

Interview Opportunity

Who **Charlene Brisson**, President of the Canadian Women Voters Congress, a non-partisan grass roots organization dedicated to helping women become involved in all aspects of the political process of government; whether it is simply to educate themselves on the issues, to participate in the community by joining a local civic board, to work on an election campaign or run for office.

Joanne Silver, Chair of the Women's Campaign School, a non-partisan, political educational program designed to teach Canadian women the political skills, strategies and tactics to run a winning campaign, as candidates or campaign managers. All levels are covered including Federal, Provincial, Municipal and First Nations governance. The only one of its kind in Canada, The Women's Campaign School is a partnership of the Canadian Women Voters Congress and Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre. The school is taught by current and recent politicians. (Mary Collins and Penny Priddy are Honourary Co-Chairs)

What Charlene and Joanne have just returned from a seven-day educational exchange to Belgrade, Yugoslavia where they were guests of The Voice of Difference, an all-women organization (NGO) mandated to increase the participation of women in public and political life as a prerequisite for participatory democracy.

When From November 11 - 17, 2001, Charlene and Joanne participated in round table discussions designed to share information about how women can become more involved in the political process. While there they met at the offices of the Association for Women Initiatives (AZIN) in Belgrade, the Democratic Centre of Serbia in Belgrade and at the Civic Alliance of Serbia in the southern city of Nis. Participants included many local politicians from DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia-representing the presently ruling coalition made up of 18 parties, government workers, academics and women from several of the women-focused NGO's.

Funded by the Association of Community Colleges of Canada (ACCC) through CIDA's Partnership for Tomorrow Program, they hope to bring representatives from The Voice of Difference to Vancouver in April 2002 to attend the fourth annual Women's Campaign School.

Why During the first democratic election in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, held in September 2000, which saw the defeat of Slobodan Milosevic, The Voice of Difference conducted two door-to-door campaigns of 45,000 women resulting in a record 70% turnout at the polls. Seventy percent of these voters were women, many were exercising their franchise for the first time.

How To interview Charlene and/or Joanne call Pauline Buck, Publicity Chair, Canadian Women Voters Congress at 604-662-4722.

The Congress

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