

Needed: Motivated Women on Municipal Councils
Councillor Claire Detheridge, Chair, UNSM Women in Local Government
Committee

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In a year and a half, Nova Scotians will vote for their municipal representatives. The October 18, 2008 municipal election falls on Persons Day, which commemorates the 1929 declaration that women are “persons under the law,” qualified to be appointed to the Senate. The coincidence is timely.

Nova Scotia needs more women in all areas of municipal decision-making, as elected representatives, as senior administrators, and as citizens on advisory boards and committees.

Accounting for more than half the province’s population, women make up only one in five municipal councillors, one in eleven mayors or wardens, and less than one in four top municipal administrators.

Women's experiences and perspectives are different than that of men, and their involvement makes a difference in how communities are run.

The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) works with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, the Association of Municipal Administrators, and the Halifax YWCA to operate the Women in Local Government Project. This partnership encourages women to vote, take part on advisory boards and committees, work for municipal administrations and run for council. Our goal is to have women be at least 30 per cent of candidates running in the next municipal election.

The project supports experienced and new councillors through networking breakfasts and a mentoring program launched in October. Municipal campaign schools for women will give them the skills needed to succeed when they run for council in 2008. A bursary program for women in municipal administration will help them to advance their careers through professional development. A public awareness campaign will educate women in communities about the role and impact of municipal government in our day-to-day lives.

You almost certainly know a woman who dedicates her time and energy to making her community better; a woman who would be an asset on any municipal council. On March 8, International Women's Day, encourage this woman to run for municipal council in 2008. And over the next 18 months, support her in her campaign.

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