



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

ELECT HER: A ROADMAP FOR IMPROVING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Status
of Women**

Karen Vecchio, Chair

**APRIL 2019
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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the Status of Women**

**Karen Vecchio
Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

FOURTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied the barriers facing women in politics and has agreed to report the following:

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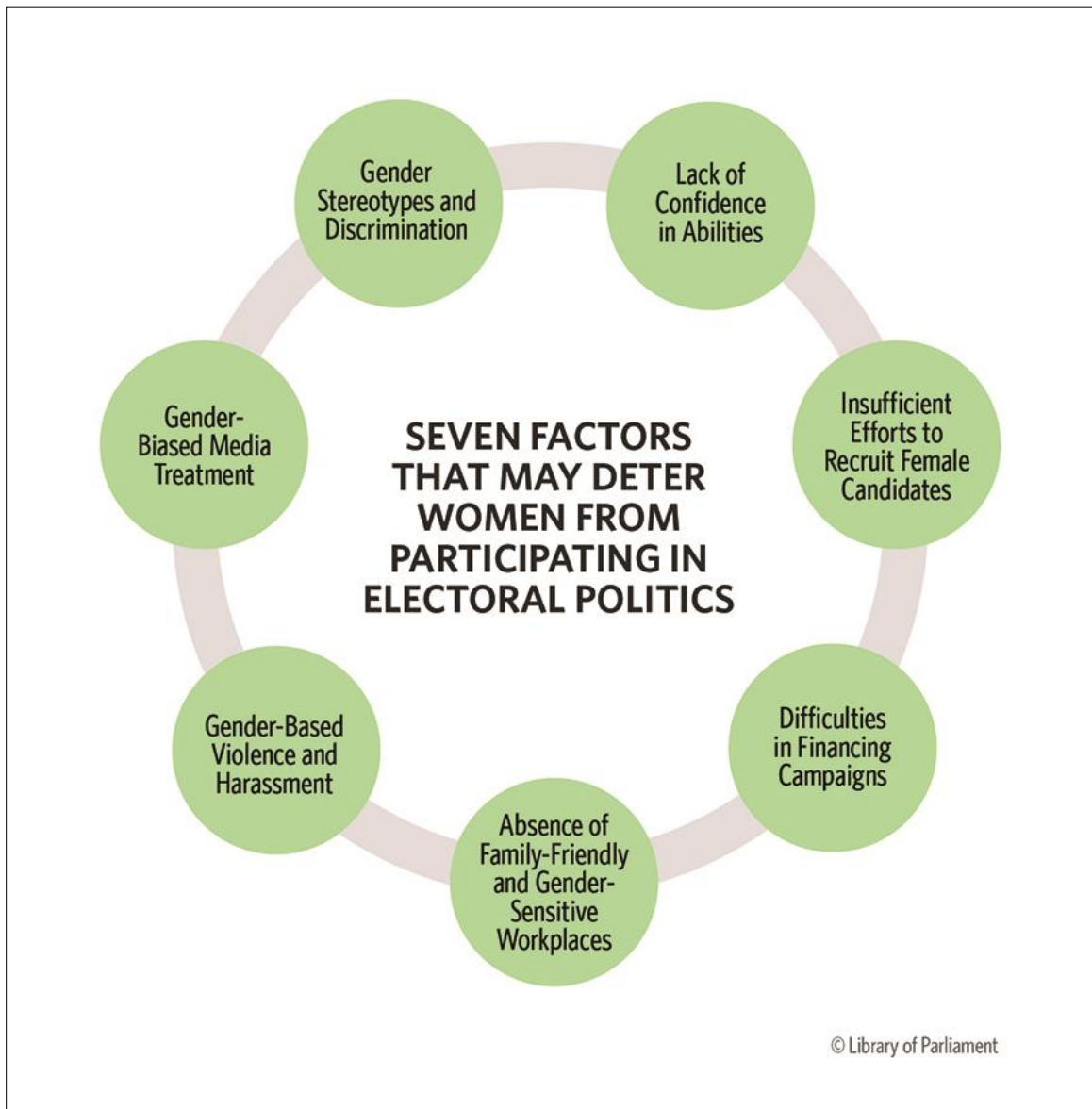
SUMMARY

Women's representation in Canadian politics has increased significantly since 1921 when the first woman, Agnes Macphail, was elected to the House of Commons. Despite their growing political participation, women represent only 35% of all legislators in Canada,¹ and remain under-represented at all levels of government. Increasing women's representation in electoral politics is essential because it can lead to greater gender equality and to better social, economic and political outcomes for all Canadians.

During its hearings held in June and September 2018, the Committee received testimony from 10 organizations, 18 individuals and four federal departments and agencies, and received 12 written briefs from individuals and organizations.

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1530 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

Figure 1—Seven Factors That May Deter Women from Participating in Electoral Politics



Many factors may deter women from entering electoral politics. For example, despite being actively involved in their communities, women tend to have lower levels of interest in electoral politics compared to men. Furthermore, gendered stereotypes and gender-based discrimination can affect both women’s decisions to enter electoral politics and their experiences as politicians. As a result of these stereotypes or

discrimination, women may lack confidence in their political abilities and may have lower levels of political ambition than men.

Women can also encounter barriers at the recruitment and nomination stages of running for elected office. The Committee heard that efforts to recruit female candidates may be insufficient and that political parties, electoral district associations and search committees can play an important role in the recruitment of female candidates. For instance, the Committee was told that political parties should be examining their recruitment and selection processes to eliminate any sexism and bias that may implicitly be built into these processes and to recruit more women.² As well, women may encounter barriers over the course of the nomination and election processes that their male counterparts do not. For example, women might find it more difficult to finance nomination or election campaigns than men because, on average, women earn less than men.

Once elected, women can also encounter barriers that might prevent them from achieving full and equal participation in a legislature. For example, a lack of gender-sensitive and family-friendly facilities, gender-biased media treatment, and gender-based violence and harassment can negatively affect a woman's experience working in electoral politics.

The Committee's report provides possible solutions to the barriers women face when entering electoral politics. The recommendations included in the report are intended to provide guidance to the Government of Canada on measures that could be implemented to help improve the representation of women at all levels of electoral politics in Canada. The Committee's recommendations are intended to:

- improve the collection of intersectional data on women's political participation;
- shift societal perceptions regarding women's political participation;
- support organizations and projects that promote the political participation of women from diverse backgrounds;
- encourage political parties to run more female candidates;

2 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1625 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

- address the gender-biased media treatment of female politicians.

The Committee commends legislatures on their efforts to foster gender-sensitive and family-friendly political workplaces and looks forward to further initiatives in this area.

The Committee believes that the implementation of its recommendations by the Government of Canada and the consideration of its observations will help improve women's representation, retention and experiences in electoral politics in Canada.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase funding to Statistics Canada with the goal of expanding survey data collection about the participation and engagement of diverse groups of women in political activities, including, but not limited to, women’s leadership in community work and women’s participation and engagement in volunteering and donating to a political party. 26

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada develop and implement a public education campaign whose goal is to positively shift how women in electoral politics are perceived..... 30

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, at the next meeting of Canada’s Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Education and for the Status of Women, encourage all jurisdictions to incorporate the topics of gender equality, gender stereotypes and women’s participation in politics into their education curricula with the goal of increasing women’s political participation and building girls and young women’s confidence. 30

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada continue to strengthen the application of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in all federal departments and agencies’ programs, initiatives, and strategies. 33

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada increase funding for organizations and projects that:

- **support the political engagement and empowerment of diverse groups of women;**
- **provide relevant training, both in person and online, for women interested in seeking elected office;**
- **provide women with internships and similar opportunities in political workplaces;**
- **provide mentorship, role modelling, networking opportunities and guidance to women in order to increase their confidence and willingness to take risks and encourage them to seek elected office; or**
- **involve men in efforts to encourage women to run for elected office..... 36**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada encourage elected officials to engage women in their communities by providing guidance, job shadowing and networking opportunities, including through local women’s councils and youth councils. 36

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, consult and collaborate with diverse groups of women to develop a strategy to encourage women from diverse backgrounds to participate in electoral politics and a strategy supporting Indigenous women in electoral politics, and report back to Parliament on the implementation and outcomes of these strategies on an annual basis..... 43

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada consider making changes to encourage gender equality and diversity in electoral politics; to ensure more transparency and consistency in nominations processes; and to require registered parties to publicly report on their efforts to recruit female candidates from diverse backgrounds after every federal general election. 46

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada encourage registered parties and registered electoral district associations to set goals and publicly report on their efforts to nominate more female candidates, to achieve gender parity on their boards of directors, including in positions of leadership, and to establish search committees for candidates in federal general elections and by-elections. 46

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada create a financial incentive for all registered parties to nominate more candidates who are women in general elections and by-elections. 48

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada consider making changes to allow, with candidates' permission, the collection of intersectional data on candidates in nomination races, including data on gender identity..... 56

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, at the next meeting of Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial Status of Women Forum, urge all jurisdictions to discuss ways to make legislatures more gender-diverse. 69

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada develop and fund awareness campaigns and training programs to counter the negative effects of gender-biased treatment and harassment of female politicians, both in traditional and social media. 71

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada support data collection on the barriers faced by minority women and women from diverse backgrounds in electoral politics, and that this data be publicly available. 74

LIST OF OBSERVATIONS

Observation 1

The Chair of the Committee, on behalf of the Committee, will send a letter to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs (PROC) to ask that PROC consider studying initiatives that could eliminate any potential gender bias linked to the design of voting ballots. 26

Observation 2

The Committee encourages registered parties to set voluntary quotas for the percentage of female candidates they field in federal elections and to publicly report on their efforts to meet these quotas after every federal general election..... 51

Observation 3

The Committee asks that its Chair send a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons to ask the Speaker to consider studying initiatives that could prevent and discourage the use of gender-based heckling in the House of Commons..... 69

Observation 4

The Committee believes that services and initiatives such as parental leave for parliamentarians; the possibility of voting and participating remotely in parliamentary work; access to full- and part-time child care services; and the undertaking of gender-sensitive audits of legislatures could help foster inclusive, family-friendly and gender-sensitive political workplaces. 69



INTRODUCTION

In 1921, Agnes Campbell Macphail became the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. Since then, the participation and roles of Canadian women in politics have grown substantially. Yet in 2018, women remain under-represented at every level of government in Canada, including in Canada's Parliament. According to Statistics Canada, women represent 35% of all legislators in Canada.¹

Increasing women's participation in electoral politics is essential for achieving greater gender equality. Having more women in elected office is about more than achieving equality in a traditionally male-dominated field; it could also have significant effects on public policy:

It is undeniable that women's increased political participation as elected officials leads to better social, economic and political outcomes for everyone. From increased attention on issues that impact women's lives to an often more collaborative working environment, increasing meaningful representation of women in politics is a crucial factor in strengthening Canada's democracy.²

Recognizing the positive effects that increasing women's representation in electoral politics would have on Canadian society, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) agreed on 1st March 2018 to undertake a study on barriers facing women in politics. The Committee adopted the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study, for the duration of six (6) to eight (8) meetings, on barriers facing women in politics, including, but not limited to:

- barriers in the candidate recruitment and selection process, male-dominated professional networks, and mentorship opportunities;

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1530 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

2 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1640 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women's Leadership Network).



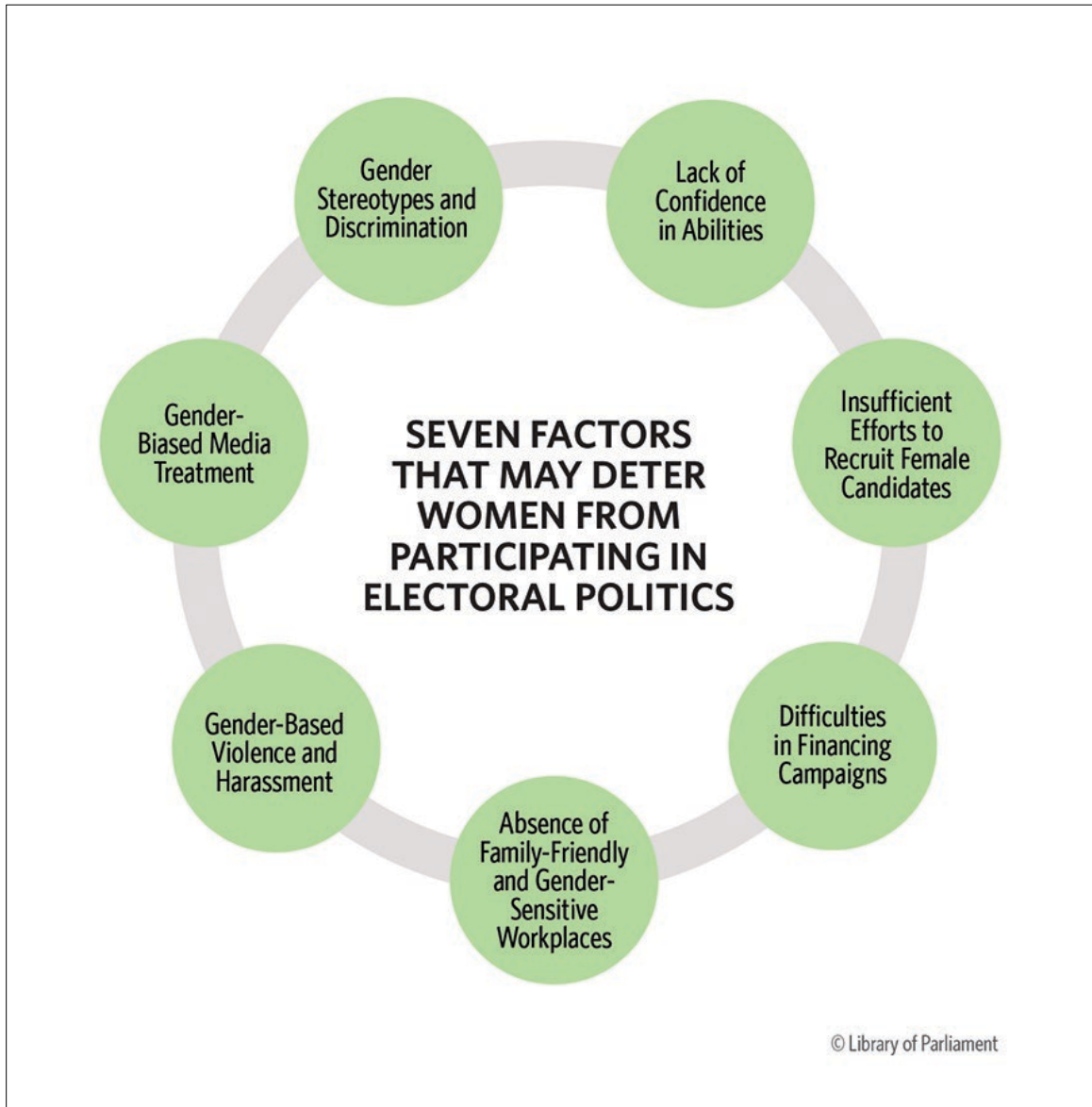
- barriers in the House of Commons, such as party discipline, gender-biased media treatment and inequity in professional development and support.³

The Committee received testimony from 33 witnesses—18 of whom appeared as individuals, with the remainder representing 10 organizations. In addition, the Committee was briefed by officials from the following government departments and agencies: the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women,⁴ the Privy Council Office, Statistics Canada and Elections Canada. The testimony was received during six meetings held from 5 June 2018 to 26 September 2018. As well, the Committee received 12 written briefs from organizations and individuals, many of which had appeared before the Committee, along with written speaking notes and follow-up responses to questions from Committee members. Appendix A of this report includes a list of all witnesses and Appendix B includes a list of all submitted briefs.

