

A Message to My Younger Self



Linda Reid
MLA for Richmond South
Centre (British Columbia)

The world belongs to those who show up. Make sure you do! Go forward with no regrets. It sure beats “snap out of it.” If you want a stronger community it will be because you effectively resourced young parents and their children. You do want to strengthen community. Continue to believe that

public service is the rent we pay for our time on this earth and you will be fine.

Janet Routledge
MLA for Burnaby North
(British Columbia)

Women tend to wait to be invited into positions of power and influence.

Don't do that.

You will miss out on many opportunities to make the world a better place and the world will miss out on what you have to contribute.

Speak up. Let them know you are there.



Leela Aheer
MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View (Alberta)

Dear little one:

I am writing you this letter to help prepare you as you grow and find your place in this world. You are so lucky that you have food on the table, a comfortable house to live in and parents who have taught you the value of a dollar, and more importantly, the value of people. You are privileged. Did you know that? You do not want for anything, you are being educated, you live in a country where you can walk outside at night time, and play basketball in your front yard safely. You are a minority where you live, so you need to be kind, compassionate, thoughtful, and tough as nails.

You need to be fierce! Why? Because you are important. People will call you weak because you are kind. They will ask you to stop smiling because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Men will misunderstand that you hug people because you truly love them as family, not because you are seeking a sexual encounter. You will have to stand up for yourself to stay authentic, and more importantly to stand up for others who do not have your grit, or your strength. You will be a voice that will be heard, and that will represent so many who came before you and many who will come afterward.

This will be your path, and I am so proud of you!



Cindy Lamoureux
MLA for Burrows
(Manitoba)

Dear former Cindy from future Cindy,

You can do this. Every day remind yourself that people are inherently good and in this job you have the opportunity to change lives for the better. Don't be discouraged by negativity, bad articles and feeling pushed outside of your comfort zone. Stay determined, remain honest, and always fight for your constituents.

Politics has many highs and lows, but as long as you surround yourself with good people, you take care of yourself and you don't take anything for granted, you will be okay.

Don't ever let people make you feel small because of your age or marital status.

Be determined.

"Though she may be but little, she is fierce." – Shakespeare

Linda Lapointe
MP for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles (Quebec)

Patience, patience, patience. Even if life is always moving at 100 km/h, take time to reflect on things on a regular basis. Things don't always happen as quickly as we would like, but good work does bring rewards.

Stay true to yourself, be persistent and strong, and still be feminine. Being a woman in politics can be difficult sometimes, but remember that the effort you put in and the pitfalls you overcome are giant leaps forward for the next generation of young, ambitious women. You will be a successful role model for them. Also, remember that we have two ears and one mouth. Use them well and in that ratio! The old adage is true: speech is silver, but silence is golden.

In short, abilities are one thing, but attitude is what sets people apart. Be positive, smile, have fun and work hard. That's the key!



Diane Lamarre
MNA for Taillon (Quebec)

Diane, what convinced you to take the leap into politics? Are you happy?

The telephone rang, and Pauline Marois, the first woman premier of Quebec, asked to speak with me. I had a lot to lose if I ran for office. I thought again about the women who inspired me: first, my mother, who taught me about the value of hard work and integrity. I thought of Zahida, my colleague in humanitarian assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where we worked on health care reform after the war. I thought of Janine Matte, the first woman president of the Quebec college of pharmacists. I was the second woman president in 140 years. I had never dreamed of a political career, but I had always wanted to serve Quebec and my fellow citizens. The lack of access to health care made me angry. All of a sudden, everything fell into place, and I was led to this ultimate commitment. I would have enemies, which was not something I was used to, but I would have a voice—one of 125—to bring my constituents' needs to the highest levels. And that privilege is priceless. I would be a respectful combatant in the political arena. And yes, I'm happy!



Lisa MacLeod
MPP for Nepean—Carleton
(Ontario)

Right now you don't know this but you will have courage—both of your conviction and also as a self-starter. Your confidence and self-esteem will take hits at different times in life, but trust me, you'll get back up stronger every time. You will learn who would go to the end of the earth for you but most of all you will learn

that there is no greater love than for your daughter – she will test you and impress you. And no matter what life throws at you, know you got this!

