

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

---

Volume 7 | Issue 6

---

2024

© 2024 *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlmh.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com/>)

---

This article is brought to you for “free” and “open access” by the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities after due review.

In case of **any suggestions or complaints**, kindly contact [Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com](mailto:Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com).

---

**To submit your Manuscript** for Publication in the **International Journal of Law Management & Humanities**, kindly email your Manuscript to [submission@ijlmh.com](mailto:submission@ijlmh.com).

---

# Role of Leadership and Representation of Women under Liberals and Conservatives in Canada (1984-2015)

---

DR. TRIPTI CHOWDHURY<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*In the context of Canadian political organization, political parties assume the crucial role of protecting representative democracy, and therefore the society at large. The Canadian political culture has been significantly influenced by the Liberal and Conservative parties and more recently by the NDP in the past few decades. Furthermore, globalization has had an impact on the way political parties operate. They break down modern day society's multiplicity of interest into simpler coherent units. They inform the society, act as lawful and organized channels of criticism and bring about transformations. The introduction of the representative conventions to select party leaders in Canada has greatly influenced its politics in that, leadership became one of the defining factors of intra party discipline and winning elections.*

*Women's political representation in Canada has changed somewhat largely as a result of more women being elected to parliament recently. That said, women still contend with a number of obstacles including the lack of gender diversity among cabinet members and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. The Liberal Party has been steeped in reformist traditions and this has seen a steady rise in female members of the party thanks to the Women's National Liberal Commission and gender sensitive cabinets under PM Justin Trudeau. The key policies that the liberals have placed great value on include, but are not limited to, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as it stands in support of liberty, equality and freedom.*

*However, the Conservative Party which has been one of the prominent parties in Canada also has been criticized for turning a blind eye when it comes to women's affairs especially during the administration of Stephen Harper from 2006 to 2015. Their policies such as the strict budget for women's programs and the lack of funding for childcare provisions showcased a lack of effort in raying gender equity policies. However, various Conservative governments in the past have actively engaged in policy formulation for social welfare and human rights, although women joined politics in smaller numbers.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Author is an Assistant Professor at Marwadi University, India.

*It has always been the NDP which has been at the forefront in trying to tackle women related problems, putting forward women candidates and educating people on discrimination against women. It has been consistency that has helped NDP in putting issues related to poverty, sexism, and gender imbalance on the agenda of several discussions, therefore making it possible for women to have a stronger voice in Canada.*

*Canadian politics has transformed from 1984 to 2015 with women at the center of it, but there still exists a gap. Women are often the nominees in constituencies that are perceived to have little chances of winning or are given junior ministries. The Talk by Trudeau concerning gender proportionality made a difference, but there still are issues out there regarding women and their positions, especially in important areas such as defence. There is a consistent growth of representation for the Liberals, which is not the case for the Conservative Party which has been increasingly depriving emphasis on women's issues. The NDP's activism persists in stressing the need to keep working towards actual gender equilibrium in the institutions of the Canadian political system.*

**Keywords:** Representation, Women, Canada, Liberals, Conservatives, Leadership.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Political parties form an important attribute of the Canadian political system. They are the uncontested agents of representative democracy in Canada. The Liberal and Conservative parties have assumed an important place in Canadian political culture for roughly a century with Conservatives existing since the time of confederation. However, the New Democratic Party's historical roots go back about half that length of time. A vast number of interests/ ideas are articulated in modern, complex societies. Political parties perform the valuable function of reducing and simplifying this complexity to manageable sets of policy alternatives. This process is known as aggregation of interests. Political parties articulate interests/ideas in many ways. They help educate and form public opinion by debating important issues, raising awareness and they provide a legitimate outlet for dissent and pressure for change. The latter is more important since it allows regional or sectional interests to be articulated. Parties are most commonly referred to as the 'gatekeepers' in political systems because they allow certain demands to pass directly to the decision makers while they eliminate or combine others. Hence they hold prominence as they act as the catalysts in bringing about change. Canada is known to be the only country in the British parliamentary tradition which chooses its party leaders through representative party conventions. Of the countries using a parliamentary system based on the Westminster model, Canada is alone in having adopted a national leadership convention for the selection of its party leaders. The national leadership convention thus became the established

institution by which the leaders of the two major Canadian parties are chosen. By replacing the leadership selection model based initially on British parliamentary practice with a leadership convention model originally designed for a political system with separate rather than fused legislative and executive offices, Canadians have brought about substantial alterations in their politics. Canadian national politics is profoundly personality-oriented. According to Peter Regenstreif (1965, 24) and the perceptive on this matter- "there is relatively little of a long-term group basis to party affiliation that operates to stabilize voters behind a party." He argues as to how the Canadian parties are weak and inarticulate and leadership is crucial in attaining the degree of party cohesion necessary to fight elections successfully and to operate parliamentary institution.

