

## On rebuilding Japan through spirit and resolve



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**T**radition. Innovation. These are two very powerful words. One refers to the actions and beliefs of the past that are upheld to the present day. The other looks towards the future, a concept that thrives on new ideas and a desire — for the most part — to make life better. Both tradition and innovation are driven by a relentless “human spirit” and, in my humble opinion, there is no better place than Japan to witness such a strong spirit of a people who have long strived for harmonious balance between the two seemingly contrasting principles.

By the time this article is published, several months will have passed since a powerful earthquake and tsunami struck off the coast of northeastern Japan. Today, my country faces unprecedented challenges as it recovers from the disaster and rebuilds. Prime Minister Naoto Kan referred to the situation as the biggest crisis Japan has faced since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, the spirit and resolve of the Japanese people — which fuelled the incredible post-war economic growth of the country — is once again put to the test.

The earthquake and tsunami have shown us the incredible power of Mother Nature, and the need to strike a balance between nature and mankind. Now, more than ever before, Japan must rely on its tradition of hard work and dedication and access the innovation of its people to move forward.

### The Great East Japan Earthquake

On March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, the highest ever observed in my country. A tectonic plate shift 500 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide led to powerful and

violent tsunamis which created waves as high as 40 metres; their effects were further amplified by a saw-tooth coastline adjacent to steep mountains with countless villages and

municipal offices. We swallow with difficulty the fact that these villages and offices no longer exist. This has made it extremely challenging to assess the damage, and to receive and host rescue and assistance teams from our friends and allies.

In addition to the numerous lives lost, and the many more who have no shelter, the disaster also severely damaged a nuclear power plant in the affected area. The reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, which supplied a significant amount of energy for the region and the country, were shut down automatically after the earthquake, but the emergency generators used to cool the heat of the fuel were no match for the 20-metre-high waves of

the ensuing tsunami. The Japanese government, with the assistance of nuclear energy experts from within and outside of Japan, is making progress to ensure a safe and secure shutdown of the plant.

The government of Canada has been tremendously supportive as Japan deals with the various aspects of recovery. Displaced residents of the affected regions are kept warm with Canadian thermal blankets, and workers at the nuclear plant are now equipped with dosimeters and portable radiation survey meters. On April 1, 2011, Canadian Ambassador Jonathan Fried visited the affected region and showed his unwavering support and encouragement for my country. Furthermore, countless Canadians have donated millions of dollars, through the Canadian Red Cross as well as various fundraising events across the country, to assist the disaster relief efforts. This kind of support, displayed by countries throughout the world, has continued to bolster our efforts to recover and rebuild.

The Japanese government has established a framework for reconstruction plans based on three key principles: first, to create a regional society that is highly



A fishing boat sits bizarrely on its side, swept ashore during the massive tsunami that struck this Japanese fishing port. The town was devastated by the 9.0-magnitude earthquake that triggered the tsunami.

resistant to natural disasters; second, to establish a social system that allows people to live in harmony with the global environment; and third, to build a compassionate society that cares about people, in particular, the vulnerable.

#### Rebuilding the affected areas

Almost immediately following the earthquake and tsunami, emergency restoration measures were enacted to restore critical transportation arteries throughout the affected region. According to the Japanese ministry of economy, trade, and industry (METI), major expressways have been restored, the Shinkansen (bullet train) route has resumed operations, and quays of all major ports in the Pacific Coast have been re-opened. Another significant development was the immediate and rapid reconstruction efforts of the Sendai Airport, which was engulfed by the tsunami. On April 13, 2011, the airport welcomed its first commercial flight landing on its runway since the disaster. Incidentally, near the same runway, a local resident used debris from the disaster to write "arigato" (thank you) in large capital letters to express his gratitude to departing foreign military personnel who provided assistance in the region. These were very moving and symbolic occurrences indeed.

This being said, there is a lot of work left to be done. If estimates such as the one provided by Standard & Poor's are true, the total reconstruction costs could range anywhere from US\$245 billion to US\$612 billion. While it is still too difficult to fully assess the total costs of the destruction, we understand the significant role the Japanese government must play in the reconstruction efforts. To this end, the government recently approved \$48.8 billion for the first phase of the supplementary plan, focusing on restoration work, such as clearing the rubble, repairing roads and ports, restoring farmland, and building temporary housing for the displaced survivors.

As Prime Minister Kan pointed out, however, it is not enough to simply restore things to the way they were before. The threat of future earthquakes and tsunamis must be considered into the redesign and reconstruction of the affected region. To address this perspective, the government has appointed a reconstruction council, led by Dr. Makoto Iokibe, president of the National Defense Academy of Japan and, incidentally, a survivor of a devastating earthquake that hit the Kobe region in 1995.



Ambassador Ishiwaka writes that Canada showed its support when Prime Minister Stephen Harper went to the embassy to sign the book of condolence. The Canadian government donated blankets and equipment, while Canadians donated millions of dollars.

Throughout the reconstruction process, the government will be relying on invaluable partners throughout the world. Following a visit to the affected region, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto announced the establishment of a public-private partnership as part of the reconstruction efforts. While specific details of this plan have yet to be announced, this partnership will undoubtedly encourage cooperation between Japanese and American businesses, think-tanks and NGOs under the broad leadership of the Japanese government.

According to *The Globe and Mail*, many Canadian companies have also taken the initiative to assist with the reconstruction efforts. Several key forestry companies — mostly lumber producers from British Columbia — have joined forces to focus initially on building temporary shelters, and then participate fully in the rebuilding efforts. This is most encouraging, particularly because it is well-known in Japan that Canadian lumber is high-quality and earthquake-resistant.

Realizing the lessons learned and collaborating with our international partners, I am fully confident that the reconstruction efforts will build stronger and safer communities for generations to come.

