

Deciding to Run



CAMPAIGN**SCHOOL**
for women

Introduction

Having more women in political leadership roles is an important step towards **gender equality**.

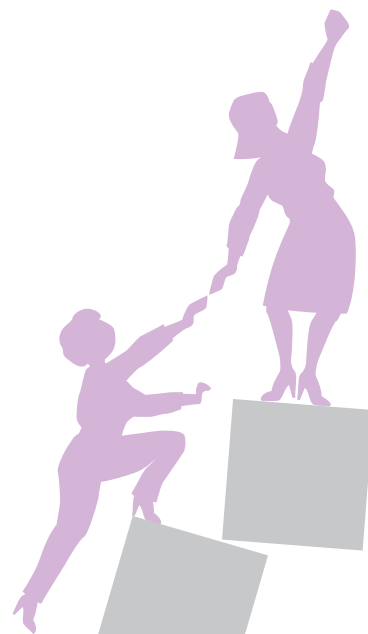
Progress is being made in Nova Scotia, and nationally, but there is still work to be done to have women represented in elected leadership roles in equal numbers as men. It is important to not only increase the number of women in these roles, but also to increase diversity and inclusion of all women, and men, from vibrant, diverse communities across our province.

You have a lot to offer. Each one of us can make valuable contributions to public discourse and policy in our communities. Considering elected political leadership is one way to make your mark and bring your voice to the table. There is a lot to consider in putting yourself forward as a candidate and entering political life. This booklet includes helpful self-assessment and reflection tools to assist you in determining which pathway to leadership makes the most sense for you.

For those who have already decided to run – congratulations! This booklet will be helpful as you take the next steps in the process. For those who are still considering, this booklet will help you to evaluate your strengths and values, contemplate the pros and cons of entering political life, and determine your brand and message. Only you can determine if you are ready to step into elected political leadership.

Women in Nova Scotia have much to offer in public life.

While you may encounter obstacles, barriers, and challenges throughout your political career, remember that, whether it is a skill, education, life experience, passion, or commitment, your voice can help balance public discourse and the decisions made by our elected officials.



There are **many ways** to contribute!

- ✓ Run for elected office
- ✓ Support women candidates
- ✓ Apply for agencies, boards, commissions, and committees
- ✓ Volunteer



*Running for office – win or lose – will **change your life.***

You will make friends, discover new aspects of yourself and your community, and gain deeper knowledge of your neighbourhood and its issues.



Considering Political Life

Women remain under-represented in part due to societal gender expectations that can create barriers to women entering politics. These perceptions can influence how voters vote, and may affect women candidates' chances of winning an election.

Do not underestimate what you can offer. Reflect on the support you currently have from family, friends, the community, and, when applicable, the political party you wish to represent.

There are several important aspects to consider before entering the political arena. The following self-assessment exercise will help you evaluate where your strengths and areas for improvement are in some key elements of political life.

*We think **men and women** make equally good leaders.*

In 2016, Angus Reid Institute conducted a study which reported 84% of Canadians believe that, in general, men and women make equally good leaders, and 6% believe women make better leaders.



*We think **women** make better leaders.*

Self-Assessment Exercise

Assess yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 signifying an area for improvement, and 5 an area of personal strengths. Re-evaluate yourself every couple of years to see how you are doing!

Patience Level

1 2 3 4 5

Reporters and constituents may ask you inappropriate questions. You may be asked the same question many times. Can you remain calm when dealing with people whom you find annoying or frustrating?

Leadership

1 2 3 4 5

Do you like working with people? Do people trust and confide in you? Are you able to listen empathetically to someone else's problems or concerns? Are you able to delegate responsibility effectively? Are you able to openly demonstrate your appreciation for the hard work and loyalty of your supporters? Do you have access to individuals and groups who would work for your campaign?