Caroline Cochrane
MLA for Range Lake
(Northwest Territories)



You are stronger than you know. Persevere through all the trials and tribulations you will experience; you will come out better than okay in the end. Learn all that you can along the way and understand the priorities and mandates of the organizations and governments that you are working for and with. Forge strong relationships with your peers as they will be some of your greatest political supporters. One day, you will be a leader for women and provide a voice for them so work hard and never let anything stop you from achieving your dreams - you can do this!

Lisa Harris
MLA for Miramichi Bay-
Neguac (New Brunswick)



It's important to believe in yourself. You need to trust your instincts, but understand where you have room to improve.

You should never be afraid to ask questions. Asking questions is the only way you, and those around you, will learn. Uncertainty is just an opportunity to

learn something new, so you should never fear admitting you don't know everything.

Don't be afraid to lean into every conversation, in any boardroom, no matter who is in the room!

Do your homework, check the facts and ask the important questions. Use this knowledge to guide your decision-making.

Finally, it's crucial to work with intention. It's not enough to merely have a target. You need to commit to a specific goal, plan the road ahead, and always be willing to work hard to achieve that goal.

Tina Mundy
MLA for Summerside -
St. Eleanors (Prince
Edward Island)



Your start in life has no bearing on where you will end up, as it is not how you start the race but how you finish. Live life like it's a marathon, not a sprint. Remember that taking a step backward after taking a step forward is not a disaster but a CHA CHA. So no matter what life throws at you keep dancing. :)

Have the courage to be imperfect and embrace vulnerability. The original definition of courage was to tell your story with your whole heart. So tell your story – the good the bad and the ugly – you never know who is listening and who you might inspire. And, above all, have the compassion to be kind to yourself first, because you can't have compassion for others if you can't treat yourself kindly.



Elizabeth May
MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands (British Columbia)

I have aged, but I haven't changed. In my head, I am still my younger self. Not thinking of myself as having or wanting a career, I have always been committed to a better world. So, what would I say to my younger self?

Keep doing what your heart says is the right thing. Don't let the bullying of the powerful intimidate you. Stay strong and keep smiling. Do not focus on what you earn, but on how much you can accomplish. Try to be kind and remember that the people who annoy you today may be able to help you tomorrow. If you make your life "all about you," you offer nothing worth sharing. If you can surrender self to the greater good, your life will be enriched as you enrich the lives of all around you. Having more can never replace being more.



Geraldine Van Bibber
MLA for Porter Creek North (Yukon)

July 3, 2017: My birthday is today. I reflect on where I have been and where I have yet to go. Many birthdays can have that effect!

When a chance to explore interesting opportunities come one's way, jump and become involved. You learn, meet others and grow in character and spirit.

A very, very young version of me was shy, awkward and afraid. A very young version of me was starting to blossom and be aware of possibilities. A young version of me worked, started a family and became involved in community.

Commissioner of Yukon, Chancellor of Yukon College, Order of Canada, Yukon MLA
-- To my younger self, you can achieve anything you set out to do. I hope to inspire and encourage other women in their journey!



Patricia Arab
MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park (Nova Scotia)

Be patient. Stop wishing time away, waiting for life to start, and enjoy every minute of what is happening around you in the moment, for this is life.

Take criticism to your head and not to heart. Hearing your critics will show you the ways to grow and will help you figure out the person you want to become, being hurt by criticism only paralyzes you and stops you from moving forward – and there is still so much ahead.

Finally, look at your gender as your greatest strength, not as something that will hold you back. There will be times that other may make you feel that you are less than, but that is only their fear speaking, be kind and be strong, the most "womanly" parts of your personality will be the keys to your success.



Candice Bergen
MP for Portage-Lisgar (Manitoba)

Don't doubt that your thoughts and opinions are important and valuable. That still small voice inside of you is actually bang on most of the time. Trust yourself. The fact that you think differently than a lot of your peers is a strength to be embraced, and not a reason to hold yourself back.