3 House of Commons, FEWO, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1 March 2018.

4 On 13 December 2018, the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women (Status of Women Canada) became the Department for Women and Gender Equality.

Figure 1—Seven Factors That May Deter Women from Participating in Electoral Politics



The Committee’s report provides an examination of and possible solutions to address:

- 1) the relatively low representation of women at all levels of electoral politics in Canada;
- 2) barriers facing women when making the choice to enter electoral politics, such as women’s interest and involvement in political activities; gender



stereotypes and discrimination; and women's political ambition and confidence;

- 3) barriers in the recruitment of women from diverse backgrounds to run for elected office, including of the role of electoral district associations, local search committee and political parties;
- 4) barriers facing women running for elected office, such as nomination and election campaigns rules and procedures; the political and electoral systems; incumbency status; the choice of riding; and campaign expenditures; and
- 5) barriers facing female elected officials, such as the lack of family-friendly and gender-sensitive political workplaces; gender-biased media treatment; and gender-based violence and harassment.

The Committee notes that while the majority of the witnesses that testified before it provided a number a barriers that make it difficult for women to enter or remain in electoral politics, one witness noted that some women might not face challenges at all.⁵

The Committee's report is intended to provide guidance to the Government of Canada on measures that could be implemented to help improve the representation of women in electoral politics in Canada. Committee members greatly appreciate the contributions of witnesses who offered their knowledge, ideas and insights on the subject of barriers facing women in electoral politics.

5 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual).

OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS IN CANADA

Over the years, Canada has made a number of international commitments regarding women's participation in decision-making and in the public and political life of their country. For instance, the United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution number 1990/15 called on governments and other stakeholders to aim at having women hold at least 30% of leadership positions.⁶ In 2018, few parliaments, legislatures, local or municipal governments have reached this threshold. The sections that follow provide an overview of women's representation in the Parliament of Canada, in provincial and territorial legislatures and in municipal and local governments.

A. WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

Women first surpassed the 20% mark in the House of Commons in the 1997 general election when they won 20.6% of seats. As of 5 December 2018, women held 91 of the 335 occupied seats in the House of Commons, representing 27.2% of all Members of Parliament.⁷ According to a representative from the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women, 4.4% of the seats in the House of Commons are occupied by visible minority women and 0.9% by Indigenous women.⁸

Female candidates' representation in federal general elections as well as the percentage of women in the House of Commons, has increased over the years. Data show that among all elected candidates, the percentage of elected candidates who identify as women is generally lower than the percentage of female candidates, indicating that female candidates are being elected at a lower rate than male candidates (see Figure 2).

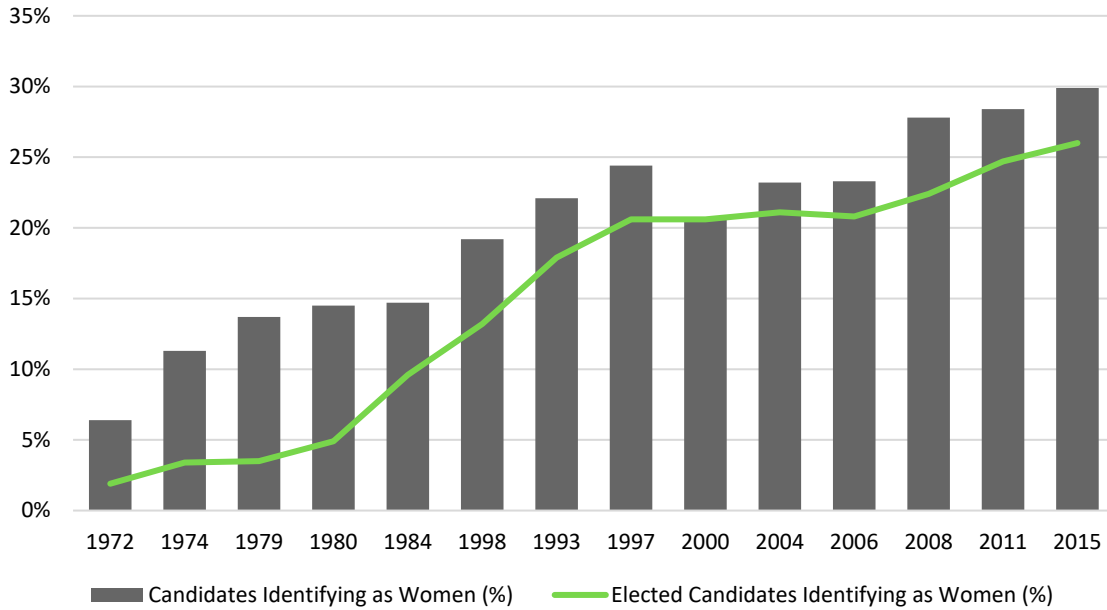
6 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1745 (Carole Saab, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Federation of Canadian Municipalities).

7 Library of Parliament, "[Parliamentarians](#)," *Parlinfo*.

8 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1725 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).



Figure 2—Percentage of Female Candidates and Women Elected in Federal General Elections



Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from Parliament of Canada, [“Women Candidates in General Elections - 1921 to Date”](#) and from Elections Canada, [Past Elections](#).

Although women’s representation in the House of Commons is at an all-time high, it “still falls below the United Nations’ recommendation of having at least 30% as the critical threshold for women in decision-making roles.”⁹ Canada ranks 60th of 193 countries worldwide for the representation of women in single or lower houses of national parliaments.¹⁰ According to a representative from the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women, “[t]hese numbers point to continued barriers to women’s equal participation in democracy, indicating ongoing systemic discrimination and persistent unconscious bias.”¹¹

Women’s representation in the Senate is generally higher than in the House of Commons. In Canada, senators are not elected; rather, they are appointed by the

9 Ibid.

10 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1610 (Esther Lapointe, Director General, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

11 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1635 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

governor general, a power exercised on the advice of the prime minister. As of 5 December 2018, women occupied 46 of the 101 occupied seats in the Senate, representing 45.5% of senators currently in office.¹² A representative from the Privy Council Office stated that women represented 58.5% of the current government's appointments to the Senate.

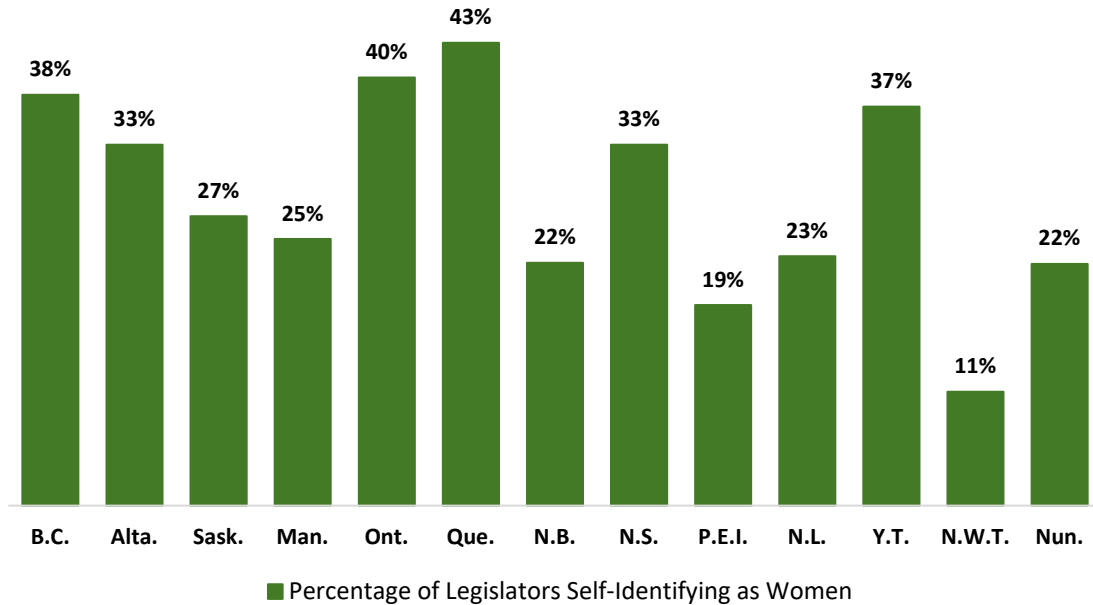
B. WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURES

The representation of female legislators in provincial and territorial legislatures varies greatly across the country, from 10.5% in the Northwest Territories to 42.4% in Quebec, as shown in Figure 3. Several provinces and territories have reached or surpassed the 30% threshold for women in their legislature; however, only Quebec and Ontario have reached the parity zone, the zone between 40% and 60%.

12 Library of Parliament, "[Parliamentarians](#)," *Parlinfo*.



Figure 3—Percentage of Female Legislators in Provincial and Territorial Legislature (2018)



Note: As of 5 December 2018, results of the 2018 Ontario general provincial elections were not official. Data for New Brunswick and Quebec are based on the makeup of the provincial legislatures as of 5 December 2018. Data from other provinces and territories are based on the makeup of the provincial and territorial legislature as of 1st October 2018.

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from provincial and territorial legislatures, political parties and Members of Legislative Assemblies’ personal websites.

Madeleine Redfern, Mayor of Iqaluit, stressed the fact that, in Nunavut, politics goes beyond the local, territorial and federal governments: Inuit land claim organizations and regional Inuit associations are also political entities.¹³ Ms. Redfern stated that these organizations often have a low proportion of women in leadership positions and that they sometimes have designated non-voting position for Inuit women on their boards of directors. She added that the under-representation of Inuit women in these organizations can create situations in which decisions taken do not reflect the views and priorities of the community as a whole.¹⁴

13 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1635 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit).

14 *Ibid.*, 1635-1640 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit).

The Committee heard that there are programs to support women in electoral politics in many provinces and territories, such as the Campaign School for Women: Leaders in Action in Nova Scotia, “a course that prepares graduates to run for public office, organize campaigns, or pursue non-elected political roles” and programs “to increase gender parity in elected positions through training, mentoring, or communities of practice” in Alberta.¹⁵

C. WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

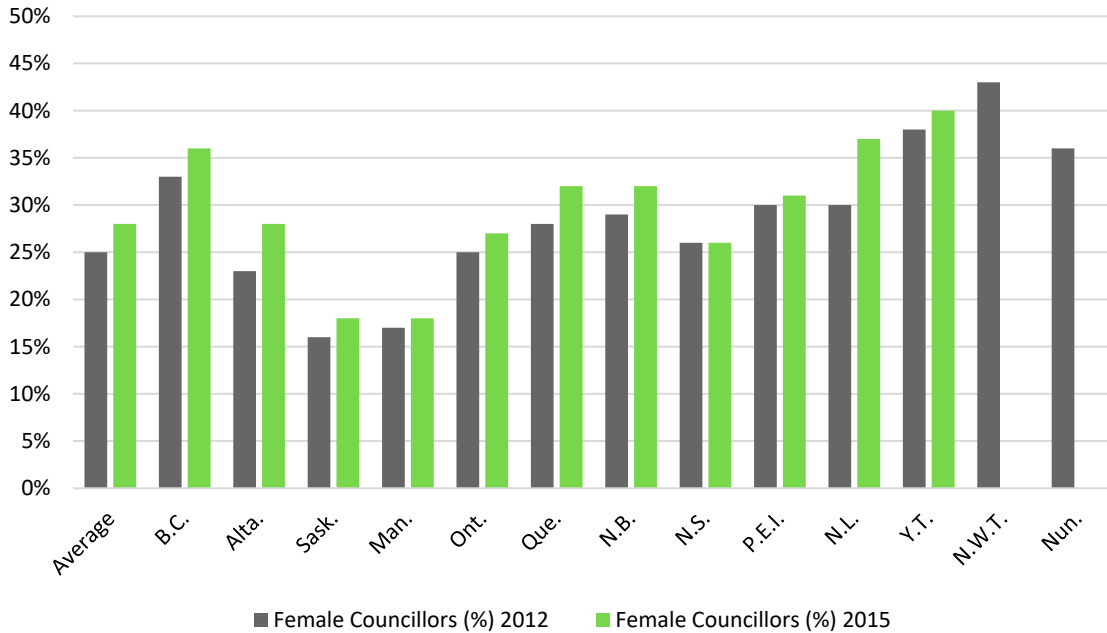
As is the case for the other two orders of government, the proportion of women elected at the municipal level has increased over the years, but women remain under-represented as municipal councillors and mayors (see Figure 4). Data from 2015 shows that, on average, women represent 18% of mayors and 28% of municipal councillors in Canada.¹⁶

15 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

16 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1745 (Carole Saab, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Federation of Canadian Municipalities) and 1815 (Yolaine Kirlew, Third Vice-President and Councillor, Municipality of Sioux Lookout, Federation of Canadian Municipalities); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).



Figure 4—Representation of Women as Municipal Councillors in Canada



Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from Federation of Canadian Municipalities, [2015—Municipal Statistics: Elected Officials Gender Statistics](#) and Federation of Canadian Municipalities, [2012—Municipal statistics: elected Officials Gender Statistics](#).

The Committee heard that the proximity and non-partisanship of municipal politics may be appealing to women¹⁷ and that municipal politics often serve “as an incubator or a springboard for moving to other levels of provincial and federal politics.”¹⁸ Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, who appeared as an individual, told the Committee:

One of the big draws to school boards and municipal politics is that you get to be at home. I don't fly to Ottawa every Sunday, or even up to Edmonton. For me, that was a very big part of it. Honestly, for me, it's the partisan piece. I'm happy not to have a party. I'm happy to make decisions and be elected and stand on points that reflect my values. I totally embrace diversity even at our small council table in the Town of Banff,

17 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1710 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual) and 1710 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1815 (Yolaine Kirlew, Third Vice-President and Councillor, Municipality of Sioux Lookout, Federation of Canadian Municipalities).

18 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1640 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

but I can always feel confident that I can speak my mind, make decisions, and vote in a way that is based on my values. To me, that is precious.¹⁹

Women are also under-represented in Indigenous governments. In 2015, Indigenous women represented 30.5% of band councillors on First Nations of Canada band councils.²⁰ As well, according to a representative of the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women, women represent approximately 17% of band chiefs in First Nations communities.²¹

19 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1710 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

20 Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, *Governance Reference Documents*.

21 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1635 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

CHOOSING TO ENTER ELECTORAL POLITICS

Deciding whether to enter electoral politics is a daunting task for anyone; however, women may face unique and specific barriers because of their gender. According to Thérèse Mailloux, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[t]oo often, the burden is placed on women to enter politics, but they are up against millennia of systemic barriers that make it very difficult for them to run for office.”²²

The sections that follow describe the challenges women may face when deciding whether to enter electoral politics, including their interest in politics and involvement in community organizations; gender stereotypes and discrimination; and political ambition and confidence.

A. WOMEN’S INTEREST IN POLITICS AND INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Data show that women in Canada tend to be less interested in politics than men: in a 2013 Statistics Canada survey, 24% of men reported being “very interested” in politics, compared to 15% of women, and 19% of men reported being “not very interested” in politics, compared to 25% of women.²³ Data showed that women and men with more education and with higher incomes are more likely to hold “positions in government and to participate in civic and political activities.”²⁴

The Committee was also told that, in some instances, men and women participate in politics in different ways. For instance, according to 2013 Statistics Canada data, women are:²⁵

- less likely than men to be members of political parties and to attend a public meeting;

22 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1605 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

23 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1535 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 1530-1540.



- less likely than men to share their opinions on the Internet or in newspapers or to speak up in meetings;
- more likely than men to boycott or choose a product for ethical reasons;
- more likely than men to express interest in joining a school group, neighbourhood, civic or community association; and
- as likely as men to report attending a demonstration or march; wearing political badges or t-shirts; displaying lawn signs in support of or against a political or social cause; and signing an Internet petition.

