# HONG KONG's future leaders visit CANADA to watch democracy in action

Earlier this year, as part of a unique educational opportunity, a group of Hong Kong's brightest young adults went to Canada to learn about the Canadian democratic system by observing the federal election.

The idea for a trip to Canada grew out of a conversation between Commissioner for Canada John Higginbotham and the Rosanna Wong, Secretary-Director of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups. "The idea was to expose some of Hong Kong's potential civic and political leaders to the Canadian democratic process in action at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. It was a timely opportunity given the forthcoming changes in Hong Kong's government," says Canadian Commission spokesman Neil Reeder.

Since 1960 the Hong Kong Federation of Youth (FOY) has been providing services such as camps, counselling, and educational opportunities to Hong Kong's youth. Currently there are about 32,000 members in the federation. One of the mandates of the group is to "encourage young people to develop an international perspective." To that end, members have participated in exchange programmes with other countries such as Germany, Japan, Singapore, UK, Russia, India and the United States since 1963.

The programme for the Canadian trip was developed and funded by the Commission for Canada (in conjunction with the Department of External Affairs) and the FOY. After a territory-wide competition, which included writing an essay on the importance of civic participation, 12 delegates, aged 19-25, were chosen to participate in the event. They were accompanied by three FOY staff members.

The group arrived in Ottawa on October 20. Over the course of seven days they visited all of the major political headquarters; toured the parliamentary buildings and library; visited polling stations; and conducted a survey of the attitudes of Canadian voters towards their electoral system for use in a report to other youth organizations and the Canadian Commission.

They also went to the Liberal celebration party on election night which Candy Lam, one of the delegates, cited as one of the most exciting events of the trip. "The experience was great because everyone was shouting, and laughing, and celebrating. We watched the returns on television and the Liberals heckled Kim Campbell whenever she was on TV." A minor disappointment for her was the early confirmation of the Liberal Party victory because of the conclusive results in Eastern Canada. "We were hoping that it would be a close decision up until the end - like going to the horse races. But it was over by 8:00 pm.



Candy Lam, right, meeting with Mac Harb, the Ottawa - Centretown Liberal MP, who was seeking reelection (he won).

The group then spent six days in Vancouver where they had the opportunity to have lunch with Raymond Chan, the successful Liberal candidate (Vancouver-Richmond) and recently appointed Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific region. Chan is the first immigrant Chinese-Canadian elected to a federal seat and he emphasized to the group the



The youth group had a chance to speak to Raymond Chan, the newly elected MP for Richmond.

importance of getting to know the people in your riding.

Kenneth Kwok, another of the delegates, explained how a visit with the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, the Honourable David Lam, provided them with a view into the workings of provincial government and with the qualities a good politician should possess. "Mr Lam gave us a short speech on leadership. He said that a good leader must be a good salesman. You must have a good idea and then sell it to the people."

The delegates also had a meeting with Tung Chan, a member of the Vancouver city council, who explained the functions of municipal government.

The group gave Canada's system high praise. Paul Chan, one of the staff members, found the Canadian democratic system impressive. In what may be an under-



Meeting with the Honourable David Lam, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and his wife was one of the trip's highlights