



JLGC

News Letter

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JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER (CLAIR, NEW YORK)

Greetings from the new Executive Director of JLGC

Shinji Hirai / Executive Director

CLAIR UPDATE



It is a great honor for me to salute the devoted readers of the “JLGC Newsletter”. I took over as executive director of the Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) here in New York on June 21. Taking this opportunity, I should like to extend my appreciation to you for your deep commitment to JLGC and your invaluable co-operation in strengthening Japan’s grass-roots ties with the United States and Canada. At the same time, I want to thank Mr. Naofumi Hida, my predecessor, for his unlimited efforts during his tenure these past four years. I hope to be able to build upon his accomplishments. Indeed, thanks to the unstinting efforts of all of you, and of my predecessors and our staff, JLGC has gained an outstanding reputation throughout the United States and Canada.

Now, we are welcoming the 20th year of the JET Programme that began in 1987, and we have just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first U.S.-Japan Sister City agreement. Over the last 19 years, approximately 44,000 JET participants, 20,000 of which were from the U.S. and 6,500 from Canada, have lived and worked in Japan. The enormous success of the JET Programme is certainly due to the ceaseless contributions of its participants and alumni, and the generous support of all the parties concerned. Meanwhile, the number of U.S.-Japan and Canada-Japan Sister City, Sister State and Sister Province relationships has risen to as many as 504.

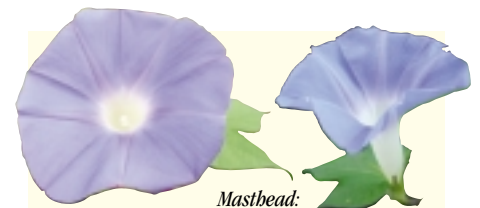
These days, Japanese local governments are charting an uncertain future, full of financial difficulties, not to mention a major structural reform of government and society. I believe that there are no national borders that separate countries when it comes to establishing effective and efficient management of state, prefecture, provincial and local governments contributing to the maximum happiness of their citizens. Even though each of our countries has a different government system, each pursues essentially the same goals: providing welfare, education, community development, economic growth, public safety, health and so on. Indeed, we can share our wisdom and our experience for a prosperous future across borders.

I formerly served as vice-governor of Tottori Prefecture, until March, 2005, striving to carry out drastic reforms. To be honest, I am really looking forward to having the chance to witness what is going on in the U.S. and Canada at all levels of government as well as, contributing to the building of a “glorious bridge of mutual understanding and close friendship” across the Pacific Ocean among the U.S, Canada and Japan.

In closing, I should be most grateful for your continuing support of JLGC toward the accomplishment of our mission. I look forward to working with you.

With my best regards,

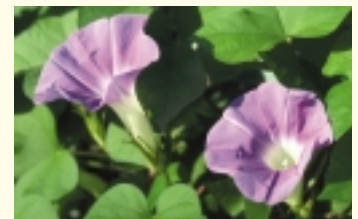
Shinji Hirai



Masthead:
The Asagao,

or Morning Glory, is one of the most popular summer flowers in Japan.

It opens in the morning and closes in late afternoon. In the language of flowers, it signifies short-lived love.