The Committee was informed that data collected by Statistics Canada on certain social factors cannot be released because of small sample sizes, and increased funding from the federal government to improve the survey may allow for improvements in these areas.²⁶

Even though women report being less interested in politics, Canadian women generally vote at higher rates than men. For instance, during the last three federal general elections, Canadian women voted at higher rates than men: 68% of women compared to 64% of men.²⁷ A representative from Elections Canada told the Committee that this pattern was observed in all age groups, except for people aged 75 years and over, where men voted at higher rates than women.²⁸

As women tend to live longer than men, and mobility challenges and other disabilities may develop with age, older women may find it more difficult than other groups to get to a voting booth.²⁹ To increase voter turnout, the Honourable Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member of Equal Voice, suggested including candidates' pictures on the voting ballot to encourage women who have literacy issues to vote.³⁰

As well, reasons given for not voting differ between women and men: 2013 Statistics Canada data show that women are more likely than men to indicate “feeling uninformed” and feeling “voting would have no impact” as their reasons for not

26 Ibid., 1625 (Jennifer Kaddatz, Chief, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

27 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1735 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 1805.

30 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1700 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

voting.³¹ The Committee heard that Elections Canada will be releasing new resources for educators in the fall of 2018 to “build the interest, skills, and knowledge required to be active citizens.”³²

According to a representative from Statistics Canada, women tend to spend more time on local and civic issues, or volunteering for schools and clubs, because they may perceive these activities as more important than volunteering for a political party.³³ The Committee heard that community leadership work is often not recognized as political. For instance, Jane Hilderman, Executive Director of the Samara Centre for Democracy, explained that female finalists for the organization’s Everyday Political Citizen initiative often do not see their engagement as political.³⁴ Nancy Peckford, Executive Director of Equal Voice, explained that the organization decided to use inclusive language to try to appeal to and recruit young women from diverse backgrounds in its Daughters of the Vote initiative:

[T]here are lots of other women who would have not, I think, seized that moment to make an application, except for how we framed the opportunity, which was by asking the following. How do you lead in your community? How are you connected? How are you engaged? What does leadership look like to you? What's your vision for leadership? How do you want to make a difference? It was questions like those that, I think, rendered the opportunity more inclusive.³⁵

31 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1555 (Anna Kemeny, Survey Manager, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada) and 1535 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

32 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1740 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).

33 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1555 (Jennifer Kaddatz, Chief, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

34 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1535 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).

35 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1645 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).



Women's motivation to enter electoral politics is generally about trying to be engaged,³⁶ to create real change and to help people and their communities.³⁷ When women enter politics, they often do not begin with a partisan affiliation.³⁸

As well, while many women are community leaders, they are often not connected to formal political spaces; they need to be invited to participate in these spaces, such as in riding associations, or party conventions.³⁹ Jane Hilderman stated that it is important to change the meaning of “be[ing] political” and help women connect their community efforts to formal politics.⁴⁰

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase funding to Statistics Canada with the goal of expanding survey data collection about the participation and engagement of diverse groups of women in political activities, including, but not limited to, women’s leadership in community work and women’s participation and engagement in volunteering and donating to a political party.

Observation 1

The Chair of the Committee, on behalf of the Committee, will send a letter to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs (PROC) to ask that PROC consider studying initiatives that could eliminate any potential gender bias linked to the design of voting ballots.

B. GENDER STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION AND WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Socialization, gender roles, perceptions of appropriate career paths for women, and stereotypes or unconscious bias about leadership roles continue to be barriers for

36 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1710 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

37 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1545 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual) and 1635 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual).

38 Ibid., 1650 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

39 Ibid., 1645.

40 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1535 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).

women in electoral politics.⁴¹ These barriers can influence the ways female politicians are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves.⁴²

The Committee heard that there are two types of sexism: implicit and explicit. Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary, noted that implicit sexism, the internalized bias against women based on gender norms and stereotypes, is unconscious and is found among women themselves. In contrast, explicit sexism is based on gender stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination; explicit sexism is more overt. She told the Committee that, according to her research, approximately one in five Canadians holds explicit sexist views, and that men and older people are more likely than women to hold these views. In her study, individuals who held explicit sexist views rated competencies, perceived intelligence, perceived likeability and perceived warmth significantly lower when the example candidate's credentials were associated with a female name.⁴³

“ [W]omen have internalized this explicit sexism they're seeing in the political system, and that in turn is driving down their political interest and their confidence in their ability to be a political actor and driving down their political ambition.”

Melanee Thomas,
Associate Professor, Department of Political
Science, University of Calgary, as an individual

Explicit sexism has more concrete negative effects on women in politics than implicit sexism. For instance, Melanee Thomas told the Committee that “a lot of women have internalized this explicit sexism they're seeing in the political system, and that in turn is driving down their political interest and their confidence in their ability to be a political actor and driving down their political ambition.”⁴⁴ As well, individuals who hold explicit sexist views might not recruit or nominate female candidates, might not mentor and support

41 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1610 (Esther Lapointe, Director General, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

42 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual).

43 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1640 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

44 Ibid.



women as politicians or party leaders, and might not vote for women.⁴⁵ However, the Committee heard that there is little research to support the idea that voters are influenced by the gender of candidates;⁴⁶ when given the opportunity, Canadians will vote for women.⁴⁷

The Committee was told that politics is often associated with male gendered traits. Karen Sorensen explained that being competitive and powerful are traits that are typically associated with men, whereas typically female traits, such as empathy, nurturing and patience, are not tied to power or politics.⁴⁸ Brenda O’Neill, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary, stated that men are perceived to possess the qualities necessary for leadership positions, such as assertiveness, and self-promotion, however, when a woman demonstrates these qualities she is often penalized.⁴⁹ For instance, “a male politician may be described as competitive and tough, but a female politician with the same qualities may be viewed as cold and aggressive.”⁵⁰ As well, sexist attitudes rely on stereotypes, such as women being too emotional or too nice for politics, to exclude women from political leadership.⁵¹

The Committee heard that, like other fields, women in electoral politics may struggle to gain recognition. A representative from the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women explained that women working in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as politics, tend

45 Ibid.; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1725 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

46 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1710 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).

47 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1725 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

48 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1655 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

49 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1540 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

50 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

51 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1640 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1540 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

to have their leadership skills judged more harshly than their male counterparts, and that female politicians from racialized communities tend to experience the most hostility.⁵²

The Committee was told that barriers to women’s political participation can only be removed once society’s attitudes about gender change.⁵³ To do so, several witnesses pointed to role modelling by women in electoral politics for children and young people as an effective strategy to combat gender norms and stereotypes about politics.⁵⁴ Daniela Chivu recommended including the topic of gender equality in education systems in Canada and suggested that Members of Parliament promote the United Nations’ “HeforShe” campaign, in order to continue to mentor boys concerning gender equality, consent, and respect.⁵⁵

Natalie Pon explained that women need to be able to talk about the sexism that they experience in politics without being told to be tougher or to “suck it up.” However, she also suggested that if women could move past sexist comments, put their name forward and win elections, there would be a positive shift in attitudes towards women in politics.⁵⁶

1. Caregiving and Family Responsibilities

The Committee heard that gender stereotypes perpetuate ideas that women belong in the home or in a caregiving role, and that men belong in electoral politics; as a result, society does not expect to see women in politics.⁵⁷ According to a Statistics Canada representative, the presence and age of the youngest child in the house has a notable impact on women’s work hours outside the home, but very little effect on men’s work hours; women with children under the age of six work fewer hours a week outside the home, on average, than other women.⁵⁸

52 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

53 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

54 *Ibid.*, 1720 and 1720 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

55 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1725 (Daniela Chivu, as an individual).

56 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1645-1650 (Natalie Pon, as an individual).

57 *Ibid.*, 1645.

58 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1530 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).



While campaigning, women’s ability to balance family responsibilities and running for elected office may receive attention in ways that men’s private and family lives do not:

Sadly, I believe there continues to be a suggestion that mothers who pursue political careers are not thinking of the best interests of their children, or having a mom in politics is somehow more damaging than having a dad in politics. In politics ... women who make a point of making time for their children are still labelled as a weak link and not focused on the job at hand, yet the same effort is praised in men who are labelled as great dads for taking time for the kids.⁵⁹

Witnesses explained that balancing political work and family life can be a challenge; expectations and responsibilities of motherhood continue to act as deterrents to women considering political careers.⁶⁰ Witnesses also explained that long sitting hours and the need to work away from home for extended periods of time can be difficult for elected officials with children.⁶¹ Kayleigh Erickson cited the high cost of childcare as a barrier to women’s participation in electoral politics.⁶² Nancy Peckford referred to research that found women’s hesitancy to run for political office is at times a result of a fear of jeopardizing the financial stability of their families, or the professional trajectories of their partners.⁶³

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada develop and implement a public education campaign whose goal is to positively shift how women in electoral politics are perceived.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, at the next meeting of Canada’s Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Education and for the Status of Women, encourage all jurisdictions to incorporate the topics of gender equality, gender stereotypes and

59 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

60 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1645 (Natalie Pon, as an individual) and 1650 (Louise Cordeau, President, Conseil du statut de la femme); also Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie, et al., “[Women in Politics and the Obstacles they Face](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

61 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1630 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

62 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1545 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

63 *Ibid.*, 1710 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

women’s participation in politics into their education curricula with the goal of increasing women’s political participation and building girls and young women’s confidence.

C. WOMEN’S POLITICAL AMBITION AND CONFIDENCE

Research suggests that in Canada, levels of political ambition differ between men and women. Melanee Thomas explained that her most recent research found that 1% of women, compared to 5% of men, indicated having the ambition of seeking elected office.⁶⁴ As well, research conducted by William Cross, Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University, concluded that among political candidates of all three official parties in the 2015 federal general election, there was a significant difference in political ambition between genders: men indicated that they had decided to pursue a career in politics at a younger age than women, and men were 40% more likely than women to believe that running for federal office was the logical next step in their political careers.⁶⁵ Witnesses stated that, while women indicate a lower level of political ambition than men, there are more than enough women who have political ambitions for parties to run gender-balanced slates of candidates.⁶⁶

The Committee was told that some women have a tendency to doubt or downplay their skills or lack confidence in their political abilities.⁶⁷ For example, Brenda O’Neill shared this personal story:

I have a Ph.D. in political science, and I study women in politics. When I first received the request to come and speak to you, my first response was, “What could I possibly have to say that would be of any importance to this committee?” It was the people around me who told me, “No, you have to participate.”⁶⁸

64 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1705 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

65 Ibid., 1650 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual).

66 Ibid., 1540 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual); and Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

67 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1530 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual) and 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1715 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government).

68 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1540 (Brenda O’Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).



Brenda O’Neill said that women who are interested in entering electoral politics may choose to run at the municipal level because they perceive this level to be easier, or because they should start at a “lower” level.⁶⁹

The Committee heard that supporting women’s empowerment is necessary for women’s overall success,⁷⁰ and that it is important to emphasize and recognize all types of women’s participation in politics.⁷¹ As poverty is one of the barriers to women’s empowerment and political participation,⁷² witnesses suggested several measures to reduce the negative effects poverty can have on women, such as applying gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) to the Poverty Reduction Strategy and mainstreaming the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as ensuring coordination between the National Housing Strategy and the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence.⁷³

Since confidence building starts during childhood,⁷⁴ witnesses emphasized the importance of incorporating changes to the education system to empower girls and young women and encourage them to engage in politics,⁷⁵ but also that the system should educate both girls and boys about gender equality, and socialization related to politics.⁷⁶ In a submitted brief, Lourdine Dumas and Solange Musanganya recommended that a bilingual, multidisciplinary educational platform focused on women’s leadership be created and made available online, offline, and through a mobile app.⁷⁷ In addition, Marjolaine Gilbert, Coordinator of the Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la

69 Ibid., 1550.

70 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1540 (Shal Marriott, as an individual).

71 Ibid., 1620 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual) and 1715 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

72 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

73 YWCA Canada, “[Racial Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Poverty as Barriers to Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

74 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1705 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

75 Ibid., 1650 and 1645 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

76 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1655 (Louise Cordeau, President, Conseil du statut de la femme); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1650 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

77 Lourdine Dumas and Solange Musanganya, “[Improving the Representation of Black Women and Trans Women in Politics \(Visible and/or Sexual Minorities\)](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

Capitale-Nationale, suggested that gatherings in town councils and internship opportunities be established for female students.⁷⁸

Projects that aim to address systemic barriers for women’s participation in political and civic life, such as Equal Voice’s Daughters of the Vote initiative, can be funded under Status of Women Canada’s Women’s Program.⁷⁹ Several witnesses asserted that the Government of Canada should continue to provide funding to organizations that support women’s empowerment and political engagement.⁸⁰ The Honourable Eleni Bakopanos stated that Elections Canada could be more engaged in encouraging women’s political ambition, through initiatives aimed at engaging young people.⁸¹

The sections that follow describe initiatives that could be undertaken to help empower women and increase their representation in electoral politics.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada continue to strengthen the application of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in all federal departments and agencies’ programs, initiatives, and strategies.

1. Campaign Schools for Women

Witnesses told the Committee that non-partisan training, particularly campaign schools, can be very beneficial to women who are considering entering electoral politics.⁸² Witnesses highlighted several areas in which campaign schools can be helpful: they can

78 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1640 (Marjolaine Gilbert, Coordinator, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

79 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1635 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

80 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1605 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government); Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018; and Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, “[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

81 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1655 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

82 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1610 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual) and 1615 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1620 (Shal Marriott, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1625 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual).



provide women with networking and mentorship opportunities,⁸³ and anti-harassment and media training.⁸⁴ Campaign schools can also help increase women’s confidence and allow them to learn practical skills such as fundraising and effective door-knocking approaches.⁸⁵

Witnesses encouraged the Committee to consider strategies to expand access to campaign schools and training for women.⁸⁶ Among the recommended strategies were increasing funding to existing organizations that provide campaign schools;⁸⁷ offering government-developed training programs and campaign-schools;⁸⁸ providing grant opportunities to cover the costs of campaign schools; and providing online courses.⁸⁹

2. Access to Role Models and Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

Witnesses stated that when women see other women in politics, they are more likely to be interested, participate, and see themselves in politics.⁹⁰ Having access to role models, including to male role models, and to mentorship and networking opportunities, both at the formal and grassroots level,⁹¹ is an integral part of women’s decisions to enter

83 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1610 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual) and 1615 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual).

84 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1600 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

85 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

86 See for example: *Ibid.*, 1610 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual) and 1725 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1625 (Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1620 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

87 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1625 (Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1620 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

88 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1610 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual).

89 *Ibid.*, 1725 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

90 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1635 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual) and 1700 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); also Diversity Institute at Ryerson University, “[Submitted to The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

91 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1615 (Shal Marriott, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1535 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual).

electoral politics.⁹² Mentorship and networking help women acquire the skills and supports needed to be successful in politics.⁹³ Both mentorship and networking can also show women that they are not alone in the political race,⁹⁴ increase their confidence,⁹⁵ and teach skills and build capacity.⁹⁶

Jenelle Saskiw explained that in rural areas, networking can be very different for men and women, and that there needs to be an increase in networking spaces for women in these contexts. In addition, she emphasized that establishing better interactions between election periods is important, especially for candidates who ran and were not successful.⁹⁷

Sylvie Asselin, President of the Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale, explained that a lack of funding to organizations providing mentorship and networking opportunities remains a barrier to women accessing these types of opportunities.⁹⁸ Kayleigh Erickson called for greater funding for these opportunities,⁹⁹ and suggested that women's mentorship should be integrated into existing youth programs, such as model parliaments, to help alleviate the burden of providing these opportunities on organizations that are often under-resourced.¹⁰⁰

92 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1725 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale); Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, "[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1540 (Shal Marriott, as an individual).