At the same time, don't be hard on yourself for being a little hesitant. A lot of your concerns are reasonable ones, and you shouldn't be embarrassed for having them. Caution is a good thing, and counting the cost of the decisions you make is going to serve you well.

Most importantly, don't measure your ability to lead by your grades, your popularity, or accolades. Your leadership is evident by your loyalty to your friends, family and community, your courage to do what is right, and your willingness to stand up to people more powerful than you.

Oh, and one more thing... your curiosity is a really good part of who you are. Being genuinely interested in people; who they are, their lives and their stories, will serve you very well as you go on to become a Member of Parliament, serving your constituents and Canadians.



Monique Pauzé
MP for Repentigny
(Quebec)

I'm proud to see that you were already fighting for gender equality, environmental protection and Quebec sovereignty at such a young age.

Protecting ecological systems from overly voracious economic activity will become increasingly important, as will persuading decision-makers to adopt fairer social policies as inequality rises.

If one day you're asked to jump head-first into the leadership of a union or into politics, go for it. If your decisions are motivated by the pursuit of fairness, respect for nature and social justice, you will never have regrets. Put aside your doubts and believe in yourself. One day, you will be elected to represent the people of Repentigny, and you will be able to pursue your goals. Finally, don't plan on a quiet retirement; it's not going to happen.

Colleen Mayer
MLA for St. Vital
(Manitoba)

Although your journey started in the small town of Fisher Branch, it is your strong work ethic, the relationships you build, and your drive that will take you places even you couldn't predict.

One of your greatest assets is your voice and after being elected as a School Trustee and Member of the Legislative Assembly to represent St. Vital, you will use that voice to advocate on behalf of residents in a community close to your heart.

Remember that life isn't always about the destination, it's about the journey. There will be days when the path isn't clear, but if you continue to write your own story, you will create a life of purpose, connection and success.

See, you can do it.





Julie Green
MLA for Yellowknife
Centre (Northwest
Territories)

You are on your own journey – and it’s okay if you don’t know to where. The place you want to be at 20 isn’t where you want to be at 30 or 50 or 70. Be confident in what you believe and humble about what you don’t know. Live a life that is meaningful by contributing to a better world. Work hard and don’t

take no for an answer. Take risks by challenging yourself to do things differently and better. Don’t be afraid to ask for help or to show your humanity. Be true to yourself and loyal to your family and friends. Always be proud of who you are.

Carole Poirier
MNA for Hochelaga-
Maisonneuve (Quebec)



What every woman should know before going into politics” is the title you would expect for this kind of article. I would tell my younger self to think bigger. Why should women go into politics? Because we’re 50 per cent of the population but have less than 30 per cent of the seats in our democratic institutions. Because we need to take our rightful place. Going into politics shouldn’t be the goal; the goal should be to change things! Our collective challenge is to advance our values and aspirations and those of the society we want to create.



Nadine Wilson
MLA for Saskatchewan
Rivers (Saskatchewan)

In my parliamentary lifetime, I have strived for 10 years to be an invigorating and optimistic legislator with a purpose in life and someone who is choosing to leave a positive footprint in my community and province.

I have been fortunate to have achieved a balance of work and family. My life is not only fulfilled by helping others through politics, but also rich in private happiness and support. I have been married to the same man for close to 40 years and we share parental pride in our four children and their families.

The skill I developed that has gotten me this far is listening – both active and passive. My younger self had to learn this over time, but it has brought me much success in life. My advice is to listen to your inner self as well as others – doing so will guide you well.

Cathy Rogers
MLA for Moncton South
(New Brunswick)



Years ago you may not have fully grasped the importance of learning and investing in various employment, volunteer, or professional development experiences. Nor may you have known that these personal investments gave you your passion for learning and acting to make a better society.

But at 38, when you left a government career to complete both a Master’s and a PhD, while balancing work, single parenting, volunteering, and managing a household, it became more and more clear that women are strong.