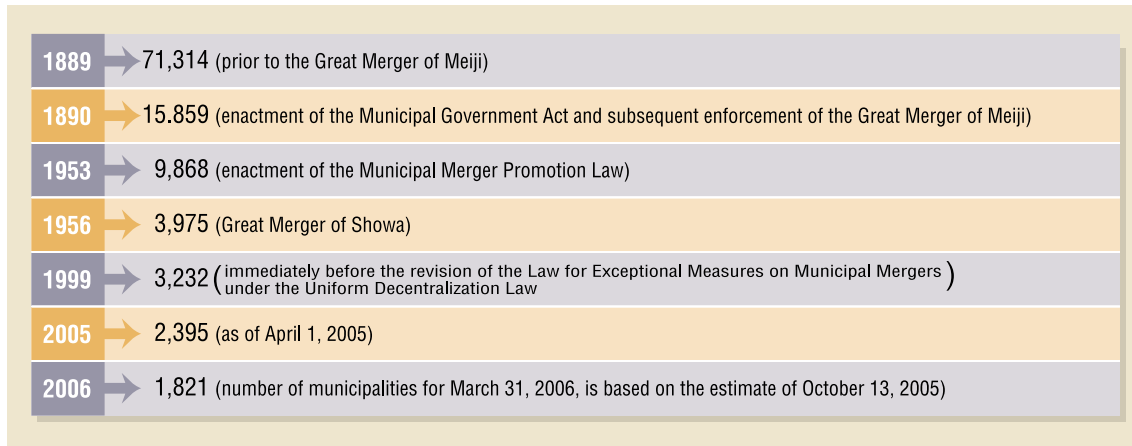




Newsletter article on Municipal Mergers in Japan Japan Consolidates

SPECIAL FEATURE

Changes in the number of cities, towns and villages (Fig. 1)



There has been a history in Japan of the consolidation of governmental units. Since the Meiji Restoration that occurred in 1868 there have been two such moments of municipal consolidation (see, Figure 1). The first, known as *The Great Merger of Meiji*, took place in 1889. At that time, a more modern local government was established and so, individually, municipalities need to be able to cope with many new responsibilities. The second, known as *The Great Merger of Showa*, took place from 1953-6. Again, these mergers were in response to a further increase in the responsibilities of local governments. Now, we are entering a third consolidation, which is tentatively known as *The Great Merger of Heisei*.

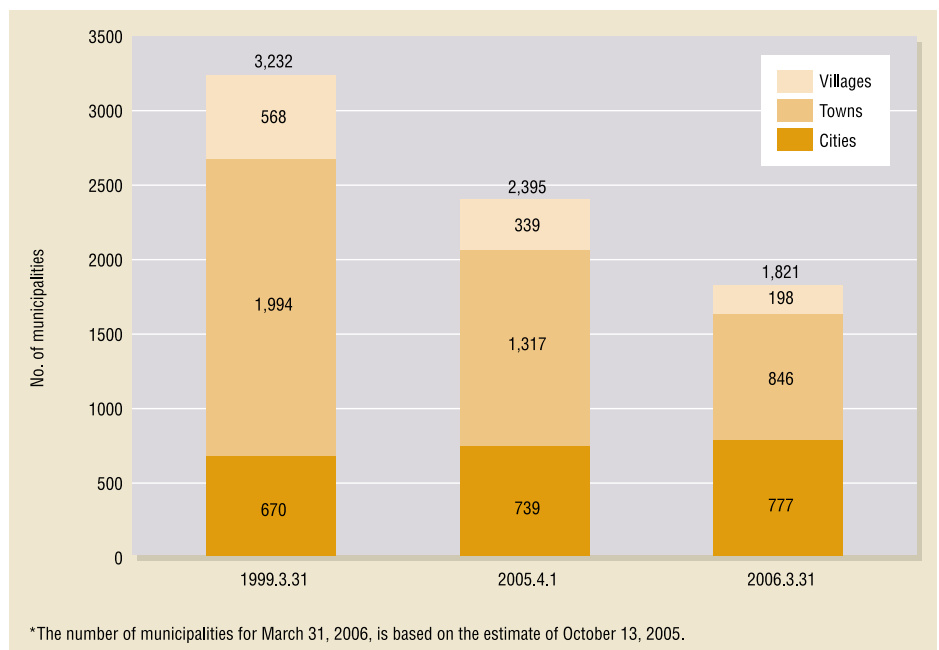
The reasons for the current wave of merger activity are more complicated than in the previous two. Nevertheless, the overriding impetus today for merging municipalities is the promotion of 'decentralisation'. In recent years, the national government has wished to place more and more authority for government administration at the local level. So, local governments need a much greater level of certainty to operate, in terms of legal authority, in terms of financial means and in terms of

human resources if they are going to be effective in delivering the services their residents need. In addition to that clarity, all governments are facing a declining birth-rate and aging population trend in Japan. This trend will require local governments to have the ability to maximise the efficiency with which they will provide services to the elderly in the future. It is important, also, to have municipalities respond to

encourage municipalities to merge (see, Figure 2 for a description of the number of municipal mergers since 1999). This was known as *The Law for Exceptional Measures in Municipal Mergers*. It was designed to sunset after a period of five years. That, together with the available financial subsidies, of course, was to give municipalities an incentive to merge.

Under the law, the Ministry of

The Progress of Municipal Mergers in Japan (Fig. 2)



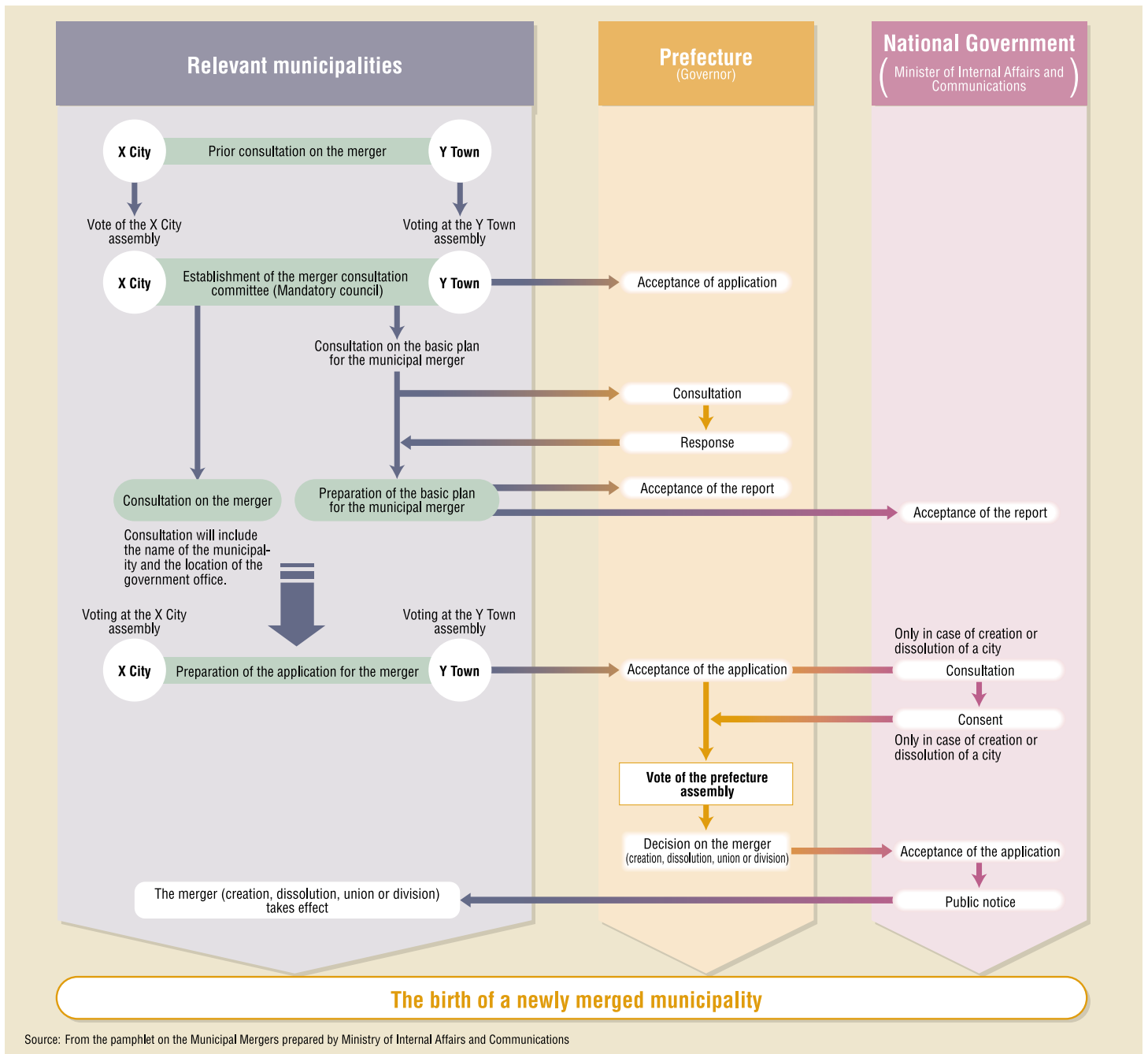
Internal Affairs and Communications was asked to develop a policy for encouraging the merger of municipal governments. The relevant municipalities apply for a merger to the prefecture after they have engaged in

consultations with each other about the desire to combine their municipalities. Then, the merger is decided by a vote of the prefecture assembly.

The procedure that has been set out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs

and Communications involves the municipalities, the relevant prefecture, the citizens affected and the staff of the Ministry. There is ample time for discussion both for and against the idea of merging (see, Figure 3).

