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**THE LATE HONOURABLE  
DAVID C. (SEE-CHAI) LAM, O.C.**

**Statement by:**

**The Honourable Vivienne Poy**

**Wednesday, December 1, 2010**

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

### THE LATE HONOURABLE DAVID C. (SEE-CHAI) LAM, O.C.

• (1340)

**Hon. Vivienne Poy:** Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to the Honourable David C. Lam, the first Canadian lieutenant-governor of Asian descent, who served British Columbia from 1988 to 1995. David was a trailblazer, an entrepreneur, a community builder, a philanthropist and a dear friend. He passed away last week at the age of 87.

As lieutenant-governor, David remained a man of the people, unimpressed by pomp and ceremony. He fulfilled his duties with such enthusiasm that both he and his wife needed medical treatment for shaking thousands of hands.

David was born in Hong Kong, the son of a Baptist minister. He left a banking career there to immigrate to Vancouver with his family in 1967 because, he said, “the beauty of the city brought tears to my eyes.”

Within 20 years, his entrepreneurship made him a fortune estimated at \$100 million. When he retired at the age of 60, he decided to give away \$1 million a year to Canadian institutions.

In an interview in 1987 with the *Vancouver Sun*, he said:

I have seen a lot of wealth — like gold, silver, diamonds and cash in the bank. But these are dead wealth. These are useless to me. True riches are of the mind.

Throughout his life, David combined the Confucian philosophy of harmony and moderation with evangelical Baptist theology. The result was a deep appreciation for values, education and simple beauty. He believed the key elements for prosperity and success for Canada lie in the quality of education, flexibility of the economy and the adaptability of the workforce.

His philanthropic endeavours were often aimed at building bridges between new Canadians from Asia and mainstream society. One example was the establishment of the David Lam Centre for International Communication at Simon Fraser University, which focuses on building intercultural understanding. David knew that ignorance can only be overcome if people really get to know one another. He said: “One can easily legislate against discrimination, but no one can legislate love.”

In 1993, David told a reporter he wanted to be remembered as “a man who preached harmony, goodness and understanding.” His lasting legacy to all Canadians is that wealth, whether monetary, spiritual or intellectual, needs to be generously shared.

Honourable senators, please join me in extending our sympathies to his family and to the province of British Columbia at the loss of a great man.

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