

# Women in Resource Development Corporation (WRDC)

**Submission to:  
The Hebron Public Review Commission**

*This is a submission of WRDC's comments and recommendations regarding the Women's Employment Plan (WEP) as part of the Diversity Plan in the Hebron Benefits Agreement signed between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and ExxonMobil Canada Management Properties (ECMP) and the Hebron co-ventures in the Benefits Agreement for the Hebron Project.*



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## **WHO WE ARE**

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Women in Resource Development Corporation (WRDC) is a non-profit organization, whose mandate is to advance the economic equality and equity of women in our province and to promote opportunities for women's equitable participation in trades, technologies and operations occupations primarily in natural resource industries. Our organization was established in 1997, incorporated in 1999 and was formed because of concerns of under-representation of women in the natural resource, trades and technologies industries.

### **WRDC offers the following services and products:**

- **Services**
  - Gender-based analysis and planning
    - Including the sharing of best practices
  - Support development and implementation of gender-equity plans
  - Creating A Respectful Work Environment and an accompanying Train the Trainer manual
  - Employment and Career Services
  
- **Programs**
  - Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT)

### **WRDC Education Resource Centre programs:**

- Girls Exploring Trades and Technology (GETT)
- Techsploration: Newfoundland and Labrador
- Girls in Renewable Energy and Alternative Technologies (GREAT)
- Camp GLOW (Group Learning for Outgoing Women)

## **BACKGROUND**

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WRDC is pleased to submit to the Hebron Public Review our comments and recommendations with the goal being to increase a gender balance in the occupations available in our vibrant oil and gas sector, in particular the Hebron Project. WRDC certainly acknowledges that though the number of women working in the Newfoundland and Labrador natural resource sector are slowly increasing, there remains challenges, such as existing attitudes, policies and facilities in workplaces. A commitment to real change is required in order to welcome more women into traditionally male-dominated occupations.

It is imperative that the implementation of EMCP's Women's Employment Plan helps to prevent, reduce or eliminate employment inequities that could potentially be, or actually are, experienced by women. This applies in particular to trades, technology, science and engineering-related occupations. EMCP needs to engage their contractors and subcontractors to ensure the implementation and execution of the gender equity requirements of its WEP.

WRDC would like to recognize ExxonMobil's commitment to the consultative process on the design of the Hebron Diversity Plan. This current submission builds on a list of recommendations developed from a past consultation with ExxonMobil on August 12, 2009, pertaining to the design of the WEP. Our dialogue at that time involved discussion of diversity initiatives and issues concerning attraction, recruitment and retention of women in trades and technology occupations. We would like to acknowledge ExxonMobil's incorporation of a number of our recommendations into their WEP.

WRDC would also like to acknowledge ExxonMobil's support (financial and the supplying of role models) for our youth programs over the past decade.

In the provincial Energy Plan, *Focusing our Energy*, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to maximize the benefits from our major resource developments for the people of our province. That plan included commitments to identify and facilitate programs to increase the participation of women in the Energy sector. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador also stated that operators of large scale projects were required to submit a Women's Employment Plan (WEP) which included mechanisms to eliminate barriers and discriminatory practices. At such a pivotal time we need to ensure that this commitment translates into real employment opportunities for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The oil and gas industry recognizes "workplace safety" as a core value in its mission statements and commitments. It has become part of the corporate identity and has been incorporated into policies, procedures and processes. When gender equity is identified and recognized at the same priority level then there will be a paradigm shift to include women in the oil and gas occupations.

## **ADDRESSING SKILLED LABOUR SHORTAGE**

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With forecasted skilled labour shortages in the province, labour markets are expected to tighten, placing strain on the available pool of qualified candidates. One strategy that has been identified by the Skills Task Force of Newfoundland and Labrador is to tap into under-represented populations, such as women, to offer solutions to the skilled labour shortage. This would broaden the pool of qualified and interested candidates.

*Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Outlook 2020* states that a proactive measure specifically those which “increase participation of women especially in non traditional occupations’ as necessary in ensuring the Province can meet its emerging labour demands.<sup>1</sup> Since approximately half of our population is female, encouraging more women to work in the natural resource sector can be a solution to the skilled trades shortage.

