Japan - Alberta Relations

PROFILE

Capital: Tokyo
Population: 127.3 million (2013)
Language: Japanese
Government: Representative Democracy
Head of State: His Imperial Highness Emperor Akihito
Head of Government: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (since December 2012)
Currency: CAD $1 = 95.65 Yen (2014 average)
GDP: $4,930 billion US (2014)
GDP (PPP): $4,613 billion US (2014)
GDP Growth Rate: 0.4 per cent (2010-2014 average)
Inflation: -0.4 per cent (2010-2014 average)

Key Industry Sectors: Japanese companies are world leaders in the manufacturing of autos, electronics, machine tools, steel, nonferrous metals, ships, chemicals, textiles and processed foods.

Sources: Bank of Canada, Economist Intelligence Unit, Economy Watch

RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

- The Government of Alberta contributed $5 million to the Canadian Red Cross to support earthquake and tsunami relief efforts following the March 11, 2011 disaster in Japan. This complemented the generous contributions made by Albertans in response to the disaster. Alberta has since participated in four restoration projects in the area, including a public library (Donguri Anne), the Yuriage Public Market, the Oranda Jima House (an after-school and community care center in Iwate) and a senior’s facility in Fukushima.

- Japan is a key overseas economic partner for Alberta, accounting for 15 per cent of non-U.S. exports. Alberta also enjoys a multi-faceted relationship with Japan that includes strong business ties, cultural and sports exchanges, educational initiatives, municipal twinnings and people-to-people activities.

- Alberta exchanges with the Prefecture of Hokkaido began in 1973, with a formal sister province relationship agreement signed in 1980. The 35th Anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido sister province relationship was celebrated in 2015.

- Several Alberta municipalities are twinned with Japanese counterparts, including members of the Alberta/Japan Twinned Municipalities Association and Lethbridge Twinning Society.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- From 2010-2014, total domestic exports from Alberta to Japan averaged $1.77 billion per year and involved primarily canola seed, coal, pork, wheat and chemical woodpulp. Japan ranks third for Alberta exports.

- From 2010-2014, direct imports to Alberta from Japan averaged $260 million per year and consisted primarily of vehicles, machinery and electronic machinery. This figure does not include goods sold in Alberta that arrived via other provinces.

- Japan continues to be a significant investor in Canada. This investment increased by 10.3 per cent in 2014 and represents 2.4 per cent of Canada’s overall foreign direct investment. Japanese investment in Alberta is concentrated in the forest products, oil sands, energy, petrochemicals, food processing, tourism and hospitality sectors.

FORESTRY

- Japan is the second largest destination for Alberta lumber, and Alberta’s longest standing Asian market.

- Japan maintains a significant presence in Alberta’s forest product industry through Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd. and Alpac Forest Products Inc.
Forestry Division and Alberta’s Forest Sector was proud to partner in the Canada-Tohoku Reconstruction Projects, providing essential social and economic infrastructure in the most affected regions following the devastating Great Eastern Japan earthquake and tsunami of 2011.

Alberta’s building products have excellent growth potential over the long-term in Japan.

ENERGY

Japan has virtually no domestic oil or natural gas reserves and is currently the world’s largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) importer, consuming 37 per cent of global LNG in 2014.

Even with a declining consumption of oil, in 2013 Japan was still the world’s third largest consumer after the United States and China, with demand of nearly 4.5 million barrels per day (bpd).

Japan is also the world’s second largest coal importer.

Japan’s electricity sector was greatly impacted by the March 2011 earthquake, with total installed generation capacity having been significantly reduced due to a loss of nuclear capacity. LNG and oil-fired generation have been increased to offset lost nuclear capacity. Japan’s LNG imports reached 120.9 billion cubic meters in 2014, up from 93.5 billion cubic meters in 2010.

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A number of Japanese companies actively participate in Alberta’s energy sector, including Japan Petroleum Exploration Co. Ltd., INPEX Corp., Idemitsu Kosan Co. Ltd, Mitsui, Nippon Oil Exploration and Toyota Tshusho.

In May 2012, a Japanese delegation of officials from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; Japan Gas Corporation; and state-owned company Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation visited Calgary to launch an energy policy dialogue with Canada. The meeting aimed to discuss how Japan’s investments could be accelerated in unconventional oil and gas developments in Alberta and British Columbia.

