## THE CANADIAN

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN



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P31

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#### 5 EDITOR

Comfort Food ALEC JORDAN

### **7** CHAMBER VIEW

Learning Curve

### 9 CANADA-JAPAN NEWS

### **10 NEW VIEW FOR VANCOUVER**

Kengo Kuma's first BC gig is a stunning bilateral hybrid of culture and nature NINA OIKI

### **12 CPTPP STIMULUS**

From meat and seafood to potatoes and pasta, trade treaty feeds Japan's hunger for quality Canadian food ALEC JORDAN

### 19 CANADA'S SUSHI KING

Creator of the California Roll helped whet nation's appetite for Japanese cuisine TIM HORNYAK

### **20 LABOUR OF LOVE**

Time for Japan to buy more Canadian fine wine ALEC JORDAN

### **24 JMEC: GRAND PLANS**

Annual event for aspiring leaders has strong CCCJ ties MEGAN CASSON

### 26 A CANADIAN'S CULTURE OF CHANGE

Montrealer Paul Lirette is leading GSK Japan's journey for better health, teamwork and communication C BRYAN JONES

### 29 SELLERS' MARKET FOR MEDICAL DEVICES

Foreign firms must act fast to beat lag and enter Japan PHILIP O'NEILL

### 31 MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Meet James Hedden, president of Tokai Japan Canada Society for business and pleasure ALEC JORDAN

### **32 NEW MEMBERS**

### **34** CCCJ AGM 2020

Despite virus, a good year for revenues and committees ALEC JORDAN

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### The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

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The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan is a private sector, not-for-profit business organization founded in 1975 to promote the development of commerce between Canada and Japan.

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Representing some 35 business industries, the CCCJ is a member-driven, member-focused organization and is the longest-serving Canadian chamber of commerce in Asia. With more than 400 members, the CCCJ represents a broad cross-section of businesspeople, including entrepreneurs, from Canada, Japan and other countries. The membership comprises Canadian companies and individuals with ties to Japan, and Japanese companies and individuals with ties to Canada.

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### **COMFORT** FOOD

By Alec Jordan Editor-in-Chief, The Canadian



I'd like to start this note by wishing all members of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) the best in these uncertain times. I hope that you, your families and your businesses are adjusting to everything that the new normal has brought with it.

#### **FLAVOURS OF CANADA**

One of the best ways to appreciate a country and a culture is through its food and drink, and with that in mind, we've put a special focus this issue on featuring the many products from Canada that find their way onto store shelves and restaurant tables in Japan. We begin with a look at Canadian food in Japan (page 12), which runs a wide gamut, from products for which Canada is well known to a few surprises for example, did you know that the french

fry capital of the world is located in a small town in New Brunswick?

Then we take a trip to Vancouver, where master sushi chef Hidekazu Tojo (page 19) sparked a revolution in the food world by adapting a traditional Japanese dish to Western tastes.

Finally, we move to Canadian wine (page 20), which has truly come into its own in the past two decades. Wine-growing regions can be found across the country, and the vintages they are producing regularly win prizes at the international level.

#### **TIES OF ALL KINDS**

The connection between Canada and Japan can be seen in a number of other articles. The Japan Market Expansion Competition (page 24), or JMEC, draws a diverse group of young professionals together to create innovative business plans for client companies. As we see in our coverage of the program, JMEC

has strong Canadian connections. The Canadian community in Japan is spread across the country, and one organization dedicated to creating bilateral ties is the Tokai Japan Canada Society (page 31), founded in 2004. The famed architect Kengo Kuma (page 10) has worked on projects around the world, but one of his most recent buildings, Alberni, which is to be completed in Vancouver in 2021, marks an opportunity for the architect to put his stamp on the skyline of a major Canadian city. And Paul Lirette (page 26), the Montrealer who is leading GSK's Japan operations, talks about what brought him to this country and how his company is tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Thanks as always for your readership, and please stay safe and healthy. \*

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Leadership Potential:	1 hr
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Leadership Potential: Stop Doing, Start Leading (10 sessions) Disagree Agreeably Dream Big, Focus Small: Achieve SMARTER Goals Getting Results Without Authority Goal Setting and Accountability How to Communicate with Diplomacy and Tact (4 sessions) How to Win Friends and Influence Business People (4 sessions) Innovation: Transforming Ideas into	1 hr 1 hr 2 hrs 12 hrs
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Create Your Work-Life Breakthrough	1 hr
Disagree Agreeably	1 hr
Dream Big, Focus Small: Achieve SMARTER Goals	1 hr
Getting Results Without Authority	1 hr
How to Win Friends & Influence Business People (4 sessions)	12 hrs
Managing Workplace Stress	3 hrs
Overcoming Workplace Negativity with Enthusiasm	2 hrs
Powerful Conversations to Engage Your Workforce	1 hr
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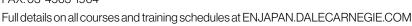


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## LEARNING **CURVE**

By Matt Ketchum **Executive Director** The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan



Amidst the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the chamber is moving along at a brisk pace. This strange landscape that we find ourselves in is a difficult one to be sure, and we stand in solidarity with one and all, but it is also full of potential, with seemingly countless opportunities.

Of course, physical events are an ongoing topic of conversation. The official edicts say that events with up to 5,000 people are acceptable, yet the general feeling is that smaller is better and just avoiding them altogether is best.

We err on the side of safety, and so our inperson event calendar is almost entirely empty (the golf tournament has been rescheduled for October 23), but that doesn't mean we aren't discussing how best to approach the new reality that is forming around us. Where should we be hosting? What sort of content is acceptable? How large an attendance list is too large? Is there a time limit on these events? What are the safest routes for attendees to take to an event? There are seemingly endless questions to be considered when discussing hypotheticals about how in-person events might safely operate in a post-corona world, and while it is pretty taxing work, it is also extremely interesting and requires the type of mental acrobatics that rarely sees the light of day.

### **VIRTUAL LANDSCAPE**

Our new world is also chock full of virtual events and these, too, require some of the same gymnastics as in-person event planning, if only to keep things interesting. The coronavirus is a topic that rears its head quite often at these events, in the context of business resilience,

safety precautions, travel restrictions and other topics. While it's invaluable information, one might comment that the landscape is getting saturated with it.

But what else can you do with Zoom, or Meets, or BlueJeans, or GoToMeeting — or any of the many other video conferencing solutions? That is a question we have been having a lot of fun addressing, and the answer is both positive and daunting: anything! You just need to explore a bit to find out what that is.

We've hosted successfully and online coffee breaks, health professionals, policy discussions, our Annual General Meeting and more, and are very much looking forward to where this will lead us.

On July 22, we had a live discussion with the members of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong about how Covid-19 has affected their day-to-day operations compared with the situation in Japan. It proved to be a valuable affair for a wide range of people all over the world.

#### ON THE WAY

We've been working with one of our food and beverage members to produce a cooking show using their products. We've finished editing the video and are in talks regarding distribution and logistics, but the gist of it is that participants will have a package of ingredients shipped to them and then, at a given time, log in to view the program and cook along with other participants.

We're also in talks with local entertainment start-ups and Canadian musicians about producing original music content which, is a really exciting proposition. On the surface, it's just a great way to get unique content to our members. But, if you dig just a bit deeper, it could also be a great method for the chamber to get that same great Canadian content into the hands of Japan, hopefully boosting the soft power presence of Canada here in doing so.

While things are far from comfortable amidst this pandemic, it does occasionally present us with new and promising opportunities to diversify our offerings and provide value to our members in new ways. And that is somewhat reflective of a larger, positive theme in all of this confusion — that when we come out of this pandemic, it had better be after having learned something and grown.

When we come out of this pandemic, it had better be after having learned something and grown.



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## CANADA-JAPAN **NEWS**





### CPTPP probe as log exports fall

As reported on July 16 in the Nikkei Asian Review, Canadian log exports to Japan have dropped significantly this year. According to the Japan Lumber Importers' Association, shipments fell 77 per cent in the January–May period, with no logs having been shipped in April. Figures for May were just five per cent of the amount shipped for the same month last year.

This raises concerns about a possible first violation of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is investigating the situation. If it is found that Ottawa is refusing to issue export permits without a valid reason, the ministry could file a formal complaint with the Canadian government.

### BC firm tests plant-based wagyu beef

A new, plant-based version of Japanese wagyu beef is being produced by Top Tier Foods, a Vancouver, British Columbia-based company. According to an article published by the South China Morning Post on July 13, the product is manufactured in Japan, and samples have been sent to restaurants and food producers in Japan and around the world.

> Dubbed "Waygu," it is made from textured soy protein and flavoured with natural ingredients. Full-scale production of the vegan

> > beef is set to begin in August. It's already made one prominent fan: the master chef Hidekazu Tojo (see page 19), who thought Waygu was the real thing at first bite.



Japanada Enterprises, a Whistler, British Columbia-based tour company, has received a C\$10,000 grant provided by the Canadian Business Resilience Network in partnership with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and software company Salesforce.com, inc. According to an article published on July 5 in Pique News Magazine, the grant is to aid businesses that have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the 1,100 small businesses that applied, 62 have received grants. Hisae Yanagisawa, owner of Japanada Enterprises, has run the company with her husband for the past 23 years. She said that their business, which has primarily targeted Japanese tourists, has dropped to near zero since March and they need to start targeting in-province customers. "We are really thankful to be selected for this grant. It definitely helps to make the changes that we need right now," she said.

