

## Gender and Sexual Diversity in Provincial Election Campaigns

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**Abstract:** Recent elections have resulted in women holding over one quarter of provincial legislative seats, with women in urban and Western Canada seeing greater success. A much smaller proportion of seats are held by lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) politicians, although they are found in similar regions. This article identifies factors such as stronger parties of the left, less traditional social and economic structures, and a greater attention to diversity in more populous urban centers as attributing to these results for both female and LGB candidates.

**Keywords:** Female Politicians, LGB Politicians, Provincial Elections

**Résumé:** Les élections récentes ont abouti à des femmes tenant plus d'un quart des sièges législatives provinciaux, avec les femmes dans les milieux urbains et de l'Ouest du Canada voyant plus de succès. Une proportion beaucoup plus faible de sièges sont occupés par les politiciens lesbiennes, gays et bisexuels (LGB), bien qu'ils se trouvent dans des régions semblables. Cet article identifie les facteurs tel que le renforcement des partis de gauche, les structures sociales et économiques moins traditionnelles, et une plus grande attention à la diversité dans les centres urbains comme attribuant à ces résultats pour les femmes et candidats LGB.

**Mots-clés:** Femmes politiques, politiciens LGB, Élections provinciales

## **Theoretical Framework**

In the early Fall of 2013 six out of thirteen of Canada's provinces and territories were headed by female premiers, one of whom was a lesbian. This fact might have led one to conclude that gender and sexual diversity is no longer an issue in provincial politics if were not the case that merely one year later only two of these women remained in office. This suggests that although change has occurred in the legislative assemblies across the country there is still some distance to go before women and lesbians, gays, or bisexuals in Canada reach equality of political representation. While recent elections have seen slight increases in the number of women elected to provincial office, and now over one-quarter of the seats in provincial legislative bodies are held by women, this proportion varies from one part of the country to another. Urban and Western Canada typically have a higher proportion of successful female and lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) candidates<sup>1</sup> than the more rural and Eastern provinces. This article outlines the recent accomplishments of female and LGB candidates in provincial elections and identifies the factors that are often attributed to their success.

While there is an extensive literature examining women's electoral experiences in Canada, much of it has focused on national politics (Bashevkin, 1993; Brodie, 1985; Erickson, 1991). The few exceptions have tended to concentrate on specific provinces and their experiences with little attempt to highlight common experiences across the regions of the country (an exception is Trimble, Arscott, and Tremblay, 2013). The literature on LGB politicians on the other hand is almost non-existent

focussing mostly on individual politicians. David Rayside (1998) provided a case study of the experiences of Canada's first out male politician, Svend Robinson, and Everitt and Camp (2009a, 2009b) examined New Brunswick's Allison Brewer, Canada's first lesbian party leader. Only Everitt and Camp (2014) have attempted to provide a comprehensive examination of the experiences of LGB politicians. Part of the reason for this is that LGB candidates have only openly run in provincial politics since 1979, and the numbers who have run have not been great, nor have they been particularly successful. However, more recent election campaigns suggest that patterns are changing as more out candidates are running for office and winning. This article will show that factors similar to those accounting for the success of female candidates can also explain the success of LGB candidates in Canadian provincial elections.

Several of the primary reasons presented to explain women's political involvement in election campaigns have to do with "supply side" explanations (such as gendered social roles and responsibilities, socialization and the lack of female role models), resource factors (including more limited finances and political networks) and the tendency for women to self-select themselves out of running for office due to a sense that their party would not be willing to run a female candidate. In addition to these arguments, researchers on this topic frequently point to systemic or "demand side" factors such as provincial or regional political cultures that are unwelcome to women, gate keepers within the parties that either ignore potential female candidates in their recruitment efforts or actively make it difficult for them to win their party's

nomination, and the tendency of incumbents to be male. Finally, women's electoral success can be related to structural factors such as the political success of parties of the left which are typically more open to female candidates, individual party rules governing candidate recruitment, and the limiting impact of the first past the post electoral system. These explanations serve at both the national and provincial level and have been argued to also have some impact on the success of LGB candidates (see Everitt and Camp, 2014).

While in the past, arguments that linked women's absence from politics to their gender roles and responsibilities may have been true, for the most part this is no longer the case today. Women are increasingly achieving similar levels of education and occupational status as their male counterparts. While women with young children are still less likely to run for public office than men with young children, this only delays their entry, not prohibits it (Praud, 2013: 69). However, despite these expectations women remain notably under-represented in political life, comprising less than one-third of political candidates in Canada and on average only about one-quarter of elected office holders. This indicates that other issues are at play in determining their electoral engagement.

Role model arguments propose that in areas where there are more females running for office it is easier for other women to consider political life as a legitimate option. This would suggest that with several women having led provincial governments, the number of female candidates would increase. However, while role models can be important to helping women to see politics as a potential career possibility,

they can also be discouraging if the women who are elected are treated poorly by their parties or receive media coverage that is belittling or sexist (Gidengil and Everitt, 1999, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Trimble and Everitt, 2010; Trimble and Sampert, 2003). Thus, the resignation of Allison Redford as Premier of Alberta in early 2013 due to charges of inappropriate use of the resources of the office of the Premier or the severe criticisms of Premiers Christy Clark, Pauline Marios or Kathy Dunderdale that led to hotly contested elections or their resignation as party leader may lead some potential candidates to hold off throwing their names into the ring. This may be part of the reason that studies regularly show that women are less likely to consider running for politics than men (Lawless and Fox, 2010).

Additional "supply side" factors include the fact that women frequently lack the financial and political resources to successfully compete for winnable ridings. Women continue to make less money than men and are often employed in fields such as education, health care or social work that are difficult to step away from during election campaigns and difficult to return to after one or two terms in office. These fields may also limit their access to the political networks which are necessary to challenge and win party nominations in ridings where a party has the potential to win. As a result, women often find themselves recruited and selected to run in ridings where the competition for the nomination is less intense and the chance of winning less secure (Everitt, 2013; Thomas and Bodet, 2013). And while complaints of "dirty tricks" such as changing the date or location of a nomination meeting are not as likely to be heard as frequently today

as they were in the past (Bashevkin, 1993: 84; Brodie, 1985: 111), there still stories of women who have met with resistance from their parties when they have sought their riding's nomination. Such experiences may make other women more hesitant to step forward to become their party's standard bearer.

This leads to the "demand side" factors that have been identified to account for women's lower levels of participation in electoral politics. Just as women may be less willing to offer themselves as candidates, parties may be less willing to seek them out due to beliefs that the electorate is not ready to elect a woman, or that the economic and cultural make up of a riding would be better served by a man. There is little doubt that as with other aspects of Canadian politics, regionalism and the urban or rural nature of a riding plays an important role. At the national level Young (2013) has found that the larger urban provinces of British Columbia and Quebec tend to exceed the average in terms of women's representation. At the provincial level the results remain similar and have been so for a while (Arscott and Trimble, 1997). While there is agreement that female candidates tend to do best in urban settings (Carbert, 2010; Moncrief and Thompson, 1991) there is less agreement as to whether some provinces have a more "traditional" political cultures that may make politics less welcoming to women and reduce the willingness of political parties to consider them as serious candidates.

What is clear is that political parties have different ideological approaches to the importance of gender equality in terms of their partisan elites and their candidates. Parties of the left have been more open to integrating

women into their party structures than more centrist or right-wing parties (Bashevkin, 1993: 108; Trimble et al., 2013: 296). As a result, New Democratic Parties have typically nominated and run more female candidates than other parties. Furthermore, the number of women elected to office has generally been higher in parts of the country where the NDP have been successful and lower in those provinces where it has been less successful (Studlar and Matland, 1996).

