

# FOUNDATION OF CANADIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

In Partnership With

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA**

And Produced by:

**KARTINI INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING INC.**

PRESENT

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CANADA**

*Through increased trade, women continue to improve the economic conditions of other women in the world, as well as of their own families.*



**May 2004**  
**Toronto, Canada**

## A Message from the Foundation

The Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs is Canada's only national charitable foundation committed to the advancement of women entrepreneurs in Canada through research, support and education.

The Foundation is the recipient of the 1999 Ontario Women's Directorate Partners for Change Award.

The objective of the Foundation is to improve and support the economic independence of women through the following activities:

- Undertake research on and about women entrepreneurs
- Promote entrepreneurship among women
- Create university scholarships for future women
- Provide education and support for women entrepreneurs
- To become the preeminent source of information about women entrepreneurs

This guide to **Best Practices in Canada** is an outline of successful initiatives that have been used to support the growth of women entrepreneurs in Canada. Originally tabled at the 2000 OECD meeting on women entrepreneurs this report has been updated to incorporate the most current thinking.

Our thanks go to the Business Development Bank of Canada who has actively supported the Foundation since its creation in 1995 and to their continuing commitment to recognizing the important contribution of women entrepreneurs to the economy. In addition we would also like to thank the efforts of Kartini International Inc for their dedication to this project.

Patricia L. Pape  
President  
Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs

## **A Message from the Business Development Bank of Canada**

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is a financial institution, wholly owned by the Government of Canada, which is playing a leadership role in delivering financial, investment and consulting services to Canadian small and medium-sized businesses.

BDC recognizes that women-led firms constitute one of the fastest growing segments in the economy and the Bank continuously works to build a long-term business relationship with women entrepreneurs to help them grow their business. BDC is proud to be recognized as one of the Canadian organizations whose expertise and experience can be shared as best practices.

For close to two decades, BDC has been proactive to facilitate financing and support the management capabilities of women entrepreneurs. The Bank is very grateful to the Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs for being the architect of this important guide of Best practices in Canada.

Edmée Métivier  
Executive Vice President  
Business Development Bank of Canada

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# **Best Practices to Support Women Entrepreneurs in Canada – 2004 Report**

'We foresee a Canada that is a magnet for capital and entrepreneurs from around the world. A Canada where the increasing number of women entrepreneurs has every opportunity to succeed and contribute a vital new dimension to our economy.' The Right Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, Speech from the Throne, 2 February 2004

## **I.0 Introduction**

In the 2000 Best Practices to Women Entrepreneurs in Canada Report, a sample of Canadian programs designed to support the establishment and growth of women-owned businesses in Canada was presented. The report highlighted best practices from the public, private, non-profit and academic sectors. The 2004 report is a combination of new initiatives implemented in the last four years as well as several on-going initiatives not included in the 2004 sample. It also documents recent changes and trends related to women-owned businesses. A summary of past best practices has been provided in the appendix to allow for quick reference and to showcase the variety of options and practices to support women's enterprises that exist in Canada.

The 2004 report has been organized by theme as opposed to by sector. These themes include:

1. Women's Enterprises as a Sector
2. National Policy
3. Financing
4. Promotion of Women's Enterprises
5. Training and Development
6. Networking
7. Technology
8. Support Services

This format reflects the actual needs women entrepreneurs have identified as their priorities for support. For the purposes of this report and to be selected for inclusion as a best practice, the initiative must:

- Be regional or national in scope or coverage;
- Have either an exclusive or major focus on women's enterprise development;
- Have a track record of achievement that is sustainable;
- Provide direct assistance to women business owners or would-be owners; and,
- Improve the environment for women's enterprise development generally.

The 2004 report has not included best practices to support specific groups of women's enterprises such as aboriginal women, youth, rural women, francophone women, women with disabilities and women from visible or ethnic minority groups because they may not meet the above criteria. A review of some of these initiatives can be found in the Report of the Prime Minister's Task Force and on its website at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur>.

## **I.1 Canadian Businesswomen in Numbers: An Overview**

In 1998, Canadian women owned approximately 35% of Canada's SMEs<sup>1</sup>. As of 2000, this figure had increased to 45%<sup>2</sup>. A Bank of Montreal study in 1996 found that women's enterprises created 1.7 million jobs in Canada (out of a total population base of approximately 30 million). By 2002, there were more than 821,000 women entrepreneurs in Canada<sup>3</sup> who contribute in excess of \$18.109 billion to the Canadian economy every year<sup>4</sup>.

The trend towards the rapid growth of self-employment in Canada continued, with self-employment having grown faster in the past 25 years than paid employment<sup>5</sup>. For women, since 1976, the average annual growth rate of self-employment has been 5.3%, compared with 2.2% for men<sup>6</sup>, meaning that women entered into self-employment twice as fast as men during the same period. This ratio increased even further recently with the number of women entrepreneurs growing by 8% between 1996 and 2001, compared with a 0.6% increase for men<sup>7</sup>.

Overall, between 1981 and 2001, the number of women entrepreneurs in Canada actually increased 208%, compared with a 38% increase for men<sup>8</sup>. By 2002, one-third of self-employed Canadians in 2002 were women<sup>9</sup> and women in Canada now make up a larger share of the self-employed than in any other country<sup>10</sup>. This dramatic increase starts to explain why so many different organizations in Canada have developed programs to support the growth of women's enterprises.

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Barker, 1998, *Gender and Lifelong Learning*, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Presentation by Industry Canada to the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. December 13, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Presentation by Statistics Canada to the Task Force, May 6, 2003

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ibid.

<sup>7</sup> 1981-2001 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada

<sup>8</sup> Presentation by Statistics Canada. op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation in Development (OECD). 2000. Cited in: Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. 2003.

The need for this support is evident because in 1998, self-employed women reported having an average of \$18,400 per year compared to the average of \$33,400 reported by self-employed men.<sup>11</sup> This ratio is also reflected in recent statistics showing that average annual sales for women's enterprises are less than half of those of men's. In 2000, women-owned SMEs averaged \$311,289 in annual sales, compared with \$654,294 in sales for firms owned by men<sup>12</sup>.

What has changed is that women are increasingly moving into multiple economic sectors of enterprise and are not restricted to more traditional service or retail areas. For example, in 2000, women held at least 50% ownership in 31% of knowledge-based industry firms and 31% of manufacturing firms<sup>13</sup>. The research also shows that women tend to own firms in slower growth and higher risk sectors, such as retail and service, in which access to financing is known to be more challenging for businesses to obtain<sup>14</sup>.

Other key characteristics of Canadian women in business include:

- Women-owned businesses are younger, with 28% having entered the market since 1996, compared with 23% of firms owned by men<sup>15</sup>.
- Only 9% of women entrepreneurs are involved in international business<sup>16</sup>.

When the analysis is refined to examine the situation of specific groups of women entrepreneurs within the Canadian population, it becomes clear that while each group faces the same challenges as women entrepreneurs in general, some demographic groups also encounter additional barriers and constraints. Four that still merit particular attention and support include rural women, low-income women, women with disabilities and aboriginal women.

Statistics Canada noted that:

- Women make up 38% of the self-employed Aboriginal population<sup>17</sup>.
- Between 1996 and 2001, the number of self-employed Aboriginal women increased by 58%, versus a 44% increase for men<sup>18</sup>.

Julie Burch, the former Director of Women and Rural Economic Development, in her presentation to the recent Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Church, 1998, *The Dirty Secret of Female Owners*.

<sup>12</sup> Industry Canada. op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. 2003. p. 26

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Presentation by Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to the Task Force (DFAIT), April 8, 2003. N.B. This statistic may not be a full reflection of the actual extent of women exporters due to the difficulty in capturing accurate data for women exporters in the service sector.

<sup>17</sup> Presentation by Aboriginal Canada to the Task Force, March 25, 2003

<sup>18</sup> ibid.

observed that rural women and women in low-income situations require assistance with all aspects of entrepreneurship. She noted that they face particular challenges because they:

- Bear the majority of family responsibilities and constantly have to balance work and family demands;
- Often require supports such as childcare and access to transportation while participating in community economic development initiatives;
- Face cultural barriers that are more predominant in rural communities, such as a traditional and somewhat restricted view of women's roles;
- Are often hindered by geographic and regulatory barriers;
- Tend to be risk averse and start their businesses slowly without borrowing a large sum of capital;
- Are less inclined to use business growth strategies, such as exporting their goods or services, strategic networking, business alliances, and seeking business loans; and,
- Continue to fight systemic and institutional barriers, such as limited access to bank services and restrictive criteria related to access to government programs.

Ms. Burch also noted that women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period also require the incorporation of life skills coaching into their entrepreneurship programs to help build their self-confidence and develop strategic planning skills. Many rural and low-income women also face additional challenges in obtaining loans to establish their businesses as they do not have suitable or sufficient personal financial assets<sup>19</sup>.

From this brief overview, it can be seen that:

- Canadian businesswomen's contribution to the economy is quite significant;
- Their entry into self-employment and entrepreneurship is a relatively recent phenomenon;
- While all women entrepreneurs face some distinctive gender-based challenges, specific groups of women, particularly low income, rural, and aboriginal women plus women with disabilities have to fight to overcome even greater degrees of discrimination and disadvantage;
- Canadian women often go into business for non-business reasons – such as, a need or desire to balance work and family in a way that is currently not possible in a salaried job; and,

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<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. 2003. page 41



- Canadian women entrepreneurs generally still have hard work ahead of them to catch up to male-owned business income and sales levels, particularly with regard to exports<sup>20</sup>.

The growth in women entrepreneurs in Canada is not just a passing trend and their contribution to the economy demonstrates that they are force to be reckoned with.

## **II. Women's Enterprises as a Sector**

Although women's enterprises can be found in every imaginable sector in Canada, to support women's enterprises adequately it is also necessary to regard them as an economic sector or cluster in and of itself<sup>21</sup>. Although women's SME's offer a diverse range of goods and services, they still share many common characteristics in terms of their business approaches, strategies and operations that are gender-based in nature. Therefore there are two ways to approach support for women-owned businesses. One is to integrate them in the more general sectoral approaches that already exist. These tend to be organized around the strategies and approach more commonly found in men's enterprises. The other is to treat women's enterprises as a distinct economic cluster that has its own characteristics and patterns of economic growth that need to be taken into account to maximize their contribution to the national economy.

Research shows that the gender specific characteristics exhibited by women's SMEs as an economic cluster include the following. They:

- Have a strong commitment to their local community, particularly in terms of sourcing and employment;
- Perceive themselves to be at the centre of their business organization with teams and working groups emanating from that central position, rather than develop rigid hierarchical structures in which they are positioned at the top;
- Have a strong commitment to a vision that encompasses their private and business lives. This means that they constantly strive to develop sustainable business with manageable growth rather than aiming for immediate high growth and overtrading;
- Focus upon the personal relationship aspects of business contacts, which supports long-term ambitions, (which include high turnover and profitability);
- Develop contacts through active networking, which they perceive as a rich business resource; and,

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<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. 2003. page 41

<sup>21</sup> Peebles, Dana. 2003. ACBO Proposal Application to Ontario Women's Directorate.

- Grow their business through a range of relationship alliances that frequently enable the creation of more businesses and trade. This results in the slower growth of women-run businesses, as measured traditionally by increased number of employees, but it also generally fosters much more sustainable growth<sup>22</sup>.

Other key factors that define women's enterprises as an economic cluster include:

- Women still face a degree of gender discrimination in the business community that goes beyond the traditional challenges facing all SMEs in terms of gaining access to credit, information, training, markets and technology;
- Women's dual role as business owners and as the primary family caregiver means that they generally have less time to devote to training and related activities needed to maintain the competitiveness of their businesses; and,
- Women whose businesses are at the relatively early stages of development generally respond best to receiving advice and mentoring from other women entrepreneurs.

To provide effective services to support the establishment and growth of women's enterprises, it is important to first understand what the general characteristics of the women's business sector. It is also critical to have access to sex-disaggregated data related to women's enterprises so that planners, policymakers, and program designers can work effectively and with accurate data. For this reason the first organization presented in this review of best practices is Statistics Canada, the federal government body responsible for collecting all pertinent statistics and information used to assist in program and policy planning across the country.

## **II.1 Statistics Canada**

### **Issue: The Need for Sex-Disaggregated Data**

#### **Program Description**

Statistics Canada is the government body that produces statistics about Canada's population, resources, economy, society and culture. Providing statistics is a federal responsibility in Canada, and Statistic Canada is the institution legislated to serve this function for the country at the national, provincial and territorial levels. The information they collect and distribute is used by elected representatives, businesses, unions and non-profit organizations, as well as by individual Canadians to make planning, budget and

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<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Muir. "Thinking Outside the Box". Cited in *Trade Matters, Best Practices & Success Stories*, Commonwealth Secretariat. 2002. London; Commonwealth Secretariat.

marketing decisions in diverse sectors.<sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada conducts a Census every five years as well as has conducted over 350 surveys on diverse aspects of Canadian life<sup>24</sup>.

What distinguishes Statistics Canada is the fact that it systematically collects sex-disaggregated data. Many other countries do not do this, and the lack of sex-disaggregated data makes it challenging to measure the actual contribution of women's enterprises to the economy and to assess what kind of public sector support they need.

Statistics Canada has been highly innovative in the definition of what constitutes work and has been conducting pilot studies in Eastern Canada to assess the dollar value and extent of women's and men's unpaid work (as volunteers, in family enterprises and in the home as caregivers for children, the sick and the elderly). Eventually this measurement system will be extended to the entire country so that this data can be taken into account in the allocation of national budgets and in decision-making.

### **Successful Program Elements**

Statistics Canada also publishes a gender-based statistical report entitled "Women in Canada". This report provides an overview of the situation of Canadian women in statistics as well as detailed statistics related to women's share of the population, their health, education, family status, income and earnings, housing and household facilities, their relationship to the criminal justice system, and statistics about the condition of immigrant women, visible minorities, aboriginal women and seniors.

Statistics Canada also gathered specific data about women's enterprises in Canada to present as critical background information for the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. This presentation has been summarized in Appendix 1.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. The collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data is essential to support the development of program and policy initiatives for the establishment and growth of women's enterprises in Canada;
2. An analysis of sex-disaggregated data regarding women in business often dispels myths and stereotypes about the sectors where businesswomen predominate, and the characteristics and growth of women-owned businesses; and,
3. Sex-disaggregated data can also provide a valuable source of information for companies that wish to target the women's market.

### **Contact Information**

Contact information for Statistics Canada and all other best practices included in the report can be found in Appendix 3.

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<sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.ca/>. April 8, 2004

<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada website: [op.cit](http://op.cit).

### **III. Policy Support**

Government policy has a significant impact on the growth of SMEs and women-owned enterprises. While governments do not create jobs or businesses, they do create the environment in which business and in particular women-owned businesses can thrive. Since women owned businesses still generate half the income and sales of men's enterprises they are particularly vulnerable to policy changes. By the same token, they are also quite responsive to policy change and different levels of government can use policy as an effective tool to support business growth. Therefore it is **critical** for governments to understand the different challenges that face women's enterprises and the different strategies women use to grow their businesses. Without this fundamental understanding it is very easy for the government to develop gender-biased policy that has either a much greater positive impact for men's enterprises or actually has a negative impact on women's enterprises.

In recognition of the growing impact of women entrepreneurs in Canada, the Prime Minister established the first ever Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs in 2002. This initiative stands out as an exemplary best practice which included consultations with all stakeholders across the country and online, including women entrepreneurs, associations, government agencies and departments at all levels, financial institutions and members of Parliament.

#### ***III.1 Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs***

##### **Issue: Need for Women Entrepreneurs Input in Policy Development**

##### **Program Description<sup>25</sup>**

The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs was the first ever Government of Canada task force specifically created, to ascertain the contributions and needs of Canadian businesswomen. In the Terms of Reference of the Task Force, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien stated that:

‘Our success depends on our ability to marshal the skills and ingenuity of all of our people. As an important source of talent and creativity, women entrepreneurs have much to contribute. However...women entrepreneurs face unique challenges, particularly in accessing the capital and expertise required to grow new businesses.’<sup>26</sup>

The Prime Minister appointed three Members of Parliament and two Senators to oversee this work:

- Sarmite D. Bulte, MP (Chair)

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<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs website. [www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur](http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur)

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

- Honourable Catherine Callbeck, Senator (Vice-Chair)
- Claude Duplain, MP
- Honourable Ross Fitzpatrick, Senator
- Karen Redman, MP.

