

My name is Irene Backholm, and I am the President of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington Federal Liberal Association. I have served many years as school board trustee, as municipal councillor, and stood twice (unsuccessfully) for the Liberal nomination in my Riding.

During those years and while raising four children, what I felt I needed most was a WIFE!

There was a great series on TVOntario in 1988 "Women and Politics" hosted by Rosemary Brown. Participants were Alexa McDonough, Barbara McDougall, Iona Campagnolo, Christina McCall, Kay Stanley, Chaviva Hosek, Sylvia Bashevkin, Elinor Caplan, Barbara Hall, Maria Minna, Lynn McDonald, Gina Branna, Maude Barlow, Sheila Cops, Mary Lou Finlay, and others.

In 1987, there was a Background Paper from the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women: Women in Politics: Becoming Full Partners in the Political Process.

Everything that was said is still as relevant today as 20 years ago. Back in 1984, 9.9% of MP's were female, in 2006, it is 11.3%. What giant steps we have made!

With reference to your questions:

1(a) Setting a goal of X percentage is a waste of time and effort, especially if the Party does not put mechanisms in place to attract women candidates.

1(b) See above

1(C) I remain extremely wary of candidates (male or female) being "appointed" as candidates. If a candidate cannot win the nomination (as long as the rules are not bent), they are showing they do not have the support in the Riding to win an election. When a candidate is "appointed" it can cause great rifts in the Riding association that take a long time to mend. The Riding association supplies the money and the bodies to run a campaign. They must be made to feel that this is "their" candidate.

1(d) I don't know

2. The barriers for women candidates are that women put their families "first". Men never get asked who will look after the children while they are away from home in Ottawa. They never have to worry whether there is milk in the fridge, or how the laundry gets done, because they have WIVES! Until men become equal partners in childrearing and housekeeping, it will remain difficult for younger women with families to even consider running.

3(a) Yes, and it should be done through the Judy LaMarsh fund. We don't need another layer of administrators.

3(b) Not really. I believe we should be an integral part of the Liberal Party and not dilute out efforts through a separate women's commission.

3(c) No. But if there were to be such an office it definitely should NOT be in the Leader's Office. There has been too much power in the hands of "appointed" people in the Leader's office. We are now reaping what we have sown.

4(a) Yes

4(b) Provide more administrative support to people who do take positions in the Party.

I hope you find my comments useful and that you can get access to the research that has been done in the past.

Irene Backholm