



# NEW PROGRAM HELPS B.C. BUSINESSES EXPORT ONLINE

World Trade Centre Vancouver introduces interactive workshop series

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# SOUNDING BOARD



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GREATER VANCOUVER BOARD OF TRADE AND ITS MEMBERS | DECEMBER 2018 | VOLUME 58 / ISSUE 11 | BOARDOFTRADE.COM

## GVBOT applauds investments in international trade

**ECONOMY** | Federal government announces \$1.1B Export Diversification Strategy in Fall Economic Statement

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade was pleased to see the federal government announce several initiatives last month to improve business competitiveness, invest in trade-enabling infrastructure, and grow Canadian exports to overseas markets.

In the Fall Economic Statement, released on Nov. 21, the government unveiled tax incentives for new capital investments along with a \$1.1-billion Export Diversification Strategy, with the end goal of substantially growing international trade.

A few days after the announcement, Finance Minister Bill Morneau took the stage in Vancouver for an address to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade about the Fall Economic Statement, and to reiterate the government's commitment to expanding Canada's trade horizons.

"In our Fall Economic Statement, we set out a target. We said we want to increase trade,



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau takes part in a Q&A with GVBOT President and CEO Iain Black during a sold-out event on Nov. 1, 2018. | MATT BORCK

outside of the United States, by 50 per cent between here and 2025," said Morneau. "It's an

ambitious goal, but one that we need to set out upon to make a difference for the long-term,

knowing that if we don't do that, we are vulnerable to just one significant trading partner."

The message was well-received by the business crowd here in Greater Vancouver, which plays a critical role as Canada's Gateway to the growing Asia-Pacific region.

"We are pleased to see the government recognize the mounting importance of international trade diversification to our economic success," said Hon. Iain Black, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "In light of Canada's recent international trade agreements — including USMCA, CETA, and CPTPP — we firmly believe that trade will be a cornerstone of the Canadian economy of tomorrow. This is why our own organization, through our subsidiary World Trade Centre Vancouver, has been working to enable B.C. businesses to export their products and services and tap into new markets."

International trade was also the central theme of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's remarks to Board of Trade Members a few weeks earlier, during a sold-out event on Nov. 1.

"We now have preferred market access to two-thirds of the global economy," said Trudeau. "Simply put, we're the only G7 country with a free-trade deal with every other G7 country."

The Prime Minister also reflected on a speech he gave to 800 Members of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade back in 2014, after he was first elected leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

"I remember saying that trade is our way forward," said Trudeau. "Four years later, I'm more convinced than ever that expanding access to new markets with modern, progressive trade agreements is the ticket to our success." SB

Video of the Prime Minister's full GVBOT address is available at [youtube.com/boardoftrade](https://youtube.com/boardoftrade).



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## HEALTH | Investing in the future: health, wellness and your business

Pacific Blue Cross CEO John Crawford on how businesses can support their employees

BY JOHN CRAWFORD

As B.C.'s #1 health benefits provider, Pacific Blue Cross exists to improve the health and well-being of British Columbians. That means we care deeply about the people of this province, including the people who show up day after day to keep your business thriving.

It's no secret that the health of a business depends on the health of its employees. With approximately four out of five Canadian adults having at least one risk factor for a chronic disease and the average cost of a disability claim estimated to be over \$80,000, it makes good financial sense to support your staff with preventative measures.

Beyond helping to reduce health risk factors, workplace wellness programs can offer benefits including increased employee energy

and engagement levels, reduced stress, and reduced absenteeism.

Do you encourage staff to get outside for a walk or hit the gym? On average, every minute of exercise can extend a person's life by 1.5 to 2 minutes.

Do you provide counselling benefits to your employees? At Pacific Blue Cross, we've seen a 36 per cent rise in mental health claim volume since 2013. In some cases, more than 41 per cent of these mental health claims are directly related to workplace related issues such as burn out, workload stress, and interpersonal problems that go unresolved.

