



Historic commitment to electing more women at Queen's Park

June 16, 2006

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, Opposition Leader John Tory and NDP Leader Howard Hampton Unite to Accept Equal Voice Challenge to Run More Women Candidates in 2007 Election

Three Leaders' Statements in the Legislature, Wednesday, June 14, 2 P.M.
Toronto, June 14, 2006 – Prior to Question Period at Queen's Park today, the leaders of all three parties in the Legislature will seek unanimous consent to make public statements committing to nominating more women to run as candidates in the next provincial election.

Premier Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party, Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory and New Democrat Leader Howard Hampton have all accepted Equal Voice's challenge to nominate more women for elected office – a province where women are more than half the population, but hold fewer than one quarter of the seats in the Legislature.

Equal Voice Chair Rosemary Speirs issued the Ontario challenge on April 27, in a letter to the three leaders. She asked the three leaders to jointly commit to the goal of nominating more women. Equal Voice has not asked the parties to meet a specific target.

Equal Voice is a national volunteer advocacy group with members in all major political parties. The Ontario Challenge was actively supported by MPP Deb Matthews, president of the Ontario Liberal Party; former Conservative cabinet minister Janet Ecker, and former NDP MPP Marilyn Churley, among other Equal Voice members.

“ This is an historic first,” says Speirs. “We believe it is the first time three party leaders have agreed to stand together vowing to take action on the under-representation of women in Canadian political life” “ If we don't see more women nominated in 2007 than in previous years, we cannot hope to see progress in the Ontario Legislature, where female representation is still only 23 per cent”, the letter to the leaders said. The Legislature now has just 24 women out of 103 members.

Speirs added that political parties--the gatekeepers to political life—have been major barriers to women's aspirations to share in government. With their statements, the leaders will be sending the message that they want more women in their elected ranks, and want active recruitment of female candidates.



Speirs and other representatives of Equal Voice will be watching from the Gallery when the leader make their statements, and will be available to the media, with women from the parties, at 4p in the media studio.

" Women's under-representation is a waste of talent, and makes for less efficient government since the voices of those who are often most affected by government programs are not adequately heard," says Speirs