The mandate of the Task Force was to:

- Examine the unique challenges faced by women-owned businesses by considering the factors required to encourage women's entrepreneurship, assessing existing resources, identifying gaps and areas for possible future action, and evaluating best international practices and their appropriateness to the Canadian context; and,
- Provide advice to the federal government on broad policy issues in women's entrepreneurship, both domestic and international and to make suggestions for specific initiatives that the government should consider, such as research and trade<sup>27</sup>.

## **Successful Program Elements**

### ***Reach:***

The Task Force traveled to all ten Canadian provinces plus the Yukon. It went to twenty-one cities across Canada, held thirty-eight consultations in those cities and heard from over a thousand people and organizations in an eleven-month period. It also traveled to Washington, D.C., New York City, N.Y. and London, England to investigate best practices in those countries and at the United Nations. The Task Force heard from hundreds of women entrepreneurs and their associations, as well as from organizations that provide services to women entrepreneurs<sup>28</sup>. The Task Force also received submissions from groups representing Aboriginal women, disabled women, rural women, home-based businesses, immigrant women and disadvantaged women. They also received hundreds of written submissions online from women entrepreneurs all across Canada who wanted to share their experiences. An unanticipated bonus of the website was that it served the purpose of a portal connecting women across the country by giving them the opportunity to make submissions but to also connect with other women across Canada<sup>29</sup>.

The Task Force also requested presentations from officials from twenty-one (21) government departments and agencies to determine what programs currently exist and to identify 'gaps' and misconceptions. They invited the major Canadian financial institutions, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters to appear before them and/or provide written submissions. Additional presentations came from Canadian academics

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<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. op.cit.

<sup>28</sup> ibid.

<sup>29</sup> These electronic submissions can be viewed online at [www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur](http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur).

who specialized in women's enterprises and from two of the major Canadian chartered banks.

In addition, the Task Force wrote to various departments of the provincial and territorial governments and to the Economic Development Divisions of each City in which it held consultations to ascertain whether or not they had any programs specifically designed for or targeted at women entrepreneurs. The Task Force received responses from nine provinces and territories and one response from the City of Toronto.

***Scope:***

The Task Force used this consultative process to consider the following questions:

1. More women than ever are starting up their own businesses. What challenges are faced by women when starting a business? What public or private sector opportunities are available to help overcome those challenges? What challenges are faced when expanding a business and how can they be overcome?
2. The federal government is looking to advance the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the Canadian economy. What steps must the federal government take to promote initiatives that would assist women entrepreneurs? Are there areas with significant potential for women entrepreneurs that have been overlooked or underdeveloped? Are there any existing international practices that should be adopted in Canada?
3. Businesses are constantly looking to expand their markets. However, achieving global business success remains one of the key challenges business owners face. What unique challenges are faced by women entrepreneurs in exporting their products or services?
4. Innovation and learning have been identified as priorities for the federal government. How can the federal government ensure that women entrepreneurs are full participants in Canada's innovation policy, research and development, and technology agenda?<sup>30</sup>

It was during the presentation from Statistics Canada that the Task Force learned that in 2002, there were 821,000 self-employed women in Canada, of whom almost 75% worked on their own. They were able to use this data to estimate the contribution of Canadian women entrepreneurs to the national economy as being in excess of \$18 billion in 2002<sup>31</sup>.

Task Force members also noted that this initiative caught the attention of the international community and that they received several invitations to speak about the Task Force at

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<sup>30</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> ibid.

different international events and institutions, including the African Development Bank. Consequently, before the Task Force's consultative process was even completed it served to profile the importance the Canadian government was allocating to program and policy support for women's enterprises as well as a role model and best practice for other countries. The Task Force also documented Best Practices both in Canada and internationally. Of particular interest, is the fact that the Task Force did not receive any specific funding to carry out its mandate, including travel. Task Force members were so committed to this historic project that all costs were covered from their personal budgets and from funds raised from their colleagues in the House of Commons and Senate.

***Impact:***

The true energy and impact that this Task Force created was witnessed when more than 500 women traveled at their own expense from every province in Canada to participate in the presentation of the Report to the Prime Minister of Canada on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, 2003 on Capital Hill.

The Task Force made 77 specific recommendations to the Canadian public sector. These recommendations were primarily related to the need for:

- Increased access to capital, information and government programs;
- More in-depth research on all economic aspects relating to women entrepreneurs;
- Increased access to government procurement;
- Increased access social safety net programs, including childcare and maternity/paternity benefits;
- More mentoring programs, networking opportunities, and business skills training;
- Increased promotion of women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, both nationally and internationally;
- Policy and program supports to encourage women entrepreneurs to export and to train them to be "export ready";
- Canada to actively participate in international fora to promote women entrepreneurs, such as the OECD;
- A voice and a "one-stop shopping" portal for women entrepreneurs;
- A re-evaluation of the service sector; and,
- The annunciation of a new vision and appreciation of self-employment.

The Prime Minister's response to these recommendations was to make the following commitments:

- To extend the Women's Enterprise Initiative funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada;

- To commit to multi-year funding for the Women in Business Initiative in Atlantic Canada;
- To create two new Women Enterprise Centres in Ontario and Quebec. The federal government will instruct Industry Canada to work with women entrepreneurs on the issue of micro lending in these centres;
- To organize a national Women’s Economic Forum to extend the work of the Task Force;
- To create a Canadian Women’s Innovation Award as a part of the Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Awards and help raise the profile of women entrepreneurs and encourage young women to guide their own careers;
- To expand its research and publications program to better meet the needs of women entrepreneurs and the federal government will ensure that this program provides policymakers with information about emerging issues;
- To raise entrepreneurship in future federal-provincial and territorial meetings so that all levels of government are aware of the concerns of women entrepreneurs;
- To continue its focus on Aboriginal women entrepreneurs to identify their needs and develop a business planning guide to help Aboriginal women break into new markets;
- To ask the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board to examine the situation that Aboriginal women face in the field of entrepreneurship; and,
- To provide Canadian women entrepreneurs with opportunities to expand their markets beyond our borders, the federal government will ensure that women entrepreneurs continue to be represented in Canada’s trade promotion activities and on trade missions<sup>32</sup>.

In the 2004 federal budget, the federal government allocated funds to several initiatives originally recommended by the Prime Minister’s Task Force. These included:

- Under “Caring for our Children” a pledge of an additional \$150 million over the next two years to accelerate implementation of the Multilateral Framework on

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<sup>32</sup> News Release. Nov. 3, 2003. “*Prime Minister Applauds Report of Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs and Announces Immediate Response*”



Early Learning and Child Care and provide up to 48,000 new child care spaces. (Refer to Task Force Recommendation 4.04);

- Under “A New Deal for Communities” a pledge to “work to widen the scope of programs currently available to small and medium sized enterprises to include social enterprises”;
- Under “Lifelong Learning” a government commitment to “update Labour Market programming to better reflect the realities of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as the growth of self-employment and the need for continuous upgrading of skills”;
- Under “Regional and Rural Development” a call for “economic development through the regional agencies where the focus must be on strengthening the sinews of an economy for the 21st century”. (Refer to Task Force recommendations 1.06, 1.07 and 1.08);
- A pledge of an increase of \$270 million of venture capital through the Business Development Bank and the Farm Credit Corporation, specifically to increase small business access to Research & Development tax credits, ease tax rules for start-up businesses; and,
- A commitment to expand accessibility to government tendering for smaller enterprises, and bolstering the usefulness and reach of Community Futures organizations and other instruments of regional development and diversification. (Refer to Task Force recommendations in Sections 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9).

The “Science and Technology” section of the Throne Speech indicated that small, innovative Canadian firms face two key obstacles – that of access to adequate early stage financing, and the capacity to conduct the research and development needed to commercialize their ideas and really grow their businesses. To address this issue, the government made a commitment to help overcome these obstacles, for example, by building on the venture financing capabilities of the Business Development Bank.” (Refer to Task Force recommendation 3.04)<sup>33</sup>.

The Task Force was essentially designed as a consultative process to provide input into the development of future Canadian government policy. However it has also served to:

- Give the needs and contributions of Canadian women’s enterprises a much higher profile than they have experienced previously;

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<sup>33</sup> News Release. Feb. 3, 2004. “*Recommendations from Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs Highlighted Throughout Throne Speech*”. News Release. Apr. 8, 2004. “*Recommendations from Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs Featured throughout Budget*”.

- Increase coverage of the priority issues affecting Canadian businesswomen in the media;
- Provide a public forum for many businesswomen whose voices are generally not heard by government and other institutions;
- Foster the gathering of additional data on the characteristics and contributions of Canadian women's enterprises;
- Provide a forum in Canadian Parliament to raise the priority issues for support identified by Canadian women's enterprises;
- Become the public face of the Government of Canada to women who had never spoken to or met a Member of Parliament or Senator before; and,
- Highlight how Canada's once progressive social support policies had not kept pace with the changing demographics and work and employment trends of women in Canada.

The Prime Minister's Task Force was an overwhelming success in many ways. Its chair, Sarmite Bulte, sums up this success in a simple, but heartfelt statement that reflects her own deep commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs.

“I am gratified that so much of our work on the Task Force has now become government policy. The hard work that went into the report is now going to assist thousands of small businesses and entrepreneurs across the country.”

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Having access to the standard federally-sponsored benefits available to salaried workers is a priority need for Canadian women entrepreneurs, particularly those benefits related to maternity and paternity leave, compassionate leave and employment insurance;
2. A highly way the federal government can support women's enterprises is to purchase their goods and services. Canadian businesswomen felt that the government procurement system favoured male owned-large businesses and that women's businesses, although offering a similar or higher quality of service, due to their size or relative newness to the market, find themselves disproportionately unsuccessful in winning bids for contracts from the public sector;
3. There is a strong need to establish an overarching Office of Women's Business at the federal level to help coordinate national, regional and provincial initiatives to support women's enterprises and provide coherent and integrated policy development across multiple government departments;

4. To maximize the work of such an ambitious mandate, women must be organized and mount a coordinated, effective media campaign to ensure maximum coverage and outreach; and,
5. The work of the Task Force is only the beginning of an on-going policy change! To ensure that the recommendations are implemented, interested stakeholders, including women entrepreneurs, must remain involved and committed and where necessary maintain the pressure on their bureaucrats and parliamentarians to follow up on their implementation.

## **IV. Financing**

Obtaining financing to support their business establishment and growth still remains a challenge to women regardless of their country or location. The reasons for this are multiple. In Canada, women, on average, still earn one-third less than men. This is in part because of their continued concentration in female-dominated industries and sectors, and in part because of the general undervaluing of the work women do. Women's lower earning power combined with the need to withdraw from the labour force to bear and raise children for periods of time are also factors that contribute to women having less access to personal savings and assets they can use to help finance their businesses. Until recently many new women entrepreneurs found that they were required to have their spouses co-sign loans to establish their business ventures. As many women still remain outside of the traditional power networks they also have fewer opportunities to help them obtain venture capital. Since their businesses are often smaller they also require less of a cash injection for start-up or expansion purposes. This can also affect their credit record, particularly when they reach a stage when they need to borrow larger sums.

Banks still assess risk primarily on the basis of whether or not the potential borrower has assets that can be used to provide collateral for loans as well as on an assessment of past credit behaviour. Canadian women still have significantly less assets than men and if they have withdrawn from the labour force for several years to have children or to attend to other family matters, including working without wages in a family business, their lack of a recent borrowing record can also lead to a negative assessment of their ability to repay a business loan. The irony is that virtually any woman can obtain a credit card with a \$5,000 - \$10,000 line of credit at a high rate of interest which is essentially a form of unsecured credit, but still face hurdles obtaining a small business loan of the same size at a lower interest rate. Hence, many women still use this expensive form of credit to start and support their businesses. Some Canadian banks and financial institutions have responded to this problem by setting up special equity and loan funds for women entrepreneurs that take these factors into account and therefore make it somewhat easier for the women entrepreneurs to obtain credit. Others, such as the Royal Bank of Canada, have also set up 'women's programs to help educate women in how to apply for loans and deal with banks as well as train their own staff on how to deal with women clients and potential clients.

However, in general there is still a disproportionate number of Canadian women still rely upon the "3 F's" of business borrowing – "family, friends and fools.". Overall, obtaining financing remains a serious challenge for many women entrepreneurs in Canada. This issue was a common one for the women entrepreneurs who made presentations at the Task Force consultations. The Task Force report recognized the seriousness and universality of this issue for women entrepreneurs across by including ten recommendations about specific ways the Canadian government could help improve access to financing for Canadian women entrepreneurs.

## **IV.1 Business Development Bank of Canada**

### ***Enhancement of BDC's presence in the Women in Business Market***

Based on the previous observations, the BDC has sought to develop financial and related services to meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. Through these services the BDC has been able to achieve the following:

- BDC activity for women entrepreneurs has increased substantially and now stands at \$1.3 billion as at March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003<sup>34</sup>;
- The women in business portfolio consists of 5,000 women entrepreneurs, almost double the number since 1995 when women entrepreneurs represented 17 percent of the portfolio. Today they account for 23 percent of BDC's lending customers<sup>35</sup>; and,
- In the Bank's leading-edge knowledge-based industries (KBI) investment portfolio, 7 percent of company presidents are women and overall they hold more than one-third of critical management positions. In the fiscal year 2003, 18 of BDC's 61 investee companies (30 percent) had women occupying senior management positions.

### ***Quasi-Equity Fund for Women Entrepreneurs***

In October of 2003, the Bank launched a new \$25 million fund targeted to women entrepreneurs to increase the availability of financing for fast-growing, women-owned firms in Canada. The creation of this fund was a direct result of a pre-budget consultation and recommendations from women entrepreneurs that the Task Force organized with the then Minister of Finance, the Honourable John Manley. This quasi-equity fund will also serve to leverage additional private equity for the women in business market segment. BDC established this fund because it recognized a need in the market – that there are a growing number of companies in Canada headed by women entrepreneurs that are experiencing significant growth. BDC's initiative provides additional financing for those fast-growing firms that fall outside the risk levels of traditional sources but still meet the fund's investment criteria. The Bank will be assessing the success of this initiative annually.

The fund has the following specific characteristics:

- Eligibility criteria: Women entrepreneurs who want to expand an existing business or seek new market opportunities outside Canada may apply for this financing. They need to be profitable companies with the commitment of shareholders and good financial controls and reporting;

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<sup>34</sup> Data for the fiscal year 2004 were not disclosed at the time of printing

<sup>35</sup> Idem

- Eligible activity: The fund may be applied towards: 1) acquisitions, management buy-outs, expansion, commercialization programs, intangible asset financing, working capital; 2) insufficient working capital to finance growth; shareholders wanting to minimize ownership dilution in raising equity; improving company capitalization;
- Targeted industries: Manufacturing, aerospace, health, software, Internet, communications, plastics, forestry, food, furniture, logistics, retail (if the company owns more than 50% of product brands sold in the stores); and,
- Definition of women-led businesses: 50% or more of a company's ownership, or female CEO or president where women have a minority interest.

The Bank has also developed lending programs for women who are starting their own business and understands that support for new firms is crucial since failure rates are high during the first year after start-up. In 2002, the Bank launched its Co-Vision Loan program to support start-ups and which provides up to \$100,000 of flexible long-term financing. BDC developed this solution with the characteristics of women-led firms in mind. Consequently, it focuses on sectors where these firms show a strong presence such as service and tourism. In the fiscal year 2003 (ending March 31<sup>st</sup> 2003), the number of loans for women entrepreneurs in the start-up stage increased by 66% (versus 25% for men). From April 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2003, the Bank authorized \$4 million in Co-Vision loans to women in business.

### ***Development of Quality Service Offerings***

- BDC undertook several precursor initiatives for women entrepreneurs such as the successful Step-In and Step-Up<sup>36</sup> programs in the early 1990s, comprising of group training, individual consulting sessions and mentoring. These fora for women entrepreneurs were considered “revolutionary” at the time. Groups of aspiring women entrepreneurs were paired with and mentored by successful women business owners. These programs showed aspiring women entrepreneurs how to get their businesses “up and running”. Recognizing that there was a need for such programs, BDC transferred the licenses for the programs to third parties at the end of the 1990's (e.g., the Network of Businesswomen of Quebec / Réseau des femmes d'affaires du Québec and SOLWBO Inc. in Ontario and Western Canada). In addition, the Bank has been in discussions with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) in Eastern Canada and women entrepreneur organizations to ensure that *Step-up* programs are also established in that region.
- Understanding of the needs of women entrepreneurs, BDC has evolved with the market. As a result, they are now focussing on growth and exports. Their current and future strategies reflect these new market realities:

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<sup>36</sup> The Step-Up Program is described in more detail as a best practice in the mentoring of women entrepreneurs in section VI.1

- BDC sponsored the first Canadian Springboard Growth Capital Workshop for women entrepreneurs held in Toronto in October 2003<sup>37</sup>;
- Given that access to capital is always a challenge, BDC piloted a *Financial Fitness Summit* to help women in business enhance their financial acumen; and,
- Another initiative called *Passport to Global Growth* demonstrates the benefits of “going global.” Through counselling and mentoring, the program provides women entrepreneurs with “do-able” tactics to effectively penetrate global markets.

