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On Tech Wages, YQG Perception and Leadership

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Last week (Jan 23) the Brookfield Institute (<https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/project/building-inclusion-into-canadas-innovation-economy/>), put out a report that outlined wage and employment in Tech in CMAs across Canada. Windsor came out of the report ranked with the highest wage gaps between men and women in Canada.

On January 30th a rebuttal emerged (https://yvonnepilon.wordpress.com/2019/01/30/how-can-windsor-move-the-dial-women-in-tech/?fbclid=IwAR12ifA6vrZiPEuDhnAnGXxM-ZW49FZMgP_8ykazwWcPxP07NTAsbix-Ci8). Now I have a lot of respect for Yvonne and her organization WE-Tech Alliance, I don't agree with every position she takes, nor would I expect her to agree with me on every position I take. I also understand the position she takes as the head of an economic develop agency in our community. Fundamentally Ec-Dev organizations are at their core place-based marketing firms. They exist to sell a town, community or region to businesses, investors and people. I experienced this first hand when Sandra Papatello chewed me out for this story in the Windsor Star (<https://windsorstar.com/news/higher-education-goes-hand-in-hand-with-higher-student-debt-higher-unemployment>), which hit the media just prior to starting a short term contract role at WEEDC. A learning experience for me, absolutely, but it hammers home the role of Ec Dev orgs. to make a place seem the most attractive and positive location as possible. The question becomes in my opinion should that positive first narrative drive our community conversations or not.

When I look at the post I agree that there are many great opportunities and resources for women in Windsor/Essex but I also feel it misses an opportunity to show adaptive leadership in our community. The missed opportunity is that post put the emphasis on others to do the work. She calls on employers to change, women to do more, the community at large to adapt, educators and parents to learn and teach. What the post fails to recognize is that many of the opportunities and she outlines requires a level of privilege and opportunity that isn't available for many women (or men) in our community. I mentor and support women in my day job, but there are not enough Richard Peddie, Frank Abbruzzese in our community to go around. Both Yvonne and I are lucky to have had parents, who inspired, mentored and supported us to achieve what we wanted in life except there are 17,000 single parent households where might not be as true for the next generation.

I am privileged in my upbringing as a white male from an upper middle class nuclear family that enabled me to go to post-secondary education and 2 masters degrees. My partner is a brilliant PhD graduate is Biology who can't find permanent work in our community and spent her holidays working retail because "I will be damned if you (Frazier) pay for my own Christmas gifts". I too am not an expert on Tech or HR nor I don't claim to be perfect or that I haven't made mistakes but I recognize that I have had tons of opportunity and am where I am because both of my privilege and hard work. Equity means rolling up our sleeves, setting aside the advantages that we have and lifting up those who don't have that same chance. That is missing in my opinion from the suggestions that were made.

I don't view the Brookfield research as an attack on our community they are simply stating facts based on data. Could it have been framed in a different way, sure; could the media reported it in a more balanced manner, I guess, but we have acknowledged that our community faces a challenge in diversifying our economy (<https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/mayor-says-diversifying-windsors-economy-his-no-1-priority-for-2019>) and women face structural barriers to success (<https://www.workforcewindsorsex.com/positioning-women-for-success/>). If we are worried that a tech company or woman won't come to this community because of a bad media report, maybe we should develop a plan to solve the problem that they are writing about instead of burying our head in the sand. Do we want to attract them here and have them find out that we sold them a flight of fancy and things aren't as they seem? What is the reputational risk of that?

Research like that from Brookfield gives us a baseline through which we can compare ourselves in the future. I do agree that this report (or any report) cannot capture every nuance of our community. That being said it does allow apples to apples comparison to other communities to be made. From this baseline we can determine if all of the activities and opportunities listed are they actually moving the

needle in our region and allows us to measure change, re-calibrate and continuously improve. If we aren't moving up the rankings next year or census then we need to try something else. We need to bring actual outcomes based data to the table; something the post also fails to do, to see if we are moving the needle as spinning positive message and not talking about our challenges only goes so far.

That being said, I do take exception to elements of one of the points.

Don't always believe headlines "Windsor is the Worst Place For Women".

