

Message from Consul-General Takako Ito

December, 2017

On Nov. 24, our National Day Reception, one of the Consulate-General of Japan's biggest events of the year which celebrates the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, was held at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. In Japan, Dec. 23 is the holiday marking His Majesty's birthday, and celebratory events are held at the Imperial Palace. At Japanese diplomatic missions around the world, however, a reception is sometimes held on a suitable day prior to Dec. 23, taking into consideration local circumstances. We fortunately had warm weather on the day we held the reception in Toronto, and it was a tremendous success with over 400 guests in attendance. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who attended the reception as well as all those who assisted us in realizing this important event.



The National Day Reception is the one opportunity during the year when we are able to gather together key persons from local governments and businesses, as well as representatives of the Japanese and Japanese Canadian community, to appeal for further strengthening of Japan-Canada relations. In addition to my own remarks, we received a greeting in person from the Hon. Victor Oh of the Canadian Senate and a written message conveyed from the Hon. Kathleen Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, while Her Worship Bonnie Crombie, the Mayor of

Mississauga, led municipal councillors and other VIPs in a *kagamibiraki* – a ceremonial saké barrel opening. A slide show of the Consulate-General's activities from the past year was repeatedly screened in the reception hall, and I was once again pleasantly surprised by our remarkable level of activity here.

Nov. 24 is known in Japan as a “Day for Good Japanese Food” so we wanted to provide a menu that could be enjoyed by all our guests. In addition to the usual sushi, yakitori and tempura, we also served more casual fare such as stewed vegetables, fried chicken and Japanese curry on rice. There were also matcha (green tea) and strawberry flavoured rice cakes and Japanese-style cheese cakes for dessert, which were so well-received I worried a bit if everyone was able to have their fill.



We also installed a booth where guests could sample saké from various regions around Japan. A crowd lingered in front of this booth for a long time, and people seemed to enjoy comparing brands of saké they might not often encounter.

Further promoting Japanese food and saké is something on

which I would like to devote a lot of energy as Consul-General. A chef specialized in Japanese cuisine, who recently assumed his position at my official residence, was in charge of the tempura and the curry at the reception, and started preparing banquets at the official residence from Nov. 28. The chef is working hard every day so that our guests can enjoy *kaiseki* cuisine while toasting with sparkling sake, and also see how Ontario wines can be paired well with Japanese cooking. The guests who come to my official residence seem to appreciate his efforts, and a delicious meal always enhances our discussions. I hope to continue making use of various events to create opportunities for everyone to enjoy the culture of Japanese food and saké.



As a result of the meeting of the Imperial House Council on Dec. 1, it appears His Majesty will step down on April 30, 2019, with His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince's succession to the throne to follow on May 1. The National Day Reception next year will therefore will be the last of the Heisei period. It will also conclude the 90th anniversary year of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations so I intend to fully devote 2018 to further strengthening Japan-Ontario relations so I will be able to report on all of our activities at this milestone reception.

It is with such thoughts that I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy Holiday Season.