

# Better parental leave policies needed to support women <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Burnaby Board of Trade is home to the Women's Business Success Network, a dynamic group of women and men from across our region who are interested in supporting women in all levels of business.

This includes whether they are a sole entrepreneur, small business owner, business professional or established executive. This group was created two years ago to foster important discussions, facilitate meaningful connections and advance advocacy positions in the support of women in business.

The group recently met with the BC Business Council to discuss their research on the status of women in the workforce. While the results of this analysis were encouraging, it illustrated why there is still work to be done to maximize the economic contributions of women, especially in an era of skills gaps and labour shortages.

First, it is encouraging to see gains being made in women's employment and entrepreneurship. Women's participation in the workforce now reaches approximately 60 per cent, up from just 47 per cent in 1976. In addition, women now own and operate 40 per cent of small businesses in B.C. - the highest rate in all of Canada.

Despite those gains, there are still significant differences between men and women on several key measures, including the percentage who are active in the labour force (a nine per cent gap in favour of men), the presence in board positions (only 14 per cent of board positions are held by women), and their participation in the critical trades and STEM sectors of science, technology, engineering and maths (women only make up 23 per cent in STEM and seven per cent in trades).

That is why BBOT group has worked to advocate for policy changes to support women in the workforce. This year, its focus was the issue of parental leaves and encouraging more shared, flexible, family-friendly policies.

It won't come as a surprise to most that women still carry the bulk of parental and family responsibilities. And when it comes to taking parental leave to assist with those duties, only 14 per cent of men take leaves despite being eligible. This disparity can contribute to holding women back economically: it supports unfounded biases when hiring that women are not reliable workers, it enshrines the unequal distribution of family and domestic responsibilities, and it makes it more difficult for women who wish to return to the workforce after a leave to do so.

That's why the Women's Business Success Network advocates for shareable, fair and flexible parental leave policies as one more tool to help support women in the workforce. For example, encouraging more men to take parental leaves, and allowing women to continue working part-time during a leave can hopefully help support women's careers and advancement.

In the end, given the ongoing shortage of skills and workers facing almost every sector in our business community, forgoing the talent and contributions of women holds back Canada's economic performance and undermines our full potential. I'm proud groups like the Burnaby Board of Trade's Women's Business Success Network are helping by finding ways to better support women across business for the benefit of all in our economy.

For more information on the Women's Business Success Network, readers can visit [bbot.ca/women](http://bbot.ca/women).

**Related link:**

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** maternity and parental leave <sup>[4]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/12/better-parental-leave-policies-needed-support-women>

**Links**

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/12/better-parental-leave-policies-needed-support-women> <sup>[2]</sup>

<https://www.burnabynow.com/business/better-parental-leave-policies-needed-to-support-women-1.23520573> <sup>[3]</sup>

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> <sup>[4]</sup> <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/maternity-and-parental-leave>