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Session 3

Winners and Losers: The Differentiated Impacts of COVID-19

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Webinar

Speakers: Mary Kay Henry, International President  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Dawn Desjardins, Vice President & Deputy Chief Economist, RBC

Gerard Wolf, Chairman of the Task Force on Sustainable Cities,  
MEDEF International  
Vice Chairman of the Africa Committee

Moderator: Reshma Saujani, Girls Who Code

## Introduction

Consul General Jeremie Robert

Good morning everyone. I cannot see myself on screen, but I guess everything is alright. I can see some, I hope you can see me. I'm the Consul General for France in New York. I'm not in my office today but I believe you can see some part of my office behind me. This is the magic of the Zoom days. I'm really pleased to open the third panel, third session of our annual Women in Business Conference. And I would like, first of all, to thank The Economic Club of New York, to thank Barbara, and to thank Marie-Josée Kravis. Without you, this would not be possible, and this is a very important annual conference. And thanks to you, this is very fruitful and always very positive. I also want to thank our colleagues from the Consulate General of Canada. It's an excellent partnership at the ministry level as we saw our ministers open the conference a few hours ago. And this is becoming a longer...(audio issue)...in March, which our ministers would not miss at all.

I would like to just briefly, to speak about the discussion that we will be listening to, but obviously you'll be listening to the real specialists. I think what's very important is that we have had four editions of the Women in Business and last year we spoke a lot about the effects of the pandemic, but this year we are focusing on the effects of the pandemic on the women and especially on the women's workforce.

And I think we all, and this is what you are going to hear from our panelists, some women have benefitted from the shifts to remote working during the pandemic. Some women have benefitted from the flexibility that we have gained and maybe some women that also have been better paid. But we know also that many women have suffered a big deal with the rigorous consequences of the pandemic. And this is all that we will talk about today because there are winners, like in every crisis, we have winners and there are losers. And you have people who benefit from the opportunities of the crisis and some people who are suddenly deeply affected.

To discuss that, we have a very high-level panel reflecting the diversity of our three countries. First of all, from the USA, I welcome Mary Kay Henry. She is the International President of the Service Employees International Union of the USA, which is a very large union, two million members. This is very significant.

I also welcome Dawn Desjardins. She's the Vice President and Deputy Chief Economist at the Royal Bank of Canada. You joined the RBC Economics Team in January 2006 and you were a key contributor to the macroeconomic forecasts for Canada and for the U.S. and you will be very well placed to enlighten us during this session.

And to balance this panel, it's very interesting – we have a representative of the union, a representative of the Royal Bank of Canada and a representative of MEDEF

International, which is the French business consul. It's our main business consul actually, our sole business consul of France. You are Vice President and Director for International Affairs of MEDEF, and you're also a businessman, Chairman of the French company called BRICS ACCESS, which promotes partnerships between European companies and their counterparts. Gerard Wolf, I welcome very much. (...speaking in French)...

And to facilitate this wonderful panel, I am pleased to introduce and soon give the floor to Reshma Saujani. Reshma started fighting for women's rights and empowerment many years ago and you decided to start where it all begins, the education of girls and women. And you created a nonprofit called Girls Who Code to promote science and science education among girls. So Reshma, the floor is yours, and I wish you all a wonderful panel discussion. Thank you. Merci.

### Winners/Losers Panel

RESHMA SAUJANI: Merci. Thank you so much. I have been looking forward to this conversation all week. We have such esteemed panelists. We're really going to learn a lot. We also say women are in crisis right now across the globe, and this is a critical problem for us to figure out how to solve, to get women back into the workforce and to make sure that the workforce actually finally works for them. I want to welcome the

audience to this panel and encourage you to put all of your questions into the chat box.

So I want to start with a question for all of our panelists. We've seen how women's labor force participation has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Can you give us a recap of what the impact has been to date, especially in regards to the communities that you work with? Why don't we start with you, Dawn.

