

Keynote Speech by Senator Vivienne Poy

**The seventh annual “Canadian Pacific Railway Lecture in Western
Canadian History”
In celebration of Alberta’s centenary**

**Centennial Lecture
Alberta:
the Chinese Canadian Perspective
past and present**

**University of Alberta
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Honoured guests, distinguished scholars, friends:

I wish to thank Prof. Lesley Cormack, Prof. Kenneth Monroe, Prof. Rod. Macleod and Prof. Jennifer Jay for inviting me to speak at your seventh annual “Canadian Pacific Railway Lecture in Western Canadian History”, in celebration of Alberta’s Centennial year. CP Rail, as well as all subsequent donors, have been most generous in funding this lecture series in Western Canadian History, and I wish to thank you all. As well, I want to thank Ms. Dietlind Bechtold, whose hard work has made this event possible. It is indeed a great honour for me to be here among such distinguished company. I want to say a special “hello” to my old friends Carl and Ellen Amrhein.

I met Prof. Jennifer Jay at an academic conference in Calgary last year, and she is well aware that my doctoral thesis is on Chinese women and Canadian immigration. All my interviews were concentrated in B.C. and Ontario, so, when I was asked to speak during this year of Alberta’s Centennial celebration, I had the added incentive of learning more about the Chinese experience in Alberta.

While researching information on Alberta, I was not successful in obtaining substantial historical material on Chinese women in this province, so I am going to concentrate on the entire community instead.

Since I am not knowledgeable about other immigrant groups in Canada, I will focus mainly on ethnic Chinese. While the early Chinese immigrants to Canada were all from south China, ethnic Chinese have come from many

different parts of the world in recent years so I want to stress that, depending on where we came from, Chinese Canadians may be culturally very different from one another.

Since this is the seventh “Canadian Pacific Railway Lecture in Western Canadian History,” and Alberta’s Centennial year, it is even more fitting that I should concentrate on the Chinese experience, because most Canadians know that it was the Chinese railway workers who made possible the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, thereby uniting eastern and western Canada.

Incidentally, not too many people know that the first contract labour group brought into Canada to help to build this country was also Chinese. This happened in 1788, when over seventy carpenters and shipwrights were brought to Nootka Sound from Macao by John Meares, to build a fort to withstand the Spanish attacks, and to build the ship “*The North West America*.”

Having come to Canada from Hong Kong on a student visa many years ago, I knew little about the Chinese in Canada who had been here for generations. Ever since my appointment to the Senate of Canada, I have made it my duty to learn as much as possible about the Chinese Canadian communities.

Over seven years ago, as a neophyte and the first Asian to be appointed to the Senate of Canada, I gained my primary impression of Alberta from Alberta Senator Nick Taylor, who told me that, during the Depression in western Canada, had it not been for the Chinese restaurant and grocery store owners, who gave credits to those who had no money for food, many in Alberta would have died from starvation.

When one speaks about the early Chinese migrants to Canada, one immediately thinks of British Columbia, rather than Alberta. So, when and how did the Chinese arrive in Alberta?

In 1885, two events happened which have greatly influenced the lives of the Chinese in Canada, including those in this province. At the completion of the CPR, Chinese labourers were no longer needed. The British Columbia government lobbied the Dominion government in Ottawa to institute a head tax on all Chinese entering Canada, in order to discourage

their entrance. It was first set at \$50. Why? Because the Royal Commission of 1885 determined that a Chinese labourer was only able to save \$43 annually after all expenses, so a head tax of \$50 should have been enough as a deterrent.

This did not discourage the Chinese from coming to Canada because conditions were much worse in south China. The population increase in Guangdong province was such that there wasn't enough land to feed the people. So, the amount of head tax was increased to \$100 in 1900, and to \$500 in 1903. The Chinese migrants continued to come. In the history of world migration, people have always gone to where there are better economic opportunities.