Public Speaking

1 2 3 4 5

Can you speak easily and comfortably in front of diverse groups and to the media? Are you articulate? Are you able to communicate potentially complex ideas in a way that everyone can understand? Does it take you a long time to practice a speech before you feel comfortable, or do you need only to read it once or twice to ensure you remember the key points? Are you able to handle unanticipated questions effectively?

Stress Management

1 2 3 4 5

Can you set priorities and follow them? Can you deal with the highs and lows during your campaign with a fairly even temperament? How well can you handle competing demands for your time? Are you able to do many different tasks at once, or are you easily overwhelmed by disorganization and confusion?

Stamina and Endurance

1 2 3 4 5

Are you able to work long hours under stressful conditions? Can you pace yourself? Are you able to travel well and schedule your activities so you do not burn out? Are you able to stop and say no before you become completely exhausted? Do you have the physical stamina for door-to-door canvassing during election campaigns?

Impact on Personal Life

1 2 3 4 5

Does your family support the idea of your involvement in politics? Can you modify or take a leave from your work and volunteer commitments? Do you have family and friends who can take over your family commitments during the campaign? Do you have a network of friends you can trust and who can provide moral support? Could you, when necessary, put the needs of your constituents ahead of your own, especially with regards to your time?

Political Know-How

1 2 3 4 5

Do you know how government works? Do you have adequate knowledge and understanding of the issues? Do you know where you stand on these issues? If you are involved in party politics, do you know the stance of your party? Do you know how to engage in the political world, such as when to say what, how much to say, and to whom? Do you know what resources are available to help you become more informed?

Create an inventory of what you will bring to the public arena.
Review it with a trusted confidante, mentor, or friend who can be objective.

Review it with a trusted confidante, mentor, or friend who can be objective.

What is my agenda?

Being ready to clearly articulate and promote your agenda to voters is key to a successful campaign. Be prepared to aggressively and publicly promote your qualifications.

1. What social changes do I want to see?

2. What have I done to make life better for my fellow citizens?

3. What issues have I tackled in which I have some expertise?

4. What personal accomplishment am I most proud of?

5. What is the greatest goal I would like to accomplish in my lifetime?

6. What do I think my community needs?

7. What issues are important to me? Are representatives in my area doing anything to address these issues?

8. What would I do to address these issues?

Voters will support
the candidate who most
consistently and clearly
articulates their own views,
and can sustain voter
confidence.

Considerations Before Committing

A life in politics can have both positive and negative impacts on a politician's personal life. How might your decision to run for public office affect your family and personal life?

Talk to a friend you trust about the potential benefits and drawbacks of entering politics you identify in the following exercise, and ask for their feedback. They may have a different perspective that will help you decide whether to run.

How will my family manage the attention?

When you are involved in politics, the personal becomes political. Your private life, and the private lives of your family, can also draw scrutiny and media attention.

There are ways you can prepare yourself and your family for this new, sometimes unwanted, attention.

Could I have potential conflicts of interest?

Rules of disclosure regarding conflict of interest apply to political life at the provincial and federal levels, and within some municipalities. It is important to thoroughly understand and follow the guidelines associated with the position you are seeking.

Talk with your spouse, children, and close family members...

... about the impact politics may have ahead of time and plan how to manage the expected and unexpected as a team. This will reduce the number of surprises and make them easier to manage. Your family will better understand the challenges, and will be more likely to support you throughout your political career.

If you have children...

...ask someone currently in politics if their children could talk to your children about the changes which took place when their parent entered politics.

How will I manage finances?

Most people get involved in politics because they want to contribute to society, not for personal gain. Compensation for municipal, provincial, and federal office may be far below remuneration for positions with similar responsibilities, hours of work, travel, etc. in the public and private sectors. Some municipal representatives are only offered a stipend or honorarium for the work they do.

Before considering political life, be sure to consider salary and benefits by checking with the appropriate office (see *Resources* booklet).



How will running affect my personal life?

What changes might occur in my life? How do they measure up against what I hope to achieve?

