

INTRODUCTION

Until very recently, Canadians have tended to view the Republic of China on Taiwan as something of a historical anachronism significant only as a recurrent thorn in the side of our developing relationship with the People's Republic of China. This perception of Taiwan as a nuisance and a sideshow is changing quickly. Developments in Canada, Taiwan and mainland China now offer an opportunity and an imperative for Canadian contact with Taiwan to be expanded. The difficult policy problem is how to take advantage of these opportunities in an era of fiscal constraint and without risking other policy objectives with respect to the PRC.

For twenty-five years, trade and commerce have been the preponderant dimension of Canadian relations with Taiwan. The principal actors have operated in private, rather than governmental capacities. This stands in contrast to our relationship with the PRC which, at least since 1970, has been dominated by geo-political concerns and state agencies. With limited and careful support from the provincial and federal government, private initiative will, and should, continue to be the driving force in expanding connections with Taiwan.

The objective of this report is to outline the current state of academic and educational relations between Canada and Taiwan and to propose short and medium term steps for promoting these relations. The focus is post-secondary education and research. Three main areas are considered: faculty exchanges, research and conferences; study abroad, especially Taiwanese in Canada; and the promotion of Canadian studies at universities and research institutes in Taiwan.

There are five main reasons for promoting contact between public and private educational institutions in Canada and Taiwan.

- (1) It is in the interests of Canada to deepen and broaden our understanding of Taiwan and the Taiwanese understanding of Canada. The advantages are economic, intellectual, and social.
- (2) Our contact with Taiwan is likely to increase in future. This is so because of the dynamism of its economy, the increasing democratization of its political system, and outflows from Taiwan in the forms of trade, investment, tourism and emigration.
- (3) Our current links to Taiwan lack balance, focusing almost exclusively on trade and investment. As with most Asian countries, a more comprehensive and intensive relationship is necessary to achieving the long term expansion of commercial relations as well as other objectives.