

## **Honourable Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services, visits Women's Enterprise Centre**

Many self-employed women in British Columbia dream about the opportunity to discuss the barriers they face with someone who will not only listen, but who can also make a difference.

That is exactly what the members of Women's Enterprise Centre, Taking the Leap to Entrepreneurship program, had the opportunity to do last month.

During a visit to the Women's Enterprise Centre, the Honourable Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services sat down for a roundtable session with members of the Kelowna Peer Mentoring Group – one of three Taking the Leap to Entrepreneurship Mentoring Programs. These women, most in their first two years of business, brought forward the issues they face in self-employment and how mentoring has helped them deal with those hurdles.

The Honourable Ida Chong, asked the members of the Peer Mentoring Group about their backgrounds, what they found most difficult about being self-employed and how their Peer Mentoring Group has helped.

The group members were able to voice their concerns about entrepreneurship that reflect issues many women in the province experience: lack of confidence, isolation and difficulty balancing life and work – to name a few. They also shared with Minister Chong how their Peer Mentoring Group has enabled them to create a cohesive bond with other women in business by sharing their experiences, challenges, issues, ideas and solutions.

In support of the Taking the Leap to Entrepreneurship program, Minister Chong granted an additional \$95,000 to Women's Enterprise Centre.

“As British Columbia's economy continues to prosper, more and more women may be thinking of launching their own business,” says Minister Chong. “From university enrolment to owning their own businesses, women in B.C. are increasingly at the forefront. In fact, women make up 35 per cent of all business owners in the province.”

To help these women in business, the Taking the Leap program will offer support through a three-part Mentoring Program for women in B.C. who are in the first two years of self-employment. The Mentoring Program includes Peer Mentoring Groups, One-to-One Mentoring and Mentor Advisory Forums.

“We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received from the BC Ministry of Community Services,” says Laurel Douglas, CEO of the Women's Enterprise Centre. “This grant will allow us to implement our new mentoring program which will help women learn and benefit from the experience of successful women business owners who understand the challenges and rewards involved in starting and running a business.”

To find out more about how you can be involved in Women's Enterprise Centre Mentoring please visit [womensenterprise.ca/mentor](http://womensenterprise.ca/mentor) or contact [mentor@womensenterprise.ca](mailto:mentor@womensenterprise.ca)