

The Empire Club Presents



THE HONOURABLE MARY NG

CANADA'S MINISTER OF SMALL BUSINESS
AND EXPORT PROMOTION

***WITH: WOMEN WHO BUILD BARRIERS AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE BUILDING
ECONOMY***

Welcome Address, by Mr. Kent Emerson, Associate Vice
President at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
and President of the Empire Club of Canada

June 13, 2019

Good evening fellow Directors, Past Presidents, members and guests. Welcome to the 115th season of the Empire Club of Canada, and, welcome, to the Storys Building.

My name is Kent Emerson. I am the President of the Empire Club and your host for today's event.

“Women Who Build” is a great event. Thanks, Marsha, for organizing this.

Distinguished Guest Speakers:

Ms. Julie Di Lorenzo, President, Diamante Urban Corp.

Ms. Denise McNally, Senior Vice President, Project Delivery, Infrastructure Ontario

The Honourable Mary Ng, Canada's Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion; MP for Markham–Thornhill

Ms. Marsha Seca, Vice President, Corporate Strategy, Infrastructure Ontario

Ms. Xue Yan, Partner, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

I would like to start this event by recognizing our sponsors: First of all, LiUNA, who were not able to come.

They have their national conference here. They were a big sponsor and also OMERS. I know Tenio Evangelista also could not come tonight. We also want to recognize the National Post and mediaevents.ca for webcasting today's event. Without all this participation, these events could not happen. I would also recognize there are a number of Empire Club board members here today. I would like to recognize all of them for coming. I saw Ziggy, Michael Kobzar, Jenna Hay. Thank you guys for all coming and supporting. Marsha, of course, is on our panel.

I want to talk about these events. We have started these evening events a couple of years ago. They are growing in popularity. The idea is you come; you pay \$40; you get your drink; we eat; then we sit down; we do the panel; and then we eat and drink again. You do not have to run anywhere ever. The idea is that they are social events, and we have our traditional lunches, but our evening events are a lot less formal, and they are a lot of fun. When you see them pop up, come. They are always a lot of fun. That is sort of how they run. I think we are going to get into the topic.

I would like to say the Empire Club prides itself on being a forum that shines light on issues that need to be discussed in Canada, and, particularly, to highlight these issues or discuss them with government. Tonight's event is no exception. The event we had today was no exception. We had an event earlier today on the rise of white nationalism in Canada, which was an incredible success.

It is known that women consistently earn less than their peers. From the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program that sets common standards to assess the skills of trades people across Canada. Certain demographic groups in the Canadian population, traditionally, have been under-represented in apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades, generally. Women comprise about 14% of NAS apprenticeships overall. Fewer women than men were registered in a Red Seal trade: 59.2% versus 81.2%. Across the top ten Red Seal trades, women are more likely than men to be hair-stylists, cooks or apprentices. There are some basic stats.

Tonight, we have a panel not of just construction individuals but from the building trades. We are fortunate to have some of the most successful women in Canada in their trades. We can agree that women are underrepresented, also, at the very top levels of this trade. In having success in their field, they are here to highlight the opportunities and progress that they have had in their careers, to give advice, and to maybe talk about some of the challenges and share their secrets of success with all of you.

It is time to introduce the panel. Our first panelist has been self-employed as a general contractor. Actually, before I do this, our first panelist, Julie Di Lorenzo, has donated something fantastic for you guys tonight. This is really, really special. When you all leave here tonight, we have a Raptors T-shirt for everyone at the Empire Club of Canada.

#Womenwhobuild is the event hashtag, and use @empireclub and you should, obviously, put Julia in there as well. Get on social media, and do your thing.

Our first panelist has been self-employed as a general contractor in the industry since 1982 on such projects as Empire Plaza Condominiums, Terminal Three at Pearson International Airport, as a developer. She has been the builder of the following projects: 520 Kingston Rd., LiUNA Social Housing Development in Ottawa and many, many other projects.

Diamante projects have been awarded the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Project of the Year in 1997, 1998 and 1999. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome the President

of Diamante Development Corporation, a real estate development company and general construction contractor, Julie Di Lorenzo.

With more than a decade of experience in senior roles within government, including as former Chief of Staff to the Minister of Transportation, Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of Training, College and Universities, Marsha Seca brings a wealth of infrastructure development and public policy expertise to Infrastructure Ontario.

She was a key contributor to the province's plan for civil infrastructure investment.

Having led a mechanical contracting company as an owner/operator, Marsha couples her political experience with her on-the-ground construction experience to move business initiatives forward. Marsha holds an MBA from the Rotman School of Business, and she attended plumbing apprenticeship training—which is amazing to me—at UA Local 46 Plumbers and Steamfitters Training School.

She continues to co-own and act as a Director of the Board of Masen Mechanical and M.A.S. Sheet Metal.

She is a Director of the Empire Club of Canada and a former Director of the Metropolitan Plumbing and Heating Contractors Association. Please, give a round of applause for Vice President of Corporate Strategy at Infrastructure Ontario, Marsha Seca.

