

# **Alberta Learning's Mission to Asia**

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October 20 to November 7, 2002



## Message from the Minister

This is an exciting time for Alberta's learning system. Globalization is presenting new challenges and wonderful opportunities for students and educators. [Alberta's International Education Strategy](#) reflects this expanding horizon, and Alberta Learning's Mission to Asia in 2002 was an important step in supporting the goals of this strategy. Alberta's schools and post-secondary institutions already have strong ties to Asia and the collaborative nature of the Asia mission both strengthened existing partnerships and made it possible to explore new opportunities. It was very gratifying to further Alberta's education relationship with both Japan and, China and to establish relations with Vietnam and Thailand. Alberta's learning system is an important part of our province's vision for the future and international education will play a role in realizing that vision. I know that the accomplishments of Alberta Learning's Mission to Asia will have a positive, lasting impact.



Dr. Lyle Oberg  
Minister of Learning

## Overview

Minister Oberg led an Alberta Learning - Team Alberta Mission to Asia from October 20 – November 7, 2002. Delegates included representatives from both Alberta's K-12 and post-secondary sectors. The mission was focused on two primary objectives: to reinforce long-standing education-based relationships between Alberta and our Asian partners, and to facilitate opportunities for Alberta's education providers in the Asian market.

The mission included visits to Sapporo, Tokyo, Harbin, Beijing, Hanoi and Bangkok.

## Mission Highlights

- Nine Educational Cooperation Agreements were signed between Alberta educational institutions and international partners. These agreements encouraged collaboration in areas of medical education, telemedicine/distance education, student exchanges, and faculty and teacher exchanges.
- An invitation by China's Vice Minister of Education to collaborate on the delivery of an Alberta high school program through two Chinese partner schools.
- The opportunity to promote the expertise of Alberta's post-secondary system in the field of customized corporate training to key corporate contacts in Tokyo.
- The signing of a letter of intent with the Education and Training Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, People's Republic of China, for future collaboration in the field of apprenticeship and industry training.
- Meetings with Joseph Caron, Canada's Ambassador to China, and Andrew McAlister, Canada's Ambassador to Thailand.

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*"The mission laid important groundwork for Alberta's schools and post-secondary institutions to subsequently contract to deliver services."*

*Sharon Carry, President,  
Bow Valley College*

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- Meetings with numerous representatives from secondary schools, colleges, technical institutes, universities and educational associations.
- A “Study in Alberta” seminar provided delegates with the opportunity to recruit Thai students.
- An audience with Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the Princess of Thailand.
- Meetings with Vice Governor Yamaguchi of Hokkaido and Dr. Adireksarn Pongpol, the Minister of Education for Thailand.

## Mission Objectives

The key objectives of the mission were:

- To promote Alberta’s world-class education system.
- To reinforce and promote international partnerships.
- To promote study in Alberta opportunities.
- To market Alberta’s expertise in educational goods and services.

## Mission Results

### Japan

During Minister Oberg’s meeting with Vice Governor Yamaguchi of Hokkaido, the Minister thanked the Hokkaido Government for their ongoing support of educational partnerships with Alberta. The success of the Hokkaido Teachers of English pilot program was discussed as well as the potential to expand the program to other prefectures in Japan.

While meeting with officials from the Hokkaido Department of Education, the Minister encouraged representatives from both Hokkaido and Alberta to seek out opportunities for further partnerships and collaboration. Minister Oberg formally recognized the Hokkaido Department of Education for its support of the Regional Exchange for Mutual Understanding (REX) Teacher Program and the Hokkaido Socio-Cultural Program. These programs provided Japanese language teachers to Alberta, and a scholarship for an Albertan to study in Hokkaido.

The Hokkaido Department of Education hosted the Hokkaido-Alberta Education Forum. Alberta delegates and representatives from Hokkaido’s K-12 and post-secondary sectors discussed alternatives for professional development opportunities for educators. Forum participants explored mutual areas of interest including the globalization of education, providing students with second language learning opportunities, internationalization, and future educational exchanges between Hokkaido and Alberta.

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*“A major strength of the mission was the fact that Alberta’s entire education system was represented.”*

*Dr. Paul Byrne, President,  
Grant MacEwan College*

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In Tokyo, Alberta delegates participated in a presentation delivered by a representative from Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Delegates cited opportunities for Alberta education providers, in conjunction with MEXT, to cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”. MEXT shared plans to; provide additional scholarships for Japanese

teachers to pursue university study abroad; to expand the number of Japanese high school exchanges with English speaking nations; and to increase the funding provided to Japanese teachers seeking training overseas.

