

Gendering Local Governing: Canadian and Comparative Lessons – The Case of Metropolitan Vancouver

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Abstract

The United Nations Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja recently noted the slow progress toward gender equity in political representation in the world's assemblies: while representation of women in national legislatures is up (now at 16.4% overall), there remain areas of slower progress, and the rate of change remains distinctly unhurried.¹ Countries such as Canada offer a basis for some comparisons; so does comparing national, provincial/state/regional and local governments. What is posed here is some evidence from the Canadian case, with brief national comparisons with a variety of other countries. Central to this examination of Canada is a study, reported here, on women in local government in metropolitan Vancouver, providing lessons in terms of Canada and more generally, and an examination of broad dimensions of reform, including the question of quotas.

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There exist factors that shape the electoral representation of women in politics. Some factors hinder the electoral prospects of female candidates, at local and senior governmental levels. These may include the increased cost of election campaigns, the presence and attitudes of parties and, for local governing, the size of municipal councils.³ Other factors encourage female representation in government. These include affirmative action policies established by various

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political parties and state constitutions, district magnitude and reformed election rules that have helped to level the playing field.⁴

There is also a perception, in Canada and more generally, that it is easier for women to achieve electoral success in municipal government than at other levels of government. Based on the findings of this study, the perception is based on the proportionately high number of female municipal politicians.⁵ If this is so, then comparative lessons may emerge from this local government experience. Despite advancements on the gender representation front, “significant barriers remain to women’s substantive representation in formal areas of political deliberation and decision-making.”⁶ The plateau reached by the number of women in Canadian politics in the 21st century presents an interesting dilemma. Canada remains “still counting”⁷ the number of female politicians in the absence of the achievement of actual equality. What lessons exist here might be applied to understanding local governing in other political systems.

The primary focus of this study is to ascertain the electoral representation of women in local government in Canada - specifically women as mayors/city councillors. The purpose of this article is threefold: (i) to describe the pattern of gender representation in local governments in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland – that is, the metropolitan city-region of Vancouver; (ii) to provide a context for more comparative studies of gender and local government comparatively; and (iii) to examine broad dimensions for reform. This article also provides preliminary observations and analysis of reasons for studying gender representation in municipal politics. It concludes with some thoughts on the current situation of the electoral representation of women in metropolitan Vancouver, comparing local, provincial and federal jurisdictions in Canada and comparatively in other national systems, and adds some questions for future study on gender and local government.

This study also accounts for the election of women to municipal office by making preliminary observations on factors that shape the electoral success of women in Canada. In order to do so, the study analyzes the effect of three specific independent variables on the electoral success of female candidates running for municipal office in the Vancouver city region. These independent variables are the presence of parties at the municipal level, the size of the municipality, and the presence of campaign finance election regulations at the municipal level.

The article also outlines the qualitative and quantitative methods used to investigate the factors that shape the election of women to municipal office, specifically as municipal mayors/councillors. This study only examines the number of women elected as councillors/mayors; future studies will also assess female candidates who campaigned for the position of city councillor or mayor and who were unsuccessful. The three main dependent variables are: the percentage of women running for city council, the percentage of successful women that ran for city councillor/mayor and the number of women elected to the position of city council compared to the number of men. These three dependent variables are a useful way of looking at electoral representation of women in local government. The study also briefly focuses on the presence of women at the provincial and federal level of government in Canada, and comparatively, in order to place the representation of women at the municipal level within this broader international context.

The British Columbia Municipal Political-Structural Content

In local government terms, British Columbia, Canada's "Pacific" province, is broken up into 27 regional districts which are further subdivided into 157 municipalities of various types. There are 42 village municipalities (normally with fewer than 2500 in population), 15 towns (2500-5000 population), 47 districts (generally large geographic areas with low population density) and 47 cities (population over 5000); there are also 164 Regional District 'electoral areas' – that is unincorporated areas which have direct elections for regional district representation. In addition, the province has three townships (Langley, Esquimalt, Spallumcheen), one Indian Government District (Sechelt), one island municipality (Bowen) and one resort municipality (Whistler).⁸ Municipal elections in BC are 'at large' (vs. wards/proportional), even in its largest cities, and there are no election spending limits at the local level.⁹ Apart from the 27 large regional districts there is also one Islands Trust (for the Southern Gulf Islands – between Vancouver and Victoria).¹⁰

Currently, *British Columbia* is Canada's third most populous province – 4,113,487 citizens (Census Canada, 2006) - representing approximately 13.2% of total Canadian (32,000,000+) population; 50.42% are women.¹¹ Despite being Canada's third largest province (948,600 square kms), 83% of the provincial population (or just under 3.5 million of its residents) still (as of 2007) resides in 157 incorporated municipalities encompassing approximately one percent of provincial territory.