Incumbency is a further factor limiting in the success of female politicians. Once elected, incumbent candidates have a greater chance of being re-elected than new and challenging candidates. While the turnover rate for politicians is relatively high in Canada, this rate varies from one province to another. In provinces where there is a high degree of electoral stability, those elected in the past are most likely to continue to hold their seats, particularly if they hold secure ridings. If, as is the case, a majority of the incumbents are men, the number of women running and winning elections is only likely to increase if these incumbents step down and are replaced by women. It is important to remember however, that Bashevkin's (1993) observation of "the more competitive the fewer" remains accurate today. Women are less likely to run or be recruited to run for parties that are highly competitive or in ridings where their party is more competitive. This holds true even for the NDP which is more ideologically open to female candidates.

One of the most critical factors affecting women's success rates in elected politics is the single member plurality (SMP) electoral system. It is a well-established fact that women are more likely to be nominated and elected in

proportional representation or mixed proportional systems than in SMP electoral systems (Rule, 1978). In plurality systems each party only puts forward one candidate in a constituency and it is possible that in constituency after constituency, the party determines that their best candidate is a male. While all provinces in Canada currently use a SMP electoral system, there were discussions in several provinces during the early 2000s that explored the possibility to change to some form of mixed member plurality system or alternative vote system and several authors have argued that such reforms would help to improve the representation of women in Canadian legislatures (Everitt and Pitre, 2007; Tremblay, 2010)

Some parties have attempted to ensure that the best candidate is not always a man. Again the willingness of a party to do so is related to its ideological understanding of equality. Given the diversity of the parties at the provincial level and the range of party structures, it is difficult to conclude that all parties sharing the same label are required by their constitutions to behave in the same way. However, the parties of the right typically understand equality to mean allowing men and women to compete freely for a riding's nomination without creating any additional supports for one or the other. For parties of the left such as the NDP, this means establishing special rules within the party to ensure that candidate recruitment committees are gender and racially balanced, that nomination meetings are not held until candidates from diverse backgrounds have entered the race, and that resources are available to support candidates from under-represented backgrounds such as women to run for the nomination.

As noted earlier, the situation and experience for lesbian, gay or bisexual candidates is similar in many ways to that of women. For example, the lack of LGB political role models or the sense that a party may not be willing to run a LGB candidate may hold back some individuals from running for office. This possibility was highlighted by the debate that occurred in the fall of 2011 after comedian Rick Mercer challenged closeted LGB politicians to become role models in response to the suicide of an Ottawa teen who had been bullied because he was gay. Mercer acknowledged that there were politicians in Ottawa and elsewhere who were known to be gay, but who had not publically acknowledged their sexual orientation, possibly in fear that their party or their constituents would not support them (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J10vtBa2FK8>).

Likewise, a province's political culture, or factors such as incumbency, a party's ideology around equality, its formal regulations around nominations and even its political success can affect the success, or lack thereof, of LGB candidates. While there is relatively little research conducted on LGB candidates<sup>2</sup> given the small number of them until recently, there is some suggestion that LGB candidates are more likely to run and be successful in the larger, more populated provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, and particular the urban areas of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (Everitt and Camp, 2014). As Everitt and Camp (2014) have found, eighty-three percent of first time LGB federal candidates and provincial candidates ran for election in large metropolitan ridings. Furthermore, while

not all candidates ran in ridings with large LGB populations there is some evidence that they were more predisposed to do so (Everitt and Camp, 2014). This may be due to the fact that larger metropolitan areas may possess the social diversity and cosmopolitan attitudes that have supported openly homosexual lifestyles (Bailey, 1998; Wilson, 1995) and areas such as Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, which contain “Gay villages”, can provide important electoral support during election campaigns. This support, including campaign volunteers or votes, can be mobilized to support a candidate (Button, Wald and Rienzo, 1999). Similar findings have been found in the United States (Heider-Markel, 2010).

Finally, as with the case with women, a party’s ideological predispositions are highly correlated to its openness to running an out LGB candidate. Haider-Markel (2010) has shown that in the United States, LGB candidates are more likely to be found running for the Democratic Party than the Republicans. Other studies of the United Kingdom, have revealed that politicians perceived greater barriers to running as an out candidate in the Conservative Party than in the Labour Party or for the Liberal Democrats (Durose et al., 2011). Furthermore, a recent study by Reynolds found “that the majority of LGB politicians have been members of left or green parties” (2013: 262). Everitt and Camp (2014) have found that the Canadian party most open to LGB candidates is the New Democratic Party, both provincially and federally.