I’m glad that you did not succumb to the voices saying, “No, it’s too much... too late, or not worth it.” As long as you follow your passion, and work hard and smart for the honourable and right causes, then risks are worth taking, and faith and passion will sustain.



Catherine McKenna
MP for Ottawa Centre
(Ontario)

You will hear from people who don't think you can win. They will tell you that you aren't good enough, you aren't connected enough, and that moms can't do the job. Don't listen. Do things your own way and you will be great.

Some days are harder than others, and it won't always be easy, but always stick to what you believe in. You are a strong woman and you work hard, so take a deep breath and embrace the challenges you face. Make sure to take time for yourself, your family and friends and everything will be okay.

Maria Fitzpatrick
MLA for Lethbridge East
(Alberta)



On May 5, 2015 you will be elected to represent Lethbridge East in the NDP Government. You will speak out on domestic violence on Nov 16, 2015. It will be a turning point for women and, for some men. Thousands of affected persons will reach out to you.

All of the obstacles you have encountered will begin to be removed for women, albeit slowly. Demand to be treated with respect, demand to be valued for who you are and what you give back to society. Keep speaking out and fighting for women's equality. This will change the world!



Irene Mathysen
MP for London-Fanshawe
(Ontario)

The opportunity to serve as a Canadian parliamentarian should always fill you with a sense of wonder at the incredible privilege the work affords. Despite your youth, challenges and yes—barriers, never count yourself out. In the course of whatever service you are fortunate enough to undertake on behalf of the many and

diverse communities of Canada, remember that true service requires humility and the measured conduct of one who understands the role of the servant leader. And while you should respond to those who depend on you with grace, commitment and kindness also remember to never be afraid to shake up the status quo. Well-behaved women rarely make history; so make history.

Karen Vecchio
Member of Parliament
Elgin-Middlesex-London
(Ontario)



First of all, you are going to marry your friend and Grade 13 Biology Partner, Mike Vecchio and have five children together. (I am sure you are already shaking your head....you were thinking two, maybe three). Although you are the baby of the family and you feel like no one takes you seriously, your family will rally behind you and you will become the first female Member of Parliament for Elgin-Middlesex-London and your mom and dad will be "so proud" of you.

All of the little bumps in the road are going to make you what you are today so don't feel discouraged. Take each obstacle and learn something important from it.



Tina Beaudry-Mellor
MLA for Regina
University
(Saskatchewan)

In her groundbreaking book, *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg writes that “it’s a jungle gym, not a ladder.” Your life and your career is not likely to walk in a straight line from point A to point B. Don’t be afraid to take advantage of new opportunities and challenges as they arise, even if they temporarily shift you in a different direction. Stretching out of your comfort zone is something you need to do regularly in order to grow in areas of competency. With each new challenge, focus on mastering the skills and knowledge you need to rise to the occasion. If you do this, you will soon have all the tools to be a strong and competent leader. Remember to surround yourself with people who will inspire you to be better.

Politics can be tough and there will be plenty of times you will struggle. If you surround yourself with the doers, the movers, the shakers and those filled with positive energy, you will have all you need to protect yourself during those times you will struggle with the inevitable haters you will encounter. Keep moving, always.



Annie McKittrick
MLA for Sherwood Park
(Alberta)

When I reflect on my life’s experiences, I realize that everything I have done – every volunteer role, position of employment, travel and educational opportunity – has guided and informed me in my current role as an MLA. I was fortunate to have exposure to public service early in my life; I had the privilege to attend a United Nations affiliated high school. I met and befriended people from all over the world with diverse worldviews. I grew up discussing such subjects as democracy, human rights, and the role of government. As an adult, I continued to travel, to study and to develop a deep commitment to social justice. All of these elements led me to seek elected office.

My advice to my younger self is this: grab onto all the experiences you can. Be mindful of how these experiences influence your views of community, government, and public service. Your right to vote is an honour – treasure it always. Foster a culture of learning about your candidates and your elected officials. See yourself reflected in them, and believe you too can seek elected office.