Representatives of Alberta's post-secondary sector accompanied Minister Oberg to business meetings with key Alberta corporate contacts in Tokyo, including Fujitsu and Nippon Oil. Minister Oberg conveyed the message that many Alberta post-secondary institutions have strengths in customized corporate training and are interested in doing business in Japan.

During a visit to Meiji University Minister Oberg addressed a group of University of Alberta students enrolled in Japanese 401. Portions of the University of Alberta's Japanese 401 course are delivered by Meiji University staff in Tokyo.

The delegation met with more than 100 representatives of Japan's education sector at a reception at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo. Delegates promoted opportunities to study in Alberta, and explored educational partnerships. While in Japan, Minister Oberg presided over the signing of five Educational Cooperation Agreements between Alberta and Japanese educational institutions. These agreements encouraged collaboration in the areas of community/rural medicine, medical education, telemedicine/distance education, student exchanges, and faculty and teacher exchanges.

### **China**

During a meeting with Minister Oberg, Vice Governor Wang Xianmin of Heilongjiang expressed support for the strong educational ties with Alberta and the many exchanges between the two provinces. The continuation of the Alberta International Education Ministerial Awards was reaffirmed by Minister Oberg, and possible new educational partnerships were discussed with the Heilongjiang Education Commission. These possibilities include English as a Second Language training opportunities for the Commission's teachers, short-term education programs for Heilongjiang students, and institutional linkages between Heilongjiang and Alberta institutions that offer degree programs.

The Heilongjiang-Alberta Education Forum provided mission participants with an opportunity to network with educational representatives from Heilongjiang's secondary and post-secondary sectors. Important groundwork was laid for future collaboration.

Over 70 guests attended a reception in Harbin. The guests represented Alberta's current and key contacts from throughout Heilongjiang's education sector.

At a reception in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, Minister Oberg delivered a speech to corporate and educational associates of the University of Calgary. Canada's Ambassador to China, Joseph Caron, welcomed the Alberta delegation to Beijing and commended Minister Oberg for leading the delegation to China.

Minister Oberg and the Alberta delegation attended a meeting and briefing session with Canadian Embassy Officials in Beijing. Topics of discussion included, the timely issuance of student visas, and student recruitment in China.

The Minister met with Vice Minister Zhang Xin Sheng of the Ministry of Education in China. Vice Minister Zhang invited Minister Oberg to explore the possibility of delivering the Alberta high school program in two partner schools in China.

Minister Oberg signed a letter of intent with the Education and Training Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, People's Republic of China, for future collaboration in apprenticeship and industry training. The Minister then presided over the signing of four other Educational Cooperation Agreements between Alberta and Chinese educational institutions. These agreements encouraged collaboration in the areas of joint externally funded projects, faculty and staff exchange and student exchanges.

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*"This mission was well worth SAIT's investment of time and resources."*

*Guy Mallabone,  
Vice President  
External Relations, SAIT*

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### **Vietnam**

During a meeting with Canadian Embassy officials in Hanoi, the delegation received an overview of the economic situation in Vietnam. Minister Oberg met with Mr. Le Vu Hung, Vice Minister of Education and Training for Vietnam. Vice Minister Hung expressed a strong interest in discussing a possible Memorandum of Understanding to promote future collaboration in the area of basic education.

Minister Oberg met with the Vietnam Investment Review, Vietnam's leading international business newspaper. The interview added profile to the mission and showcased Alberta's world class learning system. The size of the Alberta delegation was viewed as impressive as it was the largest Canadian education delegation that has ever travelled to Vietnam.

The Alberta delegation met with the Canada Vietnam Business Association. Delegates had the opportunity to gather market specific information relating to the provision of educational services in Hanoi.

During a meeting with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Deputy Minister Nguyen Luong Trao expressed interest in establishing a "train-the-trainer" program where Alberta faculty would train Vietnamese educators teaching in the field of technical and vocational education. The possibility of exploring a joint scholarship program was also discussed.

The delegation visited a school, a technical institute and a university in Hanoi. Discussions with educational leaders centered on school twinnings, the exchange and sale of curriculum (entrepreneurship and information technology), and teacher development.

