

NEW MANITOBA CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES WOMEN TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR FINANCES

Laurie Howard could no longer afford her home while supporting four children after her husband suffered a severe disability. Amanda Bibeau grew up in public housing and low-end rentals and was on the outside looking in as she watched her more affluent friends go on vacations to Disneyland.

And just as Vanessa Kunderman's family had recovered emotionally and financially from her father's death, she was diagnosed with cancer at age 16 -- and once again, her family's finances were sent into a tailspin. Yet today, all three women are leading happy lives with solid financial foundations.

Their stories of overcoming adversity are meant to serve as inspiration for Manitoba women in a new financial literacy program launched by the **Manitoba Securities Commission** (MSC) this week called I'm Worth It.

Manitoba Finance Minister Rosann Wowchuk attended the launch of the initiative last Monday at the MSC office downtown and told those in attendance that despite all the advances in equality for women, they still are less likely to invest than men. And women typically earn less, have less pension income in retirement and are more likely to live in poverty after age 65 than men.

Financial literacy is crucial to improving these statistics, she said, but equally important is that women take the initiative with their finances -- something Wowchuk did many years ago when she wanted to start a business. ...

The I'm Worth It initiative is largely focused on personal stories similar to the minister's. It also includes all the basic information, such as tips on budgeting, how to choose a financial adviser and even advice from local financial expert Evelyn Jacks, president of the Knowledge Bureau and adviser for the Federal Task Force on Financial Literacy.

While it may seem that developing a 60-page booklet and a website campaign about the basics of financial literacy is a little far afield for a regulatory body in charge of protecting Manitoba investors, ensuring Manitobans have basic financial literacy ultimately leads to a greater pool of savvy investors, says **Ainsley Cunningham, manager of education and communications at the MSC.**

"The more educational opportunities the public has concerning money and finance, the better informed they will be and the more likely they are to make wise decisions." Certainly, anyone could benefit from the information provided by this program, but Cunningham says it's deliberately aimed at women because market research conducted by the MSC found financial literacy is lowest among women. Yet what makes I'm Worth It more than just another collection of basic financial advice are the five compelling stories of Manitoba women. ...

To find out more about their stories, as well as information about saving for retirement, a home or education, visit www.imworthit.ca.

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