### **Methodology**

This article relies on several different sources of information to draw

its conclusions about the experiences of women and LGB candidates in provincial election campaigns. In the case of former, there is a wealth of information available documenting the number of candidates and successfully elected women in each of the provinces. Many provincial election offices record the gender of a candidate, and organizations such as Equal Voice regularly track the number of women running for the various provincial parties. Information on female candidates and winners in provincial campaigns was drawn from these sources. Perhaps most useful is a recently published book entitled *Stalled: The Representation of Women in Canadian Governments* edited by Trimble and her colleagues. This book provides a record and analysis of the status and the electoral fortunes of women in each of the provinces and the factors that have contributed to this. While recent provincial and territorial elections have made much of this data out of date, its conclusions are useful for providing a historical understanding of the experience of women in provincial elections across the country.

The situation is much different for the case of LGB candidates. As noted earlier, there is little academic material on LGB politicians in Canada. In addition no province or electoral body in Canada records the sexual orientation of candidates, making it extremely difficult to identify which candidates may or may not be gay. To address this challenge this article relies on a new data set containing all identifiable “out” LGB politicians at the provincial level up until the New Brunswick provincial election in September 2014. It was developed from published sources (websites, newspaper articles, LGBT magazines and other on-line materials) as well as conversations

with academics and party officials. Searches were conducted using the following key terms: gay candidate/gay politician/ lesbian candidate/ lesbian politician/ homosexual candidate/and homosexual politician, election, and the names of the various provinces.

It is possible that this data set has not captured all LGB candidates as there may be individuals who are out, but whose identity is not widely acknowledged or reported on by the media.<sup>3</sup> However, this is not a serious concern for this article given that its focus is on the experience of acknowledged LGB candidates. Candidates who are still “in the closet” are unlikely to face many of the supply or demand side barriers identified as hindering the success of LGB candidates. None the less, this data set represents the most comprehensive listing of LGB candidates to date, including a total of 70 out individuals who have been identified as having run for elected office at the provincial level in Canada throughout its history. This article only focuses on the most recent round of elections in the provinces and territories involving 32 candidates, of whom 13 were successful in getting elected.

## **Findings**

A review of the chapters in Trimble, Arscott and Tremblay’s recent book on women in provincial politics give some weight to supply side explanations such as gender roles, political socialization and lack of female role models to account for the representation of women in Canadian provincial legislatures (Trimble et al., 2013). Women with young children are less likely to run for political office than men or those whose children are older.

Financial resources remain a critical constraint for female candidates along with the lack of enthusiasm to the recruitment of women on the part of political parties (Trimble et al., 2013: 308-9).

Women are also less likely than men to want to run for office, perhaps due to the confrontational style of election campaigns or parliamentary debates or to the lack of role models or the treatment that those path breaking women have received from their opponents or the press. There is some suggestion that the number of successful female politicians does rise when a woman leads a provincial government. In the case of four of the recent female premiers (Clark, Redford, Marois, and Wynne) who led their parties to re-election after they were first selection as party leader, the number of women elected to their legislative assemblies increased between three to eight percentage points. However, in Newfoundland and Labrador where Kathy Dunderdale was re-elected as premier the number of women elected dropped by four percentage points. Eva Aariak, selected as premier of Nunavut after the 2008 election lost her own seat in the 2013 election, and also saw the number of successfully elected women slip slightly from 16 to 14 percent. Similarly, in the 2014 Quebec election which saw the defeat of Pauline Marois’ Parti Québécois, the percentage of women dropped by five percentage points. As increases and declines in the number of women elected between one election and the next also occurred in other provinces during the same period it is difficult to attribute the advances in BC, Alberta, and Ontario simply to the presence of important female role models. None-the-less, party leaders can set the tone for their party in

