



Reducing Barriers to Women in Politics through the Promotion of Inclusive & Sustainable Political Workplaces

*Equal Voice Brief to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting family-life balance & accommodating care-giving responsibilities

1) As per the commitment in the federal budget 2018, ensure the expansion of the Parliament Hill childcare services to include full and part time infant care for MPs, which includes 'after hour' care that aligns with the Parliamentary schedule and related commitments.

Further, consider making infant/toddler care available on an as-needed basis to Committee witnesses with young children who are asked to appear before a committee.

2) Institute a 60 day leave from the House of Commons for female MPs who become parents. This will address the challenge of the current 21 day leave rule which only permits MPs to be away from the House for 21 consecutive days for sickness or other exceptional circumstances.

3) Enable virtual participation and voting in Parliamentary committee meetings (in order to accommodate female MPs who are expecting/new parents and are unable to travel to the House pre or both birth/adoption).

4) Reduce travel obligation for expectant MPs and new mothers by introducing the accommodations above- along with other adjustments to the schedule of MPs.

Predictability

5) Maintain the current commitment to fixed election dates.

6) During House of Commons sitting weeks, establish Fridays as a constituency day for MPs (thereby compressing Parliamentary business into a Monday through Thursday calendar). The Quebec legislature offers an excellent model of what this could look like.

Politics as a sustainable work place

7) Increase the Members' Office Budgets envelope to enable MPs to double the available staff support in constituency offices.

- MPs currently serve an average of 103,000 Canadians and, increasingly, are asked to act as crucial ombudsmen/liaisons/problem solvers with multiple federal departments in light of consolidated service provision, Phoenix challenges and fewer staff.

8) Ensure competitive remuneration for MPs (both salary & benefits) so as to avail of the full female talent pool in Canada.

Safety

Regarding the two existing House of Commons Harassment policies that govern 1/conduct between and among MPs as well as 2/conduct between MPs and staff/interns/volunteers:

9) Establish an independent body outside of the House of Commons that will 1/ oversee harassment policies; 2/determine if an investigation is warranted; 3/solicit third party expertise to oversee an investigation; 4/report the results of such investigations to a newly established House of Commons committee and updates policies as required;

- Through this process, the potential roles of the party whip, the House of Commons Chief Human Resources Officer and/or party leaders are removed.

Regarding violence in the Workplace & Cyber-bullying as directed to MPs

10) Implement recommendations from the House of Commons Status of Women Canada's own report in 2017.

11) Pursue the House of Commons' Gender Safety Audit.

Increase the Number of Women Elected

12) Introduce a federal elections financing incentive which reimburses political parties at a higher rate for fielding an agreed upon threshold of female candidates (New Brunswick has recently introduced a mechanism like this for provincial campaign expenses).