

Ambassador's Farewell Speech

The Honourable Andrew Scheer,
The Honourable Gerry Ritz,
The Honourable Ed Fast,
The Honourable David Tkachuk,
The Honourable Mike Wallace,
Members of Parliament
Your Excellencies,
Members of the diplomatic community,
Distinguished guests:

Mon épouse Masako et moi, nous souhaiterions vous remercier infiniment d'être venus ce soir. Nous sommes très heureux et très honorés de vous accueillir ici au coeur d'Ottawa à l'occasion de notre départ définitif. Je suis très touché de la présence de nombreux amis que nous nous sommes faits depuis notre arrivée à Ottawa. Nous sommes très reconnaissants de l'occasion qui se présente à nous pour vous dire 'au revoir' avant notre départ au début d'avril prochain.

It has been just a little more than two and a half years since I arrived in Canada to take up my post in August of 2010. During that time, I have had the opportunity to travel to all corners of this vast and beautiful country, from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia to Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. Everywhere I have visited, I have been greeted by warm and hospitable people. It has been my great privilege to experience the tremendous diversity and vitality that define this wonderful country.

Le 11 mars 2011, environ six mois après le début de ma mission en tant qu'Ambassadeur du Japon au Canada, un séisme suivi d'un tsunami a dévasté une grande partie du Nord-Est du Japon. Dès les premiers instants après le catastrophe, j'ai reçu des messages de soutien adressés par le Gouverneur général David Johnston, l'ancienne Gouverneure générale Michaëlle Jean, le Premier ministre Stephen Harper, de plusieurs membres du cabinet, des députés fédéraux, et de plusieurs chefs gouvernementaux provinciaux et municipaux. Il y a un an au cours de la visite officielle au Japon, le Premier ministre Stephen Harper, le Ministre des Affaires étrangères John Baird, le Ministre du Commerce international Ed Fast, le Ministre de l'Agriculture Gerry Ritz, et la Ministre de la Coopération internationale d'alors Beverley Oda ont visité

les régions sinistrées pour encourager les habitants qui s'efforcent de reconstruire leurs vies. D'autres ministres et des membres du Parlement se sont aussi rendu à la région de Tohoku. Je vous en remercie profondément.

The Canadian government proved to be a stalwart and reliable friend throughout the most difficult of times. In addition to immediately contributing much-needed materials to relief efforts, it consistently made decisions related to the crisis in a calm and sensible manner. Its steady and unwavering support throughout the crisis was greatly appreciated.

Support was not, however, limited to official Canada. During the difficult days that followed the disaster, Canadians from all walks of life reached out to those afflicted and demonstrated compassion and solidarity that moved me greatly. Wherever I went, I was overwhelmed by the kindness and caring of the Canadian people.

The terrible tragedy that hit Japan just over two years ago forced us to consider very carefully the precarious balance that exists between the forces of Mother Nature and mankind. It also, however, served to

remind us of the compassion and solidarity that exists between nations in the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been my good fortune that my time here in Ottawa has coincided with such an exciting period of development in Canada-Japan bilateral relations.

During an official visit to Japan in March of 2012, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda launched negotiations toward a Japan-Canada Economic Partnership Agreement. Canada and Japan already enjoy one of the most prosperous, mutually beneficial bilateral economic relations in the world and the successful completion of an EPA will pave the way for substantial economic gains to both countries.

There have been significant advancements in the area of peace and security. The initial Political, Peace and Security Sub-cabinet “2+2” Dialogue between Japanese and Canadian foreign affairs and defence authorities was held in August 2011 in Tokyo. These meetings will

continue on a regular basis. As well, agreement was reached last year to further negotiations towards an Acquisition and Cross-Services Agreement which will expedite the exchange of goods and services between the Canadian Forces and the Japan Self-Defense Force.

Japan and Canada are familiar and comfortable international partners. They have in common the institutions and values that are inherent in parliamentary democracies. Both are forward-looking and ideally suited to work together to make the world a better place.

Trying to build a better future is a commitment we make to our children and our grandchildren. I have always believed that one of the best ways to make good on this commitment is to strenuously support the development of science and technology. As such, I am happy to note that under the Canada/Japan Agreement on Science and Technology much has already been accomplished and possibilities for the future seem limitless. Cooperative partnerships are flourishing, particularly in fields such as the life sciences, nanotechnology, aerospace technology, and the environment and energy.

I would like to thank parliamentarians from both Canada and Japan for their pro-active efforts to further strengthen the friendship between our two countries. Toutefois, si vous le voulez bien, je voudrais noter que

les politiques et les diplomates ne sont pas seuls à déployer ces efforts d'approfondissement des amitiés. Plutôt, je vois sans cesse croissantes l'importance des relations entre peuples, et celle des relations entre chaque individu. La mobilité dynamique des jeunes à travers le programme JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program), le programme Vacances-Travail et les bourses scolaires pour les étudiants universitaires suscite un très vif intérêt chez toute la nouvelle génération d'ambassadeurs de « bonne volonté ». Les échanges académiques continuent également d'être très actifs et très populaires avec plus de 240 accords d'échange en cours entre des universités japonaises et canadiennes.

Japan/Canada relations have never been stronger and the future looks very bright indeed.

When I leave Canada next month, I am more than certain that the Embassy will be left in very capable hands. My successor, Ambassador Norihiro Okuda, is an experienced and distinguished diplomat whose excellent reputation precedes him.

In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere gratitude to all of you for your support and friendship since our arrival here. As well, I would like to thank my colleagues in Tokyo and

at the Embassy here in Ottawa for their ongoing efforts to build and support the strong partnership between Japan and Canada.

I thank you for your kind attention.