

Campaign for an Equal Senate for Canada

December 21, 2015

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa Ontario K1A0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to urge you to ensure that the new process of selecting nominees to the Senate of Canada results in a gender-equal Senate.

We applaud you for appointing women to hold half of your cabinet positions, thereby creating the first gender-equal federal cabinet in Canadian history. We call on you now to extend this principle to appointments to the Senate of Canada.

Your new process for selecting Senators outlines several qualifications that the new Advisory Board will consider when compiling lists of candidates to fill Senate vacancies. In addition to age, residency, independence, non-partisanship, and other requirements, "Nominees will be considered with a view to achieving gender balance in the Senate". This qualification, while positive, does not ensure, or even necessarily imply, gender equality.

Currently, of the 83 sitting Senators, 30 are women, thus comprising 36 percent of the Senate. To achieve gender equality as soon as possible, the 22 current vacancies should be filled by women from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous women, women from minority linguistic, racial and ethnic communities, and others, consistent with the Senate's role in minority representation. This would achieve the result of a Senate that is 50 percent female and more representative of Canada. This is an historic opportunity. Future appointees would include both women and men in equal numbers.

It is important to note that the 2015 federal election resulted in a House of Commons that is only 26 percent female. With this poor showing, Canada ranks a dismal 48th in the world in terms of female representation. Women's voices are vastly under-represented in our most important institution of government.

Your proposal to create a Senate which is independent and non-partisan has the potential of increasing the importance of this institution in the governing of Canada. This makes it even more important that women be fairly and equally represented.

Why? Because it is 2015!

Thank you very much.



Donna Dasko, Ph.D.
Co-Founder and Past National Chair, Equal Voice



Ceta Ramkhalawansingh
Former City of Toronto Councillor, and former Equity and Diversity Manager, City of Toronto

On behalf of the
Campaign for an Equal Senate for Canada

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c.c.

Hon. Maryam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions
Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Status of Women
Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada
Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons

Attach/ List of signatories

Signatories to the letter for An Equal Senate for Canada

Zanana L. Akande, Community Advocate, Educator, former Ontario Cabinet Minister

Kay Armatage, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto

Isabel Armatage, retired businesswoman

The Hon. Jean Augustine, P.C., Former Minister of State of Status of Women

Gail Asper, O.C., O.M., LL.D President, The Asper Foundation

Sally Armstrong, Journalist

Constance Backhouse, Professor of Law, University of Ottawa

Sylvia Bashevkin, Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto

The Honourable Dr. Marion Boyd, former Attorney General of Ontario

The Hon. Sarmite D. Bulte, P.C, former MP

Lesley Byrne, Ph.D. Past Chair, Equal Voice Toronto

The Right Hon. Kim Campbell, P.C., C.C., O.B.C., Q.C., former Prime Minister of Canada

Louise Carbert, Associate Professor Political Science, Dalhousie University

Barbara Caplan, retired City Clerk, City of Toronto

Elinor Caplan, former federal and provincial cabinet minister

Denise Carpenter, ICD.D. Corporate Director

Nancy Coldham, Founder, CriticalMass Women Inc

Penny Collenette, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

The Hon. Sheila Copps, O.C., former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada

Fiona Crean, Ombudsman, Hydro One

Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse and Housing Advocate

Suzanne Depoe, Literary Agent

Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Linda Silver Dranoff, C.M., Lawyer and Author

Margrit Eichler, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto, FRSC

Gabrielle Gallant

Kiloran German, President, Sage Communications, Halifax

Sheila Gervais, Former National Director, Liberal Party of Canada

Kamala-Jean Gopie O. Ont.

Tam Goossen, former public school trustee and past president of Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

Katherine Govier, Novelist and Director of The Shoe Project

Elizabeth Gray, retired journalist/broadcaster

Sonja Greckol, Author

Beth Haddon, Journalist and former broadcast executive

Valerie Hussey C.M., former publisher

Narmin Ismail-Teja, Director, WMC

Prabha Khosla, Cities and Gender specialist and Founding Member,
Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre

Sandra Kybartas

Françoise E. Lyon, Senior Vice President, Pembroke Private Wealth Management Ltd.

Marcia McClung

Sharon McGowan, Chair, Advocacy Committee, Women in Film and Television
Vancouver and Associate Professor, Dept of Theatre and Film, University of
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Heather McGregor, CEO, YWCA Toronto

Isabel Metcalfe, Chair, Famous 5 Ottawa

Anne Miner, President, The Dunvegan Group

Velma Morgan, Equal Voice Toronto

Karen Mulhallen, Editor-in-Chief, Descant Magazine and Professor Emerita,
Ryerson University

The Hon. Anita Neville, P.C., former M. P.

Jane O'Hara, Journalist

Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Ryerson University's Global Diversity
Exchange and Chair, Lifeline Syria

Diane O'Reggio, Executive Director, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)

Dr. Pamela D. Palmater, Associate Professor and Chair in Indigenous Governance, Ryerson University

Phyllis Platt, Partner, PDM entertainment and former TV Executive

Lara Popic, Ph.D. student

Coleen A. Quinn, Primary Health Care Practitioner

Judith Ramirez, Advocate for Domestic Workers Rights, Former Member, Immigration and Refugee Board

Linda M. Rapson, M. D.

Erica Rayment, Past Co-Chair, Equal Voice Toronto and Ph.D. student, University of Toronto

Deputy Mayor Andrea Reimer, City of Vancouver

Marilyn Roycroft, Chair, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation (LEAF)

Senator Nancy Ruth, C.M.

Kara Santokie, Director, Toronto Women's City Alliance

Rebecca Scott-Rawn, former Co-Chair, Equal Voice Toronto

Paulette Senior, CEO, YWCA Canada

Sonja Smits, Actress

Joan Simalchik, Program Coordinator, Women's and Gender Studies; Associate Chair, Historical Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga

Melissa Sonberg, Executive in Residence/Adjunct Professor, Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University

Michèle Stanners, Making Treaty 7

Eleanor Stebner, Chair, Dept. of Humanities & J.S. Woodsworth Chair, Simon Fraser University

Beth Symes, C. M., LSM

Phyllis Tanaka, Past Co-Chair, Equal Voice Toronto

Susan Tanner, founding chair of LEAF, and member of Women for Nature, Nature Canada.

Jessica Tomlin, Executive Director, The MATCH International Women's Fund

Ange Valentini, Community Advocate

Anita Vandenberg, M.P., Ottawa West-Nepean

Julie White, Activist and philanthropist

Janet Wiegand, Activist promoting women in politics and women and electoral reform

The Very Reverend The Hon. Lois M. Wilson, former Senator

Ellen Woodsworth, former Vancouver City Councillor. Founder of Women Transforming Cities International Society

Frances Wright, Founder, Famous 5 Foundation

Beverley Wybrow, C. M.

Margot Young, Professor, Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia