

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL ITO TAKAKO

March 2020

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading quickly, causing a worldwide pandemic. Here in Ontario, new cases of infections are being reported daily. We cannot overstress the importance of each of us taking every available measure to prevent the spread of the virus. Wash your hands frequently with soap. (Try singing "Happy Birthday" twice at a slightly fast pace each time you wash, as this will help you reach the recommended 20-second duration.) Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and adhere to proper coughing etiquette. At the same time, take in plenty of rest and nutrition to build up your immunity. If you experience symptoms such as fever, cough and fatigue, please remember to rest, refrain from going out and contact Telehealth Ontario or your local public health unit. As the situation with respect to the spread of infection is constantly changing, please stay calm and make responsible judgements in order to protect yourself while keeping up to date with the latest information in your area.



In order to prevent further generations of group infections, please keep in mind the following three principles in places where people gather: maintain good ventilation; reduce the density of people; keep proper distance during conversations and avoid singing or overly projecting your voice.

Since the first case in Japan was confirmed on Jan. 15, the Japanese Government has taken various border measures and initiatives to prevent the spread of the infection. Three pillars of basic strategy have been recommended to the Government of Japan from the Expert Meeting on the Novel Coronavirus Disease Control: "early detection of and early response to clusters"; "early patient diagnosis and enhancement of intensive care and the securing of a medical service system for the severely ill"; and "behavior modification of citizens." In response, efforts were made to reduce opportunities for people to encounter

crowds, such as encouraging self-restrictions of large-scale events, recommending flexible work hours and telework allowances, and requesting school closures. Other measures included widely calling on citizens to undertake common sanitary measures. With the high standards observed by Japan's medical institutions, the advanced investigative capabilities of local governments and health centers and the strong spirit of cooperation among the citizens as background, at the time of this writing, we would not say Japan has experienced a massive outbreak, particularly in the context of the latest information available on the global situation. There have been regions in Japan where cases have been confirmed for which the routes of infection are not clear. However, the number of deaths due to the virus has not significantly increased. The Experts Meeting praised the manner in which patients likely to be severely affected have been identified and how proper treatments were put into place under limited medical resources. Such measures also contributed to a great reduction from other years in cases of influenza.

Other organizations which have given high evaluations to such measures taken by Japan include the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International



<https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-executive-board-statement-on-the-coronavirus-covid-19-and-the-olympic-games-tokyo-2020>

Paralympic Committee (IPC). While there are reports in the media voicing concern that this year's Games may be cancelled, postponed or held in another city, this view is not shared by the IOC and the IPC, which have authority over such decisions. These organizations have voiced their confidence that Japan is responding appropriately to the spread of the Novel Coronavirus. In fact, at the meeting of the IOC Executive Board held on March 3, it expressed "its full

commitment to the success of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, taking place from 24 July to 9 August 2020."

In response to the Novel Coronavirus, a joint task force was created in mid-February, comprised of the IOC, The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic

and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020), the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Government of Japan and the World Health Organization (WHO). The IOC and the Organising Committee have each in turn set up its own task force, with the IOC working with the CDC of the United States and other international organizations, while the Organizing Committee is discussing measures in cooperation with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and others.

The Organising Committee, with the most current situation under consideration and in cooperation with all of the relevant organizations, might have to take various necessary measures such as the shortening of test events and preventing infections among spectators, staff and runners during the torch relay. However, commitments to the Tokyo 2020 Games remain unchanged. No discussion of suspending or cancelling the Games has taken place, and preparations are progressing according to plans.

On March 12, the Olympic Flame Lighting Ceremony took place in Olympia, Greece. The Novel Coronavirus has begun infecting Greece as well, and to prevent its further spread, there were no spectators in attendance at the Ceremony. The flame was lit without incident, however, and the relay within Greece has commenced. On March 20, it will arrive in Japan, and will be toured around various regions in Japan by people who have been eagerly waiting for the "Flame of Recovery". This torch will also provide a light of hope to people around the world who are waiting for this celebration of sport and peace which occurs once every four years.



Even at the Flame Lighting Ceremony, IOC President Thomas Bach voiced his commitment to the success of the Tokyo 2020 Games set to commence on July 24. Japan will continue to closely cooperate with the IOC, the Organising Committee and the Metropolitan Government of Tokyo to realize an event that can be confidently attended by both athletes and spectators safely, and that will

draw out the best performances from the competitors. Appropriate measures against the spread of the Novel Coronavirus included, we are committed toward making all necessary preparations toward the Tokyo 2020 Games.