DAWN DESJARDINS: Thank you. Thank you. It's such a great pleasure to be here today to talk about what's been happening. You know, we looked at Canada's labor market and the, well, I guess I don't know if we'd call it, the response, but certainly once the pandemic hit, how it had such a significant impact on women. You know, women make up about 47% of the employment in Canada, yet the hit in the early days was about 51% of the 3 million jobs lost. So it was very, very dramatic. And we also saw the participation rate of women in our economy fall to a 30-year low.

So, you know, we were making great strides. I tell this story often because I think it's so kind of ironic, I guess. We had just put out a report in early March 2020 lauding how well women had done in the labor market and their financial security having picked up so significantly. And, of course, two weeks later, everything was upended.

And, of course, this was particularly true for people who were working in certain

services industries. Right away, women were the majority of some of those industries. Three of the top five losers in terms of jobs, women were overly represented there. And, of course, we saw a lot of mothers step back. So the so-called, She Recession, was born. Now, if we move back to today, you know, things in Canada are better. We certainly have seen the participation rate of prime-age women, so women 25 - 54. We've seen their participation rate hit an all-time high in recent months. So that's been great. Younger women also, you know, we're seeing them come back to the labor market.

Where we are seeing gaps, there's a few of them, but one is that more mature worker. So workers who are 55 years and older, women, you know, are not coming back into the labor market. In fact, you know, there's the demographics with retirements, but we also see that a lot of these women have lost their job due to business conditions. So, you know, there's a gap there. We look at women, mothers with children, young children, you know, twice as many of those women are still out of work compared to the number, their partners. So, you know, these are big numbers.

Service sector workers, as I'm sure Mary Kay will talk a lot to, you know, lots of those women continuing to be out of work, in particular, of course, in those close contact service industries. And it's not so much necessarily people who are working in healthcare or education. It's more people who are working in hospitality, lower paid, and

in many cases the data suggests lower educated women, really still on the sidelines. So I'll leave it there and pass it over to our other panelist.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Gerard, would you like to also provide a little bit of, you know, what the impact has been with regards to the communities that you work with?

MARY KAY HENRY: Reshma, are you talking to me?

RESHMA SAUJANI: Mary Kay, we can go with you. I had said Gerard, but we can go with you first.

MARY KAY HENRY: No, no, no, go ahead. I'm sorry.

GERARD WOLF: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, good morning in New York and good afternoon here in Europe. I think the situation of the pandemic is completely different whether you talk about developed countries or developing countries. And as I'm in charge of international, I've seen both, within MEDEF, as Jeremie said before, MEDEF International is about 70% of all French companies. And I'm in charge of international, one of the guys in charge of international.

But let's begin with France. I think in France it's roughly the same thing that Dawn said

just before me in the sense that people, I would say, in business wouldn't be differently impacted, whether they're men or women, except in some of, in some sectors, in particular in healthcare, whether you talk about doctors or nurses or whoever in this sector because we have a lot of women in this sector like all countries.

And they have been certainly affected by the number of things they had to do of course. But I think it didn't really change their lives. Certainly it's a good thing in a sense because people realized that these working forces in health cannot work if ladies are not there, which is always, I think, a good thing. But it didn't completely change the equilibrium in France.

Which is not the case on the international basis, because I think – and I won't be long on that one – but very often when we discuss about things like that, these types of issues in Europe, we consider that whether you talk about Germany or England or whoever, we are all roughly the same, which again in developing countries it's not the same. Because the reality is that the women had more to do and for once, normally in a lot of African countries, Latin American countries, also Asia, I would say they have less responsibilities, except that this pandemic showed everybody, even in these countries, how women are important.

And, as you know, France is very, I would say, good in terms of business, in these

countries, in all what we call the essential services, water, sanitation, transportation, energy, etc. And we saw in our companies how people in some countries of Africa or in Latin America discovered, if I can say so, how much important were the ladies operating in these companies, and very often in real responsibility business. This is good news, I think.