The mass media in Canada as elsewhere present a highly personalized view of the political process; newspapers present that side of politics which makes their news more exciting. The impact of the convention-system on the role of the party leader can be looked upon in two dimensions - the relationship between the leader and his parliamentary colleagues and between the leader and the public. It is reasonable to assume that because the party leadership in Canada is conferred by an extra- parliamentary body the individual so chosen has an influence over his party colleagues in the House of Commons that he would not possess. Women's entrance into politics has been the major transformation in the face of political parties in the modern era. Though once excluded from national-level positions, women's presence in parliament has increased markedly in advanced industrial democracies like Canada. A number of studies suggest that women are not only underrepresented in the upper echelons of politics, but also occupy the least sought-after posts. It is not only the case, for example, that there are fewer female than male candidates nominated for elected office. Women are also less likely to run in winnable seats (Murray, Krook, and Opello, 2012) Similarly, just as women hold fewer cabinet positions than men, they are also more likely to be offered low-prestige portfolios and relegated to the least powerful roles in government. To the extent that women have served as national leaders, they rarely lead the most powerful countries (Jalalzai, 2013) and are especially likely to act as ceremonial figureheads, with real authority concentrated in their male counterparts (Jalalzai, 2013)

## **II. ROLE OF LEADERS, IDEAS AND REPRESENTATION**

Before exploring the arena of women's representations and the various arguments and counter arguments surrounding it, it is necessary to look at the very idea of representation. John Stuart Mill (1962, 256-257), in his celebrated *Considerations on Representative Government*, argues

that the idea of democracy, in its purest form is to ensure "a government of the whole body by the whole people, equally represented." John Adams (1972, 60) along similar lines had argued that a legislature "should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should feel, reason and act like them".

The idea of representation, in its very rudimentary form, may be traced from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* where he emphasized the need to give up one's right of governing to an absolute sovereign in order to escape "the solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" state of nature. Unlike Hobbes' absolutism, John Locke places the government under the control of the society and emphasizes on the fact that the government must perform in accordance with the 'consent' of the people. Finally Jean Jacques Rousseau's concept of the 'general will' laid down the foundation for the modern ideas of representation based on the notion of popular sovereignty.

Jane Mansbridge (2000, 99-100) in "What does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Setting of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status", highlights three most vital functions of a representative because of which, the disadvantaged groups are represented by those individuals who can 'mirror' the experiences of the disadvantaged groups:

- i) She talks about how representation is a tool of communication and consultation. She highlights how dominant groups have never heard problems of the subordinate groups and in turn they have developed trust issues and hence they want to be represented by their own group as they feel being members of the same group they can understand the grievances better and even communicate effectively.
- ii) Secondly, it is noted that at the legislative level the representatives engage in an "organized deliberative process"; and hence the need to communicate effectively. In this process of deliberations, the issues that are taken up are largely "uncrystallized" and representatives who do not personally share the experiences of the disadvantaged groups would not be able to spontaneously contribute to such deliberations. Those belonging to disadvantaged groups only would be able to convince the better off sections as they will be able to cite personal experiences in regard to the problems.
- iii) Finally, Mansbridge argues if historically a particular group has been devoid of voting and other political rights, there are instances and left overs which suggest that the dominant group saw them as incapable to rule or possess rights. But it is important that such groups are being represented by their own people, which would instil the feeling that they are capable of functioning successfully and competently as lawmakers.

It is important, on one hand, that the women in Canada, who have been able to gain some kind of foothold in the political realm through a prolonged and consistent struggle, are provided with a suitable environment in which they can voice their concerns and grievances. It is argued that only when adequate representation is given to women, the political system would become more sensitive towards issues concerning women as representation can help them voice their opinions. Increasing representation of women is not only expected to have an impact on the fate of the female population of the country, but is also expected to change the very face of the political system by making it more sensitive and recognising the other gender in the country. It is in fact, argued that the very notion, which claims that the women make a difference in politics has gotten internalized and both female as well as male legislators tend to accept the "rhetoric of difference", i.e., gender differences.

