

Hokkaido – Alberta Relations

International and Intergovernmental Relations

Alberta



PROFILE

Capital: Sapporo

Population: 5.8 million (5% 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 2007 for a second term)

Currency: \$1 CDN=104.22 Yen (May 2008)

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

DID YOU KNOW?

- Hokkaido is Japan's predominant agricultural area.
- Hokkaido has a much lower population density than other regions of Japan.

- 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.
- Hokkaido has sister province relationships with Heilongjiang in China and Massachusetts in the US and a friendship and economic cooperation affiliation with Sakhalin in Russia.

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 2005, Hokkaido and Alberta celebrated the 25th 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.
- Hokkaido and Alberta are members of the Northern Forum, an organization of sub-national governments in northern regions.

- Alberta played a key role in helping Hokkaido develop into the curling capital of Japan. The town of Tokoro (Barrhead's twin) has produced most of Japan's top curlers.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- Annual Alberta exports to Hokkaido have been in the range of \$60 million CDN.
- 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.

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, 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.

EDUCATION

- For the last 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.
- Alberta represents Canada at the International Youth Exchange held annually in Sapporo and supported by the Hokkaido government and the Japan Foundation.
- Under the Alberta-Hokkaido Regional Student Exchange (REX) program, the Hokkaido Government annually provides two teachers to Alberta to help develop Japanese language programs in Alberta schools.
- The University of Alberta and the Hokkaido Board of Education have an agreement to train Hokkaido teachers in Alberta to learn the basic practices of teaching English as a Second Language. This program is known as the Hokkaido Teacher Exchange Program (H-TEP).
- Twenty-two Alberta schools are twinned with schools in Hokkaido.

VOLUNTEERISM

- In August 2001, an Alberta delegation visited Hokkaido to study volunteer driven organizations. The exchange coincided with the 'Volunteer Ai-Land' conference, similar to Alberta's 'Vitalize' conferences.
- In June 2002, Hokkaido sent seven delegates to attend Alberta's 'Vitalize 2002', a provincial volunteer conference, organized by the Wild Rose Foundation.
- In 2004, the Wild Rose Foundation undertook a mission to Hokkaido to renew the Alberta's volunteer agreement with Hokkaido. The renewed Alberta-Hokkaido

Volunteerism Exchange Agreement was signed in 2005.

- In October 2005, a Hokkaido delegation visited Alberta to study youth organizations, volunteer centres, and cultural facilities.

AGREEMENTS

- October 2005: Renewal of the 1980 Alberta-Hokkaido Proclamation of Friendship and Affiliation Agreement.
- October 2005: Renewal of the 1998 cooperation agreement between the Royal Alberta Museum and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido.
- July 2005: Renewal of the 1992 volunteer exchange agreement between Hokkaido and Alberta's Wild Rose Foundation.
- February 2001: Agreement between the Leduc Food Processing Center and the Hokkaido Food Processing Research Center for a one-year project, which has been completed, to collaborate on research and development of new beef products, specifically shelf stable meat snacks.

Medical Exchanges

- The Sapporo Medical University and the University of Alberta cooperate in areas such as nursing, sports medicine, and rehabilitation medicine. More recently, they have cooperated on tele-health, the delivery of medical and health services using telecommunications technology.

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, coaches and sports medicine expertise.
- One of the five 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

- Eighteen Alberta municipalities are twinned with Japanese counterparts. Ten of these twinings are in Alberta's sister province of Hokkaido:
 - Rocky Mountain House & Kamikawa (1984)
 - Stony Plain & Shikaoi (1985)
 - Camrose & Kamifurano (1985)
 - Lacombe & Rikubetsu (1986)
 - Slave Lake & Kamishihoro (1988)
 - Canmore & Higashikawa (1989)
 - Stettler & Okoppe (1990)
 - Wetaskiwin & Ashoro (1990)
 - Barrhead & Tokoro (1991)
 - Whitecourt & Kamiyubetsu (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

- October 2005: Hokkaido Vice Governor Yoshizawa visited Alberta to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido twinning.
- July 2005: Alberta Minister of Municipal Affairs visited Japan to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido twinning and to renew the Wild Rose Foundation's volunteerism agreement with Hokkaido.
- October 2002: Alberta Minister of Learning led a mission to Japan and Hokkaido.
- April 2002: Alberta Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations led a mission to Hokkaido and met with Governor Hori.
- September 2000: Hokkaido's Governor led a 20th anniversary delegation to Alberta.
- June 2000: An Alberta delegation visited Hokkaido to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the twinning.
- September 1999: Premier Klein met with Hokkaido's Governor Hori in Tokyo during the Team Canada mission to Japan.

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