



路明光

Lu Mingguang

從體育兵到食品進口商 路明光的故事

身形魁梧的路明光是山東人，他的中國進口食品生意做得不小，他的社交圈還算廣闊，他和家人移民多倫多將近15年了，但是他在華人社區的知名度不算高，這主要是他的為人一向低調、謙讓，即使幫了別人，做了好事，也不想張揚。

三年前，有一陣子因有華人超市售賣的部份食品標籤上的保質期過時，被懷疑不合規定，而且來自不同地方的華人移民在選購具有華人風味的食品時，常常無所適從，有中文電台請出行家路明光透過大氣電波為聽眾解說疑慮，這位山東大漢帶著精通公司法、律師出身的太座鄭萍，說出了華人超市進口貨的許多優缺點，路明光夫婦的誠懇和坦率，讓聽眾留下深刻的印象。

曾為籃球和跳高選手

他出生於中國還未對外開放的年代，曾在部隊裡當過8年的「體育兵」，因為他有188公分的個子，早年又瘦又高，擅長打籃球和跳高，但是他並沒有在體育運動方面發展自己的潛能，而是往商界探路。坊間有篇報導說，80年代大陸女性興起的彈力褲，就是路明光的傑作，他夫妻倆早在九十年代就已躋身中國百萬富豪的行列，事業可謂一帆風順。1996年，路明光來到加拿大進行商務考察後，決定以企業家移民的方式登陸楓葉國，當時中國國務院紡織工業部的副部長到訪，在應邀出席加中貿易理事會的一項活動上，他想嘗試引進中國的紡織業產品，副部長亦口頭上答應找國內的廠商盡量配合，他本人亦跑了加拿大境內多個與紡織業有關的城市，但發覺這兒的紡織業幾乎是壟斷式的，雖然也有香港移民從事製衣業，但多半是家族式經營，很少有人願意開放

外資入股，他只好死了這條心。他是運動員出身，也曾想過以「體育交流」的方式找門路，而且還進口過聖誕工藝裝飾品，甚至考慮過經營農場，結果不是慘淡收場，就是胎死腹中，最後他選中了進口中國食品，總算選對了，人總得吃和喝，但是入了這一行才知道有多麼辛苦、瑣碎、操心，賺這一行的錢不容易。

開設「中華老字號」受消費者歡迎

一個夏日的中午，在萬錦市「中華老字號」貨倉二樓的辦公室裡，雖然開著冷氣，但是路明光額頭上仍滲著汗水，述說著將近10年的奮鬥歷程，不足處，太座鄭萍在一旁補充說明，彰顯這對移民夫妻在事業的奮鬥上同甘共苦。

那是2001年，中國大陸移民人數日增，但是多倫多的華人超市出售中國進口的食品種類有限，出售著名優良食品如「中華老字號」的就更少，貨架上以產自港台和東南亞星馬泰的華人食品為主，尤其是廣東以外，具有其他中國地方風味的食品相當缺乏，路明光注意到廣東以外，大陸其他地方移民對這方面的需求，但又擔心有風險，於是先進口幾個貨櫃近千種中國食品試銷，由於自己沒有超市店面，只好向華人超市批發代售，但因經驗不足，成效不彰。他看準不是沒有市場，而是推銷和宣傳不到位，於是和朋友在士嘉堡Lawrence and Kennedy大道附近租下面積大約兩千平方米的店面，「中華老字號」超市正式開張，中國許多百年老字號如六必居、王致和、全聚德、梅林、陳麻婆、東來順、稻香村、果仁張、冠生園、虎王東北大米、山西老陳醋、貴州老干媽、紹興花雕酒、魚泉榨菜等，應有盡有，他所引進的「東北大米」很受消費者歡迎，經常供不應求。「中華老字號」超市開張後，聲名遠播，假日有遠道來自紐約、波士頓、底特律和安省其他城市的華人，專程到多倫多採購上述中國食品，有些

人的鄉愁特別濃，為了能在這兒買到家鄉的食品而感觸落淚。後來因為忙不過來，路明光把超市店面結束，現在成了龍泰超市。

削價競爭 利潤微薄

「瘦田乏人耕，耕肥了有人爭」，由於這一招成功了，馬上就引來競爭對手，有些人繞過著名食品在國內的總店，直接向各地分銷商進貨，甚至還有仿冒的水貨，為了搶生意，進口商不惜削價競爭，利潤越來越薄，甚至無利可圖。路明光說，過去中國進口食品搶手好賣，超市付款快，但競爭多了以後，部份超市開始拖欠進口商貨款，數年前曾有一家規模不小的華人超市倒閉，欠了他數萬元貨款沒還，讓他損失不小。

