

Canada - Japan
Inter-Parliamentary Group



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada - Japon

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Sixteenth Annual Bilateral Meeting with the Japan-
Canada Diet Friendship League**

Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Tokyo and Hokkaido, Japan

July 16 – 23, 2008

Report

On the Sixteenth Annual Bilateral Meeting with the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League

The delegation was comprised of the following people:

Hon. Bryon Wilfert, P.C., M.P., Co-Chair of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group, Leader of the delegation, Hon. Fernand Robichaud, Senator, Hon. Sue Barnes, P.C., M.P., Mr. Dennis Bevington, M.P., Mr. Christian Ouellet, M.P., Mr. Mike Wallace, M.P., Mr. Paul Cardegna, Executive Secretary

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Strengthen the bonds of friendship between Canadian and Japanese parliamentarians and promote the bilateral relationship;
- Exchange views between Japanese and Canadian parliamentarians on issues of mutual interest;
- Promote bilateral trade and commercial investment between the two countries in the areas of energy, environment, technology and forestry;
- Promote cultural/educational/tourism exchanges;
- Promote cooperation in initiatives on such subjects as international security, peace-keeping and climate change

The discussions during the 16th Annual meeting were divided into four broad subject areas, which were reflected in the agenda which were as follows:

- Canada-Japan Bilateral Relations
- Canada-Japan Trade Relations and Environmental Issues
 - Economic Framework
 - Forestry Products and Exports
- Social Security
- International Security
 - Peacekeeping
 - Afghanistan

Canada-Japan Bilateral Relations:

Both Canadian and Japanese parliamentarians noted that 2008 was an important year as it marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Canada. Also, after Japan hosted the G-8 summit in Hokkaido in July, Prime Minister Stephen Harper undertook official meetings with Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. Canadian parliamentarians related how the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group organized a one-day symposium on Canada-Japan bilateral relations which took place on May 14, 2008 on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Finally, it was felt that the visit of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito to Canada in 2009 would significantly increase and promote bilateral relations.

All of the participants reaffirmed that regular, annual exchanges between parliamentarians were beneficial at promoting friendship, increased trade and cultural exchanges, as well as improved bilateral relations and greater cultural understanding. It was noted that there are over 75 official sister-city relationships between Japanese and Canadian cities. Increased cooperation was also identified as an excellent way for both countries to benefit from the complimentary economic relationship which they already enjoy. It was felt that Canada's natural resource abundance and Japan's significant manufacturing enterprises should be further integrated in response to anticipated global economic difficulties and higher fuel prices.

Canada-Japan Trade Relations: Forestry Products and Exports

Canadian parliamentarians explained that the Canadian forestry industry was trying to create new international markets for lumber products due to the decrease in demand in the U.S.A. They admired the Japanese "post and beam" construction technique and pre-fabricated kits for home construction and suggested that Canadian lumber products could be developed to satisfy the demand for these products in Japan. Furthermore, they reiterated that Canada follows internationally-approved forestry techniques which ensure a secure, long-term supply of superior wood products at lower prices. The Japanese admitted that most of the wood used in Japan was imported as it was no longer cost effective to harvest Japanese forests for lumber. The Japanese believed that they would benefit from adherence to international standards in order to develop sustainable forests which would lead to efficient and effective harvesting and increase Japan's natural resource self-sufficiency.

Canada-Japan Trade Relations: Economic Framework

Eager to expand upon the 2005 Economic Framework which identified 15 issues for negotiation between Japan and Canada, the Canadian parliamentarians asked their counterparts from Japan about the possibility of the two countries negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA). The Canadians believe that an FTA would mutually benefit both countries by increasing two-way investment as well as providing a secure source of raw materials, such as oil and agricultural products, as well as foreign investment into Japan. They also noted that Japan has in recent years, signed numerous FTAs with countries such as Switzerland, the Philippines, Mexico and others.

The Japanese admitted that the policy of the Japanese government is to sign FTAs with as many countries as possible, but that the main impediment to a Japan-Canada FTA

is the inclusion of agricultural products. Japan is wary of relying too heavily on foreign imports of food or energy and strives to achieve a high level of self-sufficiency in order to avoid being subject to the policies of a foreign country. Japan seeks to develop stable sources of water, food and energy and to develop domestic industries as much as possible. The Japanese parliamentarians explained that an FTA with Canada would allow for cheaper Canadian agricultural and fisheries products to undercut Japanese enterprises and cause massive layoffs to Japanese farmers and fishermen. This was a particularly important issue in the light recent increases in the price of oil which has harmed Japanese economic development.