### ***Build and Leverage Strategic Alliances***

- One of BDC’s main strategic partnership initiatives played a key role in the establishment of the first Canadian chapter of the Women Presidents’ Organization (WPO) in 2001 in Toronto. The WPO, based in New York, is an international peer advisory network of outstanding entrepreneurial women. BDC has also been instrumental in the establishment of further chapters in Canada.
- BDC is proactive in the women in business market segment. The Bank has been partnering with other women entrepreneurs’ organizations across the country to gain better insights into their needs as well as to provide businesswomen with an opportunity to network and expand their business horizons.

### ***Create Internal Marketing and Communication Strategies***

- After showing strong internal leadership at the national level (notably through the establishment of a national women’s business champion), BDC established internal Women’s BizLink Teams in some of their key branches at the regional level to serve as catalysts to leverage a larger share of the Canadian women entrepreneurs market. These regional teams champion women’s business issues at the local level, get involved in regional women’s organizations and offer support to women wanting to expand their businesses. Through local initiatives, the Bank has increased the intensity of its already wide networking capability, with continued support and involvement in workshops and conferences, in collaboration with other important organizations that support women in business in Canada ( women entrepreneurs associations and centres, universities, other financial institutions); and,
- In early 2003, BDC designated and launched a special section of its web site for women entrepreneurs. This section provides information on business management and promotes successful women entrepreneurs as role models as well as business advice, appropriate tools and articles of interest that can serve as a resource for women entrepreneurs.

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<sup>37</sup> Spring Board Enterprises is a U.S. not-for-profit organization that has had great success in preparing and showcasing women-led business seeking equity capital. BDC is supporting the adaptation of this model in the Canadian context

## **Lessons Learned**

### ***Re Market Segmentation:***

1. BDC has recognized differences in the characteristics of women-led firms based on the degree of ownership of the business.
  - Businesses that are majority-owned by women entrepreneurs have a stronger presence in the retail and service sectors whereas businesses with 50% female/50% male ownership are more prevalent in manufacturing and knowledge-based industries;
  - Firms in this latter sub-segment (50/50) tend to be larger in terms of the number of employees; and,
  - These differences allowed the BDC to segment the women-led business market in order to respond to different needs they may have.

### ***Re Access to Financing:***

2. Women entrepreneurs are characteristically different from their male counterparts in how they finance their businesses:
  - Businesswomen are more cautious than men when it comes to financing their business; in fact, they are less inclined to turn to a financial institution, especially when they own the majority of the business;
  - Women entrepreneurs in this sub-segment often take on less debt and are more likely to use their personal savings to start their business or their own capital to run it;
  - Because they are often smaller, majority female-owned businesses have more limited financial needs. However, although women are generally less inclined than men to apply for financing, when they do, they are as likely to get it; and,<sup>38</sup>
  - Because of these characteristics there is a benefit in working to enhance the knowledge of women entrepreneurs on the advantages of external financing as well as the best sources of financing for their needs and ways to secure financing.

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<sup>38</sup> According to a study by Industry Canada, majority female-owned SMEs had a loan approval rate of 82%, which is similar to the approval rate for majority male-owned businesses (80%). Source: Industry Canada, *SME Financing in Canada*, 2002.



***Re Time Constraints:***

3. There is still evidence that women in general tend to take on a larger share of the family responsibilities. Combined with business responsibilities this often leads to critical time constraints and less time to network. Therefore any networking opportunities organized or sponsored by financial institutions need to address the priority needs of the women entrepreneurs involved.

## **V. Promotion of Women's Enterprises**

### ***Promoting Economic Growth within Canada***

Women's enterprises in Canada are promoted by a wide range of organizations – chief among them are diverse federal and provincial public sector institutions and several chartered banks. The government institutions often use specialized support programs to foster economic growth within specific regions or among specific demographic groups as a strategy to help overcome the particular challenges experienced by these regions and population groups. Generally, government programs promote women's entrepreneurship “as a viable option for women and to increase the visibility of women's entrepreneurial activity.”<sup>39</sup> They see this as one key to sustainable economic growth throughout Canada.

Some governments have focused on increasing public awareness of successful women entrepreneurs as role models as a strategy to inspire women to become involved in business. It is also a means of recognizing the contribution of leaders within the women's business community. To do this, they have used television documentaries, video profiles, print profiles, and conferences on and about women entrepreneurs<sup>40</sup>.

Often these promotion activities are conducted on a regional level by federal government organizations such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) in Eastern Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) in Western Canada. Given Canada's immense geographical size there are significant economic and cultural differences between the different regions and demographic groups. These regional development agencies are able to take these differences into account in the development of their programs.

Canada's chartered banks are also involved in the promotion of women's enterprises for a variety of reasons. They see the support of women's businesses as a good return on their investment as well as an effective way to advertise the diversity of their banking services. Women's businesses in Canada are on the increase; they have a lower failure rate than men's enterprises and have a consistently good track record re loan repayment. Therefore women's businesses make good customers. The banks also see their support as an opportunity to be good corporate citizens and give something back to the communities, which they serve.

Several academic institutions also play a lead role in promoting women's enterprises. These include the University of Toronto which helped initiate the annual Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award with the support of the Bank of Montreal, Simon Fraser University's Scotiabank Resource Centre for Women Entrepreneurs<sup>41</sup> and

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<sup>39</sup> Annette St-Onge and Lois Stevenson. 2002. *Creating An Entrepreneurial Environment To Foster The Start-Up And Growth Of Women-Owned Enterprises: Best Practices From Atlantic Canada*. p. 5

<sup>40</sup> St. Onge and Stevenson. *Op.cit.* p 5.

<sup>41</sup> Both of these programs are described in the 2000 Report Best Practices Summary in Appendix 2

Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax which runs a center for women in business with significant support from the Bank of Montreal.

In general some of the most successful initiatives to promote women's enterprises in Canada have been joint initiatives between public and private sector institutions or between the academic and private sectors. The following are some examples of successful joint initiatives at the regional level.

## ***V.1 Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency***

### **Issue: Need for Government Promotion of Women's Enterprises**

#### **Program Description**

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) is a federal government agency based in Eastern Canada. Its goal is to improve the economy of Atlantic Canadian communities through the development of business and job opportunities. As part of their programming, they offer a variety of services to businesswomen in the region, including:

- Support to organizations involved in business counseling or advisory support to women;
- Dissemination of business information, and raising the profile of women business owners;
- Partnerships with a variety of groups and associations to assist women in improving their entrepreneurial competence through business training and mentoring activities; and,
- Support of numerous conferences for women business-owners, giving them the opportunity to hear from leading experts in various business topics and to increase networking opportunities with their peers.

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The ACOA has also either initiated or supported a number of important programs to promote women's enterprises in the region. These include awards, broadcast media, print publications, conferences and conventions<sup>42</sup>.

#### ***Awards***

The ACOA worked with the Association of Atlantic Women Business Owners (AABWO) and the BDC to help implement two regional awards programs. The first was a Hall of Fame for Women Entrepreneurs that recognized businesswomen who had

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<sup>42</sup> The sections entitled "awards and print publications are adapted from a direct excerpt from: St. Onge and Stevenson. op.cit. pp. 5 - 7

pioneered the establishment of their own businesses over 30 years ago. There were four award winners - one from each of the four Atlantic Provinces and they ranged in age from 70 – 96. They represented women, “who against all odds had managed to create a livelihood for their families or to pursue a dream, at a time when women faced extreme social and economic barriers to economic activity of this kind.” It was hoped that their inspiring stories would serve as role models for younger women entrepreneurs. These three organizations also wanted to recognize the legacy of female entrepreneurs in the region. The award also helped legitimize women’s entrepreneurship as a mainstream economic activity.

The second award was the addition of a category for ‘woman entrepreneur of the year’ in the general Atlantic Entrepreneurship Award process. Winners of these awards were featured in print profiles and often used as speakers at conference events. The Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year and the national Canadian Woman Entrepreneur Awards programs also subsequently started to use this pool of regional winners and finalists as a source from which to nominate women for their own award programs.

### ***Print Publications***

The ACOA was among the first government agency to compile and publish profiles of women business owners to serve as role models for other women entrepreneurs. The first of these publications, *Profiles of Success: Women Entrepreneurs of Atlantic Canada*, was distributed in 1991 and included profiles of the first winners of the Atlantic Hall of Fame for Women Entrepreneurs plus the speakers of a major Convention for Women Entrepreneurs held in October 1991. An unexpected impact of these publications was that they would up being used by different corporations and organizations to identify a list of ‘bottom-line oriented’ women who could be invited to sit on the Boards of government and private sector agencies and organizations. They also served to call attention to what had previously been a largely invisible group of competent and successful women entrepreneurs. Since that time, several other organizations, associations, government agencies, and media have produced similar publications. These publications also helped dispel myths about the growth potential of women-owned firms.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Government financial and technical support at both the federal and provincial levels provided a significant catalyst towards coordinating initiatives to promote women’s enterprises in Atlantic Canada. This often involved multi-agency cooperation and multiple levels of government support;
2. The use of awards to profile the achievements of women entrepreneurs of all ages is a highly effective strategy that has multiple spin-off impacts and benefits.

3. It is critical that federal and provincial governments provide sufficient financial support for the organization of conferences that can offer premium programs that attract substantial interest from women entrepreneurs<sup>43</sup>;
4. While women business owners highly value learning and networking opportunities, in many cases they find it challenging to access these advantages without the provision of travel and registration subsidies<sup>44</sup>;
5. In the long term, women entrepreneurs need to adopt a learning culture in their organizations and ensure that their annual budgets include significant amounts of training opportunities for themselves and their staff;
6. Policymakers must continue to financially support events and activities focused on the development of women business owner's ability to contribute to their local economies<sup>45</sup>; and,
7. There is a tendency for business support programs to focus on start-up services. However, there is an equal if not more compelling demand for support services that focus on business growth strategies.

### ***Promoting Export Development***

Motivating Canadian women to take a serious look at trading beyond their immediate community or province is often a challenge. The reasons for this are multiple. Most women entrepreneurs are already extremely busy and developing an export market takes a lot of time and investment, especially in the service sector where most women's enterprises are concentrated. There is also the "fear factor" – a wariness of the unknown, a fear of failure and potential financial losses. Women entrepreneurs may also not know how to go about gaining access to an export market.

Currently most women entrepreneurs focus on a local or Canadian market and tend not to think globally. For many women entrepreneurs success is not necessarily defined in terms of becoming a large business through the growth that often comes with international expansion. They generally have a lot of other things to deal with and developing export markets are not necessarily a high priority. Women entrepreneurs also tend to be concentrated in the service industries where face-to-face contact can be crucial for success and to help build strategic alliances. Expansion into new markets may take more time than they have at their disposal. Women's family responsibilities can also make travel more difficult to accommodate than would be the case for most male entrepreneurs<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> St. Onge & Stevenson. *op. cit.* . p. 6

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* p. 6

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* p. 6

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Susan Baka. Board member OWIT – Toronto. Member of Step-Up Program. April 13, 2004.

To overcome these different fears and challenges, it is critical to provide different kinds of support to promote women's enterprises within an export context. The Organization of Women in International Trade – Toronto is as an example of a best practice in this area.

## **V.4 Organization of Women in International Trade -Toronto**

### **Program Description<sup>47</sup>**

The Organization of Women in International Trade – Toronto (OWIT-T)<sup>48</sup> was established in 2000 as the first Canadian chapter of a worldwide organization dedicated to advancing global trade opportunities for women. It was founded as a follow-up initiative to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Women's Trade Mission to the U.S. in 1997 and the 1999 Canada/U.S.A. Businesswomen's Trade Summit to maintain the momentum created by these two ground-breaking events. OWIT is a non-profit professional organization that provides networking and professional development opportunities. Although the emphasis is on women, membership includes both women and men who work in all facets of international trade. OWIT-Toronto is an entirely volunteer-run association and its Board includes both women entrepreneurs and government trade representatives and officials.

OWIT-Toronto's *raison d'être* is to advocate to women business owners about the importance of exploring international markets and to encourage Canadian businesswomen to export their goods and services. While the global market presents endless opportunities for business growth, women entrepreneurs have been under-represented due to a lack of contacts, financing and time and barriers created by cultural differences in countries where women are not accepted as equals.

### **Successful Program Elements**

The organization facilitates women's entry and expansion into the global marketplace in a variety of ways, including:

#### ***Seminars, Workshops and Conferences***

These events are designed to enhance the exporting skills of event participants and to keep the members current on international issues. Past topics have ranged from E-commerce in International Trade, and Financing your Exports, to Trade Mission Success Tips. Speakers have included both high-profile women in trade, such as Canadian Women Entrepreneur of the Year Award winners and the U.S. Consul General to Toronto as well as Canadian Consul Generals posted to the U.S. OWIT-Toronto members also share their diverse expertise in roundtable sessions.

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<sup>47</sup> The information on OWIT-T is adapted from direct excerpts of materials provided by OWIT-T as part of an application process for project funding

<sup>48</sup> OWIT-T changed its name from the Organization of Women in International Trade – Ontario in April 2004 in keeping with OWIT regulations that chapters should be city as opposed to regionally-based.

### ***Trade missions***

OWIT–Toronto organizes trade missions to introduce members to new markets and valuable contacts. In the past four years, they have already sponsored and/or initiated live face-to-face trade missions to England (2001), the U.S. - Atlanta and Dallas (2002) and Australia (2002), as well as a virtual trade mission with Atlanta (2002) and Australia (2003).

### ***Networking:***

Access to international contacts and access to financing for service-based businesses are the major challenges facing women who want to export, followed closely by the lack of time needed to travel to initiate and close global deals. OWIT–Toronto has addressed these challenges in a variety of ways, including:

- Sponsoring or supporting trade missions for women to expose them to new markets and global contacts;
- Conducting workshops on how to access capital for exporting;
- Disseminating practical information, tips and resources through their Web site and e-newsletter;
- Holding networking events to introduce members to a wide pool of private sector and government contacts; and,
- Forging an alliance with the Global Banking Alliance for Women, composed of four international banks dedicated to advancing the growth of women-owned businesses.

### ***Member Materials & Services***

OWIT–Toronto also provides its members with practical tips, resources and news related to trade through a newsletter and web site ([www.wito.ca](http://www.wito.ca)). They profile member success stories through these venues as well. The organization has also been quite successful in its mentoring programs. These are highlighted in this report in the Training and Development section.

### ***Sponsorship***

In all of its initiatives, OWIT–Toronto seeks to promote private-public sector partnerships. They have been very successful in attracting supportive sponsors (such as RBC Royal Bank, Cassels Brock & Blackwell, Grant Thornton, Industry Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, and Export Development Canada). The Virtual Trade Mission with Australia in 2003, also stood as an excellent example of a public-private sector initiative that attracted high profile sector sponsors in both countries.

### ***Student Involvement***

OWIT–Toronto feels that one of their best practices as an organization is their active encouragement of students as members and volunteers. They provide a reduced student membership rate to facilitate student participation. They have also worked actively to develop an on-going relationship with educational institutions that provide post-secondary training in the International Trade area. Other student initiatives include:

- Working with the International Trade program at Seneca College to involve their students in an ongoing role as volunteers to help organize and promote OWIT-Toronto events;
- Working with e-commerce students from Centennial College to assist in the design and launch of the OWIT-Toronto Web site;
- Appointing a Champion student at Sheridan College to actively recruit other students to participate in and serve as volunteers at OWIT Toronto events;
- Volunteering to serve as speakers for international trade students at the University of Waterloo;
- Acting as mentors for the students on an informal basis; and,
- Holding a seminar for members and other interested individuals and organizations on *Best Practices working with International Student Interns*.