#### Future of Japan energy use

The crisis at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant immediately following the earthquake and tsunami once again reminded Japan and the international community of the harsh and unfortunate reality that Japan lacks significant sources of fossil energy. In 2011, prior to the disaster, nuclear power supplied upwards of 30 percent of total energy production in Japan.

Our government — and presumably the global community-at-large — will need to examine the lessons learned from this situation and advance toward more robust nuclear safety. During his visit to Japan on March 31, 2011, French President Nicolas Sarkozy acknowledged a need for further discussion on this matter during a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Kan.

Furthermore, the government has acknowledged a need to re-assess the current energy policy and to move in the direction of promoting natural and renewable energy including wind, solar, and biomass energy. Another critical aspect of Japan's energy supply is conservation, in which Japan is considered a global leader. This type of energy policy will not only be better for the environment, but with the power of innovation, it will also fuel growth in the "green economy."



U.S. NAVY PHOTO

An SH-60B helicopter flies over the city of Sendai to deliver more than 680 kilograms of food to survivors of the earthquake and tsunami. The citizens of Ebina City, Japan, donated the food.

#### Continuing Japan's economic recovery

The international community and members of the foreign media were most surprised with the reaction of the Japanese people following the earthquake: true calmness. The country's recovery relies on the resilient and strong spirit of the Japanese people, 120 million strong, who are dedicated to their task at hand without a sense of panic or sensationalism.

While the earthquake has certainly affected economic activity in Japan, all major industries were quick to respond to any disruption in supply and production. Companies that had damaged supply factories are using other factories to meet demand. According to METI, most automobile manufacturers have resumed production, while some others are accelerating their production schedule and restoration plans.

Of the total manufacturing industry, more than 60 percent have finished restoration, and less than 30 percent will finish restoration within one to three months. In addition, 80 percent of the processing industry and more than 60 percent of the materials industry have secured alternative supplies of raw materials, components, and parts.

In addition, the Japanese government has partnered with local authorities to establish a support framework to help

small- to medium-sized businesses severely affected by the earthquake or nuclear power plant situation. Consisting of interest-free loans and a new credit guarantee program, this support framework will help bring peace of mind to business owners and their stakeholders through this difficult period.

As we move forward and rebuild, Japan must continue to focus on its overall economic recovery. Many readers will know the term "lost decade" used to describe the economic downturn that Japan faced during the 1990s. Driving this downward trend was the fact that heavy and bulk industries lost their competitive edge. However, this period also saw the creation of many new industries which grew rapidly. Most notably, mobile telecommunications grew 60 percent per year; the development of liquid crystal display, 35 percent; fibre-optics, 20 percent; personal computers, 18 percent, and the list goes on.

When we look even closer at individual companies, we are able to see innovation in action during this lost decade. For example, Japan observed a resurrection of light industry companies such as textile-makers who transformed themselves to become high-tech companies. This sense of innovation and adaptability will push Japan towards positive economic growth.

The "lost decade," however, has had

no impact on the incredible economic partnership between Japan and Canada. Today, more than 735 Japanese-based companies are investing in Canada. Japanese automakers produce more than 740,000 cars yearly which in turn has created more than 65,000 jobs. In fact, the total export value of these vehicles amounts to more than \$12 billion annually.

This invaluable partnership can be witnessed on many different levels. On Jan. 27, 2011, a Japanese-built unmanned cargo spacecraft successfully docked with the International Space Station with the assistance of the Canadian-build CANADARM 2 in space. This event truly symbolizes the potential of our economic and technological partnership.

In February of this year, both Japan and Canada agreed to launch a joint study on an economic partnership agreement. The two parties have had two meetings and more are expected to discuss the intricacies of such an agreement. Japan and Canada will also launch the first sub-cabinet-level dialogue on political, peace, and security cooperation in August. Both initiatives will be invaluable pillars in mobilizing our bilateral relations to the next phase of collaboration.

As ambassador, I am pleased to see our country advance with Canada on these fronts, promoting free trade in accordance


with the World Trade Organization and establishing a prime example of two free market and open economies and societies working hand-in-hand. My humble belief is that this is made possible by the fact that both countries have a long history of participatory democracy, freedom of speech and expression and legal predictability; the latter which I believe is a crucial element for the success of our multi-faceted relationship.

#### Remembrance

Throughout its history, Japan has faced many challenges. Some were called insurmountable. Others were destined to seal our fate as a nation. In the end, we rose to the challenge and the Japanese spirit fought back. Today, amid the scenes of destruction and devastation, I know in my heart that the people of my country will move forward, recover from this hardship, and rebuild once again to become the vibrant economic and cultural centre of Asia. This is part of who we are. This is our tradition.

However, as we rebuild, we must never forget the lives lost and most vulnerable generations affected by this tragic disaster. For the children who have lost their homes — and in many cases, those who have lost their parents — it is my personal appeal for our government and all of our friends and neighbours to offer them support so that they become contributing members of our global society. Perhaps it will be these children who will grow up and contribute to Japan's innovative efforts to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Furthermore, we must never forget our friends who came to us during this time of need. The words, thoughts, and prayers of all Canadians have created hope and strength to the people of Japan. The generosity of those who gave through the Canadian Red Cross will help the survivors and victims begin a new life. And the support and assistance offered by Canada — symbolized by the words of encouragement offered by Gov. Gen. David Johnston and Prime Minister Stephen Harper in signing our condolence book at the Japanese Embassy — will strengthen the close friendship shared between our two countries.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that *Japan: Tradition. Innovation.* is the title of this year's major exhibition held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec. It runs until Oct. 10 and I invite all readers to visit and see for yourself the wonders of the past, present, and future as Japan begins a new chapter in its history. 

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