
Chapter Seven

Trade Promotion is Big Business

Canadian exports to Hong Kong were approximately Cdn\$40 million in 1977. However, Hong Kong's exports to Canada had increased even more – from C\$208 million in 1975, to C\$284 million a year later, falling only slightly to C\$280 million in 1977.

In that year, there were some 35 Canadian organizations in the Territory, including banks, insurance companies, investment and security companies, Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, Seagram's, Alcan, Inco and Hiram Walker. No less important to the Trade Commission, were the enquiries from small businesses and one-man companies, who were also trying to get a foot in the door. Under Doug Campbell and J.F. McLachlan, the Commercial Section of the Commission concentrated its activities in three main areas: agriculture, transportation, and special projects.

Emphasis was on the promotion of processed food – attempting to capture part of the local market from traditional suppliers, such as Australia and the United States. In transportation, although the major contract for the Mass Transit Railway had already been let, there were other opportunities from spin-off projects. The Kowloon-Canton Railway, for example, had major potential. Special projects being pursued included consulting services to Hong Kong Telephone, development of a new airport site, a new harbour navigational system, as well as electronic component research.

With two Canada-based Trade Officers, the Trade Section relied on its local Commercial Officers – Bernard Yueng and Francis Chau – four secretaries and a single local registry clerk.

In 1981, John Treleaven took over as Senior Trade Commissioner. A year later he was joined by Waleed Hanafi, the new Assistant Trade Commissioner. These two shared a conviction that the Hong Kong market was gravely underestimated by most Canadian exporters, and completely undiscovered by a

large number of firms that probably thought all Asian markets were equally formidable.

In 1982, Tourism Canada recognized the long-haul travel potential of southeast Asia, and sent Arthur Fraser to Hong Kong to head up their regional program. His travels, naturally, extended over his whole territory, and were a frequent source of envy among his colleagues. But by the time he left four years later, he had left his mark, which did not stop with the three-fold increase in tourist travel to Canada by southeast Asians that he helped orchestrate. It was rather humbling for the export promotion staff to be shown that this tourist flow from Asia earned more money for Canada than all Canada's exports to Hong Kong, at least in 1985, when new travel records were being set.

Fraser also brought a whole different marketing approach to the post. He instituted a "marketing committee" system for his Tourism Program – a standard Tourism Canada approach. The Canadian Tourism Marketing Committee, comprising the major airlines flying into Canada and other companies with mutual interest in increasing awareness of Canada, undertook joint promotions, advertising and public relations campaigns.

Waleed Hanafi was on his first posting when he came to Hong Kong, but he was not new to business. Before joining the Trade Commissioner Service, he had been a partner in his own computer software company. He was uniquely qualified to promote high technology products, and with his special skills, Canadian telecommunications equipment suppliers began to make big inroads into the market. Taking a page out of Fraser's book, he formed a loose group of local agents, who all represented Canadian suppliers, and called it the Canadian Technology Marketing Committee. Together, they mounted a number of publicity campaigns, entered trade shows, and even held their own seminar series, with accompanying