

## **Legislative Recruitment: An Analysis of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Using qualitative data from interviews conducted with MPPs of Ontario's thirty-eighth provincial parliament and selected professionals, this paper explores the culture of legislative recruitment in Ontario and assesses whether it is conducive to prospective female candidates. The paper investigates the barriers that women encounter during the candidate recruitment and selection processes by assessing the nomination processes used by the three main provincial political parties and their constituency-level party executives. By analyzing the collected, this study suggests that the most powerful barrier to women's advancement in legislative careers is the nomination phase of the recruitment process. Specifically, results reveal that political party gatekeepers and funding are the biggest obstacles women face in the process of trying to pass from aspirant to candidate.

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## **Introduction**

Legislative recruitment is a central function of democratic political systems. It is the critical step whereby individuals move from "lower levels" into parliamentary careers (Norris 1997:1). The quality and diversity of selected candidates determines the quality of the elected representatives, the quality and culture of the ensuing legislature and oftentimes the politics of the day (Gallagher 1988:1; Lundell 2004:26). In addition to its importance for representation, recruitment is also a central and defining aspect of political parties (Seligman 1961:77). Legislative recruitment also holds great importance for the topic of women and legislative representation. Many women are not entering legislative careers in equitable proportions despite increased efforts to increase their representation. The under-representation of women in public office is a serious problem in the province of Ontario.

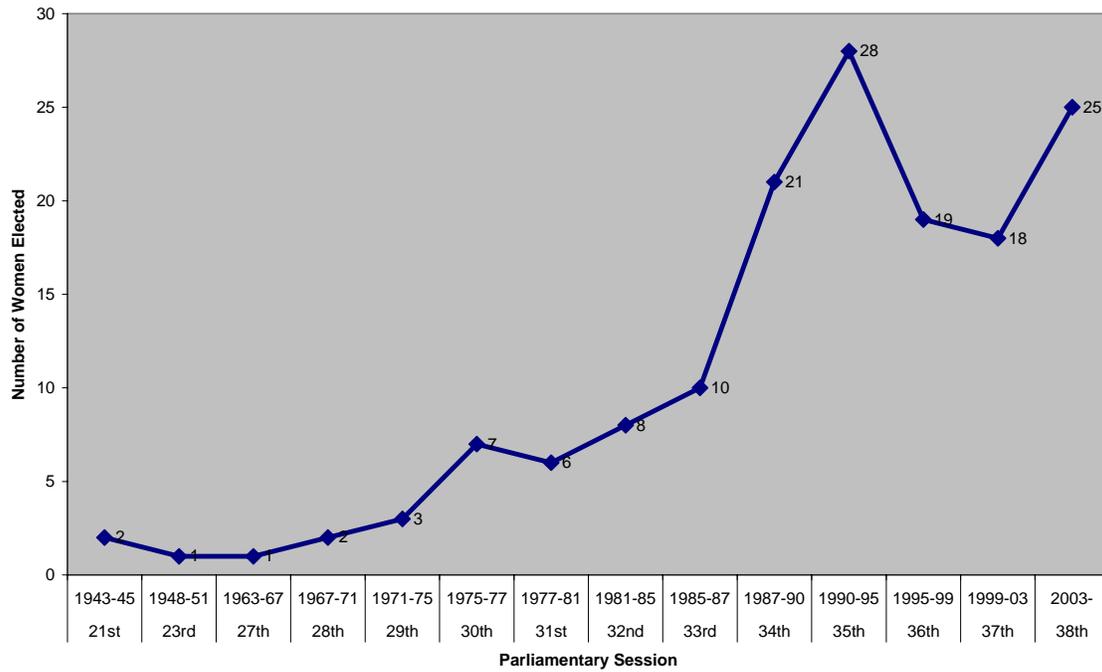
April 12, 1917 the Election Law Amendment Act, 1917, established women's suffrage in the province of Ontario. Not soon after, this right was ratified federally. Initially voter turnout was lower among women than among men, but by the 1970s women were just as likely to vote as their male counterparts (Young 2002:11). Gradually women have increased their participation in a cornucopia of political activities, such as writing to members, attending local council or school board meetings, signing petitions, joining riding associations, campaigning and so on. The "second wave" feminism in Western democracies further helped break down the barriers by positively affecting "the relationship between sexes at work and in the home" (Norris 1987:1).<sup>1</sup> One consequence of this cultural evolution was a noted increase in the number of women serving as elected representatives in legislative assemblies (Studlar and Matland 1996:272). In the Ontario parliament, women's representation increased incrementally from one female member in the early 1960s to twenty-eight female members in the early 1990s (see Figure 1). Although meager, this increase in female representation is consistent with increases in the

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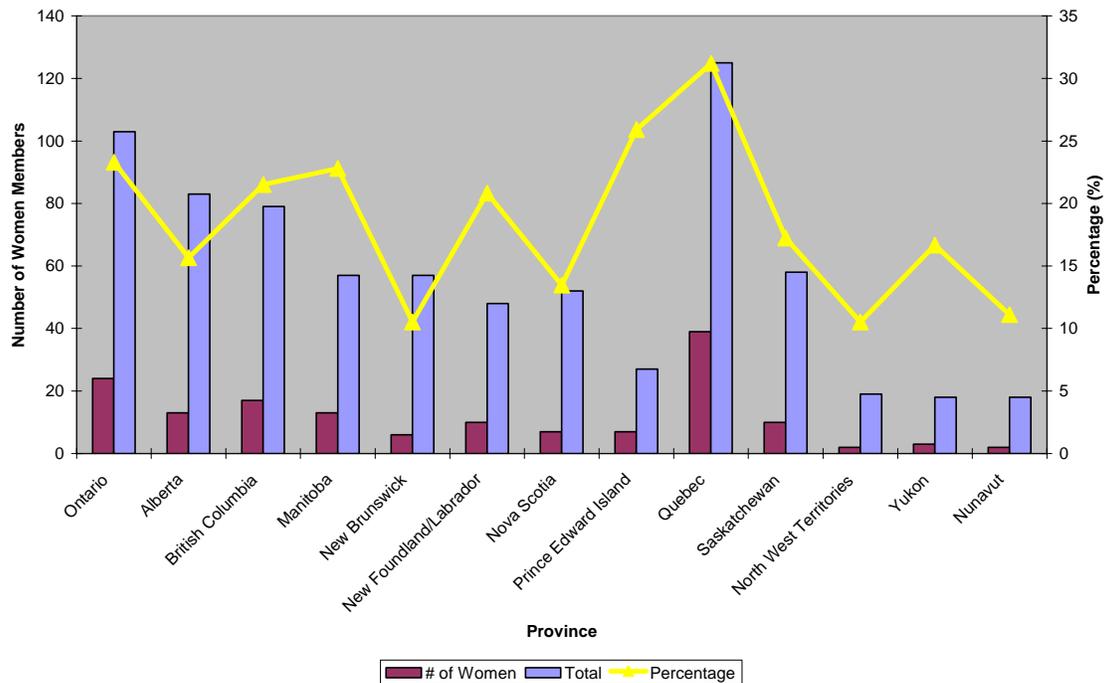
<sup>1</sup> There was a dramatic increase in the number of working mothers and single parent families. Divorce rates also noted a substantial increase (Norris 1987:1).

proportion of women legislators in other provincial parliaments (Matland and Studlar 1998:124; Studlar and Matland 1996:273).

**Women Elected to the Ontario Legislature**



**Number of Women in Provincial Legislatures**



Despite increased involvement in provincial legislatures, women, as a group, are much less likely than men to occupy an elected seat in the province of Ontario.

Presently, women hold 24 of a potential 103 seats, a proportion of 23 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of female representatives in other Canadian provinces and territories is similar with an average of nineteen per cent (see Figure 2). Though women have made significant gains in the proportion of elected offices they hold, they continue to remain substantially underrepresented. This under-representation prompts two important questions. The first question focuses on why women have not made greater increases in their rate of elected office holding in Ontario. Specifically, assessing which barriers are primarily responsible for female under representation in the Ontario legislature. The second question seeks to determine which strategies and approaches hold promise to increase women's rate of elected office holding in the Ontario legislature. To adequately answer these questions this paper details the recruitment practices currently used by the three main provincial political parties and assesses whether they are favourable or unfavourable to the legislative recruitment of women in Ontario. It is argued that the most powerful barrier to women's political advancement in Ontario is the nomination phase of the legislative recruitment process. Specifically, political party gatekeepers and funding are the biggest obstacles women face in the process of trying to pass from aspirant to candidate.

## **The importance of having women in the House**

There are many rationales as to why it is important to increase women's rate of elected office holding. First, given that women account for 51 per cent of Ontario's population they have the right to be represented as such. Second, democratic government derives its representative nature by serving as an elected body for the citizenry, aggregating their interests, and making political decisions on their behalf. It is logical to assume that a populous is best represented when its elected members reflect the composition of the electorate at large. That is, women need women to represent them and speak for their interests in legislative institutions.