### Tokyo eases rules on livestock product imports

The Canadian Inquirer reported on July 10 that Ottawa and Tokyo have expanded on the Canada-Japan Organic Equivalency Arrangement, effective July 26. Canadian certified organic livestock products and processed food products that contain livestock ingredients will be eligible for export to Japan, and the costs of industry certification and administrative processes will be reduced. The expanded agreement, which recognizes that bilateral organic livestock standards are equivalent, promises greater market opportunities for Canadian organic livestock producers and processors.

### NPO boss dies at 77



As reported by Canadian news outlet The Georgia Straight on June 25, Robert Tadashi Banno died on June 16 at the age of 77. He was the founding president of the Burnaby, British Columbia-based nonprofit Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre, and the Nikkei

Place Foundation. Banno led the merger of the National Nikkei Heritage Centre Society and the Japanese Canadian National Museum, and helped establish the Nikkei Place Foundation to fundraise for the cultural center and museum.

He was recognized with a number of accolades. In 2013, he was appointed Queen's Counsel and was awarded the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contributions to the Japanese-Canadian community. In 2016, he received the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays.

## NEW VIEW FOR VANCOUVER

Kengo Kuma's first BC gig is a stunning bilateral hybrid of culture and nature

By Nina Oiki

A giant of contemporary Japanese architecture, Kengo Kuma was born in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, in 1954. He has designed buildings in more than 20 countries and received numerous accolades, including the Architectural Institute of Japan Prize for Design and the French Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres award.



The genesis of his impressive career can be traced back to when the young Kuma attended the 1964 Olympics, where he was struck by Kenzo Tange's iconic Yoyogi National Gymnasium. After studying architecture at The University of Tokyo and working at two Japanese companies, he continued his studies in the mid-1980s as a visiting researcher at Columbia University in New York City.

Following his return to Japan, he set up the Spatial Design Studio in 1987, and Kengo Kuma & Associates in 1990.

Kuma's architectural inspiration came full circle when he was chosen by the Japanese government to design the National Stadium that will be used

for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, which have been postponed until next year.

In addition, plenty of other work has kept his studio busy. One project that recently has been turning heads is the curved-silhouette residential tower in Vancouver. Known as Alberni, the 43-story apartment building is to be completed next year. It is located in Vancouver's West End neighbourhood, near the entrance to Stanley Park.

The Canadian recently spoke with Kuma over Zoom to find out more about Alberni and his views on architecture.

### Tell us about Alberni.

The design for this large-scale project celebrates the presence of nature in Vancouver. We have worked on towers in the past, but not to this scale and level of detail, so the undertaking is an architect's dream. The tower features two concave sides to produce a curved form, while the trees and moss surrounding the building are a nod to traditional Japanese gardens.

### What is the concept behind the project?

This is the first residential high-rise project I have undertaken in North America, and my initial inspiration came from the location which, I believe, is a hub of Asian and North American culture.

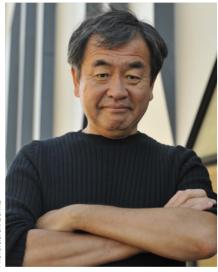
To reflect this, the building is a hybrid structure of concrete and lumber designed to combine Asian and North American cultural sensibilities.

It shows my vision for architecture which, I believe, should blend in with the surrounding environment and culture.

Because I know Canadian people appreciate the beauty and power of architecture, I have placed on the tower's roof terrace a traditional tea ceremony pavilion that, surrounded by stones, overlooks the city's downtown district. The wooden structure features sliding glass walls and a low-slung overhanging roof.

### People are pushing for a more naturerelated approach.







My basic philosophy is to respect the culture and environment of the country or location where I am working.

### What makes the design special?

It is, perhaps, the fact that the design protects the view of city corridors, and that the exterior is glass and aluminum, to reflect neighbouring buildings on the lower levels and the sky on the upper levels. Moreover, the building exudes a warm materiality with its wood balconies and bamboo interior details. The structure's mixeduse design includes restaurants and retail facilities at street level, along with a Japanese garden.

I believe that, while skyscrapers were isolated monuments in the last century, in the 21st century they should be part of the overall urban design. But perhaps the most important detail is that we are incorporating traditional features while creating something that has a personality and imparts a new image of a tower.

### Is your design sensitive to Canadian culture?

My basic philosophy is to respect the culture and environment of the country or location where I am working. Thus I always use local materials and collaborate with local craftsmen to ensure that each project is a cultural exchange.

In my design for Alberni, for example, I used local Canadian wood — which is considered to be the country's treasure. I have great admiration for the way that Canadian people treat and

protect nature, and here especially I can see similarities between Canadian and Japanese design. This helped me create a building that is a symbol of a new age — a new period of natural design.

### How'd you use wood in such a tall building?

I am very concerned with lightness and the use of wood in buildings. It is easy to achieve lightness with small wooden buildings, but it is very difficult with a building of this size. Working with very good engineers, however, we were able to build a structure combining wood and concrete to achieve the right kind of transparency. By using wooden planks, each with a gap to give wind and light access to the building, we achieved lightness and transparency.

### What message do your projects have?

In big cities, too many concrete buildings are being constructed purely for business purposes. In my opinion, this has been destroying cities over the past 60 years, so we must find a smart way to live in limited space. Since forest areas account for some 70 per cent of Japan, we must develop a way of working with what remains.

However, since such confinement is not exclusive to Japan, we must apply wisdom at a universal level. It is important for the environment that we learn to live in any space and that we conserve energy. I would like Canada to lead the way in this, because it is a country blessed with a vast wealth of natural resources.

### What changes will the Olympics bring?

I believe that, for the Olympics next year, we should not follow the modernist style of our previous Olympics. The Yoyogi National Gymnasium was designed for that event by Kenzo Tange, a star architect at the time, whose work became a symbol of those Games. The structure is a beautiful concrete and steel building featuring a suspended roof. I recall being amazed by the advanced technology that had been used in the building's design.

During the 1964 Olympics, Japan was in the process of economic expansion and believed that industrialization was good for society. These days, doubt surrounds such thinking and people are pushing for a more nature-related approach. In the belief that the National Stadium should reflect this, I used wood as the main material for the building, which is a symbol of a new age, a new period of natural design.

#### What goals guide your work?

My main goal is to recover Japanese building traditions and to reinterpret them to suit contemporary lifestyles. To do so, I take my inspiration from nature, especially light and wood. Through my designs, I try to express in projects the emotional content of materials and their natural characteristics, blending these with traditional Japanese mores.

An adequate study of a location is essential to integrating a project with its surroundings. In this way, the balance will not be disturbed but, rather, be a natural extension of that delicate balance, only one built by human hands. In the Alberni project, my design uses the forces of nature and is in harmony with its environment. \*









Among the many strong trade ties that link Canada and Japan, food figures high on the list. Canada exports a wide variety of products to Japan — from things that you'd expect, such as maple syrup and seafood, to more surprising offerings.

They come from across the country: the regions on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, which generate a wide variety of marine products, and the agricultural heartland. And thanks to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the market conditions are excellent for Canadian agri-food companies to send their products to Japan.

#### **CORNUCOPIA**

As First Secretary (Commercial) and Trade Commissioner Nathan Funk from the Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo explained, Japan is one of Canada's top export destinations and in



Nathan Funk First Secretary (Commercial) and Trade Commissioner Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo

2019 there were more than C\$4.7 billion worth of agri-food and seafood exports from Canada.

Funk said the range of products are quite diverse: "In addition to the more well-known Canadian food products like maple syrup and salmon, Canadian pork is extremely popular and sought in Japan due to its high quality and similar taste profile to Japan's domestic pork.

"Canadian beef has also experienced a steady rise in popularity and brand recognition, especially since the implementation of the CPTPP. Canola seed, used to produce canola oil, is Canada's number one agricultural export to Japan and continues to be Japanese crushers' oilseed of choice."

He added that there are also some products coming to Japan from Canada that might not be expected: "Japanese consumers may not know that Canada is Japan's number one supplier of mustard seeds, canola seed, lobsters and malt used for beer. It might also be a surprise to learn that Canadian durum wheat is used in the majority of the pasta produced in Japan, while Canadian soy is commonly used as an ingredient in Japanese foods such as tofu, miso, natto and soymilk.

"On the seafood side, many consumers might not imagine that Canada is one of Japan's major suppliers of herring roe, which is indispensable in traditional Japanese New Year dishes."

The CPTPP has also created a wide array of opportunities for Canada when it comes to offering products in Japan, Funk said. "The

implementation of the CPTPP in 2018 created a first-mover advantage for Canada over key competitors to cement new and expanded relationships in key agriculture sectors. As one of the primary beneficiaries of Japanese tariff reductions under the CPTPP, many Canadian agricultural exports have noticeably increased since the agreement entered into force. Additionally, new market access in recent years for products like cherries and greenhouse peppers have paved the way for a broader range of Canadian agriculture products to be offered to Japanese customers."