### **Lessons Learned<sup>49</sup>**

1. OWIT-Toronto and other organizations create many opportunities for women entrepreneurs to do things at relatively low-priced and subsidized events, but not many take advantage of them. This is partly because women entrepreneurs are very busy and partly due to the fear factors previously described;
2. Women lack the networks and role models that men have for sharing information and building the contacts that are such a key to success in the global marketplace. Therefore, they do not seem to be as aware of the advantages of exporting;
3. Personal, face-to-face contact is an important factor in encouraging more women to consider expansion into international trade. Women entrepreneurs need to build personal relationships and trust before they will consider working with overseas partners or strategic alliances;
4. To succeed in promoting women's enterprises in international trade requires a certain amount of handholding at the initial stages. However, if the opportunities are created to bring women from different countries together the borders and initial fears disappear very quickly;

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<sup>49</sup> Based on: Interview with Susan Baka. [op.cit.](#); and OWIT-Ontario submission to Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. Feb. 28, 2003.



5. Virtual trade missions need to be facilitated quite actively to maintain the participants' interest. OWIT-Toronto found that the use of a formal launch, teleconference, and other high profile events helped people feel that they were part of a more face-to-face event and made a significant difference to the virtual trade mission's success and participation rates;
6. Working with student interns brings great benefits to both the interns in terms of their learning experience and to a volunteer-based organization in terms of the energy, innovative ideas and human resources the students provide; and,
7. Information about upcoming trade missions and other opportunities must be communicated well in advance. Women are often not in the information loop about such things. Web sites need to be populated regularly with the most up-to-date information and there needs to be a more proactive and on-going outreach program to communicate opportunities to women

### ***Promoting Gender-Sensitive International Trade Policy***

Most trade officials and trade agreements do not take gender issues into consideration when developing policy positions and would generally argue that trade is a gender-neutral issue, i.e., that it has the same impact on women and men. This is not the case. Due to the different conditions that women and men experience in their lives and the different access they have to the resources they need to succeed in the productive sector, any trade policy has the potential to have a differential impact on women and men at different levels. World Bank economists have undertaken extensive research documenting the positive impact of investments in women's enterprises and education on national economies. However, the significance of these research results has not yet been reflected adequately or effectively in major regional and global trade agreements.

Canada has been a world leader in advocating for the integration of gender issues in trade policy. Its most successful initiative in this regard to date has been its work to promote the adoption of a gender integration policy within the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) funded through the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Gender in APEC project. CIDA has also recently had considerable success promoting the integration of gender issues within the regional policies promulgated at the Organization of American States. Its Interamerican Commission of Women (CIM) has recently held a Ministerial meeting on gender and trade to highlight these issues. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)<sup>50</sup> and Industry Canada have also been working actively to promote gender and trade issues within the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. The Canadian government is now starting to look at ways to ensure that

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<sup>50</sup> Note, Dfait has recently been reorganized and is now known as Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC) and International Trade Canada (ITCan). The former international trade functions of Dfait and Industry Canada are now combined in the new International Trade Canada department. Other parts of Industry Canada remain the same.

the World Trade Organization (WTO) adopts a systemic review of gender issues in its trade policies in the future. It has done this by financing gender and trade policy research through Status of Women Canada's policy research fund as well as through a number of different CIDA-supported gender and trade initiatives in developing countries.

## **V.5 Canadian International Development Agency<sup>51</sup>**

The Canadian International Development Agency has acted as a champion of women entrepreneurs in developing countries for a long time and promotes private sector development as a key strategy that will help lead to sustainable development. Amongst other initiatives, CIDA's funding was instrumental in creating and sustaining the Women's Leaders Network (WLN) of APEC, cited by many multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations as a best practice to promote gender integration within trade policy<sup>52</sup>. Other CIDA programs and projects support initiatives to increase the understanding of and access to the formal credit system in developing countries as well as those to increase women's ability to build self-employment opportunities, their access to micro-credit, and their business management skills. The Task Force observed that many of these programs could be adapted to an industrialized country context and subsequently introduced to support women entrepreneurs in Canada.

CIDA has also been instrumental in supporting gender advocacy efforts at the WTO. In collaboration with Geneva Women in International Trade and the WTO Women Ambassadors in Geneva, CIDA organized a session on "Women as Economic Players in Sustainable Development" at the WTO Public Symposium held in June 2003. This session was the first on gender and trade to take place within a WTO forum and was held within the context of an NGO/WTO Symposium. It could not have taken place without the active support of the Canadian Government and key players at the Canadian Permanent Mission to the WTO in Geneva, including Canada's Ambassador to the WTO, H.E. the Honourable Sergio Marchi, and Adair Heuchan, CIDA's senior trade and development officer based in Geneva.

This session was seen as a first step towards the goal of having the WTO adopt a systematic gender integration policy. Session participants called upon the WTO to draft a Ministerial statement that would recognize the importance of taking women into consideration in WTO trade policy formulation. They also raised questions related to the issue of entrepreneurial culture and how it might be cultivated among women in countries where women entrepreneurs are less prevalent.

Additional recommendations put forward by Canada included the need to assess and document the gender-differentiated impact of trade liberalization and to consider the

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<sup>51</sup> Adapted from direct excerpt from Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. Appendix A - Best Practices. p. Appx4

<sup>52</sup> Refer to Appendix 2 for a summary of this best practice from the 2000 report.

formal role the WTO might play in the future on gender and trade issues. Heather Gibb, from the North South Institute in Ottawa, recommended that the WTO:

- Adopt a formal policy of gender integration, involving, gender training for Secretariat staff and Secretariat-led research on the gender implications of trade agreements, integration of gender concerns into the courses offered by the WTO Training Institute, and creation of a Working Group; and,
- Consider how the organization might best address gender and trade issues<sup>53</sup>.

Parallel recommendations that outline the specific roles that FAC, ITCan, Industry Canada, Status of Women Canada, CIDA, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada can play to further these goals can be found in the gender and policy research report recently completed by Kartini International and funded by Status of Women Canada's trade policy research fund. This study provides a summary of key gender issues related to specific WTO trade agreements as well as outlines a Canadian gender and trade advocacy model and trade-focused gender analysis tool<sup>54</sup>. Also of note is that ITCan in March 2004, started to provide its trade officials with gender awareness and gender analysis training.

## **Lessons Learned**

### ***Re Programming to Support Women Entrepreneurs:***

1. Women entrepreneurs tend to have smaller social and business networks to facilitate access to information, resources, and clients. Therefore an effective strategy to support women's enterprises is the creation of networking channels for women entrepreneurs;
2. Some of the more successful businesses for women are found in industries that are not well established because the women were able to fill a gap without competing directly with well-established male-run businesses;
3. Despite their critical role in agriculture in developing countries, women farmers lack access to effective technologies and resources such as credit, land tenure, seed supply, and labour-saving devices and there is a need to include women farmers in programming to support women entrepreneurs;
4. Business incubator projects have been an effective strategy to support women entrepreneurs; and,
5. There is a need to include a gender analysis as a part of the design process for all programs to support women entrepreneurs and to look at culturally-based attitudes, behaviours and institutional practices that also act as barriers to the growth of women's enterprises.

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<sup>53</sup> Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. Appendix A - Best Practices. p. App4

<sup>54</sup> Publication later in 2004 pending final approval and translation by Status of Women Canada.

***Re International Trade Policy:***

6. Trade policy has a differential impact on women and men entrepreneurs, workers, family caregivers and consumers. There is a need for all countries, including Canada, to adopt a systematic approach to the use of gender analysis in trade policy design, implementation and evaluation;
7. The Canadian government's on-going and innovative promotion of gender integration within international trade policy has made a significant impact in terms of increasing global awareness of gender and trade issues as well as in influencing the actions and policies of several multilateral and regional trade bodies; and,
8. Intergovernmental and cross sector collaboration on gender and trade advocacy initiatives and campaigns remains a key factor in their success.

## **VI. Training and Development**

The majority of programs to support women entrepreneurs focus on providing them with training related to start-ups or to becoming export ready. Given the large number of women's enterprises that are fairly new there is also a strong need to develop for more training programs related to actual business growth and expansion. There are many diverse ways to offer business development training to women entrepreneurs. The most successful programs are those that provide advice from other women entrepreneurs and which are flexible in terms of when and how the training takes place.

### **VI.1 Step-Ahead Program**

#### **Issue: Need for Mentoring by Women Entrepreneurs**

#### **Program Description<sup>55</sup>**

The Step Ahead One-on-One Mentoring program is a not-for-profit volunteer organization founded in 1992. It provides educational and practical learning opportunities for women business owners interested in growing their companies. The program facilitates business growth by matching women business owners with experienced, successful mentors. Since 1992, Step Ahead has matched 250 pairs of businesswomen from all sectors and at various stages of business growth. Step Ahead participants collectively employ thousands of people and generate over half a billion dollars in sales each year.

Step Ahead's structured One-on-One Mentoring Program includes two components: 1) A one-on-one mentoring relationship between mentors and protégées who spend a minimum of three hours together each month; and 2) Ten monthly educational workshops that bring together all protégées and mentors to hear dynamic guest speakers and participate in round table discussions about business growth and challenges.

The workshops address the following topics through a variety of interactive techniques.

- New Beginnings: Goals of the program, making the relationship work;
- Marketing Powerboost: Keys to boosting your marketing effectiveness;
- Planning for Change: Macro planning-where you want to take your business;
- Projecting a Professional Image: How to give powerful presentations;
- Accessing Capital: Tips for bargaining with financiers;
- Human Resource Strategies: HR challenges of fast growth companies;

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<sup>55</sup> Adapted from Step Ahead 2004 program brochure.

- Creative Financial Management: How to maximize returns;
- Strategies for Growth: Strategic alliances, advisory boards, exporting;
- Ethics for Entrepreneurs: Running an ethical business during growth and change; and,
- Work-Life Balance: Creative strategies for establishing a balance.

The tenth workshop is also a graduation dinner for the business protégées. Step-Ahead treats it as a very special event and the dinner concludes with a speaker addressing work/life balance issues and discussing strategies for time-starved women entrepreneurs.

Mentors are asked to volunteer their time for one year. The commitment involves a minimum of 3 hours per month. Step Ahead makes an effort to find high profile mentors who will serve as role models and who also fulfill the following criteria:

- Female founder and/or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of her own business;
- Business owner or CEO of a business for at least five years. The business owner must have knowledge and experience of start-up and growth stages of business ownership; and,
- Is committed to helping other women entrepreneurs grow and develop.

The protégées must be female business owners who have already started their businesses, are ready for business expansion, whose business demonstrates growth potential and who are willing to make the time commitment necessary to participate actively in the program.

### **Successful Program Elements**

- There have been over 500 participants in the Step Ahead program since its inception;
- Several of Step Ahead's mentors have received the Canadian Women Entrepreneur of the Year Award or and have been recognized among Canada's Top 100 Women Business Owners in the annual ranking by Chatelaine and Profit magazines;
- The organization has been able to attract high profile women entrepreneurs as guest speakers for its mentoring and networking meetings;
- The program produces a quarterly newsletter focusing on successful mentoring;
- The Step Ahead program regularly receives recognition from Canada's national press, and is listed as a resource group for women entrepreneurs in many publications; and,

- Step Ahead has received numerous requests to expand to other major cities from women business owners across Canada and regional programs similar to this one have been established with the support of the ACOA and the BDC.

Step Ahead also runs open networking sessions every quarter. The aim is to provide an environment for alumni and potential protégées and mentors alike to meet on a regular basis. They set up some networking events as educational seminars and others as purely networking sessions. Past networking sessions have included:

- The Step Ahead into Spring Fashion Show;
- An educational seminar on financial management for entrepreneurs;
- A summertime roundtable in August for junior business women to discuss their toughest problems with a panel of seasoned mentors;
- A Members' Business Fair to provide an opportunity for Step Ahead Networking Members to showcase their services and/or products to their colleagues and forge new ties with a variety of business contacts; and,
- An exporting theme session.

Step Ahead invites all of its networking members to these events as well as welcomes non-members, so that the networking sessions and educational seminars will be marketed as widely as possible to attract new members as well as potential protégées and mentors for the future Mentoring programs.

### **Lessons Learned<sup>56</sup>**

1. It doesn't matter what the size of a women's business is or in which sector it operates, they all face unique challenges that are gender-based;
2. The Step Ahead program has been successful in part because it combines the one-on-one attention of individual mentoring with the large group monthly networking meetings. Participants find the latter as important and as helpful as the former;
3. Women entrepreneurs respond well to hearing the experiences of other successful women entrepreneurs. They are also far more willing to talk about and share their past mistakes as a learning experience than are men in a similar context;
4. Women entrepreneurs tend to feel quite isolated and that they are the only ones who face the particular challenges they encounter. Consequently, they respond very well to being included in a program where they find that they are not only not alone, but can get good, practical advice related to how to overcome these challenges; and,

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Susan Baka. op. cit.

5. Step Ahead has found that there are many accomplished female speakers who are business owners who are willing to act as panelists and lecturers for their networking and other events.

## ***VI.2 Organization of Women in International Trade – Toronto***

### **Issue: Need for Organization-to-Organization Mentoring**

#### **Program Description**

(Previously described in section V.4)

#### **Successful Program Elements - Mentoring**

In addition to its export support activities for women entrepreneurs, OWIT–Toronto has also played a leadership role in mentoring other OWIT chapters in Canada and internationally. Over the past year, they served as a mentor to the first Australian chapter of OWIT. This involved sharing their best practices with the Australians and providing on-going advice and resources to them. In January 2004, two of OWIT-Toronto members also traveled to Sydney for the official launch of the Australian chapter. They conducted a workshop on chapter start-up with the incoming Australian board and on exporting for the new OWIT Australian members.

OWIT–Ontario has also been proactive in encouraging chapter development elsewhere – specifically in Ottawa and London, England – and is sharing contact names to help the new chapters build their membership as well as their best practices in chapter set-up. They have had several organizational meetings in Ottawa to guide and facilitate the successful start-up of this chapter.

#### **Lessons Learned**

1. Women entrepreneurs often feel more comfortable learning from other women entrepreneurs, especially when they are just starting new initiatives.



## **VII. Networking**

The importance of networking for women entrepreneurs cannot be emphasized enough. Three reasons support this:

**One:** Women do not have the same degree of access to the traditional sources of information and marketing contacts as male entrepreneurs do. The “old boys” network while more open to women these days than it used to be, still predominately benefits men. Women entrepreneurs still need to broaden their avenues of access through intensive networking processes.

**Two:** Women in business tend to prefer developing personal relationships in business, face-to-face meetings and other kinds of direct contact when seeking to build strategic partnerships and alliances. It takes time and exposure to many different types of networking events and venues for them to find a good match.

**Three:** Many women’s enterprises are fairly new and, consequently, can benefit greatly from exposure to and contact with other entrepreneurs who are either at a similar stage of growth or have a successful track record and more years of experience. Newly established women entrepreneurs have often indicated that they feel more comfortable sharing their experiences, lessons learned and business challenges with other women entrepreneurs. One challenge many entrepreneurs face is that of relative isolation.

These three factors are all indicators that providing different networking opportunities is a critical form of support for women entrepreneurs. These include conferences, trade missions, workshops and other events where women entrepreneurs have an opportunity to meet other women entrepreneurs face to face. In Canada, organizations from the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors have all helped organize different networking events and venues for women’s enterprises. All these events focus on facilitating individual business-to-business contacts for women entrepreneurs. Another form of networking that is needed is between institutions that provide services to support women entrepreneurs. One example of this is the Global Banking Alliance of Women, a unique initiative which the Royal Bank of Canada has been instrumental in pioneering by partnering with three foreign banks.

## **VII.1 Global Banking Alliance of Women**

### **Issue: Women-Specific Banking & Related Services**

#### **Program Description<sup>57</sup>**

Originally conceived during the preparatory meetings (1996) for the first OECD Conference on Women Entrepreneurs (Paris, 1997), “Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: A Major Force in Innovation and Job Creation” and suggested by Australian women, the Global Banking Alliance was formally launched after the “2nd OECD Conference on Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Realizing the Benefits of Globalization and the Knowledge-based Economy” in Paris. The four non-competing banks that spearheaded this initiative include Royal Bank of Canada, FleetBoston Financial in the USA, the Bank of Ireland and Westpac Bank of Australia. Preliminary exploratory meetings were conducted in during the following year with the first summit to launch the Alliance being hosted in Boston in June, 2001. The goal of the summit was to both formally establish the Global Banking Alliance of Women (GBA) and to work on formulating a joint strategy for promoting access to finance, markets, and information for women in business globally and to share their own best practices

Each of the four banks involved are leaders in their countries in regard to supporting and promoting women in business. As a part of their networking process each bank agreed to exchange information on their own "best practices" to help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses. The idea behind the initiative is to accelerate the Banks’ individual and collective knowledge related to women’s banking as well as to promote women's roles in entrepreneurship and their economic self-sufficiency internationally.