The expectation is that with more and more women assuming the role of political decision makers, and assuming role in political office, attention of the political system would change towards issues such as family life and children, health, education, day care, wage disparity, violence against women and so on. Pippa Norris (1996, 98), citing the case of the women who participated in the 1992 Candidate Study in the United Kingdom, demonstrates that women were " more likely [than men] to express concern about issues like welfare services, poverty and health".

The bulk of studies on cross-national variation in women's share of legislative seats have focused on the influence of political factors which have an important role to play, particularly, the structure of the electoral system. Women are expected to make greater headway in electoral politics in nations where voters choose among party lists in multi-member districts rather than among individual candidates in single-member districts. Parties are more likely to nominate women for office, and voters are more likely to vote for them, if women represent only part of a larger group of candidates. As Pippa Norris (1987, 129) puts it: "Rather than selecting individual representatives the voter is choosing a party, with a certain group of candidates, some of which happen to be women. Under this system, central party organisations have considerable influence over the nomination of candidates, and if they are committed to including more women, they have that option". As parties, they can put forward an attractive slate of candidates that can try to create a balanced ticket by including women and men. This will lead to parity in the representation of men and women.

After leadership and representation, ideological beliefs form a third important explanation for female participation in the legislature. Ideas about women's role and position in society can enhance or constrain women's ability to seek political power. Public opinions have been shown

to matter for a variety of political outcomes. Thus, despite the presence of favourable political systems or an adequate supply of qualified female candidates, cultural norms can limit women's opportunities to participate in politics (Rule & Zimmerman, 1994). Ideology is not diffuse or abstract. Ideologies and arguments against women's right to participate in politics have created substantial barriers to women's political participation for many years. For centuries, political theorists such as Aristotle, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, Avicenna, and John Locke justified the exclusion of women from politics because of their assumed non-rational nature. Even after women gained suffrage, their ability to make rational decisions continued to be questioned theoretically and empirically. In the International Parliamentary Union study of female politicians, a negative ideology is cited more often than any other reason to explain low female participation in politics. Another respondent, from Central Europe, contrasts an ideological explanation with structural and political factors: "In spite of a long tradition of active participation in the workforce by a vast majority of women, both women and men see motherhood and marriage as the most important goals in a woman's life". (IPU, 2000a, 20). A common standpoint is that "politics is a man's business," and that women are too emotional to deal with affairs of the state and hence will not be able to take leadership roles or be in the decision making. The reasons for this are not to be found in education, with women being as educated as their male counterparts. It is simply because of the stereotyped and traditional structure of society (IPU, 2000a, 20).

Structural factors seem to usually represent a supply of women, and political factors a demand, ideological factors are known to simultaneously influence both the supply of and demand for women. It is acknowledged that on the supply side, ideological beliefs may influence women's decision to run for political office, regardless of their careers or levels of education (IPU, 2000a, 25)

On the demand side, ideological beliefs may influence the likelihood that voters will accept women as their elected politicians and influence the party elites in selecting and supporting female candidates. As democracy spreads, elections become the primary avenue to gain political power. But we see voters' mentality as a major thing in question here, as voters are influenced by their ideological beliefs about women and the patriarchal mindset which questions the competency of women. Party elites' decisions to support female candidates may be shaped by their perception of voters' preferences.

The effects of socio-demographic factors upon the relationship between gender and political activity have been documented in a number of studies. These show that variables such as education and income account for much of men's higher level of political participation. Women

are less likely to be found in the most advantaged educational and economic categories, a factor which accounts for much of the difference in political activity, as women for centuries have been kept out of education and work spheres and restricted to the private space. On the other hand, such distinctions by gender do not have a consistent effect and other factors such as age and region can also influence the relationship.

