

Ministère des Affaires Internationales / International Trade Department

Backgrounder

CANADIAN BUSINESSWOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE MISSION WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 12-14,

The Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Sergio Marchi, will be leading the first Businesswomen's Trade Mission, to Washington, D.C. from November 12 to 14, 1997. The Royal Bank of Canada is the presenting sponsor.

The Canadian Women's International Business Initiative (CWIBI) is a business development program of the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., designed to assist export-ready Canadian women entrepreneurs in developing business opportunities for their products and services in the mid-Atlantic states - Maryland, Virginia, eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and the District of Columbia - a market worth \$11.5 billion.

This region includes representation from three-quarters of the world's multinational corporations; it has the second-largest concentration of high-tech firms outside "Silicon Valley," and the U.S. government in Washington is a significant market for Canadian goods and services.

The mission is designed to balance the fact that businesswomen are under-represented within the community of Canadian exporters, despite their presence and influence in the Canadian economy. Thirty per cent of all Canadian firms are owned or operated by women; 700 000 women-led businesses in Canada provide 1.7 million jobs and are generating jobs at four times the average rate.

Projections are that there will be 680 000 self-employed women by the year 2000. In fact, self-employed women had the fastest rate of growth (172 per cent) of all employment sectors from 1975 to 1990.

The Businesswomen's Trade Mission is a major project undertaken under CWIBI to help reach the government's goal of doubling the number of active exporters in Canada by the year 2000.

- The three-day mission will feature market information sessions, networking events and matchmaking meetings aimed at forging bilateral links with U.S. firms.
- Representatives of women-led businesses in the U.S. mid-Atlantic will join mission participants at a special luncheon to be addressed by U.S. Secretary of Commerce William M. (Bill) Daley and by Minister Marchi.
- Minister Marchi will lead a round table on "breaking down the barriers" with Canadian businesswomen to determine how