Also, in 1885, the Chinese railroad workers who became unemployed at the completion of the CPR, had no where to go, so many lived in temporary camps along the railway line, and many suffered malnutrition and deprivation. Soup kitchens were set up by the Chinese merchants and the Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association (CCBA). During this period, some of the more enterprising members crossed the easternmost mountains in search of employment and business opportunities, and they arrived in Alberta.

They first went to in Calgary which was then a small railway town. In 1887, Medicine Hat recorded its first Chinese resident (Lee Turn) who opened a laundry. In 1890, Lethbridge recorded three more Chinese laundries.

With little money, most Chinese started hand laundries, though a few opened other businesses. The other employment that was accessible to Chinese men was as ranch cooks and house boys. A Chinese ranch cook was considered an invaluable hired hand, and a Chinese house boy was a status symbol of the Calgary upper class.

In the early 1890s, Calgary established its first Chinatown, (at the corner of Centre Street South and Ninth Avenue East). In 1901, there were 63 Chinese residents in Calgary. In the entire province of Alberta, there were 235 Chinese residents. (2001 - 108,050 = 3.67% of total population) By 1901, out of necessity, a second Chinatown came into existence.

I find it interesting to read what was written at the beginning of the 20th century. A Dr. Howard D. Palmer wrote in an article called *Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta* : “aside from the Indians, the Chinese were rated as the most undesirable ethnic group in Alberta ...the group least likely to be assimilated and the most conspicuously remote in culture and race....that Chinese immigrants neither could nor should be assimilated.”

The local papers called for a relocated and homogeneous Chinatown. The newspaper *Calgary Albertan* wrote that it feared that the City core would degenerate without segregation. This typical frontier journalism did not necessarily represent broader civic opinion. A poll of Calgary’s nine senior civic officials revealed that only one advocated segregation of the Chinese, and “only if it were carried out properly.”

However, the Chinese wanted to be recognized for their contributions. In what was probably the first published letter to the Editor of the *Herald* by a Chinese merchant in Calgary, Oct. 7, 1910, he wrote:

“I take your newspaper and see that some people in Calgary are saying some bad things about my countrymen here. This is not right. The Canadian government has given us the right to live here and pay our debts (head tax?). We want to do honest business in Calgary, same as all men, and, Canada’s law will protect us. You send missionaries to our homes in China, and we use them good; also English business men. If my people are no good to live here, what good trying to make them go to heaven? Perhaps there will be only my people there. Thanking you for your trouble. I am, yours truly,”
Luey Kheong. Chinese merchant; member Chinese Empire Reform Association.

By 1911, when Calgary officially became a city, there were almost 500 (485) Chinese residents there engaged in businesses or the service trades. The only businesses accessible to the Chinese were restaurants, laundries and grocery stores. Some engaged in market gardening on the outskirts of the city, and some built and managed their own greenhouses. Consequently, the reliable Chinese vegetable dealer became a welcome institution in the growing city. However, anti-Chinese sentiments were pervasive and readily evident.

In response to their isolation in mainstream society, between 1910 and 1930, significant numbers of organizations of the Calgary Chinese

community were established. The same would follow in other cities. As in all Chinese communities all over the world, three essential institutions were established: the *tong* (headquarters) or the *hui kuan* (mutual aid society); and the clan or surname associations. The latter are organizations of people from the same geographic areas, or people with the same surnames. These organizations were for self help and the protection of the community.

These organizations are common in all overseas Chinese communities. They actually originated in China, when men had to travel long distances for work and needed the support of their clansmen. So when the Chinese went overseas, these organizations were established for the same purpose, but they did more for the members because the stronger members, who were usually the merchants, had the responsibility to protect and represent their communities in foreign countries.