Measures for Promotion of the Municipal Mergers (Fig. 3)





As everyone knows, Tokyo is the center of Japanese government, commerce, and culture, as well as being the place to go to for the latest and most advanced technological gadgets. Tokyo is a sophisticated and cosmopolitan urban city that is evolving continuously. You can enjoy traditional Japanese sumo wrestling and kabuki theater, as well as the pop arts of anime and cutting-edge fashion. But there is another “wild” Tokyo: You can experience the healing effects of nature in the mountains of the Tama Region, the beautiful scenery of the Izu Islands, and the breathtaking Ogasawara Island. Discover all of Tokyo’s attractions and experience its wonderful hospitality.

▶ **“Asakusa” — Conveying Old Edo Flavor to the Present Day**

Asakusa has developed as a Monzen-cho, or temple town, for about 400 years. Senso-ji Temple originated in 628 A.D. and is the oldest and most impressive temple in Tokyo. Nearby, Kappabashi Street has been famous for more than 90 years for its wholesale stores selling wax imitation food, restaurant equipment and kitchenware. A major lure of Asakusa for tourists is the rows of houses along streets full of old-time downtown atmosphere. The annual Sanja Matsuri in May is one of Tokyo’s most gorgeous and vibrant events. You can see more than 100 Mikoshi, beautiful portable shrines, floating on the streets of Asakusa.



▶ **“Harajuku & Omotesando”**

— **Tokyo’s Fashion District**

Harajuku and Omotesando are the refined shopping areas just off and behind Shibuya. You should explore Omotesando Hills, the latest hip complex which opened in February. Omotesando Hills is home to more than 90 chic stores and trendy restaurants, and is always crowded with fashionable people. The 80-year old Dojunkai Aoyama Apartments stood at this site, and was the oldest apartment building in Japan and a symbol of the Omotesando area. A part of this apartment building has been restored, preserving a connection to the history of the area.

• For more information please visit <http://www.omotesandohills.com/eng/index.html>

▶ **Tokyo Marathon 2007**



On February 18, Tokyo will host “Tokyo Marathon 2007”. Similar to the New York City and London marathons, the Tokyo Marathon

will attract enthusiastic amateur local runners and world-class professional athletes from around the world. Runners will start from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building in Shinjuku and pass famous tourist attractions such as the Imperial Palace, the Tokyo Tower, Ginza and Asakusa, before finishing at Rinkai Waterfront City. Applications for the Tokyo Big Marathon 2007 should be submitted by August 18, 2006. Please check the following Web site:

http://www.tokyo42195.org/index_e.html

▶ **“Tokyo Festa” — Tokyo City Promotion in New York**

Tokyo Metropolitan Government

and the Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau organized “Tokyo Festa” in February, 2006, in the Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central Terminal in New York City. It was a festive exhibition bridging the Tokyos of yesterday and today. The many New Yorkers visiting “Tokyo Festa” enjoyed viewing old Tokyo’s huge Japanese style bridge, a calligraphy performance, thunderous Taiko drums, and the traditional fun and games from days of old, when Tokyo was known as Edo. They also enjoyed new Tokyo by watching anime hits presented on a big screen. Tokyo will hold another public event again on October 27 and 28 of 2006 in New York City.



• For more information:

<http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/index.htm>

Tokyo Metropolitan Government
<http://www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp/english/index.html>

The Tourism Division, Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government
http://www.tcvb.or.jp/en/index_en.htm

Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau





My JET Experience, Now and Then

Jennifer Olayon, President of JET Alumni Association of New York, 2005- 2007

J E T A A A C T I V I T I E S

My time on the JET Program (1999-2000) remains a precious turning point in my life, and my own personal ties to the Program remain strong. The people of Seihi-cho, welcomed me to their town and gave me the privilege to assist with their English language instruction in their junior high school but moreover, to partake in their daily life, and sample a flavor of their prefecture's uniqueness through the introduction of such food delicacies as castella, and champon influenced by the Portuguese and Chinese respectively, and a course that stands out as a true welding of cultures, shippoku (meaning "dinner table" in Chinese), a mixed dish made of Japanese, Chinese and Western origin.



