

Mayor Pellegrini impressed with China's growth and trade opportunities

By Mark Pavilons

An incredible, eye-opening experience has changed the way King's mayor looks at the far east.

Steve Pellegrini was part of an Ontario mayoral trade delegation to China. Sponsored by the Canada-China Investment Association, the whirlwind 10



day mission had a full slate of activities for the mayors.

Pellegrini attended on behalf of York Region, as their Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance representative. The mayor pointed out taxpayers were not on the hook for any of his expenses.

All of his previous notions about this large, populous nation were shattered upon his arrival.

He noted China has spent decades building infrastructure and today, its cities are modern examples of architectural and technological prowess.

The mayors met and networked with representatives and government officials in Beijing, Shanghai and Xian, gaining an understanding of the economy of China.

Pellegrini said he was impressed by the country's road system, calling it "phenomenal." What makes it even better, is the attention paid to well manicured boulevards, containing rose bushes and walkways. There are dedicated cycling lanes and well placed buffers. He was also taken by the large number of public art displays, statues, monuments and public parks.

While many may think China is ruled by cyclists, luxury European automobiles dominate the landscape. Cities are lush and lavish and the landscape is dotted with tower cranes, signalling constant development.

Every city, Pellegrini noted, is growing at an accelerated pace and employment is secure. Investment is coming from inside the country as well as international companies.

The Chinese have money to invest in Canada and are looking for opportunities across the GTA. Chinese companies have already purchased Niagara vineyards and Dave Eke, Mayor of Niagara-On-The-Lake attended the mission. Canadian ice wine was a huge hit in China.

The Chinese are also particularly interested in agriculture and investing in Canadian farms, to feed their growing population.

Pellegrini said they toured a private school and the country has a reputation for having some of the finest international schools in the world.

He hopes to help facilitate an exchange program between China and King's private schools. Currently, there are no exchange programs in place. He would love to see a King-China connection put in place.

The mission involved non-stop networking, meetings and events, offering little time for sightseeing. Pellegrini managed an early morning jaunt to The Great Wall and saw the famous Terra Cotta Soldiers. At times, it was "information overload," and the mayors were run off their feet.

Pellegrini enjoyed learning about their innovative methods, architectural concepts and building technologies.

Despite their prowess, China does lack certain things and is looking to Canada to help them with their hydro efficiencies, solar power and green methods.

Pellegrini called the experience "incredible."

"It was very productive. As a mayor, it was a great growth experience for me and a great learning experience."

The connections he made have already resulted in an exchange of emails.

The mission also put things in perspective as to how fortunate we are to live here.

China is Canada's number two export destination and last year, exports totalled \$18.6 billion.

The Canada-China Investment Association (CCIA) is a Canada-China investment and bilateral trade facilitator founded in 2010 as a not-for-profit business association. CCIA is an advocate for friendship and culture exchanges between China and Canada and a

catalyst for economic trade and Sino-Canadian investment.