



## Celebrate Twin City Week, March 23 to 29

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – The City of Victoria is celebrating its four Twin City relationships during Twin City Week, March 23 to 29, 2009.

Victoria has four Twin Cities, each with a unique relationship. They are Napier, New Zealand; Suzhou, China; Morioka, Japan; and Khabarovsk, Russia.

In celebration of our Twin Cities, a new set of images, showcasing iconic architecture from each of the cities, will be installed in the staircase of Centennial Parkade. During Twin City Week the stylized images will grace the lobby of City Hall. In addition, in the coming months eight utility cabinets around town (hydro boxes, traffic signal control boxes, etc) will be installed with anti-graffiti wraps portraying the Twin City images.

Twin city relationships foster and promote global cooperation, cultural understanding and economic development. They are intended to promote wide-ranging interactions between people at all levels of society, and an environment through which communities will creatively learn, work and solve problems together. Twin City relationships allow municipalities to share ideas and offer better delivery of basic amenities, such as housing, recreation, land use, sewage and garbage disposal, water supply and public transportation.

Local citizens with an interest in a specific twin city have developed local volunteer associations for three of our four city relationships. They are involved in fund-raising, hosting and hospitality for visiting delegations. Local twin city associations are also involved in a variety of philanthropic projects. The Victoria-Morioka Friendship Society established the Dr. Nitobe Memorial Garden at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, and has enabled youth sport teams to travel between the two cities. The Victoria-Khabarovsk Association has used its trust relationships in Russia to facilitate adoptions with families from Victoria looking to adopt from Russia, and also raises funds for several orphanages in Khabarovsk.

For more information about the City of Victoria's Twin City relationships, visit [www.victoria.ca](http://www.victoria.ca) and click on 'What's New'.

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**BACKGROUND ATTACHED**

# CITY OF VICTORIA

## Backgrounder

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Victoria's Twin Cities:

### **Napier, New Zealand**

City Council adopted Napier, New Zealand as Victoria's first Twin City on March 18, 1973.

Napier is the largest crossbred wool center in the Southern Hemisphere and, in recent years it has gained an international reputation for high quality wines and as a vacation destination. With the largest port on the East Coast, Napier is the hub for all imports and exports for the region. Since a devastating earthquake in 1931, Napier has rebuilt with Art Deco and Spanish Mission designed buildings, becoming a heritage attraction known the world over.

### **Suzhou, China**

Suzhou was adopted by Victoria City Council on July 17, 1980. Chinese often call Suzhou a "Paradise on Earth" as well as the "Land of Fish and Rice". Located in the fertile lands of the lower Yangtze Valley, it is indeed a bountiful land, yielding rich harvests on the land and from fresh water aquaculture.

Throughout its long and colourful 2500 year history, our Twin City has maintained a reputation as a centre of education and culture. Recently it has become one of China's economic marvels with a dynamic economy based on electronics, technology, textiles and tourism.

The picturesque heart of Suzhou, typified by a series of ancient canals and bridges also contains a number of renowned classical Chinese gardens – evocative relics of a glorious past. The spectacular building boom resulting from the economic growth is directed in the areas outside the city core which preserves the ancient heritage of "Old Suzhou".

### **Morioka, Japan**

While Morioka is Victoria's third Twin City by the signing date of May 1985, it is perhaps the most active in number of two-way visits and in diversity in the types of exchanges. An ancient castle town, which the late 19th century, Morioka was the seat of the feudal Nambu lords. The city manages to retain its historical ambiance reflecting "old Japan" while preserving the pristine green nature that sees salmon spawning in the river that runs behind City Hall.

The original impetus to twinning of the cities developed after the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Dr. Nitobe, a widely respected Japanese diplomat and philosopher, who died in Victoria in 1933. Dr. Nitobe wished to serve as a bridge across the Pacific and it is in his spirit that the relationship is nurtured. He is highly revered in the town of his birth, Morioka, and throughout Japan. The signing of the Twin City agreement with Morioka marked the beginning of an intensive series of visits and exchanges, including numerous cultural and sporting exchanges, both official and private.

### **Khabarovsk, Russia**

In May of 1990, the City of Victoria welcomed her fourth Twin City, Khabarovsk, in the Russian Far East, fulfilling the hopes of an initiative and visits that began before 1988. At the time of twinning, Khabarovsk was part of the U.S.S.R. Now in the Russian Federation, the city maintains its international flavour and boasts numerous historically renovated buildings.

Khabarovsk has long been the focus for the Russian Far East. Located on the Trans Siberian Railway where it crosses the Amur River, rail and river transport formed its early importance, with air and road traffic developing more recently. It is also an administrative centre, with a defence establishment, manufacturing and timber extraction industries complementing fishing and agriculture. As in much of Russia there is a great tradition of the fine handicrafts, performance and visual arts.