

# Israel – Alberta Relations



## PROFILE

**Capital:** TBD (official selection of the capital is being negotiated between the Israel and Palestine).

**Population:** 8.38 million (2016).

**Language:** Hebrew (official), Arabic, English.

**Government:** Unicameral Knesset or Parliament (120 seat, members elected by proportional representation to serve four-year terms).

**Head of State:** President Reuven Rivlin.

**Head of Government:** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

**Currency:** CAD \$1 = 2.8952 New Shekel (ILS) (2016).

**GDP:** US \$383.86 billion (2015).

**GDP Purchasing Power Parity (PPP):** US \$289 billion (2015).

**GDP Per Capita:** US \$45,824 (2015).

**GDP Growth Rate:** 2.51 per cent (2015).

**Inflation:** -0.6 per cent (2015).

**Key Industry Sectors:** high-technology products (including aviation, communications, computer-aided design and manufactures, medical electronics, fiber optics), wood and paper products, potash and phosphates, food, beverages, and tobacco, caustic soda, cement, construction, metals products, chemical products, plastics, diamond cutting, textiles and footwear.

*Sources:*  
Global Affairs Canada, International Monetary Fund, The World Factbook

## OVERVIEW

- Canada recognized the State of Israel upon its founding in 1948, and the two countries established formal diplomatic relations on May 11, 1949.
- The Canadian Jewish community, currently around 350,000, acts as an important bridge between Canada and Israel.
- 2009 marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Israel.

## TRADE AND INVESTMENT

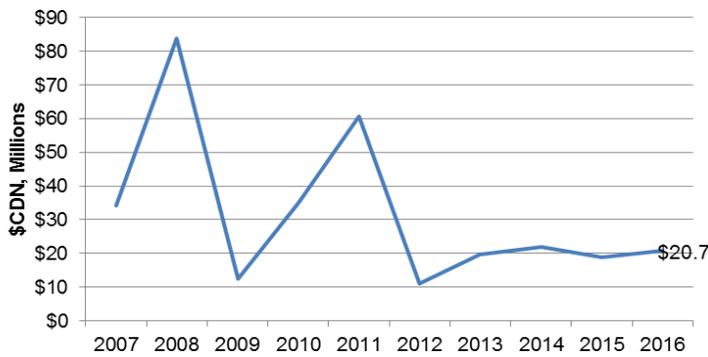
- Israel is in the unique position of having free trade agreements with the United States, the European Union and Canada.
- The Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) has been in force since January 1997, eliminating all tariffs on industrial products, and on some agricultural and fish and seafood products.
- In January 2014, Canada and Israel announced the launch of negotiations to expand and modernize the CIFTA. Negotiations are ongoing.
- Although kosher certification is not a legal requirement to export to the Israeli market, supermarkets and hotels will not purchase non-Kosher products.
- In 1994, Canada and Israel created the Canada-Israel Industrial Research and Development Foundation (CIIRDF) to promote collaborative R&D between firms in both countries. This program was renewed in 2006.

- As a pioneer in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), Israel is one of the biggest military drone exporters in the world with commercial drones being a natural extension of growth.
- Alberta's exports to Israel averaged \$18.45 million from 2012 to 2016, consisting mostly of salt, sulfur, earth, stone, cereals, animal feed, plastic, and electrical machinery.
- Alberta's imports from Israel averaged \$40.5 million from 2012 to 2016, consisting mostly of stone, plaster, cement, plastic, electrical machinery, and machinery.

