



TO GET ELECTED I WILL NEED:

- A FAIRY GODMOTHER
- A VERY GOOD MENTOR

Don't just play by the rules – make the rules. Find out how.

EXPERIENCES

equalvoice.ca/experiences

DO THE MATH: 5 DOES NOT EQUAL 1

Growing up in the 21st century, it's hard to imagine that at one time Canadian women could be fired from a job if they got married (yes, really), were not admitted to universities, and had no access to Facebook.

(OK, just joking on the Facebook front. Nobody had access to it before 2004.)

But even within the last century, women didn't have the right to inherit the family fortune (only guys were eligible), to run for office, or even vote in elections.

Fortunately, thanks to the "you've got to be joking" persistence of some hard working and courageous women, we've made progress.

Today, women are able to not only vote, but to run for office, get elected and even become prime minister.

THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.



The bad news is we're still a long way from achieving equality when it comes to having our views represented in the places where important decisions get made – decisions about how much money gets spent on what, and how – or whether – to save the planet!

Consider, in 2009, decades after finally being declared "Persons" under Canadian law (see page __), women made up only 21% of city councils, provincial legislatures, and the House of Commons.

Go figure: more than half of the population, but only one-fifth of the people in power. How does that work?

IT DOESN'T.

It's unfair and it's embarrassing: compared to 110 other countries around the world, Canada ranks 47th in terms of equality in governance. We have fewer female political representatives than Iraq, Rwanda, parts of Africa, most of Europe, and Australia.

SO WHAT?


OK, I know what you're thinking... Who wants to be a politician, anyway? You've seen them on TV, and your impression is: grey-haired, navy-suited, finger-pointing, insult-hurling white guys, who are seriously out of touch.

And no doubt some of them are, at least some of the time.

But here's the thing: Even if all our current politicians are smart, committed, informed and well-meaning (and the truth is, most are), it doesn't work that 80% of them are guys.

Because (and most people have figured this out already) women are different. When asked our opinions on many matters, we have different perspectives, informed by different life experiences.

We're treated differently by society from the day we're born. Our bodies have different capacities and challenges. Many of us get pregnant and give birth, and even if we don't, we generally spend more time raising kids and looking after aging parents than men do.



So it's not surprising that we often see things differently, care about different issues, and envision different solutions.

We tend to be more focused on the availability of childcare, the quality of schools, the services provided by the health care system, and the importance of the arts and relationships in sustaining society.

So if women aren't at the table where decisions are being made, our concerns don't get heard, and our needs and opinions don't have a chance to influence what happens.

Meanwhile, you may have heard that in general, women tend to value cooperation and collaboration over competition and conflict.

So some people think having more of us in the halls of power would actually be a really good thing for the country.

SO WHAT'S STOPPING US?

We're allowed to vote, run for office and become prime minister. So how come the number of women in politics is still so low?

Many barriers make it difficult for women to run for public office.

- For starters, because there are so few women in politics, they're not as visible as their male colleagues. As a result, it just doesn't occur to many girls and young women to even consider a political career.
- Women typically have greater difficulty seeking money from donors to finance our election campaigns -- mostly because our network of colleagues and friends is often smaller, poorer, and less influential than the networks of male candidates.
- Notwithstanding our noted capacity to multi-task, it's difficult to raise kids while speaking at rallies, knocking on doors and attending committee meetings far from home. Male candidates have the same challenge, of course, but they're more likely to have a spouse who's keeping the home front together.
- Then there's the fishbowl effect: women who run for office are often subjected to news coverage that focuses more attention on how they look (too frumpy! bad hair!) than on how smart or experienced they are. This undermines their efforts to be taken seriously, and many women just aren't willing to put up with such unfair scrutiny.
- Women's general inclinations towards resolving differences through conciliation and cooperation makes many uncomfortable with the confrontational style of debating common in politics. They just don't want to play dirty.
- Finally, women are less likely than men to believe that their knowledge and experience have prepared them for politics, even when they're actually more knowledgeable and experienced than guys who are willing to put themselves forward.

