

**Saturday 26th July 2014, 6:30pm** - Gala Dinner. Keynote approx. 45 minutes

## **BUILDING BRIDGES TO EMPOWERMENT**

All protocols observed

Executive, Past Presidents, Distinguished guest,

BPW members, Young BPWs...dear friends

Greetings from our newly elected Executive Board!

It is a great joy to be here with you tonight, and I sincerely thank President Cara, BPW Canada Executive, President Sue, BPW Saskatoon and the organizing committee for inviting me to share with you my thoughts on building bridges to empowerment and to be with you at the BPW Canada 44<sup>th</sup> Biannual Convention.

Are we loven Saskatoon... Canada???!!!!!!Hasn't Arlene and the organizing committee done an amazing job!!!

<APPLAUSE>

We are together at this crucial time for business, for women and also for Canada and BPW International.

There are so many leaders that have emerged from Canada over the years to support BPW International and tonight I'd like to recognize the contribution of a few.

Jill Worobec - Thank you Canada for delivering BPW International one of the greatest Vice President of Membership!

<APPLAUD>

Doris Hall who worked with Jill to co-chair our Friends program and we thought she was so great that we made her Congress Ambassador; Deanna worked with our team on graphic design; Sheila Crooks on WEPs; President Cara on Project WEPs and Sharon Selkirk – again - was one of our trusted parliamentarians. BPW Canada has been a large part of our success!

I would like to also thank you for the support that you have shown RC Bessie in relation to the 3 core BPW Policy based initiatives: expanding women's representation in power and leadership, achieving equal pay for work of equal value and advancing women's economic empowerment.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge the leadership role that BPW Canada is taking with the Women's Empowerment Principles [or WEPs] - and the Commonwealth Business Women (CBW) – the result of 3 organisations - the CBC, the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs and BPW International - coming together with a single focus on women's economic empowerment.

I know that VP Jill and R-C Bessie are excited about the potential possibilities here in Canada. Not only for existing BPW clubs in Commonwealth countries like: Cameroon, New Zealand, India and others but also for new growth in countries like Mauritius, Tonga, or Belize.

We are excited because the Commonwealth represents 54 economies - the largest cluster of countries outside of the United Nations – it is 20% of the world's export trade and home to one third of the world's population and includes 1 Billion women. We look at this as part of a strategic and sustainable way of growing membership. Already this association has seen the opening of new clubs in the Commonwealth - BPW in Uganda, India and Malaysia.

Earlier today, I spoke with Colleen about her ideas and vision for Canada and I am looking forward to developing the Commonwealth platform further under her leadership.

Christine Lagarde – the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - says that she has 3 wishes for women: Ultimately, she would love to see a world where women let their confidence roar from the rooftops; their cups run over with self-assurance; their voices resound across the pinnacles of power.

Well, I believe that we are well on our way to achieving this.

I want to begin my speech with the word “gratitude”. Gratitude to BPW Canada that dared the difference to work with us during this triennium and for believing in our vision.

I want you to know that BPW Canada has written its place in the history of BPW in many ways one of which is your engagement and involvement of the

WEPs. I encourage each and every one of you to continue this work because the WEPs are a high organizational priority and like the private sector, BPW International is using them to identify the work of our affiliates around the world and more importantly, because empowered women are building bridges to empowerment by leading communities, businesses, governments and nations. And that doesn't mean just engaging with CEOs to sign the statement of support.

You are all very much a part of the great success that we enjoy internationally and for which – as you all saw yesterday - we are recognised by Georg Kell at the United Nations today.

Having identified a first mover advantage in 2009 with the UN Global Compact and then positioning BPW International as the leading organisation *bringing the voice of women to business*, we needed clubs, federations to get behind our work and I will always be grateful to BPW Canada for having been one of the first to take up the mandate to bring the WEPs to all the corners of Canada, right down to the grassroots level.

Today, BPW Taiwan is working closely with SMEs; in Italy our work is with the Rome University and women entrepreneurs to establish laboratories and incubators; in France, we are working with the national peak business and industry group MEDEF resulting in BPW being chair of a commission on gender equality, in South Africa over 100 CEOs have now signed the CEO statement of support, while BPW Australia made the connection with women and business through the WEPs at the B20 meetings a few days ago ahead of the G20 meetings taking place later this year. We have put women firmly on the business agenda for the business leaders and government to take note of.

