



ASIA PACIFIC  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

FONDATION  
ASIE PACIFIQUE  
DU CANADA

## REPORT

# THE FIRST CANADIAN WOMEN-ONLY BUSINESS MISSION TO JAPAN

**BUILDING WOMEN'S PARTNERSHIPS IN THE CARE ECONOMY  
| APRIL 1-3 2019**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SPONSORS AND PARTNERS .....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	5
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS.....	6
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS .....	8
PROJECT TEAM AND CONTACT.....	10
APPENDIX 1: Pre-Mission Backgrounder	
APPENDIX 2: Presentations	

## SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

*Presenting Sponsor / Commanditaire principal*



*Gold Sponsors / Commanditaires Or*



Global Affairs  
Canada  
Trade Commissioner  
Service

Affaires mondiales  
Canada  
Service des  
délégués commerciaux

**Samantha Thavasa**

## Partner / Partenaire

GENDER, MIGRATION  
& THE WORK OF CARE

CENTRE FOR  
GLOBAL SOCIAL  
POLICY



## Supporting Organizations / Organisations de soutien



COMMUNITTECH



#MOVE  
THE  
DIAL



Rotman | Initiative  
for Women  
in Business



SheEO



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) successfully led the first Canadian Women-only Business Mission to Japan from April 1-3, 2019. This pilot project was launched in support of the government of Canada's efforts to promote international trade diversification and to advance women's economic empowerment by targeting the largest member economy of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) that came into force in December 2018. The mission focused on the "Care Economy" and, in particular, on elder care given Japan's innovative advancements and approaches to managing its super-aged population and its high per capita GDP representing economic opportunities for Canada's care sectors.

The thirty-four (34) member delegation representing regions from across Canada was comprised of seventeen (17) women entrepreneurs, a dozen (12) thought and business leaders and five (5) organizing team members. Over the course of the three-day mission, delegates met with over two hundred (200) Japanese economic and gender policy experts and representatives of companies leading Japan's innovation excellence in elder care, healthcare and long-term care. Delegates visited facilities and labs to observe services offered and technologies employed to support the work of care.

The first two days of the program held at the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo included business to business meetings and a one-day conference with keynote presentations and panel discussions highlighting barriers and opportunities for advancing women's economic interests in the public and private sectors, innovative services and technologies in health and elder care. Japan's presenters representing some of its top thought and business leaders in elder care included the Hon. Seiko Noda, Member of the House of Representatives and former Deputy Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Yoshihiko Hatanaka, Chairman of the Board, Astellas Pharma Inc. and Vice-Chair of the Board of Councillors, Keidanren, Ms. Yukako Uchinaga, Chair of Japan Women's Innovative Network, Dr. Hiroko Akiyama, Professor at the Institute of Gerontology, University of Tokyo and Dr. Yoshiyuki Sankai, President & CEO, Cyberdyne Inc. and Professor and Executive Research Director, Center for Cybernics Research, Tsukuba University.

Day three of the mission took place at Kyoto's Women University situated in Japan's cultural mecca and former capital city. The program included a bilateral panel of women entrepreneurs to discuss best business policies and practices for women-owned and women-led small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The session was hosted by the university's President Tadayuki Hayashi and was attended by business students and local women entrepreneurs.

Achieving results with Asian business partners normally takes a great deal of time, requiring months or years of relationship building. However, this mission successfully achieved immediate results. The business-to-business introductions facilitated by this mission resulted in six (6) significant business partnerships or arrangements for distribution, joint design, manufacturing and or investments and a number of negotiations are on-going with favourable results anticipated in the near future. The results achieved to date are well beyond key performance indicators (KPIs) targeted for this mission rendering this project a tremendous success.

On behalf of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and the Co-Chairs of the mission, the Project Team would like to thank the sponsors, partners and supporting organizations and the delegates for helping us to realize this ambitious yet rewarding project.

Christine Nakamura

## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Discussion following presentations by keynote speakers and panelists centred on Japan's super-aged society—over a quarter of its population is over the age of 65—from the perspective of an investment opportunity for expanding bilateral trade and one that can provide targeted benefits to women entrepreneurs. One of the presenters highlighted that Canada's 2016 census revealed for the first time that seniors outnumbered children. Projections presented also indicated that within the next decade or so, the percentage of seniors in Canada could be close to that of Japan, the world's oldest society. With the current pace of aging, increasing life expectancy and continued low fertility rate in Canada, elder care is becoming an increasingly urgent socio-economic issue.