And it's not only for the business but also in responsibilities as, you know, national sub-sovereign as we say, with finance situation, for mayors or governors. You have more and more mayors, feminine mayors, well, you have one in Montreal, Valerie, but you have in Paris, you have in Bogota, you have in Mexico. You have in a lot of countries new lady mayors. And the very interesting thing for us, companies, is to see that these lady mayors were much more – how can I say – operational on, you know, finding the right solution for these essential services. Because at the same time they are mayors, they are mothers or grandmothers sometimes. And they know more about the day-to-day life and pandemic was about dealing with the solutions with day-to-day issues.

Thank you.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you, Gerard. Yes, it's very fascinating. Dawn, I want to dig in deeper with you on some of the numbers that you get. I mean, I know I'm going to tee you up, Mary Kay, but it's such a different story here in the United States where it's really that women are in crisis. I mean still two years later we have 1.1 million that are

missing. The latest job numbers that came out show that Black women have actually had the highest unemployment rate. The great resignation here is being actually driven by women who are quitting at double the rate of men. And we have a mental health crisis when it comes to mothers here in terms of anxiety and depression rates skyrocketing. So I'd love for you, Mary Kay, to set up the situation here because I think it's a huge contrast to what we just heard.

MARY KAY HENRY: Yes, I agree. And I also wanted to widen the lens to think about the Black, Brown, indigenous, Asian and immigrant women who never dropped out of the workforce. I would say at the beginning of the pandemic their hours were drastically reduced and they had to scramble to piece together their income. But I tell the story of Thomasine Wilson, who is a Black home care worker. She's provided services to elders in their homes for three decades. She earns \$9 an hour and she has no paid sick leave. She organized inside of her union to get five days of paid sick leave from the State of Virginia for the second year of the pandemic and was able to return to work full-time.

And there's a Latina woman who led in McDonalds as a fast-food worker because McDonald's expanded their drive-through services so that hours were reduced initially but then expanded for workers. She contracted COVID on the job in May of '20 when her store experienced an outbreak because the employer was not providing personal

protective equipment or deep cleaning in between shifts. And it impacted two dozen workers and their family members, including a 10-month-old infant. And so she led one of the longest strikes in McDonald's history and there's now a first-in-its-kind Worker Safety Council that gives workers input into safety measures.

And so I think, Reshma, along with the great resignation, many women workers are on the frontlines of essential sectors like home care, childcare, fast food, hospitality across the economy saying enough is enough. We're fed up. We had people bang pots because we continued to work during the pandemic and called us essential but we feel like we're being treated as disposable, both by our government and by employer policies. Now, there's wonderful exceptions but it's not the rule.

And I think that volatility of women, both having to drop out of the workforce or scratch to string together multiple jobs is what I wanted to lift up as the condition in the U.S. That from the care workforce, Starbucks, Amazon, McDonalds to tech workers, to even professional athletes, women workers are continuing to seize their power because they're fed up because they don't want to be treated as disposable by employers and corporations and refuse to return to the normal that existed for women workers pre-pandemic and create the new normal that all women workers deserve in this economy and democracy.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you, Mary Kay. I want to come back to you on some solutions because I think you have some great ideas we're going to talk about. Dawn, I want to come back to you. So you noted something fascinating, which is that the position of women, I think you said between 25 and 55 or 28 and 55 has increased beyond pre-pandemic levels. I found that fascinating because that also includes women that are in their childbearing age or are women with younger children, which is not the case here in the United States where you're seeing childless women account for much of the recovery of women, but mothers still being held back and the need to kind of talk about it.

So I laugh because on my Instagram feed, everybody wants to move to Canada. Like that's where the paid leave is, that's where the affordable childcare is, that's where...So, but I'd love for you to actually talk about, you know, again, how those support structures that exist in Canada may have accounted for this.

DAWN DESJARDINS: Well, you know, I mean, it's true that overall, but it is similar in Canada, women who have young children are still not working or working at lower levels than prior to the pandemic. I don't think nearly as dramatic a number as in the United States and other countries.