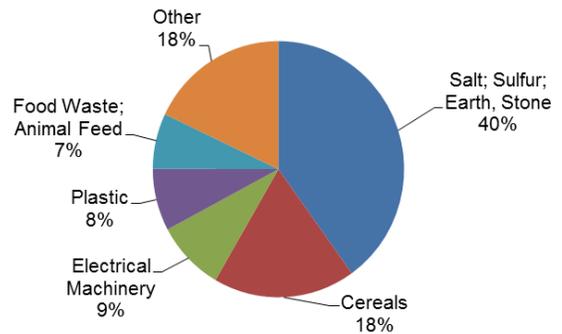
## ENERGY

- Israel is strategically located for regional energy transit to the Middle East, Europe and Asia. It shares pipeline access with several Middle Eastern countries, including both Jordan and Egypt. The reliability of pipeline operation, however, is questionable in the region due to the political instability in the area and previous attacks on several different lines.
- As of January 2014, the Oil & Gas Journal estimated Israel's proved reserves of oil at 11.5 million barrels and its proved reserves of natural gas at 10.1 trillion cubic feet (Tcf). While neither figure places Israel in the top-40 globally, these totals are significantly higher than they were a few years ago.
- In January 2009, 9 tcf of natural gas was discovered in the Tamar fields (located offshore, near Haifa). Israel began commercial production of natural gas from the Tamar field in March 2013.

### Alberta's Exports to Israel (2007-2016)



### Alberta's Merchandise Exports to Israel 2012-2016 (Total Average \$18.45 Million)



- The most recent offshore discovery occurred at the Tamar Southwest exploration well. Located eight miles southwest of the Tamar Field, the Tamar Southwest field may contain more than 500 billion cubic feet of natural gas.
- The most significant find in offshore Israel is the Leviathan field, located approximately 80 miles off the coast and situated in water that is more than 5,000 feet deep. Assessments of the Leviathan field indicate that there could be as much as 19 Tcf of recoverable natural gas in place. Production could begin at Leviathan in 2016 at the earliest.
- Commercially viable amounts of natural gas from the Mari B reserve have been supplying Israel with natural gas since 2004, but production plummeted in 2012 as the field entered the final stages of depletion.
- While historically Israel has been an importer of natural gas, the discoveries of the Tamar and Leviathan fields (among several others) should allow the country to become a significant exporter of natural gas in the next decade. There are competing proposals to develop pipelines and LNG infrastructure to support natural gas exports, but deliberations about how Israel will get its natural gas to market are ongoing.

### EDUCATION AND CULTURE

- Advanced Education provides funding to Alberta post-secondary institutions through the Campus Alberta Grant for International Learning which allows institutions to develop short-term study abroad programs in other countries including Israel.
- During 2015-16 there were 36 international students from Israel registered in post-secondary degree, diploma and certificate programs in Alberta.
- In June 2012, Canada and Israel signed an Energy cooperation agreement. One aspect of the agreement will encompass how Canada can help Israel develop its recently

discovered massive unconventional oil and gas deposits.

- In 2013-14, MacEwan employed a PhD student from Hebrew University to work on a research project, funded by MacEwan's Research Services Office.
- A MacEwan staff member (Kenneth Ristau) was a Fellow of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Israel in 2012/2013 and participated in archaeological excavations at Ramat Rachel in the summer of 2009, and at Tel Dor in the summers of 2006 and 2007.
- Political Science faculty member JC Boucher works on conflict management which pertains directly to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- The University of Alberta has academic relations with several Israeli universities (but no formal agreement).
- In March 2016, UAlberta's Vice-President (Research) and various members of the Faculties of Science and Engineering took part in the Weizmann-Alberta Nanoscience Meeting at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.
- The University of Calgary (U of C) has exchange agreements with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and with the University of Hafia.
- The Israel Studies Program in the Faculty of Arts makes the U of C an important centre of this emerging multidisciplinary analysis of Israeli history, politics, society, and culture.
- The U of C has an innovative interdisciplinary M.A. program in Israel Studies that explores critical issues in contemporary Israeli history and politics, and provides insight into the issues that Israel will face in the future.
- The Hotchkiss Brain Institute has extensive research links and hosted the Israel-Alberta Neuroscience Symposium in 2015.