### The continuum of care: pathways to health

The road of life can bring many twists and turns, and at Pacific Blue Cross, we are focused on coverage that provides support every step of the way. When the road is smooth, we take a proactive approach with services



John Crawford

such as extended health, dental and vision coverage, travel insurance, biometric and vaccination clinics (vaccinated employees can have up to 45 per cent fewer doctor visits and sick days), and more.

If an unexpected bump in the road does arise, we provide

early intervention measures such as Employee and Family Assistance Programs, web-based learning options and more. These proactive strategies can help to prevent short and long-term disability leaves. If a leave is required, we can also provide pro-active disability management to support recovery, including return to work planning.

### Taking steps toward a healthier tomorrow

One of the wellness tools available to our Members is the Pacific Blue Cross Health Challenge contest, an annual program with over 160,000 British Columbians participating each year.

At the beginning of the new year, we ask our Members to share their health resolutions (eating right, quitting smoking, or getting more exercise) with family, friends, and co-workers through social media for the chance to win \$2019 in health cash that can be used to purchase products or services tied to improved health. Whether it's a new bike, gym membership, or a smoothie

maker, we want to help our Members enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.

As anyone who has broken a New Years resolution can tell you, most people struggle with changing habits. The Health Challenge is a great example of a way businesses can promote a healthier workforce and engage staff by providing an incentive to make a goal and stick to it.

At Pacific Blue Cross, we have seen a shift in the perception that employee health benefits are just another cost to be managed. Now, including expanded coverage is considered an essential part of business planning.

The number of organizations devoting time and energy to employee health and wellness has grown significantly in the past few years, and research is proving it is well worth the investment. **SB**

John Crawford is President and CEO of Pacific Blue Cross.

Learn how to get your workplace involved in the Pacific Blue Cross Health Challenge at [pac.bluecross.ca/healthchallengeresource](http://pac.bluecross.ca/healthchallengeresource).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

See our full events calendar at [boardoftrade.com/events](http://boardoftrade.com/events)

Is there a speaker you'd like to hear from or topic you'd like explored? Make a suggestion at [boardoftrade.com/suggest](http://boardoftrade.com/suggest)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2018

### Energy Forum 2018

7:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre  
1088 Burrard Street

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

#### The Honourable Jim Carr

Minister, International Trade Diversification  
Government of Canada

#### The Honourable Michelle Mungall

Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum  
Resources  
Government of British Columbia

#### Robert Johnston

CEO  
Eurasia Group

Presenting Sponsor: Bennett Jones

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Breakfast Sponsor: Ledcor Group

Community Sponsors: FortisBC, Parkland Refining Ltd.,  
Woodfibre LNG, Kiewit, Port of Vancouver, Enbridge

Presented in partnership with: World Trade Centre Vancouver

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2018

World Trade Centre Vancouver

### International e-Commerce Essentials

8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Fairmont Waterfront Vancouver  
900 Canada Place

FACILITATOR

#### Shane Gibson

Author, Speaker, Sales Thought Leader

Project Funded by: Province of British Columbia,  
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade

Supporting Sponsor: BC Chamber of Commerce

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2018

Members Only

### Annual General Meeting - Stub Year

8:30 - 9:45 a.m.

KPMG  
777 Dunsmuir Street

#### Lori Mathison

2018-19 Chair  
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019

### Marketing in the Age of Assistance

7 - 9 a.m.

Fairmont Hotel Vancouver  
900 West Georgia Street

#### Meagan Tanner

Strategic Partner Manager  
GMB Americas, Google

In Partnership with: Google

Presenting Sponsor: Postmedia Solutions

Supporting Sponsor: British Columbia Securities Commission

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2019

Company of Young Professionals

### A Night of Non-profit Engagement and Board Recruitment

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Pinnacle Hotel Harbourfront  
1133 West Hastings Street

Signature Sponsor: BCIT Business

Community Sponsors: Chartered Professional Accountants  
of British Columbia, Vision Event Photography

