

With the East-Asian Autumn Festival as a backdrop, the conference titled, "Canada - East Asia: Business Connections" was held on October 2, 1998. It was presented in conjunction with the KW Chamber of Commerce, Communitech, Canada's Technology Triangle Community Technology Association and the Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, University of Waterloo.

Its purpose was to bring together a diverse group of individuals to discuss Canadian interests and involvement in East Asia. The Conference examined the nature of relations between Canada and East Asia in a rapidly changing global economic community. In the fall of 1998, the Canadian government and Canadian businesses were trying to formulate responses to the economic crisis that was wreaking havoc in East Asia. The so called "Asian meltdown" served as a timely context to questions considered at the conference. Discussions focused on identifying business opportunities in Asia while considering questions of culture and human rights. The conference served as an important forum in which participants could share expertise and experience to further promote relations between Canada and East Asia.

Participants were offered a wealth of information regarding opportunities and challenges for businesses with respect to the changing economic realities in Asia. They were able to obtain up-to-date information from experts on market trends in East Asia, and speak directly with Team Canada members about what they had learned on their Asian Tour. The conference allowed key contacts to be made with other business people and concerned citizens who were interested in developing relationships with East Asia.

Panelists and presenters included academics, business representatives and senior government officials whose wide-ranging and varied expertise offered a rich base for discussion. The composition of the audience was as varied as that of the presenters. The seventy-five individuals in attendance included students, interested members of the Kitchener-Waterloo community, academics, business interests, and government officials. As a result, a variety of issues and concerns were raised, thereby contributing to the on-going dialogue on policy formation on Southeast Asia.