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Master of Public Policy Graduate 2016-2017, The School of Public Policy, & Recipient of the MPP Alumni Council's 'Capstone of the Year Award'

IS GENDER PARITY ON CORPORATE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE POLICY ISSUE?

Gender diversity on corporate board of directors is a policy concern in Canada as women's inequality has broad societal and economic implications. Women currently only hold 12 per cent of board appointments on publicly-traded companies in Canada and 45 per cent of companies listed on the S&P/TSX still do not have any women on their boards. Through a series of confidential discussions with 35 male and female executives and board members from public, private and not-for-profit sectors, I assessed the feasibility of government legislating gender parity on corporate boards in Canada.

I found a number of key explanatory factors that strongly contribute to the low female representation on corporate boards were identified, including mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, women's life choices, and organizational culture and the number of women in the "pipeline." This led to my conclusion that government policies involving targets or quotas will not succeed if these factors are not

addressed. Any policy approach designed to increase the number of female board directors should involve a partnership between the public and private sector.

The capstone process gave me a unique opportunity to connect with numerous top-level professionals from various industries. Through these interactions, not only did I gather essential information needed for my research, I expanded my network in a way that would not have been otherwise possible. As a result, I have been given opportunities to become involved with various organizations that work to promote females in leadership roles.

Amber currently works as a Consultant at Global Public Affairs.



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A portrait of Amber Griffith, a young woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored top. The background is a plain, light grey.

“Increasing the number of women in key leadership roles should involve a partnership between the public and private sector.”