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International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi will lead the first businesswomen's trade mission to Washington, D.C., from November 11 to 14, 1997. This four-day team Canada mission is sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Royal Bank of Canada. It will feature market information and mentoring sessions, networking events with key decision makers and other business development activities aimed at forging links with leading U.S. firms.

"Nearly one third of Canadian firms are owned or operated by women, but they are currently under-represented in the exporting community," said Mr. Marchi. "This mission will help women entrepreneurs to reach their export objectives and heighten awareness of their importance to the Canadian economy."

The mission is expected to attract more than 100 women entrepreneurs and will explore opportunities in the lucrative \$11.5 billion mid-Atlantic U.S. market. Canadian exports already make up a significant portion of this region's economy.

The more than 700 women-led businesses in Canada account for 1.7 million jobs and are creating new jobs at a rate four times the national average. Projections indicate that there will be 680 000 self-employed women by the year 2000.

The Minister made today's announcement during his remarks to the closing ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women Leaders' Network Meeting in Ottawa.

More information on the businesswomen's trade mission can be obtained from the Canadian Embassy in Washington by telephone at (202) 461-2460, extension 7302, or by fax at (202) 461-7612.

