

## MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

October 2020

It has already been two months since I assumed my post here at the Consulate-General of Japan in Toronto. Unfortunately, this time also saw a resurgence of COVID-19 infections in parts of Ontario. Starting Oct. 10, modified Stage 2 restrictions from the framework of reopening Ontario were implemented in such regions as Toronto and Peel, and the number of affected regions has increased subsequently. As a result, regulations have been tightened once again for certain businesses such as restaurants and fitness clubs. This is undoubtedly an extremely difficult situation for those whose establishments have been affected. I sincerely hope conditions related to the pandemic will improve quickly, and that the reopening of the economy will soon be fully back on track.

This autumn, the widely celebrated Toronto International Film Festival, as well as the Toronto Japanese Film Festival hosted by the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC), took place online. While the usual festivities were missed, I did enjoy some of the films at home, and considered this to be a new way of enjoying these events.

Even under such circumstances, however, I was able to introduce myself to many people online as the new Consul-General of Japan in Toronto.



Mr. Rick Nicholls, Deputy Speaker,  
Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Oct. 7)



The Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell,  
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (Oct. 27)



The Hon. Victor Fedeli, Ontario Minister of  
Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (Sept. 18)  
(The Minister is on the upper right)



The Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food  
and Rural Affairs (Oct. 26)



His Worship Frank Scarpitti, Mayor of Markham  
(Sept. 30)



Her Worship Bonnie Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga  
(Oct. 2)

I was also able to meet the following dignitaries:

The Hon. Ted Arnott, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Oct. 14)

The Hon. Laurie Scott, Ontario Minister of Infrastructure (Oct. 7)

Mr. Stephen Bowman, Chair, Board of Trustees, Royal Ontario Museum (Sept. 30)

Mr. Josh Basseches, Director and CEO, Royal Ontario Museum (Sept. 30)

Dr. Meric Gertler, President, University of Toronto (Oct. 20)

Dr. Rhonda Lenton, President, York University (Oct. 21)

Representatives of Japanese businesses from such fields as trading, finance and manufacturing, including the Board of Officers of the Toronto Japanese Association of Commerce & Industry (Sept. 17)

With respect to the 2020 Spring Imperial Decorations, the conferments of medals and diploma were delayed due to the obstacles presented by the pandemic. Nonetheless, I was able to present the decorations this month to Ms. Marie Meiko Ikeda and Mr. Peter Hiroshi Wakayama, who have been very active at the JCCC and with Shodo Canada, an organization dedicated to promoting the practice of Japanese Calligraphy.

Our Moonlight Haiku Challenge social media campaign was a tremendous success, resulting in 201 haiku submitted by 152 people. I was at once surprised and delighted by the immense interest shown by everyone. The haiku will soon be gathered in an anthology and made public.

As I arrived to work at our Consulate-General one day, a security personnel at the entrance stopped me to ask if I was the new Consulate-General of Japan. She told me she had provided homestays to many visiting Japanese students, and has kept in touch with many

of them. This heartwarming encounter made me realize that the friendship between Japan and Canada is being supported by countless Canadians.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to continue presenting challenges for a while yet. Such circumstances notwithstanding, I would like to continue dedicating my best efforts toward sustaining and enriching positive ties between Japan and the people of Ontario.

SASAYAMA Takuya  
Consul-General of Japan in Toronto