terms of candidate selection and the presence of women in top government positions reinforces the message that it is entirely possible for women to be successful in politics. However, the electoral defeats of Eva Aariak and Pauline Marois, the disturbing controversy surrounding the resignations of Alison Redford and Kathy Dunderdale, and even the loss of Christy Clarke's own seat in the 2013 BC elections may serve to counteract any positive benefits in terms of role modeling that may have resulted from having had a female premier. The criticism that these women faced and that was levelled at their parties as a result of their leadership may make women in their provinces more hesitant to put themselves forward for future elections and may reinforce the perception that parties are only prepared to select women into positions of authority when they face the threat of electoral decline. Only in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario are women less likely to see real negatives in the experience of a high profile woman in politics, perhaps because the NDP leader, Andrea Horvath, was also a woman.

While there is far less research on the constraints on LGB candidates, there is some evidence to suggest these individuals are also affected by the lack of role models, media treatment of those role models and a sense that some parties are less willing than others to nominate lesbian or gay candidates (Everitt and Camp, 2009a, 2009b, and 2014). The experience of Kathleen Wynne, an out lesbian, as Premier of Ontario has demonstrated that being gay may no longer be disadvantageous to a candidate, particularly in major urban areas such as the golden horseshoe. However, past

examples of Allison Brewer in New Brunswick (Everitt and Camp, 2009a and 2009b) and of André Boisclair in Quebec (Lavalée, 2009) suggest that the experience of these role models, particularly in terms of their media coverage may still make other potential LGB candidates more cautious about stepping forward.

"Demand side" factors such as a political culture that is unwelcoming to women or LGB candidates, or the presence of party gatekeepers that deliberately limit a candidate's ability to win their party's nomination tend to receive less support than they might have in the past. In fact, there is some evidence that gatekeepers can have more of a positive than negative effect, especially when a party leader makes a concerted effort to ensure that women are nominated as was the case for Howard Pawley in Manitoba or Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals in Ontario (Sampert, 2013; Raney, 2013). While a greater number of women and LGB candidates tend to run and be successful in urban rather than rural ridings (Carbert, 2006, 2010; Everitt and Camp, 2014; Moncrief and Thompson, 1991) there is little evidence that rural voters are prejudiced towards them when they do run in more rural regions. In fact, studies of female candidates indicate that they are as likely as male candidates to be elected if they are nominated in ridings where their parties have traditionally had electoral success (Goodyear-Grant, 2010). Instead, their challenge lies in getting nominated in safe seats for their parties (Thomas and Bodet, 2013).



**Table 1. Success Rates for Female Politicians Across the Provinces**

Province/ Territory	Party Elected	Most Recent Election	Number of Seats	Number of Female Candidates	Number of Women Elected	% of Female Candidates Elected	% of Women Members of the Legislature
BC	Liberal	2013	85	82	31	37.8	36.4
ON	Liberal	2014	107	108	38	35.2	35.5
YT	Yukon	2011	19	16	6	37.5	31.6
MB	NDP	2011	57	43	16	37.2	28.1
QC	Liberal	2014	125	170	35	20.6	28.0
NS	Liberal	2013	51	35	14	40.0	27.5
AB	PC	2012	87	96	23	23.9	26.4
PE	Liberal	2011	27	19	6	31.6	22.2
SK	Sask.	2011	58	23	11	47.8	19.0
NL & Lab	PC	2011	48	48	8	16.7	16.7
NB	Liberal	2014	49	40	8	20	16.3
NU	N/A	2013	22	13	3	23.1	13.6
NT	N/A	2011	19	9	2	22.2	10.5

