

The hidden rise of new women candidates seeking election to the House of Commons, 2000-2008 ¹

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Abstract. Women's candidacy and election are tracked over four Canadian national elections from 2000 to 2008. These elections brought a dramatic expansion in women candidates, but only a small increase in the number elected. Simulations of alternative electoral outcomes indicate only minor impact due to the shift from Liberal to Conservative governments. Women candidates from all major parties are found to have been similarly successful as men with the same party and incumbency status. Analysis of the candidate-pool composition reveals that there were too few new women candidates in 2000 even to maintain the status quo in the House. Increases in 2004 and 2006 brought candidacies into balance with the House composition. In 2008 the recruitment rate exceeded the House proportion meaningfully. Since the Conservatives caught up part-way to the other parties in nominating new women candidates in 2008, the gender composition of the House became far less sensitive to voters' partisan preferences than was the case earlier. The results show that the flat numbers elected arose not from stagnation in recruitment of new women candidates, but rather from two relatively large fluctuations: a cross-party collapse in 2000, followed by a cross-party resurgence. Women's share of non-incumbent major-party candidacies and turned-over seats nearly doubled over the eight-year period, both reaching the one-third mark for the first time in 2008. This cross-party resurgence is shown to have carried over to the 2011 election.

Keywords. women, elections, political parties.

Résumé. La candidature et l'élection des femmes sont suivies sur quatre élections nationales canadiennes, de 2000 à 2008. Ces élections ont amené un développement spectaculaire de femmes candidates, mais un faible accroissement du nombre d'éluës. Des simulations de résultats électoraux différents indiquent un impact mineur en raison de l'alternance Libéral-Conservateur. Les femmes candidates des partis les plus importants ont eu des résultats similaires à ceux des hommes du même parti et de même mandat. L'analyse de la composition du réservoir de candidats révèle qu'il y a eu trop peu de nouvelles femmes candidates en 2000, même pour maintenir le status quo de la Chambre des Communes du Canada. Des hausses en 2004 et 2006 ont amené des candidatures en jeu dans la composition de la Chambre. En 2008, le taux de recrutement a clairement dépassé la proportion de la Chambre. Depuis que les Conservateurs ont comblé une partie de leur retard avec les autres partis concernant la nomination de femmes candidates en 2008, la composition hommes-femmes de la Chambre est devenue bien moins sensible aux préférences partisans des électeurs par rapport à ce qui se passait auparavant. Les résultats montrent que les nombres stables d'élus ne proviennent pas de la stagnation dans le recrutement de nouvelles femmes candidates, mais plutôt de deux fluctuations assez importantes : un effondrement transversal des partis en 2000, suivi d'une résurgence transversale des partis. La part des femmes concernant les candidatures de non-sortants des partis principaux et le remplacement de sièges a presque doublé sur une période de huit ans, ce qui a atteint un tiers pour la première fois en 2008. La résurgence transversale des partis est apparente aux élections de 2011.

Mots clefs. femmes, élections, partis politiques.

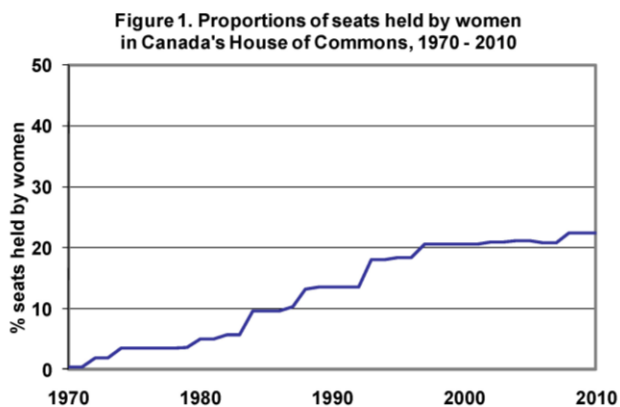
Introduction

A growing sense of disappointment has emerged over the past decade in regard to women's representation in Canada's national legislature. Figure 1 illustrates how a pattern of progress from earlier decades seemed to come to a halt. Beginning from a base of less than 5% during the 1960s, the proportion of seats held by women rose throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Increases were most rapid during the 1980s, and the rate of growth slowed during the 1990s.

Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott were among the first to identify an "electoral glass ceiling" for women near the one-fifth mark, after the 2000 election yielded no net gain, following a streak of increases in eight straight elections, from 1972 to 1997 (2003, 51). When the 2004 election failed to resume momentum, Lisa Young argued that progress on the electoral project could be expected to stall for the foreseeable future (2006, 62). After two more elections without a noticeable breakthrough (in 2006 and 2008), Sylvia Bashevkin

sought long-term explanations for what she described as a stalemate (2011, 17).

There are many reasons to have expected sustained progress. Over the past few decades the number of educated women has expanded continuously, as has the number working in the professions. Hence it is no longer possible to claim that there is not a ready supply of “qualified” women (however willing or unwilling they may be). There has been organized activity over the years to promote women’s engagement, including the 1970 Report on the Royal Commission



on the Status of Women (Arscott 1998), the 1989 Royal Commission on Party Financing and Electoral Reform (Megyery 1991), and activist groups culminating in the work of Equal Voice (Speirs 2011). Perhaps in part due to those activities, there is widespread consensus among Canadians in favour of more women in public office (EnviroNics 2008; Ekos 2010).ⁱⁱ Given that consensus, it is not surprising that quantitative studies of public opinion and election results generally have not found an overall voter bias against women (Black and Erickson 2003; Goodyear-Grant 2010; Young 2006). Furthermore, partisan activists have worked to promote women’s engagement, and as a result parties on the left of the spectrum have taken positive measures to increase recruitment of women candidates (Young 2003; Young and Cross 2003). Finally, campaign finance has become less of a barrier than was once feared (Brodie 1991; Coletto 2010, 180; Young 2005).

Efforts to understand the continued low levels of women elected have focused on remaining barriers to candidacy, typically categorized as either barriers to demand – resistance by parties and their local district associations to recruiting more women, or barriers to supply – reluctance by qualified women to step forward. Young interpreted the stalling of progress in terms of both categories: first, that the rise of the Reform party had shattered a cross-party consensus to increase demand, and led to a consolidation on the right that rejected any sort of affirmative action measure; and second, that a long-term decline in the women’s movement had removed a positive influence that had pressured parties to increase demand, and had encouraged young women to enter politics (2006). Other studies have emphasized one or the other category of barriers. The distinction can influence the effectiveness of proposed strategies for

change. Bashevkin argued that persistent biases in the treatment of female politicians have acted to deter a generation of Canadian women from entering politics. She asked whether introducing institutional changes such as monetary incentives to parties for nominating women candidates might fail due to severe limitations in the supply of women who are willing to fill the positions (2011, 21). Ashe and Stewart studied women’s candidacy at the provincial level, and argued that the demand constraint dominated, via discrimination by gatekeepers (2011).

This paper observes that despite the persistence of barriers, women’s share of candidacies in Canada’s major parties did rise dramatically over the course of four national elections from 2000 to 2008. This change has received little attention, in large part because, at the same time, there was only a minor bump in the number elected (Figure 1). Juxtaposing these two facts prompts two important questions that have not yet been addressed in the literature: 1) what caused the large increase in women’s candidacy over this period, and 2) given the rise that occurred, why were more women not elected? This paper sets aside the first question, and addresses the second. It presents a detailed account of the changing spectrum of women’s candidacies over those four elections, with an eye to understanding why more women were not elected.

The period from 2000 to 2008 brought momentous shifts in party organizations, partisan preferences, and electoral outcomes at the national level in Canada. The election in 2000 returned the Liberal party to government with a solid majority of 172 seats out of a total of 301 in the House of Commons. The two parties on the political right – the Progressive Conservatives and the Canadian Alliance – merged in 2003. A year later, in 2004, the new Conservative party reduced the hegemonic Liberals to a minority government. A forced election in 2006 produced a weak Conservative minority government, and yet another election in 2008 gave the Conservatives a stronger minority.

