

# Reaching Women about Proportional Representation

FVC AGM June 11, 2004

June Macdonald,

Women for Fair Voting (FVC)



# The Electoral Glass Ceiling

“An elite consensus --- that 20 to 25 per cent representation of women is ‘good enough’ -- provides the solid underpinnings of the electoral glass ceiling for women.”

---

**Still Counting. Women in Politics across Canada.** Linda Trimble (University of Alberta) and Jane Arscott (Athabasca University). 2004

- <http://stillcounting.athabascau.ca/>



# One hundred and seventeen years

.....is how long it will take for women  
to achieve equity in the  
Canadian House of Commons.

**THAT'S 4 GENERATIONS.**

---

Equal Voice

[http://www.equalvoice.ca/facts\\_legislature.htm](http://www.equalvoice.ca/facts_legislature.htm)



# At the rate we are going...

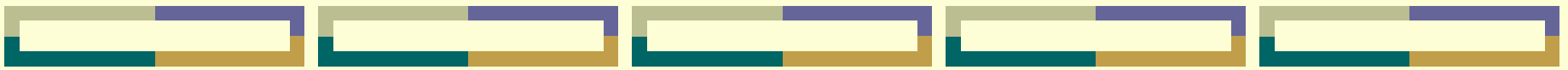
....it won't be until  
our great, great granddaughters are women  
that we'll have  
50/50 in the House.

**IT WILL BE 2118.**

---

Equal Voice

[http://www.equalvoice.ca/facts\\_legislature.htm](http://www.equalvoice.ca/facts_legislature.htm)



“The absence of women from structures of governance inevitably means that national, regional and local priorities—i.e. how resources are allocated—are typically defined without meaningful input from women, whose life experience gives them a different awareness of the community’s needs, concerns and interests from that of men.”

---

World Economic Forum

[http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Reports/Reports/gender\\_gap.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf)



# Lortie commission

“...women are **underrepresented** by **74.1** per cent relative to their demographic weight. They are only **25.9** per cent of the way to attaining proportional electoral representation.”

---

Royal Commission on electoral Reform  
and Party financing, 1991:94



# Critical Mass

“However, in order for spending and development priorities to change, there must be **at least a critical mass of women represented**, who are learning the rules, using the rules and changing the rules of the decision-making “game,” and **thus having an impact on discourse and decisions at all levels**, from the family, to the nation, to the international community.”

---

World Economic Forum

[http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Reports/Reports/gender\\_gap.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf)




# Where is Canada?

Canada ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in the world in representation of women in parliament as of April 30, 2005.


---

Inter-Parliamentary Union

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>



<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Nation</b>	<b>% Women</b>	<b>Voting System</b>
1	Sweden	45.3	PR
2	Denmark	38.0	PR
3	Netherlands	36.7	PR
4	Finland	36.5	PR
5	Norway	36.4	PR
6	Costa Rica	35.1	PR
7	Iceland	34.9	PR



8	Austria	33.9	PR
9	Germany	32.2	PR
10	Argentina	30.7	PR
36	Canada	20.6	FPTP
49	United Kingdom	17.9	FPTP
59	United States of America	14.3	FPTP

**Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union,**  
March 1 2003

PR= proportional voting systems  
FPTP = first-past-the-post systems

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif280303.htm>

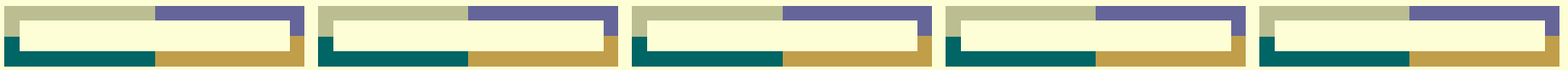


# Why does PR work?

“What studies of proportional representation reveal, however, is that it sufficiently alters the political structure to enable women to transcend the 'winner-takes-all' competition for votes one now witnesses in Canada.”

---

National Association of Women and the Law  
<http://www.nawl.ca/brief-electoral-reform.htm>



"Changing a country's electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture's view of women"

---

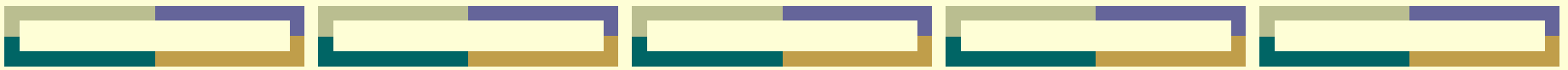
IDEA International institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

<http://archive.idea.int/women/parl/ch3c.htm>



# New Statement of Purpose

- Fair representation for women, and for minorities and Aboriginals:
- Our legislatures should reflect the diversity of our society. To enable this, voting systems must be designed to remove barriers to the nomination and election of those who are under-represented.



“A **high district magnitude** is also necessary for achieving a **representative outcome**. In a system with three or four major parties, this requires districts with **at least eight seats** to increase the probability that a party can win two or more seats in a district. Ticket balancing becomes viable and likely to produce parity only when a party expects to win two or more seats.”

---

(Karen Bird, Steps Towards Making Every Vote Count - p212)