

Canada – China  
Legislative Association



Association législative  
Canada – Chine

---

# **Report of the Canada-China Legislative Association**

## **Co-Chairs' Annual Visit to China**

### **Beijing and Guangzhou, China**

**From March 17 to 21, 2025**

## **Introduction**

From 17 to 21 March 2025, Senator Clément Gignac, Vice-Chair of the Canada–China Legislative Association (CACN) conducted the annual Co-Chair visit to China, which had last taken place in October of 2018. The trip comprised meetings and fact-finding site visits in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

While in Beijing on 17 March 2025, Senator Gignac attended a briefing with Ambassador Jennifer May at the Canada Embassy in Beijing. The Ambassador then accompanied Senator Gignac to the Great Hall of People (GHOP) to meet with Hao Ping, Vice-Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee, National People’s Congress (NPC) and other members of the NPC. On 18 March, Senator Gignac visited the Daxing International Hydrogen Energy Demonstration Zone as well as the JD.com e-commerce site. From 19 to 21 March 2025, he travelled to Guangzhou for site visits and meetings with local representatives of the Guangdong Department of Commerce, the Guangdong People’s Congress, community leaders and Canadian businesspersons in Guangzhou. Site visits included the Clifford International School, the Canadian International School, the Yantian Port in Shenzhen, the Umbra factory in Shenzhen as well as to a Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) Project.

The CACN’s primary purpose is to promote maintain a framework for dialogue between Canadian parliamentarians, representatives of the National Peoples’ Congress of the Peoples’ Republic of China and diplomats posted in China and in Canada. The specific objectives of the Co-Chair March 2025 visit included promoting the CACN relationship; facilitating collaboration and ideas on the Chinese and Canadian political situations; to learn more about Chinese-Canadian business, cultural and political links, and to promote enhanced cooperation at all these levels; promote friendship and the normalization of regular opportunities for dialogue between Canada and China.

Senator Gignac was supported by Michael MacPherson, Executive Secretary to the CACN. At meetings and during the fact-finding site visits, they were also accompanied by officials from the Embassy of Canada in Beijing as well as the Consulate General in Guangzhou.

## **Meetings during the Visit**

### **National People’s Congress (Great Hall of People)**

On 17 March 2025, Senator Gignac and Ambassador May met with Hao Ping, Vice Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee. NPC Vice Chair Hao Ping welcomed participants, emphasizing the importance of constructive bilateral efforts. Senator Gignac and Ambassador May also gave introductory remarks. Hao Ping expressed regret over recent tensions, citing Canada’s past friendship with China. He stressed the need to view each other as partners, not rivals, and called for fair and equal treatment.

Senator Gignac highlighted shared interests: aging populations, environment, sustainable development. Mentioned past visits by senior Canadian Ministers. Senator Gignac also noted China's leadership in clean energy, education, and aviation. Senator Gignac emphasized Canada’s commitment to rules-based trade and sustainable development.

Discussions also touched on China's economic growth and structural reforms, complementary markets and mutual interest in collaboration. Legislative exchanges and friendship groups since 1988 were praised for fostering understanding. Taiwan and the One China principle were emphasized by Hao Ping. Ambassador May confirmed Canada's continued respect for the One China policy.

Hao Ping expressed hope for future discussions with Prime Minister Mark Carney at the G20. Senator Gignac invited a Chinese delegation to a bilateral visit to Canada. He also expressed hope for Canada to gain preferred nation status. Senator Gignac also pointed out that Canada's childcare program success could be viewed as a model for workforce inclusion.

### **Guangdong Department of Commerce**

On 20 March, Senator Gignac attended a meeting with the Guangdong Department of Commerce. The meeting began with introductions and a briefing on Guangdong province, highlighting the strong diplomatic and commercial ties between Canada and China. The close relationship between the Guangdong Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Consulate in Guangzhou was emphasized. In 2024, trade between Canada and Guangdong saw notable growth, with exports increasing by 5% and imports from Canada rising by 80%. It was noted that bilateral investment remained stable, with growing Canadian investment in Guangdong and emerging Chinese investment in Canada.

Guangdong is China's most populous province, with 127 million residents and a GDP exceeding 14 trillion CNY—about 12% of China's national GDP. It has led Chinese provinces in economic output for 36 consecutive years and accounts for 20% of the country's total import-export activity. The province also attracts one-sixth of China's foreign investment and leads in overseas direct investment at around 10%.

