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Scott Sinclair
Manitoba Apprenticeship
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December 9, 2011

RE: Contribution to the annual stakeholder consultations to inform the 2012-2013 strategic direction of Manitoba Apprenticeship

Dear Mr. Sinclair,

The Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba (PCWM) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the annual stakeholder consultations that will inform the 2012-2013 strategic direction of Manitoba Apprenticeship.

PCWM is a federation of organizations and individual members whose purpose is to improve social conditions for the family and the province by public education and representations to Government. It is a volunteer organization that has no paid staff and receives no operating funds from Government. PCWM works by a resolution process – all resolutions are debated and voted on by each representative of a federate member of Council in order to become policy. Where policy exists, as is the case for women in the trades, PCWM can speak on the matter on behalf of its federate and individual members.

Background

PCWM has long recognized the importance of supporting women in the trades. In 1987, PCWM urged the Government of Manitoba to:

- 1) use its resources to develop a comprehensive strategy to support and carry out special measures and affirmative action activities directed towards women, natives, disabled persons, and visible minorities which would ensure their participation in apprenticeship programs;
- 2) promote participation in apprenticeship programs which more fairly reflect the make-up of the population;
- 3) consult the designated groups in this development effecting their training and

employment, and

4) budget sufficient funds to provide workshops, advertising, and appropriate literature directed to the designated groups

Even earlier, in 1976, PCWM recommended that:

- 1) women actively be sought to represent interest groups as possible appointees to the Apprenticeship Board and Trade Advisory Committee;
- 2) the promotion of females' entrance to trades at the base level
- 3) support for women be encouraged to help combat the negative pressure on them in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship courses;
- 4) literature be reviewed to remove sex-stereotyping materials in schools ;
- 5) non-sexist counselling from guidance counsellors in particular.

The National Council of Women of Canada, with whom PCWM is affiliated, similarly stated in 1980:

That the National Council of Women of Canada support further initiatives which the federal government takes to encourage provincial and territorial governments:

1. To broaden areas or categories of work where apprentice training could be provided;
2. To develop programmes to attract a larger number of female applicants; and,
3. To publicize availability of existing and proposed apprentice training programmes.

Current Response

Recently, Manitoba Apprenticeship held its annual Awards of Distinction dinner. Once again, women were vastly under-represented among the nominees and the attendees. This is, of course, a reflection of the massive gender imbalance that exists in the trades, despite the fact that several sectors of the economy, notably construction, are desperate for an increase in apprentices.

In 2005, Statistics Canada indicated that the lot of women in the trades was "improving": 1 in 10 apprentices were then female. Indeed, women accounted for 9.8% of total apprentices, double the proportion of 4.5% in 1992. However, given that the numbers would have been far lower if the traditional and lower-paying trades (personal services, hospitality) were excluded from this calculation, the improvement is nothing to be particularly proud of in the larger scheme of things. In fact, only 3% of apprentices in the generally unionized and higher-paying construction trades were women.

Through both national and provincial initiatives, an effort has begun to improve gender parity another step, in large part because industry needs more skilled workers and non-traditional apprentices are being sought out to meet the demand. Promotional

materials and campaigns demonstrate a noticeable and commendable effort to include visible minorities and women in posters, videos, websites, and brochures. The focus on children and youth with these types of progressive materials are a step in the right direction. No doubt, the numbers of women in the trades has increased slightly as a result.

However, a great deal more needs to be done to address the systemic gender inequality in the apprenticeable trades. If women are to be 30 or even 40% of the skilled labour pool, concerted and long-term change must be the goal.

