

CG Matsunaga's remarks at the opening of the handover ceremony of Foreign Minister's Commendation to Mr William Atwood Macdonald on 26 June 2024

It is my great honour to have this most auspicious opportunity, as we gather here today, to pay respect to Mr William Atwood Macdonald, who was bestowed on the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation.

The Foreign Minister's Commendations are awarded to individuals and groups with outstanding achievements in international fields, in order to acknowledge their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries and areas. The Commendations also aim to promote the understanding and support of the Japanese public for the activities of the recipients.

Mr William Atwood Macdonald was awarded the Minister's Commendation for his distinguished contributions to the mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and Canada, to the development of external economic relations, and to the promotion of activities in the areas of public relations and cultural exchanges.

More specifically, Mr Macdonald played a decisive role in Honda's decision for identifying the company's production site in Alliston Ontario nearly forty years ago, when the company launched production in Canada for the first time. It was the pioneer decision among all Japanese automakers to produce in Canada. At that time he was Special Counsel of this global automobile company. The decision set a precedent for other Japanese automobile related companies' expansion of their business to Canada.

Two months ago, Honda opened a new chapter, announcing its plans to invest approximately 15 billion Canadian dollars, including investment by joint venture partners, to build a comprehensive electric vehicle value chain in Ontario. The announcement was made in the same place, Alliston, Ontario, witnessed and praised by Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Ford among others.

Also, in 1989, Mr Macdonald cofounded the Japan Society, ushering in a trend of active exchanges between the two countries' business leaders, thereby contributing to the promotion of the bilateral economic relations. Until 1994 Mr Macdonald was the Society's Vice Chairman. Together with Chairman Hartland MacDougall, he laid the Society's foundation. From 1994 to 1997, Mr Macdonald was the Chairman of the Society.

Furthermore, Mr Macdonald has donated a large number of Japanese porcelains to George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art. This Macdonald Collection, “brings a unique vision of how different cultures can interact to great benefit and mutual accommodation,” and contributes to the promotion of the Canadian citizen’s understanding on Japanese culture.

Today, our two countries’ relations are ratcheting up to a higher plain, tied together by shared values and common strategic perspectives, underpinned by critically important economic interests. As they say, however, let’s do not forget the person who dug the well.

To Conclude, Mr Macdonald, it is my great pleasure to express our sincerest sense of appreciation for your outstanding contributions to laying the groundwork for the excellent bilateral relations from which we benefit immensely today.

Thank you.