

THE KANSAI REGION

As indicated previously, the economic activity in Japan is still maintained with Tokyo (Kanto) and Osaka (Kansai) as focal points. In economic scale, the Kansai accounts for 20% of Japan's and 3% of the world's economy. Both the population of the Kansai (23 million) and the GNP are quite similar to Canada's. Geographically, the Kansai includes the four large cities of Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto and Nara, as well as the immediately surrounding prefectures or provinces of Hyogo, Wakayama, Mie and Shiga.

According to Kankeiren figures, in 1992 Canada exported to the Kansai ¥168 billion, or about C\$2.2 billion, while Kansai exported to Canada ¥117 billion or about C\$1.5 billion. Canada's main exports to the Kansai include forest products (22%) and food and fisheries products (18%). Growing areas also include software, telecommunications, biotechnology and services. Manufactured goods account for 23% of Canada's exports to the Kansai. Major Canada imports from the Kansai include office equipment and electronics such as VCRs and TVs.

Canadian company representation in the Kansai is diversified but limited to firms such as the Bank of Nova Scotia, MacMillan Bloedel, Canadian Airlines, Air Canada and McCain's. Canadian subsidiaries of Kansai-based companies are more numerous at about 60. There are also approximately 50 Kansai-based firms distributing Canadian products within the Kansai. Canadian companies often find the average size of Kansai companies - small and medium sized - to be easier to deal with than larger organizations.

Since the 1986 establishment of the Canadian Consulate General in Osaka, linkages between Canada and the Kansai, especially in business, tourism and culture, have increased dramatically. There are now over 1,000 Canadians living in the Kansai -- double the number of only 5 years ago. These include those coming to study or to participate in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET), or in the Canada-Japan Working Holiday program (for young people up to age 25).

There are about 200 members in the Canada Japan Society of the Kansai, which was founded in 1958. This association is open to corporations and individuals, both Canadians and Japanese, in the Kansai area who have an interest in furthering good relations between Canada and Japan. There is also a Kobe-Canada Friendship Society with about 100 members, as well as an Ontario Club of Kansai businessmen whose earlier assignments included Toronto -- also about 100. The Kansai-Canada Alumni Association has fully organized itself with an executive. Total membership in the KCAA now stands at over 200 Japanese and Canadian graduates of Canadian universities.

Canada maintains a strong positive image in the Kansai as a tourism destination. Of the half million Japanese who visit Canada annually, many are