

Meeting with Marc Garneau on Women and S&T

Catherine Mavriplis

April 2013, Volume 2 Issue 2

What a treat to meet the Hon. Marc Garneau! As [NSERC / Pratt & Whitney Chair for Women in Science and Engineering](#), I had the privilege of being invited by [Barbara Orser](#) (Deloitte Professor in the Management of Growth Enterprises at uOttawa Telfer School of Management) who organized a briefing with the former Liberal Party of Canada Leadership Candidate and past astronaut. Assembled were a dazzling collection of women experts on the state of Canadian women in technology, law, management and small business, who advised Garneau on much needed strategies to make women a centerpiece of a vibrant Canadian digital and global economy.

As a group coming from different sectors, our message was remarkably similar: when it comes to women's issues, the solution has been "do it yourself", Dr. Orser stated. She urged Mr. Garneau to bring this issue to a national leadership level: to go beyond gender analysis, to make the strategy a comprehensive interministerial one, and to tie it to Canada's competitiveness in a global marketplace. Several of the participants reminded Mr. Garneau of Canada's slipping status on the road to progress in diversity, mentioning the World Economic Forum's [Global Gender Gap index](#), where Canada ranked 21st in 2012, but 14th in 2006.

Specific issues and suggestions were made by each speaker in a tight timeline. The following are but a few of the recommendations presented to Mr. Garneau. **Dale Gantous, C.E.O. of InGenious**, spoke positively of Canada's Scientific Research and Experimental Development Tax Incentive Program (SRED) that enables firms to invest in R&D by hiring qualified staff. She suggested what's missing are sales and marketing tax support credits, that would benefit women who are more likely to be found in these roles. Similarly, **Wendy Cukier, VP Research, Ryerson University**, said that focusing on Science, Technology and Engineering for large scale funding related to innovation disadvantages women at the outset since these fields are heavily dominated by men. She called for measurements, benchmarks and evaluation to monitor the impacts of policies and programs. She also spoke to the issue of minority women, citing the Greater Toronto Area's statistic of half the female population being visible minorities. **Mary Anderson, President, WEConnect Canada**, spoke of entrepreneurship for women in Canada, noting some positive private sector supplier diversity programs and regionally uneven small-business training opportunities for women. **Astrid Pregel, President, Feminomics**, cited several recent US initiatives by the Obama administration, notably the White House Council for Women and Girls, that will work across federal US foreign policy entities to work toward gender equality. As the US's leading trade partner, Canada should respond in a positive way, she suggested. **Janice Payne, a law partner at Nelligan O'Brien Payne**, spoke of the challenge to retain women in private law practice and partnerships. She noted that the provincial associations are making progress in these areas but federal programs need attention, such as judicial appointments, the Court Challenges Program and the federal government's own employment practices. Finally, Mr. Garneau was reminded that the recommendations

addressing the pipeline, research, courts and corporate worlds of women benefit both women and men and indeed the Canadian economy.

Our efforts obviously had an impact as Marc delivered his [International Women's Day Speech](#) for March 8th, speaking of putting the onus on employers to ensure pay equity and the creation of "a special Council for Women that directly advises the Prime Minister".

We thank Mr. Garneau for his attention to our briefing and, while he has bowed out of the race and now supports Justin Trudeau's candidacy, we hope he will continue to speak out for women's place in the Canadian political and economic landscape. Many thanks to Barbara Orser and Betsy McGregor for taking the lead on this initiative.