



# ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS

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Women's  
Participation in  
Transportation  
Careers – Moving  
Beyond the  
Status Quo

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March 14, 2017

# Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program.



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# 1. OVERVIEW

In recognition of International Women's Day 2017, the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table (Skills Table) and the Western Transportation Advisory Council (WESTAC) hosted a roundtable discussion on March 14 in Vancouver to identify strategies for increasing the number of women in leadership roles within the transportation industry. The invitation-only "Women in Transportation Roundtable" brought together 50 participants – women who hold senior positions in transportation and champions, both male and female, who have shown interest in developing and promoting women in transportation.

Participants recognized that transportation, as an integral part of Canada's economy and society, should reflect the communities it serves – women and men, Aboriginal people, visible minorities, and people with disabilities.

Discussions focused on the competitive advantage of having more female employees in senior positions, the obstacles women face in moving up the corporate ladder, opportunities for advancement, best practices, and ideas for organizations in achieving greater gender diversity.

**Pamela Goldsmith-Jones**, Member of Parliament for West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country, and Parliamentary Secretary for International Trade provided welcoming remarks on behalf of the Government of Canada. She noted that women continue to be underrepresented across the transportation industry with only 25% of the workforce being women. A grim statistic despite the fact that women in Canada have the 2nd highest employment rate in G7 countries and that 50% of women between 35 and 65 years old have a university degree.

“  
... creating more opportunities  
for women to contribute their  
talent to strengthening Canada's  
economy is critical to growing  
our middle class.  
”

~ Pamela Goldsmith-Jones  
Member of Parliament for West  
Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky  
Country, and Parliamentary Secretary for  
International Trade



Goldsmith-Jones said, "creating more opportunities for women to contribute their talent to strengthening Canada's economy is critical to growing our middle class. I'm pleased that we're working collaboratively, through initiatives like this, to increase Canada's competitiveness and create a skilled, diverse workforce."

**Oksana Exell**, President & CEO, WESTAC facilitated the roundtable and focused on the theme of "Beyond the Status Quo" which had emerged from interviews conducted in late 2016 with women executives in transportation and summarized in a report by the same name.

Exell opened the discussion by reminding everyone that we are on the cusp of corporate, economic and societal forces that will present new opportunities for women's advancement. She also referred to mounting evidence showing that diversity in executive levels and on Boards is correlated to productivity, profit and performance. Recent studies by Credit Suisse, McKinsey and Goldman Sachs all show that companies with diversity in senior executive positions and on Boards of Directors scored in the top quartile on return on equity and had profit margins 14% higher than those in the bottom quartile (see *Additional Readings* on page 12). More gender diverse leadership can also lead to lower risk, greater customer focus, increased employee engagement and greater innovation.

Exell encouraged participants to implement the practices or processes that are successful in advancing women's careers and to find ways to measure.



## 2. ADVANCING WOMEN INTO LEADERSHIP



**Vandana Juneja**, Regional Director, Catalyst Canada set the stage with a thought-provoking presentation which dispelled common myths regarding women's advancement in the workplace and defining inclusive leadership. Catalyst's mission is to accelerate progress for women through workplace inclusion.

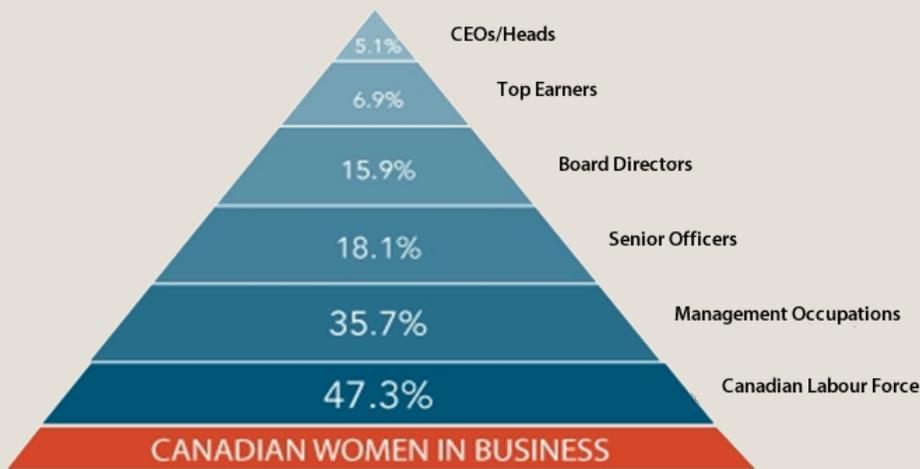
### A. Myth-busting

**Myth 1:** *Women and men advance equally until women hit a 'glass ceiling'.*

**In Reality:** From their very first job after obtaining an MBA, women are already behind when it comes to job level and pay – even after considering work experience, industry, region and other factors. Over time, as careers progress, the gender gap widens. The problem starts very early in the career pipeline, long before women hit a glass ceiling.

