

How are you all as the last traces of winter seem to linger on?

If we take a look at 2024 economic statistics, Japan ranked as Quebec's third most important export destination in terms of value, in a 14.6% increase from 2023, when Japan ranked fifth. The Consulate General will continue to strive for deepened economic relations between Japan and the provinces in its jurisdiction, including by offering support to Japanese enterprises.

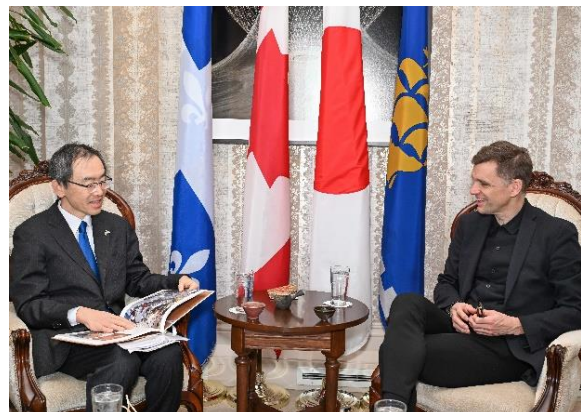
On January 28, Quebec Premier François Legault held in Québec City his annual Exchange of New Year's Greetings reception for the members of the Consular Corps. Similarly to last year, many important Quebec figures were in attendance, and I was glad to have the opportunity to meet and discuss Japan relations with them once more. In addition to the Premier, the Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, Martine Biron, and the President of the National Assembly of Québec, Nathalie Roy, I met former Québec Port Authority President and CEO Mario Girard who is expected to take on the role of Delegate General of Quebec in Tokyo, and exchanged with him on various topics ahead of his imminent departure for Japan. I would like to offer my thanks to the various people at the Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie who organize this event every year.



On January 29, I took advantage of the aforementioned business trip to meet with Québec City Mayor Bruno Marchand. In addition to reiterating the importance of ensuring the safety of local Japanese nationals, I had a productive discussion with him on the promotion of Japanese culture and relations between Japan and the City of Québec. I would like to thank Mr. Marchand for his warm welcome, which even included the serving of Japanese tea.



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On January 31, the Consulate General and the Japan Foundation held the Québec edition of the Japanese Film Festival in collaboration with the Association d'amitié Québec-Japon. A total of around 75 participants gathered to enjoy a presentation on Japanese culture and governmental exchange opportunities such as the MEXT Scholarship Program and the JET Programme, followed by the screening of two Japanese movies. The Association and its members have my gratitude for their valuable collaboration.

On February 2, I participated again this year in the Chado Urasenke Tankokai Association of Montreal's *Hatsugama* held at the Japanese Pavilion of the Montreal Botanical Garden. Japanese and Quebec association members put their hearts into this first tea ceremony of the year, displaying superb teamwork. It appears the number of students learning this traditional art is on the rise. I would thus like to express my sincere respect to the members of the association for their relentless efforts in sharing this important aspect of Japanese culture with Canadians.



On the same day, Deputy Consul General Yoshiki Takaku attended in Québec City the Association d'amitié Québec-Japon's *Shinnenkai*. More than 60 locals took part in this New Year's celebration during which adults and children alike could experience Japanese culture and enjoy such



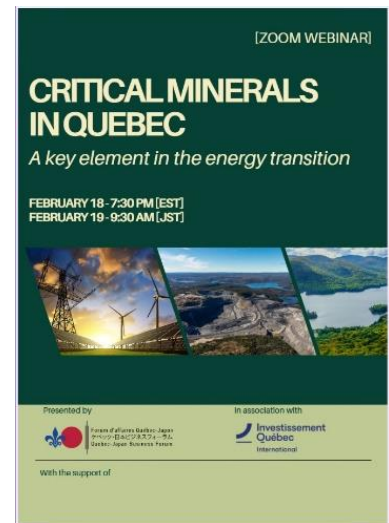
activities as tea ceremony and calligraphy demonstrations, and the seasonal *setsubun* tradition of throwing beans. Also attending the festivities was David Rangdrol, Head of Desk - Japan, Korea and Oceania at Quebec's Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie (MRIF). I would like to express my deep respect for the Association's members who provided such a valuable opportunity to the local residents to come in contact with Japanese culture.



On February 7, we held a New Year's reception with the Montreal Japanese Association of Commerce and Industry, welcoming many invitees including the previously mentioned Delegate General Girard and MRIF's Mr. Rangdrol. The event offered a nice opportunity to chat with representatives of member enterprises and exchange on various topics. I wish Mr. Girard a most productive tenure in Tokyo.



On February 18, the Quebec-Japan Business Forum (QJBF) hosted a webinar for enterprises in Japan on the topic of Quebec's mineral resources. Close to 80 participants listened attentively to the very detailed presentation given by Jocelyn Douheret from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests of Quebec. As you may know, under Canada's federalism, mineral resource development is fundamentally under provincial authority, and as such, this was a valuable opportunity to hear directly from the ministry in charge. I hope this webinar will have contributed to the strengthening of future Japan-Quebec economic relations.



On February 19 and 20, a second symposium on the Indo-Pacific was hosted by Université de Montréal's Montreal Center for International Studies (CÉRIUM). Around 30 scholars participated in panel discussions and presentations covering a wide range of topics, including new foreign policy trends within the current geopolitical context, economic security and global value chains, as well as new issues to be tackled.

Specialists from Japan, Japan Institute of International Affairs Research Fellow Kensuke Yanagida and Tokyo International University Associate Professor Jeffrey Ordaniel, took part in the conference. Bernard Denault, MRIF's Director General for Europe, the Indo-Pacific and Institutional Affairs, addressed the participants during

the event's opening. According to him, the symposium, along with similar activities at Université Laval, are initiatives supported in the wake of Quebec's announcement in 2021 of its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

In my opening remarks, in addition to highlighting how wonderful researchers' growing interest in Asia and the Indo-Pacific is, I shared Japan's perspective on such topics as its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy, economic security, and the Global South. I offer my thanks to CÉRIUM for having organized this symposium.



On February 20, the Consulate General held a networking cocktail for former participants of governmental exchange programs such as the MEXT Scholarship Program, the JET Programme, and the Kakehashi Project. With all invitees maintaining a close relation with Japan, this was a valuable opportunity for them to engage in conversation and create ties. We can look forward to their future activities in various fields related to Japan.



On February 26, Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante hosted the annual reception in honor of the local Consular Corps. As Montreal is sister city to Hiroshima, I brought up in my discussions with Mayor Plante, Montreal City Council Chair Martine Musau Muele, and other representatives the future of the city's friendly relations with Japan.

**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.*