Over half (54.4%) of the citizens of the province currently reside in the Vancouver-centred 'Lower Mainland' - two regional districts along the Fraser River adjacent to Vancouver. This 'Lower Mainland', [bounded on the south by the Canada-U.S. border, on the north and east by mountains and with its western extremity,¹² including the City of Vancouver, the gulf waters of the Pacific Ocean] represents the economic engine of the Province.¹³

Politically, the Vancouver metropolitan region elects just over half (50.7%) of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Province. In Jacobs' terms, this Vancouver-centred 'Lower Mainland' forms one coherent 'city region'.¹⁴ A newer 'metropolitan' Vancouver definition is emerging, called "South Coast BC".¹⁵ *Greater Vancouver* is Canada's third largest metropolis. It is one of the four fastest growing urban areas in North America, Canada's fastest. The Greater Vancouver region has grown to over 2 million (2,211,221 as of July 1, 2007)¹⁶ - and is expected to pass 2.5 million by 2020. It is the core of British Columbia's 'Lower Mainland'.¹⁷ Established in 1967, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) is an amalgam of twenty-one municipalities and one unincorporated electoral area, covering 3250 sq. kms. The Greater Vancouver Region includes a majority (eight of twelve) of the largest (over 50,000 population) local authorities in the province. It contains 50.67% of total BC population – and is co-terminus with the Vancouver CMA. Its adjacent neighbour, the Fraser Valley Regional District, includes an additional six municipalities and has a population of 238,000 (2006, Census Canada).

The central city, Vancouver, has a 2007 population of 601,864 (City of Vancouver, 2007), making it now, following city-regional amalgamations in several other Canadian provinces over the past decade, only Canada's eighth largest *city*. The ethnic makeup of the Vancouver-centred region's population is highly multicultural: sixty-one percent of the public school population of Vancouver has English as a Second Language, for example, a figure which has been going up – from 50% seven years ago.¹⁸ This translates, increasingly, into politics around who will represent

these communities – and how political institutions might be adapted to be more reflective of the changing social, demographic and political makeup, and the impacts of globalization on the region.¹⁹

This rapid population growth – and the shifts in demographic makeup – is a relatively recent phenomenon in the province. British Columbia's population generally grew slowly until after World War II; its population in 1901, for example, thirty years after joining Confederation, was just 179,000, few with much municipal experience, according to Higgins.²⁰ At the 1931 decennial census, BC residents numbered 694,000, and passed the 1,000,000-mark in 1946 with a post war influx. Yet by 1971, only seven BC 'cities' were over 20,000, and only one – Vancouver, with 426,000 – had over 100,000. The provincial population by 1971 stood at 2,184,600. By 2006, the province had doubled in size again – to 4,200,000 – and included some of the fastest growing municipalities in North America.²¹

Over recent years, differing population shifts have occurred in areas of the province. Most of the municipalities in the Greater Vancouver and the next-door Fraser Valley have grown rapidly over the past two decades: Vancouver, for example, grew from 471,844 in 1991 to 578,041 in 2006. (Census Canada, 2006), and over 600,000 in 2007. In the rest of the province, population remained relatively stable, the exceptions being Abbotsford and Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley, plus Kelowna and Prince George in the Okanagan/North, and Courtenay, Comox and Parksville in Central Vancouver Island showing the most growth. Other centres such as Kamloops, Cranbrook, Port Alberni, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Powell River, Terrace, Williams Lake, Dawson Creek and Kitimat all showed no or negative growth in the same period. (BC Stats, 2007, BC Regional District and Municipal Population Estimates). Interestingly, proportions of the provincial population by community type (city/district/town/village) have remained fairly stable over the past decade.

The BC Local Government Gender Gap

When BC local governments are examined for gender representation, the local government profile shows that males dominate as both mayors and councillors across the province.²² Up to the 2005 municipal elections (the next BC local elections are in November, 2008), of all (but 2) municipalities, 125 mayors were male, while only 30 female mayors were in office (19.35%) (or roughly four males for every female mayor). While municipal councils were not as skewed, there were still three times as many males on council as females, with 547 males and 270 females (33.05%). For mayors, cities had the highest ratio of males to females, with 41 males and 6 females (6.8:1 or 12.77%). Districts had the lowest ratio, with 34 males and 13 females (2.6:1 or 27.66%). On council, towns had the highest ratio of males to females, with 2.9 males for every female councillor (56 males and 19 females – or 25.33%). Villages had the lowest ratio, with 90 males and 65 females (1.4:1 or 41.94%). In 20 municipalities of various sizes, there were a majority or equal number of females on council (including mayors). In seven municipalities, there was no female representation on either council or as mayor. There were no councils with solely female representation.

Regionally, the numbers were also skewed towards males. On regional district boards (indirectly elected from municipal councils, except for unincorporated areas which elect their own representatives directly – thus reflecting the municipal pattern) - there were 296 males and 96 females (3.1:1 ratio or 15.31%). Chairs of the BC Regional District boards were also

predominantly male, with almost 3 male chairs for every female (19 males, 7 females or 26.92%) (See Appendix 1).

Internationally, Canada is not progressive in electing women to the ranks of national political office. Women make up just 21.1 per cent of current members of Parliament, placing Canada 37th out of 181 countries for the number of women in national politics. And with women's representation in local government standing at 21.7 per cent, Canada lags behind Chile at 48 per cent, Sweden at 42 per cent, Bolivia at 34 per cent, Finland at 31 per cent, and the United Kingdom at 27 per cent.²³ Although studies completed between 1980 and 1997 found a substantial increase in female representation at the municipal level in Canada,²⁴ women have not reached anything beginning to approximate equal representation with their male counterparts in municipal politics. In a study of Canada, Elizabeth Gidengil and Richard Vengroff argue that "too often women achieve, at best, a token presence and the more desirable the council seat, the more likely the presence is to remain at token levels".²⁵

It is suggested that it is easier for women to enter municipal politics than provincial and federal politics due to the different demands placed on municipal politicians. Some factors that encourage females to enter municipal politics include the lower cost of municipal campaigns compared provincial or federal campaigns and fewer time commitments for local councillors creating an advantage for women with families.²⁶ Most local government politicians in Canada are part-time, even in the country's largest cities.²⁷