This work can be divided into several categories:

- **Publicly Supporting the Principle and Expectation of Equity**

Any work that can be done to foster respect for women and change the traditional stereotypes of women in the trades will ultimately change how women are perceived in the workplace and in society. The Apprenticeship Branch can support social progress in this regard by:

- Identifying instances of gender inequity within the Branch;
- Keeping a gender lens on its own hiring processes and activities;
- Developing strong and clear policy on gender equity, and committing real resources to the efforts;
- Supporting national efforts on gender equity in the trades;
- Speaking out against sexism and gender inequity in various realms;
- Profiling successful female trades professionals, as this helps everyone see what is possible (note: the current work in this area by national and provincial apprenticeship organizations is a good start);
- Creating a Speaker's Bureau of female trades professionals who can be invited into technical training classrooms as guest speakers;
- Create and actively promote a network for women in the trades;
- Support and promote the activities of any groups that support women working in different trades; collaborate with them to develop mentorships for female apprentices coming through various trades, targeting areas with especially low numbers of female apprentices;
- Work with partners like Women's Directorates or Manitoba Status of Women to develop specific initiatives which support female apprentices, like Ontario's WIST - Women In Skilled Trades;
- Interviewing female apprentices who drop from their technical training program to determine what might have helped them to stay, and then making a concerted effort to remedy those barriers.

- **Supporting Change in the Workplace**

The most difficult work needs to take place in the workplace, where chauvinistic and sexist attitudes are prevalent, explicitly and implicitly endorsed, and often condoned. Traditional, male-dominated workplaces are notorious for their sexist views and practices, whether we like to talk about them or not. In order for women to be hired into these workplaces in entry-level positions, so that they might learn the necessary skills, prove themselves, and be selected for technical training, the culture of these workplaces needs to change dramatically.

The Apprenticeship Branch can support greater gender equity in the workplace in various ways (knowing that the concept of equity applies across diverse divides):

- As the keeper of trades-related standards and accreditations, the Apprenticeship Branch should use its power to insist on at least the same adherence to the Human Rights Code that it expects in its own offices. This does assume, of course, that sexist views and practices within the Branch itself are addressed as they arise. Likewise, the bullying and demeaning behaviours of many male-dominated workplaces cannot be tolerated. “Girlie calendars” are not acceptable on a work site any more than are hazing rituals, verbal and physical threats, or inappropriate or belittling comments. Respect is respect, period.
- Since monitoring is difficult in the under-staffed Apprenticeship Branch, staffing levels should be increased so that a variety of standards and expectations can be enforced.
- The Apprenticeship Branch should develop training materials and programs for workplaces hiring on higher number of female apprentices, much like training available for cultural diversity.
- Subsidies should be made available to employers to hire women in non-traditional trades.
- Workplaces that agree to take on female apprentices, but where female apprentices have not been the norm, likely require additional support and supervision, perhaps through a staff person with specific responsibility for gender equity.
- Incentives should be developed for employers to hire women and to build second washrooms, when necessary.

- **Supporting Change in Technical Training Programs**

Expectations for gender equity and respectful treatment in the workplace should begin in technical training programs. Sometimes, technical training programs permit different behaviours in trades training than they would in other parts of the post-secondary environment. As such, the Apprenticeship Branch should encourage and expect:

- Institutional insistence on respect for female apprentices in the training program;
- Substantial anti-bullying policies with strict enforcement;
- Teaching staff to act as positive role models in the treatment of female apprentices;
- The establishment of scholarships and bursaries for high-performing female apprentices;
- The establishment of awards and recognition for programs with a high number of successful female apprentices;
- Specific supports for female apprentices (and other apprentices with similar barriers)
 - Childcare subsidies for single parents, as women are still disproportionately expected to have greater responsibility for home, elder and child care;
 - Additional tool subsidies for women (who may need to start from scratch with purchasing equipment, books and tools);
 - Female-only classes to reduce intimidation and allow for different forms of learning (perhaps with more time, as many women have not benefitted from the experiential learning that many men have received from fathers or male friends);
 - Preparatory programs to provide pre-requisite background information about trades so that choices can be made with full knowledge of expectations, required skill and opportunities.

If you have questions about any of these recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba will continue to pay attention to policies developed to improve the percentage of women in the non-traditional trades, especially those that offer stable, higher-paying and unionized jobs.

We wish you success in your deliberations, and look forward to seeing the new strategies that are developed.

Sharon Taylor
President, PCWM