

12.03.07 - Governor Patrick Delivers Keynote at Massachusetts-China Partnership Forum

Governor Deval L. Patrick
Keynote at Massachusetts-China Partnership Forum
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As Delivered

We are very honored indeed to be present with you here and we thank you very much for the warm welcome to Tsinghua Science Park and to Beijing.

This is not my first visit to China, nor is it my first visit to the neighborhood around Tsinghua University. But it is my first visit as Governor of Massachusetts. Indeed this visit is the very first official trade mission I have led anywhere as Governor. And it is important to me that our first visit is here in China.

I live in a little town called Milton, just outside of Boston, the capital city of Massachusetts. On the top of the highest hill near the town center, there is a grand old house. That house once belonged to a merchant family named Forbes. Today it is the home of the China Trade Museum, a monument to an important trade relationship between Massachusetts and China that goes back more than 200 years.

The first merchant ship under an American flag to set sail from China was a ship owned by Boston owners and moored in Boston, embarking in 1784. Commerce in China tea, porcelain and silk helped to make Boston the second busiest port in America in the 1830s. That market created great fortunes for certain legendary Massachusetts merchant families, as well as an early understanding among us of the culture and heritage of this ancient civilization.

The point is that as long as there has been an America, there has been a special trade relationship between Massachusetts and China. And that relationship remains extremely important to us.

Of course, since that time, much has changed.

In Massachusetts, our place as the center of American higher education has strengthened. Harvard, MIT and the University of Massachusetts - among others - have each flourished and have helped to train leaders in science, industry, the arts, public policy and other fields from America, China and around the world. I am so pleased that the President of the University of Massachusetts, Jack Wilson, has been able to join us on our visit, along with representatives of Harvard and MIT. UMass faculty member Dr. Craig Mello - this year's Nobel Prize winner in science is with us as well. Each represents his own great institution of higher learning, but also the broad and timeless tradition of excellence in higher education that is Massachusetts.

Since those early days of the China trade, we have also developed an international "super cluster" around the life sciences and biotechnology. As you know, we enjoy a concentration of some of the world's best teaching hospitals, medical schools, research institutions and universities, all of which collaborate on stem cell and other life-saving research, as well as on biotechnological and biological therapies, devices and medicines. Some of the most promising medical breakthroughs - cures for diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, tuberculosis, hepatitis and even cancer, and treatments for severe burns through manufactured human skin - are being developed and commercialized by firms in Massachusetts, some of whose leaders have joined us on this visit.

We have also begun to develop an industry around clean energy technology, with over 550 companies capitalizing on our tradition of innovation and helping to respond to an urgent local and global need for clean, renewable energy generation, at stable prices. So, we have representatives joining us from wind energy, solar, conservation and consumption management firms as well.

And because people and goods travel by other means these days than by clipper ships, we have transportation officials with us today, as well. They are here to pursue new and direct flight routes between Boston and commercial centers in China.

Meanwhile, we know that, since those early days of the Massachusetts China trade, much has changed in China, as well. Your own traditional emphasis on teaching and learning has spawned great universities like Tsinghua, where intellectual and scientific breakthroughs are also working their way from the lab bench to the bedside. A large and aging population places demands on your medical system, much like our own, and you, too, are working on ways to assure the comfort and freedom from suffering of your honored elders.

China has made significant public investment in large science parks like this one and sharply increased direct public investment in research and development - in the search, just like us, for cures.

Rapid development has brought both prosperity and challenges to companies and individuals alike. With a pace of economic development that few other countries on earth can match, your electricity demand is projected to increase by as much as 250% by 2030. And with the current heavy reliance on coal as a generation source, a thriving market in clean alternative energy is growing, spurred on by government commitment to generate 15% of your energy from renewable sources by 2020.

So, we have come to refresh and renew a 200-year-old relationship. We seek to build new partnerships on an old friendship. We want to learn how you are meeting the challenges you face for advances in education, healing and clean power. And we seek to share lessons we have learned and are still learning in these and in other fields.

Right now, Massachusetts and Chinese firms enjoy a strong business relationship. Nearly 2 Billion US dollars is traded between us today. Given the strength of the RMB relative to the Dollar, our common interests in science, technology and innovation, and the length of the trading relationship between us, I believe our commercial relationship can be even greater.

Intellectual and academic exchange between your universities and ours is already quite robust. For example, nearly half of the students in the MIT real estate development training program are Chinese and have been for years. UMass and Harvard already enjoy research and teaching relationships with Tsinghua University, and Dr. Mello has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tsinghua to conduct a series of exchanges among faculty and students. We want to encourage additional ways to share intellectually through joint educational programs.

In the life sciences, many Massachusetts research institutes and companies have already established operations in China, building on the strong life sciences cluster that exists right here as well. Genzyme and Novartis, Nypro and Vertex - all of which are represented here today in our mission - as well as others are partnering in the research and manufacture of new advances in healing. We encourage you to continue and to deepen this partnership.

And in clean energy, the opportunities are vast. Because in order for China to meet her ambitious alternative energy goals, you will have to leapfrog many conventional technologies and invent new and better ones. For example, China is projected to be the world's largest market for wind power equipment in just a few years. Well, you should know that, at her renewable energy research laboratory, UMass has considerable expertise in cutting edge turbine technology. We offer multiple opportunities for joint ventures, acquisition, licensing and other investment partnerships. We invite you to take advantage of them all.

And I am personally committed to helping to build on these and other business relationships - to advance our respective environmental interests, our mutual economic interests, and the future of healing and well being.

By my side are senior government officials, scientists, educators and business leaders from Massachusetts. Each has come because he or she understands and respects China's extraordinary accomplishments and potential. And all are interested in working with you on scientific research, educational arrangements, government-to-government programs and business transactions.

We see great opportunity in building anew upon the blend of China's economic dynamism and matchless historical perspective and Massachusetts' tradition of innovation and joyful engagement with the future. Common business and international ventures lead to common ground and in turn to a common future. In a world weary of war, scarred by so much suffering and struggle, and in search of a reason to hope, we have come in essence to make the world a little smaller, our circle of friends a little wider and the prospects for mutual prosperity a little brighter.

On behalf of the entire Massachusetts delegation, I thank the government officials and the leaders of the University and the science park and our hosts here very warm and generous hospitality. We are delighted by the wonders of modern China and look forward to building strong new relationships on the old friendship between yourselves and Massachusetts.

Thank you