Event Partner: Red Truck Beer

Preferred Media Partner: DailyHive Vancouver

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2019

LOT and CYP Discovery Series

### 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Speed Networking Night

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

The Loft at Earls  
1095 Mainland Street

Signature Sponsor: BCIT Business

Community Sponsors: London Drugs, SFU Beedie School of  
Business, Langara School of Management

Preferred Media Partner: DailyHive Vancouver

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

### 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer

11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Fairmont Pacific Rim  
1038 Canada Place

#### Lisa Kimmel

President & CEO  
Edelman Canada

Moderator: Bridgitte Anderson

General Manager  
Edelman Vancouver

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## TRADE | Are you ready to start exporting your products online?

### World Trade Centre Vancouver launches new ICE workshop to assist B.C. businesses

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is pleased to announce the second program offered by its subsidiary, World Trade Centre Vancouver, aimed at permanently increasing the export capacity of B.C.'s small and medium-sized businesses.

The International e-Commerce Essentials (ICE) program is a quintessential cross-border e-commerce workshop that equips small to medium-sized enterprises for online market entry and international market development. The workshop will complement the Trade Accelerator Program (TAP) by providing a deep dive into the intricacies of global e-commerce to help companies export online faster.

Thanks to the support of the Province of British Columbia, the International e-Commerce Essentials program will now be available in B.C. offered through the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and the BC Chamber of Commerce.

"Using the program will help B.C. business owners learn the skills they need to cross geographical barriers and expand their customer base," said Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology Bruce Ralston. "Learning how to use e-commerce will help people increase business revenues and create good jobs in all regions of the province."

New trade agreements and a competitive Canadian dollar make it an ideal time for B.C. businesses to expand their reach by exporting online. Through this hands-on workshop, business owners will learn which tools exist to help them get started and how they can create an integrated online strategy to drive traffic to their website and increase conversions.

"International e-Commerce is growing twice as fast as domestic e-Commerce and expected to hit \$4.5 trillion by 2021," said Austin Nairn, Executive Director at World Trade Centre Vancouver. "Through the ICE workshop,



I wish this program was available many years ago. Learning best practices, hints and tips would have saved us time and money instead of going through costly trial and error.



we aim to help B.C. businesses break into new markets online, which will lead to economic growth and job creation here at home."

During the workshop, leading Canadian export advisors will help business owners create an online strategy to drive global sales. The workshop will include interactive presentations, completing an online strategy blueprint, and a case study where participants will discuss and apply what they have learned.

"I wish this program was available many years ago," said Kari Yuers, President and CEO of Kryton International, a B.C.-based company that exports its products around the globe. "Learning best practices, hints and tips would have saved us time and money instead of going through costly trial and error."

"Our organization is excited and proud to launch this new workshop, which will give local businesses the fundamental knowledge they need to expand their horizons and grow beyond borders," said Hon. Iain Black, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "One in five jobs in British Columbia is now tied to exporting. In the future, we expect those numbers to be even higher, which is why we are laying a solid foundation today through the work of World Trade Centre Vancouver."

ICE is now accepting registrations from B.C. businesses for its first workshops, which are scheduled to take place in Vancouver and Kamloops on December 11 and 12. **SB**

Learn more or apply today at [wtcvancouver.ca/ice](http://wtcvancouver.ca/ice).

# ICE

## INTERNATIONAL e-COMMERCE ESSENTIALS

A QUINTESSENTIAL CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE WORKSHOP  
THAT EQUIPS SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES FOR  
ONLINE MARKET ENTRY AND INTERNATIONAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT



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## SOUNDING BOARD

**PUBLISHER:** Business in Vancouver Media Group  
**EDITOR:** Greg Hoekstra, 604-640-5450  
**AD SALES:** Laura Torrance, 604-608-5145

### ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Sounding Board is the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's official publication, distributed to all its Members, as well as all subscribers of Business in Vancouver newspaper. Sounding Board is published 11 times per year by Business in Vancouver Media Group in partnership with the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. The newspaper is read by business leaders and elected officials across B.C. and beyond, with a conservatively estimated total readership of 37,500.

