

Chinese delegation enjoys King Township's bounty



Shown at the Holland Marsh Wineries were Councillor Avia Eek, Roland Nersisyan, Consul General Fang Li, Mayor Pellegrini and Norie Nersisyan.

By Mark Pavilons

The sights of King Township were on the agenda for visiting Chinese delegates, during a whirlwind, one-day tour last week. Mayor Steve Pellegrini guided members from the Chinese Consulate-General in Toronto to a variety of locales, showing King's diversity and charm.

Pellegrini was part of an Ontario mayoral trade delegation to China at the end of May, sponsored by the Canada-China Investment Association.

The mayor said Chinese officials seemed interested in King and the Consulate contacted him about arranging a visit. The mayor agreed, and the event came together very quickly.

Fang Li, Consul General; Yang Shaojun, Consul and Head of the Department of Science and Technology Affairs, Chinese Consulate General in Toronto; Mu Jianfeng, Consul in charge of Inter-Governmental Relations and Press were treated to an informative and cordial visit.

"King is such a gracious host," Pellegrini said. "They have an open invitation."

The mayor said they had some "good, frank discussions" and it was "nice that we've opened a dialogue with them."

The group visited the Bradford & District Produce Ltd., farm and then took in the Muck Crops Research Station on Woodchoppers Lane in King.

Consul General Li was particularly impressed with the facility.

Operated by the University of Guelph, the Muck Crops Research Station is the largest area of organic (muck) soil developed for agriculture in the province, and one of the most intensive areas of agricultural production in the country.

The facilities at this station include a plant pathology lab, greenhouses and computer monitored environment. Cold storage facilities, with an appropriate [cold room door](#) and windows installed, provide the specific requirements for long-term storage of onions and carrots and several sites for field research. There are four hectares of organic soil research plots on site, a further hectare of organic soil, rented from a local grower and located in another area of the Marsh. Recently two hectares of mineral soil nearby are being used to conduct field trials. Field trials are also conducted in commercial vegetable fields in cooperation with local growers.

Shawn Janse, station manager, pointed out research at the station focuses on the vegetable crops grown in the area, particularly onions, carrots, lettuce, celery and Asian vegetables. The emphasis is on discovery research in crop protection and production, to contribute to improved integrated pest management and integrated crop management of the target vegetable crops.

In operation for 60 years, the station may be small, but it serves many purposes.

Councillor Avia Eek, a Holland Marsh farmer herself, pointed out the station assists Marsh growers on a regular basis. Local farmers can also bring in their crops for analysis, if they discover something wrong.

Collaborative work with seed companies, the crop protection industry, plant breeders and other scientists continues every year. Cost recovery trials to evaluate new cultivars and crop protection materials are conducted on a regular basis. The facility is GLP certified to conduct residue trials for registration of materials.

The group then toured the Holland Marsh Wineries near Asnorveldt, operated by the Nersisyan family.

The group was treated to an outdoor lunch at Pathways to Perennials in Pottageville, joined by Councillor Linda Pabst. The group received a warm welcome from the "hat ladies" in attendance.

The group then toured Schomberg and Nobleton and wrapped up their visit with a tour of the renowned Kingbridge?Centre. Consul General Fang Li was appointed Consul General in Toronto in 2012. Prior to that, he served as Ambassador, Embassy of People's Republic of China in the Republic of Moldova (2010-2012); Consul General, Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Johannesburg (2007-2010)?and Deputy Consul-General, Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Houston (2005-2007).