



May 28, 2009

The Honourable Michael Ignatieff, Leader  
Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition  
Room 409-S, Centre Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Ignatieff:

As you are aware, Equal Voice (EV) is a national volunteer organization dedicated to electing more women to political office. We regard political parties as the main catalyst for ensuring that more women are elected to all levels of government.

On the heels of a historic victory this past fall where the percentage of female federal candidates reached a record high of nearly 28%, Equal Voice believes we can do even better. Canada still ranks 46<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries in the number of women elected to its national Parliament. It is imperative that political parties maintain the momentum so that Canada can attain a critical mass of women Members of Parliament, a minimum of one-third, in the near future.

We applaud the Liberal Party's sustained commitment to women in political life and recognize that your party attained its highest ever percentage of female nominees in 2008 - 37%. During our inaugural Canada Challenge in 2007, Equal Voice received a unanimous and public commitment from all of the federal party leaders to run significantly more women in the upcoming election. In 2008, this commitment translated into tangible progress for women seeking elected office. Previously, Equal Voice was pleased to work with your predecessor and your colleagues and we are eager to work with your party again.

In anticipation of the upcoming federal election, Equal Voice is therefore inviting you and the other party leaders to take part in our **Canada Challenge 2009: Building the Momentum to Elect More Women**. We are asking each party leader to commit to nominating substantively more women as candidates for their party than in the 2008 election. Ideally, as in the 2007 Challenge, this commitment would be made in the House of Commons on the same day as the other party leaders and would be preceded by a press conference featuring lead women from all parties.

As in the previous campaign, we are not asking political parties to set specific targets but rather we are asking the parties to do better than last time. In the upcoming election, Equal Voice plans, once again, to track the numbers of women candidates nominated by each party and will be reporting the results to our members, to the media and to the public.

Your participation as leader of the Official Opposition would be very significant for women in Canada. First, we seek your commitment to nominating more women. As well, we ask for you to make a public commitment to the Challenge on the same day as the other federal party leaders in mid-June.

In moving forward, we would like to work with your office and that of your colleagues Maria Minna and Anita Neville as soon as possible. Equal Voice's Executive Director, Nancy Peckford, will contact your office very shortly. As well, she can be reached at [npeckford@equalvoice.ca](mailto:npeckford@equalvoice.ca) or by phone at 613-292-7941.

Sincerely,



Donna Dasko  
National Chair (Acting),  
Equal Voice/ À voix égales  
[www.equalvoice.ca](http://www.equalvoice.ca)

cc: The Honourable Anita Neville, Critic, Status of Women Canada  
The Honourable Maria Minna, Chair, Liberal Women's Caucus  
Marcie Surkes, Policy Advisor, Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition  
Nicole Foster Woollatt, President, National Liberal Women's Commission