

Consul General Kuninori Matsuda
Welcome Remarks for the Arigato Ohio Reception
October 26, 2011, Dublin, Ohio

Thank you for your kind introduction and your unwavering support in organizing this event, Mayor Lecklider.

Good evening! Tonight, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first of its kind “Arigato Ohio Reception.”

For those of you who do not know, “Arigato” is Japanese for “Thank You,” and I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the People and Government of Japan, to express our profound gratitude for the outpouring of sympathy, support, and donations from the thousands of individuals and companies throughout Ohio.

ありがとうございます。

In times of crisis as in peace, Japan has no greater friend and ally than the United States.

We, the Japanese people, are now recovering from the physical, economic, and psychological devastation of the disasters. I should specifically emphasize that radiation levels in Tokyo are on par with, or even lower than, any big cities of the world.

Some of you here tonight made a trip to Japan last month to attend the 43rd Annual Japan-U.S. Midwest Conference as well as to meet your current and future business partners. Let me acknowledge a few government leaders who led delegations there:

Mayor Brannon of Bellefontaine and Mayor Culliver of Mansfield; Thank you, mayors, and all of the Ohio delegations to Japan.

You can personally attest that Japan is safe, open for business, and welcomes your investment.

As Japanese companies strive to diversify their supply chains and to minimize currency risk from the strong yen, we are expecting a new wave of Japanese investment in North America and Ohio in particular.

Nowhere in the Midwest is Japan’s presence more significant than in Ohio. I am proud to declare that Japan is the leading foreign investor in Ohio and ready to stay the Number One investor. There are now about 400 Japanese facilities which employ 55,000 people here in the Buckeye State. Many representatives of these Japanese companies are here in attendance tonight.

It is my strong belief that Japanese companies will continue to see the wisdom and benefit of leveraging their huge presence in Ohio. And, Director Schmenk, I don’t have the slightest doubt in the capabilities of the Government of Ohio to help Japanese companies grow, together with the efforts of JobsOhio, its President, -Mark Kvamme, and its six regional organizations of:

1. Columbus2020
2. Cincinnati USA Partnership
3. Team NEO
4. Toledo Regional Growth Partnership
5. Dayton Development Coalition
6. Ohio Appalachian Business Council

From what I have observed, there are several sectors that have significant growth potential for Ohio and its Japanese partners.

1. The automotive industry has experienced a remarkable recovery in the past year and Honda and other Japanese automotive and parts makers are clearly poised for expansion in Ohio;
2. After personally touring the University of Akron and the University of Dayton, I am convinced that advanced composite materials and new polymers hold great promise;
3. Likewise, after visiting hospitals in Cincinnati and Cleveland, I can say with certainty that Japanese companies can find success in Ohio's medical and pharmaceutical, especially generics, sectors;
4. Additionally, I am proud to say that I will lead a delegation of Japanese business executives next month to explore new opportunities for shale gas development in Ohio.
5. Last but not least, as Japanese investment expands, the business case for a direct flight from Ohio to Japan becomes much more convincing. Once fully realized, this will be its own engine of economic development.

This impressive trade and investment relationship combined with the grass-roots connections developed by the nearly 8,000 Japanese residents in Ohio have transformed the cultural landscape of the state. For example:

- In addition to the Ohio-Saitama Sister State relationship, there are 14 sister city relationships in Ohio, which include Bellefontaine-Suzuka, Mansfield-Tamura, Worthington-Sayama, Troy-Takahashi; Cincinnati-Gifu, Van Wert-Sumoto, Toledo-Toyohashi, Middletown-Osaki and currently several other Ohio cities are actively seeking new relationships.
- 21 Ohio universities have Japanese language and study programs, including The Ohio State University, Miami University, Bowling Green State University, the University of Toledo, Kent State University, and the University of Findlay.
- Ohio is home to very active Japan-America Societies in Columbus and Cincinnati and Japanese-American Citizens Leagues in Cleveland, Dayton, and Cincinnati.
- Ohio is also home to six very active Japanese business clubs, based in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Findlay, and Toledo.

Therefore, it would be remiss of me not to mention that tonight's reception is an excellent opportunity to network and to develop new friendships and partnerships between Japan and Ohio.

Additionally, I would like to point your attention to our representative here in Ohio: Honorary Consul General of Japan, and Dublin resident, The Honorable Phillip Barth.

You see, the earthquake's impact has made one thing crystal clear: our economies and our people are more deeply linked and interdependent than we ever imagined.

And, if silver linings can be found in natural disasters and economic challenges, they are in the unprecedented win-win possibilities in our steadfast efforts to further develop our relationships.

Thank you.