

## **Gender Equity Strategy**



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## COMPASS Gender Equity Strategy

### Context

From the very beginning, the Council of Marine Professional Associates (COMPASS) adopted the stance that marine transportation must be, and must be seen to be, an equal opportunity industry.

Various studies have noted the small number of women employed in the industry. Women represent less than 2% of the world's 1.25 million seafarers, and most of them work as cooks, porters, or waitresses in the cruise segment of the industry.

In Canada, a report by Niagara College, *Making Waves – A Profile of Career Opportunities in Niagara's Marine Sector* (2000), identified women as one of the untapped potential labour sources. It pointed out that

the socio-cultural factors impeding the integration of women onboard have deep roots in most countries. And although we may wish to think Canada is different, our findings (through both employer interviews and respondent questionnaires) suggest that we too need to improve not only our (hiring) numbers, but also our support for the integration of female mariners. (p. 33)

Employers participating in this study suggested looking to the industry's employment equities as a potential source for increasing recruits.

With women representing only 3% of our sample's respondents, industry employers may be accurate about their 'untapped potential'; albeit, perhaps overly optimistic of their willingness to enter the industry without significant changes in the milieu of life on-board. (p. 32)



The report also draws attention to the fact that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) was the first organization to develop a formal strategy for the integration of women into the marine sector. The *IMO Women In Development Programme*, initiated in 1989, offers the best resource for learning how to enhance marine training and employment for women. The IMO experience suggests the need for multifaceted interventions, including:



- Gender-Awareness Training across the sector;
- Gender-specific Fellowships;
- Shorter voyages and/or longer home leave; and
- Improved on-board accommodation and facilities.

The IMO also notes that these strategies would not only attract more women to marine professions but would also benefit all seafarers, regardless of gender.



### **COMPASS Gender Equity Objectives**

COMPASS recognizes the serious gender inequity that currently exists in the marine transportation sector. It also recognizes that women represent an excellent target population for future marine transportation recruitment initiatives. In view of these considerations and to begin addressing the issue of gender equity immediately, COMPASS has included the development of an aggressive and progressive gender equity strategy among its priority initiatives.

The foundation report for COMPASS's marine careers promotion strategy, *In the Same Boat: A Collaboratively Developed Marine Careers Promotion Strategy for Eastern Canada* (See Reports), deals extensively with the issue of gender inequity and provides a number of strategic objectives designed to address the inequity.



**Marine Transportation Gender Equity Committee** Using these strategic objectives as the basis for its gender equity approach, COMPASS invited the active collaboration of major women's organizations and government agencies, and established in 2009 a Marine

Transportation Gender Equity Committee to pursue the development and implementation of progressive gender equity initiatives, and to provide direction and leadership on gender equity issues.

The Marine Transportation Gender Equity Committee currently comprises:

Francine Couture	Recruitment and Retention Consultant, Women in Resource Development Corporation (WRDC)
Allison Dancey	Program and Policy Development Specialist, NL Department of Natural Resources
Gerard Dominic	Manager, Labour Market Policy & Partnerships, NL Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment
Carolyn Emerson	Project Coordinator, Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades & Technology (WinSETT Centre)
Laura Halfyard	Past President, Women in Science and Engineering Newfoundland and Labrador (WISE-NL)
Richard Hodder	NL Department of Education
Heather MacLellan	Assistant Deputy Minister, Women's Policy Office (WPO)
Cecilia Moloney	Memorial University, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
Linda Ross	President, Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW)
Valerie Carruthers	Executive Director, Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE)
John Connors	Executive Manager, COMPASS (Chair)



The Marine Transportation Gender Equity Committee has contributed to the development of COMPASS marine transportation careers promotional materials to ensure a gender-balanced approach and has undertaken an initiative to establish target participation rates in marine education and training (MET) programs and marine careers. This initiative involved identifying and prioritizing MET programs (offered by the

Marine Institute, the Canadian Coast Guard College, and Memorial University's School of Engineering), ascertaining current enrolments and gender proportions, and developing criteria for establishing benchmark enrolments, identifying measures to increase participation by women, and establishing measures to evaluate progress toward target enrolments.

The Committee has also developed a draft outline for a long-term gender equity strategy and action plan for marine transportation industries that addresses areas such as:

- education and training target enrolments,
- recruitment and retention,
- networking,
- communication and consultation,
- support mechanisms,
- outreach,
- measurement, monitoring, and reporting, and
- implementation



COMPASS anticipates that development and implementation of this gender equity initiative will result in the achievement of many of the gender equity objectives contained in *In the Same Boat: A Collaboratively Developed Marine Careers Promotion Strategy for Eastern Canada*, including:

- developing and disseminating recruitment materials highlighting opportunities and benefits for women;
- investigating, identifying, and publicizing all sources of support for women pursuing marine careers;
- utilizing women's organizations to assist in the promotion of female participation in marine transportation careers;
- facilitating increased female enrolment in marine education and training programs;
- creating a marine scholarships program that specifically targets women;
- conducting a study to identify and examine in detail the reasons women are underrepresented in marine occupations, and what actions are necessary to facilitate their participation;
- developing and implementing a marketing and communication strategy designed specifically for women and women's groups;

- promoting gender-awareness training for all marine sector stakeholders;
- researching the *IMO Women in Development Programme* and implementing procedures and recommendations identified as applicable and feasible;
- undertaking strategies to enhance regulatory measures related to employment equity; and
- Undertaking research to identify and address barriers to women's participation in marine careers.

This gender equity strategy is ambitious but achievable. COMPASS expects nothing less of marine transportation than to lead the way in establishing a progressive gender equity program that will set the standard for Canada, and provide a template for other industry sectors to follow in its wake.