### IF WE HAD TRULY INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES, THIS PYRAMID WOULD BE A SQUARE.

Women are underrepresented in Canadian businesses at management and senior levels.



Source: Catalyst Canada 2016

***Myth 2: Women lag because they have too few mentors.***

**In Reality:** High-potential women have **more** mentors than men, but men's mentors are more senior and act as sponsors. The mentor's level is what predicts advancement. When mentors are highly placed within organizations, they may advocate for their mentees when advancement decisions are made.

***Myth 3: Women don't help other women get ahead in their careers.***

**In Reality:** There is no 'queen-bee' syndrome – the overwhelming majority of women **are** mentoring other women (and men as well). Women who serve as mentors and sponsors earn up to \$25,000 more in salary than those who do not. Paying it forward pays it back.

***Myth 4: Women get fewer international assignments because they are reluctant to relocate and decline offers made to them.***

**In Reality:** Women are not being **offered** many international assignments often based on incorrect or outdated assumptions by decision-makers. Others are making the decisions for them without consultation. It is important that women be asked whether they would like these assignments rather than not having an opportunity to decline.

**Mentor vs. Sponsor**

**Mentor:** provides advice and guidance, important for personal and professional development.

**Sponsor:** a senior leader who actively advocates for you at the decision-making table when it comes to development opportunities or promotions.

## **B. Inclusive leaders**

Inclusive leaders value the diversity of talent and experiences. They create innovative, dynamic workplaces where employees feel connected to and supportive of one another, where employees consistently go above and beyond, and where women advance and thrive. Being an inclusive leader requires one to seek out diverse people and strive away from the natural tendency to gravitate towards individuals with similar backgrounds and experiences. Four key attributes of inclusive leaders are:

1. **empowerment:** enable direct reports to develop and excel
2. **accountability:** demonstrate confidence in direct reports by holding them responsible for what they do
3. **humility:** admit their mistakes, accept criticism from others, and share how to correct the course
4. **courage:** set personal interests aside; act on convictions and principles even when it requires personal risk-taking.

**1** *“Executive Insights: Women’s Participation in Transportation Careers – Moving Beyond the Status Quo”, Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table, 2017.*

## **C. Barriers**

Roundtable participants identified barriers to achieving gender diversity in the workplace, especially in mid-level and senior management positions. The discussion validated many of the insights gathered from interviews with senior executive women working in the transportation industry<sup>1</sup>.

### ***Organizational Barriers***

- workplace culture does not value inclusiveness
- lack of awareness of the business case for gender diversity
- diversity is not a strategic priority or no targets to meet diversity are set
- emphasis placed on operational experience rather than skillsets and cross-sectoral experience
- disproportionate focus on recruitment and not enough on retaining or advancing women already in place

### ***Individual Barriers***

- women not advocating for themselves or other women
- lack of role models at senior levels
- unconscious biases favour men

### ***Other Barriers***

- low awareness of the breadth of transportation occupations within the public reduces the pool of new entrants into the industry
- history/traditionally male-dominated workplace
- networking opportunities not female-friendly

## **D. Possible Solutions**

Roundtable participants identified possible solutions to achieving gender diversity in the workplace. These solutions build on those set out in the *“Executive Insights: Women’s Participation in Transportation Careers – Moving Beyond the Status Quo”* report (see pages 11-13). At the roundtable, participants also identified specific actions that women can take to help advance their own careers.