Our next guest has spent 25 years in the construction industry before landing on her current job at Infrastructure

Ontario, an agency of the province with the mandate to modernize public assets. Denise oversees a team of professionals to deliver large health care, educational and other social infrastructure projects for the province. She and her team provide advice during project planning on contract models, project structuring and risk allocation, and they play a key role in the overall governance of projects during the transaction period, managing the procurement, negotiations and commercial close processes, which is a big mouthful, I have to say. It sounds complicated.

During construction, the team provides active project management and advisory services to co-sponsors.

Prior to joining Infrastructure Ontario in 2008, Denise provided project management services at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation.

Please, give a round of applause to the Senior Vice President at Infrastructure Ontario, Denise McNally.

Our last guest works in the Toronto office of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP practicing in the area of commercial real estate, and she advises clients on a broad range of commercial real estate matters from acquisition, disposition and financing of commercial real estate properties to structuring and negotiating investment vehicles to achieving clients' varied business objectives.

Please, welcome Partner at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, Xue Yan. Our moderator tonight, who just flew here, in the island airport—hot off the airplane—has lots of fancy titles and areas of responsibility, but she is here tonight in

her most distinguished capacity within her portfolio, as the minister in charge of growing female entrepreneurship.

She was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Markham–Thornhill in April 2017 and was appointed Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion in July 2018. Throughout her 20 years of public service, Minister Ng has been a passionate community leader and advocate with a proven track record of results in the areas of education, women’s leadership, job creation, and entrepreneurship.

Prior to serving as a Member of Parliament, she has worked as Director of Appointments in the Prime Minister’s Office. She also served as the Director of Policy in provincial education where she built relationships, negotiated with teachers’ unions, and served students while helping to improve Ontario’s education system.

Please, welcome the MP for Markham–Thornhill and Canada’s Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion, the Honourable Mary Ng.

Mary is going to run this panel. I turn it over to you. At a certain point, Mary is going to call on you to do a Q&A and have audience questions. Think of your ideas for that time, so Mary can call upon you. Thank you, everybody.

Women Who Build, with The Honourable Mary Ng

MN: Thank you so much, Kent. This is awesome because, typically, I am on the hot seat having to answer questions. Today, I get to ask the questions which is amazing. I hope we will be able to get some audience input as well. It is really extraordinary to be here with these extraordinary female leaders. I think we will just get right into it.

When I think about what is happening around the world, we are all talking about how to get more women to participate in the Canadian economy. In fact, not only in the Canadian economy, but in all economies.

When I meet with my counterparts around the world, they often talk to me about a couple of things, and one is How do we get more small- and medium-sized businesses a greater share of the pie, so that our small- and medium-sized businesses can grow and trade with each other, whether it is in Europe or in Asia? The other thing they ask me is, What are you doing, and what are you doing in Canada, because you are leading, and you are putting a very deliberate focus on growing female entrepreneurs and female-led businesses, and how are you guys doing that? I get to talk often about what the government is doing around creating more female entrepreneurs or female business leaders. I have a

mandate from the prime minister to double the female entrepreneurs in this country by 2025. Here is the reason for doing it. I lead a \$2-billion investment plan to take on that task, and I often say I am not particularly a numbers person; the folks around here are, but here is the return to the Canadian economy: \$150 billion to the Canadian economy.

If I think about it, a \$2-billion investment with a \$150-billion return to the Canadian economy is a pretty good ROI, from where I sit. It is not only the right thing to do, but it is the economic, smart thing to do.

The question to all of you—and I will start with you, Denise—is the building industry, much like technology and others, has been male dominated; what is your view about—and I just relayed the context for entrepreneurship—the importance of getting women into the industry, into the building industry, and how do you think we might go about doing that? I am sorry I started with you for the hard question.

DM: I think that women have a lot to offer, and I am speaking from where I sit, and we are very involved in all aspects of constructions, and the projects that we do, but they have a lot to offer. They have a unique perspective; they have a thinking process that is very unique, and it is needed by a lot of the activities that we do.

I think we want to encourage them to be more involved, and there are jobs for them.

I sit on a committee, and I will not get into details, but I like to give some context or a bit of a story, and I am sitting around a table. There had to be 20 men, and I think there was me, being the only female at the table. That was a discussion. The discussion was a little bit more pointed in terms of How do we get women to get the skills, and how can we get them to join our apprenticeship program and to get into the education?

Should we talk to the parents? How do we get them to get into the school and the programs? I was looking at them thinking, “Well, that is fine; it is a good thing, but a lot of it starts from the industry.” The industry has to lead the change. I think they have to change the mentality. I think it starts from the large corporations.

The dominant players in the industry have to lead the way, and others will follow. They have to promote and advocate saying, “We want women to join our firm; we are going to give them the same opportunities as we give the men; we are going to pay them the same as we do the men,” and they have to promote that. They should be saying, “Here are our statistics, and here is our progression that we are doing internally in our company. We have policies to promote it,” and they should share that within the community. Other companies should follow.