Industrial employers have indicated that transitions for the inclusion of female labour are desirable but not happening as quickly or to the degree required for positive change. Women comprise a very small portion of workers who work in skill trades. Female workers represent 5% of Apprentices (not including cooks and hairdressers) in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and only 1% of Journeypersons in Industrial Trades.<sup>2</sup> Petroleum Industry Human Resource Council (PIHRC) states that in the oil and gas industry there is a small share of women working in Trades Engineering Technology occupations and make up 8% of employees working in core occupations. Industry often cites a lack of and limited pool of interested and qualified women as one of the main reasons for their continued under-representation in many non-traditional fields. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that women are encouraged to enter training programs and careers in these fields.

Diversity in the workplace creates a more humane work environment, and provides a broader range of skill sets, viewpoints and ideas for all employees. Many businesses and organizations have found that having a gender-diverse workforce leads to greater productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction overall. Employers have stated that female employees bring added value to the workplace, above and beyond the skills needed to do the jobs they were hired for. Employers identified benefits, such as productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction with women in the workplace. Other positive skills and abilities women bring include mediation, organization and facilitation.<sup>3</sup>

Cost-benefit analysis of training and employing women in non-traditional trades and technology reveals that while there are costs associated with the implementation of workplace change, "...the benefits – for instance, a larger talent pool and stronger financial performance – also suggest that making gender-diversity a significant goal is well worth the investment."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Outlook 2020*

<sup>2</sup> *Department of Education Newfoundland and Labrador Industrial Division interprovincial survey 2011*

<sup>3</sup> *On the Level :Women in Trades and Technology* ,The Hypathia Association Halifax, 2009, p.27.

<sup>4</sup> *On the Level* , 2009 p.v

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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1. Take a pro-active approach to increasing participation of female workers. When a shortfall of workers has been identified in a particular underrepresented occupation consider collaboration with a training institution to offer a training program for women to fill that shortfall. This was the case with Rio Tinto -IOC's mining technician program in Labrador west and Vale's Process Operator Training in Placentia. Additionally, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro hired a group of women and committed to their employment until they achieved their journeypersons status. WRDC could help to supply the women from the Orientation to Trades and Technology Program.
2. Collaborate with government, labour, post-secondary institutions, and community organizations to encourage women to consider and enter training programs and subsequent careers in non-traditional fields related to the oil and gas industry.
3. Support programs aimed at encouraging women to consider non-traditional careers through hands-on training at both the grade-school and post-secondary level.
4. Inform women about the core competencies and project-specific skills that will be required at each phase of the project, and make this information publicly available to ensure that individuals, and women in particular, obtain the necessary skills to be hired.
5. Work with government to amend the journeyperson to apprenticeship ratio to require that at least one apprentice is an entry level woman. Currently the ratio is one journeyperson to two apprentices without such a stipulation.

## **SETTING TARGETS**

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Many companies tend to avoid utilizing gender equity-related quotas to ensure that they are not viewed as using reverse discrimination and that female employees are not viewed as being hired simply to meet a quota. It is important to set targets as well as quantifiable goals and objectives. These must be firmly implemented to effectively raise female participation rates and ensure a more gender-balanced workforce. There appears to be a gap between gender equity-related policies and the actual implementation of these policies. Therefore, it is important to have a strong committee in place that will not only monitor and report, but also enforce and ensure implementation. It is critically important to establish monitoring and accountability frameworks.

The Hebron Project has set quantifiable goals and objectives for female inclusion based on workforce availability according to Statistics Canada Census 2006 which indicates the availability of the designated groups by occupational category in the labour force. These statistics are five years old and do not reflect the current availability of graduates from our training institutions. It is paramount that revised figures which reflect the current availability in 2011 must be taken into consideration.

Targets will have to be set to guarantee successful integration of women on this project. It is imperative to set targets for female participation rate and set short-term numerical goals for the hiring and promotion of women in each occupational category where under-representation exists as well as setting longer-term numerical goals for increasing women's representation, including a strategy for achieving set goals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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1. WRDC suggests that the operator of the Hebron Project should set **quantifiable targets as well as goals and objectives** aimed at raising female participation in a timely manner by including a reasonable and progressive timeline for attaining goals, as well as supporting the achievement of these goals and adherence to the timeline through other initiatives. To ensure the successful implementation of the WEP, the proponents of the Hebron Project should appoint individuals to the official duty of enforcing and implementing the policies and initiatives outlined in the WEP.