Women's involvement in municipal politics is also attributed to their increased familiarity with its structure and the non-partisan traditions which still predominate in municipal politics in Canada. Caroline Andrew has argued that women's increasing involvement in organizations like shelters for battered women, food banks and sexual assault crisis centres have brought women into contact with local government and municipal policy and have made women see the importance of municipal government.²⁸

The literature on women in municipal politics suggests there are certain indicators that point out where there should be more women or fewer women. One such indicator suggests "where power is, women are not."²⁹ In local politics, it has been argued, female politicians should face less intense political competition from their male counterparts when campaigning for councillor, since a seat on council typically lacks the power, status and financial benefits.³⁰ According to this indicator there should be fewer female mayors. There is also a "cosmopolitanism hypothesis" which predicts that women will have more success at getting elected to local office in large urban cities due to its diverse population and 'more progressive' politics.³¹ According to this hypothesis, more women should be elected in larger cities such as Vancouver and fewer women should be elected in small to medium sized city suburbs such as White Rock, Port Moody or Maple Ridge.

How well are females represented at the provincial and federal level of government? Canada is currently ranked 33rd of 98 countries in the world with some (in this case, party) form of gender 'quota'. In 2006, 20.8% of the 308 Members of Parliament elected in Canada (64 MP's) were women, tying Canada with Moldova. Canada's Parliamentary gender gap has remained highly stable over the past decade and more. Table 1 examines the number of women in the Canadian Parliament since 1984. Although, there has been an increase in the number of women as Members of Parliament, in 2006, only 20.8% of elected members of Parliament were women.

Table 1: Women in the Canadian Parliament Since 1984³²

| Year | Total Number of Seats | Seats Held by Women | Proportion of Seats Held by Women |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1984 | 282 | 27 | 9.6 % |
| 1988 | 295 | 39 | 13.3% |
| 1993 | 295 | 53 | 18.0 % |
| 1997 | 301 | 62 | 20.6 % |
| 2000 | 301 | 62 | 20.6 % |
| 2004 | 308 | 65 | 21.1 % |
| 2006 | 308 | 64 | 20.8 % |
| 2008 | | | |

Table 2 shows that Canada, scores ‘in the upper middle’ on gender representation terms when other national parliaments are compared.

Table 2: Percentage of Women in Parliament Worldwide³³

| Country | 1987 ³⁴ | 1994 ³⁵ | 2000 ³⁶ | 2005 ³⁷ |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Canada | 10 | 17.3 | 23.1 | 24.7 |
| USA | 5 | 10.3 | 12.5 | 14.8 |
| UK | 6 | 7.4 | 18.4 | 17.9 |
| Sweden | 31 | 33.5 | 42.7 | 45.3 |
| Portugal | 8 | 8.7 | 18.7 | 20 |
| China | 21 | 21 | 21.8 | 20.2 |
| Thailand | 3 | 3.7 | 6.6 | 8.1 |
| Indonesia | 12 | 12.2 | 11.4 | 11.3 |
| Argentina | 5 | 14.2 | 23 | 33.6 |
| Mexico | 11 | 7.3 | 17.9 | 23.7 |
| Cuba | 34 | 22.8 | 27.6 | 36 |
| United Arab Emirates | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Iraq | 13 | 10.8 | 6.4 | 25.5 |
| Syrian Arab Rep. | 9 | 8.4 | 10.7 | 12 |
| Burundi | 9 | 9.9 | 6 | 18.5 |

Table 3 examines the number of women in the BC Legislature since 1983. In provincial terms, there were 79 Members of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly elected in 2005; only 17 were women – or 21.5% of the provincial legislature. That was down from a high of 28% in 1996 and lower than any BC legislature since 1986.

Table 3: Women in B.C. Legislature Since 1983³⁸

| Year | Seats Held by Women | Percentage of Seats Held by Women |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1983 | 6 | 10.5% |
| 1986 | 9 | 13% |
| 1991 | 19 | 25.3% |
| 1996 | 21 | 28% |
| 2001 | 19 | 24% |
| 2005 ³⁹ | 17 | 21.5% |

Table 4 looks at the number of women in Canadian Legislatures since 1978. When compared with other Canadian provincial legislatures, BC ranks in the upper one-quarter, but women still only have one in five (21.5%) of the MLA's in British Columbia's "House", essentially at the average for Canada's provincial legislatures.

Table 4: Women in Canadian Legislatures Since 1978⁴⁰

| | 1978 | | 1998 | | 2001 | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|
| | Number of Women | Percent | Number of Women | Percent | Number of Women | Percent |
| House of Commons | 9 | 3.4 | 61 | 20.3 | 62 | 20 |
| Alberta | 2 | 2.6 | 22 | 26.5 | 17 | 20 |
| British Columbia | 6 | 10.9 | 20 | 26.7 | 19 | 24 |
| Manitoba | 1 | 1.8 | 11 | 19.3 | 14 | 25 |
| New Brunswick | 2 | 3.4 | 8 | 14.5 | 10 | 18 |
| Newfoundland | 1 | 1.9 | 8 | 16.7 | 8 | 17 |
| Nova Scotia | 1 | 2.2 | 6 | 11.5 | 4 | 8 |
| Northwest Territories | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8.3 | 2 | 10.5 |
| Ontario | 6 | 4.8 | 18 | 13.8 | 17 | 16 |
| P.E.I. | 2 | 6.3 | 4 | 14.8 | 6 | 22 |
| Quebec | 5 | 4.5 | 27 | 21.6 | 29 | 23 |
| Saskatchewan | 1 | 1.6 | 13 | 22.4 | 13 | 22 |
| Yukon | 3 | 25 | 3 | 17.6 | 5 | 29 |
| Total | 45 | 4.2 | 231 | 20 | 146 | 20 |

Study Results: Size of Municipality

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to examine the effect of three variables that shape the election of women to municipal council: size of municipality, the presence of parties and campaign finance regulations.

