

**Speech by his Excellency Kaoru Ishikawa,
Ambassador of Japan to Canada
National Day Reception – November 24**

The Right Honourable Joe Clark,
The Honourable Beverly Joan Oda,
The Honourable Peter Van Loan
The Honourable Jason Kenney,
The Honourable John Morris Duncan
The Honourable Bryon Wilfert,
The Honourable David Tkachuk,
Doctor Victor Rabinovitch,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here with you today in tribute of the 77th birthday of His Majesty, The Emperor of Japan. Emperor Akihito is the 125th Emperor of Japan, the latest in the oldest continuing line of hereditary monarchy in the world. Throughout His Majesty's 21 years, Their Majesties have brought the Imperial Family even closer to the people of Japan. I feel privileged to be able to bring their celebration here, to Canada.

You might have noted the three photos I've placed near the entrance. The first was taken in Ottawa, at Rideau Hall in July 2009 when Their Majesties were kindly received by the Right Honourable then-Governor General, Michaëlle Jean. The next shows Their Majesties in their private palace with the Right Honourable Stephen Harper and Mrs Laureen Harper, returning the warm hospitality shown to Their Majesties in Canada. The last depicts a landmark of the cooperation between our two nations: the first-ever successful unmanned docking with the International Space Station, a feat realized by Japanese rockets and technology, and the assistance of the Canadarm embracing the Japanese H-II Transport Vehicle. I believe that these three photos show heritage, tradition and future.

L'année dernière, Leurs Majestés l'Empereur et l'Impératrice du Japon ont effectué une visite historique au Canada à l'invitation de Son excellence, la très honorable Michaëlle Jean. En août, avec mon épouse Masako, j'ai eu le grand honneur d'avoir une audience avec Leurs Majestés au Palais impérial. Leur Majestés ont exprimé à plusieurs reprises leur gratitude profonde envers le peuple canadien pour leur accueil chaleureux. Profitant de cette occasion, je tiens à exprimer nos sincères remerciements à ceux qui ont travaillé pour le succès de la visite.

It is now a little over one week since the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Yokohama, during which the Right Honourable Prime Minister

Stephen Harper and Madam Laureen Harper were warmly received by Their Majesties for a private dinner at the private residence of the Imperial Palace. On the same day, the Japan – Canada summit meeting was held between His Excellency Prime Minister Naoto Kan and the Right Honourable Stephen Harper in a very constructive manner. The meeting was followed by the signing ceremony of the Japan - Canada Joint Declaration on Political, Peace and Security Cooperation.

Today, for the first time in our National Day Reception, our defense attaché, General Mitsuru Nodomi is present. It is indeed this first concrete step after the signing of the Joint Declaration.

These high level milestones shed light on the ever-increasing importance among mature parliamentary democracies who believe in the rule of law, democratic values, human rights and freedom.

Donc, je disais que ces grands évènements démontrent, l'importance qui s'acçoit sans arrêt, au sein des démocraties parlementaires matures qui croient en la liberté, en les droit de l'homme et, en les valeurs démocratique,, et en la primauté de droit.

Sur une plus petite échelle, on peut voir plusieurs autres preuves que les relations entre nos deux pays sont plus fortes que jamais.

Par exemple, chaque année, environ 340,000 Japonais visitent le Canada et 150,000 Canadiens visitent mon pays, y compris les jeunes dans le cadre de Vacances-Travail et du programme JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching). Ces jeunes apportent la culture canadienne à tous les coins de mon pays, puis ils font connaître la culture japonaise lors de leur retour au Canada

To conclude my remarks, allow me to say that I will spare no effort to reinforce the friendship I have seen grow between Japan and Canada – and the friendship shown in this celebration together. Allow me to reiterate my sincere gratitude for your gracious attendance, despite your heavy schedules.

Thank you for your kind attention.