

Belgium – Alberta Relations

International and Intergovernmental Relations

Alberta



PROFILE

Capital: Brussels

Population: 10.6 million (2007 est.)

Language: Flemish (Dutch), French, and German

Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Head of State: King Albert II

Head of Government: Prime Minister Yves Leterme (Christian, Democratic and Flemish Party), leading a coalition comprising the Flemish-speaking and francophone Christian Democrats and Liberals and the francophone Socialists.

Currency: Euro, \$1 CDN = € 0.63 (June 2008)

GDP: US\$454.3 billion (2007 est.)

GDP (PPP): US\$ 376.8 billion (2007 est.)

GDP Per Capita (PPP): US\$35,551 (2007 est.)

GDP growth rate: 2.8% (2007 est.)

Inflation: 2.0 % (2003-07 average)

Unemployment: 7.5 % (2007 est.)

Key Industry Sectors: chemicals (including pharmaceuticals), light engineering (including car parts), medical and other imaging equipment and food- and drink-processing.

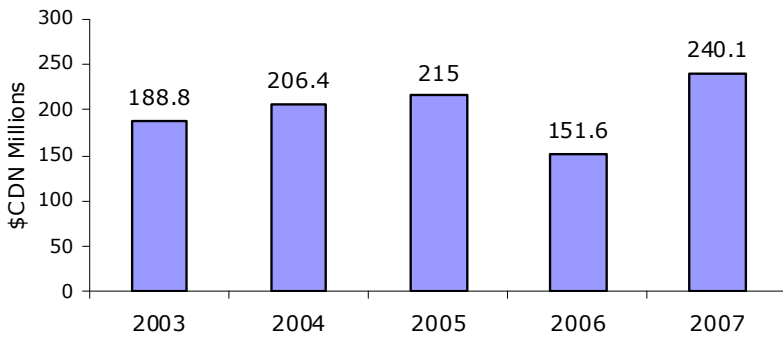
BELGIUM OVERVIEW

- In 1993, Belgium completed its process of decentralization into a federal state with three regions. These three regions are Flanders (northern Dutch speaking area), Wallonia (southern French speaking) and Brussels (bilingual capital region).
- Belgium was one of the six founding member states of what is known today as the European Union (EU), and was also a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- The headquarters of NATO and the EU are located in Brussels. The city hosts the largest number of diplomatic missions in the world.
- Belgium's highly developed transportation system enables goods to be shipped quickly and easily to other European markets, using Antwerp, Europe's second largest port.
- Belgium has a unique geographic position at the heart of the wealthiest and most densely populated part of Europe. Geographically, Belgium is within a 600 km radius of 70% of the EU market.

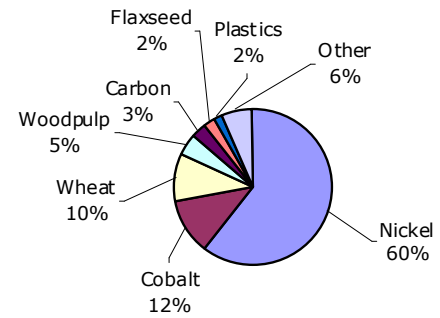
RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

- Since February 2003, a bilateral agreement allows Belgium and Alberta residents with a valid driver's license to drive in either jurisdiction without having to pass any test.
- In 2003, a \$1.5 million deal between the University of Alberta and Umicore, a Belgian company, was facilitated by Alberta Innovation and Science to research and develop nano-sized copper powder for microelectronic applications, used for a wide range of nano-technologies, from cell phones to mobile videoconferencing.
- In November 2008, Alberta Employment & Immigration will participate in an immigration attraction event called *Destination Canada* in Paris, Toulouse, and Brussels. Over the last few years, the Government of Alberta has participated in similar recruitment events in Belgium.
- There are close to 20,000 Albertans of Belgian descent.

Alberta Merchandise Exports to Belgium (2003-2007)



Alberta Merchandise Exports to Belgium in 2007



TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- Between 2003 and 2007, Alberta exports to Belgium have averaged over \$200 million per annum, consisting of nickel, wheat, flaxseed, cobalt, paper products and wood pulp and chemicals.
- Between 2003 and 2007, Alberta's imports from Belgium were worth approximately \$173 million a year, including diamonds, beer, medicine, chocolates, and machinery.
- In 2007, Belgium was Alberta's 10th largest export destination. However, since Antwerp is the EU's second largest port, many Alberta exports to Belgium are redistributed to other European countries.
- There are about 65 Belgian subsidiaries established in Canada and approximately the same number of Canadian affiliates located in Belgium.

AGRICULTURE

- In 2007, Alberta agri-food exports to Belgium totaled over \$31 million; \$28 million of that was wheat and flaxseed.
- With Belgium as a member country of the European Union, Alberta may have increased agri-food ingredient and product opportunities as market access issues are resolved.

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- Belgium provides considerable market opportunities. There is direct and unhindered access to the EU market, while the transport infrastructure, notably the ports, provides easy access both to and from other parts of the world and other EU countries.
- Market opportunities exist for forest products and services. The Canadian Pulp and Paper Association set up its European office in Brussels to enhance the reputation of the Canadian industry in the European market.
- Belgium has initiated reforms to control pollution and emissions generated by the industrial sectors providing a growing demand for environmental products and services in areas such as waste management, air pollution control and water treatment.
- Deregulation of the telecommunications industry provides opportunities in areas such as mobile communications and Internet services.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- In November 2003, Alberta and the Flanders Multimedia Valley (FMV) signed a cooperation agreement to encourage joint R&D projects and technology commercialization initiatives. FMV is the major government sponsored industry association for New Media in the Flanders region.
- In February 2003, the region of Brussels and Alberta Innovation and Science entered an MOU focused on ICT, bio-life sciences and nanotechnology.

EDUCATION

- The University of Alberta has a student exchange program with the East-Flanders Catholic Institute for Higher Education in Health Care, the largest health care institution in Belgium. It also has a student exchange program in agriculture with University of Liege and a graduate student exchange program in literature with K.U. Leuven.
- The University of Calgary has an agreement with the University of Antwerp to facilitate staff and undergraduate student exchange.

VISITS

- June 2007: Official visit of the Belgian Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Jean Lint
- February 2003: Alberta Innovation and Science Minister led a Mission to Belgium.
- October 2002: Calgary was host to the Alberta-Belgium Business & Technology Forum, which was attended by 80 individuals, including a large delegation from Belgium's three regions. Participants shared their views on ICT, Life Sciences, Nanotechnology and Venture Financing.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION

- The Belgian Ambassador to Canada is His Excellency Jean L. A. Lint.
- Canada's Ambassador to Belgium is Mrs. Laurette Glasgow.
- Ms. Renée Cochard is the Honorary Consul of Belgium in Edmonton.

