

## MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

May 2022

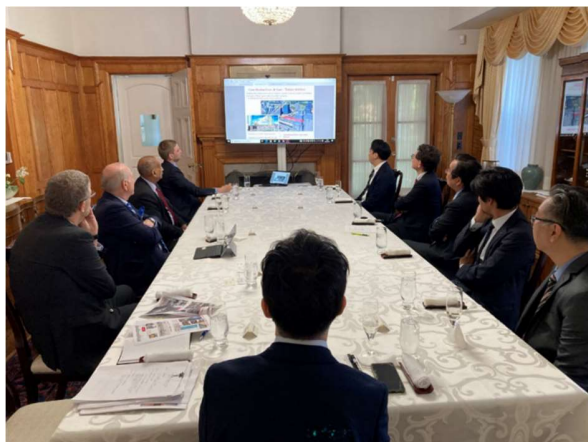
### 1. The Consulate-General of Japan's support of Japanese companies (support for rail infrastructure)

Support for infrastructure development in the assigned country of a diplomatic mission is a current area of focus for the Government of Japan. Here in Ontario, the provincial government's railroads are managed by a Crown agency called Metrolinx. Although Metrolinx is expanding its commuting service, I felt Japan could still provide concrete support, for example, by providing experienced consultation on upgrading train stations and ways on attracting customers for greater profitability. Fares do not account for a large portion of Metrolinx's revenue, and the agency is subsidized by the provincial government. In contrast, Japanese railway companies, including the JR companies, are bringing in considerable revenue from businesses other than railways by developing areas along the train routes as well as the space within the stations (known as *ekinaka*). From retail and service to real estate and hotel management, these companies are greatly increasing revenue by diversifying while providing greater convenience to passengers. Furthermore, advanced technologies developed by Japanese businesses are also being used in the maintenance of rail infrastructure. I am pleased to have been able to arrange opportunities to introduce such things to Metrolinx.

When I welcomed Metrolinx executives to my official residence, a representative of JR East's head office gave an online presentation on improving existing station facilities and *ekinaka*. Hitachi, Yamaha Music, and Canon also explained each of their contributions in Japan toward infrastructure development. These included pianos located at train stations and such projects as shrinkwrapping train cars and signage that brightened up the buildings. Furukawa Electric also gave an overview of Japan's advanced recycling technology, as well as environmentally friendly construction methods which shorten the time required for projects, thereby leading to cost-effective rail infrastructure development.

The Metrolinx executives in response asked insightful questions about Japanese technology, resulting in lively discussions.

This initiative is has only just begun. I would like to continue to introduce the Government of Ontario, as well as local businesses, ways to proceed with their various projects utilizing Japan's high technology and knowhow.



## 2. Initiatives related to Sakura

Sakura season has passed for this year, and the projects for which our Consulate-General prepared for almost a year have also concluded for the most part.

Among the concrete accomplishments are how the City of Toronto's Sakura-related webpages have been enhanced and now include a donation page for the trees. The City of Toronto also indicated that it will continue to educate its citizens about the relationship between Sakura and Japan in the future.

Canadian media also devoted considerable coverage to Sakura this year. In particular, a CBC television program aired an hour-long special episode, providing in-depth information about Sakura's historical significance, what the blossoms mean to Japan, and various recent developments. I feel this episode will prove useful or a long time in explaining the relationship between Japan and Sakura. As well, in the Globe and Mail (one of Canada's largest daily newspapers) featured a photo of the Sakura in High Park on its front page. It was especially gratifying to see the word "Sakura" being used in the caption instead of "cherry blossoms". Local Japanese businesses also carried out a number of Sakura-related projects this year. I reaffirmed how the Sakura in Ontario are not only those that were planted by the Government of Japan and Japanese Canadians, but also those which were donated by various Japanese municipalities that have sister cities in this province. These beautiful trees associated with Japan have now become places for respite for the people of Ontario in early spring.

The Sakura here will continue to bloom after each long winter. I would like to make proper use of this invaluable resource left to us by our predecessors to further deepen friendship between Japan and Ontario.





JAPANESE CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE



### 3. Restaurant Canada's RC Show

Restaurant Canada's RC show came to a successful conclusion after three days at the Enercare Centre starting on May 9. The registered visitors alone to the Government of Japan's booth numbered close to 1000. The actual number is likely much higher. As well, because this show was aimed at businesses, many of them applied for import contracts on the spot. I hope that all of these will successfully result in actual contracts in the future.

Many people also gathered for the stage show, which was streamed online as well. The non-sense expressions on the faces of audience members reflected how they were business professionals trying to discern authenticity.

I would like to thank the representatives of Ehime and Iwate Prefectures, who traveled far in order to participate in the show. I also would like to thank the local Japanese businesses for their participation over three days. Please take a look at the brief video we have put together on the event: [https://www.toronto.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/11\\_000001\\_00316.html](https://www.toronto.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/11_000001_00316.html)

The Consulate-General of Japan would like to use this opportunity as a starting point to further promote the import of Japanese foods and agriculture, forestry, and fishery products to Ontario. There still exist major issues that cannot be overcome without coordinated efforts, such as expanding the food distribution network in Toronto, training chefs, and promoting authentic Japanese food culture. I feel this show was a good starting point to begin working together on this.