93 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1635 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1615 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1700 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

94 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1645 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

95 *Ibid.*, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

96 *Ibid.*, 1615 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1700 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

97 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1715 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

98 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1725 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

99 Kayleigh Erickson, "[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

100 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1535 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).



Recognizing the positive effects that role modelling and mentorship can have, the Committee would like to encourage current and past elected officials to provide mentorship to both newly elected women, and women seeking elected office.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada increase funding for organizations and projects that:

- **support the political engagement and empowerment of diverse groups of women;**
- **provide relevant training, both in person and online, for women interested in seeking elected office;**
- **provide women with internships and similar opportunities in political workplaces;**
- **provide mentorship, role modelling, networking opportunities and guidance to women in order to increase their confidence and willingness to take risks and encourage them to seek elected office; or**
- **involve men in efforts to encourage women to run for elected office.**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada encourage elected officials to engage women in their communities by providing guidance, job shadowing and networking opportunities, including through local women’s councils and youth councils.

RECRUITING FEMALE CANDIDATES FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

The Committee heard that the under-representation of women in electoral politics may indicate difficulty to recruit female candidates to run for elected office. For instance, at the municipal level, mayors have reported that they find it difficult to recruit female candidates, and that this is especially true for women under 35 years of age.¹⁰¹

Witnesses explained that women often need to be asked multiple times or need to be convinced to run for political office,¹⁰² and as such political parties have to actively recruit women,¹⁰³ instead of encouraging women to put themselves forward.¹⁰⁴

William McBeath said:

I think it's also the case that we've relied for the most part on those individuals who have structural and situational barriers to their actually getting to the position of election. We're relying on women to do it as opposed to the demanders of nominees. We're relying on the supply, which is the women and the very ones who have those barriers in place. We're waiting for them to somehow magically come forward when we know it's not a level playing field for women and men in politics. This is the problem. When you have riding presidents saying we have one woman who's the leader of the party and we don't really need any others, this isn't true.¹⁰⁵

However, women do not lack the education and experience to hold an elected position: according to a representative from Statistics Canada, women are more likely than men to

101 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1640 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

102 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1625 (Norma Dubé, Director, Women for 50%) and 1725 (Marjolaine Gilbert, Coordinator, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1605 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie); also Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, "[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

103 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1605 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual) and 1605 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1700 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual).

104 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1600 (William McBeath, as an individual).

105 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1600 (William McBeath, as an individual).



possess a university degree at the bachelor level or higher; and women under 25 years of age are more likely than men to be working after obtaining their university degree.¹⁰⁶

Candidate recruitment and selection processes were cited as two of the main contributors to women's under-representation in politics.¹⁰⁷ Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, explained that her research has found that men are up to six times more likely than women to be selected as candidates for elected office.¹⁰⁸ Some witnesses argued that the under-representation of women in electoral politics is caused by a lack of demand for female candidates,¹⁰⁹ stemming from existing bias against women among political party officials responsible for recruiting and selecting candidates for nominations.¹¹⁰ Nancy Peckford told the Committee that, in the 2015 federal general elections, “[a] third of Canadians were going to the polls and they didn't have a single woman to choose from,” despite polls indicating that Canadians want to see more female candidates.¹¹¹

106 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1540 (Jennifer Kaddatz, Chief, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

107 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1550 and 1625 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual).

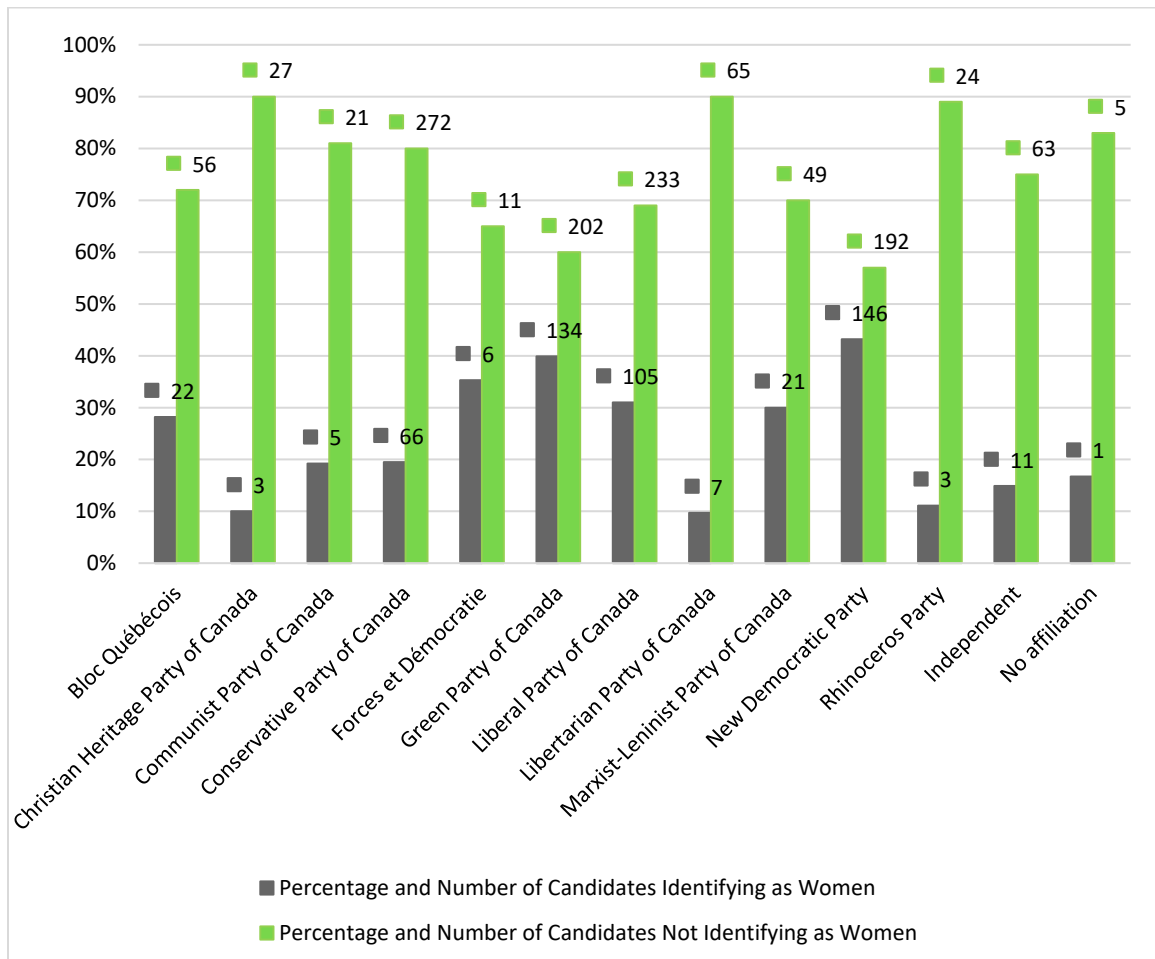
108 *Ibid.*, 1555.

109 *Ibid.*

110 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1550 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual) and 1650 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual); also Myrtle Green, “[Brief to the Status of Women’s Committee—Study on Barriers to Women Entering Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

111 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1655 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

Figure 5—Percentage and Number of Candidates Identifying as Women in the 2015 Federal General Elections, by political party



Note: Figure 5 presents data only for registered parties for which more than 10 confirmed candidates and at least one female candidate ran.

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from Parliament of Canada, [“Women Candidates in General Elections - 1921 to Date”](#) and from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, *Report on the 42nd General Election of October 19, 2015*, 2016.

Among solutions suggested by witnesses to increase women’s representation in electoral politics, we find: adopting clear language that requires electoral district associations (EDAs) to recruit female candidates;¹¹² denouncing and enforcing a zero-

112 Kayleigh Erickson, [“Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives,”](#) Submitted Brief, 28 June 2018.



tolerance policy for incidents of sexism and discrimination; being mindful of creating accessible spaces in formal political institutions and organizations for women; establishing a non-partisan coalition dedicated to encouraging women to enter electoral politics;¹¹³ and involving everyone, including men, in increasing women’s representation in electoral politics.¹¹⁴

Witnesses noted that EDAs, local search committees and political parties all have a role to play in increasing women’s representation through candidate recruitment and their selection processes.

In a submitted brief, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec told the Committee that equality could be set as an objective in the *Canada Elections Act* to send the message that gender equality is important.¹¹⁵

A. INCREASING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Women from minority groups may face additional barriers to entering electoral politics.¹¹⁶ Witnesses emphasized that the lack of representation of women from diverse backgrounds in politics, including racialized women, Indigenous women¹¹⁷ and women who are transgender, means that these groups are excluded in decision-making processes.¹¹⁸ Over the years, there has been an increase in the proportion of elected women in rural ridings¹¹⁹ (from 10% in the early 2000s to 24% in 2015), but women running in rural ridings still face specific barriers, such as, in some cases, fragile local

113 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1715 (Daniela Chivu, as an individual).

114 Ibid., 1545 and 1555 (William McBeath, as an individual).

115 Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, “[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

116 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1720 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

117 Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, “[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

118 Lourdine Dumas and Solange Musanganya, “[Improving the Representation of Black Women and Trans Women in Politics \(Visible and/or Sexual Minorities\)](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

119 For Statistics Canada, rural areas include all territory lying outside population centres. Population centres have “a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the current Census of Population.” See: Statistics Canada, [Population Centre and Rural Area Classification 2016](#).

economies.¹²⁰ Louise Carbert, Associate Professor of Political Science at Dalhousie University, recommended that initiatives to increase women’s representation in rural ridings in legislatures and similar bodies should focus on easing economic distress in these areas.¹²¹

Witnesses agreed that a diversity of opinion is advantageous to politics, and that a woman can be affiliated with any political party and should not be criticized for her choice of partisanship.¹²² Sarah Childs, Professor of politics and gender, Birkbeck, University of London, said that “our parliaments should be representative of the countries they serve. Gender is a salient characteristic. Women are diverse, and that diversity should be present within our parliaments.”¹²³ The Committee was told that a woman who wants to be in electoral politics is the ideal candidate for political office,¹²⁴ and women from diverse backgrounds should have equal opportunity to run.¹²⁵ The Committee stresses the importance of both ensuring a diversity of opinion in politics and ensuring that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is upheld.

“ [O]ur parliaments should be representative of the countries they serve. Gender is a salient characteristic. Women are diverse, and that diversity should be present within our parliaments.”

Sarah Childs, Professor,
Politics and Gender, Birkbeck,
University of London, as an individual

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- 120 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1540 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual).
- 121 Ibid., 1545.
- 122 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual) and 1615 (Shal Marriott, as an individual).
- 123 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1705 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).
- 124 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1555 (Shal Marriott, as an individual).
- 125 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1650 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1705 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual); and 1705 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).



Witnesses stressed the need for diverse parliaments, legislatures and local and municipal governments.¹²⁶ Increasing diversity in electoral politics would be beneficial for several reasons: it could change the culture of politics;¹²⁷ it could add diverse perspectives to decision-making which could improve policies; different issues could be brought forward; it could bring more role models and mentors; and it could make networking easier for women of all backgrounds and environments.¹²⁸ Witnesses explained that ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds, who defend various perspectives and are from all walks of life, are involved at all levels of electoral politics in Canada is crucial.¹²⁹ Yolaine Kirlew asserted that the visibility of women from diverse backgrounds in politics is important for teaching future generations that leadership comes from diverse backgrounds.¹³⁰

Witnesses shared initiatives that could be undertaken to increase women from different background's representation in electoral politics. In a submitted brief, the Diversity Institute at Ryerson University recommended implementing programs for women from diverse backgrounds to encourage them to enter electoral politics from an early age.¹³¹ As well, the Committee heard that targets could be established to ensure adequate representation of women from diverse backgrounds in electoral politics and to ensure that they run in ridings or districts they are more likely to win.¹³²

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- 126 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1705 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).
- 127 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1645 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).
- 128 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1705 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1630 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government) and 1710 (Louise Cordeau, President, Conseil du statut de la femme).
- 129 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1530 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy), 1705 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual) and 1720 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1650 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual) and 1545 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); and Lourdine Dumas and Solange Musanganya, "[Improving the Representation of Black Women and Trans Women in Politics \(Visible and/or Sexual Minorities\)](#)," *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.
- 130 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1745 (Yolaine Kirlew, Third Vice-President and Councillor, Municipality of Sioux Lookout, Federation of Canadian Municipalities).
- 131 Diversity Institute at Ryerson University, "[Submitted to The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.
- 132 Ibid.

In a submitted brief, YWCA Canada recommended that any federal initiatives aimed at addressing women's participation in electoral politics address the specific barriers faced by diverse and minority women, including racialized and Indigenous women. More specifically, the organization recommended that the Government of Canada, through the Indigenous Women's Circle of Status of Women Canada, develop a strategy supporting Indigenous women in electoral politics. YWCA Canada also stated that consultations for a federal anti-racism strategy should include the perspectives of racially diverse and Indigenous women who wish to enter electoral politics, and include their recommendations in the final strategy.¹³³

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, consult and collaborate with diverse groups of women to develop a strategy to encourage women from diverse backgrounds to participate in electoral politics and a strategy supporting Indigenous women in electoral politics, and report back to Parliament on the implementation and outcomes of these strategies on an annual basis.

B. THE ROLE OF ELECTORAL DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS AND SEARCH COMMITTEES IN THE RECRUITMENT OF FEMALE CANDIDATES

The Committee heard about the importance of local search committees and EDAs in increasing the number of women who hold elected office.¹³⁴ William Cross explained that EDAs with active local search committees were significantly more likely to have female candidates for nomination contests than EDAs without search committees.¹³⁵ As well, Mr. Cross found that EDAs with women in leadership positions were more likely to have female nomination contestants because female leaders are more likely to seek out other women for nomination than men.¹³⁶ However, EDAs have a low number of female executives and EDA presidents are mostly men.¹³⁷ Dawn Wilson, Executive Director of the PEI Coalition for Women in Government, urged political parties to consider having equal gender representation, and diverse people among its search committee

133 YWCA Canada, "[Racial Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Poverty as Barriers to Women in Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

134 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1650 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual).

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid., 1650 and 1700.

137 Ibid., 1650.



members.¹³⁸ Natalie Pon added that having more women involved in the grassroots process and on campaigns would bring change.¹³⁹

William McBeath called for changes to the *Canada Elections Act* to allow for the establishment and permanent involvement of political action committees (PACs) in the search for and training of female candidates that are affiliated with specific parties. He explained that establishing PACs would allow for greater recruitment and nomination of female candidates, as PACs could provide continued and consistent support, answer all the questions women have and actively recruit female candidates.¹⁴⁰

When asked about the role PACs could play in increasing the number of women running for elected office, Brenda O’Neill was very cautious and said that while PACs “can certainly help with the educative effect of teaching people what it actually means to run for office,”¹⁴¹ they can become barriers to electing more women.

C. THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE RECRUITMENT OF FEMALE CANDIDATES

Political parties, especially their leaders, can play a key role in ensuring that women overcome barriers to elected office and in achieving gender equality in electoral politics.¹⁴² The Committee heard that “[s]ystemic and structural factors impede women’s access to politics by creating invisible barriers. Chief among the barriers — the greatest, we think — are the political parties’ recruitment and selection processes.”¹⁴³

138 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1715 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government).

139 Ibid., 1710 (Natalie Pon, as an individual).

140 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1545-1550 (William McBeath, as an individual).

141 Ibid., 1620 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

142 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1610 (William McBeath, as an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1535 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1725 (Sylvie Asselin, President, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale), 1715 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government), and 1715 (Norma Dubé, Director, Women for 50%).

