

Our ancestors founded
a democratic nation.
Are we – with all our
privileges – capable of
maintaining and
renewing it?



Presented to the Nova Scotia
Legislative Committee on
Democratic Process, 3 Nov 2008



Equal Voice Nova Scotia

- We are a multi-partisan, non-profit organization. equalvoice.ca
- We want to change the face of Canadian politics by having more women hold leadership positions at every level of government.
- Presented by Louise Carbert, Chair EVNS and Associate Professor of Political Science, Dalhousie University.

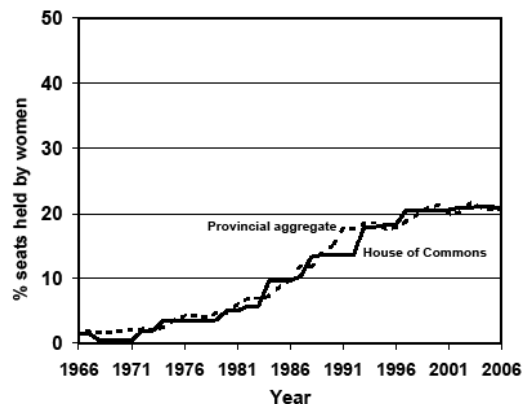


Equal Voice activities in 1 year

- Created and delivered a civics-education workshop called “Government is Us”
- D250 awarded \$4500 to mount a workshop on women and Senate reform
 - Invited Hons. Senators Jane Cordy, Raynell Andreychuk, & Lillian Dyck; postponed to spring 2009
- Spoke at NS Campaign School
- Operated “Take a girl to vote” with YWCA and Girl Guides in 2008 campaign
- Spoke at YWCA Opening Doors event
- Op-Ed in Chronicle Herald

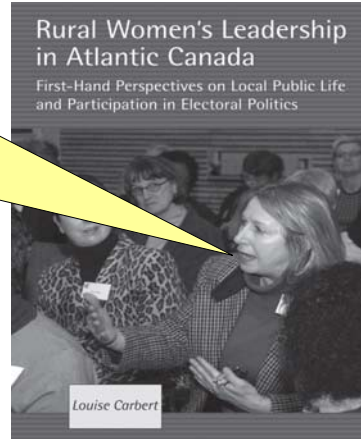


The stagnation in women’s election defies our expectations and our explanations.

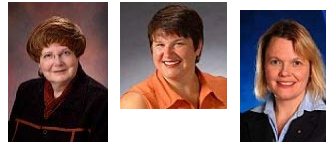


I don't want to run for office in a system of which I disapprove. I don't want to risk my job or family business. In any case, local elites are resistant to change.

Rationales for reluctance and resistance are linked to heightened expectations placed on politicians where economy is not diversified.



10 women in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly





Deborah Robinson



Shirley M. Clarke

4 women are band chiefs in Nova Scotia



Anne Francis Muise



Theresa Meuse

Role models encourage turnout and involvement

Politics is like sports:

- Boys idolize sports heroes and learn athletic skills by imitating their heroes, and thus grow up to be sports fans.
- Boys grow up to be political fans by imitating political heroes.
- Whom are girls to admire?

Women pay more attention to politics when other women are featured. Women's knowledge about politics is greater when another woman is involved.

Building women's leadership in public affairs is a cumulative process, in which each generation of women comes to political maturity with an awareness of prominent women preceding them.



Chief Mary Pierro, Wagmatcook First Nation

Mary Pierro was the 1st woman to be elected Chief of a band council in Nova Scotia. She was Chief from 1962 to 1964.



Mrs. Porter, MLA Kings North

Gladys Porter was the 1st woman elected to the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly. She held office from 1960 to 1967.

She was the 1st woman to be elected as Mayor in the Maritimes. She was Mayor of Kentville from 1946 to 1967.



Identity politics aren't just for women and minorities

Stephen Harper - hockey Dad, Leafs fan, middle-aged guy with a paunch (because all us middle-aged guys have a paunch, pretty much) - is winning. Harper is somewhere between a big minority or a small majority. How come?

By design or by accident, consciously or not, Stephen is the Canadian Everyman. He let us know that early on, when he grinned and said that meeting Bono about peace was his predecessor's schtick - and when he carried his son's hockey bag to a game, and the resulting photograph said to a few million Canadians: *"He doesn't just understand my life. He is living my life"*

(<http://www.warrenkinsella.com/static.php?page=bio>
4 oct 2008).



How to renew democracy?

1. Continue to mount the Nova Scotia Campaign School for Women
 - With attention to women outside HRM
2. Possibilities to consider
 - Mount province-wide consultations to arrive at provincial nominees to the Senate of Canada
 - Increase voter turnout by publishing the names of non-voters.



Voter turnout & community

Non-voters are not making up for their lack of electoral participation by substituting other “more relevant” political activities. Rather, they are distancing themselves from the public sphere in many ways.

Voters feel closer to their neighborhoods, their towns or cities, their provinces, their country, their continent.

To the extent that people are declining the opportunities to vote in Canada, they are illustrating a lowered commitment to the Canadian community (Pammett & LeDuc).



Voter turnout & complacency

A study of the 2008 Alberta election found that non-voters are younger and more transient than voters.

But non-voters are *not* politically different from voters. If non-voters had voted, the outcome of the election would still have been the same.

Implication: non-voters were apathetic, if not complacent, about the expected Conservative majority (Sayers & Stewart).



Voting is a social act: An experiment in voter turnout

Before the 2006 primary election in Michigan, researchers mailed one of four letters to 80K households:

1. A letter reminding voters that voting is a civic duty.
2. A letter informing voters that researchers were studying their turnout based on public records.
3. A letter listing past voter turnout for the household.
4. A letter displaying both household voter turnout **AND** neighbourhood voter turnout.

Letters #3 and #4 implied a follow-up letter after the election, reporting on voter turnout.



Voting is a social act: An experiment in voter turnout

Before the 2006 primary election in Michigan, researchers mailed one of four letters to 80K households:

1. A letter reminding voters that voting is a civic duty.
2. A letter informing voters that researchers were studying their turnout based on public records.
3. A letter listing past voter turnout for the household.
 - Increased turnout by 4.5%
4. A letter listing both household voter turnout **AND** neighbourhood voter turnout.
 - Increased turnout by 8.1%



Voting is a social act: What are the implications?

1. People conform to powerful social norms - like viewing of voting as a civic duty - if they expect that their behavior will be made public.
2. The increase in turnout exceeds the effect of live phone calls and rivals the effect of face-to face contact with canvassers conducting get-out-the vote campaigns. In terms of sheer cost efficiency, mailings that exert social pressure cost about \$2.00 per vote. Compare to the \$20 per vote for door-to-door canvassing or \$35 per vote for phone banks.
3. What if Elections Nova Scotia published a list of non-voters, deep within its website?



References

1. Carbert, Louise. 2006. *Rural women's leadership in Atlantic Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
2. Carbert, Louise. 2008. "What does Bill C-250 mean for women" IIGR Working Paper on Senate Reform.
3. Gerber, Alan, Donald Green, and Christopher Larimer. 2008. "Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment" *American Political Science Review* February 2008.
4. Pammett, Jon, Lawrence LeDuc. 2003. *Explaining the turnout decline in Canadian federal elections: A new survey of non-Voters* (Elections Canada, March).
5. Sayers, Anthony and David Stewart. 2008. "Non Voters in Alberta: A Preliminary Analysis" Atlantic Provinces Political Science Association, Saint Mary's University.

