

## Female Technicians

# A Unique Perspective

Female auto technicians are a rarity in Canadian garages, and yet they are passionate and committed to their chosen careers. And, as they say, there are definite benefits to being a woman in the industry.

BY KRYSTYNA LAGOWSKI

**A**ny woman who chooses to enter the automotive industry as a technician faces the same challenges as a man. However, she also brings a unique skill set to the position that some say give her an advantage.

## Taking the time

Montreal based technician, author and radio personality Lisa Christensen has spent 20 years in the industry and believes women are more pragmatic about car repairs. “For myself, I prefer to read the diagrams, consider the theory and understand how the component works before I begin to take anything apart,” she says.

Women are more cautious, says Rosie Dugal, a technician at Quebec’s Mazda Chatel. “I’m a perfectionist,” she observes, “My customers are more trusting because they know that I am more careful.”

## A curiosity to learn

Christensen enjoys the ever-changing nature of the industry, and loves to learn. “Every year, the car manufacturers throw 200 different models, engine and transmission configurations at us,” she notes. “It’s a constantly evolving field and it’s so very interesting, what goes on under the hood of a car. I’m never bored.”

Govaerts agrees, noting that where there were once three major car manufacturers, today there are five or six. “There’s no day when I can say I’ve learned everything,” she says. “That’s never going to happen. There’s always going to be new

technology and information to learn, to keep my mind stimulated.”

## Diverse beginnings

Govaerts, who is now an established racecar driver, began her career as a weekend racetrack tech for Spenard-David Racing School, now the Bridgestone Racing Academy. As a technician, she realized she could work in the industry for which she had developed a passion.

“The racing end of it got me into the mechanics side and then I just never went away,” she says. “There’s nothing like the immediate gratification of repairing a car. When it comes in broken and leaves fixed, you know you did well – and you don’t need anyone to tell you.”

Christensen was intrigued by the science behind car mechanics. “How does a car move forward? The propulsion is what really excited me,” she says.

Dugal found her calling at a summer job for the Quebec Coast Guard, doing repairs and maintenance on fleet vehicles as well as trucks and cranes. “My father, who was a professor of electronics, saw me working there and encouraged me,” she says.

## Supported by many

Dugal is quick to credit her father as a big supporter of her chosen career, as well as her husband, and her colleague and friend Serge Lebel.

Christensen credits her husband, as well



Fleur Govaerts,  
instructor,  
Centennial College,  
GM Automotive Service  
Education Program



Rosie Dugal,  
technician

as former automotive publisher Remy Rousseau as helping her career. One long-time friend, Roger Goudreau, currently Parity Committee president of the automotive services industry in Montreal, watched her career evolve. “When he felt I was ready, he brought me into a company to be a diagnostic specialist,” she recalls.

For Govaerts, it was service manager Michael Cira at Addison Cadillac in Toronto who readily offered her an apprenticeship. “Richard Spenard was willing to let me try anything, he never said no,” she laughs. “Also Jamie Fitzmaurice, who is still at Bridgestone, was instrumental in promoting and encouraging me.”

Whether it’s supporters or a passion for cars, perseverance is the key to success, Dugal says. “It may not be the easiest path, but when you are determined, you will find great rewards.” 🍀