

**Greetings by Ambassador Kobayashi
at the 25th Anniversary of Porirua and Nishio City's Sister City Relationships
11:05am, Saturday 15th December 2018**



Your Worship, Mr Mike Tana, Mayor of Porirua,
Distinguished Councillors present,
Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Kia ora kotou.

Thank you all for inviting me here this morning to join in celebrating a milestone achievement between Porirua City and Nishio City: 25 years of shared culture and activity through their sister city relationship!

It is clear to me as I look around at the people that fill this beautiful Japanese garden that the bonds forged between Porirua and Nishio are as strong as they were on the day these two cities first became cross-cultural partners, if not stronger. In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to His Worship, Mayor Mike Tana of Porirua, for his ongoing efforts to grow this fruitful relationship.

Indeed, it seems to me that sister city relationships, and the bilateral exchange they facilitate at a grass-roots level, is much like the gardens that surround us. To grow them, we must do our best to maintain and nurture them. As I understand it, Porirua's Japanese gardens are maintained yearly by the combined efforts of visiting delegations from Nishio, and the hard work of Porirua's own residents and council. Surely,

the success of their garden is reflective of the success of their sister city relations, the care and attention facilitated by the Mayors and citizenry of both Porirua and Nishio.

At present, there are 43 sister city relationships between Japan and New Zealand, as well as ongoing efforts to forge new sister city alliances each year. These existing close relationships, forged through various exchange activities over many years, provide our bilateral relations between New Zealand and Japan with a solid basis at a grass-roots level. As the Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand, I am very fortunate and grateful for these ongoing efforts. I wish to express my deep appreciation and respect to those persons working at city councils and sister city associations, without whose dedication and hard work the sister city relationships are not sustainable.

Finally, as I am sure many of you are aware, Japan will be hosting several global events in the coming years; namely: The Rugby World Cup in 2019, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, the Kansai World Masters Games in 2021, and the World Expo 2025 in Osaka. I hope many of you will be able to visit Japan to enjoy these exciting events while immersing yourself in our country's unique culture and hospitality, especially alongside the people of your counterpart sister cities.

Once again, thank you very much, and please enjoy the rest of your day, surrounded by proof of international friendship.