### **What Organizations can do**

- culture change requires buy-in from the CEO and other senior leaders (including the Board)
- make diversity a strategic priority and set targets; dedicate resources to meeting the targets
- educate management on the value of diversity
- allow women to make their own decisions about new opportunities – do not try and ‘protect’ women
- recognize the value of cross-sectoral experience; invest in job-specific training and other professional development opportunities and provide exposure to enable women to understand the operations
- pay attention to retaining employees
- provide opportunities for mid-level managers to be mentored by senior managers
- learn from one another – no need to re-invent the wheel, implement best practices of other firms
- ensure workplaces are safe and respectful

### **What Individuals can do**

- women need to value and believe in themselves and take ownership of their career
- actively seek mentors, sponsors or champions; focus on senior executives who can help you move up the career ladder, not other women
- young people should pursue co-op opportunities; work experience increases employability
- if there is no senior-level buy-in for the value of diversity, ‘manage up’ and influence change
- gain diverse experience in the sector and company to prepare for executive level positions

### **What Others can do**

- government mandate to improve gender diversity would be helpful for sectors that are traditionally male-dominated or have deep-rooted traditions of how work is performed
- continue public awareness campaigns on the value of trades
- working together, the industry needs to raise its public profile, this will lead to greater interest in the industry as a career

## 3. DIVERSITY IN ACTION - WHAT'S WORKING

In many respects, transportation is a tough industry for workers with long, unpredictable hours for many positions. If organizations add additional unnecessary barriers, women will be driven away from the industry. Leaders from Teck Resources, TransLink and the Vancouver International Airport Authority (YVR) provided practical examples of what their organizations and individuals within them have done to reduce barriers and advance female executives. One common denominator – each of these organizations recognized the importance of having buy-in from the CEO and other top executives.

“  
I tried to set the stage for evolution to occur then came to the conclusion that evolution is way too slow. A revolution was required – I became a disruptor.  
”

~ Michele Mawhinney  
Vice President, Human Resources & Supply Management  
Vancouver International Airport Authority

These organizations have made significant progress towards increasing diversity and the share of women in the executive ranks.

- **Teck Resources:** since 2010 the number of female employees has increased by 56%; while only 14% of the overall workforce is female, Teck is considered a leader in the mining industry and it recognizes there is opportunities for greater diversity. In the transportation department, 50% of the team is female.
- **TransLink:** women comprise 42% of managers across the enterprise, 43% of C-suite and 55% of the Board of Directors.
- **YVR:** the percentage of women in management has increased from 31% in 2013 to 41% in 2016. It aspires to have 50% of its leadership be women.

Actions undertaken by these organizations to achieve such results and revolutionize the diversity of the workforce can be grouped into four areas:

1. Education
2. Work environment
3. Specific initiatives
4. Measurement

### 1. Education

- training on unconscious biases and gender intelligence
- specialized programs to bring technical and professional women, operators and unionized staff to find solutions to deal with barriers
- train across the organization

## 2. *Work environment*

- diversity committees to set strategic direction, influence culture and develop supportive HR policies
- offer flexible work schedules
- be deliberate in recruitment at all levels
- ask managers to intervene when they see inappropriate situations occurring

## 3. *Specific initiatives*

- prepare succession and development plans that identify high-potential women in the organization; follow-up to ensure the plans are acted on
- implement corporate-sponsored mentorship programs that are voluntary and driven by the mentees
- hold 'women in management' meetings and/or 'coaching circles' to initiate dialogue about women's experiences in the organization and the challenges they face; selected meetings should include male executives as well to encourage a more inclusive environment
- partner with external organizations such as YWCA's "Changing Gears" program that encourages unemployed women to train as truck or transit drivers

## 4. *Measurement*

- set targets for diversity
- include employment equity on executive scorecards (healthy competition between executives will guide results)

See the *Appendix* for additional information on these initiatives which can serve as a resource to other organizations.

**“  
We need the best and brightest  
people involved to make better  
decisions – having women makes  
the team stronger.  
”**

**~ Don Smith**  
Director, Transportation  
Teck Resources

## 4. ACTION PLANS

The Skills Table is a non-profit with a mission to ensure that the Asia Pacific Gateway has enough people with the right skills and training to meet its needs. The Skills Table's Board of Directors has prioritized increasing women's participation in the transportation sector. As a result of this research and roundtable discussion, we will explore support for the following sectoral strategic initiatives:

1. **Employer Outreach and Capacity Building** – the why and how to achieving gender diversity
2. **Worker Empowerment** – identifying the challenges and learning how to cope and persevere despite them
3. **Women Trailblazers in Transportation** – a multifaceted initiative that engages executives, offers mentorship and engages youth with scholarships.

