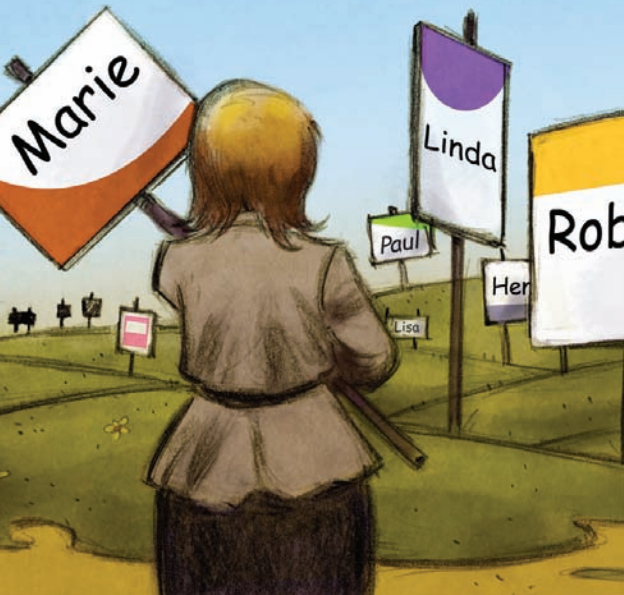




# DARE TO GET INVOLVED... IN POLITICS



FEMMES ÉQUITÉ ATLANTIQUE

## DARE TO GET INVOLVED ... IN POLITICS

Have you been wanting to get involved in politics but don't know where to start? *Dare to get involved ... in politics*, an initiative of Femmes Équité Atlantique (FÉA), was developed to awaken women to citizen and democratic action. It provides various ways to facilitate the participation of women in the development of our communities, which will enable us to learn more about the electoral process at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.

The goal of *Dare to get involved ... in politics* is to help create an environment in which more Acadian and Francophone women in Atlantic Canada will be elected to govern. If we want our laws to be more representative of the needs of women, we must work together to ensure more women are elected to positions of power and influence at every level of government.

Women make up 52% of the population of Canada but occupy only 21% of the seats in the House of Commons, provincial legislative assemblies, and municipal councils. Women bring experience and perspective that are needed in public life.

*Go for it: Your community will benefit from your talents!*

Alya Hadjem  
President  
Femmes Équité Atlantique

## WHAT IS FEMMES ÉQUITÉ ATLANTIQUE?

Established in 2004, Femmes Équité Atlantique (FÉA) seeks to help Francophone and Acadian women living in minority situations in the Atlantic Provinces address more effectively the issues they face in relation to socio-economic inequity.

FÉA is made up of 10 organizations from the Francophone community sector at work in Atlantic Canada. Its main activities involve informing, raising awareness, educating, and mobilizing women and their allies throughout the four Atlantic Provinces with regard to socioeconomic inequity.

Femmes Équité Atlantique provides Acadian and Francophone women in Atlantic Canada with opportunities to become informed, to consult together, and to ensure a female presence in provincial activities and issues, while strengthening the representation of women within the governance of communities.

To find out more about Femmes Équité Atlantique, contact the FÉA Coordinator, Louise d'Entremont, by e-mail at [fea@featl.ca](mailto:fea@featl.ca)

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Society needs more women to be involved in the decision-making process at all levels of government. They bring to the decision table a distinct point of view and have different concerns than men do. Political decisions have different effects on women than on men. Moreover, women have many talents that differ from men's and they are not being used to their full potential.

According to the United Nations, there needs to be a critical mass of 30% of women elected so that women's concerns are taken into consideration. Increasing the number of women elected at every level of government is a matter of fair and equitable representation. The voice of women reinforces the debates on public interest policies. Women are more likely to bring an "ethics of care" to the decision-making process.

The participation of women in the political process will ensure that governments reflect the needs and concerns of women in the decision-making process. It is crucial that more women participate directly in the governance process.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

While there is a wide variety of reasons for venturing into politics, essentially, it comes down to wanting to

make a difference. Depending on your interests and availability, you have to determine at which level you want to participate: municipal, provincial, or federal. Would you like to volunteer for a candidate, support a female candidate, or become a candidate?