I mean certainly we do have, you know, childcare. And in the province of Quebec, they

do already have affordable, accessible childcare programs in place. So what our government is doing here is saying, hey, you know, this is a model. And what's interesting about that is in Quebec, they announced that in 1997. So this is not brand-new for that province. And it did take probably about eight years before – the participation rate of women in Quebec was the same as the participation rate in the rest of Canada but then it continue to exceed. So obviously having accessible care that's affordable, because certainly if you're working in some of these lower wage industries, you still need to be able to afford the childcare. I mean you might have access to it, but if it's extraordinarily expensive, it's not necessarily putting you far ahead.

So, yes, overall, the population of women in terms of our participation in the labor market as well as jobs is above, but there is still this period. So as we go forward, I think the one thing we're trying to look at with our research is to say, yes, this is great, and it's good, and it's going to happen once we can find childcare, you know, early learning educators who can take on these roles, but even having said that, it probably will take some time, you know, before we really get to that increase in participation rates right across the whole country.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. Mary Kay, turning to you next, month over month as we discussed, we're seeing incredible job growth, right? But when you actually dig in deeper into the data, you realize, as you talked about that, Black, Latina,

Asian women are nowhere close feeling this recovery equitably. So is this a moment, you know – we know what’s happening in Washington in terms of the bill formerly known as Build Back Better – but is there a moment for the private sector, for workers to come together and really, you know, build the workplaces back better than they were before. Because even though we were 51% of the pandemic, most women, women of color, immigrants – my parents are refugees – we were barely hanging on.

MARY KAY HENRY: Yes, yes, absolutely. I think it’s a moment. We’ve seen a historic uprising of working people being led by women across all sectors who are demanding, respect us, protect us, and pay us. And they’re demanding that our government and employers come together and create solutions. One that our union obviously thinks is a key thing is to empower women to be able to join together in organizations and bargain directly with their employers so that an economy that never worked for us before the pandemic can get designed based on women’s needs and thinking through collective bargaining and unions.

And I do agree that there’s key elements of Build Back Better. What Dawn just spoke to, affordable, accessible childcare and paid leave, for God’s sake, that Canada and France have as standards that don’t exist. People were shocked, I think, during the pandemic. Reshma, I don’t know if you agree that they couldn’t believe that most essential workers in the U.S. have no paid sick time as a condition of employment.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Our nurses, our doctors, our heroes...

MARY KAY HENRY: It's just like insane. And that's why Angeli Rodriguez from McDonald's contracted COVID because when she started feeling sick, she couldn't afford to stay home. And our broken immigration policy doesn't allow undocumented workers to stick their heads up and go get healthcare because of the concerns under the last president, not the current president, of being reported to ICE. So the intersection of all these issues, it's time for it to get addressed by allowing people to join together in unions, fixing broken immigration, and dealing with childcare and healthcare policies and paid leave.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. I think we have a tremendous opportunity here. I think part of it, as you know, as an organizer, it's just people are so tired. It's how do you actually provide community and sisterhood? I was thinking this morning about seeing the Poland mothers leaving the baby carriages for the Ukraine mothers. And it's that image, right, it's like that sense of coming together right now in this moment is, I think, an opportunity.

Gerard, the MEDEF represents the French private sector. Could you tell us where French private companies stand in terms of professional equality? And what has been the impact of the pandemic on professional equality in France? I also want to remind

everybody to put your questions in the chat please. We want to hear what you think.

GERARD WOLF: Well, France is today number one in the world in terms of women participation in the boards of companies. We have, in our 120 biggest companies, we have more than 45% women in our boards, and this is number one in the world. And I think that what Mary just said before, you know, in France, we have this sentence, which is...(speaking in French)...You clean the stairs from the top and not from the beginning. And that's the story, that's the real story. I mean I have no lesson to give because I know pretty well the states, the situations are the same. The social history is not the same for evident reasons.

But to clean the stairs from the top is very useful. And now that we have this, because this is done by law, you have to have more than 40% of the board members who are women. And this will come to the Exec Committee. I was in a very large company where we had, we were seven in the Exec Committee, two of them were women. This is not enough, but we are on progress. And I think that, again, if in each company, if you had at the top women, like 50% of each, it's a good image for the company of course, but it's not the question of image, it's the day-to-day life which changes.

