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Canada and Japan sign Social Security Agreement

A Japan-Canada Social Security Agreement was signed in Tokyo on February 15, by Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Taro Aso, on behalf of the Government of Japan and by His Excellency Joseph Caron, Canada's ambassador to Japan, on behalf of the Government of Canada.

The signing of the agreement eliminates double pension taxes by Japanese and Canadian transferees working in Canada or Japan. The agreement between Canada and Japan will now undergo Japanese and Canadian approval procedures specified in their legislation or constitution. It is anticipated that the agreement will enter into force in late 2007. For more information, visit the CCCJ website at www.cccj.or.jp.

Harold Archer, CCCJ Social Policy Committee chair and Toyota Group Manager, Americas Division, gives an insight into the history of the CCCJ's involvement in the agreement.

When did you start to think about this pension issue and why? It was around 1990. I was young and not expecting to stay and develop a career here in Japan. But as a Canadian working in Japan, I had to pay Japanese pension, national and municipal taxes, and other fees. The monthly deductions were not small, and I was not happy with the conditions that applied in order to collect pension benefits (such as working in Japan for 20 years or being 65 years old).

As a CCCJ member, I thought the Chamber was a good forum to meet people and try to change things. I met fellow member Les Lohmann, and we formed a Tax Committee. Les then spoke at a CCCJ seminar on Social Security Issues for Canadian expatriates and addressed the issue. We also enlisted the expertise of Heather MacKay who wrote an article in *The*



Canadian Ambassador Joseph Caron with Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Taro Aso.

Canadian quarterly magazine about our efforts in pension reform and the mid-90s Japanese government solution to refund pension payments for up to three years. The Chamber followed up with an article in *The Canadian* that was distributed during the Prime Minister Team Canada visit in 1999.

Did the momentum from this committee carry on to the Canada-Japan bilateral agreement today? No. Canada-Japan pension developments were a low priority after the mid-90s. Human Resources Development Canada made multiple visits to the Japanese Minister of Health and Welfare regarding this issue. In 1999, Prime Minister Obuchi and Prime Minister Chrétien signed a Joint Prime Minister Communique, and in 2000-01, the Canada-Japan Business

Council Statements and Canada-Japan Joint Economic Statements were issued; yet the issue continued to float along and was not a top priority in Canada-Japan discussions and was reactive to the Japanese agenda. For example, at that time, despite top government efforts, including various Prime Minister signings and other visits, we found that Germany was Japan's first priority. Then in 1998, we found Canada was number 16 on their negotiation priority list. Everything seemed very reactive to the Japan agenda. Our Canadian side also did not give up, but seemed very "top-driven."

What kind of action did you take to create a practical approach to move the process forward? In September 2002, then-CCCJ President David Iwaasa called and asked me to help revive the issue by acting as chair of a newly established Social Policy Committee. The initial meeting held in early October focused on the preparation of a policy paper and targeted specific organizations that could help raise awareness of this issue.

I decided to take the approach of a Japanese-style policy paper format, using the "obento box" visual style (layout to eat with your eyes) in a point-form format with a chronology, comparison monthly pension payments and documented facts of people in each country, among other figures.

The policy position paper, recommending the Canadian and Japan governments immediately proceed to negotiate and conclude a bilateral pension reciprocity treaty, was issued in December 2002, 10 years after this issue was officially raised within the CCCJ.

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A magical night at the Maple Leaf Ball

On February 10, the CCCJ hosted its 30th annual Maple Leaf Ball at the award-winning Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Chinzan-so. This year's theme—Magic Under the Great Canadian Skies—celebrated Canada's great open skies and her majestic beauty.

Festivities began with a champagne reception and background classic guitar tunes deftly performed by Brad Holmes. While guests enjoyed the bubbly, an impressive array of items in the silent auction, including tickets to Honolulu, celebrity designer evening dresses, icewine, pearl earrings and golf packages, added excitement to the evening.

Master of Ceremonies Anne McDonald greeted guests as they entered the ballroom and, once seated, turned their attention to two large video monitors for a video image presentation of Canada's great open skies.

Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado, wearing a beautiful light blue gown that magically matched the decorated ballroom, was joined at the head table by His Excellency Ambassador Joseph Caron and Madam Caron, the former Japanese ambassador to Canada Mr. Kensaku Hogen and his wife, along with CCCJ President Philip and Atsuko O'Neill, and chair of the Ball Committee Patricia Bader-Johnston and her husband Brad Johnston.

The spectacular six-course menu represented specialties from across Canada and featured a main course of roasted tenderloin of Canada beef with sautéed foie gras on Flin Flon wild rice and ginger nut sauce.

Moving seamlessly from table to table, two Canadian magicians entertained guests with their impressive arsenal of magic tricks as part of the ball's theme.

Without the use of magic, Anne McDonald and the team of young volunteers for the evening then proceeded to draw names for the many prizes that were given away. A night for two in a suite at the Four Seasons Hotel and dinner at the Park Hyatt's New York Grill restaurant were among some of the prizes that preceded the most sought-after prize of the evening.

The grand prize of two business class tickets to Canada, courtesy of Air Canada, was graciously drawn by Princess Takamado. The lucky winner, Eric De Groot, was attending the ball for the first time.

For the second year in a row, Calgary's Dino Martinis led by lead singer Susan Scott entertained the crowd with their selection of swing and popular classics that kept the dance floor swinging and rocking until the end.

In addition to the silent auction, a charity raffle was held to support the Seeing is Believing campaign, a global



Members of the Head Table who joined Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado.

fundraising initiative aimed at making a lasting difference to the problem of avoidable blindness. The booklet *Run With Me*, translated and signed by Princess Takamado, was made available at the charity table with kind permission.

The CCCJ thanks all the sponsors for their generous contributions. We would also like to thank the organizing committee for all their efforts in making this event a great success. Pictures of the ball can be viewed at the CCCJ office or online at www.cccj.or.jp.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2007 Maple Leaf Ball!

Thank you for reading this sample issue. If you would like to read the full issue, or find out more about the Chamber of Commerce in Japan, please contact our office.

The Canadian is the Chamber's bi-monthly newspaper for members and is also distributed to a targeted and influential audience of businesses, public and private-sector business organizations, and key decision makers with an interest in the Canada and Japan relationship.

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