Farwell party hosted by Seihi-cho high school teachers, June 2000

Seihi-cho is not foreign to international and cultural experience; it has long enjoyed ties to Dutch culture. My family and friends were amused to learn that when I would walk to one corridor of the junior high school I worked at and look out of the window, I would see, as one would expect in suburban Japan, a traditional home adorned with intricate roof tile but at the opposite end of the school, I saw a grand wind mill tunnel and bright yellow tulips, as if I had been transported to Holland's countryside. Through tailored person-to-person marketing messages, JET alumni have the opportunity to endorse Japan and

their respective Japanese hometown on JET and post-JET, as a tourist destinations. We can tell our friends and family the wonders of Japan, through the unique lens of living in Japan as JET participants.

This is a banner year for JET both on an international and immediate local level. The Program celebrates its 20th year anniversary and the JET Alumni Association of New York (JETAANY), was conferred the title "Special Representative for the Visit Japan Campaign" by the Government of Japan, the first organization to be awarded this. Under Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the Japanese government has set to double the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan each year, to ten million by 2010. The JET program welcomed us to Japan and now JETAANY is happy to help welcome Japan to our friends, family, co-workers, and the many other people that we communicate with through the JET alumni association. If every JET alumni can convince one person to visit Japan, that would translate to 44,000 new visitors!

JETAANY's designation ceremony was held at the official residence of Mr. Motoatsu Sakurai, Ambassador of the Consulate General of Japan in New York on May 2, 2006. In true JET fashion, the event brought together people from both Japan and the United States. Guests included alumni from the tri-state area, government officials, media and tourism industry professionals. Notably, there were two distinguished guests from Japan. Mr. Ryuhei Maeda, whom on behalf of, Mr. Kosuke Shibata, Deputy Vice Minister of Tourism Policy, awarded JETAANY a plaque in recognition of this special honor and one of JET's

most famous alumni, Mr. Anthony Bianchi, the first North American elected city council member in Japan, who was in New York to a part of his hometown's annual Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Sakura Matsuri.



Designation Ceremony, May 2006

I think the Program was really onto something when they said "exchange." Our work on the ground, in the classroom, in our villages, towns, or cities touches many lives. Upon our return to the United States, we have the opportunity to be a kind of cultural "buzz" agent and promote Japan, the JET Program, and the distinctive charm of what we called home for at least one year. In keeping with JETAANY's mission in promoting Japanese culture and understanding, this new partnership with the government through the Japan National Tourist Organization enhances JETAANY's role as grassroots cultural ambassadors. This in turn will help the organization further build upon its resources in developing a deeper understanding of Japan.

In constant search of this deeper understanding, we at JET continue to stay involved with Japan through our volunteer and professional activities. Our new collaboration with the Visit Japan Campaign is an exciting endeavor and we will strive to be an outstanding model for the other JETAA international chapters to follow.



CLAIR

Building Prosperity Together: The 69th Annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference

Matthew Gillam / JLGC Senior Researcher

JLGC UPDATES

The beautiful and historic city of Montreal played host to the 69th Annual FCM Conference and Municipal Expo, running from June 2nd to the 5th. This year's conference was significant because it was the first time that the new Prime Minister, Steven Harper, was able to address the assembled municipal leaders and appeal for support for his policies, and it signaled the beginning of a new chapter for FCM in its dealings with the federal government.



The former Liberal governments, especially the last led by Paul Martin, came to agreement with FCM that the federal government should recognize and - as far as constitutionally possible and with the agreement of the provinces - directly support municipal and regional government. Mr. Harper has held to his Conservative Party's position that the Canadian Constitution gives control of local government to the provinces, with no direct federal role in their affairs. He has shown indications, however, since his election, that he has somewhat modified his strict views and is willing to expend political capital to gain the support of the major cities and their large populations that have traditionally not supported his party.

The main topic of this year's gathering was the much-discussed "fiscal imbalance" that has been dominating the Canadian news for months now. This term originally applied to the disparity between revenue available to the provinces and their constitutional obligations (i.e. post-secondary education, health care, etc.), but that has recently been expanded to

include the needs of local governments in meeting obligations (primary & secondary education, social welfare, etc.) to their residents. With multi-billion dollar federal surpluses over the last few years, Ottawa has been depicted as recovering spectacularly from the fiscal problems of the 1990s at the expense of lower orders of government, who suffered from downloading and constrained revenue sources. With Ontario in the lead, provincial premiers have been asking for more money from the federal government to help them meet their obligations. But to complicate matters, because some of this money would probably come from changes to the equalization program there is also widespread disagreement among the provinces about how to achieve any increase.