So this answers your question in the sense that, yes, we are making more and more things, even in medium-sized or startups where if you take, you may know – and this

will be the end for this turn because I don't want to be too long – you may know that we have the biggest incubator in the world called Station F, where we have more than, I think it's 5,000 companies, startups. But if you go there, you can go and visit it, and I'll be happy to invite you there, but roughly, when you go around, it's 50% guys and 50% girls.

And this is good news because I know we're not talking about the basic work, as has been said before, hospitals or cleaning or education, but, you know, it's a question of signal that you give. And the private sector gives that signal that, yes, we are committed. And it's more than that. In my own task force, you were talking about the task force I'm chairing, we have 420 companies there. And I have an Exec Board, bureau as we say in French, of six vice presidents. I have three ladies and three guys, and they're all either CEO or Vice CEO of a company. And it's a signal that we give to all the companies. I think we have to do more on that. And come and visit France. We'll be happy to show you. But you know it by heart.

But it's not to say, and that's my last sentence, that France is better, because again it's a question of history. The French Revolution was made, in particular, by women, if you remember the reality about our history. So it's a long, long-haul system, you know, evolution.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. It's very helpful. Dawn, I want to come back and talk a little bit about childcare again because it seems as all roads lead back to childcare. You know, in the United States, most Americans spend more on their childcare than their mortgage. I mean it is unbelievably expensive. And, you know, culturally we've often talked about childcare as like it's your personal problem. But we're recognizing that it's not your personal problem, it is an economic issue.

Talk to me a bit about, you know, how is this discussion being had in Canada around affordable childcare? You know, you talked about what's happening in Quebec, but, you know, why is it so important for some of the tools available to policymakers to talk about this so we can start closing participation gaps? Is it the government only? Is it the private sector? Is it both? What's the opportunity here?

DAWN DESJARDINS: Yes, I mean I think it is certainly both because you're going to need a lot of childcare. But having said that, and this is a statistic I personally like because it does kind of, to me, round it out to say, okay, if women in Canada had the same participation rate as men, that would add \$100 billion to our economy every single year. So it's not, you know, oh, this is something just for women. It's for everyone, right? You're going to grow the pie. And if you grow the pie, then everybody's going to get a little bit more.

And when we think about other things that governments are doing, and the pandemic, I think, you don't want to say that it really created some good things, but in a sense, shining the spotlight on these issues that are keeping women from participating. And now as we look forward, as people say, okay, well, I kind of want to make a pivot here, you know, government policies that put in re-skilling or up-skilling, and really trying to concentrate on getting people back into the labor force. Because in Canada, and I know it's true in the states too, but we have a record number of vacant positions. So, you know, there's a lot of demand for this labor.

Now, in Canada, as you know, we're very reliant on immigration. We had kind of a time-out obviously during the pandemic. So there are gaps that are going to be filled by people coming to Canada, but we also need women to be working to the same extent as their male colleagues. So again those are the types of things, but also just this idea of actually being able to train for something. So government programs are coming out. And businesses too, I think, you know, certainly are really trying to put a lens on how can we help our employees, you know, migrate throughout the firms.

Because in Canada, you know, to the point about on boards, you know, at senior executive levels we're still running at about a third. So lots of room to grow there.

Certainly at the company, RBC, where I work, you know, they are doing a lot on that type of thing, trying to get careers launched, so early employees, but also senior women getting the mentorship and the leadership capabilities developed so they can take on

these roles as we move forward.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. Mary Kay, speaking to your work at SEIU, as you mentioned, we have been seeing organizing, workers organizing, demanding unions across industry. You know, we saw it at Google. We saw it at Starbucks. We saw it at Amazon, from tech workers to fast food workers and beyond. And when you do look at the leadership, it's a lot of women leading this fight. And how, and this was happening even pre-pandemic, right? And the pandemic seems to have just like lit a match underneath that. Why has this movement, though, created fire? And how can businesses support their workers? And are you hopeful that we will win? Because we didn't have as many wins, and I mean "we", as in workers organizing to get unions or to get support. Do you see it changing? What's the opportunity?

