Access to data and research resources is essential for the policy research community. Policy researchers and decision-makers need easier access to policy data in today's faster moving policy context.

It is clear that we need a stronger knowledge base and capacity to make the most of emerging opportunities in a fast-changing and complex world.

In Canada, we have in conjunction with partners in over 30 federal departments and agencies, including my Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as provincial governments, numerous think tanks such as the Asia-Pacific Foundation and many universities, a desire to promote horizontal linkages, working in partnership to identify social policy issues within the Canada.

The Policy Research Initiative is a catalyst in this effort, bringing policy researchers together, helping to build partnerships, synthesizing research results and sharing knowledge.

Over the course of the Japan-Canada social policy collaboration, some of you have attended the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) National Conference and interacted with researchers and policymakers. The purpose of the PRI is to help build a stronger knowledge base on the complex issues facing Canada with international collaboration in a globalizing context. To do this the PRI pursues three objectives:

1. To develop a stronger base of longer-term policy research on crosscutting issues;
2. To build policy research capacity; and
3. To strengthen a culture of partnership in the policy research community across Canada and abroad.

Building partnerships in the policy research community, as we see here today, is critical to our understanding and knowledge development of social policy. With proper knowledge, we will be better prepared to face the many challenges that both Japan and Canada face in our social systems.

3. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

I would now like to take this opportunity to reflect on and talk about some of the principal social policy challenges and opportunities that we face in terms of social policy in a globalizing era.

Social cohesion, and the related concepts of inclusion, exclusion, social capital and differentiation are central debates in public policy today. We must consider such pressing issues as access to work and education, poverty and social inequalities, social and cultural diversity and such emergent challenges as the digital divide.

Let us first take a look at Diversity and Multiculturalism

It is important to recognize that diversity makes society more resilient, more creative and more innovative. In an era of globalization, diversity strengthens our economic, social and cultural ties to the world.