Third, women have a different life experience than men. Alternate experiences indicate that most women approach politics from a slightly different viewpoint than their male counterparts. To ensure democratic and representative policy-making and implementation it is important that women's perspectives be incorporated in political decision-making. Fourth, the greater the number of women in public office the more elected role models there are to attract younger women to legislative careers. Fifth, increased representation of any visible minority enhances the democratization of governance (Hibbing 1999; Karam and Lovenduski 2002; Lundell 2004; Matland 2004; Matland 1999; Norris 1987).

An example that illustrates the influence of women Members at Queen's Park is the OLP's Women's Caucus. Members assert that Women's Caucus was instrumental in hastening the Premier's decision to not allow Sharia law in Ontario and in the government's decision to increase funding for children's treatment centers as well as increasing support for children at risk. At a membership of seventeen, this Caucus has served as a forum to gain support behind important social welfare issues. The decisions

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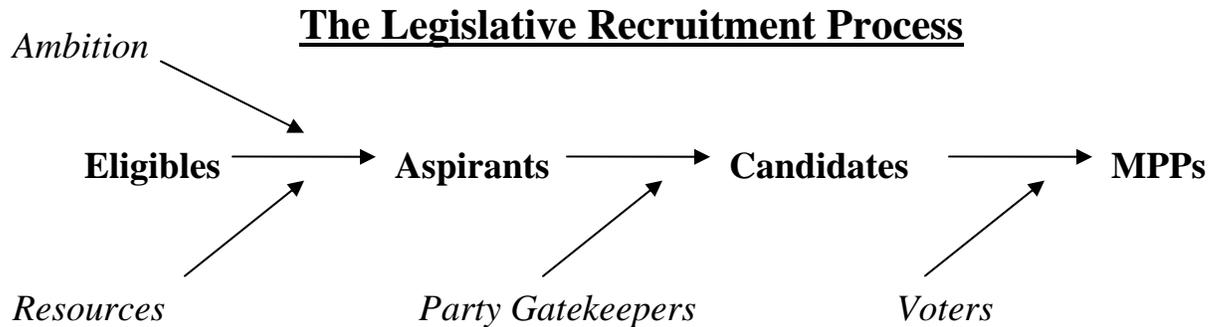
<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Churley, former NDP MPP for the riding of Toronto-Danforth resigned her seat provincially to run federally in the 2006 election. Therefore, although she no longer sits in the legislature, there have been twenty-five women elected to the thirty-eighth parliament since its 2003 inception.

outlined above indicate that women’s participation in the 38<sup>th</sup> parliament is an important component of government funding and policy-making decisions.

## Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of this paper I rely on a model developed by Richard Matland that illustrates the legislative recruitment process and its impact on women (see Figure 3). Matland’s model is marked by four stages: beginning with eligibility, moving to aspirant, then to candidate, and finally, to elected Member (Matland 1999; Matland 2002; Matland 2004). In between these four stages there are three crucial barriers that women must overcome before they can enter a legislative career. First, women must be willing to select themselves or as Matland refers to it “stand for election.” Second, women must win secure the nomination and thus be selected by party members as the candidate. Finally, women must be elected or rather “selected” by the electorate (Matland 1999; Matland 2004).

These three barriers are what Matland refers to as the “winnowing out” stages, whereby the pool of eligibles slowly shrinks as it passes through each phase (Matland 2004). The first pool is generally quite large given that it includes all citizens above a certain age who have not been convicted of a crime. This stage is where women decide if they are going to run for office, a complicated calculus that involves important choices. There are two main elements that affect a woman’s decision to emerge as a candidate: (1) her level of personal ambition; and (2) her perceived opportunities in the political system.



Source: (Matland 1999)

How a woman perceives her political opportunities will depend on the nature of the electoral opportunity structure; that is, the party context, the political context and the social context (Matland 1999; Matland 2002; Matland 2004; Studlar and Matland 1998).<sup>3</sup> If a prospective candidate decides she has the ambition to pursue election and can stand favourably in the political system she must also face what Matland identifies as a third

<sup>3</sup> The party context is the current party conditions, its rules, policy on representation and ideology. The political context refers to the opportunities for election, level of competition, number of spaces available, rate of legislative turnover and the electoral system. Finally, the social context includes the political culture, specifically social values, attitudes and norms “that affect the demands for various characteristics of candidates” (Studlar and Matland 1998:118).

problem referred to as the “three job problem.”<sup>4</sup> Most women have a full-time job in their chosen profession, work a full-time job at home if they are the primary caregiver and are assuming a third full-time job by becoming politically active and deciding to run for office.

Though researchers who have studied eligibility in Canada indicate that it is no longer an obstacle for women, this is the stage where women’s organizations can have the biggest influence by offering supports and encouragement (Matland 2004; Pitre 2003; Tremblay and Pelletier 1995). Meeting eligibility criteria may not be an issue, but declaring oneself an aspirant is.<sup>5</sup>

The steepest obstacle is the second barrier, whereby women aspirants must be selected by the party. At this stage the ability for women to enter the political arena is largely controlled by party gatekeepers, the political party and constituency-level executives who determine who is able to run for office. This stage largely depends on the mechanisms the party uses to recruit candidates, party inclusiveness and internal and external pressure to select a candidate who will maximize the party’s vote. How the party perceives the candidates credentials is perhaps the most heavily weighted given that party’s ideally want to run “star” candidates (Matland 1999; Matland 2004). Party members also want candidates who reflect the interests and values of the party. If gatekeepers are predominately male, or embody traditional values and attitudes, a woman’s chances of passing onto the next stage and capturing the candidacy are slim.

Another important factor associated with this stage, and the content of this paper, is the structure of the nomination process. The nomination procedure a party chooses to use can have a significant impact on the type of candidates it recruits. Gallagher (1988) characterizes a nomination system by two dimensions: (1) breadth of participation; and (2) degree of centralization or decentralization. Those processes that provide a substantial opportunity to participate are at one end of the spectrum; at the other, systems where the party leader, party executive or small central faction select candidates (Hazan 2002:11; Matland 1999:5; Matland 2004:8).

Norris (1996) further evaluates nomination structures based on whether they are patronage-oriented or bureaucratic in form. Bureaucratic systems have explicit, standardized rules and are generally more inclusive because they are followed regardless of who is in power. Patronage-oriented systems, by contrast, have ambiguous rules that are often not followed. Power in patronage systems is usually wielded at the top.

Finally, the step from candidate to MPP is where the candidate must be chosen by the voters. Decisions made at this stage usually hinge on the culture of the region and whether or not an electorate harbours strong traditional values that may perceive women as unfavourable for political positions. Although this may have been an issue in Ontario at one time, the electorate is largely accepting of women now.

Using the aforementioned framework, this paper illustrates that the most powerful barrier to women’s increased political participation is the nomination process. Finances are the second greatest obstacle to involvement and are especially salient for new female candidates both before the nomination race and after they have secured the candidacy. Finally, culture continues to act as a barrier to the advancement of women’s political participation, although its influence is gradually diminishing.

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<sup>4</sup> A dilemma women from industrialized democracies usually face given their increased levels of participation in the labour force

<sup>5</sup> Data collected in this study will refute this point further on in the paper.

## Purpose and Methods

This paper uses primary and secondary research to gain greater insight into the reasons behind female under-representation in the Ontario legislature, particularly by analyzing the nomination processes practiced by the three main parties. The primary research involves the collection of qualitative data, obtained from interviews conducted by the researcher. Secondary sources include books and scholarly articles on the topics of legislative recruitment, candidate selection and women in politics.

Because the objective of the study was to obtain as much information as possible concerning the recruitment of female candidates, party nomination processes and general insight into why there are so few women MPPs at Queen's Park, interviews were conducted with a diverse sample. Participants included MPPs (males and females, backbench Members and Ministers) and a select group of professionals (senior party officials from all three main political parties as well as representatives from interest groups and organizations concerned about the low proportion of women in the Ontario legislature). Altogether 41 interviews were conducted, 30 of which were with MPPs and 11 with professionals from other areas. This sample includes people who possess key insights and knowledge into legislative recruitment in Ontario, many having been recruited or responsible for recruiting at one time or another. Given these credentials, there is great potential for this sample to offer unique perspectives and rationales as to why women continue to be under-represented at this level and what can be done to increase women's rate of elected office holding at Queen's Park.

Interviews were conducted for a one month period between Friday April 28, 2006 and Sunday May 28, 2006 and no time limit was enforced.<sup>6</sup> All Members except the party leaders were contacted via email with an interview request. Due to time constraints, only male Members who responded were interviewed. However, given the scope of the research a more concerted effort was made to interview female Members, particularly with follow-up calls. 36 Members agreed to be interviewed, but because of rescheduling only 30 interviews were conducted. The majority of professionals interviewed were solicited because of their specific knowledge on a certain issue, or their substantial involvement and understanding of a party's method of legislative recruitment. A couple participants however, heard of the research and voluntarily offered to share their knowledge and insight. All professionals who offered to provide information were interviewed.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions that asked participants various questions concerning the lack of women MPPs at Queen's Park. Questions for MPPs focused on their personal experience with recruitment, their thoughts on the nomination process, the culture of Queen's Park, why they believe there are fewer women legislators, and what they believe can be done to increase the proportion of women in the House. All female Members were further asked whether they had ever experienced discrimination from colleagues, opposition members, the media or anyone because of their gender. The other interviews also included open-ended questions, although depending on the profession of the person interviewed the questions varied. Party officials were questioned more vigorously regarding the party's recruitment processes, whereas others were questioned concerning their specialty (i.e. women's involvement in politics). Aside from informative questions, most probed respondents to explain why there are fewer

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<sup>6</sup> Without time constraints participants could feel comfortable to discuss the issues without feeling rushed.

women MPPs comparative to male MPPs; and what should be done to increase women's rate of elected office holding in Ontario. To ensure all participants felt they could be candid none of the respondents will be explicitly identified in this paper.