MARY KAY HENRY: Yes, absolutely I see it changing. We see more and more workers who are fed up and I think have decided, given what they've been through in terms of life-threatening decisions to be in the frontlines of the pandemic without the proper personal protective equipment, without paid sick leave, without affordable childcare, without all the things that this panel has already discussed, people want to take matters into their own hands and join together and make demands to respect us, protect us, and pay us.

And I was thinking about the childcare workforce, as you and Dawn were talking about childcare, again that's the most undervalued and underappreciated job in America alongside of fast food and home care. It was written out of labor laws. Childcare workers have no access to our social security system. We have to fight state by state to get them covered by minimum wage laws in some cases. But together, when they join together in a union, we can raise standards.

And so when the government invests in affordable childcare, we want that connected to the ability for working women to be able to join together in unions and bargain a better life and continue to work with employers and our government to write these jobs that were excluded back in the 30s in. And that's what we think is really critical to being able to create the solutions and spur other change across the economy, especially for Black, Brown, immigrant, and indigenous women who have been excluded for far too long.

RESHMA SAUJANI: You know, Mary Kay, for example, in like the paid leave fight here in the United States, you know, a lot of salaried workers got paid leave, but we left a lot of hourly workers behind.

MARY KAY HENRY: Yes.

RESHMA SAUJANI: What do we do differently to make sure that doesn't happen?

MARY KAY HENRY: I think we can allow the federal government to set the floor for states and then for states to build up. And we can make sure that major employers send a signal. I thought what Gerard said about the French private sector sends a signal to what the standard is. Imagine if that could be the U.S. private sectors sending a signal that we want paid leave for every worker, whether hourly or salaried, and to allow those hourly workers to be able to join together and create a permanent solution to high-quality union jobs across service and care.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Gerard, you've been working internationally during COVID-19. What would you tell us about the impact of the pandemic abroad and the part played by women during the crisis worldwide? One of the things that struck me, as an Indian-American woman, is what was happening in India and seeing women for the first-time start demanding, you know, wages for housework. And that actually shifted, and we've been seeing very interesting movements, especially on being paid for unpaid labor, which we know around the world, women are the ones who are doing, which gets in the way of their paid work. So what have you seen? Oh, you're on mute.

GERARD WOLF: Here we go. Am I back?

RESHMA SAUJANI: You're back.

GERARD WOLF: Well, in the sense, I think the pandemic has, it made a shock in all these countries because women, for instance if you talk about Africa, you know or you don't know that in each of the 54 countries of Africa, there's an association, national association called Urban Poor, which gathers all people living in, in formal settlements, let's say, which is around 50% of the towns, right, and 50% of the economy. All, I say all, 100% of these urban poor associations, national, are chaired by women.

And the good news is that when they come to UN-Habitat or all international organizations and say this is what we are facing, when they come to see us in different programs, in the COP26, or in any type of conference, they can tell, look, guys, you men, you French men, we know what we need, and we want you to do so, so, so. And the pandemic gave them kind of more responsibilities, but also more certainty on what was the best for their own countries. And it's clear, you were talking about India. In India, this is exactly what happened, exactly.

But you can go everywhere. If you listen to the lady mayor of Mexico, Mexico is now, more than 20 million inhabitants as you know, when you hear Claudia Sheinbaum, when she talks about the problem of the city and the different networks she has with women organizations in Mexico, she knows what she's talking about. And you can't say, you don't know a thing about your city. Of course, a businessman will never say that. He wants to have a market. But that's not the real solution.

I think that it gave, you know, with this horrible pandemic, it gave one good shot, which is the people who know about how to deal with this pandemic on a day-to-day basis are the ladies who are operating the city. And this is key for the future.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. We think ladies running everything is the key to every future. We'd love to have everyone close out. We have a couple more minutes. As just a closing thought, one of the things, you know, people always say never waste a good crisis. Actually before I do that, I'm seeing some questions. One question from J.C. Atchette, what is the mayor of Mexico doing...

