

# **Bridge the Gap with Women in Skilled Trades and Technologies: Saskatchewan's Summit, May 6, 2011 Briefing Document**

## **Background**

In December 2010, representatives from the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC), Saskatchewan Women in Trades & Technology (SaskWITT), Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, and the Status of Women Office (SWO), Ministry of Social Services, met to explore the concept of hosting an industry-based summit.

A working group representing a cross section of stakeholders was invited to assist with the planning functions. The members of the working group represent the following organizations:

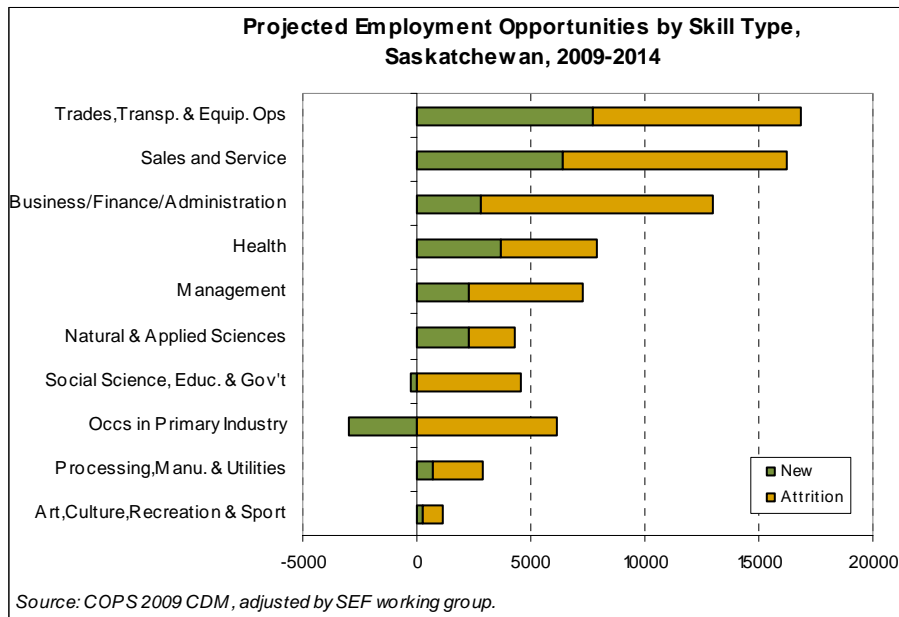
- Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology
- Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
- Saskatchewan Construction Association
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
- Saskatchewan Mining Association
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
- Saskatchewan Women in Trades and Technology
- Saskatchewan Status of Women Office, Ministry of Social Services

After several meetings, it was determined a summit was feasible and could be scheduled for May 2011. The Summit's objective is to bring together high level decision-makers from Saskatchewan business, industry and government to engage in discussions resulting in a plan of action to increase the participation of women in skilled trades and technology occupations in Saskatchewan. The occupations included in the purview of the summit encompass those with predominantly male participation.

Invitations to the Summit were sent to over 200 decision-makers from Saskatchewan industry, government, training Institutions, Aboriginal organizations, and SaskWITT.

## **Skilled trades shortages**

The graph on the following page provides projections for the occupational employment outlook for Saskatchewan to 2014. Employment opportunities in the category of trades, transportation and equipment operators are projected to be the largest at 21.9% of all opportunities. Major factors driving demand in this grouping are strong economic growth as well as a high attrition rate common to all occupational groupings.