### ABOUT THE BOARD OF TRADE

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is Western Canada's most active and influential business association. We accelerate business success through our advocacy and public policy initiatives, our four Signature Programs for professional development, and our 100+ events each year, which educate and connect our region's business community. We engage with decision-makers to develop our region as a vibrant hub for commerce, trade, travel, and free enterprise. And we've been doing it with tangible results, for more than 130 years.

### MISSION STATEMENT

OUR PURPOSE is to support sustainable prosperity throughout the Greater Vancouver region.  
 OUR VISION is to be an active, innovative, trusted, credible business organization, known for influencing decision-makers, and educating, connecting with, and engaging our communities.  
 OUR MISSION is to provide leadership, information and connections, and public policy support that help ensure the Greater Vancouver region is competitive and the preferred Pacific Gateway for trade, commerce, and travel.  
 WE ARE informed, respectful, principled, collaborative, and professional.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-19

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## LEADERSHIP | In memory of Ken Martin

Chair Lori Mathison reflects on the legacy of GVBOT Governor Ken Martin, who passed away on November 20

British Columbia's business community lost a revered and admired figure last month with the passing of Ken Martin at age 70.

Ken died peacefully at home on November 20 with his family by his side. His obituary on the *Vancouver Sun* website reads that "Ken died as he lived; on his terms, in control and with dignity."

Ken was perhaps best known in Vancouver for his role as President and CEO of Pacific Blue Cross from 2003 until his retirement in 2013. Within the company, he is remembered fondly for his "firm but fair leadership style" and for helping the organization achieve financial health, stability, and a much higher profile in the community.

In addition to his role at Pacific Blue Cross, Ken also served as a director on several key boards in our community, including the Vancouver Airport Authority, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, Autism BC, Ovarian Cancer Canada, and the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

In fact, Ken served as Chair of the Board of Trade in 2012-13 — a year in which our organization was admittedly facing some daunting financial challenges and was struggling to re-invent itself and re-launch with a renewed purpose, focus, and value relevant to its Members.

We had to urgently find ways to do more with less, and then develop a plan that would help move the Board of Trade in a new direction, without interrupting or compromising service for our Members. Thanks in large part to Ken's leadership, we succeeded on all fronts and ultimately recorded a historic financial turnaround, years ahead of schedule.

As the Board of Trade's President and CEO has said many times, Ken was the perfect Chair for our organization at the time. His deep operations knowledge as a senior executive, his command of board governance, his direct experience guiding organizations through transformation, and his ability to "cut to the chase" on any matter of pertinence gave our board acute focus, and our CEO the needed pathway to maneuver internally.

It was also Ken who helped the Board of Trade re-establish its public policy relevance in B.C. through the introduction of the Policy Council, which links the efforts of our extraordinary network of committees with our board directors and senior management team. The Policy Council continues to be instrumental



to our organization's policy and advocacy efforts to this day.

"At that moment in our history, we were so fortunate to have a board chair who understood — at a very personal level — the challenges we were trying to overcome in pursuing our re-invention. In Ken, I had a boss, a coach, a defender, and, ultimately, a dear friend," said Iain Black, President and CEO. "We completed our five-year transformation and financial recovery in just over two years in large part because of Ken's tenacity, focus, and leadership. For this, we will always be grateful."

Ken not only had a vision for policy governance, but he also had crisp insights into the substance of matters. Ken expected excellence and fostered the very best in people around him. I am grateful to Ken for his direction and words of encouragement, which shaped my involvement in the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's policy committees.

Ken Martin personified the best attributes of a business leader.

Throughout his career — which took him from Toronto to Calgary to Memphis to Vancouver — he led several companies with pride, diligence, and resolve, but he never lost sight of the importance of giving back to the community through volunteerism and donating his time and expertise to boards.

For those reasons — and many more — Ken will be deeply missed in our community.

Ken was predeceased by his parents, Margaret and Grant and his sister, Judy and is survived by his wife, Kathy of 43 years and their two children, Christopher and Kelly.

