



## **Background: The Sakura Project Comes to a Close**



September 2012 – History will close a chapter in Japan-Canada relations this fall, when the Sakura Project will mark its end with a donation of 30 trees to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre(JCCC) on Sept. 20. This will conclude more than a decade of strengthening friendship between Japan and Canada through the planting of over 3,000 Sakura (Japanese flowering cherry) trees at public places around Ontario.

Initiated in the spring of 2000, the aim of this project has been to promote understanding between Japan and Ontario – and between Japan and Canada – by planting donated Sakura trees in areas that were prominently visible to Canadians. The Japanese hold tremendous affection for Sakura, its beauty being a source of a great deal of national pride. The blossoms are a beloved sign of spring each year, and Japanese traditionally hold Sakura viewings in parks and other locations, often enhanced by picnic meals and Japanese rice wine (saké). Due in part to the Sakura Project, cherry blossom viewings have also become an annual practice here in Ontario (albeit without wine in public parks, of course).

The Sakura Project across the province has planted 3,082 trees at 58 locations ranging from public parks to schools, universities, research institutions and elderly care facilities. These plantings were made possible by the generous monetary contributions by Canadian and Japanese private citizens and companies, who together have generously donated more than \$83,000 toward the purchase, shipment and planting of the Sakura trees.



The Sakura Project was overseen by the Sakura Committee, a group of prominent members of the Japanese and Japanese Canadian community, who volunteered their time to guide the Project in the direction of its mandate. The Chair of the Committee has been traditionally filled by the current Consul-General of Japan in Toronto (at present Mr. Eiji Yamamoto). Otherwise, while membership of the Committee has undergone some changes over the years, the current roster consists almost entirely of members who have been with the Project since the beginning:

Chair: Mr. Eiji Yamamoto, Consul-General of Japan in Toronto

Vice-Chair: Mr. John Craig, Counsel for Davis LLP and Chair of the Japan Society

Mr. Scott Fujita, former Senior Landscape Architect. Salmona Tregunno Inc.

Mr. Sid Ikeda, Special Ambassador of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre

Mr. James Matsumoto, President of JME Inc. and ShowFlex International Inc.

Another crucial component in the Sakura Project has been Vineland Research and Innovation Centre/University of Guelph. Headed by Mr. Ray Kaczmarek, Station Manager, the facility stored and cared for the trees, as well as delivered them to the planting locations as a voluntary service to the Project. Mr. Kaczmarek, along with Mr. Fujita, also provided their invaluable expertise in advising the Committee on site selection and in providing recipients with advice on caring for the trees. Both Mr. Fujita and Mr. Kaczmarek will receive a special commendation from Consul-General Yamamoto at the Sept. 20 planting ceremony at the JCCC.

The Sakura Committee would like to take this opportunity thank the many donors and other supporters of the Sakura Project. We hope the trees will prove to be a source of much enjoyment for the people of Ontario for many years to come, and remind them always of the friendship between Japanese and Canadians.