I have so far not mentioned Edmonton. Let us find out how the Chinese first arrived here. In June, 1892, a Chinese laundry worker in Calgary contracted smallpox. Officials immediately closed the laundry, burned the building and its contents, and placed its Chinese occupants under quarantine. When they were released from quarantine, a mob of three hundred Calgarians went on a rampage trying to drive the Chinese out of town. This incident was reported in the *Calgary Herald* on August 3, 1892, entitled "Hunting Chinamen." "A Chinese shack near Hamilton stable was raided, but two of the men who were wanted escaped by the rear. The crowd then proceeded to a laundry on South Street....and smashed in the doors and windows and attempted to burn the place down...they then went to a similar shack west of the Alexander corner and broke down the doors and windows. They then went to the Chinese store next to the Diamonds.....one or two of the Chinamen were badly maltreated....the outrages might have been stopped at the outset by the prompt interference of the police, but they were not to be seen until too late. The Mounted Police were brought in."

Fearing that the white public would use this incident as an excuse to close all Chinese laundries in Calgary, Chung Gee and his brother Chung Yan left Calgary for Edmonton to set up a business in the newly incorporated town. That was the first recorded event of the Chinese arrival in Edmonton in 1892.

In 1907, the newspaper *Herald* stated, "The Alberta government would be well advised if it passed legislation making it impossible for a

Chinaman to have a vote in this province. Making these yellow men understand we are not going to allow them to secure any influence in our affairs. They have no right....to compete with white votes.”

During the 1908 federal election campaign in Alberta, *The Coleman*, a local newspaper, urged local miners to vote conservative to prevent Canada from being “overruled by the Mongolians who work for starvation wages on which a white could not exist.”

Racial discrimination precluded Chinese residents from improving their economic status, which then reinforced the common stereotype equating the Chinese with poverty.

An *Edmonton Bulletin* reporter visited Chinatown in 1908, and left one of only a handful of known contemporary accounts: “It is estimated....that there are between 250 and 275 Chinamen resident in Edmonton....In the back room behind the stores the indolent ones roll and recline on chairs and tables, smoking cigarettes and talking to one another in their chop-stick sort of language....In the Chinese stores queer wares are on sale; the long strange pipes of the Celestials....and other curious and unknown articles....”

Reading this kind of account makes one realize how much Canadian society has changed.

By 1911, a Chinatown began to emerge in Edmonton, after a few Chinese merchants established their businesses at the intersection of Namayo Avenue (97 St.) and Rice Street (101A Avenue).

Because there weren't that many Chinese residents in Alberta, they were generally not viewed as competition as they were in B.C. With the exception of incidents such as the smallpox outbreak in Calgary, their existence was generally tolerated by the white citizens until the end of the First World War.

Due to the period of economic recession and unemployment that followed the Great War, politicians in British Columbia demanded that action be taken by the Dominion government against the Chinese, resulting in the passage of the Immigration Act of 1923, generally known as the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Until its repeal in 1947, only a handful of Chinese were able to enter Canada. The so-called Chinese “bachelor society” became a horrible reality for the married men because their wives and children were forced to remain in China even if they could afford to send for them. The Chinese communities in Canada became increasingly isolated and inward-looking.

The anti-Asian sentiment became more magnified during the Great Depression. Relief payments for the unemployed were \$2.50 per week for non-Chinese, and \$1.12 for the Chinese. The rationale was that the Chinese had a lower standard of living anyway. Members of the Chinese communities in Alberta had to rely even more heavily on their own social, fraternal and benevolent associations.

In 1936, with the help of the Communist Party, Calgary’s Chinese began to protest the disparity. That May, several Chinese were arrested for picketing government offices. In December, three unemployed Chinese died of malnutrition, and the city officials investigated the living conditions in Chinatown. Several substandard tenements were closed, rendering the occupants homeless during a frigid January. In response, unemployed Chinese staged a sit-down strike on the streetcar tracks. On February 6, 1937, the confrontation turned violent and thirteen Chinese were arrested.

Calgary’s city council continued to argue that supporting Chinese residents was not a civic responsibility. One alderman insisted that “White people....should be looked after before Chinese.” Eventually, pressure from the Communist Party, the CCF, and the Calgary Council of Women forced Alberta’s Premier to accept Chinese Albertans onto the relief rolls at \$2.12 a week (still lower than the amount for white people.).