Another possible explanation for gender imbalance in political involvement has been raised where the absence of direct issue appeals to women has not been extensively explored. Some might believe that a gender-based issue appeal to women was patronizing, but one can see that the approach helped in mobilizing of ethnic and other political minorities. The development of a women's political agenda- could include day care services, pay equity, and the election of more women--would involve the kinds of appeals that might be thought to increase women's political activity. Mass political participation by women has unfortunately only received limited attention in Canada and has been frustrated by severe data restrictions. Until recently the most prominent empirical study on this theme was provided by Black and McGlen (1977) whose findings suggested that the traditional imbalance in participation rates between the sexes was in decline, at least between 1965 and 1974, the period they investigated. They suggested that this phenomenon might be a product of the women's movement and that it was particularly evident among French-Canadian voters and those who fit a more traditional demographic profile. While the time interval studied in that piece certainly overlapped with the rise of the women's movement, 1974 was by no means a terminus for feminist activism. Accordingly, it can be argued that if the women's movement was a prime instigator of such gender-based changes in participation rates then the trend should continue beyond 1974. Black and McGlen (1977) point out the data limitations of their own investigation, is a dissimilarity between the 1965 and the 1974 national election studies in the wording of certain questions and the coding of some response categories.

It is a known fact that women were relatively late comers to Canadian politics. They received the right to vote as late as 1918 with Quebec being the last to grant franchise to women in 1940. Women did not have a representative of their own sex in the federal Parliament until 1921, in the first federal election held after the franchise was extended. The first woman Member of Parliament (MP) was Agnes MacPhail who originally sat as a member of the Progressive Party and later joined the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). She served as an MP until she was defeated in 1940 and then moved to provincial politics in her native land, Ontario. Until the 1950s political parties were male preserves despite the individual contributions of such women as MacPhail. As the level of low grade participation gradually receded, the demand for



women to be integrated in main organisations increased.

Although women constitute 52% of the Canadian population, they have had very little political power. Women's groups are becoming increasingly vocal and forceful and their issues appear on the political manifesto. Issues such as pensions for homemakers, day care facilities and removing pay differentials between men and women are becoming priorities on the political agenda. These were important issues on the 1984 election campaign, and for the first time there was a debate organised by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NACSW), between the three party leaders specifically on so called "women's issues" to clarify the party positions.

Despite such measures to encourage female participation, women continue to be poorly represented in the parliamentary wings of the three major parties. Between 1917-1970 less than 11% of all elected members of the federal and provincial legislatures were women. In 1980, only 15 of the federal representatives elected that year were women; that number increased to 27, in 1984. More women seem to be competing than ever before but the percentage of women in the legislature remained lower than most of the liberal democracies. Thirty nine women were elected in 1988, 13% of the House of Commons. Since about 1979 there has been a greater willingness on the part of the three major parties to accept, and even search for and assist, women as candidates, but they still run primarily in 'lost cause' ridings where party popularity is lowest. Only a few retiring members are succeeded by female candidates, although the Quebec Liberals have, in recent years nominated several women to run in safe federal seats in that province.

Most women candidates continue to be merely standard bearers nominated to fly the party colours in hopeless races. Women frequently run as independents for fringe parties (128 of the 302 female candidates in 1988) yet in terms of social characteristics, female candidates are similar to male counterparts. Hence we see the difference between actual representation and representation for the sake of it. Women are usually seen to be given those seats which have less chances of winning.

### **III. IDEOLOGY AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN UNDER LIBERALS**

The Liberal Party originated with a reform tradition and a willingness to look outside the British political model. The Liberal Party has always paid special attention to the aspirations of francophone Canadians. From its earliest history, the party selected francophone leaders from Quebec: Wilfrid Laurier, Louis St. Laurent, Pierre Trudeau, and Jean Chrétien. This strategy translated into frequent election victories. Liberal policies are judged to be selectively

internationalist in the field of foreign affairs. Internally, bilingualism and broad commitment to individual and minority rights, both linguistic and legal, were perhaps the most pursued liberal policies under Pierre Trudeau.