Environmental Issues:

Parliamentarians on both sides agreed that recent changes in weather patterns are showing the damaging effects of climate change. Moreover, the increase of greenhouse gases is a global problem that affects food and energy supplies and should continue to be discussed at the international level. Both countries noted that the principle challenge is to ensure continued, sustainable economic development while protecting the environment. The Japanese were quite impressed with Canada's ability to harvest its abundant natural resources without destroying natural habitats, but the Canadians explained that this balance was difficult to maintain in light of the recent increase in demand for Canadian petroleum products.

Both sides expressed concern about the recent increase in the amount of grain being exported to the USA to be used in the creation of bio fuels. This practice has inadvertently increased food prices by decreasing the available supply of grain world-wide. The Canadians noted that their government is attempting to attain a minimum level of 5% bio fuel, but that the subject is still under debate. In addition, Japanese parliamentarians believed that the fishing industry has to be made sustainable to avoid fish stocks being depleted.

Social Security:

Canadian Parliamentarians described the Canadian system of social security to their Japanese counterparts. While noting that Canadian society is ageing, the Canadians were quick to point out that the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) is actuarially sound as contributions into the fund were increased by 65% from 1997 to 2003. This, coupled with liberalized investment regulations, led to a general increase to the fund's value and its ability to pay out future retirees' pension benefits. In addition, the Canadians explained other benefits which comprise Canada's social safety net, such as the Old Age Security benefit, Employment Insurance payments, survivor and death benefits.

The Japanese parliamentarians explained that Japan's population is ageing at a much faster rate than Canada's. The percentage of the population in Canada that is older than 65 years is currently 18%, whereas in Japan it is 25%. Also, while the birthrate in Japan is the same as in Canada, the median age of death is considerably higher in Japan. This has placed a considerable burden on the pension and health care systems and has significantly increased Japan's debt.

International Security:

Peacekeeping:

The Canadian Parliamentarians noted that Japan is attempting to secure a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations. While Canada supports this initiative, the Canadians suggested that Japan needs to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy in order to play a larger role in UN affairs and peacekeeping initiatives. To this end, the Canadians suggested that Japan should amend its constitution to allow its military to operate in combat roles. The Canadians also suggested that both countries could benefit from increased cooperation in peacekeeping operations. In order to facilitate this, the Canadians suggested that the Japanese government establish a military attaché at the Japanese Embassy in Ottawa, or accredit one of the military attachés at the Japanese Embassy in Washington for Canada.

The Japanese admitted that their constitution did limit the possible operations that Japan could undertake, but cautioned that amending their constitution was a very complex issue. They noted that Japan passed a special law which allowed Japanese ships to continue refuelling allied ships in the Indian Ocean for one year, but expressed frustration with the fact that the law would have to be passed again each year to allow these operations to continue.

Afghanistan:

Canada also suggested that if an amendment to the Japanese constitution cannot be passed, Japan could still take a larger role in the war in Afghanistan, such as by setting up Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) or assisting in development assistance and reconstruction initiatives. The Japanese noted that Japanese non-governmental organizations (NGO) are very active in Afghanistan, but that soldiers are prohibited from being there due to the constitution. They also reminded the Canadians that Canada's involvement in Afghanistan is under the auspices of a North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation. Unfortunately, Japan can only participate in United Nations (UN) operations since it is not a member of NATO. They also explained that Japan is active in sending advisors to other locations such as Sudan in order to render assistance while still conforming to their constitution.

Miscellaneous:

During the Bilateral meeting the Canadian delegates brought up the contentious issue of the abduction of children from divorced Canadian-Japanese couples. Japan is not a signatory of the 1980 Hague Convention on Human Rights and, therefore, does not respect the custody rulings of Canadian courts concerning access to children of these couples. The Canadian delegates strongly urged the Japanese to sign the Hague Convention.