It really has to start from the industry because the problem is not necessarily with the women not wanting to join and get the education; it starts from the marketplace. Women will go and get the education if they know they are going to be welcomed at the other end and have a job waiting for them, and they have the same opportunities for progression as the men.

MN: As a female CEO of a significant, incredible company in this field, what is your perspective and response to what Denise just said?

JD: To give you an idea of scale, I am doing one of the largest projects in the city right now and about \$750 million of work. You might see a profile in a recent magazine, and it is called the “King of Condos.” There was not a woman on the page. This is great. Am I yelling? And I do this at the house.

MN: It is okay to be loud and bold.

JD: I start by saying something serious, but you have to have a sense of humour when you have your own business, and you are a woman. I am just going to give you a cute little story. I was sitting at my desk. It was 6:30p.m. It was one of those, I feel, really cool days, like, my clothes were great; my hair was great; I had a great meeting. I was at the phone, and it was 6:30, and the principal of my daughter’s school called.

I go, "Hello." She asked, "How are you?" I said, "I'm great." She asked, "Where are you?" I answered, "I'm in my office," feeling really good. She said, "Oh, your daughter is here," because I forgot her. I forgot to pick her up. One of the things that is serious about that was that childcare is still only deductible up to \$8,000. That, literally, allows me to have a nanny for one day a week. People know they get emails from me at four in the morning, so I have a relay of people that help me do my job. Until we understand that there are things that need to change, structurally, women will not necessarily be able to dedicate their time to their jobs. Childcare at \$8,000 a year is not satisfactory.

Are there other impediments to women? I say be a developer. It is the best job in the whole wide world. You own your space. You own your work and you get to meet the most amazing people. I would tell you that I have been really lucky. There have not been a lot of impediments. If there have been impediments, they have been impediments that existed in the industry in the first place. In one era, there was no capital. Now, there is definitely not a problem with capital. It is really about surrounding yourself with the smartest people, but it is not just women; it is women and men. I have had great men who are sponsors and believed in me. You find people that believe in you, and avoid the people that do not believe in you.

MN: That is a very good point. I will pick up on your point about affordable childcare. Our investments and our economic investments to help women grow in business will not do it on its own. Putting \$40,000 in affordable childcare out there into the province's men in the country is going to help women be successful in our view. We absolutely agree and putting forward a \$10-million construction fund, which is a construction fund to facilitate and promote women in construction, in particular, is something that we are looking very much forward to working with you in the industry and everyone in the industry to help promote more women participating, leading and getting into the field of construction.

MS: Can I jump in?

MN: Yes, please.

MS: I just wanted to add on something that Julie said. When I went into the construction sector, I went in as an owner. I did not find that particularly hard. People were welcoming of me. It was all good. It was fine. People respected my mind. I think that, though, what Denise says is important, and I will talk a little bit about my experience in apprenticeship training.

I think that the industry has to create a culture of being accepting of women from the bottom up through the top. I think once you get to a place where you

are established, I think your title somewhat helps, and if you have proven yourself, but when you are going to apprenticeship training, and you are the only woman in the room, and your instructor is nice to you and not nice to the rest of the guys in the room, I was fine with that, but culturally it is wrong. Going out to job sites—I could see why it is not always culturally inviting for women in the field to go out to job sites.

I agree with Denise that the industry has to step up and fix that. I will make one last point. I also believe that I got involved because some relative was involved. I think I read the StatsCan statistics that say, generally, women who do get involved do so because they grew up in it or somebody influenced them in that nature. I think the influence should spread to elementary schools. Why are we not talking about that as a viable career for children? My son certainly does not think that girls are different than he. We are not really promoting that even as parents when we put our children in dance versus hockey. There is a cultural shift that needs to happen at the lowest levels as well as in the industry.

MN: I often say that you have to see it to be it, to see women in leadership throughout all levels in the industry, I think, is going to make that difference. I think what I am also hearing is it is not just one or the other; it actually requires everyone. It requires industry; it requires

parents who will encourage their girls; it requires the tools that we have that governments have put into it.

The question, actually, is for you, Marsha. You have a really interesting background because you started, and you continue to have a business in construction, in plumbing. Yet, you have also spent a lot of years doing public policy and public policy specifically to put programs together that are apprenticeship programs that will then help encourage and create that right environment for everyone—for females, for women, for girls to get into apprenticeships, into the trades.

Can you talk to us about that—and yet, the numbers are as we described, still quite low?

MS: Failed.

MN: Let us talk about not that. Let us talk about, going forward: What can we learn from this? What can we be doing so that the apprenticeship programs actually can work for women to increase women in trades?

MS: I think I started to answer it earlier. I think girls just need to see it as a viable option and not grow up believing that they are too weak to do it. Then, when they get to the job site, they need to feel welcomed.

They cannot be treated like the person who just holds the sign or whatever it is that you see going on, on the job site—the calendars that are plastered on the

walls and the culture that goes on, on sites. I hate to be crass, but it is true. It exists. I think we have got it at the post-secondary level. Certainly, they are welcome to attend. The numbers are increasing. The government is pumping money into programming. They get bursaries for their tools and all the rest. I think it just has to start younger. We have to start talking about it in the K-12 arena, and then, eventually, the parents will shift with that.

