



Issue #4 Spring 2011

# Women in Municipal Government Newsletter



WIMG Committee Members (standing l to r): Paula Evans, Anita Gillard, Yetunde Oke, Jacqueline Biollo, Linda Sloan. (sitting): Nabil Chehayeb, Kimberley Sharkey.

## What's Inside...

We are pleased to bring you this issue of the WIMG Newsletter. Inside you will find:

- A message from the Chair highlighting the importance of Champions.
- Looking Back and Looking Ahead: The history and future of women in politics.
- An article from Equal Voice Canada about the gains made by women in the recent federal election.
- An announcement regarding the 2nd Annual WIMG Bursary.

We encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues and community members. Together we are working towards achieving the goal of 30% of government officials being women that was established by the UN and supported by FCM and the AUMA.

For more information on the Women in Municipal Government Committee please visit the AUMA website: [www.auma.ca](http://www.auma.ca).

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

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(Chair)**

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## Message from the Chair

Across the province and within our municipalities, the search for “Champions of Democracy” continues. This year, the Women in Municipal Government Committee have identified, within their 2011 Operational Plan, to **further strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process.** The Committee defines a “Champions” as *people* who have the *potential* to seek out and realize theirs, and the *potential* of others. The mandate of the WIMG Committee will continue to build on the related work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities: identify emerging issues and opportunities related to women in municipal government, provide a ‘women in municipal government lens’ to relevant issues and initiatives being reviewed by other AUMA committees, and communicate women-centric issues and initiatives to the AUMA membership.

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**Champion** \Cham”pi\*on\, *noun* 3: a person who backs a politician or a team, etc.; *verb* 2. to support or maintain; to protect.

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### Pleased to Be a Male Champion

**Nabil Chehayeb  
Mayor, Tofield**

It was with great honour that I accepted the appointment to the Women in Municipal Government Committee. I know from experience that the participation of females has had a positive effect in the political arena. We don’t have to do much searching to realise the major contribution of women, whether in politics, science or any kind of work force. Together with the committee, I would like to work towards having a stronger representation of women in government. I attended my first meeting on April 20 and I was so impressed with each committee member’s level of commitment and passion for their careers. Our goal is to encourage more participation of women in government and I firmly believe that achieving this goal would have a very positive impact on all levels of government.

In order for this mandate to be successful, the province of Alberta needs Champions...not just me, or the other WIMG Committee members, but *you*, your colleagues on Council, municipal administrators, and the community-at-large. We need a plan, some actions or milestones that provide an opportunity to identify and discuss emerging issues, and to identify educational and professional development opportunities relevant to women in municipal government.

**The time is now** to identify women who would be excellent future candidates and leaders. **The time is now** to encourage, support and mentor ‘the girl next door’ to consider running for election to municipal government. **The time is now** to be a Champion.

Today, and tomorrow, the Women in Municipal Government Committee will continue to build relationships with other political and community organizations through ongoing communication and mutual understanding of issues. **WIMG will continue to be a Champion.**

Watch for more information about how you can get involved and become a Champion to further strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process in newsletters, press releases and AUMA weekly digest. Visit the website, participate in future educational webinars, contribute or apply to the WIMG 2011 Bursary or join the committee at **‘The Girl Next Door: Exploring the Strengths and Contributions of Women in Local Governance’** AUMA Convention session.

The time is now to be a Champion to **strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process.**

Jacqueline Biollo, Chair  
Councillor, Town of Beaumont

## Looking Back and Looking Ahead

In looking towards the future of women in politics, it is always helpful to begin by looking back. The history of women in Canadian politics dates back to Louise McKinney who became the first woman elected to a legislature in Canada in 1868. However, from that point onwards, progress was slow. It was not until 1928 that the British Privy Council overturned Canada's Supreme Court ruling that women were "persons" and able to sit in the Senate. The landmark case overseen by Canada's "Famous Five" - a group of women from across the political spectrum dedicated to seeing an equal treatment of both sexes—signaled the beginnings of a cultural shift in the Canadian mind-set.

In the last 50 years, the speed at which Canadian culture has shifted is remarkable. When the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was set up in 1967, there were only two women in the House of Commons. In 1972, however, four women were elected to the House. They included Flora MacDonald, Jeanne Sauvé, Albanie Morin and Monique Bégin. Bégin, MacDonald and Sauvé would go on to hold cabinet posts. In 1980, the number of women increased to a total of 14 and Sauvé went on to become the first female Speaker of the House (in 1980) and Governor General (in 1984). By 1984, that number almost doubled to 27 (close to 10 percent of the members of the House). Before the 2011 election was called, that total was up to 67 (of 308).