Since the 1930s, Vancouver has elected local officials using at-large plurality (first-past-the-post). This system was imported from the United States to Vancouver (and the rest of British Columbia) and it effects how constituencies are divided.⁴¹ The city is not divided into wards, but is treated as one big riding. In this system, voters have as many votes as there are positions, and candidates with the most votes are awarded seats. For example there are 10 councillors for the City of Vancouver. Each voter is allowed to vote for up to 10 councillors from a possible list of 50+ candidates. Of these 50+ only the top 10 candidates with the most votes will be elected to municipal council.⁴²

The "size of municipality" variable examined whether female candidates have a greater chance of success in getting elected to municipal council in small, medium or large municipalities. The main questions addressed were: does the size of municipality affect the number of female candidates for municipal office and does the size of municipality affect the success of female candidates?

The metropolitan hypothesis argues that more women will be elected in large urban cities due to their large and diverse population, progressive politics and acceptance of women in positions of authority. If this hypothesis is correct there should be more female councillors in large

municipalities and fewer female councillors in smaller municipalities. Preliminary analysis, however, suggests the opposite. In small and medium size municipalities in metropolitan Vancouver⁴³ regional municipalities women make up 50% or more of the municipal councils. In contrast, large municipalities such as Vancouver have fewer female councillors. For example, in such “small” suburban municipalities, as on the Port Moody⁴⁴ council, there are 4 female and 2 male councillors; in Lions Bay⁴⁵ there are 3 female and 1 male councillors; and in Langley City there are 3 female and 3 male councillors. In comparison, in 2005 Vancouver elected 4 female councillors and 6 male councillors. These observations suggest that size of municipality does affect the number of women that are elected to municipal council, but that the ‘cosmopolitan thesis is not supported. Further study – on large municipalities (more than 100,000), medium municipalities (10,000 – 100,000) and small municipalities (less than 10,000) in the metropolitan Vancouver - will allow for a comparative-test these early findings.

Study Results: The Presence of Political Parties

The second independent variable in the study was the presence of political parties at the municipal level of government. In the metropolitan Vancouver region, there are some municipalities where political parties are present; many have none. For example, municipal candidates running for office in larger municipalities such as Vancouver, Surrey⁴⁶, Burnaby⁴⁷, Coquitlam⁴⁸, Delta⁴⁹ and The District of Langley⁵⁰ are represented by a municipal political party. There exists differing opinions as to whether political parties act to encourage or hinder women in getting elected to local government. In party systems, a woman must convince the gatekeepers that she is the “right” candidate to carry successfully the party banner.⁵¹ Others have argued that non-partisan elections may actually create a barrier for women because candidates must rely on name recognition and financial resources.⁵² Political parties may give female candidates name recognition when she is identified with a certain political party.

Preliminary analysis in metropolitan Vancouver shows that fewer women are elected in municipalities where parties are a feature of the political landscape. In Vancouver, the past three elections show that 4 women or fewer were elected to council out of 10 councillor positions. Burnaby, Coquitlam and Delta also displayed an under- representation of women on municipal council. The exception was the municipality of Surrey (BC’s “second” city) where women have dominated council for the past three elections. This preliminary analysis suggests that local political parties have acted as a deterrent of success for female candidates.

At the national level of government, initiatives to improve the number of female candidates and the number of females elected to office have been met with structural and normative barriers that have proved difficult to shift. The three dominant political parties in the Canadian Parliament have all advanced a number of strategies each with different success. The leftist New Democratic Party has an impressive record for undertaking reforms to improve the position of women in the party.⁵³ For example, in 1981 it introduced an affirmative action strategy to encourage more women to stand as candidates, and in 1983 it adopted measures to achieve gender parity on the two governing bodies of the national party. The more centrist Canadian Liberal Party was less supportive of introducing affirmative action than its NDP counterpart. Not totally convinced that affirmative action should be taken, in the 1980s the internal National Women’s Liberal Commission (NWLC) recommended that the party introduce a quota system so that women would make up 50 percent of the candidates, but these measures were resisted

internally.⁵⁴ The Liberal Party later became active in recruiting women to “winnable” ridings and providing them with campaign funding.⁵⁵ Liberal Opposition Leader Stephane Dion committed the party to nominating women in one third of all federal ridings for the October 2008 General Election.⁵⁶ In the 1990s, the rightist Conservative Party rejected the need for special measures to be taken to advance female candidates in their party. They initiated measures to “support and encourage” female candidates by reserving a limited number of positions on the national executive for the Internal Women’s Federation and established a “talent bank” of suitable women for future appointment to political office as well as assistance with campaign funding to support female candidates.⁵⁷ When Stephen Harper, the leader of the Conservative Party, and Canada’s Prime Minister, was asked about his party’s position on the nomination of women he stated, he would leave it to the local riding associations. Furthermore, he noted that women in his party were successful due to their own hard work.⁵⁸ In the end, only 36 of the Conservative Party’s 308 candidates (12%) were women,⁵⁹ while 12 of the 99 members elected from the Conservative Party in 2006 were women.⁶⁰