Nicole Rancourt
MLA for Prince Albert Northcote (Saskatchewan)

If I could send a message to my younger self, my main message would be to stay true to yourself. Never feel that you need to be someone that you are not. Dress the way you want, and be proud of who you are because people will appreciate you for being authentic. People will always judge you but that is because they may not be truly comfortable with who they are, so don’t let their insecurities affect you.

Never forget where you came from because all the people in your life and experiences make you the wonderful person you are today. Stay humble, and always treat others how you would want to be treated. Remember your manners and respect everyone. Don’t sweat the small stuff and ask yourself “will this matter a year from now?”. Have good boundaries with your personal and work life. Surround yourself with people who stay true to their values and morals. Make time for your family and friends because they are truly what matters in the world.



Caroline Simard
MNA for Charlevoix-Côte-de-Beaupré (Québec)

You don't know it yet, but in 2014 you will be elected for the first time as the Member for a large riding covering more than 13,000 km². You will be named Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier of Quebec and, a few years later, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism.

Your team will cause you to question yourself sometimes, but you will stay the course by believing in your dreams and showing what you are capable of. Trust in yourself, respect others and take the time to listen — you'll go far.

Kim Schreiner
MLA for Red Deer North (Alberta)



Follow your dreams and don't ever let anyone tell you, you can't do something. Only you know yourself. Trust your inner voice; it speaks to you with the wisdom that you have accumulated throughout every situation you have endured. Your inner voice strengthens your outer voice and it is worth being heard. Don't forget to take care of yourself; it will help you take care of others. Remember humour; it will help you endure when you are unsure. Enjoy the moments that define your new self. And always say thank you.



Pam Parsons, MHA
for Harbour Grace-Port de Grave (Newfoundland and Labrador)

You took an interest in politics at an early age. Remember when you were in Grade Three and there was a provincial election taking place? A family friend had secured a nomination and was going to be a candidate for the district of Harbour Grace.

Many years later, after completing a degree in Political Science, you decided that you would put yourself forward for public office someday. Little did you then that you would become the first female Member of the House of Assembly to represent the District of Harbour Grace-Port de Grave.

Always keep in mind one of your favorite quotes: "only those who attempt the absurd, achieve the impossible"...

Mitzi Dean
MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin (British Columbia)



Recognize and honour the history and sacrifices that came before you and be proud of building a better community through your service. Always know why you are doing what you are doing and for whom.

Exceed your own standards in everything you do. Others may be more popular, but stay true to yourself and your standards.

Listen to your instinct and voice your perspective — it is unique and valuable. Be professional, reliable and accessible, and allow yourself to be unpredictable and use new methods when you really need to.



Filomena Tassi
MP for Hamilton
West-Ancaster-Dundas
(Ontario)

Believe in yourself. Read and reflect on the words of Marianne Williamson, words which Nelson Mandela used in an inaugural address: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light,

not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God."

Never see any obstacle as insurmountable. Take the long view. What one day may seem an impossible situation, with time, wisdom, patience and good guidance can and will be overcome.

Keep intentions that are genuine and work towards the promotion of justice, fairness and goodness. This will help you to feel peace and fulfillment at the end of your career.

Stay humble and treat everyone with respect. Serving as a Member of Parliament is a blessing, an honour and a gift. Never forget those who entrusted you to serve. Remember you are fortunate.

Include exercise and meditation/mindfulness in your daily practice. It is very important to take care of yourself. You must stay healthy to serve most effectively. Make time for this in your life.

Bernadette Jordan
MP for South Shore - St.
Margaret's (Nova Scotia)



Hey Bern; Time for some advice from your older (wiser?) self. If I can tell you one thing, it's "don't be a spectator in your own life!" If you want to travel, do it; if you want to study, do it; if you want to zip line – well, you may want to rethink that one; and if you want to run for public office, do it." You only get one shot, so make the best of it. Sometimes people may think you are out of your league or out of your depth – don't listen. You're capable, smart, and fearless – don't let anyone tell you any different. At the end of your time on this earth don't look back and think, "I wish I would have..."

