



21st CENTURY WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP & LEADERSHIP

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

APRIL 21-22, 2023 | CROWNE PLAZA MADRID AIRPORT, MADRID

Supporting organizations who provide critical service to women entrepreneurs, the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) shares research and resources on women entrepreneurs in Canada. Made up of 10 regional hubs, WEKH operates in both official languages and includes a network of over 250 organizations, reaching more than 100,000 women entrepreneurs. WEKH is a part of the Government of Canada's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy that aims to increase women entrepreneurs' access to financing, talent, networks and expertise. Using a methodology developed by the Boston Consulting Group and the Cherie Blair Foundation (2019), it is estimated that closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship in Canada could add \$41-\$81 billion to Canada's GDP. <https://wekh.ca/about/>

I co-lead one of the WEKH regional hubs in Canada and have been involved with this initiative since its inception. The national center is housed out of the Toronto Metropolitan University under Dr. Wendy Cukier and she has given me permission to speak on this topic on behalf of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub Canada.

Biography

Debra is a strategic and visionary leader who has consistently excelled at building strong and profitable organizations and has been active within the Winnipeg business community for over 30 years. Debra is the I.H. Asper Executive Director for the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship at the Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba responsible for the strategic direction and operational execution within the centre. In her previous role as Director of Executive Education for the Asper School of Business, Debra was responsible for the strategic development of the Executive Education program in support of delivering leading edge programming for senior leadership in both the public and private sector. Debra was previously President of People First HR Services and was responsible for the strategic leadership and operations of the organization. Prior to People First, Debra was Vice-President of Dufresne Furniture and Appliances. In this position she was

THE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP KNOWLEDGE HUB – CANADIAN GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON INCREASING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CANADA

Debra Jonasson Young

I.H. Asper Executive Director for Entrepreneurship, Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, University of Manitoba, Canada

responsible for the strategic direction and operation of the retail division, as well as, the furniture wholesale alliance with the North West Company and the Dufresne Retail Solutions Group, a buying group supplying retail solutions to over 80 independent furniture retailers across Canada. Debra has also held the positions of Vice-President for Shopper's Optical, responsible for the strategic direction and operation of the national chain's 75 locations across Canada and Vice-President and General Manager of Videon CableSystems. Debra spent the majority of her earlier career within Eaton's Department Store working her way up through successive positions, latterly as the General Manager of the Manitoba North Western Ontario division. Debra holds an MBA from the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. Active within the community, Debra is Past-Chair and currently sits on the board of the Associates of the IH Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. In 2019 she was appointed to the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council (Status of Women Provincial Government). She is Past-Chair of the Women of Winnipeg, is on the executive of the Institute of Corporate Directors Manitoba Chapter, sits on the Advisory Board of TEC, and previously sat on the board of Value Partners investment firm. She was a Governor of the Manitoba Museum for nine years, and was on the board of Manitoba Hydro Board. As well, Debra served both on the board and as Chair of the Winnipeg Downtown Business Improvement Zone, sat on the board of Tourism Winnipeg and acted in an advisory role to the University of Manitoba, Continuing Education Division as well as the Red River College, Business Administration program.