

# **PRESENTATION ON CANADA-CHINA SISTER CITIES**

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In less than one month Canada and China will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Canada is very proud of having been the first country in the seventies to initiate negotiations with the People's Republic of China and then bring about this meaningful relationship precisely on October 13, 1970. It was the interest and the determination of our former Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, which led to this important decision. Canada's example was followed by a large number of countries in that decade, and contributed to the return of China on the international scene.

Not too long afterwards, when exchanges between the two countries began in earnest, it became popular for visiting Canadian mayors or provincial premiers to seek sister cities or provinces in China. At one point, we counted 35 such relationships. Unfortunately, too often, the visit once over and someone else elected in the relevant positions, the relationship failed to prosper for whatever reason. I suspect what happened in Canada is not unique, and that similar situations also exist in some of the countries represented here. In our country there is no federation regrouping all Canada-China twinnings; it is therefore difficult to give an overall perspective of the current sister cities situation. However at this stage, there are a number of relationships that developed and prospered and, in so doing, contributed significantly to the promotion of friendly exchanges and cooperation.

It so happens, in fact that, at either end of our country, two such twinnings are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year: Montreal-Shanghai in the east and Vancouver-Guangzhou in the west.

### **Montreal-Shanghai**

As we are in Shanghai, I shall begin with the Montreal-Shanghai twinning which has experienced an exceptional evolution since 1985, and was recently reinforced on May 12 of this year when mayors Han Zheng and Gérald Tremblay signed a protocol covering exchanges planned for 2010-2012. The scope of the exchanges that have already taken place is truly remarkable: technical exchanges in management of archives and libraries, urbanization, civilian defense, environment, horticulture, museum science and culture, all of the above having had positive impacts on businesses and universities in both countries.

The new memorandum outlines a number of activities, many of them in new areas. The first symbolic activity is related to the 25th anniversary, each city having decided to hold one week of cultural activities destined to improve the knowledge of the other. In Shanghai, this is happening in the context of EXPO 2010. The Shanghai International

Culture Association and the Shanghai Education Commission are ensuring the promotion of the permanent exhibition on our Canadian hero - Norman Bethune - so revered by the Chinese - at the Montreal Garden Pavilion in this city.

In the area of economic exchanges, both cities will continue to promote exchanges, innovation and knowledge related to universities, and bringing together economic partners in the areas identified as promising. There will cooperation between the Montreal Digital Alliance and the Shanghai Multimedia Industry Association with a view to promoting the development of businesses, particularly in the areas of multimedia and digital media; continuing negotiations between relevant airports and airlines to arrive at a Shanghai-Montreal direct air link to increase the level of tourism, business and cargo traffic.

In the all important area of education and youth exchanges, there will be increased support given to exchanges of university experts and research projects, notably in urbanization and in public health; cooperation in student exchanges and in teaching of foreign languages; cooperation and exchanges between schools of both cities at all levels; creation of a "Confucius class" in Montreal primary and secondary schools to promote Chinese language and culture; durable links and development of concrete projects between the Montreal Youth Council and the Shanghai Youth Federation.

Public security is another area identified: Exchange of experts in civilian security, personal security and fire prevention especially in underground sites.

Parking management: Montreal Parking and Shanghai Urban Transportation Bureau will exchange expertise in the area of application and regulation of paid parking

Environment: the two cities will promote the development of sustainable cooperation in the area of environment (air, water, soils, waste) and sustainable development (economic with low carbon rates, social, environmental) by holding workshops in all those areas.

Urbanization: exchanges of experts in the area of urban planning, development of underground spaces and urban design.

Culture is another important area where exchange of expertise will take place and includes not only culture but leisure; library management and promotion of reading, annual exchange of books, and cooperation between the Montreal Arts Council and the Shanghai International Culture Association to promote exchanges within the framework of festivals, professional exchanges in the area of creation, artistic companies and managers of cultural activities.

Green spaces, horticulture and biodiversity: both cities will share best practices regarding parks and green spaces, protection of wet soils and natural spaces; continued cooperation to ensure appropriate management of the Chinese "Dream Lake" at the Montreal Botanical Garden including the collection of penjings; exchanges in botany and horticulture and biodiversity.

Law and relations with citizens - a brand new area -: exchange projects and transfer of expertise in the area of mediation, conflict resolution and citizens rights and responsibilities will involve the Montreal Ombudsman Bureau and the Shanghai Complaint Reception Office; both parties will support the development of exchanges in the area of justice at the municipal level.

