



Marking a Century of Women's Suffrage
Commémorer un siècle du droit de vote des femmes

equal voice
À voix égales

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Federal Budget 2018 Seeks to Empower Women

February 27 2018 (Ottawa): Equal Voice is delighted to see **four key measures** in federal budget 2018 that will improve opportunities for women's empowerment, including those who wish to seek and serve in elected office.

They include:

1. A significant financial boost to Status of Women's Program by \$100 million over five years to advance gender equality, including through initiatives that **encourage more women and girls to reach leadership and decision-making positions.**

Equal Voice's historic and ambitious Daughters of the Vote initiative which brought 338 remarkable young women, one from every federal riding in Canada, to the House of Commons on International Women's Day during Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017 would not have happened without support from Status of Women Canada.

Equal Voice fully believes in the power of innovative programs that connect diverse and dynamic young women with formal political institutions, and women and men role models who serve in them. Without such programs, closing the representation gap between women and men in Canada's Parliament (women currently comprise 27 percent of MPs in the House of Commons), in addition to provincial and territorial legislatures, will take far too long.

"EV is delighted by the additional investments which will support initiatives aimed to strengthen women's political empowerment," says Nicole Foster, National Chair.

2. The introduction of a Gender Results Framework to **guide future decision-making and to measure progress** - in addition to amendments to federal legislation to make Status of Women Canada an official and autonomous department of the Government of Canada.

"There is no doubt that a gender parity federal cabinet thrives when there is a fully equipped department to support complex policy considerations regarding gender equality in all facets of society," emphasizes Nancy Peckford, Executive Director of Equal Voice.

Increasing the capacity of Status of Women Canada to provide cutting edge and innovative analysis across departments is fundamental to supporting female leaders in government. EV recognizes this as a very positive step.

3. **Distinct measures to accommodate women and men Parliamentarians with families** so as to ensure the fulfillment of their Parliamentary functions including 1/ improvements to achieve work-life balance, 2/ access to child care and designated spaces for the use of those with infants and children; and 3/the introduction of parental leave for Parliamentarians.

“In light of Equal Voice’s long-standing call to ensure that MPs have access to infant care services on Parliament Hill while performing their duties as a Parliamentarians, we are strongly encouraged by this announcement.” - Nicole Foster.

“It is clear that Canada’s federal Parliament must lead the way in modeling a 21st century workplace where becoming a parent of young children is not an impediment to public service in the electoral arena.” – Nancy Peckford.

Further, the commitment to providing a predictable short term parental leave for MPs is welcome news. The current situation of female MPs risking pay deductions if they are unable to return to the House of Commons once 21 days has passed (after giving birth) is both punitive and untenable.

4. Boosting **legal aid funding** across the country with a focus on supporting victims of sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as the establishment of a **pan-Canadian outreach** program which will better inform employees, particularly those who are most vulnerable, about their rights and how they can access services in the event of experiencing harassment.

“Equal Voice expects this measure to improve how political staff on Parliament Hill better identify troubling behavior from the outset and understand their options if they are victims of harassment.” - Nancy Peckford.

Further, emerging female leaders in Canada who are eager to contribute to their country by working for an elected official must do so in conditions that are respectful of their talents and commitment. The culture of all of Canada’s formal political institutions must change to be far more inclusive of women in all positions.

To this end, reducing the vulnerability of female staffers to sexual harassment by ensuring they are well informed about what constitutes harassment, and how to address it, is imperative. In doing so, it will be easier to attract talented women leaders to themselves consider running and serving in elected office.

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