

Canada day

Vibrant economy seeks further partnership

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AMBASSADOR OF CANADA

On behalf of the government of Canada, I am delighted to extend to all Canadians, and friends of Canada, a happy Canada Day, "joyeuse fête du Canada," on this 144th anniversary of Canadian Confederation.



Canada Day in Japan provides an opportunity to reflect on and share with our readers key developments over the past year, and our plans for engagement with Japan and the world going forward.

The catastrophic events of March 11 in Tohoku have changed the lives and perspectives not only of the Japanese people, but also of people from all corners of the globe. Canadians have conveyed their sympathies to those who lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods, and have contributed generously to assist in efforts to rebuild lives and communities.

Canada today

Canada's historical vocation as a champion of peace, security and global development is manifested by our ongoing promotion of democracy, human rights and

the rule of law, and of sustainable and balanced growth, at home and abroad. Despite the challenging global economic environment, Canada's economy remains the envy of many: We have enjoyed the strongest employment growth among Group of Seven (G-7) nations since mid-2009, and have more than recouped all of the loss in output experienced during the global recession. Canada's banking system has been ranked the soundest in the world by the World Economic Forum for three years in a row, and five Canadian financial institutions were recently named to Bloomberg's list of the world's strongest banks, more than any other country. With these achievements, in May 2011, Canadians presented Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his government with a mandate to form Canada's first majority government since 2004.

Unwavering relationship

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the chancellery of the Embassy of Canada to Japan, a product of Canadian and Japanese creativity, ingenuity and innovation that remains the primary symbol in Japan of our strong, multifaceted relationship. Building on people-to-people ties, our bilateral relationship has flourished since we first established diplomatic rela-

tions in 1928, and today encompasses political, economic, commercial, defense, cultural and educational links.

Canada and Japan work closely together at the G-7/Group of Eight (G-8), Group of Twenty (G-20), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, and other regional and multilateral forums. Shared values and interests are reflected in our contributions to international security and development, such as through our shared commitment to United Nations peacekeeping and to the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan, Haiti and other countries requiring international support.

On the margins of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Yokohama, Prime Ministers Harper and Naoto Kan signed a Joint Declaration on Political, Peace and Security Cooperation, paving the way for further collaboration through regular vice-ministerial "2 plus 2" talks.

Canada and Japan also enjoy a vital and mutually beneficial trade and investment relationship, reaffirmed by our two prime ministers at their bilateral meeting at the recent G-8 Summit in Deauville, France. They directed officials to complete as soon as possible a joint study on a proposed economic

partnership agreement with a view to the early launch of formal negotiations. And the inauguration of expanded air services between Tokyo and Calgary is emblematic of new opportunities for trade and investment between Japan and resource-rich western Canada.

In recognition of the importance of youth exchanges, Canada continues to invite 6,500 young Japanese to experience Canada each year through the popular Working Holiday Program. In addition, the Embassy of Canada will soon establish a new category under the Canada-Japan Leadership Fund, which will be dedicated to financially assist Tohoku students affected by the triple disaster to study in Canada. Generous donations from schools in Canada as well as from Canadian and Japanese businesses and expatriate communities in Japan have contributed to the realization of this project.

The future

Canada is confident that the courage, discipline and resilience of the Japanese people will enable them to overcome the daunting challenges that lay ahead. Canada will continue to offer to assist as Japan moves to recovery and reconstruction. And by working together internationally, we can support a more secure and more prosperous global community.