Louise Chappell explains that a feminist’s choice of political action has to do with the influence of political institutions.⁶¹ Institutions can provide barriers to advancement or can provide opportunities. She has examined political behaviour or more specifically, the political opportunity structure (POS) and how feminists in Canada and Australia may take advantage of existing opportunities or initiatives to create political opportunities. Based on how accessible institutions are, feminists may decide how and when to pursue their political agenda. Chappell has noted that in Canada there is a constitutionally- enshrined equality guarantee in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Sections 15 and 28) which has provided Canadian feminists with a legal basis to pursue their interests through litigation. Women have also found advantages through lobbying umbrella organizations – such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC).⁶² In Australia, there seems to be more tolerance for the bureaucracy which has made feminists focus on a “femocrat strategy.”⁶³ The Australian ‘femocrat strategy’ began in the 1970s when feminists began entering the bureaucracy to work as internal advocates on feminist policy issues such as in the women’s affairs agency in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.⁶⁴ This comparative analysis presents the argument that institutions can provide both opportunities and barriers for females seeking to enter the political arena. These “fluid moments of opportunity”⁶⁵ create strategic opportunities that shape behaviour of actors seeking change. What lessons there are for systems such as Canada remain “fluid”.

Study Results: Role of Municipal Campaign Financing

The final variable that is examined is the role of municipal campaign financing. British Columbia is unique because it is one of the few provinces in Canada which has not implemented regulations that govern election campaign finance at the municipal level. Election campaign finance clearly has an effect on the success of candidates. Money matters, and the lack of regulations may hinder the success of female candidates. With the increasing costs of campaigns and the lack of regulation restricting corporate and union donations to candidates, these factors may provide obstacles for women running for council or mayor. The importance of campaign finance regulations is explained best by John Rawls. He argues that “political parties are to be made independent from private economic interests by allotting them sufficient tax revenues to play their part in the constitutional scheme.”⁶⁶ By placing restrictions on the amount of money that can be donated to political parties from the business community, unions and individuals

there is the argument that they will be better able to represent the interests of the community rather than fall to the interests of wishes of their donors. The three reasons that motivate the restriction of political parties to financed interests are: equality; the behaviour of political office holders upon being elected to office; and the need to stimulate political debate.⁶⁷

The issue of party campaign finance was first comprehensively analyzed in the mid-1960s when the Committee on Election Expenses (Barbeau Committee) issued its report. In the report it noted that some countries subsidized the activities of political parties: (transportation in Japan, broadcast time and mailings in Britain and France, nomination conventions in Norway)⁶⁸ while in other countries West Germany, Sweden and Puerto Rico provided parties with unconditional subsidies based on the votes or on the number of seats won in the proceeding election.⁶⁹ The report was fundamental because it provided the basis for the 1974 Canadian *Election Expenses Act*, which led to what was then considered Canada's most comprehensive regulatory framework for party and election finance. The report created a framework for changes which affected provincial and federal campaign finance reform in Canada.⁷⁰ The main elements of the 1974 reforms in Canada were: limits on the election expenses of registered political parties and candidates; disclosure of parties' and candidates' revenue and spending; and public funding through post-election reimbursements to parties and candidates, as well as an income tax credit for contributions to either.⁷¹

However, the trickle-down effect did not affect the campaign finance regime for British Columbia's local governments. Terry Morley states that "successive governments of the province have failed to grasp the spirit of reform that followed the federal Report of the Committee on Election Expenses (Canada, Committee 1966)"⁷² which has resulted in only modest regulation of party and election financing. In this, BC remains in a backwater of election expense transparency in Canada.⁷³

Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott argue that reformed election finance rules have made electoral competition more affordable to some women.⁷⁴ Many studies on campaign finance focus on provincial and federal level of government, often neglecting this topic at the municipal level. It has been argued "at the provincial and federal levels, women may have less success at fund-raising if they lack lucrative contacts in the business world. Finding backers at the local level is less a concern to many female municipal candidates."⁷⁵ At the municipal level, however, "a women's material disadvantage and lack of contracts with moneyed interests should be less of a barrier to entry at the local level".⁷⁶

This study suggests that the unregulated campaign finance regime in British Columbia local elections may represent an obstacle for the electoral success of women candidates. Currently, a mayoral campaign in small and medium sized municipalities costs an average of \$50,000 and councillors' campaigns often between \$5000 and \$8000. In Vancouver, the most expensive campaign for councillor was \$163,264.96.⁷⁷ With an absence of campaign limits, a candidate's expenses are likely only to increase over time making it more difficult for women to enter municipal politics. In the 2005 election in the small municipality of White Rock⁷⁸ \$10,993.93 in donations were made by corporations to 14 male candidates, compared with \$2,910.43 made to 6 female candidates by corporations. These observations suggest that campaign finance does shape the electoral success of female candidates in municipal politics. This pattern was repeated across many Lower Mainland municipalities and represents a basis for comparative testing in other local governing systems

Conclusion

This research has found that women were elected in higher numbers in some municipalities, yet remained under-represented in others in metropolitan Vancouver. For example, in the large municipality of Surrey and smaller Port Moody, women have consistently been elected as councillors. In Surrey, six out of nine current councillors are women and the mayor is also female. In Vancouver, however, women did not do as well. This observation raises the question: do political parties create an obstacle for women? Is it the current campaign finance regime that makes it difficult for women to raise sufficient money for their campaigns? Or is it the size of municipalities that affects the success of female candidates. Do women achieve higher electoral representation in smaller municipalities or larger municipalities? These questions continue to require more comparative research to answer adequately.