This is an initiative that has required champions with vision and leadership and support of the Bank’s at the highest levels. The four woman executives who championed the formation of the GBA include<sup>58</sup>:

- *Betty Wood*, Managing Director, Women Entrepreneurs' Market, Royal Bank of Canada and initially, Sherry Fotheringham, National Manager, Women Entrepreneurs' Market
- *Teri Cavanagh*, Senior Vice President at FleetBoston Financial and Director of its Women Entrepreneurs' Connection
- *Angela Leigh-Doyle*, Bank of Ireland's Sector Manager for Small Business
- *Amanda Ellis*, Westpac Banking Corporation's Head of Women's Markets.

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<sup>57</sup> Adapted from “Global Banking Alliance for Women Convenes First Summit to Promote Women Entrepreneurship; Four International Banks Converge in Boston to Share “Best Practices””. [Business Wire](#), June 20, 2001

Amanda Ellis, Senior Specialist Gender – Private Sector Development: International Finance Corporation, World Bank. Interview – April 23, 2004

<sup>58</sup> Most of these women have since moved on to other positions but the banks remain committed to the GBA.

## **Successful Program Elements**

In their first summit meeting the Global Banking Alliance of Women shared their experiences in serving the women in business market and in developing a women's market. Each member has experience implementing different programs dedicated to actively supporting women in growing their businesses. One commonality that GBA members noted is that the four funding banks did far more than just loan money to women entrepreneurs. They also provided them with training, mentoring, and sponsorship opportunities as well as access to networks and new markets.

At the summit the GBA also committed itself to work towards:

- Encouraging the growth of women-owned businesses through improved access to capital;
- Providing education and training to improve women's wealth potential, and ensure adequate provision for retirement;
- Showcasing women's global economic contribution; and,
- Facilitating access to networks and to markets, including international markets that will enable women-owned businesses to grow.

To achieve these goals in their founding meeting the GBA committed to:

- Create an online library of information and resources concerning women in business;
- Identify best-in-class financial, educational, and market access products and services for women in business for dissemination in each member country;
- Share information on customer relationship building and marketing campaigns;
- Encourage collaborative initiatives among Alliance members to provide educational programs for banking personnel, as well as training for women in business;
- Support the gathering, disseminating, tracking and reporting of data about women entrepreneurs; and,
- Develop guidelines for the admission of future participating institutions.

In 2002, Australia's Westpac Bank hosted the GBA meeting and introduced the concept of the four banks working to connect their customers to each other. They decided upon this course as a result of bank research that found that the two top obstacles that women entrepreneurs cited as preventing them from exporting their goods and services were lack of contacts and information on how to export. The third obstacle women entrepreneurs listed was finance so the GBA worked on identifying what were the global best practices with regard to providing financial services to women entrepreneurs and what makes

banking different for women and men. They also developed a video as a form of outreach to other banks that outlined a compelling business case to support specialized banking programs for women entrepreneurs.

In 2003/4, the RBC Financial Group was the GBA chair and worked with the GBA to jointly organize the “Women Trading Globally Trade Mission and Forum” held in Vancouver from March 31-April 2, 2004. The trade mission also provided additional business matching for interested participants in Toronto on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. The mission’s main goal was to increase trade between entrepreneurs among the GBA communities and therefore originally targeted women-led enterprises that were export-ready from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, and the United States. The World Bank subsequently made funding available to expand this range to include women entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Jordan and Iraq. Trade mission participants were particularly enthusiastic about the private sector tours, the business matching sessions and the high quality of the speakers. The GBA community participants also felt that there was a great deal of value-added from the exchange between themselves and the women entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Jordan and Iraq.

In their exchanges related to member bank best practices, the GBA’s founding members noted, the following initiatives as being particularly successful.

**Royal Bank of Canada** cited a wide variety of initiatives including the creation of a national virtual network, its Champions newsletter for women entrepreneurs, a targeted web site for women entrepreneurs, the establishment of Small Business & Entrepreneur Advisory Councils, and a series of Royal Bank Definitive Guide publications for small businesses on key topics of interest to women entrepreneurs. The Royal Bank of Canada has been a leader in focusing on the women’s market. They have worked actively to open up new market opportunities for growth-minded women entrepreneurs through their sponsorship of the first women’s trade mission to the U.S. in 1997, the Canada/U.S.A. Businesswomen’s trade summit in 1999, followed by a series of trade missions between Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and Australia. They also provided core funding to help establish a national businesswomen’s association in Canada as well as provided support for the events of other businesswomen’s associations’ events and activities<sup>59</sup>.

Over the past five years **FleetBoston** established a Women Entrepreneurs' Connection program with a budget of \$2-billion to provide loans and equity to women-owned businesses and support advocate efforts on their behalf. Their innovative Business Model connects women to capital, information and resources at the different stages of business growth. The Connection program has also supported groundbreaking research on key issues affecting the future of women entrepreneurs in the USA, and about the development of the next generation of women business owners through its national

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<sup>59</sup> Refer to Appendix 2 for further details on past Royal Bank of Canada support originally outlined in the 2000 report.

partnership with Independent Means. GBA member Teri Cavanagh noted that accessing venture capital to grow women's businesses remains their greatest challenge. As a result, FleetBoston has developed a range of ways to reduce the traditional dependence of women business owners on personal credit cards and family investments.

The *Bank of Ireland* was the first bank in Europe to appoint a national manager for women in business (1997). They also set up a special fund, the Enterprise 2000 Seed Capital Fund, to address early-stage financing needs as well as a joint micro-loan project with First Step, an Irish non-profit organization. Through these two initiatives, the Bank has funded and sponsored a wide range of networking, training and research programs for women-owned businesses.

*Westpac Bank of Australia* is the only Australian bank with a business unit dedicated to serve women's financial needs with specialists in every state. Westpac's innovative bank-wide program, "Bank on Women in Business," includes a training initiative that educates bank employees on how to serve women business owners most effectively. The bank also sponsors diverse business education seminars, trade expositions and networking events to assist women in areas such as cash management, wealth creation and e-business. They also provide qualified women entrepreneurs with innovative financing options such as unsecured card-based lines of credit and access to Westpac's Business Equity Matching Service. Since recent government research revealed that Australian women have only a third of the retirement savings of men, Westpac has also designed their Women in Business program to help businesswomen address this issue. They also place a premium on educating young women.

The GBA members are currently working with the World Bank to develop ways to share this diverse experience with banks and other financial institutions in developing countries.

### **Lessons Learned<sup>60</sup>**

#### ***Re GBA:***

1. There is a need for institutions that provide services or do business with women's enterprises to network so that they can share their experiences as well as collaborate on joint initiatives;
2. Global Banking Alliance of Women members have found the learning experience related to supporting women entrepreneurs so positive that they would like to expand it to include other diversity markets;
3. All of the GBA member countries are experiencing high growth rates in women's business start-ups and have observed that women often do business in different ways than male entrepreneurs;

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<sup>60</sup> Interview: Betty Wood. April 14, 2004 [op-cit](#)

4. To successfully foster the growth of women's enterprises banks must provide support that goes far beyond simply lending money to women entrepreneurs. It also means facilitating networking opportunities, offering training on business growth and development and helping build businesswomen's associations and other advocacy initiatives; and,
5. Financial institution support of women's businesses and other diversity markets is a way in which international banks can help advance the development of civil society globally.

***Re Trade Missions & International Trade Fora:***

1. Communicating the value and potential benefits a company can gain from participating in a trade mission and forum of this nature is a challenge in a society where there are so many training and networking opportunities already available for women entrepreneurs. Many participants in the "Women Trading Globally" event made the decision to attend because they had a personal connection who encouraged them to go;
2. The Banks are more likely to support private-sector led initiatives of this nature in the future than to take the lead themselves since they are very time-consuming to organize; and,
3. Trade missions and fora need to strike a balance between government and entrepreneurs' interests and representation.

## **VIII. Technology**

Technology is a powerful vehicle that women entrepreneurs can harness to help grow their businesses. Internet technology, in particular, has revolutionized the way women do business by allowing them to operate globally at a fraction of the cost. Initial contacts can be made with customers and potential strategic partners from a distance and the electronic nature of the communication often means that the sex of the business owner is not immediately obvious and this is less likely to be taken into account in purchasing or business decisions. ICTs have also allowed large numbers of women to establish home-based businesses thus both cutting their overhead costs and facilitating some of the work/family balance issues they confront in their lives. New technologies offer many advantages to women entrepreneurs as well many new ways of doing business. Therefore support programs that show them how to make effective use of technology to support and promote their businesses are critical.

### ***VIII.1 The Wired Woman Society (WWS)***

#### **Program Description**

The Wired Woman Society aims to establish women as a significant force in technology. Since 1996, the Wired Woman Society has been filling an important role for women who are in or entering into a career or business in technology. WWS provides innovative programs for education, training, mentorship and recognition. They also provide leadership opportunities for women to challenge themselves and build on their experience. They work to provide an environment for a community of like-minded women who wish to partner with, and support each other in the development of their careers or technology-based businesses.

The Wired Woman Society works for positive change by:

- encouraging more girls to enter into technology training paths;
- encouraging women to be innovative with regard to technology development, to take risks and be recognized for their technological achievements; and,
- supporting women in their efforts to advance technology and its uses for the benefit of all.

To achieve this, the society manages the development and national disbursement of four key programs: Education, Mentorship, Online Services, and Research and Development. These include support for women who run technologically-based businesses as well as encouragement for women to take advantage of new technologies to help grow their businesses. Through these programs they introduce women to important technology issues and provide the community with the tools it needs to help women flourish in the technology industry.

## Successful Program Elements

The Wired Woman Society:

- Creates an open and safe learning environment that encourages women to explore opportunities in technology and to build successful careers and businesses that will allow them to play a positive role in the growth and development of the information age;
- Holds monthly meetings that provide a forum for women to hear guest speakers who share their experiences about working in Canada's technology sector;
- Develops and provides education programs to help women learn about their computers, understand networking, and other aspects of technology and design web pages;
- Provides networking opportunities, career resources, and community and academic presentations;
- Has over 2000 members across the country with chapters in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto and Calgary;
- Has over 90 volunteers who provide training and support for the WWS education programs. Volunteers include women working in the technological and new media industries, as well as women business-owners in these fields; and,
- Developed customized tool kits for both mentors and protégées providing participants with guidance and principles on ways to take advantage of new technologies for career and business development<sup>61</sup>.

Through these efforts, the Wired Women Society has created both formal and informal learning opportunities for girls and women to explore technology and gain an understanding of the opportunities available to them in this ever-changing field. The most remarkable element of WWS is that it is almost entirely volunteer run and has been able to generate sufficient interest and momentum to keep expanding and remain innovative. Sponsorship and membership lists continue to grow thus reflecting the importance and interest that technology is for Canadian women.

## Lessons Learned

1. The WWS mentorship program was developed to give the society's younger members the opportunity to develop their career paths with the guidance of senior industry role models, while allowing senior members the opportunity to teach and inspire the next generation of industry leaders. This exchange has proven to be an effective model that has benefited all involved;
2. Many women who are new in business are not aware of the many different ways technology can be used to help grow their businesses. Some may be a bit fearful

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<sup>61</sup> Kathy Conway of Virtual Communications in Oakville, Ontario, developed the intellectual property for the WWS mentorship program, piloted in Ottawa in 2000.



of adopting new technology simply because they are unfamiliar with it. WWS has found that women respond well to learning about technology from other women and, as such, seeks creative and innovative ways to increase women's involvement in cutting-edge technology and related processes; and,

3. Women and men often approach and use technology in different ways. Most technology training does not reflect this. WWS's approach provides an introduction to technology from a women's perspective and as such fills the much needed orientation for young women thinking about a career in technology as well as for women in business.

## **IX. Support Services**

Women entrepreneurs have many demands on their time. Therefore support services designed to help them establish or grow their businesses have to be readily accessible and not take a lot of time to either find or use. The support services that women entrepreneurs most often need include:

- information about where and how to obtain affordable credit;
- business development information and training;
- specific technical advice about growth strategies for their own businesses;
- networking opportunities to meet potential clients and find new markets for their products and services; and,
- A chance to meet other women entrepreneurs to help establish strategic alliances or simply to find mutual support related to the challenges that they face.

Women entrepreneurs often need more than one type of support service. Therefore an effective model for working with women entrepreneurs is to place as many of these services under one roof as possible. This serves to both integrate the support services provided and will save time for the women entrepreneurs themselves.

### ***IX.1 Western Economic Diversification Canada – Women’s Enterprise Initiative***

#### **Issue: Need for One-Stop Services**

#### **Program Description<sup>62</sup>**

The Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is a federal government department that works to strengthen Western Canada's economy and to advance the interests of the West in Canada's national economic policy. Programs and services support three strategic directions: “Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Communities”. WD also supports the Western Canada Business Service Network, which provides over 100 points of service across Western Canada<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Material in this section adapted from excerpts on WEI in the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs.

<sup>63</sup> WEDC website. [http://www.wd.gc.ca/default\\_e.asp](http://www.wd.gc.ca/default_e.asp)

One of the WD's most successful models for supporting women entrepreneurs is the Women's Enterprise Initiative (WEI). Under this initiative the federal government gave each of Canada's four Western provinces funding to establish a non-profit enterprise development program for women. Four centres were established (one in each of the four western provinces) so that there would be local control allowing each centre to develop programs and services tailored to the specific needs of the community and province they serve. All four centres do, however, share a similar mandate.

The four WEI's include the:

1. Manitoba Women's Enterprise Centre;
2. Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan;
3. Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association; and,
4. Women's Enterprise Society of BC.

Each centre offers women entrepreneurs access to a loan fund, advisory services, networking and mentoring, assistance finding the best fit for their business with existing services and a range of other unique products and services to support women entrepreneurs. Their guiding principles are to:

- Provide a range of services to women who want to launch or develop a business;
- Endeavor to increase awareness of entrepreneurship and individual enterprise as a career choice for women and girls;
- Work with current service providers in the public and private sectors to coordinate services for women and make them accessible, while avoiding duplication;
- Trace the evolution of women's needs over time, through proposals for new services from women in business;
- Provide services that are accessible to all women in the four western provinces; and,
- Provide client-oriented services.

### **Successful Program Elements**

The Task Force report observed that the WEI's are run for women entrepreneurs by women entrepreneurs and that they operate their services in a highly cost-effective manner due to their non-profit nature. Both these factors have contributed to their overall success. The Centres have developed strong linkages with other federal/provincial government service providers and with the private sector. This facilitates the coordination of existing services and helps to provide seamless service delivery to their clients.

Through research initiatives, the WEI found that there were two main gaps in service that needed to be addressed. These were:

- A need for incremental access to credit for growth-oriented women-owned businesses, thereby easing a financing gap that is widely regarded as especially severe for young firms; and,
- Training and business counseling services that help fill the experience gap that hinders women-owned firms from growing as fast as those owned by men.

Consequently, they designed programs to eliminate these gaps and to focus on providing women entrepreneurs with one-stop shopping with regard to business development services and loans or loan referrals.

The Task Force noted that one of the most successful WEI centres is the Manitoba Women's Enterprise Centre in Manitoba. This centre is set up as a 'store-front' operation with a warm, cozy and welcoming atmosphere and located on the same premises as Industry Canada's Business Centre and the Manitoba Business Centre. Consequently, the Centre can readily act as a one-stop access point for women entrepreneurs requiring information, funding, support and advice. Referrals are made and cooperation is on-going among all three business centers. The Manitoba Women's Enterprise Centre also works closely with the other three Business Centres and with the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Communities organization with each referring clients to the other and sharing resources on site.

Over the past eight years the WD's Community Futures Development Corporations and the Women's Enterprise Initiative offices have provided loans to 16,814 western entrepreneurs. In Saskatchewan, the Community Futures Development Corporations and Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc. provided 1,966 loans worth \$55 million, which when leveraged represent \$71.4 million over the past eight years.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Programs to support women entrepreneurs are often best run by other women entrepreneurs;
2. The WEI's program has been so successful in Western Canada that women entrepreneurs across the country have specifically asked the federal government to establish programs across the rest of the country following a similar model, i.e., one that builds upon existing programs and resources and which has the autonomy to tailor services to the needs of the individual communities. As a result of the recommendations of the Task Force, two business centres for women are in the process of being established in Ontario and Quebec as a pilot project in areas where this type of service centre had not previously existed;
3. Women respond well to business support services operated and designed by other women entrepreneurs; and,
4. Public sector – non-profit organization joint initiatives can be highly effective, but they need to have guaranteed core funding to ensure continuity of services.