In 1937, Japan invaded China, and the Chinese communities in Canada rallied to support the Nationalist Chinese government. That same year, the Pan-Alberta Anti-Japanese League was formed with its headquarters in Calgary, with branches in other cities and towns.

During the Pacific War, Canada and China were allies. The Chinese communities actively participated in fundraising for the war effort; some of their young men and women also joined the Canadian armed forces. This helped to change Canadian public opinions towards the Chinese in their midst.

After the War, with the active lobbying of the Chinese Canadian veterans and some human rights groups in Canada, in 1947 the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, and the Chinese residents were given Canadian citizenships. It was then that their families were able to reunite in Canada. From then on, with more women and children among the Chinese population, the picture of the Chinese communities began to change, from bachelor societies to ones with women and children.

You remember I mentioned earlier that I had difficulty in researching historical information on Chinese women in Alberta. That's because there were so few. At the beginning of the Second World War, there were only 305 Chinese women in the entire province of Alberta compared to almost three thousand (2,817) Chinese men (105 Chinese women in Calgary; 26 in Edmonton; 14 in Lethbridge and 3 in Medicine Hat).

You may ask, how did the Chinese communities change from what it was then to what it is today? A lot has to do with the change in our immigration policy.

Significant change didn't happen until the introduction of the points system in our Immigration Regulations in 1967, when the last remnant of racial bias in immigration was removed. It was also then that women began to immigrate to Canada on their own merit, based on their own training and education, instead of having to be dependents of men. From then on, Chinese immigration into Canada became more balanced. In the case of Alberta, by 1971, the total ethnic Chinese population was over 12,000 (12,205); almost 7,000 men (6,915) to just over 5,000 (5,290) women.

Due to our small population and our low birth rate, Canada needs immigrants to fuel our labour force and our economy. When immigration policy changed, it went hand-in-hand with a change in the views of our provincial governments towards new immigrants.

From 1967 on, ethnic Chinese professionals, entrepreneurs and students from many different countries began to settle in Alberta, from places as diverse as Peru, South Africa and the Caribbean, while the majority arrived from Asia, from Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan.

In the 1980s, with the introduction of the entrepreneur and investor class in our immigration regulations, there was a large influx of immigrants from Hong Kong, many of them educated partially or fully in English. They were also used to the demands of urban life, and therefore, generally adapted well to their lives in Canada.

By the latter part of the 1990s, immigrants from mainland China were the largest group of new arrivals; among them were many young professionals. We all know that talents brought in from other parts of the world can contribute to innovation and growth, as well as enhance a nation's diversity.

Of the 1.8 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and 2001, 58% were from Asia, with ethnic Chinese as the dominant group, and many of them settled in Alberta.

Alberta is now the fourth largest immigrant-receiving province in Canada. Of the immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2003, 4.2% went to Calgary, and 2.2% to Edmonton.

While the total number of immigrants to Canada has greatly increased, the number of immigrants heading to the Prairies actually has decreased since 1980. Fortunately for Alberta, a high level of inter-provincial migration has helped its economy. In 2002 alone, more than 26,000 (26,470) Canadians moved to Alberta, the highest net in-migration of any province.

The declining immigration levels to western Canada represent a potentially serious concern. Higher levels of immigration alone are not the answer; it is more important to integrate immigrants into the workforce. It is recognized that the basic benefit of immigration, besides fulfilling the demand for labour, is the creation of an expanding market for consumer goods and for real estate. Spending in turn creates employment opportunities for immigrants and for Canadian-born residents alike.

This is why Alberta announced this month that it intends to boost immigration by 7,500 with the objective of receiving almost 20% of the national total. The provincial government hopes that this plan, combined with an apprenticeship program to help immigrants succeed in the province, will ward off a projected labour shortage. Many businesses in the province

are already complaining that they don't have the people they need to fill the jobs. The province also intends to actively market Alberta abroad.

