

**Remarks for H.E. Norihiro Okuda**  
**National Day Reception**  
Chateau Laurier Hotel, Ottawa  
November 26, 2013

The Honourable Ed Fast,  
The Honourable John Baird,  
The Honourable Joe Oliver,  
The Honourable Alice Wong,  
The Honourable David Tkachuk,  
The Honourable Mike Wallace,  
Your Excellencies,  
Members of the diplomatic community,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is my very great pleasure to welcome you here this evening as we mark the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of his Majesty, the Emperor of Japan. His Majesty remains a symbol of the unity of the Japanese people and, together with Her Majesty Michiko, who turned 79 years old earlier this year, he works tirelessly on their behalf.

In fact, His Majesty will turn 80 years old on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Since his birthday falls so close to Christmas, and taking into account the very busy schedules of the members of international community at that time of year, we usually hold this reception one month earlier. I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for coming out this evening to convey your best wishes. At this time, I ask you to join with me in wishing His Majesty continued health and prosperity.

It has been seven months since I arrived in Canada. In that time, I have had the opportunity to visit much of this beautiful country. I have also come to more fully appreciate the depth and vitality of the relationship between Canada and Japan - a relationship that is built on shared values and ideals that make us natural friends and allies.

I feel very fortunate that so early in my tenure Prime Minister Abe paid an official visit to Ottawa. During the visit, Prime Ministers Abe and Harper reiterated their enthusiastic support for ongoing negotiations aimed at producing an Economic Partnership Agreement. The potential economic benefits to both sides of an EPA are substantial and well documented. Perhaps equally exciting was the commitment both leaders made to increased energy cooperation. Personally, I believe that the positive implications of a new long-term deal to have Canadian Liquid Natural Gas exported to Japan cannot be overstated.

Prime Minister Abe's visit has already yielded results. Based on discussions held by the two leaders, agreement has already been reached to open Canadian flights into Haneda, downtown Tokyo. Further, it is anticipated that high-level "2+2" security discussions will resume in the very near future.

As natural friends and allies we often find ourselves on the same side of issues that arise in multilateral organizations. More and more we find ourselves working together to address the political, economic and security challenges in the international community.

We are entering a new and exciting era in Japan/Canada relations. I am delighted to have an opportunity to participate in the process, and I look forward to working with many of you going forward.

I would now like to invite the Honourable Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade to make a few remarks.

Please enjoy yourselves this evening.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup.