

## Women join first female trade jaunt

*New Brunswickers hope to develop trade in Washington*

By LISA HRABLUK  
and JULIAN BELTRAME

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**SAINT JOHN** - This week four New Brunswick businesswomen will join 121 other women in the first-ever Canadian businesswomen's trade mission to the U.S.

Accompanying them on the four-day trip is University of New Brunswick marketing professor Deirdre Grondin.

Prof. Grondin was invited to participate because of her research on export initiatives by Canadian businesswomen.

The mission is being led by International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi who wants to double the number of female-led firms in the export market by the year 2000.

Sharon Geldart-Wry says she'll have only one thing on her mind when she arrives in Washington, D.C. today.

"I'm looking for more markets," said the owner of Geldart's Warehouse and Cartage in Moncton.

"The more you go out the more you reap."

Team Canada trade missions are becoming a routine part of Ottawa's strategy for building an export-oriented economy. What is different about this mission that begins today is its size, the fact that all the participants are heads or executives of small and medium-sized businesses, and that they are all women, representing female-owned firms from every province except Prince Edward Island.

Ms. Geldart-Wry bought her personal-goods moving firm from her father in 1981 and since then she has seen the industry evolve and change.

"The industry has diversified a lot. Thirty-three years ago we just carried furniture. Now we haul everything - plants, frozen foods, animals."

She is hoping this trade mission will introduce her to American businesswomen who may be in need of a reliable Canadian moving company to help transfer employees across the border.

In addition to networking with other business owners, Ms. Geldart-Wry will also share some of her knowledge during a roundtable discussion on border-crossing issues which she has been asked to lead on Friday afternoon.

The mission, the first of its kind for Canada, is almost a perfect fit of mutual interests for the businesswomen and the Canadian government.

With more than \$1-billion in bilateral trade flowing across the Canada-U.S. border every day, the temptation may be to say that Canada's export objectives vis-a-vis their southern neighbor are being met.

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But, in truth, both the U.S. and Canada believe that a vast, untapped trade potential lies in the small and medium-sized firms of both countries which make up an increasing portion of the economy and rarely think beyond their regions.

And as a senior Canadian trade official pointed out, female-led small and medium-sized firms are growing at three or four times the rate of those directed by men. There are currently 700,000 women-led businesses in Canada, accounting for 1.7 million jobs.

At the same time, women

business owners are the new kids on the block in the world of commerce and the least likely to have experience marketing their products and expertise outside the country.

The trade mission will give the Canadian women an opportunity to learn about customs regulations and market strategies, as well as make contacts with businesses in the Washington region. The Canadian entrepreneurs will be meeting with leaders of 80 regional firms on Friday.

Rounding out the New Brunswick contingent are Fredericton businesswomen Betty Lee, president of Betty Lee Food Services Ltd.; Gwen McKay, president of Amulet Consulting Ltd. and Rita Vallières, president of Optimum Translation.