

As I did not have the opportunity until now to extend my New Year's greetings, please allow me to wish you a prosperous 2026!

As the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Canada approaches in 2028, the Consulate General remains committed to further strengthening the ties that unite Japan with the regions within our jurisdiction this year.

Last month, according to seasonal reports, Fred the groundhog predicted that this year may bring an early spring. The official website mentions that his predictions are said to have an accuracy rate of approximately 75 percent, and we therefore sincerely hope that Fred's outlook will prove correct this year!

#### New Year's Reception Hosted by the Mayor of Montreal

On January 21, I attended the New Year's reception hosted by Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Mayor of Montreal, at City Hall. During our discussion, I conveyed my sincere appreciation for the City of Montreal's continued hosting, each August, of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony. I also mentioned that the sister city relationship between Hiroshima and Montreal will mark its 30th anniversary in 2028, the same year that Japan and Canada will celebrate the 100th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.



Photo @Ville de Montréal\_Sylvain Légaré

I further highlighted the ongoing efforts to introduce and promote Japanese culture at the Japanese Pavilion and the Japanese Garden located within the Montreal Botanical Garden.

#### The Montreal Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai Presents: "Hatsugama"

On February 1, I attended the annual Hatsugama event hosted by the Montreal Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai. It was the first tea ceremony of the year, held in the snow-covered Japanese garden, where the bright winter sun felt pleasantly warm despite the surrounding snow. I was once again deeply touched by the generous hospitality of the Association members, as well as by the remarkable harmony and coordination demonstrated during the tea ceremony. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the Association members for their continued efforts to promote the art of the tea ceremony in Montreal, which led to their receiving the Minister of Foreign Affairs Commendation last year.



New Year's Reception for Members of the Consular Corps Hosted by the Premier of Quebec

On February 3, the annual New Year's reception hosted by Mr. François Legault, Premier of Quebec, for members of the Consular Corps was held in Quebec City. As in previous years, many prominent figures from Quebec were in attendance, providing an opportunity to exchange views on Japan–Quebec relations with the Premier and his spouse, Mr. Christopher Skeete, Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, Ms. Nathalie Roy, President of the National Assembly of Quebec, and Mr. Bruno Marchand, Mayor of Quebec City.



In addition, ministers from the provincial government delivered briefings on the current status and policies in areas such as international relations, higher education, natural resources and forestry, agriculture and fisheries, and culture. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government and National Assembly of Quebec, and in particular to the Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, for organizing this valuable event.

Quebec's Manga, Anime, and Video Game Festivals

Otakuthon has been held in Montreal for 20 years, while Nadeshicon has taken place in Quebec City for 15 years. On January 29, I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Stefan Latour and Mr. Jean-Marc Baroud, Otakuthon Co-Presidents, Ms. Enora Fouillé, Executive Committee Chair, and Mr. Michio Hirai, Japanese Guest Liaisons Director. On February 10, I also met with Mr. Jean-Luc Servant, President of Nadeshicon. Both events, centered on Japanese pop culture, continue to grow in popularity each year, with attendance steadily increasing. I am always impressed that these festivals have been sustained for so long thanks to the dedication of local volunteers, the organizers, and the many others involved. This year, Nadeshicon will be held in April and Otakuthon in August, and we look forward to welcoming many fans of Japanese culture to both events.

Networking Event for Former Participants of Japanese Government Exchange Programs

On February 19, we held a networking event for former participants of Japanese government programs, including the JET Programme, the MEXT Scholarships Program, and the Kakehashi Project. The gathering provided an opportunity to hear the valuable experiences of individuals who, through their participation in these initiatives, have contributed to strengthening the ties between Japan and Canada. I sincerely hope that all of the alumni will continue to flourish in their respective fields and to serve as bridges between our two countries.

