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Nunavut Implementation Commission
Commission d'établissement du Nunavut

TWO-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES AND GENDER EQUALITY:
A "Made in Nunavut" Solution for an Effective and Representative Legislature

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Introduction

In designing a new Nunavut government, with its own Legislative Assembly, the Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) and the people of Nunavut have a unique opportunity to find ways of ensuring balanced representation of men and women at the highest political level.

The important thing is not that the Nunavut Legislature Assembly look and operate exactly like most other legislatures in the world: the experience of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories shows that for a legislature to best serve the people of the north, it has to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of the north. In order to do so it may have to be structured – and it may have to operate – somewhat differently than other legislatures.

The important thing is that the Nunavut Legislature Assembly must reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of Nunavut.

One of those needs is for an **effective** legislature. A very small legislature would likely have problems functioning effectively. For this reason, this discussion paper begins by asking "How Large Should The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Be?"

One of those aspirations is for a **representative** legislature. The most under-represented group in politics – in Nunavut, in Canada, and in much of the world – is women. The Commissioners are committed to the principle of gender equality. For this reason, this discussion paper then asks, "Why Is Equal Representation For Women In Politics An Issue?", "Are Women Full Participants In Decision-Making In Nunavut?" and "What Has Been Done To Try And Achieve Balanced Participation In Politics Between Men And Women?"

These questions are separate but related, as it is difficult to imagine a system which could provide balanced representation for men and women in a legislature that only has 10 or 12 seats.

The section "How Could The Design Of The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Guarantee Balanced Representation Of Men And Women?" suggests that a system of two-member constituencies, with all the voters in each electoral district electing both one male MLA and one female MLA, would be the fairest, simplest, and most effective way to design a Nunavut Legislative Assembly which is both effective and representative. The section "Can Two-Member Constituencies Work?" shows that two-member constituencies work well in many countries, including Canada.

This would be a "Made in Nunavut" solution that is (as a participant in the NIC's regional consultation in the Kitikmeot put it) "simply the right thing to do."

How Large Should The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Be?

How many MLAs should there be in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly? This is a serious question, as political scientists have advised the NIC that an assembly of less than 15 to 20 members will likely experience serious operating difficulties due to its small size – especially if 'party politics' comes into play.

Background:	The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories is composed of 24 members, 10 of whom represent constituencies in Nunavut. 3 of the 24 MLAs are women, and 1 of the 10 Nunavut MLAs is a woman. Greenland's Home Rule Parliament, the *Landsting*, is composed of 27 members, 4 of whom are women.

This discussion paper therefore takes as its starting points that:

- **the legislature should be composed of *at least* 15 to 20 MLAs, and**
- **people are generally satisfied with the existing electoral boundaries.**

If NIC's consultations with the Nunavut Caucus, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., regional and community leaders and the general public suggest that people want a legislature with fewer than 15 to 20 members, or a legislature with significantly different electoral boundaries, then these assumption would no longer be valid.

The size and make-up of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories has evolved over time, in recent years as a result of recommendations made by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The ten members of the Nunavut Caucus are currently elected to represent the following electoral districts:

- **Baffin region**
  - Amittuq
  - Baffin Centre
  - Baffin South
  - High Arctic
  - Iqaluit
- **Keewatin region**
  - Aivilik
  - Keewatin Central
  - Kivallivik
- **Kitikmeot region**
  - Kitikmeot
  - Natilikmeot

There are any number of options for structuring the Nunavut Legislative Assembly: For discussion purposes, let's assume that after consulting with the communities the NIC concludes that the present structure of 10 electoral districts plus a separate electoral district for Sanikiluaq – a total of 11 members[1] – is the preferred option.

Would this legislature be large enough to function smoothly, keeping in mind that a Cabinet of 5 would leave only 6 MLAs to serve as 'ordinary members' and that a Cabinet of 6 would be larger than the 5 'ordinary members'? If party politics were to

[1] 12 if the Premier were to be directly elected, instead of chosen from among the MLAs.

be implemented, it would be possible for the governing party to elect just 6 MLAs – and each of them would have to be in the Cabinet!

This is a serious point. The first Nunavut Cabinet can only be as effective as the 'talent pool' from which it is selected.

If one agrees that an 11 seat legislature is too small to function smoothly, then one needs to ask: in what other fashion might the Nunavut Legislative Assembly be structured?

One method would be to use the 10 existing electoral districts 'as is,' give Sanikiluaq back its own electoral district, but give each constituency 2 seats. This would result in a legislature of 22 members.[2]

This method of structuring the makeup of the legislature would:

- result in the legislature being a reasonable size – large enough to function smoothly but small enough to be cost-effective,
- make life a little easier for each MLA, and
- offer a simple, effective and fair way to achieve something that many people in Nunavut would like to see: balanced representation for men and women in the new Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

2 23 if the Premier were to be directly elected, instead of chosen from among the MLAs.

Why Is Equal Representation For Women In Politics An Issue?

The answer to this question has been neatly summed up by Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, Sheila Copps:

> *The main answer is obvious. Plain fairness.*[3]

Women make up just over half the population, but are systematically under-represented in politics – not just in Nunavut, but across Canada and all around the world. Why? The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing agreed that women face a number of barriers to participation in politics, including:

- sex-stereotyping,
- the difficulty of juggling career, family and political responsibilities, including:
  - inadequate child-care facilities, and
  - a tendency to hold jobs that are less flexible with respect to taking time off to participate in political activities,
- negative attitudes within political parties,
- the fact the men tend to have better political 'networks,' and
- negative stereotypes of women in the media.

Because these barriers form part of a system of "systemic (or structural) discrimination,"

> *practices and attitudes that have, whether by design or impact, the effect of limiting an individual's or group's right to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics,*

they are often referred to as "systemic barriers":

> *barriers to people realizing opportunities or receiving equal protection/benefit of the law. These barriers are understood to be communicable to the social, economic, political and cultural arrangements in a society.*

If these systemic barriers could be completely eliminated, then one can assume that women would run for – and be elected to – political office in equal numbers with men. But we must be clear: nowhere in the world have these systemic barriers been eliminated, and as a result nowhere in the world is there balanced participation in politics between men and women.

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[3] Copps (1992), p. 3.

As **groups**, men and women have had different relationships with the laws and institutions created through public policy, and have had different life experiences. As a result, there are differences in the ways in which men and women **approach** politics. Collectively, women place greater emphasis on the ways in which public policy impacts on the family and the community. Some **individual** men and women do, of course, have different opinions.

These points suggest that women have shared interests in their day-to-day lives, and therefore have shared interests in seeking equal representation in politics.

One can go a step further, however, and acknowledge that women's under-representation in politics helps explain why they are more likely to be poor (especially if they're single parents) than men are, earn lower wages for work of equal value, face other forms of discrimination in the workplace, are discriminated against by pension systems, and have limited access to affordable child day-care. The call for balanced representation in politics is therefore more than a call for recognition of shared interests, it is a call for recognition for equality for a historically mistreated group in society.

Canadian society has long recognized that certain **groups** of people – the Québecois and Francophones outside Québec, for example – should be recognized as having group rights. More recently, Canadian society has recognized the existence of aboriginal rights: the Nunavut Land Claim and the future Government of Nunavut are in fact products of that recognition. The human rights of women can also be understood – and implemented – as a form of group rights.

Some critics of equal political representation for women criticize the idea by asking whether there shouldn't be equal representation for other groups in society: elders and youth, the disabled, etc. Some even try and make a bad joke out of it by adding tall and short people, long-haired and short-haired people, blue-eyed and brown-eyed people, etc. to the list.

This discussion paper is premised on the idea that our gender differences overlay all of our other individual, cultural or socio-economic characteristics. The male/female grouping is unique in that men and women exist in roughly equal numbers, tend to approach politics somewhat differently, have different levels of access to the political system, and **are currently able to participate in politics to very different degrees.**

This is not to say that human beings identify solely as men and women, or that all men and all women think exactly the same way. Not at all. But society as a whole can hardly benefit from a political system that fails to provide balanced representation for as universal, abiding and numerically equal subsets of humanity as men and women.

This model presented in this discussion paper is therefore not an attempt to create divisions in society – rather, it is an attempt to recognize differences and address the systemic inequality and unfairness which already exists in society.

Are Women Full Participants In Decision-Making In Nunavut?

Women have always played a prominent role in Inuit society. There can be no denying that the communities in Nunavut today could not function without the contributions made by women – in the home, in the workplaces, and in a wide range of organizations. And women in Nunavut certainly do participate in the full range of decision-making processes at the community, regional and territorial and national levels.

Indeed, northern women in general – and Inuit women in particular – have earned national attention for their strength and commitment to public life. Only Inuit could (and did) field a team like the 'Mothers of Confederation' – Rosemarie Kuptana, Nellie Cournoyea and Mary Simon – during the constitutional reform process.

But **women in Nunavut remain significantly under-represented in electoral politics at the territorial level:** only one of the 10 Nunavut MLAs is a woman. The reason why women are less politically active at the territorial level than at the municipal level could be that the systemic barriers to participation in politics are weaker in women's home communities than they are at the territorial level.

There's no need to blame anyone for this situation – and no one person or group of people is really to blame. But more and more women (and men) are saying that there is a need to remedy the situation – by taking steps to address the systemic barriers to women's participation in politics and ensure that women are full and equal participants in the political process at all levels.

It is also important to distinguish between participation in "formal" (i.e. electoral) politics and participation in "informal" politics (women and men volunteering their time and talents to cooperatively make the communities better places to live), because it is the people who participate in the "formal" politics of legislatures who determine the level of resources that people who participate in "informal" politics have available to work with. Participation in electoral politics is therefore particularly important during times of fiscal restraint.

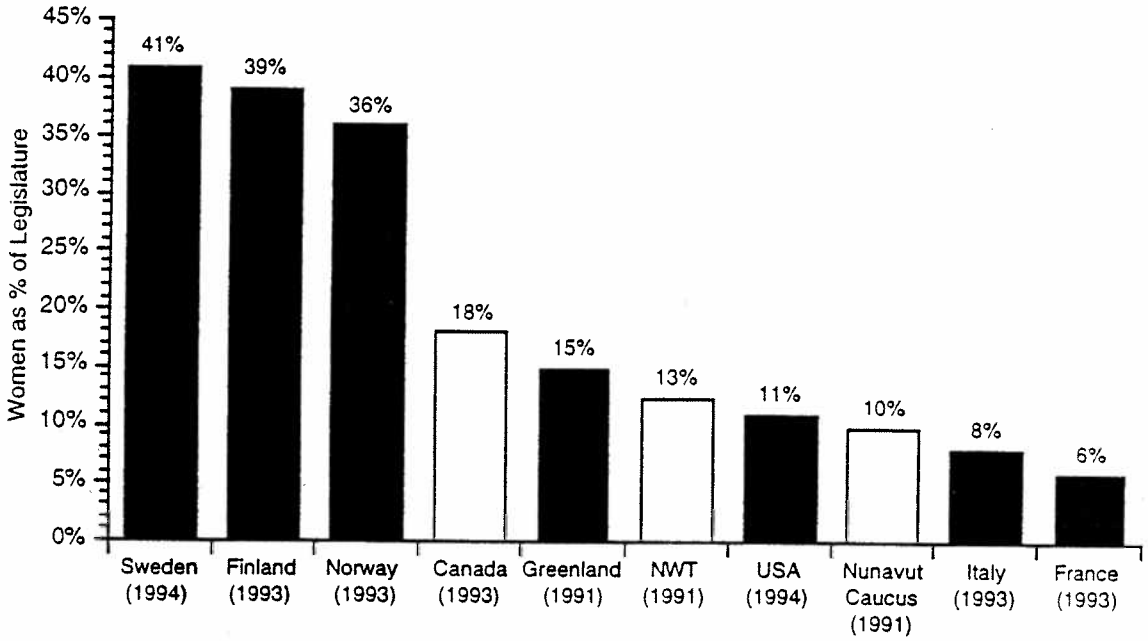
What Has Been Done To Try And Achieve Balanced Participation In Politics Between Men And Women?

Women continue to struggle to increase their levels of participation in politics – both in Canada and around the world.

The Globe and Mail recently reported that the governing Australian Labour Party has committed itself to make sure that women make up 35 per cent of its candidates for parliament by the year 2002. "When half our population is more adequately represented in our party and our parliament, we'll be stronger for it," the Australian Prime Minister said. Currently only 10 per cent of the members of Australia's House of Representatives are women.

The part of the world where the most progress has been made with respect to ensuring equal representation of women in politics is Europe, especially the Nordic countries – Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.[4] But not every country in Europe has tried very hard to achieve this goal, and as a result women in the different European countries have very different levels of representation.

This graph shows the degree of gender equality in selected legislatures in Europe, the United States and Canada:



and this graph shows the degree of gender equality in the legislatures of Canada's provinces and territories:

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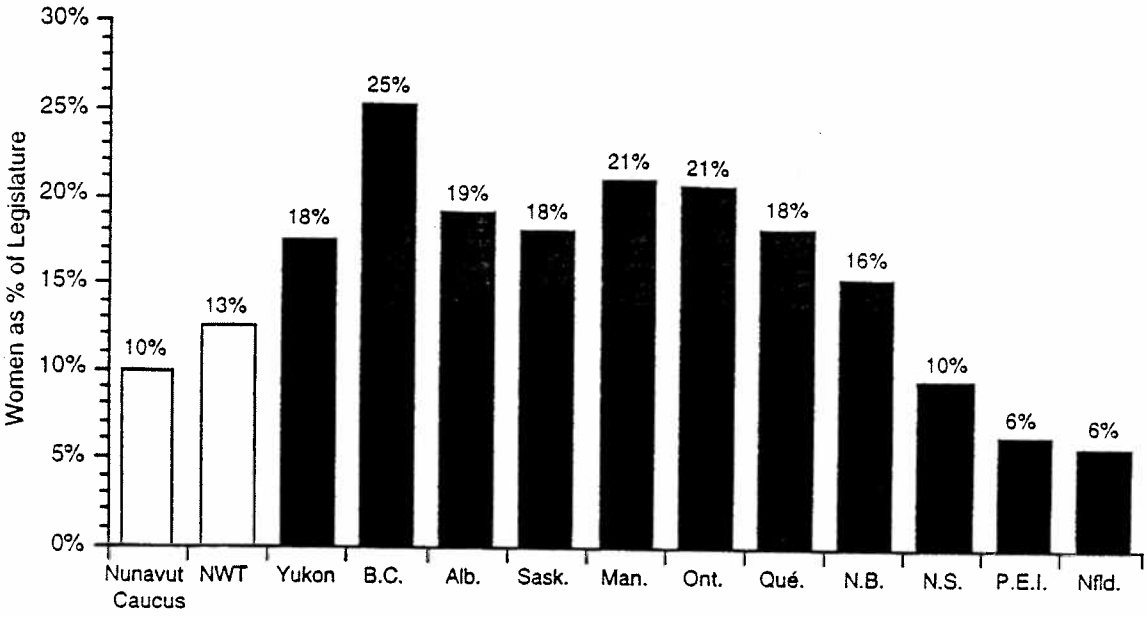
4 see Nordic Council of Ministers (1994) for a remarkably thorough assessment of the status of men and women in the Nordic countries.



Lisa Young, a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at the University of Toronto, has extensively researched women's representation in politics and notes that:

> *few voters are aware of the extent to which, at a practical level, electoral systems shape electoral outcomes. ... A study of factors (including electoral structures, political parties, and socio-economic conditions) contributing to the election of women in 23 democracies found that the type of electoral system is the most significant predictor of the number of women elected.*[5]

Some of the different electoral systems used in western democracies include:

- **single-member plurality** (the system used most often in Canada), where the candidate who receives the most votes in a constituency is elected (even if they don't have anywhere near a majority of the total votes cast),
- **single-member majority**, where either: voters rank the candidates in order of preference, and candidates with the least votes have their votes redistributed according to the ranking until one candidate achieves a majority; or a "run-off election" of the two top candidates is held if no candidate wins a majority of votes in the first election,
- **proportional representation**, where parties present a list of candidates and voters cast their ballots for their favourite party. (There are many different kinds of proportional representation systems, too many to be described here.)

This chart shows the degree of gender equality in selected legislatures, grouped by type of electoral system:

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5 Young (1994), p. 4

Electoral System	Country, Legislature (Year of Election)	Women as % of Legislature
Proportional Representation	Sweden, *Riksdag* (1994)	41 %
	Norway, *Storting* (1993)	39 %
	Finland, *Eduskunta* (1991)	39 %
	Denmark, *Folketing* (1990)	33 %
	Greenland, *Landsting* (1991)	15 %
	Italy, Chamber of Deputies (1992)	8 %
Mix of Single-Member and Proportional Representation	Germany, *Bundestag* (1990)	20 %
Single-Member Plurality	New Zealand, House of Representatives (1993)	21 %
	Canada, House of Commons (1993)	18 %
	United States, House of Representatives (1994)	11 %
	United Kingdom, House of Commons (1992)	9 %
Single-Member Majority	Australia, House of Representatives (1993)	8 %
	France, National Assembly (1993)	6 %

What trends do we see when we look at the results of using these different systems?

> *Among West European and North American countries, the countries with the greatest proportion of women in their legislatures – Finland, Norway and Sweden – employ proportional representation systems, while the countries with a lower proportion of women – the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada – employ single-member systems.*[6]

Proportional representation systems offer political opportunities for women primarily because the various political parties know that it is in their best interest to "balance the ticket" by listing both men and women on their list of potential legislators. Many parties, beginning with the Norwegian Labour Party in 1983, have recently adopted guidelines or quotas for women's representation on the party list. This has been an important development, as the outcome of an election in a proportional representation system is only as representative as the lists put forward by the parties.

