MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

June 2022

With the solstice now behind us, summer has truly arrived in Toronto. Crowds are gathering at in-person events for the first time in two years. I feel that the Toronto that has been absent the last couple of years is finally back.

Among the recent large events was Collision, an immense startup conference held over four days starting on June 21. JETRO Toronto established a booth on site, while Japanese startup companies participated. This month, I would like to tell you about the field on technology in its current state in Toronto and Ontario.

Technology in Ontario

Toronto has been called the “Silicon Valley of the North”, and the event that symbolizes this is Collision, the largest startup conference in North America. The City of Toronto has been working hard to attract participants.

Along with JETRO Toronto manning its booth, eight Japanese startups participated and garnered a lot of attention from visitors. The services being offered included stability of web advertising, data analysis using AI, and solutions utilizing satellite data. All are methods of improving content through technology. I hope Toronto serves them well as a launch pad from which to take flight.

Onsite at Collision

JETRO's booth


Invest in Canada

I would like to introduce two companies which set up their own booths. One is FutuRocket, represented by CEO and Founder MITANI Hiroumi. They have developed a system that uses easily obtainable AI cameras to count the number of visitors to a venue and to collect big data, all the while giving due consideration to privacy. The other company is ZeBrand. It is not easy for a small company to develop its own brand and branding strategies. ZeBrand provides branding services that resolve such issues with the help of AI and algorithms.

FutuRocket

Photo: ZeBRAND

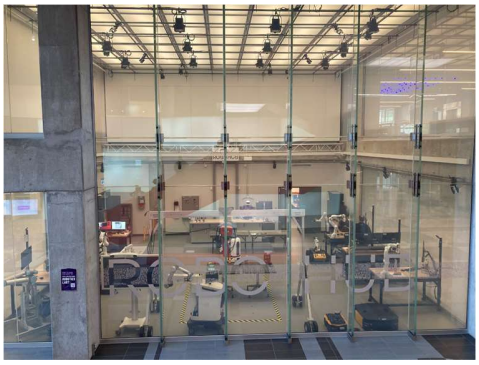
Due to Toronto's cosmopolitan and diverse characteristics, the attendants showing interest were from varying backgrounds. Furthermore, while I had been participating in Collision online in previous years,

because it was held this year in-person, I was finally able to meet the people with whom I had only interacted virtually before.

Last year, JETRO Toronto compiled a comprehensive report on the tech field across all of Canada. Please have a look if you are interested (in Japanese only):
https://www.jetro.go.jp/world/reports/2021/01/b7c1b215e3dc712f.html

What are “ecosystems”?

In May, prior to Collision, I visited Velocity at the University of Waterloo, which is famous for its tech-related initiatives. The term “cluster” is often used to describe a geographical concentration of industries, but in tech-related fields, we often hear the word “ecosystem”. The University of Waterloo’s programs provide a clear understanding of this idea of ecosystems. Separate cells exist within the space of a large facility where many researchers and developers work on their projects. Through the process, exchanges among them will arise, and technologies developed with certain objectives might wind up being utilized in completely different fields. New service and technologies will be created from there and may then connect with the local community. I was told these kinds of life and work environments are called “ecosystems”. I once studied abroad at a college in England. It seemed to me that colleges there were places where students studying different subjects could live, sleep, and eat together, providing opportunities for them to hear ideas of people from varying walks of life, thereby enriching their studies. Even in Japan, there is the term *gakusaiteki* (interdisciplinary). The University of Waterloo’s efforts are directed toward properly providing these kinds of ecosystems.



Ecosystems at the University of Waterloo

What is DX?

There is not a day when there is no mention of tech or DX among business news in Japan. There are also many visitors to Toronto where academics famous for their research on AI and deep learning are working. However, even if you have a vague desire to acquire DX or improve efficiency in the workplace, this often does not result in actual implementation. Businesses and individuals alike encounter specific problems which then prompt us to seek technical solutions. That there would be no DX without such a process was something I keenly felt here in the “Silicon Valley of the North”. This also means that DX can be undertaken at a personal level. I myself produce this report using voice input followed by proofreading. I also play golf as a hobby and have recently acquired an AI that recommends which clubs to use. This is my personal DX. Tech can change society but is also a tool for improving the lives of individuals.