

Liberals on best behaviour in bid to woo women [CA] ^[1]

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Source: Globe and Mail

Format: Article

Publication Date: 13 Apr 2009

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Liberals are trying to find ways to bring women voters - especially baby boomers - back to the party, through recruitment, new policies and even better behaviour in the House of Commons.

"Liberals cannot win a government unless they have a significant gap in their favour with women voters," said Peter Donolo of the Strategic Counsel, a national polling firm. "They've got issues to overcome [such as] in Western Canada, so they have to find advantages where they can and a key one is women voters."

Michael Ignatieff surprised some in the party recently when he promised that one-third of his 308 candidates in the next federal election will be women. The Liberal Leader was confirming a commitment made by his predecessor, Stéphane Dion, who actually reached the target for female candidates in the last election.

Women over 55 have traditionally accounted for one-third of Liberal support. The Grits often win a majority of their votes. But in the last election, women stayed away from the Dion Liberals, according to polling research.

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With this in mind, Liberal MPs are, among other things, trying to be more polite during Question Period in the Commons. Women respond better to politicians who are not hurling insults, Liberals say.

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Liberal policies also have to be attractive to women. Ms. Neville said Mr. Ignatieff has recommitted to a national child-care program and pay equity.

However, Nik Nanos, of the national polling firm Nanos Research, said the politics of gender is changing because of the economic meltdown. Women are just as worried as men are about jobs, debt and money, he said.

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- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

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