



Issue #2 Winter 2010

Women in Municipal Government Newsletter



WIMG Committee Members (l to r): Anita Gillard, Julia King, Jacqueline Biollo, Linda Osinchuk, Elaine Sorochan. Missing: Gail Parks, Connie Fett

AUMA President's Message



I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the members of the Women in Municipal Government Committee for their important work increasing the active participation of women in politics. I have had the opportunity to participate in a recent meeting of this Committee and was impressed by the passion and commitment

that its members have for raising awareness of the importance of women in municipal government.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities only 25% of elected officials in Alberta are women. This is a number that we need to increase as we move forward in this election year. Women offer a valuable insight into municipal issues and we all benefit from diverse voices around the decision-making table. I am pleased to say that this year we have strong representation from women on the AUMA Board with 7 of the 15 directors being women.

International Women's Day is March 8. In honour of this day, please join me in recognizing and celebrating the vital contributions of all women in municipal politics; past, present and future.

Please feel free to contact any of the following people with questions or comments about the newsletter or the Women in Municipal Government Committee:

Committee Members

Linda Osinchuk (Chair)

Councillor, Strathcona
osinchuk@strathcona.ab.ca

Anita Gillard

Mayor, Village of Clive
agillard@platinum.ca

Jacqueline Biollo

Councillor, Beaumont
biollo@shaw.ca

Elaine Sorochan

Councillor, Two Hills
esoro@telus.net

Gail Parks

Councillor, Red Deer
gail.parks@reddeer.ca

Julia King

Mayor, Penhold
mayorking@townofpenhold.ca

Connie Fett

Administration, Cochrane
connie.fett@cochrane.ca

AUMA Staff

Marc Colbourne

mcolbourne@auma.ca

Rose Dacyk

rdacyk@auma.ca

I
n
s
e
r
t

H
e
a
d

S
h
o
t

o
f

L
i
n
d
a

O
h
e
r
e



Message from the Chair

First of all, I would like to extend my best wishes to each of you as we celebrate International Women's Day. This important day is an opportunity for us to reflect on the achievements of women and to be inspired as we continue to move forward.

The Women in Municipal Government Committee believes that its work is vital to the AUMA and its members. The results of AUMA's Women in Politics survey confirms this. Last year, the Committee worked to strengthen its connection with FCM's Women in Politics Standing Committee, engaged in dialogue with our membership on the challenges

"I would like to extend my best wishes to each of you as we celebrate International Women's Day. This important day is an opportunity for us to reflect on the achievements of women and to be inspired as we continue to move forward...."

SOME FACTS....

Female population of Canada: 52% ¹

Members of Canadian House of Commons that are women: 22%¹

Canadian Municipal, provincial and federal elected representatives that are women: 21% ¹

Elected Municipal officials in Alberta that are women: 25% ²

Sources:

¹ Equal Voice Website
www.equalvoice.ca

² Federation of Canadian Municipalities. January, 2009.

and barriers faced by women and encouraged mentorship for young women in the area of municipal politics.

At last year's Convention, the Committee brought forward a resolution asking the membership to request that the Province implement policies and financing to support the active participation of women in government. The resolution led to much debate on the floor and, in the end, was defeated. Our Committee was disappointed by this outcome but it has renewed our commitment to educating our membership on the issues confronting women in politics. Women are important to all levels of any decision-making table. Only 21% of municipal, provincial and federal levels of politics are women; yet 52% of the population in Canada is female. Canada is 49th out of 189 countries behind Afghanistan and Iran with regards to female representation.

It is important to remember this is not a quota drive; it is a democracy and governance issue. I challenge you as a Mayor, Councillor or Administrator to look at the makeup of your Council. There needs to be a fair representation of female voices. We are working to encourage more women to place their names on the ballot.

We need to support more women and girls to step forward and show their leadership skills. To my female colleagues: on this International Women's Day make a commitment to mentor a young woman.

Happy International Women's Day!

Linda Osinchuk
Councillor, Strathcona County
Chair, Women in Municipal Government Committee

The Journey *IS* the Destination



My mantra: **People ~ Possibility ~ Potential** has grown out of my life journey thus far. Paved by opportunities to learn and grow, to stumble or succeed, it is a journey I've sometimes walked alone, but at other times felt the strength and encouragement of others alongside me...Ralph, Martin, Janet, Anita...Nolan, Gerry, my dad...

It is for these times and individuals that I am the most appreciative. There are many instances where through luck or good fortune, calculated introductions and networking that I

have had the fortuity of meeting self-assured and confident leaders. Some of whom, to my great delight, have offered (or accepted) an active role as mentor. As my own learning curve continues, the development and fine-tuning of positive thinking, action, accountability and evaluation remains forefront in my mind.