143 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1530 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

All political parties should bear the responsibility of fielding more female candidates and actively recruiting women for these positions.¹⁴⁴ In particular, the Committee was told that political parties should be examining their recruitment and selection processes to eliminate any sexism and bias that may implicitly be built into these processes and to recruit more women.¹⁴⁵ Melanee Thomas explained what these steps could look like for political parties:

What this means for parties and for organizers is that they actually should start saying no to candidates who volunteer or who are easy recruits from overrepresented groups. It means that leaders need to tell their organizers to find a set number of women to run. That number for parity in Canada is 169, so it's a low bar.¹⁴⁶

Political parties are responsible for creating an environment in which women have equal opportunities;¹⁴⁷ to do so, parties can offer support to female candidates who might be unfamiliar with the electoral process, for example.¹⁴⁸ In a submitted brief, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec recommended requiring that political parties create action plans that would include concrete measures to achieve gender equality and to report on their progress to chief electoral officers. To achieve goals set out in these action plans, political parties could be required to invest some of their subsidies into a

“ Systemic and structural factors impede women's access to politics by creating invisible barriers. Chief among the barriers — the greatest, we think — are the political parties' recruitment and selection processes.”

Thérèse Mailloux,
Chair, Board of Directors,
Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie

144 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1720 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, “[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 July 2018; and Myrtle Green, “[Brief to the Status of Women’s Committee—Study on Barriers to Women Entering Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

145 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1625 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

146 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1645 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

147 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1650 (Daniela Chivu, as an individual).

148 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1710 (Natalie Pon, as an individual).



fund to promote and support gender equality in politics.¹⁴⁹ As well, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec made several recommendations regarding women from different backgrounds' representation in electoral politics, such as:¹⁵⁰

- requiring that a certain percentage of parties' candidates be from racialized groups; and
- ensuring that parties' national lists reflect the ethnocultural diversity of Canadians, and that these candidates are well-positioned to win seats.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada consider making changes to encourage gender equality and diversity in electoral politics; to ensure more transparency and consistency in nominations processes; and to require registered parties to publicly report on their efforts to recruit female candidates from diverse backgrounds after every federal general election.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada encourage registered parties and registered electoral district associations to set goals and publicly report on their efforts to nominate more female candidates, to achieve gender parity on their boards of directors, including in positions of leadership, and to establish search committees for candidates in federal general elections and by-elections.

1. Offering Financial Incentives to Political Parties to Increase Women's Representation in Electoral Politics

Because of the important role political parties play in the recruitment and the selection process of candidates for elections, some witnesses stated that political parties should be incentivized to increase the number of female candidates running in elections.¹⁵¹

149 Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, "[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

150 Ibid.

151 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1715 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

Witnesses recommended a number of ways in which political parties could be incentivized.

Firstly, several witnesses recommended that political parties receive financial incentives to field more female candidates in elections,¹⁵² which some witnesses suggested doing at the federal level by amending the *Canada Elections Act*.¹⁵³ Witnesses shared the example of New Brunswick,¹⁵⁴ where changes were made to the formula for the public financing of political parties whereby votes “received by female candidates are weighted 1.5 times greater than votes received by male candidates.”¹⁵⁵ According to Kayleigh Erickson, this encourages political parties to run women in competitive and ridings they are more likely to win.¹⁵⁶

As well, witnesses suggested that subsidies could be available to political parties who meet a certain threshold of female candidates or women elected. For instance, Jeanette Ashe suggested that thresholds for female candidates or candidates from other marginalized groups could be established and subsidies could be available for political parties who meet them.¹⁵⁷ In a submitted brief, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec recommended subsidizing political parties based on the proportion of elected representatives who are women, rather than the proportion of

152 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1550 and 1555 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual); and Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

153 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1555 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual).

154 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018; and Equal Voice, “[Reducing Barriers to Women in Politics through the Promotion of Inclusive & Sustainable Political Workplaces](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

155 Government of New Brunswick, “[Government encourages recruitment of more female candidates](#),” *News release*, 22 March 2017; New Brunswick, *Political Process Financing Act*, Chapter P-9.3, s. 32(2).

156 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1605 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

157 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1620 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual).



candidates who are women once women represent more than 35% of those elected from the party.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, instead of providing financial incentives to political parties, William Cross suggested providing financing to “local EDAs that have more women on their executive or to local associations that have gender parity in their membership.”¹⁵⁹ Mr. Cross argued that such incentives might increase women’s participation in politics at the grassroots level, which might lead to more women seeking nominations.¹⁶⁰

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada create a financial incentive for all registered parties to nominate more candidates who are women in general elections and by-elections.

2. Quotas to Increase Women’s Representation in Electoral Politics

The Committee heard that one of the ways to rapidly increase the representation of women in electoral politics is to implement quotas. According to Brenda O’Neill, the implementation of quotas can rapidly eliminate stereotypes that are barriers to women’s participation in electoral politics:

Seeing more women in office acting as strong leaders would serve to dispel the stereotype that women are more suited to supportive roles than to leadership roles and are therefore unsuited to politics. It would also reinforce the role model effect. More women in political office increases the likelihood that women will see politics as an option for them. I think it would also help women to overcome the problem of feeling that they’re not competent enough to engage in politics.¹⁶¹

Quotas have successfully increased women’s representation in electoral politics in a number of countries where they were implemented, such as France, Mexico, New

158 Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, “[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

159 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1655 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual).

160 Ibid.

161 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1535 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

Zealand, Rwanda and Spain.¹⁶² According to Thérèse Mailloux, most of the “top 20 or 30 countries on the Inter-Parliamentary Union list have quotas prescribed by law or in their constitution, or quotas the parties impose on themselves.”¹⁶³

The Committee was told that implementing quotas would send a strong message about the importance of gender equality.¹⁶⁴ Several witnesses recommended that quota systems be established to increase women’s representation in electoral politics in Canada. For instance, some witnesses recommended that political parties be required to field an equal number of female and male candidates in general elections,¹⁶⁵ and that gender parity in the federal government’s Cabinet be legislated.¹⁶⁶ Witnesses told the Committee that quota systems should aim to increase the number of female candidates parties put forward in elections;¹⁶⁷ provide incentives for parties, for instance financial incentives;¹⁶⁸ and be adapted to the Canadian political context.¹⁶⁹ In a submitted brief, the Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie suggested that political parties be granted greater funding to “take concrete steps to bring parity to their lists of candidates before and during electoral campaigns.”¹⁷⁰

162 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

163 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1605 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

164 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1600 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

165 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1550 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1530 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

166 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1530 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

167 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1535 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); and Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

168 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1545 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1700 (Rosie Campbell, Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).

169 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1600 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

170 Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.



There was a diversity of opinions on the use of quotas. Firstly, witnesses explained that quotas can reinforce the idea that women are elected because of their gender and not because of their ability or competence.¹⁷¹ However, Brenda O’Neill told the Committee that, according to research, quotas tend to improve the quality of the elected candidates because “parties appear to be more careful of the skills they would like to see in their political nominees, rather than relying on short-hand mechanisms for selection such as gender and occupation.”¹⁷²

Secondly, the Committee was told that quotas can create conflict between quota groups and non-quota groups, because diversity is not only about gender, but also about identity factors such as age, religion, sexuality and profession.¹⁷³ To that point, Rosie Campbell, Professor of Politics, Birkbeck, University of London and Sarah Childs advocated for the development of a “quota-plus” policy in order to “maximize the supply pool of women, and particularly to diversify the supply pool of women” to ensure that parliaments are representative.¹⁷⁴

Finally, some witnesses said that quotas are an arbitrary metric that, once reached, can send the message that the issue for which the quota was implemented is settled.¹⁷⁵ For instance, William McBeath suggested that “[o]ftentimes, in order to meet the quota, political parties will nominate candidates in ridings in which they are unlikely — or even highly unlikely — to be successful. If they’re not going to win in a general election, then this does nothing to further the cause of electing more women candidates to public office.”¹⁷⁶ Michaela Glasgo told the Committee that a “quota system goes against the very principle of democracy” and that voters “should be electing who they want to see in Parliament and in legislatures.”¹⁷⁷

171 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1535 (William McBeath, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1650 (Natalie Pon, as an individual).

172 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1615 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

173 Ibid., 1535 (William McBeath, as an individual).

174 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).

175 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1535 (William McBeath, as an individual).

176 Ibid., 1530; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1610 (Shal Marriott, as an individual).

177 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1710 (Michaela Glasgo, as an individual).

In order to increase women’s representation in electoral politics, Michaela Glasgo suggested focusing on grassroots initiatives that “bring women to the table,” such as asking competent women to get involved in politics, instead of implementing quotas.¹⁷⁸

Observation 2

The Committee encourages registered parties to set voluntary quotas for the percentage of female candidates they field in federal elections and to publicly report on their efforts to meet these quotas after every federal general election.

178 *ibid.*

WOMEN RUNNING FOR ELECTED OFFICE

Running for elected office is not an easy decision regardless of gender; however, the Committee heard that women may encounter barriers over the course of this process that their male counterparts do not. The sections that follow describe the challenges women may face during nomination and election campaigns, including those related to rules and procedures, incumbency status, the impact of the choice of riding on candidates' success, and campaign expenditures.

A. RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The Committee was told that the rules and processes associated with nomination and election campaigns can be complicated,¹⁷⁹ and that decision-making within parties was described as “opaque.”¹⁸⁰ William McBeath explained that winning a nomination requires work and support in four areas: recruitment, training, fundraising and networking.¹⁸¹ He added that:

[Winning a nomination] involves identifying, and occasionally persuading, a candidate to seek office; mentoring them when they encounter challenges; building a team of volunteers and professionals to support the nomination campaign; raising money to pay for nomination campaign activities; and connecting the candidate and her team with key stakeholders, influencers and voters in the constituency to build a winning coalition of members or supporters.¹⁸²

179 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1810 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1530 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

180 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1610 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1605 (William McBeath, as an individual).

181 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1530 (William McBeath, as an individual).

182 Ibid.



Louise Carbert added that in nomination races in rural ridings, often small groups of people dictate which candidate they want to see go forward, and direct funding and support towards this candidate.¹⁸³

According to William Cross, increasing the number of women elected starts with party nominations. He added that evidence suggests that when party members are given the option to nominate female candidates, they will do so.¹⁸⁴ In addition, early and long nomination campaigns are more likely to attract female contestants.¹⁸⁵

Women may benefit from increased transparency and accountability in nomination and election campaign processes, as this would confirm that all candidates are subject to the same rules.¹⁸⁶ The Committee heard from Natalie Pon that the best way to support female candidates through the nomination and election process is to help them in concrete ways, such as in door-knocking, selling memberships and fundraising.¹⁸⁷

1. Data on Selection and Nomination Processes at the Federal Level

Under the *Canada Elections Act*, EDAs are required to disclose to Elections Canada only the names of people who entered the nomination contests.¹⁸⁸ The only gender-related data Elections Canada receives — and shares with the House of Commons — are on candidates in general elections.¹⁸⁹ Similar data are not collected consistently at the provincial or territorial levels and across municipalities.¹⁹⁰

A representative from Elections Canada explained that issues of privacy can arise if collecting certain information is not prescribed by law, including gender-related information.¹⁹¹ Following a nomination contest, the EDA holding the contest files a report with Elections Canada which includes the names of each contestant and identifies

183 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1625 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual).

184 Ibid., 1650 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual).

185 Ibid., 1655.

186 Ibid., 1600 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).

187 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1650 and 1700 (Natalie Pon, as an individual).

188 Ibid., 1825 (Jeff Merrett, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Systems, Elections Canada).

189 Ibid., 1830 and 1750 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).

190 Ibid., 1825 (Carole Saab, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Federation of Canadian Municipalities).

191 Ibid., 1755 (Jeff Merrett, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Systems, Elections Canada).

the winners. The form used for this report does not include any gender questions. A representative from Elections Canada speculated that using information from the reports filed by EDAs to collect and analyze gender data in nomination contests would not be precise, as this process would require assigning genders to participants based on their names alone.¹⁹²

The Committee was told that collecting data related to the number of women running for nominations would not be possible with any of Statistics Canada's current survey vehicles.¹⁹³

Both Jeanette Ashe and Jane Hilderman proposed two data-related strategies to increase the transparency of the nomination process at the federal level:¹⁹⁴

- Elections Canada could be given a formal role in monitoring recruitment processes and candidate selection contests with respect to data collection; and
- parties could be required to report to Parliament on their nomination processes, including on the amount of notice given before membership deadlines close, on who stands for selection, and on who is successful and who is not.

More specifically, Jeanette Ashe recommended that section 476.1(1) of the *Canada Elections Act* be amended — if possible through Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments — to require the collection of intersectional data from all participants in a selection contest, including, but not limited to: sex; gender identity; race; indigeneity; physical ability; and sexual orientation.¹⁹⁵ As well, Melanee Thomas proposed that EDAs be required to disclose and report information on selection and nomination processes to Parliament.¹⁹⁶

192 Ibid., 1750 and 1830.

193 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1605 (Jennifer Kaddatz, Chief, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

194 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1600 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy) and 1550 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual).

195 Ibid., 1555 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual).

196 Ibid., 1725 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).



Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada consider making changes to allow, with candidates' permission, the collection of intersectional data on candidates in nomination races, including data on gender identity.

B. THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Committee heard about the role that the federal electoral system in Canada plays in women's representation in politics. A few witnesses indicated that some kind of electoral reform — such as multi-member ridings instead of single-member ridings¹⁹⁷ — may be necessary to increase the diversity of elected representatives.¹⁹⁸ However, Louise Carbert told the Committee that it is social democracy, rather than electoral systems, that allows for the election of women.¹⁹⁹

While Thérèse Mailloux argued that the first-past-the-post voting system is not a barrier to gender parity in Canadian politics,²⁰⁰ several witnesses expressed the opposite.²⁰¹ Adopting a proportional representation (PR) system was cited by some witnesses as a potential solution to the purported barriers created by the current electoral system.²⁰² Witnesses recognized that while research has found that the representation of women in countries with PR systems is on average 8% higher than countries with other systems

197 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1625 (Brenda O'Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

198 Myrtle Green, "[Brief to the Status of Women's Committee—Study on Barriers to Women Entering Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

199 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1615 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual).

200 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1530 (Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie).

201 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1605 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); and Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, "[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

202 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1605 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1615 (Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, as an individual) and 1615 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual); and Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, "[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

in 2012, PR systems do not guarantee parity.²⁰³ Some witnesses speculated that PR systems may work well in combination with other proactive strategies.²⁰⁴

In a submitted brief, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec recommended introducing a new electoral system that would assign “at least 40% of the seats in Parliament in proportion to the number of votes received by the parties across Canada” and that would “establish a national list.” National lists would “alternate between female and male candidates, starting with a woman, while ensuring a minimum representation of all the regions in Canada.” In this system, every voter could cast two ballots.²⁰⁵

C. THE IMPACT OF INCUMBENCY ON CANDIDATES’ SUCCESS

The Committee heard that incumbent candidates are rarely challenged when seeking re-nomination,²⁰⁶ and that incumbent candidates tend to receive greater financial resources, support and visibility during an election campaign compared to non-incumbent candidates.²⁰⁷ According to a representative from the Privy Council Office, “there is an incumbency advantage, and that generally seems to support men.”²⁰⁸ Melanee Thomas indicated that her research has found that female incumbents are

203 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1700 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1625 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1615 (Louise Carbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, as an individual).

204 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1615 (Jeanette Ashe, Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, as an individual); and Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

205 Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec, “[Equal Rights for Women Must be Paramount in the House of Commons](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

206 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1650 (William Cross, Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1720 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

207 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

208 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1700 (Joshua Bath, Analyst, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office).



more “precariously placed” than their male counterparts.²⁰⁹ However, Karen Sorensen explained that once women “prove [them]selves” they may be re-elected.²¹⁰

Approximately two-thirds of the current members of the House of Commons won their seats in ridings that did not have incumbent candidates.²¹¹

D. THE CHOICE OF RIDING AND CANDIDATES' SUCCESS

Witnesses told the Committee that women are often recruited for and nominated in ridings in which they are less likely to win based on their party’s past election results in the riding. Parties may present many female candidates but based on the ridings in which they run, these women have little chance of being elected.²¹² The Honourable Deborah Grey told the Committee:

Don't put them, as women, in some riding they don't have a hope of winning. That's pathetic to me, when they say, “Look at all the women we ran.” They didn't have a hope of getting elected, but we put them on there and we look virtuous. No. Put capable women in from all backgrounds, and then we're able to share and make this country a much better place.²¹³

Running in ridings in which their party is historically less likely to win can be a barrier to women becoming candidates, and also to women being elected.²¹⁴ In a submitted brief, the Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie indicated that women have as much chance of being elected as their male counterparts if they run in ridings in which their

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- 209 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1645 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).
- 210 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1715 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).
- 211 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1720 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).
- 212 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1530 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1615 (Brenda O'Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).
- 213 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1600 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual).
- 214 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.

party is historically more likely to win.²¹⁵ Brenda O’Neill added that election results are sometimes unexpected and can lead to a jump in women’s representation; parties may win ridings they did not expect to win, and women are often the candidates in such ridings.²¹⁶

E. EXPENDITURES FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The Committee was told that financing a nomination and/or an election campaign may be a greater barrier to electoral politics for women than for men;²¹⁷ according to Jenelle Saskiw, male candidates raise more money than women, and men donate more money to male candidates.²¹⁸ Furthermore, funding the early stages of a campaign can be very important, and this may be more difficult for women, particularly for racialized and Indigenous women, in part because of the gender wage gap.²¹⁹ Kayleigh Erickson suggested that initiatives to address the gender wage gap, or policies to safeguard candidates’ income, such as paying employees two months of full wages and benefits if they are nominated by any party as a candidate, may encourage more women to run for office.²²⁰

In a submitted brief, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities expressed that women’s expenditures on campaigns tend to be approximately 10% higher than men’s expenditures. Women’s increased campaign expenditures may be linked to childcare and other care-related²²¹ or

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- 215 Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.
- 216 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1615 (Brenda O’Neill Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1645 (Riri Shen, Director of Operations, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office).
- 217 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, “[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1735 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1650 (Daniela Chivu, as an individual).
- 218 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1640 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).
- 219 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, “[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.
- 220 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.
- 221 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1740 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).



household responsibilities; “overcome[ing] ... negative perceptions about women;” and strategies to be competitive against incumbent — often male — candidates.²²²

A representative from Elections Canada said that, at the federal level, certain provisions in the *Canada Elections Act* regarding spending limits for nomination contestants, candidates and parties “create equal opportunity for all participants by limiting the amount of funding that is required to compete in a nomination contest or election.” Personal expenses — including child care, or care for a person with a mental or a physical disability — incurred as a result of an individual’s candidacy are regulated under the *Canada Elections Act*. A candidate can contribute a maximum of \$5,000 for personal expenses if they are not reimbursed from funds raised for the campaign. These requirements may lead to a disadvantage for candidates with care-related personal expenses. As such, the former chief electoral officer recommended that Parliament remove the restriction on personal expense contributions.²²³

Representatives from Elections Canada and from the Privy Council Office spoke to the Committee about the changes to the *Canada Elections Act* that were proposed in Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments,²²⁴ in particular, provisions that would:²²⁵

- remove the limit on federal elections candidates’ own contributions towards personal expenses incurred as a result of their candidacy; Bill C-76 would allow candidates to pay these expenses with either campaign funds, or with their own funds. As such, candidates’ care-related costs would no longer contribute to their campaign expense limit.
- increase the reimbursement by the Receiver General of care expenses for federal elections candidates who receive 10% of the vote from the current 60% to 90%.

A representative from the Privy Council Office indicated that while the changes proposed in Bill C-76 would benefit all federal elections candidates, “evidence suggests

222 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, “[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

223 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1740 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).

224 Bill C-76 received Royal Assent on 13 December 2018.

225 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1645 and 1650 (Riri Shen, Director of Operations, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1740 (Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Elections Canada).

this would be more likely to benefit women candidates.”²²⁶ As mentioned in a previous section of this report, the Committee heard that the presence of a young child has a notable impact on women’s work hours²²⁷ and that the cost of childcare was a barrier to women’s participation in electoral politics.²²⁸ Furthermore, Bill C-76 contains several provisions that would reduce barriers to participation for people with disabilities.²²⁹

226 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1645 and 1650 (Riri Shen, Director of Operations, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office).

227 Ibid., 1530 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada).

228 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1545 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

229 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1650 (Riri Shen, Director of Operations, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office).

WOMEN WORKING AS ELECTED OFFICIALS

Women working as elected officials in municipal or local governments, in provincial or territorial legislatures and in the House of Commons may face a number of barriers to achieve full and equal participation. For instance, according to a Samara Centre for Democracy survey, former female Members of Parliament indicated they felt they had to "work harder, prepare more, and speak" louder to be heard during their time in politics. Younger female respondents to the survey indicated that they "felt their credibility and their authority as a candidate and as [a Member of Parliament] were often more open to doubt" and that "their opinions did not carry as much weight" as their male counterparts.²³⁰

The sections that follow describe some of the barriers faced by female elected officials, such as a lack of family-friendly and gender-sensitive political workplaces, gender-biased media treatment and gender-based violence and harassment, as well as some possible solutions to address these barriers.

A. FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND GENDER-SENSITIVE POLITICAL WORKPLACES

The Committee heard that legislatures and other similar bodies were created and designed at a time when men and women did not play both professional and personal roles, as it is the case today.²³¹ As explained previously, politics is often seen as a masculine environment and the emphasis on debate and conflict can discourage women from pursuing a career in electoral politics. Indeed, the Committee heard that some women do not see themselves working in this type of environment.²³²

Witnesses shared with the Committee some family-friendly and gender-sensitive initiatives, such as parental leave, support for care work and work-life balance, as well as some changes to rules, procedures and practices, that could have a positive effect on

230 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1530 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).

231 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1650 (Louise Cordeau, President, Conseil du statut de la femme).

232 Ibid., 1630 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government), 1650 (Louise Cordeau, President, Conseil du statut de la femme), and 1625 (Norma Dubé, Director, Women for 50%); also Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, "[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 6 July 2018.



female elected representatives if implemented in parliaments, legislatures or local governments.

1. Parental Leave

At the federal level, rules allow Members of Parliament to be away from the House of Commons for a maximum period of 21 days for sickness or other exceptional circumstances, but do not specifically address parental leave.²³³ Sarah Childs told the Committee that implementing parental leave for parliamentarians would show “that Parliament is a place for people who have families.”²³⁴

A representative from the Privy Council Office explained that Bill C-74, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 2018 and other measures aims to amend the *Parliament of Canada Act* “to allow Parliament to create a regime for maternity and parental leave.”²³⁵ Bill C-74 received Royal Assent in June 2018. Section 59.1 of the *Parliament of Canada Act* was amended to allow for the Senate and the House of Commons to make regulations “that relate to the attendance of members, or to the deductions to be made from sessional allowances, in respect of its own members who are unable to attend a sitting of that House by reason of (a) being pregnant; or (b) caring for a new-born or newly-adopted child of the member or for a child placed with the member for the purpose of adoption.”²³⁶ As of 5 December 2018, the House of Commons has not made such regulations.

The Honourable Eleni Bakopanos recommended introducing a 60-day leave period for female Members of Parliament who become parents to give them a “little more leeway to enjoy the first few months of their newborn's life.”²³⁷

233 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1710 (Selena Beattie, Director of Operations, Cabinet Affairs, Legislation and House Planning, Privy Council Office).

234 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).

235 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1710 (Selena Beattie, Director of Operations, Cabinet Affairs, Legislation and House Planning, Privy Council Office).

236 [Parliament of Canada Act](#), R.S.C., 1985, c. P-1, s. 59.1.

237 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1630 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

2. Childcare

Lack of access to adequate childcare options is one of the barriers faced by female elected officials, as well as by women aspiring to a public charge.²³⁸ Several witnesses stressed the importance of providing adequate childcare options to elected officials, particularly for female elected officials,²³⁹ because the “lack of accommodation for caregiving in many political spaces can ... limit women’s opportunities.”²⁴⁰ Jenelle Saskiw shared some of the childcare-related challenges of elected officials in rural areas:

When I was first elected as mayor, I was paid \$50 as a per diem for every meeting I attended. With a babysitter for four kids, I went in the hole. For two years, until I convinced council to allow us to raise the rates to \$100 per diem, I actually lost money on every single meeting that I attended ... I think it's really important to ensure that we look at everything as a well-rounded balance, to see where we can offer extra services, especially in rural communities. We don't have a day care. You rely on the girl down the street. You hope that she's free so that she can come and watch the kids for you in the evening, but it could be that she has an exam the next day and has to be back home by nine o'clock. I think that we have to look at how we can ensure that we have these resources in place that are fully rounded for absolutely everybody, regardless of where we are geographically and what age our children are.²⁴¹

In a submitted brief, Equal Voice recommended the expansion of childcare service on Parliament Hill to full- and part-time care and to after-hours care so that services offered would better align with the parliamentary schedule.²⁴²

The Committee also heard that having a workplace, a schedule and policies that accommodate elected officials with caregiving responsibilities is important to ensure that parliaments and similar bodies are suitable workplaces for all.²⁴³ The Committee

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- 238 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1530 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).
- 239 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government); Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, [“Barriers Facing Women in Politics,” Submitted Brief](#), 6 July 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1725 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).
- 240 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, [“Barriers Facing Women in Politics,” Submitted Brief](#), 6 July 2018.
- 241 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1705 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).
- 242 Equal Voice, [“Reducing Barriers to Women in Politics through the Promotion of Inclusive & Sustainable Political Workplaces,” Submitted Brief](#), June 2018.
- 243 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1630 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual).



was told that the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons has recently made changes to the travel point system for Members of Parliament. No travel point is deducted for dependents under the age of six and half a point per trip is deducted for children between the ages of 6 and 20 years of age and for youth between 21 and 25 years of age if they are full-time students.²⁴⁴

3. Work-Life Balance for Elected Officials

Witnesses indicated that some women identify the difficulty of achieving a satisfactory work-life balance as a barrier to entering politics.²⁴⁵ Witnesses shared a number of initiatives that could be undertaken to help achieve this balance.

Firstly, witnesses spoke about some flexible work arrangements that could be implemented to allow elected officials to respond to their various personal and family responsibilities, such as caring for family members. For instance, Nancy Peckford recommended that, during sitting weeks in the House of Commons, Fridays could be designated as constituency days for Members of Parliament so that they could work from their ridings.²⁴⁶ As well, the Honourable Eleni Bakopanos recommended allowing pregnant Members of Parliament or new mothers to participate virtually in the work of the House of Commons. For example, travel requirements could be reduced for new mothers by allowing them to participate in Committee meetings and vote via teleconference or videoconference.²⁴⁷ Marjolaine Gilbert recommended implementing a plan to foster greater work-life balance among politicians in legislatures and similar bodies, which would include day care, homework help, the ability to do telework and a review of wages.²⁴⁸

Secondly, witnesses told the Committee that having an efficient and predictable schedule can help elected officials achieve a better work-life balance.²⁴⁹ For instance,

244 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1710 (Selena Beattie, Director of Operations, Cabinet Affairs, Legislation and House Planning, Privy Council Office); and House of Commons, Board of Internal Economy, *Minutes*, 24 May 2018.

245 Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

246 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

247 *Ibid.*, 1630 (Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member, Equal Voice).

248 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1640 (Marjolaine Gilbert, Coordinator, Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale).

249 Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie, et al., “[Women in Politics and the Obstacles they Face](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

Karen Sorensen explained that setting rules to make schedules of elected officials predictable would allow them to go home around the same time each day.²⁵⁰ As well, a number of witnesses recommended adhering to fixed elections date.²⁵¹

4. Rules, Procedures and Practices

A representative of the Samara Centre for Democracy suggested that female elected officials experience politics differently than their male counterparts, in part because of various rules, procedures and practices in politics.²⁵²

The Committee was told that one of the differences in how men and women experience politics can be seen in how each group experiences heckling. Jane Hilderman explained that, according to a survey of sitting Members of Parliament, “67% of women [Members of Parliament] reported gendered heckling versus just 20% of their male counterparts.”²⁵³ Female respondents to the survey indicated that gender-based heckling affected their performance and reduced their willingness to participate in debates.²⁵⁴ Witnesses suggested implementing preventive or disciplinary sanctions in legislatures or similar bodies to prevent the use of gender-based heckling, such as training, using camera angles that show hecklers, or having the Speaker of the House of Commons ask hecklers to remove themselves for a period of time and to apologize.²⁵⁵ Actions such as shifting the language used to talk about women in politics, not

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- 250 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1725 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).
- 251 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).
- 252 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1530 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).
- 253 Ibid.
- 254 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018.
- 255 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1605 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1605 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).



objectifying women and not making gender-based comments, could help create a more inclusive environment.²⁵⁶

Witnesses shared various examples of changes that could be made to ensure that parliaments, legislatures and local and municipal councils are gender-sensitive. Parliamentary roles and duties could be distributed more equally between men and women to ensure that women have a chance to influence parliamentary rules, procedures and practices.²⁵⁷ In this regard, Dawn Wilson suggested implementing policies that support “increased gender and diversity.”²⁵⁸

Secondly, witnesses stressed the importance for parliaments and similar bodies to subjects themselves to gender-sensitive parliament audits, or gender safety audits, with the goal of identifying areas in which they might not be sufficiently sensitive to the needs of women or of elected officials from diverse identity groups.²⁵⁹ In a submitted brief, the Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie suggested creating a structure whose mandate would be “to diagnose gender sensitivity and establish an action plan to prioritize parity” within legislatures assemblies.²⁶⁰

Furthermore, witnesses told the Committee that elected officials’ remuneration should be competitive. Nancy Peckford told the Committee that Members of Parliament’s office budgets should be increased to ensure adequate resources are available for constituency offices. As well, Ms. Peckford added that Members of Parliament’s remuneration should be competitive so that all qualified women can run for elected office at the federal level if they wish.²⁶¹

Finally, to “address the inequality that allow women’s vulnerability to be exploited,” the National Democratic Institute recommended, in a submitted brief, that political parties

256 Kayleigh Erickson, “[Challenging Barriers Experienced by Women Within/Entering Politics by Addressing Systemic and Structural Inequality in Society and Funding Non/Multi-Partisan Initiatives](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 28 June 2018; and Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie, et al., “[Women in Politics and the Obstacles they Face](#),” *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

257 Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

258 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government).

259 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1630 (Sarah Childs, Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, as an individual); and Equal Voice, “[Reducing Barriers to Women in Politics through the Promotion of Inclusive & Sustainable Political Workplaces](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

260 Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

261 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1635 (Nancy Peckford, Executive Director, Equal Voice).

implement measures to strengthen internal dispute resolution mechanisms; enforce sanctions for perpetrators of violence; increase transparency of resources allocation to candidates; review parties' meeting times and locations; and allow for monitoring of parties' social media accounts for abusive or hateful communications.²⁶²

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, at the next meeting of Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial Status of Women Forum, urge all jurisdictions to discuss ways to make legislatures more gender-diverse.

Observation 3

The Committee asks that its Chair send a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons to ask the Speaker to consider studying initiatives that could prevent and discourage the use of gender-based heckling in the House of Commons.

Observation 4

The Committee believes that services and initiatives such as parental leave for parliamentarians; the possibility of voting and participating remotely in parliamentary work; access to full- and part-time child care services; and the undertaking of gender-sensitive audits of legislatures could help foster inclusive, family-friendly and gender-sensitive political workplaces.