Research highlights the fact that “legislation alone” is not sufficient to end political representational gender gaps. Electoral systems, the roles of parties, political financing, etc., all play roles. According to Freedman, “for parity to become a reality, it seems that both formal institutional structures and informal norms and traditions surrounding candidate selection must change.”⁷⁹ Others have previously noted the issue of access to resources as a key impediment. Initial analysis of local electoral spending in local elections over the 1999, 2002 and 2005 BC municipal elections suggest part of the gender gap story may be explained in the \$-differences here.⁸⁰

The trend line on international reforms would seem to suggest quota reforms are one way toward shortening the gender representational gap in both Canada and across the world. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has ranked 184 countries by the number of women representatives – only 13 ranked above 33.3%, none at 50% (BC’s Lower Mainland Municipal Governments would have ranked 12th, compared to these national figures.):

Table 5: Women in Politics International Comparisons [at/above 33%]

| Rank | Country | Election Date | Total # of Seats | Number of Women | Percent Women |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Rwanda | Sept’03 | 80 | 39 | 48.8% |
| 2 | Sweden | Sept’02 | 349 | 158 | 45.3% |
| 3 | Norway | Sept’01 | 165 | 63 | 38.2% |
| 4 | Finland | Mar’03 | 200 | 75 | 37.5% |
| 5 | Denmark | Feb’05 | 179 | 66 | 36.9% |
| 6 | Netherlands | Jan’03 | 150 | 55 | 36.7% |
| 7 | Cuba | Jan’03 | 609 | 219 | 36% |
| 8 | Spain | Mar’04 | 350 | 126 | 36% |
| 9 | Costa Rica | Feb’02 | 57 | 20 | 35.1% |
| 10 | Mozambique | Dec’04 | 250 | 87 | 34.8% |
| 11 | Belgium | May’03 | 150 | 52 | 34.7% |
| 12 | Met Vcr Local Govts | Nov’05 | 197 | 68 | 34.5% |
| 13 | Austria | Nov’02 | 183 | 62 | 33.9% |
| 14 | Argentina | Oct’01 | 255 | 86 | 33.7% |
| 15 | South Africa | Ap’04 | 400 | 131 | 32.8% |

Source: Adapted from 'Women in Politics: International Comparisons', *Fawcett: Closing the Inequality Gap*, UK, 2006, @ www.fawcett.org.

The central question for quotas is "do they work?" Despite the fact that approximately forty countries now have gender quotas in their constitutions or electoral laws, studies continue to find inequality in gender representation. Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall, for example, looked at recent Scandinavian experience with the quota system. As table 8 indicates, these countries rank as amongst the best on gender representational equality in the world. Their conclusion, like that of Freeman on France, was that "quota provisions may be merely symbolic... without specifications of quota provisions that match the electoral system in question, and rules about the rank order of candidates as well as sanctions for non-compliance."⁸¹ Other comparative examinations of gender quotas highlight similar concerns: in "Gender Quotas II: Critical Perspectives on Gender and Politics", Baldez, Krook and Nanivadekar, individually examined the impact of quotas in Mexico, on candidate recruitment, and in India; their conclusions include the view that "the adoption of gender quota laws often reveals the deep-rooted nature of gender discrimination" in political systems.⁸²

All that suggests that quotas may be a necessary step in dislodging a seized-up system, but other responses and reforms will also need to be added to achieve gender sufficiency. Given some 'peculiarities of the BC municipal election system – all municipal elections are at large – shifting to clearer election finance laws (there are no limits) and running elections under a more proportional or single transferable vote system – might go a good way to being the additional necessary conditions to achieve gender sufficiency. One Belgian study, by Petra Meier, offers one of the early applications of the quota debate and research at the local level.⁸³ Quota use in Belgium shows that these reforms are likely to be part of any short-to-intermediate term solution on narrowing the representational gender gap.

There clearly remains more to do before John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) provides 21st century answers to his *Subjugation of Women* (1869), whether in Canada or more generally.

Endnotes

* The 'local/city' part of this research was supported by the SSHRCC MCRI Multilevel Governance project: Vancouver City Study. Initial research assistance was provided by Ola Stoklosa.

¹ Rachel Mayanja, Special UN Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Speech to Femmes Africa Solidarite, March 2006.

* The 'local/city' part of this research was supported by the SSHRCC MCRI Multilevel Governance project: Vancouver City Study. Initial research assistance was provided by Ola Stoklosa.

² Rachel Mayanja, Special UN Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Speech to Femmes Africa Solidarite, March 2006.

³ Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott, *Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada*, (Broadview Press, 2003), 42-47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵ See, for example, Patrick Smith, "Gendering Local Governments in British Columbia: Opportunities and Obstacles in Metropolitan Vancouver", Paper for the Pacific Northwest Political Science Association, Bend, Oregon, October 19-21, 2006.

