

# Businesswoman cheered for addressing political problems

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WASHINGTON – Businesswoman Bianca Battistini dared to say what many of the other women had only thought, and when she did the response was thunderous.

“Seventy-five per cent of the time, when I meet a potential customer, they ask me about Quebec independence,” Battistini said to applause from 125 Canadian businesswomen in Washington.

“They want to know, for instance, if they buy something, whether they are going to be able to have it serviced for the next 10 years.”

The businesswomen – from Quebec and the rest of Canada – jumped to their feet, stomped on the floor and a few jumped on their chairs to show the Magog businesswoman their appreciation.

During last month’s all-woman trade mission to Washington, federal International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi had asked the businesswomen for recommendations on what the government could do to help their businesses.

He accepted 27 recommendations,



JOHN KENNEY, GAZETTE  
Can-Am VP Bianca Battistini.

most of them, about tariffs, visas and other less volatile things, graciously. But as for what to do about Quebec in-

dependence?

“I noticed his face went red,” said Battistini, vice-president of Can-Am Group Inc. in Magog. “For the rest of the mission, I wasn’t too popular with the government people.”

Battistini had asked Canadian businesswomen if they wanted to set up a consortium, Canadian Women Exporters for Canada, and to break down the barriers the government had failed to.

“You know that it’s an export mission and it’s going to help us domestically,” Battistini said after her speech.

Now home, Battistini, who had been invited as a mentor on the four-day trade mission, is back at work and busy organizing, along with some local businesswomen, the new group’s first public meeting.

“We’re going to do something in Montreal in June,” said Battistini. “We need to import women from the other nine provinces into Quebec and export Quebec women into the rest of Canada.”

– Cheryl Cornacchia

## Facts on businesswomen

Here are some interesting facts on the role of Canadian women in business:

- One-third of Canadian firms are owned and operated by women.
- The 700,000 women-led firms in Canada are creating jobs at four times the average rate and last year generated \$37 billion in sales.
- Women-owned companies contribute 1.7 million jobs to the Canadian economy.
- Only 10 per cent of small and medium-sized companies export. About 100 Canadian companies are responsible for 50 per cent of all exports.
- Projections indicate that there will be 680,000 self-employed women by 2000.

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE