

# Business leaders ask Canada to support Taiwan's bid to join trade pact

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Taiwanese-Canadian business leaders in Toronto are calling for the federal government to support Taiwan in its bid to join the Pacific Rim trade pact.

On Friday afternoon, the Taiwan Merchants Association of Toronto and the Toronto Chinese Traders Association held an event in Markham in support of Taiwan joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The invasion of [Ukraine](#) by Russia has prompted some to make comparisons to Taiwan's relationship with [China](#), and to [speculate](#) that the crisis in Ukraine could prompt similar actions by China toward Taiwan.

China claims Taiwan as part of its state, even though Taiwan is self-governing and a member of the World Trade Organization in its own right, and has engaged in military intimidation of the island state.

Both China and Taiwan [applied to join](#) the CPTPP in September; China has opposed Taiwan's bid. The pact includes Canada, Australia, Japan, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Jin-Ling Chen, director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Toronto, said the Taiwanese-Canadian business community has been advocating for Canada to support Taiwan's CPTPP bid since September. Taiwan is an export-oriented economy, she said, and a quarter of their total trade is with members of the CPTPP.

In 2020, Canada imported more than \$5 billion in products from Taiwan, and exported around \$1.7 billion to Taiwan. Taiwan is a big player in the semiconductor industry, making it an important trade partner for a wide variety of products including smartphones and cars. Meanwhile, Taiwan imports agricultural products, raw materials and cars from Canada, according to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office.

Canada's public support would significantly boost Taiwan's chances of joining the CPTPP, Chen said in an interview before the event.

"We know Canada ... is very supportive of Taiwan," she said.

Canada has not publicly supported either country's bid to join the pact, but in early January, International Trade Minister Mary Ng announced that Canada would seek a foreign investment protection agreement with Taiwan amid the country's ongoing tension with China. Canada has been trying to diversify its Indo-Pacific trade relations since the Meng Wanzhou-two Michaels affair.

The event Friday afternoon featured business leaders from multiple industries including banking, trade and construction. MP Melissa Lantsman also attended.

At the event, Chen said Taiwan's inclusion in the CPTPP could increase Canada's exports to Taiwan, especially in the agricultural and food products sector. Taiwan is determined to join the CPTPP, she said, and has begun to introduce new measures in line with CPTPP's commitments.

Timo Yu, one of the event co-ordinators and CEO of Wen Ho of Canada Ltd., said Taiwan's participation in the CPTPP would benefit not only Taiwan, but Canada as well, increasing trade opportunities and lowering import duties.

Fred Wang, president of H&W Development Corp., agreed.

Wang said he thinks the CPTPP would benefit Taiwanese-Canadian businesses, and the relationship between the two countries. The pact involves countries that have common values, he said, when it comes to democracy and human rights.

Experts have supported Canada's move to improve trade relations with Taiwan, but have also noted that if Canada outright supported Taiwan's bid to join the CPTPP, China might get angry. However, last fall, trade analysts said Canada should vocally oppose China's own application to join the CPTPP.