However, while Japan offers a great deal of opportunities for Canadian producers, it is not without its challenges, Funk explained: "Time zone and cultural differences, stringent specifications and complex technical import requirements are some of the key challenges for Canadian food exporters to overcome. Although it often takes time for Canadian suppliers to find success in this market, Canadian agri-food exporters find that Japanese companies tend to be reliable, long-term partners that appreciate high-quality Canadian products."

### **PIONEER**

One company that is well established in the Japanese market is Maple Leaf Foods Inc., based in Mississauga, Ontario. The first Canadian pork supplier to open in Japan, they launched in Japan in 1980 as Canada Packers Japan. The company's name changed to Maple Leaf





Foods Japan Co., Ltd. in 1991. The Japanese operations are 100 per cent owned by the Canadian company.

Maple Leaf Foods Senior Sales Manager Munenari Hiramoto explained that the company was launched in response to a growing demand in Japan for pork products at the time: "Responding to increased inquiries from the Japanese market for high quality pork products, Maple Leaf International Trade Division senior executives, along with several Japanese partners, decided it would be beneficial to have a permanent presence in the Japanese market for further business expansion. The feeling was that Japan was a sophisticated market, so it was imperative to have Japanese employees in the market to educate both the end customer about Canadian pork as well as Maple Leaf employees about the intricacies of the Japanese market and its pork quality and taste preferences. This exchange of information enabled Maple Leaf Foods to more quickly adapt to the demands of its Japanese customers."

When they first launched in Japan, the company sold only frozen pork cuts, such as loin and tenderloin. However, over the years, their business has expanded to include many other cuts including belly, collar butt, ham and picnic [pork shoulder], as well as pork fat and offal items.

Hiramoto explained that the company's most popular item is chilled pork, which is sold at Japanese retail stores. This has become a very important business for Maple Leaf Foods because the product attracts a steady demand, comparable to the company's domestic business. Across the market, the demand for Canadian chilled pork has grown drastically over the past 10 years, almost tripling from roughly 5,000 metric tonnes to 15,000 metric tonnes a month.

He added, "Maple Leaf Foods also sells frozen pork, which is destined mainly for

### "If we want to promote Canadian products, we could do a better job."

further processing, and becomes raw material for Japan national brands of sausage, ham and bacon. Many Japanese are eating Canadian pork without realizing it, since products that have come from Canada could make up some portion of the processed meat products they consume from day to day."

Hiramoto commented that Canadian pork is a good fit for the Japanese market because of its many similarities to domestic pork, so customers are comfortable with its appearance, texture and taste.

In addition, to stay abreast of changing trends and demands, Maple Leaf Foods relies on its in-market experts to guide them and ensure that they can supply Japanese consumers with products that meet their tastes.

Although Maple Leaf Foods Inc. is a global leader in pork exports, selling products to 40 countries, Hiramoto says that the Japanese market is critically important, and that many of their Japanese customers are among the company's most strategic partners. "The continuity and stability of demand, along with Japan's demand for high-quality products is a perfect fit for Maple Leaf Foods," he said.

This strong connection to the Japanese market also plays out in pork production in Canada. Hiramoto explained that almost all of the cuts from its Lethbridge, Alberta, pork facility are destined for Japan in chilled or frozen form.

The operation's pigs, feed, running and overall decision-making are based on a Japan first line of thinking. In addition, a large percentage of high-value cuts from Maple Leaf Foods' large Brandon, Manitoba, pork facility

— their largest — are also destined for Japan as chilled or frozen cuts.

Hiramoto explained that the company, which in 2019 became the first major food company in the world to become carbon neutral, is hoping to bring similar emission targets and environmentrelated investments to Japan. "We believe Canada is on the leading edge of sustainable business, and Maple Leaf Foods, which represents excellent Canadian food in Japan, needs to bring that value, too. This can help us establish even stronger bonds between Canada and Japan that can last for many decades."

### **ON THE RISE**

Another player in the pork industry is HyLife Pork Ltd., based in La Broquerie, Manitoba. In 2010, they started exporting to Japan and launched HyLife Pork Japan Ltd. in 2016. As Naoyuki "Nick" Funakoshi — chief business development officer, Asia for the company explained, the initial motivation to start up in Japan was to let consumers know the source of the pork they were already buying.

"Before we launched in Japan, we actually had a decent-sized business in Japan, with about 1,000 metric tonnes of pork exported from Canada to Japan every week. But without



Naoyuki Funakoshi Chief husiness development HyLife Pork Japan Ltd.



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a brand, consumers couldn't recognize that the pork was coming from Canada or HyLife Pork. So we wanted to provide a taste experience that people could recognize was HyLife Pork. And, once they had that experience, they could become repeat customers or even have an improved image of Canada."

The company has a tight relationship with a number of strategic partners and distributors, including Itochu Corporation, which has a 49 per cent ownership. HyLife Pork's most popular products are thick-cut pork steak and pork loin, which can be found everywhere, from Hokkaido to Kyushu.

Their primary customers are supermarkets — more than 1,500 stores around the country. Thirty per cent of their product is branded and sold as HyLife Pork, while the remainder is used in processed meat, such as sausages or bacon. They also co-brand some of their pork with other retailers.

They have grown rapidly since their launch. In 2010, they were shipping seven metric tonnes of pork to Japan a week, and are now shipping 1,000 metric tonnes a week. Funakoshi explains that this growth can be attributed to marketing strategy and their partnerships. Japan is crucial to HyLife Pork's business — it is the company's single biggest market.

To meet market demand, HyLife Pork relies on market research and a production process that is designed to meet the tastes of Japanese consumers. "We have an integrated production system, which means that we actually control the process, from farm to table," Funakoshi said, adding, "especially in terms of pork, genetics and the environment in which the animals are raised are very important, and influence the taste. For Japanese people, the preference is for a lighter flavour, no strong odour and a tender consistency. Understanding these preferences, we can control the genetics and the feed ingredients in order to raise pigs that meet Japanese tastes."

Their early marketing efforts focused on the B2B side, which included educational programs, workshops and recipe promotion. And it has been successful, Funakoshi says. "I believe that

### "Every division's key person needs to understand Japan and make that connection on an emotional level."

now in the Japanese pork industry, there's no one who does not know about HyLife Pork."

Another part of their strategy was setting up HyLife Pork Table in 2016. Locating the flagship restaurant in the upscale Tokyo neighbourhood of Daikanyama has helped to build brand awareness. Extending their marketing efforts to the B2C business, HyLife Pork is targeting a younger demographic — people in their twenties and forties — who are more likely to be interested in buying imported products, and who also appreciate the cost-performance aspect of the products. The company plans to pursue this approach for the coming five to 10 years, and are using everything, from social media influencers to recipe leaflets distributed at points of sale, to appeal to consumers.

The importance of Japan for HyLife Pork also applies to the development of executives back in Canada, Funakoshi adds. "One of the unique things we have at HyLife Pork is a kind of master's program, which serves as training for future executives.

"It's a yearly program, and at the end we invite 10 or so people to Japan. There, they learn about Japanese customers and culture, and they have HyLife Pork at HyLife Pork Table. Because for HyLife, Japan is the most important market, every division's key person needs to understand Japan and make that connection on an emotional level."

### **FRY KING**

Operating in a different product space is McCain Foods Limited, based in Florenceville, New Brunswick. The world's largest producer of frozen potato products, they have been in the Japanese market since 1987. Takashi Nagai, president and managing director of McCain Foods (Japan) Limited, said that they were

inspired to set up in Japan following the boom in the french fry market, which was inspired in great part by the introduction of McDonald's Corporation restaurants in the 1970s.

"I think Japan was one of the countries to most quickly recognize the food culture of the United States represented by McDonald's," Nagai said. "Since the 1970s, Japanese people have gotten used to eating french fries. Now french fries are one of the most profitable items for restaurants, [pubs] and bars. They have almost 100 per cent exposure and visibility on menus at these outlets."

McCain Foods sells a wide range of potato dishes in Japan, from traditional shoestring french fries to flavoured, appetizer-style potatoes. And although you can find McCain Foods branded potato products at Costco, most of the product that they sell in Japan — and around the world — is not branded as such.

But if you're ordering fries during a karaoke session, at a family restaurant or while you're getting a fast food fix, there's a strong chance that you'll be eating McCain Foods' potatoes.

Several major fast food franchises carry their products, and Nagai explained that about one-third of the french fries you can find at restaurants and hotels in Japan are from McCain Foods.

