

First all-female trade mission to tackle U.S.

Canadian Businesswomen's International Trade Mission
La Mission commerciale internationale des femmes d'affaires canadiennes

Women-led businesses increasing to export market, minister says

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Trade Minister Sergio Marchi will spearhead the first all-female Team Canada trade mission on a four-day trip to Washington later this week.

The mission, announced yesterday, is aimed at drawing more small- and medium-sized Canadian businesses — one-third of which are owned by women — into the export market.

The mission is "a way of seeing that the world of trade is not necessarily a men's world," says a world that used to be dominated by large companies, Mr. Marchi said.

"This will help women entrepreneurs to reach their export objectives and heighten awareness of their possibilities in the Canadian economy," he said.

The mission is expected to attract more than 100 foreign entrepreneurs who will explore export options in the lucrative and sheltered U.S. market.

Currently only 25 per cent of Canada's one-million small businesses — the backbone of the nation's economy — export their goods and services.

Instead, the export market is dominated by a relatively small number of companies, about 20,000, which account for almost half of Canada's exports.

Mr. Marchi has set for Canada the goal of doubling the number of export companies by 1995.

He said female-owned firms must play a major role in achieving that goal because their numbers are increasingly important ones.

The trade mission to the U.S. Mr. Marchi said is the beginning of a program designed to help women-led businesses in Canada who are ready to go export opportunities.

"It would seem logical that the women-owned sector is the highest, the closest and most successful — should be a good jumping-off point to help women entrepreneurs prepared to look at exporting," he said.

A recent study reported that the number of women-owned or operated businesses in Canada is about two million. The study also said that women-led firms are creative and growing faster than the national average. Protectionist measures have not helped women-led companies by much.



"...the world of trade is not necessarily a man's world," Sergio Marchi, Trade Minister