

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Trudeau's visit to China didn't accomplish much



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently concluded his official visit to China.

He travelled to Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Hong Kong with the aim to build a stronger, more stable relationship with the country, as well as to identify new ways Canada and China could mutually benefit from closer ties, such as trade and investment. Unfortunately, his visit resulted in little benefits for our country and he is instead moving closer to meeting China's demand that Canada join the controversial Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and launch a feasibility study on a bilateral free trade agreement, while failing to secure a long-term deal on canola access.

Prime Minister Trudeau had an opportunity to build on the record of the previous Conservative government's strong record on China, but failed to do so. The previous Conservative government was able to sign agreements on investment, airline flights and market access for key agricultural products, such as beef and blueberries. The current Liberal government campaigned on openness and transparency; however, Prime Minister Trudeau hasn't been open with Canadians about his free trade talks with China. Canadians deserve to know which agreements the government is pursuing. It is extremely disappointing that the current government isn't being transparent with their plans to pursue a free trade agreement with China. This is a huge departure from their approach to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which they continue to delay through endless consultations.

Another troubling development resulting from Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to China is the current government's steps towards having Canada join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In bringing Canada into this investment bank, the current Liberal government will plan on sending hundreds of millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars to a Chinese government bank without control over how the money will be spent or whether there will be benefit for Canadian companies. In stark contrast, the previous Conservative government, along with other nations such as the United States and Japan, did not join the AIIB. The previous Conservative government could not and the current Liberal government cannot ensure this bank will follow the environmental, social and human rights standards Canadians expect from development institutions.

Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to China also failed to deliver any real, long-term solutions for Canadian canola farmers and their access to the Chinese market. A temporary extension doesn't provide any certainty for farmers who are harvesting their crops. Forty per cent and \$2 billion of Canada's canola seed exports go to China and sadly, the current Liberal government continues to put this industry at risk. It is unfortunate, but China has been playing politics with the industry and the current government has been falling for it and as a result, isn't standing up for Canadian canola farmers.

Prime Minister Trudeau's aims to build a stronger, more stable relationship with China and to identify new, mutually beneficial initiatives for both countries failed to occur during his recent visit to China at a time when Canada's economy is performing worse than it has since the Great Recession. Instead of working with other countries on a common agenda, Prime Minister Trudeau and the current Liberal government appear to be going it alone and sadly, Canada is sacrificing too much for too little in return.