For example, during the run-up to the recent general election in Sweden a coalition of women's groups made it clear that if the political parties didn't do a better job of including women on their lists then they would form a "women's party" (as was done in Iceland). Each of the main Swedish parties promised to do better, and they did: 41 per cent of the MPs elected were women, and both of the main parties promised to have women make up half of their cabinet.

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6 Young (1994), p. 40. We all know the expression "one man, one vote," but the reality appears to be "one vote, one man."

However, simply adopting a proportional representation system doesn't guarantee balanced political participation of men and women: some countries which use proportional representation systems lag far behind the Nordic countries – where the under-representation of women is widely considered to be a public problem, against the interests of women and ultimately as a disadvantage for the society as a whole.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that women have only been elected in significant numbers "in countries where major political parties have made commitments to achieving representative outcomes. Generally, parties have made these commitments only after women both inside and outside the party have exerted pressure on the party to implement affirmative action programs, such as reserving half of the places on the party list for women."[7] Political parties have also played a crucial role in increasing the level of women's participation in politics in Canada.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations' *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,* which states that "women shall be entitled to hold public office ... on equal terms with men, without any discrimination,"[8] and women's participation in formal Canadian politics certainly has increased significantly in recent years. But women are still a very long way from being equal participants in the Canadian political system.

It was only 12 years ago that a female MP stood up in the House of Commons and began a speech on violence against women... and was heckled and laughed at. Since that day, women in Canada – north and south – have learned a lot about using the political system to make positive changes on issues of concern to them. As MP Mary Clancy has noted, "At least they're not laughing any more."

Most Canadian women received the right to vote in federal elections in 1917[9], not long after women in the Nordic countries, but the number of women elected to the national legislature increased much more slowly here: to 13 per cent of MPs elected in 1988 and 18 per cent of MPs elected in 1993.[10] Similar trends can be found in provincial and territorial legislatures.[11]

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7 Young (1994), p. 33.

8 this sentence is from Article 7 of the convention, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979 and ratified by Canada on December 10, 1981.

9 All residents of the Eastern Arctic – Inuit and non-Inuit alike – were disenfranchised until the federal election of 1962. The area we know today as Nunavut had no representation in the House of Commons, and therefore neither men nor women could vote. As well, First Nations women did not receive the right to vote until the *Indian Act* was amended in 1960.

10 the record of the Canadian Senate – an appointed body – is rather worse. For example, it has only been 65 years since women have been *allowed* to sit in the Senate – they were not considered "persons" in the law before a 1929 decision of the British Privy Council overturned Canadian courts in the famous "Persons Case." But during the 65 years since the "Persons Case," 92 per cent of the Canadians appointed to the Senate have been men – and today only 13 per cent of Senators are women.

11 getting women elected to national and provincial/territorial legislatures is particularly important in Canada, where Cabinet ministers can only be selected from the elected MPs or MLAs. This is not the case in many European countries, including Greenland.

Lisa Young notes that:

> *The three main parties holding official party status in the House prior to the 1993 election ... demonstrated at least a nominal commitment to increasing the number of women holding office. When a proportional representation system was being discussed in the context of an elected Senate during the 1992 constitutional round, there was support for using such a system to increase the social representativeness of the Senate. All three parties represented in the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada agreed that "parties should use the opportunity presented by multiple nominations to promote gender equality and the representation of Canada's social and cultural diversity within the political process."*[12]

Each of the political parties which elected MPs to the House of Commons in 1993 were contacted for information about the manner in which they currently promote the participation of women.

The **Liberal Party** endorses a campaign, chaired by Deputy Leader (and Deputy Prime Minister) Sheila Copps, to recruit female candidates in "winnable" constituencies. The Liberals also have an active National Women's Liberal Commission (NWLC). According to the report of the 1994 NWLC biennial meeting:

> *The mandate of the NWLC is to represent and promote the interests of women within the Liberal Party of Canada and to encourage the active participation of women at all levels of the Party. By the turn of the century, they anticipate that at least fifty percent of all members of Parliament and the Senate will be women. The NWLC strives to ensure that federal policies do not discriminate against women.*[13]

This is worth noting: the goal of the NWLC, an official body of the Liberal Party, is "to bring about equal representation in the House of Commons, the Senate and the provincial and territorial legislatures by the end of the century" as well as "at all levels of the party." An assessment of the gender representivity of the various party bodies and committees must be presented at each party convention.

