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# Le Réseau des femmes

BULLETIN DU RÉSEAU DES FEMMES DE LA FÉDÉRATION INTERPROFESSIONNELLE DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC



## BEING EMPOWERED: STRATEGY, SOLIDARITY, ACTION!

The Women’s Network on October 15 and 16 was an opportunity for the union reps to continue their reflections on how to be empowered and to get more involved in their field. The Network has proven to be a fitting place to discuss the subject and share everyone’s experiences.

Starting with the theme “Being empowered: strategy, solidarity, action!” the activists addressed the possible avenues of action and strategies for acting in a tangible way on their everyday life, as women, citizens and healthcare professionals. Through the participative conferences and workshops, they were called upon to reflect on how to exercise their full power.

How can an increase in the number of women in positions of power be ensured? And, closer to our reality, how can a greater involvement of the healthcare professionals in their union team be encouraged in such a way as to empower themselves to take actions?

The issues affecting the status of women need to be on the agenda of our governments more than ever. Women’s demands must be heard. Moreover, the activists had the opportunity to be seen and heard on October 17, the day after the Network, during the World March of Women attended by nearly 10,000 marchers in *Trois-Rivières*. 10,000 voices demanding de facto equality between women and men. 10,000 voices in solidarity with the aboriginal women who have disappeared or been killed. 10,000 voices for a more fair and egalitarian society.

*Line Larocque, Vice-President and Political Officer for the Status of Women Committee*





Speaker *Andrée-Anne Lacasse*, researcher at the *Conseil du statut de la femme*

# WOMEN IN POLITICS: MOVING TOWARDS PARITY

## IS HOLDING A POSITION IN POLITICS STILL A CHALLENGE FOR THE WOMEN OF QUÉBEC?

Yes, without a doubt. *Andrée-Anne Lacasse*, researcher at the *Conseil du statut de la femme*, conducted a study with eighteen women involved in politics at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, and in the regional and aboriginal structures. This study confirms that the obstacles that these women must face are still well entrenched.

Still too few who hold elected office, women, who represent 27% of the parliamentarians in Québec, struggle to enter politics and must juggle a multitude of constraints to maintain an active presence. When they choose a commitment to politics, they work harder than their male colleagues and have to deal with stereotypes about their character traits, their behaviour, their physical appearance and their competencies. To all of that is added family responsibilities.

## WHAT BLOCKS A WOMAN'S ENTRY INTO POLITICS?

A certain number of factors which are beyond the individual candidates' control clearly came out of this study. Thus, despite the evolution of women's rights, there is a tendency to exclude them from political power like in past centuries. All the evidence points in the same direction: the education which is given to girls as well as the requirements set out by society for them, confines them to roles where gentleness, a lack of risk taking and perfection are valued.

## BUT WHY DO WE WANT MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS?

Because a democratic society must reflect the make-up and the diversity of the population within it. A third is too little for a group of women who represent a little more than 50% of the Canadian population. Because women can stand up for collective interests in line with the issues like the gender division of work, their socioeconomic status, well-being and the domestic sphere. Because women show solidarity, regardless of their political allegiances, when it is a question of major topics related to society.

### HOW CAN THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS BE ENCOURAGED?

- Recruit candidates
- Act on work-family balance
- Promote the political socialization of women
- Set up structural projects to support the political action of women

### TO FIND OUT MORE

THE SUMMARY  
[www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/resume\\_femmes\\_politique\\_version\\_web.pdf](http://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/resume_femmes_politique_version_web.pdf)

THE COMPLETE REPORT  
[www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/avis\\_femmes\\_et\\_politique\\_web2.pdf](http://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/avis_femmes_et_politique_web2.pdf)

## DOCUMENTAIRE 75<sup>E</sup>, ELLES SE SOUVIENNENT

It was with great interest that, in the evening, the activists watched the documentary *75<sup>e</sup>, elles se souviennent* which traces the 75-year history of women in Québec since the right to vote was attained in 1940. Prominent figures, such as *Janette Bertrand*, *Julie Snyder*, *Lise Payette* and *Pauline Marois*, give stirring testimonials on the evolution of the situation of women over the years. An activity that was greatly appreciated by the activists!

## 2015 WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN



Status of Women Committee:  
From left to right: Julie Daignault, Lucie Ménard, Florence Thomas, Line Larocque, Caroline Flageol, Patricia Lajoie, Line Mercier, Claire Alarie

The women of the Network took advantage of the World March of Women on October 17 last to assert their power and to be heard. Therefore, collectively, they decided to continue the major march started in 1995 in order to denounce the situation of poverty and violence in which too many women live.



This year, the women decided to launch an appeal to resistance: "Liberate our bodies, our land and our territories". They especially wanted to denounce the austerity measures implemented by the Government, economic development based on the destruction of the environment as well as the militaristic policies of our governments. All of these measures affect women in particular.

The marchers also took this opportunity to oppose the accounting logic of the government which results in changing the work environments to the point of rendering them inhumane and burning out the healthcare professionals. That's enough. Patient care comes first! "Solidarity!", they chanted in unison!





Speaker Katie Gagnon, from the *Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie*

# NEGOTIATE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION!

In what way do I want to get involved?  
 How can I target my area of influence?  
 How to be able to negotiate my participation?

It was with these questions posed by the speaker, Katie Gagnon, from the *Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie*, that the activists were directly challenged.

In a workshop, the participants were able, through concrete cases, to identify the strengths and talents of each person, make up a work team building on their strengths and to develop a realistic and attainable action plan which takes into account the different levels of influence of the organization. Therefore, they moved on to action collectively while appropriating their power!

Committing with complete knowledge of the cause, knowing how to determine her strengths and to define the leadership that we want to exercise, those were the basic elements which the speaker relied on for promoting the idea that participation can be negotiated!

*“I am intervening in my environment, I am taking the power to act and I am negotiating my participation!”*



## INSPIRATIONAL BOOKS FOR INSPIRED WOMEN

Lynda Mathieu, Caroline Larochelle and Karine Mercier were the lucky winners of a draw which took place at the end of the Network. They received the following books respectively: *100 questions sur les femmes et la politique* by Manon Tremblay, *Les tranchées* by Fanny Britt and *Second début* by Francine Pelletier. These three Québec authors have together addressed the subjects affecting the status of women and give a most interesting analysis and enlightenment on what it really is to be a woman in Québec today. Enjoy the books!