Mireille Jean
MNA for Chicoutimi
(Quebec)



I'm a businesswoman who only recently took the plunge into politics. Still, here are a few lessons that I have learned and would like to share. Don't wait for someone to offer you a spot—take it!

Once you're elected, allow yourself to make mistakes. You will find that people are not as nasty as you have been led to believe. In fact, they're quite friendly and often want to help. In politics, it's important to learn how to take a step back; there is always tomorrow.

As for your reputation, don't worry about it: despite the bad press politicians sometimes get, people always show a lot of respect for those who dare to enter the arena, whether they voted for you or not.



Michelle Stilwell
MLA for Parksville-
Qualicum (British
Columbia)

Moving from the world of elite sport, where people built you up, into the political arena, where people will fight just as hard to tear you down, will be one of your life's most rewarding adventures.

Learning to cope and responding to criticism, with support from family, friends and colleagues, will be your biggest challenges. But like everything in life, do what you feel in your heart to be right – for you'll be criticized anyway.

Don't underestimate yourself and remember that you were elected and re-elected by your constituents to represent their voices in the Legislature and that every day you get the opportunity to help make someone else's day/life better.

Deb Matthews
MPP for London North
Centre (Ontario)

Your point of view is as valid as anyone else's. Don't be afraid to stand strong and express it.

Be conscious and deliberate in defining what is important to you, and what your values are. Then stay true to them.

Work hard.

Get out of your comfort zone. Try your best to see the world from many points of view. Get to know people who aren't like you.

Be kind.

Read. Listen. Travel. Laugh. Learn. Love. Enjoy.



Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet
MP for Hochelaga
(Quebec)

If I had known 50 years ago that I would be elected twice as an MP, if I had known that my leader and my party would value me enough to appoint me whip and entrust me with the well-being of my colleagues, and if I had known how well my knowledge and abilities would help me support so many people in need, I would have had a lot more self-confidence. I would have done this a lot sooner.

To all you young or not-so-young women, I say, draw up a list of your strengths and attributes, and start chasing your dreams.

Kim Rudd
MP for Northumberland-
Peterborough South
(Ontario)

The 100th anniversary of the election of the first woman parliamentarian is a testament to Canadian democracy. It has been my sincere privilege to work with so many incredible women parliamentarians. These are women from all walks of life who bring their unique skills to their roles every day. I would tell myself as a young woman that you can never let any chorus of naysayers, or the minstrels of the negative, become the soundtrack to what will eventually become the symphony that is your life. Though we may have differing political ideologies, our values as women and our values as Canadians will stand as our truest permanent legacy.





Carolyn Bennett
MP for Toronto-St. Paul's
(Ontario)

Politics is not a swear word! Politics is about engaged citizens, not satisfied with the status quo, who want to make a difference.

Changes that we see as obvious are not always shared. Even with the best evidence and the Canadian value of fairness, not everyone will just “get it”. Some people are doing very well in the status quo, and will pull just as hard to resist those of us trying to effect change.

Success often comes in finding the “unusual suspects” to support change – especially those who won’t benefit personally. Allies recognize that good public policy benefits the most people or those most in need. Progress in feminist causes has required having great men onside.

Marilyn Gladu
MP for Sarnia-Lambton
(Ontario)



Make a difference in the world. Don’t be afraid to follow your passions. Don’t let intimidation, stereotypes or societal norms determine who you are and what you do. Get interested in science and math, excel in the arts, thrive in social sciences; do what makes you happy and create your own path.

Love. Be truthful. See the positive in every situation.

Be yourself, every day, and never back down. Live every moment with purpose, passion and power, and don’t forget to have fun. Savour every moment. You are unique. Make a difference.



Kirsty Duncan
MP for Etobicoke North
(Ontario)

The best advice I ever received was to take every opportunity you are offered. Dream your biggest dream, and know that the impossible is nothing.