An important benefit of immigration is that immigrants bring with them a wealth of information about other cultures, and links to their countries of origin, which represent a potential asset to Canadian business. Today, China and India are becoming the economic powerhouses of the world, and trade links developed through Canadian immigrants from these countries are becoming increasingly important.

How has Alberta benefited from its immigrant population? Up until the latter part of the twentieth century, Albertans would never have guessed that the province would one day have strong trade and social ties with Asia. Japan is now the second, and China the third, largest export destination for goods from Alberta. The province is also twinned with the province of Heilongjiang in N.E. China, with Hokkaido in Japan and Gangwon in Korea.

Today, universities in Alberta send missions to China to discuss opportunities for higher learning; Alberta's ballet performed in six Chinese cities at the end of last year and the beginning of this year; China is reopening the market for Canadian bovine genetics which is so important to Alberta; China is also one of the 2 new priority markets of the Canola Council of Canada. And, aside from sectors such as health care, ICT as well as the wood markets, I believe the promotion of Chinese tourism is of great importance to the Alberta government.

To most people, oil is synonymous with Alberta. I should mention Husky Oil, the majority of which is controlled by Mr. K.S. Li of Hong Kong, whose sons went to university in Canada. So, here is an excellent example of how immigration leads to cultural and business connections with the immigrant's country of origin.

While on the subject of oil, Alberta oil is giving us an important connection to China. The China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) purchased 1/6 of MEG energy Corp., a private Calgary-based company which has large land holdings in northeastern Alberta. The Chinese government is working towards having a significant interest in Alberta's oil sands.

In a recent article in the British newspaper *The Times*, a preliminary deal was signed between a Canadian pipeline company and PetroChina, at the cost of \$3.4 billion, linking Edmonton to Kitimat, in order to export 200,000 barrels of oil per day across the Pacific. Quite mind boggling!

Being from Ontario, and traveling to western Canada quite frequently, I have come to recognize Alberta as a very special province. Despite its reputation of being “red-neck” among easterners - which I believe is said out of envy – Alberta has produced many citizens who are outstanding for their contributions to our country. What comes to mind immediately are the Famous Five. These five women have made a great difference to the rights of women across Canada.

I sympathize with Albertans that their unique regional perspective is not appreciated by the rest of Canada. The fact that there is so much immigration from other provinces is proof that Canadians know that Alberta is the land of opportunities. Certainly, people like the Chinese railroad workers in 1885 knew that there were good prospects here, and today, many Canadians as well as immigrants are making Alberta their home.

I spoke to a cousin not long ago who told me that she specifically chose to immigrate to Calgary from Hong Kong a number of years ago because of the school system here, and the atmosphere her son would grow up in, and he has done very well.

Ontarians have a habit of believing that ours is the most prosperous province, and I am no different. While doing research for this speech, I have come to realize how far we have slipped in comparison with Alberta. I hope Premier McGuinty is taking notice.

Please forgive me for giving you some hard facts. In Asia Pacific trade, the per capita exports from Alberta are 4 times higher than that of Ontario and per capita imports to Alberta are five times lower than those to Ontario. So, there is very large trade difference between the two provinces.

Your per capita income is also almost \$60,000 (\$58,537) compared to ours at just over \$40,000 (\$41,768.). What’s more, your unemployment rate is much lower than ours.

Whenever we travel to Alberta, the first thing we notice is that you have no sales tax and ours is 8%. Even though a city like Toronto is the first choice for immigrants to settle, Ontario has no inter-provincial migration, and Alberta has the largest in the country.

In your health care system, your waiting time for surgery is shorter than ours (at 4 weeks instead of our 4.3 weeks), your provincial spending on each citizen is much higher than ours (\$6,914 to \$5,358), despite the fact that it costs a lot more to live and to receive higher education in a city like Toronto. What is amazing is that, in the area of health care, your government is boosting its spending by 8.6% this year, which is five times the rate of inflation in the province. In competition to attract medical professionals, other provinces will have to follow suit whether they can afford it or not.

