

Women on Council: A Case Study of 12 Ontario Cities

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, a critical assessment of Graham, Phillips and Maslove's (1998) statement that there is a greater proportion of women represented in urban politics than in provincial and federal legislatures (p.101) will be presented. The research in this area of interest is sparse, and findings have been restricted to large urban centres. The focus of most work in this area has been presented from the feminist perspective and tends to report barriers to access and representation issues with negative overtones. A pilot study with three Ontario case cities was conducted to determine the value in proceeding with a large scale data collection. After a successful pilot study, an additional nine case cities were selected for analysis, representing approximately 1.1 million residents in the Province of Ontario. None of the cities selected are considered to be large urban centres and therefore represent municipal structures that are not generally reported in the literature. To contrast the case study information, a comparison will be made to data gathered about female representation in the Canadian House of Commons. Regional differences, disparities due to amalgamations and other limitations to this study are discussed. The case city data suggest that women are not more represented at the local level than at other levels of government.

*best friends,
there have been two.*

Mike, MDK, P... you have held my hand, warmed my heart, encouraged my mind and guided my soul. You felt all that I felt; you believed when I didn't. I could not have done this degree without you –it is part yours.

Sean, SPS, Seanathon... you have offered support through thick and thin. You helped when I couldn't help myself and did when you couldn't do for yourself. You have your own MPA...but you deserve part of mine as well.

*colleagues,
friends.*

Jode, Tim, Andy, John, Cindy and Leslie...we did it –together! Thank you for all your support, laughter and tears. And to Maureen...it was my pleasure.

*this path has been a difficult one,
but I have endured.*

I have earned this honour

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*The Country is yours ladies; politics is simply public affairs.
Yours and mine and everyone's. The government has enfranchised
you, but it cannot emancipate you, that is done by your own
processes of thought.*

*-Nellie McClung
Calgary News-Telegram, 1917*

INTRODUCTION

Another distinctive feature of urban politics is the much greater proportion of women represented than in provincial legislatures or the federal House of Commons (Graham, Phillips, Maslove, 1998, p. 101)

Is this true? Can this possibly be correct? Is the mere fact that a woman can be limited to representing her local community an actuality, or a glaring generalization? These are some of the questions that arise when a well-respected textbook summarizes Canadian female political representation in this way. Of course, the plethora of other questions that arise from questioning this statement crosses academic boundaries to address sociological, philosophical, political, psychological and women's studies issues. At the very least, the

statement may simply be reflective of a pervasive opinion regarding female political representation.

As Graham *et al.* (1998) chose to devote approximately one page to this topic, it is difficult at best to conclude that the rather broad sweeping statement that leads this discussion, is accurate. Although there are merits to the notion that local government structures are more accessible to women, this does not mean that representation is at a lower level in the other levels of government. In many cases, especially in smaller urban or rural municipalities, women may not be as politically visible as in their massive urban counterparts. This point alone may be enough to disprove the Graham *et al.* (1998) statement.

The hypothesis upon which this discussion is centred is simple: female political representation is not greater at the local levels of government than at the provincial and federal levels, nor is it easier to gain an elected position at one level over another. Conventional wisdom will be challenged –not by arguing that barriers to access don't exist for women, but rather, that there is no definitive advantage to running for a position in local government over any other level of government. A sample of twelve Ontario municipalities will serve as the data by which this claim will be tested, and as a point of comparison, data from the House of Commons will be added.

the feminist perspective

Most of the literature in this area of study has been written from the feminist perspective. In this context, the feminist perspective is characterized by understanding the links between urban spaces, social identities and social practices (Graham *et al.*, 1998). According to this view, society is defined by gendered relations, all of which are demonstrated in every conceivable aspect of our governance system. The bureaucratic structures, the political and administrative representation, public policy and organizations at large are all affected by the differences that exist between men and women. In addition, feminist theory tends to recognize issues that are relevant to other minority groups in existing political structures.

Many feminist scholars have been charged by the question of why political structures are not more widely representative of the Canadian demographic. Feminist analysis usually starts with a series of questions designed to strip the concept of political power to its roots (Maillé, 1990). In translation, Paquerot (1983, pp. 59-60) writes about feminism and political power in the following terms:

Faced with power, all women, whether feminists or not, are confronted with three possible strategies: to become part of the existing structure of political power and find a position of equality within it; to challenge the existing power structure through parties whose goal it is to pre-empt such power in order to transform it; or remain on the fringes of the established structures in order to engage in pressure tactics and subversion.

Other scholars have framed their analysis using a similar framework (Barry, 1991; OECD, 1995; Gingras, 1995; Conway, Steuernagel & Ahern, 1997; MacIvor, 1996), and each attempts to provide answers to the ever present reality of inequity in governance structures.

Arguments focus on: the "numbers game" -which is primarily defined by the actual proportion of males to females in governance structures-, whether women should be elected to solely represent the views of women, how to motivate the female vote, and how women will change the drive towards creating comprehensive and inclusive public policy.

