

Canada – Japan
Inter-Parliamentary Group



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – Japon

Report of the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

22nd Bilateral Meeting

Tokyo and Tohoku, Japan

From May 13 to 17, 2024

Report

From 13 to 17 May 2024, in response to an invitation from Japan's Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group (CAJP) travelled to Japan for the 22nd Bilateral Meeting with counterparts from the Japan–Canada Diet Friendship League (DFL). The CAJP's two Co-Chairs – Senator Stan Kutcher and Terry Sheehan, MP – led the delegation, which also included Angelo Iacono, MP, CAJP Vice-Chair, Senator Michael L. MacDonald, Gord Johns, MP, Sébastien Lemire, MP and Dan Mazier, MP. The delegates were accompanied by two CAJP staff: Grant McLaughlin, Secretary, and Corentin Bialais, Advisor.

While in Tokyo from 13 to 14 May 2024, the delegates met with members of the DFL, officials from the National Diet of Japan and Japanese cabinet ministers. From 15 to 17 May 2024, the delegates undertook a fact-finding trip focused on reconstruction in the Tohoku Region, which is the part of Japan that was most affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

In Japan, delegates were supported by staff from Japan's House of Representatives during the bilateral meeting, and by staff from the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo throughout the visit. Moreover, delegates received briefing materials from the Library of Parliament and from Global Affairs Canada, which also provided an oral briefing before delegates left Canada. On behalf of the delegates, the Co-Chairs express their sincere thanks for the materials and other supports involved in both preparing for the visit and accompanying delegates to the bilateral meeting and fact-finding trip.

BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS

The bilateral consultations were the core of the delegates' visit to Japan, and provided Canadian and Japanese parliamentarians with an opportunity to exchange views on issues of shared interest. This year, they agreed to discuss the following topics:

- Cooperation on Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific and Beyond;
- Cooperation on Science and Technology Policy and Energy Trade; and
- Comparative Approaches to Disaster Prevention and Recovery.

Prior to departing for Japan, the delegates designated a lead presenter for each topic, with the designation based on individual interests. They also agreed about the need to convey a cohesive and unified message to their Japanese counterparts.

A. Opening Remarks

ETO Seishiro, President of the DFL, launched the consultations between the CAJP and the DFL by welcoming the delegates to Tokyo and by thanking Canada for hosting the 21st Bilateral Meeting in Ottawa in August 2023. Senator Kutcher thanked the Japanese hosts before introducing both the delegation and the three topics of focus during the consultations.

B. Cooperation on Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific and Beyond

SUZUKI Keisuke, member of Japan's House of Representatives, identified concerns about China's disruptive role on the international stage, particularly citing repression in Hong Kong and attempts to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. He stressed the importance of cooperation between and among like-minded nations to strengthen deterrence, and welcomed the ongoing implementation of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. As well, Mr. SUZUKI supported further collaboration between Japan and Canada, including in relation to freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Angelo Iacono focused on Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, drawing attention to the ways in which the strategy is integrated with recent Canada–Japan cooperation initiatives, including the ongoing negotiations for a General Security and Information Agreement between the Canadian Forces and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. He also underlined Canada's April 2024 defence policy update, which he explained is partly designed to respond to China's ambitious military build-up and North Korea's recent actions that are destabilizing the Indo-Pacific region. Finally, Angelo Iacono indicated that the policy update echoes commitments in the strategy aimed at enhancing Canada's military presence in the region.

The delegates from both countries agreed that allies should coordinate their approaches to deterring China's actions directed against Taiwan, noting the disruptive consequences that such actions could have on global supply chains. They also discussed their participation in the multinational effort among several of the region's allies to enforce United Nations sanctions against North Korea through the Enforcement Coordination Cell based in Yokosuka, Japan. Moreover, in addition to reinforcing the significance of this collaboration with such like-minded countries as Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, the delegates pointed out the importance of engaging with countries that have the same geopolitical interests, such as India. Finally, the Canadian delegates thanked the Japanese for their efforts in supporting Ukraine, including by rapidly implementing strong sanctions against Russia.

