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Three execs honoured for championship of women's advancement

Monique Leroux, Jennifer Tory, Michael Bach recognized by Catalyst

Three executives have been honoured for their championship of women's advancement in Canadian business by Catalyst Canada, a non-profit membership organization dedicated to expanding opportunities for women and business.

Monique Leroux, chair of the board, president and CEO of Desjardins Group, Jennifer Tory, regional president of greater Toronto at RBC, and Michael Bach, director of diversity, equity and inclusion at KPMG were recognized for their demonstrated commitment, passion and results.

"This year's champions are extraordinarily committed to advancing women in the Canadian corporate world," said Deborah Gillis, senior vice-president of membership and global operations at Catalyst.

Companies gain when they have a greater number of women on their boards and in senior leadership roles — and highly placed sponsors such as this year's champions are the key to women's advancement, she said.

"Advancing women to leadership strengthens companies and promotes the sustainability and well-being of corporate Canada as a whole. By recognizing these outstanding leaders with the Catalyst Canada Honours, Catalyst hopes to inspire a robust pipeline of women and men who will follow in their footsteps."

The honours recognize a company or firm leader, a business leader and a human resources or diversity leader who champion progress by advancing women in their organizations, industries and communities.

As the first woman elected chair of the board, president and CEO of Desjardins Group and the first woman to lead a top-10 financial institution in Canada, Monique Leroux has taken giant steps to increase diversity at Canada's largest financial cooperative group, said Catalyst. She implemented an unprecedented organizational restructuring, establishing 10 multi-disciplinary task forces with equal numbers of men and women on each, sending a clear message about gender equality at Desjardins.

Leroux is also a mentor and sponsor to many women, speaks regularly to various women's networks at Desjardins and has established several programs to build a strong pipeline of women in banking. She is also active with many boards and organizations across Canada that support the development and advancement of women.

As regional president of greater Toronto at RBC for the past five years, Jennifer Tory has worked to advance women and visible minorities both at RBC and in her community. Her innovative approaches have created development opportunities for the advancement of high-potential women and visible minorities, and are fundamental to her overall strategy of cultivating talent for results, said Catalyst.

Tory's commitment to advancing women and diversity extends beyond her role at RBC into the community, with her work on the boards of the Toronto International Film Festival and the Toronto Board of Trade, and as the chair of the Sunnybrook Hospital Foundation's capital campaign.

In his four years as director of diversity, equity and inclusion, Michael Bach has championed diversity at KPMG, both within Canada and on a global level. He authored the business case for dedicated resources for diversity and inclusion at KPMG and was instrumental in creating and implementing targets for women becoming partners at the firm, which has resulted in an increase in the proportion of women and visible minorities in new partner classes at KPMG from 40 per cent in 2009 to 51 per cent in 2010, said Catalyst.

Bach's commitment to diversity also stretches into his work with several community organizations. He is founder and board chair of Pride at Work Canada and is involved with the Canadian Board Diversity Council and the Rotman School of Management's Back to Work Program.