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## **For Immediate Release**

### **Women's Network PEI Announces Breakthrough for Island Tradeswomen**

**March 1, 2017, Charlottetown, PE** – Women's Network PEI has released a statistical forecast that shows impressive movement toward gender equality in the trades on PEI.

In 2009, only a few women worked in the Prince Edward Island skilled trades and industrial technology sectors. With such low numbers, the sector was projected to see equal numbers of women and men working in the trades in 276 years. Thanks to a shared effort, spearheaded by Women's Network PEI, the province is now on track to see that happen in just 45 years.

Research and first hand evidence indicates that the face of poverty in PEI is female. Traditionally male jobs tend to pay more money. In 2010, Women's Network PEI, in partnership with Skills PEI and the Interministerial Women's Secretariat developed the Trade HERizons career exploration program. The goal of the program is to increase the number of women in trades and industrial technology occupations on PEI. Since then, more than 120 women having completed Trade HERizons and Holland College's enrolment rates for women in trades and industrial technology programs have more than doubled.

"We knew we were making strides but these numbers are well beyond our expectations," says Sara Roach-Lewis, creator of the Trade HERizons program. "It is very exciting to see the hard work paying off in such a big way."

This increase led Women's Network PEI to ask how long it will take to reach equal numbers of men and women in the trades on Prince Edward Island. Grace Lore, a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of British Columbia, did calculations for WNPEI based on enrolment numbers in trades and industrial technology programs at Holland College. What she discovered is remarkable.

Ms Lore's calculations indicate that in 2009, gender equality in trades was 276 years away. After only seven years of Trade HERizons programming, Women's Network PEI has lowered that target to 45 years.

“Reducing the time it takes to achieve gender equality from 11 generations to one and a half takes many hands,” said Roach-Lewis. “Since we started this project, we have had amazing support from the whole community. Both the provincial and federal government have funded this work. Holland College provides hands on learning experiences for all our trades women. And local businesses are hiring women, hosting tours and working with us to reduce barriers in the workplace.”

“Most importantly, Island women have taken up the challenge of exploring careers in trades. Being a tradeswoman is not for the faint of heart. While these numbers are encouraging, we still have a long way to go. Women entering the trades are trailblazers and continue to experience serious challenges as they develop their careers. While there are many people supporting them and creating the conditions for their success, they are truly the ones doing the hard work.”

“I worked long hours in a fish processing plant to get enough hours to qualify for Skills PEI funding,” says 2016 Trade HERizons graduate Jenna MacNeill.

Ms MacNeill is now a student in the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program at Holland College. “I love it. I’m so happy,” continues MacNeill. “My instructor, Josh Silver is so supportive and soon I’ll get to use my new skills to help with the restoration of Province House.”

“PEI women still need Trade HERizons,” states Roach-Lewis, “We will be meeting with all the stakeholders in the coming weeks to share this great news and see how we can build on it. With continued, sustainable investment, I believe PEI could lead the country and see gender equality in trades in 25 years.”

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