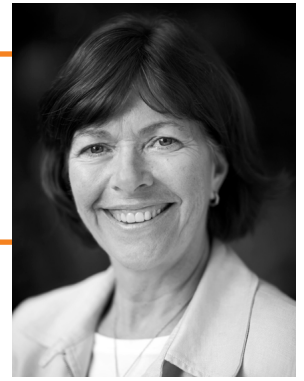




Jean Crowder, MP

Nanaimo-Cowichan



Volunteer Cowichan AGM

June 24, 2011 - Words from Jean Crowder, MP, and
Yana Stratemeyer-Trinczek, Constituency Assistant

I will begin by sharing Jean's words and then follow those up with my own observations.

From Jean Crowder, MP, Nanaimo-Cowichan:

Thank you for inviting me to address your AGM and I apologize for not being able to attend. I am in Ottawa because of back to work legislation for Canada Post. And thanks to Yana for delivering these remarks for me.

I was asked to talk to you about women and leadership, and I will largely focus on women in politics as over the past 7 years, that is where I have spent my time. So why is it important to have women in leadership roles?

Rosemary Brown once said: "Until all of us have made it-none of us have made it." And this is absolutely true. Women make up half the Canadian population and yet we are seriously under represented at all levels of government and in senior roles in business. This has an impact on the way we make decisions and the kinds of decisions we make. In Canada, although we have made some modest gains in the number of women elected to parliament in the recent federal election, women still fall far short of the 50% we would expect based on the Canadian population.

In 2010 after the New Brunswick Election CBC (<http://www.cbc.ca>) reported that:

"Canada prides itself as being a democracy. We have universal suffrage. We have free and fair elections and we have majority rule with a constitution that protects minority rights. However, one of the hallmarks of a democracy is that it is representative of the diversity and of the interests of its citizens. In this case Canada, and New Brunswick in particular, fails the democratic test.

While there are many groups and identities within the Canadian political system that are clearly under-represented, the most obvious example is the case of women. "

And this is an important point – that democracy requires that its citizens have representation that reflects who they are.

From a report on Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six step Plan (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>) outlines some of the reasons why it is important to include women in decision making: "women in parliaments can also have a substantive effect upon the policy agenda."

"The OSCE region continues to face many major challenges in achieving gender equality in education and the labour

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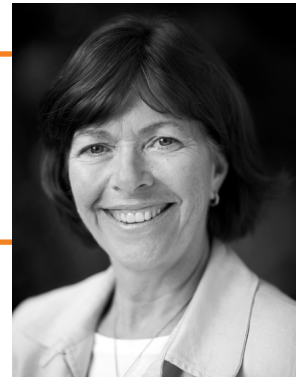
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market, in social policies, healthcare, and reproductive rights, as well as in the home and care of dependents. . . . When public policymakers seek to address these complex challenges, the inclusion of women's voices broadens the range of diverse experiences"

(AND more)"inclusive parliaments also have the capacity to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among the general electorate; female leaders serve as role models who mobilize women as citizens, party members, and political activists. The empowerment of women in elected office can thus strengthen democracy and provide a more effective voice for articulating women's interests."

So why are women under-represented in politics and leadership roles in business? Again referring to the CBC report, "There are several reasons for why these numbers are so low. In some cases it is because women still shoulder a greater share of the family responsibilities and therefore wait until their children are raised before considering politics.

In other cases it is because women are often found in occupations that are more difficult to step away from for the four to six weeks of an election, or have fewer financial resources or networks with the financial resources to mount an election campaign.

There is also the adversarial, "us" versus "them" nature of politics, the winner-take-all attitude and the win at all costs approach that leaves many women (and many men) dissatisfied with the political process and unwilling to participate."

So how can we encourage more women to get involved?

