

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Helena Guergis gets no sympathy for 'hissy fits'

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By Jennifer Ditchburn

If beleaguered Conservative minister Helena Guergis was hoping for sympathy from her political sisters, former party matriarch Deborah Grey was fresh out.

Ms. Guergis, minister of state for the status of women, was a no-show Friday at a panel on women in politics at the Manning Centre's annual conference for small-c conservatives. Her office did not respond to a question about her absence.

Two weeks ago, Ms. Guergis was forced to apologize for an angry outburst against airport and Air Canada staff in Charlottetown. She allegedly seethed at being put through airline procedures as she arrived minutes before a scheduled flight, calling the city a "hellhole" and uttering a profanity.

Ms. Grey did attend the panel discussion, as did moderator and junior minister Diane Ablonczy, MP Lois Brown and Andrea Mrozek of the Institute for Marriage and Family Canada.

When a member of the audience asked about women in politics being treated differently, Ms. Grey responded that even so, it didn't give them licence to "throw hissy fits at airports."

"Women are judged differently. We can like it, we can harangue about it, we can hate it, we can do all kinds of things, but that's the way it is. That's life," Ms. Grey, one of the best-known Conservative women, later told The Canadian Press.

"We can't give ourselves permission to lose control and have a hissy fit at an airport or wherever, in the House of Commons, because it will come back to bite us."

Ms. Mrozek also waded in.

"Is it because someone's a woman or that they're just being an idiot in the public square?" she said.

Ms. Ablonczy also indirectly commented on Ms. Guergis, saying Conservative women are treated differently in the media than Liberal women. She pointed to a [column by Judith Timson](#) in The Globe and Mail last week in which the writer suggested Ms. Guergis should resign but not a Toronto city councillor who angrily shot back at a heckler.

Conservatives have been curiously candid in their reaction to the Guergis incident.

The former communications director to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Kory Teneycke, referred to Ms. Guergis's "diva behaviour" as unacceptable.

"You've got to come clean and you've got to show contrition and in doing that it allows everyone to move on," Mr. Teneycke told The Canadian Press.

"Half addressing it or skirting it doesn't allow people to turn the page."

Ms. Guergis is also dealing with the fallout from husband Rahim Jaffer's careless-driving charge. Mr. Jaffer, a former Conservative MP, saw charges of impaired driving and drug possession dropped – a "break" in the words of the judge who heard his case.

"When you're in the press, and you're on the front page of the newspaper for something other than good sound public policy, it's never good," Ms. Grey said.

"The two of them are just in a dill pickle."