B. GENDER-BIASED MEDIA TREATMENT OF FEMALE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Media coverage of female politicians sometimes upholds negative gender stereotypes and norms, a practice that reinforces the idea that politics is not for women. This type of coverage may dissuade women from seeking elected office²⁶³ and might put women in danger of experiencing violence.²⁶⁴ Witnesses described various ways in which the media treats female politicians differently than their male counterparts. Firstly, female

262 National Democratic Institute, *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

263 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and Diversity Institute at Ryerson University, "*DiversityLeads: Women in Politics*," *Submitted Brief*, 6 July 2018.

264 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1650 (Daniela Chivu, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).



politicians are often asked about their work-life balance, strengthening the stereotype that women are the primary caregivers, whereas male politicians are rarely asked similar questions.²⁶⁵ Karen Sorensen said that media needs “to stop asking if a woman can be both a politician and a mom.”²⁶⁶ Furthermore, the Committee was told that the media is more likely to refer to female politicians by their first names, which “downplays their contributions and capabilities as serious politicians.”²⁶⁷

Secondly, witnesses described a different use of language by the media around female and male politicians: while the media does talk about both female and male politicians’ appearances,²⁶⁸ in doing so, the media is more likely to use a negative tone when describing a woman’s appearance and a neutral tone when describing a man’s appearance.²⁶⁹ Karen Sorensen said that while male politicians are sometimes criticized based on their appearance, the criticism is not usually gender-based.²⁷⁰ The Honourable Deborah Grey stressed the need to stop criticizing politicians, both male and female, based on their appearance.

Another difference in media treatment between female and male politicians is the amount of media coverage received. Research has shown, for instance, that female premiers in Canada receive less media coverage than their male counterparts.²⁷¹

The Committee heard that the media, including social media, can play an important role in changing the narrative around women in politics. Madeleine Redfern stated that media sensitivity training was necessary to change the way women in politics are portrayed.²⁷²

265 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 June 2018, 1530 (Kayleigh Erickson, as an individual).

266 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

267 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and Women Transforming Cities, “[Barriers Facing Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 July 2018.

268 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1620 (Hon. Deborah Grey, as an individual).

269 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1715 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

270 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

271 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1715 (Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, as an individual).

272 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1705 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit).

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada develop and fund awareness campaigns and training programs to counter the negative effects of gender-biased treatment and harassment of female politicians, both in traditional and social media.

C. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Gender-based violence or harassment against female elected officials can take many forms including sexist comments or insults, sexual harassment, sexual assault and death threats.²⁷³ Data show that violence against female elected officials is common;²⁷⁴ a representative from the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women shared with the Committee the results of an Interparliamentary Union (IPU) survey on violence against women in politics: more than 80% of the respondents indicated having experienced some form of psychological violence during their parliamentary terms and 20% reported being victims of physical violence.²⁷⁵ Jenelle Saskiw shared one difficult experience with the Committee:

A determining factor for me was actually a disgruntled resident who phoned our house at five o'clock in the morning and asked if I would come and meet him downtown. He was upset about a downtown revitalization project we were doing in Marwayne. Maybe it was just a feeling in my stomach, but I did not choose to go and meet him. He phoned back with some subsequent phone calls that got more and more hostile as the conversations continued, enough that I did phone the police. Later that evening that gentleman was found deceased on a rural road after he had committed suicide. I often wondered what would have happened if I had gone and met him.²⁷⁶

Women from diverse backgrounds experiences of gender-based violence are also shaped by intersecting forms of violence, such as racism, homophobia and

273 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1615 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

274 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1715 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1530 (Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy).

275 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

276 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1655 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).



transphobia.²⁷⁷ Having diverse backgrounds can be challenging for female elected officials and women looking to enter electoral politics, as their backgrounds are added targets for violence. In a submitted brief, the YWCA Canada recommended that Status of Women Canada’s Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre support data collection on the barriers faced by minority and women from diverse backgrounds in electoral politics and that this data be made public.²⁷⁸

Power imbalances in electoral politics can allow “perpetrators to use their positions within our systems to commit sexual violence and to silence survivors.”²⁷⁹ For instance, Madeleine Redfern told the Committee that, sometimes, “when [some] Inuit male leaders travel with their female staff, they think it's a benefit and a perk that they can sexually harass, sexually assault or have relationships with women on the road.”²⁸⁰ Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director of the Young Women’s Leadership Network, told the Committee that even if women choose to enter politics, as volunteers, staff or elected officials, violence can force them to have to choose between their employment and their safety.²⁸¹

Witnesses also stressed the fact that violence against elected officials not only affects the person experiencing violence, but also their families.²⁸² The Honourable Joanne Bernard explained that dealing with homophobia as an elected official was very difficult for her and for her family:

The sexism, misogyny, and homophobia that ensued over the months after coming into office took a tremendous toll on me. It took a tremendous toll on my partner and my son. My son at that time was 23. The first negative tweet that he saw, he took himself

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- 277 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1640 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1615 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1705 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit); and YWCA Canada, [“Racial Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Poverty as Barriers to Women in Politics,” Submitted Brief](#), June 2018.
- 278 YWCA Canada, [“Racial Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Poverty as Barriers to Women in Politics,” Submitted Brief](#), June 2018.
- 279 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1640 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network).
- 280 Ibid., 1710 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit); Madeleine Redfern, Correspondance with FEWO, 27 September 2018.
- 281 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1645 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network).
- 282 Ibid., 1705 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit).

off social media, and then he stayed off and has stayed off because it still continues to this day.²⁸³

Gender-based violence and harassment, including violence and harassment experienced on social media, are some of the elements that can prevent women from entering politics.²⁸⁴ Karen Sorensen stated that “Any woman who has political aspirations that spends 10 minutes on Twitter following their female mentors may be simply afraid to run. Women see how women are being treated and they get the message. Their response is, ‘Thanks, I’ll take a pass.’”²⁸⁵ In a submitted brief, the National Democratic Institute stressed the anti-democratic dimension of violence perpetrated on social media. Online harassment can force women to self-censor and withdraw from public space, which “represents a direct barrier to women’s free speech, undermining democracy in all its key elements.”²⁸⁶ The Honourable Joanne Bernard said that, at one point in her career, she hesitated encouraging young women to run for elected office because of violence against female elected officials.²⁸⁷

“ Any woman who has political aspirations that spends 10 minutes on Twitter following their female mentors may be simply afraid to run. Women see how women are being treated and they get the message. Their response is, ‘Thanks, I’ll take a pass.’”

Karen Sorensen,
Mayor of Banff, as an individual

Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, urged the Committee to begin “a directed national conversation about the security climate facing women in politics.”²⁸⁸

283 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1535 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual).

284 See for example: Ibid., 1645 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual) and 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women); and National Democratic Institute, *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

285 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1635 (Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual).

286 National Democratic Institute, *Submitted Brief*, July 2018.

287 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1540 (Hon. Joanne Bernard, as an individual).

288 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 June 2018, 1545 (Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, as an individual).



Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada support data collection on the barriers faced by minority women and women from diverse backgrounds in electoral politics, and that this data be publicly available.

1. Support for Victims of Gender-Based Violence or Harassment

Few victims of violence or harassment in political workplaces report their experiences to campaign or party officials because of the “lack of clear human resources mechanisms and policies, the fear of public scrutiny and victim blaming, and an overall culture of indifference toward sexual violence.”²⁸⁹ According to Arezoo Najibzadeh, partisan politics also forces survivors of violence to stay silent about their experiences; survivors do not want to be vilified or become socially isolated, as “social capital is a driver of success within politics.”²⁹⁰

The Committee heard that political institutions should also provide non-partisan survivor-centred and trauma-informed supports and resources for victims of violence and harassment.²⁹¹ As well, Arezoo Najibzadeh recommended that training on sexual violence prevention and support be mandatory for individuals working and volunteering in elected politics, for example in legislatures and political parties.²⁹² She explained that victims will not come forward if they are not supported by those around them in the workplace.²⁹³

Witnesses recommended that political institutions develop and adopt sexual violence policies as well as report mechanisms.²⁹⁴ A representative from the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women told the Committee that the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-65, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and

289 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1645 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network).

290 Ibid.

291 Ibid., 1645 and 1715; and YWCA Canada, “[Racial Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Poverty as Barriers to Women in Politics](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

292 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1645 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network).

293 Ibid., 1700.

294 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018, 1635 (Dawn Wilson, Executive Director, PEI Coalition for Women in Government); Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, “[Act for Parity](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1645 (Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network).

violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1 to “ensure that federally regulated workplaces, including Parliament, are free from sexual harassment and violence” and that \$34.5 million starting in 2018-2019, and \$7.4 million per year ongoing were being allocated to support the implementation of the legislation.²⁹⁵

In a submitted brief, Equal Voice recommended that, at the federal level, an independent body be established outside the House of Commons to oversee harassment policies; determine if an investigation of alleged harassment is necessary; solicit a third party to oversee an investigation, if necessary; and report the results of an investigation to a “newly established House of Commons committee.”²⁹⁶

Finally, witnesses stated that education on gender-based violence and harassment, on how to use social media as a positive tool, and on women’s history should be offered to foster long-lasting cultural change.²⁹⁷

The Committee would like to stress the importance that the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment Between Members and the House of Commons Policy on Preventing and Addressing Harassment adequately protect Members of Parliament and political staff from harassment and violence.

295 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1640 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

296 Equal Voice, “[Reducing Barriers to Women in Politics through the Promotion of Inclusive & Sustainable Political Workplaces](#),” *Submitted Brief*, June 2018.

297 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 26 September 2018, 1725 (Arezo Najibzadeh, Executive Director, Young Women’s Leadership Network) and 1715 (Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 14 June 2018, 1715 (Jenelle Saskiw, as an individual).

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women Justine Akman, Director General Policy and External Relations Nancy Gardiner, Senior Director General Women’s Program and Regional Operations	2018/06/05	106
Privy Council Office Joshua Bath, Analyst Democratic Institutions Selena Beattie, Director of Operations Cabinet Affairs, Legislation and House Planning Riri Shen, Director of Operations Democratic Institutions	2018/06/05	106
Statistics Canada Pamela Best, Assistant Director Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division Jennifer Kaddatz, Chief Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division Anna Kemeny, Survey Manager Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division	2018/06/05	106
As individuals Kayleigh Erickson Michaela Glasgo Shal Marriott	2018/06/07	107
Equal Voice Hon. Eleni Bakopanos, National Board Member Nancy Peckford, Executive Director	2018/06/07	107

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As individuals	2018/06/12	108
Jeanette Ashe, Chair Political Science, Douglas College		
Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor Department of Political Science, University of Toronto		
Rosie Campbell, Professor Politics, Birkbeck, University of London		
Louise Carbert, Associate Professor Political Science, Dalhousie University		
Sarah Childs, Professor Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London		
William Cross, Professor Department of Political Science, Carleton University		
Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor Department of Political Science, University of Calgary		
Samara Centre for Democracy	2018/06/12	108
Jane Hilderman, Executive Director		
As individuals	2018/06/14	109
Hon. Joanne Bernard		
Hon. Deborah Grey		
Jenelle Saskiw		
Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff		
Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie	2018/06/14	109
Esther Lapointe, Director General		
Thérèse Mailloux, Chair, Board of Directors		
As an individual	2018/06/19	110
Natalie Pon		
Conseil du statut de la femme	2018/06/19	110
Louise Cordeau, President		
Elections Canada	2018/06/19	110
Jeff Merrett, Director Regulatory Affairs and Systems		
Susan Torosian, Executive Director Policy and Public Affairs		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Federation of Canadian Municipalities Yolaine Kirlew, Third Vice-President and Councillor Municipality of Sioux Lookout Carole Saab, Executive Director Policy and Public Affairs	2018/06/19	110
PEI Coalition for Women in Government Dawn Wilson, Executive Director	2018/06/19	110
Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale Sylvie Asselin, President Marjolaine Gilbert, Coordinator	2018/06/19	110
Women for 50% Norma Dubé, Director Roxanne Fairweather, Co-Chair	2018/06/19	110
As individuals Daniela Chivu William McBeath Brenda O'Neill, Associate Professor Department of Political Science, University of Calgary	2018/09/26	111
City of Iqaluit Madeleine Redfern, Mayor	2018/09/26	111
Young Women's Leadership Network Arezoo Najibzadeh, Executive Director	2018/09/26	111

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Arney, Jeremy

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

Diversity Institute at Ryerson University

Dumas, Lourdine

Equal Voice

Erickson, Kayleigh

Green, Myrtle

Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie

Musanganya, Solange

National Democratic Institute

Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec

Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie

Table de concertation des groupes de femmes du Bas-St-Laurent

Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie (TCMFM)

Women Transforming Cities

YWCA Canada

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 123, 124 and 128](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Vecchio
Chair

Supporting Women in Politics While Respecting Their Merit

Introduction

The participation of women in politics is of great importance to the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. During the study, the committee had the opportunity to hear from more than one hundred witnesses who each offered a perspective worthy of careful consideration. The Conservative members are submitting this dissenting report in order to draw attention to a number of points the Liberal members of the committee voted down and were therefore excluded from the main report. This was in spite of the fact witnesses discussed these themes at length.

There's no doubt that Canada is greatly enriched by the participation of women in all levels of political leadership. Women make up half of Canada's population. Therefore, to accurately represent the Canadian public, the participation of women in the political realm is much needed. While women should be encouraged to run for political office and should be free to do so without reprisal, they should be given the benefit of gaining a seat based on merit, rather than being used as a token to meet a government-dictated quota.

The previous Conservative government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, created opportunities for women to take positions of leadership within both the private and public sphere, including elected office. During Harper's mandate, the number of women in the House of Commons and at the Cabinet table increased to levels not previously observed.

Conservatives remain dedicated to making sure women from a diverse set of backgrounds are able to pursue political office free of barriers. This should be a grassroots, democratic effort, that protects the freedom of women.

The Power of Running on One's Own Merit

Conservatives believe that women deserve rightful recognition as strong leaders within their workplaces. In its chapter entitled, "The Role of Political Parties in the Recruitment of Female Candidates", the committee's report outlined and highlighted specific testimony with regard to implementing gender quotes so as to increase the number of women in politics.

Though the Conservative Party of Canada understands that quotas can be well-meaning, they often suggest that a woman is not at the table based on her own merit, but solely based on her biological gender. A consequence of the quota approach is that it can leave a woman wondering if she was given a seat at the table purely based on the organization's need to fill a

seat with a woman in order to meet an artificial measure or based on her own hard work and value.¹

Quotas undermine a woman's merit. If a woman is nominated as a candidate in order to fill a quota, she will never know if she is there because she is capable and qualified, or only because of her gender.^{2 3}

Using quotas within the electoral process delegitimizes the democratic process.⁴ Canadians are capable of choosing strong candidates without government interference.⁵

Women are strong, powerful, and free to positively impact Canada's political realm and have the intelligence and work ethic to gain their rightful place in public office.

