

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

December 2020

We are more than halfway through December, and I imagine all of you are spending your days busy preparing for the holidays. As of this writing, the state of lockdown remains in place in Toronto, Peel Region, York Region and Windsor-Essex County in order to thwart the further spread of COVID-19. On the other hand, vaccine inoculations have now started in Canada so there is light at the end of the tunnel. Nonetheless, I would like to ask everyone to remain vigilant and maintain safety measures for the time being.

I would like this time to inform you about exchanges and other activities relating to the sister-city and friendship agreements which tie municipalities in Ontario with various regions in Japan. Many of them have continued even under this pandemic.

In fact, there have recently been two very happy developments!

First, it was announced on Nov. 3 that Mr. Ron Starr, Mississauga City Councillor and former Chair of the Mississauga Friendship Association, has been awarded Japan's Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays. Mississauga has a longstanding friendship agreement with Kariya in Japan's Aichi Prefecture. Mr. Starr was among those who set the stage for the establishment of the sister-city agreement established in 1981. Since then, he has hosted various delegations visiting from Kariya and continued for many years to contribute greatly to this friendship. As was mentioned in my October message, I paid a courtesy call that month on Her Worship Bonnie Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga. On that occasion, I was deeply impressed by the beauty of Kariya Park located on the proximity of City Hall. And the street leading to the park is called Kariya Drive! Mr. Starr's decoration was announced during the City Council meeting on Dec. 9. In 2021, their sister-city agreement will mark its 40th anniversary. I sincerely hope this friendship will grow even closer in the future.



Meanwhile, the recipients of Japan's Foreign Minister's Commendations were announced on Dec. 1. Among those in the jurisdiction of our Consulate-General is the Burlington Mundialization Committee Itabashi Subcommittee. This committee was established in 1989 when a sister-city agreement was exchanged between Tokyo's Itabashi Ward and the City of Burlington. Since then, there has been an exchange of delegations between Itabashi and Burlington every five years. As well, around May each year when Japanese cherry blossoms, or Sakura, are in bloom, Burlington organizes its Sakura Festival, making it a well-known location for Sakura which enjoys many visitors. That Burlington's Itabashi Garden opened in 2019 to mark the 30th anniversary of this sister-city relationship remains fresh in the minds of local citizens. Regretfully, many exchange projects this year needed to be postponed to 2021 or later due to the pandemic, but I have immense hope that such initiatives will become even more active in the future.



On Dec. 11, I met online with His Worship George Pirie, Mayor of Timmins. Timmins, a city in Northern Ontario, is twinned with Naoshima in Kagawa Prefecture. The mining technology of Naoshima was the catalyst behind the establishment of this relationship. Mayor Pirie said that the economy of Timmins is focused on mining and forestry and that the city was hard at work even in the midst of the pandemic. He said he hoped to strengthen its friendship with Naoshima. He also said that the region of Northern Ontario where Timmins is located is rich in rare earth, and that he hoped many Japanese companies will take interest in this. From the perspective of diversifying Japan's foreign suppliers of natural resources, I also hope this will gain the attention of Japanese businesses.



These exchanges that are currently active in Ontario are too numerous to report on in this month's report alone. Sagami-hara in Kanagawa Prefecture is a Friendship City of Toronto and hosts the winner of the Ontario Japanese Speech Contest held every year in March. I imagine there cannot be many Japanese language speech contests that offer such a valuable

prize. There is also Nayoro in Hokkaido, which holds a high school student exchange every other year with Kawartha Lakes. Indeed, one of my fondest memories from when I was serving at the Embassy of Japan in Ottawa is receiving a visit by high school students from Nayoro. The City of Gifu in Gifu Prefecture, which is twinned with Thunder Bay, will be putting its best efforts into supporting Japan-Canada relations next year when it will be the host town for the Canadian track and field team for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Barrie is planning to dispatch Youth Ambassadors to Murayama in Yamagata Prefecture next year after being unable to this year.

In August 2019, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, hosted a lunch for Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado along with representatives of communities engaged in sister-city relations with Japan. I am sure that must have been an unforgettable experience for everyone.

A list of Ontario municipalities engaged in sister-city/friendship relations with Japan follows below. Their exchange activities should gain renewed energy next year after countermeasures against COVID-19 prove effective. We at the Consulate-General of Japan would like to do whatever we can to assist.

Japanese Municipality (municipality, prefecture)	Municipality in Ontario	Year Agreement Established
Nayoro, Hokkaido	Lindsay (now Kawartha Lakes)	1969
Fukuyama, Hiroshima	Hamilton	1976
Kariya, Aichi	Mississauga	1981
Naoshima, Kagawa	Timmins	1981
Katano, Osaka	Collingwood	1981
Neyagawa, Osaka	Oakville	1984
Fujisawa, Kanagawa	Windsor	1987
Itabashi Ward, Tokyo	Burlington	1989
Sagamihara, Kanagawa	Toronto	1991
Sanjo, Niigata	Vaughan	1993
Shimokawa, Hokkaido	Kenora	2001
Gifu, Gifu	Thunder Bay	2007
Asago, Hyogo	Perth	2008
Murayama, Yamagata	Barrie	2017

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