

Statement

95/52

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE RAYMOND CHAN,
SECRETARY OF STATE (ASIA-PACIFIC),
TO THE
ASSOCIATION DES RESTAURANTS CHINOIS DU QUÉBEC
ON CANADA'S LINKS TO THE ASIA-PACIFIC
AND THE UPCOMING QUEBEC REFERENDUM**

**BROSSARD, Quebec
September 19, 1995**



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

I am particularly pleased to join you here this evening on behalf of the Government of Canada to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Association des restaurants chinois du Québec. There are a number of reasons why I am so pleased to join you here. First and foremost, what person in their right mind would turn down a meal with 500 restaurateurs? Secondly, I feel a genuine kinship with you as I have owned and operated two Chinese restaurants in my home province of British Columbia. I know how difficult it is to run a successful restaurant and opportunities like this evening to sit back and celebrate your successes are few and far between. It is not often that we restaurateurs can sit back and have someone else do the cooking and the serving.

I also feel a particular sense of pride looking around the room tonight as I see many Canadians who, like myself, came to this country from Asia looking for, and finding, a better life for themselves and their families. Several of you are sixth and seventh generation Canadians and I thank you and your families for blazing a trail to Canada, making it so much easier for the rest of us because you demonstrated to other Canadians why this country should continue to open its arms to hard-working and industrious people.

I would like to take a few moments to briefly describe my role as Canada's Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific). The prime function of my position is to advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs, André Ouellet - who represents the Montreal riding of Papineau-Saint-Michel - on Asia-Pacific matters. My responsibilities therefore cover both geographic and sectoral issues, such as political economic matters and social development assistance. At the same time, I work closely with the Minister for International Trade, Roy MacLaren, to help him in his capacity of promoting trade for Canada.

A key part of my job is to build on the links that many of us have with Asia to enhance Canadian export opportunities. As our government has clearly demonstrated during the two years we have been in office, trade - exports, investment and technology transfer - is central to sustaining Canadian prosperity. The export of Canadian goods and services accounts for over one quarter of Canada's gross domestic product. Directly and indirectly, exports sustain over two million jobs in Canada. Most importantly, the export sector has been the most dynamic element in stimulating economic growth in Canada. For all these reasons, international business development holds a high priority on our government's economic agenda.

The two years since Prime Minister Chrétien appointed me to his cabinet have certainly been eventful for those of us dealing with the Asia-Pacific: it included visits to Canada by a number of Asian heads of state, and ministers from virtually every Asian country. Going the other way, André Ouellet, Roy MacLaren and I have crisscrossed the region working hard to promote Canadian interests.

Last year was the kick-off of "Team Canada." Led by Prime Minister Chrétien, Team Canada was a sort of awakening to the sheer scale of opportunities and to Canada's capacity to compete when the effort is

made. Team Canada showed that we could pursue business opportunities. It demonstrated the advantage of working together: federal government with provincial governments, business with government. And it proved that Canada can compete with the best in the world and win.

I am convinced that our government's focus on the Asia-Pacific - and our explanations to Canadians for that focus - is perhaps the best example to Canadians of our government's Red Book philosophy. In short, exports create jobs, and jobs create wealth for Canadians, thus helping to reduce the deficit and to maintain many of those programs, such as health care, that have made our country the envy of the world.

As the Prime Minister and the nine premiers who joined him demonstrated on the Team Canada trip, our government's commitment to the Asia-Pacific region can also address some of our concerns about national unity. While national unity is most obviously relevant in the Quebec dimension it is also significant in mediating lingering divisions between Eastern and Western Canada. We see our efforts in the Asia-Pacific as a unifying force - something on which we can all agree. Indeed, support for national unity can be enhanced through the pursuit of co-operative working relationships with the provinces, and through federal leverage and access in the Asia-Pacific when key contracts are at stake and major issues must be dealt with.

I cannot even begin to count the number of times I have travelled to Asian countries to meet with heads of state, ministers and business leaders in order to promote and support companies from Quebec who were bidding on contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars. It is an incredible advantage to Quebec companies to be a part of a country that is considered to be a Pacific country by our Asian partners. As Prime Minister Chrétien pointed out last week following a meeting with Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Tok Chong, yet another of the many reasons Quebec needs to remain in Canada is to give Quebec firms like Bombardier better access to the Pacific Rim markets. To quote our Prime Minister: "If Quebec were separate, it would not be a Pacific nation anymore."

This brings me to an important issue I want to discuss with you this evening; the upcoming referendum. Quebecers like yourselves must choose between a country that has already proven successful and the unrealistic option of those who want to break it apart. This is the question you are faced with on October 30th. No matter how it is dressed up, the question is clear: Do Quebecers want to separate from Canada?

And make no mistake about it, the referendum is your business. Canada's multiculturalism policy recognizes that all Canadians are full-fledged members in building a better society and that no one should be excluded from that process. Ensure you are registered to vote. The deadline for registration has not yet passed. Talk to

your families, your neighbours, your friends, your customers. Tell them it is vital they vote. I am told there are some 100 000 Canadians of Asian origin living in Quebec. It is essential that these numbers are reflected at the polls. As Canadians living in Quebec, you each have to ensure that your voices are heard and thus it is essential that you exercise your right to vote so that Canada remains united. My comments are limited to Quebec, but as someone from British Columbia, Quebec's separation would have an impact on all of us throughout Canada.

As a young boy growing up in Hong Kong, my father used to tell me that just as he had fled China to Hong Kong, I too would have to flee Hong Kong for a better life. He instilled in me the need to study a science so that my skills would be marketable in other countries. When he died when I was a teenager, I began to search for a real home. My eyes quickly turned toward Canada. Like me, many of you, or your ancestors, came to Canada because you recognized that Canada is a community united by certain basic values: the rule of law, a democratic government, freedom, integrity, peace, and respect for human rights, honesty and compassion. These values are the very essence of our society. These are universal values, values that transcend cultures. There was a special moment when all of this hit me shortly after my arrival - it was during my first week in Canada. I was standing at a bus station in Vancouver. It was raining so I had on the typical raincoat that we wore in Hong Kong and with my little hood over my head it was quite clear I was new to Canada. A little old woman standing at the bus stop walked over to me and said: "Where are you from?" Now I must admit I was a bit nervous because I wasn't sure what she wanted. Nevertheless, I answered her: "I'm from Hong Kong, ma'am." She took my hand and shook it. "Welcome to Canada son, we have a great country. We can use more hard-working young men like you." I knew right then and there that I had finally found a home.

And I do not want to see my home divided and broken apart. There is too little to be gained and far too much to lose with separation. You and all Quebecers would be giving up all you have built for empty promises and non-existent guarantees. We have worked hard to win our rightful place in this country and to be called Canadians. At this point, the road to separation is not only pointless, but dangerous, especially considering that we have achieved so much together.

The Canadian economy is solid. Inflation is almost non-existent. Our growth rate is the highest of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries. Our productivity is on the rise. And the latest federal budget is ensuring that we get our fiscal house in order.

Let us ask ourselves this question: How would an independent Quebec be more successful in trying to solve the problems of unemployment, or social problems such as crime and welfare dependency? How would

separation help to balance the budget, assist the disadvantaged, or prepare our young people for the future?

In speaking of the immediate risks of separation, we must look at what Quebec's separation would mean in concrete terms. I will outline just three of the many risks that loom on the horizon in the aftermath of a YES vote.

The risk of losing your citizenship. One thing is certain: whatever the PQ [Parti québécois] says, your Canadian citizenship would be put at risk in a separate Quebec. Currently, as Canadian citizens, your Canadian passport guarantees you protection, respect and recognition worldwide. The citizenship we now enjoy is a privilege, not a right. Canada is free to redefine its arrangements regarding citizenship. The PQ government cannot make promises or decisions on behalf of the Canadian government as to who is a Canadian citizen.

The risk of job losses. A certain number of jobs in Quebec could be lost in the event of separation. New investments will slow down and capital, individuals and companies that do not want to remain in a separate Quebec might go elsewhere. How will this affect the future of your children and your communities? What is certain is that the economy and the situation of cities such as Montreal and Quebec City would be uncertain. I don't have to tell you how volatile the restaurant business is to this risk.

The risk of losing your mobility right. Within a separate Quebec, your access to jobs in other Canadian provinces, and that of your children and your grandchildren, would be eliminated.

Talking about the economic consequences of separation is not a fear-mongering campaign: it is telling Quebecers the truth. And I am confident that Quebecers realize not only these risks, but the tremendous advantages of Canada. Indeed, at the end of this saga, we will continue to demonstrate to the world why Canada has been selected by the United Nations for the second year in a row as the best country in the world in which to live.

We have made Canada our country and together we can ensure that it continues.

A Canada united, strong and ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow – a future brimming with hope and opportunity – is the heritage we should pass on to our children and our grandchildren. This is the heritage that we deserve!

Thank you.