There will be a Celebration of Life for Ken Martin on Thursday, December 6 at the Century Plaza Hotel at 4 p.m. In Ken's memory, donations to the BC Cancer Agency or the Pacific Family Autism Network would be appreciated. **SB**

To send a message of condolence, please go to [korcremation.com/obituaries](http://korcremation.com/obituaries).



## LEADERSHIP | 'Be true to yourself and honest to others'

### Q&A with Board of Trade Director Jim Bogusz

#### Give us your elevator pitch and describe what you do.

I'm a director of two significant not-for-profits and am in the process of forming a fund which invests in industrial real estate.

#### Where is your hometown and how did it shape you as an individual?

Toronto, but I've now lived in Vancouver most of my life. I had a very active youth and was exposed at an early age to a wide range of arts and culture in both cities. I still enjoy walking the neighbourhoods and taking in the lights, sights and sounds of any city.

#### What was your first job?

I was a carrier for the *Vancouver Sun* in my early teenage years. In those days you delivered, collected the subscription amounts, and if you wanted more income, went out and got more subscribers. Without realizing it at the time, I ran my own small business. It was a great learning experience.

#### What is the most important lesson you learned from your parents?

Mostly to be true to yourself and honest to others. Very quietly, my parents gave a lot of themselves

to my brothers and me, and were quite involved in their community. Over time I've come to appreciate how important this was in my upbringing.

#### Why did you join the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade?

Simple. It's time for me to give back to the community. The GVBOT is instrumental in influencing policies which help shape our region; it is an honour and a privilege to be a part of the organization and have a seat at the table.

#### How do you think our region will be different 10 years from now?

As long as we remain clean, safe and politically stable, Vancouver's place as one of the most desirable cities in the world is assured. I think that in 10 years densification will be more accepted. We'll see more towers and even multi-level industrial warehouses in our region and by then action will have been taken to resolve our major infrastructure bottlenecks.

#### What advice would you give your younger self?

Study harder, be patient, don't look for the easy way out. Stick

to your principles, make good friends and pursue what you love.

#### What's the most out-of-character thing you've ever done?

I took a two-year contract in Barbados. New country, new company, new industry, and a very young family. Not sure I'd do it again but the exposure to the international business stage was life-changing.

#### If you had to change careers, what would you do next, and why?

I'm kind of doing that now. The opportunity to start something from the ground up is far too enticing. The entrepreneurial spirit is still strong.

#### If you could witness any event past, present, or future, what would it be?

It would either be witnessing the release of Nelson Mandela or the toppling of the Berlin Wall. You cannot deny the human spirit and fundamental will to be free and self-determining. These are two excellent examples of that.

#### What qualities make someone successful?

For starters, a baseline intelligence is an absolute prerequisite. Add in doses of resilience, tenacity, natural curiosity and critical thinking and I believe



Jim Bogusz

my happy place. I love it 12 months of the year.

#### If you retired tomorrow, how would you keep busy?

That's a good one. I thought I was retired, or at least slowing down. My two boards and start-up project have me busier than ever. When I do officially retire, I hope to travel more, spend more time with my wife and maintain a connection to the community through board work and volunteerism.

#### What does a perfect day look like?

Starts with a cappuccino and sunshine, moving next to a long challenging bike ride, then dinner with family or friends, always involving a great bottle of wine. If it's winter, substitute the bike ride for a day of skiing. **SB**

you have a pretty good chance of being successful.

#### If you could be anywhere else right now, where would you be and why?

I'd be touring some wine region in Chile on my bike. It's almost summer there and I'd be doing most of my favorite things at once.