Perhaps in part due to the work of the NWLC, the Liberals elected 36 female MPs in 1993 – the largest number of women that any caucus has ever held in Parliament.

The **Bloc Québecois** was unable to respond to NIC's request for information within the tight time frame required for the preparation of this discussion paper.

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12 Young (1994), pp. 36-7.

13 National Women's Liberal Commission (1994), especially the sections "Historical review of the NWLC," "Mission statement of the NWLC," and "Liberal Party of Canada: gender assessment, May 1994."

Reform Party MP Diane Ablonczy stated that the Reform Party believes in treating all its members, candidates and MPs equally, and as a result there is no formal women's network or association within the party. Ms. Ablonczy stated that women are active participants in all levels of the party, although she acknowledged that women make up far fewer than half of the Reform MPs or high-ranking party officials.[14]

New Democratic Party leader Audrey McLaughlin stressed that the NDP has made encouraging equal participation of women a priority for many years. The NDP has been more willing to use quotas than the other parties: during the last election the NDP divided the federal electoral districts into regions, and then insisted that each region ensure that 50 per cent of the NDP candidates were women.[15]

The **Progressive Conservative Party** also has a women's commission, however the party office informed NIC that it was more of an informal 'network' than anything resembling the National Women's Liberal Commission.

The Liberals, the NDP and the Conservatives also carry out fund-raising (through the Judy LaMarsh, Agnes McPhail, and Ellen Fairclough funds, respectively) to provide women candidates with additional resources (usually amounting to a few thousand dollars) during the election campaign.

In summary,

- all 4 of the political parties who responded to NIC's request for information acknowledge that women face system barriers to full participation in politics (the Reform Party's acknowledgment coming from an individual MP),
- 3 of those 4 parties have internal structures and/or policies which attempt to assist women in overcoming those barriers, and
- despite the significant advances that have been made, women cannot yet be considered to be full and equal participants in any of these Canadian political parties.

The participation of women in politics has also been addressed by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (RCERPF), which submitted its final report to the government in 1991. It made a number of important statements on the participation of women in Canadian politics. The RCERPF found that "women are the most under-represented segment of Canadian society," being under-represented by 66 per cent relative to their presence in the electorate[16]. That statistic supports the claim of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of

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[14] Ms. Ablonczy also stated that she completely agrees that women face systemic barriers to participation in politics. Where "Reform women" differ, she said, is that they choose to overcome these barriers as individuals.

[15] New Democratic Party (1993?).

[16] 75 % at the time their report was issued; the statistics improved slightly after the 1993 election.

Women that "the voice of government" remains "a man's voice," 20 years after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

The "virtual exclusion" of several segments of the Canadian population, especially women, is "no longer acceptable," the RCERPF concluded, because "the full range of Canada's interests" will remain unrepresented until they begin more "reasonably" to reflect the actual composition of society.

Specifically, the RCERPF acknowledged the sex-bias in existing electoral practices, supported the use of gender-neutral language in Canada's *Elections Act*, and introduced the notion of under-representation as a catch-phrase and reform slogan. In summary, the most important factors in increasing the participation of women in politics have been:

- the use of electoral systems which increase women's political opportunities,
- political parties which actively support increasing women's participation in legislatures, and
- effective and credible women's movements and organizations in the society as a whole, and broad support in the society as a whole for the participation of women in politics.

The work of Pauktuutit (the Inuit Women's Association), the informal network of prominent Inuit women leaders, and the support of the many Inuit men who believe in equal participation of women in politics have all helped create a social and political climate which allows the current discussions to be taken seriously. As Martha Flaherty, Pauktuutit's President, recently commented, "We do not seek power over men but, rather, equality with men – respect, fairness, and openness."[17]

[17] Flaherty (1994), p. 8.

How Could The Design Of The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Guarantee Balanced Representation Of Men And Women?

Nunavut does not yet – and may never – have party politics, so we can't assume that progressive political parties will help close the political "gender gap" in Nunavut as they have elsewhere.

Among the three most important factors in increasing the participation of women in politics, this leaves the use of an appropriate electoral system as a critical factor in any strategy to increase women's political opportunities in Nunavut.

One simple and effective way of structuring the Nunavut Legislative Assembly to both:

- ensure that it is of sufficient size to function smoothly, and
- guarantee balanced participation of men and women,

would be to have two-member constituencies for the existing electoral districts, with one seat being held by a man and the other seat being held by a woman.

