

Canada – China
Legislative Association



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Canada – Chine

Report of the Canada-China Legislative Association

24th Bilateral Meeting

Beijing and Shanghai, People's Republic of China

From March 24 to 29, 2024

Report

From 24 to 29 March 2024, Senator Paul Massicotte – Senate Co-Chair of the Canada–China Legislative Association (CACN) – led a delegation to Beijing and Shanghai, People’s Republic of China (China) for the 24th bilateral meeting between the CACN and China’s National People’s Congress (NPC), the first such meeting since 2019. The other delegates were: Senator Victor Oh; Han Dong, MP, House of Commons Co-Chair of the CACN;¹ Don Davies, MP, Vice-Chair of the CACN; and Majid Jowhari, MP, Vice-Chair of the CACN. The delegation was accompanied by Grant McLaughlin, Association Secretary, and Ryan Vandenberg, Association Advisor.

The objectives for the delegation’s visit to China included:

- strengthening relations between Canada and China;
- exploring opportunities for bilateral trade and other economic cooperation;
- advancing collaboration on shared environmental and clean energy goals;
- deepening bilateral people-to-people ties; and
- sharing knowledge about infrastructure development.

In addition to exchanges with Chinese legislators from the NPC and the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress, the delegates met with journalists from western media outlets, Canadians and others with strong connections to Canada who are living in China, and representatives of civil society organizations and businesses, including Canadian businesses operating in China.

MEETINGS IN BEIJING

A. Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress

Mr. Zhang Qingwei, Vice-Chair of the NPC Standing Committee and Chair of the China–Canada Legislative Association, reflected on the long history of successful relations between China and Canada, as well as the two countries’ complementary interests. Noting that bilateral relations had been strained in recent years, Mr. Zhang stated that the delegation’s visit to China was important for building trust.

The CACN Co-Chairs indicated that resuming the bilateral meetings with the NPC should lead to a fruitful working relationship. They also emphasized that the parliamentary delegates are independent from the Government of Canada. On behalf of the delegation, they invited the NPC to send a Chinese delegation to Canada for a bilateral meeting in 2025.

B. 24th Bilateral Meeting

The 24th bilateral meeting involved speeches by a Canadian delegate and a Chinese legislator on each of four pre-determined topics, followed by an informal opportunity for the delegates and Chinese legislators to share views. Mr. Shi Yaobin, Executive Vice-

¹ On 23 April 2024, the House of Commons Co-Chair of the Canada–China Legislative Association changed from Han Dong, MP to Majid Jowhari, MP.

Chair of the China–Canada Legislative Association and Vice-Chair of the NPC Financial and Economic Affairs Committee, and Senator Massicotte highlighted the importance of resuming bilateral meetings.

1. Bilateral and Interparliamentary Relations

Mr. Hao Ping, Vice-Chair of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee and Vice-Chair of the China–Canada Legislative Association, and Mr. Dong spoke about bilateral and interparliamentary relations between Canada and China. Highlighting the significance of bilateral relations, Mr. Hao encouraged communication and bilateral exchanges to strengthen the two countries' economies, trade, people-to-people ties and knowledge about each other's cultures. As well, Mr. Hao drew attention to certain actions involving Canada and Canadian parliamentarians with which China is dissatisfied, including: Parliament's adoption of Bill S-211 concerning forced and child labour in supply chains;² Canada's acceptance of Uyghur refugees and investigation of forced labour in Xinjiang; and Canadian parliamentarians engagement with officials from the Republic of China (Taiwan) and support for Tibetan separatists.

Mr. Dong focused on the importance of regular communication, including through bilateral fora, for building trust and demonstrating good-faith approaches to strengthening the relationship between Canada and China. He noted pragmatic ways of working toward shared interests, such as deepening people-to-people ties by increasing the number of passenger flights between the two countries and ensuring that trade barriers are minimized for Canadian exports to China, such as beef.

2. Economy and Bilateral Trade

Mr. Shi spoke about China's economic situation, and Mr. Tian Guoli – Vice-Chair of the NPC Financial and Economic Affairs Committee – and Mr. Jowhari discussed trade between Canada and China. Mr. Shi indicated that China's economy is recovering and that Chinese industrial policies are positioning the country for long-term economic growth.

