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COMMENT

Trade mission to China: Thirteen and a half hours in the air?

By Ted Brown
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A Ted Bit

Over the years I've written columns in the damndest places.

In the barn waiting for lambs to be born, on vacation relaxing on a back porch, or many times from a hotel room but this column is pretty much the most unique.

I'm writing it on the go, so to speak, as one of eight members of the Town of Halton Hills Trade Mission, including three members of Council, and five staff members.

I've composed some bits of this column in my airplane seat, some in an airport terminal, a bit more on another flight, and the final words in my hotel room at 4 a.m., Tuesday March 22, a full 12 hours ahead of Halton Hills.

Being part of this Town of Halton Hills Trade Mission to China, well, we have to get there and enduring a 13-hour-plus air trip wasn't something I was looking forward to.

I wasn't alone all eight members of the group agreed it was quite a stint to sit on a plane for more than 13 hours.

So in spite of the fact the entire cost of the trip was sponsored, the trade mission members each decided to kick in some of our own funds, to cover the upgrades.

The Sidekick and I have flown to Europe, the UK and Ireland on other occasions, so I was well aware of the stress on one's body to spend eight hours in an economy seat, let alone more than 13 hours in a narrow seat that doesn't really recline much.

So Business Class it was.

Sunday (March 20) we left the parking lot of the Town Hall Sunday around noon, and headed to Pearson Airport to prepare for our flight to Shanghai Pudong Airport.

We cleared baggage in good time and spent some time having some lunch, while waiting for the boarding time of our flight you know, that 13-plus-hour flight.

Once on board and settled into my seat, I

could learn to like this way of flying.

There was scads of room!

The flight attendant brought a beverage, we stowed our carry-on, another flight attendant took our menu requests for dinner later on and then we waited.

And waited.. And waited.

The flight was supposed to leave at 4:30 p.m.

The plane finally moved onto the runway an hour later.

Now I can become a bit fidgety when I'm sitting in a seat for an hour with no movement.

I dozed, I read a magazine I did all the things one does to kill time.

And finally we were in the air.

We headed north, and in time, we were flying over James Bay, starting across Hudson's Bay, over the Arctic Circle and across northern Canada, finally on to Pudong Airport, Shanghai, China.

From there we had a two-and-a-half hour stopover, and another four hour flight to our first destination, Chengdu, China.

We booked into our rooms at 3:30 a.m., totally exhausted.

It'd been about 30 hours since we'd left the Town Hall parking lot. Although we had cat-napped on the plane, that's not exactly quality sleep.

And we'll be making that same return trip back, March 30.

I'll be the first to say this is an exciting trade mission to be a part of, but travel aside, its one grueling itinerary to keep up to.

We're venturing into unknown waters here, but I'm hopeful this trip will establish numerous trade relationships and in doing so, benefit the Town of Halton Hills down the road.

So we're in China. Many meetings will be held, discussions will create an exchange of ideas, and ultimately, both municipalities will benefit.

And I'm so damn proud to be a small part of this team.

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