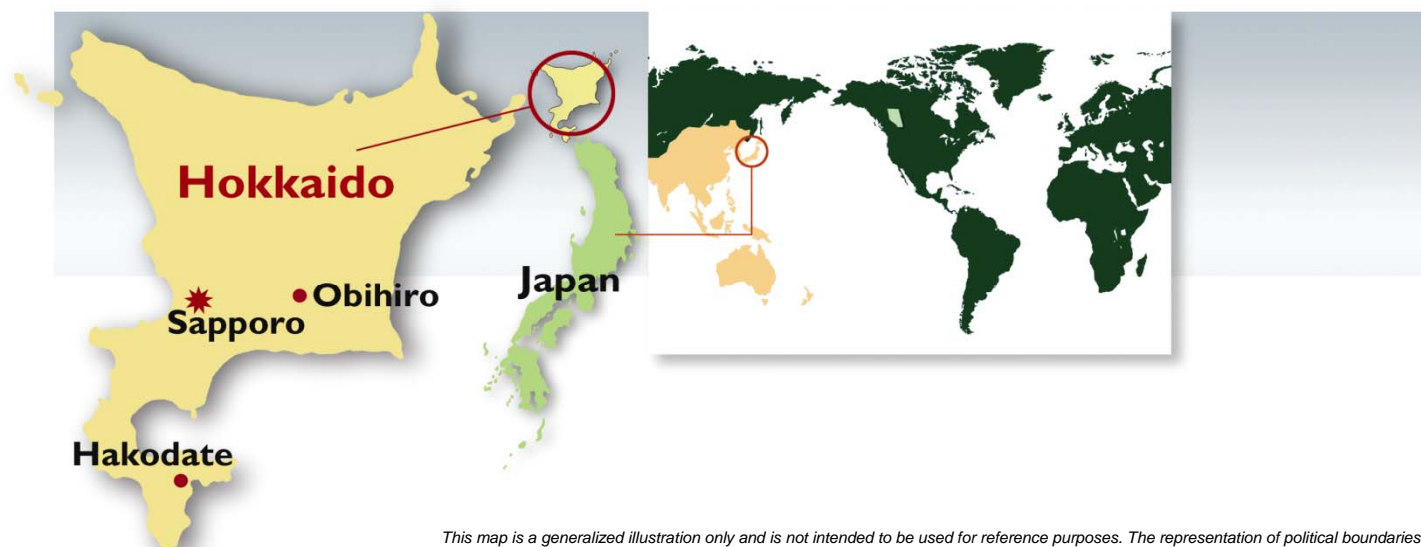


# Hokkaido - Alberta Relations



*This map is a generalized illustration only and is not intended to be used for reference purposes. The representation of political boundaries does not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of Alberta on international issues of recognition, sovereignty or jurisdiction.*

## PROFILE

**Capital:** Sapporo

**Population:** 5.43 million (2013)  
(only 4.3 per cent of Japan's total population)

**Language:** Japanese

**Major Cities:** Sapporo (1.9 million); Asahikawa (343,000); Hakodate (271,000); Kushiro (176,000)

**Government:** Unicameral legislature with Governor as head

**Head of Government:** Governor Ms. Harumi Takahashi (Re-elected April 2015 for a fourth term)

**Currency:** CAD \$1 = 93.64 Yen (2015 average)

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

*Sources:*

*Bank of Canada, Economist Intelligence Unit, Government of Hokkaido*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Hokkaido is Japan's second largest island and the largest, northernmost of its 47 prefectural-level subdivisions.
- Hokkaido is Japan's predominant agricultural area.
- Hokkaido has a much lower population density than other regions of Japan.

## RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

- Alberta's relations with Hokkaido began in 1972 with an Alberta government economic mission to Japan.
- In 1980, Hokkaido formally became Alberta's sister province.
- In 2015, Hokkaido and Alberta celebrated the 35th anniversary of their sister province relationship, the second oldest for Alberta. The Vice-Governor of Hokkaido visited Alberta in October 2015 and signed a reaffirmation of the sister province relationship with the Deputy Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.
- Hokkaido and Alberta have many similarities, including a resource-based economy, climate and topography.
- Alberta played a key role in helping Hokkaido develop into the curling capital of Japan. The City of Kitami (formerly the town of Tokoro), Barrhead's twin, has produced most of Japan's top curlers.

- Hokkaido also has sister province relationships with Heilongjiang in China and Massachusetts in the United States as well as a friendship and economic cooperation affiliation with Sakhalin in Russia.

## TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- 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.

- There have been a number of joint initiatives focusing on sectors such as construction, housing and wood products, manufactured goods and food products.
- As a result of Alberta's relations, Hokkaido can be an entry point for Alberta businesses seeking access to the larger Japanese market.

