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***Former Executive Director, Heritage Montreal Foundation***



Marie Senécal-Tremblay, LL.B, MBA holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Bachelor of Laws from the *University of Ottawa* and, most recently an Executive Masters of Business Administration jointly from *HEC, Université de Montréal* and *McGill University* where she was awarded the Non-profit sector Scholarship. Currently a member of a federal quasi-judicial tribunal, she has broad professional experience in federal labour regulatory law as corporate counsel for CP Rail, as a senior manager and a community leader, while also serving as a director on the boards of several Canadian charitable not-for-profit organizations. As Executive Director of Heritage Montreal she directed a major change reorganization of this leading Canadian heritage preservation foundation. This multi-sectorial experience has led to an ongoing interest in the issues arising from the intersection of public policy, private enterprise and civil society. She has focused her research on identifying, studying and facilitating innovative approaches and best practices, including corporate board diversity, to improve corporate governance.

***Topic: «Moving from Words to Action: Getting to greater diversity in  
Canadian corporate boardrooms »***

***Abstract:***

Given its universality, gender diversity is the *de facto* gateway for other types of functional, internal and external demographic diversity, such as nationality, culture, experience and tenure. By its external measurable nature, it acts as proxy for diversity writ large in the same way that corporate board performance acts as proxy for corporate governance writ large. In Canada, decades of public debate stand in sharp contrast to the absence of movement on this issue over the same long period.

This research uses complexity theory insights which when applied to management science, champions an emerging analytical approach, focused on policy context, looking from within and the identification of patterns. Combined with in-depth field interviews and a broad literature review this approach seeks to 1) understand the key characteristics of Canadian corporate culture; 2) compare Norway's legislated quotas with Canada's actions over the same timeframe; and 3) examine innovative initiatives such as the equality of opportunity based 'Rooney Rule' in the United States. An incremental public policy approach which builds on identifiable, innate corporate characteristics is compared with the recent Ontario government mandate to the Ontario Securities Commission (OSC), the OSC's subsequent course of action and its proposed regulatory 'comply and explain' amendments to National Instrument 58-101.

This paper aims to make a contribution by answering why public debate and voluntary actions are necessary but not sufficient to effect change on this complex public policy issue. A better understanding of this multi-factorial ecosystem is essential for the emergence and development of an informed, effective public policy course of action that is well-adapted to Canada's corporate and national cultural contexts.