Municipal governments, both big cities and smaller rural communities, have taken up the fiscal imbalance argument and are demanding more flexible and lucrative revenue sources, like a permanent share of the federal gasoline tax, in order to pay for the physical and social infrastructure for which they are responsible. They also see their best hope of increased funding as coming from the federal government, with its ongoing surpluses, rather than the provincial governments that would have to raise taxes to cover the extra spending.

The Prime Minister promised to maintain some Liberal initiatives, like the temporary gas tax transfer to municipal governments, and he promised to consult with the cities on issues of national importance, like immigration and public safety. It is not clear in the long run, though, how he will reconcile the Conservative goal of greater autonomy for the provinces within a more decentralized federal system with the demands of municipal leaders and citizens that the federal government consult with and support local governments more directly.

All evidence indicates that municipal governments are not willing

to go back to pleading with their provincial overseers for more funding and support, feeling that relationship has seldom yielded the desired results, since, ironically, provincial governments seem to have an easier time ignoring or rejecting the demands of their subordinate municipalities. Now that appeals to Ottawa have started to pay off (literally), local leaders at the conference were focused on capitalizing on their strength in numbers as FCM members in order to extract further aid from the federal government.

Other popular topics this year included pollution and environmental policy, and how to implement "green" solutions at all levels of government, along with the related topic of funding for more public transit. The ongoing divide between the large cities and smaller communities was a recurring theme in comments from participants, with smaller communities feeling that their interests are overlooked or sacrificed in the effort by their more influential big city colleagues to wrest concessions from the federal government out of the limited resources available.



Montreal was a beautiful and gracious host for this year's conference, with generous helpings of the great food, enchanting music and dazzling circus performances for which the city is famous. Next year's 70th annual conference will be held in Calgary, and the pressure is on to match, if not surpass, the level of meaningful discussion, productive working sessions, and pleasant after-hours festivities of this year's conference.



Mayors Meet in Las Vegas for a Spectacular Conference

Seth B. Benjamin / JLGC Senior Researcher

JLGC UPDATES

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) held its 74th annual conference in the fabled city of Las Vegas, Nevada, from 2nd June to 6th June. With over 300 mayors in attendance, and with Mayor Oscar Goodman as host, the conference offered the mayors full days of hard work and some well-earned night-time relaxation enjoying the sights and sounds of Las Vegas.



Beverly O'Neill, Mayor of Long Beach, CA, Outgoing President of USCM, Addressing the Conference Participants

As usual, the conference followed a format that mixed standing committees, task forces and workshops, together with general sessions. The range of subjects covered was wide. Community policing, homelessness, city beautification, health, poverty and work opportunities, energy and the environment and exploited children were just some of the topics that the mayors addressed in various formats. The international quality of the meeting was highlighted by a well-attended meeting of the International Committee. At that meeting, Mr. Naofumi Hida, JLGC's director, gave a short speech complimenting the work of USCM and the very warm relationship JLGC has with American and Canadian mayors. He introduced the new executive director, Mr. Shinji Hirai, and two of our senior officials from CLAIR (Tokyo): Shinichi Ohno, Senior Managing Director, and Yoshitaka Hada, Manager of the International Information Division. The U.S. State Department was represented by the director of Intergovernmental Affairs.



Mr. Hirai, New Executive Director, and Mr. Hida, Director, of JLGC, with Michael Guido, Mayor of Dearborn, MI, Incoming President of USCM

At the plenary and luncheon sessions, we were treated to some fine speeches by a variety of national and international figures. The Mayor of Beijing, China, who is also the president of the China Association of Mayors, spoke about the slow but developing quality of life in China's capital city. He was proud of the fact that in Beijing the *per capita* income was equivalent to that of Americans in 1974! He tempered his enthusiasm, however, with the recognition that between Beijing and the rest of the country there was an enormous gap in wealth creation. Then, at the annual luncheon celebrating the city livability awards, U.S. Senator John McCain addressed the mayors on a few key subjects. (Incidentally, the city livability awards are an opportunity to reward the leadership of those mayors who have made an attempt to make their cities that much more livable.) The main thrust of Senator McCain's talk was about two subjects that have captured the public's imagination; immigration and the war in Iraq.