MN: I am sorry to put you on the hot seat, again. I am going to go to Xue Yan in a second, but Julie, in response to this, and, thinking of it from the point of view of the industry, are there some of those challenges that the industry can put their minds to, around creating an environment and a culture that, right from the get-go, women who enter into the field feel like they belong there?

JD: I think it is a little bit of give and take. You cannot expect to leave a big meeting, because you have got an emergency and not have everybody drop their shoulders. What you do is you end up creating your own environments. I am famous for my breakfasts.

Why breakfast? Because I get the kids wherever they are going, and you can find me at the same table practically every morning having breakfast meetings. Why? Because it lets me be productive. The point of

that is you own your own space. When you own your own business, you do not have to go to a meeting when someone else tells you. You figure out the times that work for you, and you organize your life around what works for you. You cannot really expect the whole world to accommodate you on their schedule, but you create a life that you need based on your own limitations.

To be honest, the only time I have seen a problem when I was President of the Home Builders' Association, was when I actually hid that I was pregnant.

I do not know if anybody knows Donna Karan wrap dresses. I hid for five, six, seven months until I got elected. When I got elected, I made sure I wore the tightest Donna Karan dress. My belly was out to here.

People were going, "Oh, my God, what are we going to do with her now?" The point was, was that fair to them? No, I felt that was fair to me, because I knew I could do the job. I had my baby while I was President. A lot of people here know I had my BlackBerry in the room with me. You also have to find people who support you. As I said, I had a great colleague at the Home Builders' Association who was a supporter.

When someone said, "She cannot do the job," he said, "She is going to do the job. If you do not support her, you have to go." You continuously cultivate the

people around you who support you. There will be a bit of overlap and a bit of give and take, but you will find the people that support you.

MN: That is great. Speaking of the industries that collaborate with the construction industry development, you need lawyers to put deals together. You certainly put a number of commercial real estate deals together.

What is your perspective, Xue Yan, around those who are practicing alongside you? Are you finding that there are other women there? Do you find that—we certainly do in my own business, when you are a leader at the table and you have other collaborators at the table who also add to the voice—it actually strengthens it? From your point of view, on the deal-making side, what do you think?

XY: My experience is slightly different from the rest of the panel, just because I am not on the site, like Julie, to fight with other male counterparts or to do what you do, Marsha, but I do all that in a boardroom. I do all that through emails at our fingertips and conference calls. As probably most of you know, now half of law school students are female. Close to half, if it is not already over half, of practicing lawyers are female.

In commercial real estate, for some reason, still, the share of the female lawyers is still, comparatively speaking, much, much less for multiple reasons, I

think. It is even now. I have been practicing for ten years, and, from day one—it is still, now, uncommon to walk into a boardroom with a room full of women. It is still, primarily male, I would say.

Especially on the business side, I would say, probably, you see more female lawyers, but when you are dealing with your clients or your client's team, it is not uncommon at all. It is all male than the other side. You have to negotiate with the other side, who are also male. I am actually used to it. I am immune to it, but I am aware of it. I know our title today is “Barriers and Opportunities,” and I am reluctant to use the word ‘barriers’, because barriers seem to imply some drastic measures has to be taken to break down. I would rather call that ‘challenges’ because challenges breed opportunities. The rest of our panelists—they all know much better than me—know that in order for real estate business to succeed, you have to see who is consuming the real estate. Now, we all know a significantly increasing number of women are consuming real estate.

When we design, when we build a building, we have to address their concerns. If you are an architect or a designer, or a builder, and you have a woman on your team, you have a woman's perspective, and your business is likely to be more successful. I would think it is more diverse.

From a practicing law perspective—and my perspective is a little bit different, though, because I do not think we can see women as monolithic, because everybody’s experience is different, in terms of cultural upbringings, socio-economic status. I am a woman, but I am also an Asian woman, and I am also relatively a newcomer to this country. I came to Canada in 2002 for school. When you get to so many challenges or hurdles in front of you, you kind of lose track of how many were there, so you kind of just focus on what do you want to do. It is my story. With respect to my decision-making, I never really think about whether I can do it or not because I am a woman, naively. And that has somehow benefited me, because I never think about that role. I just do not think that way. Of course, I have to say, I am very fortunate to have mentors along my way.

I think one way to answer the Minister’s question about how we go about this is I think it is very important we talk about external measures. We have to see from an industry perspective, but also from within, as a woman professional—you know what you want, and you seek out the mentors. I think mentors are very important, very effective. Mentorship is an effective tool to help the younger generation of women professionals who are interested in the building or commercial real estate industry to succeed. I think, especially for us

on the stage and I think many of you, as well, we have been given a lot of opportunities along the way. I think it is almost like an obligation on us to give that back to the next younger generation to help. I will end this—I promise I will stop after this—which is just a personal story to respond to some of you who mentioned that you cannot be who you cannot see. Is that how you say it?

MN: You need to see it to be it.

