



Letter to the Editor of the Globe and Mail
January 23, 2008
Re: John Ibbitson's article,
"Americans are better at political diversity than we are"

John Ibbitson is correct in stating that Canada's political institutions lack gender diversity. However, his suggestion that the United States is doing better in this regard than Canada is almost laughable.

The candidacy of Hillary Clinton is indeed exciting for many women, but the United States has never had a woman as a national party leader, Vice-President, or President. Canada has had three women as federal party leaders, two as Deputy Prime Minister and one as Prime Minister.

The real comparison, however, is in the percentage of women in our elected legislatures. With an average of 21% women elected to Canada's House of Commons, provincial legislatures and municipal councils, Canada currently ranks 47th in the world; far behind most democracies in Europe, parts of Africa and the Middle East. But the United States lags far behind Canada. With only 16% of women elected to Congress and the Senate, the United States is near the bottom of the pack, ranking 65th in the world. Is Canada superior? The most we can say is that Canada's performance in achieving gender equality in politics is dismal but the United States is worse.

The United Nations has emphasized that equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women. Both Canada and the United States should be doing much more to level the playing field and advance women in public life.

Sincerely,

Donna Dasko
National Vice-Chair
Equal Voice