The Power of Diversity

¹ "I think I addressed that briefly by saying that I'm not a number. I'm not a percentage, so if anybody sees me as somebody...they might always wonder whether I got there just because I'm a woman. I don't want any part of that." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 14, 2018, 1600, Hon. Deborah Grey, (As an Individual)

² "In my opinion the quota approach is the wrong way to address the problem of recruiting more women candidates, for several reasons. The biggest one is that I believe it causes more harm than good to the goal of electing women to public office in the long term. Firstly, quotas are arbitrary. They are a metric established and once that quota target has been reached, it sends the message that no more work needs to be done—we have our quota list, issue managed. Oftentimes in order to meet the quota, political parties will nominate candidates in ridings where they are unlikely—or even highly unlikely—to be successful. If they're not going to win in a general election, then this does nothing to further the cause of electing more women candidates to public office. Secondly, candidates elected under a quota system frequently face the often unfair perception that their ability to fulfill the role of being an elected official is secondary to their gender. It leads some to call into question the merit of their candidacy and their ability to perform the job." FEWO, *Evidence*, September 26, 2018, 1535, Mr. William McBeath, (Principal with Canadians for Democracy and Prosperity; board member of the Southern Alberta Chapter of Equal Voice)

³ "In fact, I think what the government is already doing, such as introducing quota systems, further marginalizes women and creates an environment where we're taking women who are perfectly meritorious and saying that it's because of their gender that they get a position.... I think that's demeaning and condescending to women who otherwise are perfectly qualified. I feel that the quota system that the present government has introduced is harmful and demeaning to the spirit of equality of women, and I don't feel that government policy has a place in making what are essentially societal changes." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1550, Ms. Shal Marriot, (As an Individual)

⁴ "Yes, I'm unequivocally against the quota system. I think that, especially here, being elected to one of the highest offices here in the House of Commons or in the legislatures across the country, having a quota system goes against the very principle of democracy. People should be electing who they want to see in Parliament and in legislatures, so if you're saying that the only way you're going to get there.... If my success is contingent upon this categorization of myself by nothing but my gender.... That isn't something I think of when I wake up in the morning. I don't think, oh, I'm a woman and therefore my life is going to be structured this way. No, I have to go to work; I need to make breakfast; I need to do this and whatever else." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1510, Ms. Michaela Glasgow, (As an Individual)

⁵ "As you're a government, I would encourage you to do nothing on the subject of women in politics. I do not believe any policies can be implemented that would shift the attitude about women in politics today. Rather, change must take place on the individual and societal level by first shifting the very way we talk about women in politics." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1540, Ms. Shal Marriot, (As an Individual)

Canada is a diverse nation. It is a country that weaves multiple cultures, religions, viewpoints, and ethnicities together. Canada’s elected representatives should reflect this unique diversity. There needs to be room for differences within Parliament and for people of all political opinions to be represented.⁶

Encouraging and seeking to bring more women into politics on all levels means bringing in a more diverse group of women that represent different parties, ethnicities, and beliefs.^{7 8}

The House of Commons, along with provincial and municipal government bodies need to reflect the Canadian public. There is no wrong way to be a woman, and by extension, there is no wrong way to be an elected official. There are many ways to be a successful woman and a successful representative. It is up to each woman to choose her path.

Sadly, not all parties appreciate the diversity that exists within Parliament. Some women are mistreated by female members of other political parties because they fail to adhere to the same ideologies. This is a significant barrier that wasn’t addressed in the final report.

⁶ “Simply, there are correct and incorrect political opinions to have, and if you have an incorrect political opinion, then you’re not really representing women. Each time a woman speaks, she is thought to be speaking on behalf of her gender. An example of this, I think, can be seen in the abortion discussion, where women who are pro-life are slandered as anti-woman and ostracized because of their opinion. This tyranny of the opinion of women is not brought about by men who have the luxury of speaking independently for their gender; rather it is the habit of women themselves who place obligations on the entirety of their gender and who are all too willing to dismiss views that run contrary to popular opinion as incorrect and in opposition to the very fundamental notion of equality for women.” FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1540, Ms. Shal Marriot, (As an Individual)

⁷ “No, no, there are questions of intersectionality. Sometimes it’s a problem that we think of this dichotomously—man and woman—but absolutely not; there has to be outreach into ethnic communities, visible minority communities, lesbian and gay communities to make sure our parliament is representative of all the different facets of Canadian society.” FEWO, *Evidence*, June 12, 2018, 1705, Mr. William Cross, (Professor Department of Political Science, Carleton University, As an Individual)

⁸ “Women are not a monolith. Women are 52% of the population. Of course there is great diversity among women, with any number across the ideological spectrum, across the economic spectrum, and across any kind of policy preference spectrum. The argument I would make is that our deliberative democracy inside parliament would be made better by bringing all of these diverse experiences forward into parliamentary debate. That is the real benefit, for me, in having a gender-equal parliament, for sure.” FEWO, *Evidence*, June 12, 2018, 1705, Ms. Melanee Thomas, (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, As an Individual)

Multiple witnesses emphasised that peer-to-peer harassment by women exists and that women can often hold other women back more extensively than men do. Harassment from a woman's female colleagues is prevalent in the political realm.^{9 10}

The Conservative Party also recognizes that women of all backgrounds and views need to work together and for each other so as to provide training and mentorship for one another. Working together, and toward a compromise, can ensure that there are a greater number of women in elected office.¹¹

The Power of Mentorship and Training

An alternative to implementing quotas to increase the number of women in politics is an approach that relies on an increase in mentorship. The vast majority of Canadians believe in equal opportunity for men and women and it's clear that women are just as capable as men. By increasing the social network that women can call upon to provide advice, opportunities and experience. This can help break down some barriers that are in the way of women succeeding in politics.

Mentorship and training are influential tools that must be used to increase engagement from women in politics. Without legislating increases for women in politics, we can empower women of all ages to continue to become politically involved, by mentoring and providing role models

⁹ **MP Rachael Harder:** "My next question is to Status of Women. You've made it clear that harassment is one barrier that women face that often would perhaps prevent a woman or that a woman would give as a reason to not enter into politics. Often, when we talk about harassment, we talk about the actions of a man towards a woman. Do you have any information with regard to the harassment that women face from their female colleagues?"

Ms. Justine Akman: "I'm not aware of any research that's looked into that."
FEWO, *Evidence*, June 5, 2018, 1700, Hon. Rachael Harder, (Member of Parliament), and Ms. Justine Akman, (Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women, Director General, Policy and External Relations)

¹⁰ "I would say, too, that getting over the mentality and trying to really have a zero-tolerance policy for when someone steps backwards on this issue and paying, no, it's not okay if you make an anti-woman joke at a political event, or no, it's not okay if we only use language that can be applied to women like, "shrill", or, "bossy", or words that you only ever see applied by media, for example, in a female context. To me, that's where men really have to step up more so than they have." FEWO, *Evidence*, September 26, 2018, 1545, Mr. William McBeath, (Principal with Canadians for Democracy and Prosperity; board member of the Southern Alberta Chapter of Equal Voice)

¹¹ "In my opinion, political parties need to create conditions to encourage and give women equal opportunities to run for office. Nevertheless, as women, we must also realize that if we want to have an equal voice to that of men, we must make an effort to put partisanship aside and work together. It is up to us to continue whether to be divided based on partisanship and ideological lines, or to work toward a compromise to ensure women get elected in the Parliament of Canada. Instead of making politics a scavenger's playground, we could work together." FEWO, *Evidence*, September 26, 2018, 1650, Ms. Daniela Chivu, (Member of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), As an Individual)

to them and encouraging the capable, intelligent women in our own lives to run for political office.¹²¹³¹⁴

This mentorship and training are needs to be relevant and needs to triumph, and must come from other women, but also from the men in a women's life.¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷

The Conservative Party of Canada also believes it is very important to offer non-partisan training to women who are thinking of, or who are running for, political office.¹⁸ We believe this

¹² "As for an actual thing that we can all be doing, just ask women to run. If you see a competent woman sitting at the table at Tim Hortons or wherever she is, on the farm, and she's talking to you about politics or she's community-minded, why not just say, "Hey, have you ever thought about sitting on our EDA board?" Those are grassroots, organic initiatives that bring women to the table quite literally, which aren't necessarily government-imposed or some kind of structural demand." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1710, Ms. Michaela Glasgow, (As an Individual)

¹³ "When I say that government ought to be doing nothing, I do not mean that the people in government ought to be doing nothing. I would actively encourage you and other members of Parliament to go to high schools to speak about women in politics. Talk of the first female cabinet minister who earned her place in the Diefenbaker cabinet, who earned her position fighting for immigration and other such reforms, and give people role models to aspire to. Share your experiences." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1550, Ms. Shal Marriot, (As an Individual)

¹⁴ "The work of winning a nomination can be broken down into really four areas: recruitment, training, fundraising, and networking. It involves identifying, occasionally persuading a candidate to seek office; mentoring them when they encounter challenges; building a team of volunteers and professionals to support the nomination campaign; raising money to pay for nomination campaign activities; and connecting the candidate and her team with key stakeholders, influencers and voters in the constituency to build a winning coalition of members or supporters." FEWO, *Evidence*, September 26, 2018, 1530, Mr. William McBeath, (Principal with Canadians for Democracy and Prosperity; board member of the Southern Alberta Chapter of Equal Voice)

¹⁵ "As to women's equality and having a seat at the table, a man should ask a woman in the same way as I would ask another woman to sit at a table with me. I think that, by changing that narrative, elected women and elected people in general can have a greater impact than they think, because if we're constantly giving an economic portfolio to a man, or assuming that a woman wouldn't want that portfolio and that she would want, say, status of women instead, that's actually where we regress. Just making sure everything is open and available to people is the best step. FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1715, Ms. Michaela Glasgow, (As an Individual)

¹⁶ "When you're looking at getting involved, as I said, if you want a seat at the table, pull up a chair. For me personally, some of my biggest supporters have been men. Rachael's here today and she's one of my biggest mentors, but at the end of the day, I also have Jason Kenney who has been a huge mentor and inspiration to me. John Barlow has been a huge inspiration and mentor to me, and Drew Barnes. These people in various sectors of government have been absolutely influential in informing who I am and my politics and motivating me to go forward." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1650, Ms. Michaela Glasgow, (As an Individual)

¹⁷ "I'd also like to say we can't do it without men, without the 49% of men who have been through the experience. I have also had male mentors, by the way, and quite important ones. I had Robert Bourassa, Jean Chrétien, and Jean Charest, to give you a few examples. We need the help of men. Feminism isn't about being against men. I want to put that on the table. I don't believe in that. Feminism has changed over the years, and we have a lot of men who are very supportive." FEWO, *Evidence*, June 7, 2018, 1715, Ms. Eleni Bakopanos, (National Board Member, Equal Voice)

¹⁸ "I believe that in order to meet the goal of nominating and electing more capable women, we need to reverse course on what has been a trend of late about the provincial and federal levels; namely, the reduction or outright elimination of third-party involvement in political party nominations." FEWO, *Evidence*, September 26, 2018, 1530, Mr. William McBeath, (Principal with Canadians for Democracy and Prosperity; board member of the Southern Alberta Chapter of Equal Voice)

training must not only come from the government, or from political parties, but from groups of strong people who can train others.

Conclusion

There are many ways to be a successful woman and it's up to each woman to choose her path, which is why economic *choice* is the greatest measure of equality. Do women have the same freedom as men to pursue the career of their dreams? Do women have the same freedom to prioritize caring for a child or loved one as men do if that is what they choose? Do women have the same freedom as men do to start their own business? Does Canada's cultural framework afford women the freedom to choose part-time work over full-time work without feeling of lesser value? Do women feel free to choose a job that pays less but is more fulfilling without being pushed by the government to pursue a career where women are under-represented?

Autonomy must be granted. Freedom must be protected. Choice must be respected.

Recommendations

In response to the report that was tabled by the committee, the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women put forward the following recommendations toward helping women succeed in the political realm. These recommendations were omitted from the final report by the Liberals, but they express important points made by witnesses who testified during this study.

Harassment faced by Women

1. That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, and in cooperation with Statistics Canada research the prevalence and impact of harassment faced by women from other female colleagues.

Engagement of Men (amendment to Recommendation 5)

2. [That the Government of Canada, through the Status of Women Canada, increase funding for organizations and projects that] "promote the engagement of men as champions of women entering politics."

Women are Strong, Powerful, and Free

3. That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, create an awareness campaign that focusses on women's ability to run for elected office on their own merit, because they are strong, powerful, and free to positively impact Canada's political realm and have the intelligence and work ethic to gain their rightful place in public office.

Equal Participation for Women in Politics: A Long Way to Go

The study undertaken by the Parliamentary Committee for the Status of Women on Barriers Facing Women in Politics illustrates the challenges faced by women who would and should participate at every level of government in Canada.

We wish to thank and acknowledge the work of former NDP MP Kennedy Stewart in advancing this very important issue for study and consideration in the 42nd Parliament.

As we heard from witness Pamela Best, “women’s increased political participation as elected officials leads to better social, economic, and political outcomes for everyone.”ⁱ

The report touches on gender stereotypes and discrimination in regard to women’s political participation, yet it fails to demonstrate understanding of the fact that this discrimination is endemic in all levels of government.

A May 2018, Library of Parliament report presented findings that supported the 2016 report of the Auditor General of Canada that found Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) was neither completely nor consistently applied with quality in Government of Canada Departments. And while it wasn’t included as evidence in this study, the Library of Parliament report serves to underscore that if women are to become the political equals of men, government must use instruments like GBA effectively to ensure it understands and responds to the reality that policies can affect men and women in differing ways; it is more often than not women who experience the negative impacts of policy that is not subjected to a GBA lens.

Recommendation 4 of the Committee report does not respond to this failure to ensure a robust application of GBA on the part of the Government.

The NDP suggests that recommendation 4 should be worded as follows:

(4) That the Government of Canada make GBA mandatory in all departments and agencies; that the Government equip all department and agencies with tools and staffing levels required to order and conduct full GBA; and that the Government ensure all departments and agencies provide analysis in order to track GBA’s impacts on policy proposals.

The evidence in this report also pointed to problems inherent in the Parliament of Canada with regard to parental leave, pregnancy and work-life balance. In the report there was recognition that the maximum period for absence from the House of Commons and the need for greater flexibility as set out in Bill C-74 has not been acted upon by the House of Commons.

It is important to include in this dissenting report, a recommendation that the House of Commons make regulations that relate to the attendance of Members or deductions from seasonal allowances in respect to its own members who are unable to attend a sitting by reason of (a) being pregnant; or (b) caring for a newborn or newly-adopted child.

The barriers to women entering the political life are many and significant.

It is, however, irresponsible to discuss these barriers without an examination of the social conditions that serve to exacerbate those barriers. First and foremost is the failure of this Liberal government to support the national and regional women's organizations that promote women's equality and encourage women's political participation.

In 2006, the Conservative government of the day defunded national organizations such as the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) and others, creating a huge vacuum with regard to the research and advocacy that assisted women in their communities to pursue equity and equality. Core funding previously provided by the Department on the Status of Women is vital to providing this kind of advocacy. The Department has restored short-term funding on a project by project basis that ties up the resources of women's advocacy organizations. Lack of core funding essentially prevents women's organizations from doing the networking and advocacy work that increases political participation.

The Committee on the Status of Women would have done well to advise the Government to restore core funding for national women's organizations.

While this report includes a discussion about the ways in which sexual harassment and gender-based violence are systemic barriers to the participation of women in all aspects of community life, we feel it does not go far enough. The NDP would include recommendations allowing for an independent body to oversee the House of Commons harassment policies and investigate cases of alleged harassment. In addition, the NDP recommends the House of Commons provide non-partisan, independent, trauma-informed and survivor-centric support services to assist victims of violence and offer training on harassment to all Members of Parliament and political staff.

The study of Barriers Facing Women in Politics makes reference to lack of access to adequate child care, but does not include a recommendation that the Government implement its long-promised but yet to be fulfilled promise of a national child care program. Such a program is crucial to women considering the pursuit of political careers.

Support for childcare facilities in government workplaces, as well as family friendly infrastructure such as quiet rooms would also create an environment more conducive to women's participation. While there is much left to do, we acknowledge the work and progress made in the 42nd Parliament towards creating a more family friendly environment for Parliamentarians and staff.

Pay equity, affordable housing, a living wage and accessible affordable public transit are all factors contributing to the social condition of women in Canada. The absence of federal support in all of these areas serves as a detriment to women's participation in politics.

Promises and strategies whose funding is only guaranteed after the next election are not helpful to Canadian women who are in need of support now.

ⁱ FEWO, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, 1530 (Pamela Best, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada)

