

Remarks for Ambassador Ishikane
2018 National Day Reception
December 5, 2018 Château Laurier

Bonsoir mesdames et messieurs,

C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de vous accueillir ce soir à la réception pour le 85^e anniversaire de Sa Majesté l'Empereur du Japon.

We often say that adversity tests the sincerity of our friends. I am so glad to have all of you here tonight despite the adversarial Ottawan winter, for which I hope I am more prepared than my first year.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations. Prime Minister Abe had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau on November 18 in Papua New Guinea. They discussed the importance of keeping the Indo-Pacific region free, open, rules-based, and further enhancing Japan-Canada strategic cooperation. In fact, we have already seen Japan-Canada relations moving forward in this direction. Japan and Canada are now both original members of the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), which will be a model of high-standard multilateral trade pact in the region. Cooperation between our forces has been advanced through the signing of a new legal framework. Canada is also actively participating alongside Japan in an international initiative to counter North Korea's maritime smuggling. Last but certainly not least, the final investment decision of LNG Canada on October 1 will have significant economic and strategic impact in the region.

We should not, however, content ourselves with where we are now. I am deeply convinced that there remains a lot to be done between our two countries. And this is needed more than ever at a time where fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, free trade that have been the backbones of the world peace and prosperity are increasingly under threat. It is therefore my resolution in the new year to put this strategic cooperation into "action" and reach tangible results. We have started to hold more frequent dialogues on subjects of strategic importance. We are expecting more active Canadian involvement in Asia-Pacific. We are planning to further enhance business ties between our two countries. To realize all this, we have already started to interact with many Canadian friends, including those who are here with us tonight.

It is also important to highlight that the very foundation of our relationship lies in our peoples. Throughout the year, in a video series called "Japan, Canada and Me", we have 52 outstanding individuals and groups from both Japan and Canada sharing their

experiences connecting our two countries. You will see some of the videos here tonight. To commemorate this 90th milestone, we have also organized a wide range of events across Canada. These celebrations will continue in the new year, which will mark the 90th anniversary of the establishment of Canada's diplomatic mission to Japan. Building on the success of the "Japan, Canada and Me" series, the Embassy of Canada to Japan will start a video series featuring the Canada-Japan 90th anniversary, so please stay tuned. This is another example of how closely Japan and Canada are cooperating, isn't it?

Speaking of our grassroots-level cooperation, it is so wonderful to see increasing number of Canadians visiting Japan, and vice versa. Despite a series of natural disasters this year in Japan, the affected areas have recovered in an incredible pace, and are ready to welcome tourists from around the world, including from Canada.

As many of you are aware, this is the last National Day Reception for the current Emperor of Japan. After 30 years, the Emperor will abdicate on April 30 next year and the enthronement of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince will take place the very next day, May 1. Over the course of his reign (known as the Heisei era), their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress have travelled extensively abroad, including Canada. Indeed, 2019 will mark the 10th anniversary of their Majesties' last visit to Canada, as shown in our video here. At the Welcome Ceremony at Rideau Hall, his Majesty expressed his wishes to deepen their understanding of Canada, "*a country where those who have lived here for generations and those who moved here from various countries recognize and respect their mutual cultures and strive to create harmoniously the Canada that is today.*" This is also my basic position as Ambassador to Canada.

One interesting episode that I would like to highlight is during Their Majesties' visit to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Her Majesty sang a lullaby to the kids, and the song goes: *sleep well tonight. I will be wishing for your happiness with His Majesty.* I would like to think that this song was not only for the kids, but also Her Majesty's wishes for the future of Japan-Canada relations. I am afraid I cannot sing a song here tonight, but following Her Majesty's words, I would like to extend my best wishes for the new era of Japan-Canada partnership.

En terminant, j'aimerais bien présenter mes meilleurs vœux pour la santé et le bonheur de Sa Majesté l'Empereur du Japon et à vous tous présents ici ce soir ainsi que pour l'avenir du Japon et du Canada.

Merci beaucoup et bonne soirée.