Given that participant selection was restricted to MPPs in the 38<sup>th</sup> Ontario Parliament, it is clearly not representative of all parliaments, nor is the selection of respondents considered random. Similarly, the selection of the remaining participants was not random and they should not be considered representative of any professional group or party. Further, because the sample design does not meet the statistical requirements for various tests of significance and measures of association, no statistical analysis can be performed using the data collected.

## Gatekeepers

During the 1980's Ontario parties all showed significant progress in the number of women candidates they ran. Decreasing slightly in the 1990s, these numbers have made no significant increases and growth in the proportion of female candidates remains stagnant. One popular argument for women's poor infiltration into legislative careers is that political parties and their riding executives act as gatekeepers limiting women's access to legislative power (Brodie 1985; Conway 2001:232; Norris and Lovenduski 1995:Chapter 7; Pitre 2003: 1; Young 2002:16). The qualitative data collected for this paper confirm that the ability of women to run as party candidates is most significantly stymied during the nomination seeking process, whereby the political parties act as 'gatekeepers.' Many MPPs and party insiders confirm that the nomination process is the uglier side of running for public office in Ontario and likely a major deterrent to prospective female candidates. To advance this argument the following section details the existing nomination processes practiced by the three main political parties in the province of Ontario and assesses their relevance as a barrier to women's advancement in legislative careers. It further analyzes the qualitative responses collected from interview participants.

## ONDP Nomination Process

The nomination process for the ONDP begins with each riding forming a Candidate Search Committee (CSC) that is reflective of the riding. This committee brainstorms names and explores potential nomination candidates, eventually formulating a group of names. This process is overseen and aided by the ONDP's Central Candidate Search Committee (CCSC).<sup>7</sup> The CCSC suggests potential candidates, may assist CSC's in approaching certain desired candidates, and ensures that individual riding committees adhere to the party's policy guidelines. The CCSC is also responsible for forming a sub-group, the Nominations Sub-Committee, which handles and approves the nomination process.

Once a nomination list is finalized, CSC's must complete the *Candidate Search Requirements* and forms. This information should include details regarding the members of the Candidate Search Committee and "all individuals approached by the committee about running for the ONDP nomination" (ONDP 2003). There must also be a clear

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<sup>7</sup> The members of the CCSC are both appointed and elected by the committee itself. All committee forming is done democratically.

indication as to whether or not those individuals approached, and the confirmed nomination candidates, are members of an affirmative action group. The CSC must then request approval for a nomination meeting from the Nominations Sub-Committee.<sup>8</sup> This must be done well in advance of the meeting, as the ONDP guidelines require that nomination meeting notices be sent out a minimum of fourteen days prior to the event (ONDP 2003).

An important, yet interesting aspect of the ONDP's nomination process is that a prospective candidate need not be registered as seeking nomination prior to the nomination meeting. That is, nominees are able to run "off the floor" providing one person from the riding supports their nomination. This affords nomination seekers a unique opportunity not offered by the Liberal or the PC parties.

At the nomination meeting, an *elimination runoff* is held, whereby the weakest candidate on a ballot is eliminated until there is a majority. Unlike federal party leaders, provincial leaders are not required to sign letters of endorsement and therefore no party leaders have the explicit right to veto a candidate's nomination.<sup>9</sup> Once they are secured, all ONDP nominations must be approved by the party's Provincial Council – a group of representatives from ridings across Ontario, as well as members from various party committees and members of labour affiliates.<sup>10</sup>

Like most nomination processes that occur in plurality systems with single-member districts the ONDP method of candidate selection is relatively decentralized (Lundell 2004: 26). That said, groups such as the CCSC, the Nominations Sub-Committee and the Provincial Council do increase central control. Though increased centralization can be seen as a barrier to the recruitment of females if power is misused, the centralized mechanisms used by the ONDP are used only to ensure that affirmative action guidelines are followed and the individual CSC's are equity seeking. Aside from these 'checks,' the significant power of local party selectorates and the ability of nomination seekers to run "off the floor" highlight the fact that nomination control is not overly centralized.

Another main benefit of this process is its level of bureaucracy. Explicit rules are obviously a major asset to the incorporation of minority groups such as women because they prevent the arbitrary dismissal of candidates. Institutionalized approaches also "make it easier for newcomers to understand the process" (Matland 1999:6; Pitre 2003:3). In addition, the incorporation of rules guaranteeing women's representation is an important step toward achieving gender parity and illustrates the inclusive mandate of the party.

## **OLP Nomination Process**

Like the ONDP nomination process, the Liberal method is also localized. Individual riding associations form Candidate Search Committee's (CSC) that are responsible for the recruitment of candidates. Though no explicit guidelines are in place concerning the type of nominees they recruit, prospective candidates should ideally be people the party feels will maximize their vote. Once the CSC has established a list of names they are required to fill out an *Ontario Liberal Party Nomination Plan*. This includes information

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the Nominations Sub-Committee must approve the date of the nomination meeting, but not the location.

<sup>9</sup> A party's leader could gain this right if it was passed into the party rules.

<sup>10</sup> The Provincial Council is the governing body of the ONDP in between conventions.

regarding membership, the proposed nomination meeting, the candidates, the members who were responsible for the candidate search and the activities of the CSC.<sup>11</sup>

The completed plan is sent to the central Nomination Commissioner (NC) for approval. A telephone call between the NC, Regional Vice President and riding President confirms the nomination meeting details. The NC is a central means of ensuring that the individual riding committee's consider diversity when seeking prospective candidates. At the nomination meeting *preferential ballots* are used, whereby each voter ranks the prospective candidates in order of preference. Preferential voting fosters a friendly environment because there is no opportunity to broker between rounds. It therefore eliminates the ugliness that can develop in *elimination runoff* elections.

The current OLP nomination process was amended in 2001 and therefore used for the first time in the 2003 provincial election. Though the change in process regulation was enormously controversial, it has created a more transparent, accountable and equitable selection method. With the change came the advent of candidacy appointments. The leader of the OLP now has the opportunity to appoint candidates in five constituencies across the province. Though this mechanism centralizes control slightly, if used properly, it can increase the diversity of OLP candidates.

One MPP, who is a beneficiary of the appointment, noted that her chances of securing the nomination would have been poor given (1) the ethnic voting bloc in her riding (which would have coalesced around their designated candidate); and (2) the patriarchal culture within the ethnic voting bloc. Of the 2003 appointments two of the candidates were female and two others from ethnic minorities. All five candidates were successful in election. Selection by the party leader also affords the appointed candidates a strong sense of legitimacy and party support. This helps a minority candidate feel more comfortable running and bolsters his/her profile in the eyes of the public.

## PC Nomination Process

The PC nomination process is also fairly decentralized. The party leader does not have the power to veto a nomination or make appointments, and has very little involvement.<sup>12</sup> Most major decisions are made by the party executive, who establishes the time frame and rules of the nomination process. The candidates search itself is performed by the individual riding associations.

Before the nomination meeting can occur, ridings must prove that they have a certain number of memberships, a certain amount of money in the bank, a proposal for the nomination meeting (including date and location) and illustrate the candidate search process used to recruit nomination seekers. In addition, each riding must prove they made a concerted effort to look for women candidates. Like the ONDP, the party is currently in the process of finalizing their rules for the 2007 election. The plan must be approved by the party well in advance so as to give a minimum of 31 days notice to

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<sup>11</sup> The OLP boasts an extremely comprehensive *Nomination Plan* which requires the CSC to list a proposed date, location (which should be wheelchair accessible) and other elements. Asking the CSC to specify a desired location allows the opportunity to ensure the location is in an area that is travel friendly to all prospective candidates.

<sup>12</sup> For the first time in the party's history the Executive Committee, who oversees the nomination process, will have a leader's representative.

members. The PC nomination meetings also rely on an *elimination runoff* to select the candidate.

## Party Mandates toward Women

The ONDP boasts the most comprehensive affirmative action policy of any of the three main parties. Although the party is presently working on passing its rules for the forthcoming October 2007 election, I am able to comment on the rules and affirmative action policy set in place for the 2003 provincial election.<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this paper, only policy that relates to the incorporation of women is examined.<sup>14</sup>

First, no riding can run a nomination meeting unless they have at least one candidate from an affirmative action group.<sup>15</sup> Second, the party's affirmative action policy explicitly notes that 50 per cent of all ridings should have female candidates (ONDP 2003). In addition, candidates from affirmative action groups should be running in 75 per cent of non-incumbent 'priority' seats.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the party has a central candidate search committee which helps ensure that individual riding associations are equity seeking and that they explore nomination candidates from all societal groups.

