

Mentoring Eases the Transition to Self-employment

Whether they're coming at it from employment, retirement, stay-at-home parenting or unemployment, starting a business can be a little intimidating for anyone. 'Why?', was the question posed recently to entrepreneurial women from across BC, who came together in seven cities to discuss the barriers they face when entering self-employment.

Organized by Women's Enterprise Centre, these groups explored the issues around women transitioning to entrepreneurship. Their candid disclosures will form the basis for a comprehensive mentoring program to be launched in March 2007.

"We spoke with 53 women, either on the brink of self-employment or in business a maximum of three years, to find out what their challenges were and what kind of support they needed to overcome those challenges," says Janine Brunelle, Business Advisor with Women's Enterprise Centre. "We discovered that self-employed women across the province, probably across the county, share common experiences when transitioning into entrepreneurship."

Participants in the groups often referred to their experiences as a rollercoaster ride of emotions, citing feelings of both excitement and fear. Many faced a common dilemma in trying to find a balance between their home lives and the demands of their businesses.

"Clearly, there are challenges related to balancing personal lives, family and entrepreneurship. We heard from women who had issues on each end of the spectrum; either working too many long, hard hours or having problems being focused and motivated," adds Brunelle.

Women's Enterprise Centre will use the insights gained from the focus groups to build a multi-dimensional mentoring program for women moving into self-employment

"We know the barriers that women face. Now, through mentoring from experienced, savvy entrepreneurs - the ones who have 'been there, done that'- we'll give them more ways to overcome those barriers," says Brenda Tournier, Manager of Skills Development at Women's Enterprise Centre. "This mentoring program is going to give more women more access to owning and operating viable businesses."

Women's Enterprise Centre has long been a proponent and provider of peer-to-peer learning and support services for women business owners in BC.

“Giving new entrepreneurs the chance to learn from the experiences of their peers is a proven way to support their success,” says Tournier. “All the theory in the world means nothing if you don’t know how to use. Mentoring provides the bridge between theory and application. It offers credible assistance because it’s grounded in the real world.”

The mentoring program is only possible through special-project funding from BC’s Ministry of Community Services. Announcements on its launch will be made via Women’s Enterprise Centre’s website, monthly newsletter and subsequent media releases. For more information visit www.womensenterprise.ca

- 30 -

Contact:

Janine Brunelle
Women’s Enterprise Centre
1-800-643-7014.