

June 29, 2006

Dear Leadership Candidate,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Renewal Commission Task Force on Women's Issues. I have had the opportunity to hold six consultations across the country with more scheduled in the weeks ahead. I have also heard from many women active in our Party, both through my website and through informal discussions.

This Task Force is crucial to the future of our Party. Historically, women have supported the Liberal Party in larger numbers than other parties. However, it seems that the gender gap that has existed in our favour is slowly disappearing. We need to consider the policies that will be of particular importance to women in the future and how to communicate these policies in ways that resonate with them in their daily lives.

Further, we need to understand why fewer women are choosing to stand for elected office at the federal level. We must discuss what we need to do, as Liberals, to remove or mitigate barriers to women's greater participation.

Not surprisingly, there is great interest among the women I have met in learning more about the positions of the leadership candidates on these issues. Below are four questions which have been raised frequently in my consultation sessions. I would be grateful if you could provide me with your answers to these questions by July 21, 2006. I would, of course, also welcome any other comments you may wish to make on issues you believe would be of key interest to women in the Liberal party. I will post your responses on our Task Force website (www.annemclellan.com) so as many women as possible can review and evaluate your responses. I will send a copy, by email, to the women who have participated in this Taskforce.

The questions are:

1. Women comprise 52% of the Canadian population yet constitute only 20.3% of all Liberal MPs (11.3% of Government MPs and 20.7% in the House of Commons overall). In fact after the 2006 election one less woman sits in the House of Commons than in 2004.

(a) Our party has a "goal" of 25% women candidates. What would your goal be and why?

(b) What is your time frame for achieving this goal?

(c) If you were the Leader, would you use your power to appoint candidates to guarantee that the percentage identified in 1(a) was achieved?

(d) What would you do to ensure that women candidates are given an opportunity to seek nominations for and, run in, "winnable ridings"?

(e) What other measures do you believe need to be put in place to address this inequity?

2. In your opinion what barriers, systemic or otherwise, currently prevent women from running as Liberal candidates? How can they be removed or mitigated?
3.
 - (a) Do you believe that the Party should dedicate financial resources to identify, recruit and mentor future female candidates? If so – will you make that commitment now and how will you ensure that it happens?
 - (b) Do you believe the Women's Commission is fulfilling its role in this regard?
 - (c) Should the Liberal Party establish an office dedicated to this purpose? Where should that office be located: LPC? Leader's office? other?
4. Our party has had, in its history, only one female President, Iona Campagnola.
 - (a) Do you believe that within our Party, we need to do more to encourage women to seek senior executive positions?
 - (b) If so, what concrete steps would you take, as Leader, to bring this about?

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to these issues. I know that your responses will be of great interest to Liberals everywhere.

Yours truly,

AAM