The OLP is also committed to promoting women in politics and enhancing female recruitment. Senior party officials emphasize that the party is actively seeking new ways to bring women into the party. In preparation for the October 2007 provincial election, Premier Dalton McGuinty has given a campaign mandate to exhaust all possibilities to explore women candidates prior to nomination.

Since arriving in government, the OLP has proven their commitment to women. Appointing a pregnant female to a Ministerial position defies traditional sex roles and is a positive step toward equality. During a more recent cabinet shuffle McGuinty's motives were questioned; "I don't see women, I see talent" he replied. It is this attitude which distinguishes women as qualified persons as opposed to by their gender, which shows that the patriarchal culture is dissipating and encourages women to get involved in politics. The OLP has also been praised by Members for their supportiveness when it comes to family. The party even rented a Winnebago in the last election campaign so that a new mother/candidate was able to spend time with and nurse her baby.

Ontario PC leader John Tory has also made a commitment to increasing the proportion of PC women candidates and set a party goal to run the most women candidates in the party's history. To illustrate this commitment the party has run women candidates in five of the six by-elections since 2003, electing two women in the most recent March 30, 2006 by-election.<sup>17</sup> To help meet Tory's goal of increasing women's representation the PC party has also enlisted their Women's Association.

The PC Women's Association (PCWA) is a branch of the party executive whose mandate focuses on candidate recruitment, encouraging women to run for office, and

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<sup>13</sup> The ONDP party rules for the 2007 election go before council Saturday, June 10, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> That said, it is important to recognize that the NDP is committed to increasing party representation of minority groups such as women, aboriginals, youth, disabled, gays, lesbians, francophones and other visible minorities.

<sup>15</sup> Unless, of course, the riding has an NDP incumbent.

<sup>16</sup> That is, a winnable riding without an NDP incumbent. It is interesting to note that in the remaining 25 per cent of 'priority' seats special attention is given to ethnic candidates; especially when the riding is comprised of a significantly ethnic population (ONDP 2003)

<sup>17</sup> The only by-election the party did not run a woman candidate was the by-election that elected the PC leader, John Tory. MPP's Christine Elliot and Lisa MacLeod are the two newest additions to the PC team.

more generally, promoting female involvement in politics.<sup>18</sup> Though some women perceive associations of this nature as patronizing, the PCWA is an important internal advocate for women. For example, the association holds training sessions for women interested in candidacy that focus on the nomination process. Also, the PCWA is currently organizing outreach events across the province targeted at women, particularly those belonging to ethnic minorities. Initiatives such as this lessen the ambiguity surrounding the nomination race and are encouraging to party newcomers.

## Pros and Cons

In recent years, all three parties have made sizable efforts to ensure their nomination processes are more transparent and democratic. Prior to the advent of explicit nomination rules, a party could retroactively instate the membership cut-off date. Therefore, if the party's choice candidate was not selling as many memberships as his/her opponents, the party could say that given the retroactive deadline the 10,000 memberships the opponent recently sold were disqualified, giving the party favourite an unfair advantage. This is why the bureaucratic method now used by all three parties is more democratic and supportive of minority groups, who can feel intimidated by an implicit rule system.

In terms of suggestions, the *preferential voting* method should perhaps be considered by parties currently relying on *elimination runoff* as a means of removing some of the unpleasant brokering that can occur. It is also important that all parties strive to make their nomination meeting date and location favourable to all candidates. Both the OLP and the PC's require that a predetermined location be specified so as not to give a geographic advantage to one contender over the other. In addition, the OLP *Nomination Meeting Request Form* asks whether the location is wheelchair accessible. Small measures like this illustrate that the party recognizes the importance of accommodating for persons with disabilities. Finally, the appointment system used by the OLP is an effective method of increasing the diversity of candidates and should be considered by other parties.

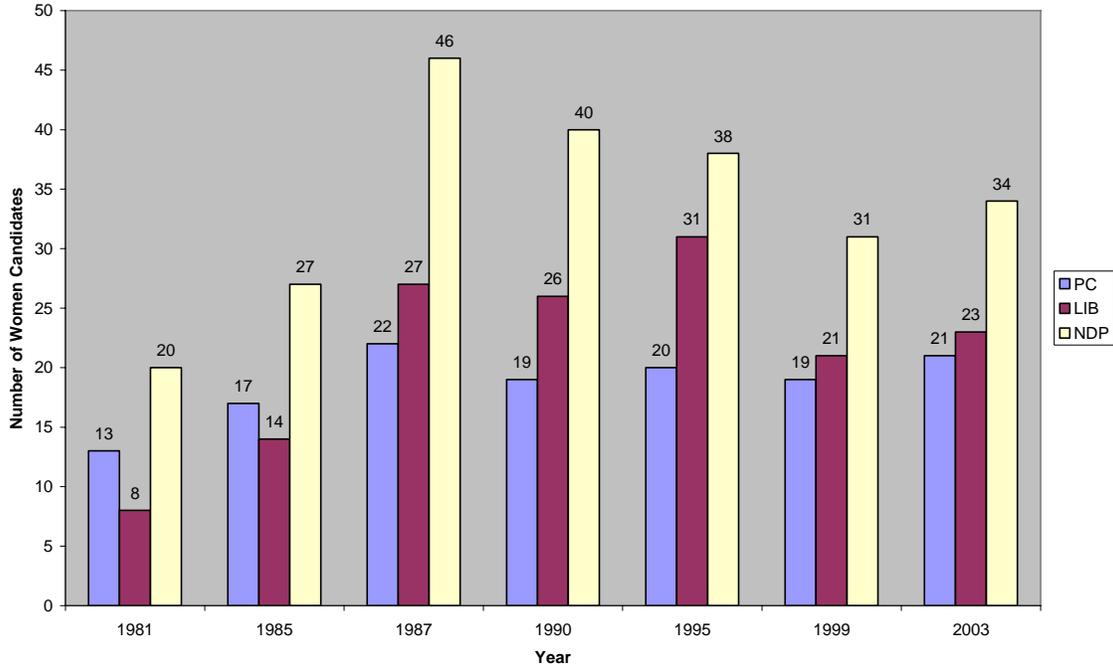
Quotas are also suggested as an effective means of increasing the representation of women in political office. Theoretically, if a party adheres to a quota they can offer minority groups, such as women, a huge advantage. However, although quotas have the potential to significantly increase the representation of minorities, they are not guaranteed. The ONDP's policy is a good example of this. In its *Affirmative Action Guidelines* the party sets a target that 50 per cent of all ridings run female candidates, however the party has yet to meet this goal (see Figures 4 and 5).<sup>19</sup>

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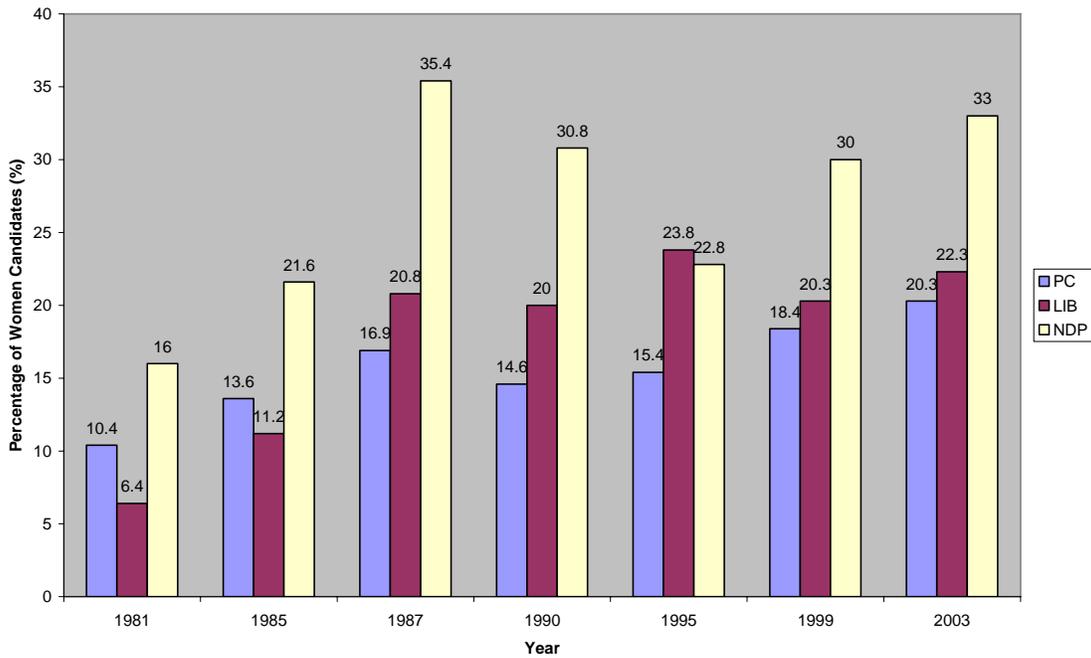
<sup>18</sup> The PCWA is the product of a long line of women's associations that first began as political conservative clubs for women.

