

Canada – Japan
Inter-Parliamentary Group



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – Japon

Report of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

21st Bilateral Meeting of The Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group and the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

August 27 to 30, 2023

INTRODUCTION

From 27–30 August 2023, the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group (CAJP) hosted the 21st Bilateral Meeting with its Japanese counterpart – the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League (DFL) – in Ottawa, Canada.

The Canadian delegation was led by the CAJP's two Co-Chairs – Senator Stan Kutcher and Terry Sheehan, MP – and one of its two Vice-Chairs – Angelo Iacono, MP. The other delegates were Senator Pierrette Ringuette, Mona Fortier, PC, MP, Shelby Kramp-Neuman, MP, Marie-France Lalonde, MP and Julie Vignola, MP. The delegates were supported by David Chandonnet and Céline Ethier, association secretaries, and Brendan Naef, advisor to the CAJP. Staff from the Embassy of Canada in Japan were also present.

The Japanese delegation comprised DFL President ETO Seishiro, DFL Vice-President and Chief Secretary TSUCHIYA Shinako and DFL Permanent Chief Secretary GOTO Yuichi, as well as KOMURA Masahiro and HAMADA Satoshi, members of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, respectively. The delegation was supported by SASAKI Taro, executive assistant to TSUCHIYA Shinako, officials from Japan's National Diet, and representatives of the Embassy of Japan in Canada, including His Excellency YAMANOUCHI Kanji.

OFFICIAL BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS

A. Opening remarks

Senator Kutcher, Terry Sheehan and ETO Seishiro launched the consultations by providing opening remarks and welcoming the resumption of in-person bilateral meetings.

B. Collaboration on peace, security and trade in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond

KOMURA Masahiro emphasized that, with almost one-half of the global population and a number of strong economies, the Indo-Pacific region has a range of notable opportunities; however, there are also substantial risks in the region due to the presence of major military powers. Outlining Japan's strategic initiative – Free and Open Indo-Pacific – to engage in the region under the core principles of defending freedom and the rule of law, KOMURA Masahiro welcomed Canada's support for this initiative through the Canada–Japan Action Plan. As well, KOMURA Masahiro emphasized the significant risks posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), particularly its challenges to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, and stressed the importance of constructive engagement with the PRC to address these challenges. Finally, concerning the accession of other jurisdictions to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, KOMURA Masahiro characterized the negotiations with the United Kingdom as an important step in the formation of a free and fair economic order in the Indo-Pacific region.

Agreeing that the Indo-Pacific region has both opportunities and challenges, Marie-France Lalonde referenced Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and commented that Canada aims to reinforce its military presence in the region to promote peace and security,

including through participating in naval exercises with allies. Moreover, Marie-France Lalonde drew attention to the strategy's focus on expanding trade ties in the region, including through negotiations for trade agreements, and noted that Japan is Canada's fourth-largest trading partner in the region. Finally, Marie-France Lalonde underscored an information-sharing agreement between Canada and Japan designed to enhance military communication, and highlighted the sanctions against Russia that the two countries have taken with other G7 members because of the invasion of Ukraine.

C. Science and technology policy, and scientific and academic cooperation

Regarding ways in which to strengthen cooperation in the areas of science and technology, GOTO Yuichi drew a link to delegates' discussions about peace and security by highlighting the need for improved research and development collaboration among Japan, Canada and the United States regarding semiconductors in an effort to reduce dependence on the PRC. As well, GOTO Yuichi pointed out the opportunities and challenges relating to artificial intelligence (AI), and underlined both initiatives in Japan, including the Hiroshima AI Process to establish international rules for generative AI, and Canada's leadership through ventures like the Global Partnership on AI.

Senator Kutcher stated that science and technology are essential for building the economies of tomorrow, and emphasized the need to increase academic cooperation between Canada and Japan. Drawing attention to the two countries' 1986 Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, and citing the 2019 establishment of the National Research Council of Canada's office in Tokyo, Senator Kutcher added that the bilateral scientific relationship is very much alive. Finally, Senator Kutcher stressed the need to increase academic and scientific exchanges, including at the post-graduate level and with early-career researchers.

D. Comparative approaches to supporting families

Noting that Japan is facing a major demographic challenge due to its rapidly aging population and one of the world's lowest fertility rates, HAMADA Satoshi identified a number of factors contributing to this challenge, including high housing costs, longer periods of time spent pursuing education and inadequate childcare. HAMADA Satoshi said that Japan's child allowance is having a limited effect on birth rates but is a major financial burden for the country, and suggested that Japan's government should instead support couples who are contemplating parenthood.

Angelo Iacono acknowledged that, because education and health are primarily provincial responsibilities in Canada, many of the policies that support children and parents are provincial, although the Government of Canada provides transfer payments to the provinces and territories to fund initiatives in this area. In particular, Angelo Iacono drew attention to the Canada Child Benefit, maternity and parental benefits, and the Government's agreements with the provinces and territories regarding early learning and childcare that focus on reducing daily costs, increasing the number of affordable spaces and expanding the number of qualified educators.

E. Conclusions

Senator Kutcher, Terry Sheehan and ETO Seishiro provided closing remarks, and noted delegates' thoughtful interventions during the consultations. Senator Kutcher underscored that the bilateral meeting helped to identify the numerous existing and potential areas of cooperation between Canada and Japan. Terry Sheehan highlighted that many of the discussions during the 21st Bilateral Meeting built upon those that had occurred during previous meetings between the two countries' legislators. ETO Seishiro said that the DFL is looking forward to hosting a Canadian delegation in Japan for the next bilateral meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Stan Kutcher, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Terry Sheehan, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	21 st Bilateral Meeting of the CAJP and the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League
DESTINATION	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
DATES	From August 27 to 30, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Stan Kutcher Hon. Pierrette Ringuette Terry Sheehan Angelo Iacono
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Mona Fortier P.C. Shelby Kramp-Neuman Marie-France Lalonde Julie Vignola
STAFF	David Chandonnet Céline Ethier Brendan Naef
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 5,794.37
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 6,198.39
PER DIEMS	\$ 0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 194.11
TOTAL	\$ 12,186.87