



Suzan Cooper Rochon
Perfect Fit Lingerie

Are YOU ready to start your own business?

Talk to PARO about the Gateway program.

Gateway: A Path to Self Employment is a self-employment benefits program for women living in the Thunder Bay area whereby Employment Insurance eligible women receive benefits while working to develop their business plan and start their businesses. This program also provides weekly learning sessions as well as ongoing access to a business counselor.

Suzan Cooper Rochon:

I AM READY... to Start My Own Business

Suzan Cooper Rochon and her family returned to Thunder Bay after living in Winnipeg for 20 years. Suzan has over 25 years of successful retail sales management experience in small boutiques and big box stores. While still in Winnipeg, Suzan had worked in a lingerie store and developed a real passion for the lingerie business.

Upon her arrival in Thunder Bay, Suzan knew that she wanted to follow her retail passion but she also longed to be her own boss. She also wanted to be able to spend valuable time with her husband and son. She knew that running her own business would be hard work, but that it would allow her the professional flexibility that she was seeking to balance work and family life. Through research and networking with local women, Suzan discovered PARO Women's Enterprise Centre and the Gateway program.

Suzan says that she felt immediately comfortable at PARO Women's Enterprise Centre and that the helpful staff provided her with the resources and support she needed to get started. With help from the Gateway program, Suzan spent five months working with a PARO mentor who guided her through the essential steps of launching a business. Suzan learned how to write her own business plan, how to obtain the appropriate licensing and how to obtain funding for her startup. During these early months, she was also able to obtain Self Employment Benefits and maintain a supporting income for her family.

Suzan remembers her most memorable moment when Rosalind Lockyer, Executive Director at PARO, approved her business plan and she knew it was the day when her business concept would start to become a reality.

Suzan opened the doors to her business, Perfect Fit Lingerie, on Red River Road in Thunder Bay in July 2007. The response to the business from the community has been overwhelming. Perfect Fit Lingerie offers professional fitting services and a selection of beautiful European bras in a full range of sizes. Suzan has also been strategically expanding her stock to include sleepwear, swimwear and other foundation garments. In just a short few months, Suzan has recruited three members of staff and she has been increasing her customer base through local referrals.

Suzan maintains close ties with the PARO Women's Enterprise Centre as a member and a Circle member. She says that without PARO's assistance, the business startup process would have been much more difficult and lengthy. Suzan highly recommends the Gateway program to other women who are ready to start their own business or have an idea that needs some professional nurturing.