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Entertainment Feature: SHE'S THE MAYOR

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When sixty-four year old Iris Peters (Janet-Laine Green) charged into her neighborhood's all-candidates debate to protest plans for replacing the community garden with a big box store, who knew she'd end up running for office? And now that she's the mayor, Iris is going to turn the fictional, mid-sized town of Fairfax on its ear.

The former school principal brings a refreshingly no-nonsense style to City Hall. That most rare breed of politician, she plainly speaks her mind. She uses the PA system for daily announcements, makes people raise their hands in meetings and she bans cell phones in the office. She is notorious for saying or doing things that she and her staff have to scramble to rectify.

Helping her through the bureaucratic maze of City Hall is her eclectic staff including her former pupil Maxine (Tonya Lee Williams), a "thirty-nine and holding" glamour gal who becomes her closest ally; Trevor (Joseph Motiki), an intelligent go-getter who sees conspiracy theories everywhere; Mr. Lee (Denis Akiyama), a septuagenarian ex-Korean secret serviceman who guards Iris with his life; Scott (Colin Mochrie), a career bureaucrat who has never met a form that didn't need filling in and filing; and Deputy Mayor Bill Clarke (Scott Wentworth), the man who initially wants her job, but eventually wants her heart.

And, as if Iris's plate isn't full enough, her grown son Stanley (Paul Constable) lives with her and wakes up every morning with a new "get rich quick" scheme.

50PLUS.com had the opportunity to ask Janet-Laine Green a few questions about her role as Iris — and her thoughts on ageism, reinvention, and making your own rules.

50PLUS: So much of the show seems to be about reinvention: whether it's about career, relationships or romance, a person can reinvent him/herself, no matter how old. Your thoughts on this?

Janet-Laine Green: You reinvent yourself every time you wake up in the morning. The necessity to reinvent oneself happens by choice or circumstance. Iris's husband leaves her for another woman after 40 years of marriage. She loses her job as a respectable high school principal. She moves to another town, moving in with her adult son. Iris begins to find out who she truly is — a single woman of a certain age — with a love of the earth and a strong sense of right and wrong.

I am always intrigued by stories of men and women who dramatically change their lives. They start following a dream that they had as children, or just start walking down a different path. What do you do when you come to the end of your rope? Start climbing! To me reinvention means to rejuvenate your spirit, shake off the dust, and dance to a different tune.

50PLUS: Some say that ageism is the last remaining acceptable form of discrimination.

Although often presented with humour in *She's The Mayor*, Iris does have to contend with it. Have you experienced ageism personally in your career? And if so, how did you deal with it?

JLG: I have to remind everyone I was raised in the atomic age, not the Bronze Age. I still feel like I am 24! Doesn't everyone feel that way? I have had many rejections for film roles — based on age. "She's wonderful-but we're looking for someone younger." Women in the film and TV world are often put out to pasture far too early. We all become more interesting, more worldly, more loving, more accepting as we age. I think audiences want to see their own ages portrayed truthfully. The role of Iris in *She's The Mayor* does deal with sexism, ageism, as well as rheumatism. I feel blessed to play this wonderful role.

How I deal with ageism? I look after my health, I exercise, I breathe deeply, I stand tall, I open my heart and I let people see me as I truly am.

50PLUS: What do you like most about acting the role of Iris?

JLG: Being the boss is fun! I love Iris's feistiness, her tough exterior, her vulnerability. I love how she goes overboard in her passionate beliefs, and gets into trouble with her big mouth. I love Iris slowly coming to bloom again with the possibility of love. I love Iris's relationship with her 39-year-old son — a handful to say the least.

50PLUS: I love how Iris brings her plain speaking, teacherly, no-nonsense approach to City Hall. Do you think the world needs more of this sort of tough love and practicality?

JLG: My dad always said, "Don't lick snow from a frozen axe." Iris would say, "Sit up straight and don't answer back." A straight-ahead approach to life and politics works better than hidden agendas and false words. "That's so — So what — Now what?" is my mantra.

50PLUS: What do you think is the best thing about aging?

JLG: I see the world so differently than I did as a young adult. I appreciate the wisdom I am now gathering and I am grateful for the beauty of life.

50PLUS: The most challenging parts of aging?

JLG: Doing the splits!!

[She's The Mayor](#) ^[1] airs on [VISIONTV](#) ^[2] Friday nights at 8:30pm ET starting March 4, 2011

WHERE TO FIND VISIONTV:
Rogers 60 (GTA)
Across Canada: BellTV 261 – Shaw Direct 394
or check your local listings

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