## Saskatchewan Women are Skilled Learners

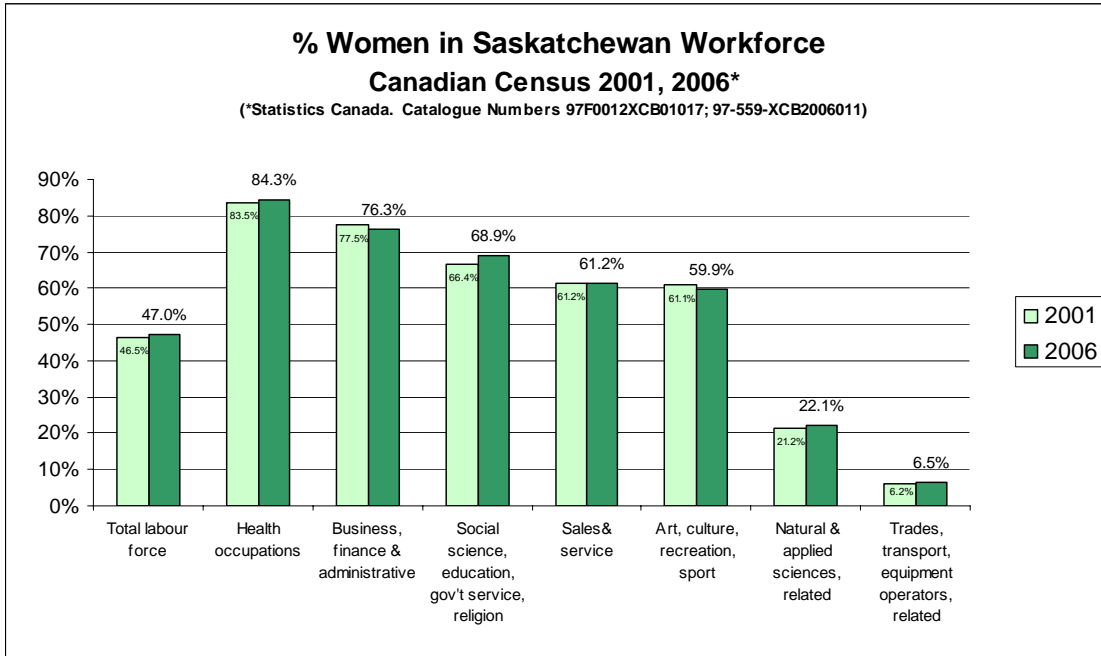
At the same time that Saskatchewan industry is facing a skilled worker shortage, Saskatchewan's current unemployment rate of 5.2 per cent is the lowest in Canada. Traditional labour pools and recruiting methods appear insufficient to satisfy current demand or improve retention. Saskatchewan women have the highest labour force participation rates in the country, and represent a potential solution to industry's labour challenge. Between 2007 and 2009, 12,500 women joined Saskatchewan's labour force, and three-quarters of that growth was in full-time work. In 2007, there were 3,500 more men than women employed in Saskatchewan; by 2009, there were almost 4,000 more women than men in the provincial labour force.

In Saskatchewan, women's employment patterns demonstrate they want strong, long-term attachment to the labour force and good wages. Over the last two decades, employment growth among women has been in full-time work and high wage situations.

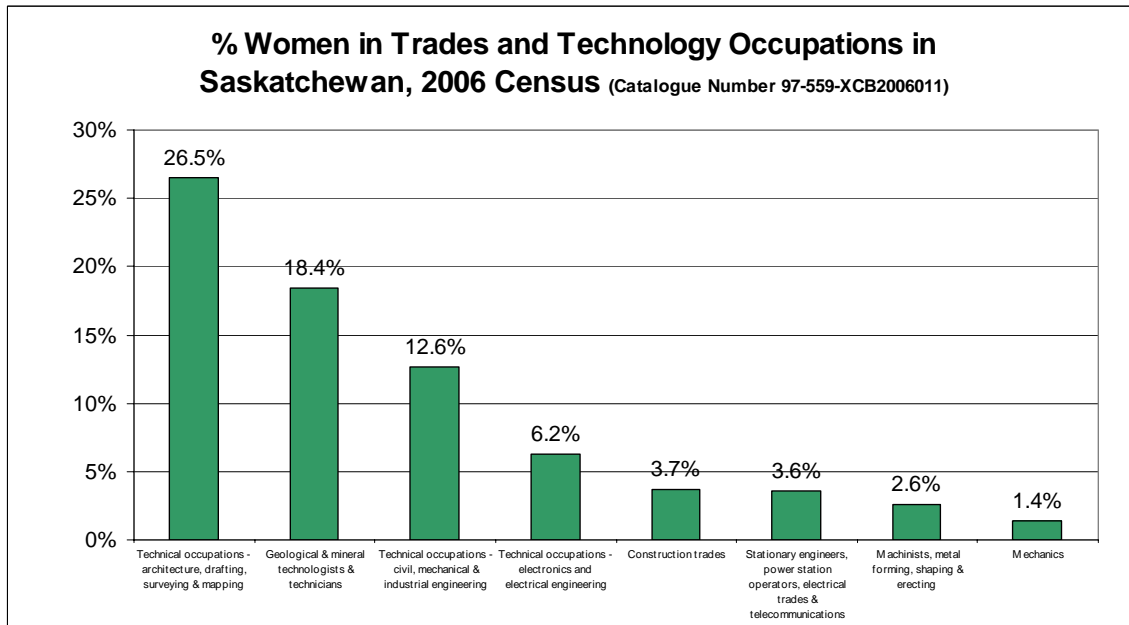
We live and work in a knowledge economy, and industry needs a knowledgeable, highly skilled work force. According to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, 90 per cent of jobs over the forecast period will require at least a high school diploma.

