

Canada - China
Legislative Association



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Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Annual Co-chairs visit

Canada-China Legislative Association

**Beijing, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (Nanning,
Guilin) and Hong Kong (China)
March 17 to 21, 2008**

The Co-chairs of the Canada-China Legislative Association (CCLA), the Honourable Joseph A. Day, Senator, and Mr. Bob Mills, M.P., conducted the CCLA annual Co-chairs visit to Beijing, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (Nanning, Guilin) and Hong Kong (China) from March 17 to 21, 2008.

Report

The Co-chairs of the Canada-China Legislative Association (CCLA), the Honourable Joseph A. Day, Senator, and Mr. Bob Mills, M.P., conducted the CCLA annual Co-chairs visit to China from March 17 to 21, 2008. During the visit, the Co-chairs had the opportunity to visit Beijing, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (Nanning, Guilin) and Hong Kong (China) and meet with their counterparts in the Chinese branch of the CCLA. The Co-chairs were accompanied by Mr. Paul Cardegna, Executive Secretary for the CCLA.

Objectives:

The objectives of the visit were:

- to continue the renewal and reinvigoration of the CCLA relationship following the 10th Bilateral meeting of June 2007;
- to apprise the Chinese of the political situation in Canada;
- to learn more about Chinese-Canadian business, cultural and political links;
- to discuss the objectives and parameters for the 11th Bilateral meeting which will take place in China in October 2008; and
- to promote friendship and the normalization of regular opportunities for dialogue with Chinese counterparts.

Participants:

A complete list of people who met the Co-chairs is contained in the Appendix A of this report.

Beijing:

Upon arriving in Beijing, the delegation attended a briefing by the Embassy of Canada to China in Beijing, which included information concerning the current situation in China, Canada-China relations and the 11th Meeting of the National Peoples' Congress (NPC). The Co-chairs were told that the NPC meeting focussed on health care and the preservation of the Chinese social safety net. The Co-Chairs also attended the closing ceremony of the 11th NPC meeting.

Tibet:

The delegation arrived in China at the same time that violent public demonstrations and riots were taking place in Tibet. The Chinese government moved quickly to restore order in Tibet and ensure the peace and stability of its citizens. The issue was raised during all of the meetings that the Co-Chairs attended while in Beijing.

The Chinese explained to the Canadians that their view was that the violent demonstrations were premeditated and organized by the Dalai Lama and his clique in order to embarrass China right before the August 2008 Olympic games in Beijing.

Chinese authorities had acted to protect the people and property of Tibet from the demonstrators and assured the Canadians that no foreign nationals were injured during the riots.

They reminded the delegates that Tibet enjoys benefits that other regions in China do not receive and reiterated the fact that religious freedom was well established in Tibet, a position supported by the recent increase in the number of Lamas and temples which had been constructed there. The Chinese noted as well that since the demonstrations in Tibet began, Chinese Embassies in several countries, including Canada, had been the target of demonstrations and vandalism. The Chinese hoped that authorities would intervene quickly to protect the dignity of Chinese diplomatic officers in Canada.

Finally, the Chinese stated that the Dalai Lama's agenda is a political and separatist agenda, rather than a spiritual agenda, and that his ultimate aim is to have Tibet separate from China. China was quite concerned about the Dalai Lama's recent visit to Canada during which the Tibetan leader attended several senior-level meetings with politicians. The Chinese were dismayed by this as they felt that these meetings illustrate a general support for the Dalai Lama's agenda, which is political in nature and not spiritual.

The Canadian delegates suggested that restraint and transparency on the part of the Chinese government would help the international community understand the delicate situation in Tibet. They reminded their Chinese hosts that Canada continues to adhere to its "One-China" policy and that they would not comment on the demonstrations. However, the delegates did mention that Canadians distinguish between the Dalai Lama's religious, spiritual and political motives and that Canadians tend not to conflate the religious and political views of their leaders: they believe that these motives are different and should be evaluated separately. Finally, the Canadians were very concerned that violence in Tibet would overshadow the Beijing Olympics as they acknowledged how much effort and importance China was placing on the summer games.

