

For Immediate Release



World Class Scale, 130m Wide and 20m High in Asahikawa, Japan!

Massive *TRANSFORMERS* Snow Sculpture



Asahikawa Winter Festival, Begins tomorrow: February 8-12, 2012!!

Tokyo, Japan, February 7, 2012: TOMY Company, Ltd. (President, Kantaro Tomiyama), proudly announces a collaborative effort with the 53rd Annual Asahikawa Winter Festival, being held Feb 8th through the 12^h. This year TOMY's *Transformers* characters, world renowned and loved first as toys and more recently brought to life as Hollywood cinema icons, will be the this year's theme for the giant snow sculpture which has become the hallmark of the festival. Admission to the festival is free of charge.



Asahikawa, the host city of the festival, boasts the record for Japan's coldest ever recorded temperature¹ and for the past 53 years the town has taken advantage of it's cold weather and made special use of the tremendous volumes of snow and ice which must be cleared from the local roadways, by sponsoring the creation of giant works of art from the otherwise wasted resource. This year's sculpture consists of 70,000 cubic meters of 100% snow and ice cleared from roads, and uses no other supporting structure. The outer surface is decorated with blocks of pure white snow.

The main motif of the giant snow sculpture is Optimus Prime, the most revered *Transformers* character, along with the JR Asahikawa New Station Building. The giant structure includes two long snow slides (approx. 100m each) and the total dimensions of the snow structure measure an incredible 130m wide (including the slides), 40m deep and 20m high. Visitors can go up to the "terrace" on top of the four-story high sculpture and feel the grandeur up-close. Above the terrace, near the frozen bust of Optimus Prime, are the 14m high snow slides which give visitors a thrill ride better than any park around.

The sculpture was designed by Kaoru Otani, a part-time lecturer at Tokai University, and was built with the construction and logistical support of approximately 240 members of the 2nd Division Ground Self-Defense Force, over the course of about one month.

Besides Optimus Prime, other *Transformers* characters can be found around the structure, some in the open and others, "in disguise," hidden in the icy decor. For example, the large central balcony (60m wide x 10m high x 20m deep) with a view of the festival is called "*Bumblebee Gate*" since it is designed with the motif of the popular

¹ A temperature of - 41.0 C was recorded on January 25, 1902 at the Kamikawa measurement station, now the Asahikawa local meteorological observatory.

Transformers character, Bumblebee. There is also a separate sculpture of Bumblebee carved out of a 3.5M block of snow.

Over the weekend of February 11th and 12th there will be a special contest where visitors can find and photograph hidden *Transformers* characters, with the first 200 to register their photos winning 450g samples of a famous brand of locally produced rice.² There will also be local food delicacies available at food booths at reasonable prices of ¥100 to ¥350, with *Transformers* branded prizes to be given away to early birds and in various drawings. Finally, at the rest lounge, there will be a temporary “*Transformers* Museum” recounting the history of *Transformers*, including a display of many *Transformers* toys from the early years up to a “first look” showing of the new toys and animation for the new series, *Cho-Robot Seimeitai Transformer: Prime*³ which launches in April in Japan.

“Robots in Disguise” has been catch phrase for *Transformers* from its inception, with seemingly ordinary cars and airplanes concealing the true robot identities, allowing the robots to “hide in plain site.” Seeing them transform into their actual robot form has been the key unique surprise and attraction of the brand. This collaboration of TOMY’s *Transformers* with the Asahikawa Winter Festival and its concept of “transforming” ordinary snow into something completely unique and “transforming” the cold and snow into fun is a wonderful pairing of artistic visions. Adding in the fun of hiding many of the *Transformers* characters in snow sculpture disguises brings the visitors a feeling of excitement and piques their dreams, very much in the same spirit of TOMY’s *Transformers* brand.

About *Transformers*

Transformers is Japanese-originated toy content, created by Takara Co., Ltd. (Now TOMY, a.k.a. K.K TAKARATOMY). The brand is built on the unique concept, “Robots in disguise,” which implies that robots could be all around us. The magnificent story of freely transforming sentient robots, battling across the universe adds to the adventure. The brand was launched by Hasbro in the U.S. in 1984 with Takara’s toys, an animated TV series and comics and became a huge hit. In 1985 the toys were reintroduced into Japan, along with the animated content to similar success. In 2007, renowned movie director, Steven Spielberg and Michael Bay produced the first in the live action *Transformers* Hollywood movie series. In 2011 *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* became the third in the mega-hit series. Today, *Transformers* are loved by two generations of fans in over 130 countries.

About the Asahikawa Winter festival

2012 Event Summary

Date: Sunday, August 21, 2011, 10:00-17:00

Venue: Heiwa-dori Street Shopping Park
Ishikari River, near the Asahibashi Bridge, Asahikawa-district, Hokkaido Prefecture
Access: 5-min walk from JR Kyoto Sta., Hachijyo Exit

Website: <http://www.city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp/files/kankou/awf/>

Schedule: Main events below. More details available on the website.

Wednesday, Feb	17:45-18:15	Opening ceremony
	19:00-19:15	Opening Show: A spectacular music, fireworks and laser light show with the giant snow sculpture as the backdrop.
Thur, Feb 9 – Sat. Feb 11	19:00-19:15	Fantasy Show with music and the light
Sunday, Feb 12	16:00	Grand finale
	19:00-19:15	Final Show: A beautiful winter fireworks display

History

The Asahikawa Winter Festival began in 1960, following in the footsteps of the successful Sapporo Snow Festival which began in 1950. The Asahikawa Snow festival now includes the renowned annual giant snow sculpture and its “Festival of Snow, Ice and Lights,” the Ice Sculpture World Championship and a variety of events that visitors can enjoy.

² The rice brand is called *Taisetsuzan MitesodattanO*. In Japanese, 「大雪山見て育ったの」

³ The Japanese title is 超ロボット生命体 トランスフォーマー プライム This animated series is known as “*Transformers: Prime*” in English

Photos from 2012 Asahikawa Winter festival



The snow sculpture under construction



Night time illumination

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