GERARD WOLF: Femicides...

RESHMA SAUJANI: Yes, for femicides in Mexico and making work safe for women there.

GERARD WOLF: I think I'm supposed to answer that question. I think it's a very good question. And I'm not saying that because the mayor is a woman, life would change the next day. We know that criminality in Mexico and in a lot of countries is very high. Thank you for the question, but can I say that criminality is, I'm afraid, even in Europe, is not kind of gender-driven, if I can say so. Yes, they're often \_\_\_\_\_. That's another story. But the situation of criminality and security in all of the countries, I'm afraid to say that,

whether it's women or men, who are mayor or governors, doesn't change that much. I know this is not the answer that the guy or the lady who asked the question is looking for but that's the reality I'm facing each single day, wherever I go in each continent.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you for that. Why don't we close up and just one final note. So I want to hear your last thoughts. You know they say, we're almost on the two-year anniversary of the pandemic. I think a lot of us are thinking about where we were actually this week. And, you know, there's this line, they say you should never waste a good crisis. And so when it comes to, you know, women's labor market participation, when it comes to gender equality, you know, what is the opportunity that we have? What's the one thing or two things that you would change? Why don't we just go with Dawn, Mary Kay, and then Gerard. Dawn, why don't we start with you.

DAWN DESJARDINS: Yes, I mean I think it is very much this idea that a spotlight now has been put on a very critical issue that, you know, women have known about for quite a long time, but I think we've really seen a groundswell of support because people do realize that if women are not participating in the labor market, your economy, it just can't grow as robustly as it could with women.

So, you know whether it's figuring out ways to elevate women in terms of get into a job, how do we ensure that the path towards a senior leadership role is smoother, is easier?

Or again, just getting women really involved in the labor market at all, making sure that those barriers are really eliminated. I think that's really, you know, we all know it should be done. I think we just shine that light on these issues really is what, we have to keep the light bright.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Thank you. Mary Kay.

MARY KAY HENRY: Thank you. I think when you look at entering year three of this pandemic and we've discussed that workers' demands, and women at the front of that have only gotten louder and louder about what needs to change. And I really think corporations and the private sector employers have to meet this moment, no matter how big or small they are. And we have a moral obligation as a nation and globally to make sure that our governments, and in our case in the U.S., the President and Congress and state legislatures, are going to pass policies that either hold corporations accountable or establish a floor that allow women workers the support and structure they need to return to work.

And for us, that includes allowing women workers to join together in unions where our vision is that working people, and especially women of color who have borne the brunt of this pandemic and have held us all up during the pandemic are at the center of getting a seat at the table to bargain a better life. If we have women mayors that are

making differences around the globe, as Gerard has said, and women could make \$100 billion in Canada if they had the same participation as men, we need women workers in the service and care sector empowered through unions to create a fair and inclusive economy for the first time in the history of the United States.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Gerard, I'll let you have the last word.

GERARD WOLF: Well, what a responsibility. I would say that I will take back my story of the stairs, saying that you have to clean them from the top. We still have to do a lot of things in Europe and in France at the back of the stairs. Because what the pandemic really showed is that the essential services workers, I was talking about, you know, the day-to-day in health sector, in food distribution, in personal assistance, in cleaning, these people are, in majority they are women.

And this is where we still have to do a lot of, I would say, progress. We are on progress, but when I say that the COVID made it clear for everybody that all the hospitals in France are working with women. By the way, my daughter is a medical doctor so she would tell more what I can do. But certainly now that the stairs are, I would say, more clean at the top of it, we have to accelerate what we understood with the COVID, which is that we have to go down the stairs. And we are clearly, with the unions, we are clearly on our way to have real progress in the coming months, I would say.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Wonderful. Thank you everybody for a fantastic panel. I'm frozen at the right time. Great. I think we're onto our next event. So thank you so much everybody.

GERARD WOLF: Thank you. Bye bye.

RESHMA SAUJANI: Bye.

MARY KAY HENRY: Thank you.