

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL ITO TAKAKO

December 2019

The year 2019 was full of events and excitement for us at the Consulate-General of Japan in Toronto. We were able to take various initiatives in strengthening Japan-Ontario relations in the fields of government, economy and culture.

Following the enthronement of a new Emperor on May 1, a new era called Reiwa, which means “beautiful harmony” in Japanese, has started in Japan. Meanwhile in Toronto, we marked the 60th anniversary of the donation of Sakura cherry trees to High Park, which was a gift to Torontonians from the citizens of Metropolitan Tokyo in 1959. For the celebration for His Majesty’s accession as well as the 60th anniversary of the Sakura donations, we planted six new cherry trees in High Park.



We also celebrated His Majesty’s enthronement and the 60th anniversary of the Sakura donations in High Park with a special reception at my official residence on May 3, attended by representatives of governments, the business community, arts and culture, the Japanese community, alumni of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme and the MEXT Japanese Government Scholarships etc.

This year was also the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Canadian diplomatic mission in Japan. A wide variety of events marking this milestone took place in Ontario, including a splendid reception at Queen’s Park on June 4, celebrating the unshakable friendship which has developed between Japan and this province.

Of particular note was the visit to Canada by Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado commemorating this 90th anniversary. Her Imperial Highness’s family has had close ties with Canada, ever since His Imperial Highness the late Prince Takamado studied at Queen’s University in Kingston, ON. This time,



Toronto was the first stop on Her Imperial Highness's Canadian tour. In addition to attending the opening of Japan Festival CANADA, held annually every August in Mississauga, Her Imperial Highness was the keynote speaker at the gala dinner held at the Royal Ontario Museum to celebrate the 90th anniversary. At the lunch held in her honour hosted by Her Honour the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, Her Imperial Highness met with mayors and other representatives of Ontario communities which maintain exchange with their Japanese counterparts through various sister-city and friendship agreements.

With respect to regional exchange between Japan and Ontario, this year marked the 30th anniversary of the sister-city agreement between Burlington and Itabashi Ward in Tokyo. In July, the delegation of Itabashi headed by its Mayor visited Burlington to commemorate this anniversary with the opening of Itabashi Garden in the city. As well, Lindsay in the municipality of Kawartha Lakes and Nayoro in Hokkaido celebrated the 50th anniversary of their sister-city relations, and I had



the pleasure of attending the commemorative ceremony in Nayoro in July. The Mayor of Sagami-hara, the sister-city of Toronto, visited here in October, and in November the Mayor of Collingwood visited Japan. It is heartwarming to know that so much exchange is occurring regionally between Ontario and Japan at the grassroots level.

Various international events took place in Japan in 2019. In June, the G20 Summit was held in Osaka with Japan in the role of its Presidency. Meanwhile in Toronto, a symposium was held at the University of Toronto's Centre for the Study of Global Japan to discuss the prospects of the Osaka Summit. In March, we hosted a reception to draw attention to the first Rugby World Cup in Asia, which would take place in Japan from September through November.



In 2020, we will witness the Olympic and Paralympic Games take place in Tokyo, and excitement has been building in the GTA through such important



qualifying events as the BMX Freestyle Canadian Championships and the Toronto Waterfront Marathon. Through my participation in such events, and with my staff promoting the Tokyo Gorin Ondo dance at various venues around Ontario, we are doing our part to build excitement for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In order to promote Japanese exports to Ontario, we held events introducing ways to pair sake with both Japanese and Western cuisine, as well as Washoku (Japanese food) demonstrations by the chef of my official residence. I am fully confident we succeeded in introducing many Canadians to the wonderful qualities of Japan and Japanese food. Using next year's Olympic and Paralympic Games as an opportunity, we are working hard to increase Japanese exports to Canada and to strengthen Japan-Canada economic relations.

On the cultural front, there were many events commemorating the 90th anniversary. From November to December, traditional Japanese arts were presented through Yose performances (Rakugo comedic storytelling;



Kamikiri traditional paper cutting;

Daikagura juggling and balancing acts), as well as with Cinema Kabuki and Kyogen performances. It was a time when Canadian audiences were presented with invaluable opportunities to enjoy the best of Japanese traditional arts.



The success of this eventful year was all possible thanks to your constant, generous support. I look forward to continuing to work with you in 2020 in the spirit of Reiwa – beautiful harmony. Please have a happy and safe holiday season.