Reflecting on the progress and challenges historically, one is confronted by the question: "what will the future hold for women in politics?" If one is optimistic, the current state of provincial leadership contenders offers a possibility that not only might Alberta's Premier be a woman, but that women may lead all official opposition parties as well.

This is an exciting prospect, but it must be accompanied with caution. Electing a woman leader does not guarantee a future where our gender will achieve full equality professionally, socially or politically. Perhaps our highest prospects and hopes are placed with education. The more women seek formal education and to achieve professions previously dominated by men, the more active women will be in all dimensions of our communities and political systems.

Until women can establish a collective agenda formulating the fundamental elements we need to achieve (including a fair, just and equal society), electing more women will not be enough. Let us be inspired to strive towards this goal and find our inspiration in the Famous Five who proved just how powerful a collective agenda can be no matter where you lean in the political spectrum.

Linda Sloan  
Councillor, City of Edmonton

## 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 2010 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 2011, the Committee will focus on increasing the number of women involved in municipal politics through education and mentorship opportunities, awarding a bursary for women interested in municipal politics, and communicating 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](mailto:mcolbourne@auma.ca)



## Women Win One-Quarter of Seats in Newly Elected House of Commons

Canadians will welcome 76 women to the House of Commons, an increase of eight from the last Parliament. Women now make up 25 percent of Canada's Members of Parliament, a notable increase over the 22 percent representation in the 40th Parliament.

The New Democratic Party leads the way with 40 women elected, or 39 percent of its successful candidates. The Bloc Québécois elected one woman of the four remaining BQ Members in the province. Women in the Conservative and Liberal caucuses comprise 17 and 18 percent, respectively. For the Conservative Party, this represents 28 women elected. For the Liberal party it is a total of 6.

*“Equal Voice is pleased to see that women now constitute a quarter of all federal Members of Parliament. This is a historic high. In fact, it is the single largest increase Canada has seen in over a decade,” said Donna Dasko, National Chair.*

Further, the Green Party made history in electing Elizabeth May, its national leader, who will now serve as the sole female party leader in addition to being the only elected Green Party member in the House.

“Equal Voice is pleased to see that women now constitute a quarter of all federal Members of Parliament. This is a historic high. In fact, it is the single largest increase Canada has seen in over a decade,” said Donna Dasko, National Chair.

“It signifies that Canada is moving forward,” noted Dasko.

Canada now ranks in the top 40 countries in terms of women's representation in national Parliaments.

Equal Voice applauds all of the women who ran in this federal election.

“It takes a tremendous commitment to the democratic process, considerable tenacity and significant work to stand for election. No one should underestimate the sacrifice women make to put themselves forward,” said Peckford.

“While twenty-five percent is a significant achievement, Equal Voice is working towards the day when women comprise a minimum of one third of the house,” underscored Vicky Small who oversaw EV's candidate tracking.

***Equal Voice is a group of women and men who are deeply concerned about Canadian politics and have formed a multi-partisan, non-profit organization devoted to the still-bold idea that more women must be elected to every level of government of Canada. This article was taken from the Equal Voice website: [www.equalvoice.ca](http://www.equalvoice.ca)***

## Are you a woman considering a career in municipal politics? Do you know a woman who is ?

### Apply for the Second Annual WIMG Bursary

The Women in Municipal Government Bursary will be awarded to a woman pursuing a career in municipal politics in Alberta. The award will cover costs (up to \$1000.00) associated with education/professional development (with the submission of appropriate receipts or invoices).

The bursary is awarded by the AUMA Women in Municipal Government Committee. The Committee's mandate is to raise awareness of the importance of women in governance and to strengthen the participation of women in the democratic process.

#### Criteria and Selection:

To be eligible for consideration for the AUMA Women in Municipal Government Bursary, an applicant must be a female who is considering entering into municipal politics or is an elected municipal official.

The bursary can be applied to:

- Programs of study leading to a diploma, degree or professional accreditation
- Enrolling in short courses, workshops or seminars related to politics
- AUMA Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP) courses
- Joining a relevant professional association or attending Association sponsored activities

Applications must be accompanied by:

- A cover letter outlining
  - political aspirations
  - reasons for applying for the bursary
  - how the bursary will help in the achievement of established goals
  - information on the educational/professional development opportunity the bursary will be applied to
- An essay (minimum of 1000 words) on the importance of increasing women's participation in municipal government
- Two letters of recommendation

**Please submit applications to [mcolbourne@auma.ca](mailto:mcolbourne@auma.ca). The deadline for submission is August 1, 2011.**

### The Girl Next Door

Please join us at the WIMG session at Convention. The topic will be *The Girl Next Door: Exploring the Strengths and Contributions of women in Local Governance*. For more information on the AUMA Convention please visit the AUMA website: [www.auma.ca](http://www.auma.ca).

#### 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.](#)

