



*This map is a generalized illustration only and is not intended to be used for reference purposes. The representation of political boundaries does not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of Alberta on international issues of recognition, sovereignty or jurisdiction.*

## PROFILE

**Capital:** Sapporo

**Population:** 5.57 million (4.3 % of Japan's total population)

**Language:** Japanese

**Major Cities:** Sapporo (1.9 million); Asahikawa (360,000); Hakodate (290,000); Obihiro (170,000)

**Government:** Unicameral legislature with Governor as head

**Head of Government:** Governor Ms. Harumi Takahashi (Re-elected April 2011 for a third term)

**Currency:** \$1 CDN = 82.1 Yen (2011 average)

**Key Industry Sectors:** agriculture (rice, wheat, beans, potatoes, onions, dairy), forestry, fisheries, and food processing.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Hokkaido is Japan's second largest island and the largest, northernmost of its 47 prefectural-level subdivisions.
- Hokkaido is Japan's predominant agricultural area.
- Hokkaido has a much lower population density than other regions of Japan.

## RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

- Alberta relations with Hokkaido began in 1972 with an Alberta government economic mission to Japan.
- In 1980, Hokkaido formally became Alberta's sister province. In 2010, Hokkaido and Alberta celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their sister province relationship, the second oldest twinning for Alberta.
- Hokkaido and Alberta have many similarities, including a resource-based economy, climate and topography.
- Alberta played a key role in helping Hokkaido develop into the curling capital of Japan. The City of Kitami (formerly the town of Tokoro), Barrhead's twin, has produced most of Japan's top curlers.
- Hokkaido also has sister province relationships with Heilongjiang in China and Massachusetts in the United States and a friendship and economic cooperation affiliation with Sakhalin in Russia.

## EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunities exist in housing and building products and services, processed foods, consumer goods, information technology and services, biotechnology and pharmaceutical products and services, and health care products and services.
- Hokkaido's proximity to the offshore oil and gas industry in the Russian Far East presents a good opportunity for Alberta businesses.

## TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- Manufacturing, agrifood, and pulp and paper remain Hokkaido's principal industries but in recent years many high-tech companies have been attracted to the island mainly due to lower start-up costs.
- There have been a number of joint initiatives focusing on sectors such as construction, housing and wood products, manufactured goods and food products.
- Hokkaido can be an entry point for Alberta businesses seeking to access the larger Japanese market.

## AGRICULTURE

- Agriculture was the primary focus for commercial activity when the twinning agreement was initiated.
- Dairy exchanges formed an important part of early activity under the twinning.
- Hokkaido and Alberta plant breeding institutions were involved in joint venture wheat breeding programs in the 1990s. Recent years have seen interest in new areas such as food processing technology.
- A February 2001 agreement between the Leduc Food Processing Development Center and the Hokkaido Food Processing Research Center for a one-year project focused on the research and development of new beef products, specifically shelf stable meat snacks.

## ENERGY

- The Hokkaido Electric Power Company (HEPCO) is the sole provider of electricity on the island of Hokkaido. It has 53 hydroelectric generation stations, 11 thermal stations, and one nuclear station. Together, all 65 sites generate 7,367,535 kw of electricity.
- In 2010, HEPCO sold 31,500,000 MW of electricity to its customers on Hokkaido, with 18 percent of output being generated through renewable energy.

## EDUCATION AND CULTURE

- For over a decade, Alberta and Hokkaido have partnered in a high school exchange program where students from Alberta and Japan develop their international language skills by spending 8 weeks in each other's homes and schools.
- Under the Alberta-Hokkaido Regional Student Exchange (REX) program, the Hokkaido Government annually provides Alberta with two teachers to help develop Japanese language programs in Alberta schools.
- The University of Lethbridge has administered a successful university-wide exchange program with Hokkai Gakuen University in Hokkaido since 1982. As of 2009, over 400 students and over 100 professors have participated in this program.

- Since 2007 the University of Alberta's English Language Program has had an agreement with Rakuno Gakuen University and Mitsugi Sato, Snow Brand Milk Products for a scholarship program which allows Rakuno Gakuen students to take a month of English training.
- The University of Alberta and the Hokkaido Board of Education have an agreement to train English teachers from Hokkaido in Alberta. This program, known as the Hokkaido Teacher Exchange Program (HTEP), celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010. Alberta Advanced Education and Technology assisted in the launch of the HTEP program.
- Out of the 17 Alberta schools twinned with schools in Japan, twelve are twinned with schools in Hokkaido.
- The Sapporo Medical University and the University of Alberta cooperate in areas such as nursing, sports medicine, and rehabilitation medicine. They have cooperated on tele-health, the delivery of medical and health services using telecommunications technology.
- The renewal of the 1998 cooperation agreement between the Royal Alberta Museum and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido took place in October 2005. The agreement laid the foundation for developing closer ties between the museums, such as literature and artifact exchanges, exhibit development, comparative research and staff exchanges.

## VOLUNTEERISM

- In 1992, with funding shared by the Government of Alberta and the Prefecture of Hokkaido, a Volunteer Exchange Program was developed – the first of its kind in the world – to support voluntary sector development and leadership.
- In March 2010, a delegation from Hokkaido met with voluntary sector agencies in Edmonton to discuss volunteer management.
- In October 2007, a delegation from Hokkaido (led by the Director of the Hokkaido Community Activities Promotion Association) met with leaders from Alberta's voluntary sector to discuss voluntary sector development issues.

## SPORTS EXCHANGES

- Since 1979, Alberta has participated in numerous sports exchanges with Hokkaido including: badminton, softball, basketball, curling, skiing, hockey, skating, and rhythmic gymnastics. These exchanges have become an integral part of the sister province relationship, with a focus on developing athletes and coaches.
- In March 2011, a curling team from the Hokkaido Curling Association visited Edmonton for a friendly bonspiel at the Granite Curling Club.
- One of the members of the Japan Women's Curling team at the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics was involved in the Curling Sport Exchange program with Alberta.

## SISTER CITIES

- Several Alberta municipalities are twinned with Japanese counterparts. Nine municipalities are twinned with counterparts in Alberta's sister province of Hokkaido:
  - Rocky Mountain House & Kamikawa (1984)
  - Stony Plain & Shikaoui (1985)
  - Camrose & Kamifurano (1985)
  - Lacombe & Rikubetsu (1986)
  - Canmore & Higashikawa (1989)
  - Stettler & Okoppe (1990)
  - Wetaskiwin & Ashoro (1990)
  - Barrhead & Kitami (1991)
  - Whitecourt & Yubetsu (1998)
- With support from the Alberta government, the Alberta Japan Twinned Municipalities Association was established in 1998 and works with Alberta communities to promote Alberta-Japan relations at the community level.

## RECENT VISITS

- November 2010: The Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations, commemorated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alberta-Hokkaido twinning relations with various celebratory events in Alberta.
- July 2010: Hokkaido's Vice Governor visited Alberta to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido twinning.
- May 2010: The Premier met with Hokkaido's Governor in Tokyo as part of the Premier's joint Alberta-British Columbia-Saskatchewan Premiers mission to Asia.