## **RECRUITMENT OF FEMALE WORKERS**

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Many companies state that they do not take gender into consideration during the hiring process, but rather hire the ‘best candidate for the position.’ The determination of who is the “best candidate” is heavily influenced by the number of years of experience of the candidate. In the hiring and resume review process it is important to recognize that statistically women are less likely to have as many years of experience in the oil and gas industry as men. This is due to the fact that it has been and remains a highly male-dominated sector. Therefore, if no gender-identifying information is taken into account during resume review, there will inevitably be more men than women that successfully pass through the screening process and ultimately get hired. This will affect companies’ attempts to achieve their goals and objectives associated with raising women’s participation in the field.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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1. In order to raise female participation rates and to achieve a more gender-balanced workforce, when the proponents of the Hebron Project are faced with two equally qualified individuals of the opposite sex, they should give priority to the female candidate. Consider using the Human Rights “special program” Chapter H-14 article 19.1 to permit an employer to give an advantage to the groups that are traditionally disadvantaged in the hiring process.
2. Identify alternative qualifying characteristics, aside from years of experience, to use as selection criteria in the hiring and promotion process. This increases the likelihood that women have an equal chance as men at getting hired and promoted. Consider transferable prior learning and volunteering skills.
3. Women often have more demands on their time outside of the workplace than men. This means that it is important to provide clarity in job advertisements as to the amount of travel time instead of vague comments such as employees must be available for travel.
4. During the interview process include women on the hiring team or interviewing committee. This conveys a message that women are welcomed and included in the organization.
5. The proponents of the Hebron Project should establish a corporate culture that is free of gender-related biases, prejudices, and discrimination in relation to hiring and promotion, including ensuring that maternity/paternity and parental leave is not a consideration in either process.
6. When screening applicants take training potential into consideration as well as the results of aptitude test. It is crucial that a woman not be penalized for a lack of hands-on experience in her childhood. It is important to remember that aptitude tests only indicate if a person has experience in demonstrating a particular skill. These tests do not necessarily reflect the applicant’s ability to learn that skill.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *On the Level*, p. 23

## **RETENTION OF FEMALE WORKERS**

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As important as it is to recruit more women into the workplace, it is equally challenging and important to retain those who are hired. From the standpoint of retaining female workers, it is necessary to recognize the importance of establishing a gender inclusive workplace environment and corporate culture. This involves a need for awareness on the part of employers and employees that, due to the long-standing male-dominated workforce in the oil and gas industry, there are various masculine norms and traditions ingrained in these fields. It also involves being mindful of the effects and consequences of gender-related biases, prejudices, and discrimination in the workplace. Specifically, it is important to counter the social isolation which can result from a lack of acceptance or inclusion from male co-workers and gender bias and discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

There is a "culture" on industrial worksites that has been predominately and historically male-dominated. Culture is considered to be the assumptions, attitudes, roles and norms that shape an environment; these are often unwritten and unspoken, and most often are not communicated to women. Dominant values and attitudes influence decision making and clearly shape work culture. Since stereotypical attitudes about women in non-traditional occupations still exist, both men and women need to work together to create a fair and respectful work environment. The goal is to create a work environment that is supportive of women; where they are welcomed into non-traditional roles without being seen as a threat. It is important that women feel able to raise concerns without being seen as "complainers."<sup>7</sup> Also, it is critical to ensure there are not unfair expectations such as women having to work harder than men to prove their competence to employers and co-workers. A work environment where women are treated with respect and as equals to their male co-workers is the single biggest factor in retention.<sup>8</sup>

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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1. The proponents of the Hebron Project should include Creating A Respectful Work Environment(Gender Awareness in the Workplace training) in their orientation process for all new employees and in professional development seminars for existing employees to ensure a gender unbiased workplace.
2. Review internal systems, hiring procedures, interviewing as well as determining if all employees are being informed of opportunities for training and advancement and lateral mobility.
3. Offer career counseling by female counselors.
4. Provide an opportunity for women who are interested in training to self- nominate
5. Establish a culture of gender inclusivity by incorporating and adopting gender equity as part of the organization's corporate strategy and business goals with gender awareness training offered to management, all staff and new hires.

