

Foreword

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Canada's first trade mission to Japan. In an Order to Council dated May 4, 1897, Wilfrid Laurier sought permission for a Mr. George Anderson to travel to Japan to investigate "to what extent and in what manner an increase in trade between the Dominion of Canada and Japan can be brought about". When we look back on his report today, we can see that, in a sense, it was Canada's very first Action Plan for Japan.

Mr. Anderson's mission must have been particularly timely, as trade with Japan rose spectacularly in the next few years from a paltry \$8148 of goods shipped to Japan in 1896 to \$616,000 in 1910/11. Japan was and is Canada's most important trading partner in Asia, and as we focus on where we are going, it is both interesting and encouraging to look back at where we were.

In his directions from the Deputy Minister of the Department of Trade and Commerce, Mr. Anderson is reminded that his task is to "closely investigate with reference to what products either natural or manufactured of Canada would seem to be the most likely to suit the Japanese market", bearing in mind that he would "...find the Japanese are perhaps more inclined to be particular with reference to the foreign goods they purchase than almost any other nation. They look minutely into the characteristics of the goods and any slight variation either in quality or appearance from what they are led to expect in purchasing will cause the rejection of the goods upon their arrival in Japan." Recognizing Japan as a sophisticated, demanding market was an important first step 100 years ago. It is still important today, as the Action Plan demonstrates.

It is particularly appropriate to lead into the 1997-98 edition of Canada's Action Plan for Japan with these words from our trading history. Japan is our principal Asian market, and has been so for most of Canada's history.