

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

August 2021

We are now at the end of August. I wonder how all of you have spent your summer?

Fortunately, vaccines against COVID-19 have now been widely administered – with over 80 per cent of eligible Ontarians having received the first dose and 75 per cent fully vaccinated with both doses. However, the number of new cases is once again on the rise due to the Delta variant. I would like to ask everyone to continue to observe safety measures to prevent infection in accordance with guidelines issued by local health authorities.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games were successfully realized despite encountering numerous challenges, while the Paralympic Games are currently underway. The Canadian team did extremely well at the Olympics, and I think many of its members were able to perform to their full potential. Many swimmers won medals early in the Games, including Penny Oleksiak, immediately raising the level of excitement across Canada. What remains vivid in my memory is the penalty shootout which resulted in the women's soccer team taking the gold medal. The game in which the women's softball team won bronze was also very moving. Andre De Grasse and the men's track and field 200 and 100-meter races are also unforgettable. The Canadian team also performed well in such events as rowing.



With respect to the media, such amusing segments as a CBC reporter introducing a Japanese convenience store in the athletes' village and another demonstrating the difficulty of removing the wrapper from an onigiri rice ball proved very popular. The kind of reporting coming out of Tokyo varied, but watching from Canada I felt there was much positive dissemination of information. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved for their hard work.



This was also a summer when safety measures related to COVID-19 were relaxed and it became possible to meet people face-to-face for the first time in a long time. As mentioned in my message last month, I was able to pay greetings in person for the first time to the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, on July 20. Premier Ford apparently had not met with any visitors in person for nearly a year. For his first meeting after the reopening, he met not only with representatives of our Consulate-General but also those from the Shokokai (Toronto Japanese Association of Commerce & Industry), JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization), The Japan Foundation, Toronto, and the JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization), making up a kind of "Team Japan". At the start of the meeting, Premier Ford recounted his father's experience as a businessman who established a printing company in 1962. At that time, he traveled to Japan in search of printing equipment and returned with an importation contract. The Premier said that he has placed his trust in Japanese businesses ever since his father's machinery was delivered on time as promised. Our discussion covered a wide range of topics, not limited to economic relations but also covering cultural exchange, tourism promotion, importation of Japanese food and sake, and Japanese language education. Our exchange of views exceeded its scheduled time by as much as 45 minutes. At the end of our meeting, the Premier was presented with a Tokyo Olympics 2020 tee shirt from our Consulate-General, as well as a Shokokai tee shirt from the Shokokai. It was a very cordial meeting, and I think we were able to impress upon him the significant presence of Japan in Ontario.



Photo Credit: The Government of Ontario

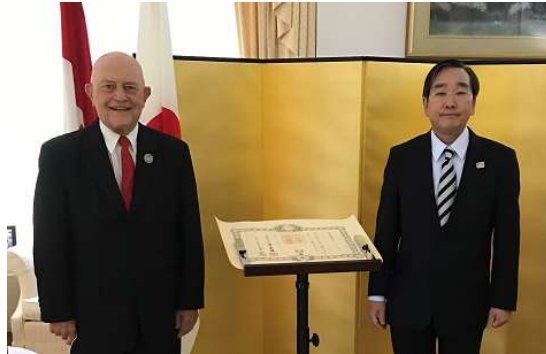
The pandemic also prevented us last year from presenting various decorations and Foreign Minister's Commendations to their recipients in person. We were finally able to remedy this from this past June through August.

One June 23, we presented the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Ms. Nancy Jacobi, who founded the Japanese Paper Place and has spread appreciation of washi (traditional Japanese paper) among Canadians for over 40 years. I myself found this occasion to be an invaluable experience in which I encountered an unexpectedly wide variety of washi for the first time and learned of their uses



Photo Credit: The Japanese Paper Place

On July 27, we conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, to Mississauga City Councillor Ron Starr. Mr. Starr has supported the sister city relationship between Mississauga and Kariya, Japan, since its establishment, and for years has been key in maintaining his city's friendship with Japan. He has also devoted his efforts to raising Japan's presence in Ontario and strengthening friendly ties. We had the honour of having Her Worship Bonnie Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga, in attendance at the ceremony, as well as former Mayor Hazel McCallion who celebrated her 100th birthday this year.



On Aug. 4, we conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, to Mr. Steve Oikawa, who served twice as the President of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC). He also was Chair of the planning committee of the JCCC's expansion project. It goes without saying that he is one of the leading figures of the local Japanese Canadian community. The conferment ceremony was attended by his family and friends, as well as major representatives of the JCCC.



On Aug. 5, we presented the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Mr. Stephen W. Bowman, Chair of the Royal Ontario Museum's Board of Trustees. Mr. Bowman has served a member of the ROM's Bishop White Committee's executive as well as its Chair. For many years, he has deepened understanding of Japanese culture among Canadians by promoting it, as well as Japanese art, through various events and lectures. In recognizing his long career, I was able to reaffirm the depth of cultural appreciation in Ontario and the love of Japanese culture among the Canadian people.



On Aug. 9, the Foreign Minister's Commendation was presented to the Burlington Mundialization Committee Itabashi Subcommittee. The ceremony held under the hot summer sun in in Burlington's Itabashi Garden turned into one in which all of us were constantly wiping perspiration from their brows. With Her Worship Marianne Meed Ward, Mayor of Burlington, as well as Committee members and volunteers in attendance, I was able to appreciate the strong ties that exist between Burlington and Tokyo's Itabashi Ward.



On Aug. 26, we presented the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, to Mr. David Worts, former Executive Director of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association of Canada (JAMA Canada). Working for the benefit of the automobile industries of Japan and Canada, he recently devoted great effort toward the realization of the CPTPP. Mr. Worts also served as President of the Japan

Society. I sincerely hope that he will continue to support further development of economic relations between Japan and Canada.



On Aug. 30, we presented the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Japanese Restaurant Association of Canada President KIMURA Shigeo. Washoku, Japanese cuisine, has become one of multicultural Toronto's representative type of cooking, and Chef Kimura was its pioneer here. I hope he will keep promoting Japanese food culture in the future and also put his efforts toward nurturing chefs who are aiming to do the same.



We will be welcoming Labour Day weekend next week, and a new school year will begin immediately afterwards. I hope everyone will continue to look after their health as we welcome the new semester.