Mr. Jowhari highlighted the importance for Canada's economy of Chinese merchandise and services trade, as well as foreign investment, but he acknowledged obstacles to bilateral trade in recent years; in particular, he drew attention to Canadian canola and beef. However, Mr. Jowhari also underlined opportunities for expanding Canada–China trade, especially in the agricultural, natural resources, energy, infrastructure and health sectors. He also pointed out that multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, provide avenues for collaboration.

Mr. Tian noted the complementarity of Canada's and China's economies, identifying the potential for cooperation in a number of sectors, including energy, finance, health, technology and minerals. As well, he suggested that the two countries could build on one another's expertise: China could learn from Canada's knowledge of aerospace, quantum computing and life sciences, and Canada could gain from China's expertise regarding

² [Bill S-211, An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session.

transportation and digital infrastructure. That said, Mr. Tian also commented on Canadian policies limiting investment because of national security concerns, such as the 2022 policy issued under the Investment Canada Act to improve scrutiny of foreign investments in the mineral sector, and the resulting uncertainty in China.

3. People-to-People ties and Cultural Exchanges

Mr. Li Wei, member of the NPC Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee, and Senator Oh focused on people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. Senator Oh noted the importance of respect for human rights, and he remarked that people-to-people ties between Canada and China form the cornerstone of bilateral relations. Furthermore, he reflected on the legacy of the Canadian “head tax” on Chinese immigrants from 1885 to 1923, as well as the impacts of rising anti-Asian hate crimes in Canada in recent years. Senator Oh also urged both countries to undertake more educational and cultural exchanges, including by encouraging increased activity through existing exchange mechanisms, such as sister cities.

Similarly, Mr. Li underscored the value of bilateral people-to-people ties for engendering trust and maintaining friendships between China and Canada, and he provided three suggestions for deepening these ties: leverage lessons learned from exchanges in such fields as the humanities, education, sports and health to strengthen legislative cooperation in these areas; stop using national security as a reason for restricting educational exchanges and scientific cooperation; and engage in more cultural exchanges, including by celebrating each other’s festivals and increasing the number of passenger flights between China and Canada.

4. Global Governance

Mr. Jiang Chenghua, member of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee, and Mr. Davies focused on global governance. Mr. Davies highlighted the multilateral engagement by Canada and China, especially their collaboration on environmental issues, and noted the two countries’ efforts to hold one another accountable for their human rights records through the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Reviews. He also identified areas of bilateral cooperation, such as the Canada–China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement. As well, Mr. Davies suggested that China could help shape global institutions with the goal of bringing about fairer outcomes for countries with developing economies.

Mr. Jiang explained that both China and Canada have contributed to efforts to uphold a multilateral global order that strives for cooperation and consensus, but he expressed concerns about the rise in anti-global sentiment that is leading countries to de-couple from one another, thereby putting such global issues as climate change at risk of insufficient progress. Suggesting that Canada uses national security provisions to limit Chinese trade and investment, Mr. Jiang urged Canadian parliamentarians to exercise practical oversight of Canada’s international treaties to foster trade and positive bilateral relations with China.

C. International Department of the Chinese Communist Party

The delegates met with Ms. Sun Haiyan, Vice-Minister of International Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee, which serves a diplomatic function for the CCP. Ms. Sun commented that China and Canada have recently had a period of turbulent bilateral relations. She raised issues of concern to China, including allegations in Canadian news media that China is a security threat and is interfering in Canadian politics, which she characterized as misinformation.

Moreover, Ms. Sun noted that there are many areas on which China and Canada can work together, including “green development,” especially biodiversity and “green finance,” and the digitalization of key sectors. She also encouraged Canadians who had been rejected for a Chinese journalist visa to reapply.

The delegates and Jennifer May, Canada’s Ambassador to China, urged China to negotiate an equitable agreement to increase the number of passenger flights between Canada and China, which could increase person-to-person ties. As well, the delegates proposed that China should begin supporting peace negotiations between parties in international conflicts, including in Ukraine and Gaza, arguing that China’s official neutrality concerning such conflicts puts it in a position it to broker peace. Furthermore, the delegates and Ms. Sun supported more active use of existing cultural exchange mechanisms. They also committed to continued enforcement of strict controls on opioids and related ingredients.

