

Response from the riding of New Brunswick Southwest, submitted by Victoria Cunningham

The questions are:

1. Women comprise 52% of the Canadian population yet constitute only 20.3% of all Liberal MPs (11.3% of Government MPs and 20.7% in the House of Commons overall). In fact after the 2006 election one less woman sits in the House of Commons than in 2004.

(a) Our party has a “goal” of 25% women candidates. Is this "goal" good enough? If not, what should it be and why?

The goal is not good enough. I think you have to shoot for a higher expectation so that more effort will be put towards the goal. Shooting for the smaller number tends to make people think its not a challenge, or fait accompli.

(b) In what time frame should we achieve this goal?

(c) Do you think the Leader should retain the power to appoint candidates to guarantee that the percentage identified in 1(a) is achieved?

I am not too clear about this question but I have a strong dislike for people appointed to positions because of favor or thanks, that care should be taken to choose qualified, skilled and talented leaders. It makes a difference in the long run IMO.

(d) What strategies do you think we should adopt within the party and within your riding to ensure that women candidates are given an opportunity to seek nominations for and, run in, “winnable ridings”?

Paying attention to the female segment of voters, as well as other issues. Meaning the candidate should address womens concerns, but also make sure to encompass ALL concerns within the population sector so as to reach a broad base of voters. Some perceive female candidates to be strictly working for the female voters which is not true, or should not be.

2. In your opinion what barriers, systemic or otherwise, currently prevent women from running as Liberal candidates? How can they be removed or mitigated?

Gender barriers exist and if the women are not well versed in all the issues pertaining to ALL the voting segment, they will be perceived as being secular leaders with one intent. This is a problem I think. I also believe that women should have as their supporting staff a mixed bag of male and female and of different ethnic origins.

3.

(a) Do you believe that the Party should dedicate financial resources to identify, recruit and mentor future female candidates?

If there is a distinct niche and need for them YES but with caution and intelligence. But in actuality they should be able to compete and fit into the main stream just as their counterparts do. Perhaps it could be conceived as being biased.

(b) Do you believe the Women's Commission is fulfilling its role in this regard?

I am not sure in our area.

(c) Should the Liberal Party establish an office dedicated to this purpose? Where should that office be located: LPC? Leader's office? Other?

I think it would be helpful as there are many issues pertaining to women which go ignored or unresolved. They are obviously not the only segment of the population but I believe that their issues often also encompass families, homes, children etc so that it would be very helpful and is needed. As far as location, I suppose where one could find a vacancy and is economically feasible but easily found by constituents.

4. Our party has had, in its history, only one female President, Iona Campagnola.

(a) Do you believe that, within our Party, we need to do more to encourage women to seek senior executive positions?

YES, the time has come.

(b) If so, what concrete steps would you recommend that we take?

Making sure that women who seek executive positions have a clear and broad understanding of all problems, concerns and goals of the total population. They have to be careful not to be perceived as focusing ONLY on women's issues, at the same time, it's a fine line as so many women's issues are left out in the cold and not addressed. The women in this position would have to realize that they need support from across the spectrum and be perceived as being educated, intelligent, willing to grasp issues and to work for a resolution, display leadership skills, and have an empathy and understanding for the plight of the downtrodden who are in need etc. at the same time displaying strong leadership skills and the ability to arbitrate and skillfully politic in a masterful way.