The process of making your dream come true is very meticulous. It includes the following:

- Becoming politically active
- Learning more about our political system  
Parliament of Canada: [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)  
Government of Canada: [www.gc.ca](http://www.gc.ca)  
Your province: <http://canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html>  
Different levels of government: <http://gettingtothegate.com>
- Joining a political party (The power is in access!)  
The Liberal Party of Canada: [www.liberal.ca](http://www.liberal.ca)  
The Conservative Party of Canada: [www.conservative.ca](http://www.conservative.ca)  
The New Democratic Party of Canada: [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)  
The Green Party of Canada: [www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca)
- Considering volunteering for a candidate who represents your interests/concerns well
- Developing and sharing your opinions on topics that interest you
- Exercising your right to vote and encouraging others to vote on election day
- Nominating a woman
- Becoming a candidate

## ME, A CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT ELECTION

So, you want to become a candidate? Take the time required to adequately prepare yourself by planning each step of your road to success. That path will not always be easy. The process will require a lot of energy and will be demanding on you and on your family as well. Approach former candidates to find out about the role and responsibilities of an elected official, as well as the method of remuneration. Discuss the requirements of the position with your family and make sure you have their support as well as the support of your friends.

### Develop a winning strategy

- Determine your strengths and challenges
- Get to know the nomination process
- Plan for success by developing a winning strategy
- Establish a power base: select your allies from various spheres of the community
- Choose a mentor
- Get some online training – such as *Getting to the Gate* ([www.gettingtothegate.com](http://www.gettingtothegate.com)) – or participate in a campaign college for women
- Surround yourself with a team of loyal people who are familiar with the electoral process
- Organize your personal finances and affairs
- Plan the financial aspect of your campaign
- Develop a communication strategy
- Plan out election day

## DARE ... TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Women, take the leap:** Be confident in your abilities and become active in politics!

Before joining a political party, ask the party leaders some questions.

- What will your party do to ensure a diversified representation of candidates?
- What commitments has your party made to eliminate violence against women, children and the elderly?
- What strategies has your party adopted to eliminate poverty among young women, single mothers and their children?
- What is your party going to do to ensure that children, who are victims of child abuse or have been exposed to domestic violence, receive the services they need and are not forced to visit the abusive parent without supervision?
- What is your party going to do to ensure legislation guaranteeing pay equity or a decent salary for those who work in traditionally female fields?
- How will your party set up an affordable daycare system that supports children, women and families?

**Getting involved at any level of governance is worth it!** *You will have the satisfaction of contributing to the greater welfare of the people in your community and beyond.*

# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Here are some links to sites where you can learn more and find guidance as you get involved.

- An Initiative to elect women in PEI: <http://www.wnpei.org/womeningovernment/>
- Elections NWT: [http://www.electionsnwt.ca/english/candidates\\_information.html](http://www.electionsnwt.ca/english/candidates_information.html)
- Equal Voice: [www.equalvoice.ca](http://www.equalvoice.ca)
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities: Women's Tool Kit: <http://www.fcm.ca//CMFiles/FCM%20Toolkit%20En10KX-6232008-6808.pdf>
- Getting to the Gate: [www.gettingtothegate.com](http://www.gettingtothegate.com)
- Government of Canada: [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)
- NB Advisory Council on the Status of Women: [www.acswcccf.nb.ca](http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca)
- NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women: <http://women.gov.ns.ca>
- One Woman One Vote: <http://www.onewomanonevote.org/>
- PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/acsw>
- Pouvoir...ensemble (Able...together)/Centre Femmes La Jardilec: <http://catalogue.cdeacf.ca/>
- Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Newfoundland & Labrador: [www.pacsw.ca](http://www.pacsw.ca)
- Still Counting: <http://stillcounting.athabascau.ca/index.php>
- UN Platform for Action Committee Manitoba: <http://unpac.ca>
- Young Women Vote!: <http://www.geocities.com/youngwomenvote/index.html>
- Your province - Government of Canada Site - click on "Provinces and Territories": <http://www.canada.ca/>

## French-only sites\*

- Centre de développement des femmes et gouvernance: <http://cdfg.enap.ca>
- Femmes, politique et démocratie: [www.femmes-politique-et-democratie.com/ecole\\_ete.php](http://www.femmes-politique-et-democratie.com/ecole_ete.php)
- Kit: Pensez à Elles!: [www.femmescentreduquebec.qc.ca](http://www.femmescentreduquebec.qc.ca)