Potential Benefits

Potential Drawbacks

Personal

Family

Community

Career

Income

Expenses

Other

Developing Leadership Skills

No one is a born leader—everyone can develop leadership skills, and benefit from using them.

Take time to analyze and understand yourself.
It is the first step to understanding others.

Consider these important questions:

- What kind of leader am I?
- Am I a leader who helps people get along?
- How do others see me as a leader?
- What are my goals, purposes, and expectations of my campaign team and myself?
- Who could be a possible mentor?

Strategies for Developing Your Leadership Skills

- Ask for and use constructive feedback
- Evaluate yourself regularly and honestly
- Seek out new roles and new challenges
- Start practicing leadership skills
- Join community organizations and volunteer for committee work
- Never pass up training opportunities
- Remember that “to teach is to learn twice”
- Work with and learn from strong, skilled, and upright leaders
- Set personal leadership development goals and work on them

Self-Assessment of Leadership Skills

Identify areas for improvement. Ask yourself these questions:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Do I try to be aware of how others think and feel? | Y | N |
| 2. Do I try to help others perform to the best of their abilities? | Y | N |
| 3. Am I willing to accept responsibility? | Y | N |
| 4. Do I accept and appreciate other perspectives and opinions? | Y | N |
| 5. Am I aware of current issues and concerns in my community? | Y | N |
| 6. Am I willing to try new ideas and new ways of doing things? | Y | N |
| 7. Am I able to communicate with others effectively? | Y | N |
| 8. Am I a good problem solver? | Y | N |

Analyze your **strengths and weaknesses**—and take action! Devise a strategy for upgrading your skills.



Building Your Political Resume

A variety of factors can contribute to your success as a politician.

Building a political resume is an important personal process to develop different ways of relating your professional and personal experiences to the political arena, demonstrating to voters your unique qualifications and skills for the job. This is also an opportunity to start to develop content for your pitch, your website, and brochures.



What contributes to my political qualifications?

These experiences involve similar skill sets linked to organization, leadership, providing service to the community, working with people, and knowledge of basic political structures.

- community involvement, volunteering, committee work
- previous experience in politics at any level
- professional employment and contacts
- academic preparation at university or college
- volunteering on other candidates' campaigns
- general knowledge of the skills needed to participate effectively within the community and in local government
- name recognition achieved through community involvement, letters to the editor, articles in local papers, etc.
- graduation from candidate campaign schools

The **ultimate requirements**, however, are an awareness of the issues, and a desire to do something about them.

Pursuing Community Leadership

There are many options available to women who wish to contribute to their community without running for political office, or are looking for more exposure to, and experience with, the public service before putting their name forward.

- **Community** leadership allows you to gain skills and build networks within your community in areas that particularly interest you.
- **Local schools and non-profit organizations** also require skills from community volunteers.
To find out more about organizations in your community, you can visit: www.ns.211.ca
- At the **municipal** level, there are many citizen committees, task forces, and advisory groups that frequently seek volunteers.
- At the **provincial** level, there are numerous agencies, boards, and commissions (ABCs) that are open to the public. Openings on ABCs are advertised twice a year. To learn more about ABCs and current openings, visit www.gov.ns.ca/exec_council.
- The **federal** government also has a number of boards and agencies that require citizens with expertise. Participation at the federal level may require travel to Ottawa or other areas of the country depending on the nature of the work of the board or agency. To apply, visit: www.appointments-nominations.gc.ca

What Motivates Me to Run for Office?

People have very different reasons for entering politics: they may want to improve their communities, recognize skills they have that would help others achieve their goals, or want to create wider societal change.

Whatever your agenda, the public and the media will expect you to be knowledgeable on a variety of issues. They will assess and judge you based on your awareness of, and responses to, the issues affecting your community.



- Are there ways your summary could be strengthened?

Notes



**Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
the Status of Women**

www.women.novascotia.ca

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