1	1	2
Don't see the value in the work	2	0	2

Other barriers identified once in the full survey were women were held to a different standard, people do not see the lack of women as an issue, no role models, not a respectful workplace, no social support (daycare) and length of term. Barriers identified once in the women-only survey were timing of meetings (daytime) and a lack of home support.

Solutions Identified:

Solution	Full Survey	Women only	Total
Greater information/ education i.e. workshops	12	4	16
Encourage women to run	9	1	10
Training after elected	2	3	5
Provide social supports (daycare)	4	0	4
Promote role models and success stories	3	1	4
More flexibility (i.e. meeting times)	2	1	3
Establish quotas	1	1	2
Raise awareness that this is an issue	2	0	2
Involve young women	2	0	2
Promote FCM material	2	0	2

Other solutions receiving a single mention in the full survey were gender training once elected, need to connect women's issues with municipal issues, increase pay, shorter terms to reduce commitment, and educate employers about the need to allow people to be elected. In the women-only survey, electoral system change away from the ward system was mentioned once.

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LINKS

If you are interested in learning more about this topic or want to review the great work being done by other groups we highly recommend you visit the following websites:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities – www.fcm.ca/women

Equal Voice – www.equalvoice.ca

Canadian Women Voters Congress – www.womenvoters.ca

Status of Women Manitoba – www.gov.mb.ca/msw/index.html

Business and Professional Women's Club of Winnipeg Central – <http://winnipegcentral.bpw.ca>

Indigenous Leadership Development Institute Inc. (formerly Aboriginal Leadership Institute) – www.ildii.ca

United Nations Women Watch – www.un.org/womenwatch

Alberta Urban Municipal Association Women in Municipal Government Committee – www.auma.ca/live/AUMA/Toolkits+%26+Initiatives/Women_in_Municipal_Government

Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities Women in Local Government Project – www.wilg.ca

Union des Municipalités du Québec Women and Local Government – www.umq.qc.ca/grandsdossiers/femmes_municipalites.asp

Make Your Mark Newfoundland Campaign – <http://makeyourmarknl.ca>

Year of Women in Local Government Australia – <http://lgwomen2010.org.au>

And for updates on the AMM's work in this area please visit:

www.amm.mb.ca



“Upholding the equality of rights is not an act of benevolence by those in power. It is needed for the progress of every society.”

United Nations Report on Human Development, 1995, p. 99



Association of Manitoba Municipalities
1910 Saskatchewan Avenue W.
Portage la Prairie, Manitoba R1N 0P1
Phone: 204-857-8666
Fax: 204-856-2370
Email: amm@amm.mb.ca
Web: www.amm.mb.ca