ENTER: EQUAL VOICE AND THE EXPERIENCES PROJECT

But Equal Voice was invented to help change that. And the Experiences Project is one of the ways we're aiming to do that.

We figure just because you've never before imagined what a great mayor, member of parliament or health minister you could be, doesn't mean we can't give you the opportunity to try the idea on for size!

So here's what we're planning to do:

- **MEET YOU** where you live in lively public forums;
- **ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS** about politics, government, democracy, the way it all works, how you're affected, and why you should care;
- **LISTEN TO YOUR IDEAS** about what's important, what you'd like to see changed, how we can engage more young people in public life;
- **EXPOSE YOU TO SOME ENGAGING SPEAKERS** who will share their personal stories of political life and why they recommend it; and
- **MATCH YOU UP WITH MENTORS** who will play a more active personal role in supporting you to pursue the kind of political involvement that suits you best.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

By the end of the process, you'll have been able to:

- Hang out with some amazing women of all ages;
- Acquire some great stories to tell your friends;
- Learn a lot of fascinating things about how the world works;
- Look at your skills, interests and goals in a different light;
- Develop an increased sense of your own power and how you can use it to make a difference in the lives of others; and maybe even
- Imagine what it would feel like to serve as a leader in your own community or country.

... and who knows where that will lead?!

THEY LOBBIED IN PETTICOATS

... and without email or txt msg!

“Suffragettes” -- if you didn’t know better, you might think it was a cheer-leading squad or a retro girl band.

The term for women’s activists comes from the word “suffrage”, which means the right to vote in political elections. Although men began to vote for their political representatives way back in 1791, women were denied the opportunity for another century or so.

Hard to believe now, but back then, most people – many women included – figured that politics, like medicine and law, was a guys-only pursuit.

But attitudes started to change in the second half of the 19th century when a few trailblazing women started to demonstrate that they were just as capable as guys in carrying out jobs that had previously been reserved for the men in suits set.

Additional pressure came from women who were fighting to limit alcohol abuse and improve working conditions for factory workers. But without the ability to vote, women were unable to exert much influence on politicians.

THE FABULOUS FAMOUS FIVE



So in 1876, they started organizing to lobby for women's suffrage. It wasn't easy. In fact, it took another 40 years before Manitoba became the first jurisdiction in Canada to grant women the vote – white women, that is.

Most other provinces and the federal government soon followed suit, although Quebec withheld the right until 1940.

Regrettably, Canada's laws continued to prevent Chinese-, Indo-, and Japanese- Canadians – both men and women – from voting until the late 1940s. And shockingly, aboriginal Canadians weren't permitted to vote, unless they gave up their First Nations status, until 1960!

For early women activists, suffrage was just the start. They also began pressuring the federal government to appoint a woman to the Senate. But governments kept using the excuse that under Canadian law, only men were considered "persons", and only persons were eligible for important positions.

Are you amazed that such an argument could be made with a straight face?

If you've ever visited Calgary's Olympic Plaza or Parliament Hill in Ottawa, you may have seen the bigger-than-life statues of five lively women in turn of the century garb, holding an impromptu outdoor tea party.

These women – known as the "Famous Five" – were not amazed: they were used to being told to stick to their knitting and leave the important things to men.

But Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Henrietta Muir Edwards belonged to the "I don't think so" club.

Smart and sassy, dedicated and determined, they petitioned the courts to change the law. Their fight took them all the way to Britain for a final appeal. But they won.

Canadian women have benefited from the determination of the Famous Five in countless ways ever since. And now those courageous women are recognized as a symbol of all those who work to promote women's equality.

In their name, six Canadians who continue to advocate for women's rights are honoured every year by the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case.





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equal voice

ELECTING MORE
WOMEN IN CANADA



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada



Bank Financial Group



CANADIAN WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES FEMMES EN COMMUNICATIONS

