



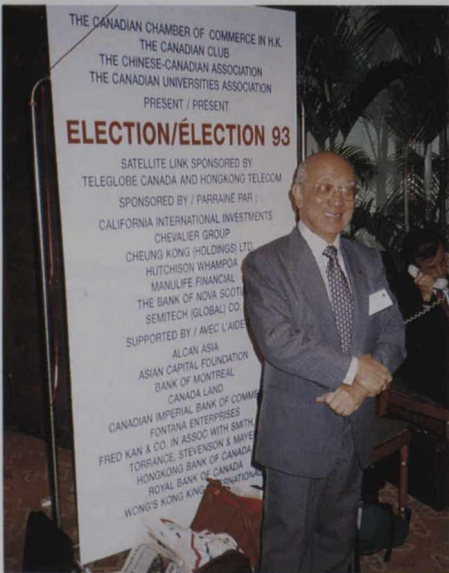
CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION 1993

BY MARGARET COATES

Canadians, their guests and friends of Canada crowded around televisions in Hong Kong and watched in amazement as the Canadian political landscape was dramatically transformed in the recent federal election.

Live television coverage of the election results was made available at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Hong Kong through a special satellite feed from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

At times a hush fell over the crowd as everyone listened intently to the results; at other times it was a strain to hear the announcers over the excited hubbub in the room.



William Chong from the Vancouver Board of Trade next to the sponsor board.

The event was held on the morning of Tuesday, 26 October, 1993 (local time). More than 350 people attended, with many political junkies staying for the entire six hour broadcast. There was also a large press contingent present, recording the event for the local media.

The telecast was organized by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, the Canadian Club of Hong Kong, the Canadian Universities Association and the Chinese Canadian Association. Special thanks is also due to the Commission for Canada for its assistance.

Satellite transmission of the broadcast was provided by Teleglobe Canada, while

Hongkong Telecom sponsored the link to the hotel.

The event was made possible by generous financial support from California International Investments, Chevalier Group, Hutchison Whampoa, The Manufacturers Life Insurance Co., The Bank of Nova Scotia, SemiTech (Global) Co., Alcan Asia, Asian Capital Foundation, Canada Land, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Fontana Enterprises, Hongkong Bank of Canada, Fred Kan & Co. in association with Smith, Lyons, Torrance, Stevenson & Mayer, Royal Bank of Canada, Wong's Kong King International, and Bank of Montreal.

Two Canadian delegations that were visiting Hong Kong at the time, one from the City of Toronto and the other from the Vancouver Board of Trade, attended the event.

An unofficial "straw poll" among the Canadians at the broadcast showed 40 "voters" supporting the Liberals, 16 in favour of the Progressive Conservatives and the same number for the Reform Party, and 2 each for the Bloc Quebecois, NDP, and the Rhinoceros Party. John Parsons won the pool, correctly predicting the Liberal victory, right down to the number of seats.

For the first time, Canadian expatriates could vote in the federal election, if they met certain requirements and had registered on the electoral list. Although no records are kept, it is believed from discussions with Canadians in Hong Kong that few of those eligible actually registered to vote. Lack of information about the issues and the parties, and the fact that this was the first election in which an overseas vote was available, are often cited as contributing to the low level of participation.

However, a major reason appears to be



Colin Sheen of Scotiabank casts his ballot in the mock election.

concern that registration to vote might have adverse tax consequences. Fears were expressed that stating an intention to return to Canada in the future, as required in the application for registration to vote, could bring an otherwise non-resident Canadian into the Canadian tax net. Many people apparently were not prepared to take that risk.

Nevertheless, the Canadian community in Hong Kong and its friends were very interested in the outcome of the election, as demonstrated by the keen interest in the telecast. ♦



Commissioner for Canada John Higginbotham with Elizabeth Smart and Gloria Wong.