

Canada – Japan
Inter-Parliamentary Group



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – Japon

Report of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Co-Chairs' Annual Visit

Hakodate, Sapporo, and Tokyo, Japan

November 13 to 17, 2023

Report

Overview

From 13 to 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs of the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group (CAJP) – the Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher and Terry Sheehan, M.P. – conducted their annual visit to Japan. Their agenda included meetings and fact-finding site visits in Hakodate, Sapporo, and Tokyo.

The CAJP's primary purpose is to promote exchanges between Canadian and Japanese parliamentarians, to propose initiatives likely to lead to a better mutual understanding of bilateral and multilateral challenges, and to develop co-operation between Canada and Japan in all fields of human activity.

The Co-Chairs' objectives for this visit were the following:

- to continue in-person exchanges with the Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League (DFL) and discuss the upcoming 22nd bilateral meeting, which is expected to take place in Japan in 2024;
- to explore shared interests and mutual priorities with Japanese parliamentarians;
- to identify potential areas for enhancing cooperation, trade, scientific exchange and people-to-people ties between Canada and Japan; and
- to raise Canada's profile in Tokyo and Hokkaido Prefecture by engaging with politicians, local officials, academics, and entrepreneurs.

The delegation was accompanied by Grant McLaughlin, Association Secretary. At meetings and site visits, the delegation was accompanied by officials from the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo.

MEETINGS DURING THE VISIT

A. The Japan-Canada Diet Friendship League

On 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with the executive members of the DFL to discuss Canada–Japan relations and to discuss recent and upcoming bilateral meetings. The DFL's executive members in attendance were ETO Seishiro, President; TSUCHIYA Shinako, Vice-president and Chief Secretary; NAKAGAWA Masaharu, Vice-president and Secretary General; and SASAKI Taroh, Secretary and assistant to TSUCHIYA Shinako.

Participants discussed the treatment of the water used for cooling melted fuel and fuel debris at the Fukushima Daichi plant through the Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) and its controlled discharge into the sea. The DFL's executive thanked the Co-Chairs for Canada's support internationally in recognizing the work that has occurred to ensure this activity is being done in a safe and responsible manner.

Various other topics have been addressed during the meeting. The Co-Chairs inquired as to the challenges around Japan's depleted fish stocks and shared some of the efforts they heard during the week of meetings. The group similarly discussed the challenges and opportunities related to critical minerals, their importance to current and future

economic activity, and possible avenues of cooperation between Canada and Japan. The group discussed democratic reform in their respective countries and Senator Stan Kutcher shared his perspective on some of the recent alterations in the composition and make-up of the Canadian Senate as part of this effort.

As well, participants focused on the anticipated 22nd bilateral meeting in Japan. They noted that following the successful 21st bilateral meeting that took place in Ottawa earlier in August, Canadian members were eager to visit their counterparts in Japan to continue their important conversations and connection building. Participants identified various possible locations that could be included in a visit to Japan.

B. Diet Committee Chairs

On 16 and 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with several chairs of committees from both chambers of the Diet. Overall, the discussions addressed many of the priorities identified in the [Canada-Japan Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region](#): the rule of law; peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; health security and responding to COVID-19; energy security; free trade promotion and trade agreement implementation; and environment and climate change.

The first meeting was with MORIMOTO Shinji, Chair of the Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry of the House of Councillors. He explained that, although Japan's goal is to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, there remains work to be done, especially with regards to progress in developments around storage batteries. The group discussed the importance strong cooperation between likeminded nations to maintain order, security, and international trade.

The Co-Chairs also met with KATSUMATA Takaaki, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives. They discussed international economic cooperation, with a focus on fishing and fish stocks. KATSUMATA Takaaki shared how proud Japan is of its seafood and the great efforts the country has taken to protect and conserve this natural resource. However, as fish have no national boundary, there is a limit to what can be accomplished alone to preserve ocean biodiversity. The Co-Chairs agreed, noting that those engaging in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing without regard for long-term impacts harms everyone and the only way forward is greater international cooperation.

The Co-Chairs next met with YANA Kazuo, Chair of the Committee on National Security of the House of Representatives. In highlighting the importance of a stable Indo-Pacific region, He highlighted bilateral cooperation between Canada and Japan in working towards this goal, including through joint drills and operations in the region. Participants also discussed Japanese energy security and how Canada can support its ally, such as by supplying important materials and resources.