路明光說，別看他進口的中國食品種類多，量又大，但利潤不高，進貨後以批發價賣給超市，超市再零售給消費者，層層計較下，所賺很有限。他目前大約是每天進一個貨櫃，每個月20至30個不等。他指出，並非所有出口的中國食品都有錢賺，他以中國的「魚泉榨菜」為例，這是中國出口量第一位的榨菜，現時在中國國內的售價是一元人民幣一小包，這兒超市出售的「魚泉榨菜」是10包售價99分錢加幣，中間還有運費，進口商和超市還要賺一點，源頭的廠商根本無利可圖，換言之，國內的市場供不應求，製造商根本不願意出口，但是他說服國內廠商「照顧」海外同胞的需求，廠商等於是賠本出貨。

中國食品製造包裝不斷改進

說到從大陸出口的中國食品，過去有不少華人認為製造過程和包裝都不夠嚴謹，衛生要求的水平也令消費者擔心，甚至有些大陸移民直接指明要購買台灣或香港製造的同類貨品，但這種情形隨著大陸食品的質素和包裝不斷改進而減少。路明光夫人鄭萍

律師指出：「一方水土製造出來的食品，風味就是不一樣，別的地方是無法取代的。」她說，中國著名食品不論在包裝和製造工序上，近年都有顯著的改善，尤其是被冠上了「中華老字號」優良著名食品廠商的自律性很強，從上到下都盡力維護得之不易的商譽。而且國內有關當局像檢測局和海關對出口食品的監管非常嚴，幾乎沒有一種食品包裝上沒有打上「保質期」的，進口商或製造商擅自塗改保質期的可能性可以說絕無僅有。

專注於公司法、專利法的鄭萍指出，一直以來，西方國家都非常注意中國製造的食品和兒童玩具，這兩類貨品也是最容易被攻擊的對象，她不否認還有改善的空間，但是國與國之間的貿易戰和政治鬥爭，往往拿消費者作為訴求對象，中國的製造商通常是根據進口商的要求標準製造的，某種有害的原料超標，責任應該由進口商去負，不能怪罪於製造商。她說，歐洲的貿易保護主義和反傾銷意識非常強，中國出口商品經常是冷戰和政治鬥爭下的犧牲品。

建立「物流網」滿足華洋消費者

儘管辛苦，路明光還是仍然看好中國優良著名食品和其他精品在海外的市場，他已有計劃邀集國內著名企業集資開設類似COSTCO的大賣場，為華洋消費者提供更全面的服務。他不但進口中國食品，也大力促銷加拿大產品，包括食用油、日用品和紙製品等，將其出口到中國、美國、歐洲各地，為了拓展業務，路明光從05年開始建立「網上超市」，現全面升級為「物流網」。這是個非常有潛力的市場，消費者可從網上訂貨，他在北美和中國都設有服務站，既無需店面，也不受時間、品種、數量的限制，在海外可以做中國產品的生意，以滿足海外華洋消費者市場的需求；在中國又可以做外國產品的生意，尤其現在國內有錢人

越來越多，他們之中喜用洋貨的不少。他已在上海、北京、大連三個城市建立了服務站，前景看好。

人總得飲水思源，他來自中國，移民加拿大，當然希望促進中加雙邊貿易額，中國國家主席胡錦濤今年六月到訪時，曾表示到2015年時，希望將雙邊貿易額翻倍，提高到600億美元的目標。作為進出口商之一，他希望盡一己之力。

雖然移居加國近15年，路明光夫婦一向關心國內發生的重大災難和本地華人同胞遭遇的困難，以及春晚活動等，總是盡力提供協助。汶川大地震後，他夫妻倆與愛心教育基金會和環球教育基金會的負責人合作，募集了加幣近10萬元，送交聯合國兒童基金會加拿大分會，類似的善行，不勝枚舉。

走過15年，路明光認為他選的路沒走錯，他嚐遍了各類中國食品的酸甜苦辣，也嚐到了這一段人生經歷的酸甜苦辣，他帶著笑臉望著與他一起打拚的律師妻子，繼續向前。



路明光從軍時留影。
Mr. Lu in the army



當兵時，路明光曾是跳高高手。
A high jump athlete



路明光和太太滑雪。
Mr. and Mrs. Lu



路明光和太太參加「第五屆世界華僑華人社團聯誼大會」留影。
Attending an Overseas Chinese Convention



路明光伉儷參加愛心教育基金會與聯合國兒童基金會的扶貧項目會議。
Meeting with UNICEF



路明光2010年獲安省頒發十年義工獎。
Receiving Ontario 10th Years Volunteers Award



路明光創建的「中華老字號超市」。
Establishing Wing On New Group Canada Inc.



