

The Gender Gap in BC's Economic Activity: New WEB Alliance Report Calls for Change

Unprecedented collaboration within the BC business community has resulted in the release of an action plan for government, industry and individuals to support career growth for women

Embargo Until May 6, 2015, 6:00am PST - VANCOUVER, BC-- (Marketwired – May 6, 2015) The [WEB Alliance](#), a dynamic collective of over 25 women's business networks, representing over 10,000 professional and entrepreneurial women in BC, today announced the release of a report "*Women as a Catalyst for Growth: A BC Action Plan*", which identifies key barriers and solutions to increasing the economic impact of women in British Columbia. The report reveals extensive opportunities to grow the impact of women in senior leadership, entrepreneurship, and non-traditional roles and emerging sectors that can and should be acted on now by government, industry and individuals.

The report has been released at a time when consideration of the gender gap in the workplace is on the rise. As a result, recommendations and actions outlined in the report have captured significant interest. The WEB Alliance and Vancouver Board of Trade have partnered with [The Next Billion event](#) for a [reception](#) on May 6, 2015 to share and discuss the report recommendations.

"A clear business case has emerged out of our work in compiling and releasing this Action Plan. There is an essential economic need to increase awareness and take swift action in supporting career growth for women in Canada," comments [Jill Earthy](#), Co-Chair of the report & forum and Co-Founder of the WEB Alliance. "We have an opportunity in BC to be leaders in taking action, and this report will directly contribute to that."

Women as a Catalyst for Growth: A BC Action Plan outlines recommendations and key actions across three areas including women in senior leadership, women entrepreneurs and women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors. Common themes identified across all areas include the need for early education to sustain cultural change, the role of men in the conversation, the need for reorientation of industry policies to support work-life flexibility, and the positive impact that champions can have on career advancement for women.

A summary of key recommendations include:

1. Promote and advocate diversity;

- a. Implement diversity policies in your organization.
- b. Implement updated talent management systems that positively support the recruitment and development of a pipeline of women.
- c. Develop flexible work practices and policies to support women and families, and employees.
- d. Be an advocate for diversity and inclusion.

2. Champion women:

- a. Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women seeking to elevate their careers within your organization and community.
- b. Support supplier diversity and invest in women-owned businesses.
- c. Act as a champion, mentor, and role model for women in your life and workplace.
- d. Actively champion your own career and step up to direct your career advancement.

3. Foster Positive & Self Affirming Mindsets:

- a. Support women and girls in building confidence in their skills and capabilities to realize their full career potential.

- b. Encourage family, friends, colleagues and organizations to address self-limiting and cultural mindsets that hold many women back.
- c. Adopt a positive mindset and be confident in your abilities.

4. Incorporate a diversity focus in early education:

- a. Enhance the Public Education (K-12) Curriculum to include diversity content that encourages girls to pursue business, entrepreneurship, trades, and STEM.
- b. Act as a sponsor and role model for programs that encourage young girls to pursue leadership and non-traditional roles.

5. Activate Men:

- a. Engage men as active participants and critical partners in conversation and action, to collectively shift the dial.

Women as a Catalyst for Growth: A BC Action Plan is the result of an unprecedented level of collaboration across committed organizations and individuals in BC. The WEB Alliance initiated the '[BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth](#)', held on October 24, 2014, to bring all of the voices together. The forum included over 400 community leaders and influencers from across the province to develop actionable recommendations to support women's economic growth. Speakers at the Forum included The Honourable Christy Clark, Premier of BC, The Honourable Kellie Leitch, Minister for Status of Women Canada, and Alex Johnston of Catalyst Canada. Further insight was garnered through extensive research available on this topic.

"This Action Plan represents an incredible collaboration of people and organizations from across BC, who aim to grow the economic impact of women. Never before have so many come together for this purpose," states Lois Nahirney, report and forum Co-Chair. "We have outlined steps that government, industry, and individuals can take to enhance opportunities for women, beginning today. The impact comes from everyone taking action now."

Women as a Catalyst for Growth: A BC Action Plan and its resource links can be found at www.weballiance.ca and www.boardoftrade.com. It will also be circulated to government, businesses, key industry associations, women's business networks, Vancouver Board of Trade members and at speaking events and presentations across the province. A second Economic Forum event has been scheduled for October 23rd, 2015, which will serve as a follow up to further action and accountability. Additionally, the Vancouver Board of Trade's Women's Leadership Circle will be launching a 'Leadership Challenge', allowing organizations to register and commit to changes, which will be tracked to demonstrate progress.

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About the WEB Alliance

The WEB Alliance of Women's Business Networks represents over 10,000 women in business in BC and collaborates to create change towards better business, stronger communities and an enhanced business culture for women. <http://www.weballiance.ca>

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