TOURISM

In February 2012, direct air service between Calgary and Tokyo Narita was expanded to year-round service.

Travel Alberta maintains an in-market representative in Tokyo.

In 2013, Alberta received 40,500 overnight visitors from Japan accounting for $52.7 million in tourism expenditures.

Approximately one third of Alberta’s agri-food exports to Japan consist of value-added products.

In September 2014, Canada signed a new organic equivalency arrangement with Japan which came into effect on January 1, 2015. The Japan-Canada Organic Equivalency Arrangement (JCOEA) recognizes the organic production and certification systems in each country, making it easier to sell organic products in either country. The Canadian organic products that are covered under JCOEA are plants including fungi, as well as processed foods of plant origin.

Japan maintains import restrictions on Canadian beef and a ban on live cattle due to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) concerns. As of February 1, 2013, market access for Canadian beef has been expanded to allow access to beef from animals UTM.

Agriculture

In 2014, Japan was Alberta’s third largest market for agri-food products at $1.2 billion, behind the U.S. and China. Alberta comprised approximately one third of Canada’s total agri-food exports to Japan, which were valued at just under $4 billion in 2014.

Top ranked Alberta export products in 2014 include: canola seed ($421 million), wheat ($188 million), pork ($189 million), beef ($73 million), malt ($68 million) and hay and fodder ($58 million). Other top exports were processed meats, honey, horse meat, canola oil and tallow.

The Government of Alberta continues to promote investment and partnership opportunities between businesses in Alberta and Japan in areas such as information and communications technology and life sciences.

In July 2009, the National Institute for Nanotechnology (NINT), located in Edmonton, became home to a new research and product development centre using state-of-the-art Hitachi microscopes (the first outside of Japan), stemming from collaboration with Hitachi High Technologies Canada. NINT is a joint partnership of the Government of Alberta, the University of Alberta, and the National Research Council.

Alberta organizations have worked on several joint research projects with Japan’s New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization. Alberta-based microsystem and nanotechnology companies are also developing strategic relationships with Japanese companies and have sales representatives in Japan.

Science and Technology

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From 2010 to 2014, 1,331 foreign students from Japan were issued a permit to study in Alberta.

Over the last 35 years, about 100 Alberta students have participated annually in short-term cultural exchanges with the Yamate Gakui high school in Yokohama, Japan. The program also sees about 200 Japanese students come to Alberta schools annually for short-term visits during the spring.

Each year, approximately 60 Albertans are employed by the Japanese government’s Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme to teach English in Japan.

Alberta has developed curriculum for nine year (Grades 4-12), six year (Grades 7-12), and three year (Grades 10-12) Japanese language and culture learning programs. Fifteen school districts throughout the province offer these programs to over 2,000 students.

The Japanese Government, through an agreement involving the Japan Foundation, provides a Special Advisor on Japanese language and culture to Alberta Education.

Seventeen Alberta schools have a twinning relationship with schools in Japan.

The University of Alberta (U of A) has six student exchange partners in Japan and numerous other agreements with Japanese institutions related to teaching and research. It established the Prince Takamado Centre for Teaching and Research which facilitates teaching of Japanese language and culture and co-ordinates a Prince Takamado Japan-Canada Memorial Fund that supports student mobility and cultural exchanges.

The first international student to graduate from the U of A was Yuichi Kurimoto (1926). Mr. Kurimoto maintained his relationship with the university after returning to Japan and founding the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration. A donation from his family resulted in the building of the Kurimoto Japanese Gardens in the U of A’s Devonian Botanic Garden which opened in 1992. His son, Dr. Hiroshi Kurimoto, continues to support the university through generous support to the School of Business and received an honorary degree from the U of A in June 1993.

In recent years, the University of Calgary (U of C) has undertaken a variety of engagement initiatives with Japan including: hosting the 20th Alberta District Japanese Language Speech Contest, completing the Japanese Studies digital collection and hosting the Calgary-Japan Exchange Print Exhibition curated by Professors of Kyoto City University.

The U of C maintains student exchanges with nine universities in Japan, and has offered English Language Programs for a number of post-secondary institutions. U of C’s Werklund School of Education and Hokkaido University of Education recently re-signed an agreement that will provide international exchanges for students enrolled in the pre-service teacher education program. In addition to these agreements, the Japanese Language and Culture Group Study Program offers students opportunities to further their study of Japanese language and culture in an immersive setting at Senshu University near Tokyo.