**Table 2. Success Rates for LGB Politicians Across the Provinces**

Province/ Territory	Party Elected	Most Recent Election	Number of Seats	Number of LGB Candidates	Number of LGBs Elected	% of LGB Candidates Elected	% of LGB Members of the Legislature
BC	Liberal	2013	85	9	4	44.4	4.7
Manitoba	NDP	2011	57	3	2	66.6	3.5
Quebec	Liberal	2014	125	4	3	75	2.4
Nfld & Lab	PC	2011	48	2	1	50	2.1
NS	Liberal	2013	51	1	1	100	1.9
Ontario	Liberal	2014	107	12	2	16.6	1.8
Yukon	Yukon	2011	19	1	0	0	0
Alberta	PC	2012	83	0	0	-	0
PEI	Liberal	2011	27	1	0	0	0
Sask.	Sask.	2011	58	0	0	-	0
NB	Liberal	2014	55	1	0	0	0
Nunavut	N/A	2013	22	0	0	-	0
NWT	N/A	2011	19	0	0	-	0

Where demand side factors come into play is in the critical role that incumbency plays in Canadian politics. Due to a culture where sitting members are rarely challenged from within their parties, “safe seats” generally only become available when incumbents decide to retire or are tossed out during landslide elections. As the majority of incumbents are heterosexual and male, this has the effect of slowing down the entrance of women and LGB individuals into political bodies. While high turnover rates in some parts of Canada can result in a more rapid feminization of provincial legislative assemblies (Raney, 2013) if women are not nominated in “safe seats”, the successes of one election can be overturned in the next as women (or LGB politicians) in one party are defeated and replaced by women or men from another party (Thomas and Bodet, 2013; Everitt, 2013).

Perhaps the most useful explanation in understanding the patterns of gender and LGB representation across the country comes from structural arguments around the nature of the party system in the various provinces, the electoral success of parties of the left, and internal party rules governing candidate recruitment. As can be seen from Tables 11.1 and 11.2, provinces with the highest levels of women elected tended to also have the highest number of LGB politicians in their legislative assemblies. British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba and Quebec rank the highest for women legislators with Nova Scotia close behind. The same provinces also have sitting LGB politicians, although their proportional ranking differs slightly. The Yukon and Alberta have relatively high levels of gender representation, but have no LGB MLAs. When comparing cross-nationally

it becomes clear that much of the explanation for this pattern lies in the nature of the party system in the provinces and the relative success of left leaning parties such as the NDP.

Of the thirteen elected LGB politicians currently holding office in Canadian provinces and territories seven are members of the NDP, three are Liberals, two are members of the *Partis québécois* and one a member of *Québec solidaire*. Close to half of the candidates (14 out of 32) who ran in the most recent provincial elections were running under the banner of the NDP. Five candidates ran for the Greens, four for each of the Liberals and Conservatives, two for each of the *Partis québécois* and *Québec solidaire* and one as an independent. All four of the LGB politicians in British Columbia are members of the NDP, as are the two Manitoba and the single Newfoundland and Labrador LGB politicians. It is important to note that while at this point in time Manitoba is the only one of the provinces with a sitting NDP government, the NDP (or other left leaning parties) have played a stronger role in these provinces than elsewhere in the country. In some cases they have replaced the provincial Liberal parties as the party of the centre left; in others, they present themselves as a truly viable third option within a three-party system. In provinces such as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, where the NDP presence is significantly weaker, women and LGB politicians have tended to do less well. The strong commitment of the NDP and other left-wing parties to gender and other forms of equality makes them more prone to nominate female and LGB candidates (Everitt and Camp, 2014; Trimble et al., 2013). In doing so they put

pressure on other parties to improve their own records of representation (Trimble et al., 2013: 296).

Ideological predispositions towards equality of representation have been assisted in many areas by formal rules surrounding affirmative action of under-represented groups. The Ontario NDP began to implement such rules in 1982, stipulating that fifty per cent of all ridings should have female candidates and seventy-five per cent of the “targeted” seats in non-incumbent ridings should have affirmative action group candidates. These candidates include “women, visible minorities, youth, people living with disabilities, aboriginal people, gays, lesbians bisexual and transgendered individuals and francophones” (ONDP, 2011). These are more targets than quotas, yet they have worked to ensure that the NDP have had the highest percentage of female or LGB candidates in Ontario. The BC NDP implemented similar targets for candidates in 2007 seeking to have fifty per cent of their candidates being women and twenty-five per cent from equity seeking (or under-represented) groups. To reach these levels they seek to replace retiring incumbent women with female candidates and retiring men with women or equity candidates. This process is assisted by search committees dedicated to finding diverse candidates. They have also provided financial incentives to those constituency associations that select women and diverse candidates along with funds to the candidates to cover expenses such as childcare during the campaign.

