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Tribute to Women of
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Week Without Violence

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August 29, 2005

Dear Mayor Mandel,

YWCA Edmonton does not support the recommendation proposed by Executive Committee of City Council to increase the deposit amount required by municipal election candidates. Such an increase will make it harder for women to run for office.

Past experiences of many women when running for office are that they are more likely than men to experience fundraising difficulties. Women are less likely than men to be able to afford to campaign since typically they have less disposable income and generally do not have the same access to people who donate dollars to election campaigns. Often male candidates have greater access to funds since they have more access to the business network and individuals who are likely to donate to campaigns. In addition, many women who campaign carry the added expense of childcare or senior care while campaigning and, in fact, many women are deterred from running at all because of the need to raise money on their own.

- YWCA Edmonton held a *One Woman One Vote Think Tank* of invited women committed to having more women in public office - MLA's, School Trustees, former municipal counselor, published political scientists. At this facilitated discussion on June 25, 2002, the group identified that one of many barriers to more women running for office was financial and fundraising considerations.
- Calgary's *Winning Women Political Skills Manual* on barriers facing women capable of and wishing to run for office states: "Many women have no direct source of income as they do not earn wages for household labour or community volunteer work". (p 8).
- *Electing Women in PEI: A Collaborative Workshop* was held on October 15, 2004. In attendance were representatives from the Liberal Party of PEI, The Conservative Party of PEI, the NDP Party of PEI, the Liberal Party of Canada, the Senate of Canada and current and former elected members of municipal, provincial and federal governments. Identified as one recommendation to address the barriers facing women running for office: make the nomination process more economical for women.

- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' efforts through the 2004 *Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision-Making Project* is also researching and addressing: "How can we ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities to effectively participate in local governance, both during the election process and at the municipal council table?"

In their consultation process, women reported many practical and systemic barriers to participation in municipal processes. In particular, marginalized women, including women living in poverty, face more serious barriers to participation in municipal government. The report identifies that a major barrier for women's participation in municipal government is the lack of support from the municipality for more inclusive policies and practises. According to the findings in the report, "policy – or the lack of it – shapes consultation practises and women's involvement in municipalities." (p.15).

Women's experiences in running for municipal office clearly illustrate the need for a nomination process and municipal policies that do not create additional barriers for women.

We encourage council to NOT accept a proposed deposit increase as it will be detrimental to women's ability to run for municipal office.

Sincerely,

Kelly Sloan
Executive Director
YWCA Edmonton

Janet Buckmaster, Coordinator
One Woman One Vote
YWCA Edmonton