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<sup>6</sup> "Draw the World into your Workplace," Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada, 2007

<sup>7</sup> "Hang On To Your Women ," UKRC for Women in SET (Posters), 2007

<sup>8</sup> On The Level, p.32

6. Mentorship programs are particularly effective in engaging and retaining employees from diverse groups. This includes:
- Recruiting positive leaders;
  - Providing women with role models and mentors within the industry overall and on site, when possible;
  - Organizing a monthly mentoring session where women can meet informally over lunch or coffee;
  - Inviting a woman at a more senior level to talk about career progression;
  - Supporting women by actively seeking out a male or female employee who is understanding, supportive and positive towards women working in your company to help her in the orientation process.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Hang On To Your Women ,” UKRC for Women in Set(Posters), 2007

## **CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS**

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WRDC recognizes that operators have committed to ensuring women's participation in projects. It is also important that operators work closely with their subcontractors to ensure awareness of and compliance with the WEP. We commend EMCP for the development and distribution of a subcontractors' guide to further assist them in the implementation of the WEP.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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1. We recommend that EMCP include gender-equity provisions in its calls for bids and criteria for evaluating them. As well, implement accountability and reporting measures with a diligence to meeting the objectives. In recognizing that the success of the WEP is the overall responsibility of EMCP the company needs to work diligently to support its contractors and subcontractors in meeting their women's employment plan goals and requirements.

## **PARTNERING WITH LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS**

WRDC is consistently advised by industry that although employers may make the recommendation to hire more women, they state that ultimately unions make the decisions and dispatch the workers. While acknowledging that there are still barriers to female inclusion, however, they state that they cannot interfere with the union's selection process.

Women often face difficulty in obtaining trade union memberships as they are not part of the sponsor network and have difficulty logging enough hours of training and work experience to complete apprenticeships. This is a major stumbling block in women's access to job opportunities, as it limits the possibility to log hours and advance through the apprenticeship process. The C-NLOPB expects the Operator to "address the participation of these [designated]...groups for employment and for corporations or cooperatives owned by them to supply goods and services for the project"(C-NLOPB, 2006: 4.6). The Acts (paragraph 45(3) (b) specify that a union agreement may not frustrate access to training and employment for members of the designated groups.<sup>10</sup>

Working in collaboration with unions will be essential in effectively implementing the WEP. The Hebron Project needs to commit to working with labour unions to ensure women have fair and equal access to employment opportunities on site. This will involve exploring and implementing progressive initiatives to remove barriers to women's access to employment opportunities, including exploration of potential female name hires as a measure to address the barriers that union seniority lists can create for women. It will also involve maintaining regular contact with labour unions to exchange information and ideas, as well as inviting them to attend and participate in annual stakeholder meetings for review and feedback on the progress of the WEP.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. We recommend incorporating into collective agreements mechanisms to allow women entry into unions and consider incorporate a special measures clause to allow women access to job opportunities-for example consider utilizing the name hire option.
2. We recommend negotiating with labour a new component in the hiring process that will increase women's employment. For example when selecting from the out of work list, utilize a three to one ratio. This means selecting 3 men and then one woman from the list. This would help level the playing field.

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<sup>10</sup> ExxonMobil Canada, *Hebron Project Canada- Newfoundland and Labrador Benefits Plan*, Appendix B, p.B-4.

## **CONCLUSION**

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It is expected that the Hebron project will leave a lasting legacy for the people of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. WRDC is open to and interested in collaborating with the proponents of the Hebron Project in terms of the services, programs and expertise that we offer. We wish to move forward together to help make the Hebron Project a leader in gender equity. WRDC recognizes that there are certainly challenges however there are always solutions. We look forward to cooperating with EMCP as the project progresses to help with working through the barriers and seeking the solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity of presenting our views and perspectives as it relates to the successful integration of women in the Hebron project.