D. National People’s Congress Foreign Affairs Committee

During a meeting with members of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee, chaired by Mr. Lou Qinjian, Chinese and Canadian legislators agreed that the delegation’s visit to China was important because face-to-face meetings build mutual respect and understanding. They also stated that legislators could benefit from collaborative bilateral fora to share best practices on, and to raise concerns about, data and privacy protection. As well, Canadian and Chinese legislators indicated that they would support negotiations designed to increase the number of passenger flights between Canada and China.

Mr. Lou described China’s efforts to eradicate poverty, identified the country’s desire for peace on the global stage, and said that China and Canada have many opportunities to collaborate, especially in the computing and telecommunications sectors.

E. National People’s Congress Environment Protection and Resource Conservation Committee

During a meeting with members of the NPC Environment Protection and Resource Conservation Committee, chaired by Mr. Lu Xinshe, Chinese and Canadian legislators underscored the long history of collaboration between China and Canada on environmental issues, including climate change and conserving biodiversity. Mr. Lu underscored China’s need for Canadian expertise concerning oil, metals and energy conservation to support its green transition. The delegates learned about China’s legislative framework for environmental protection, some elements of which – including legislated impact and health assessments – are partly based on Canadian laws and environmental expertise. In the context of China’s proposed national park legislation, the delegates described Canada’s measures for monitoring and updating its biodiversity

protection regulations, and they commented on the negative consequences of displacing Indigenous peoples to create national parks.

F. British Columbia Forestry Innovation Investment and Canada Wood

The delegates met with representatives of British Columbia Forestry Innovation Investment (BCFII), a provincial Crown corporation, and Canada Wood China, an advocacy organization. The representatives explained that China's prioritization of environmental goals provides many opportunities to use Canadian forestry products, particularly in the construction sector. They also described the ways in which the BCFII leverages Canadian expertise to influence technical building codes to allow for more carbon-friendly wood construction products. The delegates saw examples of high-profile tourism- and residential housing-related wood projects across China, many of which were built with Canadian wood.

G. Western Journalists

The delegates met with journalists from various western media outlets. The journalists described the operating environment for foreign news media in China, as well as their changing level of access to Chinese visas, regions and people to interview. They attributed the lack of accredited foreign journalists to China limiting the number of visas issued to them; accordingly, they suggested that a greater number of human-interest stories about China would be written if more visas were to be issued, thereby reducing the focus on Chinese geopolitics, which often portray China negatively. The delegates were told that the negative depiction of China in much western media may partially be a result of that country's poor treatment of foreign journalists.

The journalists explained that they or their colleagues regularly experience state surveillance and intimidation – and, in rare instances, violence – that hinders their work. They also indicated that Chinese citizens are often unwilling to speak with foreign journalists and drew attention to some interviewees having been reprimanded for such interactions. The journalists stated that the surveillance and intimidation of foreign journalists is more common in regions in China that are more politically sensitive, such as Xinjiang and Tibet, and that these situations are being experienced in a growing number of regions, such as China's borders with Russia and Mongolia.

Concerning human rights in Xinjiang, the journalists said that – compared to recent years – the region has become more open to foreign media, perhaps because China is trying to change perceptions about life in the region. Nevertheless, they highlighted that foreign journalists still have limited access to citizens in the region and cannot secure interviews with state officials. The journalists also indicated that people in Xinjiang refer to “prisons” rather than to “re-education camps,” and they provided examples of Uighurs serving official prison sentences for arbitrary charges based on such behaviour as “praying too much.”

H. China Council for International Cooperation on the Environment

The delegates met with representatives from the China Council for International Cooperation on the Environment (CCICED), a Chinese research organization chaired by Zhao Yingmin, Secretary General of CCICED and China's Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment. Mr. Zhao explained that, based on international experts' advice, the CCICED makes environmental policy recommendations directly to the State Council of the Chinese Government, which often implements the recommendations.

