

Japan suicides, depression cost economy \$33 billion

TOKYO—Suicides and depression cases in Japan last year cost the country \$33.6 billion Canadian when taking into account lost income and compensation claims, a government study showed on Tuesday.

Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the developed world despite efforts to reverse a rise after the 1980s economic bubble burst, leaving many out of work and in debt.

“Given that the number of suicides in Japan has been over 30,000 for 12 straight years, this is a problem that needs to be addressed by the entire nation,” a Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry official said.

“We hope this study triggers stronger prevention measures.”

Most recent suicides have been linked to debt, family problems, depression and other health issues.

The study showed that those who took their lives last year, between the ages of 15 and 69, would have earned \$23 billion had they worked until retirement.

It also showed that people suffering from depression would have earned \$1.35 billion more had they not taken leave from work. Additional costs came from unemployment benefits and social security payments.

There is no religious taboo against suicide in Japan, and until the 19th century it was a form of punishment or atonement for wrongdoing.

Japan, a country of about 127 million people, has one of the world's highest suicide rates, with 32,845 people killing themselves last year, the 12th year in a row in which the number was over 30,000.

Star wire services