

HANDBOOK GOVERNMENT IS US - a civic education workshop covering the basics of parliamentary democracy in Canada today

Handbook Contents

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Objectives of this handbook

- Provide background information about the text
- Provide background information and list additional resources
- Identify frequently asked questions before the presentation
- Suggest questions for discussion after the presentation

Set-up: Technical considerations

This presentation is designed as a slide show accompanied by a written text to be read aloud. The necessary equipment is listed below. It is not difficult to set up and operate a slide show with a computer and projector. If you do not know how to do it, it should be easy to find someone who knows how. If you do not have access to a projector, you could print out the slide handout.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What is the purpose of this workshop?*

The purpose is to inform women how government works in Canada and thus raise awareness about avenues for women's political participation.

2. *Why should I hold this workshop?*

It is an opportunity to review the basics of how Canadian governments work, in order to give women greater confidence in taking on roles of increased responsibility in governance.

3. *Why is there so much about Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Municipality in this workshop?*

- We need specific examples that can be applied generally in Canada. Nova Scotia, the first place in Canada to have representative and responsible government, is used as the example for provincial governance; HRM is the example for municipal governance.
- Presenters may add examples closer to home once the text has been printed.

4. *What can I say to convince to people to attend?*

Use your discretion; some people really are too busy (or are actually in distress). There are four sorts of arguments that you might try using:

- Equity and justice: Women are 52% of the population, and so they deserve to exercise a significant share of the political power.
- Representation and democracy: The people running our governments should look like "us," in all our diversity.
- Contribution: Government needs women's particular experience and knowledge.

- Obligation: Everyone – men and women – alike has to pull their weight to keep democracy working. It's no longer about “who gets to be the elected member in government”. Instead, it's about “who has to be the elected member in government.”

5. *How do I identify my audience?*

- Make it a public event, advertised widely and open to everyone. Libraries regularly host events for speakers.
- Use a pre-existing group that holds regularly scheduled meetings to which guest speakers are invited. In our experience, a pre-existing group whose members already know each other is the preferred audience.
- Invite an informal group of friends and associates to attend.

6. *Is the workshop suitable for youth?*

Although the subject is presented at a level that is suitable for teenagers and older, the workshop is designed for adult women. This workshop may be useful for facilitators who could add material specifically directed to youth.

7. *Where and how do I select a location for this workshop?*

Depending on the audience, here are some possibilities

- Women's centres
- Community centres
- Community development organizations
- Church halls, church clubs
- Service clubs
- Meeting room at a place of employment
- Private room in a hotel or restaurant
- Local and regional libraries

- Seniors' centres
- Friendship centres
- Private homes

8. *When is a good time to mount the workshop?*

If the group has a regular meeting time, this is ideal. If not, consider tying the workshop to an event such as International Women's Day in March, Mi'kmaq History Month, African History Month, or some other appropriate anniversary.

9. *Do I have to make copies of the handout for everyone?*

This is optional. It depends on your audience and your budget. You may decide to make copies of just the title page, with the table of contents listed.

10. *How long does the workshop take?*

You should plan for two hours. It takes about 45 minutes to read the text that accompanies the slide presentation straight through. If you wish to pause for questions and discussions as you go through the slides, which we recommend, it will take more time. If you do allow time for discussion along the way, be sure to watch the time ticking away.

11. *Why can't I do the workshop on my own?*

It really does take two people to mount the workshop effectively. To begin with, there are the practical problems. Two minds are definitely better than one when it comes to all the logistical details of planning, set-up, and presentation. The worst thing is to forget your audience while you fuss with mechanical problems. Furthermore, even if you don't have technical problems, the presentation works better with two people, so that while one is speaking, the other operates the slide show. Finally, even if you are an experienced and confident teacher, you'll find that it's better to have two people

presenting. Alternating back and forth makes it a workshop as opposed to a (boring) lecture.

12. *How do I introduce the session?*

Greet and welcome your audience / participants and thank them for coming. Tell them how long the workshop will be. Tell them if there will be a break part-way through.

13. *How do I generate discussion? What is my role?*

You are not expected to be an expert on the structure of Canadian governments or current policy disputes. The workshop is structured so as to direct the audience to thinking about their own experiences. Possible discussion questions are included in this manual. Some more resources are listed below, and notes to the text give some additional information that you may find useful.