C. Cooperation on Science and Technology Policy and Energy Trade

GOTO Yuichi, member of Japan's House of Representatives and Acting Chief Secretary of the DFL, acknowledged that Japan has one of the lowest rates of energy self-sufficiency among developed countries and relies on imports for most of its energy supply. Explaining that Canada is a potential partner as Japan seeks to diversify its energy suppliers, he praised the collaboration with Canada regarding liquefied natural gas, ammonia, nuclear energy, and carbon capture, utilization and storage. Concerning science and technology policy, he underscored the vital work of the Group of Seven's (G7's) Hiroshima AI Process group and discussed the need to leverage the innovative opportunities associated with artificial intelligence (AI) while managing its risks.

Regarding science and technology, Sébastien Lemire highlighted the longstanding collaboration between Canada and Japan that started as early as 1972 with exchanges involving federal public servants and continued with the signing of a formal agreement on science and cooperation in 1986. He pointed out that, in September 2023, the two countries signed a memorandum of cooperation on industrial science and technology,

including a Canadian commitment to strengthen science, technology and innovation partnerships with Japan. With respect to energy trade, he drew attention to the commitments in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy to make Canada a responsible and reliable energy partner by leveraging its potential as a supplier of hydrogen and clean energy. As well, he stressed that the Abitibi-Temiscamingue region in Quebec is well positioned to provide some of the minerals required for the energy transition, including for the development of batteries for electrical vehicles.

The delegates from both countries pointed out the ways in which innovation and energy are intertwined, with Japanese delegates mentioning that AI presents opportunities for innovation and research, but noting that Japan is struggling to attract investment because of the limited availability and high cost of electricity. In addition, both countries' delegates noted the role that nuclear energy could play in the energy transition, with this source of energy providing opportunities, including for rural regions with small modular reactors, but also challenges, including the need to manage nuclear risks and waste.

D. Comparative Approaches to Disaster Prevention and Recovery

MUTAI Sunsuke, member of Japan's House of Representatives, underscored Japan's breadth and depth of experience in addressing natural disasters, such as earthquakes, but noted that the country must confront new challenges driven by climate change, such as an increased frequency and magnitude of typhoons. He recalled that, following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Japan established a Reconstruction Agency to coordinate the recovery efforts and the response to the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Stressing the significance of governments in such situations, he emphasized the crucial role that local communities, including municipalities and volunteer firefighters, play in emergency prevention and response. He concluded by pointing out the importance of implementing the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, in which member states pledged to improve disaster recovery and prevention in the context of adapting to climate change.

Gord Johns acknowledged the tragic loss of lives and destruction caused by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, observing that the tsunami reached British Columbia's west coast and resulted in Japanese marine debris being deposited on the province's beaches. As a member of the House of Commons representing one of Canada's coastal regions affected by the tsunami, he expressed gratitude for the Japanese Ministry of Environment and other Japanese non-profit organizations that sent experts to British Columbia to assist with the cleanup. He also provided an overview of Canada's response to emergencies, explaining that the federal government supports the provinces and territories and may deploy the Canadian Armed Forces at their request. He echoed MUTAI Sunsuke's comment about the need to prepare for emergencies, indicating that wildfires – including in 2016 in Fort McMurray, Alberta, in 2021 in Lytton, British Columbia, and in 2023 across the country – are becoming increasingly uncontrollable in Canada due to climate change.

