

Lebanon – Alberta Relations



International and
Intergovernmental Relations

Alberta



PROFILE

Capital: Beirut

Population: 4.06 million (2006 est.)

Language: Arabic, French and English are widely spoken.

Government: Parliamentary Republic

Head of State: President Michel Suleiman (since May 2008)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Fouad Siniora

Currency: \$1CDN = 1,480 Lebanon Pounds (LBP) (July 2008)

GDP: US\$24.6 billion (2007 est.)

GDP (PPP): US\$42.3 billion (2007 est.)

GDP Per Capita (PPP): US\$11,300 (2007 est.)

GDP growth rate: 4% (2007 est.)

Inflation: 4.1% (2007 est.)

Unemployment: 20% (2006 est.)

Key Industry Sectors: banking, tourism, food processing, wine, jewelry, cement, textiles, mineral and chemical products, wood and furniture products, oil refining, metal fabricating.

LEBANON OVERVIEW

- A small, mountainous country, Lebanon was under French mandate from 1920 until independence in 1943.
- Its population is a mixture of various Christian sects, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Druze and others, having been a refuge for the region's persecuted minorities.
- From 1975 until the early 1990s Lebanon suffered a bloody civil war in which regional powers - particularly Israel, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organisation - used the country as a battlefield for their own conflicts.
- Lebanon has made progress toward rebuilding its political institutions since 1991 and the end of the devastating 1975-1990 civil war.
- Lebanon has retained its traditional mercantile culture and it remains an important commercial centre for the Middle East.

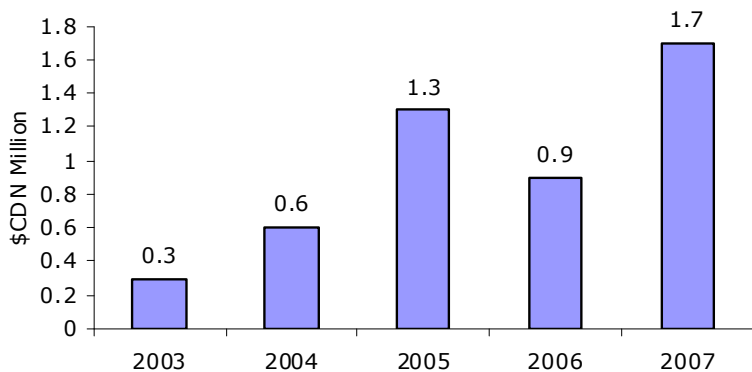
RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

- The Government of Alberta committed \$250,000 CDN to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for emergency relief efforts in Lebanon during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict.
- Official relations between Alberta and Lebanon were difficult during the Lebanese Civil War. There were, however, regular visits by Albertans of Lebanese descent and several trade missions.
- Since the reopening of the Canadian Embassy in Beirut in January 1995, Lebanon has become a more attractive environment for business and investment.
- Former Premier Klein's mission to Lebanon in 1995 was one of the first official Canadian visits since the resumption of relations.

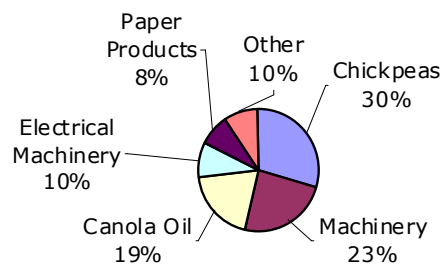
TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- Alberta exports to Lebanon, which dried up almost completely during the civil war, have increased marginally in recent years.
- Over the 2003-2007 period, Alberta's annual exports to Lebanon averaged \$0.96 million CDN, and consisted mainly of chickpeas, canola and flaxseed.
- Over the 2003-2007 period, Alberta's annual imports from Lebanon averaged approximately \$1.2 million CDN a year and consisted almost entirely of food items and food preparation materials.
- As an important Middle East banking centre, Lebanon has significant ties with the Arab Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) states.
- Composition of Lebanon's GDP: agriculture 5.1%, industry 19%, and services: 75.9%.

Alberta's Merchandise Exports to Lebanon (2003-2007)



Alberta's Merchandise Exports to Lebanon (2007)



EDUCATION AND CULTURE

- Over 400 students are enrolled in Edmonton's Arabic bilingual program.
- Locally developed second language courses in Arabic are also offered to approximately 400 other students province-wide.

COMMUNITY

- Alberta's Lebanese population is estimated at 20,460.
- In the last period of immigration (2001-2006), 1,040 Lebanese citizens immigrated to Alberta.
- Lebanese immigration to Canada increased during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). In this period of time, Lebanon was often ranked among the top 10 sources of immigration to Alberta.
- CKER-FM broadcasts across Alberta in many different languages, including Arabic.

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunities exist in Lebanon for reconstruction and development projects in both private and public sectors. As well, there are emerging opportunities in the area of governance.
- The Lebanese business community has expressed a strong interest in dealing with Canadian companies and views Canada favourably. Potential business opportunities have been identified in the following areas:
 - Health care
 - Dairy and food products
 - Food processing systems
 - Construction equipment and materials
 - Telecommunications
 - Energy and power, hydroelectric energy
 - Transportation systems
 - Water supply and treatment
 - Environmental technologies and services
 - Agri-foods
 - Building materials.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

- Over the 2001-2008 period, the Alberta Wild Rose Foundation's International Development Program provided more than \$114,000 in funding for several Canadian-based non-governmental organizations leading development projects in Lebanon including: Yanta Cultural Society, Chinook Rotary Club Society, and Human Serve International Society for Relief and Development.

OFFICIAL VISITS

- 1998: Bahia Hariri, sister of the Prime Minister of Lebanon, visited Alberta.
- 1998: Former Alberta Minister of Community Development, Shirley McClellan, and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Alberta, Moe Amery, visited Lebanon as part of a mission to the Middle East.
- 1995: Premier Klein, accompanied by MLA Moe Amery, led a 25-member business delegation to Lebanon as part of the Team Alberta Mission to the Middle East.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION

- His Excellency Massoud Maalouf is Lebanon's Ambassador to Canada.
- Canada's Ambassador in Lebanon is Mr. Martial Pagé.