First, in this era of #fakenews the post comes very close to calling parents and teachers to ignore respected academic work and the news media that reports it. The "Windsor is the Worst Place for Women" is a striking headline but research that has been conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/>) which is a respected progressive think tank which has published a wide range of research on universal child care, wage and gender gaps across the country, pharmacare to name a few topics, which are policy solutions that would help close the wage gap that started this discussion. If we don't believe that headline from a reputable news organization (CBC, Windsor Star, CTV) should we ignore "Windsor's unemployment rate drops below national average" and do some additional research on that number? No leader in 2019 Canada should be calling on people to question respected media sources or research organizations.

Do your own research.

You ask parent and educators to go do research on what is being reported to them. We all know that they don't/won't do that as people don't have time, energy or effort to do that and that is why Donald Trump is President of the United States. This is one of the great challenges facing our society today, but to blanket any opposing statement as potential falsehood and create distrust by driving people to research and find potentially false truths in the media is also a risky endeavor. As a society we rely on expert opinions like those of Think Tanks to conduct research inform debate and policy. As this is what I do for a living and you asked me to do my own research, I did. These are **facts** from the 2016 Census for the Windsor CMA (<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMA&Code1=559&Geo2=PR&Code2=47&Data=Count&SearchText=Windsor&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&wbdisable=true>) (the same geography and base data as the Brookfield's Report):

- o 3,710 women (compared to 2,405 men) live in our region and speak neither English nor French. – Creating barriers to accessing education, employment or services.
- o Median income for women after tax \$27,050 (vs \$40,881 for men); average \$31,364 (\$44,208) – they make less money.
- o Female income percentage from employment: 64% vs 72.6% for men – women are more dependent on government transfers for income than men. There is some qualification bias here.
- o 81% of lone parent families are led by women. – single women are raising more kids than men.
- o After tax 7,300 women over the age of 15 have 0 total income (5,860 men)
- o 52% of women live in the bottom half of the income distribution vs 48% of men.
- o 30,120 women and girls are living in low income (LIM-AT) compared to 26,635 men and boys.
- o Workforce participation rate for women in the census was 56.1% compared to 64% for men.

Women in the Windsor CMA face greater challenges than men, this is a fact. The Census does paint a bleak picture for women in our community via statistical data. All you can say about this is that it may have improved since 2015, when the census was taken. On the other hand, it may have gotten worse we won't know for sure until 2022 when data from the next census becomes available. It wouldn't surprise me if CCPA came out again with its rankings and Windsor remained near the bottom.

A shift in thinking is needed from success being measure based on outputs around good headlines, great events and one off engagements to a system of longitudinal system level outcomes being tracked. It takes a generation to transform an economy and a region. A negative headline per year over 20 years of progress is nothing in grand scheme of things. As a leader, Yvonne can implement many of her own suggestions in her own organization and replicate best practice research and measurement: do a local study on closing the salary gap in the local tech industry. (<http://irle.berkeley.edu/state-policy-strategies-for-narrowing-the-gender-wage-gap/?fbclid=IwAR0rfsQzBMKGM7vmloyMxAMhFKVgy7VsGMggvM59QhGcV68ypDhWcC2PYwJ>); diversify her own organization board of directors, (<https://www.wetech-alliance.com/our-board/>)conduct focus groups with women (https://www.elephantinthevalley.com/?fbclid=IwAR2g_LugczbXEX-Gmg1O2NOSleTA_h7Yh9aesuX2SKTaAwDtGXqxQT15ybs) in tech and share their stories both good and bad.

I am happy to share positive stories on our community and region. The problem that I struggle with is without data, how do we know that the story isn't masking a bigger problem; and without robust dialogue around solutions and true and transparent buy in from industry, it is kind of hard to move the need.

Uncategorized

3 thoughts on “On Tech Wages, YQG Perception and Leadership”

1. Pingback: [The Economic Security of Women living in Windsor Ontario – The city is here for you to use](#)
2. Pingback: [Windsor Research Project: Racial Inequality | gingerpolitics](#)
3. Pingback: [A Few Thoughts on Week 23 | gingerpolitics](#)

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