- UCalgary School of Public Policy and the Haskayne MBA students participate each Spring in a graduate Group Study Program 'field school' in Israel.
- In 2005, Alberta's Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation signed a water conservation and irrigation research agreement with the Jewish National Fund of Canada.
- The University of Lethbridge has offered its students the opportunity to train at the Tel Beth Shemesh Archaeological Field School in Israel since 1989. Participants have uncovered significant archaeological finds such as a seal discovered at Beth Shemesh, an archaeological site located between the Biblical cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, along with other finds on the floor of an excavated house dated by archaeologists to the 12th century BCE.

### COMMUNITY

- The Jewish community in Alberta numbers approximately 15,000, mostly in Edmonton and Calgary.
- Of the many Jewish cultural and charitable organizations and activities in Alberta, the Jewish Federation, Hadassah and the Jewish National Fund have been the most prominent.
- Since 1979, Calgary-based Kahanoff Foundation has provided close to \$50 million to charitable programs in Israel in the areas of health, education, culture, social services, philanthropy and community development, and research.

### AGRICULTURE

- Alberta's total agriculture and food exports to Israel in 2016 reached \$8 million.
- Israel has traditionally been a large purchaser of Alberta wheat (\$5 million in 2014); however, in 2016 wheat dropped off, and exports were dominated by pet food (\$4 million) and canola seed (\$3 million).

- Total agriculture imports to Alberta from Israel in 2016 were \$1.2 million, dominated by guavas and mangoes (combined \$0.4 million) and greenhouse peppers (\$0.3 million).
- Israel imports 70 per cent of its food products, and the Israeli private consumption is growing at 5 per cent per year.
- While Alberta's best opportunities will be grains and pulses, other items of interest include: organic, healthy or natural products, and salty and sweet snacks, sauces, and spreads.

## EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- Israel is widely recognized as a leading source of knowledge and innovation in advanced research and technology. The percentage of Israelis engaged in scientific and technological inquiry, and the amount spent on research and development relative to its gross domestic product is one of the highest in the world. Israel ranks tenth among the most innovative countries in the Bloomberg Innovation Index and has among the highest number of start-ups per capita.
- Israel's academic, business and government leaders recognize nanotechnology as a key platform for ensuring Israel's continued R&D excellence. The country has established six nanotechnology centers at its research institutes. The focus areas of these centres mirror the capabilities of Israel's nanotechnology companies: Nanomaterials; Nanobiotechnology; Nanoelectronics; Nanowater.
- Israel has had nearly 40 Israeli commercial drone start-ups in the past 3 years. Alberta has an application rich environment and hosts Canada's first permanent restricted airspace to conduct behind visual line of site (BVLOS) operation and cluster of organizations involved in various aspects of the industry.
- As a result, the commercial unmanned aviation industry is poised for growth.
- There remains much to discover with the application of this technology to a wide scope of industries and further development of hardware, software, and operational products is required and could be explored through partnerships. Alberta will have a presence at key events such as Xponential and Paris Air Show.

## EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- August 2014: His Excellency Rafael Barak visited Edmonton and met with the Premier, Speaker, Lieutenant Governor, Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Rural Development and Transportation, Assistant Deputy Minister Policy, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, and Leader of the Official Opposition.
- December 2012: Her Excellency Miriam Ziv visited Edmonton and met with the Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy.
- October 2012: Dr. Uzi Landau, Israeli Minister of Energy and Water Resources, visited Calgary and met with Premier Redford.
- September 2012: Official visit of Mr. DJ Schneeweiss, Consul General of Israel in Toronto.
- February 2009: Her Excellency Miriam Ziv, Israel Ambassador to Canada, visited Edmonton.
- November 2008: Minister Ron Stevens led a mission to Israel and Ramallah.

## DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION

- Israel's Ambassador to Canada is His Excellency Nimrod Barkan. He took up his posting in December 2016.
- Canada's Ambassador to Israel is Deborah Lyons. A Representative Office of Canada to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah manages issues related to Gaza and the West Bank.
- Ms. Galit Baram is Israel's Consul General in Toronto with jurisdiction over Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut. She took up her posting in August 2016.

## RECENT VISITS

- March 2017: Ms. Galit Baram visited Edmonton on an official visit.



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