The delegates from both countries described their respective approaches to emergencies. Japanese delegates provided information about the Tokyo Disaster Medical Assistance Team that dispatches doctors and nurses to disaster sites instead of

transporting the injured to hospitals, which is an approach that greatly reduces the number of casualties and delivers immediate physical and mental health services. As well, both countries' delegates discussed the value of volunteer firefighters in emergencies, as well as methods for increasing their numbers, especially in rural areas where they often are first responders. Canadian delegates outlined the federal tax credit for volunteer firefighters, and Japanese delegates explained that volunteers may receive allowances. As well, Japanese delegates drew attention to the involvement of women and children in disaster risk prevention at the local level.

E. Closing Remarks

TSUCHIYA Shinako, Japan's Minister for Reconstruction and Vice-President and Chief Secretary of the DFL, and Terry Sheehan concluded the bilateral consultations by noting delegates' fruitful discussions and the aligned interests of Japan and Canada in such areas as peace and security, energy, research and innovation, and emergency preparedness. Terry Sheehan encouraged members of the DFL to travel to Canada for the 23rd Bilateral Meeting.

MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL DIET OF JAPAN

On 14 May 2024, the delegation met with NUKAGA Fukushima, Speaker of Japan's House of Representatives, and KAIEDA Banri, its Vice-Speaker. Speaker NUKAGA welcomed the delegation to Japan, praised the strong relationship between the CAJP and the DFL, and commemorated the 95th anniversary of the establishment of the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo that marked the start of bilateral relations between Canada and Japan. Vice-Speaker KAIEDA thanked the delegates for travelling to Japan and for Canada's important support following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Senator Kutcher and Terry Sheehan expressed gratitude for the invitation to travel to Japan for the 22nd Bilateral Meeting and highlighted the importance of the bilateral consultations to strengthening mutual understanding and trust between the CAJP and the DFL.

As well, the delegates met with NAGAHAMA Hiroyuki, Vice-President of Japan's House of Councillors. After welcoming the delegates and thanking them for their presence, he stressed the multifaceted relationship that Japan and Canada have built, including at the bilateral and multilateral parliamentary level, such as at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum. As well, he highlighted the importance of municipal ties, explaining that his hometown of Chiba is twinned with North Vancouver, British Columbia, and noted the importance of educational exchanges, such as those that occur through the Japan Exchange Teacher program. Senator Kutcher and Terry Sheehan underlined the CAJP's longstanding commitment to the relationship with Japan, including the CAJP's support for Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, indicating that members of the CAJP had also visited the Tohoku region in 2012 and in 2018.

Moreover, the delegates toured the National Diet of Japan's building and learned more about Japan's parliamentary process. During the opening of the plenary sitting of the House of Representatives, the delegates were recognized and received a standing ovation.

MEETINGS WITH JAPANESE CABINET MINISTERS

On 13 May 2024, the delegates met with ITO Shintaro, Japan's Minister of the Environment and Minister of State for Nuclear Emergency Preparedness. During that meeting, Minister ITO discussed Japan's ongoing energy transition and its changing energy mix, which includes modest – but rapidly growing – renewable energy generation. He noted the importance of encouraging private investment to fund mitigation efforts relating to climate change, and mentioned ongoing efforts among the G7 environment ministers concerning climate change, biodiversity and microplastics pollution. In their discussion with Minister ITO, the delegates focused on some issues posed by the energy transition, such as the recycling of solar panels, carbon border adjustments and the energy requirements of new technologies, including semiconductors.

On 14 May 2024, the delegates met with KAMIKAWA Yoko, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs. The delegates and Minister KAMIKAWA highlighted the goals that Canada and Japan share on the international stage, with those goals underpinned by similar concepts, such as Japan's New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Senator Kutcher and Terry Sheehan thanked Minister KAMIKAWA for being a member of the DFL, and for her commitment to – and interest in – Canada, as partly evidenced by her January 2024 visit to Montreal, Quebec.

FACT-FINDING VISIT TO THE TOHOKU REGION

From 15 to 17 May 2024, the delegates travelled to the Tohoku region to learn more about the reconstruction efforts undertaken following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011, as well as the incident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant that occurred immediately thereafter.

