

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL TAKAKO ITO

May 2020

Two months have already passed since the state of emergency was declared by the Government of Ontario because of the Novel Coronavirus. Some economic activities have resumed in this province under strict guidelines applied to various industry sectors while health and safety remain top priority. It feels as though we can finally see a distant light at the end of this long tunnel. However, the pandemic persists. While the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19, hospitalized patients and deaths in Ontario show a declining trend, hundreds of new cases of infection are reported while tens of them are losing their lives every day. Your health is yours to protect so please pay your utmost attention to avoid infection, taking measures such as washing your hands frequently, maintaining a physical distance of at least two meters and avoiding the 3 Cs: closed areas (poorly ventilated spaces), crowds and close contact with others.

May 1 was Doctors' Day in Ontario, while May 12 was International Nurses Day. I would like to thank the courageous health professionals who are coming to the



Click [here](#) to watch CG Ito's message on Doctors' Day.

aid of countless patients at the risk of infecting themselves; the first responders who rush to various emergencies such as heart attacks, strokes, traffic accidents and fires; and those who continue to assist women in labour – even if the work of such dedicated people is now often overshadowed by news of the Novel Coronavirus. I also cannot

help but be tremendously grateful to those who work in fields other than health and medical care but also continue to leave their homes every day to provide us with essential services.

At a time when we are still unsure when large gatherings of people can resume, the various cultural events and receptions usually held by the Consulate-General of Japan also cannot take place in the same way as before. Those such as lectures and seminars can be moved online, however, and this actually removes the need for travel times, making them arguably more convenient in some ways for both presenters and audiences. Many organizations in Canada are in fact holding seminars and meetings online, and we often have a hard time deciding which of them we should attend. Events in which we could not participate before, such as members-only luncheon lectures or seminars charging expensive entrance fees, are now often available free of charge as webinars or video recordings, enabling us to access their content. A friend told me that working from home has resulted in her being busier than ever because of the increase in online meetings and seminars. If we are able to work around the time difference, we can even hold seminars which include participants from Japan for much less than what such events cost previously. Our Consulate-General therefore is now in the process of coming up with ideas that turn this “crisis into opportunity”.

We can also now enjoy cultural events like film screenings and live performances online, thanks to the efforts of such organizations as the Japan Foundation, Toronto, and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. Here also, we can enjoy such advantages as the ability to enjoy Kabuki performances which normally would not be accessible outside Japan. Expressions on the faces of live performers, which we would not be able to see clearly from the back of a theatre, can be fully appreciated through closeups on video. We can also watch films at home whenever it's convenient to us, eating and drinking what we like. On the other hand, the intense energies of live theatre and musical performances cannot be fully conveyed online. The vibration of taiko drums; lingering resonances of koto and shamisen; the humour of improvisational interactions with the audience – such things can only be felt by being in that space. This is the reason why



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audiences still take the trouble of attending live theatre and musical performances despite all the remarkable advances in sound and video recording technology. So I eagerly await the day when such events resume in our lives, while at the same time considering what we can do the meantime given our present situation.

As we continue to avoid unnecessary outings and limit gatherings to no more than five people, the late spring has finally arrived in Toronto. The City found it necessary to close High Park during Sakura season in order to prevent large



Mayor John Tory's daily briefings. Click [here](#) to view.

crowds, but Mayor John Tory nonetheless kindly mentioned in his announcement that the trees there were a gift from the citizens of Tokyo. We also were delighted to receive a message – along with a photo – from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, informing us that the Sakura trees which had been planted there last October had blossomed for the

first time. Did everyone enjoy the Virtual Flower Viewing presented by our Consulate-General on our social media platforms? I myself was surprised by some of the locations famous for Sakura which I did not know about before. Our origami Sakura tree, which was decorated with one folded flower each time we received a “like”, was also able to fully bloom thanks to your participation. The Somei Yoshino Sakura tree at my official residence also blossomed fully, even if we had no guests to admire it. However, in order to allow more time for passers-by to enjoy the blossoms, this year we lit up the tree at night. Now the Yaezakura (multi-layered Sakura) is starting to open, while the magnolia trees at our front door are in full bloom. The theme song for Japan’s recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 was



Consulate-General of Japan in Toronto's Social Media
<https://www.facebook.com/JapanConsToronto>
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“Hana Wa Saku” (“Flowers Will Bloom”). As I keep that song in mind, I would like to express my sincere wish for our full recovery also from the Novel Coronavirus.