Taiwan:

The subject of Taiwan was raised in several meetings as well. In 2007, the government of Taiwan proposed to hold a referendum asking its citizens to ratify the Taiwanese government's request that Taiwan be allowed to enter the United Nations (UN). However, the Chinese government is opposed to this act as it feels that Taiwan-China reunification is a core national issue for China. Just prior to the arrival of the delegation in Canada, the Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Canada, delivered a speech in which he suggested that the Taiwan referendum was not a prudent activity at this point and reiterated Canada's adherence to the "One-China" policy which has been the cornerstone of Canada-China diplomatic relations for many years. Chinese officials very much appreciated the Minister's comments which showed Canada's respect for China's national sovereignty. The Canadian delegates agreed with this perspective and resolved to educate more Canadian parliamentarians about the Chinese perspective on this subject.

Canada-China Bilateral relations:

China is Canada's second largest trading partner and two-way trade between the two countries in 2007 was worth over \$30 billion. Both the delegates and the Chinese officials with whom they met spoke openly of how much they value this relationship. While Chinese officials repeatedly stated how their government identified Canada as an important nation, they acknowledged that some bilateral irritants still exist. They suggested that increased discussion based on mutual respect and more exchanges at all levels between the two countries would strengthen relations significantly. The delegates agreed noting that the work of the Canadian CCLA is aimed at educating Canadian parliamentarians about China. The Canadians noted that the media in Canada and the views of some Canadian parliamentarians do not always reflect the views of the Government or Parliament of Canada. The Co-Chairs resolved to continue educating Canadians about China and proposed an increase in exchanges in order to allow more Canadian parliamentarians an opportunity to see China personally. Finally, the Chinese officials noted that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has formal relations with over 160 political parties across the world, but that the CCP has no relationship with any Canadian political parties. The Canadians suggested that building these relationships was laudable, but also reminded them that the CCLA is a non-partisan organization which represents members from all recognized parties at the Parliament of Canada.

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region:

The Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is one of five special autonomous regions in China that enjoy increased local control over economic and social issues. A large percentage of the population of Guangxi is comprised of members of ethnic minorities. In fact, 16 million of the 45 million population (35%) of the region are members of one of the 56 officially recognized Chinese ethnic minorities.

Nanning:

While in Nanning, the delegation visited the Nanning Sowers Action Huaguag Girls School, which is partially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The all-girls school was opened in 2000 and specializes in providing education for ethnic girls who come from poverty. Students are admitted from the surrounding area and usually come from subsistence-level farming families. With few economic opportunities in the region, many girls must leave school to work, which results in their not having sufficient skills to find better jobs. As a result they drift deeper into poverty. In an effort to break this cycle of poverty, the school provides girls with an education which then allows them to apply to university.

Guilin:

The city of Guilin has a population of 4.98 million people from over 30 different ethnic groups. The 2007 GDP for the city was ¥74.8 billion and its primary industries are manufacturing, automotive production, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products and electronics. During its stay here the delegation had the opportunity to meet a group of students from the Guangxi Normal University. This institution was established in 1776 and currently has sister-institution relationships with over 152 universities around the world. In the course of this meeting the students asked the CCLA Co-Chairs questions regarding the Canadian university education system, Canadian teacher training regimes, climate change, energy conservation and the effect of new technological innovations on society.

Miscellaneous:

While in Beijing, the delegation had the opportunity to tour the new National Grand Theatre as well as the British Columbia Canada Pavilion which was constructed to promote British Columbia and Canada during the August 2008 Beijing Olympics. While in Guangxi, the delegates conducted a site visit at a Legal Aid Clinic in Liuzhou (near Guilin) which is funded by CIDA and took a cruise on the historic Lijiang River. Finally, while in Hong Kong, the delegates received a briefing from the Canadian Consulate General.

Conclusion:

This visit to China was an excellent opportunity for the Co-chairs of the CCLA to further expand their knowledge of and contacts in China and conduct essential research for the next bilateral visit to China, which will likely take place in October 2008. It was also vitally important to the planning of this 11th Bilateral visit to travel to China at this time as the Co-chairs were able to raise Canada's profile in China and gather vital information that will assist in strengthening, reinforcing and reinvigorating the already robust relationship which exists between Canada and China.

A summary of the travel costs is appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Joseph A. Day, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-China Legislative
Association

Mr. Bob Mills, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-China Legislative
Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-China Legislative Association
ACTIVITY	Annual Co-chairs' visit
DESTINATION	Beijing, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (Nanning, Guilin) and Hong Kong (China)
DATES	March 17-21, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Joseph Day, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Bob Mills, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Paul Cardegna, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$25,080.86
ACCOMMODATION	\$4,284.08
HOSPITALITY	---
PER DIEMS	\$1,165.46
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,548.30
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$3,432.75
TOTAL	\$35,511.45