

# Economic Development and Trade

## Importance of Alberta's Membership in Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor Alliance

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### Issue

Alberta's energy resources and agriculture sector make it an important part of the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor. Due to the economic benefits that flow from enhancing this vast North American trade region, it is critical that Alberta participate in the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor Alliance. Specific goals that can result from displaying leadership in the Alliance include expanding the Port of Wild Horse and developing the Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor.

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### Background

The Ports-to-Plains Alliance is a coalition of governments, communities, economic development regions and business leaders advocating for robust transportation infrastructure along a north-south trade corridor in order to promote economic security and prosperity throughout North America's energy and agricultural heartland, extending from Laredo, Texas to Fort McMurray.

The Province of Alberta and several regional economic development alliances in eastern Alberta – Palliser Economic Partnership, Lloydminster Economic Development Corporation, Battle River Alliance for Economic Development, Northeast Alberta Information HUB and Port Alberta– are members of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance.

A significant thrust of the regional economic development alliances has been in the development of an eastern Alberta trade corridor. The economic development groups represent over 100 eastern Alberta communities which share similarities in economies, agriculture and tourism. These communities are looking for opportunities for trade, partnerships and synergies that will complement, diversify and expand opportunities for the entire north-south corridor.

A key element for establishing a north-south trade corridor through "North America's agriculture and energy heartland" is the Wild Horse Port of Entry, located south of Medicine Hat at the Alberta-Montana border. The Ports-to-Plains Alliance encourages and advocates for the Canadian and American governments to expand their border facilities to provide 24-hour commercial and traveler services.

Alberta's main goals for participation in the Ports-to-Plains Alliance are to:

- i. Establish rural trade development opportunities, business and community growth;
- ii. Establish the Wild Horse Canada/U.S. border crossing as a 24-hour a day crossing;
- iii. Enhance awareness and business development, trade, investment, tourism, legislative advocacy, and partnerships between Alberta and United States communities.

The eastern Alberta regional economic development alliances' ambition to see the creation of a corridor from the U.S. border north to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, complements Alberta's three main goals, although some of the alliances' objectives go beyond those goals and focus on the corridor solely within a provincial context.

These objectives are the following:

- i. Marketing and expansion of the use of the corridor for:
  - a. Moving products within Alberta, as well as to and from the US
  - b. Serving Alberta and other Canadian and US tourists
  - c. Attracting investment for existing and new businesses.
- ii. Implementation of a plan for the corridor that will effectively support increased traffic volumes, as well as increased business activity and investment in both existing and new businesses in eastern Alberta
- iii. Sustaining the Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor in order to implement the corridor plan.
- iv. Defining initial activities for the corridor plan to be undertaken by the Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor. The main routes in the eastern Alberta corridor are Highways 41, 36 and 63, with links to the Edmonton-Calgary corridor to the west, as well as links east to Saskatchewan.

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**The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Alberta:**

1. Continue to endorse and support the Ports-to-Plains Alliance initiative and commit to an ongoing membership in the alliance.
2. Work with industry groups to collect data and advocate for an extended hour port of entry at Wild Horse to enhance the efficient and effective movement of goods through the corridor.
3. Officially support and recognize the Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor as an avenue to assist in commercial transport and growth in the Eastern part of the province.
4. Recognize the Ports-to-Plains Corridor as a transportation corridor supported by the Government of Alberta, including, but not limited to recognition on the government's website in Corridor Development.