Several areas of mutual interest were identified, including education and scientific research, with Guangdong hosting top universities and 28 million students. Energy and environmental protection were also key topics, with Guangdong promoting clean energy and expressing interest in hydrogen energy collaboration with Canada. Other sectors of interest included aviation services, logistics, finance, and industrial design, with Guangdong seeking to develop its aviation industry and inviting Canadian companies to participate in popular air shows and trade expos. It was explained that these expos, which attract up to 400,000 visitors daily, offer opportunities for Canadian businesses to showcase products and explore imports. The province also hosts cultural and high-tech expos and maintains an office in Los Angeles to support international cooperation and policy review.

### **Guangdong People's Congress Dinner**

On 20 March, Senator Gignac attended a dinner meeting at the Guangdong People's Congress. Consul General Bez Babakhani was also in attendance. The meeting's topic included historical and cultural themes as well as a strong focus on improving Canada-China relations. Enhancing political connections and rules-based trade were also discussed.

## **Fact-finding site Visits**

### **Daxing International Hydrogen Energy Demonstration Zone**

On 18 March 2025, Senator Gignac visited the Daxing International Hydrogen Energy Demonstration Zone. The Daxing International Hydrogen Energy Demonstration Zone, located in southern Beijing near Daxing International Airport, is a flagship project aimed at advancing hydrogen energy technologies and promoting sustainable development. Spanning over 208,000 square meters, the zone is divided into North and South sections, each with specialized functions. The North Zone features Asia's largest hydrogen refueling station, research incubators, and exhibition centers, while the South Zone focuses on testing, office space, and workshops.

This demonstration zone serves as a comprehensive hub for the entire hydrogen energy industrial chain, including hydrogen production, storage, transportation, and fuel cell vehicle development. It hosts nearly 200 enterprises and supports daily operations of over 100 hydrogen-powered vehicles. The zone played a prominent role during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, showcasing its capacity for large-scale deployment of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

Beyond infrastructure, the zone offers a “one-stop” service system for startups and innovators, covering areas such as finance, human resources, and technology transformation. Senator Gignac toured an incubator for startups that included living quarters that could enable teams to work round the clock. It also includes a public testing platform for fuel cell products, supporting full lifecycle development. With a strong emphasis on international collaboration, the zone aims to attract global talent and set standards for green hydrogen technologies, positioning itself as a leader in China's transition to a low-carbon economy.

### **JD.com e-commerce site (Beijing)**

On 18 March, 2025, Senator Gignac and Ambassador May toured the JD.com e-commerce site in Beijing. JD.com, also known as Jingdong, is one of China's largest and most influential e-commerce companies. Founded in 1998 by Liu Qiangdong, it began as a small electronics shop and transitioned to online retail in 2004. Today, JD.com operates a vast business-to-consumer (B2C) platform offering a wide range of products including electronics, fashion, groceries, and healthcare items. What sets JD.com apart is its direct sales model and self-operated logistics network, which includes over 1,400 warehouses and 200,000 delivery personnel, enabling it to reach 99% of China's population with fast and reliable service. It was explained that many purchases are delivered within hours of ordering. The company has also invested heavily in technology, including artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and automation, using drones and robots for deliveries in select cities. The tour included demonstrations of autonomous robots at work in a simulated warehouse.

During the tour, it was explained that JD.com has also expanded into sectors such as healthcare, industrial solutions, insurance, and financial services, offering products like JD Pay and JD Baitiao. Its commitment to a “responsible supply chain” ensures product authenticity and operational efficiency, making it a trusted platform for both consumers

and global brands. JD.com connects over 20,000 international brands to Chinese shoppers through JD Worldwide, and its presence continues to grow globally, including recent expansions into Europe. With over 580 million active users and annual revenues exceeding \$150 billion, JD.com is a Fortune Global 500 company and a key player in shaping the future of digital commerce in China and beyond<sup>34</sup>.