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- ⁷ Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott, 4.
- ⁸ As of Summer, 2007, the Province of Bc has indicated it will split into two smaller regional districts, the Regional District of Comox-Strathcona, on northern Vancouver Island. That will mean there will be 28 RD's.
- ⁹ For more on local BC elections, see Kennedy Stewart, *Think Democracy: Options for Local Democratic Reform In Vancouver*, (Vancouver: IGS-SFU, 2004).
- ¹⁰ Smith, 3-4.
- ¹¹ Ministry of Finance, Province of British Columbia, *BC STATS*, April, 2006, ([@www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/project/bctab1.htm](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/project/bctab1.htm)) Accessed. September 14, 2006.
- ¹² The Canadian Decennial Census of 2001 confirmed the Vancouver CMA as the third largest metropolitan region in Canada, and the 29th largest in North America. [In comparison, the Toronto metropolitan region, Canada's largest, is 8th in North America; Vancouver's neighbour, Seattle is 19th.] *2006 Census Canada figures*.
- ¹³ See David Bond, "Sustaining the Metropolitan Economy" in P.J. Smith, H.P. Oberlander and T.Hutton, eds., *Urban Solutions to Global Problems: Vancouver - Canada - Habitat II*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Centre for Human Settlements, 1996), Ch 12, pp.68-71.
- ¹⁴ Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life*, New York: Random, 1984; H. Peter Oberlander and Patrick J. Smith, 'Governing Metropolitan Vancouver: Regional Intergovernmental Relations In British Columbia', in Donald Rothblatt and Andrew Sancton, eds., *Metropolitan Governance: America/Canadian Intergovernmental Perspectives*, University of California, Berkeley/Institute of Governmental Studies, Berkeley, California, (1993), pp.329 -73. See also, P.J. Smith, "Governing City-Region Policy Options: The Case of Cascadia", *Korean Local Government Review*, vol.7, #3, February, 2006, pp.143-174.
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- ¹⁷ Current population calculated from *2006 GVRD Board of Directors*, (Burnaby: GVRD, June, 2006).
- ¹⁸ Figures from Catherine Eddy, Manager, Vancouver School Board Reception Centre, Vancouver, September 27, 2006. This is from one of two definitions of ESL need by the VSB: their 'broad' definition is for any student who has learned a first language other than English or whose Mother Tongue home language is neither English nor French. (The '1701 VSB Form'). The VSB also has a narrower definition: the number of students actually needing ESL assistance for low English language skills. In 2005-6, that represented 25.24% of the public school student population in Vancouver. ceddy@vsb.bc.ca.
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- ²⁵ Elisabeth Gidengill and Richard Vengroff, "Representational Gains of Canadian Women or Taken Growth? The Case of Quebec's Municipal Politics", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (Sept., 1997), 537.
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- ²⁷ See, for example, Smith and Stewart, "Immature Policy Analysis: Building Capacity in Eight Major Canadian Cities", * (with Kennedy Stewart), in *Policy Analysis In Canada: The State Of The Art*, Laurent Dobuzinskis, Michael Howlett and David Laycock, editors, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press – Institute of Public Administration of Canada Series in Public Management and Governance, 2007), Ch.11, pp.265-288.
- ²⁸ Caroline Andrew, "Getting Women's Issues on the Municipal Agenda: Violence against Women," in Judith A. Garber and Robyne S. Turner, eds., *Gender in Urban Research, Urban Annual Review* 42 (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), 99.
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- ⁴³ Vancouver's visible minority population is 291,740 and the three largest ethnic groups are Chinese (168,215), South Asian (32,515) and Filipino (28,605). Non visible minority is 96% (279,860) <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915022&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom>

- ⁴⁴ The population in Port Moody is 27,440 and the city's visible minority population is 6,940. The three largest ethnic groups are Chinese (2,445), Korean (1180) and South Asian (825) The city's non visible population is currently 78 % (20,500) <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915043&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Port%20Moody&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁴⁵ The population in Lions Bay is 1330. The city's visible minority population is 9% (120). The three largest ethnic groups are Chinese (60), Japanese (30) and Filipino (15) Non visible population is currently 91% (1,205). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915065&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Lions%20Bay&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁴⁶ The City of Surrey is considered the second largest municipality in Metropolitan Vancouver with a population of 392,450 of which 46% are a visible minority. The city's three largest visible minority groups are South Asian (107, 810), Chinese (20,210) and Filipino (16,555). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915004&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=surrey&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁴⁷ The City of Burnaby is the third largest municipality in Metropolitan Vancouver with a population of 200,855 of which 55% are a visible minority. The city's three largest visible minority groups are Chinese (60, 765), South Asian (16,840) and Filipino (7,805). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915025&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Burnaby&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁴⁸ The City of Coquitlam population is 113,560 of which 39% are a visible minority. The city's three largest visible minority groups are Chinese (19,580), Korean (5,990) and West Asian (4,250). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915034&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Coquitlam&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁴⁹ The population of the City of Delta is 96,075 of which 27% are a visible minority. The city's three largest visible minority groups are South Asian (14,220), Chinese (5,835) and Filipino (1865). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915011&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Delta&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
- ⁵⁰ The population of the District of Langley is 93,040 of which 10% are a visible minority. The city's three largest visible minority groups are Chinese (2,350), South Asian (1,445) and Korean (1,900) <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915001&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=langley&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&Custom=>
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- ⁵² Susan Welch and Albert Karnig, "Correlates of Female Office Holding in City Politics," *Journal of Politics* 41 (1979), 478-91.
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- ⁵⁵ Louise A. Chappell, 71
- ⁵⁶ Talking Points. Equal Voice: Changing the Face of Politics. "Fast Facts on Women in Federal Politics" http://www.equalvoice.ca/idx.php?rl=talking_points (Accessed April 29, 2007)
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- ⁵⁸ Reply from Stephen Harper, leader of Conservative Party, to Rosemary Speirs, Chair of Equal Voice, March 29, 2004, posted on www.equalvoice.ca (Accessed April 29, 2007)

