



## Nova Scotia Campaign School for Women: Navigating the Campaign Process

### A BACKGROUNDER

Nova Scotia has a rich history of democracy dating back to 1758, and this political system has developed and matured in the last 250 years.

For women, however, political involvement and representation through suffrage, candidacy or elected office has been a challenging road. In the year 2011, where 52% of the province's population are women and girls<sup>i</sup>, only 23% of the Nova Scotia Legislature<sup>ii</sup> and only 9% of Nova Scotia's representation in Parliament are women.<sup>iii</sup> Municipal representation of women in elected office has similar statistics. In rural Nova Scotia with populations less than 10,000, 24% of the Councillors are women and only 8% are female Mayors. In urban areas with populations equal or greater than 10,000, the percentage of Councillors is the same at 24%.<sup>iv</sup> However, there are no female Mayors out of the 16 municipalities that were documented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.<sup>v</sup> These staggering inequities in the number of Nova Scotian women in politics compared to the population shows that work is still needed to achieve gender equality in our elected chambers.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women is committed to work to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities. One way that women can realize equality, inclusion, and empowerment is through direct political involvement.

Historically, a conference on *Women in Politics* was held in 1990 at Mount Saint Vincent University where women from Nova Scotia shared their desire for political involvement with all levels of government and political parties.

That conference was followed by regional workshops throughout the province which continued for several years. Once again, women from both urban and rural areas affirmed their interest for political leadership and their need to learn more about the campaign process.

To provide more information to women considering political involvement, a publication was created entitled *Votes for Women: A Political Guidebook for Nova Scotia Women* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The guidebook is also available in French, «*Des votes pour les femmes - Un guide politique, Troisième édition*».



This publication has been disseminated throughout Nova Scotia in both printed and electronic formats, and continues to be a valuable resource to women considering political office.

To empower women to translate their desire for political leadership to a successful election campaign, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has offered campaign schools for women.

Over 137 women have participated and graduated from our five campaign schools. In recent history, six graduates have run for public office, and many more have helped organize campaigns or pursued non-elected political involvement.

With the municipal elections scheduled in 2012 and the provincial elections in 2013, this year's Campaign School comes at an opportune time. From October 14 to 16, 2011, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women is hosting its sixth non-partisan Campaign School for Nova Scotian women. Consistent with previous years, its purpose is to:

- Increase the participation of women in politics in our province;
- Share experiences and stories about the rewards and challenges of women in politics;
- Give information to women who would like to participate in municipal, provincial, and federal elections as either a candidate or campaign manager;
- Encourage women who are considering political participation in the future; and
- Equip women who want to be politically involved with the tools to effectively campaign and possibly, win an election.

Considered as a national best practice in providing campaign training to women, the Campaign School is a weekend of sessions and workshops that centre on experiential learning. The Campaign School allows for an exchange of knowledge and insights from and between women who have entered the world of politics, and who continue to effectively operate in it. The Campaign School also provides a wide-range of practical campaign strategies such as door-knocking, on-the-spot media interviews, and fundraising.

## REFERENCE

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<sup>i</sup> Statistics Canada. (2011). CANSIM Table 109-5325. Online. Retrieved July 20, 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> The Nova Scotia Legislature. (2011). *Women MLAs*. Online. Retrieved July 20, 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> Parliament of Canada. (2011). *House of Commons - Members*. Online. Retrieved August 31, 2011.

<sup>iv</sup> Federation of Canadian Municipalities. (2011). *Municipal Statistics: Elected Officials Gender Statistics*. Online. Retrieved July 20, 2011.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.