Although the literature is rooted in feminist theory, there is an inherent contradiction in the literature. While equality and broad based inclusive thinking are core features of feminist theory, there is a common belief that women should be elected to solely represent women and their issues (Vickers, 1997; Maillé, 1990; Maillé, 1997; MacIvor, 1996; Young 1997), excludes a large segment of

the population (i.e., men). In addition, proponents of proportion based arguments (i.e., pre-determined numbers of female representatives) fail to recognize that the implementation of a rigidly defined structure is again contrary to the fundamental views of non-power based feminist theory.

There has been no supposition that women bring anything vastly different to the political arena, than do their male counterparts. This study focuses on empirical evidence. The objective of this study is to add to the feminist-based literature by contradicting conventional wisdom regarding female political representation at different levels of Canadian government.

the literature

The literature in this area of interest is sparse, and it is generally classified as a feminist area of study. Existing research on women and political representation focuses on federal politics and central-Canadian provincial and municipal examples (Arscott & Trimble, 1997). More often than not, the literature deals with women in general terms, and if a discussion has been narrowed, it is too specific for broad analysis and/or comparison (e.g., women in Québec legislatures, or the Ontario NDP party). Although these discussions are valuable when researching the municipal context, they are influenced by party

lines and provincial factors. These types of individualistic/focussed discussions hinder the ability to compare and contrast findings through different provinces and at different levels of government.

For this analysis, several articles from the bibliography of the Graham *et al.* (1998) text were selected. To be consistent with the information that was presented by Graham *et al.* (1998), a critical review of the literature that was used to make the claim of increased female representation in urban government was conducted. More extensive literature search methods included: searching through indices, available databases, journals, and book materials.

Overall, the surprising lack of information with respect to the municipal context made it very difficult to extract an opinion with any scholarly merit behind it. This may account for the generalization made by Graham *et al.* (1998), as pieces of information are found in many resources, and much of the municipal information is vague at best, lacking empirical support.

The barriers to political access are many, and most (if not all) authors on the subject agree that it is more difficult for women to access the political establishment than it is for men (Vickers, 1997; Darcy, Welch & Clark, 1987; Brodie, 1985; CACSW, 1987; Maillé, 1990). Barriers are often invisible and

unofficial, and exist at all levels of governance (some to varying degrees). The following short list describes some of the barriers to access:

- x Property Ownership: For many years, municipalities had property qualifications that dictated who could run for office. As late as 1970, a major Canadian city was still restricting women from running in municipal elections based on property ownership -Montréal! As males are more likely than females to own property, this had a significant impact on women running for office (Brodie, 1985).

- x Family Responsibility: One of the biggest barriers to access is the role of the female in child bearing and rearing. In addition, there is an increasing role on the female to provide care to aging parents (Vickers, 1997). It is often written that women bear a disproportionate amount of family responsibilities, and that this commitment is the single greatest obstacle in pursuing a career in office (MacIvor, 1996). In many instances, women are *expected* to sacrifice a career for familial responsibilities until such time as their role becomes less important (i.e., later stages of child rearing) (Brodie, 1985).

- ✘ **Professional Networks:** As men are more likely than women to be involved with business networks at a higher professional status, women lack the ties to organize effective campaigns to run for office (Young, 1997). Organizational support is one of the most important factors in winning an election (Darcy *et al.*, 1987), and women still lack the connections to benefit from this advantage. Despite predetermined campaign expense ceilings, candidates still must have access to economic networks that can shoulder part of the nomination campaign costs (Maillé, 1990). As few women belong to the financial circles or seats of power that provide an advantage to running for office, they continue to be dissuaded from becoming politically active.

- ✘ **Socio-Economic Factors:** Political campaigns are expensive and there are only a small number of women that correspond to the traditional profile of a politician (Maillé, 1990). There are economic differences between men and women that work against female participation in the political process, including income differentials, and access to senior level employment (Maillé, 1990; CACSW, 1987). As women generally earn less money than their male counterparts, they are unable to pour large amounts of money into campaigning. The class structure is a major factor in candidacy;

women must have access to their own money *and* access to additional funds (Brodie, 1985).

- x Socialization: Many authors theorize that women have been effectively “socialized out” of politics. Not only have the political institutions that surround us been dominated by men, but often young women are told that politics are “man’s work” (Brodie, 1985). Political institutions were designed when women were not yet considered citizens, and they have not been sufficiently modified to integrate women (Maillé, 1990). The reference to the political elite as the “old boy’s network” remains prevalent in our culture (CACSW, 1987; Maillé, 1990; Young, 1997; Darcy *et al.*, 1987)

- x Leave of Absence: When a candidate throws their hat in the political ring, it may involve taking a leave of absence from the current place of employment. Men are more likely than women to be encouraged by their firms to pursue political office, whereas women are pressured to maintain status quo (CACSW, 1987). Women are also less likely to pursue combining an existing permanent career with a political one (MacIvor, 1996).

- ✘ **Education:** Education credentials have been a key distinguishing feature between political elites and ordinary citizens. As women achieve higher levels of education (representing a majority in post-secondary institutions), the pool of qualified female candidates may increase (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999). In addition, as education has been correlated to voter participation, greater educational attainment by women in general may also spur increased voting rates, which may lead to more women in office (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999; Darcy *et al.*, 1987).