There are many ways to encourage and support women who want to take on leadership roles. A number of years ago, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities looked at the under-representation of women in municipal politics and produced a report called "Getting to 30%" (<http://www.fcm.ca/CMFiles/wreport1UDO-3262008-929.pdf>) And they had practical suggestions for increasing the participation of women in politics. I will focus on a couple of their suggestions:

1. Mentoring –any of us who are in leadership roles can take on the responsibility for mentoring other women who are interested in stepping up. This can be as informal as chatting over to coffee to more formal like job shadowing, coaching and regularly scheduled support
2. Encouraging young women to get involved – speak to high schools, universities, encourage job shadowing
3. Set up a speaker's bureau of women in leadership roles
4. Encourage women to volunteer in organizations to gain exposure –e.g. get involved in municipal advisory committees
5. Education – women need to develop skills in public speaking, conflict resolution, team building, time management

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6. Take campaign school training – non partisan events that support both women who want to run for politics and key campaign workers where they get the framework on what it takes to be a politician and run a campaign

To come back to what I started with as Rosemary Brown once said: “Until all of us have made it-none of us have made it.” And Safer Futures here in the Cowichan Valley said as we make communities safer for women and children we make our communities safer for all of our residents.

That is why we need more women’s voices at all decision making tables.

From Yana Stratemeyer-Trinczek:

As a graduate student, I recently wrote a paper on leadership, though not directly about women in leadership positions.

While doing some research for this paper, I read an article on the problem with decisive leadership in the Ottawa Citizen. In speaking about a political speech, Dan Gardner, the columnist, wrote the following:

“It was routine political theatre, playing off a near-universal understanding -only vaguely expressed but deeply felt -of what makes a good leader. A leader sees all. He understands. He is in control. He has a clear vision for the way forward. And most of all, he is sure of himself. (And yes, it usually is a man. This, the realm of intuition, where the stereotype of the male leader is still king.)

The organization such a leader creates is obvious. It's a pyramid, with the Great Man on top. Information flows up, giving the Great Man an Olympian view of all that surrounds him. With this, and his bold vision of the future, the Great Man makes decisions and issues orders to the staff immediately below him, who pass the orders down, until the whole great edifice is working together, united, to implement the Great Man's strategy.”

The adversarial system of politics we have in Canada seems to perpetuate this notion of leadership. However, there are some clear problems with this type of leadership.

As an employee in Jean’s office, I have firsthand experience as to what a different kind of leadership can look like. Jean has always been an exceptional leader for us employees and constituents alike.

There are many reasons why Jean is such a good leader and during my assignment for school, I was able to explore these leadership qualities a little further.

Back to the leadership assignment: Out of the 150 qualities that the students came up with, we were able to take out the overlapping characteristics and get it down to about 75.

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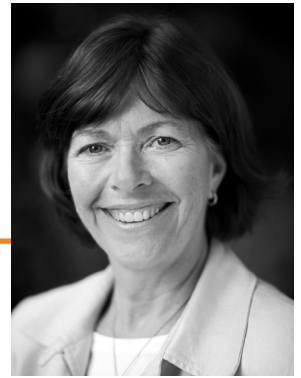
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These qualities included vision, a focus on relationships, flexibility, courage, passion, humility, honesty, and listening ability.

Leadership is about innovation and creativity. It is not about one person imposing his or her vision.

By having more women in leadership positions, appropriate decisions can be made in collaboration to reflect the best interests of the citizens.

As noted in Jean's speech, representation that is reflective of the general population is imperative for a democracy.

What Jean did not mention are some of the physical challenges that come with being in federal politics.

Dedicated politicians such as Jean work many, many hours to serve their constituencies. This makes it difficult to have a family life and many sacrifices are made both by the politician and the family members.

If there are more women in politics, these types of challenges can be brought forward for discussion.

Just today, I came across an article from 1943 with 8 tips for hiring female employees. We have come a long way since then, but we are still leaving many women feeling unsupported in leadership roles.

It is my hope that by supporting and empowering women, we will soon see more women stepping into leadership roles. There are other challenges that leaders face as well. We tend to have very high expectations of our leaders who often have very few resources or who cannot make change at the speed of light (Harford, T. 2011, Adapt).

This has been a huge issue for many leaders. There is also the fact that, especially in politics, leaders must represent varied constituencies who have differed expectations of delivery and when the leader does not deliver on those expectations, the leader is seen to have failed.

There are many leaders in our community, although some may not be in recognized leadership positions. For example, they could be teachers, bank tellers, or moms who are stepping up to make change.

We need to invest and mentor these grassroots leaders in order to make our community a place that is safe and welcoming for us all.

Thank you for coming out,
Jean Crowder, MP, Nanaimo-Cowichan
Yana Stratemeyer-Trinczek, Constituency Assistant

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