The point is clear. While the activities may be different - the unifying spirit is what binds us to deliver our vision. BPW International today is inspiring businesses, empowering communities and creating opportunities around the world.

BPW International is thinking globally so that you can act locally. We are Empowered Women Leading Business and you are the driving force behind the pillars of sustainability; social, economic & environmental.

Here in Canada, BPW Saskatoon's focus has been on providing bursaries and leadership – so their focus is on WEPs 4 promoting education, training and professional development of women.

BPW London look at WEPs 6 - community based initiatives with a focus on bringing together potential partners to deal with local social issues.

BPW Calgary's focus is on non-discrimination in the workplace and after hearing from Jenny yesterday (and with her resolution on EPD now passed), their work to ensure that a date is set to commemorate EPD is now well on its way to parliament to become a national day in Canada!

BPW Manitoba and BPW Ontario and BPW Martin are working with their Chambers of Commerce with consultations around WEPs #4. Ontario used "The Best and Worst Place to be a Woman in Canada Report" as leverage to write their Securities Commission Reporting Consultation paper.

There are many more examples that truly inspire and show me the strength and power that we have in this very region.

I hear about your amazing work and how each of you is creating lasting changes in your workplaces and communities and for this, I sincerely thank you.

There is no question that women are having a profound effect on global business and taking their rightful place in the world - not only as mothers, wives, or caregivers but as producers, consumers, employers, entrepreneurs, suppliers and investors.

In the wake of the financial crisis that has destroyed trillions of dollars of value, there is an urgent need now for economic and investment strategies that are focused on long-term value creation with women being recognized as part of the solution.

Eliminating gender inequality and empowering women are finally being recognised, on a global basis, for what they are - urgent moral and economic imperatives. Never before in history have there been so many forces working together for gender equity.

What the world needs now is leadership and the time to lead is now. Given that in previous centuries only half the population have had a say in the decisions that have affected people's lives, it is incumbent on the other half to now lead a new style of inclusive leadership in this 21st century. A leadership style that is equal, fair, and which sees men and women leading side by side.

BPW has the power to make the 21<sup>st</sup> century - the Women's Century: the

century of inclusion and women's equal leadership and participation, where gender equity and women's economic empowerment become front and centre – we can do it together!

More than ever before women's empowerment and gender equality are not only goals in their own right; they are also critical means to end – peace and progress that is just and sustainable.

Our achievements in the past triennium were inspired by the words of our founder, Dr Lena Madasin Phillips who said, "If our motive is right, if we have faith, vision and courage, accomplishment must come."

Tonight, I wanted to share with you my story. It's a story that is a testament to what can happen when we have faith, vision and courage... that eventually, accomplishment must follow.

I have served BPW International for 3 successive terms. As Executive Secretary, VP UN and more recently as President and it has been an amazing journey.

When I first joined the board, I was trying to work out what BPW did; who it stood for and what was its purpose. I could never articulate what it meant because BPW existed as individual federations – all doing amazing things at the grassroots level – but with no unified purpose and was trying to be all things to everybody.

It wasn't until I came into the role of VP UN that I really wanted to make a difference. Now here's a story – youngest ever VP UN, from a country so remote in a far away land in the pacific, where we are more concerned about who wins the footy nationally than we are with international affairs, let alone the UN! and I get to represent BPW at the UN. WOW!

Now being new to the role with a steep learning curve I found myself asking questions... and lots of them! It seemed to me that there was a lot that didn't make sense. Sure we belonged to lots of different UN agencies.....etc.. but we weren't speaking with the one voice.

In 2008 the world experienced a global event that would impact every person on earth. It was the Global Financial Crises and with it came the biggest opportunity to pursue once again the importance of equality. Because the GFC highlighted to the world the real risks associated with group thinking.

And at the calling of the Secretary General Ban KiMoon the two UN entities responsible for – women and business (private sector) came together.

One afternoon I was sorting through my “hundreds” of emails and I came across this call to action on the UN listserv that would change things for the better. It was an email about a multi stakeholder consultative process to engage with a set of principles and provide feedback to UNIFEM (now UN Women) and the UN Global Compact. This email would change the course for BPW and as pioneers, allow us to pave the way for an amazing future.