These barriers affect women at all levels of governance. The higher in the political chain one looks and the more competitive the "game" becomes, the harder it is to get involved politically (MacIvor, 1996; Bashevkin, 1991; Bashevkin, 1985). Alternatively, there are many reasons why running for municipal government may favour women. They are reported consistently throughout the literature and include the following:

- ✓ absence of party politics
- ✓ ability to remain close to home (family)
- ✓ political office is not always full-time
- ✓ the influence of volunteer and grassroots experience
- ✓ less expensive to campaign

- ✓ traditional gender roles more easily harmonized
- ✓ larger number of municipal offices
- ✓ men are less interested in running at the municipal level
- ✓ municipal issues are more relevant to the female experience

The number of women elected to political office at the municipal level is growing much faster than that at either the federal or the provincial level, however, this trend is restricted to large urban centres and has no counterpart in rural areas (Maillé, 1997; Maillé, 1990). There are few (if any) studies that report specifically on small urban municipalities and rural governance structures. The original Graham *et al.* (1998) statement that this paper aims to dispute, seems to emanate from the urban focus that the literature provides. The metropolitan census areas that Graham *et al.* (1998) use to support much of their writing, represent less than half of the total population in Canada. If the eight cities that Graham *et al.* (1998) use are the only reference point in making statements about female political representation, then the generalizations are misguided. The urban context, as previously discussed, is not solely defined by the large Canadian (primarily capital) cities.

METHODS

As most researchers use the major metropolitan centres of Canada (or other countries) in their analysis of the municipal context (including the statement in question), conclusions should be restricted to those same areas. However, generalized statements and most literature-based arguments infer otherwise. In order to disprove the Graham *et al.* (1998) statement, twelve Ontario case cities were selected for analysis.

pilot study: three case cities

Prior to undertaking the study of the full sample (i.e., twelve case cities), a pilot study was done in order to determine the value of continuing on a larger scale. The study took place in the early months of the year 2000. Three case cities were selected: Barrie, Sarnia and London. Barrie was selected because it is the investigator's home town, Sarnia was selected because of its similarity to Barrie, and London was selected as the location of the course of study (i.e., the University of Western Ontario). The combined population of the three cities is 497,000.

Information from Barrie and London was gathered in person by the investigator, and information from Sarnia was acquired by contacting the City Clerk's Office by e-mail.

Results of the pilot study are presented in the *Results* section.

Provided below are brief profiles of the three pilot case cities:

case city no. 1: barrie

Barrie is a city located approximately one hour north of Toronto with a population of 100,000. The region is experiencing rapid growth that has been widely attributed to the Toronto commuter base. Barrie relies on, and has grown around, the natural resource that the urban area surrounds - Kempenfelt Bay / Lake Simcoe. Barrie was incorporated as a town with village rights in 1853.

case city no. 2: sarnia

Sarnia is a city located approximately three hours southwest of Toronto at the mouth of the St. Clair River at the tail of Lake Huron. Sarnia serves as a border authority between itself and Port Huron, MI. It has a population of

The three pilot study case cities were included in the final study sample. They were assigned to a geographical catchment area. The remaining nine case cities that were used in this study, were randomly selected from three geographical catchment areas. To be consistent with existing boundary definitions, the province of Ontario was divided into four sections: Northeast, South-Central, East and Northwest. Cities that were both West and South, for example, were designated by the area that was most predominant (e.g., Windsor would be South not West). After the catchment areas were defined, an Ontario

case city selection

London is the largest city in the sample with approximately 325,000 residents. With the intent of being the province's capital, London has grown on a fine history of industry and business. Located on the fork of the Thames River, London is approximately two hours southwest of Toronto. It was incorporated as a town with village rights in 1840.

case city no. 3: london

73,000 and boasts of being a transportation hub and Lake Huron's largest city. It gained town status when it was incorporated in 1856.

map was used to select a total of three cities in each area. The pilot cities were all located in the South-Central catchment area, so only cities in the remaining catchment areas needed to be determined. Common cartography symbols were used to denote urban centres. At random, the remaining nine cities were selected. The total population of the nine additional case cities is 600,000. Therefore, the population of all twelve case cities is approximately 1.1 million people, or, 10% of the province's total population (Government of Ontario, 1999).

gathering information

After the nine new case cities had been selected, a search for information on the cities commenced. This portion of the study began in May 2000, and continued through the month of June. City webpages were found through the Ontario government's homepage, and other internet search engines were employed to find missing information. General information was gathered from the city webpages, including population and date of incorporation as a town/city (refer to *Results* section for city information).

For more specific information pertaining to female representation on each of the nine city Councils, a list of contact information was developed. In most

cases, the City Clerk's Office was the most obvious choice for finding information. However, some cities had Archivists or Records Managers who were likely have information on female representation. By searching through city webpages, e-mail addresses or phone numbers/extensions were gathered. In cases where neither of those two pieces of contact information were available, a phone call to the main switchboard of each city yielded the name and number of the appropriate individual.

