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Report of the Prime Minister's Commission
on
Japan's Goals in the 21st Century

Summary of Overview
The Frontier Within:
Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the
New Millennium
January 2000

I. Realizing Japan's Potential

- The vested interests and social conventions that have grown up during the course of Japan's development since the Meiji era (1868-1912) in accordance with the "catch up and overtake" model have ossified society and the economy and leached Japan's vitality. The world no longer offers ready-made models. Japan's own latent strengths, talent, and potential are the key to Japan's future. In this sense, Japan's frontier lies within Japan.

- Two core changes are needed: changing the methods and systems whereby citizens interact with the state and redefining and rebuilding the relationship between the individual and the public domain. This calls for fostering the spirit of self-reliance and the spirit of tolerance, neither of which has been given sufficient latitude so far.

II. Global Trends and Their Implications

Globalization

Systems and rules in society must be made explicit and internationally acceptable. Japan must create a society in which the wisdom and ideas of individuals are valued, where people's vitality is not inhibited by precedents, regulations, and established interests, and where those who fail have chances to try again. Japan should participate actively in the formation of global systems, standards, and rules.

Global literacy

The Japanese must strive to increase their "global literacy," meaning that they

can freely and immediately obtain information from the rest of the world, understand it, and express their own ideas clearly. The basic elements of this new literacy are the mastery of information-technology tools, such as computers and the Internet, and the mastery of English as the international lingua franca.

The information-technology revolution

To cope with the revolution in information technology (IT) and particularly the rapid development of the Internet, Japan must upgrade its infrastructure and strengthen its IT training. We need new rules to strike the proper balance between the protection of information on the one hand and disclosure and freedom of expression on the other; we also need to get neutral, fair actors to take part in the formulation and maintenance of such rules.

Advances in science

Rapid advances in science and technology are enriching our lives, but they also require us to reconsider the fundamental issue of the purposes of scientific and technological development. Human existence and dignity are being put to the test. Science and technology should serve not to conquer nature but to support lives that are spiritually as well as materially affluent.

Failing birthrates and aging populations

The decline in the number of children being born and the rise in the proportion of elderly in the total population are global issues. And aging is progressing faster in Japan than anywhere else. This trend raises such fundamental issues as how to give younger people a proper say in society, how to reconcile intergenerational differences, and how to maintain social vitality. We should avoid pessimism and look for ways to draw out the latent strengths of all.

III. Central Elements of Reforms

1. From governing to governance

In Japan, which has given priority to the state, the bureaucracy, and organizations, governance is widely seen as a top-down, or public-sector to private-sector, process. There is little sense of governance as requiring creative tension between those who entrust authority and those entrusted with authority, as signifying the joint creation of a new public domain by

individuals acting responsibly in cooperation with various actors.

Building anew form of governance and enabling it to mature requires new rules and relationships between individuals and organizations. Articulation of rules, disclosure and sharing of information, presentation of options, transparent and rational decision making, steady implementation of policy decisions, and ex post facto policy assessment and review are necessary. This means establishing governance built up through joint endeavors, governance based on rules and the principle of responsibility and grounded in two-way consensus formation, rather than governance premised on one-way rule.

While we do not repudiate everything about the old style of governance, the Japanese word traditionally used for governance, *tochi*, cannot adequately convey the new governance, which we have decided to call *kyochi* in the Japanese version of this report because it emphasizes cooperation rather than governing rule, or control.

2. Empowerment of the individual and creation of a new public space

In the twenty-first century, whose salient feature will be diversity, tough yet flexible individuals who take risks on their own responsibility and tackle challenges with a pioneer spirit are needed. Engaging in free and spontaneous activities and participating in society, such individuals will create a new public space based on individuals rather than the traditional top-down public sphere, a public space that permits and supports diverse "others" and that honors consensus.

Empowerment of the individual will catalyze the creation of a new public space, and the creation of a new public space will present the individual with greater choices and opportunities. This interaction will generate a new form of governance (*Kyochi*).

IV. Japan's Twenty-first-century Frontier

1. Promoting the pioneering spirit

In the twenty-first century a social ethos and systems welcoming individual excellence underpinned by a pioneer spirit are necessary. We need to introduce a new kind of fairness that justly assesses and adequately compensates people who display excellence and have creative ideas and "fair

disparity" through assessment of performance and growth potential. Equal opportunity not equal result must be guaranteed and systems allowing, people to start over devised.

