

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

July 2023

Around my official residence, one can see not only squirrels but other wildlife such as rabbits and foxes. Twice this year, a bird built and hatched its eggs in a nest in the eaves near the entrance. I believe it's an American robin (*komatsugumi* in Japanese).



1. Collision Conference

Collision, considered by many to be the largest tech startup conference in North America, took place once again in Toronto for the three days starting from June 27. It was held at a time when there was no shortage of topics to discuss, including how generative AI such as ChatGPT have become a social phenomenon. With 36,000 people in attendance, it was a technology showcase on par with CES in Las Vegas.

The Toronto office of JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) set up a booth on site again this year, and 10 startups from Japan also participated with JETRO's support.

The MaRS Innovation Hub may be best known among Toronto's tech ecosystems, but Toronto Metropolitan University's DMZ has also shown great enthusiasm in collaborating with Japanese companies. Prior to Collision, DMZ held a Japan Night with Japanese companies in attendance. Mr. Abdullah Snobar, CEO of DMZ and Mr. Sherif El Tawil, its Senior Director, held lively discussions on working together with Japanese companies. Young Japanese trainees are also very active in the field.



JETRO Toronto also used this opportunity to organize a visit to the University of Waterloo for about 20 Japanese companies from Japan and the US. The University of Waterloo is home to the accelerator called Velocity and has a track record of collaborating with Japanese companies. Several companies visited Collision and Waterloo in succession.

This year's Collision was a full-scale in-person event, and I felt the number of participating Japanese companies and their enthusiasm were extraordinary. According to JETRO, a total of more than 300 business negotiations were held by Japanese startups during the conference. Their fruits of such discussions are truly something to which all of us can look forward.

Toronto has officially announced that it will be hosting Collision again next year. I sincerely hope that collaborations with Japanese startups will develop further here in the “Silicon Valley of the North”.



2. Realizing Ontario's EV Strategy

Following his visit last year, the Hon. Victor Fedeli, Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, traveled to Japan again this year.

Japanese auto parts makers and related manufacturers in Ontario have recently made new investments in the province. Mitsui High-tec, which I wrote about in my March message, subsequently announced its Phase 3 investments. JFE Shoji, which has manufacturing facilities in Burlington was also involved in Minister Fedeli's visit to Japan.

While in Japan, the Minister visited Toyota and Honda, both of which have production facilities in Ontario. He also visited KDDI, which recently announced its investment of over 140 billion yen to establish KDDI Canada by acquiring a data centre in Toronto. Minister Fedeli was even interviewed by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun newspaper.

Aside from electric vehicles, Japanese corporations from a variety of fields seem to be investing in Ontario and Canada's potential.



The Arrow, APMA (Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association) Canada's concept EV, made entirely of Canadian parts.

3. Summer Festival in Sudbury

In last month's message, I wrote about the Côté Gold Project, which is being developed by Sumitomo Metal Mining just outside Sudbury. Although the Japanese population in Sudbury is not large, local Japanese residents have been spearheading Japan Festival Sudbury since before the pandemic. Since last year, the festival has been held in Bell Park, and this year, it attracted 1500 people on July 22, many of whom were dressed in traditional *yukata*.

Bell Park is a lovely park situated at the centre of Sudbury on the shore of beautiful Ramsey Lake. There were performances by dancing children, taiko and yosakoi groups, as well as one introducing the traditional lion dance. A local karate club also held demonstrations while vendors served Japanese food such as *oden* (stewed fish cakes) and shaved ice, resulting in long lineups.

Our booth introducing Japanese culture also welcomed a lot of visitors. Adults and children alike enjoyed playing with the Japanese toy called *kendama*. Surprisingly, many people said they were fond of Japanese culture, have visited Japan, and/or were studying Japanese. More than 600 pamphlets, such as Nipponica, introduced facets of Japan and its culture, and all of them quickly disappeared, clearly indicating a strong interest among the visitors.

With the large number of Japanese in the GTA, opportunities to experience Japan's culture and food are readily available here. However, there is lots of room to promote Japanese food further out from Toronto. With the tireless efforts of local residents, Japan Festival Sudbury will hopefully be established as an ongoing opportunity to experience the real Japan.



At Japan Festival Sudbury



**The Consulate-General of Japan's
information and culture booth**