For the past 13 years, Lethbridge College has partnered with the Nippon Institute of Technology (NIT) in Tokyo to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) training and two year diplomas to NIT students.

MacEwan University signed a student exchange agreement with Nagoya Gakuin University (2009). Students from Alberta are able to travel to Japan to study language and various aspects of Japanese culture and history.

MacEwan University signed an agreement with Fuji Women’s University to participate in MacEwan’s ESL Partnership Program. Through this program FWU students study ESL for one or two terms.

Mount Royal University (MRU) is partnered with Gifu University (2002), Mukogawa Women’s University (2006), and Hirotsugi University (2004). Students are exchanged in both directions on an annual basis.

SAIT Polytechnic and Kagawa Prefectural University of Health Sciences (KPUHS) in Takamatsu, Japan recently signed an one-year Exchange Program Agreement in June 2015. Four students and one instructor from the SAIT Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT) program visited KPUHS from June 27 - July 13 this year. Students were immersed in various laboratory activities and tours of medical facilities in Takamatsu as well as participated in cultural activities and tours of Hiroshima, Kyoto and Tokyo. Two nursing students from KPUHS are expected to come to SAIT in September this year.

Each year the English Language Program at the Faculty of Extension at the U of A hosts a number of groups of Japanese high school and/or university students to provide short-term English language training and Canadian social and cultural experiences.

Concordia University of Edmonton has partnerships with Toyo University, Tokyo and recently signed an agreement with Toohoku Fukushi University, Sendai, for cooperation in Public Health.

13,465 Albertans are of Japanese descent.

Between 2010 and 2014, 772 immigrants from Japan chose Alberta as their destination. Approximately 58 per cent were economic immigrants. This includes principal applicants and their dependents. These economic immigrants were largely occupied as cooks and university professors and lecturers.

From 2010 to 2014, 1,457 foreign workers from Japan were issued a permit to work in Alberta. Approximately 48 per cent were issued open employment permits and the rest were most commonly occupied as tour and travel guides, cooks, and food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations.

November 2015: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry met with key Japanese industry and government stakeholders to further Alberta’s trade and investment interests in the agriculture and forestry sectors. The Minister met with Hokkaido government officials and participated in events to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido sister province relationship.

June 2014: The Associate Minister, Persons with Disabilities, attended the 17th Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Japan Seminar, “How to Best Shape Teacher Policies? Policy Lessons from International Comparisons” in Tokyo. This seminar presented the results of the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey, in which Alberta was the only Canadian participant.

May 2014: The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development met with Alberta agriculture/agri-food industry with a presence in Japan and key Japanese stakeholders to
gain a greater understanding of recent opportunities, challenges and future business planning. The Minister also met with a Senior Vice-Minister of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries along with the Embassy of Canada in Japan to discuss the on-going bilateral and multilateral trade agreement negotiations between Canada and Japan, as well as potential collaboration between Alberta and Japanese entities on research and development opportunities.

- January 2014: Alberta's Minister of Finance met with a number of companies in Tokyo who have expressed interest in investing in Alberta.

- October 2013: The Minister of Energy visited Japan and met representatives from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) alongside other key stakeholders. He discussed prospects and opportunities involved in energy trade between Alberta and Japan, and encouraged greater Japanese involvement in Alberta's energy sector; in particular oil and gas development, transportation, technologies and investments.

- September 2013: The Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations went to Japan to promote stronger political and business ties between Alberta and Japan, and met key government, business and community representatives.

- June 2011: The Minister of Education went to Japan as part of an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) roundtable of ministers. The mission met with several education contacts in the market including Japan's Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION

- Japan's Ambassador in Ottawa is His Excellency Kenjiro Monji.

- A Japanese Consulate was established in Edmonton in 1967, becoming a Consulate General in 1972. The office is now located in Calgary and has jurisdiction for Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

- The Japanese Consul General in Calgary is Mr. Ryosaku Tamura.

- Canada’s Ambassador to Japan is Mr. Mackenzie Clugston. The Embassy is located in Tokyo. There is a Canadian Consulate in Nagoya, as well as Canadian trade offices in Kitakyushu, Osaka and Sapporo.

- Alberta has maintained an office in Tokyo since 1970. The Managing Director of this office is Mr. David Anderson.