<sup>19</sup> Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the number of female candidates run by the three main parties in the seven provincial elections from 1981 to 2003.

Number of Women Candidates run by the the three main Provincial Parties



Percentage of Women Candidates run by the three main Provincial Parties

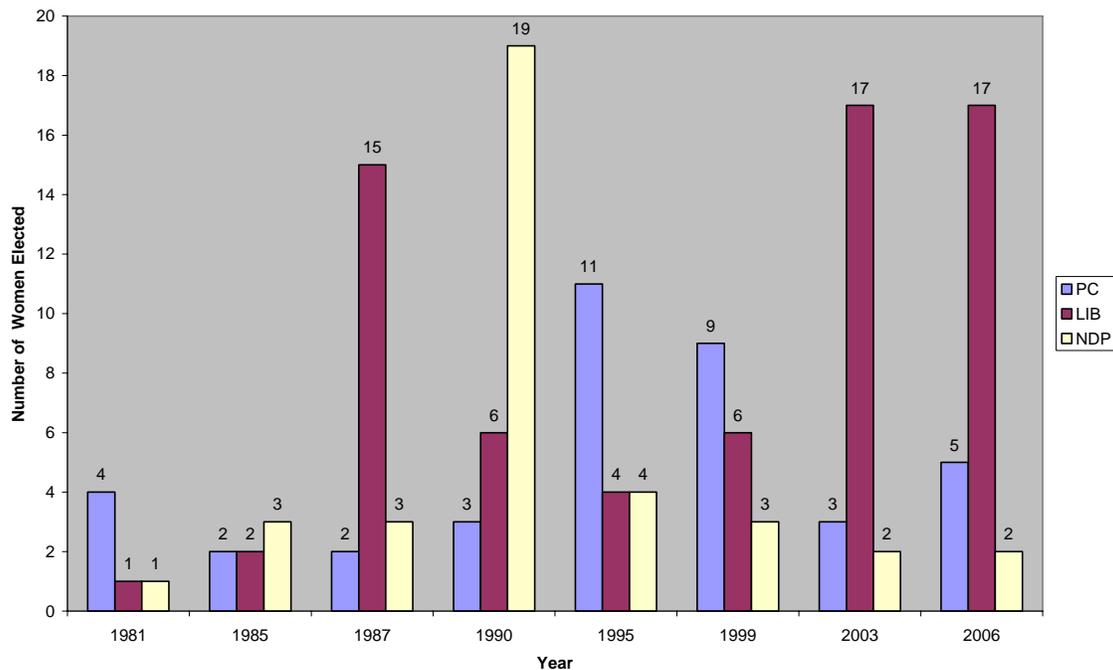


## Women as ‘token candidates’

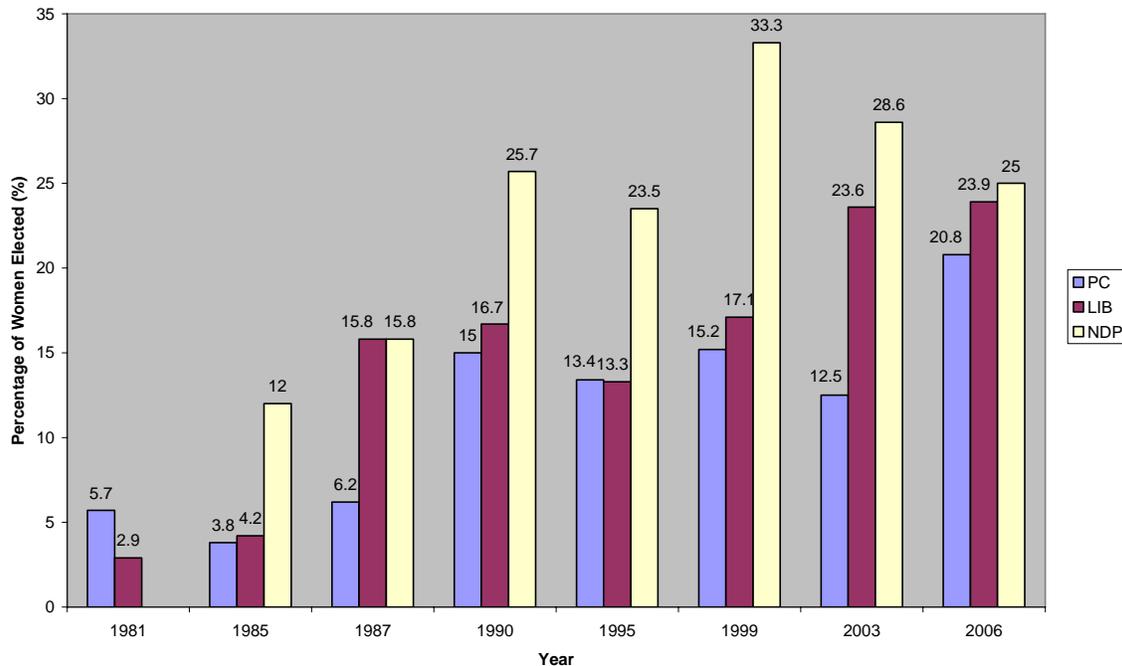
Although all parties have made a concerted effort to ensure that a greater proportion of women are nominated as candidates the argument has been made that “the surge in nominations has failed to lead to a surge in seats because women are getting the wrong

type of nominations” (Berstein 1986:155). There is speculation in the literature, that all too often women are nominated in ridings held by an incumbent, rather than a riding with an open seat or a riding that pre-election polls reveal is not winnable (Studlar and Matland 1996; Matland and Studlar 1998; Pitre 2003). Interviews with party insiders confirm that the ‘sacrificial lamb hypothesis’ was at one point practiced by political parties in this province in an effort to improve party statistics. Though this tactic is no longer practiced, this example illustrates the level of influence gatekeepers have over women’s entrance to public office and highlights how important it is that this power not be abused if women are to substantially increase their representation at Queen’s Park. Figures 7 and 8 allow for a comparison of the number of female candidates run versus the number of female candidates elected. Although it is not possible to go through and determine if a riding was considered winnable, the graphs visually depict which parties have been more successful at electing women candidates. The second percentage graph is important given the ONDP’s low rate of electoral success (with the exception of the 1990 election).

**Number of Women Elected for the three main Provincial Parties**



Percentage of Women Elected for the three main Provincial Parties



## Financial Advantage

While there are spending limits set on a candidate's campaign there is no provincial legislation limiting spending during a nomination race.<sup>20</sup> Though the parties can set their own limits on nomination races, to date only the ONDP has done so.<sup>21</sup> Both the Liberal and PC party have yet to cap spending in their nomination races. An absence of spending limits can create an unfair race, especially if one nomination seeker has significantly greater access to financial resources than his/her opponents.

For example, some interviewees observed that a competitive nomination race can cost a prospective candidate between \$80,000 and \$90,000. Furthermore, responses confirm that in the past, candidates from certain parties have been able to win a race by purchasing party memberships and giving them away at no cost, as opposed to selling them.<sup>22</sup> This tactic gave wealthier or better connected nomination candidates an advantage given that it is easier to 'give away' than it is to sell. If a candidate was able to give away more memberships than his/her opponent was able to sell, s/he could unjustly capture the party nomination.

Since men are more likely to have additional experience in the paid labour force, and have therefore had more time to build professional connections, they are expected to have an advantage over women when fundraising (Berstein 1986:158; Norris 1987:Chapter 4). Further, some speculate that women are biologically not as 'driven' as

<sup>20</sup> The Elections Ontario formula that limits campaign spending is calculated as the number of electors in a riding multiplied by \$1.08 (Election Finances Act, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> The ONDP has set a spending limit of \$6000 for candidates seeking nomination in urban ridings and \$7500 in more rural ridings where travel costs can escalate. If a nomination seeker spends more than this amount it is written into the *Rules for Candidate Nomination* that s/he be disqualified.

<sup>22</sup> Nomination candidates are required to sell memberships prior to the nomination meeting.

men and that this may impede their ability to network and raise funds (Bernstein 1986:158). Though the latter assertion may hold true for some women, it is unfair to generalize all women as biologically not as 'political' as men. Throughout my primary research I spoke with many politically acute women who are equally capable (if not more so) at facilitating fundraising. Regardless of the extent of the handicap, implementing spending limits on nomination races is important to ensure a level playing field between candidates. Limits on spending produce a more equitable nomination system.

## Financial Assistance

Many female candidates have difficulty successfully raising sufficient funds to run an effective nomination race or campaign (Matland 1999; Matland 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2000; Pitre 2003). Though some studies dispute this, the responses I collected from current female MPP's confirm that financing remains a barrier – both in seeking nomination and when running a campaign as a party candidate.<sup>23</sup> The following section details the financial assistance programs all three main provincial parties offer women interested in candidacy. It also addresses how women are at a financial disadvantage comparative to men and suggests strategies to level the playing field during the nomination race and the campaign.