路明光獲安省政府頒發最佳進口商獎。
Receiving The Best Import Award from
Ontario government



路明光將加拿大著名的日常用紙
ROYALE引進中國市場。
Introducing Canadian product 'Royale'
to Chinese market



路明光與加拿大前總理克里靖合影。
With former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien

Mr. Lu Mingguang

With a burly physique, Lu Mingguang was originally from the Shandong district of China. He has a large Chinese food import business and wide connections in Canada, but he is not well known in the Chinese community. The main reason is that Lu, being very modest, maintains a low-key profile. Even though he has helped many people and performed numerous good deeds in his life, he does not like to boast about them.

Three years ago, talks about Chinese food products past expiry dates being sold in supermarkets caused a lot of concern among the Chinese community. Chinese Radio invited Lu to talk to their audience. Together with Zheng Ping, his wife and a lawyer familiar with commercial regulations, Lu explained to the audience the good and bad aspects of the food products being imported and sold at the many Chinese supermarkets. The couple impressed the audience with their honesty and their sincerity.

Lu was born at an age when China was not yet open to the world. Being 188 cm tall and adept at basketball and high jump, he served in the army for eight years as an 'athlete' soldier. However he did not realize his full potential as an athlete. He immersed himself in commerce from the start, and it has been fairly smooth sailing for his business. A newspaper article once reported that the ladies stretch pants, popular in the eighties, were developed by Lu. In the early nineties, Lu and his wife Zheng Ping through their commercial exploits were already among the relatively few Chinese millionaires. In 1996, Lu came to Canada to investigate trade possibilities, and decided they would immigrate to Canada as investors. At that time the Chinese Deputy Minister of Textile was also visiting, and agreed to set up connections with Chinese textile manufacturers for Lu. Lu

himself visited many Canadian cities with textile industries, but found the industry here monopolistic. Although there were Hong Kong immigrants working in the textile business, these were usually family businesses not open to outside investments. Lu finally gave up on the textile industry. Since he was an athlete before, he thought about investing in sports team exchanges with China. Lu also tried importing Christmas crafts and ornaments, and even considered entering into the farming business, but all of these ventures either failed or never got off the ground. In the end, Lu chose to import Chinese food products, and it was the right choice. Although it is a very difficult industry requiring a lot of attention to detail and hard work to succeed in, food products are needed by a growing population of new immigrants.

In the 2nd floor office at his Markham warehouse, beads of sweat poured down Lu's forehead, despite the air conditioning going full-blast. He talked about their struggles in the last ten years, and his wife, Zheng Ping, added more details while sitting on his side. This couple obviously shared everything together, both hardship and success.

In 2001, the increasing number of immigrants from China found limited food imports from China in the local Chinese supermarkets, especially those with a good brand name such as 'China Time-honored Brand'. The shelves were usually stocked with food items from Taiwan, Hong Kong or Southeast Asia, but with only a few exceptions from Guangdong, it was rare to find products from other parts of China. Lu recognized that there was a real need from immigrants from different parts of China. It was a risky venture, so Lu imported on a trial basis a few containers with a thousand different food products. Since he did not have a supermarket of his own, he sold them to the local Chinese supermarkets. It was not a success as he was inexperienced,

but Lu recognized that the problem was not due to lack of market but rather due to lack of marketing. So he and his friends opened up a supermarket at Lawrence and Kennedy, selling all the 'hundred year old' brand name food products from China. The rice he imported from Northeast China was especially welcome; often there was not enough supply for the demand. Since the supermarket opened, its reputation grew, and people came from New York, Boston, and other Ontario cities to purchase their products. Some people even wept tears of nostalgia when they could see products from their own villages on the shelves. In the end Lu was so busy that he had to sell the supermarket to concentrate on his import/export business.

