

## Entrepreneurial spirit rubs off on Rubin

# Ed Rubin encourages more Canadians to set up business in Hong Kong



photo by Heather Doyle

Ed Rubin: "Where else would you want to be?"

**T**he high energy of Hong Kong seems like a perfect fit for the high energy of Ed Rubin.

Rubin first arrived in the territory in September, 1971 when he was transferred by law firm Phillips & Vineberg (now Goodman Phillips & Vineberg). He immediately became involved in the Canadian community.

After serving two terms as president of the Canadian Club, he was instrumental in establishing the Canadian Business Association, which later evolved into the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. He was, in fact, the Chamber first chairman of the Board of Governors and served two more terms as a governor. From a dozen pioneering business people 17 years ago, the Chamber has now grown to an organization of more than 900 members.

Rubin left Goodman Phillips & Vineberg in 1990 and established Corton Hill Investments Ltd where he manages his own investments and appraises new opportunities in South-East Asia.

"I practiced law for more than 25 years and I got a bit bored. I've always been investing privately and I felt that I could and should do it," says Rubin of his move. He adds: "I've always liked the entrepreneurial spirit of Hong Kong - it's catching."

**B**efore moving to Hong Kong, the Montreal native worked as a special assistant to Pierre Trudeau, who was then prime minister of Canada.

Married last year to Winnie Wong, Rubin continues to involve himself in the community. He is a member of the Management Committee of the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre, a member of the Corporate Contributions Committee of the Community Chest of Hong Kong, director of several private companies and member of the South-East Asia Advisory Board of Rolls-Royce PLC and Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation.

His office in Central is testament to his long stay in Asia: art from Japan, Thailand and the Philippines is mixed in with the high technology needed to do

business - fax machines, computers and telephones.

Over the past 22 years, Rubin has witnessed the dramatic changes that have swept Hong Kong. "I would say Hong Kong has become more international, yes, and more Chinese. The Chinese elements are definitely more important than before and that's going to increase."

**H**e says that in the early 1970s the major Canadian business presence in the territory was that of financial institutions such as the banks and insurance companies. In the late 70s a slightly more diversified group of large companies established themselves. Rubin, however, says there are not as many as there should be.

Rubin encourages Canadians to establish their business in Hong Kong and offers the following advice: "Have a clear objective in mind, determine the type of people you want to do business with, and secure a partner, ie, an agent, distributor or joint venture arrangement."

Another question to consider is how the service or product fits into the marketplace. Rubin advises businesses to adapt their product to the marketplace rather than imposing the current offering.

He emphasizes that a plan to start-up a business in Hong Kong alone "is fraught with danger" and is a step to be taken seriously. He recommends talking to Hong Kong-based business people and asking questions, including "what other questions should I be asking?"

**M**ore than one or two trips and a great deal of time, money and energy are required to make the venture a success. Rubin says his philosophy is to be "constant and consistent" in your approach to the marketplace in Hong Kong.

The economic revolution in the region in general and China in particular will continue to bring greater prosperity. With this belief, Rubin's future plans lie with Hong Kong. "Where else would you want to be?" asks Rubin. ♦