## Conclusion

This overview of current best practices to support women entrepreneurs in Canada combined with the summary of past practices highlighted in the 2000 report demonstrate that there are many innovative ways to provide support to women entrepreneurs. The fact that so many women are going into business for themselves and the immense amount of money they contribute to the Canadian economy as well as the millions of jobs they have created for other Canadians are ample evidence that there is a significant return on any government funds invested to support the growth of women's businesses.

The private sector, particularly Canadian banks, recognized fairly early on that the rapid growth of women's businesses was an economic trend of considerable significance. They have led the way in developing innovative business support services that go far beyond just lending money. Several prestigious Canadian academic institutions also provide diverse training and support services for women entrepreneurs. Non-profit organizations are also heavily involved in support to this sector, particularly for women entrepreneurs from the primary demographic groups that face additional challenges on top of those encountered just trying to establish and grow a business. What is clear from this range of services is that they are all needed and demand is still growing. It is also clear that the most effective programs to support women entrepreneurs in Canada are those that involve collaboration between the different sectors – public, private, non-profit and academic.

Regardless of which sector is offering support services for women entrepreneurs and regardless of the way in which it is offered, it is also clear that Canadian women mean business in all senses of the word. They offer a new way of doing things as well as all of the energy and innovation that comes with the establishment of new businesses. With the growth of these businesses comes a tremendous potential to generate wealth for many Canadians. This makes it that much more critical for all existing and future support programs for women entrepreneurs to work with them on ways to at least double their sales and incomes so that the gap between men's and women's businesses disappears. To achieve this goal will require the on-going support of all four sectors, reaching out to those not currently connected and a continuation of the momentum and success generated to date by the many best practices that Canada has to offer.

In his reply to the Speech from the Throne earlier this year, Prime Minister Martin reinforced his support for women entrepreneurs. In asking what kind of Canada we want, he noted the following:

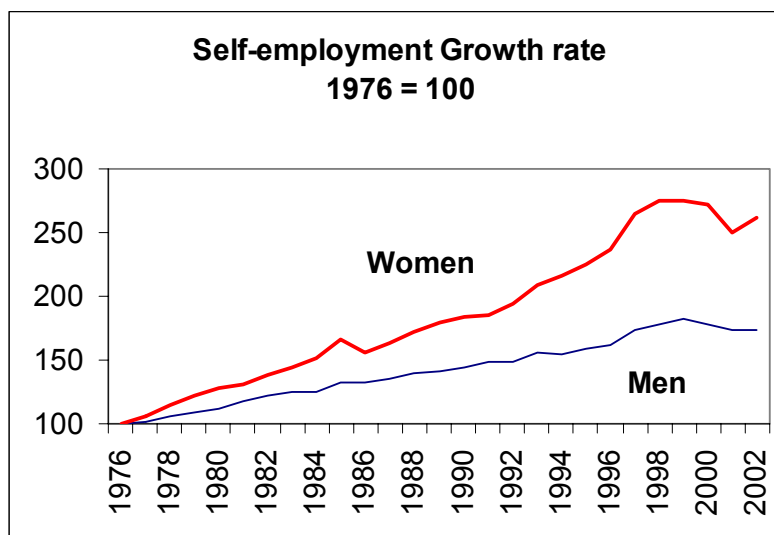
“A Canada which is at the leading edge of the world's technologies. A Canada where today's small businesses are tomorrow's global leaders. A Canada where there is no glass ceiling for women entrepreneurs.”

## Appendix 1: Summary of Statistics Canada Presentation on Self-Employed Women in Canada<sup>64</sup>

After a prolonged decline, self-employment grew faster than paid work over the last quarter of the 20th century, with growth being particularly strong among women. This trend reversed slightly in the late 1990s, during a period of strong economic expansion. However, overall, the self-employment rate for women rose from 8.6% in 1976 to 11.5% in 2002 and by 2002, women accounted for 35% of all self-employed. This is up from 26% in the mid 1970s, and down slightly from a peak of 36% in 1998.

The likelihood of self-employment increases with age but most women entrepreneurs are aged 35 to 54. Statistics Canada found that self-employment rates were less polarized by educational level for women than men. Of even more significance is the fact that only a third of women entrepreneurs in Canada have a spouse who is a paid employee, with 22% having no spouse, 8% having a spouse who is unemployed and 37% a spouse who is self-employed. The majority of these serve as partners with their wives in the same business. Only 33% had a spouse with paid employment.

**Table 1: Self-Employment Growth Rate in Canada 1976 – 2002**



Another important finding is that almost three quarters of women entrepreneurs worked on their own in 2002. There are some significant differences between self-employed women who are employers and those who work on their own.

<sup>64</sup> All statistics in this overview are drawn from the May 6, 2003 Statistics Canada presentation by Deborah Sunter to the Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs in Canada posted on the Task Force website under the Feedback section. <http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur/about.asp?lang=en>

**Table 2: Characteristics of Self-Employed Women in Canada: 2002**

<b>Total Self-employed Women in Canada: 821,000</b>				
Total Employers: 213,000	25.9%	Total Own Account: 586,000	71.3%	Unpaid family Worker 22,000 (2.6%)
Incorporated Employers: 127,000	15.4%	Incorporated Own Account: 84,000	10.2%	
Unincorporated Employers: 86,000	10.4%	Unincorporated Own Account: 502,000	61.1%	

The vast majority of women entrepreneurs work on their own although the number of women employers is growing. The motivation for self-employment tends to differ for these two groups, with employers being attracted by independence, control and challenge, and own account workers by flexibility and greater control of work-family balance.

For those who are employers, one-fifth manage retail businesses. Women employers are more likely to work long hours and their average earnings are higher than those of own account workers. Annual earnings are predominantly found at the lower end, with over 50% of women entrepreneurs earning less than \$15,000 in 2000. Ten percent of women entrepreneurs earned between \$45K and \$99K. This is compared to 3% of adult paid workers who earned between \$70K and \$99K.

Approximately half of own account women entrepreneurs in Canada work out of their homes, a fact that probably reflects the impact of information technology on the way business can be conducted, the flexibility it provides in terms of creating a better balance between family and work and, lower startup and overhead expenses. This is a more common reason for voluntary self-employment among women than it is for men.

The majority of women entrepreneurs chose self-employment and would not prefer to be doing paid work (60%) with another 10% who became self-employed involuntarily, but now prefer to remain self-employed. Of significance to the financial community is the fact that 42 % of self-employed adult men experienced financial difficulties compared to 35 % of self-employed adult women. Contrary to the situation for men, own account self-employed women did not experience more financial difficulties than their employer counterparts. However, overall, being self-employed still remains a high risk business: between 1978 and 2000, the probability that self-employment ceased from one year to the next due to bankruptcy or inadequate self-employment income was roughly 20%. The

probability of paid workers being permanently laid-off for the same period varied between about 6% and 9%.

Among entrepreneurs, only 19% of men and 13% of women have full insurance or benefits coverage, mostly through a spousal plan rather than direct purchase or membership in an association. This is as compared to 50% of paid workers who have full benefit coverage (health, dental and disability) through employer-sponsored programs alone. More are covered by spousal plans for health and dental. About 40% of both self-employed men and women have indicated that they would be interested in paying premiums to an income insurance program. Full coverage was more common among women employers than women working on their own account. Also of significance is the trend that following the birth of a child, half of women entrepreneurs are back at work within a month.



## **Appendix 2: Summary of 2000 Report on Best Practices**

### **CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES**

#### **#1: Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs**

##### **Purpose**

The Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs is a national registered charity dedicated solely to the promotion, support, education, advancement and advocacy of Canadian women entrepreneurs across the country. The mandate of the Foundation is to:

- Undertake research on and about women entrepreneurs;
- Promote entrepreneurship among women;
- Create university scholarships for future women entrepreneurs;
- Provide education and support for women entrepreneurs; and,
- To become the preeminent source of information about women entrepreneurs in Canada.

To fulfill its mandate, the Foundation has partnered with private and public sources of funds such as the Royal Bank of Canada, Business Development Bank of Canada, IBM Canada, Industry Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Service-Growth Consultants Inc., Kartini International Consulting Inc., Western Economic Diversification Canada's Women's Enterprise Initiative, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Women Entrepreneurs of Canada; the Ontario Women's Directorate, and Heritage Canada.

##### **Achievements**

The Foundation has:

- Funded and co-produced three award winning television documentaries that are now in libraries and distributed to schools across Canada and internationally as motivational videos for students and young women. These documentaries are educational projects of the Foundation and were produced by Pixie Bigelow of Bigelow/Currie Productions and Positive Impact Productions. They have been broadcast nationally in Canada as well as internationally;
- Supported and undertaken the following research projects:
  - 1998, 'Fast Forward' A Resource About Women and Entrepreneurship in Canada - a joint project of the Foundation and the Ontario Women's Directorate - Canada's first comprehensive national guide to resources available to women entrepreneurs, would-be entrepreneurs and associations across Canada;

- 1999, 'Beyond Borders' - a sponsor and supporter of the first comprehensive research project providing information about Canadian women exporters - in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade;
- 2000, 'Services to Global Markets' - Canada's first research into women exporters in the services sector in partnership with Service-Growth Consultants Inc.;
- 2000, 'Best Practices for Women Entrepreneurs in Canada' - documented details concerning best practices to support and advance women entrepreneurs in Canada; and,
- Partnered with TradeBuilders Inc. to promote and market Canada's first virtual trade mission for women entrepreneurs to Atlanta, Georgia

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Running a charitable foundation with little or no money and a volunteer board of directors can be very challenging. Due to lack of funding and not having any paid staff, the Foundation has had to be very selective in the projects that it has been able to support. Therefore it is important to have a clear mandate with a specific focus as well as a Board of Directors and Leader with a true vision; and,
2. There is a strong need for research on the true state of women entrepreneurs in Canada that can be used to help form public policy for business and trade as well as to assist corporations with determining their own marketing strategies.

## **#2: YMCA Pilot Project for Young Women's Entrepreneurship**

### **Purpose**

The pilot project was initiated by the YMCA in October 1995 and ran for ten months. It was organized and implemented by the Enterprise Centre of the YMCA in Toronto, funded by the federal agency, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) as well as given some additional support by private sector enterprises. The program was initiated after the YMCA observed that young women had a particularly difficult time trying to start new businesses. Twenty-five young women took part in the pilot.

### **Successful Program Elements**

To be eligible to participate the women had:

- To be between the ages of 18 to 29;
- Attend a project orientation;
- Provide an outline of their business ideas and a business resume; and,

- Take part in an interview. The women selected were those whose business ideas appeared to be feasible to implement and did not require too much capital to establish, were available full time to participate in the training and in the development of their businesses over a ten-month period. They also had to have demonstrated a clear drive and commitment to starting a business in their application.

All participants received a training allowance from HRDC regardless of whether or not they were social assistance recipients at that time. If they had children the women were also entitled to receive a childcare subsidy. The YMCA helped the participants for whom the allowance was either their sole or primary source of income to find alternative sources of affordable credit. The women were also all given YMCA memberships during the pilot and encouraged to take advantage of the YMCA's stress and relaxation programs.

The first four months of the pilot involved intensive training on all aspects of developing a market plan, skills development in sales, balancing work and family responsibilities and in making presentations. The last six months of the pilot were spent establishing their businesses on an individual basis. During this period the young women were provided with on-going business development advice and were partnered with volunteer mentors from the Canadian Bankers Association.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. The mentoring program with the Canadian Bankers association worked well and helped the women develop valuable and on-going business relationships;
2. Group participation in a trade show was a very effective strategy which gave the pilot participants exposure to the use of a trade show as a marketing tool as well as different marketing techniques used by other businesses; and,
3. In future programs the YMCA recommends shortening the length of time for the intensive training to allow the participants to launch their businesses as soon as possible. Most were able to learn a great deal through simply by doing the work needed as well as from the support that they got from their mentors and the YMCA.

### **ACADEMIC INITIATIVES:**

Training is a critically important tool for women entrepreneurs, especially in a world that is changing so rapidly in terms of technological innovations and management practice. It is particularly important for women entrepreneurs as they often enter business because they have a good idea or skill to market as opposed to having a lot of experience in business management.

The role of the academic sector in supporting this process is potentially quite powerful. New women entrepreneurs need access to training that allows them to operate their businesses at the same time. It also has to be affordable and provided by instructors who have a significant level of business development experience themselves. One program that takes these different factors into consideration is found at the Scotiabank Resource Centre for Women Entrepreneurs at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

### **#3: The Scotiabank Resource Centre for Women Entrepreneurs**

#### **Purpose**

The Scotiabank Resource Centre for Women Entrepreneurs operates from the Faculty of Business Administration at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and receives core funding from the Scotiabank. The purpose of the Centre is to provide non-credit training for women entrepreneurs by giving them access to practical courses that help them manage and grow their businesses.

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The Centre offers workshops designed for women who are already in established businesses and who find that they need additional business development skills. The Centre offers a series of five to six workshops each semester on different topics depending upon the feedback they get from the participants. Attendance ranges from 20 to 60 women depending upon the topic, with 20 being seen as an ideal number from the perspective of training methodology and costing. The workshops are taught primarily by the faculty from the Business Administration program or by people who have a combination of academic and business experience. This program also provides the participants with networking opportunities.

The Peer Mentoring Program involves groups of eight to ten women who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They receive 22 hours of training on how to work in a mentoring situation. This includes one full-day session. The facilitator also attends the mentoring meetings for the first three sessions. The group then continues to meet once a month for three to four hours to discuss work related issues or life issues such as how to balance work and family responsibilities.

The Peer Mentoring Program has been particularly successful. The women find that they feel more comfortable discussing their business problems and challenges with other women who are often in similar situations. They also find it inspiring to listen to the successes of other women who have started from a very modest base. In addition, the women are able to give each other support and encouragement.

## **Lessons Learned**

### **Funding**

1. The program operates on a semi-cost recovery basis. In addition to the core funding the Centre receives from the Scotiabank, nominal fees are charged for all services;
2. Women entrepreneurs do not have a lot of money to spend on training. Consequently, the Centre only charges a nominal fee for the workshops and CDN\$4,000 for the Management for Women Program;
3. Despite this fee structure the Centre would not be able to operate without the support of the Scotiabank or another major donor; and,
4. This model could be easily duplicated in other university settings if a partnership with the private sector can be worked out.

### **Attendance**

5. Centre staff have found that female entrepreneurs are extremely busy and have a tendency to put their own needs last when it comes to training. Consequently, it is often a challenge to get the women to attend the workshops;
6. Some partial solutions to this problem are to have a staff person call to confirm attendance immediately prior to the workshop and to overbook the workshops, to compensate for the participants who will drop out; and,
7. Requiring a non-refundable deposit or full payment of fees ahead of time helps ensure a commitment to attend.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES**

### **#4: Royal Bank of Canada**

The Royal Bank of Canada has been a pioneer in the financial world in terms of developing innovative supports for women entrepreneurs; The Bank is seriously committed to meeting the financial and credit needs of the women's market. To assist in this process the Bank initially established a Women's Entrepreneurs Advisory Council. Some key initiatives the Bank started based on the advice of the Advisory Council are outlined below.

#### ***Royal Bank Initiative No. 1: Women's Market Champions***

##### **Purpose**

1. To increase the understanding of bank personnel of the particular challenges that face women entrepreneurs;
2. To ensure that women entrepreneurs have a voice and that their concerns and needs are represented at all levels within the Royal Bank; and,

3. To develop programs and supports that will increase the success rates of the Royal Bank's female clients.

By providing gender-sensitive support to women entrepreneurs through this initiative, the Royal Bank has been able to serve as an advocate for women entrepreneurs, help increase the profitability of its female clients and increase its own share of the women's business market.

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The Royal Bank has formed a national network of over 100 women's market champions who are active in their local markets. The champions are strategically placed staff from the Bank, with the majority being account managers responsible for small business in their local branches. They advocate on behalf of women within the Bank and organize initiatives to serve the women's business market. Their role is also to serve as the front line contact for referrals related to women entrepreneurs.

#### ***Royal Bank Initiative No. 2: Staff Training***

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of staff training was to ensure that the Royal Bank's account managers and other staff are sensitized to gender issues and the growing importance of the women's market.