Nagai says that the total Japan market for french fries, which is growing about two or three



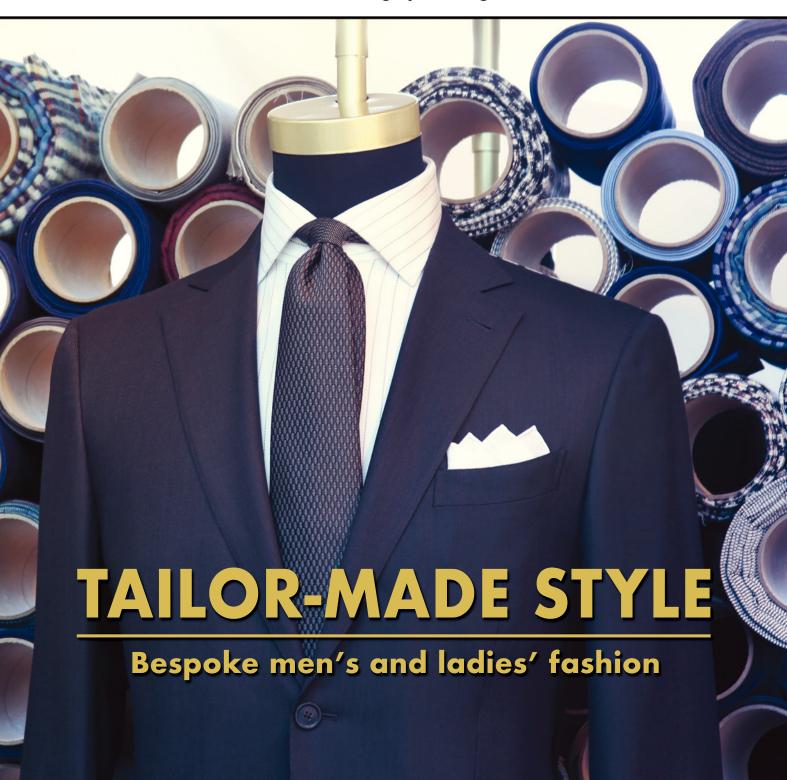
Takashi Nagai President and managing director McCain Foods (Japan)



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### About one-third of the french fries you can find at restaurants and hotels in Japan are from McCain Foods.



per cent each year, is highly dependent on the performance of large, fast food franchises.

For the company, Japan is not a huge market — representing about three to five per cent of global sales. With no manufacturing plant in Japan, the company imports potatoes from Canada and the United States, with most coming from north of the border.

But Nagai says that there isn't a strong image of Canada when it comes to McCain Foods' potatoes. "McCain is the largest supplier in Japan, and the world — the sign at the entrance of Florenceville says, 'French fry capital of the world.' But the image of french fries is from the US, because of McDonald's."

And it's not just the image, when it comes to competitors in the market. "Our main competitors are from the US. And they've organized the United States Potato Board. It receives considerable investment from suppliers. They have an office in Japan and they have a large budget. Our french fries are from Canada so we cannot promote together. I think there's an opportunity there. If we want to promote Canadian products, we could do a better job."

One idea has come up between his company and a Canadian pork exporter, Nagai says. "In the future we would like to possibly lead tours in Canada together."

"If we could invite some Japanese businesspeople there, we might be able to collaborate on a tour — maybe after they visit the pork farm we could schedule a plant tour for the french fries. We're just discussing it, but if we paid for that, it would be quite expensive. So we need to figure out how to get some additional support from Canada.

"Actually, about 20 years ago, we invited a lot of people from our food industry and we did a lot of plant tours. All of the customers appreciated this and have great memories from their Canadian tour. So personally, I'd like to do that again, and invite important customers, to attract them, and do exhibitions and make more sales."

### **COVID IMPACT**

The coronavirus pandemic has affected every corner of the business world, and the food industry is certainly no exception. However, as Funk explains, the first four months of the year have been better than expected in some areas.

"Canada recorded a 15 per cent [year on year] increase in agriculture exports to Japan over the first four months of 2020. When looking at trade data from January to April 2020, some key commodities that fared well include beef, particularly fresh and chilled beef, which was up 36 per cent [year on year], and barley, which was up 37 per cent [year on year]." Both beef and barley have seen reduced tariffs thanks to the CPTPP.

Nonetheless, Funk explained that, during the same period, Canadian seafood exports were down 14 per cent, due to a sharp decline in food service industry demand, reflecting the temporary closure of restaurants, the cancellation of events such as wedding receptions, and the precipitous drop in the number of tourists coming to Japan.

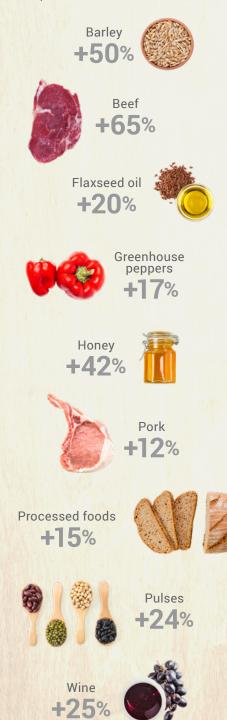
One particularly illustrative example of the export decline is Canada's live or fresh lobster exports to Japan. They dropped more than 90 per cent in April 2020 compared with the same month last year — C\$126,000 in 2020 compared with C\$2.07 million in 2019.

For Maple Leaf Foods, Hiramoto explained that the pandemic has meant the quarterly or twice-yearly visits from members of the Canadian team have come to a halt, but like all businesses, they're using a wide range of communication tools and platforms to adapt to the new normal and stay in touch with stakeholders.

HyLife Pork, meanwhile, has spent more than C\$3 million to create a safer work environment for their employees at processing plants, by such means as building plastic walls and making other adjustments that will allow people to continue working while maintaining social distance. \*

### **EXPORT GROWTH** FOR CANADIAN **AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS**

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### One of the quintessential experiences for travellers to Japan is dining on authentic sushi.

As a global industry worth billions, it's one of Japan's most successful exports, so it's no wonder that tourists have flocked to sushi's homeland. Ironically enough, however, one of the most influential figures in its boom is a Vancouver chef, who turned tradition on its head.

Hidekazu Tojo was born in Kagoshima Prefecture in 1950 to parents who usually ate fish and chicken. As a teenager he began cooking dinner for his family so he could try dishes he saw his classmates eating. After high school, he moved to Osaka and trained as a chef at a ryotei — a high-class, traditional restaurant - called Ohonoya. Fond of experimenting in the kitchen, Tojo felt limited by the strictures of traditional Japanese cuisine. Long having had a dream of living overseas, Tojo got his chance in 1971, when he saw an ad seeking Japanese chefs at restaurants in Vancouver. He packed his bags and left the country, only 21 years old.

### REINVENTING THE ROLL

Tojo did long stints at Maneki and Jinya, two Japanese restaurants in Vancouver, and introduced omakase (chef's choice) menus. But he saw room for innovation by reinventing makizushi

rolled sushi, traditionally made with rice, seafood and other ingredients wrapped in seaweed.

"When I came to Vancouver, there were only four Japanese restaurants, and the popular dishes were tempura and teriyaki — there wasn't any sushi," says Tojo. "Canadians did not like the idea of raw fish, or even seaweed. I used the inside-out roll method to hide the seaweed and used cooked Dungeness crab, which Canadians really enjoy."

With sleight of hand, and by catering to local tastes, Tojo had a hit. The Inside-out Tojo Roll, consisting of Dungeness crab, wasabi, special mayonnaise, spinach, avocado, egg omelette and sesame seeds, proved so popular that it became a global standard — called the California Roll, because early fans were from Los Angeles. Other Tojo creations include the BC Roll with barbequed salmon skin, and the Golden Roll, wrapped in an egg crepe.

Tojo met with great success after he opened his own restaurant in 1988, and has earned numerous awards from the likes of the online restaurant guide and reviewer of restaurants Zagat and The Wall Street Journal; celebrity patrons include Guns N' Roses. Tojo's popularity mirrored that of sushi itself, of which he is very proud. But he says global sushi has also placed a strain on marine resources and led to many producers using substandard ingredients. In a reflection of his dedication to quality, in 2016 the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries appointed Tojo a goodwill ambassador of Japanese cuisine, one of only 13 overseas.

"I have been teaching people about Japanese food culture informally, without the title, at events, interviews and every night with customers, since first coming to Canada," says Tojo. "In my experience, people are curious and open and love to learn, and are becoming more so over the years."

### **STAYING HUNGRY (AND HUMBLE)**

Despite his fame, Tojo resisted the temptation to open more than one restaurant, preferring to concentrate on cooking instead of business. Success for him means repeat customers. He's focused on quality and serving regulars from a menu that includes surprises like unakyu temaki sushi (barbequed freshwater eel, or unagi, and cucumber, or kyuri, in a sushi temaki, or sushi roll), and the Great Canadian Roll (Atlantic lobster, asparagus and smoked Pacific salmon).

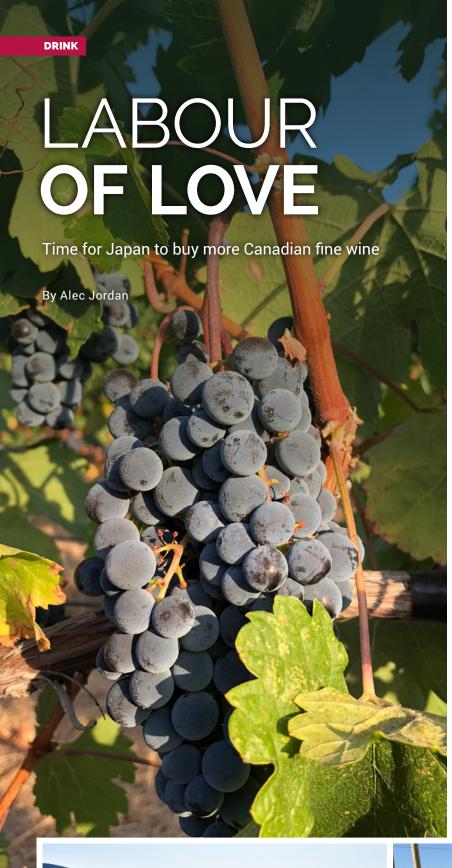
"By getting to know my customers I've been able to introduce them to very authentic Japanese flavours, just sometimes in a way that's specifically designed for them," says Tojo.

