
Conclusion

Women play an important role in the Canadian economy. It is important for women, as it is for all Canadians, that the nation's economy continue to grow and prosper. Free trade offers opportunities for economic growth, increased employment and incomes, and an improved standard of living. Enhanced security of access to the U.S. market, including assurances against future protectionist actions, will mean increased trade and additional jobs for women.

The service sector, where 84 per cent of employed women work, will benefit directly and indirectly from free trade. Canadian service industries will have more secure access to the U.S. market and will benefit from increased spending and investment by Canadian consumers and businesses. Women will find new opportunities for employment and new opportunities to advance their careers.

For the manufacturing sector, the elimination of bilateral tariffs, the lowering of non-tariff barriers and more secure access to the U.S. market will result in more efficient production and economies of scale. Lower-cost inputs will enable manufacturing industries to become more competitive. For the 12 per cent of employed women working in manufacturing, more efficient and competitive industries will mean more and better jobs.

Women today own more than one-third of Canada's small businesses. Free trade will bring opportunities to women

entrepreneurs because of the access to a much larger market. Under free trade, businesswomen will be able to develop and target their business plans in a more secure trading environment.

For consumers, free trade will also mean more competitive prices, a wider variety of goods and services, and better quality products.

The Agreement does not affect the range of social programs currently enjoyed by Canadians, such as medicare, child care, maternity benefits, pensions and unemployment insurance. Nor does the Agreement prevent the introduction of new social programs. Rather, the economic growth created by free trade will provide an expanded financial foundation for our social programs.

Free trade presents Canada and Canadian women with both challenges and opportunities. Reductions in trade barriers and more stable and predictable rules for trade and investment will lead to economic growth, increased employment and incomes, and enhanced standards of living. Free trade offers opportunities to broaden the country's economic and industrial capabilities and to expand employment choices and mobility. These opportunities are important for women who represent a major source of Canada's potential as workers, entrepreneurs and consumers.