When election time approaches, the returning officer would keep two lists of candidates instead of one – one list of male candidates and one list of female candidates. If party politics were to emerge in Nunavut, each party could run one man and one woman in each constituency. On election day, each voter would cast votes for two MLAs – one from the list of male candidates and one from the list of female candidates. The male candidate with the highest number of votes and the female candidate with the highest number of votes would both be elected.

Each constituency would then be represented by 2 MLAs, with equal rights and equal responsibilities. They may agree on some issues and disagree on others, but it is reasonable to assume that they would work together to promote the interests of their constituency as a whole on addition to focusing on the issues of particular interest to them as individual legislators. It is also reasonable to assume that the women MLAs would co-operate to ensure that issues of particular importance to women get the attention they deserve.

The model presented in this discussion paper would be simple and effective. It operates on the "single-member plurality" system that people are used to. There would be no need for quotas, or proportional representation, or any other methods that people might find complicated or too "different" from the electoral system we've had to date. It would work with either 'consensus government' or party politics. It would be a fundamental step forward for both men and women, and it would lay the foundation for a better future for our children.

Can Two-Member Constituencies Work?

The model presented in this discussion paper suggests using two-member constituencies as a tool to meet the goals desired for the design of the legislature. This is not a new or an untested tool: Canada has actually had quite a lot of experience with two-member (and multi-member) constituencies, and they are very common in Europe today.

Canada's House of Commons had 5 two-member constituencies in 1921, 4 two-member constituencies until 1930, and 2 two-member constituencies from 1935 until 1966.

At the provincial level, 9 of the 10 provinces have used two-member or multi-member constituencies in the past 50 years[18], and Prince Edward Island still does so today (see below). Most provinces were still doing so as recently as the 1960s, when some 20 per cent of all members of the provincial legislatures were elected from districts returning more than one member. Some provinces combined proportional representation systems for their larger, multi-member constituencies with simple plurality single-member systems in the smaller constituencies.

PEI's Legislative Assembly has historically been structured on the basis of 16 two-member constituencies – for a total of 32 MLAs. Like many systems using two-member and multi-member constituencies, PEI's system has as its historical roots the notion of representation for different groups in society as well for individuals. Landholders elected Assemblymen and non-landholders elected Councilors, however over the years the two positions effectively became the same.[19] (This is similar to the difference between Britain's House of Lords and House of Commons, except that in PEI's case the two types of representatives operate within the same legislature.)

The use of two-member constituencies in Canada has its origins in England. The historical pattern of representation in the British House of Commons before 1832 was for each county and enfranchised borough to elect 2 MPs. Two-member and multi-member constituencies remained the rule (with some exceptions) until 1885, and Britain continued to have 15 two-member constituencies until 1945.

It should be stressed that nothing in the political science literature indicates that there has ever been problems with two-member or multi-member constituencies.

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18 only Québec has never done so.

19 the 1993 election in PEI was the last to use two-member constituencies. The legislature recently passed a law establishing a system of 27 single-member electoral districts to come into effect when the writ is issued for the next provincial election. According to the office of Premier Catherine Callbeck, the change was not in response to any unhappiness with the traditional arrangement. Rather, the residents of PEI had expressed a desire for fewer politicians generally, and the government responded by creating a Royal Commission which recommended the new system.

Some – but certainly not all – countries have, over the years, developed electoral systems which emphasize individual representation at the expense of group representation. Others developed electoral systems which also allow for more representation by various groups in society, and many of them use multi-member constituencies as a tool to achieve that goal.

Indeed, multi-member constituencies are the norm in most Western European countries today. Switzerland, for example, has 5 single-member constituencies and 21 constituencies which elect between 2 and 35 members. Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Greece and others have widely differing legislative systems, all of which use multi-member constituencies. The Greenlandic *Landsting,* with the Danish *Folketing* as its model, also operates in this manner.

Most European countries have found a way of meeting both the nineteenth century demand for equality of representation and the older principle of community representation by varying numbers rather than drawing boundaries. In the same manner, the model presented in this discussion paper would satisfy both the demand for equality of representation and the principle of balanced participation by men and women by increasing the number of MLAs rather than by redrawing the electoral boundaries.

Conclusion: Simple, Fair, Effective, And "Made in Nunavut"

Democracy is best served when the composition of a legislature closely mirrors, in terms of social characteristics, the composition of the population represented. This is true on the level of day-to-day government decision making and resource allocation, and this is also true on a symbolic level because legislatures – which are supposed to be representative institutions – re-present society to itself.

