

YAHOO! CANADA FINANCE

Female entrepreneurship key to Canadian economic welfare: Report

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By Liam Lahey | Yahoo! Finance Canada – Wed, 9 Nov, 2011 1:48 PM EST

Word has it women's entrepreneurship is falling short in Canada and it poses a potential economic risk if nil is done about it.

So suggests an article in [The Globe And Mail](#) that cites recent data from Industry Canada that states only 16 per cent of all small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are majority female-owned. Moreover, the average annual revenue of those firms is roughly C\$563,000 versus \$1.12-million for majority male-owned businesses. While other developed nations including the U.S. are in the midst of devising strategies to bolster female entrepreneurship, it reads here Canada has some catching up to do.

The Canadian Task Force for Women's Business Growth issued a report this week that states Ottawa, "needs to consolidate existing small business programs to prevent overlap and to ensure those services are relevant to women entrepreneurs. Such recommendations, if implemented, would lead to a 20 per cent increase in total revenues among majority female-controlled businesses, according to the task force. That, in turn, would provide an extra \$2 billion a year to the Canadian economy."

Leanne Minichillo, 35, is of two minds on the subject. The Toronto-based businesswoman established her own public relations firm, [diva Communications](#), in 2004. She told *Yahoo! Finance Canada* any entrepreneur must assume certain economic risk, regardless of one's sex, when taking the plunge into business ownership.

"The majority of small businesses I've been encountering nowadays are in fact owned and operated by women," she said. "That's part of being an entrepreneur: The risk you take to stand up on your own. People who survive are the people that recognize they have to rely on themselves."

But as an entrepreneur and mother-to-be, she also would like to see greater support from Ottawa for female business owners that require maternity leave.

"I'd like to not worry about putting my business on hold and facing a potential downturn due to having a baby," she said. "What would be helpful is if there was some sort of initiative the government could put forth where you could hire someone to temporarily run your business or one that provides extra financial support in this instance.

"Especially in this economy, if I have to take six to eight months off to focus on rearing a child, it's a major strain on my wallet and my business."

Meanwhile, [Reuters](#) says Wall Street too should make an effort to appeal to the next generation of investors and female professionals in order to remain competitive in the wealth management industry.

"The securities industry 'doesn't do a great job for women or being appropriate' for the next generation," said Sallie Krawcheck, who was ousted as head of Bank of America's global wealth and investment management unit in September; Reuters reported. "We talk about stock market returns. We're not talking as an industry about protecting the downside."

Despite the challenges, ladies seeking inspiration to launch their own venture need look no further than [Canadian Business magazine's](#) 13th annual PROFIT W100 ranking of Canada's top female entrepreneurs.

"In 2010, the W100 firms generated almost \$1.4 billion in revenue. The 49 that export their products or services abroad sold almost \$259 million worth to foreign buyers. And they're big-time employers, providing the equivalent of 9,000 full-time jobs last year. Furthermore, these entrepreneurs know how to expand their empires: Over the past three years, their businesses have grown by an average of 156 per cent."