

I would like to welcome you all this evening as we ring in the New Year together. It is always wonderful to get together to wish each other health, joy, and prosperity for the year to come.

The year 2016 has witnessed a great progress in the bilateral relationship between Japan and Canada with the first official visit to Japan by Prime Minister and Mrs. Trudeau as well as the visits by 11 Canadian Cabinet Ministers mostly in the context of the G7 meetings. PM Trudeau chose Japan as the destination of his first bilateral visit in Asia in May, and agreed with PM Abe to create a “new era for Japan-Canada cooperation”. So, we have set sail on a new journey to further promote our relations.

Looking ahead, this year 2017 marks the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, and 2018 will be the 90th Anniversary year of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations. And then come the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020. All of these occasions will serve as further opportunities for our two countries and peoples to endeavor on a journey, in a new era of cooperation, to bring them even closer across the Pacific Ocean.

On a special note, the Ottawa Japanese Canadian Association (OJCA) celebrated its 40th Anniversary last year. This year 2017 will mark the 75th anniversary of the Nikkei incarceration. Japanese Canadians have successfully taken root in the Canadian society while overcoming all unwarranted difficulties, and I would like to commend the steadfast efforts they have exerted over generations. The Embassy will continue to support the development of the local Japanese community here in Ottawa including Hoshuko, or the

Japanese School. I look forward to working closely with the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) and OJCA, as well as Japanese nationals in Canada to bring the two countries and peoples even closer, especially, using opportunities of the 150th Anniversary of Confederation and the 90th Anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations.

In closing, I would like to propose a toast to the health and continued success of everyone in 2017. *Kanpai! (Arigato gozaimashita)*