

Canada Day

Celebrating our shared strengths and values

IAN BURNEY

AMBASSADOR OF CANADA



On behalf of the government of Canada, I am pleased to wish you a happy Canada Day!

This year marks an important milestone for our country as we celebrate the 150th Anniversary

of our Confederation. This special occasion provides an opportunity for Canadians and friends of Canada to celebrate our shared values, linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as rich history and heritage. It also allows us to reflect upon Canada's place in the world, including its relationship with close partners like Japan.

Canada's 150th anniversary comes at a time of renewed momentum in our relationship. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited in May 2016 ahead of the Ise-Shima G-7 summit, making Japan his first Asian destination for a bilateral visit. In total, 14 cabinet ministers have visited Japan since the Trudeau government took office. In addition, we have seen visits during this period from five provincial premiers and many provincial ministers, mayors, and parliamentarians. These interactions have deepened the political, economic and peo-

ple-to-people ties between our countries, and I expect this pace of engagement will continue as Canada prepares to assume the G-7 presidency in 2018.

Since I arrived in Japan in September, I have traveled across the country and met people from all walks of life, from political and business leaders to citizens engaged at the grass-roots level. The vibrant relationship that Canada and Japan enjoy is a tribute to the dedication and passion of this array of committed and energetic people. These encounters have also reinforced my conviction that there remains huge potential to further grow our relationship.

Peace and security cooperation is a priority for Canada and Japan as we share common interests in preserving stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This summer, two Royal Canadian Navy ships will be in Japan for port visits and exercises with the Maritime Self-Defense Force. As well, we have now reached an agreement on an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, which will facilitate cooperation between our military forces, notably during humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations and U.N. peacekeeping missions. It will be a key building block for further cooperation on security matters.

Enhancing our trade, investment and innovation ties with Japan is another top priority for Canada. Japan is now Canada's fourth-largest trading partner and remains our largest source of investment from Asia.

Hundreds of Japanese companies have taken advantage of Canada's welcoming and competitive investment environment and unparalleled access to international markets.

At this time of global economic uncertainty, Canada and Japan must continue to demonstrate leadership in promoting open markets and free trade. We are thus working together, along with other remaining Trans-Pacific Partnership members, to assess how best to advance our trade objectives in the region. Canada is also actively promoting bilateral opportunities to further liberalize trade.

Our two countries also enjoy vibrant grass-roots ties. Last year, more than 300,000 Japanese tourists chose Canada as a holiday destination and thousands of young Japanese studied in Canada, a testament to the quality of our academic institutions. Canadians are also very active in Japan on the cultural front. I invite you to subscribe to our Culture Canada e-newsletter to keep apprised of activities close to you.

Let me close by inviting you to visit Canada during this special year. With dozens of direct flights to Canada every week, including a new Nagoya-Vancouver air link on Air Canada Rouge, and free admission to all of our national parks throughout 2017, there's never been a better time to discover the wonders of Canada and share in the celebration with us!

Happy Canada Day!