Unfortunately, as a woman in politics you will face additional challenges. You may have to speak louder and work harder.

But remember that these challenges are just speed bumps, not dead ends, and you must learn to find ways around them.

Get involved in your community early and often. If you wish to be the voice of your community, you must know your community. Go door-to-door; give everyone the opportunity to be heard.

Bowinn Ma
MLA for North
Vancouver-Lonsdale
(British Columbia)



There is nothing for me to teach you here that you will not learn for yourself in time. You will make mistakes and often be wrong, and all of those experiences will shape who you become and how you behave during the moments that really matter.

You will learn not to judge people too quickly or too harshly and to approach every situation with humility; you will learn to be bold and find the courage to push beyond your limits; and you will forge the convictions that will guide you as you face challenges on behalf of the public you serve.



Carla Qualtrough
MP for Delta (British Columbia)

When given an opportunity or a chance, always take it. Keep aiming higher, and do the laps because there is just no substitute for hard work and you know you can't cut corners. Your hard work will take you places.

Continue to advocate for yourself and others, and never hesitate to be bold. Take the path less travelled and seek out new experiences. There are always obstacles but stand firm in your convictions in order to achieve your goals.

Continue to be the strong, fierce leader I know you to be!

Pam Damoff
MP for Oakville North-Burlington (Ontario)

Take more chances and do not be afraid of failure. Watch for unexpected opportunities and take advantage of them.

Always keep learning and trying new things. It is important to take care of yourself.

Go for a bike ride or take a walk when you need to think. No good ideas every popped in to your head when you are busy.

Be confident and stick to your principles, even when it is hard to do so.



Marie Renaud
MLA for St. Albert (Alberta)

Remember when you were a little girl and your mother angrily asked you why you always said exactly what you were thinking? I want to tell you that there is no need to feel bad about that. There is no need to try and change who you are.

Be proud of the strong young woman you are and the strong woman you will become. Be confident when you express your informed opinion and be thankful you have been given opportunities to speak for people who are unable to speak for themselves.

Treasure the gifts you were given even if they don't always feel like gifts. Be truthful. Be compassionate. Be strong. Always be yourself.

Enjoy the journey; it is going to be excellent.

Sylvia Jones
MPP for Dufferin-Caledon (Ontario)

My advice to my younger self? Don't be in such a hurry!

My desire to start a career (and worries about taking on too much student debt) meant I didn't explore my post-secondary options as much as I wish I had.

There is no easier time to go to school than when you are young. Take advantage of the opportunities to explore your interests; even if you can't see an immediate path to a job.

While we continue to learn throughout our lives, formal schooling is a gift that shouldn't be rushed.

Find your passion and enjoy the journey as well as the rewards.





Daiene Vernile
MPP for Kitchener-Centre
(Ontario)

You've won the lottery! You don't realize it yet, but being born in Canada, you'll benefit from an excellent education system and universal healthcare. You live in a country where we strive to protect women's rights and gender equality.

Sure, you were born into an impoverished, immigrant family, but you'll take advantage of all those phenomenal Canadian opportunities.

Your love of politics and history will land you a career anchoring and producing a weekly television current affairs program. There will be few women in your workplace, and at times, you'll have to put up with a lot of chauvinistic nonsense. But, don't be deterred, as great things are in store.

After 30 years of covering Ontario news, an opportunity will come knocking. Don't say, "No." This will be your chance to serve your community. Time to give back.

Anne Kang
MLA for Burnaby-Deer
Lake (British Columbia)

Dear Anne,

Turn passion into action. Keep the values of community involvement and volunteerism close to your heart, and be ready to embark on an incredible journey that life will take you on. Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone, and never miss an opportunity to learn.

Sometimes, the journey will get tough, but when you stop and look around, you will find your family, friends, and community standing right next to you, and you will find the strength, through their support, to keep going.

Dream big! There are endless possibilities in life, and many different ways to support and empower others. It doesn't matter what you do when you grow up, as long as you help others and make your community better. Stay true to yourself, as you are destined for great things. I believe in you!