14. *How do I end the workshop?*

Thank participants for attending the workshop. Ask them to complete evaluation forms. Invite them to join Equal Voice

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Begin by asking audience if there were any people whom they recognized in the slides.
2. Who are the local equivalents of some of the people appearing in the slides?
3. Who are the women leaders in your community?
4. Have you ever done any of the political activities discussed in the presentation?
Which ones?
5. Is there any agency, board, or commission might you be interested in serving on?
6. What are the barriers to taking on leadership roles in your community?
7. What are the opportunities for taking on leadership roles?

LOGISTICS CHECKLIST

**Order may vary; all items need doing,
but not always in the order outlined below**

- Gather a planning group to help you organize
- Define your goals and objectives.
 - Identify participants
 - What do you want to achieve by mounting this workshop to this group of people in this community?
 - Set the event date and time
 - Secure a meeting space. Is after-hours access a consideration?
- Enlist a co-host and have her go through the slides and text with you
 - Review the slides, read the accompanying text out loud
 - Prepare opening and closing remarks for specific audience
 - Prepare discussion questions
- Prepare necessary materials.
 - If this is a public event, publicize it. Customize poster for each event; insert date, location, sponsoring organization on the poster.
 - Additional supporting literature for distribution at the event is available on request from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
 - Customize title page for each event.
 - Make print-outs or photocopies of evaluation form, title page, or handout
 - Prepare a sign-up sheet for participants
- Arrange for equipment:
 - Computer with Adobe Acrobat reader or MS office software



- Projector. Many libraries and offices can provide on-site; otherwise bring your own
- Arrange for a screen or a smooth white wall surface on which to project.
- VGA cable to connect computer to projector
- MAC computers may not be compatible with projector. Is a MAC converter for VGA cable necessary?
- Extension cord
- Laser or other pointer (optional)
- Lectern or table for speaking notes
- Side table for sign up sheet, additional literature.
- ☐ Arrive early.
 - Is the building locked?
 - Get equipment set up; test it.
 - Arrange seating for a discussion. Can everyone see the screen properly?
 - Distribute feedback forms, title pages (or handouts) around the table or on everyone's seats if there is no table.
- ☐ Welcome everyone.
 - Invite the participants to ask questions and interrupt the presentation; encourage discussion as you go along.
- ☐ Thank participants.
 - Ask them to complete a feedback form.
 - Invite them to sign up for Equal Voice.
- ☐ Do evaluation
 - Collect and collate feedback forms.
 - Complete the facilitator's tracking form and send it in.

FURTHER RESOURCES

This page contains links to the proceedings of a workshop about women and politics that was held at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax in December 2001. "Building Women's Leadership in Atlantic Canada" was a small, three-day workshop that brought together some thirty academics, policy makers, and politicians - all of them women - in a format designed to maximize interaction and mutual learning.

Six academics - a historian and five political scientists - were invited to present papers, each on her own particular area of expertise, to which invited women politicians from the Atlantic region responded. The comments, have been transcribed and edited, but kept in the form and voice in which they were presented.

Women's Exercise of Political Power: Building Leadership in Atlantic Canada. *Atlantis*, 27:2 (spring 2003).

Louise Carbert and Naomi Black, "Building Women's Leadership in Atlantic Canada"
<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantis/vol/272all/272carbert.pdf>

Mary Clancy, "Introductory remarks"
<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantis/vol/272all/272clancy.PDF>

Margaret Conrad, "Addressing the Democratic Deficit: Women and Political Culture in Atlantic Canada"
<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantis/vol/272all/272conrad.PDF>

Joanna Everitt, "Media in the Maritimes: Do Female Candidates Face a Bias?"
<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantis/vol/272all/272everitt.PDF>

Ann Bell, "Commentary"
<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantis/vol/272all/272bell.PDF>

Sonia Pitre, "Women's Struggle for Legislative Power: The Role of Political Parties "

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272pitre.PDF>

Yvonne Atwell, "Commentary"

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272atwell.PDF>

Brenda O'Neill and Lynda Erickson, "Evaluating Traditionalism in the Atlantic Provinces: Voting, Public Opinion and the Electoral Project"

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272oneill.PDF>

Patricia Doyle-Bedwell, Address: "Mi'kmaq Women and our Political Voice"

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272bedwell.PDF>

Susan J. Carroll, "Have Women State Legislators In the United States Become More Conservative?: A Comparison of State Legislators in 2001 and 1988"

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272carroll.PDF>

Alexa McDonough, "Commentary"

<http://www.msvu.ca/atlantisc/vol/272all/272mcdonough.PDF>