

1997-2007 A Decade of Progress for Women Exporters



These Canadian women entrepreneurs, shown at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. in November, 1997, made history when they participated in the first Businesswomen's Team Canada Trade Mission.



that generated close to \$2 million in sales for her business. "After that, I tied into other U.S. work," she says, estimating that \$5 million in sales can ultimately be attributed to the trade mission. Medea Group's export sales went from virtually zero before 1997 to 40% of total sales this past year.

Reflections and Celebrations

Back in November 1997, Canada's International Trade Minister led the first-ever all-women Team Canada Trade Mission to Washington, D.C. Over 120 Canadian businesswomen participated in that historic mission, spearheaded by **Astrid Pregel**, then Minister Counsellor (Commercial) at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, and sponsored by RBC Royal Bank and a host of other corporate and government partners. "We made Washington rock" is the common refrain heard from many of the participants.

"The trade mission provided a lens for the Canadian public, the government and for the women themselves to see clearly, perhaps for the first time, just how important and powerful women's economic contributions to Canada really were," says Astrid, now President, Feminomics Inc. "And Canadian women have never looked back. The World Bank calls its new focus on women's economic empowerment 'Smart Economics'. We Canadians knew this a decade ago."

New business generated

Although primarily designed as an export awareness event to introduce Canadian women entrepreneurs to the world of trade, the mission actually resulted in millions of dollars in deals being signed. **Mary Fote**, President of the Medea Group (www.medeagroup.com), is one of those who benefited significantly. She signed a three-way strategic alliance partnership

And, like a number of other participants, Mary also increased her domestic business as a result of the contacts she made with others on the mission. "One of the sponsors became our first large bank client," she adds. Today, the Medea Group has 68% market share of Canadian bank business for its digital marketing tool.

"I would absolutely recommend such trade missions. They are extremely valuable and the opportunities are there, but you have to work at them."

Mary Fote, *The Medea Group*

"The 1997 trade mission to Washington showed for the first time how important and powerful women's economic contributions to Canada really were."

Astrid Pregel, *Feminomics Inc.*