

**MOTION 13-18(3):
INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,
CARRIED**

March 8, 2018

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS women comprise half of the population of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS women have been under-represented, accounting for no more than 15 per cent of Members of the Legislative Assembly in any given Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the lack of representation by women may have resulted in the creation of legislation and policy that does not take their needs and concerns fully into account, to the detriment of all Northwest Territories residents;

AND WHEREAS the Northwest Territories has the lowest percentage of women Members of a Legislative Assembly in Canada, while representation has increased at the federal level;

AND WHEREAS the United Nations has determined that a critical mass of at least 30 per cent women is needed before legislatures produce public policy representing women's concerns, and before political institutions begin to change the way they do business;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the Legislative Assembly supports the goal of increasing women's representation in the Legislative Assembly to 20 per cent by 2023 and 30 per cent by 2027;

AND FURTHER, that Members of this Legislative Assembly work together and individually to identify and implement a wide range of strategies, including positive action, public debate, and training and mentoring for women as leaders, to achieve these goals. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, some distinguished women have served in this Legislative Assembly, including Nellie Cournoyea, the first and only woman Premier of the NWT, the second woman Premier in Canada, and the first Indigenous leader at this level. Jeanie Marie-Jewell of Fort Smith, Sandy Lee from Yellowknife, and Jane Groenewegen of Hay River all served in Cabinet, as my colleague Caroline Cochrane does today.

All told, there have never been more than three women in any single Assembly, representing 15 per cent of the total Members. Not to put too fine a point on it, Mr. Speaker, the NWT has the worst record for electing women in the country. Legislatures in British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta, and Nova Scotia all have representation of at least 30 per cent women, as well as the Yukon. What do they have that we don't?

One factor is a lack of party politics where parties can choose candidates and mandate a specific proportion of women. For example, there is a bipartisan initiative in New Brunswick to have women as 50 per cent of all candidates in the provincial election coming this fall.

What we do know is that the more women who run, the more will get elected. Last year, there were 20 candidates running for the 10 councillor positions on the Behchoko community government. More than half of the candidates were women, and eight got elected.

The challenge is to get women to run at the Territorial government level. They have always been reluctant to do so, averaging no more than 15 per cent of candidates since 1951. While we are at it, hats off to the 110 women who have run in the last 66 years. Mr. Speaker, last election, only 17 per cent of candidates were women, and no women ran in 10 out of 19 ridings.

Let me turn to the question: what prevents women from running? A 2013 American study about the gender gap in political ambition among girls found that, first, boys are more likely than girls to have been socialized by their parents to think about a career in politics; second, young women tend to be exposed to less political information and discussion than are young men; third, young women generally get less encouragement to run for office than young men do; and fourth, young women, consequently, are less likely to think they will be qualified to run for office, even in the not-so-near future.

From my own experience, I would also add two more reasons: women give more consideration to the toll politics will take on their families, especially their children, when they will work long hours and may be away from home for weeks at a time; secondly, women worry about the cost of paying for a campaign out of their own or their family's financial resources.

In short, women have to be talked into running, and it usually is a hard decision for them to make.

The Status of Women and now the Women's Advisory section of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs have been helping to equip women to run by offering campaign schools free of charge to any woman who is interested in running for office at any governmental level. The school offers practical advice about creating a message, budgeting, fundraising, and honing networking skills, among other things.

There were campaign schools in Inuvik and Hay River last winter, in Fort Simpson last weekend, and in Yellowknife this coming Saturday and Sunday. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women and I have been at all of them. We are on a mission to get women into this building.

Why do we need more women? Women are voters and taxpayers. We hold important roles in the courts, public service, and business. We want to share the power. We want to present our own perspectives on the issues of the day. These are different than hearing a man talk about a woman's perspective. The two of us here bring our unique gender perspective to the work we do, including budget review, creation of policy, and legislation.

Women tend to highlight areas of work that men may not emphasize, such as promoting the need for available and affordable childcare and advocating for action on violence against women. That doesn't mean that women don't care about economic or environmental issues. Of course, we do. It doesn't mean that the men here are doing a bad job. They aren't. We are allies working together for the good of the whole of the NWT.

Research has shown that having women at the table provides for faster decisions, more effective actions, and better financial outcomes. Mr. Speaker, we need a Legislative Assembly that is truly representative. Gender equality is a human right. Women are half of the population, but have only 10 per cent of the seats. Imagine if this was the other way around, and men had only 10 per cent of the seats. They wouldn't feel adequately represented here. What we want is equality.