Lunch hosted by Mr. Takahiro Yokomichi, Vice-Speaker, Lower House and Vice-President of the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League

The Canadian delegation had the honour of being hosted to lunch by Mr. Takahiro Yokomichi, Vice Lower House Speaker and Vice-President of the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League. Mr. Yokomichi explained how happy he was that the delegation would visit Hokkaido during their time in Japan, as he had been Governor of Hokkaido for 12 years. He explained that Hokkaido had a sister relationship with Alberta. The other Japanese participants identified 2008 as an important year as it marked the 80th

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Canada and that Japan had hosted the G-8 summit, after which Prime Minister Stephen Harper had undertaken official meetings with Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. Both sides applauded the recent announcement of the state visit of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito to Canada in 2009.

During the lunch the delegates discussed the effects of climate change and the need to improve energy efficiency by developing alternative energy sources such as solar, wind and geo-thermal power. Both sides agreed that more effort has to be made to change public opinion about energy use and conservation. The Japanese government recently introduced a policy entitled "Cool Biz" which is designed to raise awareness of energy usage amongst consumers and promote conservation. The Japanese also noted that the private sector has begun working with governments in order to develop more energy-efficient products. The Canadians stated that the increased cost of oil would affect economic development as well as promote increased energy use awareness.

Courtesy call on Mr. Fumino Ueda, Mayor of Sapporo City

The Canadian delegation had the honour of making a courtesy call on Mr. Fumino Ueda, Mayor of Sapporo City. Mayor Ueda explained to the Canadians how Sapporo is the 5th largest city in Japan and its primary industries are fishing, agriculture and forestry. Domestic tourism is also a 2nd level industry and is vital to the economic health of Sapporo. The Mayor also noted that he was currently the President of the World Winter Cities Association and had opportunities to liaise with Canadian cities who face similar issues such as snow removal (Sapporo's annual average snowfall is roughly 6 metres). Finally, the Mayor explained how Sapporo recently established a city-wide jazz festival and sent a student band to Montreal to perform during the Montreal International Jazz Festival.

Miscellaneous

During their visit to Japan, the Canadian delegation attended a reception hosted by Vice Hokkaido Governor, Mr. Kunihiko Yamamoto and visited the Shiretoko UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Kushiro Marshland, the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi Porotokotan and the Volcano Science Museum in Lake Toya.

Conclusion

The 16th Bilateral consultations between Japanese and Canadian parliamentarians were vigorous, amiable and spirited. Both sides worked hard to strengthen the relationship that exists between both countries and focussed on common values and ideals. The discussions were positive and constructive and allowed both sides to learn about the perspective of their counterparts. The participants look forward to continuing these discussions during the 17th Bilateral consultations which will take place in 2009 when Japanese parliamentarians visit Canada.

A summary of the expenditures incurred for this activity is also appended.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Marie-P Poulin, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary
Group

Hon. Bryon Wilfert, P.C., M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary
Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Sixteenth Annual Bilateral Meeting with the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League
DESTINATION	Tokyo and Hokkaido, Japan
DATES	July 16 – 23, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Fernand Robichaud, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Sue Barnes, C.P., M.P., Mr. Dennis Bevington, M.P., Mr. Christian Ouellet, M.P., Mr. Mike Wallace, M.P., Hon. Bryon Wilfert, C.P., M.P.
STAFF	M. Paul Cardegna, Secretary of the delegation
TRANSPORTATION	\$54, 696.05
ACCOMMODATION	\$24, 972. 76
HOSPITALITY	\$279. 52
PER DIEMS	\$2, 963.29
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1, 269. 40
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$69.62
TOTAL	\$84, 350. 64

Appendix A

List of parliamentarians from the House of Counselors and the House of Representatives of the Diet of Japan met by the delegation:

Ms. Akiko Kamei, Member of the House of Councillors

Mr. Hisaoki Kamei, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Shuichi Kato, Member of the House of Councillors

Mr. Seigo Kitamura, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Takeshi Maeda, Member of the House of Councillors

Mr. Asahiko Mihara, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Takashi Mitsubayashi, Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Mayumi Moriyama, Vice-President, Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Yoshitaka Murata, Secretary, Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Hiroshi Nakai, Standing Secretary, Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Akihiro Ohata, Chief Secretary, Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Shinako Tsuchiya, Secretary General of the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Isamu Ueda, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Tamisuke Watanuki, President, Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League, Member of the House of Representatives

Mr. Taimei Yamaguchi, Member of the House of Representatives