

Panel Presentation by Senator Vivienne Poy

Careers in Asia, Striving and Achieving

**Hosted by the Asian Institute's Asia-Pacific Club
Munk School of Global Affairs, Room 208N**

February 15, 2011

Good afternoon, distinguished panel and students:

We are here today to explore job opportunities for students interested in Asia, as well as careers that can be found by relocating to Asia.

In order for anyone to work in the Asia Pacific region, or even on issues that are related to that part of the world here in Canada, you need to understand much more than academics. I know those of you in the collaborative Master's program are taking an interdisciplinary program that can include political science, geography, anthropology, economics, history, as well as specific courses in East Asian or South Asian studies. This cross-disciplinary approach is very useful because it will give you a profound understanding of the Asia Pacific region. This kind of in-depth knowledge is essential for whatever field you decide to specialize in.

Culture and language are equally important. I will mention one incident my youngest son told me about, a few years ago, when he was working as a sales manager for Carlsberg Beer in Shanghai. One day, he went to see the owner of an establishment, and as he was entering the office, two Americans came out. The owner said to our son, who speaks fluent Mandarin, "Those two think they can make money out of me, and they won't even learn my language!"

Many of you are acculturated because of your own family backgrounds, and you may have some knowledge of your mother tongue from the Asia Pacific region. If you want to relocate there in the future, you really need to be fluent in the language, and learn to think like a local. And those of you who are of other cultural backgrounds, and want to work in the Asia Pacific regions, there is no reason why you can't learn the language, and the culture of the region you are interested in. Remember, Mark Rowswell, otherwise known as Dashan, did it, and so can you.

Beyond what you learn in university, it helps to get involved outside the classroom, either through work or volunteering with international organizations. And, of course, depending on what you end up specializing in, you may need additional courses to expand your knowledge base.

I live in Toronto, but much of my time is spent in Ottawa for my work in the Senate of Canada, so I am going to tell you about the kind of opportunities that are readily available for graduates of this program in the Ottawa region.

The first thing that comes to mind when you think of Ottawa is government. I can hear you yawning at the thought of becoming a bureaucrat, but in Ottawa we get a lot of

exposure to the civil service, and I would like to rise to their defence. Civil servants perform very important work, and many of those who work in international affairs are making a huge difference in our world.

If you see your future in helping the people in the developing countries in Asia, there are two government agencies that focus on international development.

The first is the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In 2009, CIDA announced its aid effectiveness plan which, in essence, meant that it reduced the number of countries it focused on to 20. In Asia, CIDA's priorities include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Vietnam. In China, CIDA has limited involvement on human rights, and environmental management. CIDA also works in Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. Of course, the government's biggest commitment in Asia is in Afghanistan, and CIDA works with the Department of National Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs on a "whole government" approach to Afghanistan's reconstruction. With much of the funds for development going towards Afghanistan, knowledge of this region, the history, and languages could be very useful. Until recently, most Canadians knew little about the country.

In Ottawa, there is also the crown corporation, the International Development Research Centre, (IDRC), which supports applied research in order to find local solutions that are sustainable. The IDRC acts as a facilitator, and brings together the very best scientific minds from both developed and developing countries, to collaborate on finding knowledge that offers concrete solutions to the problems in the third world. It's a great place for academics. For most jobs in that department, you need at least a Master's degree, and many have Ph.D. degrees. The IDRC hires people from all over the world – together, they speak 27 different languages. It has two regional offices (Singapore & New Delhi) in Asia, serving 21 countries. The IDRC is attempting to focus its work in Asia on some of the less positive affects of rapid economic growth, such as growing inequality, and environmental degradation. If you are interested, try it as a summer job. They hire students every summer, and you can see if you like the environment.

There are numerous non-governmental organizations that work in developing countries based in Ottawa, and I can't mention them all, so I'll just mention one, and that is the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada, an organization with which I have some experience. I know people who work with the Foundation and the Aga Khan Development Network, and they are all exceptional people. One of them is a very good friend of mine, who was a senior civil servant in Ottawa. She became the head of the Aga Khan Development Network for the Kyrgyz Republic a few years ago.

The Aga Khan Foundation of Canada is part of the Aga Khan Development Network, which grew out of the Ismaili Muslim commitment to helping those in need throughout the world. It focuses its work on four core areas: health, education, rural development, and building the capacity of non-governmental organizations. It also integrates gender equity into every program, in part because of the philosophy of the Ismailis, which emphasizes education for women. According to the World Bank, many international organizations recognize that gender equity is one of the most important keys to the economic and social success of a nation. In Asia, the Aga Khan Development Network works in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Their understanding of the Muslim cultures in these regions, and of local languages, helps them to build relationships

with community members based on trust, and this close relationship is essential for development efforts.

If you want to work with the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada in Asia, they have an annual International Fellowship Program, focused on one of three streams - international development management, microenterprise and microfinance or international media. The deadline for applications each year is February 1, and all applicants must be under 30 years of age, and have an undergraduate degree. I am sorry the deadline is already past for this year.

For some of you, what I've talked about so far may be of little interest. You may wonder when I will talk about business, trade, and finance.

