

Message from Mr. Kawamura, Mayor of Mitaka City, Tokyo, on the Visit to La Cañada Flintridge

To our friends in La Cañada Flintridge: I am Takashi Kawamura, Mayor of Mitaka City, Tokyo.

A delegation from Mitaka City, led by Deputy Mayor Hiroshi Tsuchiya, is currently visiting La Cañada Flintridge. As this marks an important occasion to build a new friendship between our two cities, I have asked Mr. Tsuchiya to deliver my sincere greetings to all of you on my behalf.

First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mayor Kim Bowman for warmly welcoming our delegation, as well as to the members of the City Council, the Sister Cities Association, and all the residents of La Cañada Flintridge. I am also deeply grateful for the precious opportunities you have arranged for us, including the tour of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

In Mitaka City, we have been promoting the creation of a multicultural, inclusive community by deepening our understanding of differences among countries and regions through exchanges with residents of overseas origins living in our city. For this reason, we have not engaged in exchanges with specific countries or cities outside of Japan in the past.

Even with this backdrop, I believe the City of La Cañada Flintridge's kind proposal to establish a sister-city relationship is a new step

forward in international exchange for Mitaka City and represents a deeply meaningful opportunity.

I have high hopes for this sister city partnership because I sense a strong shared commitment to peace by both cities.

Mitaka City was once home to a munitions factory, and war relics and traces of that history are present to this day. We continue our efforts to research and preserve these sites while passing on the importance of peace to future generations.

Inokashira Park—a symbol of Mitaka City—was also greatly affected during the war. Many of its cedar trees are said to have been cut down to make coffins for those who perished in air raids, making the park a desolate place. Nonetheless, thanks to the efforts of many people, the park was subsequently restored and has now become a place of relaxation where many people gather. Its current appearance reminds us of the preciousness of peace.

I am very pleased that you have noted the commonalities between Descanso Gardens and Inokashira Park. The Japanese garden at Descanso Gardens also symbolizes the journey Japan and the United States have taken to overcome a difficult history and foster mutual understanding and friendship.

I believe that these two parks share the common desire of people to connect the experiences of the past with the future, and at the root of that lies a wish for peace. That is precisely why I hope that exchanges between our two cities will also deepen mutual understanding and serve as a bridge of friendship leading into the future.

There is also great potential in education and learning.

Mitaka City hosts research institutions such as the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, and many residents are interested in space and astronomy. Meanwhile, La Cañada Flintridge is home to the world-renowned NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. This shared interest in space and science can also become a driving force for the future exchanges between our two cities.

Exchanges among children and young people are also important. I believe that the greatest significance of sister city exchanges lies in their impact on the next generation—who will shape the future—as they learn about each other's cultures and histories, foster friendships, and build connections that transcend national borders.

I believe that these connections—where citizens learn from one another, and children interact—will be the greatest force for peace and friendship in the future.

In Mitaka City, the Mitaka International Society for HOsPitality (MISHOP), a local NPO/foundation, has long led citizens' initiatives in international exchange and mutual understanding. I believe that the driving force behind sister city exchanges lies in exchanges between citizens. Going forward, I wish to see MISHOP and the Sister City Association of La Cañada Flintridge work together to expand the circle of exchanges among our citizens.

The cities create opportunities. Their citizens nurture the friendships. I am convinced that such exchanges will be the foundation for a long-lasting sister city relationship.

As for Mitaka City, we will move steadily toward the formal establishment of a sister city relationship while promoting its support in the City Council and among our citizens. Based on the shared desire for peace and passion for learning that our two cities hold, we hope to build a long-lasting friendship.

Just as Descanso Gardens has been symbolizing the bond between Japan and the United States, I sincerely hope that the friendship between our two cities will serve as a solid bridge passed down to future generations.

In closing, I wish you all good health and continued prosperity for the City of La Cañada Flintridge. I hope today's meeting marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our two cities, and with that, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you very much.

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Takashi Kawamura, Mayor of Mitaka