A standard e-mail was drafted and sent to each of the case cities. It included an introduction to the investigator, the purpose of the inquiry, four key questions, and ideas on how to communicate the information back to the investigator. An example of the e-mail that was sent can be found in Appendix A. Where necessary, phone contact was established, and casual telephone interviews were conducted. The same four questions were asked in the telephone interviews as were posed in the e-mails.

Detailed records of each city were recorded in a database to track all information gathered. Dates, contact names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers were recorded. When information was received from the cities, it was saved electronically, and printed in hardcopy for future reference. The date that the information was returned was also recorded in the study database. If a city

failed to respond, a short follow-up phone call was placed. In most cases, the information was promptly provided to the investigator. Any delay in providing information was attributed to vacations, job transfers, being busy, or preparing for the upcoming election.

As the investigator had sent four clear questions to the attention of the cities, the information that was returned was similarly easy to understand. In all cases, only the answers to the specific questions were sent, or lists of female representatives were provided. This manner of acquiring information was very efficient in terms of the subsequent analysis. Interestingly, anecdotal information proved to be quite valuable to this study. Some individuals were able to recollect all of the female representatives, simply because there weren't that many to recall. In all cases, this anecdotal information proved to be accurate.

In cases where a piece of information was missing, a follow-up e-mail was sent or a phone call was made. After all information had been gathered from a case city, an e-mail was sent thanking the individual for their time and attention to the study. Similar appreciation was extended to those individuals who communicated information over the phone.

additional nine case cities

case city no. 4: brockville

Brockville has the distinction of being Ontario's first incorporated community. Named after Sir Isaac Brock in 1812, Brockville is located in the beautiful 1,000 islands at the base of the St. Lawrence River approximately 350 kilometres east of Toronto. Brockville is served by nine Councillors and a Mayor, in a three ward system. Industry has always been the backbone of the community, however, tourism is responsible for much of the recent growth.

case city no. 5: cornwall

Cornwall has ten Councillors and a Mayor, elected at-large from a base of eleven wards. Located approximately one hour east of Ottawa, Cornwall is strategically located on the banks of the St. Lawrence River adjacent to highway 401. Incorporated as a town in 1945, major growth has resulted from the manufacturing sector. With a high bi-lingual population, Cornwall is leveraging themselves into service industries and retail.

case city no. 6: kenora

Kenora is located on the north shore of the Lake of the Woods, 200 kilometres east of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Rich in aboriginal heritage, Kenora was the site of a Hudson's Bay trading post. It was incorporated as a town in 1892 after much debate between Manitoba and Ontario for "ownership" rights. Kenora was originally incorporated as a Manitoba town in 1882, ten years prior to its Ontario incorporation. It is a district seat for government service provision and a commercial hub for the region. The three basic industries are: forestry, tourism, and mining. Kenora is governed by a Council of six and a Mayor. There is one from each of the three wards and three at-large Councillors.

case city no. 7: Kingston

Kingston is one of two cities in Ontario that has a Board of Control (3 elected members). The Council consists of twelve Councillors from twelve districts, and there is a Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Located at the base of the St. Lawrence River, Kingston is approximately 250 kilometres from Toronto. As Canada's first capital, Kingston played an important role in the history of Upper and Lower Canada. It was incorporated as a town in 1846. Kingston boasts of urban sophistication and small-town charm, and offers knowledge-based industry and tourism as its largest sectors.

case city no. 8: north bay

Located 350 kilometres north of Toronto, North Bay is governed by ten Councillors and a Mayor who are elected at-large. As an important settlement along a system of interconnected waterways, North Bay has a rich history of trade and exploration. The city developed as a transportation hub, and depends heavily on natural resources such as mining and forestry. It has become a regional centre for education, health care and government services. North Bay was incorporated as a city in 1925.

case city no. 9: sault ste. marie

Sault Ste. Marie was incorporated as a town in 1887, and is rich with aboriginal and settlement history. It is northern Ontario's oldest community. Battles between the enemy tribes of the Ojibway and the Iroquois nations still dominate the current culture. With a Council structure based on six wards, twelve Councillors and a Mayor comprise the governance structure. Sault Ste. Marie is located on the St. Mary's River that flows between Lake Huron and Lake Superior. With a strong industrial base of steel, wood and paper, there is a growing technological sector and thriving government research centres.

case city no. 10: sudbury

Sudbury was incorporated as a town in 1930 and is a crucial northern city, serving the needs of over 500,000 people. Nine Councillors and a Mayor serve nine wards in Sudbury. Approximately 400 kilometres north of Toronto, Sudbury is built on the Canadian shield landscape and has some of the world's richest ore deposits. Once totally dependent on nickel mining, growing sectors include tourism, education, business and government.

case city no. 11: thunder bay

Seven hundred kilometres from Winnipeg, Manitoba lies Thunder Bay. As the gateway to the Canadian Shield, Thunder Bay was an important trading post. It is a national centre for transportation and forest industries, located atop the world's largest inland waterway. Incorporated as a city in 1970, Thunder Bay was a part of a large regional amalgamation. With a broad cultural mosaic, it is home to regional education facilities, health centres and northwestern Ontario's regional government. The city is governed by twelve Councillors and a Mayor, from seven wards. There are five at large seats elected to serve on Council.

case city no. 12: timmins

Timmins elects eight Councillors from five wards, one in each of four wards and four from ward five. It was incorporated as a town in 1912, and is dependent on the riches of the Canadian Shield. Gold was an early source of wealth in Timmins. As one of the north's largest regional centres, core sector include, health, air transportation and government services. There is a heavy reliance on resource-based industries including mining and forestry.

comparison information

Much of the literature that deals with female political representation pertains to the federal context. Although there are a number of factors that are significantly different between the municipal and federal levels of government, the House of Commons was selected for comparison. Data were gathered from federal government webpages, and source material provided additional information.