(1) Transforming education

It is necessary to overturn the excessive degree of homogeneity and uniformity in education. We must distinguish clearly between compulsory education, which requires citizens to acquire necessary knowledge and skills, and education as a service, which helps free individuals acquire means for self-realization. The former must be rigorously and vigorously implemented as the minimum required of citizens, while the latter should be left to the market mechanism, with the state offering only indirect support.

In regard to primary and secondary education, one proposal is to compress a carefully selected compulsory-education curriculum into three days a week, with the other two days given over to review or, for children who are achieving well, scholarship, arts, sports, and other forms of personal cultivation, specialized vocational education, and so on. Using state-issued vouchers, these children can also study at privately run institutions outside the official school system.

Education is a joint endeavor of home, community, and school. Discipline and training in the home are important. It should be made clear that the primary responsibility for children's education and behavior rests with guardians.

In regard to higher education, educational institutions themselves must improve their international competitiveness. Excessive regulation of the establishment of universities and other institutions of higher education must be abolished, educational and research performance assessed, English used as a language of teaching and research, and foreign faculty dramatically increased.

Medical schools, law schools, and other means of improving educational functions in order to hone specialized skills are also

essential.

(2) Enhancing global literacy

It is necessary to set the concrete objective of all citizens acquiring a working knowledge of English by the time they take their place in society as adults, organize English classes according to level of achievement, improve training and objective assessment of English teachers, expand the number of foreign teachers of English, contract language schools to handle English classes, and other general materials. In addition, the central government, local governments, and other public institutions must be required to produce their publications, home pages, and so on in both Japanese and English.

In the long term, national debate on whether to make English an official second language will be needed.

2. Making a strength of diversity

In an age of diversification, mutual recognition of differences and in systems actively encouraging of diversity are essential. Valuing diversity means valuing freedom. The balance between freedom and responsibility is important.

(1) Putting individuals in control of their lives

To achieve self-realization, life should be a single continuum, regardless of gender or age. Integrated policies that address education, employment, child care, social security, economic revitalization measures, and so on as a whole are needed. Policy options and the relationship between benefits and burdens should be articulated so that people can plan their lives.

The minimum necessary social security must be guaranteed by the state and public institutions, but over and above that individuals should be enabled to choose from among diverse options. The idea of paying into pension funds for a certain period in order to receive benefits later in life is important. It is

also necessary to increase options for elderly care services, preventive medicine, and public health services. In regard to employment, fair assessment of skills, the choice of diverse employment formats, and the provision of opportunities to develop skills and start over are needed throughout life.

(2) Regional self-reliance

What is required is not just a decentralization through the devolution of powers from national to local authorities, but also the building of a system under which local residents can themselves decide on the shape of their own regional government.

The first requirement is to level the relationship between the center and the regions. We need to achieve local autonomy in the proper sense of the term, meaning that local residents can themselves decide what sorts of services they desire and how much of a burden they will bear in connection with their region's own issues. Regional governments should be set up on a scale that allows them to exercise self-responsibility and self-reliance, and the regions should be free to decide on their own taxes and local bond issues. Rules will also be needed for the rehabilitation and possible merger of regional governments in financial trouble. The setup should secure the maximum possible degree of citizen participation, limit the scope of administrative discretion, and allow prompt implementation of policies.

The role of the national government should be limited to areas where action needs to be carried out from a truly national perspective, and systems should be established that will allow it to implement these policies on its own so that the implementation process will not be affected by the conditions of particular regional governments.

(3) Vitalizing the nonprofit sector

We should shift to a system under which the realization of the public interest will reflect the will of the people involved, and the nonprofit private sector can grow through its own efforts. To achieve this, first of all it is essential to unify the system for establishment of incorporated nonprofit organizations, with registration being sufficient, and to establish a transparent system whereby eligibility for tax deductibility of donations is judged on a uniform basis by a neutral and fair third-party institution. In addition, it will be necessary to greatly expand the scope of tax deductibility for donations and allow both individuals and businesses the option of using a portion of their income either to pay taxes or to make donations.

(4) Taking new steps for an immigration policy

Japan should move to implement an immigration policy, on a gradual basis, that will encourage foreigners to want to live and work in this country. To start with, we should set up an explicit immigration and permanent-residence system to encourage foreigners who can be expected to contribute to the development of Japanese society to move in and possibly take up permanent residence here. We should also consider preferential treatment for foreign students, allowing them automatically to acquire permanent residence status when they complete their academic work at a Japanese high school, university, or graduate school.

3. Strengthening underpinnings of governance

It is essential to have a new system of governance to match the needs of an age of increasing diversification and complexity. The executive, legislative, and judicial functions must all be reviewed.