This stepwise shift in partisan outcomes provides a rare historical backdrop for studying women’s candidacy and election, in part because the two parties that have formed the government have differed greatly in their approach to promoting women’s candidacy (Bashevkin 2009; Young 2006). The Conservative party has no official policy on this topic. The closest that it has come is in a 2004 letter from Stephen Harper, in his capacity as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, to former journalist Rosemary Speirs, in her capacity as Moderator of Women’s Political ConNeXion, underlining the independence of district associations and claiming to be favourable to the idea of more women candidates, without endorsing it as a practical goal for the party.ⁱⁱⁱ

Within the Liberal party issues of women’s representation came to the forefront of mainstream politics during the 1990s, largely through the vigorous activities of its women’s commission. In the run-up to the 1993 election, Jean Chrétien used his prerogative as leader to appoint women candidates in a partially successful attempt to meet his stated goal of 25% of the Liberal slate. His successor Paul Martin explicitly endorsed this same goal in principle, but did not commit to any specific measures during his brief two-year term in

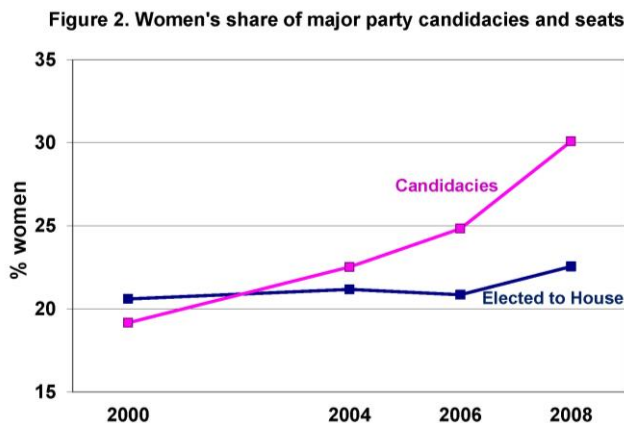
office (MacDonald 2005). The next Liberal leader Stéphane Dion committed to women holding a one-third share of the Liberal slate, even if it meant barring men from seeking some nominations (Bagnall 2007; MacCharles 2008).

Given the magnitude of the difference in approach to women's empowerment by the two leading parties, a shift in voting preference from the Liberals to the Conservatives would be expected to have the potential for considerable impact on the overall mix of women's candidacies, and on the gender composition of the House. At the same time, Canada's two other major parties – the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Québécois (BQ) – also made electoral gains. These too made their mark on the pool of women candidates, since both are relatively women-friendly parties on the left.

This paper documents the impacts of these changes in party popularities using sensitivity studies of the election results, and weighs them against changes in party practises for nominating women candidates. It then analyzes the relationship between the pool of candidates and the set of new MPs elected to the seats turned over in the House. Finally it presents a range of hypothetical scenarios for projecting future gender compositions of the House. The results tell us a great deal about important changes that have been taking place in women's entry into Canadian national politics. These changes belie the appearance of inertia and stagnation suggested by simply adding up the number of women sitting in the House. The analysis will show how a series of countervailing effects influencing the election of women have conspired to nearly offset each other in recent elections. It will attempt to convey a sense of how different the outcomes might have been, and, more importantly, a sense of the potential for actual change in the gender composition of Canada's national legislature.

An apparent paradox

Figure 2 shows that in the 2000 national election, women comprised 19% of the candidates put forward by the major parties.^{iv} This proportion rose with each subsequent election,



to the point that 30% of the candidates standing for the major parties in 2008 were women.

In absolute terms, out of the total of 997 candidates standing for the major parties in Canada's 308 federal electoral districts in 2008, 300 were women. Direct comparison of this number to the 2000 election is complicated by the loss of a major party. Prior to their merger in 2003, both parties on the political right ran candidates throughout the country. To avoid over-representing the rise in candidacies that occurred,^v we re-counted the district candidacies in 2000 with an imagined merger before that date; we estimate that there would have been a total of 205 women candidates in that election. Comparison with the 2008 count of 300 indicates that a surge of women-friendliness in Canada's major parties over the past decade placed 95 additional women candidates on the ballot. By any reasonable measure, a 46% increase in women's candidacy for election to a national body over an eight-year period is notable. As will be seen in a later section, the increase is even greater when the focus is narrowed to non-incumbent candidates only.

By contrast, the increase in women elected during the same interval seems far from impressive. The second curve in Figure 2 shows that the proportion of seats held by women in the House increased from just under 21% to just over 22%. In absolute numbers, 62 women sat among the 301 Members elected in 2000, compared to 69 out of 308 in 2008. This development scarcely added a bump to the proportion of women elected, which had been in a holding pattern since the mid-1990s. Accordingly, we refer to the expansion of women candidates as "hidden," in the sense that it was not reflected in the composition of the House. Another sense of it being hidden will emerge when we break down the contributions of the different parties.

Everything else being equal, one might expect the proportion of women elected to follow the proportion of women candidates standing for major parties. Indeed the two proportions were not far apart at the beginning of the period shown in figure 2. Judging by the subsequent increase in candidacies, then, one might have expected to count 93 women in the House after the 2008 election - that is, 24 more than the actual contingent of 69 women.

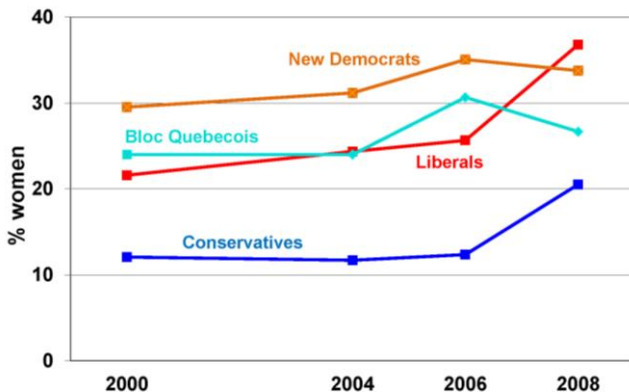
How did this disappointing disjuncture arise? The introductory discussion points to an obvious culprit – the rise of the Conservative Party at the expense of the Liberals. Was the entire deficit just the indirect product of shifting popularities away from the more women-friendly of the two leading parties? Or was there some other gender bias at play, which prevented women candidates from winning their "fair share" of seats? For example, did the parties, or some subset of them, reserve more successful candidacies for men, as large numbers of women entered national politics for the first time? Did the voters, or some subset of them, bring hostility against women candidates to the polls? These questions will be addressed in turn below. It will be seen that the answers do not resolve the apparent paradox, but rather deepen it. Careful comparison of the gender and partisan compositions of the candidate pool to those of the House will point the way to a different resolution, which places the 2000 – 2008 period in historical context.

How many women were shut out of the House by shifting party fortunes?

The shift from Liberal to Conservative governments over the period studied affected women's prospects for election indirectly because the parties are not equally women-friendly. Many factors contributed to the change in voter preferences, but it is safe to say that the distinction in the promotion of women candidates was not central; rather it came along with the Conservative package. Assessing the impact of this shift is complicated by the simultaneous rise in popularity enjoyed by the relatively women-friendly NDP, and to a lesser extent the Bloc. This section tries to sort out these partisan effects, using vote-sensitivity studies similar to those employed by Studlar and Matland in their re-evaluation of the 1984 national election (1994, 60-64).

Distinctions in women-friendliness from one party to another are reflected in differing numbers of women candidates. Figure 3 illustrates women's share of candidacies for each of the major parties since 2000.^{vi} It shows that the Liberals were far more women-friendly than the Conservatives. In 2000, 22% of Liberal candidacies went to women, and this proportion rose with each election, reaching 37% in 2008. The figure also shows that the NDP consistently ranked at or near the top in terms of fielding women candidates, and that the BQ for the most part kept pace with the Liberals. Women's share of the Conservative slate was much lower. Nevertheless it increased substantially in 2008, rising from 12% to 21%.

