

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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BY ANNE DUFFY
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Trade Minister Sergio Marchi will appear on 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 man's world" — 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 contributions to the Canadian economy," he said.

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

Currently only 10 per cent of Canada's one-million small businesses — the backbone of the nation's economy — export their goods and services.

Instead, the average number of companies that export is only one or two.

Mr. Marchi has set for Canada the goal of doubling the number of export companies by 2000.

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

The trade mission to the U.S. Mr. Marchi said is the beginning of a program designed to help small- and medium-sized businesses in Canada explore export options to more export opportunities.

"It would have been thought that the women-owned sector is the highest, the fastest and most profitable — and that it would be a good jumping-off point for other small businesses prepared to look at exporting."

A recent study reported that the number of women-owned or operated businesses has increased by nearly two million worldwide. The study also found that women-led firms are creating jobs at a faster rate than the national average. Protection measures have also been put in place to help women-owned businesses.



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