Politicians will require intellectual skills of policy development and policy debate, and also the ability to engage in international dialogue. Naturally, they must also display the spirit and ethics befitting those involved in the conduct of public affairs, along with a sense of responsibility.

In the private sector, physicians, attorneys, asset managers, and others providing specialized information and services affecting individuals' lives and property should be subjected to stronger requirements of accountability and third-party review.

Journalism also has an important role to play and responsibility to fulfill in areas like sifting information, protecting human rights, proposing policies, expanding international networks, and transmitting information from Japan. The world of journalism should abandon closed arrangements like the exclusive press clubs set up to cover particular government departments, and it should establish its own systems of independent review and mutual criticism.

(1) Diversity and transparency in policy choices

It is essential to strengthen the policy staff working for legislators, enlarge the research organs attached to the National Diet, enhance the "think tank" functions of political parties, and strengthen the policy-proposing and policy-research functions of universities, private-sector think tanks, nonprofit organizations, and other bodies. People from such outside institutions should actively be brought into government service, and bold exchanges of personnel should be conducted between the public and private sectors.

As elected politicians increasingly take the initiative in the processes of forming and deciding on policies, they must also accept accountability. It will also be necessary to establish systems to prevent politicians from serving special interests and to ensure information disclosure by and systematic oversight of political parties.

With respect to issues that involve the shifting of burdens to future generations, such as the management of government debt, it will be necessary to establish a system that will provide for specialized, neutral planning and policy drafting through a transparent process based on a medium- to long-term perspective.

(2) Lowering the voting age to 18

It is necessary to find ways to ensure that the people's policy choices are reflected in election results and to halt the trend toward political apathy. An automatic system of regular periodic reapportionment should be instituted to correct

imbalances in legislative representation, and a debate should be started about the merits of shifting to direct election of the prime minister.

We propose that the voting age be lowered from the present 20 to 18. Adding 3.5 million new young voters to the rolls will not only get these younger people involved but will also raise the general level of people's sense of involvement in politics.

Lowering of the voting age will have to be accompanied by consideration of lowering of the minimum age of eligibility for election, along with the need for consistency between the new voting age and the provisions of relevant legislation, such as the Civil Code and the Juvenile Law.

(3) Strictly limiting the government's role

The role of the government should be strictly limited to those areas that the private sector is incapable of handling. This is more than a matter of streamlining. Rather, the aim should be reform that will raise the level of services provided to the public.

A fundamental overhaul of the management of public administration is essential. The main priority should be examining the extent to which public administration has made efficient use of the budget and other administrative resources to achieve policy objectives; for this purpose a public accounting system should be established, along with a system that will allow the apportionment of the budget by policy objectives and the results of policy review to be reflected in expenditures.

In addition to establishing the appropriate legislation and other measures for crisis management, it is necessary to achieve adequate disclosure of information and to create a setup under which the national government, local governments, businesses, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and others can work together to manage crisis situations.

(4) Promoting rule-based governance

The international competitiveness of Japan's legal services will have a major impact on the country's vitality. We should dramatically increase the number of people in the legal

PROJECT BACKGROUND
Canada-Japan Social Policy Research Project

Objective

The Canada-Japan Social Policy Research Project (SPRP) seeks to increase cooperation between Canada and Japan on social policy research issues where there is potential mutual benefit.

The objective of the SPRP is to create a mechanism by which government and non-governmental communities of both countries will be encouraged to share ideas, knowledge and experience on social policy issues. Cooperating with Japan on a bilateral basis will increase collaboration in international institutions dealing with social policy matters and augment our policy development capacities to better deal with the challenges of economic and societal changes.

Project Evolution

The SPRP is in part a response to the invitation embodied in the "Initiative for a Caring World", a proposal by Japan at the 1996 G-7 Summit to cooperate with Canada and other G-7 members on developing greater international cooperation on social policy issues. It is also a response to the growing global conviction, as evidenced by the recent work in leading multilateral fora, that economic development and prosperity in all countries demands sound social policies.

A number of Canadian and Japanese organizations are developing and managing the SPRP. In Canada, this includes the Policy Research Secretariat (PRS), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo. In Japan, this includes the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. To date, several Canadian government departments, Japanese government officials and Canadian and Japanese academics have participated in the initial phases of the project.

Activities to Date

- In March 1999, a roundtable discussion in Vancouver was co-hosted by DFAIT's Japan Division and the PRS, with the assistance of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APFC). The meeting brought together Canadian academics knowledgeable about Japanese and Canadian social policy issues, officials from various federal government departments and

representatives from the PRS and the APFC to identify opportunities and develop a commitment to the goals of the SPRP.