Noting that the Government of Canada helped found the CCICED and remains its top donor, Mr. Zhao said that Canada is an important partner for the CCICED. As well, he provided an overview of the many areas of potential Canada–China environmental cooperation, including renewable energy, plastics and electric vehicle batteries. He noted China's goal of carbon-neutrality by 2060 and associated opportunities, and contended that Canadian companies are particularly well positioned to finance Chinese environmental initiatives.

I. The Canadian Ambassador to China

The delegates and business leaders with connections to Canada met with Ambassador May. Their discussions focused on various sectors, including tourism, banking, aerospace, leisure and education. The delegates were informed that some Canadian business leaders generally feel comfortable living and doing business in China despite strained bilateral relations and the arbitrary arrest of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

In addition, the delegates learned about the "International Business Leaders Advisory Council for the Mayor of Beijing," which provides representatives of a select group of multinational companies with opportunities to discuss Beijing's economic and social development with municipal officials and to seek advice from the government, including about the application of a Chinese law.

MEETINGS AND SITE VISITS IN SHANGHAI

A. Shanghai Municipal People's Congress

The delegates met with Mr. Chen Jing, Vice-Chair of the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress (SMPC), and Ms. Huang Hong, Chair of the SMPC Foreign Affairs Committee. Underlining areas of shared interest between Canada and Shanghai, the delegates suggested that Shanghai's sister relationships with the province of Quebec and the city of Montreal should be leveraged to support greater people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. Mr. Chen noted that the Port of Shanghai and the Port of Vancouver are sister ports, which presents opportunities for sharing knowledge.

Mr. Chen, Ms. Huang and the delegates discussed best practices on a variety of topics, such as housing development, land use and environmentally friendly waste management. As well, the delegates learned about Shanghai's municipal planning practices and the city's drivers of growth, which include major Canadian and other foreign companies.

B. Xintiandi Complex, Lululemon and Arc'teryx

The delegates toured the Xintiandi Complex, which is a shopping district owned by Brookfield Asset Management, a Canadian investment management company. They visited flagship locations for Canadian apparel brands Lululemon and Arc'teryx, and learned about these companies' strategies for rapid growth in China. The delegates noted that both brands leverage Canada's image as a country with outstanding natural beauty and a physically active population in their marketing for Chinese consumers.

C. GIGA and Brookfield Asset Management

The delegates met with Raefer Wallis, founder and Chief Executive Officer of GIGA, a Canadian benchmarking organization, and with Stanton Wong, President of GIGA. They were informed about Canadian business opportunities linked to China's transition to net-zero emissions by 2060. Mr. Wallis indicated that Chinese President Xi Jinping has sent ambitious policy signals to domestic businesses with the aim of achieving that goal even though China is – at present – the world's largest emitter of carbon.

Mr. Wong highlighted GIGA's environmental performance standard and demonstrated its application at Brookfield Asset Management's head office. During that visit, the delegates learned about Brookfield Asset Management's strategy for expanding its market share in various Chinese sectors, notwithstanding the economic downturn that is being driven largely by the decline in China's real estate sector.

The delegates also met with Daniel Cheng, Managing Partner in the Renewable Power and Transition Group at Brookfield Asset Management. They discussed predictions for China's economy overall and its real-estate sector specifically.

D. Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai

The delegates met with representatives of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai (CanCham) and CanCham's board members. Ms. Jenny Fan, Chair of the CanCham's board of directors, explained that business-to-business ties between Canada and China have remained strong, in spite of the strained political relationship and diminished people-to-people ties between the two countries in recent years. CanCham's representatives and board members added that the delegation's visit, as well as bilateral diplomatic engagement, could help Canadian businesses operating in China to succeed. Moreover, they indicated that the Canadian business community in China is able to share – with personal and business contacts in Canada – nuanced insights about China that are not always reflected in Canadian news coverage of the country, which is often negative.

In addition, CanCham's representatives and board members drew attention to the trade-offs that Canadian businesses make when they decide to operate in China. The delegates were informed that such factors as surveillance and concerns about individual rights give them some discomfort when doing business in China.

However, CanCham's representatives and board members pointed to positive aspects of China's market, including favourable conditions for green technologies and innovation, as well as general optimism about China's economy and its application of commercial and anti-corruption laws. The delegates heard that there are doubts about the feasibility and

desirability of reducing western businesses' reliance on Chinese businesses, as some western observers have proposed.