#### What is on your "bucket list?"

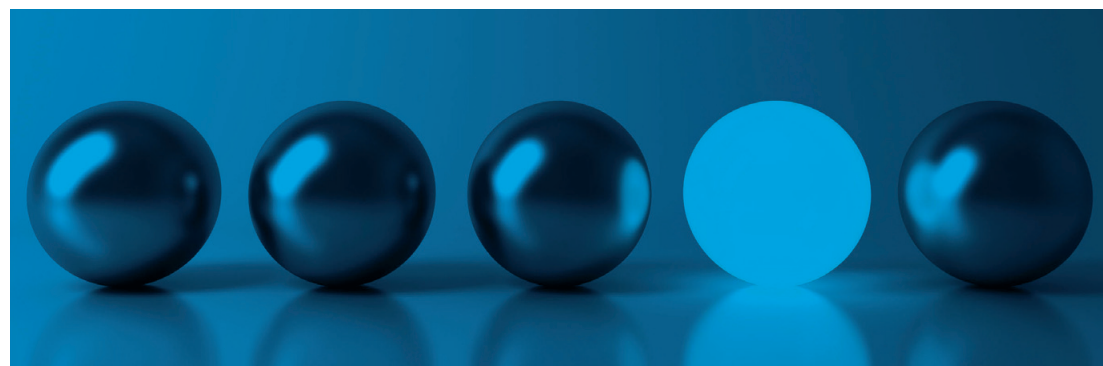
Travel. I want to see as much of the world as I can. I also want to live to see my team win the Stanley Cup and get to as many big sporting events as possible.

#### What is your favourite vacation spot and why?

There is so much of the world I want to see, but Whistler is

Jim Bogusz currently serves as Chair of the Independent Contractors and Business Association of British Columbia and Director of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is fortunate to have 36 of our region's top executives and business leaders on its board of directors. Learn more about these exceptional individuals at [boardoftrade.com/directors](http://boardoftrade.com/directors).



# Energy Forum 2018

Thursday, December 6, 2018 | 7:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, 1088 Burrard Street

Bringing together a diverse intersection of industry representatives, policy-makers and the business community for an inclusive dialogue on Canadian energy development and its role in supporting a robust, competitive and sustainable, Western Canadian economy.

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### Keynote Speakers



**The Honourable Jim Carr**  
Minister, International Trade Diversification  
Government of Canada



**The Honourable Michelle Mungall**  
Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources  
Government of British Columbia



**Robert Johnston**  
CEO  
Eurasia Group

### Session 1: [Western Canadian Energy Developments](#)

2018 has been a landmark year in Western Canadian energy. This panel will explore three facets: LNG development, Indigenous consultation and business development, and Canada's oil sands.

### Session 2: [Transferable Technologies](#)

Learn how innovations and breakthroughs in the energy sector are being applied to diverse parts of our economy and our export base.

For more information visit [boardoftrade.com/energy2018](http://boardoftrade.com/energy2018)



## IN FOCUS | Photos from recent events and activities at the Board of Trade



Sue Paish shares an update on the launch of Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster during a special breakfast event on Nov. 13. | MATT BORCK



Perry Bellegarde, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, returned to Vancouver on Nov. 23 for his fourth annual address to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. In his remarks, National Chief Bellegarde identified his top priorities for his second term at the helm of the AFN and discussed the role that B.C. businesses can play in reconciliation, including partnerships with First Nations communities that create jobs and economic opportunities. Listen to the full remarks at [boardoftrade.com/afn2018](http://boardoftrade.com/afn2018). | MATT BORCK



Renowned academic and thought leader Dominic Barton takes part in a Q&A with BCIT President Kathy Kinloch on Oct. 19 about the global economy of the future. | MATT BORCK



TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond gave his third annual address to our region's business community on Nov. 8, speaking about booming ridership growth. Following his address, Desmond was joined on stage by Jane Bird of Bennett Jones LLP for a Q&A session. Listen at [boardoftrade.com/translink2018](http://boardoftrade.com/translink2018). | MATT BORCK



Lyft's Director of Public Policy Timothy Burr Jr. (left), Donnelly Group Partner Damon Holowchak (centre), and GVBOT Policy Analyst Sonia Takhar (right) take part in a panel discussion on the need for ridesharing services in B.C. on Nov. 14.