##### **Successful Program Elements**

It was critical to start the Bank's women's market strategy with this type of wide-scale training, as there were a lot of misperceptions about women in business and a general perception that business is gender neutral. In addition, women often felt intimidated by account officers or felt as though they were being 'talked down' to. The Bank provided the initial training to all of its account managers over a four-year period. After that they were able to incorporate much of the material from the training course into their regular training program for new account managers and therefore no longer needed special training for their staff in this area.

#### **Royal Bank Initiative No. 3: ViaSource**

##### **Purpose**

ViaSource is a national initiative that links small businesses and entrepreneurs to resource networks to assist them in operating and growing their businesses. Through this program small businesses and entrepreneurs request confidential fora with professionals from diverse areas to give them some additional direction and insight about business issues of concern to them.

## **Lessons Learned**

1. The different women's initiatives the RBC has supported over the past nine years have been possible because there has been strong support for them at the most senior levels within the Bank;
2. To help build the profile of women entrepreneurs and the women's business market, the RBC has sponsored a number of high profile events publicizing the contribution and needs of women entrepreneurs;
3. Using training as a means of remedial action to sensitize account managers and other staff proved to be quite effective; and,
4. The investment the RBC has put into supporting special initiatives has increased the Bank's credibility as a good corporate citizen that gives back to the communities it serves. It has also raised the profile of women entrepreneurs in Canada and internationally significantly.

## **MULTISECTOR INITIATIVES**

### **#5: THE WOMEN'S Virtual Trade Mission (1998) Pilot Project**

#### **Purpose**

The virtual trade mission combined some elements of a more traditional trade mission with the use of Internet and videoconferencing technology to bring businesswomen in Canada, and Malaysia together. The Virtual Trade Mission was initiated and funded by the Global Enterprise Group and IBM and coordinated by the CanAsian Businesswomen's Network. Other sponsors included Lucent Technologies, the Royal Bank of Canada, Bottom-Line Communicating, and the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Association Malaysia (FEM).

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The original goal of the Virtual Trade Mission was to match 15 businesswomen from Canada with 15 businesswomen from Malaysia. Invitations to participate were extended through businesswomen's networks in these countries. The Virtual Trade Mission then set up a videoconference in which trade mission members, organizers, sponsors, and government officials met for the first "in person" meeting connecting Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto, and Kuala Lumpur. This allowed the businesswomen to meet face to face without having to spend a lot of time and money on travel. It also introduced them to the technology to be used. Additional technological support allowed the participants to conduct meetings and discuss long-distance sales deals and joint ventures over the two-month period of the mission. Following the completion of the Virtual Trade Mission, mission members traveled to Kuala Lumpur to meet their international contacts personally, complete site tours and participate in official VIP "signing ceremonies".

## **Lessons Learned**

1. The first virtual trade mission was successful because it combined both technology and support from businesswomen's networks. Many of the participants required additional support to utilize the technology required to participate and this training had to be incorporated into the trade mission process;
2. There had to be a balance between buyers and sellers, not just participants who wanted to sell;
3. The businesswomen's networks helped match the different businesses in each country as well as provided backup support in terms of the technology;
4. While the technology and substantial support from the private sector were key elements that made the virtual trade mission possible, without the additional support of the FEM in Malaysia and the Can Asian Businesswomen's network in Canada to provide the human element and organization, the mission would not have succeeded; and,
5. Similar trade missions in the future would benefit from being more focused in terms of the business sectors to be matched.

## **# 6: TradeBuilders Virtual Missions™ for SME's**

TradeBuilders is a U.S. based company that has been instrumental in piloting virtual trade missions between Canada and the U.S. It is the company that hosted the world's first virtual trade mission among women-owned companies in Canada and Malaysia in 1998. It is a business-to-business e-marketer for small and medium size enterprises. The company provides virtual trade missions that enable participating companies to network and build business relationships through a mix of communication media at a fraction of the usual cost of conducting international business. The first official virtual trade mission pilot offered by TradeBuilders included women-owned companies that offer business services in Canada and the U.S.

TradeBuilders is built upon a global network, and is a unique trade mission process that builds the trade capability of Mission Participants over the internet. The TradeBuilders Virtual Missions™ allows Mission Participants to benefit from:

1. Unique public-private sector partnerships that are organized for each TVM™ and include relevant governments, trade associations, corporations, and internet portals;
2. Focus on the needs of small and medium enterprises;
3. Low fees and opportunity costs;
4. The ability to network extensively before committing to an international trip; and,
5. Being able to do follow-up online and via videoconferencing.



### **Successful Program Elements**

A TradeBuilders Virtual Mission™ (TVM™) is a proprietary process that facilitates business matching among participating companies, inside an online networking environment. A typical TVM™ is designed for companies that currently import, export, are import/export ready, or are looking for joint ventures, representation, sourcing, or foreign direct investment. Its customized virtual environment mirrors traditional trade missions and enables participants to aggressively pursue international trade deals in a way that is affordable, convenient, and efficient.

Mission Participants have access to:

1. Business-matching opportunities;
2. Links to business and trade information;
3. Business coaching for completing transactions on the site;
4. An international network of outstanding women business owners; and,
5. Products and/or services offered by the team of organizers

### **Lessons Learned**

The primary lessons learned from the pilot Canada-US virtual trade mission were that the model could be improved by:

- Focusing on specific industry sectors to improve business matching;
- Educating and coaching participants on e-commerce, in a more formal, standardized way, to help facilitate the business matching process;
- Building on the global network of government agencies, corporations, and associations that helped to organize the Canada-US pilot; and,
- Broader promotion of the site, the network and the virtual trade mission concept as an affordable way to participate in e-commerce and the global market place.

The pilot exceeded its success criteria by proving that:

- Trade missions can be done over the internet and result in solid business agreements in a short period of time;
- There is strong demand for affordable, internet-based trade missions from both public and private sector organizations around the world;
- The technology used can be improved, but worked well for this application; and,

- Based on the participant and sponsor feedback, TradeBuilders has a viable business model that can help to develop the trade capability of SME's and women entrepreneurs.

The TradeBuilders Virtual Mission™ website is <http://www.tradebuilders.com>.

## **#7: Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Awards**

### **Purpose**

The Awards were established to recognize the achievement of women entrepreneurs in Canada by bringing them to the forefront and to encourage their mainstream participation in other national awards. The Awards were designed to help overcome the traditional reluctance that women have to nominate themselves and to have their achievements recognized. The initiative has received significant support from the private sector since its inception, with its principal sponsor since its creation in 1992 being the Bank of Montreal.

### **Successful Program Elements**

The Award ceremony is now a major event and has succeeded in ensuring that Canada's women entrepreneurs are taken seriously as a force to be reckoned with. There are now six categories of awards for which women entrepreneurs may apply or be nominated:

#### ***Start-Up:***

The applicant has been in business at least three year but less than five years. Her business is now profitable and she has a comprehensive business plan and is ready for second stage business growth.

#### ***Lifetime Achievement:***

The applicant has owned her business(es) for at least 20 years and is still actively involved in its (their) operation. Her success has served as an inspiration to others.

#### ***Innovation:***

The applicant's company has a product, service or strategy that is innovative and gives her an advantage in the marketplace. Supported by a solid management team and adequate financing, the company is ready for significant growth.

#### ***Impact on Local Economy:***

In the course of developing or expanding her business, the applicant has contributed significantly to the development of the local economy by creating jobs and encouraging others in the community to do the same.

***Export:***

The applicant owns a Canadian company that has increased sales by developing global markets or services. The applicant must provide evidence that at least 30% of her sales come from outside Canada.

***Young Entrepreneur:***

The applicant is under 25, is either a full-time student who has operated a business for at least three years, or in business for at least two years and meets all other criteria.<sup>65</sup>

The Awards are run as a business and have been copyrighted by the University of Toronto Rotman School of Management. The School hosts a website specifically for the Awards and also uses this website to advertise related courses and workshops for women entrepreneurs.

The Awards have successfully raised the profile of women entrepreneurs in Canada among the public and private sectors as well as the general public. They also serve as a source of inspiration to other Canadian women entrepreneurs by highlighting the achievements of Canadian businesswomen.

**Lessons Learned**

1. A key to the success of the Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Awards has been the partnership between the Rotman School of Management and the private sector;
2. High levels of private sector sponsorship have meant that the School has been able to ensure that the Awards receive a high profile within the media and the business community;
3. Piggybacking advertising of the School's entrepreneurship and related management courses with the Awards has added to the success of the Awards. Any person searching the website for information on the Awards automatically sees that these prestigious awards are closely associated with the Rotman School of Management and the amount of advertising the School receives for the courses increases exponentially; and,
4. Several winners of the Canadian Women Entrepreneur of the Year Awards have subsequently been recognized among the Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World.

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<sup>65</sup> Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award website, [op.cit.](#)

## **PUBLIC SECTOR INITIATIVES**

### **Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)**

DFAIT (now FAC and ITCan) established the division of Trade and Small and Medium Enterprises to ensure DFAIT's trade promotion services respond to the needs of its key clients, SMEs - including businesswomen-owners, young entrepreneurs and Aboriginal businesswomen - and to ensure that the Department's services are fully accessible and used by SME's to increase their success in the export arena. The division is dedicated to the design and implementation of DFAIT's strategy in support of exports by firms owned and managed by Canadian businesswomen.<sup>66</sup>

The trade division of the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C. has also played an active role in the development of a series of initiatives to support women entrepreneurs.

### **# 8: Canadian Women's International Business Initiative**

#### **Purpose**

The Canadian Women's International Business Initiative (CWIBI) was established by the trade division of the Canadian embassy in Washington D.C as a public and private sector partnership. Its primary goals were to encourage more Canadian businesswomen to consider international markets as a way to grow their businesses and to foster economic growth for Canada by connecting more Canadian businesswomen with more global business opportunities. The Initiative was set up to provide significant resources and funds for events and infrastructure that would contribute to achieving these objectives and to recognize the achievements of exporting women. CWIBI was also a form of targeted marketing by the Government of Canada to increase Canada's exports overall.

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The CWIBI program was launched with an initial outreach / awareness tour in late 1996 of Canadian Trade Commissioners to speak to Canadian businesswomen about existing international business opportunities. This, in turn, inspired the organization of many more regional events in Canada designed to encourage exporting by women-owned or led businesses. Financial institutions and government crown corporations conduct their own training sessions and seminars. Between 1996 and 2000, CWIBI complemented the first awareness tour by building an extensive network of contacts among international businesswomen leaders -- first, in Washington DC, then in other US and world cities and across Canada.

This was achieved through activities and events including briefings, meetings, film screenings, evening receptions, events done in cooperation with private sector

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<sup>66</sup> DFAIT has since been reorganized and this department has been restructured. Refer to footnote No. 48.

associations on both sides of the border, the creation by DFAIT of the Businesswomen in Trade web site designed to meet needs of Canada's businesswomen interested in international markets and the hosting of Canada's first-ever Minister-led trade mission of businesswomen.

The initiatives that grew out of that November 1997 Mission included:

- The Global Summit of Women, July 1998, England;
- Trade '98 Magog, Quebec, September 1998;
- The Businesswomen's Trade Mission to Los Angeles, March 7-10, 1999;
- Trade Research Coalition and national launch, March 8, 1999;
- The first-ever Canada/U.S.A. Businesswomen's Trade Summit, May 1999;
- American première in June 1997 of the Foundation of Canadian Women Entrepreneurs' *"Women Entrepreneurs: Making A Difference!"*
- *Women in Science Roundtable* in March 1998.
- March 1998, the first Canadian Women's Mission to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank;
- International Women's Week event at the Embassy in March 1998;
- The production, in October 1998, of the first edition of the *"Directory of Organizations and Resources for Businesswomen in Canada"*;
- Presentation of the first *Canadian Embassy Businesswomen's Award* to 12 Canadians honouring their outstanding contribution to the businesswomen's community in Canada, at the "Leadership into the Next Millennium" Conference in Washington, D.C., in October 1998; and,
- An 180-person event at the Embassy in celebration of International Women's Day on March 8, 1999, featuring a panel discussion on *"Women in the Global Economy: Agenda for Success"*;

A number of businesswomen-focused initiatives have since been undertaken by other Canadian Embassies and Consulates. These include:

- Canada-Argentina Businesswomen's Forum in January 1998, organized by the Canadian Embassy in Buenos Aires during the Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico, Brazil and Argentina
- Canadian businesswomen's trade mission from Northern Ontario to Chicago in November 1998, organized by the Canadian Consulate General in Chicago.
- A trade mission to Los Angeles in early March 1999, organized by the B.C. Chapter of Women Entrepreneurs of Canada and the Canadian Consulate General in Los Angeles.

- A virtual trade mission and trade mission to Atlanta, Georgia; and,
- Celebrations of International Women's Day at various consulates and tied in with promotional activities for women entrepreneurs.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. The key activities organized and lessons learned under the auspices of CWIBI have also been included as case studies in other parts of this report; and,
2. For such initiatives to succeed, there must be leaders and at least one champion who is committed and relentless in their efforts to make a difference.

### **#9: First Businesswomen's Trade Mission - November 1997**

The former Canadian Minister for International Trade, The Honourable Sergio Marchi, led the first women's trade mission to Washington D.C. in November 1997. 116 businesswomen from diverse business sectors took part. It was a high profile event with significant media coverage and participation from government officials and private sector support at the highest levels. Events included business matches with US businesswomen, workshops about doing business in the US or with international financial institutions and multiple networking opportunities.

### **Successful Program Elements**

- Creation of new networks of businesswomen across Canada with links into the U.S. market;
- Increase in public and government awareness regarding the importance of the contribution of Canadian businesswomen and in the number of appointments of Canadian businesswomen to government boards and committees; and,
- The formation of the Women's Software and Technology Association.

During April and May 1998, a six-month assessment and follow-up of the participants of the 1997 Women's Trade Mission to Washington was undertaken. Some of the immediate results were:

- 96 of the 101 women interviewed represent cumulative gross sales of \$319.43 million. Five participants declined to answer the question;
- 99 women participants directly employ 7,799 people full-time and a further 335 part-time;
- 20% of the women interviewed were doing new business in the U.S. as a direct result of the Trade Mission; and,

- 23% of the women still anticipated doing business in the U.S. within 12 months of taking part in the Trade Mission as a result of their participation on the Trade Mission.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. The participants observed that it takes some time to develop new business relationships and a trade mission environment really helps to initiate this type of relationship and contact;
2. Individual follow-up by each participant is critical; and,
3. The Trade Mission helped create a climate that made it attractive for the private and public sectors to continue to support high-profile businesswomen's initiatives and led to several other government-led and private sector-sponsored events to support women in business.

### **#10: Trade Research Coalition**

The objective of the Coalition was to gather information to clarify the degree and type of participation by Canadian businesswomen-owners in the trade environment, particularly in the U.S. market. Based on this research it then proposed recommendations, policies, measures and activities to promote export development for businesswomen owners. The Trade Research Coalition's Board included members from DFAIT, Industry Canada, and Status of Women Canada and the private sector as well as coordination with U.S. counterparts

The first study completed by the Trade Research Coalition "Beyond Borders: Canadian Businesswomen in International Trade" was on the export needs of women-owned or led firms. The study was one of the follow-up activities from the first Businesswomen's Trade Mission to Washington D.C. The purpose of the study was to fill in the primary gaps on existing research on Canadian women entrepreneurs.

The research objectives were to:

- Document the level of participation by women-owned SME's in international trade;
- Identify conditions that assist the development of export business;
- Identify impediments to exporting for women;
- Identify the potential for export development among women-owned businesses;
- Assess the successful export strategies used by women business owners; and,

- Measure the awareness of and satisfaction with, existing public and private sector support programs that relate to export promotion.<sup>67</sup>

The primary findings of the study were that:

- Canadian women are selling their products and services all over the world;
- Export-oriented women-owned SME's are committed to growth;
- Women exporters are experienced managers;
- Women exporters want to be taken seriously;
- Most women exporters enter foreign markets fairly quickly after start-up;
- International marketing poses the greatest challenge to women exporters;
- International success is based on contacts;
- Women-owned SME's are overcoming the financial challenges posed by exporting;
- Women-owned SME exporters are primarily product-based firms; and,
- Businesswomen have mixed views on the effectiveness of existing export support services.<sup>68</sup>

The report also identified that two of the strongest needs of women exporters were increased networking opportunities and ready access to market information.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. The study established that women's businesses are highly viable as exporters and that they face some special challenges related to gender perceptions of women in business in other cultural settings;
2. That most women were able to overcome any obstacles that the different views of women's roles may have created;; and,
3. The key issues remain the cost of breaking into new markets outside of Canada and how to access market information efficiently and effectively.

