

**Historic
association**

Yet, this situation is changing, and changing rapidly. Much has to do with the new economic wealth and political influence of western Canada, which for many years has seen the Pacific as the cornerstone of its prosperity. The westward shift in national focus has also brought central and eastern Canadians to a new appreciation of the Pacific. It has reminded us all that even before Simon Fraser and Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific Coast overland, the westward thrust to the Orient – the search for the Northwest Passage – was an integral part of Canada's history. The magnetism of the Pacific has continued as an irresistible force ever since: without it, Canada as we know it, would not, in all probability, exist.

In 1843, for example, Canada's first Pacific venture of the modern era was the founding of Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island, only three years after the establishment of Hong Kong. Our first transcontinental railway was called the Canadian Pacific, and in the early years of this century – and even before – Canadian Pacific *Empress* liners linked Vancouver with the Orient, Australia, and New Zealand in a vast imperial marine highway – the *White Empresses* now supplanted by the *Orange Empresses* of our flag carrier in the Pacific.

Canada has been historically associated with the Pacific in many other diverse ways. We opened our first commercial office in the region in Sydney in 1895. Melbourne, Yokohama and Shanghai followed on swiftly in the next few years. In 1929 one of Canada's first diplomatic posts abroad was our Legation in Tokyo. On the human side, an inflow of Chinese helped open the Canadian West, while a later substantial outflow of missionaries provided many Asians with their first close look at Canada and Canadians – and gave Canadians their first real sense of involvement in the problems of Asia.

And who could not, in more recent times, remember the role of Canadian troops in Hong Kong in the Second World War, and later in Korea? In working for peace and stability in the region we have participated in various forms of control commissions in Indochina, and we have contributed to the economic development of the region through the Colombo Plan, the Asian Development Bank, and bilateral aid programs.

Canadian provincial governments have also made significant contributions to Canada's presence and activities in the region. And so has Canada's private sector, both through a long record of trade, investment and other business activities, and more generally through Canadian participation in the Pacific Basin Economic Council since 1967.

New directions

While much of this is history, it provides a solid basis on which to write an even more illustrious future chapter. This will require, however, co-ordinated and well-defined policies and activities which are better fashioned to focus on, and respond to, a myriad of conditions and situations – political, economic, cultural and social. The formation of innovative new approaches to the Pacific poses an enormous but exciting challenge to contemporary Canada, and to this Conference in particular.

In developing new directions we must, first and foremost, come to terms with the sheer size and complexity of the Pacific world; this very diversity makes it impossible to delineate, let alone implement, one set of policies applicable to all countries.