RESULTS

The following tables and information summarize the findings of the pilot study and the larger case study.

pilot study case cities: female representation

Each of the case cities has a relatively short history of female representation. This, of course, is no surprise. It is useful to put the analysis into the context of female voting privileges; women in Ontario gained the vote in 1917. In addition, as was previously discussed, several Canadian municipalities had property ownership stipulations that determined eligibility to run for Council. It was not in the scope of this study to determine which of the case cities had this type of clause in their by-laws.

barrie

The citizens of Barrie elected their first female Alderman in 1946, almost 100 years after its incorporation as a town, and almost 30 years after Ontario women were eligible to vote. The first female mayor in Barrie's history was elected in 1951, the earliest date for a female mayor among all twelve municipalities. Of special note, the election of Barbara Hanley in 1936 gives

Webbwood, ON (approximately one hour West of Sudbury) the distinction of being the first municipality in Canada to elect a female Mayor. Barrie's first female Mayor was elected a full 15 years later.

Barrie's government is a five ward system, with two Councillors per ward and currently, the composition of Council is split 50/50, with five out of the ten Councillors being female. In addition, the current Mayor is also female. The total number of women that have served on Barrie's Council as either an Alderman or the Mayor, is 11. It is important to note that elected officials in Barrie are still referred to as Aldermen. Although this point may seem less important than the larger issues of representation, language barriers can be considered a significant detail that engenders the politics of a municipality.

sarnia

Sarnia shares a similar history to Barrie, with the first female Alderman being elected to serve on Council in 1954 -again, almost 100 years after incorporation as a town and approximately 30 years after provincial voting rights. To date, Sarnia has yet to elect a female Mayor. Based on a four ward system, Sarnia's Council is comprised of eight Councillors plus the Mayor (i.e., two Councillors per ward). At present, of the eight members of Council, there is only one female Councillor.

Over Sarnia's history, there have been 12 women elected to serve on Council. Of note, the current Mayor (Mike Bradley) created the Ad Hoc Women's Advisory Council, to investigate why women were not getting involved in municipal governance. After all women were "shut-out" of the 1988 election, Mayor Bradley decided that an advisory committee could:

...address the perception of a "gender gap" on City Council and...provide a vehicle for input from individuals and organizations in the community on social and economic issues of significant interest to women in the community (Bradley, 1988)

The committee received mixed reviews in the media and in the community at large. There were claims that Mayor Bradley's decision was simply "trendy", masking the underlying issues (Egan, 1988; Kehow, 1988; Hogan, 1988). The advisory committee was disbanded following the next election.

London

London too has a past that reflects male dominated political representation. The first female Alderman was elected in 1954 (the same year as Sarnia), and the first female Mayor was elected in 1972 -a full 21 years after Barrie's first female Mayor, and over 35 years after Canada's first female Mayor. The Council in London is comprised of a four-member Board of Control and seven wards with two Councillors per ward. Currently, of 18 elected positions,

there are five female members. Of note, currently both the Deputy-Mayor and the Mayor of London are female.

Over time, there have been 21 elected female members on London Councils. A quick calculation indicates that of approximately 560* elected positions (available since Ontario women were eligible to vote), only 3.7% of all seats have been held by female representatives.

The following table summarizes the case city information:

	Barrie	Sarnia	London
Population	100,000	73,000	325,000
Town Incorporation	1853	1856	1840
1st Councillor	1946	1954	1954
1st Mayor	1951	--	1972
Current Composition (female / total)	5 / 10	1 / 8	5 / 18
Current Composition (%)	50%	12.5%	28%
Total # of Women	11	12	21

* This figure was calculated by adding the total number of seats available during each year between 1917 and 2000. Information was available denoting the terms of council and the number of councillors. If a council sat for a term that was greater than one year, each seat was counted on a per year basis. For example, if there was a council of 10 that sat for three years, there would be 30 seats available.

additional case cities: female representation

As was found in each of the pilot cities, the other nine municipalities that were selected for analysis also had relatively short histories of female representation. Their individual histories are more similar than dissimilar, and the new data resembles the data that were found in the pilot study.

brockville

As the municipality that was incorporated first, Brockville's history of female representation is not quite as historic. There have been a total of five women in Brockville's history, and there has never been a female Mayor. Currently, of nine Councillors, only one is female. Brockville elected its first female Alderman in 1958.

