

Local mover shaking up Washington D.6

■ Sharon Geldart-Wry part of first women's international trade mission

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It may be her first trip to Washington, but Sharon Geldart-Wry hasn't had time to tour around the American capital yet. She's simply been too busy for the likes of the Lincoln Monument and Smithsonian Museum.

"We're making history here," the Moncton businesswoman said in a telephone interview from her D.C. hotel room yesterday. "It's been one exciting week. My mind is just boggled by all the info they've thrown at us. It's so intense."

Geldart-Wry, the secretary-treasurer of Geldart's Warehouse & Cartage, a moving company, is in Washington for the first-ever Canadian businesswomen's international trade mission to the U.S. capital. The mission is being led by

Canada's International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi.

The three-day gathering, which wrapped up late yesterday, was an opportunity for 160 Canadian women to learn about exporting their goods and services south of the border. Geldart-Wry was one of just four New Brunswickers there, the other three women are from Fredericton.

"We've been given all kinds of exposure. People are ready to help us expand our export markets," said this year's winner of the Prix Muriel Fergusson Award, given biannually to a woman in New Brunswick who demonstrate leadership in management, innovation and contribution to her community.

During the mission, which featured chances to network, meetings, workshops, and a dinner at the Canadian embassy, Geldart-Wry said opportunities to connect with Marchi were tremendous. Each of the 160 delegates got to know the minister personally, she said.

She also thought the workshops were very helpful. At one of the sessions, Geldart-Wry led a table of women talking about the problems they face getting goods across the border.

"Eight ladies sitting around this table made \$50 million in revenue last year," she said, explaining that the collective spirit in Washington excited everybody there. "Everybody is revved up — there's no other way to explain it."

In Canada, roughly one-third of all companies are led by women. These 700,000 firms create jobs at four times the average national rate and today employ about 1.7 million people. These numbers are all growing, Geldart-Wry said, and now Marchi had taken notice and gotten on side.

"The minister said he never realized how much energy and dedication we bring to the Canadian economy. He saw why we're growing so fast. And, as far as we're concerned, if the government doesn't have a follow up for this, we're going to do it ourselves."

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