Saskatchewan women are skilled learners and skilled workers. In Saskatchewan, more women than men complete high school, technical school and undergraduate degree programs. Women average higher grades than men across that spectrum. In Saskatchewan's labour force, 57 per cent of women are post-secondary graduates as compared to 46 per cent for men (2009).

## Current Participation of Women



The above graph shows that women's participation in 2006 equalled 47% of the total labour force. A full 80% of Saskatchewan women are concentrated in five occupational clusters with upwards of 60% of each cluster represented by women. In contrast, women's participation is only 6.5% in the highest demand category.



The graph above shows the participation of women in some specific sectors of industry. Participation in technical occupations in mining, construction, manufacturing and mechanical sectors is significantly higher than in trades occupations, but still well below 30 per cent.

Successfully reconfiguring the distribution of women across industry and occupation groups in the provincial labour force would require elimination the pervasive sex-based gap in hourly wage rates. In Saskatchewan, in all industry groups and occupations except food services, males are paid higher average hourly wage rates than females. This gap holds in spite of women’s greater proportional representation in the labour market, higher levels of educational achievements and full-time attachment. Saskatchewan’s labour market is characterized by a clear division of labour between females and males that is shaped in part by workplace culture and conditions, and by gendered ideas about men’s work and women’s work.

Information from the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission is provided in the two tables below. The first table illustrates that the percentage of women who received Journeyman Certificates over a 5 year period closely mirrors the overall participation of women in trades occupations.

**Percentage by Sex of Journeyman Certificates Issued in Predominantly Male Trades**

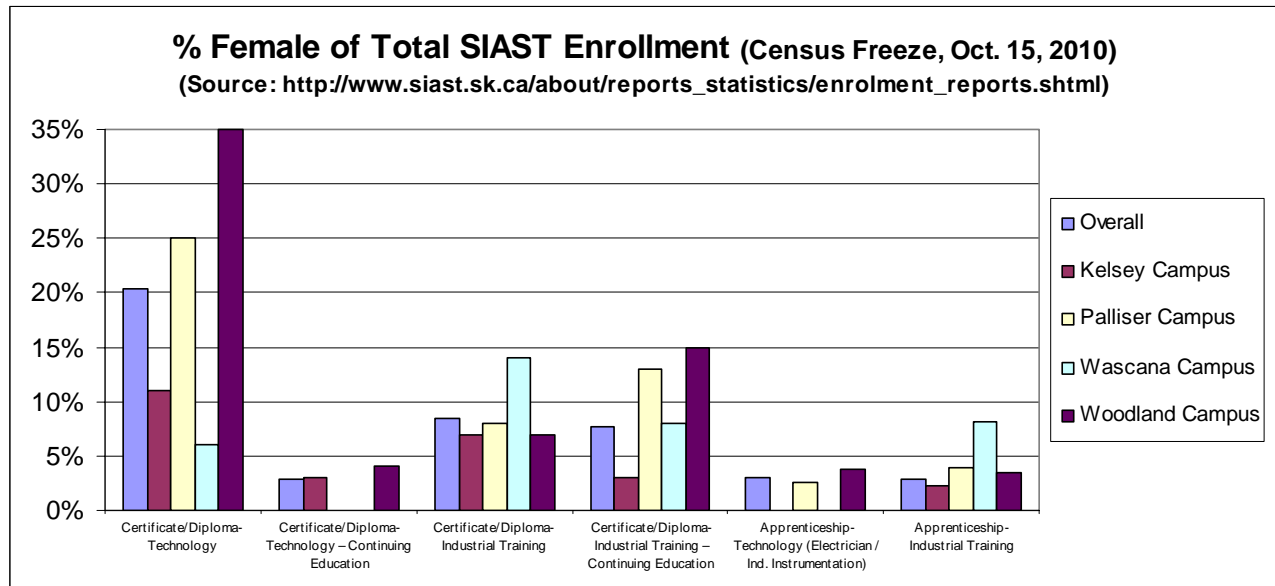
Year	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Male	98.3%	98.5%	98.7%	98.6%	97.6%
Female	1.7%	1.5%	1.3%	1.4%	2.4%

The second table below presents the actual numbers of women acquiring Journeyman certification in the same five year period.

