

Mr. Peter S. Milson, President of Hampton Gray V.C. Chapter of the Canadian Naval Air Group;  
Mr. Stephen Quick, Director General of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum;  
Mrs. Jane Underwood and honoured family members of Lt. Gray;  
Honourable veterans,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank you for your warm and kind invitation for me to be with you this evening. I understand that Hampton Gray V.C. is one of the leading active chapters of the Canadian Naval Air Group, and I would like to commend all of you for being a part of an event dedicated to the people of Onagawa in Japan.

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, the last Canadian to be awarded the Victoria Cross, was one of the many brave Canadian soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War. But his legacy is much more than his valiant efforts in battle. He has brought Canada and Japan closer together. This is symbolized by the "Gray Memorial" which stands strong in Onagawa Bay as a memorial dedicated to a foreign soldier on Japanese soil.

Tonight, I am deeply touched by your warm support and strong solidarity to the people of Onagawa.

As all of you know, Japan was struck by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake on March 11<sup>th</sup> of this year, the highest ever observed in my country. A tectonic plate shift of 500 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide led to powerful and violent tsunamis which created waves as high as 40 meters; their effects further amplified by a saw-tooth coastline adjacent to steep mountains with countless villages and municipal offices.

In fact, though my country has been hit by large tsunamis throughout our history, we need to go back to the year 869 when a similarly devastating tsunami hit the archipelago.

According to the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, GPS readings from 1,240 locations across Japan indicated that, after the earthquake of March 11, the country laterally moved eastward by as much as 5.3 meters, and the tectonic movement physically lowered elevations in some coastal communities by as much as 1.2 meters.

As of October 26th, a total of more than 15,800 people were confirmed dead and another 3,700 missing. A further 5,900 suffered injuries.

The town of Onagawa was heavily damaged by this disaster. The tsunami reached over 14 metres in height, which led to a total of 320 hectares of land immersed in water. Over 4000 buildings were completely destroyed. One piece of good news is that the Onagawa

Nuclear Power Plant stopped its operations automatically as programmed when the earthquake occurred and it remains secure.

In Onagawa, there were 575 deaths, and 380 still missing. At the peak of the aftermath of the disaster, there were 23 evacuation sites with 5720 evacuees.

Today, the town of Onagawa is making a slow but steady move forward to reconstruct the town and build safe and secure communities. While all the facilities in the Onagawa fishery harbour were heavily damaged, it resumed operations this month. In addition, the Onagawa fish market re-opened in July. This has given courage to the fishermen as they are struggling to go back out to the ocean.

Reconstruction and recovery efforts can be seen throughout the affected region, with many thanks to the generosity and support offered by our friends throughout the world such as Canada.

The town of Onagawa received messages of sympathy and support and donations from the people of Nelson, British Columbia, the birthplace of Lieutenant Gray. Acts like these, in addition to the countless fundraising events held across the country, have given something tremendously invaluable to the people of Japan.

Certainly, money raised through these events are very important for the affected people, but more so is the heart behind each cent donated.

Ladies and gentlemen, indeed, you have given them HOPE.

For everything that you have done to offer support to the Japanese people, allow me to say “thank you.”

I would like to thank the Hampton Gray VC Chapter of the Canadian Naval Air Group once again for giving me this wonderful occasion to say “thank you,” and I wish you much success in the future.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Stephen Quick, Director General of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum for his kind hospitality tonight, and also for extending this hospitality to the joint events that we co-hosted such as the visit in September by Dr. Mamoru Mohri, Japan’s first astronaut, who gave a lecture to Canadian children about space. The Museum also graciously hosted a fundraising concert in June dedicated to the relief efforts in Japan, which featured several young Japanese-Canadian musicians.

Reiterating my appreciation, I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you a pleasant evening.