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*"Opportunities were bountiful – there was a great deal to learn from these experiences."*

*Klaus Puhlmann,  
Superintendent,  
Grande Yellowhead Regional  
Division No. 35*

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The mission to Vietnam resulted in greater visibility for Alberta institutions in Vietnam's educational marketplace. In addition, considerable progress was made in establishing Alberta's educational sector as a contracting source for International Financial Institution (IFI) projects.

### **Thailand**

Minister Oberg and the delegation met with Dr. Rung, Director General of the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC). The Commission is instrumental in leading education reform initiatives in Thailand. The meeting provided the delegation with an opportunity to identify areas of mutual interest and explore future possibilities for the exchange of educational expertise.

Minister Oberg met with Dr. Adireksarn Pongpol, the Minister of Education for Thailand. Minister Oberg shared with Dr. Pongpol, Alberta's strengths in apprenticeship, technical and vocational education, rural education and agricultural training. Minister Oberg invited Dr. Pongpol to visit Alberta to discuss future areas of educational collaboration between Alberta and Thailand.

The meetings with Dr. Sadimani of SEAMES (Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Secretariat) and Dr. Shaeffer of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) provided the delegation with an opportunity to review areas for future collaboration. These may include quality assurance in education, accessibility (distance learning, open learning, technology in education), good governance, health programming (epidemiology, telehealth, and telemedicine) and occupational standards.

The delegation visited several elementary and secondary schools in Bangkok. Opportunities for student and staff exchanges, collaborative curriculum projects in second languages, and twinning agreements were discussed.

A “Study in Alberta” seminar provided delegates with the opportunity to recruit Thai students. Thai students met with each Alberta institution or school directly to obtain specific course and program information.

Minister Oberg and the delegation toured the Royal Chitralada Projects. The Royal Chitralada Projects include applied research activities in agriculture, food processing research, occupational promotion, water resources, public health and the environment.

Minister Oberg and Ambassador McAlister met with Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. This meeting served to maintain Alberta’s close relationship with her Royal Highness.

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*“Thailand’s vision is an education system that is constructivist, pupil centered, decentralized, and nurtures creative and independent thinkers. This is consistent with Alberta’s vision. We both have much to gain from working together.”*

*Earl Choldin,  
Executive Director,  
The Learning Network*

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## Itinerary

October 20

- Depart Edmonton for Sapporo

October 21

- Arrive in Sapporo

October 22

- Team Breakfast Meeting
- Courtesy call – Vice Governor of Hokkaido
- Meeting with the Superintendent, Hokkaido Board of Education
- Lunch with Sapporo Medical University
- Hokkaido-Alberta Education Forum
- Meeting with Hokkai-Gakuen University
- Minister’s speech to the Hokkaido Canada Society
- Reception with education contacts in Sapporo

October 23

- Visit to the Sapporo International and Technological High School
- Travel to Tokyo

October 24

- Team Breakfast Meeting
- Visit to the Meiji University to observe the delivery of a language and culture course by distance learning technologies
- Meeting with The Japan Foundation
- Business and industry meeting between Post-secondary delegates and Nippon Oil Exploration
- Meeting with Canadian Embassy Officials
- Meeting with the Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
- Minister's speech on Alberta's use of learning technology
- Reception with education contacts in Tokyo

October 25

- Basic Learning delegates visit Yamate Gakuen school
- Post-Secondary delegates attend a business and industry meeting with Ito-en Sangyo
- Post-Secondary delegates attend a business and industry meeting with Fujitsu
- Meeting with the British Council, ALC Press Incorporated, ICS Incorporated, Canadian Education Alliance, and the Japan-United States Educational Commission.
- Meeting with the Alberta Japan Office

October 26

- Private Day

October 27

- Travel to Harbin via Beijing

October 28

- Team Breakfast Meeting
- Meeting at the Governor's Office
- Meeting with the Heilongjiang Education Commission
- Heilongjiang-Alberta Education Forum
- Reception with education contacts in Harbin

October 29

- Travel to Beijing
- Visit to a Beijing High School
- Minister's speech to the University of Calgary Energy Showcase

October 30

- Team Breakfast Meeting
- Meeting with the Alberta China Office
- Meeting with Canadian Embassy Officials
- Meeting with the Ministry of Education
- Meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation
- Signing ceremony for Cooperative Education Agreements with Chinese partners
- Reception with education contacts in Beijing