## FORESTRY

- Forestry Division and Canada Wood are promoting the use of Spruce-Pine-Fir (SPF) dimension lumber and Oriented Strand Board (OSB) in Japan. The Gokigen Sanhana Elderly Care Home was opened in April 2014, using SPF in a hybrid post and beam wall panel system and OSB from Canada. The two-storey residence for 25 seniors will provide daily care and medical assistance in Sapporo.

## AGRICULTURE

- Agriculture was the primary focus for commercial activity when the sister province agreement was initiated.
- In recent years, the honey industries in Alberta and Hokkaido have developed a relationship based on best practice exchanges.
- In November 2014 Agriculture and Rural Development helped to support Alberta Pork retail promotional events which were organized at a number of supermarkets located in Hokkaido.

- Agriculture and Forestry, along with the Alberta Japan Office, facilitated a relationship between the Alberta Barley Commission and the University of Obihiro regarding a joint research project on feed barley in the Hokkaido beef/dairy industry.
- 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.
- An initial one-year project agreement between the Leduc Food Processing Development Centre and the Hokkaido Food Processing Research Centre focused on the research and development of new beef products (specifically shelf-stable meat snacks), and resulted in a relationship between the two centres for a number of years.

## EDUCATION

- 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 Japan.
- For over a decade, Alberta and Hokkaido have partnered in a high school exchange program in which students from Alberta and Japan develop their international language skills by spending eight weeks in each other's homes and schools.
- Out of the 17 Alberta schools twinned with schools in Japan, twelve are twinned with schools in Hokkaido.
- 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. Thirteen school districts throughout the province offer these programs to over 2,000 students.
- Alberta Education has had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Japan Foundation since 2001, which was renewed in 2014. The MOU supports the posting of a Special Advisor of Japanese Language and Culture to Alberta Education.
- Launched during International Education Week in 2015, the Think Globally Art Contest had students reflect and illustrate the 35th anniversary of Alberta's "sister relationship" with the Prefecture of Hokkaido. Postcard packages were created from the winning entries.
- Since 2007, the U of A's English Language Program has had an agreement with Hokkaido's Rakuno Gakuen University for a scholarship program which allows Rakuno Gakuen students to take a month of English training.
- The Sapporo Medical University and the U of A cooperate in areas such as nursing, sports medicine and rehabilitation medicine. They have cooperated on tele-health and the delivery of medical and health services using telecommunications technology.
- The University of Calgary has a university-wide student exchange agreement with the Hokkaido University of Education. The Werklund School of Education has had a very active relationship with Hokkaido University for over 25 years, and its Cultural and Pedagogical Exchange program boasts participation of approximately 120 students from Canada and Japan.
- Since 1982, the University of Lethbridge has administered a university-wide exchange program with Hokkai Gakuen University in Hokkaido.
- In 1982, Olds College signed a formal arrangement with Rakuno Gakuen University and the Alberta-Japan Dairy Science and Exchange Program. At that time, the College became the seat of the Dairy Exchange program in Alberta. Now called the Open Studies Exchange program, 52 students from Rakuno Gakuen have participated in this program at Olds College in the past 10 years.

## CULTURE

- In July 2016, the Hokkaido Sports Association and the Alberta Sports Connection signed an agreement for a friendship sport exchange between the two provinces.
- A delegation of Hokkaido sports representatives, including 25 representatives from the Hokkaido Women's Curling Academy, visited Alberta in October 2014. They attended various sport and culture programming in Edmonton and Calgary.
- In September 2013, the Royal Alberta Museum and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido signed an MOU to continue the commitment to developing closer ties between the museums in areas such as literature and artifact exchanges, exhibit development, comparative research and staff 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 and coaches.

- Beginning in 1992, and with funding shared by the Government of Alberta and the Prefecture of Hokkaido, a Volunteer Exchange Program was developed – the first of its kind in the world – to support voluntary sector development and leadership.

## 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, and 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.

## SISTER CITIES

- Eight Alberta municipalities are twinned with counterparts in Hokkaido:
  - Rocky Mountain House & Kamikawa (1984)
  - Stony Plain & Shikaoi (1985)
  - Camrose & Kamifurano (1985)
  - Lacombe & Rikubetsu (1986)
  - Canmore & Higashikawa (1989)
  - Wetaskiwin & Ashoro (1990)
  - Barrhead & Tokoro (1991)
  - Whitecourt & Yubetsu (1998)

## RECENT VISITS

- 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.
- October 2015: The Vice-Governor of Hokkaido Prefecture, Mr. Yoshihiro Yamaya, led delegation to Alberta to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido sister province relationship. The delegation included members of the Hokkaido Legislative Assembly, senior government officials, select individuals from universities based in Hokkaido and municipal government officials whose jurisdictions are twinned with Alberta cities.



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