Well, with China's ascendancy as a world economic power, many businesses have focused on building a stronger relationship with China. Manulife Financial, Bombardier, Magna International, Royal Bank, Bank of Montreal, and Research in Motion have all made major inroads into the Chinese market. So, that's the private sector. And, who is to say that you can't gain experience from the government and then move over to the private sector. Actually, if you are an entrepreneur, the sky is the limit. But, in order to succeed, you must remember the importance of knowing the language and the culture.

India is a country I am not familiar with, but we do know that the Canadian government began negotiations in November last year towards a free trade agreement with that country, so this is a very positive development. Opportunities in India are equally great for entrepreneurs.

As Asia becomes increasingly important as a trading block, our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade or DFAIT will be looking for experts in the region with a good general knowledge of trade, finance, diplomacy and international institutions. It has 170 offices worldwide, along with its headquarters in Ottawa.

One of the job titles at DFAIT is "Commerce Officer." This job might involve negotiating free trade deals, such as the ongoing negotiations with India, analyzing global economic developments, promoting Canada to countries like China and India as a destination for their high tech companies, and representing Canada at the WTO, OECD, or APEC. And these are the acronyms for organizations you'd need to know more about to work at DFAIT. Policy officers also work in Ottawa, and are either designated "political economic" or "commercial economic". If you want to spend more time overseas, you can apply to be a Management Consular Officer, or a Foreign Service Officer working at Embassies and Consulates abroad on a rotational basis.

DFAIT specifically indicates that it is looking for diverse individuals and states that proficiency in Arabic, German, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin (Chinese), Portuguese, Russian and Spanish are valued. So again, remember to work on your language skills.

The Federal Government hires both students and graduates on an annual basis. In addition to its annual postsecondary recruitment program, it has a recruitment of policy leaders program, which can act as a catalyst for your career in the public service. A very capable young man I know did this program, and he has been rising through the ranks ever since.

The other major organization devoted to trade and business in Ottawa is Export Development Canada (EDC), and like IDRC, it's a crown corporation. EDC is Canada's export credit agency, and by providing finance, insurance and risk management solutions, it helps Canadian exporters and investors expand their international businesses worldwide. If you watch the CBC program called Dragon's Den, you've probably seen their ad. EDC works with more than 8,000 companies, and most of these are small to medium sized businesses.

The EDC is very interested in recruiting top students with expertise in business and in specific geographic regions. It awards international business scholarships to Canadian students. It also offers work terms of four or eight months, and these can be counted toward accredited coop programs. While the majority of the student positions are finance related, students also work in risk management, insurance, computer science, communications, marketing, human resources, economics, sales and environmental sciences.

Finally, in Ottawa there are a few other avenues that those interested in the Asia Pacific region might explore.

Citizenship and Immigration needs experts to research the situations in different countries, particularly those countries where our refugee asylum seekers come from.

And, as you know, Ottawa is also home to many Asian Embassies, all of which hire locally in addition to having foreign staff. An overall knowledge of the country and region, an ability to negotiate different cultures, language ability, and having a political science background, would be very helpful in these jobs.

I won't go on too much longer, as I know this is a lot of information to absorb at one sitting, and of course, we have two more presenters. I am going to give you a handout with the websites of all the organizations I have mentioned, as well as other relevant information.

If none of these jobs is of interest, you can always work towards becoming a provincial or federal Member of Parliament, in order to promote greater ties with the Asia Pacific region, which is what I have been doing for more than ten years.

For many years, I have been saying to audiences that we are too dependent on the U.S.A. for our trade, and we should look outside the box, to countries like India and China. Am I a voice in the wilderness? The economic crisis in 2008 was a wake-up call for Canada. We do need more people with your expertise on the Hill, as well as in our provincial parliaments!

I think that your choice of studying the Asia Pacific region at this time is a good one. We are at a turning point in our history, and your knowledge is more important than ever in understanding Canada in the world.

Thank you for inviting me to speak.

Websites Reference Sheet

- Aga Khan Foundation of Canada International Fellowship Program (Deadline February, 2012): <http://www.akfc.ca/join-us/international-development.html>
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA): Work Opportunities in International Development for Canadians or Permanent Residents, next recruitment for development officers, Fall, 2011: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-12910547-LNE>; <http://jobs-emplois.gc.ca/index-eng.htm>
- CIDA Internships: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/ANN-9308195-GFY>
- CIDA: Asia Overview: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-129151657-RSN>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/careers/careers-how.asp>
- Department of Foreign Affairs and international Trade Canada (DFAIT) Careers: <http://www.international.gc.ca/jobs-emplois/careers-carrieres.aspx>
- DFAIT's List of Foreign Representatives in Canada: <http://www.international.gc.ca/protocol-protocole/rep.aspx>
- Export Development Canada (EDC) Student Recruitment: http://www.edc.ca/english/HRRecruitment_StudentRecruitmentWorkTerms.htm
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Summer Jobs: <http://publicwebsite.idrc.ca/EN/AboutUs/Careers/Pages/Student-Employment.aspx>
- Public Service of Canada, Postsecondary Recruitment, Fall, 2011: look for further information September, 2011: <http://jobs-emplois.gc.ca/psr-rp/index-eng.htm>
- Public Service of Canada, Recruitment of Policy Leaders Program: <http://jobs-emplois.gc.ca/rpl-rlp/index-eng.htm>