The ONDP offers women financial assistance for both nomination races and for campaigns. As part of their *Affirmative Action Guidelines* they reimburse up to \$500 in childcare costs incurred during the nomination process. As affirmative action candidates, women are also eligible to receive an additional \$500 for travel costs if the contested nomination took place in a large rural riding.<sup>24</sup> Once a woman has secured the nomination in a riding she is eligible for additional funding. Though federally the NDP offers this support through the Agnes McPhail Fund, provincially the fund has yet to be named.<sup>25</sup> Funding is divided equally among female candidates and has traditionally translated into a grant of \$750-\$1000.<sup>26</sup> There are no internal party restrictions on how the money can be spent.<sup>27</sup>

To ease the financial difficulty many female candidates experience, the Ontario Liberal party established the Margaret Campbell Fund in 1984.<sup>28</sup> Financial assistance from the fund is offered to female candidates after they have secured the nomination. All female candidates are eligible for assistance, even incumbents, although they usually decline the sum. Money from the fund is divided equally among women candidates and is usually between \$500 and \$1000. Use of the money is limited to campaign related expenses. Though there is presently no website for the Margaret Campbell fund, the OLP

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<sup>23</sup> Please see in particular a 2003 OAS Inter-American Forum Report that examined financing as a barrier to the political participation of women in the Americas:

[http://www.sap.oas.org/docs/fiapp/2004/report/aid\\_memoir\\_05\\_06\\_04\\_eng.pdf](http://www.sap.oas.org/docs/fiapp/2004/report/aid_memoir_05_06_04_eng.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> The ONDP also offers similar nomination funding for the disabled.

<sup>25</sup> Party representatives indicated that they are considering a name for the fund.

<sup>26</sup> The amount given depends on the amount of money in the fund and the number of candidates that are running.

<sup>27</sup> Candidates must still comply with the rules of spending and limitation set out in the *Election Finances Act*.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Campbell was elected the first female Liberal member of the Ontario Legislature in a 1973 by-election for the riding of St. George. Campbell served in the Legislature until 1981 during which time she led a crusade for women's rights, improvements to health care and justice.

is currently working on how to increase the fund's profile in partnership with their efforts to promote female involvement in politics.<sup>29</sup>

Females who are interested in running for the Ontario PC party are eligible to receive money from the organization, Women In Nomination (WIN). WIN was established in the late 1980s with the goal of providing financial assistance to women interested in seeking nomination. The organization was launched by a group of party activists who wanted to attract more women candidates and recognized fundraising as a barrier to running an effective nomination campaign.<sup>30</sup> New women candidates seeking party nomination are eligible and usually receive between \$500 and \$1500 depending on the fund and the number of female nomination seekers. Generally, funds are divided equally, although extra support may be offered to prospective candidates in rural ridings or those who have financial difficulties. There are no restrictions placed on the funding female aspirants receive from WIN.<sup>31</sup>

In the most recent March 30, 2006 by-election all three women PC candidates won the candidacy by acclamation.<sup>32</sup> Because their nominations had not been contested and they had not received any funding from WIN, the Women's Association gave them financial support for their campaigns.

The important distinction between Margaret Campbell and WIN is that Liberal candidates are only eligible to receive funding when they have secured the nomination in their riding; that is, once they are the party candidate. PC hopefuls, by contrast, receive financial assistance when they are seeking the nomination and may therefore have a better chance of winning the nomination race. Since the greatest barrier to holding elected office comes at the nomination stage of the legislative recruitment process, additional funding should be directed to supporting females in this juncture. Though it makes rational economic sense to give money to declared candidates because there will almost always be fewer female candidates than prospective candidates, concentrating more financial support in this area may enable an increased proportion of women to break through.

The ONDP is embracing the right approach by offering of financial assistance at both the nomination and candidate stage of the legislative recruitment model. In order to minimize financial barriers, it is important to offer support to prospective candidates in both phases. However, research conducted for this paper indicates that until all parties place a spending cap on nomination races, financial support is more effectively targeted at the nomination level.

Once someone has secured a nomination his/her chances of fundraising increase, albeit sometimes minimally, given the prestige associated with candidacy. Further, if a candidate receives at least fifteen per cent of the vote in his/her riding s/he is reimbursed by Elections Ontario for 20 per cent of campaign spending according to the Election Finances Act. There is no reimbursement from Elections Ontario for nomination races, even though theoretically one could spend \$90,000 on a nomination and then only \$50,000 or \$60,000 on the campaign. In this regard assistance is more helpful at the nomination level. If all parties were to place a cap on nomination race spending the

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<sup>29</sup> Federally, Liberal female candidates are supported through the Judy LaMarsh fund.

<sup>30</sup> WIN is not a party organization.

<sup>31</sup> Given that Elections Ontario places no limitations/restrictions on spending in nomination races, there are virtually no restrictions on expenditures.

<sup>32</sup> Acclamation occurs when it is not a contested nomination. That is, there is only one prospective candidate.

financial burden of the nomination process could be reduced substantially. However, even with limitations in place it is important to offer some sort of nomination funding. One method might be to develop scholarships or larger grants for prospective candidates who are not well-off financially or who require extra financial support for personal reasons.

Knowledge is another important element that can eliminate barriers. Enhanced knowledge of the nomination and campaign processes can make running for office seem more attainable. The more someone knows about something, the less fear they have of it. Many male Members also suggested teaching women how to fundraise effectively. As one Member put it, “teach women how to slap guys on the back and ask for money.” Although increasing funding for women may effectively help the group, it is important to teach candidates how to fundraise. Teaching someone how to fundraise is far more sustainable than giving them money. The PCWA seminars are a great model for this type of initiative. A seminar that focuses not only on unmasking the ambiguity surrounding the nomination process but also on how to effectively raise funds would be an enormous asset.

## Culture

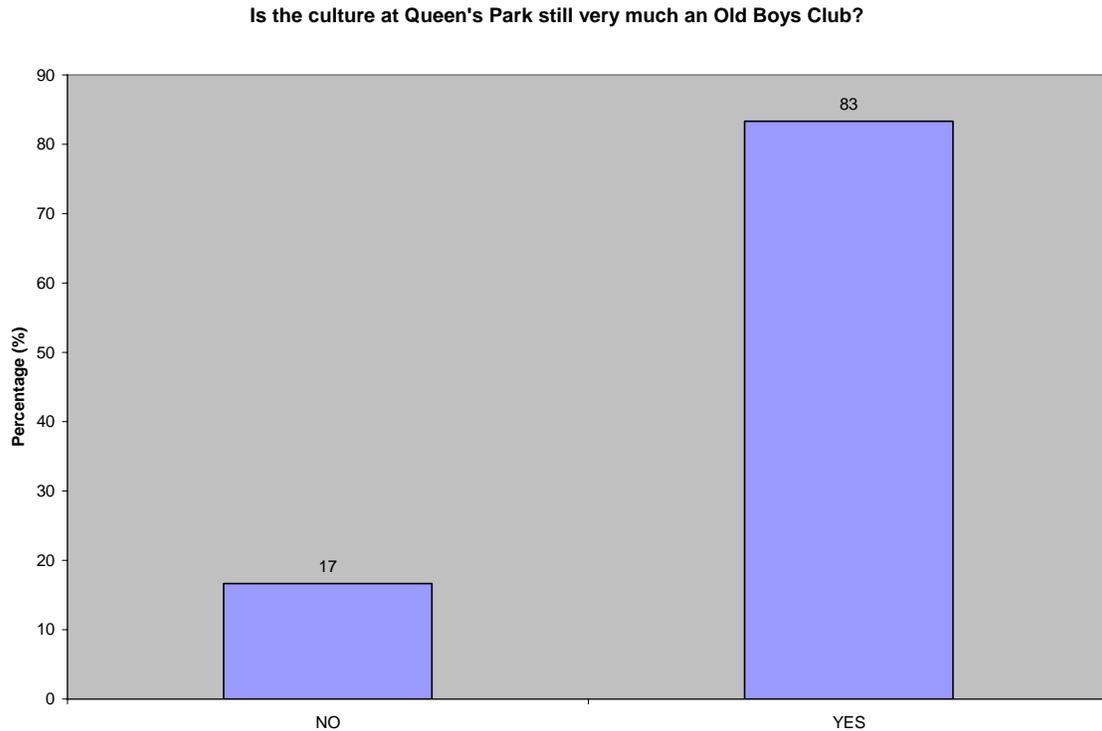
Culture has continually been cited as a barrier to women’s political advancement (Conway 2001; Karam and Lovenduski 2002; Matland 1999; Matland 2002; Matland 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2000; Pitre 2003). The cultural context within which a system or institution operates can serve as a significant deterrent to prospective candidates. Culture dictates whether a woman running for office is proper, whether she faces sexist obstacles (whereby she is judged or criticized on the basis of her looks,) and, as mentioned, whether women are willing to run. Culture also places significant focus in the sexual division of labour and often determines how ‘traditional’ a woman’s role is expected to be. There are two cultures that must be briefly discussed here: (1) public attitudes and values; and (2) the culture of Queen’s Park.

Party polls indicate that for the most part Ontarians are accepting of women. Though there may be a small percentage in rural ridings that still harbour traditional values (fifteen per cent or less), it is highly ethnic communities that are less conducive to women’s advancement in politics. Ridings with high concentrations of Italians, Greeks, Sheikhs, Portuguese, and so on, are less likely to be accepting of women candidates.

