

A MARKET FOR POLLUTION SOLUTIONS



Private Sector Committee Environment Centre
Executive Director Stephen W. Lam

A database established by the Private Sector Committee Centre could offer Canadian companies access to Hong Kong's expanding market for environmental goods and services.

The Centre, established by the Private Sector Committee on the Environment, is a uniquely Hong Kong solution to what is usually perceived as a public sector problem.

It aims to promote practical, efficient, and cost-effective solutions to Hong Kong's environmental problems, and its Committee membership reads like a who's who of Hong Kong business — 65 per cent of companies listed on the Hang Seng Index sit on the executive arm, which is chaired by Sir William Purves, group chairman of HSBC.

"That," notes the Centre's Executive Director Stephen W. Lam, "has significant implications." Lam, a gregarious Hong Kong-born Chinese who was educated and worked in the U.S., understands power, and the private and public sectors from the inside out, thanks to years spent first as corporate director of environment services for an American food conglomerate, then as an environmental consultant before being nominated by the Governor of Louisiana to the State Department — the first Asian-American appointed to cabinet level posts in the southern U.S.

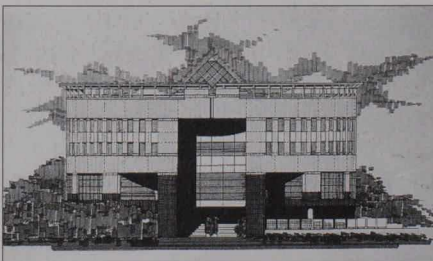
He's working to put power, and the Centre's connections, to work for the environment. "Hong Kong's success is due to the dynamism of the private sector," explains Lam. He wants to take that dynamism, direct and motivate it, and apply its energy to dealing with

Hong Kong's environmental problems. But, characteristic of Hong Kong, Lam has a broader vision. He sees past today's smog and scum to clean air and water, and a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. "Hong Kong has a strategic location in Asia. We have every reason to believe we could potentially become the trail blazer of the environmental industry. We're here to add business, to create a market, to challenge the issue through a private-sector arena," Lam says.

"Perhaps, longer term, this is a set-up that Asia can follow. We could become a very major regional resource centre, clearinghouse, training institute, and perhaps a macro-marketing centre," he says. "This humble initiative here could be an example. We are creating an international environmental partnership."

He points to the complexity of environmental problems, noting social, economic, technological, and political issues. "The challenge that confronts Asia is that its economic boom has to be dealt with sensibly and methodically. That takes a kind of partnership — sectoral partnership. The government, the private sector, green groups, the citizenry," he lists them.

Lam first began by expanding the Centre's agenda back in 1991, working from short- to mid- to long-term strate-



Artist's rendering of the future
Private Sector Committee Environment Centre

gy. "The mission is pretty simple. The mission hasn't changed, but the programme expanded," he explains of an agenda that he believes remains highly focused. Initially, he thought the Centre's impact might be too small, that "we should do a little bit more. A 'little bit more' is probably an understatement," he says now. On the way to doing a little bit more, he's harnessed the power of the media, appearing, among other places, in the *Global and Mail*, as well as speaking at an environ-

mental conference in Toronto.

For Canadian companies, the Centre's environmental database for business and industry — the first in the region — could be the vital link between supply and demand. Companies simply register with the database. He says, "Tell Canada to get in here with us — fax us. Letters take too long."

The Centre, which will hold the groundbreaking ceremony on its HK\$50 million complex in November this year, in conjunction with the Urban Growth and The Environment World Congress, has launched several major initiatives since its inception.

It began a program of cooperation with China, participation in the United States-Asia Environmental Partnership, developed the region's first environmental database with IBM's assistance, organised annual Business and Environment weeks (June 6-10 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre), and launched a newsletter, *Pollution Solutions*.

The Centre also offers technical assistance to small- and medium-sized industry, including technology demonstrations, seminars, training, and consultation, as well as environmental audit services.

The Centre has also introduced Environmental Management Systems to Hong Kong's business and industry, as well as Technology Cooperation Services, Education/Research Services, and the Waste Exchange/Recycling Information Scheme (WERIS). WERIS provides free advice on recycling waste while acting as a clearinghouse for those generating waste and those hoping to recycle it. Explains Lam, "Certain people's waste becomes some people's gold." In 1993, one million tons of waste was recycled for an export value of HK\$2.2 billion.

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