

LACHARITY: Now, I had a couple of statistics here that are, well, fairly amazing. One of them, a third of Canadian firms are owned and operated by women, impressive enough on its own. But when you add to that the fact that as a group, they create jobs at four times the average rate. But the one area of weakness, or one of the areas of weaknesses tends to be in export. Now, is that because of the very nature, the kind of businesses are not export-oriented, or the track record's not there? What do you think?

PENNY: Well, I think that a lot of these businesses are what they term small to medium size. That means that we're not the Corels or the Newbridges or the IBMs. We're just small to medium size. We provide the backbone as far as contributions to Canadian economy, really. And as you say, the importance of creating jobs is there. As far as being able to get into the export market condition, I think sometimes that is reserved for the big players. If you see the trade missions that have been organized by the federal government so far, it is very large corporations who are either invited to attend or able to attend.

And if you look at the women to men ratio on those missions, it's a very, very low women to men ratio. So this provides an excellent opportunity for it to be 100 per cent women who are the owners of these small to medium-size businesses who can offer a great deal of expertise as well as consumer products to the American market.