

**LIBERAL RIDING ASSOCIATION
of
OAKVILLE**

**WOMEN'S TASK FORCE SUBCOMMITTEE
AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2006**

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

The group feels that the goal should be at least 50%, as the suggested 25% is barely over the current 20.3%. If there are more women voting Liberal than men, it is a priority to make sure the representation reflects the popularity of the party with women. At the same time, the Party must be cognizant of the many other marginalized groups (ie. persons with disabilities, seniors, ethnic minorities, youth and aboriginals).

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

The time frame should be within 10 years, with a clear increase at each election. It is imperative to have the Renewal Commission begin to address the issue of women’s representation NOW.

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

The overwhelming answer to this question is that we live in a DEMOCRACY where the Leader is entitled to SUGGEST a particular candidate for a riding, but the Riding Association should have the final say. Ultimately, the best candidate should win, no matter the gender, but the disparity will remain until the Party does a better job at recruiting and retaining candidates.

1. 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”?

- at the grassroots level, the riding associations should do more to inform the public what a politician or executive member of the association does.
- groups of Ridings should work together to develop a protocol to entice qualified female representatives through seminars that include potential candidates, experienced Riding Association executives, female MP’s
- Riding Associations should organize more intimate “Round Table” groups in the summers with the local MP, to discuss the roles and responsibilities necessary to become active in politics
- The Riding Association and LPC websites should include links to the Liberal Women’s Commission, including more publicity on what the job entails
- Better use of the media to enhance the image of female politicians
- Subcommittee at the Riding Association which actively searches the business/charitable organizations for women with the profile and skills necessary to be successful to win the riding

- Encourage Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments to provide public education that will promote the value of political involvement, through positive and rewarding experiences in volunteer work. This will encourage young women to continue with various levels of engagement throughout their lives.
- Continued efforts to reduce campaign contribution donations and spending during an election period, to offset the fundraising constraints that many female candidates (and other marginalized Canadians) face
- Promotion of a better life/work balance to attract more people to the field of politics. Incentives to attract women, who have long been the primary caregivers, include: increase in MP expenses to cover child care costs; acceptable use of technology to offset the demands of the House and travel requirements are suggested

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

- Financial inability to get involved at a more active level (ie. Participation in the “whole political picture” because of the costs of leadership conventions, AGM’s etc.)
- Challenges to secure adequate funding for female candidates. Males seem to have a greater advantage over corporate and union donations than females who have traditionally worked in the social service sector
- Family commitments until later in life
- Lack of public identity
- Visible minority women even more behind in terms of acceptability
- Stigma of participation in government, when the ethics are often in question. Women may have a more difficult time coming to terms with the actions of the government.
- Lack of grassroots encouragement, education in the schools, and media attention on women’s strengths (versus their weaknesses)

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

Yes.

3.b) Do you believe the Women’s Commission is fulfilling its role in this regard?

Not necessarily. There is a need to reach younger women. The status of the Women’s Commission lacks public attention. The members of the group knew very little about the actual roles and responsibilities of the Commission.

**3.c) Should the Liberal Party establish an office dedicated to this purpose?
Where should that office be located?**

Yes. The Party could fulfill its goal to increase female candidacy by creating a Women's Network for Strong Democracy. It should provide access for women executives/volunteers to meet and greet, using the media and other forums. An office should be located in Ottawa, with representatives from every Riding Association as a contact member. There should be an annual evaluation by/or report to the LPC from the Office. The staff should include someone with professional marketing skills, and knowledge of how to entice women to become more active as politicians at the federal level. Riding Associations should work on accountability and sharing ideas through the guidance and central coordination of the Liberal Women's Network.

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

Yes. This should happen from the grassroots, up.

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

- More encouragement at the local riding level, including annual male/female chairs. We recognize that the Oakville Riding is in the unique position of having been represented by the very capable Bonnie Brown since 1993 at the Federal level. This positive female influence has certainly encouraged women in the riding, although the Executive is still predominantly male at the Riding Association meetings.
- Encouraging more women who come out to campaign to come and join the Executive and attend Association meetings so they have a better idea of the many ways they can contribute to the political agenda of the Liberal party and the local Association Ridings.
- Greater promotion of young women at the Riding Association level, including encouragement to join the Young Liberals
- Preparation and grooming of female candidates with the goal of attaining executive positions in the LPC. Do not become complacent, and lose passion to fulfill this positive vision of the Party.