

Report of the Eighth Toyonaka Foreign Citizens' Council (Digest Version)

Toyonaka City initiated the Foreign Citizens' Council in July 2005 with the aim of reflecting the voices of foreign citizens in municipal policy. This was the eighth council. Nine foreign citizens exchanged opinions as council members at four meetings during their term of about two years since July 2019. As it was difficult for council members to have face to face meetings due to the spread of the COVID-19, the 2nd to 4th meetings were held online.

The theme for the eighth council was "To lead a healthy life in a familiar local community." The council members offered various feedback about the situations where they felt language barriers or culture differences in their daily life. Also, there were many opinions concerning worries and troubles during the spread of COVID-19.

Here we report the wide range of opinions the council members offered at the meetings.

April 2021

Toyonaka Foreign Citizens' Council Secretariat

(Human Rights Policy Division)

The Theme for the 8th Council

“To Lead a Healthy Life in a Familiar Local Community”

◆Major opinions expressed at the meetings (Summary)◆

■ Medical Care

- It is difficult for foreigners to fill out a medical questionnaire in Japanese. There should be special supports such as setting up clinics for foreigners.
- Since Toyonaka City does not provide medical interpretation services, some foreigners have difficulty in going to clinics or communicating with doctors. What we need is not an interpreter provided by the hospital but one who accompanies us to the hospital.
- Language barriers make foreigners feel uneasy about seeing a doctor. Moreover, the cost of hiring an interpreter makes us even more hesitant.

■ Education

- When we see report cards from school, we sometimes feel that they do not grade our children properly for lack of understanding about our culture and customs. I also think that they should offer support to foreign parents who are not familiar with Japanese educational systems and school life.
- Some foreign children and Japanese children who lived abroad are not good at reading Japanese. Handouts from school written only in Japanese with a lot of kanji are sometimes too difficult for them.

■ Food Culture

- Some people cannot eat certain foods because of religious restrictions. However, many elementary schools do not understand the restrictions, and foreigners cannot explain them well because of a language barrier.
- It is also important for children to have opportunities of having meals different from their homemade dishes by eating out and experiencing Japanese culture through school lunches.

■ Concerning COVID 19

- I feel that there are few tools for foreigners to find information. I do not know where to consult when I am worried about COVID19 or need to have treatment. So, I hope to have special medical support for foreigners.

■ Others

- All the events I have attended so far have been led by Japanese citizens.

It will be great if we, foreigners, can take the initiative to hold events that involve Japanese people.

- It would be nice to have a network where foreigners can help each other in case of an emergency such as a disaster.

- Even though most of information for foreigners has furigana over kanji, it is not written in easy Japanese but in formal Japanese.

- In order to expand work opportunities for foreigners, more effort should be made to provide information of recommendable positions and promote foreigners' participation in the working world. Also, I would like them to make work related books that are written in *Hiragana* or 'easy' Japanese.