

## MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

September 2021

Having undergone the change of seasons, fall now is fully underway. I wonder how all of you are spending your days? While COVID-19 variants remain a cause for concern, the number of new cases fortunately has not yet resulted in an overwhelming fourth wave. I urge everyone to continue monitoring the information provided by your local health authorities and taking appropriate safety measures.

### Federal Elections



The Canadian federal elections were held on September 20. For me, it was the second opportunity to witness the general elections in this country after closely following it in 2019 when I was stationed at the Embassy of Japan in Ottawa.

I think there are a few notable aspects of Canadian elections which make them distinct from elections in Japan. The first is the long election period. This time, it was 36 days but I understand this was the minimum allowed by the rules. Another feature of Canadian elections is the major role played by door-to-door canvassing in campaigns. I visited a number of candidates I knew, and all of them told me they go door to door at least twice while campaigning. The Canadian Parliament consists entirely of single-seat constituencies, with approximately 100,000 voters in each. Running around during the 36 days, the candidates I visited were clearly stretched thin compared to when I'd seen them before. Some of them understandably also seemed very tired. Public gatherings this time were limited due to the pandemic, but in the previous election candidates had opportunities to get together in front of large audiences to debate policies. Topics ranged

from immediate concerns, such as social assistance and housing costs, to larger scale issues like international diplomacy and security. The large number of voters in attendance were overflowing from the venues. I recall being moved by how the quality of democracy in Canada was being raised in this way.

As you know, this year's elections ended with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continuing to lead Canada in a minority government.

### **Exchanging Views with Canadian Media's Tokyo 2020 Teams**



**The CBC's Tokyo 2020 coverage team**

I was fortunately able to invite journalists from the CBC who covered the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games to my official residence. Telling their stories from first-hand experience, all of them praised Japan's skillful management of the Games, as well as the detailed health safety measures in place and speedy responses to changing situations. The countless volunteers, who also welcomed and extended warm hospitality to not only the athletes but also to the media and other visitors, were also the subject of much praise. Some even told me that only Japan could have successfully held the Games under the difficult conditions arising from the pandemic. It also could not have been easy for the athletes to perform their best without spectators. The members of the media gave me a real sense of how the competitors maintained focus and realized their full potential.

When I go out these days, people will often stop me to express their appreciation for the realization of the Tokyo 2020 Games. There was much debate surrounding the Games,

but here in Canada, Tokyo 2020 made a positive impression with many people still praising it highly.

### **Attending a Racing Event Just Outside Toronto**

As summer drew to a close, I was able to attend a car race at Sunset Speedway in Innisfil, just 60 kilometers north of Toronto. NTN, whose bearings manufacturing plant is in Mississauga, was sponsoring a female driver in the race. Along with former Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, local federal MP Jon Brassard, and former Ontario Premier Mike Harris, I was given an opportunity to address the stands. Under a breathlessly blue sky marking the end of summer, I was able to express my heartfelt appreciation for being able to attend such a wonderful event to all of the organizers and supporters. I also was able to extend thanks to the people of Ontario who have embraced the many Japanese companies operating here. It was an invaluable experience through which I was able to feel the immense power of local Canadians.