Today, there are more than 200 million women entrepreneurs worldwide. Women earn more than \$10 trillion every year, and this is expected to grow by \$5 trillion over the next several years. In many developing countries, women’s incomes are now growing faster than men’s. Eight of the top twelve female CEOs on Fortune Magazine’s list of the most powerful international businesswomen are from Commonwealth countries as they were in the previous year.

Women are the next emerging growth market that governments and companies can no longer ignore.

Members and friends

Never before has there been such focus on the issue of gender equality on the global stage. And indeed, the Commonwealth, which represents one billion women, must find ways to achieve gender balance. Because increasing women’s participation in the economy and enhancing their efficiency and productivity will lead to greater competitiveness and growth of our economies.

As all calls of action that come from the UN this had a cut off date. Consult with your members, tell us what you think about the principles and feedback your comments in 2 weeks. Right.

So I reviewed the documents that were sent in 2009. And I remember thinking... this is it.. this is what BPW is about. If LMP could be here, this was surely the vision that she was striving to achieve over 80 years ago.

Now I knew I couldn’t answer within the time frame but I knew that this resonated with what BPW was and should be about. I had noted that from the companies listed in the consultation that Australia was absent – so I responded and said we’d like to have input into this but can’t get back to you

in a fortnight. I could however set up a consultation with big business and feedback our findings. Great. We were off!

And that's exactly what we did. I used highly regarded Industrial Relations experts in Australia and through them set up a meeting with ASX listed 100 companies that would be held at the Town Hall, chaired by a senior partner from a renowned law firm and they in turn prepared a report that we sent to the UN in BPW's name and well....the rest, as they say is history.

That was enough to earn BPW a seat at the table and we then took the WEPs to the Asia Pacific region - B+15 meetings in Philippines; APEC Singapore and Japan.

In 2010 our SG launched the WEPs and in 2011 we launched our first ever WEPs toolkit and I became President.

By 2012 BPW was regarded as a gender specialist and we were invited to major UN meetings to speak about our experiences and the impacts of the WEPs.

BPW Canada soon after started with the WEPs webinars and CEO signatories. We couldn't have done it without federations like Canada that came on board as early adopters.

By 2013 we were at the WEPs Leadership Group and invited to join the WEPs judging panel.

In 2013 we launched Project WEPs with the IOE (International Organization of Employers) at the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit and 2014 we presented Project WEPs to members at Congress. A pilot project aimed at learning from 12 of our federations to further support affiliates across the world by 2016. The pilot federations are asked to do two things: Form a working group through business groups associated with BPW international and establish their own National Plan of Action. By 2016 we hope that our learning's will find a workable model that we can roll out and across to over 100 federations.

I am equally grateful to the affiliates that joined us that those early days – affiliates like BPW Canada. Because there were many members that thought – what is she doing? Why the focus on the WEPs? Why WEPs?

I often look back at those days and think to myself – what would have happened had I not seen that email. Had I not been ready to galvanise the

support to get business together. Success is nothing more than hard work and a little bit of luck – being at the right place, at the right place and being prepared to take action.

What BPW has shown through our affiliates is that there is no limit to the WEPs. While they were designed for the private sector, we have found many other applications including using them as part of a unified framework that binds us internationally.

We have brought the WEPs the new, different and exciting levels. As an NGO for the first time, this allowed us a roadmap to see how all of the federations across 100 countries fit together against the same matrix – the WEPs – for each triennium's focus. BPW has never been more focused and committed.

Because of that focus:

- we were invited to join the CBC and BAWE and formed the CBW;
- invited by the SG Sharma to speak at the Tenth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting;
- at the annual National Machinery meeting in New York;
- to speak at the CBF, during CHOGM;
- invited by the President of the General Assembly at New York Headquarters to address the commission on the reasons why women, girls and adolescence must be included in the post 2015 development framework.
- To speak at the - UN GC Leaders Summit; CSW and WEPs Leadership Group side events.
- to address the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva;
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We are no longer observers... we are actors engaged in the process and shaping the discussions.

The WEPs are good for business because they provide companies – big and small – with a framework that allows them to open their minds, think creatively, look for new, better and inclusive ways of doing business, and to be sure that we keep women at the table because women are a vital source of growth that can power economies.

It's about changing cultures, behaviours and attitudes that have persisted for centuries, holding women back.