Meetings with committee chairs resumed the following day and the Co-Chairs began by meeting with OKAMOTO Mitsunari, Chair of the Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry of the House of Representatives. OKAMOTO Mitsunari raised the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises to economic success and the need for government to provide support, particularly when it comes to international trade. The Co-Chairs

agreed, noting how strong people-to-people relations between like-minded nations are another essential ingredient. The two sides also discussed some of the barriers to international trade and how closer Canada-Japan relations could alleviate those issues.

Finally, the Co-Chairs met with KITAMURA Tsuneo, Chair of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defense of the House of Councillors. The group spoke on global tensions and irritants and the need to consider new approaches for successful international relations. The Co-Chairs suggested the rise of multilateralism as an effective counterweight, noting that effective multilateralism includes strong bilateral relations between nations.

C. Ministers and other parliamentarians

On 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs and Deborah Paul – Deputy Head of Mission from the Embassy of Canada to Japan – met with HORII Iwao, State Minister for Foreign Affairs. They discussed the geopolitical tensions in the region and noted the importance of ongoing combined military exercises, such as around North Korea, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait. The Co-Chairs highlighted the threats posed by health disinformation, whether directly to democracy or by eroding trust in institutions, and the group discussed the challenges posed in resisting and sharing accurate information.

As well, on 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with TSUJI Kiyoto, State Minister for Foreign Affairs. The participants discussed the opportunities for collaboration between Japanese and Canadian businesses and the key role that people-to-people relations can play in making those connections. TSUJI Kiyoto also spoke of challenges posed by Japan's aging population, including efforts to turn to immigration to ease the burden. The Co-Chairs shared some of the Canadian experience and efforts in welcoming immigration to the country.

Finally, on 16 November 2023, Senator Stan Kutcher – leader of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the 31st meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), held from 23 to 26 November 2023 – and MP Terry Sheehan met with HIRAGUCHI Hiroshi, Japan's Head of Delegation to the APPF, in order to discuss the upcoming Forum, share both delegations' perspectives on some of the issues to be discussed at the meeting, and to better understand their respective positions.

FACT-FINDING SITE VISITS

A. Hakodate

The Co-Chairs visited the northern island of Hokkaido, a region with strong cultural and economic ties with Canada from 13 to 15 November, including many twinning agreements at the municipal level as well as between the Hokkaido Prefecture and the Province of Alberta. Senator Stan Kutcher began the visit on 13 November with a day in Hakodate, the third largest city in Hokkaido and a sister city of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The visit was opened with a lunch hosted by the Hakodate-Halifax Association (HHA), attended by their president, Dr. KOJI Junichiro, HHA founders, HHA members, and other city officials. A message from TOMIHARA Akira, Speaker of the Hokkaido Prefectural Assembly, who could not be present for the lunch, was read on his behalf. This was a

helpful beginning to the visit, as the conversations about the sister city relationship between Hakodate and Halifax, of the two cities' histories, and their similarities and differences, launched into larger conversations about many aspects of the Canada-Japan relationship.

This was followed by a visit to Iai Women's Academy, where Senator Stan Kutcher spoke with students in grade 10 to 12 about the work of a Canadian Senator, careers, studying in Canada, and their future aspirations.

As well, Senator Stan Kutcher visited the Hakodate Research Center for Fisheries and Oceans to meet with FUJITA Hideki and NAOTSUNE Saga, Secretary General and Executive Director, and tour the facility to better understand the work and projects the centre has been engaging in. Founded in 2014, they discussed how the centre's initial focus on salmon and seaweed and kelp has evolved into a public-private-academic collaboration that covers many aspects of fish and the fishing industry. They explained the early steps that have been taken to establish a mariculture industry in Hakodate and discussed the importance of international collaboration and knowledge sharing for projects such as this to succeed.

Finally, Senator Stan Kutcher met with MUKOYAMA Jun, an aspiring candidate for the Liberal Democratic Party in the next general election. This was an opportunity to hear firsthand about the challenges and opportunities facing young women entering politics in Japan. They discussed Hokkaido's political history and how that fits within wider Japanese electoral politics. The conversation was a good opportunity to better understand the larger Japanese context, but also to share experiences and overlaps between the Canadian and Japanese systems.

B. Sapporo

On November 14 and 15, the Co-Chairs visited Sapporo to meet with local politicians, entrepreneurs, and academics and to learn more about the Ainu, one of Japan's indigenous people.