XY: You need to see it, yes. Very interesting. I have two little ones. When my daughter was about three or four, and my son was two-ish, I asked my son, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My son, knowing I am a lawyer, said, “I want to be a lawyer.”

My daughter looked at him saying, “Do not be silly; you are not a girl. You cannot be a lawyer.”

MN: Bravo.

XY: This conversation, if it happened 60 years ago, you all know how that conversation would go. It was the opposite. Of course, it is two kids talking. I was at the side, and I was shocked. Sometimes, it just takes us to show people what we are doing, showcase what we do, and then everything, it will follow.

MN: I think very much we are certainly of that ethos—to see it, to be it. Speaking of leadership and speaking

about how a sector or an individual or individuals can take a bit of the leap or take a little bit of the lead, Denise, you manage a portfolio that is some of the largest and important infrastructure projects here, on behalf of the province. I am just wondering whether, with respect to schools, hospitals or the other institutional infrastructure projects that are part of your portfolio, you have seen an increase in women participating on those projects? In government, you sometimes are able to create an environment because you actually have a lever on the rules. When I think about what I am doing, I think, “Hmm, so we want to help Canadian companies scale up.

We want them to grow. How do I help some of our Canadian companies grow?” Well, you take a piece of what government is going to buy because we are a very big purchaser, and we make sure that we give preference to Canadian small- and medium-sized companies, but we are also going to give preference to women entrepreneurs or women-led businesses and so forth. The government actually has an opportunity to put some parameters around—are you seeing any changes at all in the infrastructure projects that you get to lead?

DM: In terms of any policy, in terms of our procurement policy, no, we do not shape or direct in terms of requiring certain women-led businesses. Of course, we

would encourage it. I would say in the past, having been in construction for 25 many, many years, I would say, recently, these projects are very big, so each of the bidding teams brings together a wide, a diverse sector of the overall. It includes the lawyers and the lenders and the architects and the design engineers. It is very large. I would say it is good to see today and even so much as even ten years ago that there is a lot more women who are participating in these pursuits and taking lead roles. They are not just in the office helping design and prepare for these bids. These bids are very, very expensive, because the projects are very large.

They are leading the discussions and the presentations. They have the ability to connect with the audience. They have the ability to explain technical terms in a non-technical way that makes the clients understand because, remember, these are users; they are not necessarily technical people. I would say, in terms of what we are seeing, in the design and even the engineering trades, is almost equal representation. Obviously, not so much in the design engineering. It might be slightly less in terms of women participation.

MN: That will change.

DM: It is changing. It is. I have a couple of examples, but, I say that when we go to site, there is still some of that historical; it has not changed very much. It is

very male dominated. Site work is tough. I know we have talked about this off stage, and I am not going to say ‘barriers’, but it is tough. A couple of examples I would give in terms of just how good women are at really presenting, and because of their power—they are very influential. There is an engineer at a construction firm, one of the prominent construction firms we use, and she always shows up, and she is an electrical engineer. She always does the presentations. I do not know how she makes electrical drawings interesting, but she does. She explains it, and she does not get fussed, and she does it better than anyone out there in terms of presenting. It really helps. If you have good presentation, the audience really is very receptive. I can name a couple of lawyers, but there are some female lawyers which I know whom no one likes to see across the table from them in these negotiations because you know she is very tough, very respected. Women are really making a place. I would say there is still always some challenges that we have to work through at the trade and at the site level. I think we have all talked about it. It is tough. It is not insurmountable. I always go and talk to the general site managers, and I always ask, “How many females do you really have?” I do. He said, “Well, actually, we really promote, as a corporation. We want women to step up, and I have a couple of supervisors who are women.” He said, “I actually prefer them, because they are very detail-oriented and

very neat and organized, and they tell me what I need to know.” I said, “I am getting excited. This is great. I like to hear this.” He says, “But...,” and, I said, “Oh, God.” I was deflated immediately. He said, “Well, there are still some things that make the women really good but which can sometimes be a challenge. There is that emotional aspect in that. Sometimes they cry too much, and they cry in front of the men.” I said, “Oh, jeez. Let me know if you need me to talk to them, because I do not cry. It is never them; it is everybody else.” I think mentorship is very important, especially when you get to the trade level and the site level. It is tough. It is a lot slower to change, but I think we have changed leaps and bounds. I think women really have a good voice, and they are very good. I will say to all the bid teams or people who represent bid teams that they are very strong, and they are very well received by the audience. The audience does not see gender. They hear a really good story and a good sales pitch.

MN: I sit around a cabinet table. There are half of us who are women and the other half who are men. When there is a tough issue to debate through, to work through, from time to time, emotions do come up, and it is regarded as good input. The reason it is regarded as good input is because of the diversity of views, because, at the end of the day, someone I think here said that your customer or your consumer represents that diversity now, and

to be responsive and to be competitive to be able to get that business, to have that perspective and a wider range of perspectives, is probably what we are starting to see more and more of. As far as questions go, those are the ones that I have got. Maybe what we will do is we will throw it out to the floor, and we will get some questions. I want to save just a little bit of time at the end, because I have one last question for everybody on the panel. For now, why don't we throw it to the floor? Who wants to do the first question? I feel like Kent is supposed to do this. I have now just taken it over.

