

September, 2011

Sarah Campden, CTech Meets with Federal Ministers to Discuss Women in the Workplace



*Back row: Lisa Raitt, MP (4th from the left) and Sarah Campden, CTech (4th from right)
Front row: Kerry-Lynne Findley, QC MP (center)*

Sarah Campden, CTech, Chair of ASTTBC's BC Women In Technology (BCWiT), attended a Roundtable meeting with the Honourable Lisa Raitt, Minister of Labour; MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice; and, other members of the industry to discuss issues faced by women in the workplace.

Two other Roundtable sessions were held across Canada; one in Mississauga, Ontario and one in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Minister Raitt was impressed with attendance at this session, noting that it is an important issue for women and the economy in the province of BC.

Women often encounter barriers to their equitable participation and continue to face challenges and hazards in the workplace. Barriers such as sexism, racism and ableism (discrimination against people living with disabilities) limit women's ability to secure good employment and reach upper-level management positions. Within the workplace, women are at risk of harassment and in some cases, violence. Women also have a higher incidence of disability resulting from workplace injury than

men. Sarah commented for this report that in a survey conducted by ASTTBC in 2009, female technologists, technicians and technical specialists in applied science and engineering technology did not have the same difficulties as may be felt in some other fields. About 35% of ASTTBC member respondents indicated that they face some 'challenges' being a woman in a male dominated field. For the full survey results: <http://www.asttbc.com/careers/wit/documents/WITSurveyReport.pdf>.

At the Roundtable, views were expressed by participants on these issues. Minister Raitt was particularly interested in hearing from the participants about their concerns in this area, the challenges faced, and best practices in mitigating these challenges. Other issues that were of interest to the participants were the skills shortage facing BC, the lack of women in senior leadership roles, and the lack of women in media in these types of roles.

Interesting information from the participants:

- In the Law profession, one third of women leave the industry in the first five years.
- Definition of success for women is very different from that of men; women tend to want to help others and achieve success in ways that are not necessarily monetary.
- Women are gaining an equal voice in the area of politics.
- Women with a strong father figure were more likely to succeed in business.

Some of the attendants: Vancouver YMCA, Teck, Mayor of Delta, the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, UBC Mechanical Engineering and the Women's Enterprise Centre. The Minister and MP Findley were diligent in listening to each presenter and recording the discussions.