Actions such as these have helped to ensure that the NDP in these provinces have higher numbers of female and LGB candidates than other parties, although at no time have they met their full equity

targets. None the less, in most cases real jumps in the number of women elected occurred when the NDP formed the province’s government (1990 in Ontario, 1991 in BC, and 1999 in Manitoba). Furthermore, as noted earlier, these actions on the part of an electorally strong NDP have resulted in contagion effect on other parties, pushing them to seek out and nominate more women and LGB candidates. This is in part what has happened in places such as Nova Scotia where the NDP has improved its standing in recent elections, leading the NS Liberal Party to improve its own record in terms of diversity. Indeed, in the Fall 2013 Nova Scotia election the Liberals matched the number of female candidates run by the NDP (12 out of 51) and were the only party to run an out LGB candidate.

While the NDP in other parts of the country also have affirmative action policies with regards to the nomination of candidates, their weaker electoral positions have meant that Liberal or Conservative Parties in places such as New Brunswick, PEI, or Newfoundland and Labrador have not felt the need to respond by diversifying their own slates of candidates. Likewise, in periods where right-wing parties are increasing in popularity, more progressive parties (including the NDP) feel less pressure to recruit women and diversity candidates. Such has been the case in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in recent years (Berdahl, 2013; Sampert, 2013) and more recently in Quebec where the number of female candidates dropped from 33 percent in 2012 to 28 percent in 2014.

Alberta and the Yukon stand out from these other vanguard provinces in that the higher proportions of female candidates and elected politicians is not matched by a similar willingness to

nominate and elect LGB candidates. This may be due to the fact that these assemblies are dominated by right-wing parties (the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta and the Yukon Party in the Yukon) who are less likely than other parties to run openly gay candidates (Everitt and Camp, 2014). While the fact that these provinces rank among the highest in the country in terms of gender might appear counterintuitive, this can be explained in part by the fact that the majority of the successful female politicians in them are elected in the larger urban ridings of Calgary, Edmonton or Whitehorse. Furthermore, in the case of the Yukon, the small size of the legislative assembly (19 seats) means that the addition or loss of one female candidate can change the proportion of women in that body by five per cent. To emphasize this one only needs to look at the dramatic increase that occurred after the 2011 election when the number of women jumped from two to six while the percentage of women jumped from 11 to 32 per cent.

A final point to draw from the data presented in Tables 11.1 and 11.2 is that once nominated women and LGB candidates actually have a relatively high chance of getting elected. In almost all provinces the percentage of female candidates who get elected is higher than the percentage of seats held by women in the legislative assembly. In provinces where this is not the case, such as Quebec, this can be explained by the large number of parties competing for election and the fact that women are more likely to be nominated by these minor parties than by parties with a greater chance of winning (Thomas and Bodet, 2013). The results are even more noticeable for LGB candidates, where, except in Ontario, PEI

and New Brunswick, between 45 percent and 100 percent of the candidates win their seat. In part, this can be accounted for by the small numbers of self-identified LGB candidates competing in each provincial election campaign. Thus, the success of one of the two LGB candidates in Newfoundland and Labrador means that 50 percent get elected. Indeed, as the number of out candidates increases (as in Ontario) the chance of success appears to drop. While greater proportion of candidates still get elected than actually hold seats in the legislature, the number of seats is still remarkably low.