Love always, Anne



Rachel Blaney
MP for North Island – Powell River (British Columbia)

Do not be afraid and if you are, go for it anyway. A life that isn't fully lived is wasted. If you waste some time, forgive yourself immediately.

Encourage women around you, always. Learning to make space in the world you live in can be a challenge, remember that you have a right to be the main character in your own life.

Make sure you take time for yourself to reflect on the choices you are making. Not paying attention can lead you somewhere you do not want to be. Take time to be aware of your direction. Do not try to be someone else; admiring others is wonderful but the biggest gift you can give to the world is your authentic self.



Laurie Scott
MPP for Haliburton—
Kawartha Lakes—Brock
(Ontario)

Take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. Sometimes you will find yourself in the right place at the right time. Don't let the moment pass you by!

Be confident to take on things that you think you are too young or inexperienced for, and never doubt your ability to meet the challenge.

Trust that when people ask you to be involved in something, they genuinely believe in you and value your contributions.

Don't underestimate the value of education. It is worth the time and effort, even if it won't be clear to you until twenty years down the line.



Lisa Thompson
MPP for Huron-Bruce
(Ontario)

First of all, I would like to say - follow your dreams because with hard work and staying true to yourself - your dreams will come true!

It is also so important to never forget your roots! Always be proud of growing up on a farm. The reality is, in the future, fewer and fewer people will have a chance to have that amazing experience.

And guess what - those 4 Hs you totally embraced will set you up perfectly for your career path! By pledging your head to clearer thinking, your heart to greater loyalty, your hands to larger service, and your health to better living - you will embark on a journey that will present to you many opportunities. Remember to give thanks to those who help you along the way - and always take time to pay those opportunities forward.

Never stop whistling. Always be humble and kind. Cherish your family, friends and time at home. Always strive to be your best self.



Louise Harel
Former MNA for Hochelaga–Maisonneuve (Quebec)

When you first get elected in Hochelaga–Maisonneuve in 1981, you don't think you will sit in the National Assembly of Quebec for more than a few years, but you will stay there for 27 years and 8 months. You will be a minister under four premiers, the head of about 10 departments, the chair of numerous committees, the house leader of the Official Opposition and the first female Speaker of the National Assembly.

You will fall madly in love with this job, despite knowing that politics is a blood sport in which the aim is to destroy your adversaries—fortunately, only symbolically. The whole time, you will try to approach politics from a woman's perspective rather than a man's. You will try to persuade and convince, not to impose and order. You will base your decisions on the interests of the most vulnerable people in society.

You will want to share—especially with young women—your belief that being a politician can give you indescribable joy and truly improve people's lives.



Ginette Grandmont
Former MNA for Masson
(Quebec)

A surprise awaited me at the end of two very busy careers and after I had raised my family: to my great surprise, I was elected to the National Assembly in 2007. It was a wonderful experience, but ended too quickly.

If I had known when I was younger that political life would be so rewarding, I would have gone into it much sooner.

If you're an ambitious young woman, don't hesitate to jump into politics. It is rewarding and demanding, but it is worth the effort.

Carole James
MLA for Victoria-Beacon
Hill (British Columbia)

Believe in, and be true to yourself. There will always be critics, but if you can trust your gut and focus on your values, you will stand strong and weather anything that passes your way.

Laugh more, worry less!

Remember what's truly important, and don't sweat the small stuff. Learn to let go of slights or mistakes or stumbles. Life is all about learning, so challenge yourself.

And no matter how clear the plan is for your life and your future, always leave room for the unexpected and unscheduled. Often those are the richest experiences. Respect yourself and others.



Lorraine Richard
MNA for Duplessis
(Quebec)

After 14 years in politics, one thing is clear: despite the progress women have made in our society, they still face many barriers. Some of them are harder to break down than others. But the more women there are in politics, the more they can change!

So get in there and seize the opportunity; no one will hand it to you. Make decisions based on your convictions and you will make a difference. Be strong. Above all, be yourself. Staying true to your beliefs will be your greatest asset.

