



PORTS-TO-PLAINS

TRADE CORRIDOR ALLIANCE



Securing the Benefits of Commerce to
North America's Energy & Agricultural Heartland

Alta. joins U.S. Plains trade corridor group

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By Staff

The Alberta government sees farmers gaining from joint efforts on transportation infrastructure, rural development and "collaborative advocacy" on ag and energy issues through a new U.S. interstate trade group.

The province on Tuesday officially became a member of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, an economic development coalition which includes nine U.S. states and aims to smooth trade between the three NAFTA countries.

The province said it has signed a one-year \$125,000 contract with the non-profit group that includes mayors, other elected officials, economic development officials, business and other opinion leaders in the economic development corridor between Texas and Alberta, spanning about 3,700 km.

Through the partnership, the province said, it expects to strengthen its trade relations with the nine coalition states, several of which it said "already rank among Alberta's top trading partners."

Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming are the coalition's other nine members.

"Additionally, the Alliance will enable Alberta to collaborate with other members to better address the challenges and opportunities common to all the communities in the Ports-to-Plains region, North America's energy and agricultural heartland," the province said.

The province said it also plans to "leverage the influence" of Ports-to-Plains to help convince both Washington and Ottawa of the need to have 24-hour port of entry access at the Wild Horse border crossing, about 140 km south of Medicine Hat.

"Border delays are a trade impediment," Premier Ed Stelmach said in a release Tuesday. "As Alberta becomes an even greater source of North American energy supply we must ensure that we have a steady flow of goods between our countries."

"Throughout the Ports-to-Plains region, our members share remarkably consistent concerns, values and priorities: rural development; the new energy economy; transportation and other infrastructure policies that ensure good connectivity between our farms and ranches, and our natural resources, and the urban consumer," said U.S. Rep. Randy Neugebauer, a Republican congressman from Texas and one of the coalition's founders, in the province's release.

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"It is gratifying to see our organization evolve in a way certain to make it one of the premier forums for North America's rural communities."

According to the coalition, its nine member states include about 38.5 million U.S. citizens and form a region producing much of the U.S. energy supply, over 40 per cent of U.S. ag goods, 14 percent of U.S. gross domestic product and 20 percent of U.S.-Canada-Mexico trade.

The membership announcement is the culmination of nearly two years of talks between the coalition's members, the province said.

"One quality of the rural folks who lead our Alliance is their readiness to work together in hard times, and to share in times of abundance," said coalition president Michael Reeves, a former vice-president of governmental affairs for the Lubbock (Texas) Chamber of Commerce, in the province's release.



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