### **#12: International Financial Institutions Trade Mission - March 1998**

The International Financial Institutions Trade Mission was the first sector-specific trade mission organized especially for businesswomen. It was designed to address the vast

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<sup>67</sup> Ruth Hayman, *op.cit.*, p. 3

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 4 -5



discrepancy in the success rates of Canadian women versus men consultants in pursuing business opportunities financed by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The 25-member mission was aided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)'s Women in Development Division.

The mission members were specialists in different aspects of the field of gender and development. They attended workshops on how to do business with the different development banks and how to access Canada Consultant Trust Funds. They were also introduced to the Canadian officials working on their behalf at the World Bank and the InterAmerican Development Bank. Trade mission participant also met with selected task managers at the two development banks who worked in their areas of geographic and technical expertise.

Immediately following the trade mission, the trade mission participants formed a networking association that meets regularly once a month in Ottawa. In addition, several members of the mission were able to establish strong contacts with the development banks in Washington that led to new contracts for Canadians.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Sector-specific trade missions facilitate better market access in specialized fields and more networking opportunities between mission members than more generalized, large scale trade missions; and,
2. It became clear to the trade mission's participants as time has passed that to be successful in breaking into the international development banks it is necessary to make frequent trips to Washington or to hire an agent. Both of these options are beyond the resources of the many of the individually-run consulting firms that participated in the trade mission.

### **#13 Businesswomen In Trade Website - June 1998**

The TSME Division of DFAIT developed a web site devoted to supporting businesswomen in trade. This was done in recognition that women exporters face some unique challenges in accessing information regarding how to export and in finding out more information about the export market. This multi-purpose website allows businesswomen to search for potential partners, learn about different government programs designed to support exporters as well as to learn from each other. The web site also gathers names of businesswomen owners to form a database for the government.

The web site is located at:

- [www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/menu-e.asp](http://www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/menu-e.asp)  
(English language location)

- [www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/menu-f.asp](http://www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/menu-f.asp)  
(French language location)

One interesting feature of this website is the profiling of the success stories of women exporters. Any woman entrepreneur can request to have her success story profiled on the website and thus both promote her export business as well as provide export advice to other women entrepreneurs. Through this feature, women entrepreneurs in widely different fields share their experiences in the export world.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. It is critical for any new web site to garner as much publicity as possible so that it can reach a wide audience. Therefore the TSME developed a comprehensive outreach and communication strategy to launch the web site;
2. The TSME also observed that by specifically targeting women entrepreneurs in this website, the website has served to document the demand for these services as well as to create further demand for support for Canadian businesswomen; and,
3. One of the greatest requests from women was to find out more about the personal success stories of women entrepreneurs.

### **#14: Canada /U.S.A. Businesswomen's Trade Summit - May 1999**

This historic private-public partnership was an initiative of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade that was funded jointly by the Government of Canada and the private sector, done in partnership with Industry Canada and Team Canada Inc., as well as the U.S. Small Business Administration, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. State Department. It also involved both the Canadian Ambassador to Washington and the U.S. Ambassador to Ottawa. The Canadian Embassy in Washington was instrumental in coordinating the Summit which was largely being driven by the private sector. York University also participated. The Summit hosted high-level dialogues between the Canadian Minister of International Trade and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce as well as round table dialogues between participants and the Minister and Secretary of Commerce, the Minister of Industry Canada and the Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration. This direct access to the most senior decision-makers in the trade sector in each of the participating governments was one of the most unique features of the Summit. Through this process, the participants were able to make recommendations directly to their respective ministers regarding policies and programs to further advance businesswomen in trade in their countries. The Summit also included workshops and seminars on doing business across the border, a trade fair, two days of business matching, business meetings and networking and spectacular entertainment galas promoting the best that Canada has to offer. All contractors and suppliers to the Trade Summit were women entrepreneurs.

### **Lessons Learned:**

1. The overall assessment of the Trade Summit by the Canadian participants was positive. In particular, they felt that the networking opportunities presented were of great value to them and they appreciated the opportunity to discuss challenges and share ideas.<sup>69</sup>
2. General recommendations for a future event included:
  - More service sector specific events;
  - Smaller groups;
  - More time to exhibit products/present services;
  - More emphasis on websites/ecommerce;
  - More one on one meetings and business matchmaking opportunities; and,
  - Establishment of an exporter's club.

## **INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**

### **#15: The Women Leaders Network**

#### **Purpose**

The Women Leaders Network (WLN) evolved as a response to the growing need to take gender issues onto account in the trade liberalization and facilitation process promoted by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and to promote a higher level of involvement by women in the APEC process. The Canadian government through the Canadian International Development Agency, provided financial support for the development and activities of the (WLN). Canadian women leaders from the private and public sectors as well as academe and civil society have played a strong leadership role in the development of the Network and in the WLN's lobby efforts.

While the WLN has made specific recommendations on a wide range of issues affecting women in the APEC region, overall their focus has been to look at the specific concerns of women entrepreneurs. In particular, they addressed the specific needs of women related to access to new technology, training, financing, markets and information.

#### **Successful Program Elements**

The key factors that have contributed to the success of the WLN's lobby efforts with APEC are as follows:

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<sup>69</sup> Summary of Telephone Survey: Canadian Businesswomen Trade Summit Delegates, Industry Canada, Sept. 2000

- Formation of a network of women leaders who already have access to the decision-making processes in their own economies and who were able to make optimum use of their influence at the national level;
- An in-depth understanding of how APEC operates by key WLN members;
- Establishment of the WLN as a flexible network that was able to adapt and shift its strategies in pace with a rapidly changing economic world and in keeping with the capacity and socio-political reality of each APEC economy;
- The inclusion of representatives from the four major sectors of a national economy, public and private sectors, academe and civil society;
- Strong financial support from CIDA for the operation of an interim de facto secretariat that allowed the WLN to focus on substantive development issues, the provision of travel support by CIDA to ensure the inclusion of women leaders from the developing economies of APEC and support for the Canadian team to participate actively and play a leadership role within the WLN;
- The willingness of the Canadian participants and their Asian counterparts to compromise and collaborate even when there were very different agendas and opinions;
- The flexibility to reach out to other women not represented and to include issues of marginalized women;
- The presentation of WLN of draft gender related recommendations and policy statements presentations at specific APEC Ministerial meetings based on the specific themes established for these meetings;
- The WLN strategy of focusing on the gender issues related to APEC's economic agenda and the documentation of women's substantial economic contribution to the region.
- Strong commitment on the part of the women leaders involved to fostering a change process within APEC;
- The existence of male champions in a few strategic positions who supported the efforts of the WLN;
- Constant consultation with WLN members at all levels;
- Strong support from the public sector members of the WLN in terms of ensuring that the WLN messages were sent through the appropriate channels and reached the Senior Officials, Ministers and Leaders in time to make an impact at specific APEC meetings; and,
- Establishment of the WLN as an independent body that operates outside of APEC even though it has a strong APEC focus and follows APEC structures and themes.

## **Lessons Learned**

The primary lessons learned from the WLN lobby processes include:

1. It is possible to have a significant impact on multilateral trade liberalization policy through the efforts of a relatively small and informally organized group of women leaders;
2. Women entrepreneurs need representation at the multilateral level to ensure that their interests, needs and contributions are taken into account in the decision-making process;
3. To ensure balanced participation from both developing and developed countries it is necessary to have financial support from donor agencies and private sector partners;
4. To be sustainable, a network of this nature needs to work on ways of becoming financially self-sufficient from its inception;
5. To feel the full impact of a major policy shift at the multilateral level by the individual enterprise takes several years;
6. To make an informal network of women leaders operate smoothly requires the support of a coordination centre or interim secretariat; and,
7. That even when the primary goal of the WLN has been reached, its existence must be flexible to meet new challenges, maintain its continuity and its momentum and to serve a monitoring role to ensure that APEC's gender integration policy is implemented effectively.

In general, the WLN provided a unique model of a multi-sectoral lobby effort at the multilateral level. It operates virtually 95% of the time and has required relatively small amounts of resources to promote its view and to successfully influence APEC policy.

### Appendix 3: Matrix of 2004 Best practices

Organization/Program	Issue	Contact Information
<b>Women's Enterprises as a Sector</b>		
Statistics Canada - 9	The need for sex disaggregate data	Deborah Sunter 120 Parkdale Avenue , Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6 Tel: (613) 951-5979 – Email inquiries: <a href="mailto:infostats@statscan.ca">infostats@statscan.ca</a> Web site: <a href="http://www.statscan.ca">www.statscan.ca</a> Statistics Canada National inquiries line: 1-800-263-1136 National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired: 1-800-363-7629
<b>Policy Support</b>		
Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs - 11	Need for Women Entrepreneurs Input in Policy Development	Sarmite Bulte, Member of Parliament High Park/Parkdale 2333 Dundas St. West, Toronto, On Tel: 416-952-0823  432 Confederation Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6 Tel. (613) 992-2936 - Fax: (613) 995-1629 Email: <a href="mailto:bultes@parl.gc.ca">bultes@parl.gc.ca</a> <a href="http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur">www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur</a>
<b>Financing</b>		
Business Development Bank of Canada - 19	Access to financing and capital markets	National Champion - Women in Business Initiatives Sylvie Ratté Alliances and Market Manager Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) 5 Place Ville-Marie, 3e Montreal, Quebec H3B 5E7 Phone: 514-496-1182 Fax: 514-283-6878 E-mail: <a href="mailto:sylvie.ratte@bdc.ca">sylvie.ratte@bdc.ca</a> <a href="http://www.bdc.ca">www.bdc.ca</a>  Manager -\$25 million quasi-equity fund for Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Susan McIntosh, Manager – Subordinate Financing BDC 5 Place Ville Marie, 6th floor, Montreal, Quebec, H3B 5E7 Tel: (514) 283-1709 Email: <a href="mailto:susan.mcintosh@bd.ca">susan.mcintosh@bd.ca</a>  Susan Higgs Manager, Subordinate Financing (\$25 million quasi-equity fund for the West and the Prairies) BDC Tower - Bentall Centre1 – 505 Burrard StreetMain Floor, P.O. Box 6, Vancouver, British ColumbiaV7X 1V3 Tel: (604) 666-7774 Email: <a href="mailto:susan.higgs@bdc.ca">susan.higgs@bdc.ca</a>

Organization/Program	Issue	Contact Information
<b>Promotion of Women's Enterprises</b>		
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency - 27	Promoting Economic Growth Within Canada/ Need for Government Promotion of Women's Enterprises	<p>Blue Cross Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor 644 Main Street PO Box 6051 Moncton, New Brunswick , Canada E1C 9J8 (Courier Address: E1C 1E2)</p> <p>General Enquiries: (506) 851-2271 Toll Free: (800) 561-7862 Facsimile: (506) 851-7403 Secure Facsimile: (506) 857-1301 Device For The Hearing &amp; Speech Impaired: (506) 851-3540 Access to Information / Privacy: (506) 851-3845</p> <p>60 Queen Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor PO Box 1667 STN B Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5R5 (Courier Address: K1P 5Y7) General Enquiries: (613) 954-2422 Facsimile: (613) 954-0429</p>
Organization of Women in International Trade–Toronto - 30	Promoting Export Development	<p>Susan Baka, President Tel: 416-410-1654; e-mail: <a href="mailto:sbaka@baycomm.ca">sbaka@baycomm.ca</a> OWIT–Toronto P.O. Box 715 31 Adelaide St. East, Toronto, ON Canada M5C 2J8</p>
Canadian International Development Agency - 34	Promoting Gender-Sensitive International Trade Policy	<p>Adair Heuchan Counsellor/Conseiller Permanent Mission of Canada/ 5, avenue de l'Ariana 1202 Geneva <a href="mailto:Adair.heuchan@dfait-maeci.gc.ca">Adair.heuchan@dfait-maeci.gc.ca</a> Tel.(41) 022-919-92-93</p> <p>Julie Delahanty Sr. Policy Officer CIDA – Hull, Quebec Canada <a href="mailto:Julie_delahanty@acdi-cida.gc.ca">Julie_delahanty@acdi-cida.gc.ca</a></p> <p>Heather Gibb Senior Researcher North-South Institute 55 Murray, Suite 200 Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1N 5M3 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hgibb@nsi-ins.ca">hgibb@nsi-ins.ca</a> 613-241-3535 Web: <a href="http://www.nsi-ins.ca">http://www.nsi-ins.ca</a></p>

<b>Training and Development</b>		
The Step Ahead/ One-on-One Mentoring program - 37	Need for Mentoring by Women Entrepreneurs	Step Ahead 150 Rivermede Road Unit 4 Vaughan, On L4K 3M8 Tel. 416-410-5802 – Fax: 905-763-7429 Email: <a href="mailto:info@steaheadonline.com">info@steaheadonline.com</a>
Organization of Women in International Trade–Toronto - 40	Need for Organization-to-Organization Mentoring	Susan Baka, VP, Communications Tel: 416-410-1654; e-mail: <a href="mailto:sbaka@baycomm.ca">sbaka@baycomm.ca</a> OWIT–Toronto P.O. Box 715 31 Adelaide St. East, Toronto, ON Canada M5C 2J8
<b>Networking</b>		
Global Banking Alliance of Women - 41	Women-Specific Banking & Related Services	Betty Wood, RBC Royal Bank National Manager, Women & Young Entrepreneur Markets Chair, GBA 2003-04 Tel: (416) 974-0669 Email: <a href="mailto:Betty.Wood@rbc.com">Betty.Wood@rbc.com</a>
<b>Technology</b>		
The Wired Woman Society (WWS) - 47	Promoting the use of technology among women entrepreneur	Lynda Brown, B.A., M.Ed <a href="mailto:president@wiredwoman.com">president@wiredwoman.com</a> Suite #395280 Nelson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2E2 Tel. 604.605.8825 - Fax. 604.648.9521  Chapter Contact Contacts: <a href="mailto:vancouver@wiredwoman.com">vancouver@wiredwoman.com</a> <a href="mailto:toronto@wiredwoman.com">toronto@wiredwoman.com</a> <a href="mailto:winnipeg@wiredwoman.com">winnipeg@wiredwoman.com</a> <a href="mailto:ottawa@wiredwoman.com">ottawa@wiredwoman.com</a> <a href="mailto:calgary@wiredwoman.com">calgary@wiredwoman.com</a>
<b>Support Services</b>		
Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD)/ Women's Enterprise Initiative (WEI) - 50	Need for one-stop services	The Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is a federal government department Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba Tel. (204) 988-1860 - Toll Free: 1-800-203-2343 Email: <a href="mailto:wecinfo@wecm.ca">wecinfo@wecm.ca</a> Web site: <a href="http://www.wecm.ca">www.wecm.ca</a>  Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc. Tel. (306) 477-7173 or (306) 359-9732 - Toll Free: 1-800-879-6331 Email: <a href="mailto:info@womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca">info@womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca</a> Web site: <a href="http://www.womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca">www.womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca</a>  Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association Tel. (403) 777-4250 or (780) 422-7784 - Toll Free: 1-800-713-3558 Email: <a href="mailto:info@aweia.ab.ca">info@aweia.ab.ca</a>



		<p>Web site: <a href="http://www.aweia.ab.ca">www.aweia.ab.ca</a></p> <p>Women's Enterprise Society of B.C.  Tel. (250) 868-3454 - Toll Free: 1-800-643-7014  E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@wes.bc.ca">info@wes.bc.ca</a>  Web site: <a href="http://www.wes.bc.ca">www.wes.bc.ca</a></p>
<b>Best Practices Report</b>		
<p>Foundation of Women  Entrepreneurs of Canada</p>		<p>Andrina Lever  President – Lever Enterprises  965 Bay Street  Suite 2308  Toronto, Ontario  M5S 2A3  Canada  Tel: 416-920-5114  Fax: 416- 920-6764  Email: <a href="mailto:andrina@attglobal.net">andrina@attglobal.net</a></p>
<p>Kartini International</p>		<p>Dana Peebles  Director – Kartini International  118 Arundel Avenue  Toronto, Ontario  Canada  M4K 3A4</p> <p>Tel: 416-462-1714  Fax. 416-462-9347  Email: <a href="mailto:kartini@sympatico.ca">kartini@sympatico.ca</a></p>

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