

Message from Consul-General of Japan, Takako Ito

May, 2018

The people of Canada were devastated by two grave tragedies in April. The first occurred on April 6, when the bus carrying the Saskatchewan junior ice hockey team Humboldt Broncos encountered a major accident, killing 16, including several players in their teens, and injuring 13 passengers. Canadians mourned the deaths of the young athletes on the move by bus – some of them would have been future stars of the game – fearing that a similar accident could have occurred anywhere in the country. People stood hockey sticks outside their front doors or in their yards, and wore jerseys as expressions of mourning and solidarity. Money quickly gathered in a fund established to support the victims' families and people affected by the accident.

Then on April 23, before we had reconciled with the grief resulting from the first tragedy, a rental van drove for more the two kilometers on a sidewalk in the northern part of Toronto, killing 10 and injuring 16. The passengers in the Humboldt Broncos bus which crashed had been ascertained quickly, but a misidentification of one of the



deceased caused a great deal of confusion and distress. In contrast, the incident in Toronto involved ordinary pedestrians in a multicultural Canadian city where people from a wide variety of ethnicity live together. The work of identifying the victims was done very cautiously and took time, and their names were not immediately made public.

Our staff at the Consulate-General of Japan reacted quickly, gathering information to ascertain whether Japanese nationals were among the victims. At the same time, we shared available information through our consular e-mails which were disseminated among the individuals on our residential and travel registration lists. Media queries were also given responses in a timely manner. Although the area in which this terrible incident took place is one where many Japanese nationals live, fortunately there were no Japanese involved in this incident.

Some members of the Japanese business community told me they first learned of the incident from our consular e-mail, and that they were able to quickly confirm the safety of their employees and their families as a result. We also heard from people who received the e-mail and contacted us to confirm the safety of the Japanese foreign students under the care.



We would like to once again urge Japanese nationals residing or traveling in Ontario to properly register, just in case such emergencies occur.



In fact, among the victims of this horrible tragedy was a Jordanian gentleman who was in Toronto visiting his son, as well as a South Korean student who was studying here. Japanese nationals who are here for a short time can utilize our travel registration, and those who are here for longer than three months can make use of the residential registration. This will enable us to communicate with them in a timely manner. We strongly urge all Japanese in Ontario to take advantage of this effective system. Even if you are on our residential registration list, it is possible you may encounter emergencies while traveling in regions outside Ontario, so completing the travel registration before you leave is highly recommended.

This incident in Toronto does not appear to be related to organized terrorism. Even in Japan, the Akihabara massacre took place in 2007, killing seven and injuring 10 people. If such a terrible incident can occur in Japan, a country considered to be among the safest in the world, it becomes imperative that proper care be taken while traveling overseas.

Starting in April, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website has been presenting a series of videos entitled *Golgo 13's Overseas Safety Manual for Small and Medium Enterprises* – one episode every week. These are animated versions of the manga published last year, and each instalment consists of the story and its analysis. The series is not limited to small and medium enterprises, and some episodes contain information that are useful for tourists, foreign students and anyone living overseas.

I urge you to have a look. Incidentally, the Golgo 13 character is voiced by the celebrated actor Hiroshi Tachi, and our Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Kono himself supplied the voice of the Japanese Foreign Minister who appears in the first episode.



Countless people placed flowers and messages of sympathy at the scene of the tragedy in Toronto's North York. Consuls-General posted in Toronto from various countries were also given an opportunity to lay flowers, and I participated as the Consul-General of Japan. As well, in the evening of April 29,

the people of Toronto, with Canadian Governor-General Julie Payette and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in attendance, held a vigil in defiance of the cold temperature of just 6°C. I was deeply moved by the courageous message from Torontonians that Toronto will grow stronger in the aftermath of such tragedy, not through hate but through love.

