

The objective of the Summit is twofold.

First, it will bring together women business leaders from our two countries to identify - and recommend ways to eliminate - the barriers that inhibit businesswomen from entering international markets.

Second, it will attract an American trade delegation working through the U.S. Consulate in Toronto for two days of meetings, site visits and one-on-one business contacts. In this way, the Summit will embody the exact objectives the policy dialogue is supposed to address - that is, more business for more women across more borders.

The ideas and recommendations from the Summit will also be taken forward to the Conference on Women Entrepreneurs sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] in the year 2000.

To make sure our joint Summit and the OECD Conference have solid data on the particular issues women in business face, we are putting together a "research coalition" of government, private-sector and academic representatives. My department will take a lead role in co-ordinating this activity along with Industry Canada and Status of Women Canada.

I am proud to recognize our first partners in this coalition. They are the Royal Bank of Canada, which has also been a generous sponsor of this mission, and the Women Entrepreneurs of Canada Foundation - both of which are represented here today.

In fact, the Women Entrepreneurs of Canada Foundation and the National Foundation for Women Business Owners here in the United States have agreed to co-operate in this task and will also be signing a memorandum of understanding to that effect later today.

But let me assure you that we are not going to wait until the next millennium before taking action!

As part of my department's ongoing program for exporters, a special visit is being planned to Washington next year. Its focus will be on international financial institutions and how to increase the number of Canadian women consultants winning contracts financed by the World Bank and the InterAmerican Development Bank.

We are going to complement our efforts on trade fairs and missions with a more concerted effort to provide Canadian businesswomen with the information they need to export their products and services. We will make greater use of vehicles such as the Internet to help bridge the information gap for women entrepreneurs.