Figure 3. Women's share of candidacies, by party



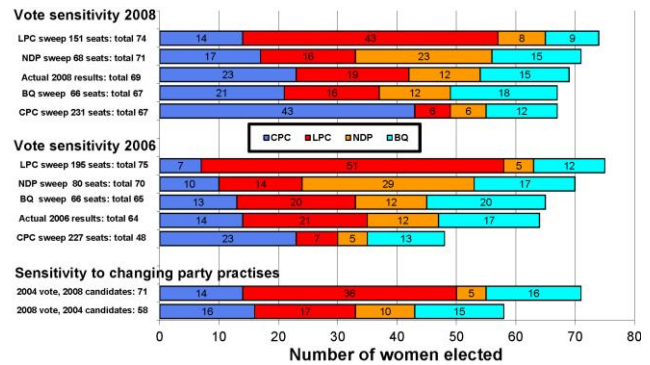
One of the most important issues for long-term progress toward gender parity is the degree to which the number of women elected depends on which party wins the election. How different might the gender composition of the House have been under different partisan outcomes? And how vulnerable are the gains achieved to date in the election of women?

A good way to probe the practical limits of how well an election might have turned out for any given party is to imagine the improbable scenario in which it had swept every single race in which it had enjoyed at least moderate success.

A reasonable measure of moderate success in a given district is that the party's candidate won at least half as many votes as the winner.^{vii}

First consider the best-case scenario for the Liberal party in

Figure 4. Hypothetical scenarios for the election of women



2008. In that election, there were 151 districts in which the Liberal candidates exceeded the above criterion for moderate success, and 157 in which they did not. Keeping all parties' slates of candidates unchanged, imagine that the Liberals had won all 151 more-successful races (instead of the 77 that they actually won), and leave the vote results in the remaining 157 districts unchanged. The top line of figure 4 summarizes the hypothetical results for women elected. In that scenario Liberal women would have taken 43 seats instead of the actual 19. However, as seen by comparing with the actual vote results (line 3 of figure 4), this gain of 24 women would have been offset by losses of the other parties in the districts taken from them by the Liberals: 9 Conservative women (23 actual minus 14 hypothetical), 4 NDP women (12 actual minus 8 hypothetical), and 6 BQ women (15 actual minus 9 hypothetical). The net effect is a gain of only five additional women elected overall: 74 women elected instead of the actual 69.

Now consider the best-case scenario for the Conservative party in 2008. In that same election, there were 231 districts in which the Conservative candidates exceeded the above criterion for moderate success, and 77 in which they did not. Imagining that the Conservative party had swept all of its 231 more-successful races, and proceeding as above, we see in line 5 of figure 4 that there would have been 43 Conservative women, and 67 women elected overall – two fewer than the actual 69. Other scenarios, involving NDP or BQ sweeps, fall between these extremes. Hence the extremes of reasonably attainable partisan outcomes for the 2008 election frame a range of women elected spanning from 67 to 74.

Even as recently as 2006 the stakes for women's election were much higher. Consider the same two extreme scenarios for that election. First imagine that the Liberals had won all 195 seats in which they contended with at least moderate success, with all slates of candidates unchanged. In that case (line 6 of figure 4), there would have been 11 additional women elected - a total of 75. Now imagine the opposite extreme in which the Conservatives had won all of its 227 "good" races in 2006. In that scenario (line 10 of figure 4)

there would have been 16 fewer women than the actual 64 elected - a total of 48. These two extreme scenarios frame an enormous 27-woman range of reasonably attainable outcomes. In 2006 the Conservatives had become much more popular, but had not yet increased their numbers of women candidates meaningfully. Had the Liberal party support collapsed completely, the gender composition of the House would have been set back almost two decades in one go.

That extreme sensitivity faded in 2008, as Conservative women made substantial gains, erasing a good deal of their shortfall compared to the other parties. This contrast suggests a newfound robustness with respect to voter preferences. It arose because the Conservative party became less distinct (albeit still not indistinct) from the others in terms of women's candidacy.

Nevertheless it is a fragile robustness. Two different variables are at work here: voter party preferences on one hand, and party nomination practises on the other. While the outcome for women became less sensitive to shifts in party popularity, it depends sensitively on the parties maintaining and building upon women-friendly practises. For example, imagine that the 2008 election proceeded with the same district-by-district result, except that the 2008 slates of candidates were replaced by the 2004 slates.^{viii} This scenario conceptually erases the progress in promoting women candidates that occurred, while retaining the actual shifts in voter preferences. The bottom line of figure 4 shows that the number of seats held by women would fall from 69 to 58. The Conservative party is a particular concern, because it has the most seats, the shortest record of increased recruitment of women, and no public commitment to this ideal. This result suggests that any backsliding by that party would have negative consequences for the gender composition of the House. Hence, while the outcome has become relatively insensitive to voter party preferences, it remains sensitive to party practises. In this sense, women's candidacy and election results from the 2008 election can be described as a "precarious emergence of robustness."

The second-last line of figure 4 shows the converse scenario using the 2004 district-by-district result (Martin's 136-seat Liberal minority), with the 2008 slates of candidates. This hypothetical scenario would have brought 71 women to the House - only two more than the actual number. Clearly no reasonable alternative scenario of party popularities would have brought the number of women in the House in 2008 to anywhere near the level of 93 that we sought when beginning this section. Two main effects operated to offset the impact of Liberal losses over the period studied. First, it was not a zero-sum game. Besides the Conservatives, the NDP and BQ were also beneficiaries of Liberal losses. Their gains brought additional women to the House. Hence scenarios more favourable for the Liberals implied substantial losses of women by those parties. Second, the Conservatives nominated considerably more women in 2008 than in earlier elections, adding more women to their elected caucus, and partly diminishing their distinction from the other parties. In the end, only a small fraction of the divergence between women's share of candidacies and their share of seats is

explained by the shift in party popularities that occurred over these four elections. This prompts us to wonder whether some form of systemic gender-based bias prevented the added women candidates from winning their "fair share" of seats.

Did women candidates win less than their fair share of seats?

If systemic gender bias were the culprit, it would have to be a large and obvious bias to explain the enormous discrepancy described above, between changes in women's candidacy and election from 2000 to 2008. One potential form of systemic bias involves the parties. Did the parties allocate less successful candidacies to women, and reserve the districts with the highest prospects for men?^{ix} This possibility has been examined in numerous studies, and most have found that this practise has not been widespread, especially recently. Réjean Pelletier and Manon Tremblay found no evidence for this sacrificial-lamb hypothesis at the provincial level in Québec, after taking political party and incumbency into account (1992). Tremblay's follow-up analysis confirmed that earlier result, and noted a trend for the parties to run female candidates against each other, which gives rise to the impression of women as defeated candidates (2008). Donley Studlar and Richard Matland found some limited evidence supporting the sacrificial-lamb hypothesis across Canada in the 1970s when women first began to run in significant numbers, but not after the early 1980s (1996). Studies at the national level have generally found similar results (Studlar and Matland 1994; Tremblay 2002; Young 2006). Other potential mechanisms for "unfair" treatment involve the voters. As noted in the introduction, quantitative studies find broad consensus in favour of more women in public office, and do not support an overall bias by voters against women. A more complicated explanation might sound plausible. Perhaps Conservative voters bring a gender bias that came into effect only when their party fielded more women candidates, and mattered more as that party won more seats. An experimental study in political psychology in the United States found a party-specific gender bias against hypothetical women candidates among Republican voters. This effect could also feed back to the candidate selection process (King and Matland 2003).