cornwall

Cornwall elects its Council members at-large, and is one of the younger municipalities in the sample. Incorporated in 1945, Cornwall didn't elect its first female Alderman until 1977 (ranked second last among the sample). To date, there has not been a female Mayor. A total of six women have been elected to serve on Council in Cornwall's history, and there is one woman on the current Council (out of ten Councillors).

kenora

With a Council of only six members, it is not surprising that Kenora has only has one woman on Council. After all, it does have the lowest population of all the municipalities in the sample. However, a total of nine women have served on Council in Kenora's history, and the first female Alderman was elected in 1935 –the earliest election for a female in the entire sample. Incorporated as an Ontario town in 1892, Kenora elected its first female Mayor 103 years later (i.e., 1995).

kingston

Kingston is another one of Ontario's older municipalities, and has a large Council structure (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Board of Control, Council). Of the twenty member Council, only one member is a female. In Kingston's history, ten women have been elected to serve on Council. Citizens elected the first female Alderman in 1955 and the first female Mayor in 1989.

north bay

North Bay was incorporated in 1925, and has elected a total of nine women to serve on Council. There has not been a female Mayor in North Bay's history. The first female Alderman was elected in 1958 and there are currently three female Councillor's serving in North Bay.

sault ste. marie

In 1965, Sault Ste. Marie elected its first female Alderman. However, to date there has not been a female Mayor. Only five women have served on Council in the municipality, and three of them are currently on Council. As a municipality, it has been incorporated since 1887.

sudbury

There are no women on Sudbury's current Council of nine. Only a total of four women have ever been elected to serve on Council. The first female Alderman was elected in 1985, but interestingly, Sudbury has elected a female Mayor in its past. That appointment took place in 1967 –among the earliest dates for female Mayors in the sample.

thunder bay

Thunder Bay's Council is split between ward designated elected Councillors and at-large Councillors. The city of Thunder Bay was incorporated in 1970, therefore data on female representation does not include data from the now amalgamated municipalities of Fort William and Prince Arthur. The first female Alderman was elected in 1969 and the first female Mayor was elected in 1978. A total of twelve women have been elected to serve on Council in Thunder Bay, and there are currently two women on the twelve member Council.

timmins

Timmins was incorporated as a town in 1912, and since that time it has seen only five women elected to serve on Council. There is currently one woman on the eight member Council. There has never been a female Mayor, and the first female Alderman was elected in 1973.

The following table summarizes the pilot data and the data from the larger sample.

City	Pop'n	Town Inc. (year)	1st Fem. Alderman	1st Fem. Mayor	Total # fem*	Current Comp. (fem:male)**	% fem (curr comp)**
Barrie	100,000	1853	1946	1951	11	6:11	54.5%
Brockville	22,000	1812	1958		5	1:10	10.0%
Cornwall	47,000	1945	1977		6	1:11	9.1%
Kenora	17,000	1892	1935	1995	9	1:07	14.3%
Kingston	112,000	1846	1955		10	1:20	5.0%
London	325,000	1840	1954	1972	21	6:19	31.6%
North Bay	56,000	1925	1958		9	3:11	27.3%
Sarnia	72,000	1856	1954		12	1:09	11.1%
Sault Ste. Marie	81,000	1887	1965		5	3:13	23.1%
Sudbury	90,000	1930	1985	1967	4	0:10	0.0%
Thunder Bay	125,000	1970	1969	1978	12	2:13	15.4%
Timmins	50,000	1912	1973		5	1:09	11.1%

Average	91,417	1889	1961	1973	9	2:12	19.30%
High	325,000				21	6:11	54.5%
Low	17,000				4	0:10	0.0%

Earliest		Brockville - 1812	Kenora -1935	Barrie -1951
Latest		Thunder Bay - 1970	Sudbury -1985	n/a

Colour Legend
Northeast
South-Central (pilot)
East
Northwest

* includes all female Councillors and Mayors in history

** includes Councillors/Board of Control/Mayors

summary: pilot cities

In terms of generalizing from the data that were collected from each of the three case cities, Barrie's female representation data seems to disprove most theories when compared with the other data. Not only did Barrie elect its first female Councillor almost ten years earlier than the other two cities, but it elected its first female Mayor in the 1950s (half of the total case cities still haven't been represented by a female Mayor!) Barrie's current composition of 50% females 50% males is also quite unique. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues, or if it was isolated to this past election.

Sarnia's female representation has been consistently low and spurred the Mayor to form the Advisory Committee on Women, however, this kind of investigation into the female representation issue is rare. Sarnia is the only city that has shown some level of priority to determining the underlying issues. London's current 30% female representation is the highest it has ever been, and like Barrie, it will be interesting to see if the trend will continue. The domination of women at the top of the chain in London (female Deputy Mayor and female Mayor) is also an interesting anomaly that will be put to the test during the next election. If London can maintain its strong female representation, then future work in this area may see London as a trend-setter for the election of women to

municipal Council.

summary: nine additional case cities

The nine additional case cities in the study sample provided data that confirmed the hypothesis of this report: women at the municipal level of government have not been widely represented on Council, either as Councillors / Aldermen or as Mayor. Combined, just over 100 women have served on Council in the twelve case cities. Considering the thousands of available seats and the histories of all twelve municipalities, this number represents only a fraction of the total number of Council members.

