

Leadership Accord for Gender Diversity



BACKGROUND & COMMITMENT FRAMEWORK

In many occupations, women represent a much smaller component of the workforce than they should – and in many instances they continue to face barriers that limit their advancement, or indeed their desire to remain in the occupation of their choice. These barriers may include conscious or unconscious discrimination, a lack of female role models, and/or workplace culture and practices that erode an inclusive workplace. Integrating women into workplaces that employ skilled workers requires more than just opening the doors to female employees. Paradigm shifts require repeated focus and attention.

Few of us reach our goals without the support of others. Normalizing women in trades and technology careers will take industry and educational leadership and commitment, as well as individual ownership for change, to ensure our industry becomes truly reflective of the society that we live in¹.

Labour Context

Labour market research has indicated that the aging of the Canadian population and workforce, loss of industry knowledge and lack of young people with the right skills, training and/or work experience all pose critical challenges in this time of change. Employers will therefore need to look to underrepresented groups to fill the talent gap – this includes women.

This highlights the importance of attracting women to critical occupations such as engineers, engineering technicians, technologists and other skilled trades. These efforts must be tackled together by industry, government, unions and educational institutions.

According to Statistics Canada, there are 7.6 million women working in Canada² – making up approximately 47 per cent of the Canadian workforce. Women, however, still represent only 25 per cent of the workforce in the electricity sector. Furthermore, fewer than 13 per cent of practicing licensed engineers are women. In the trades, that number plummets to fewer than 5 per cent. Despite the rise in the proportion of women in these technical areas and best efforts to tap into, develop and retain this cohort, the pace of improvement has been slow, with the parity between men and women in the industry remaining a long way off.

¹ Electricity Human Resources Canada Steering Committee for Connected Women

² Labour Force Survey, December 2017, Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/180105/t001a-eng.htm>

An Accord for Action

There is a real opportunity for employers to actively engage in building a workforce that is truly representative of Canada's people. This Accord proposes united action by employers, educators, unions and governments to: expand the breadth and depth of the skilled workforce; ensure that women are informed of the opportunities available in the sector of their choice and once in the sector, are fully supported and provided with equal opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential.

Our Key Beliefs

More Women = Potential + Diverse Thinking + Increased Safety + Better Performance

Actions to support and promote women in the workforce will benefit individual workers and employers by:

- increasing women's economic power through increased earning potential
- adding skills and diverse thinking to organizations nationwide as well as the wider Canadian economy
- driving up productivity and innovation, introducing new ways of working, strengthening team dynamics and improving decision-making processes
- enhancing the quality of engagement and mutual understanding between a company and the community in which it operates by extending the benefits of a project more directly to both men and women
- helping businesses to manage risk and reduce potential liability for non-compliance in relation to labour, health and safety, discrimination and sexual harassment, therefore reducing exposure to fines or the legal costs of addressing claims
- positively impacting revenue, market growth, profits and shareholder returns

Defining Success

Stakeholders agree that success means:

- Building a strong consensus among a broad group of employers, educational institutions, government and organized labour that action by the industry is needed
- Signatories develop individual benchmarks to track progress toward the goals outlined in this Accord and review as part of their internal review mechanisms
- Signatories can identify (quantitatively or qualitatively) a number of tangible actions they have taken across the spectrum to implement any or all of the committed actions outlined as part of this Accord

- Working together to track, monitor and report on progress towards the achievement of the gender diversity commitments outlined in this Accord. EHRC will maintain an oversight function providing employers with supporting assessment tools and managing the review process

Commitments

Employers, unions and educational institutions agree to make commitments to increase the representation of women in their programs, organizations and the Canadian workplace.

This will be achieved through a range of initiatives which may include:



Employers



Labour



Education

Policy & Governance Practice

Ensuring policies and governance are inclusive

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committing to the on-going improvement of our workplace policies, practices and operating procedures so that women are sufficiently represented in the workplace. This includes a review of key HR policies and the creation of gender-diverse work environments and organizational cultures that are supportive of women. 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working actively, in partnership with employers, to develop measures to better allow women to enter the workforce such as special letters of understanding, settlements or memoranda. 		✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting in place contractual terms and conditions that require contractors to have a representative workforce. 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Striving to ensure collective agreement provisions are not unconsciously biased towards women entering the workforce. 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Striving to ensure women represent between 10% and 30% of Board of Director and Senior Management positions and promote the business case that diverse leadership teams make good business sense. 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging joint ventures between employers and government or employees and their respective unions (or even tri-partite ventures between all three) in support of advancing women in under-represented roles in the workforce. 	✓	✓	

Education & Workplace Readiness

Working towards supporting women in the workplace

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring there is at least one female interviewer on all educational program intake panels. 			✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring instructors are aware of, sensitive to, and in some cases receive training on the barriers facing women in non-traditional positions within the workplace and that there is no conscious or unconscious bias within the classroom that discriminates against female students. 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing co-op placements to both male and female students. 	✓		✓



Employers



Labour



Education

- Investigating and researching potential factors that are limiting the successful transition from educational and training programs into the workforce.
- Supporting women’s transition into the workplace by matching new hires with women already working through internal mentoring programs and/or national mentoring programs.
- Helping to develop women’s resilience to thrive within the workplace.

✓

✓

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Recruitment and Retention Practices

Striving to hire more women through tangible efforts

- Working to promote occupations and career opportunities where women are under-represented in a way that attracts more women.
- Striving where possible, for at least 2 qualified women shortlisted for all positions.
- Endeavour where possible to have at least one female interviewer on all intake/hiring panels.
- Striving/Working towards increasing the number of apprenticeship positions being filled by women, by the individual organization.
- Developing processes or special programs that help advance women within the workplace and support their development.

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Defining and Measuring Success

The Accord needs clear goals that can be measured. It is acknowledged that not all organizations will progress at the same rate, nor will results always be immediate, however it is the premise of this Accord that to effect systemic change in the workplace a bold vision is required by industry leaders.



Commitment

The entry level – for organizations that have recently started the process



Achievement

The intermediate level – for organizations that have a more advanced and comprehensive approach to increasing the representation of women in the workforce



Excellence

The advanced level – for organizations that demonstrate that these practices are embedded in their corporate culture and values