E. Meituan

During a visit to the Shanghai office of Meituan, a Chinese e-commerce company, the delegates were informed about Meituan's technological innovations, its competitive advantage in the Chinese market and the regulatory environment in which it operates. Ms. Mao Fang, Vice President of Meituan (Shanghai) and Deputy to the SMPC, discussed Meituan's coordination with government air traffic control officials to deliver food using drones, efforts to protect consumer data while complying with Chinese data regulations, and collaboration with Chinese legislators to test technological innovations in the market to identify problems and potential solutions before legislation is drafted.

F. Redfern Digital

The delegates met with Ryan Molloy, the Chief Executive Officer at RedFern Digital, a digital marketing agency. Mr. Molloy underscored the prevalence of e-commerce in China, which is higher than in Canada, and stated that Canada – with its reputation for stringent safety regulations and high-quality products – has many brands that appeal to Chinese consumers, including those relating to child health and outdoor apparel. However, he cautioned that small companies experience difficulties entering the Chinese market, partly due to the high investment required to establish an e-commerce presence.

G. Shanghai Tower

The delegates visited the Shanghai Tower, a 128-storey tower that is the second-tallest skyscraper in the world and that is stabilized with technology designed and supplied by RWDI, a Canadian company. During the visit, Mr. Qian Feng – Senior Project Manager and Associate Principal at RWDI – explained that a magnetic damper reduces vibrations by up to 45%, and he indicated that using magnetic damper technology rather than hydraulics avoids the risk of leaking.

H. Shanghai International Port Group

The delegates met with representatives of the Shanghai International Port Group (SIPG), which is the terminal operator for the Port of Shanghai, the world's largest port by throughput. In addition to learning about efforts to make the port more energy-efficient and to reduce its carbon output, the delegates were informed that the SIPG is automating many port operations.

The delegates and Mr. Ding Xiangming, Vice-President, Board Secretary and General Counsel at SIPG, discussed the high cost of shipping since the COVID-19 pandemic and the security of port infrastructure. In addition, they drew attention to the significant partnership between the Port of Shanghai and the Port of Vancouver, which provides both a critical point of connection between the two countries and a vehicle for knowledge exchange.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the 24th bilateral meeting, the Canadian and Chinese legislators underlined the importance of resuming regular bilateral meetings and made a commitment to holding such meetings annually. The bilateral meeting provided a valuable opportunity for discussions and for building trust. As well, the delegates' meetings with Chinese legislators, as well as representatives of civil society organizations and of Canadian and Chinese businesses, highlighted the benefits of in-person engagement.

The Canadian and Chinese legislators identified many ways in which bilateral and multilateral cooperation could be established or strengthened, drawing particular attention to shared environmental goals and the facilitation of mutually beneficial trade. They also expressed interest in leveraging existing mechanisms for people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. Moreover, the bilateral meeting provided opportunities for the delegates to raise issues that are important for the bilateral relationship, including human rights, commercial cooperation, visas for Canadian journalists, and the number of passenger flights between Canada and China.

During their meetings with Canadian businesspeople in China, the delegates learned that the businesses that succeed in China tend to be those that: understand the Chinese market and the country's political dynamics; sell products or services desired by Chinese consumers; and seek advice about Chinese commerce from the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and other knowledgeable entities.

The delegates invited members from the NPC to visit Canada in 2025 for the 25th bilateral meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Paul J. Massicotte, Senator
Co-Chair, Canada–China Legislative Association

Majid Jowhari, M.P.
Co-Chair, Canada–China Legislative Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-China Legislative Association
ACTIVITY	24th Bilateral Meeting
DESTINATION	Beijing and Shanghai, China
DATES	From March 24 to 29, 2024
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Paul J. Massicotte Hon. Victor Oh Don Davies
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Han Dong Majid Jowhari
STAFF	Grant McLaughlin Ryan Vandenberg
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 70,123.72
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 13,757.26
HOSPITALITY	\$ 2,579.10
PER DIEMS	\$ 6,945.08
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 427.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 7,660.47
TOTAL	\$ 101,492.63