

# **HKETO Tribute**

**R C Lee Canada-HongKong Library  
Dec. 13, 2012**

**Director Gloria Lo, Dr. Jack Leong, Mr. Frank  
Ling, many honoured guests and friends:**

**First of all, I want to thank Gloria and the  
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office for  
holding this event. When Gloria mentioned it to  
me in October, I said that it wasn't necessary  
because I am around and not going anywhere. She  
insisted, and here we are, and I am just thrilled by  
your presence.**

**Looking at the guests this evening makes me  
very nostalgic. Do you know that I have primary  
school friends here - yes primary school in Hong**

**Kong - St. Paul's co-ed, and we went on to middle school together. There are also many friends here I have made in Canada over the years. I want to thank everyone for being here this afternoon.**

**I believe once you are from Hong Kong, you are forever a Hong Konger. There is something about the way we think and do things. It is generally known that we are hard working and entrepreneurial. These characteristics, together with British Common Law, have turned Hong Kong from a group of rocky islands to a major international financial centre within a couple of centuries.**

**I recently learnt that Causeway Bay in Hong Kong has overtaken Fifth Avenue in New York as having the most expensive commercial rent in the world. The area is so crowded, with wall-to-wall**

**people. Retailers here would have loved to have that. I know this is only a trend and comes in cycles, but just the same, I am glad I can experience this amazing economic performance during my lifetime.**

**I came to Canada to attend university more than 53 years ago. At that time, there were very few ethnic Chinese in Canada, and even fewer in the universities. I was one of a handful of Chinese girls at McGill. Many of you would know, all this changed since the 1980s when there was a huge influx of immigrants from Hong Kong, and that was when many of my school friends came to Canada. The establishment of The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) 20 years ago showed the import relationship between Hong Kong and Canada.**

**Over the years, I have had close contact with The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, and have known all the successive Directors personally. When I was appointed to the Senate of Canada, I had the opportunity to work with the HKETO in Ottawa.**

**On Parliament Hill, there is a Canada-Hong Kong Friendship Group of which many parliamentarians belong. I turned down the position of President because I wanted other parliamentarians to have the opportunity to learn about Hong Kong. I go to Hong Kong frequently anyway, and Canadian parliamentarians need to know that Hong Kong is a natural gateway for trade into Mainland China.**

**Another Ottawa organization I was actively involved in is the Hong Kong-Canada Business**

**Association (HKCBA), whose founder is Mr. Frank Ling from whom you have just heard. Frank asked me to be their Patron soon after I entered the Senate, and I remained in that position until I retired this September. Besides the Chinese New Year banquet celebration in which Neville and I frequently participated, we actually managed to be in Hong Kong at one of their meetings there when Lenore Gibson was president.**

**I hosted an annual HKCBA Breakfast in the Parliamentary Restaurant, featuring a prominent keynote speaker. These events were opened to the public, and they were always very well attended despite the very early morning hours, and the time it takes for the general public to go through security.**

**Starting with the large influx of immigrants from Hong Kong since the 1980s, Canada gradually became the multicultural country it is today. In fact, UBC has a project on how Hong Kong has changed Canada, and both Neville and I have been interviewed for it. Because of the large Hong Kong population in Canada, it has become so convenient for me to turn on the Hong Kong news to keep track of what's happening over there.**

**For many of us, it's natural that we often compare Canada to Hong Kong. When I first arrived in Canada as a student, I used to wonder why it took so long to have anything done here. And needless to say, many of us also wonder why taxes manage to be so low in Hong Kong and so high in Canada. A library such as this one helps Canadians to understand Hong Kong and the**

**people from Hong Kong. The precursor of this Library was the Canada-Hong Kong Resource Centre, which was established by HSBC. Prof. Bernard Luk first introduced me to it many years ago when I needed to do some research on Hong Kong. Thanks to the Director, Dr. Jack Leong, many very informative seminars and conferences are held here, and they are always well attended.**

**This afternoon is also a celebration of a new beginning for me, and you might wonder what I am going to do? One of the many things that I can do now is to attend more seminars and conferences that were not possible before. Such as, “Living with the Dragon” – a talk by our former Ambassador to Beijing, David Mulroney, that took place last night at the Rotman’s. I love learning, and this will keep my brain ticking.**

**I now have more time to write, - I'm onto my 7th book. Neville and I will be able to travel to the parts of the world we haven't been to. And most important of all, I get to spend time at home, and have more time for family and friends. It is a treat that I no longer have to constantly run to catch a plane.**

**Thank you, Gloria and Jack, for this wonderful tribute, and thank you all my friends for being here this afternoon.**