Questions & Answers

Q: Hello. I have a question. I agree with where it starts to promote women and the opportunities to women. You have to start with institutions. If I have a proposal to become a proprietor or to build a company, and I go to a financial institution, and I say, "I need some help; I need some capital," you need to start with institutions, because I do not think women are getting the help that they need. I speak firsthand because I am in that industry where I lend. It is very difficult for a woman, even though she has a full-time job; she has a great salary; she has a great proposal. Banks do not lend in certain areas if they consider that risky.

MN: I feel like that is an question that, if you do not mind, I will take it. It is precisely why we have a strategy, which is the first ever women's entrepreneurship strategy. Let me give you some statistics. Ninety-nine percent of our businesses in this country are small- and medium-sized businesses. What percentage do you think are women-owned or women-led? It is better than two. Sixteen. It is only 16%. Earlier I said it is 16%, and yet we know we can actually add to the Canadian economy. That 16% right now, by the way, contributes \$150 billion to the Canadian economy, and they employ \$1.5 million Canadians. That is female entrepreneurs out of that 16. Imagine doubling that and actually having that kind of participation. You are absolutely right. The issues that face women, those barriers—and they are barriers—that we are working to overcome, to access to capital I hear about all the time. I hear it from small- and medium-sized businesses across the country all the time, but I do particularly hear it from female entrepreneurs. Because of the industries that they tend to be in, they are considered higher risk, or the lending or the collateral that is needed tends to be more of a challenge. Those are some of the things that we are absolutely tackling as part of that strategy. From the business owner and here on the panel, do you want to talk about how to address that from your standpoint?

JD: Access to capital? I would say when I first started in 1982—so it is 35 years now—I do recall if I applied for a credit card and my partner, a man, did, he would get a larger credit limit. I think we have come a long way, though. I have got to be honest with you. I think that now you have a lot of banks that are very sensitive. You have got a lot of female bank managers now on the other side of that table. I have not seen, for example, as a developer, any difficulty with access to capital any longer. In fact, there is so much money out there for developers now that you are just actually just picking a suitable bank. What I find is if I find resistance, I just find someone else. You really have to learn that you do not push against the wall. Just move, and you will find someone else. Once upon a time, the simplest advice I ever got was when you feel you are at the edge of the table, and you cannot see anything better, you just push yourself higher and you will get the whole plane of the table. There is a whole depth of financing available there. BDC does a great job and, also, they provide mentorship.

MN: We have increased their portfolio. Part of that \$2-billion strategy, \$1.6 billion, is going specifically into this, into BDC, to capitalize female entrepreneurs.

On that, you are absolutely right. It is not so much the money part; it actually is the mentorship and accessing, getting the advice and getting access to the

mentors and the supply chains and so forth. I am going to make a plug. Go to innovation.canada.ca or download my Canada app, Canada Business app, and it will guide you through the various streams of capital that might be there for female entrepreneurs.

Q: Some people have to take loans. I think when you find somebody vulnerable, it is kind of sad, because I think the government should step in and say, “You are a female; you are an entrepreneur; you want to be in the business,” and they, the government have to actually give some more incentive.

MN: Okay.

Q: Hi. Thanks. You guys spoke a lot about mentorship and sponsorship. Julie gave a really good example of somebody going above and beyond to advocate for you. In an effort to try to take something away, my question is what two characteristics would you have to see in someone for you to do the same, for you to say, “This person or this female is going to do this job,” so that we know how to better display those characteristics to our mentors?

JD: That is a beautiful question. I was going to make a joke that this whole side looks like my family, because they bought all the tickets. We have a motto. We take in seven to ten kids every summer, and we teach.

It is not men or women or boys or girls. I see char-

acter. Character is number one. Leadership comes from having values, value-driven people. That is the number one criteria. Can I talk about a little loan interview I went to? I went to a very famous person for a loan once. I was really nervous. I practiced, and I had all my proformas. He did not ask me one question about my business. The first question was about my ex-husband, which is a very interesting topic. It is too much drama for tonight. You see, there is humour in business; otherwise, you go crazy. The second question was, are you spending too much time doing charity work? Is your eye off the ball at work? I thought that is a fantastic question, too, which leads me into another bit of advice. I said to him, "Why did you not ask me any questions about my business?" He said, "You would not have even been in the door if I did not think you knew what you were doing. I want to know what kind of person you are." I would tell you, as an entrepreneur, hands down, what gets you to the finish line is your character and your integrity. I would say that would be number one.

Then, we can figure out what we want to do after that. I really genuinely believe that. Hopefully, my team has always known that. Talk about the philanthropy for a second. Another time, can I tell another joke or not really?

MN: Yes.

JD: I think I am funny. My family does not think I am funny, so I got you guys in front of me.

MN: That is such a great question that once you are finished, I am going to have the others answer that question, too, because I think that is a great question.

JD: I promise not to take that long. I do massive play dates, because I cannot do one play date at a time, because I have no time. I got a bus. We were all going to the Jonas Brothers—all these moms and kids.