The Co-Chairs met with the Hokkaido-Canada Society chairman SEKIHACHI Yoshihiro and board members Mark Hamilton and TSUJIO Shinichi. The Hokkaido-Canada Society is a Sapporo-based organization founded in 1979 to deepen relations between Hokkaido and Canada. The Society members spoke of their various efforts, including lectures, facilitating academic exchanges, and supporting sister city relations between Hokkaido and Canadian cities – currently there are 26 twinings between the two. The group also discussed opportunities in the traditional Hokkaido industries of agriculture, fishing, and tourism and the related challenges posed by climate change, particularly within the context of collaboration between the two nations.

The Co-Chairs met with professor HOUKIN Kiyohiro, President of Hokkaido University; Professor TAKAHASHI Aya; Executive Vice President of International Affairs Department; and HATA Eri, Director of International Affairs Department, to discuss the potential of greater collaboration between Japanese and Canadian universities. Professor HOUKIN noted that Hokkaido University has 2,100 international students, 13 of whom are from Canada, and 748 agreements with institutions abroad, 9 of which are Canadian. Senator Stan Kutcher agreed that there could be funds and support for academic

exchanges within Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, but also encouraged HOUKIN Kiyohiro to pursue more direct links with Canadian institutions.

The Co-Chairs met with members of the Japan-Canada Friendship League in the Hokkaido Legislative Assembly to discuss Canada-Hokkaido relations. The League's members in attendance were MURATA Noritoshi, President; AKANE Kosuke, Vice-President; and CHIBA Hideya, Member. The participants discussed the rich history between Hokkaido and Canada, with MURATA Noritoshi noting that it would be the 45th anniversary of Hokkaido-Alberta twinning agreement in two years, hoping that Canada would be able to send students to study in Hokkaido to mark the occasion. The participants also discussed the impacts of climate change in their countries. MURATA Noritoshi shared the challenges posed by a recent heatwave in Hokkaido and the impact on fish migration in the region, while Terry Sheehan provided the example of how climate change has impacted local animal populations in his region. They likewise discussed energy security and the role that nuclear can play in both countries' futures. All agreed the conversation left them with much to consider and looked forward to continuing the discussion.

The Co-Chairs met with professors YAMASAKI Koji and KITAHARA Mokottunas of Hokkaido University Center for Ainu & Indigenous Studies to hear about the university's Ainu & Indigenous Studies program and better understand the place of Ainu within Japanese society. The professors explained the state of Ainu-Japanese relations in academics and society writ large, noting that there remains work to be done. The Co-Chairs shared some of the Canadian experience and the group discussed the challenges and opportunities around Reconciliation.

The Co-Chairs supplemented this conversation with a visit to the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, a national museum dedicated to the history and culture of the Ainu, where they met with SASAKI Shiro and MURAKI Miyuki, Executive Directors of the museum, and toured the facilities. They learned more about both traditional and recent Ainu culture and discussed Japan's ongoing efforts towards reconciliation.

C. Tokyo

On 16 November 2023, staff at the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo provided the Co-Chairs with briefings on Canada–Japan political, security, trade, cultural and academic relations. This was a helpful conversation to equip the Co-Chairs with the latest details in advance of their meetings with Diet ministers and members throughout their time in Tokyo.

As well, on 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with Laurie Peters, the Commissioner General for Canada at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai to hear the latest update on Canada's preparations for the upcoming World Expo. She shared the recently unveiled the pavilion model and themes for Canada's entry. The group also discussed upcoming preparations and plans and how the CAJP could potentially help with promoting Canada's Expo efforts.

On 16 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with Professor MATSUMOTO Yoichiro, Science and Technology Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and professor KOTANI Motoko, Executive Vice President for Research, Tohoku University, to learn more of Japan's science and research policies. The participants discussed some of the

mechanisms and organizations that could be leveraged to increase collaborations between Japanese and Canadian academic institutions.

On 17 November 2023, the Co-Chairs met with Professor AMAGAI Masa, Vice-President for Research, and SATO Tomo, Deputy Director of the Global Engagement Office, both of Keio University. Senator Stan Kutcher shared his views of the benefits of stronger university-sector links between Japan and Canada, inquiring as to how best to achieve this goal. Professor AMAGAI and SATO Tomo spoke to the connections between Japanese universities and the participants discussed possible next steps.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Stan Kutcher, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Terry Sheehan, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Co-Chairs' Annual Visit to Japan
DESTINATION	Hakodate, Sapporo, and Tokyo, Japan
DATES	November 12 to 17, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Stan Kutcher
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Terry Sheehan
STAFF	Grant McLaughlin
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 4,822.24
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 9,423.49
HOSPITALITY	\$ 1,436.32
PER DIEMS	\$ 4,140.51
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 556
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,717.55
TOTAL	\$ 23,096.11