

At the outset, may I say how pleased I am to be able to speak to you today. In a sense, this could be considered a minor event of historic significance, since in spite of many associations and contacts over the decades, I believe this is the first occasion on which a Canadian foreign minister has delivered an address in Hong Kong. But I hope it will not be the last, since many changes taking place both in the Pacific and in Canada suggest that intensified relations on a number of fronts will be beneficial to both our country and the nations in this region.

In many ways, the thrust towards the Orient has been an integral part of Canada's history. Indeed, it was the quest for a passage to Cathay that led to the discovery of Canada itself. The name given by French explorers to the rapids in the St. Lawrence River near what is now Montreal bears testimony to what they were really after -- La Chine -- China. In the nineteenth century, Canada's first Pacific venture of the modern era was the founding of Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island in 1843, just three years after the establishment of Hong Kong. Our links with Asia continued to multiply as Canada's Pacific regions were settled and developed. Royal Navy establishments here and in British Columbia were one early connection. Canadian Pacific Empress liners linked Vancouver not only with the Orient, but with Australia and New Zealand, forming a vast imperial marine highway -- a transportation link now supplanted by the "Orange Empresses" of Canadian Pacific Airlines. It is no accident, too, that our first trans-continental railway was called the Canadian Pacific. There are also human bonds that go back a long way -- for example, it was through Hong Kong that many of the Chinese came who figured so prominently in the opening of the Canadian West.

Canada's commercial and diplomatic interests in Asia go back to the early years of this century. In 1906 we established commercial offices in Shanghai and in 1928 in Hong Kong. A Canadian legation was opened in Tokyo in 1929. One of our first posts abroad.

During the Second World War, the role of Canadian troops in the tragic attempt to defend Hong Kong is still remembered. Canada played a role in the United Nations' collective security action in Korea and participated in international control commissions in Indochina from the signing of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 until the 1970s.

But our role in the Pacific has not been military primarily. Canada was one of the founding members of the Colombo Plan, and over the years we have made significant contributions to economic development in the region. In the private sector, interest in the Pacific region is reflected in strong Canadian participation in the Pacific Basin Economic Council. In fact, the Canadian Committee of this Council has for almost 10 years been an official advisory committee to our Government on economic policy in the Pacific, and we expect that role will enlarge in the future.