October 31

- Travel to Hanoi

## November 1

- Team Breakfast Meeting with Canadian Embassy staff
- Meeting with the Ministry of Education and Training
- Meeting with Hanoi Amsterdam School
- Interview with Vietnam Investment Review
- Canada-Vietnam Business Association Lunch with Business and Education partners in Hanoi
- Meeting with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs/General Department of Vocational Training
- Meeting with the World Bank to discuss the World Bank's education program in Vietnam.
- Post-Secondary delegates attend a meeting at the Hanoi Industry College
- Basic Learning delegates attend a meeting at the Hanoi Pedagogical University
- Meeting with the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Reception with education contacts in Vietnam

## November 2

- Travel to Bangkok

## November 3

- Private Day

## November 4

- Breakfast Meeting with Canadian Embassy Staff and CIDA representatives
- Briefing from the Office of The National Education Commission (ONEC)
- Meeting with Minister of Education –Deputy Prime Minister
- Meeting with Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)
- Meeting with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Representative, Asia Pacific Regional Office
- Reception with education contacts in Thailand

## November 5

- Meeting with the schools affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University
- Attend a series of presentations at Srinakharinwirot University
- Minister and Post-Secondary delegates attend a meeting with the Rajamangala Institute of Technology
- Basic Learning delegates attend a meeting with the United Nations' New International School in Bangkok
- "Study in Alberta" seminar for Thai students

## November 6

- Tour of the Royal Chitralada Projects
- Meeting with HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

## November 7

- Travel to Edmonton via Hong Kong and Vancouver

## Budget

### Costs for Official Delegation:

Airfare:	\$34,554
Hotel/Meals:	11,387
Other*:	3,473
Total:	<b>\$49,414</b>

\*Includes cost of ground transportation, telephone charges, and sundries.



## Conclusion

Alberta is already recognized, in international academic circles and in industry, for the high quality of its education system and graduates. The mission to Asia was an effective means of raising the profile of Alberta's world class learning system in Japan, China, Vietnam and Thailand. The visits to both Hokkaido and Heilongjiang served to strengthen Alberta's strong and productive ties with these sister provinces. Existing international partnerships were reinforced and new relationships were forged with educational providers, and governments from all four countries visited.

Delegates actively promoted study in Alberta opportunities to students, teachers, educational administrators, international recruitment agents, and government officials. The meetings and relationships that were established have created numerous opportunities for continued cooperation in the areas of student and faculty exchange, and in the provision of Alberta's educational expertise to markets in Asia. Delegates from both the K-12 and post-secondary sectors, as well as representatives of Alberta Learning, are following-up on the opportunities explored with contacts made during the Mission to Asia. Many potential initiatives are being considered, with those agreements made during the mission being finalized over the coming months.

The accomplishments of Alberta Learning's Mission to Asia were numerous and will have a lasting and positive impact on Alberta's learning system.

## Delegates

### Official Delegation

Dr. Lyle Oberg	Minister, Alberta Learning
Yvonne Fritz	Member of the Legislative Assembly
Bob Maskell (China only)	Member of the Legislative Assembly
Joel Palmer	Executive Assistant to the Minister

### Education Delegation

Michele Mulder	President Alberta School Boards Association
Paul Byrne	President Grant MacEwan College
Sharon Carry	President & CEO Bow Valley College
Mark Lee	President & CEO Lakeland College
Sam Shaw	President Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Ralph Weeks	President Medicine Hat College

Thomas Wood	President Mount Royal College
Mal Clewes	Superintendent Lethbridge School District No. 51
Klaus Puhlmann	Superintendent Grande Yellowhead Regional Division No. 35
Sig Schmold	Superintendent Pembina Hills Regional Division No.
Douglas Yeo	Superintendent St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1
Dennis Salahub	Vice President (Research) University of Calgary
Shamsul Alam	Associate Vice President (Academic) University of Lethbridge
Fran Trehearne	Senior Advisor to the President University of Alberta
Guy Mallabone	Vice President External Relations Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Gordon Nixon	Vice President Academic Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Alex Reed	Registrar Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Ralph Helder	Director Alberta Distance Learning Centre Pembina Hills Regional Division
Pat Bidart	Dean, Agriculture Technology and College Accessing Olds College
Russel Boris	Manager, International Education Medicine Hat College
Earl Choldin	Executive Director The Learning Network
Val Larsen	Executive Director Alberta Centre for International Education
Dan Rowe	Program Manager Alberta Centre for International Education

\* Not all delegates participated in all portions of the mission. Education delegates were responsible for paying their own expenses.