

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL TAKAKO ITO

January 2020



Happy New Year, everyone!!

Welcoming the first New Year of the Reiwa Period, we have started the year of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The three core concepts of the Tokyo 2020 Games are: “Achieving Personal Best”; “Unity in Diversity”; and “Connecting to Tomorrow”. These are important concepts which apply not only to the competitors participating in sporting spectacles like the Olympic and Paralympic Games, but to all of us who should keep them in mind every day as world citizens living in the 21st century.

As the Tokyo 2020 Games draw closer, we can easily imagine there will be news disseminated around the world on Japanese hospitality, or *omotenashi*, along with those on Japan’s cutting edge technology. There will also be news on the many thoughts surrounding these “Recovery Olympics” being held in the 10th year after the Great East Japan Earthquake. To begin with, there will be the torch relay. After its arrival from Greece, the “Flame of Recovery” will be on display in Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima prefectures –the three prefectures that were most severely affected by the earthquake. Then, on March 26, the torch will begin its journey from the J-Village National Training Center in Fukushima through all 47 prefectures across Japan. The relay will be started by the winning members of Nadeshiko Japan, the 2011 Champions of the FIFA Women’s World Cup. The J-Village was closed after the disaster because it was needed as an operational

base for dealing with the nuclear power station accident. Now the facility has been fully reopened and the torch relay will be started by the members of Nadeshiko Japan, who became the FIFA Women's World Champions in the year of the disaster and brought much needed joy to the people of our country. This in itself is an uplifting narrative to be shared with the world.

As well, the approximately 5000 medals to be used in the Games will be made with metals from "urban mines" — cell phones, computers and other used electronics recovered in Japan. The shuttle bus in the Athletes Village will be autonomous. Other buses will be running on fuel cells using hydrogen from Fukushima. Robots will be working in security, caretaking and registration. AIs will assist in simultaneous translation and facial recognition. These and other exciting examples of Japanese technology and initiatives aimed toward sustainable development are sure to surprise and impress the world.

Japan has also undertaken the "Host Town Initiative" in which regional communities will host athletes coming to Japan to take part in the Games. There are a variety of host towns for Canada, divided according to Olympic and Paralympic events. For example, the City of Sagamihara, which is the sister city of Toronto, will be hosting the Canadian rowing team for its final preparations before the Games, which is also sure to deepen international exchange before the competition. As well, the 2020 Tokyo Games will feature "Arigato" ("Thank You") Host Towns for Supporting Reconstruction, with communities in the three prefectures most severely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake acting as host towns. Their aim is to showcase their recovery to the countries and regions which supported them after the disaster, and do so through direct exchange with their local residents. Natori City in Miyagi Prefecture has been approved as the "Arigato" Host Town for Canada, thus exchanges between the people of Natori and representatives of the Canadian Olympic Team are expected.

The Consulate-General of Japan in Toronto will continue with such activities as our workshops promoting the Tokyo Gorin Ondo 2020 dance in order to raise local awareness of the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games.



In the field of economics, we are welcoming our second year under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

(CPTPP) which entered into force on Dec. 30, 2018.

Under CPTPP, Japan-Canada economic relations have been expected to be strengthened in not just trade but also a wide variety of fields such as investment and the digital economy. Starting with Collision, the international conference on high technology which took place in Toronto last year, interest in Silicon Valley North seems to be increasing



in Japan. Due to last year's federal elections, there have been changes among the members of Federal Parliament and various committees who have been elected from Ontario ridings. There are also representatives of the Ontario Provincial Government who assumed new positions due to the cabinet shuffle last June. I intend to continue meeting with such government officials and others in order to advocate for policies for strengthening economic ties between Japan and Canada, including those on improving the local business environment.

Canadians who go to Japan are also very impressed with our public transportation systems. We are continuing to explore ways to utilize Japan's experiences in this area to work with Canada, especially for Transit Oriented Development and the subway networks. I would also like to continue working with relevant parties locally in further promoting Japanese export of food products, as well as sake and other alcoholic beverages.



With respect to strengthening friendship between Japan and Canada — and between Japan and Ontario — I take heart in hearing about the countless positive activities in a wide variety of fields of local Japanese nationals. The Consulate-General of Japan will continue to provide information to help you live here with peace of mind, to support local Japanese businesses and to keep you connected with Japan. To this end, we welcome any ideas or suggestions you would care to share with us.

In conclusion, I would like to wish everyone good health and much success in a most fruitful New Year.