



30 Women in Local Government: Celebrating CLGF's 30th Anniversary

Featured Interviewee #15: Rebecca Bligh

President, Federation of the Canadian Municipalities (FCM) & Councillor, City of Vancouver, Canada



Profile

Rebecca Bligh is a two-term Councillor in the City of Vancouver, President of the Federation of the Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and a Director at Metro Vancouver Regional District.

Rebecca has worked passionately on policy discussions related to the poisoned drug crisis, climate, community safety initiatives, and more significant investments in housing in all communities across Canada. She brings her passion for

governance and has supported the FCM board since 2018 through transformative work to modernize and improve board effectiveness.

Outside of politics, Rebecca is the founder of BLACKPiiN, a consulting and facilitation practice that works with executives and teams to define, develop, and implement strategies to enable success. Motivated by the core value of service leadership and passionate about giving back to the community, Rebecca has enjoyed working with several local organizations, most notably before 2018, the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and Legado Initiatives, partnering in delivering training and development in Ethiopia and Mozambique.

Rebecca, along with her partner Laura, lives in Vancouver, sharing life adventures with their two adult children, Holly and Jackson.

Rebecca Bligh

President, Federation of the Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Councillor, City of Vancouver, Canada

Interview Highlights

1. How has the role of women in local government evolved over the past three decades, and how do you think women can accelerate action for gender equality today?

Over the past 30 years, women have moved from being underrepresented voices to becoming key decision-makers in local government. Representation has improved, but parity is still a challenge. Today, women can accelerate gender equality by championing inclusive policies, mentoring emerging leaders, and ensuring that equity is embedded in governance structures—not treated as an afterthought.



2. What inspired you to enter local government, and how has your journey advanced gender equality in your community or country?

I was inspired by a commitment to create a city where equity and inclusion are foundational. My journey has focused on advancing gender equality through policy—such as supporting gender-based analysis in decision-making—and by amplifying diverse voices in civic processes. Representation matters and being visible as a woman leader helps normalize women in leadership roles.

3. What has been your most rewarding experience as a woman leader in local government, and how did it contribute to promoting gender equality?

One of the most rewarding experiences has been shaping Vancouver's equity and inclusion strategies, which prioritize gender equity alongside other intersecting identities. These frameworks ensure that city decisions consider the lived experiences of women and marginalized groups, creating systemic change rather than isolated initiatives.

4. What challenges did you face as a woman entering local government, and how did you overcome them? What can be done to accelerate overcoming these barriers for future women leaders?

Challenges included navigating entrenched systems and biases that often undervalue women's leadership. I overcame these by building strong networks, seeking mentorship, and staying grounded in community priorities. To accelerate progress, we need structural reforms—such as family-friendly council schedules, anti-harassment policies, and leadership pipelines for women.

5. What advice would you give to other women considering a career in local government to help them accelerate gender equality in their communities?

Lead with authenticity and purpose. Build alliances, because change is collective. Use your platform to advocate for systemic equity—not just representation—and ensure that gender equality is integrated into budgets, policies, and governance practices.

6. How can we encourage more women, particularly young women, to enter leadership roles in local government, and what actions can governments take to create more inclusive environments for women?

We need visible role models and mentorship programs that demystify political leadership. Governments can create inclusive environments by addressing barriers like childcare, hybrid meetings and safe spaces for dialogue. Representation should be supported by policy, not left to chance.

7. Why is it urgent to increase the number and influence of women in local government, and how will this contribute to positive change in governance?

Diverse leadership leads to better governance. Women bring perspectives that shape policies on housing, safety, and social equity—issues that affect everyone. Increasing women's influence ensures decisions reflect the realities of all residents, strengthening democracy and trust in institutions.



8. How has digital technology helped or can help accelerate women's political inclusion in local government, and what steps should we take to make it more accessible to women in leadership?

Digital platforms have reduced barriers to participation by enabling remote engagement and amplifying voices through social media. To make technology more accessible, we need training programs, equitable access to digital tools, and safeguards against online harassment, which disproportionately affects women leaders.

9. What innovative practices or strategies have you used to accelerate women's participation and leadership in local government in your region or country?

In Vancouver, we've embedded equity frameworks into policy development and budgeting, ensuring gender considerations are systemic. We've also supported advisory committees that elevate women's voices and partnered with community organizations to create leadership pathways for underrepresented groups.

10. As CLGF celebrates 30 years, what actions must be taken in the next 30 years to ensure the continued empowerment of women in local government?

We need to move from representation to influence—ensuring women not only hold seats but shape agendas. This requires institutionalizing gender equity in governance, investing in leadership development, and leveraging technology to create inclusive, accessible political spaces globally.

CLGF 30th Anniversary Commemoration

In celebration of CLGF's 30th Anniversary, we are honoured to spotlight the inspiring stories of 30 trailblazing women in local government from across the Commonwealth, all members of the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network. These interviews celebrate their groundbreaking contributions to gender equality and their transformative impact on building inclusive, empowered communities.

Stay Connected

Join the conversation on social media using the hashtags:

#AccelerateAction | #ComWLG | #LocalGov | #IWD2025 | #CLGF30Years | @CLGF_News
Visit **CLGF's** [website](#) for more inspiring stories and to stay updated on the 30th Anniversary campaign. Thank you for being part of this important movement!