Mr. Hirai and Mr. Hida with US Secretary of Transportation, Norman Mineta

Two more notable speakers were the Governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson, and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Norman Mineta. Governor Richardson spoke to the mayors about energy policies and how the United States has to lessen its reliance on foreign oil (the Governor had been U.S. Secretary of Energy in the Clinton Administration). He spoke also about immigration. This for him was a very real issue since his state was a border state with Mexico. He talked about poverty and finally about the threat to the world of Iran as a nuclear power (the Governor was also the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in the Clinton Administration).



A Plenary Session at the Conference

Of course, the mayors had a chance to relax and enjoy the enormous variety of entertainment Las Vegas has to offer. This included a unique opportunity to see the famous French-Canadian troupe Cirque du Soleil in a brand new production celebrating the life and art of the *Beatles*. They were able to taste a sampling of the various acts that were being presented currently in Las Vegas and enjoyed an evening at the heart of the 'old' Las Vegas, Fremont Street, with its tremendous light show. In all, the conference allowed JLGC to strengthen its strong ties to the United States Conference of Mayors, make many new friends among the mayors and renew old friendships.



Accomplishments of our Local Government Officials Training Program

Tamaki Yoshida / Former Assistant Director, JLGC

C O R R E S P O N D E N T F R O M F O R M E R J L G C M E M B E R

Mina-san konnichiwa! My name is Tamaki Yoshida; I'm a former member of the New York Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) where I worked until this past year. I am now back in Japan and back in my office at the City of Yokosuka International Relations Division.

At the JLGC, I was in charge of the Local Government Officials Training Program (LGOTP) and often tried, unsuccessfully, to recruit trainees from several cities in the U.S. I recall the words of my coworker Stephen V. Fasano, who explained the difficulty for American city officials to leave their taxpayers for six months to train overseas. Having returned to my hometown and my work with the City of Yokosuka, I am now again in charge of the LGOTP through which we currently host a trainee from the People's Republic of China. Having been unable to recruit U.S. trainees in the past, I never imagined that I would be involved in the program from my post in Japan. I can't help but wonder if the LGOTP and I are connected by some kind of invisible power.



Making a courtesy call on director of Seoul Grand Park Zoo

Yokosuka has hosted trainees through the program since 1996. To date, we have welcomed nine participants from Vietnam, Thailand, Korea and China. These trainees visit our city to learn Japan's local government systems, but the lessons learned through their daily

interactions with their Japanese coworkers cannot be understated. The LGOTP offers not only our trainees but also our municipal staff an invaluable lesson in internationalization.

Having hosted trainees from Korea six times, my colleagues and I decided to deepen our relationship with the country itself by traveling to Seoul for three days and two nights in April. In Seoul, we reunited with former trainees and learned about our neighboring country.



pojangmacha

We headed out to Haneda International Airport after work; compared to Narita, the main international airport serving the Tokyo area, Haneda is located very close to Yokosuka. We landed at the Seoul Gimpo International Airport and reached our hotel by 11:00 p.m. where two former trainees, accompanied by another Korean friend were awaiting our arrival. They brought us to Dongdaemun, an absolutely exciting area in Seoul's downtown which never goes to sleep! Even in the middle of the night, there are so many young people shopping, eating and drinking that you easily forget that it is not daytime.

Dongdaemun is especially famous for its pojangmacha, sit-down street food vendors serving traditional Korean food and drinks. My travel companions, myself in particular, stuffed ourselves full that night.

The next morning, and on very little sleep, we visited to the Seoul Grand Park Zoo where Jung Sang Yun, Yokosuka's trainee from last year, is employed. In spite of having slept very little, Yun-san was very alert when he picked us up at the subway station. He guided us around the park and showed us the flamingo, dolphin, and sea lion shows which now incorporate ideas and skills learned during his training in Japan's zoos and aquariums last year.

If you visit Korea, please stop by the Seoul Grand Park Zoo and enjoy the animal shows. Not only is the park itself worth the trip, the shows are also an excellent example of the LGOTP's success in uniting Japanese and Korean culture.



Dolphin show

PS. A bit of news from Washington D.C., Strader Payton, Yokosuka's former Graduate Student Intern has just landed a position working with the New York office of Tokyo T.V. Congratulations Payton-san!

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