We looked out the window, and everybody at the bar was a man. One of my friends, who sold her company for \$400 million turned to me and said, “The reason there is a problem is because they are in the bar, and we are on the bus going to the Jonas Brothers.”

What she and I then decided was how we do our socialization, which is fundamental to business, I tell everybody: Be in the traffic or do not bother going.

Do not even bother being an entrepreneur if you are not in the traffic. How you do it is a really nice way.

You get on a board, if you know someone who can get you on a board, a nonprofit board, and you start to make connections. Then they know your character.

Again, it always goes back down to character.

DM: I would say it is the confidence, confidence in yourself and having confidence. And having conviction is when you are right and when you are wrong, you are

able to admit that, but I think it really is about confidence. If you know you are right, be very confident in saying and voicing your opinion. I think that you have to, in this industry, in building, especially.

MS: I think what I will say is I felt sometimes, as a woman in construction, that I had to always be proving myself in a way that I did not so much in public policy and politics because people—they view you with their biases. They see the blonde woman who did not grow up in a trade, and they think, “What do you know?”

They have these biases. I felt that I was constantly having to prove myself. I think that was probably the reason why I went to trade school, because I wanted to show them that I could do it, too, and that I knew just as much as they did. I guess I am agreeing with both Julie and Denise, but my motto has always been, “I am going to work harder and know more; therefore, you cannot challenge me.” I think that would be my advice.

XY: I think integrity, you mentioned, is very important.

If I have to pick another one, it would be take ownership of what you do, and you always do that extra mile, because that really makes you stand out, like you always do something more than what you are being asked.

I find that for articling students or junior lawyers,

when I see that character, that attribute in them, I know they are going to make it. It is always that extra.

MN: That is great advice from these female leaders.

Work hard, be confident, have character, integrity and value, and I think that holds you well. I think, in this industry, but quite honestly, I think in almost every industry there is, it is synonymous. Really good advice.

Q: Hi. This is a great presentation, and it is bringing lots of value, so thank you all very, very much. There is one thing that I want to ask that we talked a little bit about, I think, and it is mentorship. What I wanted to ask you all is have any of you used an association or something where you are a member of that helped you along your path? If so, what was it and how did it help you?

XY: Not in my case, actually. I belong to all of the lawyers associations, this and that Bar. I am primarily there just for me to be up to date as to what is going on in the industry and so forth and to know people. Then, you get to meet the clients more in terms of business development, for me, rather than for the mentorship purposes.

We have to remember, mentorship comes in different forms. It is formal, informal. I have mentors both within my firm BLG and outside the firm—male and female. Some are more professional in a way that they just teach

me how to do things, how to do the deal, how to negotiate. Some are more about the career path, how to advance, how to develop your business. You can find multiple mentors for different purposes.

JD: When I started at FBDB—now, they are called BDC—they had great mentorship programs in the credit union movement. Community lending is really a very interesting way, if you are starting a small business, to get advice. Other than that, I have got to say, when I started, all my advisors were older. Now, all my advisors are younger than I am. I talk to my team all the time. “What do you think? We have a problem.” We talk about the problem. I say, “What do you think?” Perspective does not necessarily come from someone that is older than you. It comes from people who are going in the same direction as you.

MS: I am going to make three comments. I do not think we have to look at mentors as men or women. I think that is a whole conversation to unpack. I had lots of mentors who were men, very welcoming to me in construction, who are lovely older men, who wanted to help me and tried, in many ways, and with whom I still talk to this day. As a Director of the Board of the Empire Club, the reason I put this event together is because I believe we need to build a network and help each other and stand by each other. I did not want it to be so much about barriers as much as it is highlighting that there is

opportunity and trying to actually influence the message out there that this world is not just for men. I do not think men think so, either—not all of them, anyway.

Many of them do not. I am going to say, thirdly, yes, I sat on a board. It was on the board of the Metropolitan Plumbing and Heating Contractors Association.

I think that helped me a lot to get some credibility in my job because, although they were all men, they knew that I knew things and could do things that they could not do, and they respected that. I gained some mentors that way, too, but mostly they were men. I wanted to do this event so that women—we have to bring each other up, too. We have to help each other out.

MN: See it to be it.

DM: I would say that when I was growing up through the industry, there were not those associations specifically to support women, but I would say, like Marsha, my mentors were men in the industry. I always tell the story that really stuck with me and which really propelled me through the industry. I remember asking, because I grew up in construction with my brother, “Well, how do you feel when you see a woman in the room or you see a woman coming in who is either an engineer, a landscape architect or whatever it is that you are doing?”

How do you respond to her?” He said, “There is always a noise that is around when they see a woman.”

This is many years ago, so there was always the tittering or what have you. He said, “When it comes down to it, as long as she knows what she is talking about and she is giving me direction, so it is not slowing me down on site.

It all comes down to business. If she knows what she is talking about, I will listen to her, because I have got to get on site and do this, and I have people waiting, so she better know what she is talking about.” That is what I always think. I think we have touched on this, which is you are going to have to work a little bit harder.