Exchanges between subdivisions of the cities of Montreal and Shanghai in the area of governance.

### **Vancouver-Guangzhou**

Now on to the west coast of Canada where folks in British Columbia are celebrating this year the 25th anniversary of the Vancouver-Guangzhou twinning and the 15th anniversary of the BC-Guangdong twinning. The link between Vancouver and Guangzhou has been very strong, helped no doubt by having a substantial portion of the population with links with Guangzhou and Guangdong. Since 1985, mayors of each city have visited their sister city on a regular basis. In fact, the Mayor of Vancouver is in Guangzhou this month. Civic gifts have gone both ways: the bell in the heart of Chinatown in Vancouver is a gift of the Guangzhou government and, on the 20th anniversary of twinning, Guangzhou presented a splendid gate which sits outside the Chinese Cultural Centre. Vancouver and B.C. have planted trees, sent a totem pole in China, and in 2004 returned an antique opera chest to the Liwan Museum in Guangzhou.

The Guangzhou Children's hospital has been linked to the Vancouver Children's Hospital since 1984 and there have been exchanges of doctors.

There have also been workshops on sustainable urban development, cultural issues and business opportunities.

This year, the 25th anniversary was marked in Vancouver by a visit of the People's Consultative Congress delegation and by delegations from Art Circles and Martial Arts Circles. It was the occasion of an enormous banquet of over 90 tables with entertainers from Guangzhou and Vancouver. This month, there will be a photographic exhibition to celebrate 25 years of friendly relations, and as a soccer match in which Vancouver's mayor himself will play. The mayor will also plant a tree and sign an MOU with Guangzhou on reducing carbon emissions. In November and December, there will be spectacles offered by troupes of Cantonese Opera and martial arts.

The Guangzhou-Vancouver Friendship Society works closely with the BC- Guangdong Business Council which is constantly involved with activities linking BC with Guangdong at the provincial level. There are a significant number of B.C. municipalities that are linked to Guangdong municipalities: Burnaby (Zhongshan), Surrey (Zhuhai), New Westminster (Yunfu) and North Vancouver (Qingyuan), and more twinings are under discussion.

### **Alberta-Heilongjiang**

Turning back east of B.C., some significant Canada-China activities also take place in Alberta although I'm told it is not always easy to tell whether it is as a result of the Alberta-Heilongjiang twinning which dates from 1981, one of the very first for Canada, as a result of the Edmonton-Harbin twinning which grew out of it in 1985, or because both cities belong to the Winter Cities network. Chinese women's hockey and curling teams train in Alberta for months during the winter. Schools from another city, Calgary, are twinned with schools in Harbin. In February 2009, the mayor of Edmonton led a delegation of representatives of the city, the University of Alberta and of Edmonton tourism to promote Edmonton in China. A "Canada Night" held on the occasion was attended by over 200 guests and featured First Nations performances from Edmonton. As a result of discussions with the Mayor of Harbin, a new tourism agreement was signed to boost interactions between the sister cities, and promote relationships between post-secondary institutions in Harbin and Edmonton.

### **Quebec City - Xian**

This is a newer relationship dating from 2001. Economic and commercial exchanges are part of the program but other areas identified for cooperation are the sciences, technology, culture, education, health and sports.

### **Ottawa-Beijing**

I have left our two capital cities for the end of this brief overview. Ottawa and Beijing entered into a sister city agreement in 1999 with a focus on environmental protection, municipal administration, technology and tourism. In April of this year during the visit of Ottawa's current mayor to Beijing, a new memorandum was signed which re-energized the relationship. Twenty business leaders accompanied the mayor and discussions were held with Beijing counterparts on economic, high tech, investment exchanges. Environmental protection, clean technology, energy conservation, waste management emerged as promising areas. An agreement is expected soon in information and communication technology. In tourism, there is now a cooperation agreement between the Badaling section of the Great Wall and the Ottawa Rideau Canal, both UNESCO World Heritage sites, each having undertaken to promote the other. Last month, to mark the arrival of the first group of 200 Chinese tourists visiting Canada pursuant to the Approved Destination Status, Ottawa's mayor hosted a welcome banquet. Certainly the most visible of the sister city relation will be the beautiful Imperial style gate donated by the city of Beijing is being constructed at the entrance of Ottawa's Chinatown and will be officially inaugurated within the context of the numerous celebrations planned on the happy occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and China.