I have also been able to experience the other side of mentorship—offering pieces of my core value system, philosophies and viewpoint to others. In her own words, Kristen gives a bit of personal reflection and history of our relationship, of which I am grateful for the depth of her inquiries and the exchange of our ideas.

“As a second year political science student, hoping to study law, I am beginning to understand the problems with representation for women, specifically in government areas. Through my capacity on the University of Alberta Debate Society, I have had the opportunity to advocate for women’s rights within the context of Canadian debate. It is somewhat disconcerting that although women are provided juridical rights in Canada, there are still many societal problems that Canadian women are confronted with. A barrier to entry in government positions certainly reflects one part of this problem. Mindful of this, I entered the Equal Voice Mentorship Experiences Program in the hopes of gaining insight into the problem of representation, hoping to gain a first-hand a perspective. Thus far, Jacqueline and I are in a somewhat introductory phase of our mentorship program, but I already feel that I have gotten to know an extraordinary leader within Albertan municipal governance. This opportunity has proven to be quite a blessing.”

For all I know, “mentorship” does not follow any rule books; there are no policies and procedures, defined timelines, or guaranteed outcomes. Offered through a personal or professional relationship that seems to “fit just right”, this unique and special someone can help put things into perspective, identify goals, and empower. If you haven't already, I hope you have the good fortune to find a mentor or offer yourself and mentor others.

Jacqueline Biollo
Councillor, Town of Beaumont
AUMA Director, Towns East

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The Women in Municipal Government Committee is a Committee of the AUMA Board of Directors.

The Committee works to raise awareness of the importance of women in governance and to strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process.

Priorities for this Committee in 2009 have included increasing communication of issues and initiatives related to women in municipal politics to the broader AUMA membership and identifying and providing input to the Board of Directors on any emerging issues.

In 2010, the Committee will focus on increasing the number of women involved in municipal politics through education and mentorship opportunities, implement a peer support network for female municipal leaders and communicate relevant issues to the broader AUMA membership.

If you have any issues that you would like to see the Committee address please do not hesitate to contact Marc Colbourne at mcolbourne@auma.ca

RESOURCES

Civic Participation is Democracy in Action

This curriculum and resource manual was produced by the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association as a result of the "Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women" project. The manual is a resource for immigrant women wishing to learn more about civic participation and community activism. [To access click here.](#)

Election Toolkit for Women: The Candidate's Guide to Municipal Elections.

This election toolkit produced by FCM is designed to give women considering running for municipal office an understanding of the job, as well as to provide tips and strategies for running a campaign. The toolkit was developed based on the experiences of municipal politicians across the country and includes a comprehensive listing of additional resources that you should consult as you consider running for office. [To access please click here.](#)

Canada in Need of Consistently Strong, Powerful Female Public Policy Voice

"...[P]ublic life in Canada, and for that matter any sector, needs to draw from as deep and broad a talent pool as possible, and here we are selling ourselves short. We need a talent pool with a greater diversity of perspectives, interests and aspirations, whether male, female, black, white, gay, small town or big city.

A friend shared a story about the conversation between a woman in England and her young son while Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. When she asked her son

what he aspired to do when he grew up, he said he aspired to be a Member of Parliament. When asked why not Prime Minister, the son replied: "Can a man be Prime Minister?" Unless women see themselves occupying high positions, their aspirations to those positions may not feel legitimate."

Excerpt from *Canada in Need of Consistently Strong, Powerful Female Public Policy Voice* by Dr. Roger Gibbons. [To read full article click here.](#)

March 8 is International Women's Day!

March 8 is International Women's Day. This day marks the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. In some countries like China, Russia, Vietnam and Bulgaria it is a national holiday.

Thousands of events are held throughout the world on this day to inspire women and celebrate their achievements. A web of diverse local activity connects women from all around the world ranging from political rallies, government activities and networking events through to local women's craft markets, fashion parades and more.

On March 8, remember to take the time to celebrate a special women in your community.

For more information on International Women's Day please visit www.internationalwomensday.com.

Are You Tuned In?

EVENTS CALENDAR

The AUMA and other organizations host a number of conferences and events throughout the year that are of interest to municipal politicians and administrators. To find out about events that are key to your community, click here to visit the AUMA web site calendar.

WEEKLY DIGEST

Each week the AUMA and AMSC release a Digest that covers information on advocacy efforts, AMSC services and other topics of interest to municipal politicians and administrators. Make sure that you are in the know by subscribing via the AUMA web site. [Click here to subscribe.](#)