These less-than-fair-share hypotheses have one thing in common: they pertain to non-incumbent candidacies. In each case a gender bias would imply that women in non-incumbent candidacies would be less successful than their male counterparts. Focusing on non-incumbent candidates makes sense for a number of reasons. Incumbents have already met with approval from their parties and their voters. Incumbents typically choose to run again, and, when they do, win again in the great majority of cases. As long as the incumbent remains a member in good standing, parties rarely interfere with his or her decision to run again. There is virtually no latitude for changing the gender composition within the category of incumbent candidacies, even if the

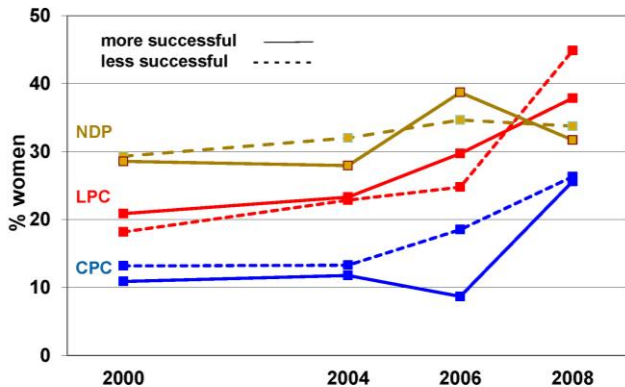
party wished to change its approach to women’s empowerment.

Most importantly, non-incumbents represent the face of change. Some portion of the House turns over with each election, as some incumbents step down, and others lose to non-incumbents of other parties. There was almost no gender differentiation in which incumbents vacated the House during the period studied: 87.0% of women incumbents ran again, as compared to 86.5% of incumbent men; among those who ran again, 87.3% of women incumbents regained their seats, as compared to 88.2% of the men. Therefore the returning portion of the House reflects the previous legislature, and the portion turned over reflects the non-incumbent candidate pool that fed it. Eventually all the current Members will no longer be present, and all Members will have arisen from the injection of new candidates.^x Hence the composition of the House changes in accordance with how the composition of the non-incumbent candidate pool differs from it.

A good way to test whether a party somehow reserved the higher-quality non-incumbent candidacies for men is to sort the districts by how well the party actually fared. If the party had played favourites (by gender), then presumably one would find more women among the districts where the party fared poorly, and fewer in the districts where it won substantial numbers of votes. Voter bias against women candidates would also have a similar effect.

As a first step, figure 5 shows a rough contrast for the three parties that run candidates nationally. It divides the non-incumbent candidacies of each party into two groups, according to how well the party fared in the district. (The BQ is excluded from this rough illustration because so few of its candidacies fared poorly, and so many of the candidates who did well were incumbents.) In one group, the party attracted fewer than half as many votes as did the winner; those candidacies are categorised as having fared relatively poorly. The rest (including those non-incumbents who won) are categorised as having had moderate or better success. Were women more concentrated in one group than the other?

Figure 5. Women’s share of more and less successful non-incumbent candidacies, by party



Overall figure 5 has a close resemblance to figure 3, which depicted women’s share of all candidacies (including incumbents), by party. The Liberals ran somewhat fewer women

candidates than the NDP in the first three elections covered, but overtook them with a major influx in 2008. Women’s share of Conservative candidacies was consistently lower, but also rose over time, with an especially large jump in 2008. The two curves for each party in figure 5 break down the non-incumbent candidacies by vote success. For the most part, these two curves move together, with remarkable consistency and only minor distinctions. This means that for each party, women’s share of the more successful candidacies was almost always close to their share of less successful candidacies.

The main exception is the sizable divergence between the two Conservative curves in 2006. As the Conservatives’ popularity rose, the 2006 election brought them an expanded array of new districts within competitive reach. But the prized expansion districts went overwhelmingly to men, and so women’s share of less-successful candidacies went up in 2006, while their share of more-successful candidacies did not. This divergence represents a missed opportunity for the Conservative party to catch up, if only part-way, to the other parties in regard to electing women. In 2008, that party did add women in the more-successful candidacies, completely wiping out the earlier divergence between the categories.

Figure 5 also depicts a few other minor divergences. For example, women’s share of non-incumbent Liberal candidacies was somewhat higher in the less-successful group than in the more-successful group in 2008. Yet in 2006 the opposite occurred, nearly as strongly. It seems reasonable not to infer anything important about the party from these minor differences.^{xi} The NDP curves also show minor divergences that alternate from one election to another. Again these slight differences do not support a gender bias in filling candidacies based on the party’s prospects in the district. Overall, the curves in figure 5 show a remarkable lack of gender differentiation by success over the four elections covered.

Considering the size of the discrepancy we are trying to explain, the rough contrast in figure 5 should be more than sufficient to rule out male / female success differences as a cause. Just in case, however, calculations were carried out that replace the binary success criterion (i.e. arbitrary cut-off) with a continuous measure of candidate success. The results can no longer be plotted in pairs of curves on a simple graph like figure 5. Instead regression calculations are employed using that continuous variable. These calculations include the BQ as well. The results yield no surprises; they reproduce the same patterns described above using a rough contrast. Detailed results are presented in the Appendix. They reveal no significant evidence that any of the major parties reserved higher quality candidacies for men over the four elections covered here, nor for voter bias.

Yet one is still left with the impression from figure 2 that women candidates have not done as well as expected. Could there have been a more subtle party gender bias that reserved winning candidacies for men, but otherwise allowed women to fill uniformly the remaining spectrum of candidacies, from lost-cause to close-call? In mathematical terms, might the dependence have been so highly nonlinear that regression analysis missed a deficit of women that was re-

stricted only to the upper limit of the success variable (i.e. the winners)? This is demonstrably not the case. For example in 2008 there were 245 non-incumbent women candidates across the four major parties, and 23 of these won their races, for a win rate of 9.4%. Non-incumbent men shared nearly the same win rate, with 45 winners among 486 candidates. The candidate's party popularity of course affects his or her chances of winning, as does the presence or absence of an incumbent from another party. Regression analysis confirmed that non-incumbent women and men did not have significantly distinct probabilities of winning their races, across the four elections studied, whether or not one controls for these factors. The details are not listed here, since they convey a null result consistent with those presented above.

These results showing that women candidates fared just as well as men of the same party and incumbency status are in agreement with the above-cited works on sacrificial lambs and voter bias. These parties have not, for the most part, gone out of their way to reserve higher quality non-incumbent candidacies for men. Nor have the voters brought an overall gender bias against women to the polls. To be sure, more candidates were men than women, and some parties fielded more women than others; it is just that the gender imbalance within each party extended quite consistently along the spectrum of success.

That is not to say that the gender imbalances are uniform in every way across the electoral districts. If we categorize the districts by other characteristics besides success in the election, male / female ratios can vary substantially within each party. For example, whether or not a district is located in a major urban centre is a strong determinant of the probability that a competitive candidate will be a woman (Brodie 1977; Carbert 2009; Moncrief and Thompson 1991; Matland and Studlar 1998). Interviews with potential candidates in rural areas in the Atlantic and western regions documented barriers in both demand for, and supply of willing candidates (Carbert 2006). These impediments were linked to rural expectations for a political representative to act like a traditional patron, based on rational calculations of collective self-interest in a fragile, undiversified economic setting (Carbert 2010). Other district characteristics have also been found to affect an association's chances of nominating a woman. In their study of the 2004 and 2006 national elections, Christine Cheng and Margit Tavits found that district associations were more likely to nominate a woman candidate where the local party president was a woman, where more voters were women, and where more women had been candidates since 1980, especially for the same party (2011). Tremblay and Pelletier's study of the 1997 election found that the influence of local party president gender was limited to parties on the ideological right (2001). These and other factors are crucial to the study of why there are so few women candidates in the first place, and what challenges remain to increasing their numbers. As noted in the introduction, these issues are beyond the scope of the present study, which takes the candidate slates as given. Our finding that women had as much success as men with the same party and incum-

bency status implies that differential gender ratios according to other district characteristics had no measurable impact on the total number of seats won by the women candidates who made it onto their party's slate.

We have arrived at an impasse. We began with figure 2, and asked why women's share of seats in the House of Commons did not expand along with numbers of candidates. We have now discovered that our initial impression of a 24-woman deficit must have been wrong. Those women who managed to be nominated as candidates fared just as well as men with the same party and incumbency status, and won their fair share of the races. Nor do shifts in party popularity bridge the gap. Even had the Liberals maintained their hold on government, the earlier vote-sensitivity studies showed that only a small fraction of the perceived deficit would have been erased. If anything, these findings only deepen the apparent paradox. Why the large increase in candidacies and not in seats?