Members of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's under-35 program, the Company of Young Professionals, served dinner at the Salvation Army Harbour Light on Oct. 20. Learn how you can get involved at [boardoftrade.com/cyp](http://boardoftrade.com/cyp).

Did you know the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade hosts nearly 130 speaker events, seminars, webinars, and networking receptions each year?

More photos at [facebook.com/boardoftrade](https://www.facebook.com/boardoftrade)



## IN FOCUS | Snapshots from the 2018 WE FOR SHE Conference



Master of Ceremonies Karina LeBlanc and WE FOR SHE Co-Chairs Jill Earthy and Lois Nahirney snap a selfie with members of the Landing Dance Centre during the fifth annual WE FOR SHE Conference on Nov. 16. This year's event focused on 'Creating and Equal Future' and drew more than 1,400 attendees from across the province. See the full photo gallery at [facebook.com/boardoftrade](https://facebook.com/boardoftrade). | MATT BORCK



The Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, shares stories from her career before being joined on stage for a Q&A with Lori Mathison and Adina Williams. | MATT BORCK



Transgender advocates Tru Wilson and Levi Nahirney speak about how attendees can learn to think positively and 'love their story.' | MATT BORCK

## DIVERSITY | 'We're not biased, we hire the best'

How to address systemic barriers facing women in the workplace

BY WYLE BAOWEEN

Have you heard this statement before: "We're not biased, we simply hire and promote the best."

If these decisions are truly based on merit, then why are there more CEOs in Fortune 500 companies that have the name John than all female CEOs combined? And why is the rate of promotions for women and other underrepresented groups well below that of men?

The answer is simple: organizations are not as meritocratic as we would like to think. Unconscious bias and systemic barriers exist for underrepresented groups including women.

Systems and processes are built to serve a male-centric culture that dominated businesses for hundreds of years. Our recruitment, promotion, workplace inflexibility and many other processes are biased and lead to a lower rate of hiring and advancement for women.

This was one of the important conversations that took place at the fifth annual WE FOR SHE conference, which drew more than 1,400 attendees to the Vancouver Convention Centre last month. Organizations are realizing that the most effective and sustainable change comes by addressing systemic barriers.

Organizations that have been successful in this effort start by collecting data to design their systemic changes. And data here is quantitative (i.e. numbers from recruitment, promotion, retention, pay) and answers the question "what" and also qualitative (i.e. people experiences and stories based on interviews and focus groups) which answers the "why."

There are several benefits to collecting data at the beginning of your organization's journey to advance diversity and inclusion. Below are four key benefits.

### Leadership buy-in

Data helps build a strong evidence-based analysis to highlight the issues. This leaves little



Wyle Baoween presents at WE FOR SHE 2018 on Nov. 16. | MATT BORCK

room for skeptics who question the presence of gender inequalities in their organizations.

### A focused and coordinated approach

Data identifies which issues to tackle first. For example, looking at recruitment data we can determine if women are not applying, or perhaps they are not passing the interview stage. This is true for other processes such as advancement and pay.

There are several benefits to collecting data at the beginning of your organization's journey to advance diversity and inclusion.

### Maximize resources

Data helps target efforts to the areas that will generate the greatest impact. This is particularly important for organizations that are not resourced for a "Diversity and Inclusion" team (true for more than 90 per cent of companies).

### Show progress

Collecting data gives organizations a baseline for measuring progress and rerouting where needed. After a long period of talking about gender equity without visible results, organizations can experience "diversity and inclusion fatigue" where employees start to lose trust and motivation to be engaged.

For all of us leading the way to gender equity it is important to question the statement "we hire the best" and to consider the fairness of the systems around us. Think about systemic changes as the most effective and sustainable way to address gender inequality and start by collecting data to make meaningful change. **SB**

Wyle Baoween is CEO of HRx Technology and a member of the Women's Leadership Circle advisory committee. Learn more about the program and how you can get involved at [boardoftrade.com/wlc](https://boardoftrade.com/wlc).





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