This isn't a perfect comparison, because it deals with diversity rather than equality, but what if this House had two Indigenous Members and 17 non-Indigenous Members? Indigenous people, naturally, would not feel adequately represented. They are half of the population. Women, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, are underrepresented in this House.

In an ideal world, women would have half of the seats here. The reality is that there are only a couple of countries in the world today that have true equality. The UN has set a goal for women's representation at 30 per cent. That is the threshold at which there are enough women to produce public policy representing women's concerns. It is time for all of us to share responsibility to achieve gender equality.

To bring this idea home, 30 per cent of representation by women would be six Members in this House. That is where we want to be by the 2027 election, if not sooner. Twenty per cent representation by women is four Members. That is double where we are now, and that is our goal by the election in 2023. Mr. Speaker, these are modest goals, but we have to start somewhere.

As the 18th Assembly, we committed in our mandate to supporting initiatives designed to increase the number of women running for elected office in the NWT. That support can take a number of forms; promoting women's leadership, encouraging women to take part in public debate, responding to requests for mentoring from women who want to become candidates in any level of government, to appreciate and work to remove all of the barriers women face in becoming candidates.

As I said in my statement today, equality won't happen by itself. Our starting point for making it happen is to support the goals set out in today's motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Motion 13-18(3), a motion by my colleague from Yellowknife Centre to increase women's participation in the Legislative Assembly, and I want to thank her for bringing this important motion forward.

We began the 18th Assembly directed by our electors with a commitment to openness

and transparency, and we have taken some positive steps in that direction, Mr. Speaker, and that's good, but when you look around this Chamber and do a simple count, Mr. Speaker, it tells a different story.

Of 19 Members, only two are women. What does that say to young people who look into our proceedings and wonder how we reflect the needs and realities of their communities? Is our system truly open and transparent to women? What does that say to aspiring young women who want to take on leadership roles in their communities? How does that encourage young women to step up and make their voices heard?

It doesn't, Mr. Speaker. It is a failure of our process that this Chamber is a very poor reflection of the territory and people we are here to represent.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in this House about the influence that my mother has had on my life. As a working single parent, she was my role model. She embodied the values that I have come to respect and value most in life. The fact that she, and people like her, are left without a fair and equitable voice in this Assembly is a flaw in our system and in public representation, Mr. Speaker.

It is not your fault, nor mine, Mr. Speaker, or the fault of any other MLA, government, past or present, but our system must improve its representation of women. Motion 13-18(3) puts a measurable goal on that improvement and commits us and those who follow to taking specific actions to achieve that goal, and for those reasons, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support this motion.

I don't think I could possibly begin to embody the spirit of the motion as my friend the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre did, but I did want to take some time to speak about the difference that elected representatives can -- and we have two here today who have been working tirelessly since the term began, the honourable Members for Range Lake and Yellowknife Centre -- make a difference and actually find meaningful ways we can improve representation in politics by getting more women elected and more women interested in the system. We have seen campaign schools. We have seen more education of the male Members of this House on how our attitudes might not be the most conducive to encouraging women in decision-making in this place, and I want to thank them for that, but I also want to recognize the other women parliamentarians who are doing this work.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians group is a network of members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's parliaments and legislatures, of which the NWT legislature is a Member. The CWP is an integral part of the CPA and works for better representation of women in legislatures and the furtherance of gender equality across the commonwealth. This is a means to build the capacity of women elected to a parliament or a legislature to be more effective in their roles and improve the awareness and ability of all parliamentarians, male or female, and encouraging them to include gender perspectives in all aspects of their role, legislation, oversight, and

representation, and helping parliaments become gender-sensitive institutions.

According to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 28 parliaments and legislatures have reached the Commonwealth Heads of Government target of 30 per cent representation of women, of which only two have over 50 per cent representation. Nine have 40 per cent representation. In Canada, that's Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Yukon.

Over 20 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from 16 countries have met to discuss gender priorities in 2017, and they formed a working group which is sitting well beyond 2017 to develop strategies to solve this problem. These include looking at formal and informal quota systems and talking through strategies to engage men in gender agendas, agreeing on the importance of gender budgeting, leveraging social media as a tool to engage and educate society about the importance of gender equality, and seeking out partnerships to strengthen the work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network, and these kinds of activities are ways that we continue to move the dial, working with other parliaments to see how we can learn from each other to make meaningful changes in our electoral systems and in our parliamentary institutions.