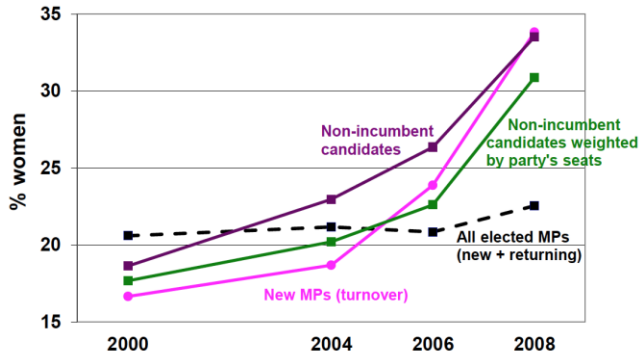
Sorting out party effects in the candidate pool

Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that! (Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass 1871)

The composition of the House changes in response to differences in the composition of the non-incumbent candidate pool that feeds it. Some portion of the House turns over with each election. Assuming no bias in which incumbents quit, and no bias in which ones lose, the returning portion has the same composition as did the House before the election. Assuming no voter bias by gender, the portion turned over has the same gender composition as the pool of non-incumbent candidates with electoral prospects. A necessary condition for electing more women is that there be a higher proportion of women in the non-incumbent candidate pool feeding the turnover in the House than there was in the House prior to the election. By taking a closer look at that necessary condition, this section clears up the apparent paradox.

The simplest – albeit inaccurate – way to estimate women's share of the candidate pool feeding the House turnover is to include the entire pool of all non-incumbent candidates standing for the major parties. The topmost curve in Figure 6 displays this estimate as it varied over the four elections covered. It began in 2000 at 18.6%, and rose with each election. In 2008 it reached 34%, nearly doubling its initial value. This change represents a major shift in women-friendliness among Canada's major parties. Comparing this curve to the overall gender composition in the House – the dashed curve in figure 6 – reveals a clue to the puzzle. In 2000 women's share of the non-incumbent candidate pool was actually below that of the House. The situation in 2004 was not much better: barely enough new women candidates to replace outgoing members. The numbers in 2006 and 2008 appear to be high enough to drive new increases, according to this simple estimate.

Figure 6. Estimating women's share of the candidate pool feeding the House turnover



That simple estimate is too generous, in that it significantly over-represents the supply of women candidates available to fill the seats vacated by outgoing members. The main reason concerns the NDP. Overall this party was the most women-friendly of the major parties. At the same time it was much less popular than the other parties during the period studied, across the districts in which it ran candidates. Hence this party dominated the lost-cause category of districts. This means that a disproportionate number of women depicted by the “non-incumbent” curve in figure 6 were NDP candidates who had little or no chance of winning a seat in the House. Furthermore, the other parties had their own lost-cause candidacies, and the mix among them changed over the course of four elections. What we need is a refined estimate that represents women’s share in the pool of non-incumbent candidates weighted by the popularity of their parties.

One technique to account for the changing mix is to weight the non-incumbent candidacies by the total number of seats won by each candidate’s party.^{xii} The result, depicted in the green curve in figure 6, is one refined estimate of women’s share of the pool of non-incumbent candidates feeding the available seats in the House. It gives the largest weight to the Liberals in 2000 and 2004, and to the Conservatives in 2006 and 2008; and attenuates the NDP contribution throughout the period. Overall, women’s share of non-incumbent candidacies still nearly doubles over the period from 2000 to 2008, just as it did when weighting all candidacies equally. Hence the picture of greatly increased women-friendliness across the parties at the end of the period remains intact. However, this improved estimate reduces women’s share of non-incumbent candidacies throughout the period covered, especially in 2004 and 2006. This reduction alters significantly the comparison with women’s share of seats in the House. Employing this refined estimate shows that there were relatively *fewer* women in the candidate pool than in the House in both 2000 and 2004, and only slightly more in 2006. Accordingly, the first three of four elections studied here saw barely enough women candidates to sustain the existing number of seats held by women, never mind to feed renewed increases. Only in 2008 did women’s share of

the incoming pool exceed the House proportion substantially; indeed that election did bring several additional women to the House.^{xiii}

These findings indicate that a reasonable representation of the incoming candidate pool reveals three essential features:

1. Too few women candidates to sustain the House proportion in 2000;
2. Barely enough to sustain the status quo in 2004 and 2006;
3. Substantially elevated levels of women candidates in 2008, above 30%.

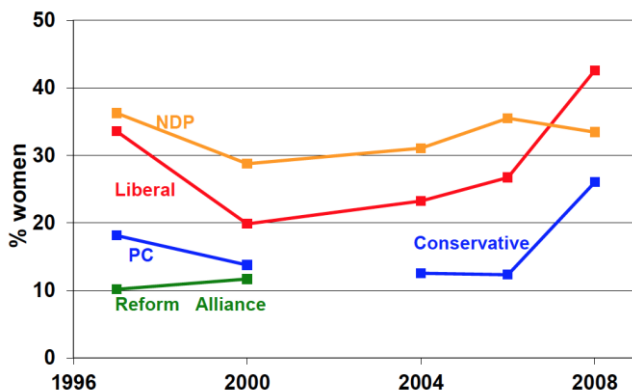
The net electoral impact of these changes is reflected clearly in women’s share of seats turned over – the pink curve of figure 6. This crucial proportion is a measure of overall progress in current party practises regarding the recruitment of women. It doubled between 2000 and 2008, from 17% to 34%. It follows the refined representation of the non-incumbent candidate pool (green curve in figure 6) quite closely, because women candidates won close to their fair share of seats in each election. In particular, women’s share of the turned-over seats was well below the overall level in the House in 2000, and far above it in 2008.

Hence we arrive at the unexpected conclusion that a good deal of the expansion in women’s candidacy that occurred after 2000 was actually required just to maintain the status quo. Our initial impression that women candidates were not winning their share of races in 2004, 2006, and 2008 was based on comparing candidacies to the initial point of the study in 2000. This approach made the tacit – and mistaken – presumption that candidacies and seats were in balance at that initial point. We have now discovered that they were not in balance; there were too few women candidates in 2000 to sustain their share in the House. Even the Liberals fielded new women below the rate in the House in that election: 20% of non-incumbent Liberal candidates were women, compared to 21% of the House, and 23% of the Liberal caucus.

How did the numbers of women elected ever get as high as they did before 2000? Comparison with results from earlier elections reveals that levels of recruitment of women had indeed been higher. Figure 7 shows that the Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Progressive Conservatives all contributed to a major slump, in which far fewer women were recruited in 2000 than in 1997.^{xiv} The Liberal party had the largest decline, down to 20% from the 1997 level above 33%; and so when it won more turned-over seats than any other party, not many of those new MPs were women.^{xv} Adding up the non-incumbent candidacies of all major parties, women’s share fell from 25% (above the House level) in 1997 to less than 19% (below the House level) in 2000.

Some aspects of this slump have been addressed in earlier studies on the 2000 election. Tremblay noted an overall 15% decrease in the total number of women candidates for the major parties (which is shown here to have arisen from a larger 25% decrease in non-incumbent recruitment, including a 40% drop for the Liberals). She argued that the Liberal party had de-prioritized claims of feminist activists within and outside the party, due to fears of Alliance gains in the west (2002, 94). Young (2006) observed that the Liberals and New Democrats nominated women candidates at higher rates than did the Alliance, which was gaining in popularity. However, she did not compare the candidate slates of the Liberals and New Democrats to their own earlier, more impressive, slates from 1997. Nevertheless part of Young's interpretation of the stalled numbers elected to the House paralleled that of Tremblay, in terms of a cross-party consensus being shattered by the new party system. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, this interpretation leaves open the question of why the decline was so short-lived, as the Liberals (and New Democrats) resumed recruitment increases while the Conservative threat intensified over three subsequent elections.

