

Leadership

It is important to recognize that this corridor is at an early and somewhat vulnerable stage of its development. So far, it has been relatively strong in theory but less so in practical implementation. The growing trade and traffic in the region is a tribute to the vision of several people across Canada, the United States and Mexico who saw the tremendous advantages that an integrated system could offer, and became directly involved as promoters or users of the corridor. But much can be done to create conditions in which the corridor can achieve greater economic results.

To its benefit, the corridor has had the dedicated support of influential political leaders in all three countries. Government officials across the corridor have established a series of essential connections that have been vital in underpinning the definition of the corridor and its role in the region's economy. Those political initiatives and intergovernmental efforts, such as those of the Manitoba/Winnipeg Corridor Partners Committee, must continue and the involvement of federal government officials should be encouraged.

The Manitoba government and Winnipeg community leaders have invested considerable resources to develop contacts and a strong information base about trade and transportation in the mid-continent region. They participate on behalf of this area in many of the organizations such as Red River Trade Corridor and North America's Super-highway Coalition. They have provided the fundamental groundwork in the initial phase of drawing together the interests of political leaders and government officials at many levels who are interested in the corridor.

Underlying Issues

In our review of the issues, the Task Force found some important matters that require attention if the corridor is to succeed in attaining its intended economic benefits. Not all of the elements are yet in place to enable Manitoba to take full advantage of the corridor.

One of these matters is the urgent shortage of skilled employees in key industry sectors, and the mismatch of skills and job requirements. For some key sectors, including manufacturing, the shortage of skilled workers currently limits the potential for exporting from Manitoba.

While the shortage of skilled workers is a public policy issue with broad implications for immigration and education, it is one which must be kept in mind as governments proceed with any measures to enable corridor development. A key to taking advantage of the corridor will be to ensure that the human resources and skills are in place, and that training adapts to the changes in industry that the corridor is bringing. Closer working relationships with industry should become a priority for universities, community colleges and other training institutions.

There are some particular skill sets for personnel working in corridor-related businesses that need to be developed. One of these is for drivers, dispatchers and others in the transportation sector, who need to become more computer-literate to deal with customs documents and reporting, and to handle new technologies such as global-positioning