



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### OTHER REPORT

Report Date: May 7, 2007  
Author: Councillor Suzanne  
Anton & Councillor  
Heather Deal  
Phone No.: 604.873.7242/  
604.873.7248  
RTS No.: 06719  
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Meeting Date: June 12, 2007

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Councillors Suzanne Anton & Heather Deal

SUBJECT: Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Getting to 30% National Campaign -  
Report Back on March 16, 2007 Regional Event

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council request that the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Sustainable Region Initiative host a regional follow-up event in March 2008 in support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Getting to 30% National Campaign, prior to the 2008 municipal elections, to continue the work of increasing women's participation in municipal government.

#### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

#### COUNCIL POLICY

There is no applicable Council Policy.

## PURPOSE

To report back to Council on the March 16, 2007 "Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government" regional event held in support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Getting to 30% National Campaign.

## BACKGROUND

In March 2006, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) approved a policy entitled "Getting to 30%", an initiative to increase women's participation in municipal government. The United Nations defines 30 per cent as the minimum percentage required for local governments to reflect women's concerns. Women make up 52 per cent of the Canadian population but only 21.7 per cent of municipal councils.

FCM asked Vancouver to host an event as part of FCM's national campaign to increase the number of women on council in Canada to 30% of the total by 2026.

On December 14, 2006, Council approved \$5000 from contingency to help organize a joint event with municipalities from the Lower Mainland.

## DISCUSSION

Councillors Suzanne Anton and Heather Deal, with the support of city and FCM staff, struck a committee to help plan the event. With International Women's Day falling on March 8, 2007, the committee decided to hold a dialogue and lunch on "Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government" in the month of March. A successful event was held on March 16, 2007 at the Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver.

Other GVRD municipalities, as well as Squamish and Whistler, were invited to participate. Representatives from several municipalities served on the advisory committee. Several municipalities also generously agreed to help support the event financially, including: City of Coquitlam; City of New Westminster; City of Richmond; City of Surrey; and the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

The goals of the event were to:

- promote awareness and participation;
- begin the work of increasing women's interest in politics;
- provide support to women who are participating or who have the aspiration to participate in municipal affairs; and
- create media attention.

The event attracted a broad segment of women. Each participating municipality sent out invitations to women in their community, and alerted women's organizations and networks to the event. The event filled to capacity within three weeks. The participants, mostly women but including some men, were from government, private and non-profit sectors, and were diverse in culture, ethnicity and age.

Ann MacLean, Mayor of the Town of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, was the keynote speaker on behalf of FCM. Local politicians and representatives from women's organizations sat on a panel moderated by newscaster Mi-Jung Li, and provided their thoughts about women's participation in politics. Penny Priddy MP, Mayor Maxine Wilson (City of Coquitlam), Janet Wiegand of Equal Voice, and former school trustee Dr. Yvonne Brown, were the panellists.

Over lunch, each table was invited to respond to the following question: *What will you or your organization do to encourage someone to enter municipal politics (and don't forget the next election is 2008!)*. A summary of the notes from those discussions is attached to this report as Appendix A.

The event attracted media coverage, including: Vancouver Courier; Richmond Review; Fairchild Radio & TV; CBC Radio; CBC French Radio; CTV; and the Whistler Question.

Many participants were keenly interested in a follow up event next year. It is recommended that the GVRD Sustainable Region Initiative be approached with the request that an event be included in their programming for March 2008, in time for those interested in the November 2008 civic election.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

#### CONCLUSION

The March 2007 "Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government" event held in Vancouver in support of the FCM's "Getting to 30%" campaign was a success. Many participants expressed keen interest in a follow up event in March 2008, in advance of the November 2008 civic election.