Figure 7. The cross-party recruitment back-slide of 2000: women's share of non-incumbent candidacies

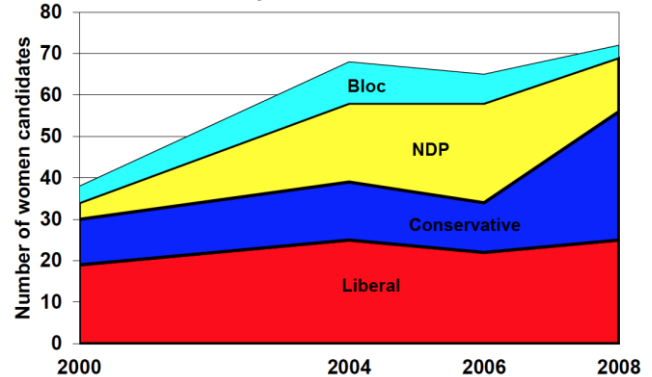


The cross-party pull-back in 2000 played a major role in the stalling of progress in women elected to the House of Commons. Had recruitment merely “stagnated” at the 1997 levels (rather than falling as it did), women's share of seats in the House would have continued to rise, not stall, because their share of seats turned over in 2000 and 2004 would have continued to exceed the overall House proportion. Conversely, had recruitment remained at the nadir of the 2000 level through 2008, there would have been substantially fewer women remaining in the House, as each turnover would have dragged down the overall House proportion. What did happen is that the 2000 election featured a low turnover, muting the impact of anomalously low recruitment; and the prospects for women's election improved over the three subsequent elections, becoming strongly positive in 2008, when the Conservatives joined in the cross-party resurgence of recruitment. We can now appreciate that the situation for women's election was more dire in 2000, and more hopeful in 2008, than would be implied by mere stagnation.

Contributions by party

A picture has emerged in which a general increase in women-friendliness among Canada's four major parties expanded

Figure 8. Non-incumbent women candidates who won at least half as many votes as the winner in the district



women's share of non-incumbent candidacies. This expansion over four elections reversed a state of imbalance – i.e. a shortage of new women candidates in 2000 – to the point that by 2008 there were real prospects for significant progress in the gender composition of the House of Commons. What were the contributions of the four parties to this progress?

Figure 8 breaks down, by party, the numbers of non-incumbent women who won at least half as many votes as the winner in the district. Taking all major parties together overall, this dynamic pool of candidates expanded greatly after 2000, nearly doubling from 38 to 72 women in 2008. All of the major parties contributed to the increases. As the Liberal party's popularity slid, the overall number of districts in which its candidates achieved that level of success declined to 151 in 2008. Many of these districts still had a Liberal incumbent who ran again, leaving only 67 non-incumbent spots. The level of competition among Liberal politicians vying for these diminishing candidacies must have been quite intense. Even so, the number of these prized nominations going to women actually increased to 25, so that their share increased to 37% (see figure 5). This increase in women-friendliness allowed the Liberal party to increase the number of women in districts where the party attracted substantial votes, even as this category of districts shrank with each election.

As the Liberals struggled in 2004 and 2006, the NDP became competitive in substantially more districts, and carried its longstanding record of recruiting women to these districts. As a result this party's contribution of successful women candidates soared. Their contribution in 2006 (including 7 additional women elected) was especially timely, because this was the year that the Conservative party dragged its feet regarding women candidates, even as it thrived in the polls. The NDP thus prevented a decline in quality of women's candidacy, and in the number of women elected in 2006.

Perhaps surprisingly, the largest gains over the period studied were brought by the Conservative party. Of course this party expanded its list of successful campaigns as its popularity rose. Even without the Conservatives becoming more women-friendly, one would expect to see them increase the number of women proportionately. However, the actual increase far exceeded that level, as Conservative women's share of at-least-moderately successful non-incumbent candidacies rose from 11% in 2000 (11 women among 101 candidates) to 26% in 2008 (31 among 120). Most of this gain occurred in the 2008 campaign. Why the party recruited so many additional women for high-quality candidacies remains a mystery, as it did not make a public commitment to do so. It is interesting, however, that it coincided with Stéphane Dion's highly publicized push to increase the number of Liberal women candidates. Whatever the reason, the Conservative gain made its mark on the composition of the House of Commons, as that party elected 11 new women MPs, and raised their caucus total from 14 in 2006 to 23 in 2008. Overall, moving from 2000 to 2008, the Liberals lost 20 women in their caucus, the Conservatives gained 15, the NDP gained 7, and the Bloc gained 5.

The inertia of incumbency

If women's share of prospective new candidates is held above the elected rate over a series of elections, the proportion in the House necessarily rises toward the proportion among the new candidates. The pace of that change can be excruciatingly slow because in any given election, most incumbents run again, and most of them win. Over the four elections covered here, an average of 87% of incumbents ran again, and 88% of those won. This leaves an average turnover of only 23% of the House in each election. Even if that new 23% has an elevated proportion of women, the returning 77% carries forward the old proportion that sat in the House before the election. (As noted earlier, there was virtually no gender distinction in which incumbents vacated the House during the period studied.)

One can get a feel for the inertia created by this level of incumbency by imagining an artificial scenario in which new candidates are injected at a constant higher rate over a series of elections. Here we follow, and update, a mathematical approach used by Lisa Young (1991). After any election, the House can be divided conceptually into two groups: the returning portion, which has the same proportion of women as the previous House, and the turnover portion, which has the same proportion as the prospective pool of non-incumbent candidates. The overall proportion of women is the weighted combination of these two quantities. This process can be expressed mathematically as a geometric series. Suppose that the initial proportion of women in the House is P_0 , new candidates are injected with a proportion P_{inject} , incumbents run again at the rate I_{run} , and win at the rate I_{win} . Assuming a gender-neutral vote, the proportion P_n of women sitting in the House after the n^{th} election will then be

$$P_n = P_{inject} - (P_{inject} - P_0) \times (I_{run} \times I_{win})^n$$

With a 23% turnover rate ($I_{run} \times I_{win} = 0.87 \times 0.88 = 0.77$), it takes three elections for the House composition to move beyond the halfway point between P_0 and P_{inject} . As an extreme example, suppose that new women candidates were injected at the rate of gender parity ($P_{inject}=50\%$). Even with this ambitious agenda, starting from the 2008 proportion of 22.5% women in the House, it would take three elections to reach 37% – still below some Nordic levels. Moving into the realm of fantasy, imagine that all new candidates were women ($P_{inject} = 100\%$); it would still take two elections to reach gender parity in the House. These examples (figure 9) illustrate how high levels of incumbency slow down the impact of changes in candidate pool composition.

Figure 9. Three scenarios for injecting new candidates

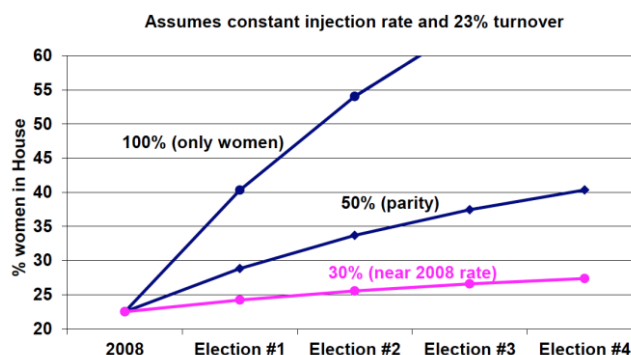


Figure 9 also illustrates what might be expected if women's new candidacies were held at the 30% rate (near the 2008 level) over the next few elections, assuming the same 23% turnover in each election. It shows a gradual rise toward 30% women in the House, only exceeding the 25% mark in the second election after 2008, and 27.5% in the fourth. This illustration explains why the actual increase of five women in the House in 2008 was about all that could be expected in just one election.

Clearly a continued expansion of women friendliness among the major parties would be required to feed meaningful change in the gender composition of the House of Commons in the near term. For example, if women's share of the non-incumbent candidate pool were to increase to 40% (a level attained by the Liberal party in 2008), their share of the House of Commons would be expected to reach 30% in the second election after 2008. It is important to keep in mind that these projected rates of change presume a continuation of the turnover rates that prevailed during the four elections studied here. Any future upheaval in electoral outcomes would bring higher turnover to the House, which would accelerate the impact of expanded levels of women candidacy.