Getting these numbers is like a wake up call for me. No wonder my friend Carl Amrhein referred to us jokingly as his friends from the “have not province” during the dinner in celebration of the installation of your new President!

Alberta is getting some envious looks from other provinces. Their citizens say, after all, Albertans didn't earn their wealth; it's an accident of geography that they happen to sit on top of massive reserve of crude oil. But is that all there is? You had a boom in the 1970s, but it didn't last. Now the boom is back, Albertans need to make sure that your government manages to make your prosperity last.

You might find this amusing when I give you these statistics: Albertans take fewer sick days off; you watch less TV, and you only have one smog alert per year compared to 14 in Toronto. And, thanks to Albertans like Normie Kwong, you've even won the Stanley Cup a lot more often than we have. Despite the low birthrate in Canada, Alberta even has a slightly higher pregnancy rate than Ontario. Imagine that! No wonder Alberta is gaining 40,000 new arrivals from other provinces, while Ontario is losing over 10,000 annually.

In the area of higher education, Alberta is the envy of all the provinces. Your government is pumping billions into the system, which has to be the most far sighted and the smartest investment for the future, and which will help to make Alberta very competitive globally. Funding for higher education is increasing by a significant 30%.

The final blow to other provinces is that Alberta is debt free. Unfortunately, Ontario has a net debt of \$145 billion. In *Saturday Night* magazine, Andrew Coyne calls Alberta the new Ontario, and Ontario, the Alberta circa 1980. No wonder there is so much in-migration to your province.

Community activist, Teresa Woo Paw, who heads the Asian Heritage Foundation (Southern Alberta), of which I am the Honourary Co-Chair, has found tremendous support for May's Asian Heritage Month celebrations in Calgary from every level of Government. In fact, my fellow Co-Chair is Minister Gary Mar, whom you all know well. This support speaks to the province's recognition of the importance of diversity to its dynamic growth. And, by the way, after having heard what I said earlier about the articles published in the newspaper *Harold*, it is nice to know the enthusiastic support given today by the *Calgary Harold* to the Asian communities during the celebration in May of Asian Heritage Month.

Today, Albertans of Chinese ancestry are prominent in many communities. This July, we heard about the passing of one of your citizens, the first ethnic Chinese Alderman and MLA, George Ho Lem, who had set a great example to the Chinese in Alberta over the years. I read in his obituary that he had set his sights on a Senate appointment. Well. I'm sorry George. I beat you to it!! All joking aside, I am sure he has had great influence on the attitude of his close friend, your premier, Ralph Klein, in his views towards Asian immigrants in Alberta.

Another prominent Albertan of Chinese ancestry is Minister Gary Mar who was born in Canada, and is a true blue Albertan. His heritage, and the fact that his wife is from Hong Kong, has given him additional link with Asia which is important to the future of Alberta. We take great pride in his achievements in political life in this province.

The highlight for the ethnic Chinese in Alberta had to be the appointment of Normie Kwong as your new Lieutenant Governor. The son of an immigrant grocer who didn't have the vote until his 40th year in Canada, Normie has achieved the Canadian Dream. He mentioned, as a child, how he was taunted or accused of wrong doing because of his race, and now, he is at peace with himself and with his heritage. How times have changed!

It is really not possible for me to speak at a centennial lecture of the University of Alberta without mentioning your new President, the brilliant Dr. Indira Samarasekera. I first met her at the installation of Prof. Bob Birgeneau at UC Berkeley this spring, but her fantastic reputation had certainly preceded her. Last month, I was also fortunate to represent the University of Toronto at her installation.

In a recent interview with Macleans Magazine, Dr. Samarasekera's contention was that, she accepted the job as President of the University of Alberta, because the province has a 20 year vision for the post-secondary sector that no other province can match, and that is leading in learning; unleashing innovation; competing in the global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit. Your provincial government aims to attract the best and the brightest from across Canada, and around the world, over the next 20 years.