Note: Kakehashi Project – A Program to Promote Understanding of Japan

The Kakehashi Project is an exchange program for outstanding youth from North America. Its purpose is to enhance interest in and deepen understanding of Japan, while encouraging participants to build on their experiences after returning home. Through this program, participants develop a deeper understanding of Japan and become supportive of Japan-related initiatives, thereby strengthening Japan's diplomatic foundation. The Kakehashi Project promotes understanding of Japan in fields such as politics, economics, society, culture, history, and foreign policy, in accordance with participants'

expertise and areas of interest, while also encouraging them to share their experiences and perspectives with others.



#### Hatsugama Hosted by Quebec Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai

On February 22, the Quebec Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai held its Hatsugama, the first tea ceremony of the year, which was attended by Deputy Consul General Takaku. For the past 16 years, the Association has contributed in Quebec City to promoting a deeper understanding of Japanese culture through the practice of the tea ceremony, while also fostering exchanges between Japan and Quebec. Through the splendid tea ceremony performed by the Association members, the event also offered local participants from Quebec, attending as guests, an opportunity to experience the depth and refinement of Japanese culture.

#### Quebec Japan Business Forum (QJBF) New Year's Reception

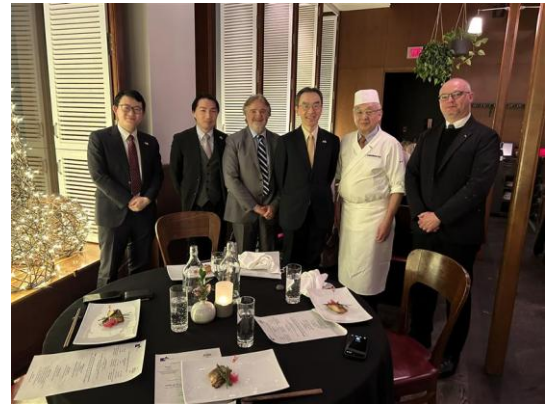
On February 25, the Quebec Japan Business Forum (QJBF) held its New Year's Reception, at which I had the honor of delivering remarks. Despite heavy snowfall, more than 100 participants involved with Japan across a wide range of sectors gathered for the occasion. During the event, QJBF President Anaïs Nguyen also spoke about her visit to Japan last November through the Kakehashi Project, which further contributed to the lively and engaging atmosphere of the reception.

*(Note) Kakehashi Project: Program to Promote Understanding of Japan (as mentioned above).*



### Montréal en Lumière

The 26th edition of Montréal en Lumière, a festival celebrating food culture, music, theatre, and light installations, was held this year until March 7. Within this framework, on February 25, the Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ), which trains professionals for the local restaurant and hotel industry, collaborated with the Miyagi Culinary Arts School in Miyagi prefecture, Japan. Japanese chefs specializing in Japanese cuisine, visiting from the school, delivered lectures to ITHQ students and also prepared Japanese dishes served at the



ITHQ's affiliated restaurant. The restaurant was fully booked each day, reflecting both the popularity of Japanese cuisine and the strong interest it generates among local residents.

We extend our sincere appreciation to ITHQ for its significant contribution to introducing Japanese food culture, and to the Miyagi Culinary Arts School for traveling such a long distance to share the appeal of Japanese cuisine.

### New Year Greetings Exchange with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Montreal

On February 27, we held our annual New Year greetings exchange with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Montreal and other Japan-related organizations. This year, with the aim of further deepening exchanges among those involved in Japan–Quebec economic relations, we extended the invitations to include companies not affiliated with the Chamber, such as Investissement Québec (the primary public investment agency and financial arm of the Quebec government), as well as representatives from the Quebec Japan Business Forum (QJBF). Ms. Joanie Leroux-Côté, who is scheduled to assume her post shortly as Economic Attaché at the Quebec General Delegation to Tokyo, was also in attendance, providing an opportunity for her to interact with representatives of Japanese companies based in the region. The Consulate General will continue its efforts to support Japanese companies and to further strengthen economic relations between Japan and Quebec.



\* In addition to the above, I had the opportunity to exchange views with various individuals and representatives of organizations in Japan and Canada, making the last few months a very rewarding period.

\* This message is also sent to our newsletter subscribers in French and English.