Aside from these isolated cases, party polling, and a majority of Members, indicates that the Ontario public is supportive of women in politics. Some Members cited Lynn McLeod’s leadership of the OLP as evidence that the Ontario public has been accepting of political women for some time. Interestingly however, four Members commented that while canvassing for the 1995 election an overwhelming number of citizens claimed they were not going to vote for the OLP because McLeod was a woman. One Member remembered a constituent commenting, “She would have to be the second coming of Christ to equal another leader.” Comments from these Members (who were not all from urban ridings) indicate that in 1995 the public atmosphere may not have been as conducive to women in politics as it is today. A majority of Members surveyed responded that they believe the Ontario electorate would be ready to elect a female Premier, if given the opportunity.

The culture of Queen’s Park has historically been perceived as an “Old Boys’ Club,” unfortunately interview responses indicate that politics at Queen’s Park is still

very much a “white man’s game.” All Members were asked if they perceive the culture of Queen’s Park to be an “Old Boys’ Club,” and an overwhelming 83 per cent of participants responded that the culture at Queen’s Park remains patriarchal (see Figure 8). Some pointed to the “cutthroat nature” of Question Period as being too “harsh” for women. Other Members pointed to internal businesses as indicators that the culture at the legislature remains predominately male. Some commented on the barber shop in the basement, noting that a barber shop is a male establishment and that there have been no efforts to bring in a unisex hairdresser.



Daycare was also listed as a major concern, especially for Members with small children. Though there is a government daycare facility in the nearby buildings, it is only open from 8:30am to 5:30pm, costs \$18,000 per year per child and has a waiting list. Those hours of operation are not supportive of life as an MPP. Even if the House is not sitting late, politics is by nature a night-time business. There are receptions, events and sometimes social function related to the position, that Members are expected to attend. One Member with a young child who is burdened with an excessive amount of travel time is on the daycare waiting list and cannot secure a spot. If the legislature wants to show that it is conducive to younger Members with children it should consider implementing an MPP daycare, or creating a program whereby MPPs can have guaranteed daycare facilities for their young children. As a result, the majority of women who are attracted to a career as an MPP are those who are older and are willing to take on the responsibility and time commitment associated with the work. To broaden the attractiveness of the position to other cohorts, some more inclusive measures should be taken.

It is important to note that although many Members still classify the culture of Queen’s Park as patriarchal, many of them observed that this culture is changing, albeit slowly. This culture will slowly dissipate over time, especially as more women MPPs are

elected. How quickly change happens however, is up to the parties and the Board of Internal Economy.<sup>33</sup>

## **Proportional Representation**

One solution that has been touted by Members and academics alike is the notion of adopting a new electoral system. It is argued that proportional representation (PR) systems create an electoral opportunity structure that is more conducive to the election of women and therefore statistically elect more females than single-member plurality systems (Matland 1999:8; Matland 2002:80; Pitre 2003:4; Rule 1981:77).<sup>34</sup> Though PR had very positive effects in countries like Australia, Norway and Scotland (as some Members noted) it is not a solution to the representation problems here in Ontario as a majority of Members recognized.

First, PR systems are less democratic given that the electorate votes for the party as opposed to the candidate. Second, it is important to recognize that “uprooted institutions do not necessarily flourish in different environment to their origins” (Norris and Inglehart 2000:11). There is no static formula that can determine whether the emergence of a PR system will have comparable success in Ontario. Factors such as party competition and the social climate both substantially influence the operation of an electoral system. Third, political parties in PR systems may have a greater propensity to nominate women candidates because they are able to nominate more than one candidate per riding (Pitre 2003:4). Fourth, PR systems are often characterized by more centralized nomination processes. Central control is a useful tool to increase minority representation if it is used for such, but power can often be misused. More generally, a centralized nomination process is far less democratic than a decentralized process which provides for broad participation from all party members.

## **Women’s unwillingness to run for office**

As a final portion of the analysis, a comparison was drawn between the female and male Members interviewed to see if there was a substantial difference between how they became a candidate (i.e. whether they were (a) recruited/conscripted by the party or whether they (b) ran under their own motivation; (c) whether they had grown up in a political family or if family members had served in public office; (d) whether they had previous experience at the municipal level; and (e) if they had been involved with the party at some level prior to running for office (i.e. member of riding association and so on).

The results are first presented for the women and then for men and women. Women MPPs were more likely to be recruited by the party, have a political family history, municipal experience and previous involvement with the party than male MPPs. The men, by comparison, were more likely to have run on their own motivation. Interestingly (although this data is not displayed) female Cabinet Ministers were more likely to have run under their own motivation than female backbench MPPs.

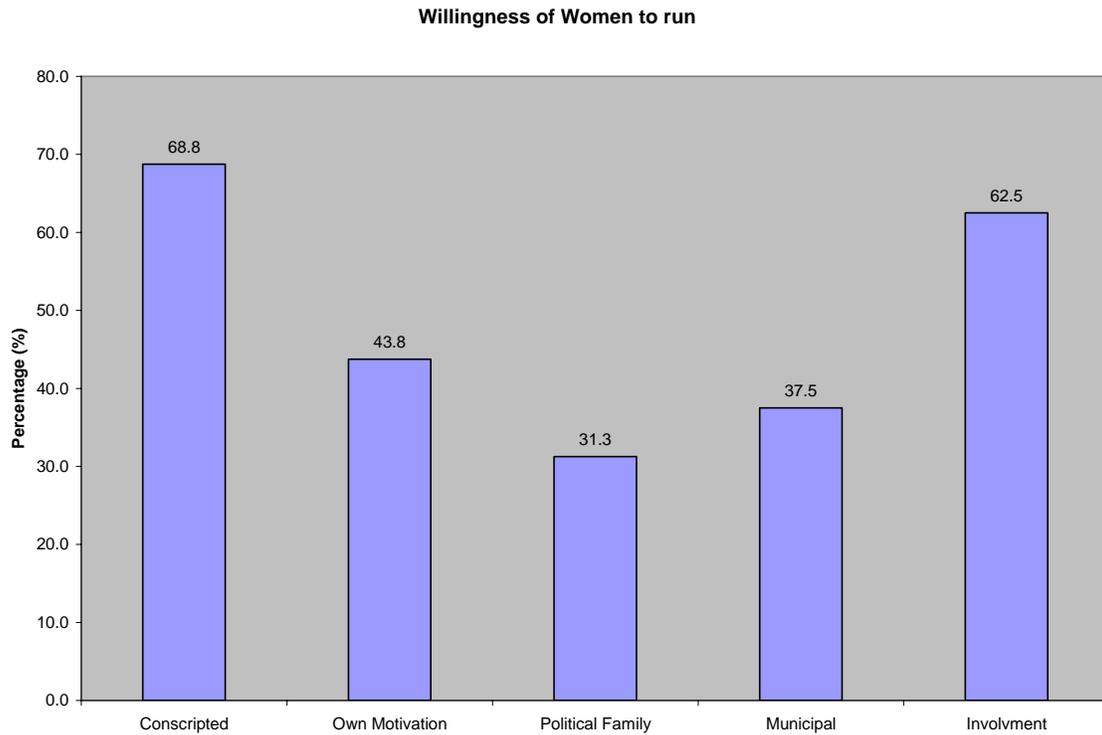
These numbers hint that perhaps women are more reluctant than men to run for office. Women may also be more encouraged to enter a legislative career if they have

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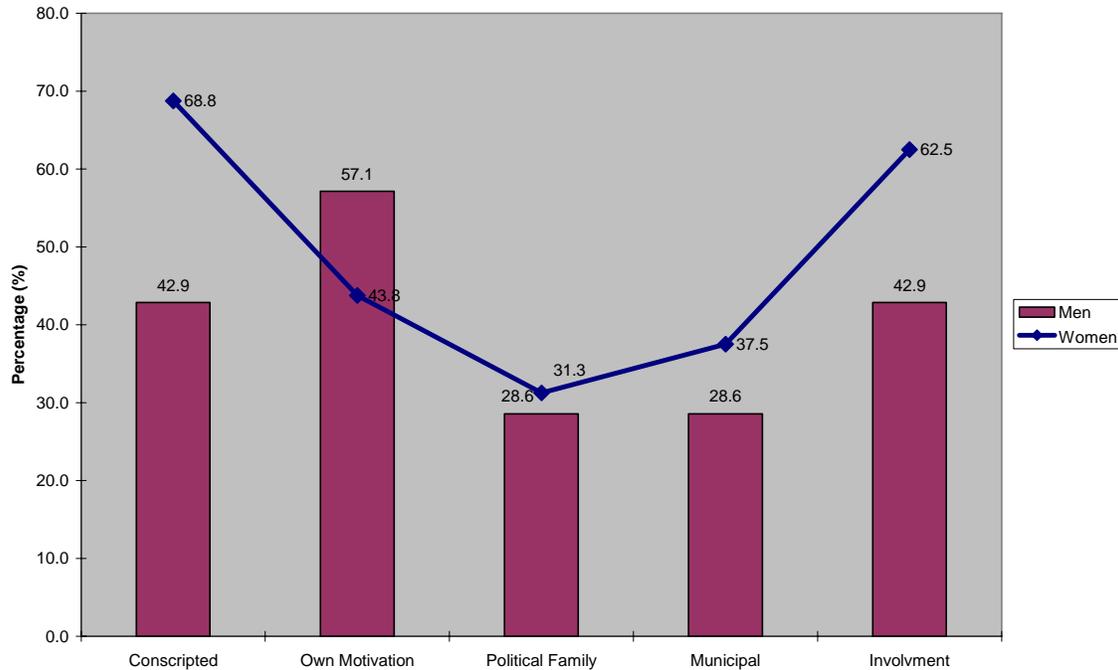
<sup>33</sup> The Board of Internal Economy is a legislative board that makes decisions for each party.