Since this venture was so successful, competition grew. Some supermarkets would go around him to buy directly from the source in China, and some would even use imitation products. To get more business, some of the importers would cut their prices and the profits would dwindle to nothing. In the past the supermarkets would pay on time when they sold the imported items, but now with more competition among importers, the supermarkets would no longer pay on time. A few years ago a large Chinese supermarket closed owing Lu tens of thousands of dollars.

Lu says that although he imports a large variety of Chinese food products in huge quantities, the profit margin is not big. He sells the imported items at a wholesale price to the supermarkets, where they retail to the consumer. Multiple intermediaries share the profit, which is limited. Currently he imports one container each day, about 20 to 30 containers each month. Not all the food imports are profitable. As an example, the 'Fishwell' pickled vegetable is the number one selling brand in China and each packet sells for one RMB. Here, 10 packets

are sold for \$0.99, which includes transportation costs, the profits for the supermarket and the importer. The manufacturer at the source hardly makes any profit. When the supply can only meet the demand inside China, the manufacturer is hard pressed to export their product. However he has been able to convince the manufacturer to consider it as a service to their fellow countrymen overseas, even if they lose money over the transaction.

In the past many Chinese felt that the manufacturing and packaging process for food products made in China did not meet hygiene standards. Even immigrants from Mainland China often insisted on buying the same type of products made in Taiwan or Hong Kong. But these situations are evolving as the quality of the food products and packaging improve over time. Lu's wife Zheng Ping pointed out that even for the same product, making it in one geographical area will produce a different taste from another location and it cannot be duplicated simply by others. She says that with the brand name food products, there have been some very obvious improvements in both manufacturing and packaging processes. Those with famous brand names such as 'China Time-honored Brand' will impose their own discipline from the top down to the staff on the factory floor, because they will try to protect their brand reputation. At the same time the inspection service and custom officials in China are now examining the export food products very stringently. All products are now sold with an expiry date, which cannot be altered in any way by importers or manufacturers.

Specializing in commercial and monopoly law, Zheng Ping pointed out that western countries have paid a lot of attention to food products and toys made in China, and that these two products are

easy targets. She does not deny that there is room for improvement, but she feels consumers are often used as pawns in commercial and political war between two countries. The manufacturer makes the products according to contractual terms set by the importer. If certain ingredients exceed regulation limits and become harmful, the responsibility should be borne by the importer, and not the manufacturer. In Europe, where there are anti-dumping laws and strong protectionism for trade, Chinese exporters are often victims of cold war and political fighting.

Lu paints a future bright picture for top name brand Chinese food and speciality products in overseas markets. He has plans to invite large enterprises such as Costco, to provide a better and more complete service to the consumers in the western countries. Not only does he import Chinese food products, he also exports Canadian products, such as cooking oil, daily items and paper products to China, United States and European countries. Since 2005, Lu has been building an internet supermarket, now expanded to be a full service logistics supply chain over the internet. This is a market with a lot of potential. Consumers can order products online and there are service delivery points in North America and China. There are no storefronts, no restrictions on time, brands, or quantities. One can do business overseas with Chinese made products, meeting the demands of the immigrants here. At the same time one can also sell western made products within China, where increasingly there are more wealthy Chinese, among whom many especially like to use foreign made products. He has already built customer service stations in Shanghai, Beijing and Dalian.

As a Chinese Canadian immigrant, Lu hopes to improve trade exchange between the two countries. When he visited Canada in June

this year, Chairman Hu Jintao expressed the hope that by 2015, the trade exchange between the two countries would double to 600 million US dollars. Lu hopes to contribute what he can to that goal.

Although he has been in Canada for over 15 years, the Lus have always been concerned about the natural disasters in China, as well as the difficulties faced by the local Chinese communities here. He has always tried his best to help out, not only for those catastrophes, but also at community events such as Chinese New Year celebrations. After the Sichuan earthquake, the Lus collaborated with the Love Education Foundation and World Vision Education Foundation to collect close to \$100,000 for the United Nations Children's Foundation Canada branch. The Lus have carried out countless similar acts of charity without much fanfare or notice.

After 15 years, Lu Mingguang feels that he has chosen the right path. He has tasted different foods: sour sweet, bitter, and hot, and he has also tasted what life has to offer: sour, sweet, bitter and hot. He looks forward with a smile to the road ahead with his wife!