- ⁵⁹ Numbers provided to Nikki Macdonald by Conservative Party of Canada. Posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
- ⁶⁰ Party Standings, Parliament of Canada, 2006-2008.
- ⁶¹ Louise A. Chappell, 6
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 6-7
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-29.
- ⁶⁵ Lisa Young, 13.
- ⁶⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) 225-26.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.
- ⁶⁸ *Report of the Committee on Election Expenses* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), pp. 175–180.
- ⁶⁹ *Report of the Committee on Election Expenses*, pp. 203–222
- ⁷⁰ Peter P. Constantinou, "Public Funding of Political Parties, Candidates and Elections in Canada," in F. Leslie Seidle, ed., *Issues in Party and Election Finance in Canada*, Vol. 5 of *The Collected Research Studies*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), pp. 246–258.
- ⁷¹ F. Leslie Seidle, *Provincial and Party Election Finance in Canada*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), xi.
- ⁷² Terry Morley, "Paying for the Politics of British Columbia", in *Provincial Party and Election Finance in Canada* Leslie Seidle (ed.) Volume 3, 89.
- ⁷³ See D. Gavan-Koop, S.Vieille, and P. Smith, "A Tale of 27 Cities: Questions on Accountability, Right to Know and Local Governing in British Columbia", BCPA paper, 2007.
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- ⁷⁷ Vancouver Votes 2005, Campaign Finance Disclosure, http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/election2005/candidates/pdf/financing/council/Thompson_Kathi.pdf (Accessed June 18, 2008)
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Appendix 1: Women in Lower Mainland (Greater Vancouver/Fraser Valley) Municipal Councils

| <u>GVRD Municipalities [+ Council Seats]</u> | 1999 | | 2002 | | 2005 | |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of Women | % | Number of Women | % | Number of Women | % |
| Anmore (5) | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% |
| Belcarra (5) | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% |
| Bowen Island (7) | Not a municipality | X.X | 2 | 28.57 | 3 | 42.86% |
| Burnaby (9) | 3 | 27.27% | 2 | 18.18% | 1 | 9.09% |
| Coquitlam (9) | 4 | 44.4% | 4 | 44.4% | 3 incl Mayor | 33.3% |
| Delta (7/9) | 4 incl Mayor | 57.14% | 3 incl Mayor | 42.86% | 4 incl Mayor | 44.4% |
| Langley City (7) | 3 incl Mayor | 42.86% | 3 incl Mayor | 42.86% | 3 | 42.86% |
| Langley Twp.(9) | 3 | 33.3% | 3 | 33.3% | 1 | 11.1% |
| Lions Bay (5) | 3 incl Mayor | 60% | 3 | 60% | 3 | 60% |
| Maple Ridge (7) | 3 | 42.86% | 3 | 42.86% | 2 | 28.6% |
| New Westminster (7) | 1 incl Mayor | 14.3% | 1 | 14.3% | 2 | 28.6% |
| North Van City (7) | 2 incl Mayor | 28.6% | 2 incl Mayor | 28.6% | 2 | 28.6% |
| North Van District (7) | 3 | 42.86% | 2 | 42.86% | 2 | 28.6% |
| Pitt Meadows ((7) | 4 | 57.14% | 3 | 42.86% | 3 | 42.86% |
| Port Coquitlam (7) | 0 | 0% | 1 | 14.3% | 1 | 14.3% |
| Port Moody (7) | 3 | 42.86% | 3 | 42.86% | 4 | 57.14% |
| Richmond (9) | 2 | 22.2% | 3 | 33.3% | 4 | 44.4% |
| Surrey (9) | 5 | 55.5% | 5 | 55.5% | 6 incl Mayor | 66.6% |
| Vancouver (11) | 3 | 27.3% | 2 | 18.18% | 4 | 36.4% |
| West Vanc. (7) | 1 | 14.3% | 2 | 28.6% | 3 | 42.86% |
| White Rock (7) | 3 | 42.86% | 3 incl Mayor | 42.86% | 3 incl Mayor | 42.86% |
| GVRD Total | 51 (of 148) | 34.5% | 51 (of 157) | 32.48% | 56 (of 157) | 35.67% |
| GVRD Mayoral Success | 5 (of 20) | 25% | 4 (of 21) | 19.04% | 4 (of 21%) | 19.04% |
| Fraser Valley RD | | | | | | |
| Abbotsford (9) | 1 | 11.1% | 2 | 22.22% | 3 | 33.33% |
| Chilliwack (7) | 2 | 28.6 | 2 | 28.6 | 3 | 42.86 |
| Harrison Hot Springs (5) | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% |
| Hope (7) | 1 | 14.3 | 3 | 42.86 | 2 | 28.6 |
| Kent (5) | 1 (incl Mayor) | 20% | 1 (incl Mayor) | 20% | 1 | 14.3% |
| Mission (7) | 2 | 28.6% | 2 | 28.6% | 2 | 28.6% |
| Fraser Valley Total | 8 (of 40) | 20% | 11 (of 40) | 27.5% | 12 (of 40) | 30% |
| FVRD Mayoral Success | 1 | 16.6% | 1 (of 6) | 16.66% | 0 (of 6) | 0.0% |
| Lower Mainland Combined Total | 59 (of 188) | 31.36% | 62 (of 197) | 31.47% | 68 (of 197) | 34.5% |
| Lower Mainland Mayoral Success | 6 (of 26) | 23.07% | 5 (of 27) | 18.5% | 4 (of 27) | 14.8% |

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