

## Speech at Washington-Japan Sister Cities Dinner Reception

Good evening, Mayor Davidson, ladies and gentlemen.

### **I. Washington-Japan Sister City Relations**

Thank you for organizing this reception dinner to celebrate Washington and Japan sister city relations. My wife and I feel most honored to be here with you.

We have 37 sister city relationships between Washington State and Japan, in addition to sister state relations with Hyogo Prefecture. This number is by far the largest in the United States -except for California!

### **II. A Three-Fold Tragedy on March 11<sup>th</sup>**

We experienced a three-fold tragedy in the eastern part of Japan on March 11<sup>th</sup>, losing nearly 20,000 people and suffering 211 billion US dollars in damage. Ishinomaki, the sister city of Everett, was swallowed by a 25 foot high tsunami and lost 3,900 residents.

We have received many messages of sympathy, and donations and volunteers in the affected areas from Washington State. I would like to express sincere gratitude to you for all your support. Washington and Japan are so connected! These ties are made possible by you engaging in grassroots exchange through sister city relations.

7 months have passed since the disaster. Debris has been cleared in the coastal areas. Supply chains have been restored. Tohoku is on the way to recovery and reconstruction. Whether to relocate towns on hilltops, or to rebuild them where they are with strengthened shelters is being discussed by many communities in devastated areas. It will take several years to rebuild, but the first important steps have been taken already.

### **III. Japan is Open for Business and Travel**

I would also like to brief you all on the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant situation. There have been a lot of sensationalized media reports about the radioactive leakage. We have a strong anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan right now, and may revise our energy policies in the coming years, but I want to remind everyone that there were neither injuries nor was there a single loss of life because of the nuclear meltdown. Our strict rules and regulations have already seen us through a disaster and kept everyone safe.

The point to remember is that Japan is open for business and travel. Your sister city relations and exchange programs can continue to grow and thrive!

### **IV. 200 Kids to Ride Boeing 787**

I'll tell you a short story.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, just one month ago, the new Boeing 787, made in partnership with Japanese companies, was delivered to ANA and will soon begin commercial use. Before that, on October 30<sup>th</sup>, they will send the new plane up to Sendai Airport, which incidentally was a base of the US forces during "Operation Tomodachi" half a year ago. ANA will invite 200 kids from Miyagi and Fukushima to ride on the aircraft. Our Dreamliner will encourage their dreams for the future!

### **CG Commendation**

Now I will change topics entirely. In addition to enjoying this fine reception, I would like to take this opportunity to confer the Consul General's Commendation on Mr. Burton Bard Jr., the State Coordinator of Washington State, for his contributions of distinction. I'll name three main achievements now.

First, he founded the American Cultural Exchange in 1973, which aided Japanese students to study in the United States including arranging home stays, ESL classes and cultural education. Mr. Bard has dedicated himself tirelessly to international exchange. Today, Washington State has the second most students from Japan after California.

Second, he initiated the Seattle Sister City Reception in 1996 and helped foster sister city exchanges between Seattle and cities around the world. This year is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this reception!

Third, he became the Washington State Coordinator of Sister Cities International in 2006 and organized the annual conference for Washington State sister cities.

On top of these, and very close to home for me, in February last year, he coordinated with my Consulate so that we could host a reception at my Official Residence for those involved sister city relations. Thank you, again!

Mr. Bard's work is not over. Just 2 weeks ago, Mount Vernon and Matsushige signed all the documents to make them official sister cities. I am sure you can guess who the matchmaker was!

My office and I appreciate your work so very much. You have touched such a large number of lives in a wonderful way. You have truly promoted peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.