Discussion during the tour also touched on JD.com's links to Canada, primarily through trade, investment, and cross-border e-commerce. One of the most prominent initiatives is the Canada National Pavilion on JD Worldwide, a cross border online shopping platform. Launched in collaboration with the Embassy of Canada in Beijing, this online flagship store showcases premium Canadian products to Chinese consumers. Featured brands include INNISKILLIN, Natural Factors, SunRype, and Nova Sea Atlantic, offering items such as ice wine, maple syrup, health supplements, and beauty products. The Pavilion serves as a gateway for Canadian companies to enter the Chinese market without needing a local presence, benefiting from JD's logistics, customer service, and streamlined customs procedures.

In terms of financial investment, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) significantly increased its stake in JD.com in early 2025, acquiring over 1.1 million shares valued at approximately \$45 million. This move reflects growing Canadian institutional interest in JD.com as a strategic investment. Additionally, JD.com has expressed interest in expanding its global footprint, which could open further opportunities for Canadian businesses and investors. These developments highlight JD.com's role not only as a retail platform but also as a bridge for deeper economic engagement between Canada and China.

### **Clifford International School and the Canadian International School (Guangzhou)**

Senator Gignac visited the Clifford International School in Guangzhou which offers a Canadian curriculum and serves a diverse student body of over 550 students from more than 22 countries. Located in Clifford Estates, the school provides a fully English-language education with daily Mandarin instruction and is staffed by certified Canadian teachers. The campus features extensive facilities including science labs, libraries, a large gym, and one of Guangzhou's largest turf fields. Clifford emphasizes critical thinking, global citizenship, and academic excellence, and graduates receive a Manitoba High School Diploma, preparing them for universities worldwide.

The Canadian International School of Guangzhou (CISGZ), also located in Panyu District, is Alberta-accredited and offers a holistic education from Pre-K to Grade 12. Founded in 2012, CISGZ combines the Alberta curriculum with the IB Primary Years Programme and Advanced Placement courses. The school serves over 1,000 students from more than 45 nationalities and boasts modern facilities including STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) labs, a theatre, and a swimming pool. CISGZ is known for its strong academic outcomes, with all graduates receiving offers from top 100 universities globally. The school emphasizes global citizenship, innovation, and student voice, supported by a team of certified and experienced educators.

### **Yantian Port (Shenzhen)**

Yantian Port in Shenzhen serves as a vital gateway for trade between China and Canada, particularly for goods originating from the Pearl River Delta region. Canadian businesses benefit from Yantian's advanced logistics infrastructure and high container throughput, which help reduce shipping costs and improve delivery times. Several Canadian importers use Yantian for sourcing electronics, textiles, and consumer goods, while logistics providers like Yuetong International and Dantful offer specialized shipping routes from Yantian to Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

Additionally, Yantian Port plays a strategic role in facilitating bilateral trade growth, with Canadian exports, such as agricultural products, seafood, and raw materials that enter China. The port's proximity to Guangdong's manufacturing centers and its integration with digital customs platforms and blockchain documentation systems enhance transparency and speed in cross-border transactions. As China expands its maritime routes and digital trade capabilities, Yantian is expected to become even more central to Canada-China trade, offering Canadian companies greater access to Chinese markets and consumers.

### **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) Project (Shenzhen)**

Senator Gignac toured a Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) project, which showcased a small department store that provided employment for low-income local women. The visit to the department store, along with the ensuing discussions with employees, provided valuable context for the positive impact that CFLI projects can achieve.

### **Umbra Factory (Shenzhen)**

Senator Gignac then toured the Umbra factory in Shenzhen, which is the main manufacturing hub for Umbra, a global housewares design company headquartered in Toronto, Canada. Established to support Umbra's international operations, the Shenzhen facility produces a wide range of modern home products including furniture, kitchenware, bathroom accessories, and decorative items. This factory is strategically located near major shipping and logistics centers, allowing efficient distribution to markets across Asia, Europe, and North America. It works closely with Umbra's hosted data center in Toronto, which manages global manufacturing and distribution software, ensuring seamless coordination across continents. This allows the Shenzhen factory to operate efficiently and respond quickly to market demands, making it a cornerstone of Umbra's international supply chain.

### **Travel Expenses**

Travel expenses associated with this activity can be found in the delegation's financial report. This report is available in the [Financial Disclosure](#) section of the Parliamentary Diplomacy website.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Clément Gignac, Senator  
Co-Chair, Canada-China Legislative Association

Zoe Royer, MP  
Co-Chair, Canada-China Legislative Association