

Significant ministerial visits have taken place in other fields as well, namely foreign affairs (Hon. Mitchell Sharp in 1972, Honourable Don Jamieson in 1978 and Honourable Mark MacGuigan in 1981), petroleum (Honourable Donald McDonald 1973), science and technology (Honourable Jeanne Sauvé 1973 and Honourable John Roberts, 1981), wheat (Honourable Otto Lang 1977), trade (Honourable Jack Horner 1979), agriculture (Honourable Eugene Whelan in 1980), sports (Honourable Gerald Regan in 1982), health (Honourable Monique Bégin in 1982), defence (Honourable Gilles Lamontagne in 1983) and Communications (Honourable Francis Fox 1983). Ministerial visits are part of an ongoing programme of developing cooperation with China and will continue in a number of fields. On the Chinese side, a number of ministers and vice ministers have visited Canada, including Mr. Huang Hua as Foreign Minister in 1977, the Minister of Foreign Trade Mr. Li Qiang in October 1979, Vice-Premier Bo Yibo in 1980 and Mr. Wu Xueqian, State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1983.

Dr. Norman Bethune

One important Canadian figure has formed a continuing link between Canada and China: From January 1938 to November 1939, Dr. Norman Bethune, provided important medical services to the Chinese Eighth Route Army (the precursor of today's People's Liberation Army) in the war with Japan. Dr. Bethune was a prominent thoracic surgeon in Canada and held radical views concerning the organization of medical services, judged by the standards of time. In 1936 he organized the Canadian Mobile Blood Transfusion Service in Spain during the Civil War. After a brief return to Canada he went to China where he died in 1939 after contracting blood poisoning while performing an operation.

Mao Tse-tung wrote "In Memory of Norman Bethune" after the doctor's death. This tribute became one of the three most commonly read articles in China during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960's. Consequently, Bethune has become one of the best-known non-Chinese historical figures in China today and Canada is now widely known there as the homeland of Norman Bethune. Dr. Bethune's birthplace in Gravenhurst, Ontario has been purchased and restored by the Federal Government. On August 30, 1976, a Vice Ministerial delegation from China attended the official opening of Bethune House as an historical site. In 1979 ceremonies were held in China and Canada to make the fortieth anniversary of the death of Norman Bethune. A Canadian delegation which included two of Dr. Bethune's nieces travelled to China as guests of the Chinese government to take part in the commemorative activities.