It was suggested that Japan and Canada would make excellent partners for finding innovative solutions for elder care. As Japan has for decades been dealing with a rapidly aging population, its public and private sectors have emerged as global leaders in systems and technological innovations, service infrastructure, and have even implemented a national long-term care insurance for the elderly. Additionally, Japan's financing structure, as one panelist described, is a gold mine for innovation given that there are still so many needs without solutions in the elder care community.

As for Canada, its strength in healthcare service delivery draws from its open immigration policies that account for the abundant pool of multicultural skilled labour to manage its diverse population. Canada's long history and experience in employing liberal immigration policies could contribute to Japan's efforts to fill its skilled labour shortages and in particular in the elder care sector.

Traditional social expectations concerning family care responsibilities in Canada and Japan result in a disproportionate over-representation of women in both the demand and supply of care products and services. While this imbalance relates to unequal social and economic opportunities between men and women, it also results in more women innovators in the care space. By promoting increased trade in the care sector and, more specifically elder care as well as supporting the scaling of women-owned and women-led businesses in this sector through access to international markets, we are unleashing an engine for strong future economic growth and one that provides targeted benefits to women entrepreneurs.

Related discussions also touched on the uneven advancement of women in the workplace, trends and issues related to elder care and the care economy, and addressed how Canada and Japan can and should work collaboratively to support women in business. Several Japanese participants indicated that Japan lags behind Canada's progress in gender parity in business leadership. For example, one Japanese CEO pointed out that among Japan's listed companies only 1% of CEOs are women whereas 3-4% of CEOs of Canada's publicly traded company are women according to data from the Canadian Press and Canadian think tanks.

The First Canadian Women-only Business Mission to Japan provided a forum for the frank exchange of ideas addressing the business case for women's advancement—why does diversity matter? As one of the Canadian thought leaders responded, "it comes down to the fact that diversity is good for business." In markets like Canada, businesses that reflect a diverse and broader representation of employees, are better able to address the needs and demands of a diverse society. Strong leadership understands that diversity of thought and experiences contribute to better decision-making, innovation, and improved productivity which ultimately drive increased shareholder value. One panelist pointed to OECD and Japanese prefectural data to show that in

areas where women's labour force participation is higher, economies do better and – in contrast to common assumptions – is also correlated with higher birthrates, a desirable outcome for Japan with its record-low birthrates.

In addition to gender inclusion in business, diversity of cultures from Canada's perspective is key to addressing the needs and preferences of a multicultural society. Japan, a nation like many in Asia prides itself on its homogeneous population and therefore policies on immigration have generally been opposed by its leadership and people. However, given its rapidly declining population, it was suggested that Japan needs to seriously consider its options for sustaining its population and nation. As Japan considers its options, Canada could share its expertise as a global leader on open and inclusive immigration policies that may assist Japan in realizing benefits of diversity.

One of the Japanese speakers urged women and men who are exerting efforts to advance diversity in business to move beyond addressing the "why" to defining the "how." Enough has been said and discussed about the benefits of diversity and inclusion in business and decision-making overall. It was unanimously agreed by presenters, panelists and the audience that it is time to take action and achieve results.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ***Align investments in diversity with shareholder interests.*** A key recommendation was to align corporate diversity efforts with shareholder interests, embedding and explicitly defining the return on investment in diversity as a basis for all key decisions in an organization. For example, prioritizing diversity in decision-making processes can be a strategy for improving access to diverse pools of talent, consumers, and investors, which is good for business. Integration of diversity objectives into leadership decisions avoids isolating the goal of diversity as an issue disconnected from corporate operations and profit. If treated as an add-on to decision-making, diversity becomes artificial and marginalized, resulting in its eventual removal from corporate decisions as nonessential in the pursuit of savings and efficiencies. Diversity should be perceived as a capital investment that increases value for companies and their shareholders.
2. ***Expand and strengthen women networks and mentorship, including working with men.*** Women were encouraged by speakers and panelists to grow collaborative networks both locally, within organizations and domestic markets, as well as internationally. The case for women supporting other women in business is clear from a networking and mentorship perspective—connections open up career advancement opportunities for junior beneficiaries. Women need the support of leadership that includes female leadership, which is especially important in sectors traditionally underrepresented by women like STEM fields. On mentorship, as one panelist put it, women cannot see themselves at the top if there is an absence of other women as role models. One panelist recommended regular meetings between senior women mentors and junior mentees to provide advice on and help steer careers for early-stage career women.

