

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

November 2021

The number of in-person gatherings has started to increase in November, and we now have more opportunities to meet people face to face.

I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of Invest in Canada on Nov. 4. This is a Canadian government agency with the mission to promote, support, and accelerate direct foreign investments to Canada, and to introduce investment opportunities as well as customized services to businesses from Japan and other countries. The representatives whom I met were: Mr. Greg Da Re, Invest in Canada's Regional Director for Ontario; Ms. Samantha Caldwell, Investor Services Advisor, Ontario; and Mr. ABE Kosuke, Senior Investor Services Advisor, Japan. Mr. Abe usually works in Ottawa but kindly took time to come to Toronto for the meeting. In the following week, on Nov. 8, the Toronto Global Forum, a gathering of North American investors, was held in a local hotel, and I was pleased to be able to attend the reception as well as lectures with the many participants. There were people in attendance whom I'd met only online before, as well those I had not seen in person for quite a while. There were, of course, also people I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time. It was truly wonderful to once again experience the excitement of in-person events.



Visiting Japanese Companies

Kintetsu International Express (Canada)

Kintetsu International Express (Canada) Inc., which has an office in Mississauga, is the Canadian subsidiary of Kinki Nippon Tourist Co. Ltd. When I visited, I was warmly welcomed by three of its representatives, including its General Manager, Mr. HIROTA Hisashi. The tourism industry is one which was severely impacted by the pandemic. Kintetsu International also saw Japanese tourists to Canada dwindle to zero because of COVID-19. As the infections subside, however, domestic travelers have slowly started to return. Also, while the pandemic is not yet over, international students are now being issued visas, and a number of people are now entering Canada. Currently, they are responding to various inquiries and looking into opportunities for group tours with the aim to resume the exchange of people sometime next year. Business travel also decreased because of the pandemic. Although they are resuming gradually now, companies which utilize communication technology in lieu of sending employees on business trips are increasing. Even after the pandemic, business travel is not expected to recover to previous levels.

Even in the midst of facing such challenges, they placed great importance on maintaining ties with their clients through such initiatives as conducting virtual tours of Canada. I feel this is a reflection of the immense value the company places on its customers. I concluded my visit with the hope that the pandemic will pass next year and the exchange of people will subsequently resume.



J-Athletics Canada Inc.

J Athletics Canada is a sports group that puts emphasis on educational aspects of sports such as fitness and health. J Athletics Canada's motto is 『スポーツは武器になる』 which means, "Utilizing the full power of friendly competition." J-Athletics Canada has been active since 2006 as a sports club of the future with the aim to promote exchange among the GTA's Japanese Canadian community. Through sports, the club has been actively promoting fitness and social exchange, and teaching Japanese etiquette to youth in order to cultivate human resources suited to success in Japanese society. When I visited their training facility in Markham, I was warmly welcomed by its Representative and Coach, Mr. UNAGAMI Makoto and its Manager, Mr. MIWA Shota. Most of their students are children from Japanese Canadian families, but recently there are some whose parents hope will learn soccer and proper etiquette through the Japanese language.

I have only played soccer casually but was invited to take part in a children's class. I spent a short but very enjoyable time playing flag tag and mini soccer.



A flag is removed right away. So much for practice.



A pass results in a splendid goal!

The club was greatly impacted by COVID-19. Soccer is a game which entails considerable contact so, even though it was to be played mostly outdoors, many

days were devoted toward considering safety measures. The number of students also reduced dramatically at the same time. With public health measures taking effect, however, half of the students have returned since summer.

Future activities will depend greatly on whether Japan will make the World Cup in Doha next year. If they make it through the qualifiers, preparations is sure to proceed once again for public viewing. As well, the 2026 World Cup is set to take place in Canada, the US, and Mexico. I understand the Club intends to increase its activities in anticipation of the Japanese team coming to Toronto.

Of immediate concern is the lack of indoor practice facilities. As their students return, other clubs will also commence practicing within the same time frame. Saturday afternoons are the ideal practice time for youths. I was told securing proper practice space for this time is of paramount concern.

We have experienced how wonderful sports can be through this year's Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Consulate-General of Japan would also like to do what we can to support the production of young talent who will lead the future.



Activ 8

This is a HR agency familiar to anyone who has seen their television commercials. In Toronto, they mainly conduct work relating to foreign students. I visited Ms. KIKUMOTO Mayumi and Ms. INOUE Sakae at their downtown office. Student visas were not available for a while due to the pandemic, but are being issued

once again this year, resulting in an increase in inquiries. Surprisingly, compared to before the pandemic, their number has increased tenfold. I understand that many people are studying remotely to improve their English with the intent to actually study abroad next year.

It seems clear that many young people are feeling that, although they are unable to meet easily people now due to COVID-19, they strongly desire to study overseas after the pandemic passes.

When asked what advantages Toronto and Canada offer to foreign students, they immediately told me: (1) a wide range of learning options such as universities, colleges, and language schools; (2) visas which can be obtained relatively easily; (3) a low crime rate; (4) a multicultural society that is tolerant of foreign visitors; (5) the still relatively small Japanese population; (6) the ease with which one can also visit the US and Europe; and many others. Each was very clear once they mentioned it.

In addition to international study, there are also requests for other kinds of exchange, such as short-term training for students and internship at private businesses. They informed me they plan to move into such areas starting next year.

The Consulate-General of Japan would like to extend any assistance we can to further increase exchange between Japan and Canada.