**Actual Number of Journeyman Certificates Issued to Women in Predominantly Male Trades**

Year	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Aboriginal	1	0	2	0	3
Non-Aboriginal	14	14	11	15	26
Total	15	14	13	15	29

**Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Student Enrollment**



Women's participation in **apprenticeship training** at SIAST closely mirrors the pattern in industry.

What is notable in **certificate and diploma programs** in both trades and technology, however, is that the proportion of women is almost double that of women in those sectors in the workforce. The fact that women are entering and completing training programs in such elevated numbers is a good indicator that women are "ready, willing and able". Capitalizing on this investment will ensure that these women enter and succeed in the workforce.

## **Why So Low?**

Studies over the past 40 years regarding women's participation in trades and technology occupations consistently identify the following determinants:

- Parents and career counsellors discourage girls from entering
- Girls/women are not given information necessary to make informed choices
- Lack of role models and mentors
- Isolation and discrimination
- Lack of industry connections and/or networking opportunities
- Unwelcoming workplaces

These are social barriers, not barriers of aptitude or ability. Women's ability and aptitude for trades, technical and manufacturing work, their strength, dexterity, mathematical aptitude, tenacity, and stamina, have never been identified as obstacles. Women worked successfully in skilled trades, technical and manufacturing occupations whenever history has offered the opportunity. During the years of the Second World War, women shifted into trades, technical and manufacturing jobs until they were squeezed out to make room for returning soldiers and war workers.

The working committee prepared a Selected Bibliography of recent Canadian Resources on women in the skilled trades and technologies for use by Summit Participants. This document is appended.

## **Strategies for Inclusion**

Effective programs, policies and practices have been adopted in many settings, albeit often in an *ad hoc* fashion. These fall into a few broad categories with several common themes. Most strategies use collaborative partnership approaches to address and shift social norms.

The bulk of the work related to bridging women into predominantly male trades and technology occupations has focussed on requiring women to adapt. Most career exploratory and preparation courses emphasize the importance of role models, opportunities for hands-on exploration, and information delivery methodologies that resonate with girls and women.

- Elementary and secondary school age girls: Many initiatives involve preparing workplace ambassadors to carry the word into schools through career fairs or as guest speakers;

others lend role models to guide girls through hands-on activities in summer camps, with girl guides, or other community events.

- Post secondary initiatives: Exploratory courses provide a solid base from which women can make informed decisions about their futures. Programs range from half-day information sessions to six-week shop programs to six-month programs that immerse women in a variety of shop settings with detailed project work. Students participate in work placements and Industry spend-a-day programs. Workplace visits allow women to make informed occupational choices. Instructors are trained to work with women's learning styles to be more effective.

Other post-secondary programs are sex- and trade-specific, and work well to bridge into the work force women who have already made informed career choices. These courses provide female students with entry-level training and build students' confidence as they train with other women. These programs have been very successful: the Women's Work Training Program in Saskatchewan in the latter half of the 1990s doubled the number of registered female carpentry apprentices in the Province. Career exploration courses are typically designed to prepare women for work in predominantly male settings.

Effective workplace solutions typically focus on change management with efforts geared towards adapting management policies and practices. Employees may be required to participate in workshops on gender and workplace behaviours. Workplace programs assist men to adapt to working in a gender-mixed setting. Training and education programs are facilitated by organizations that employ women who have worked in predominantly male settings and have experienced first-hand the challenges of introducing diversity into workplaces.

## Conclusion

This background paper is designed to stimulate your thinking prior to participating in **Bridge the Gap with Women in Skilled Trades and Technologies: A Saskatchewan Summit**. Increasing the participation of women in trades and technology occupations in Saskatchewan will deepen the talent pool, strengthen our workforce and increase our competitive edge in Canada. By pooling our expertise and resources, we can develop a variety of "made in Saskatchewan" solutions that will match the supply of tradeswomen, technicians and technologists with industry's demand for a highly skilled and motivated workforce.