Mentorship and networking among women should be complemented with the presence of men. Men still form a clear majority in decision-making roles. Buy-in from men is a necessary precondition for women's advancement. One recommendation to this end is the formation of "joint action committees," which intentionally include male allies in organizations that are interested in improving corporate diversity and gender parity. This may also mitigate feelings of exclusion by men and foster support for an organization's diversity efforts. Men's mentorship is also necessary for women's advancement into leadership positions.

3. ***Support the talent pipeline for women.*** It was agreed that women need support at all stages of their careers that will help mitigate unnecessary loss of talented employees by employers. Due to the gendered expectations of family and domestic care, many talented women employees are lost at the mid-career stage. In Japan, this pattern of women's labour force participation is defined by an asymmetrical M-curve—explained by women leaving the workforce after marriage and/or childbirth, but very gradually returning to the labour force after raising their children. Various work re-entry programs implemented by organizations in Japan today were mentioned and described by participants as models available to mitigate loss of female talent. Supporting re-entry programs could reduce the effects of hiring biases against women due to anticipation of this M-curve pattern. It was further mentioned that a perceived absence of qualified women candidates for Boards of Directors is a barrier to women's advancement to executive and leadership positions. One thought leader from Canada shared information on an innovative "Early-on-Board" solution, a program that prioritizes participation by early stage career women on boards of directors. This strategy not only infuses leadership with new, diverse and innovative energy, but it



would ensure a pool of well-qualified women to take on leadership roles when vacancies arise.

Panelists also suggested that hiring and staffing policies prioritize the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the applicant pool. Additionally, it was recommended where possible and appropriate that more than one woman be promoted to similar levels to mitigate a sense of isolation and a perception that such employees are “diversity candidates.”

4. ***Leaders stand up for diversity.*** Related to recommendation 3, support of the talent pipeline must come from the top. Panelists and participants agreed that for meaningful and sustainable change to occur, leaders must stand up and set precedents for cultural change within organizations.
5. ***Revalue care work.*** Aligned with the theme of the mission, recommendations for the revaluation of care work were directed at both private and public sector organizations.
  - a. ***Combined parental leave.*** Organizations in both private and public sectors were encouraged to adopt combined parental leave for both mothers and fathers. Nordic models of shared parental leave were promoted as exemplars to follow. Policies of shared parental leave, time that is forfeited if unused, encourage co-investment in shared childrearing between two parents, and among heterosexual couples this fosters an improved work-life balance for women and men.
  - b. ***‘Culture change’ around care work.*** More broadly, panelists agreed that the care economy is a good investment compared with other industries, but it was unanimously agreed that worker compensation needs to be revalued to encourage public investment. According to research data presented by one of the experts on care work, government investment of 2% of GDP in the care economy creates almost twice the number of jobs or Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) compared with the same investment into industries that have comparable educational requirements for workers like in infrastructure or construction work. If care work is better valued culturally and with commensurate compensation, investment in the care economy would be even more worthwhile and attractive. As summarized by one participant, you get more “bang for buck” by investing in the care industry.

## PROJECT TEAM AND CONTACT

### **Mission Co-Chairs:**

**Ms. Janice Fukakusa**, Chancellor, Ryerson University; Member of Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's Asia Business Leaders' Advisory Council (ABLAC); Chair, Canada Infrastructure Bank

**Dr. Beatrix Dart**, Professor of Strategic Management and Executive Director, Rotman Initiative for Women in Business, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto; Country Lead, The 30% Club Canada; Co-Chair, The Canadian Gender and Good Governance Alliance

### **Project Director:**

**Ms. Christine Nakamura**, Vice-President, Toronto Office, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

### **Project Team:**

**Dr. Ito Peng**, Distinguished Fellow, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada; Director, Centre for Global Social Policy; Professor of Sociology and Public Policy, Department of Sociology and Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto

**Dr. Andrew Weiling (A.W.) Lee**, Program Manager, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada; Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Global Social Policy, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto

**Ms. Mari Abe**, Mission Logistics, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

For more information on this and future women's trade missions, please contact:

**Ms. Christine Nakamura**  
Vice-President, Toronto Office  
Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada  
E: [christine.nakamura@asiapacific.ca](mailto:christine.nakamura@asiapacific.ca)  
T: (416) 597-8040 x 203  
C: (647) 409-8330

**Dr. Andrew Weiling (A.W.) Lee**  
Program Manager  
Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada  
and  
Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Centre for Global Social Policy  
Department of Sociology, University of Toronto  
E: [a.w.lee@asiapacific.ca](mailto:a.w.lee@asiapacific.ca)  
T: (416) 597-8040 x 205