A. Meetings with Officials and Site Visits of Affected Communities

The delegates visited Natori, a coastal city near Sendai, Tohoku's largest city. In Natori, they met with YAMADA Shiro, Mayor of Natori. The delegates learned about the damage caused by the Great East Japan Tsunami in 2011, which resulted in 965 lives being lost among the city's 73,229 residents at the time and in 13,991 buildings being damaged or destroyed. Mayor YAMADA thanked Canada for its support for two projects that were part of the Canada–Tohoku Reconstruction Project established following the disaster: the construction of the Maple Pavilion at the Yuriage Harbor Morning Market, and the Donburi Anne Public Library that was repurposed to the Natori City Museum of History and Folklore. The delegates visited these two sites and laid a wreath in Natori Earthquake Memorial Park.

As well, the delegates met with mayors and officials from three communities in the north of Sendai that were affected by the Great East Japan Tsunami, including Matsushima Mayor IROKAWA Haruo, Shiogama Mayor SATO Koki and Ishinomaki Mayor SAITO Masami. In Ishinomaki, the delegates were told about the tsunami-related deaths of 74 children and 10 teachers from the Okawa Elementary School, and learned that – although the school was located inland – the children and teachers who had followed their emergency procedure and regrouped

outside of the school building were engulfed when the tsunami pushed water up the river. The delegates toured the ruins of the former school, which have been kept intact since 2011, toured the museum constructed to document the tragedy and laid flowers at the site.

B. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant

The delegates travelled to the Fukushima Prefecture, where they visited the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum and learned more about the timeline for the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and resulting nuclear incident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the search and rescue efforts that followed, and the lives of those affected by these events. Regarding the nuclear incident, the delegates were informed about the processes being used to decontaminate the soils and the return of people to the region since the six-year evacuation order was lifted.

As well, the delegates visited two installations relating to the decommissioning work concerning the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant: the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) Decommissioning Archive Center; and the decommissioned nuclear plant. At the TEPCO Decommissioning Archive Center, the delegates met with ABE Moriyasu, Vice President of the Fukushima Daiichi Decontamination and Decommissioning Engineering Company. He outlined the timeline of the nuclear incident, and explained that the Archive Center collects information about the ways in which TEPCO responded to the nuclear incident and about actions that could be taken to prevent a similar incident in the future.

At the decommissioned power plant, which also hosts the installations that are decontaminating the wastewater, Mr. ABE explained that, to prevent environmental contamination, the irradiated water that is captured and stored on site is treated using the Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS), a pumping and filtration system that removes radioactivity. He noted that the treated water was kept in tanks until a first discharge into the ocean took place in August 2023, with the plant now starting the second phase of the discharge.

In discussions with experts at the decommissioned power plant, the delegates focused on the decontamination processes, the costs of the remediation efforts, and TEPCO's cooperation with Japan's central government as remediation and prevention efforts are under way. During the discussions, the delegates explained that Canada has learned some best practices based on Japan's experience, adding that the country strengthened its disaster risk management for nuclear safety following the nuclear disaster in Japan. The Co-Chairs expressed their support for Japan following the decision by China and by Russia to ban Japanese seafood because of the discharge of treated water. They noted that these two countries continue to fish in the same waters, and stressed that both the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission have stated that Japan's plan to release the ALPS treated water was aligned with international safety standards and was science-based.

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	22nd Bilateral Meeting
DESTINATION	Tokyo and Tohoku, Japan
DATES	From May 13 to 17, 2024
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Stanley Kutcher Hon. Michael MacDonald Terry Sheehan Angelo Iacono
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Gord Johns Sébastien Lemire Dan Mazier
STAFF	Grant McLaughlin Corentin Bialais
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 78,679.72
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 21,520.06
HOSPITALITY	\$ 923.17
PER DIEMS	\$ 6,074.85
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 989.50
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,999.42
TOTAL	\$ 111,186.72