Tojo still has strong ties to Japan, and returns every year to keep abreast of culinary trends. Following a 2019 trip to Koyasan, the mountaintop Buddhist sanctuary in Wakayama Prefecture, he has become more interested in shojin ryori, the traditional vegetarian and vegan cuisine of Buddhist temples. Who knows what kind of new bridges he can build between Japan and Canada through that?

"The two countries have a very strong relationship, and share many key values, such as appreciation of nature, cultural openness and learning, social responsibility and strong community," says Tojo, adding: "The success of sushi demonstrates people's appreciation for Japanese food; interest, understanding and acceptance of Japanese culture; and globally, openness to other cultures." \*



Chef Tojo prepares a masterpiece.



Many things come to mind when Japanese people think about Canada. It might be the great outdoors, long, cold winters or even hockey. But you can bet that high-quality wine is not going to be topping their lists of what is quintessentially Canadian. That would be a mistake.

Over the past two decades, Canada has been producing a wide variety of vintages that are drawing the attention of connoisseurs around the world — and slowly but surely in Japan.

The history of Canadian wine production goes back a long way. Some of the first grapes grown in North America were planted in Nova Scotia in the 1600s, and wine was produced from those grapes. In the 19th century, vines were planted in British Columbia. Yet the modern wine-growing movement in the country goes back but 40 years, and really only hit its stride in the past 15 to 20 years.

#### **ROOM TO GROW**

There is plenty of land in Canada that is well-suited to producing the beverage. The country's wine regions are mainly located between 41° and 50° North — the same latitudes as celebrated wine locations such as California, Washington and Oregon in the United States, and noted locations in France, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Canadian soils rich in glacial deposits help vineyards thrive, while the climate allows grapes to ripen slowly and uniformly, thus balancing sugar and acidity. This makes for particularly flavourful wines of many varieties.

As Jamie Paquin, the owner of Heavenly Vines, a shop in Ebisu that specializes in Canadian wines, explains, the growing regions range across the country. Two of the most prominent are the area in Ontario close to Niagara Falls, about 80 kilometres from Toronto; and British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, some 450 kilometres inland from Vancouver.

Both regions, according to Paquin, are capable of producing a wide range of vintages, because "They have a surprising range of climates and soils. So you can do the spectrum of things — from aromatic whites and sparkling wines to lighter body Pinot







Jamie Paquin Owner Heavenly Vines

Noirs or Chardonnays to full-bodied reds and whites. There are a whole range of grapes: from Bordeaux and the Rhone Valley in France; little fragments of Zinfandel and Syrah, as well as things like Tempranillo [from Spain] and Sangiovese [from Italy] in small quantities. So the variety is quite surprising."

Other regions produce less wine but are, nevertheless, attracting interest. Over the past 20 years, Paquin says, producers in the Gaspereau Valley in Nova Scotia have been adapting to their particular climate and developing sparkling wines and fresh, aromatic wines that have been getting attention. Prince Edward County on the north side of Lake Ontario is regularly taking top honours for the best Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs in North America. And even though it has a shorter growing season, Québec is producing many good wines.

### **HIGH GRADE, LOW YIELD**

While Heavenly Vines, in business since 2011, isn't the first shop to have brought Canadian wines to Japan, they are a pioneer in carrying high-quality wines that have a strong reputation back home. Paquin points out that one of the other interesting aspects of the Canadian wine industry is that it is primarily geared to smaller producers — in fact, about 90 per cent of the estates in Canada are boutique wineries, and the majority of the wine that Heavenly Vines carries is made by producers who make, on average, 5,000 to 10,000 cases of wine a year. By way of comparison, a large corporate winery in the United States could make somewhere in the order of two million cases a year.





Paquin chalks this up to Canada's growing climate: "In wine terminology, Canada is a cool climate region. You get great wines in a region like that when you do lower yield viticulture, so you can't carry the same volume of fruit per acre. That means if you're going to invest in making wines and having a winery, you probably need to have a high-end mentality about producing a premium product. And that tends to draw people who have the resources to bear the initial start-up costs and to ride that out, but to make something really exceptional. And it's usually a labour of love because of their passion for wine."

But the amount of Canadian wine that is coming to Japan is still quite small. According to First Secretary (Commercial) and Trade Commissioner Nathan Funk from the Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo, Canadian wine valued at about C\$1.1 million was exported to Japan in 2019.

Paquin explains that one reason for this is that the high-quality wine is being consumed domestically. "As an industry, it's doing all of the things that the best wineries of the world do to make great wine, but doing it in a way that it's just being taken up by the local market, so the word doesn't get out about it."

Funk corroborated this point: "Overall, Canadian exports comprise around three to four per cent of what is produced in Canada, with the top five export markets — by value — being the USA, China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan."

He added: "Canadian wine production is small by global standards and Canadian wines are popular in the domestic market, but there are also Canadian wineries with the capacity and strong interest to expand their consumer base in foreign markets such as Japan. Other producers also export as they see value in having their product sold and showcased in key influencer markets in the global marketplace, where they are featured on wine lists and shelves in high-end restaurants and speciality retailers. Trade Commissioners are keen to support wine

producers and associations with the capacity to, and interest in, exporting wine to Japan."

And the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) makes for a favourable trade environment for companies that are looking to export wine. Funk explained that Japanese wine tariffs for exporting countries without a trade agreement are 15 per cent or ¥125 per litre, whichever is less. Under the CPTPP agreement, Japanese wine tariffs are reduced every year and will be eliminated by April 2025. He said that he believes the CPTPP provides strong opportunities for Canadian wines to expand in the Japanese market.

### **SPREAD THE WORD**

A major hurdle in increasing demand for Canadian wines in Japan is awareness, Funk explained. Efforts are being made, but it's still a challenge. "Thanks to industry and government efforts, Japanese customers are slowly starting to recognize Canadian wines, but attracting consumer attention is challenging in an environment where the availability of a variety of competitively priced wines from more recognized regions, such as France and Italy, is plentiful."

One way that awareness is being increased is through the efforts of the Trade Commissioner Service in Japan that "has supported the Canadian wine industry through holding wine tastings, seminar events and a master class for Japanese sommeliers and journalists, which has been successful in increasing recognition of Canadian wine in the market. And the Trade Office in Sapporo holds an annual wine tasting



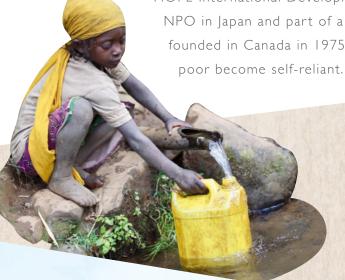
Nathan Funk First Secretary (Commercial) and Trade Commissioner Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo



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### "As an industry, it's doing all of the things that the best wineries of the world do to make great wine."

event that has proven very successful at raising interest in Canadian wines and introducing suppliers to importers and restaurants."

Paquin, who is at the front lines of spreading the gospel about Canadian wine, believes that much of what needs to be done is to dispel stereotypes and outdated notions: "One interesting thing about Japan is that so many people study things formally. So many people have been through wine education, but textbooks — even the recent ones - are really outdated in terms of what they tell people. So the average person that went through a wine course would think Canada makes ice wine - and that's about it. I even had a person argue with me, saying that we don't make other wines.

"The other challenge is that the image of Canada is sold to the world as the Rockies and — especially in Japan — the Northern Lights, ice and snow and frigid weather. They don't imagine southern Canada having warm weather. Every time I tell people the story of the Okanagan Valley, I always say the average summer has 17 days of about 40 degrees there. And they pause, and they say, 'Fahrenheit?' "

Part of Heavenly Vines' strategy is to lead Canadian wine tours. The first trip for the Okanagan Valley was planned for June, but then provisionally was rescheduled for September. That said, given the situation with Covid-19, things are still up in the air.

And that ice wine? Paquin says that's partially up to marketing, and shouldn't get in the way of people here realizing just how much more wine Canada makes: "My big message is, don't associate us with that, because it's only about three to five per cent of production. One reason that Japanese people associate ice wine with Canada is that one producer was quite aggressive towards the Japanese during the bubble era. They recognized that Japanese people were buying ice wine on trips to Canada, and then they cleverly figured out where else in the world Japanese tourists go. That's why, if you're in a duty-free shop in Hawaii, you'll see ice wine. It's really cemented this idea that that's Canada's thing.

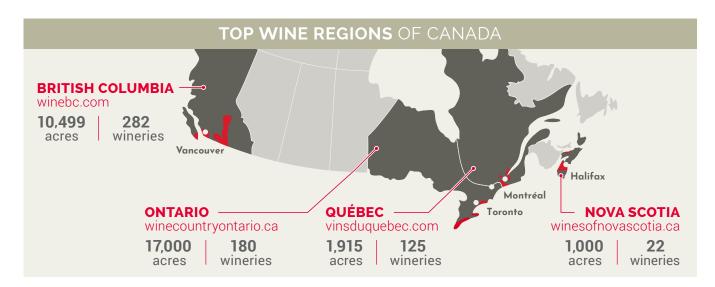
"But people tend to forget that, to make ice wine, first you grow grapes. If you grow grapes, it means you can make whatever you want. The difference is the winter is cold enough in the places they make it that you can let the fruit hang into the winter. And when it goes below minus eight, you pick it. So that's why we can do both . . . but if we're known for that, people think that's all we do, and they don't come looking for anything else."

