

SWEET BEGINNINGS

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For Immediate Release

January 2006

U.S. OFFERS ATTRACTIVE MARKET FOR CANADIAN WEDDING AND EVENT PLANNING COMPANY

(Vancouver, BC)--- There are more than 295 million good reasons why Sweet Beginnings is crossing the Canadian border to begin franchising in the United States.

With almost 300 million people, the U.S. population is more than nine times that of Canada's 32 million citizens. Rob Lancit, CEO of Sweet Beginnings Wedding Consulting & Event Planners, says it was a never a matter of "if" but "when" the franchisor would head south of the border from its Vancouver, B.C. headquarters.

The opportunity is hard to ignore. According to the International Franchise Association Education Foundation, franchising generates more than 18 million jobs for Americans – which is more than half of Canada's total population – and more than half of U.S. retail and service revenue is generated by franchised businesses.

One in seven private-sector jobs in the United States comes from franchised businesses and Americans' fondness for franchises shows no signs of slowing down.

"Americans are very business-savvy individuals," Lancit said. "They see an opportunity and act on it fairly quickly. I know it's a cliché, but America is really the land of opportunity. When I look at the United States to expand, I see nothing but opportunity...for me and my future franchisees here. People have more disposable income here and government agencies make obtaining funding much easier than in Canada."

Lancit speaks from experience. In 2002 Lancit formed CANAM Franchise Development Group, Inc., which helps Canadian, U.S. and foreign franchisors sell franchises in Canada, while at the same time helping Canadian-based franchisors sell franchises in the United States.

CANAM has worked with U.S.-based franchisors such as Precision Tune Auto Care, Instant Imprints and Critter Control as well as Canadian franchisors Puckmasters, Discovery Computers and Bin There, Dump That. Lancit also holds the licensing rights for BeTheBoss Canada, an online franchise directory.

Lancit said there were few hurdles to meet in launching Sweet Beginnings in the United States, save for stricter U.S. and individual state franchising regulations. All U.S. franchisors must provide prospective franchisees a Uniform Franchise Offering Circular (UFOC) that includes information the franchisor must disclose before an individual buys a franchise. This includes up to three years of the franchisor's audited financial statements.

Lancit said only two Canadian provinces – Alberta and Ontario – have similar requirements.

“It's great for Americans because it provides more protection to the potential franchisee by giving them full disclosure on a company,” Lancit said.

Sweet Beginnings is already prepared to expand beyond North America. Lancit said he soon expects to award a master franchise in Brazil, with operations expected to begin within six to eight months. Interest has also come from Australia.

As the Sweet Beginnings' network grows both in the United States and internationally, Lancit said the company would offer destination wedding packages to cities where it has franchises. Couples from Australia, the United Kingdom, India and Singapore have already taken advantage of destination packages offered by Sweet Beginnings' Vancouver location.

“Somebody in Minnesota might want to get married in November, December or January, but not in five feet of snow,” Lancit said. “Instead, they could get married in Puerto Rico and let Sweet Beginnings handle all the details.”

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