



School trustee says female Ministers unhelpful

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Education and childcare need a competent champion, according to outspoken advocate and Vision Vancouver school trustee **Sharon Gregson**. So even though the ministers of both were reelected last night—**Linda Reid** and **Shirley Bond**—Gregson's list of better candidates for the job is entirely male.

On the government side, she said, heavyweights **Kevin Falcon**, **Wally Oppal**, or even Premier **Gordon Campbell** should take on childcare and education. From the Opposition, she suggested business-savvy suits **Bruce Ralston** and **John Horgan**.

As for Bond and Reid as women in politics, Gregson told the *Straight*, "They don't seem to be doing us any favours at the moment. We need a critical mass before we can see a change, and presumably we haven't reached that line yet."

On May 12, B.C. elected a legislature that's 27.05 percent female. That's up from 2005, when the figure was 22.8 percent, but it's still below 1996's 28 percent.

Gregson warned that this term, childcare and education will both be in trouble unless they get top-of-mind attention in the legislature.

"We need whoever the Liberals consider to be their superstar on these portfolios," she said, warning that child-care fees could rise by 50 percent over this term, to \$1,500 on average for toddler care. "Childcare needs a champion, and needs to be recognized as economic stimulus. This could be the premier's pet project for this term, like the Olympics was last term."

Women are obviously just as able handle a cabinet portfolio, according to **Rebeka Breder**, spokesperson for Equal Voice B.C., a multipartisan lobby group in favour of having more women in politics overall. Gregson's male-dominated list, she said, is the result of a too-small pool.

"The sad reality is, there's not too many women to choose from," Breder told the *Straight*, noting that the NDP elected 11 women, and the Liberals elected 12. "If half the legislature were women, she'd [Gregson would] have that many more to choose from."

Breder blamed the small number of women elected on low voter turnout. She attributed the low turnout to the lack of female candidates.

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