

## News Release

For Immediate Release  
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### **Women working in tech continue to face age-old barriers**

A survey by the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) revealed sobering news: significant barriers continue to exist in the workplace for women in the applied science and engineering technology profession.

The survey shone a spotlight on a Mad Men era world where highly trained women technologists are slower to receive promotions, asked to get coffee for their bosses, required to take minutes at meetings, and may be seen as the default performer of other administrative roles due to their gender. The survey also found that women have to work harder than their male peers to gain recognition, and have lost momentum in their career paths due to maternity leaves. Harassment and sexism are every day occurrences, sometimes escalating to sexual harassment and assault.

But where there are problems there are also solutions thanks to the resourcefulness of these determined women technologists, the professional association in their corner, and the fact that technology remains a lucrative career according to the ASET salary survey results.

“ASET has long been committed to supporting and advancing women in technology, but the survey findings indicate that we had greatly underestimated the severity of the situation and we are taking steps to remedy this. The good news is we know anecdotally that achieving their professional designations through certification with ASET at least helps armour them when they enter the field,” said ASET CEO Barry Cavanaugh.

Women currently comprise 12 per cent of ASET’s membership of 18,000 technicians and technologists. However, more than half of the applied science and engineering technology professionals in the province are working without designations or potentially even proper training. This yields an opportunity women technologists can potentially leverage to their competitive advantage.

Canadian Armed Forces Master Corporal (retired) Tara Chahl, now a CET and project manager on the oil pipeline, was strategically motivated to achieve her designation through ASET because she knew it would give her a professional edge both in terms of respect and remuneration.

“My CET designation allowed for a salary increase based on the ASET salary survey. My

former company insisted on my having my designation because I wrote technical reports. The incentive was the salary increase and I ultimately received it,” said Chahl.

As one of the first female infantry soldiers on the front lines of the Kandahar, Afghanistan war zone, Chahl has been able to draw comparisons between her workplace in the military and in the field on the oil pipeline. Both are male-dominated and she has faced harassment in both scenarios.

In addition to getting her CET designation, other strategies she has adopted are using her emotional intelligence to read situations and know which issues to let go, and being professional at all times. Professionalism is a tactic commonly employed by survey respondents as well.

ASET has developed an action plan to address many of the themes and issues illustrated in the survey and, to date, has:

- formed a women in technology working group made up of ASET women members who are consulted for ideas and input on various initiatives;
- hosted teleforums for ASET women members, focusing on topics highlighted in the survey;
- created a women in technology resource library with suggestions for books, websites, videos, etc.;
- developed a women in technology page on its website;
- ensured the inclusion of relevant women in technology courses and events on its members-only continuing professional development activity connector;
- participated in the Alberta government news conference announcing the new occupational health and safety changes on workplace harassment and bullying. ASET’s CEO and a council member were presenters.

The Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) is the professional self-regulatory organization for engineering technologists and technicians in Alberta. ASET currently represents over 18,000 members, including full-time technology students, recent graduates and fully certified members in 21 disciplines and some 124 occupations across a multitude of industries. **[aset.ab.ca](http://aset.ab.ca)**

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