In designing a new Nunavut government, with its own Legislative Assembly, the Nunavut Implementation Commission has been challenged to find ways of ensuring balanced representation of men and women at the highest political level. The people of Nunavut have a rare and wonderful opportunity to create a legislature and a government which are appropriate, innovative and progressive.

What we learn from studying women's representation around the world is that the structure of the political system makes a big difference. the evidence from across Canada and around the world suggests that if balanced participation for man and women is not designed into the very make-up of the legislature, then women in Nunavut are unlikely to achieve full and equal participation in politics.

Two-member constituencies – with both one male MLA and one female MLA representing each constituency – could be a simple, fair, effective and "Made in Nunavut" solution for designing a Legislative Assembly that is both effective and truly representative.

The Nunavut Legislative Assembly could be a model for democratic peoples everywhere. Nunavut could have the first legislature in the world to have balanced representation of men and women designed right into its make-up.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission welcomes **your** comment on this discussion paper.

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Appendix: In Response To Critics

In late 1994 and early 1995 the possibility of gender equality in political representation in Nunavut has received a brief flurry of attention from the northern media, and has become a subject of discussion in the communities. All one can say for sure is that some people are in favour of it in principle, some people are opposed to it in principle, and with the release of this discussion paper all Nunavut residents have an opportunity to consider an actual model of how balanced participation between men and women might be implemented.

What kinds of criticisms have been expressed about gender equality, and how does the model presented in this discussion paper address those criticisms?

- One criticism is that having two MLAs for each constituency would be more expensive that having one MLA for each constituency.

  But this is only true if one compares (for example) a 22-seat Assembly to an 11-seat Assembly. If one agrees that an Assembly should have at least 15 to 20 MLAs to function smoothly, then it doesn't matter how those 15 to 20 MLAs are chosen... the cost is still the same. Besides, the NIC is emphasizing elected bodies over non-elected boards and agencies, and the money saved by doing so could go towards operating a Legislative Assembly which is both a reasonable size and which ensures the balanced representation of men and women in formal politics.

- A second criticism that people might make is that this would be a "quota system," when it is better to have representatives elected on the basis of merit.

  But this isn't a "quota system." All MLAs would be freely elected, presumably on the basis of merit (or party affiliation, or both). It wouldn't be a system where men only vote for men, and women would only vote for women – both MLAs would be elected by both men and women. It would be a system consistent with fundamental democratic principles.

- A third criticism is that some people like the system "just the way it is."

  To accept this criticism one must not be too concerned by the systemic under-representation of women in politics, both in Nunavut and elsewhere. One must not be too concerned that the issues that women tend to care most about tend to get less attention by male politicians. And one must not be too concerned about – as Sheila Copps put it – "plain fairness."

An editorial in News/North ("Women don't need a leg up," October 3, 1994) identified several of the obstacles which will have to be overcome if the model presented in this discussion paper is to become a working reality:

- The editorial implies that the handful of prominent northern women politicians it names is proof that our political system is OK the way it is.

  Our existing political system is not OK. One women member in the 10-member Nunavut Caucus is not good enough. Northern women face the same systemic barriers to participating in politics as women everywhere else in the world do, and as a result women are significantly under-represented in formal politics in the north.

- The editorial suggests that people who want equal participation for women "should have the confidence to allow women to be treated on individual merits."

  The model presented in this discussion paper does that – but it also recognizes that there is a big difference between a political system that talks about gender equality and a political system that delivers gender equality.

  The model also recognizes that merit is not a value-free concept: different groups in society assign merit differently. For example, the Government of Nunavut can be expected to value the ability to speak Inuktitut more than a government which represents a primarily English or French speaking population. The Government of Nunavut would therefore arrive at a different calculation of the relative "merit" of different job applicants than governments who do not place the same value on the ability to speak Inuktitut.

- the editorial concludes that guaranteeing equal representation is not the best way for women to be represented in the Nunavut legislature.

  The editorial supports using limited measures to reduce some of the systemic barriers to women's participation in politics – a timid approach which has not resulted in balanced participation in politics anywhere in the world. There is no reason to believe that it would do so in Nunavut.

  This discussion paper suggests that a simple, fair, and effective *way of designing the* Nunavut Legislative Assembly is to create a system of *two-*member constituencies, with all voters in each electoral district electing *both* one male MLA and one female MLA.