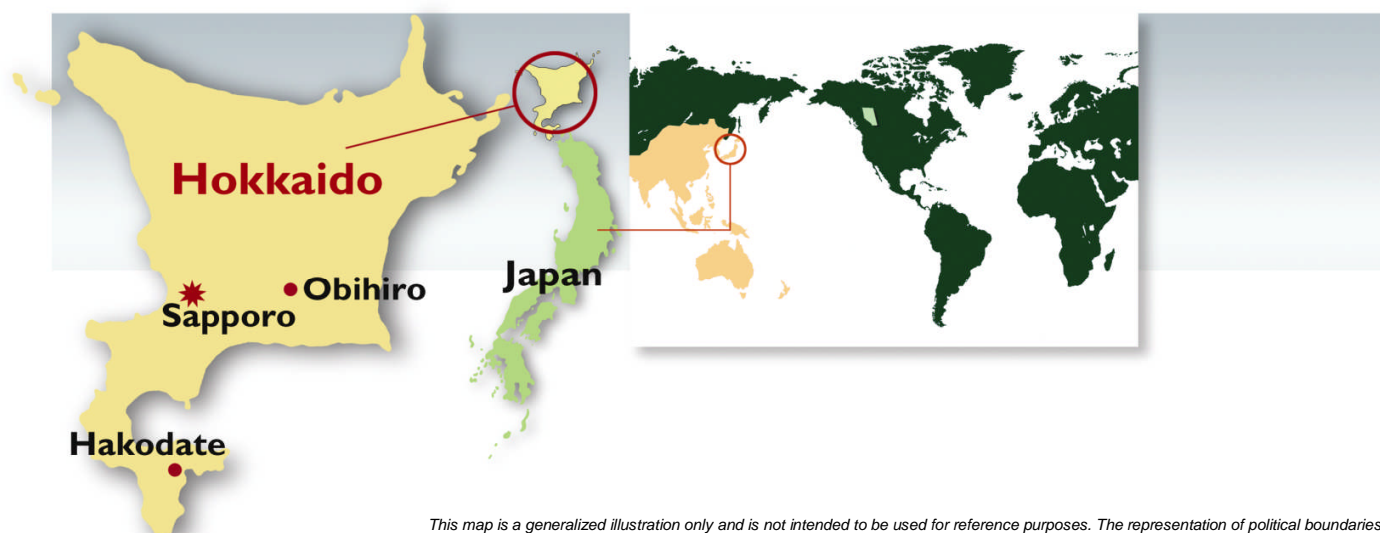


Hokkaido - Alberta Relations



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: 5.45 million (2012)
(only 4.3 percent of Japan's total population)

Language: Japanese

Major Cities: Sapporo (1.9 million); Asahikawa (352,000); Hakodate (280,000); Obihiro (168,500)

Government: Unicameral legislature with Governor as head

Head of Government: Governor Ms. Harumi Takahashi (Re-elected April 2011 for a third term)

Currency: \$1 CAD = 95.14 Yen (2013 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 2010, Hokkaido and Alberta celebrated the 30th 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.
- 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 and 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.

AGRICULTURE

- Agriculture was the primary focus for commercial activity when the twinning agreement was initiated.
- In recent years, the honey industries in Alberta and Hokkaido have developed a relationship based on best practice exchanges.
- Most recently, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development along with the Alberta Japan Office facilitated a relationship between the Alberta Barley Commission and the University of Obihiro regarding an on-going joint research project on feed barley in the beef/dairy industry in Hokkaido.
- 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 (FPDC) 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

- 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 8 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.
- In 2012, Alberta and Hokkaido renewed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Alberta Education and the Hokkaido Board of Education and participating school boards in Alberta for the REX (Regional and Educational Exchanges for Mutual Understanding) Teacher Program.
- Under the REX program, the Hokkaido Government annually provides Alberta with two teachers to help develop Japanese language programs in Alberta schools.
- Since 2007, the University of Alberta's (U of A) 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.
- With assistance from the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, the U of A and the Hokkaido Board of Education have an agreement to train English teachers from Hokkaido in Alberta. In 2010, the Hokkaido Teacher Exchange Program (HTEP) celebrated its 10th anniversary.
- The Sapporo Medical University and the University of Alberta cooperate in areas such as nursing, sports medicine, and rehabilitation medicine. They have cooperated on telehealth, 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. Over the years the Werklund School of Education has had a Cultural and Pedagogical Exchange program and approximately 120 students from Canada and Japan have participated in this program.
- Since 1982, the University of Lethbridge has administered a university-wide exchange program with Hokkai Gakuen University in Hokkaido. As of 2009, over 400 students and over 100 professors have participated.

CULTURE

- While visiting Sapporo in September 2013, the Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations signed an MOU between the Royal Alberta Museum and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido. The agreement is a continued commitment to developing closer ties between the museums, such as literature and artifact exchanges, exhibit development, comparative research and staff exchanges.
- In 2012, the governments of Alberta and Hokkaido signed an agreement for a friendship sport exchange between the two provinces.
- In March 2011, a curling team from the Hokkaido Curling Association visited Edmonton for a friendly bonspiel at the Granite Curling Club.
- In 2010/2011, a long track speed skating exchange took place between Alberta and Hokkaido.
- 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.

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.

VOLUNTEERISM

- In March 2010, a delegation from Hokkaido met with voluntary sector agencies in Edmonton to discuss volunteer management.
- In October 2007, a delegation from Hokkaido (led by the Director of the Hokkaido Community Activities Promotion Association) met with leaders from Alberta's voluntary sector to discuss voluntary sector development issues.
- 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.

SISTER CITIES

- Several Alberta municipalities are twinned with Japanese counterparts. Nine municipalities are twinned with counterparts in Alberta's sister province of Hokkaido:
 - Rocky Mountain House & Kamikawa (1984)
 - Stony Plain & Shikaoi (1985)
 - Camrose & Kamifurano (1985)
 - Lacombe & Rikubetsu (1986)
 - Canmore & Higashikawa (1989)
 - Stettler & Okoppe (1990)
 - Wetaskiwin & Ashoro (1990)
 - Barrhead & Kitami (1991)
 - Whitecourt & Yubetsu (1998)
 - Brooks & Hiroo (2010)
- 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

- September 2013: The Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations visited Sapporo and met with Vice Governor of Hokkaido, members of the Hokkaido International Exchange and Cooperation Center (HIECC), twin town representatives and Hokkaido's Curling Association members to celebrate "Alberta Day" in Hokkaido.
- November 2010: The Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations commemorated the 30th anniversary of Alberta-Hokkaido twinning relations with various celebratory events in Alberta.
- July 2010: Hokkaido's Vice Governor travelled to Alberta to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Alberta-Hokkaido twinning.
- May 2010: The Premier of Alberta met with Hokkaido's Governor in Tokyo as part of the joint Alberta-British Columbia-Saskatchewan Premiers mission to Asia.

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