The Liberal Party's historical approach to French Canada placed it to the left of the Conservative Party. The Liberals further consolidated their position on the left by introducing federal programmes to improve economic equality: baby bonuses, unemployment insurance, old age security, university student loans, and national health care. The Liberals introduced policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism. Under Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched in the Canadian constitution in 1982. However, sensing a public swing toward conservative economic values in the last decade of the 20th century, the party shifted to the right. It cut back government spending to eliminate deficits and shelved new social programmes, such as a national day care program. The Liberal Party was much slower than the Conservatives to develop as a national force. Its predecessors were the early reformers who advocated a radical transformation of society and wanted to solve major inequities through governmental reform. Liberals were considered more egalitarian than the Conservatives. There was no real unity until Wilfrid Laurier became leader in 1887 and transformed these disparate interests into the national Liberal Party. Laurier still holds the record for the longest continuous term in office as Prime Minister from 1896-1911. In 1919, William Lyon Mackenzie King was elected as a party leader. The Liberals won the 1921 election and King rebuilt the party into a strong organization which dominated Canadian government for most of the next six decades. He also is remembered for setting a record for being in power for most of the years, i.e for 21 years and 5 months. Trudeau's ascent to the leadership in 1968 was dramatic – a victory by an attractive political neophyte over well known, experienced Liberal leaders. It spurred a wave of 'Trudeaumania'. Throughout the 1960s the Liberal popular vote increased in the West and represented as the Liberal high point. Though Trudeau faced severe criticism for his views on the 'White paper' and was considered to be insensitive towards the aboriginals.

The Liberal Party of Canada was the party to include the National Women's Liberal Commission. The commission traces back its origin in 1928 and now since 2012 Mary Pynenburg is the President of the commission. It gave women not only an equal footing with their male counterparts but a platform for them to showcase their interests and garner an equal representation in the party. The following are the roles of the commission:

- (1) The purpose of the National Women's Liberal Commission is to ensure equal participation of women and men at all levels of the Party, to represent and promote the

interests of women within the Party and to encourage the active participation of women at all levels of Party activities.

- (2) Every member of the Party who is a woman and who meets any additional membership requirements (including the payment of membership fees in addition to the fees for membership in the Party) established in accordance with the Constitution of the National Women's Liberal Commission is entitled to become a member of the National Women's Liberal Commission.
- (3) The National Women's Liberal Commission is responsible to establish, where practicable, in each electoral district, a women's club that satisfies the standards of recognition set out in Section 46.
- (4) The National President, in consultation with the National Women's Liberal Commission, is responsible to report to every biennial convention of the Party with an assessment of the extent to which equal participation of women and men at all levels of the Party has been achieved. If the convention determines that such equal participation has been achieved, then the National Women's Liberal Commission will be deemed to have completed its primary mandate and the goals and objectives of the Commission will be reviewed with the aim of determining the need for its continued existence.

After a defeat by the Conservatives in 1984 under Mulroney and staying out of power for almost a decade, Liberals came back to power under the leadership of John Chretien in 1993. Even though being the oldest party it stayed out of power for a major time. But after coming to power it ensured a lot of new policy and efforts were taken in regard to women. The Federation des Femmes du Quebec (FFQ) established in 1996 till present day led efforts to defend gender equality in Quebec, where feminist ties to Liberal and Parti Quebecois (PQ) governments offered some protection for social security and social justice. Quebec's introduction of a low cost public day care programme in September 1997 typified that better prospect. The FFQ was especially attentive to class divisions: during the 1995 Bread and Roses March and the 2000 World March of Women, it highlighted links between poverty and sexism. Liberal party after being in power under Chretien not only encouraged women's participation in politics but also encouraged women legislators. With the coming of Trudeau government in 2015, a lot of emphasis was placed on gender equality and feminism. Trudeau selected a cabinet that was gender balanced something which hardly happened before with women forming a small percentage of the cabinet. He also launched "Feminist International Assistance Policy" (FIAP). The policy focusses on core gender equality work, including preventing and responding to

sexual and gender-based violence and supporting local women's rights organizations and movements, with special funding dedicated to front-line grassroots women's organizations. Hence, we see the graph to be rising in terms of better representation of women under Liberals.

#### **IV. IDEOLOGY AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN UNDER CONSERVATIVES**

The Conservative Party originated before Confederation and gave Canada its first prime minister, John A. Macdonald. The privileged elements of Canadian society banded as early as 1854 where Macdonald brought together a working coalition of various interests under the label Liberal-Conservative. At that time, it favoured high tariffs, assistance to big business, and a strong British presence in Canada. In the late 19th century, the Conservative Party devised a National Policy that protected Canadian industry, supported railway construction, and increased Western settlement. It sought an east-west economic axis to defend Canada from the southern pull of American influences. The Conservative Party's championing of British traditions hurt its fortunes in French Canada. The hanging of French speaking Métis leader Louis Riel for treason, in 1885, and the imposition of conscription during World War I, also added to its unpopularity. In addition, its failure to find strong francophone party leaders made electing Conservative MPs in Quebec difficult. Brian Mulroney, a bilingual Quebecker, was Conservative prime minister from 1984 to 1993. The party collapsed after that time partly because it could not maintain a strong foundation in Quebec.