As part of the International Women's Day celebration in 2017, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Canada region continued their commitment with the Daughters of the Vote initiative, where young women from every federal riding in Canada are invited to the Canadian federal parliament and provincial legislatures to discuss their visions and a vision for the future of Canada. I know that our women parliamentarians here participated in that exercise and brought young northern girls and women to the parliament to discuss that. These kinds of mentoring opportunities are just another way that we can help encourage women to take up roles in public office.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Women's working group, the Canada Regional Steering Committee, met further in 2017 and have continued to assess the dire need to continue to increase this. Even though some provinces are making strides, the overall representation still falls short of where it should be. They have developed very strategic plans. They have developed other ways that our parliament can get involved.

I want to encourage all Members of this House to consider how we can work within these existing frameworks of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and work with our women colleagues to find ways to support the work both inside and outside the House to be more gender-inclusive and ultimately to achieve our goal of getting more representative legislature at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, in another life, I was involved with recruiting candidates, and it's a lot more challenging to recruit a woman candidate than a male candidate. The first question they will ask is always, "Well, I have to think about my family." If you ask a man, he says, "Okay, when can I start?" I think that is the problem that we need to address. We need to have a more sensitive way of understanding the different perspectives on the workplace, on employment, and we also need to ensure that your legislatures and democratic institutions are both family-friendly and gender-inclusive. Things like daycare

programs, shorter sittings that allow people to return home, these are all the kind of initiatives that seem very minor but help in a big way. So I look forward to hearing further debate on this motion and ultimately supporting it and seeing what work we can do to turn what is aspirational into meaningful action to solve this problem by 2030. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like to thank the mover and the seconder for bringing forward the motion and for continuing the public debate around gender equity and political leadership. It's consistent with what I have always said and believe, and I look forward to the day when my daughter, her daughter, and indeed all of our daughters fill this House, so I will be very happy to support this motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to this motion. I would like to thank Ms. Green and Ms. Cochrane for developing the motion before us this afternoon. I support this motion and am interested in the work we will need to do to make this goal a reality. Women's representation in government is not a new subject. It has been a topic of discussion in the NWT for many years, and I know it's on the table in other governments across Canada and around the world. It is definitely something we need to look at. Right now, this motion tasks us with supporting an ambitious long-term target that stretches over the next several Assemblies, but the reality is that, for this 18th Assembly, our legacy is going to be the actions we take within the next two years and that that time is going to go fast.

The motion calls on us to work together, and I see that as a place to focus our efforts. I see an opportunity here for Cabinet Ministers and Regular Members to work together, especially when it comes to engaging the public and getting the research and the public debate started. I will stop there, Mr. Speaker. It's a big project, and we need to get started. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to support the motion here today. I have been in the Assembly for three terms, and I know that, in each term, we have had only two women as MLAs. I think that the women in this Legislative Assembly for all the three terms that I have served in the House have brought a perspective that maybe would be missing if there were no women in the House. I find that that is an important perspective, and, as the motion indicates, developing legislation without the perspective of women would be difficult and we would not be able to develop a full legislation that covered all perspectives, so I support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Increasing the number of women in politics is critical. MLA Green did a wonderful job of talking about why we

need to increase the numbers, so I am not going to do that again. I do want to say that this government has made it a mandated priority to support initiatives designed to increase the number of women running for elected office in the Northwest Territories. We are moving towards this through campaign schools to support women with the tools they need to run for office. When we do this work, we cast the net more broadly than running for a Member of the Legislative Assembly because we know that gender representation is important for all levels of government and that women who have some leadership experience or, at a minimum, a knowledge of the process have increased likelihood of running.

That said, Mr. Speaker, two of the most important ways that women need to be encouraged is, one, by being asked and by being supported. Asking multiple times by multiple people and providing the financial emotional and physical support needed to run is critical. This motion is an indirect way of calling on women in our territory to run, and it is also a commitment by all of us to ask and encourage in a way that extends past our current term. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Cabinet, we give full and enthusiastic support for this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. I will allow the Member for Yellowknife Centre to conclude her remarks on that motion.

MS. GREEN: I rise to express my support to my colleagues on both sides of the House for supporting this motion. I think it represents a milestone that we can all be proud of in moving our territory towards gender equality. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Member has requested a recorded vote on the motion. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (MS. KAY): The Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Mackenzie Delta, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour; zero opposed; zero abstentions. The motion is carried.