While on the subject of your new president, I would like to say a little about the background of immigration of South Asians to Canada. Like the Chinese, South Asians were subject to attempts at exclusion, but it wasn't as blatant as the policy against the Chinese. I will not dwell on the topic, but the "continuous journey" policy, instituted at the beginning of the 20th century, was aimed specifically at the South Asians. It stated that immigrants must come to Canada directly from their countries of origin, without any stopover, which was almost impossible from the Indian subcontinent, therefore few managed to migrate to Canada.

However, a relatively large number have come to Alberta since the 1960s. The South Asians who came to Alberta are generally skilled and many are highly educated. As a result of their exposure to British institutions, and the English language back home, the people from South Asia found settlement easier than groups who don't speak one of the official languages. Despite their adaptability and education, life has not always been easy for South Asians in their new country.

In recent years, Alberta can boast many outstanding citizens of South Asian descent. Now, your new president will be cutting a path for many more to follow in her footsteps.

According to the 2001 Census, almost 10% of the total population of Alberta is from Asia (about 800,000). Of these, the largest community is ethnic Chinese, followed closely by the South Asian population. This is in keeping with current trends, over the past decade, where China and South Asia have dominated as a source of immigration to Canada. The top four source countries for new immigrants to Alberta in 2003 were China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan. Most of these immigrants were in the independent class, young, and highly educated, reflecting the emphasis in our new Immigration Act passed in 2001.

As of 2003, Alberta's share of immigration was still quite small, at just over 7% (7.1%), compared to Ontario at over 50%. But nevertheless, Alberta has experienced an increase between 2001 and 2003, while Ontario experienced a decline. I believe this trend may very well continue, particularly as Alberta is building its global connections, and developing a strategy to increase immigrant numbers. As my friend Carl Amrhein wrote to *The Edmonton Journal* over half of Alberta's economy involves direct trade around the world.

One very effective way of emphasizing global connections is the appointment of Normie Kwong as the first Asian Canadian Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. The fact that Normie was able to achieve so much: being named Athlete of the Year in 1955, and inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 1969, and now, as Lieutenant Governor, says much about Alberta.

Individuals such as Normie Kwong, Gary Mar, Indira Samarasekera, and many more, have the diversity of experience and the breadth of knowledge that will be this province's greatest strength in its future growth.

Last June (2004), your Premier, Ralph Klein, delivered a speech at Beijing University in China, during a trade mission in which he noted that during the trip he had signed international agreements in energy, science and technology, and education. According to Premier Klein, the education agreement included provisions to enhance language and cultural awareness by promoting Chinese studies in Alberta, and introducing an English International Studies Program based on Alberta curriculum in schools in China.

Premier Klein went on to detail the other areas where international cooperation could be increased, and without a doubt, Alberta's indigenous strength and understanding of diversity will be an asset as ties between China and Alberta continue to grow, particularly as the demand for energy worldwide increases. Premier Klein announced his intent that bilateral trade between China and Alberta would double by 2010, a mere five years from now.

Despite great hardships, over time, the Chinese Canadian communities have done well in Alberta. With Alberta's emphasis on Asia today, and its need to diversify its markets, increasing immigration is a sound investment with a view to expanding international networks, a policy that would be considered totally outrageous just 50 years ago.

This is Alberta's centennial year, and it is a time to reflect back to September 1, 1905, when Alberta was inaugurated as a province, and Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier delivered a speech to 12,000 spectators in Edmonton, which was the newly appointed capital of the province. No one at that time could have known, a hundred years later, how prosperous Alberta would be, having half of its trade links with countries around the world. And even more of a surprise would be the diversity of its population.

Everyone saw the excitement during the finals of the Canadian Idol contest. The winner is Melissa O'Neil from Calgary whose mother is Chinese. Melissa is a very good example that, today, the face of Albertans comes in many different shades. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the way of the future.