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## Appendix A - Event Notes

Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government  
Friday March 16, 2007  
Wosk Centre for Dialogue  
580 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC

To coincide with International Women's Day a dialogue was organized by a committee of representatives from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and Squamish and Whistler to look at ways of increasing the number of women elected to municipal office. This event was spearheaded by an FCM initiative to raise awareness about the low number of women occupying municipal offices. Women make up 52 per cent of the Canadian population but only 21.7 per cent of municipal councils.

Adopting strategies to increase women's participation in municipal decision-making promotes strong, effective and accountable municipal government and supports FCM's mandate to improve the quality of life in all communities. For this reason, FCM's Standing Committee for Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government initiated a project, with support from the Status of Women Canada, to meet the following two objectives:

- To develop political support and validation for a national strategy to increase women's participation in municipal decision-making processes, including elected office.
- To develop a national strategic action plan in order to increase women's participation in municipal decision-making processes.

### **Meeting in Vancouver**

Over 180 people, mainly women, participated in the half day program consisting of a dialogue with a guest panel and lunch. This event was free to everyone. During lunch the participants were asked to discuss ways of increasing the number of women in public office and all their comments were recorded. The session was very positive and extremely well-received. Many participants indicated an interest in a follow-up event in March 2008 in preparation for the November 2008 civic election.

A summary of the discussions follows.

## Summary of Discussion

The United Nations defines 30 per cent as the minimum percentage required for local governments to reflect women's concerns. Women make up 53 per cent of the population. What can be done to get more women involved in politics and elected to public office? The following question was put to each attendee for discussion.

*Question: What will you or your organization do to encourage someone to enter municipal politics (and don't forget the next election is 2008!). Give one or two suggestions.*

The following six major topics came out of the discussion groups.

### 1. Education

Education comes in many forms and never stops. Here are some suggestions for educating oneself about issues, local politicians and community groups.

- Learn about governance, community organizations, civic commissions, special projects and community events.
- Encourage education for interested people in governance/committee process through community organizations.
- Organize candidate forums through organizations' programs focusing on election issues and women in politics.
- Encourage those who are in office to move up.
- Work on having an annual event like this that provides information for women.
- Build on today's workshop with continuing workshops throughout the year.
- Promote message that women contribute value.
- Find ways to increase education to new Canadians and recent immigrants about upcoming elections and candidates.

### 2. Mentoring

Everyone agreed that there is a huge need for women to be mentors. Mentoring not only applies to young women but also to new immigrants and women looking for experience. Some suggestions for mentoring include:

- Establish places where women can go for support, guidance and direction.
- Mentorship by older, more experienced women to encourage others to follow in politics.
- Support women to get the skills needed to run for public office.
- Organize mentorship program through your organization or business.
- Identify a woman and work with them one-on-one.
- Learn from others - get involved with neighbourhood community centres as a program volunteer, board member or on special events.
- Help to eliminate barriers such as cultural, ethnic, time.
- Lead in your community without being elected; lead by example, become a role model.

### 3. Networking

Everyone agreed that networking is one of the best ways to engage with other women.

- Form a network to encourage women of all ages and cultures to get involved in community activities.
- Explain how women can be involved at the committee level at city hall.
- Organize focus groups of diverse women to share their know-how.
- Do research and community outreach through personal connections to support a candidate.
- Bring diverse communities together.
- Set up a women's advisory council to encourage participation, sharing of knowledge, to discuss issues, network and make connections.
- Organize community dialogues, breakfast/get togethers - non-partisan.
- Organize or get involved in a community meeting.
- Support gatherings like this *Women's Dialogue* to support women with networking and information gathering.
- Establish lists of capable women to invite to get involved in your organization.
- Organize a session with local media for women community leaders to talk about diversity in leadership.
- Organize focus groups of diverse women to share their knowledge and expertise.
- Look for women interested in community issues and help them.
- *Leadership Vancouver* - attend meetings, get involved.

### 4. Politics

There are many ways for women to get involved in politics without running for public office. Helping women to find ways to get involved, learn about politics and engage in the process will hopefully lead to more women being elected.

