

'There's going to be networking, sharing'

MISSION

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"That means keeping your ears open, something Ritter did during the entire mission.

During a breakfast at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, she heard someone from the museum mention they were considering putting on an exhibit of the work of Canadian painter Emily Carr in the next two years.

"My ears perked up," said Ritter. "We are putting together 13 one-hour episodes on remarkable women, starting with Emily Carr."

After the meal, Ritter rushed up and introduced herself to the woman, who in turn introduced her to another woman, the curator of the museum, who in turn offered her expertise to the film and a venue for the completed film's American screening (the museum's theatre).

Now, at home, Ritter put that serendipitous breakfast and the entire mission in context.

"Maybe I didn't come home with contacts.

"But I do have some new ongoing contacts and there's going to be networking, sharing of information and who knows what else."

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Now that she is home, Saint-Eustache businesswoman Joëlle Montpetit is sleeping again, a little less stressed out and back to smoking her usual one pack a day.

Throughout the four-day mission, the 32-year-old businesswoman could be seen pacing the lobby of the Westin Hotel where the meetings were held, sitting in the hotel bar (until 2 and 3 in the morning) and excusing herself early from meal tables.

She worried away the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the mission because Friday, her final day in Washington, was marked by 11 meet-

ings with potential customers from the D.C., Virginia and Maryland areas.

"The Americans don't speak French and I don't speak English, much," Montpetit said last week.

"The stress was my own fault," Montpetit, along with her husband, is owner and operator of Transpotéch Consultant Inc. in Saint-Eustache, which employs a full-time staff of six and last year made sales of \$1.4 million. Combining information technologies, telecommunications and 10 years of trucking expertise, the company in an instant, can connect a customer with the most competitive carrier in a network of 700 trucking companies. Canada-U.S. regulations regarding loads also give the Quebec company a competitive edge.

The company already has a few U.S. customers, but wants to expand.

Before arriving, Montpetit was confident her company had a lot to offer companies on the eastern seaboard—a market worth \$11.5 billion—but she just wasn't sure how she was going to get her sales pitch across.

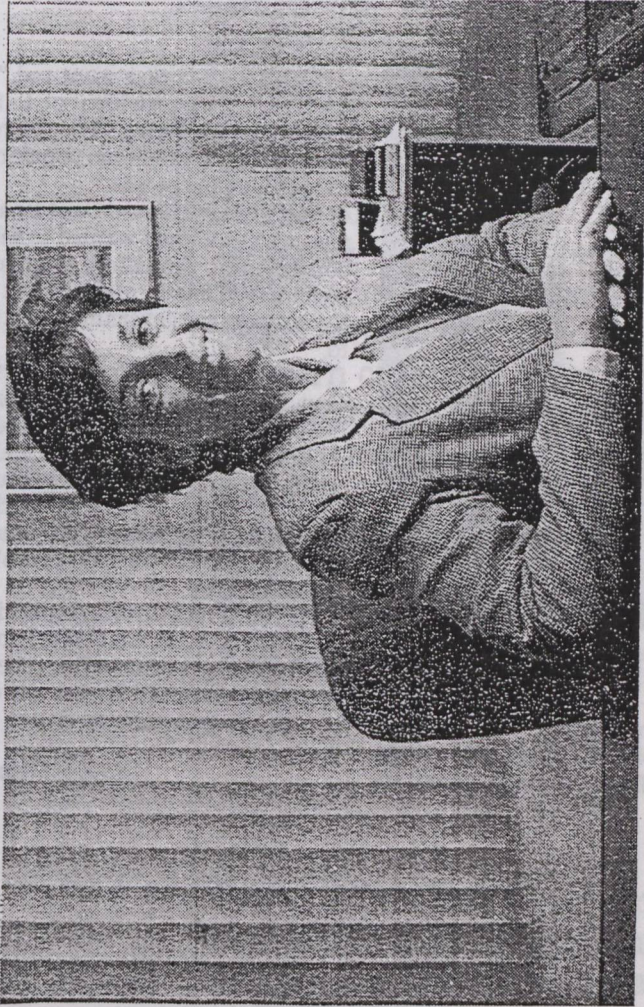
"We can offer a 40-per-cent discount on what many of them are spending," said Montpetit. "I worried for nothing," she said.

On the Friday, she held court in a suite in the Westin Hotel while company after company came to her. "They were very sympathetic and I asked them to repeat things I missed. The language was money. And there was no problem there."

She is now negotiating with three of the companies and her late-night trips to the hotel bar have also paid off. A couple of the women from the mission she met there, including a wine-and-beer producer from Ontario and a Quebec caviar manufacturer, have called her asking for price quotes.

Back in Saint-Eustache, Montpetit, also a mother of two, is back to her 60-hour workweek and fielding calls from potential customers.

"I'm very tired," said Montpetit. "But that's the way it is for most women in business."



Joëlle Montpetit, president of Transpotéch Consultant Inc.

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