

6. Strategy

systems and other navigational equipment, which is becoming important for long-haul trucking across jurisdictions with different regulatory requirements. Exporting companies face the need to invest in new equipment and staff to handle electronic data interchange and similar innovations which are increasingly necessary for international operations. Smaller firms, in particular, face difficult challenges in this transition.

The development of better export marketing and sales capability in Canadian firms is also an apparent need, so that the markets across the corridor can be effectively pursued. There are considerable differences in cultural backgrounds in the various gateway cities and distinct ways of doing business throughout the corridor, and a focus of marketing education should prepare Canadians to work more effectively in the various parts of the region, particularly in Mexico.

Federal Government Initiatives

To their credit, several Canadian government departments have initiated improvements in north-south trade. These include Revenue Canada's innovative use of a "single window" in some instances to coordinate the involvement of all government departments, such as Agriculture and Immigration, in cross-border movements. Revenue Canada also has active training programs, including sensitivity to aboriginal rights, to help employees work more effectively.

Transport Canada has been undertaking studies to identify corridor routes and freight movements, as well as the ways in which regulatory activities have an impact on corridor development. It also leads the Canadian delegation dealing with NAFTA's land transportation standards and motor carrier issues.

The federal government's International Trade Centre in Winnipeg offers a range of business development services, including export counselling and access to government programs, aimed at increasing the number of active exporters and diversifying their markets.

Broader Participation

It is important for the corridor to begin drawing more private sector participants into the shaping of its form and direction. This Task Force identified, in its first set of discussions, the need for the transportation system to be responsive to the initiatives of manufacturers and exporters, rather than vice versa. The corridor is to serve a purpose, and that purpose is economic and business development.

To help the corridor maintain its focus on trade and economic issues, as well as transportation infrastructure, there needs to be more direct involvement by exporters, manufacturers, and shippers to balance the interests of governments and transport carriers that tend to have more direct involvement in matters that are more strictly defined as transportation. This corridor and its gateways are more likely to succeed and prosper if they are driven by a combination of both the companies making use of the system and those in the transportation industry operating it.