Given that in previous centuries only half the population have had a say in the decisions that have affected people's lives, it is incumbent on the other half

to lead a new style of inclusive leadership in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

But this new order needs to be led by women and men together, tackling the hard issues and finding solutions to prevailing barriers left over from a different time to reflect new economic realities and concepts of justice.

From a different time and different economic relationship, I believe that this can be the Women's Century: the century of inclusion and women's equal leadership and participation, where gender equity and women's economic empowerment become front and centre.

And as men largely wrote the rules of past centuries, it is incumbent on the women in this century to write, participate and implement a new beginning in **the Women's Century**.

Can you imagine what this could look like and the sort of world that we could create? Close your eyes. Imagine the year 2050. We are here. Look at what we were able to achieve over the last 37 years.

- The Global Platform for Sourcing from Women Vendors ceases to exist because women businesses are established as significant suppliers to leading companies from India to Canada
- 50% of women on boards is the norm not because of quotas but because the enhanced value women can make to the quality of decision making is widely recognized
- 50% of women represent our governments – where inclusive policies are implemented that make sense for families, communities, business and economies.
- 50% of the **trillions** of dollars done at the Commonwealth Business Forum came from businesses where women are in senior roles
- The Olympics and major sporting events have strong policies and procure from Women Owned, Operated or Majority Run Businesses following the lead taken by the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014 and Gold Coast 2018

Indeed, the Women's Century was a turning point for gender equity. It took bold women, led by public action, supported by courageous men, to deliver an attitudinal change that led to genuine transformation. Norms changed forever. And ultimately, it was political will led by public action that achieved this new world. And BPW Canada was at the forefront.

We can demonstrate that a harmonious society is not an impossible dream but a practical vision, one that can inspire us to fulfill our responsibilities and create a better world.

If we decide — as societies, governments and businesses — to invest in women and girls, we will strengthen our efforts to fight poverty, drive development and spread stability. If we decide to take action, we will see that achieving full economic potential through gender equity actually extends beyond women and has rippling effects to all of humankind.

I urge you to commit to a plan of action to build world-class inclusive workplaces, marketplaces and communities, for equity, for empowerment and for the benefit of all. The qualities that our founder embodies, the persistence and collective spirit of the BPW women, hold the key to seeing this 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the Women's Century.

The idea that the economic empowerment of women can be the engine to transform economies has arrived.

Now is the time for us to work together; to stand united, focused and to speak with the same voice. Now is the time for change.

I have no doubt that we will see the future that we want. A future that is better served by gender parity in our workplaces, marketplaces and communities... the consciousness is there... it is growing and the momentum is building....and the stage is set for BPW International to yet again be in pioneer mode.

But whether this happens in 10 years, 50 years or another century is up to each and every one of us – for it is your voice - our voices – the voice of civil society – that has and always will shape economies, governments and the institutions of the world.

After a century of progress and change, it is clear that in societies with more gender equity, democracy is stronger, economies are more developed and peace is a priority. Achieving equity depends on each and all of us. From the government that changes its laws, to the company that advances equal pay and equal opportunity, to the mother and father who teach their daughter and son that all human beings should be treated equally.

If we decide — as societies, governments and businesses — to invest in women and girls, we will strengthen our efforts to fight poverty, drive development and spread stability. If we decide to take action – like Angela,

Linda, Sheila, Heather and stand up for what we believe and know to be right - we will see that achieving full economic potential through gender equity actually extends beyond women and has rippling effects to all of humankind.

Now that's a future that we can create and that's a future we can claim in this Women's Century because when women thrive, families, communities and countries thrive — and the world becomes more peaceful and prosperous.

There's been no greater honour than to serve, lead and work with all of you over the last three years.

As volunteers there is no greater group of women than BPW Canada. I am aware of a lot of the work that many of you have put into BPW Canada and I sincerely thank you as your IPP.

BPW Canada, keep building the bridges to empowerment – I look to you as the future architects of change and from today's resolutions that were passed.. you are all well on your way!

Let us build the roadmap and walk that journey together so we can say, it was at this time, in this place, in this room, in Saskatoon at the 44<sup>th</sup> Biannual National Convention that the lives of women in Canada changed for the better.

I thank you for your support of BPW International's vision because without it we would not have been able to achieve the many things we have. The achievements are yours and I wish you all:  
a world where you let your confidence roar from the rooftops;  
your cups run over with self-assurance; and your voices resound across the pinnacles of power, when building the bridges to empowerment in this – the Women's Century!