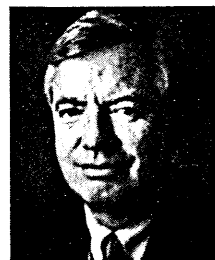


An Interview with CYAP Ambassador John Bell



CANADA'S YEAR
OF ASIA PACIFIC
1997 L'ANNÉE
CANADIENNE DE
L'ASIE-PACIFIQUE



This CanadExport interview with John Bell, Ambassador to Canada's Year of Asia Pacific (CYAP), was conducted a few weeks before the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Vancouver, the culminating event in a highly successful CYAP 1997.

CanadExport:
What was the main purpose

behind organizing Canada's Year of Asia Pacific, especially as it pertains to business people?

Ambassador Bell: Canada's Year of Asia Pacific was all about increasing awareness of the fact that Canada is a Pacific nation and refocusing our attention and resources across the Pacific, commensurate with our real and potential interest in the region. And this is something we did from coast to coast.

CanadExport: Could you give us some background?

Ambassador Bell: It is interesting to note that over 30 years ago, Asia Pacific accounted for only 4 per cent of the total global production of goods and services. This year the region accounts for 25 per cent, and the projection is that over the next decade one half to almost two thirds of the increase in global production in goods and services will be in Asia Pacific. And despite the strong readjustments in the currency and stock markets the last few months, indica-

tions are that an overall strong policy framework will bring the Asia-Pacific economies back to a stronger position in the next few years.

Another factor is that we now have two million Canadians of Asian background — that's 62 per cent of new Canadians now coming from Asia. So a lot of what we sought to accomplish this year related to our own economic opportunity and the fact that our linkages with Asia Pacific will create jobs in Canada, and that we will succeed better by working together. We've focused the year on youth, on small business and on working with Asian Canadians in building bridges to Asia, particularly in terms of business, but also culture and other connections.

CanadExport: How has CYAP connected with business people?

Ambassador Bell: The first event was really the Team Canada Mission to South and Southeast Asia, which was about opening doors and creating access for Canadian companies. It was also, coincidentally, about Canadian companies working together

to take advantage of these markets. We have undertaken a series of conferences throughout Canada, building on Team Canada's successes. And we have sought to make the opportunities in Asia Pacific known to small businesses. The Asia-Pacific Leaders' Meeting, for example, is not just about creating special relations, but also about creating greater trade liberalization and trade facilitation through things like customs clearance and common standards, as well as facilitating business travel. All these events have brought information and networking opportunities for a wide variety of small and medium-sized Canadian businesses.

CanadExport: What kind of response has there been to the many CYAP events?

Ambassador Bell: Well, first of all, the attendance of small and medium businesses from both the APEC region and Canada was considerable — more than expected. And a number of groups will be organizing a conference shortly to plan ways to keep the momentum and enthusiasm from dissipating.

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