<sup>34</sup> Currently used here in Ontario.

previous political connections, either through family, at the municipal level or within the party. The motivation shown by female Ministers insinuates that perhaps their appointment is the result of their continued motivation and hard work. It could also imply that female Members who run by their own motivation are more politically driven than those female Members who are recruited by the party. Regardless, the data does lend an interesting perspective to the argument that women are less likely to run on their own accord than their male counterparts.



Willingness to run, Men versus Women



## MPP Responses

To gain greater insight into why there are fewer women MPPs at Queen’s Park and what can be done to remedy this under-representation, MPPs were asked their thoughts on both questions. Members were able to cite multiple factors as culpable. 46.7 per cent of respondents replied that it is women’s traditional role as caregiver that explains the gender’s absence from the legislature. 30 per cent cited fundraising difficulties as culpable, and 23.3 per cent noted the nomination process and the patriarchal culture of Queen’s Park.

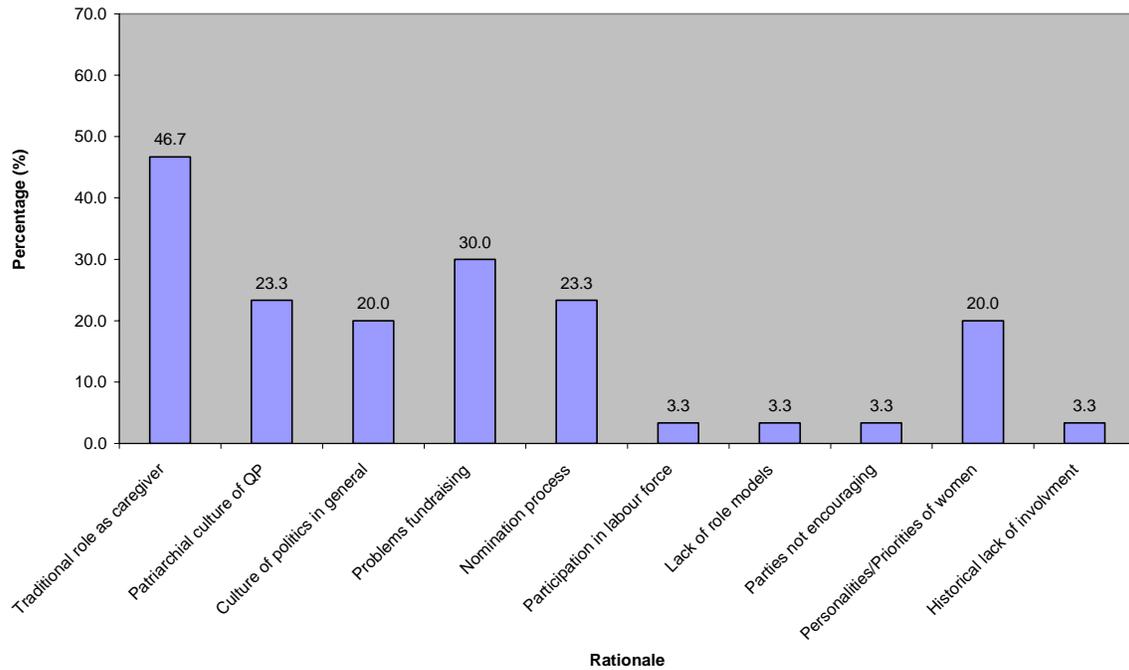
Examining Members suggestions for improved representation is an unusual comparison. Responses indicated that the parties need to do a better job of actively recruiting candidates (43.3 per cent), providing funding or teaching how to fundraise (36.7 per cent), instituting superior daycare facilities (33.3 per cent), and having women role models encourage other women to get involved (30 per cent).

It is interesting that Members did not cite parties as responsible for the under-representation of women, yet the majority of responses on how to attract more women to public office centered on the role of parties in recruiting candidates. Fundraising is a popular response for the questions. Given this response level and the earlier analysis concerning finances, it can be concluded that funding is a major barrier to women’s political advancement, particularly during the nomination stage of legislative recruitment.

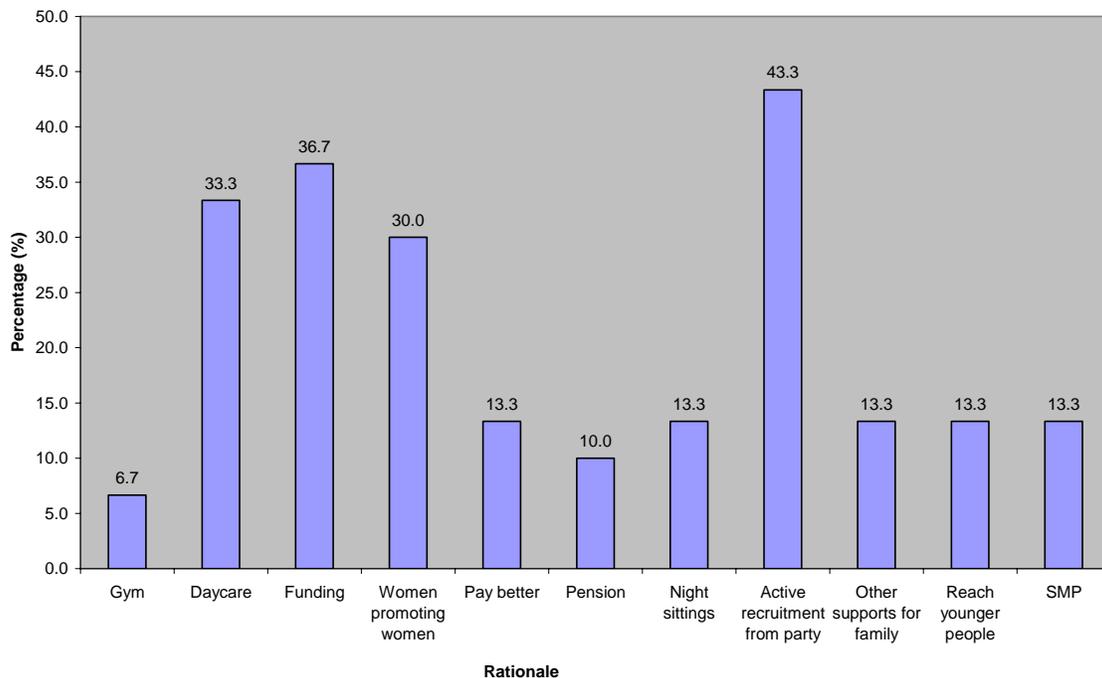
Daycare as a solution is logical given that a majority of respondents cited women’s traditional role as caregiver as the primary explanation for why so few women are MPPs at Queen’s Park. Childcare facilities are also an issue that should be addressed both for the sake of attracting women and younger men with families.

The notion of women promoting women is an important one. It seems the best advocate for women is women. Empowerment is best achieved both inside the party and outside. Pressure from both sides will help erode any patriarchal barriers still found in the nomination process and attract more women to the party, and potentially, legislative careers.

**Why are there fewer women MPPs at Queen's Park?**



**What can be done to increase women's representation at Queen's Park?**



## Conclusion

After briefly reviewing the literature and analyzing the rich, qualitative responses collected through the primary research of this study it is clear that barriers still hamper women's political advancement in Ontario. Particularly, the nomination process of the legislative recruitment model poses the greatest threat to increasing female representation at Queen's Park. While gatekeepers and funding remain the two most powerful obstacles, culture plays a significant role in a woman's decision to run. Solutions include developing clear and democratic nomination guidelines and methods, party outreach, particularly increasing knowledge, and imposing stricter financial guidelines on the nomination process. The power to significantly reduce the main obstacles to female candidacy is in the hands of the gatekeepers. Though all parties have made significant improvements to their nomination procedures, further changes are necessary if there is to be gender parity in the Ontario legislature.

Efforts of all three parties to increase women's representation are encouraging. All parties compete against one another and given the forthcoming 2007 election this sense of competition is acute. Party initiatives should likely prompt other parties to ensure they have comparable policies. Although this is not the correct motivation behind supporting women's advancement in politics, it may help bring more women into the Ontario Legislature in the next election. And, more women is exactly what is needed to continue stifling the patriarchal culture of Queen's Park, advance women's issues, and further promote the political involvement of Women.