

# PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Increasing the Representation  
of Women on Canadian Boards



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada

Canada



Copies of this document may be obtained from:

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# PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

## Increasing the Representation of Women on Canadian Boards

In June 2014, the Honourable Dr. K. Kellie Leitch, Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, released the Advisory Council's report *Good for Business* on ways to increase the representation of women on public and private boards.



Minister Leitch as she released the federal Advisory Council for women on boards report. June 2014



A NATIONAL GOAL OF  
**30%**  
WOMEN ON BOARDS  
BY 2019

The Report, “**Good for Business: A Plan to Promote More Women on Canadian Boards**” laid out aspirational goals for Canada’s public and private sectors, most notably, a national goal of 30% women on boards by 2019, as well as a number of **best practices** in use to successfully advance more women into board positions.

The Report builds on the 2013 ***Business Case for Women on Boards***, drafted by the Conference Board of Canada on behalf of the Forum of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers for the Status of Women. This document highlighted the importance of board gender diversity in an increasingly competitive global market, positioning the issue of women on boards as a business imperative.

As of October 2014, nearly 20.8% of corporate board positions at Canadian stock index companies are held by women in Canada. (*Catalyst, October 2014*)

“Everything we do [to appoint women] we do with a mercenary attitude to enhance our own benefits and profitability, and I think that’s what makes it sustainable. I wonder where the other leaders are that they don’t know successful women?”

Michael Cooper, CEO, Dream Unlimited Corp  
*Globe and Mail, June 26, 2014*

Since the launch of the Advisory Council’s report, momentum has continued to build. In 2014, Minister Leitch engaged with federally regulated and FP500 companies, and the response was very positive as many of them endorsed the recommendations put forward by the Advisory Council and shared their **best practices**.

## FEDERAL LEADERSHIP – SETTING THE EXAMPLE

Minister Leitch has seized the opportunity to promote board gender diversity across the country and to raise awareness of the importance of this issue, from speaking engagements with Canada’s most powerful business leaders to meeting with young women and girls just beginning their careers.

The Government of Canada is also reaching out to Canada’s business leaders through the campaign **It Starts with One – Be her Champion**, recognizing that a champion can provide critical support to women seeking board opportunities. Leaders in all fields are encouraged to make a difference in a women’s career by becoming her champion by **taking the pledge**.



**36%**  
OF GIC  
APPOINTMENTS  
IN 2014

The importance of gender balance in governance is not limited to the private sector. In fact, balanced representation of women within Governor-in-Council (GiC) appointed positions is a priority for the Government of Canada. Canada has already exceeded the Advisory Council’s recommended goal, with women representing roughly **36%** of GiC appointments in 2014, which represents a significant increase since 2012, as women represented less than 30%.

In 2014, the Ontario Securities Commission implemented a mandatory “comply or explain” amendment, requiring businesses to report annually on the gender composition of their boards of directors. Most jurisdictions across the country have followed suit and adopted the same amendments.

To complement the efforts of provincial and territorial counterparts, the Government of Canada announced, through **Economic Action Plan 2015**, its intention to amend the **Canada Business Corporations Act** to promote gender diversity among public companies, using the “comply or explain” model of disclosure.

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO INFLUENCE CHANGE

Stakeholders are essential to continuing to increase the representation of women on boards.



There are a number of leading organizations in Canada promoting the importance of board gender balance, including Catalyst Canada, the Canadian Board Diversity Council and the Women’s Executive Network.

The **Catalyst Accord** continues to call on Canadian corporations to increase the overall proportion of FP500 board seats held by women to **25 percent by 2017**. High profile signatories continue to come on board, including the addition of the first mining company, Goldcorp Inc.

*“Gender diversity on boards helps drive better business results and strengthens Canada’s economic competitiveness. We encourage organizations across all industries to develop their own strategies and action plans for accelerating the advancement of women in leadership.”*

*Chuck Jeannes, President and CEO, Goldcorp Inc*

Canada has also seen the creation of the Canadian branch of the successful UK initiative, **The 30% Club**. Inaugural Chair Spencer Lanthier, former Chair of the Bank of Canada, has been given the mandate to seek Canadian board chairs and chief executive officers to join the organization and pledge their support for gender diversity on boards.

Both **Catalyst** and the **Canadian Board Diversity Council** produce lists of board ready women and both organizations operate mentoring and championing programs.

In addition, a number of executive search firms targeting women have emerged in recent years, providing opportunities for the skills and expertise of women business leaders to be showcased.

## THE WAY FORWARD

With the wealth of activity to address board gender balance in Canada, momentum is building to reach the proposed goal of 30% representation by 2019. With “comply or explain” requirements implemented or being implemented across the country, business leaders on the cutting edge know that now is the time to take action.



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