Although there are more similarities between the case cities than there are dissimilarities, there are some unique findings that are worth mention. Six of the case cities have yet to elect a female Mayor. As two of the three pilot cities had elected female Mayors, this finding was surprising. In addition, six case cities have only one female representative on their current Councils, and Sudbury does not have any women on Council. Sudbury also has the distinction of being the last city to elect a female Councillor (1985).

The smallest city in the sample was Kenora, and interestingly, it is the

municipality that elected the first female Alderman (now Councillor). 1935 marks that occasion, and pre-dates the election of Canada's first female Mayor by only one year. The third largest city in the sample (Kingston) had an unusually low total number of women in its history (n=10), and for the size of its Council (n=20) had only one female representative.

Another one of the larger cities, Thunder Bay, also has few females representatives in its history. However, given the date of the city's incorporation (1970), the fact that Thunder Bay has the second highest number of female representatives is quite interesting. Cities with the highest ratios of female to male Councillors include: Barrie, London, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. Alternatively, cities with the lowest ratios include: Sudbury, Kingston, Cornwall and Brockville (of note, three of those cities just listed were in the Eastern catchment area).

house of commons: female representation

The following chronology of the Federal House of Commons will serve to add some perspective to the context of female representation at the federal level of government.

- 1921 First woman elected to the House of Commons
- 1957 First female Cabinet Minister
- 1980 First female Speaker of the House of Commons
- 1993 First female Prime Minister
- 1993 First female Deputy Prime Minister

The total number of seats held by women in the House of Commons is 249. The current composition of the House of Commons has female representatives in 62 of 301 seats. In other words, 21% of elected Members of Parliament are female. It is significant to note that the most important positions (i.e., Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister) in the House of Commons can boast only one woman per position. Simply put, women have had greater opportunity to hold the highest seats of power on municipal Councils (i.e., Mayor and Deputy Mayor) due to the greater number of municipal Councils versus the single federal legislature. If the two are to be compared, one could theorize that everyone, in fact, has greater opportunity at the municipal levels than at the other levels of government. However, this was not the focus of this study and will not form a major component of the conclusions drawn from the data.

limitations & future investigation

Inherent to any study of this size and magnitude are a number of limitations that are beyond the control of the investigator. Aside from routine

sampling, time and financial constraints, there were more specific issues that were not addressed in this report.

The nature and scope of this report did not allow for further investigation into the effect of amalgamations on a municipality. Cities may or may not have reported data that reflected amalgamated areas. The accuracy of the information that was provided may be compromised given that amalgamated municipalities may not track the same information.

The amalgamation factor is significant, specifically, in the case of Thunder Bay. In 1970, Fort William and Port Arthur amalgamated to form the City of Thunder Bay. The history of female representation that has been presented in this report dates back to the 1970 incorporation, and therefore does not accurately reflect female representation in this area. Additional information about Thunder Bay, Fort William and Port Arthur has been included in Appendix B.

Based on the objective of this report, there were a number of larger municipalities that were not considered in this sample. This was a strategic decision that was made in order to add to a sparse literature base that ignores smaller urban areas. The decision to focus on small to mid-size municipalities

does not provide a true snapshot of female representation in local politics. A broader investigation would allow for a larger sample, and a cross-section of small, mid and large size municipalities. As the original statement in dispute was written in the context of Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), there may have been some value in using one of the CMA as a point of comparison.

Relying on anecdotal information can be problematic. A number of the case cities reported data from a combination of sources, including, the memories of many municipal staff members and former Councillors. Although Councillor lists exist in many of the municipalities, the majority of lists report Councillors / Aldermen by initials and last name only. This makes the determination of gender an impossibility. With the help of anecdotal interpretation, this barrier is overcome. Although the anecdotal information was valued, and treated as accurate, there is a possibility that an error could have occurred.

In most of the case cities, there was no Archivist or Records Manager. The Clerk's Office was responsible for the information about Councillors, and most have just recently realized the value of having this information available. Some municipalities do not keep detailed records of Councils, and had difficulty finding the information. Requesting detailed information about female representation added another dimension of difficulty. If it weren't for the very

few number of women in each municipality that have served on Councils, the task of dealing with poor records management would have been a time consuming exercise in research.

As the sample was defined by geographical catchment areas, it would have been valuable to analyze the differences (if any) that existed between and within regions. The scope of the report did not allow for this type of in-depth analysis but would be important in any future research in this area. Differences between cities of the same population, demographic characteristics, geographical size, and age would be other areas of comparison in future research.

DISCUSSION

It's not deference I want but equality, not just for me but for the sake of all the women who will come after me. Already I sometimes think I can hear their footsteps echoing in the corridors

*-Agnes Macphail, 1977
in Crowley, 1990, p. 62 & 190*

In every facet of government, there are challenges facing both the political structures (i.e., legislatures and municipal Councils) and females in society. Governments must recognize the barriers that face women who aspire to be elected to public office, and women must learn to accept the structures that exist and work to overcome traditional stereotypes. The paradox that exists in society today is an odd one. On the one hand, women represent an actual majority in terms of the Canadian demographic, and they also represent a majority of students at the post-secondary level (Brooke, 1999). On the other hand, political representation is disproportionately low. It is this key issue that has many scholars searching for answers to the female representation quandary.