- In May 1999, a roundtable attended by Canadian and Japanese participants took place in Tokyo to promote the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) and meet with various Japanese think tanks.

Key themes that emerged from these discussions were:
  - the consequences of aging populations for all participants and sectors of society
  - the underlying values and ethics of social policies, including their preservation in the face of various pressures
  - the social policy decision-making process, notably the development of a social consensus.

- During the Team Canada mission to Japan in September 1999, The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada and His Excellency Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan stated in a joint communiqué that Canada and Japan recognize the potential for bilateral cooperation on social policy research.

- During the week of November 23-26, 1999, Japanese academics visited Ottawa to participate in several bilateral meetings and to attend the PRI's National Policy Research Conference, *Analysing the Trends*. The visit:

  - built upon work already undertaken on joint social policy research by introducing Japanese academics to a number of key Canadian social policy practitioners
  - introduced the Japanese delegation to a broad range of Canadian social policy issues through participation in the National Policy Research Conference
  - further engaged other government departments in the bilateral relationship to more effectively identify areas where Canada and Japan can optimize their cooperative efforts.

Current Status

The PRS and DFAIT's Japan Division are holding a follow-up meeting in March/April 2000 with Japanese and Canadian academics and government officials to identify concrete research projects that both countries might undertake in the months ahead. The aim is to develop a two-year work-plan for parallel research.

SUMMARY OF ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION
on
SOCIAL POLICY COOPERATION WITH JAPAN
Vancouver
March 26, 1999

On March 26, 1999 a round-table on social policy cooperation with Japan was held in Vancouver. This event was co-hosted by the Japan Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Policy Research Secretariat (PRS) with the assistance of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APFC). The meeting brought together Canadian academics knowledgeable on Japanese and Canadian social policy issues, officials from various federal departments and representatives from the PRS and the APFC. A list of participants, together with the meeting's agenda, is attached to this report.

The round-table was held in order to assess the potential for a Canada-Japan social policy cooperation initiative. The participants were specifically asked to evaluate the merits of this project and propose social policy issues on which Canada and Japan could collaborate. The consensus view was that a mechanism for cooperation on social policy with Japan that could issue from the process would be beneficial to Canada and to Japan as well as to the bilateral relationship. A number of proposals were made on issues worthwhile to examine as possible items upon which Canada and Japan could join forces for mutual benefit. The establishment of such a mechanism was clearly perceived as feasible, although a number of possible challenges were identified. With that realization in mind, a number of suggestions were also made relating to a method for the future development of this initiative.

There was general agreement that the round-table was helpful in clarifying the various issues involved and in developing a range of possible next steps. Nonetheless, the set of conclusions that it reached is not necessarily thorough and definitive. It stands as a body of suggestions or starting points for further exploration and scrutiny. The round-table did however clearly demonstrate the wealth of possibilities that this initiative has to offer.

Role of Cooperation on Social Policy with Japan

It was felt that a mechanism of cooperation between Canada and Japan could have an important and varied role, bringing to each party a number of benefits. The following are some of the most important functions that such cooperation could fulfil.

- 1 -

One of the most important roles of the mechanism would be to extend the breadth of Canada's relations with Japan. It would contribute to making them more commensurate with the ones that Canada has with other G7 countries and with Japan's importance in the world.

Social policy is an important yet new area of focus which crosscuts many of the key areas in which the two countries have already established strong cooperation, such as on economic and security matters. Social policy cooperation could serve as a basis to bring together a wide range of concerns which may not necessarily have a channel within which they can be discussed and therefore could serve to expand the focus of traditional bilateral relations. It would also help consolidate a common ground that could spread to discussions in other areas.

Cooperation in this field would give a chance for Canada to promote greater awareness and understanding of its foreign policy agenda in Japan and to generate support on issues of importance to Canada. For instance, it could, in part by assisting the ongoing efforts of Japanese advocacy groups, promote a shift in Japan from an institutionally based society to a society founded on human rights. It would in general allow for greater propagation of values important to Canadians, a key mission of Canada abroad.

Canada could act as model or inspiration on a number of issues for which Canada is already well known and respected (examples include the areas of multiculturalism and diversity, immigration policies and health care for the elderly, which a number of Japanese delegations have come in the past to investigate). Just as the success of bilateral cooperation on peace and security matters was in part based on Canada's reputation in Japan as a non-aggressive country that actively promotes peace worldwide, similar success could be anticipated in the area of social policy because of Canada's position as a leader on many of these issues.