- Promote organizations like the Women's Campaign School to community volunteers, community leaders and young women.
- Recruit more women as organizers within the party.
- Get to know your local politicians.
- Familiarize yourself with your local council - go to council meetings.
- Support a woman running for public office - help her get on a city advisory committee or a board.
- Work on a candidate's campaign - look for a person who shares your vision, passion, values.
- Accompany first time voters to the poll; explain how important voting is.
- Encourage establishment of a women's advisory committee in your municipality.
- Identify community activists and encourage them to run for public office.
- De-mystify politics - organize talks to various groups about life in public office.
- If you decide to run for office organize campaign well in advance; last minute decision to run can backfire.
- Need to find funding for women interested in running for public office.

### 5. Volunteering

Volunteering was generally seen as the key element to involvement. There are many ways a person can volunteer. The purposes of volunteering include the opportunity to make connections, get experience and contribute in some way. Here are some ideas for volunteering:

- Promote volunteering in the community.
- Run or participate in a political campaign.
- Sit on a city advisory committee, board or commission.
- Look for opportunities or events in the community to participate in.
- Support media training for volunteers.
- Get involved in the community - on a board, with a community group, in a school or church.

## 6. Youth

There is a huge resource in youth. It was generally agreed that getting youth involved will lead to increased numbers of women in public office in years to come.

- Encourage youth to volunteer in the community.
- Encourage youth to get involved in politics, volunteer on a political campaign.
- Engage youth in civic government agencies and commissions; this will open the door to them to consider running for public office.
- Engage youth in the city/civic government via civic agencies, i.e. Vancouver Youth Outreach Team etc, open up the doors of City Hall to young women.
- Target young people ages 13-24 to participate with other youth in organizations such as: Youth Politik, Partners@Work, Check your Head.
- Support youth organizations like British Columbia Youth Parliament, whose membership includes many young women who, with the right support and direction, could be future civic politicians.
- Youth council at local level important starting ground.
- Youth politics- identify youth who might enter politics later.
- Encourage youth to get involved in school politics and run for school office.
- Work with schools to help identify possible future leaders.

## Recommendations for future sessions

The following are recommendations from the participants.

1. Find a municipality, or possibly the GVRD, to host session in March 2008.
2. Start planning earlier.
3. Plan more time for dialogue - start session earlier.
4. Reference all that has been accomplished in this session to carry ideas forward.
5. Include a list of participants for networking purposes.
6. Ensure event is free to everyone.
7. Focus for next session - *How To Get Started*.

## Resources

Aboriginal Women's Action Network  
Battered Women Support Services-  
BC Women's Housing Coalition  
British Columbia Youth Parliament [bcyp.org](http://bcyp.org)  
Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement [tgmag.ca](http://tgmag.ca)  
Check your Head [checkyourhead.org](http://checkyourhead.org)  
City of Vancouver Youth Groups  
Council of Women  
Downtown Eastside Aboriginal Women's Centre  
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre  
DTES Women's Leadership Network  
Environmental Youth Alliance  
Equal Voice  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities [gettingtothegate.com](http://gettingtothegate.com)  
Indian Homemakers Association-  
India Mahila Association  
Minerva Foundation  
Partners@Work [vancouveryouth.ca](http://vancouveryouth.ca)  
Phillipine Women's Centre  
Reel Power Youth  
South Fraser Women's Services Society  
Taking It Global [takingitglobal.org](http://takingitglobal.org)  
University Women's Club  
Vancouver Custody and Access Support and Advocacy Association  
Vancouver Status of Women  
Vancouver Women's Health Collective  
West Coast Childcare Association  
West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund  
Women's Campaign School [congress@telus.net](mailto:congress@telus.net)  
Women's Committees of Unions  
Women Elders in Action  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Vancouver Society for Immigrant and Visible Minority Women  
YouthPolitik, City of Vancouver [vancouveryouth.ca](http://vancouveryouth.ca)  
YWCA