### Additional Readings

Catalyst Inc. (2015). *Companies Behaving Responsibly: Gender Diversity on Boards*. Retrieved from <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/companies-behaving-responsibly-gender-diversity-boards>

Catalyst Inc. (2013). *Why Diversity Matters*. Retrieved from <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/why-diversity-matters>

Credit Suisse Research Institute. (2016, September 22). *Credit Suisse Research Institute Releases the CS Gender 3000: The Reward for Change Report Analyzing the impact of Female Representation in Boardrooms and Senior Management*. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/credit-suisse-research-institute-releases-the-cs-gender-3000-the-reward-for-change-report-analyzing-the-impact-of-female-representation-in-boardrooms-and-senior-management-300332558.html>

Goldman Sachs. (n.d.). *Diversity and Inclusion*. Retrieved from <http://www.goldmansachs.com/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion/>

McKinsey & Company. (2015). *Why Diversity Matters*. Retrieved from <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

# APPENDIX – RESOURCES TO JUMPSTART A DIVERSITY PROGRAM

**Teck Resources' Mining and Refining pilot program at Trail:**

<http://www.teck.com/news/stories/2016/mentorship-for-women-at-teck-trail-operations>.

**Teck's Inclusion and Diversity Page:**

<http://www.teck.com/responsibility/featured-topics/inclusion-and-diversity>

**Teck's Inclusion and Diversity Policy:**

<http://www.teck.com/responsibility/approach-to-responsibility/our-commitments/policies/inclusion-and-diversity-policy>

**TransLink Mentorship Program:**

In 2013, TransLink’s Human Resources department created an enterprise-wide Mentorship Program designed to nurture learning and employee development across the organization. The intention of the program is to foster knowledge transfer in creating a resilient and versatile pipeline of talent across the enterprise.

The program is a matching program where mentees are matched with mentors across the enterprise based on the developmental goals and objectives mentees are working towards. The program is 6 months long, and is completely voluntary. Mentees and mentors are expected to meet on a monthly basis for the duration of the 6 months. The evaluation criteria consist primarily of self-report measures in a survey format as well as interviews from mentees, mentors, and the mentee’s manager.

Mentorship Program timeline:



The uptake for the program has been more than encouraging since its launch. Mentees report that they have gained a variety of skills around communication and feedback, relationship building, team building, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking. Mentors also report developing and practicing key skills related to coaching, team building and employee development.

For more information, please contact Raya Rahbari at TransLink’s *Organizational Development* department at 778-375-7727 or [Raya.Rahbari@translink.ca](mailto:Raya.Rahbari@translink.ca).

**YVR Women's Coaching Circles:**

*Are you interested in volunteering to join an innovative pilot program for our women leaders?*

***What are the Coaching Circles?***

The Women's Coaching Circles pilot program is an opportunity for our women management team to learn from our own women leaders and connect with peers. Through hot topics and candid dialogue in a confidential setting, you will be able to ask tough questions, seek advice on your current challenges, and learn how others have embraced diversity to thrive in our organization.

***Who are the coaches?***

The women VPs and Directors have each volunteered to co-lead a Coaching Circle.

***How will the Coaching Circles work?***

The coaches will organize a monthly lunch with their Coaching Circle. During the lunch, various topics will be discussed. The Coaching Circle may decide to have focused monthly topics, or they may choose an open forum format for discussion with each other and the coaches. Each Coaching Circle will have a maximum size.

***How do I sign up?***

Contact Human Resources to volunteer for a Coaching Circle. We will try and accommodate your preferences.

***What is the time commitment?***

As a participant, the time commitment is minimal – one hour per month to attend a Coaching Circle lunch.

**This Study was led and the following report prepared by:**



WESTAC (Western Transportation Advisory Council) is a council of transportation leaders in business, government and labour, from across Canada, with an interest in the long-term competitiveness of Western Canada's trade and transportation network. A neutral and trusted platform for over 40 years, the WESTAC forum hosts conversations on important issues in transportation and encourages collaboration on supply chain challenges.

#### **About the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table**

The Skills Table is a non-profit, federal-provincial partnership between labour, business and education/training institutions. Our 19-member stakeholder Board works to ensure the Asia Pacific Gateway (APG) has enough people with the right skills and training to meet its needs. The Skills Table is a trusted source for labour market information (LMI) and offers a unique voice on workforce issues and solutions, having delivered over 35 projects.



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