The Conservative Party adopted the adjective "Progressive" in 1942 in an attempt to present a reformist image. During this course, the party was probably slightly to the right of the Liberals, Canada's other major political party. For the most part, the

Progressive Conservatives supported the social welfare and human rights measures introduced by the Liberals. Progressive Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker introduced Canada's first Bill of Rights in 1960. The party's commitment to human rights was emphasized in 1988 by the apology and compensation it offered to Japanese Canadians who had been interned and whose property had been confiscated during World War II. Conservatives themselves agree that their modern party is hampered by its public image of being pro-big business and anti-labour, anti-ethnic and anti-women as well as reactionary on most social issues.

Conservative ideology opposes large-scale government intervention in the economy. However, Progressive Conservative administrations created such large government institutions as the Canadian Pacific Railroad, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Bank of Canada. In December 2003, members of the Progressive Conservative Party voted to merge with the

Canadian Alliance Party to create the Conservative Party of Canada. This was precipitated by the declining electoral fortunes of the Progressive Conservatives in the 1993, 1997, and 2000 federal elections and by the failure of the Canadian Alliance Party to secure votes east of Manitoba in the 2000 election.

Stephen Harper's government (2006-2015) was seen to be one that was anti-woman. Since it began leading the country, the Harper government had- (Chabot, 2014)

- i. dismantled several programs and measures that aim to defend and promote the rights of women;
- ii. decreased the working budget of Status of Women Canada, leading to the closure of 12 regional offices;
- iii. abolished public financing of women's rights organizations and denied their legitimacy to act (groups that have existed for decades have had to close their doors);
- iv. denied the rights of women for equal pay in the public sector;
- v. cancelled the federal-provincial agreement regarding childcare centres that would have allowed for financing Québec's network of childcare centres.

## **V. NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN**

To ensure female participation, both the Progressive Conservatives (PC) and Liberal constitution guarantee officials of the women's groups positions on the party executive committees and specify that a certain number of voting delegates at the conventions be women. The PCs require that at least one of six constituency delegates and one half of the delegates at large from the provinces be women. One of the two directors representing each province on the National Executive must also be a woman. The Liberals require that two of seven constituency delegates, and two of the for national Vice Presidents, be women. Partly because of these guaranteed positions, women have achieved higher visibility within party organizations in recent years. For the first time in Canadian history a woman. Iona Campagnolo, was elected Liberal Party President in 1983, and there was a strong movement within the party encouraging her to run as a leadership candidate the following year. Two of the major contenders for the Conservative Party presidency in 1983 were women. Another high- profile woman, Lorna Marsden, Liberal Vice- President and long-time party worker was rewarded with a Senate appointment in 1984. The New Democratic Party (NDP) constitution has guaranteed least with respect to female participation, on the general understanding that there is no need for such

measures. NDP was the first party to address issues such as day care and pensions for widows. By 1981, however, the party had an internal affirmative action program and two years later approved requirement for equal representation of women and men on its executive and council. In the December of 1989 the NDP elected Audrey McLaughlin as its national party leader, making her the first woman ever to lead a national party in Canada.

Data on candidates and elected MLAs were gathered for all parliamentary elections in the 10 provinces between 1975 and 1994, using primarily the Canadian Parliamentary Guide, supplemented by material from provincial Election Officers (Studlar and Matland, 1996). There were over 11,000 candidates in these elections who received 5 per cent or more of the vote in their ridings; women constituted 14.7 per cent of the candidates, increasing their share over time. Of the 3,755 MLAs elected, women won 384 seats, or 10.2 per cent. By parties, the Progressive Conservatives (PC) won 37.1 per cent, the Liberals 31.6 per cent, the New Democrats 18.5 per cent. In the early 1990s, the proportion of candidates had risen, albeit slowly, in all three major parties to the point where women constituted nearly one third of the NDP candidates, about one fifth of the Liberal candidates and one sixth of PC candidates by the early 1990s. The Liberals have been less inclined than the NDP to advocate adoption of women candidates to meet a particular group interest. But in the mid- 1980s, they too began to nominate more women, and have continued to do so slowly. The Conservatives show a more erratic pattern, with an overall upward incline in the late 1980s. But we saw the fall in the 1990s in the conservative upward incline.

