

## Message from Minister of Foreign Affairs Makiko Tanaka

The Honorable Dr Rey Pagtakhan, Secretary of State, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada

Dr Hiroshi Imada, President, Kwansai Gakuin University,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me to offer a brief message at the opening of this 'Think Social Harmony: Canada-Japan Social Policy Symposium'.

The strengthening of cooperation between Japan and Canada in the field of social policy research was welcomed in the joint press statement released after the Canada-Japan summit meeting in 1999, and I am extremely pleased that, through opportunities such as this symposium, cooperation between our countries in this important field has been making progress. At present in Japan, the aging of the population and the decrease in the number of children are rapidly becoming more pronounced, and it is forecast that by the year 2025 there will be one elderly person for every two workers in Japan. With finances at the national and local levels mired in very severe conditions, it has also become necessary to examine methods for health and medical care from new perspective. In addition, measures should be enhanced throughout society for increasing the participation of women in society and supporting families raising children. These problems are not those only of our country alone, but are problem that many countries around the world are commonly facing.

Under these conditions, this joint symposium, which has as its main themes health and medical care, aging, and work and the family, is a very timely and meaningful opportunity. I hope and expect that his symposium will achieve very fruitful results through the active discussion of the participants and will see further progress in Canada-Japan cooperation in this field.

Lastly, I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to the Canadian Embassy in Japan and Kwansai University, the joint sponsors for this symposium, and to the National Institute for Population and Social Security Research, the Asia Pacific Foundation, Canada, and other concerned organizations for their many contributions in preparing the symposium.