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To The Hon. Jack Layton,  
Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada,  
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Layton:

I am writing to you as a friend of Equal Voice, our national, volunteer advocacy group for the election of more women. As you know we are multi-partisan, working with members of all parties, including your own, to build a cross-party consensus on fairer representation in political life. Equal Voice is growing fast—witness our chapters springing up across the country in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, the North West Territories, plus a National Youth Chapter—because of the disappointing pace of progress for women in politics.

We are aware that the New Democratic Party has an affirmative action policy to encourage the nomination of more women, and that you, as leader, have made a point of recruiting women candidates. The NDP's record in nominating women for election is the best in Parliament, but still falls short of the more balanced slates necessary if women are to be full partners with men in Canadian public life.

For this coming election, which appears likely to perpetuate the status quo in the Commons, we ask you to intervene personally to ensure remaining winnable ridings go to women candidates.

When the election is over, we ask you to continue to use your leverage to achieve voting reform at the federal level. We are persuaded that a mixed system, which includes seats based on proportional representation, would help us achieve fairer representation in the Commons.

Our National Capital Region chapter is tracking nominations for the election, and reports that fewer than a quarter of the total party candidates are women. Your party has nominated the most women so far and we congratulate you for that. But, because so many incumbents have been protected in their seats, and because of the overall gender imbalance in the nominations, this snap election is unlikely to produce more than the 21 per cent female

Members. We urge you to continue your role as champion of electoral reform.

Thank you

Rosemary Speirs, National Chair Equal Voice  
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