The barriers that exist for women who aspire to participate in formal political structures exist at all levels of Canadian government. Although

accessibility was not a central feature of this study, it is important to note that the obstacles that were presented in this essay, and in the literature, have direct implications on the history of female representation in Canadian political structures. The task of trying to assess accessibility barriers (if they are indeed barriers) and their effect on empirical based results pertaining to female representation, is at the core of this area of study for many researchers. It was not, however, within the scope of this discussion to elaborate on this topic.

The data from the twelve case cities helps to solidify the argument that accessing seats in urban politics may not be much different for women than at the provincial or federal level. Although factors exist that make municipal government more attractive for females to participate, the "numbers" illustrate otherwise. Both the House of Commons and the average of the twelve case cities show that female representation is approximately 20%. This has not always been the case, as is evident from the historical data that is available -at all levels, women have not achieved such a high proportion of representation. Even looking back 15 years, women were very poorly represented at all levels of government. At both levels, women became involved in politics around the same time, and milestones have been consistent with one another (e.g., first female Alderman in Kenora, 1935; first female elected to the House of Commons, 1921).

The history of women in Canadian politics is not isolated to elected positions. There is another facet of this area of research that has not been addressed in this report. Statistics regarding candidacy in elections may prove to be equally as revealing about female participation in Canadian political structures. Data regarding candidacy and election results at the municipal level is available, but in most cases is not readily accessible. Female candidacy at the federal level has been gathered, but not analysed. Investigating in this area of interest would broaden the analysis of female representation. It would also reveal more questions about why women are not elected and why women run for political office in the first place.

Admittedly, the data and information that exists regarding the Canadian municipal context is sparse. It is very difficult to surmise anything from the existing literature base, and as the factors of education and female empowerment continue to change the dynamics of society, this area will continue to evolve at a fast pace. Using the provincial and federal, and even foreign literature is problematic, but provides a base for discussing the issues at the municipal level.

Based on the population data provided from the census metropolitan areas (CMA) that were used in Graham *et al.* (1998), the majority of Canadians

do not reside in these urban areas. It is important to consider that sweeping generalizations about female political representation at the municipal level are isolated to these CMAs. An important consideration in rural and small urban centre politics is the existence of strong gender roles that continue to be dominant. In rural areas, for example, women may not be empowered to participate in the political process. They may be more apt to participate in local school boards, volunteer organizations, or support others in their bid to pursue a political career (Brodie, 1985; Conway *et al.*, 1997; Darcy *et al.*, 1987).

This area of interest requires further investigation, and any additional findings will certainly be a tremendous contribution toward understanding female representation in the context of Canadian municipal governments.

Generalizations about female representation should be avoided until additional data exist to support the claims that municipal governments are more inclusive to women. Graham *et al.* (1998) would be well served to increase their analysis to include municipalities that are not characterized as Canada's largest cities. The data presented in this discussion serves to dispute any belief that female political representation is at a higher level in local governments than at the federal level.

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Appendix A

Text of the initial e-mail sent to municipalities to request information about female political representation.

Subject: Information Request
Date: 6 June 2000

Hi,

My name is Kelly Barrowcliffe and I am a Master of Public Administration student at the University of Western Ontario in London. I am currently doing a study of various councils across Ontario to determine the number of female representatives that have served over time. My theory is that there haven't been that many!!

I have selected [city] as one of my case cities –one of three in [geographical catchment area] Ontario, and one of 12 across the province. I am hopeful that you may have some information regarding the historic and current composition of council. I am looking for the following information.

The first female Alderman;
The first female Mayor;
The total number of women who have served;
The current number of males and females on council.

Other municipalities have been able to provide me with a list of their councils over the years, and I am hopeful that [city] has kept similar records. It would be helpful if females could be highlighted in some way as most lists are kept with initials and last names only, making it difficult to distinguish males from females. Alternatively, I would be pleased to speak with someone over the phone to gather the same information if you could provide me with a contact name and number.

Below, please find my contact information:

Kelly Barrowcliffe
#106-625 Kipps Lane,
London, ON
N5Y 4R5

(519) 672-9059
kbarrowc@julian.uwo.ca

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Kelly

Appendix B

The City of Thunder Bay was incorporated in 1970 with the amalgamation of Fort William and Port Arthur. The following information has been provided to pre-date the 1970 incorporation.

Fort William

Fort William has had three female Aldermen in its history. The first was elected in 1951, which is among the earliest dates in the twelve case cities. In 1959, Fort William elected its first female Mayor. Second only to Barrie, this is the second earliest date for the election of a female Mayor in the entire sample.

Port Arthur

Port Arthur also had three female Aldermen in its history. In 1948, the first female Alderman was elected, again among the earliest in the twelve case cities. Port Arthur has also had a female Mayor, who was elected in 1956. This election pre-dates the election of a female Mayor in Fort William, and becomes the second earliest date for the election of a female Mayor in the entire case city sample.