

Canadians would benefit from learning Chinese

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper talks with China's President Hu Jintao at the end of the APEC Summit in Singapore on Sunday.

**Photograph by: Michael Fiala, Reuters, Edmonton Journal**

Re: "Canada, China must work together for common benefit," The Journal, Nov. 16

It is all well and good to suggest that there must be dialogue between our countries.

The real dialogue begins when Canadians can make an honest effort to communicate with the Chinese in their own language.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper can make a huge difference by encouraging Canadian students to learn other languages over and above English and French.

Those provinces that haven't already done so should pass enabling legislation to make this possible during regular school hours for the benefit of future generations.

More educational jurisdictions should take a cue from Edmonton's Chinese(Mandarin) Program which has nearly 2000 students learning Mandarin in 12 public schools from kindergarten to Grade 12 in recent years.

The study and participation in cultural activities are an important part of the curriculum. These schools have been twinned for educational and cultural purposes with schools in China since 1991.

The establishment of Confucius Institutes in various Canadian cities has greatly enhanced the learning resources available for learning Mandarin, and improving our understanding of China by offering cultural activities to the public.

This is an Olympic-sized challenge ...do you believe?

Wei Wong, Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association, Awards & Scholarship Committee

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