### **PRIDE OF PLACE**

The good news is that, once people actually try Canadian wine, they quickly appreciate its quality. Paquin says that Kenichi Ohashi, Japan's one Master of Wine (a distinction

granted by The Institute of Masters of Wine in the United Kingdom), has recently become a big fan of Canadian wine, and has said that it easily compares to French wines that are five times more expensive. Canadian wines regularly take top places in international wine competitions. And Funk says that Canadian wines, which are showcased to VIP guests and food influencers, including journalists, at receptions taking place at the Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo and the embassy's official residence, often receive rave reviews from their guests. He added that the embassy has also received positive feedback about Canadian wine from prominent figures of the Japan Sommelier Association and other influential individuals.

Paquin believes that it's also important for expat Canadians, particularly those who have been in Japan for a long time and have missed the relatively recent boom in their home country's wine industry, to celebrate and support their home vintages: "This is something that you can actually be proud of, and it's got a truly Canadian essence to it, because wine is such a product of the place. If it were Canadian, and it were no good, that would be one thing. But we have our wines at all kinds of Michelin restaurants in Japan, such as L'aube and L'Effervescence, and they're blown away by it. So we Canadians have got to get on board." \*



### JMEC: GRAND PLANS

Annual event for aspiring leaders has strong CCCJ ties

By Megan Casson

Supported by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ), the 26th annual Japan Market Expansion Competition (JMEC) brought together young, hopeful professionals to create solid business plans for a wide variety of client companies.

Participants — including one Canadian — attended lectures from industry experts on accounting, research, marketing, business and presentation skills, before each one was allotted to one of 13 teams. Although the coronavirus pandemic presented challenges during the final months, participants, consultants, mentors and judges persevered.

JMEC has Canadian connections that go back to the start. The program was launched by the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan, but the CCCJ soon joined them.

For about the first 10 years of JMEC, most lectures were held at the Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo.

There have been at least 17 Canadian participants in JMEC, including Sarah Mak this year, and at least five Canada-related projects, including those for McGill MBA Japan and the Canadian Embassy Trade Office. Ron Huber, a CCCJ governor and the current CCCJ JMEC Executive Committee representative, has been particularly active in JMEC, having served as an expert and advisor to a number of JMEC teams. He has also recruited interns from McEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta, to work with JMEC.

Unlike past years, when the JMEC winners were announced at a Tokyo American Club



Sarah Mak University of Toronto graduate Team 7





From left: Team 13 and Team 4 meet online

gala, this year the victors were announced at a virtual event on June 3. JMEC Executive Committee Chairman Tom Whitson said: "On behalf of the JMEC team, I want to thank the 12 companies that submitted projects to the program [one company requested two different projects] as well as the lecturers, judges, team mentors and consultants who gave up days of their time to make this program a success."

#### **PANDEMIC PRESSURES**

Whitson also commented on the impact that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic had had on this year's competition. "JMEC 26 was conducted under the challenging conditions of a national state of emergency, due to Covid-19, which severely curtailed much of the research and interaction that preparing a business plan entails. I want to congratulate all the participants for their dedication to this competition that resulted in a series of excellent business plans. You have all well and truly earned your certificates as graduates of our JMEC business training program."

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the JMEC initiative was not run as in past years. Toshiya



**Toshiya Haraguchi** Project Manager Custom Media K.K. Team 4

Haraguchi, JMEC participant and project manager at Custom Media K.K., which publishes *The Canadian*, spoke about how necessary social distancing and Japan's national state of emergency impacted his team's ability to work. In particular, meeting with key industry figures to gain insight in the primary stage of their research was made difficult with social distancing measures in place. "In terms of team meetings, we were able to adapt to online meetings rather quickly."

Nevertheless, Haraguchi said, "In the beginning we lost brilliant ideas and links posted in chat windows as we tried out different platforms. However, once we found the best platforms, being able to meet online and use cloud storage services really helped us. By April and May, we were having meetings every day."

Haraguchi also described how the pandemic affected JMEC at the end, and how the usual celebratory drinks and meetings could not be held. "We still haven't seen each other since JMEC finished," he noted, "as the number of Covid-19 cases are still rising in Tokyo. The JMEC winners' announcement was online this year. It would have been nice to physically gather as a team one last time, have dinner together and scream and shout in celebration of what we had accomplished for the client [the South African Chamber of Commerce in Japan]. If it weren't for Covid-19 I would have thrown a party with poutine and Nanaimo bars. I look forward to the situation in Japan improving, so we can hold a belated celebration together."

#### **CANADIAN DREAM**

Haraguchi also spoke about how JMEC has helped him prepare for the future. His past experience studying and working in Canada is something he hopes to return to. "I did my exchange program in the University of Fraser Valley in British Columbia, where I took TESOL and communications for two semesters. I also worked for American Express Canada in Toronto as a VIP travel concierge for a year while I was on a working holiday visa." He added, "It seemed only natural for me to jump in when my company introduced me to the program, since I hope to work in Canada again in the future."

"The program requires dedication, grit and willingness to go above and beyond for the client. However, the JMEC program is calibrated so that the harder you try, the more you gain from it. Whether you are a Japanese individual hoping to work for [foreign companies in Japan], an English teacher trying to launch your own business, or an English-speaking professional who would like to sharpen your skills and expand your professional network, the program will really pay dividends for you."

#### **WINNERS**

In third place was Team 3, with a presentation for AlgaEnergy, a Spanish biotechnology company that creates product solutions derived from microalgae for a range of industries such as agriculture and cosmetics. Team 3 focused on microalgae-based solutions for the food and beverage industry - specifically condiments enriched with microalgae. AlgaEnergy Development Projects Manager José Maria de Gregorio Muniz said: "Our JMEC team presented their findings and business plan to us, and we were much impressed by the quality of their research, analysis and outcomes. The team was very well organized and highly dedicated to the project, and their plan will enable us to draw very valuable conclusions!"

Team 13 took second prize with their plan for Sun Tamaniwa Farm, an indoor farming project by Hamish Ross, a Tokyo-based entrepreneur and investor. Ross said: "I was very impressed by the depth and conclusions of the plan, which was way beyond my original expectations. It has given me the confidence to progress with the project, because the team were able to access potential customers and ideas that I hadn't thought of. Flexibility and the ability to think outside the box are a hallmark of JMEC teams, and this team showed such characteristics in spades."

The winners were Team 12, who also developed a business plan for AlgaEnergy.

### "The JMEC team produced a business plan that was way above and beyond my expectations, and amplified my initial ideas."

However, Team 12 focused on the roll-out of cosmetic brand MareVitae. Alga Energy Expansion Director Miguel Rodriguez-Villa said: "The quality of the team's work was exceptional and exceeded our expectations, with profound and valuable insights on the Japanese market, which are very useful for an appropriate approach regarding our expansion plans in Japan. On behalf of AlgaEnergy, congratulations to the team for their first-place prize!"

### **SPECIAL HONOURS**

The judges also rewarded certain teams with special honours, to recognize their impressive efforts and dedication.

Team 6 received the Best Presentation Award for an impressive oral presentation to the JMEC judges for Global Dreamers Lab, a visionary museum facility project in Tokyo by Carl Williams, a US Air Force veteran with deep ties to Japan. "The JMEC team produced a business plan that was way above and beyond my expectations, and amplified my initial ideas," Williams said. "The plan provides a solid foundation and roadmap for taking the project forward, and I congratulate my highly dedicated team on their well-deserved award!"

The Best Market Research Award went to Team 2 for their extensive and outstanding efforts for Herniamesh, an Italian maker of medical devices, including surgical mesh solutions, sold through their worldwide distribution network. Marketing and Sales Area Manager Marco Bertolino said, "We were very happy with the team's final business plan, which provided highly useful research and analysis to help us re-enter the Japanese market — and I congratulate the team on their award!"

Team 8 won the Best Executive Summary Award for a potential market re-entry project for Ardex, a global company headquartered in Germany that is a leading solution and service provider of innovative tile and flooring systems. Andreas Oberecker, the company's Asia regional managing director, said: "Choosing JMEC as partner for our project proved to be absolutely the right decision. Our JMEC team was highly motivated and moved quickly, and we were impressed by the level of technical and commercial detail that was uncovered." jmec.gr.jp



### First Place | Team 12

Jonathan Ho, Yasuko Yoshino, Hiroshi Koyama, Hailan Huang, Takenori Nishimura

#### **Project Client:**

AlgaEnergy-MareVitae® Cosmetics

Prize: Return tickets to Europe on Finnair (economy) and one-year memberships of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ)

### Second Place | Team 13

James Greer, Miyuki Sasaki, Toshifumi Suzuki, Bogna Baliszewska, Ngo Van Nguyen

Project Client: Sun Tamaniwa Farm

Prize: Hewlett-Packard notebook computers and one-year ACCJ memberships

### Third Place | Team 3

Geoffrey Kayiira, Nonoka Tajiri, Shunsuke Akiyama, Noriko Kubodera, Javier Lopez Gimenez

### **Project Client:**

AlgaEnergy-Macami Food Condiments

Prize: Bree travel bags and free tickets to an ACCJ event

#### **Best Presentation | Team 6**

Amanda Marshall, Yuta Nagasaki, Tatsuro Oshimoto, Derrick Sugiyama

Project Client: Global Dreamers Lab

### Best Market Research | Team 2

Xing Zhang, Shisa Hoshino, Hajime Watanabe, Jinghui 'Sunny' Huang

Project Client: Herniamesh

### **Best Executive Summary | Team 8**

Charles Feuchter, Yuka Miyazaki, Diah Wasis Wulandari, Yusa Kawauchi, Yuichi Fujimori

Project Client: Ardex

# A CANADIAN'S CULTURE OF CHANGE

Montrealer Paul Lirette is leading GSK Japan's journey for better health, teamwork and communication

By C Bryan Jones



Long before Covid-19 turned the business world upside down and presented the healthcare industry with one of its greatest challenges, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) was transforming how teams work together — with a Canadian in charge of its Japan operations.

The UK-headquartered, science-based pharmaceutical and healthcare firm's global team researches, develops and manufactures innovative pharmaceutical medicines, vaccines and consumer healthcare products.

Key areas of focus in the pharmaceutical business include respiratory, HIV, infectious diseases, oncology and immuno-inflammation. And during the current coronavirus pandemic, GSK has been playing a role in the pursuit of vaccines and drugs with great urgency and investment.

Japan is an important market for the firm. As issues such as aging and lower birth rates present societal challenges, there are opportunities for GSK to make a difference in people's lives to address unmet medical needs, including preventive care and to collaborate with stakeholders—including the government—to share best practices from the global market that can further shape and improve the environment and policy.

Two years ago, Montréal, Québec native Paul Lirette arrived in Tokyo to lead the firm's Japan operations. Right away he began a journey to strengthen an already solid foundation and enable GSK to provide local physicians and patients with the best possible service and most effective treatments.

To learn more about this journey, as well as GSK's Covid-19 efforts, we sat down with Lirette at the firm's headquarters in Akasaka, Minato Ward.

### What brought you to Japan?

Having spent many years in Australia and the UK, I came to love living in different countries and being challenged by different cultures. After five years back home in Canada, I was wondering what I would do next. So, I had a conversation with Emma Walmsley, our CEO, and she asked me what I would like that to be. I said that I'd like to have a more complex business to manage, and to do it in a very different culture. I wanted to be able to do what I had been doing, which was, basically, to enhance a culture and make sure that we have a business that is sustainable.

What I didn't know is that I was describing Japan. But one Friday evening, I received a phone call and was asked, How about Japan? It

was a big compliment for a leader, because the country is the second-biggest market regardless of the company you work for or the industry you're in. It took me just one minute to say yes.

### How does it compare with other places?

The challenges are very, very different. Australia was my first experience as a general manager. In Canada, as head of sales and marketing, I knew the market by heart. I even knew the key opinion leaders, having been born there. And I knew all the employees, so I knew which levers I could use. But when I moved from Canada to Down Under, I had no internal network and no external network. I had expertise based on knowledge, but not based on who I knew. So, without knowing the environment, I had no choice but to rely on leading people. I also learned the hard way to ask questions. So, it required different leadership skills.

Then, moving to the UK and leading our Central and Eastern Europe operations meant the people I worked with were very different



Virtual and face-to-face "Coffee with Paul" sessions



again. They weren't native English speakers, so I learned not to be judgmental based on language skills and I learned to slow down when I speak. I also learned that every market has different life cycles in terms of integrating innovations, culture and how you inspire people. The way you inspire the Polish, for example, is very different than the way you inspire the Czechs. Learning about their history and their role models is very important.

I'm applying all this here in Japan. I'm listening and learning every single day. The people are fascinating. I love my colleagues. I love the business. There are lots of challenges and opportunities, but it's a very humbling journey. I feel very privileged to be in Japan. I couldn't ask for more.

### Tell us about GSK's Covid-19 efforts.

Obviously, coronavirus is a top priority worldwide and finding a vaccine is critical to getting life and business back on track worldwide. Since the outbreak began, we have quickly turned our resources towards this challenge with our science and expertise while also protecting the health and well-being of our people. We are taking a comprehensive approach to three areas:

- Prevention
- Treatment
- Disease management

Prevention is focused on the development of a vaccine. Globally, our primary aim is to develop multiple adjuvant Covid-19 vaccines using our innovative adjuvant technology, and we are collaborating with several firms and institutions around the world. This is the time for firms not to compete but to collaborate. We are in this

### There are lots of challenges and opportunities, but it's a very humbling journey. I feel very privileged to be in Japan.

together and are competing against the virus.

One of the most recent such collaborations is a global joint project with Sanofi, which we announced in April. They are a French pharmaceutical firm that has developed a Covid-19 antigen. We're providing them with our proven pandemic adjuvant technology and hope to have a candidate vaccine that can enter clinical trials in the second half of 2020 and, if successful, be available in the second half of 2021.

The use of an adjuvant can be of particular importance in a pandemic situation because it may reduce the amount of vaccine protein required per dose, allowing more vaccine doses to be produced and, therefore, contributing to the protection of more people, sooner.

In addition to Sanofi, we are also collaborating with firms and institutions across the world, including in North America, Australia and China.

Alongside vaccines, we are also exploring therapeutic options. In April, we entered into a collaboration with the US firm Vir Biotechnology, Inc. to identify and accelerate new antiviral antibodies that could be used as therapeutic or preventative options for Covid-19 or future coronavirus outbreaks.

Through this collaboration, we're combining Vir's technology with our expertise in functional genomics. We are also evaluating their marketed pharmaceutical products, as well as medicines in development, to determine if any could be

used beyond their current indications in response to the pandemic. This includes medicines with potential direct antiviral activity and those with possible utility in prevention or treatment of secondary complications of Covid-19.

Beyond vaccines and medicines, we are also making other contributions using our capabilities and expertise—for example, to support national testing centers in England.

In addition, we are supporting global and local community funds, including the donation of \$10mn to the United Nations-World Health Organization Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund, to support distribution of essential supplies and personal protective equipment to health workers.

We have also made donations to contribute to healthcare in Japan, namely the Japan Respiratory Foundation, Japan Foundation and others.

As part of disease management in Japan, GSK also started an initiative using a telemedicine system that aims to enhance adherence to treatment. This could potentially protect asthma patients from Covid-19.

Finding solutions, such as vaccines and drugs, to Covid-19 is an unprecedented challenge. Supporting the global response to Covid-19 is at the heart of GSK's purpose to "do more, feel better, live longer"-and our business and portfolio are highly relevant and much needed. \*



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While entering the Japanese market can be difficult in any industry, the area of medical devices once seemed to offer particular challenges. But regulatory changes taking hold over the past decade have made the market promising for overseas device makers.

Based on total sales of C\$38.9 billion in 2020, Japan is Canada's third-largest market for medical devices, after the United States and China. And facing the concerns that come with an aging population, Japanese regulatory agencies are very interested in bringing into the country clinically- and cost-effective medical devices and systems.

There is a strong demand for a wide range of medical devices, including systems for managing care of the aged, personal health record systems, telemedicine systems and software, wellnessenhancing systems and devices, mobility enhancements designed for elderly users, AI-enhanced imaging and diagnostic systems, as well as in-vitro diagnostic systems.

### **BATTLING THE LAG**

But one of the highest hurdles for manufacturers looking to enter the medical device market was a lag, both real and perceived. Often, medical devices would enter the Japanese market many months — or years — after they had been released in other markets around the world, particularly in the United States. This meant that many potential users in Japan were missing out on beneficial treatments.

The chief reason for the device lag was the approval process of Japan's Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA), which is responsible for endorsing and monitoring all drugs and medical devices marketed in

Japan. It plays a role similar to that of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States and Canada's federal institution, Health Canada. Foreign companies in particular considered the approval system opaque and found it time consuming to obtain PMDA approval.

Over the past 10 years, however, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) — which oversees the health care insurance and delivery systems in Japan — and the PMDA have taken action. On recognizing that the device lag was preventing the Japanese population from benefitting from overseas products in a timely fashion, the ministry and agency invested heavily in making the approval process more transparent and faster.

Then, in 2014, the approval process for medical devices was separated from that for drugs, while the PMDA took additional steps to speed up the approval process. These included setting goals for faster decision times, increasing investments in prior consultations before submissions by device manufacturers, greater use of outside experts for examinations, as well as greater dissemination of information in English.

Meanwhile, the MHLW has set up fasttrack approval processes for highly desired treatments and orphan diseases, [defined by the FDA as diseases that affect fewer than 200,000 people]. As a result, the PMDA approval process is now on a par with

that of the FDA, which is considered the industry's gold standard.

### **TIME FOR CHANGE**

A device lag does still exist, but that is because in some cases, overseas companies are not putting in their approval requests as quickly as they could. This is, in part, due to the longstanding perception of Japan being a slow market to respond to outside initiatives. However, the time has come for overseas medical device makers to prioritize Japan.