Maybe it is just the nature. You know what they say: A woman has to work twice as hard to make half as much, but I had to. It is important to know your stuff and then stand by your convictions, and you know you are right. Then, you will gain respect. When it comes down to it, they really just want direction, so they can get out on the site and do it. Everything else is just noise.

MN: What Denise is talking about is a woman boss.

XY: It is so true, though. At the end of the day, it is your proven track record that really speaks volumes.

At the beginning, I do not remember how many times I negotiated with a male lawyer on the other side, and, especially, if it was a senior, like 20 or 30 years older than me, I could just tell by the first line if he was not thinking too much of me and was very condescending.

Then, once you start to give the reasons and arguments, then they start to listen. Being Asian is not helping, because a lot of people think we are perpetual college students until we hit 65. It is true.

They were just saying, “How old are you?” I am not young. I am actually not young.

MN: That is a good problem.

XY: Well, that is a small problem. When you really know your stuff, when you know what you are doing, at the end of the day, really, other people will listen.

MN: I have been getting the hand signal back there.

We are heading towards a wrap, but here is the last one question I have for everyone. I am going to start with Marsha, because I started with Denise the first time.

To the group, if you could give one tweet-able piece of advice to women who are curious about getting into the building industry, what would it be?

MS: Work hard, be strong.

XY: Get involved now, today.

JD: Speak a little louder than you think is polite.

MN: That is 140 characters, too. I hope those who are tweeting it are actually tweeting this.

DM: I am going to be very unoriginal when you think of it.

I am saying just do it; the time is right; do it. If you like construction, and you know you can do it, just do it. There is nothing stopping you. Ignore the noise, and just be strong.

MN: That is fantastic.

Thank you so very much. Everyone let us give the panel a hand. I loved being the one asking the questions today. It was awesome!

KE: You did a great job. The appreciation remarks are normally done by the sponsor, Joseph Mancinelli, but, tonight, they are going to be done by a board member, Jenna Hay, from the Empire Club, who looks exactly like Joseph Mancinelli.

MN: The Raptors T-shirts are going. Before even that, I would say, "Go Raptors Go!"

**Note of Appreciation, by Ms. Jenna Hay,
Head of Policy Development and Regulatory Affairs,
Lending Loop; Director, Empire Club of Canada**

I can talk longer because I am no longer standing in the way of them. I want to just take a moment, before I read Joe's remarks to thank this panel. I think a really good sign of an excellent event is the fact that I was sitting there regretting not having a notebook with me. Thank you so much.

I want to give a special thank you to Minister Ng. Minister, as you know, and as Kent alluded to earlier, we really have been striving, especially this past year at the Empire Club, to have conversations that matter, to have conversations that, as Kent had today, sometimes are difficult in our society, but are really important to have. Every single time we have picked up the phone and called you, Minister, you have responded enthusiastically, and we are very appreciative of that. Thank you so much. Tonight is no exception.

Of course, I want to thank all of our panelists for such engaging and dynamic remarks— certainly, that tweetable advice at the end was great. Also, just one very special round of applause for Marsha, who really made all of this happen.

It is a pleasure serving on the board with you, Marsha, and thank you for expanding my horizons tonight, among other people. As Kent mentioned, I won the contest of the

Joe Mancinelli look-alike we had earlier. Thank you for that applause. I am just here to deliver some remarks on behalf of Joseph Mancinelli. He is the LiUNA International Vice President and Regional Manager for Central and Eastern Canada, and he actually sends his greetings from Montreal. He asked us to communicate the following.

He says, “Apologies that we cannot be with you this evening. We are concluding our LiUNA Canadian Conference here, in Montreal, but LiUNA is proud to sponsor such a dynamic and empowering event with exceptional female leaders who are paving the way to embrace and promote women in leadership roles and changing the perspective of women in the trades. LiUNA continues to work with signatory contractors, like Julie, to showcase the female talent that we have throughout Canada. We still have work to do, but it is because of the leadership of the women you have heard from this evening that we are changing ways for a better and more inclusive tomorrow.” That is from Joe. Thank you very much.

As Kent mentioned before, we really cannot do this without our sponsors, so thank you to LiUNA and OMERS as well. I will turn it back over to you, Kent.

Concluding Remarks, by Kent Emerson

A couple of more things. We have had a great season at the Empire Club. This is our last evening event.

We do have two more events. Next week, we have the Chief Economist of the Conference Board of Canada doing an event with OSSTF on education, talking about the need to invest in education and about what it does for the economy. I think it is going to be a very important event.

The Federal Health Minister, Mary Ng's colleague, will be here on June 24th for a lunch. Both our lunches are going to be fantastic. I want to thank all of you for coming. What I am going to ask to happen here is for the sound team at VVC to strike the chairs in the podium after we are done and all of you can get your pictures with the Minister on stage, if you want.

The panel has these Raptors T-shirts. We could get pictures with them on and have lots of fun. I just want to thank Julie for providing all of you with a Raptors T. I think she deserves a special round of applause. Ladies and gentlemen, meeting adjourned.

Thank you.