



PROMOTING THE ELECTION OF WOMEN IN CANADA
PROMOUVOIR L'ÉLECTION DES FEMMES AU CANADA



May 28, 2009

The Honourable Jack Layton, Leader
The New Democratic Party of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Layton:

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 that we can do even better. Canada still ranks 46th 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 recognize and applaud the New Democratic Party for adopting some of the most sustained and productive strategies to electing more women to federal office. We also applaud the fact that the NDP has the highest percentage of women in its caucus of any federal party - 41%. 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 office and that of your colleague, Irene Mathysen, and we are eager to work with you 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 New Democratic Party 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 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 or by phone at 613-292-7941.

Sincerely,



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

cc: Irene Mathyssen, M.P. (London–Fanshawe), Critic, Status of Women
Judy Wasylcia-Leis, M.P. (Winnipeg North), Caucus Chair
Anne McGrath, Chief of Staff to Jack Layton and President of the New Democrat Party