Among the three major parties, there was relative equality in percentage of female legislators in the late 1970s, but by the early 1980s the NDP moved into a clear lead. They maintained this by increasing the proportion of women elected in the 1990s, when women were one quarter of NDP MLAs. The two other parties essentially maintained a level of women MLAs around 5 per cent, with the Conservatives having slightly more than the Liberals, until the mid-1980s, when first the Liberals and subsequently the Conservatives began to elect more women, to a point in the early 1990s where both were in the mid-teens. Overall, the NDP has widened the gap between their percentage of women provincial legislators and those of the Conservatives and Liberals, even as all three increased. Of course, nominating women is one thing, electing them is another. Women are a greater proportion of candidates than they are of elected MLAs. Nevertheless, as more women have become candidates for the major parties, more have been elected.

The 1993 election saw the decimation of the NDP, the party that consistently led the way on the nomination of women, as well as the stunning defeat of the Progressive Conservative party,

which had made significant progress on electing women through the 1980s. The same election also witnessed the rise of the Reform Party, which went on to become the Canadian Alliance, which in turn went on to swallow up the remnants of the Progressive Conservative Party in 2003, producing the new Conservative Party. Unlike the old Progressive Conservative party, which had an active women's association focused on encouraging women's participation and election, the Reform/Alliance/Conservative Party eschews any measures designed to increase women's participation in the party or in Canadian politics. Espousing an ethic of individual merit, the party nominates fewer women than did the old.

Progressive Conservative Party. Since its rise to official party status in 1993, the party has consistently nominated women as between 10 and 11 per cent of its candidates. Consistent with this, the new Conservative party in 2004 nominated women in 12 per cent of electoral districts. Assuming that the Conservative party replaces the old Progressive Conservative party as the alternative governing party in Canada, there is reason to expect that the slow rate of change in women's representation will persist for some time.

With the Harper government coming to power in 2006 and staying for nine years a lot of things were changed. The reorientation of the women's programme at Status of Women Canada (SWC) is clear. In 2006, the first Harper (minority) government changed the mandate of the federal organization's women's programme. Funding for research and advocacy was eliminated. Twelve of 16 regional offices were closed. This case study shows how, by 2015, funding that used to go to women's organizations, as well as research and advocacy about women, now goes primarily to programmes led by, or partnered with, business groups with a much narrower, primarily economic focus. This shift moves the focus toward getting women working in non-traditional, resource and high-tech industries and away from the work of research and advocacy. The loss of funding from SWC has caused many feminist organizations (especially national ones) to shut down. This has severely undermined the physical and intellectual spaces where women once gathered to develop alternative, feminist voices, policies and practices. As a result, women's organizations and feminist perspectives have been shut out of policy development federally and have less presence and capacity to engage in making change at the provincial and local levels as well.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

One can trace a great leap forward in terms of women's representation from 1984 to 2015 as the representation has definitely increased but it indeed has a long way to go as a party plays a very important role in giving seats to women. But a lot of parties give those seats to women

which have less chances to win or have a gender disparate cabinet. But in 2015 with coming of Trudeau to power we do see a parity in terms of men and women even though there is criticism regarding how women aren't given hard core roles like the defence ministry. The NDP played a major role in politics in Canada as it brought out for the first time a range of women issues to the forefront. Liberals though initially seemed to not have given adequate representation, but one can see from 1988 a steady increase in women's representation in the Liberals but the opposite happened in the case of Conservatives which started at a high note but with Harper government women representation and women issues were side-lined.

\*\*\*\*\*



## VII. REFERENCES

- Bystydzienski, M. Jill (1995), *Women in Electoral Politics: Lessons from Norway*, Westport: Praeger.
- Bystydzienski, Jill (1992), *Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Krook, Mona Lena (2009), *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krook, Mona Lena (2010), "Studying Political Representation: A Comparative-Gendered Approach", *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1): 233-240.
- Mansbridge, Jane (1985), "Myth and Reality: The Era and the Gender Gap in the 1980 Election", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49(2): 164.
- Mansbridge, Jane (1999), "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'", *Journal of Politics*, 61(3): 628–657.
- Mill, Stuart. John (1962), "*Considerations on Representative Government*", Chicago.
- Norris, Pippa (1996), "Women Politicians: Transforming Westminster?", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 49(3): 89-102.

\*\*\*\*\*