Conclusions

This paper has tracked women's candidacy for election to Canada's House of Commons over four successive elections in 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2008. These elections saw a dra-

matic expansion in the number of women candidates standing for the major parties, but only a small increase in the number of women elected. The divergence of the two quantities gives the initial impression that some barrier prevented a significant number – possibly up to 24 – of the new candidates from winning seats. Careful analysis revealed that this impression is largely an illusion.

Simulations of alternative electoral outcomes using the actual candidate slates fielded by the major parties demonstrate that the shift from Liberal to Conservative government did hold back the number of women elected, but not by more than about five. Analysis of various measures of success shows that women candidates were similarly successful as men with the same party and incumbency status, and won their “fair share” of the races.

The bulk of the apparent divergence was traced to the mistaken presumption that women’s candidacies and number of seats in the House were in balance at the beginning of the period covered. Refinement of the pool of new candidates feeding the House turnover revealed that there were too few new women candidates in 2000 even to maintain the status quo. Much of the increase in women’s candidacy that occurred in subsequent elections was required just to keep women’s share of seats in the House steady, just above the 20% mark. Only in 2008 did the injection rate of new women candidates exceed the House proportion meaningfully. This abundance did have an impact on the number of women elected, but that impact was tempered by the inertia of incumbency.

Overall the analysis presented here belies the sense of calm seemingly implied by the stagnation in the numbers of women elected to Canada’s national legislature (figure 1). We can now appreciate that there could easily have been a collapse in women’s representation as the government passed from Liberals to Conservatives. Several key factors had to come together to prevent collapse. In 2004 and 2006 the NDP, and to a lesser extent the Liberals and BQ, stepped up their nominations of women, compensating for the relatively few women among the seats gained by the Conservatives. Then in 2008, the Conservatives tested the waters of promoting significantly more women, to some effect in the House. These efforts over the eight-year period covered here amounted to a transition, as collapse gave way to resurgence. Since the major parties became less distinct in nominating women candidates, the number of women elected became less sensitive to which party won in 2008, than was the case in earlier elections. Preserving this robustness, and sustaining the cross-party resurgence, would require the Conservatives to continue to build on what they started with their shift toward nominating more women.

The results paint a picture of ebb and flow in place of stagnation, and the emergence of a potential for renewed progress in the gender composition of the House. At the same time, they also show how easily past successes can be reversed (as seen in the comparison between 1997 and 2000). Understanding, much less having an impact on, future trajectories will require answers to questions that have not fully been addressed. Why did all the parties nomi-

nate far fewer new women candidates following the 1997 high mark, and then resume strong increases that surpassed that mark handily by 2008? Why did the Conservatives begin to participate in the resurgence, without acknowledging the recruitment of more women as a goal, let alone issuing a statement of principle, policy, or target? Logically, the persistence of longstanding barriers could be used to explain a hypothetical stagnation in recruitment of women. However, stagnation is not what occurred; something more fluid is required to explain the actual cross-party collapse, and the subsequent cross-party resurgence to unprecedented levels of women’s candidacy that occurred during the period studied here.

Addendum: the 2011 election

A national election occurred during the preparation of this manuscript, on May 2, 2011. Preliminary results pertaining to non-incumbent women candidates and women's share of seats turned over in the House of Commons are summarized in the table below, in a form that facilitates comparison to earlier results.

	Conservative	New Democrat	Liberal	Bloc Québécois	4-party total
2008 election					
non-incumbent candidacies	26.0% (196)	33.5% (281)	42.6% (223)	16.1% (31)	33.5% (731)
seats turned over	31.4% (35)	33.3% (12)	50.0% (14)	14.3% (7)	33.8% (68)
2011 election					
non-incumbent candidacies	27.1% (170)	41.8% (273)	30.8% (237)	31.3% (32)	34.1% (712)
seats turned over	24.3% (37)	42.9% (70)	0% (2)	0% (1)	35.5% (110)

The percentages reported are women's share of the indicated category, and the numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of men and women in the category. The table does not include the Green Party, which in 2011 elected one Member – Elizabeth May – a non-incumbent woman candidate who won a turned-over seat.

In 2011 all of the four major parties listed above nominated new women candidates at a rate above the level sitting in the House, ranging between 27% and 42%. Of particular concern entering the campaign was the Conservative party, which had earlier increased its recruitment of women for only one election in 2008, when it doubled their share of its non-incumbent candidacies to 26%. The table shows that the Conservatives did maintain that increase in 2011, nominating women in 27% of its non-incumbent candidacies. The Liberals recruited fewer women than in 2008, but their 31% share of new candidacies remained above the Conservative level. The New Democrats stepped up their recruitment, filling 42% of their non-incumbent positions with women candidates.

Overall for these four parties, women represented 34% of non-incumbent candidates – a new high. These candidates in turn won a 35.5% share of the seats turned over in the election, also a new high. Since the election brought a moderately high turnover rate (36% of the seats), it also sent a record 40 non-incumbent women to the House, including 30 New Democrats and nine Conservatives. (The 1993 election brought nearly as many – 39 new women MPs – but only because of a much higher turnover rate of 69%.) These gains of new women MPs were tempered by the defeat of 28 incumbent women, including 11 Liberals and 13 Bloc Québécois. Nevertheless the election brought a new high total number of women to the House -- 76 or 24.7%. Together, the 2008 and 2011 elections make it two in a row, setting new highs for women's percent share of major-party non-incumbent candidacies and seats turned over, both in the mid-30s. It is important to keep in mind that these proportions are still far below parity. Nevertheless, it is notable that they arose at a time when the party that recruits the fewest women took majority control. Setting new highs during a challenging period could reasonably be considered as a positive indicator. Thus, while the partisan composition of Canada's House of Commons was transformed in 2011 by an NDP surge, a Conservative majority, and severe losses by the

Liberals and Bloc Québécois, the overall situation for women's candidacy and election followed a similar pattern of increase as was found for 2008.

Figure 10. Historical context for the recruitment and election of new women candidates by major parties in the 2011 election

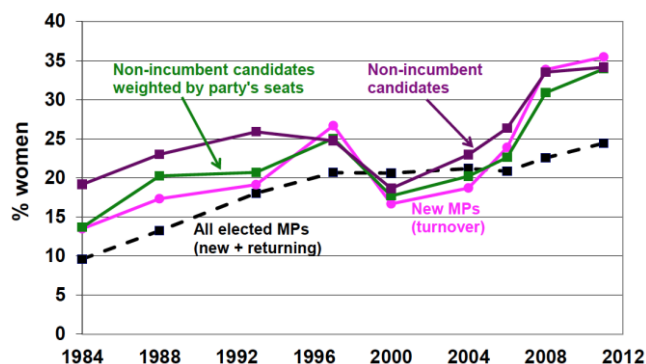


Figure 10 helps to put these preliminary results into historical context, using the same format as figure 6. It shows the rise in major-party recruitment of new women candidates through the 1980s and 1990s at levels above the proportion of seats in the House, the collapse to sub-House levels in 2000, and the resumption of increases thereafter, reaching unprecedented levels in 2008 and 2011. The election of new candidates in the House turnover followed the same pattern, tracking the changes in recruitment levels closely.

Appendix:

Testing for gender differentiation across a continuous spectrum of candidacy success

Figure 5 presents a contrast of women's share of each party's non-incumbent candidacies in districts where the party had relatively more versus less success. That success was represented as a binary variable, based on whether the party won more or less than one-half as many votes as the winner. Here we repeat the analysis using a continuous measure of success in place of the binary approximation, and regression analysis to test whether non-incumbent women candidates were less successful than their male counterparts in the same party.

The dependent variable is a continuous measure of success given by the ratio of votes won by the candidate divided by the votes won by the winner in the district, expressed as a percentage (with value 100 for the winner).