### **Implications**

Based on the points raised in this article it is possible to conclude that it is a combination of “demand side” and structural factors that helps to account for the variable degree of success or lack thereof for female or LGB candidates in Canadian provincial elections. Provinces where parties of the left, and in particular the NDP, have had a stronger presence tend to have higher levels of gender and LGB representation. The importance of equality and diversity in the ideological underpinnings of these provincial parties has led them to be more open to the recruitment of female and LGB candidates. This propensity has been strengthened by internal party rules and targets that put pressure on candidate search and nomination committees to seek out and run these individuals in winnable ridings.

This does not mean that other parties actively resist nominating or running female or LGB candidates. It is more an issue of not seeking them out and actively supporting them, particularly in winnable ridings. The single member

plurality electoral system resulting in nomination battles fought in each individual constituency means that it is possible for parties to take a hands-off approach allowing the “best” candidate to win. If the best candidate in most ridings across the province happens to be a straight man, then that is the will of the party. Indeed when a party does make an effort to nominate women in areas that it is electorally strong, as was the case for the McGuinty Liberals in recent Ontario elections, it can have a significant impact on the number of women elected.

More important, however, than the ideological value that New Democratic parties place on diversity and the structures they create to support it, is the willingness of the electorate to vote for these parties. As noted earlier, left-wing parties across the country generally nominate more women and LGB candidates than parties of the centre or right. However, when these parties get elected, legislative assemblies tend to become more diverse; it matters little how many candidates parties of the left nominate if they do not win seats in provincial election campaigns.

In areas in where the NDP has only made limited inroads such as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, there are far fewer elected female and LGB politicians. The strong two-party system still in place in these provinces accounts to a large extent for these lower numbers despite a willingness of the NDP to nominate these candidates. Furthermore, without the presence of a strong NDP pressuring them to consider questions of diversity, the Liberal and Conservative parties in these areas have created few internal structures to recruit or improve their chances of nominating a female or

LGB candidate. As a result, the centre/centre-right parties in these provinces generally run fewer female (and virtually no LGB candidates). Since elections typically shift between one of these parties to the other, there has been little opportunity for the number of women or LGB politicians to increase.

As noted earlier, an excellent example of the impact of party ideology and the contagion effect is the case of Nova Scotia. This was a province which until the late 1990s had a two-party system similar to what is found in the other Atlantic Provinces. Prior to the 1998 election, in which the NDP won the same number of seats as the governing Liberals, its internal party targets led it to regularly double if not triple the number of female candidates it ran compared to the other two parties. After 1998, the Liberals began to increase their number of female candidates, as did the Progressive Conservatives, although not quite as substantially. While the NDP continued to lead throughout the next several elections in terms of the percentage of female candidates, the spread decreased significantly until in the most recent Nova Scotia election the difference was marginal with both the NDP and the Liberals running 12 candidates and the Progressive Conservatives running 11. It will be interesting, however, to witness what happens in the future as the NDP’s electoral support dropped dramatically in the 2013 election campaign, potentially reducing the pressure on the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives to nominate a diverse slate of candidates.

Given the conclusions that demand side and structural factors are among the most influential in determining the diversity of legislative assemblies, the

likelihood that we will see dramatic changes in the next few years is slight. Changing the levels of elected female or LGB politicians is not simply a matter of more women or LGB candidates stepping up to the plate or waiting until the electorate is willing to vote for them. These things are happening. What it will require is for parties to change their behaviour and be more active in seeking out and nominating women and LGB candidates in winnable ridings. As such intrusive actions conflict with the ideological predispositions of many right-wing and centre-right provincial parties, it is unlikely that they will adopt such approaches. This leaves it to the NDP to remain the “dynamic element” of provincial politics in terms of increasing the diversity of provincial legislative assemblies. Where the NDP is electorally viable, the presence of female and LGB politicians in provincial politics is likely to be greater. Where the NDP is weak, numbers are likely to remain low.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> To date, there have been no transgendered candidates who have run in a provincial election.

<sup>2</sup> See Reynolds (2013) for an assessment of elected LGBT politicians across 96 countries.

<sup>3</sup> However, since their sexual orientation is not a matter of public knowledge this should not be too serious of an issue as their electoral experience is likely to be more in common with non-LGB candidates than LGB candidates.