

IT'S PARITY TIME!

Submission presented by:

Iris Almeida-Coté, President of the Women's Commission, LPC(Q)

On behalf of the Members of the Women's Commission,
Liberal Party of Canada (Québec section)

To the attention of:

The Liberal Renewal Commission Task Force on Women's Issues, chaired by the Hon. Anne McLellan
The National Women's Liberal Commission
The Liberal Party of Canada (Québec section)
All Candidates seeking the Leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

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We, members of the Women's Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada (Québec section) strongly believe that strengthening the role of women and achieving gender parity is central to the Renewal of the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party of Canada has long championed gender equity in its policies and gender parity in Canadian politics. Yet, time and again, we fall short of even the most modest objectives.

It is time to move beyond well-meaning rhetoric to a clear plan of action with concrete targets and timetables. The objective should be nothing less than achieving gender parity in all appointed and elected positions within both the Liberal Party of Canada and the Parliament of Canada.

WHAT THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA SHOULD DO

To achieve gender parity, the Liberal Party of Canada should address with urgency and full commitment a broad range of issues from campaign financing to the recruitment, training, mentoring and support of candidates as well as the structure and culture of the Party itself.

Accordingly, the Liberal Party of Canada should immediately implement the following recommendations:

- Strengthen the effectiveness, role and resources of the national and regional Women's Commissions so they can fulfill their central mandate: **getting more Liberal women into both party and parliamentary positions.**
- Require the Leader to consult the national and regional Women's Commissions when appointing candidates and approving nominations.
- Create and maintain national, regional and local rosters of potential women candidates for party and parliamentary positions through consultation with national and regional Women's Commissions as well as relevant community and professional organizations.
- Provide professionally supervised childcare at all major LPC events, such as leadership and policy conventions and provincial level meetings.

Achieving Gender Parity within the Party

Require gender parity for every position at every level of the Party. In the event of a single position (e.g. riding or Party President); there should be co-presidents (a man and a woman) or alternating male/female terms.

Establish a dedicated position within the Leader's Office to:

- Coordinate the work of the Liberal Party and Caucus to attain gender parity in both the Party and Parliament; and
- Conduct gender-based analyses (i.e. examine the impact on women) of all Party policies and proposals, including campaign platforms and convention resolutions.

Achieving Gender Parity among Liberal MPs

Ensure that 52% of Liberal MPs are women within three general elections through specific targets and timetables as follows:

- If the next election is held within two years, field women candidates in at least 35% of all ridings, including 100% of vacated ridings and [X]% of swing and winnable¹ ridings (defined in terms of [X] percentage of Liberal support in the last three elections).
- If the next election is held within 3-4 years, field women candidates in at least 50% of all ridings, including 100% of vacated ridings and [X]% of winnable ridings.
- Thereafter, continue to increase the number of women running in swing and "winnable" ridings so that gender parity is achieved within three general elections.

Recruiting and Mentoring

Establish and fund a sustained recruitment program led by sitting and former parliamentarians that will identify, recruit, mentor, encourage and support Liberal women to run for Parliament, especially in winnable ridings and those being vacated by a Liberal Member of Parliament.

Actively seek out women leaders in the community, in neighborhoods and a wide range of organizations and fields (academia, advocacy, business, cultural communities, faith, labour, etc.) in addition to women's professional and voluntary organizations.

Appoint women candidates in winnable ridings, particularly those that are being vacated by a Liberal MP. The recruitment process should ensure that the roster of all candidates – men as well as women – reflects the diversity of Canada.

Financing

The Liberal Party of Canada fund-raising programme should be overhauled with the aim to:

- Increase the number of contributors at least five-fold
- Encourage smaller contributions of \$25, \$50, \$100 and all amounts in between.
- Increase direct donations
- Create targeted fund-raising campaigns that focus on specific issues and encourage donations in support of specific Liberal initiatives.

The resulting increase in financial resources should be largely allocated to supporting women candidates.

¹ The precise percentage depends on the definition of "winnable" ridings as well as what proportion of these are currently held by women. The key will be to establish a baseline on which to build vigorously so as to achieve overall gender parity within three general elections.

WHAT A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO

Achieving Gender Parity within the Government of Canada:

To achieve gender parity within the Government of Canada, the next Liberal Government should immediately implement the following recommendations:

- Appoint women to 50% of Cabinet positions, including those traditionally held by men (such as finance, foreign affairs and defence)
- Appoint only women to Senate seats until gender parity is achieved in Parliament.
- Create a gender advisor/parity officer position in the Prime Minister's Office to:
 - Examine and advise on all government policies, programs and projects – fiscal, foreign and domestic – in terms of their impact on and implications for women; and
 - Review and make recommendations regarding all government appointments (crown corporations, courts, parliamentary, diplomatic, etc) to achieve gender parity.

Achieving Gender Parity within the Parliament of Canada:

To achieve gender parity within the Parliament of Canada, the next Liberal Government should immediately implement the following recommendations:

- Review the current first-past-the-post electoral system in terms of its impact on fair representation of the Canadian population, especially women. Consider alternate or additional electoral mechanisms and systems which may increase women's representation in Parliament.
- Provide pay equity, professional childcare services and extended maternity/parental leave for women in politics (elected officials as well as party, parliamentary and ministerial staffers).
- Establish a family-friendly parliamentary calendar through, for example, shorter, more efficient work weeks in Ottawa, and provide for electronic participation where practicable.
- Create an ethos of respect and civility by developing and implementing a parliamentary code of conduct to curb disrespectful language and behaviour.
- Provide financial rewards to all parties that get women candidates elected.
- Ensure adequate funding to Status of Women Canada to support non-partisan activities that will increase the participation of women in the political process (e.g. an on-line training programme for women candidates).

On behalf of the Women's Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada (Québec section) I would like to express thanks and appreciation for the assistance and input provided by members of the Women's Commission LPC(Q), in particular: Judith Berlyn, Désirée McGraw, Jennifer Crane and Tifanie Valade.

For more information please contact: Iris Almeida-Côté, President, Women's Commission, LPC(Q)

Email: iris.almeida@sympatico.ca; Telephone: (514) 487-4749.