Canada also serves as an excellent model of a country which is charting a 'middle course' in social policy and welfare. Canada may be unlike the US where social welfare is residual and highly divisive and unlike Europe or Nordic European countries, like Sweden, which tend to be high tax-high welfare states. The Japanese Government has been aiming to follow a middle level course, like that which Canada has been following.

Through greater involvement in Japan on such vital issues, Canada could also raise its profile considerably in that country. Canada's efforts could expect to obtain some good exposure among the Japanese public.

Cooperation on social policy would also provide many opportunities for both countries to learn from each other. Canada could, for example, learn from results of social experimentation currently underway in Japan by watching, for instance, the changes

brought to key social indicators of policy changes. Canada could also learn from Japan's successes illustrated, as UNDP reports point out, by the superiority of some of its indicators (notably those relating to health). In this way, Canada could broaden its policy development capacity by more closely observing what is being done in Japan and by looking beyond Canada's own paradigm. Furthermore, as we learn from each other, there may be opportunities to do things together in third countries.

Importantly, cooperation with Japan on social policy could in many ways act as a response to the pressures of globalization. Socially developed countries such as Canada and Japan (the former probably more so than the other) face numerous challenges from globalization. While bringing many economic advantages, globalization is forcing countries to adopt policies that are more efficient in order to remain competitive and, in some cases, that lead to lower social welfare levels. Canada and Japan need to be prepared to deal with the consequences on their societies of these choices. Canada and Japan could even perhaps gain in a partnership to promote the maintenance of these standards at acceptable levels.

Much of Asia looks to Japan on many aspects of policy, including social policy. This is a process which Japan itself encourages. If Canada were to influence Japan on such issues and Japan continued to influence the rest of Asia, the impact of this cooperation could also be much greater than initially expected, as Canada's orientation ultimately spreads to other countries.

Globalization could also be used as the underlying theme for other features of cooperation, such as the cross-border monitoring of disease propagation, joint work in third countries and the issues of diversity in the citizenry, and migration.

And lastly, cooperation on social policy would probably provoke many kinds of unforeseeable spinoffs related to trade and investment (eg opportunities for health care services, encouraged also by ongoing deregulation, insurance and pension management etc)

Social Policy Issues for Cooperation

The following are suggestions for areas on which Canada and Japan could possibly collaborate successfully. However, they stand only as possibilities and may not in the end be viewed as desirable or feasible. In addition, further development of the initiative, especially in conjunction with Japanese partners, would undoubtedly provide additional ideas. Lastly, issues could be added as they arise throughout the life of the collaboration.

It should be noted that a number of suggestions cut across different themes (such as health and aging; health and human mobility; youth, diversity and human resources; aging and public participation etc).

The general themes were identified in a paper produced by the APFC for the round-table. Participants generally agreed that these themes should provide the parameters for the initiative at this time. These themes in addition help to define for the purposes of the initiative the concept of social policy.

Aging

Canada has many experiences in this domain to share with Japan. For instance, Canada is seen in Japan as a leader in the use of technology for the care of the elderly. More broadly, Canada has much to offer in terms of experience on the matter of adapted facilities for the elderly and the disabled. Canada could also contribute to, and learn from, the ongoing debate in Japan regarding proper care for the elderly: increased use of technology versus increased numbers of care givers through the acceptance of immigrant workers.

Canada could also share knowledge with Japan on the specific success its has achieved in the reduction of poverty of aged women.

Canada and Japan could collaborate on the issue and concept of active ageing. Canada may gain from learning from such experiences in Japan as the one of Hyogo prefecture involving seniors as volunteers in its local governments. Canada itself still has much work to do to find meaningful ways seniors can make contributions to society so that they may put an end to their dependency on it. As described below, Canada could also share its expertise on voluntarism of seniors in community care.

In general, Canada and Japan could work together to promote more fluidity between traditional life categories in order to achieve more flexible and pragmatic life plans. This could involve work on paid and unpaid work for seniors; leisure opportunities for all age categories and the consideration of the development of suitable facilities; life-time education etc. Such promotion of flexibility would contribute to relieving tensions based on inter-generational conflicts and to improving life in urban centres.

Overall, the theme of aging was felt to be the one with the most immediate potential. It includes issues that are on the forefront of policy development in both countries. But aging should be considered for this purpose to also include issues other than those that are of current concern primarily to present-day seniors or soon-to-be seniors (such as pension and health care issues). The implications of an aging society reach into many areas of social policy, such as issues related to youth, human resources and family