



Women in Local Government

LGLA Leadership Forum, Feb 1, 2018, Richmond BC

Moderator: Josie Osborne, Mayor of Tofino
 Sharon Gaetz, Mayor of Chilliwack
 Sheila Malcolmson, MP, Nanaimo-Ladysmith
 Sonia Theroux, Local Government campaign manager
 Aimee Watson, Director, RD Central Kootenay

Women elected as MPs and MLAs



26%

Canadian MPs
elected in 2015



39%

BC MLAs
elected in 2017

Women elected in BC 2014 General Election



57%

School
Trustees



36%

Councillors



27%

Mayors



24%

Electoral
Area
Directors

Source: BC Civic Info, FCM

Research shows that:

- ▶ Women bring distinctive perspectives and work styles
- ▶ Women are more likely to work across party lines
- ▶ Women bring forth issues related to women's lives, seek prioritization of them, and are persistent in keeping them on the agenda

United Nations

- ▶ Critical mass of at least 30% women is needed before legislatures produce public policy representing women's concerns and before political institutions begin to change the way they do business.

Women's representation in local governments makes a difference

- ▶ The number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils (panchayats) in India was 62% higher than in those with men-led councils.



Women's representation in local governments makes a difference

- ▶ In Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found



We need more women to run.

- ▶ The single largest barrier to gender parity in public office is the lack of women candidates.
- ▶ **Gender is not a liability at the ballot box:** When women run, they win at the same rates as their male counterparts in comparable races
- ▶ Inviting women to run, and providing support for campaigns, is not enough. There are social and structural barriers to recruiting and electing more women.

Barriers to recruiting & electing women

- ▶ Incumbency and first-past-the-post
- ▶ Lack of internal party quotas
- ▶ Lack of women in leadership positions
- ▶ Campaign funding:
 - Women have persistently lower incomes
 - Fundraising is more difficult
 - Women give less money and give in smaller amounts
- ▶ Media, sexism, and intrusion into personal lives
- ▶ Women candidates believe they must be overqualified before considering running
- ▶ Family work and time constraints
- ▶ Political culture, negativity, and partisanship

Panel Discussion

- ▶ Sharon Gaetz Mayor of Chilliwack
- ▶ Sheila Malcolmson MP, Nanaimo-Ladysmith
- ▶ Sonia Theroux Director of Mobilizing, GPC & local government campaign manager
- ▶ Aimee Watson Electoral Area Director, RDCK
- ▶ Josie Osborne Moderator, Mayor of Tofino

Thank you to the Local Government Leadership Academy for supporting this panel.