

# WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING



The *Beijing Platform for Action* (PfA) identifies the “inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels” as a critical area of concern. The PfA contains strategic objectives and actions to: take measures to ensure equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision making; and, increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

Women in Canada are empowered and involved in decision-making processes in a variety of ways, including as parents and family members; community activists; labour force participants and consumers; employees; union members; business owners and entrepreneurs; and as members of government, non-government and private-sector organizations.

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## PATTERNS AND TRENDS\*

- In 2004, women made up 21.1% of members of Parliament and 35.8% of members of the Senate of Canada.<sup>i</sup>
- During the 2004 federal election, women accounted for 23% of candidates among the four parties with previously elected members.<sup>ii</sup>
- Canada's current federal Cabinet is comprised of 22% women, representing eight out of a total of 39 cabinet members -- a decrease from 11 women in the previous Cabinet.<sup>iii</sup>
- Within the federal public service, 25% of Deputy Ministers were women in 2004.<sup>iv</sup>
- Women accounted for 52.8% of federal public service employees, and 33.8% of the executive category.<sup>v</sup>
- As of August 2004, an unprecedented four of nine judges on the Supreme Court of Canada are women, making it the most gender-balanced high court in the world.
- In provincial and territorial legislatures, women are represented at an average of 20%, ranging from a high of 32% to a low of 8%.<sup>vi</sup>
- In 2002, Federation of Canadian Municipalities statistics reported that 12% of mayors, 21% of councillors and 52.1% of city managers were women.

- Canada has an extensive and diverse network of women's organizations and equality seeking groups many of which receive government support. These organizations contribute in many ways to priority-setting and public policy development.
- 35% of all managerial positions in Canada were filled by women in 1999, an increase from 27% in 1987.
- 27% of senior managers were women in 1999 while 36% of lower level managers were women.
- Women's representation among several categories of professionals increased between 1987 and 1999: they are now 20% in mathematics, natural sciences, and engineering; 58% in social sciences or religion (48% in 1987); 49% in business and finance (41% in 1987); and, 47% of doctors and dentists (44% in 1987).
- Of all female employees, 31% were members of a union in 1999, almost double the 16% in 1966.
- Women made up 46% of union members in 1999, a significant increase from less than 20% in 1969.

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## TOWARDS EQUALITY

- The *Employment Equity Act*, covering women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people and members of visible minorities, was strengthened in 1996 to give the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) the authority to conduct audits and enforce compliance.

- Federal Public Service employment equity programs are striving to ensure that its policies and practices reflect the diversity of the Canadian population and result in the selection of qualified individuals from employment equity groups (Aboriginal People, persons with disabilities, women and visible minorities).
- The Canada Study Grants program includes a special grant intended to increase the participation of women in certain fields of study, such as engineering and applied sciences, at the doctoral level.
- Through its Women's Program, Status of Women Canada supports a wide variety of initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels.

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## RECENT INITIATIVES

- Canada's main political parties have established programs to encourage and support women candidates. This often includes earmarking campaign funds for women, including grants for childcare, household help and lost wages.

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\* The source for data is Statistics Canada unless otherwise mentioned. Also, please note that *Women in Canada 2005: a gender-based statistical report* is being developed by Statistics Canada for publication in the fall of 2005.

<sup>i</sup> Library of Parliament

<sup>ii</sup> Elections Canada

<sup>iii</sup> Library of Parliament

<sup>iv</sup> Library of Parliament

<sup>v</sup> Employment Equity in Federal Public Service 2003

<sup>vi</sup> Research Center on Women and Politics, Ottawa University