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A Toastmasters first

By [Erin Cardone - Victoria News](#)

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She moved up though the ranks to a male-dominated position.

The new president of Toastmasters International is a Greater Victoria woman – Pat Johnson.

"In August they held the election and I made it," the View Royal resident said. "I was honoured and very excited. I spent probably 11 years since (my) district leadership (role) to get to president. It's been a long haul and I didn't see it coming."

Long haul indeed – Johnson's journey with the public speaking organization started more than 27 years ago when she attended college in northern Manitoba. Seeking confidence and direction to help her write a speech to introduce a senator, she joined the local branch of Toastmasters.

Since moving to Greater Victoria, Johnson has been busy climbing the ranks. In 2007, she was elected third vice-president and was the first Canadian woman to do so.

She now holds that same honour as president of Toastmasters International, which has a presence in 113 countries.

It's another full-time job for the assistant director of business education at B.C. Pension Corporation.

The title should give other women in Toastmasters courage, Johnson said. Just four other women have held the position before her, but never a Canadian woman.

"We (women) think we can't do it because we see mostly men do it. We're not highly represented yet in the high ranks."

Membership to Toastmasters at the lower levels is fairly equal between the sexes, she added.

As president, Johnson has a series of travels to undertake, including Japan, Singapore, South Africa, Ireland, England and Portugal. She'll be the official ambassador and has a personal goal of increasing the female membership to the organization across the globe.

"I really believe in the work the organization does in terms of helping people become who they're fully capable of being," Johnson said. "The impact it's had on my life has been (positive) in terms of my personal and professional life."

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Pat Johnson

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