

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL ITO TAKAKO

February 2020

In addition to the Embassy of Japan in Ottawa, there are four Consulates-General of Japan in Canada: in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal. Every year, the heads of all these missions discuss Japan-Canada relations with officials of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs at an annual meeting that takes place at one of the above cities. The meeting last year took place in January in Toronto, while this year it was held on Jan. 20 at our Embassy in Ottawa. I of course was in attendance.

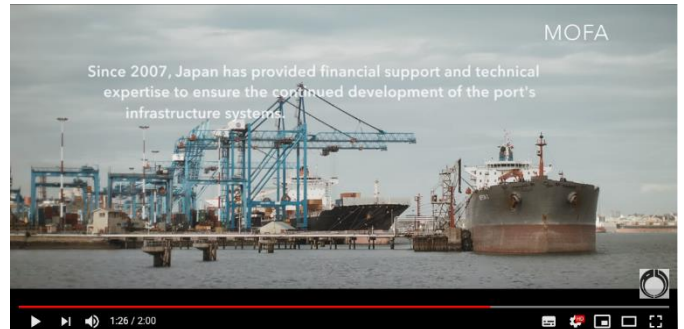
In a country as large as Canada, some of the issues that require attention can differ according to region, while other topics for consideration and discussion are



common across the country. Generally, Canadians hold a very positive view of Japan. Japanese culture, including cuisine, anime, manga, and cinema, are tremendously popular. However, in terms of diplomacy or economic relations, it is a reality that most Canadians still look to the US and Europe (although there are differences in the degrees to which this is done between Eastern and Western Canada). It also cannot be denied that the number of

Canadian students in Japan, as well as Canadians on working holiday visas in Japan, are much less than those coming from Japan to Canada – or those exchanged between Canada and other regions (USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc.). How can we turn the attention of Canadians toward the Asia Pacific, including Japan? In particular, Japan and Canada are partners that share such common values as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As such, topics for discussion at our meeting included how to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of these two countries cooperating to advance

the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” in the Asia-Pacific region. I understand the symposium on the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” – held recently in Vancouver immediately after our heads of missions meeting – was a great success with many participants in attendance. The extreme importance of continuing such activities across Canada – including Toronto – goes without saying.



[\[Video\] Japan's Efforts toward Connecting and Prospering the World for Free and Open Indo-Pacific](#)

In the field of economics, the main topics to which we give most of our thoughts often differ within Canada. For example, from the perspective of the Consulate-General of Japan in Calgary – the jurisdiction of which spans Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba – great attention is paid to the energy and natural resource sectors, as well as agriculture, with respect to Canada’s business with Japan. Meanwhile from the perspective of Ontario, much of our thoughts are directed to how the USMCA will influence the manufacturing sector, which centers on the automotive industry that continues to see expansion by Japanese companies. At the same time, with regard to such high tech industries as AI and



ICT, we have confirmed possibilities of collaborations between Japanese industry and our researchers with various locales across Canada, each of which are drawing attention from around the world. This includes not just “Silicon Valley North” in Ontario but also: Montreal where the

Government of Canada has established an AI supercluster; Edmonton, the location of the University of Alberta where AI research is being pushed forward; and Vancouver where research is progressing on AI and quantum computing.

At the meeting for the heads of Japanese diplomatic missions in Canada, there were opportunities to exchange views with representatives of Japanese businesses active in various parts of the country, as well as to have these business representatives meet with officials of the Canadian Government. With

the attendance of Japanese business organizations in Canada as well as Japanese business people active in representative industries of the regions, we were able to hear frank opinions on a wide variety of topics. Suggestions on improving the business environment in Canada, including those centering on the issuance of visas to Japanese business expatriates, were also conveyed directly to the Government of Canada.

We were also able to exchange views with representatives of Japanese Canadian organizations from various locations in Canada. Many Japanese Canadian organizations are active in presenting Japanese culture in Canada as a way of maintaining their identity, and we therefore consider them to be important and reliable partners. Although the history and scale of each organization differ, they seem to face common challenges such as fundraising for their activities and securing the participation of younger generations. There already exists a network among Japanese Canadian organizations in Canada, and we were able to have the top representatives of each attend our meeting. To directly discuss various matters with them face-to-face was something that held great significance.

Through this year's meeting, I was once again able to see that the Japanese diplomatic missions across Canada are continuing to devote a great deal of thought and effort toward their various initiatives. Using the information I gathered as reference, I have renewed my commitment to promote greater understanding of Japan in Ontario and to increase the presence of Japan here as an invaluable partner of Canada.