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Supporting Women's Participation in the Western Canadian Economy

Women entrepreneurs are strong players in western Canada and have shown a growing entrepreneurial spirit over the last 20 years. Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) enhances and supports female-led businesses through many channels, including the [Women's Enterprise Initiative \(WEI\)](#), which provides a wide range of services to create new opportunities for growth and help female entrepreneurs succeed in diverse markets.

The Women's Enterprise Initiative Celebrates Two Decades of Support for Entrepreneurs

The Women's Enterprise Initiative (WEI) supports the development and growth of female-led businesses through its one-stop service model to women entrepreneurs.

The Government of Canada, through WD, invests \$3.9 million annually in the WEI organizations to support their operations in Canada's four western provinces, and has also contributed a total of \$20 million to establish WEI loan funds in each province.



Minister Rempel tours WEI client Metric Design Centre with Tara Holcomb, Assistant Director.

These non-profit centres provide a variety of assistance for women entrepreneurs including advisory services, training options, networking opportunities, and business loans of up to \$150,000 to women interested in starting or expanding a business.

From 2006-2014, WEI organizations have helped to create nearly 4,300 jobs in Western Canada. Every year, WEI provides thousands of services to its clients in the form of information and advisory sessions. The results have been impressive.

In fact, we have witnessed the number of self-employed women increase 36 percent overall across Western Canada since the creation of WEI. This increased participation has helped to create new jobs and economic opportunities right across the West.

During the 2014 Prairies Startup Canada Awards, held in Calgary last May, WEI received an Honourable mention as the Government Organization of the Year with the largest impact in advancing the success of entrepreneurs and for demonstrating innovative approaches.

Look for 20th anniversary celebrations at your WEI organization. For more information on the program and its services, visit our website [here](#).

Building Bright Futures for Women in the Trades

Women Building Futures (WBF) is a not-for-profit organization, established in 1998, that strives to achieve economic independence for women in trades. Over the years, the Government of Canada has been a constant supporter and partner of WBF.

Today, WBF is considered a leader in trades training for women, working closely with industry to consistently achieve a job placement rate of 90 percent. Over 170 industry employers have employed WBF graduates and recognize WBF as a key supplier of high quality, apprenticeship-ready tradespeople. In 2010, WBF established an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, which has succeeded in increasing the student participation rate of Aboriginal women from 19 percent to 27 percent, and continues to attract and support more Aboriginal women to WBF's programs.



Minister Rempel poses with project partners and students from Women Building Futures at the #4ME project announcement in Edmonton.

After providing training in a 4,000 square foot basement for several years, the organization was able to purchase a warehouse to enhance the space for training and mentoring. WD played an instrumental role in assisting WBF convert the warehouse into the current WBF Training Centre. This facility is the first of its kind in Canada, enabling the organization to accept more women into its programs and supply more skilled workers for western Canada.

In January 2015, WD announced an investment of \$996,942 towards the #4ME project, which will use a technology-based system to create a robust online presence for WBF's services. In addition to moving key WBF tools online, this project will also deliver courses via video conference, online and on-site for rural and Aboriginal women. Leading to brighter futures, WBF is opening new doors and helping more tradespeople put their tools to work.



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