

Five things the federal government can do to support women and economic growth ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Research consistently showed that women in the workforce, whether they be employees, business-owners or entrepreneurs, have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Canadian Chamber's Council for Women's Advocacy (CWA) aimed to reverse that trend.

"As Canada begins planning its recovery from COVID-19, widespread job creation and sustained economic growth will require nothing less than the full participation of women in the workforce. This is not a women's issue, it is an economic issue," said Penny Wise, President, 3M Canada Company and CWA co-chair.

"Through this evolving pandemic situation women have been at the forefront and burden of this change, affected across every aspect of their lives, from extended work hours to home-schooling to frontline caregiving," said Kevin McCreadie, CEO and Chief Investment Officer, AGF Management Limited and CWA co-chair.

"We are at an inflection point in our re-openings where funding is needed now to create significant opportunities to foster an inclusive recovery. The actions we take today will help avoid worst case scenarios in the near future," McCreadie continued.

The CWA was created to be a unifying national voice of the business community to drive action. It is focusing its initial efforts on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in three key areas for the short-term: facilitating safe, reliable and affordable childcare; supporting women's entrepreneurship; and supporting job pivots for women.

The CWA called on the federal government to immediately realize the following five recommendations to support women, foster inclusive recovery and ensure sustained economic growth.

A safe return to school is a critical element of getting women back to work. The CWA called for the government to build upon the July 2020 safe restart initiative and work with provinces and territories to ensure there are safe policies in place for a full-time return to school in September 2020.

This plan should take into account international experiences and best practise to date.

Improved childcare options are a must-have to maximize women's participation in the workforce. The CWA urged the federal government to augment then expand the mandate of the Expert Panel on Early Learning and Child Care Data and Research.

As part of this improvement, the government should add parent and business community representatives to the Expert Panel to ensure all pertinent stakeholders are at the table and make informed decisions and recommendations.

The Expert Panel's mandate should be expanded to include developing recommendations on tax incentives for both parents/guardians and childcare providers. This could require transforming the Expert Panel into a National Secretariat by the end of the calendar year, with recommendations to follow shortly thereafter.

The eligibility for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy should be extended to include hiring in-home childcare, so business owners can return to work.

Data for federal funding and programming should be tracked as well as broken down – similar to what has been done by Statistics Canada for individuals. This data should include specific measurements of female-owned businesses and entrepreneurs, but also their ratios of applications, rates of successful applications and timing for received funds. This data should be used to inform improvements in funding and programming going forward.

Finally, the government should earmark recovery funding for upskilling and re-skilling women. As a significant and ground-breaking undertaking with a longer-term horizon, it is critically important to start and start now.

The CWA is a cornerstone of the Canadian Chamber's diversity and inclusion initiative, established to bring the voice and perspectives of women to national policies, inform the Canadian Chamber's initiatives in advancing the gender equality agenda and drive meaningful action to address the identified issues and barriers.

The CWA will continue to explore recommendations that the federal government can implement to support women through the recovery period, alongside looking at best practises and guidance for the business community.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: economic recovery ^[4]

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