There are three main reasons to shift priorities:

- The accelerated approval process means it is easier for firms to recoup their investments.
- In contrast with other major healthcare markets, the market in Japan works on a single-payer basis, making reimbursement a single negotiation. (In the US there are many providers and payers, Europe has many countries and systems, while in Canada, there is a differential pricing system based on the province in which the medical device is used.)
- · Japan, meanwhile, has a strong system of experts who can be relied on to help move prospective medical devices through the approval process.

Further, given that the Covid-19 pandemic has drastically affected the US market for medical devices, the current streamlined approval processes, favourable financial environment and excellent support system for foreign applicants, the time is right to focus on Japan. \*

### The MHLW has set up fast-track approval processes for highly desired treatments and orphan diseases





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## MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Meet James Hedden, president of Tokai Japan Canada Society for business and pleasure

By Alec Jordan

The Tokai Japan Canada Society (TJCS) is an organization dedicated to promoting the development of social, cultural and commercial relations between Canada and Japan's Tokai region, which includes Mie, Shizuoka and Aichi prefectures and the southern part of Gifu Prefecture.

To find out more about the organization, we spoke with TJCS President James Hedden, who explained what led to its inception, his personal connection to the society and the links between the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) and the TJCS.

### What sparked the society's launch?

The idea to form the TJCS was first put forward in February 2004 by a group of Canadians living in the Tokai region, and the Canadian consul at the time, Jeff Kucharski. Due to a lack of any association — such as a chamber of commerce or business networking group — for Canadians in the region, as well as the approaching EXPO 2005 in Aichi Prefecture, it was decided to launch the society.

### What are your demographics?

Currently we have 15 corporate members and just over 80 individual members. Twentysix per cent of our individual members are Canadian and 74 per cent are Japanese and people of other nationalities.

### What events do you hold and how often?

Thanks to our committees — business, social

and culture — the TJCS is very active, as is clear from the number of events we generally host and activities we organize. Prior to Covid-19, monthly TGIF gatherings were organized at a number of local watering holes in Aichi, Gifu and Mie prefectures.

Under our Social Committee umbrella, several annual events were organized. They included ski trips; Canadian-style hanami; Canada Day BBQ celebrations at Canada House in Nagoya; an annual street hockey tournament held in Kariya in Aichi Prefecture, which in past years has drawn participants from its sister city, Mississauga, Ontario; as well as Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner celebrations.

Events to introduce Japanese culture to both local expats and society members included jibiki ami (traditional fishing); visits to kabuki and rakugo performances; tea picking; and visits to local festivals.

As one of our roles is to support and promote the Canadian Consulate in Nagoya and its activities in the region, we generally cohost and support visiting speakers and government representatives, while taking advantage of related opportunities under the aegis of the Business Committee.



### What do you enjoy about leading the TJCS?

I would say the fact that it allows me to represent Canada, its heritage, culture, values and beliefs, as a very proud Canadian living in Japan. In addition, there is the reward of meeting and working with an array of people interested in Canada, as well as the opportunity to help people grow in their leadership roles and their personal development. Of course, at the top of the list is also raising a glass or pint from time to time and celebrating Canada.

### Do the TJCS and CCCJ have formal ties?

Up until the beginning of 2020, the extent of the relationship and ties between the TJCS and the CCCJ took the form of reciprocal honorary membership. On rare occasions over the years, representatives of each society have had the pleasure of attending events in Nagoya and Tokyo. Beyond this, there have been no formal ties; or collaboration.

The strengthening of ties and possible collaboration both with the CCCJ and other Canadian societies across Japan was on the agenda for the TJCS this year, but for now, we wait.

### Do you have a message for CCCJ members?

I wish the governors and members the best of health, safety, business sustainability and prosperity during these extraordinary times. I look forward to connecting organizations and members, and would be very happy to welcome all CCCJ members to future TJCS events. \*









### The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan welcomes our newest members

### **CORPORATE**



**Greg McDonald** TMF Group Japan

I'm originally from Paris, Ontario, but I've made Japan my home for close to 20 years. I have extensive experience in the Japan business process outsourcing market, having assisted more than 100 foreign firms set up their operations in Japan. In January, I joined TMF Group Japan as managing director. I graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy, and hold an MBA from McGill University. I am married and have a one-year-old son. I have been a member of the CCCJ since 2009, and am a former governor and treasurer of the chamber.

#### **SMALL BUSINESS**



**Bernd Strauss** Genesis Robotics

I'm working in Japan for Genesis Robotics, which is based in Langley, British Columbia. I'm in charge of sales and customer acquisition. Originally from Bavaria in Germany, I've been living and working in Japan since 2003, and have held management positions in a number of industries. I decided to join the CCCJ for networking purposes, and to stay up to date regarding seminars, as well as other events and activities. I'm always happy to make new connections and lasting relationships.

### **ACADEMICS**



Yu Maemura The University of Tokyo

I am a Torontonian based at the University of Tokyo, researching international development aid and infrastructure management. Social programs, initiatives and institutions have changed my life, and I am obligated to try to become a part of something that will give someone the same chances that people gave me. I hope that the diverse and progressive voices within the CCCJ will give me the learning opportunities I need to realize these obligations.



Stephen R. Nagy International Christian University

Originally from Calgary, I am a senior associate professor at the International Christian University, Tokyo, a Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and an appointed China expert with Canada's China Research Partnership. I also hold fellowships with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and the Japan Institute for International Affairs. I provide consulting services related to political risk in North and Southeast Asia. I joined the CCCJ to network with Canadian businesses in Japan and provide them with political risk consultancy services.

### **INDIVIDUAL**



John Clark Andritz AG

I'm from Montréal. I went to secondary school in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and came to Japan in 1995 on a translation apprenticeship program at the age of 22. My first real job was as a translator at a law firm in Tokyo. I later went to law school in the UK, thanks to relentless coaxing by Ernst & Young colleagues. I'm now engaged as a local contract specialist for Andritz AG, a global engineering firm that is building multiple biomass power plants throughout Japan.

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On July 1, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) held its 39th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at HyLife Pork Table in Daikanyama, Tokyo. The event also marked a milestone: it was the CCCJ's first virtual AGM — members joined online, and they could comment on the proceedings throughout.

CCCJ Chair Neil van Wouw convened the meeting and announced the new members of the Board of Governors. There were six vacancies on the Board, and 14 candidates ran for the positions.

Sixty-one per cent of eligible members cast their votes. The newly elected governors are: Machiko Asai, Marc Bolduc, Ai Nakagawa and Aaron Reist. David Brulotte and Gordon Hatton were re-elected. The governors will serve a two-year term. A hearty thanks was extended to the two outgoing governors, Warren Arbuckle and Kiyo Weiss, for their many years of dedicated service.

### **STRONG SHOWING**

Gordon Hatton, treasurer and chair of the Financial Administration Committee, presented the audited financial statements of the 2019–2020 fiscal year.

Financials for the chamber are quite strong compared with those of the previous fiscal

"Our engagement has been increasing over the year, and diversity is increasing as well." year. Assets are up 9.7 per cent, liabilities down 16.7 per cent and expenses declined 11.9 per cent. Hatton noted that the Maple Leaf Gala held in February was a strong performer, and had contributed greatly to revenue. He added that moving the CCCJ office to Blink has been a positive step: the terms of the office space had been negotiated quite favourably and events can be held there once the new normal allows for a return to in-person events.

Van Wouw then delivered his annual report. He explained it had been quite a year — starting with high expectations for everything that would come with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and now grappling with the fallout of Covid-19. Shortly after the chamber had moved to new premises in March, the CCCJ office team of Matt Ketchum and Marie Ohashi started teleworking and are only now returning to the office.

Despite the difficulties of the past months, van Wouw explained that the chamber is doing very well: "Our finances are stable. Our membership is stable. Our engagement has been increasing over the year, and diversity is increasing as well."

### **BANNER YEAR**

He added that committees have been more active in the past year, including the Publications and Communications Committee, chaired by Governor Annamarie Sasagawa; the Events Committee, headed by Noriko Ishida; and the Gala Committee, co-led by Donovan Gordon and Miles Roque. Van Wouw called attention to the launching of several new initiatives and committees, including Aaron Reist's work on an investment guide; Joey Woo's launching of a Wellness Committee; Riyo Whitney's inauguration of an Education Committee; and the soon-to-be launched Canada Experts on Call, headed by Jackie F. Steele.

To create greater diversity in the makeup of the board, van Wouw explained, the chamber has put in place formal structures that will help guide it and perhaps even be added to its constitution.

He then pointed out a number of successful events and endeavours with which the chamber has been involved. These include Thanksgiving at Tokyo American Club, watching the Canadian elections live, the Business Council of Canada's visit to Tokyo, and the visit of Québec Minister of Economy and Innovation Pierre Fitzgibbon. But perhaps the moment that stands out most is the collaboration between members of the CCCJ and Rugby Canada, as they worked together to help clean up the Iwate Prefecture city of Kamaishi, following the typhoon which caused the Canada vs. Namibia match to be cancelled. He said that these were moments that the chamber should look back on with pride.

Already, Ketchum and Ohashi have held a series of online coffee and tea breaks, and the chamber has hosted a few well-attended webinars. Look for even more in the months to come.





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