Table 2. Regressions of non-incumbent candidate success (votes won as a percentage of the winner)

Variable	Party		Liberal		New Democrat		Bloc Québécois	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant (man in 2000)	30.6 ^a	1.2	61.6 ^a	2.2	15.3 ^a	1.4	63.7 ^a	4.9
2004 (vs 2000)	21.0 ^a	2.1	1.1	3.0	18.3 ^a	1.9	21.0 ^a	6.4
2006 (vs 2000)	33.6 ^a	2.3	-16.8 ^a	2.9	20.1 ^a	1.9	7.8	7.7
2008 (vs 2000)	31.6 ^a	2.3	-18.2 ^a	2.9	19.2 ^a	1.9	-3.1	7.1
Woman (vs man)	-0.03	2.5	-0.9	2.2	-0.3	1.4	-1.4	5.9
Woman × 2006	-9.5	6.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. observations	1187		727		1144		141	

Entries report unstandardized B coefficients based on OLS regressions for each party
a: B significant at $p < .01$; b: B significant at $p < .05$; c: B significant at $p < .10$

Since each party's overall popularity varied substantially over the four elections, dummy variables were introduced for each of the three elections after 2000. With this choice, the regression constant represents the estimate of vote ratio for a man standing for that party in the 2000 election. Hence the Liberal constant is relatively high, as that party was relatively popular in 2000. The large negative coefficients for 2006 and 2008 indicate the major declines in popularity for Liberals in those years. The Conservative coefficients represent the converse story of rising vote success for that party. The gender of a candidate is represented as a binary variable with value 0 for a man and 1 for a woman. A negative regression coefficient that is statistically distinct from zero would indicate that men had more success than women in that party. This did not even come close to arising for any of the four regressions, as each coefficient is smaller than its standard error. This null result indicates that in all four parties, men did not fare better than women, throughout the period studied. This finding confirms the overall pattern found in Figure 5, this time using a continuous measure of success.

In addition a separate interactive variable was included for the Conservative party, to test specifically whether the obvious divergence in 2006 between women's share of more and less successful candidacies was statistically significant. The result was a negative coefficient that reproduces the divergence in figure 5. The analysis calculates a p value of 0.12, which is slightly outside the conventional range of

statistical significance. Hence a Conservative party supporter could plausibly claim that it just happened that way by chance alone. In any case, it is safe to say that something positive happened within the Conservative party in 2008, which was not present in 2006, so that the party missed an earlier opportunity to elect more women.

Additional calculations were performed with an interactive variable of the form gender x time, to test for a growing or declining bias in favour of men. These tests yielded null results consistent with the above finding, and so are not listed here.

The addition of other variables influencing candidate success does not change the finding of no significant gender differentiation. The regression equations listed in the table purposefully omit two variables that have strong influence on the dependent variable: the vote ratio from the previous election, and whether or not the incumbent from another party contested the race. Including these variables would control for them, leaving the gender variable only to measure residual differences in success for women versus men, presumably due to voter bias. It would thus hide any bias that may have occurred in reserving candidacies for men in open races or in districts where the party had fared better in the previous election. We wanted to know whether men fared better than women in the same party, without controlling for those factors. The results shown above clearly indicate that they did not. Having found that result, additional calculations were performed that included prior-election vote ratio and presence of incumbent. As expected, these variables had strong influence on candidate success. However, no significant dependence on candidate gender emerged for any party, yielding no support for opposing biases by party and voters that would offset each other. Consistent with that null result, no significant association was found between candidate gender and the two added variables, for any of the parties. These tests yielded null results consistent with the above finding, and so are not listed here.

In sum, there is no evidence of gender differentiation across the spectrum of non-incumbent candidacy success.

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Endnotes

- 1 The author wishes to thank Len Sonmor for his advice, and Richard Matland and Naomi Black for their helpful comments. Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the American Political Science Association and the Atlantic Provinces Political Science Association in 2010.
- ii Environics Research Group reported that women are virtually unanimous (90%) in wanting to see more women elected. Even a large majority of men (79%) want to see the same. Opinion broke down on a left-right basis, but less distinctly than might be expected. On the left wing of the Canadian political spectrum, New Democratic Party voters were the most likely to support efforts to elect more women (93%). On the centre-left, 89% of voters for the Liberal Party supported efforts to increase the number of women elected. Conservative Party voters were the least likely to agree, but, even so, 76% agreed with not just the desirability of electing more women, but also supporting efforts to increase their numbers. An Ekos poll from 2010 found that half of all Canadians thought that having more women leaders would have a positive effect.
- iii Stephen Harper, correspondence to Rosemary Speirs, 29 March 2004. Personal communication from Speirs, 2010. Speirs is founding Chair of Equal Voice.
- iv Other parties - notably the Green Party - have nominated candidates, including substantial numbers of women, in some or all of the districts, in each of the four elections covered here. One of the major parties - the Bloc Québécois - runs candidates only in the districts located in Québec. All election data reported in this paper, including candidate slates and votes, were obtained from Elections Canada.
- v The simple ratio of women's share of candidacies at the beginning and end of the period covered (30% / 19%) would suggest a relative increase of 58%, rather than the more careful estimate of 46%, found by correcting for changes in the party system.
- vi For the 2000 election the candidacies of the Progressive Conservative and Alliance parties were combined when making figures 3, 5, and 8.
- vii This measure is purposely chosen on the generous side, to probe the limits of how differently things might have evolved. Less generous measures would result in even narrower ranges of outcomes for women elected. As it is, the ranges are still too narrow to resolve the paradox in terms shifting party fortunes.
- viii It is impossible to overlay candidate slates from any earlier election due to the electoral redistricting that was carried out for the 2004 election.
- ix To speak of a party "allocating" candidates is shorthand for the net effect of independent district associations carrying out their mandates, partly in response to subtle changes that pervade the collective enterprise. It is true that leaders have final approval of candidates, and may express preferences. However, local riding associations generally select their own candidates, and tend to guard this prerogative fiercely (Carty and Eagles 2004).
- x In this paper "new candidate" is used interchangeably with "non-incumbent candidate," for ease of reading, even though they are not technically equivalent. Obviously some losing candidates return for a second try, and a few defeated incumbents try again later. The important feature for the present purpose is that the district association makes a choice, in contrast to the rubber-stamp given to returning incumbents.
- xi If one lumps together incumbents and non-incumbents, a very different picture emerges for the Liberal party in 2008: 28% women in the more successful districts, compared to the same 45% in less successful districts. This extreme divergence occurred because this party had a relatively high number of incumbents, and a large increase in recruiting new women candidates. The party had virtually no latitude for changing the gender composition of incumbent candidacies. Therefore if one includes incumbents, the contrast between more and less successful candidacies becomes a contrast between past and present Liberal party nomination practises. If one wishes to investigate concurrent differentiation by district prospects, it makes more sense to focus on non-incumbent candidates.
- xii More technically, the weighting is calculated as the number of seats won as a proportion of candidates fielded by the party. Since the BQ runs in Québec only, the denominator is smaller for that party. For example the 2008 weighting for BQ candidates is 49/75, while the weighting for NDP candidates is 37/308.
- xiii This pattern was found not to be sensitive to changes in the technique used to refine the representation of the pool of non-incumbent candidates that fed the turnover in the House. Several alternative techniques were employed. One weighted the candidacies by the party's number of new seats won, rather than the total seats. Others excluded the least successful candidacies using a variety of reasonable criteria. All yielded results close to those shown in the figure, and consistent with the features highlighted in the text. This repeatability arises because within each party, the male / female ratio extended consistently throughout the spectrum of success levels.
- xiv The BQ slate included too few non-incumbents to generate a smooth series of proportions, so the results were too noisy to be displayed in the same figure along with the other curves. Women's share of non-incumbent BQ candidacies was slightly lower in 2000 (8/39) than 1997 (7/32).
- xv In the 2000 election, the Liberals elected 23 new members, including three women. The Canadian Alliance elected 17 new members, including four women. Bloc Québécois elected six new members, including one woman. The NDP elected one new MP, a man.