

The year is slowly coming to an end. I hope you have been well and wish you a warm and pleasant start for the new year.

On November 9, I once again this year dropped by the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM)'s annual mochitsuki activity. I was greeted warmly by the Centre's President, Minoru Inoue, and other familiar faces, and I was allowed to try my hand at pounding some mochi. This year again, the glutinous rice cakes were very popular, so much so that it was almost impossible to keep up with the demand.

The process transforming rice into mochi, then part of it again into other various foods such as *chikara udon* noodles was well established, and it was impressive to see the volunteers carrying out their respective tasks with enthusiasm and efficiency. The venue welcomed many families, with each participant spending their Saturday in their own way, enjoying delicious Japanese foods made from mochi.

I have deep respect for the JCCCM and all the volunteers for their efforts in keeping this tradition alive and introducing it to the local population.



From November 12 to 14, I was on an official business trip to Newfoundland and Labrador, during which I met with Lieutenant Governor Joan Marie Aylward and her spouse. We discussed the friendly relations between Japan and the province and their shared social issues, while the Lieutenant Governor brought up topics of interest related to Japan.

I also paid a courtesy visit to Premier Andrew Furey and exchanged views and opinions on the current and future state of Japan-Newfoundland and Labrador relations, focusing on areas such as fisheries, minerals, and energy.



I met with House of Assembly Speaker Derek Bennett in his office and discussed Japan-Newfoundland and Labrador relations in regards to fields such as that of marine and mineral resources. He graciously gave me a tour of the establishment, explaining the building's history.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to engage in conversation on the province's current situation and its relation to Japan with Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology Andrew Parsons, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation Steve Crocker, St. John's Mayor Danny Breen, Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills Deputy Minister Sharlene Jones, Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture Assistant Deputy Minister Scott Jones, and Memorial University President and Vice Chancellor pro tempore Neil Bose.

In addition to reiterating to the relevant authorities my request for the continued protection of Japanese nationals in the province, I also introduced Japanese governmental exchange programs, such as the JET Programme and the MEXT Scholarships.

My sincere thanks to Newfoundlanders for the warm welcome.





On November 15, I met with Quebec's Minister Responsible for Seniors and Health, Sonia Bélanger, and medical specialists from Quebec and Japan, with whom I had a fruitful exchange of views on Japan and Quebec's shared challenges, such as declining birthrates and aging populations.

Through sharing statistical data and outlining of the Japanese government's "Guideline of Measures for Ageing Society", similarities between Japan and Quebec, in terms of issues and measures for instance, were made obvious. I would like to express my gratitude to the Minister and her staff who specially came all the way from Québec City, as well as to the experts for their presence and contribution.

I attended on November 16 the Annual General Meeting of the Montreal Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai. After the deliberations and other procedures had been carried out, the Japanese and Canadian teachers and students seemed to have renewed enthusiasm for tea ceremony as they discussed their regular practice and lessons in a friendly atmosphere. I have deep respect for the Association's efforts in promoting this Japanese tradition.

On November 28, I visited Le Salon du livre de Montréal, Montreal's annual book fair. Compared with my visit last year, spaces aimed at young people, and especially graphic novels including Japanese manga had obviously gained in importance. I was happy to learn that more and more Quebecers have come to be interested in Japan through manga translated into French.

**In addition to the above, I was able to exchange ideas and opinions with various Japanese and Canadian people and organizations, making for yet another meaningful month.*