

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL TAKAKO ITO

January 2019



I would like to wish everyone in Ontario a very Happy New Year!!

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation for your invaluable support of our activities last year. Thanks to the many events held throughout 2018 to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations, I believe we were able to promote greater understanding and goodwill toward Japan among Canadians in Ontario. To everyone who were directly involved in organizing the events, as well as to those who took time out of their schedule to attend, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude.

This year, the succession to the Imperial throne will take place on May 1 for the first time in 30 years. By coincidence, I happened to be stationed in Canada 30 years ago also, when the Japanese era changed from the Showa to the Heisei after the previous succession of the Emperor of Japan. I therefore was not able to witness this historic event in Japan. However, it did provide me with an opportunity to inform Canadians about His Majesty the Emperor who is the symbol of the Japanese State and the unity of its people. This year also, I hope to have many opportunities to speak to the people of Canada – which is another country that upholds a constitutional monarchy like Japan – about His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan who will ascend to the position of His Majesty the Emperor.

Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan toured Canada in 2009. Toronto was one of their stops, and here they visited the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, the Momiji Residence of the Momiji Health Care Society, the Hospital for Sick Children and many other places of interest. Even today, I hear stories from those people who are still very appreciative of how Their Majesties took a moment to speak to them during that visit. Before being posted to Toronto, I myself had the opportunity to serve Their Majesties as one of the Masters of the Ceremonies at the Imperial Household Agency. In my position, I was able to observe first-hand their activities on New Year's Day, on His Majesty's birthday, garden parties and when they welcomed foreign dignitaries. In particular, when Their Majesties visited Vietnam and Thailand in 2017, I had the honour of taking part in the preparation of the tour as well as accompanying them during their actual visit. I was deeply moved by how Their Majesties at every event put their wholehearted efforts toward fostering friendship and goodwill as representatives of Japan. They were also very considerate to those of us who accompanied them. Receiving their words of gratitude for my work after we returned to Japan is one of my fondest memories. I sincerely hope the new Emperor, who will ascend to the throne in May, will also find an appropriate opportunity to visit Canada together with the new Empress.



This is also the year that Japan will assume the presidency of the G20, and will host various related ministerial meetings as well as the Summit taking place in Osaka in June. Through the course of various discussions and gathering views on peace and prosperity from representatives of the world's major countries, I am confident Japan and Canada, who share so many common values, will work well together in pursuit of success.

In addition, the Rugby World Cup will take place for the first time in Asia when Japan hosts the games from September to November. The Canadian team has also qualified for this World Cup, so it will be coming to Japan. Canada and Japan are in different pools for the preliminary league matches, but I hope to cheer them both onto the tournament rounds.



In Ontario, the general elections held in June last year resulted in the establishment of a new provincial government, and in October all the municipalities in the province held elections for their mayors and councillors. The Consulate-General of Japan will continue to work with the new provincial and municipal governments for the next four years in order to further strengthen political and economic relations with Japan, to promote mutual understanding and to enhance friendly and cooperative relations.

Last year marked 90 years since the establishment of the Japanese legation in Ottawa, so we held various events celebrating the 90th



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anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations. This year, however, is the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Canadian legation in Tokyo, so we will be continuing with the 90th anniversary celebrations by holding and supporting various events. Even events organized by private organizations can

be recognized as an official 90th anniversary celebratory event if it meets certain criteria. Such events can be listed on the official 90th anniversary calendar, and it will be possible that a staff from the Consulate-General of Japan can come and give greetings. Please refer to our website for details.

We will continue to take initiatives in providing various services of the Consulate-General as well as in supporting Japanese businesses and providing various, reliable information on Japan. We will devote our best efforts toward fulfilling our duties, while listening to your ideas and suggestions. I hope we can work together toward this end.

I would like to conclude my New Year's greeting by expressing my sincere, deeply felt wish that 2019 will be a prosperous and very good year for everyone, as well as for Japan-Canada and Japan-Ontario relations.