



New North America Initiative

FAQ:

Why a New North America Initiative?

The name signals the approach and goal of the Initiative, which are to use new approaches to create a new vision of what North America can be. The name signals a break with past thinking and the nostalgia that dominates traditional approaches to North American engagement in Canada. Traditional thinking and approaches have led to missteps such as underestimating the likelihood of tariffs and overestimating of the importance of the historic relationship. These missteps and others have had a real cost to Canadians.

What is new about this Initiative?

The most significant difference with the Initiative is its bottom-up approach to building a vision for what North America can become. The Initiative will adapt the polling and focus group methodology used by the Carnegie Endowment's "Foreign Policy for the Middle Class Project" to build a vision for a New North America. This bottom-up approach differs from traditional elite-informed top-down approaches. That this work will focus upon and be done outside of national capitals is also new and important to enable a break from past traditional thinking and frameworks. In addition, the Initiative will bring voices from the New Left and New Right in the U.S. to Alberta to enable stakeholders to hear and interact firsthand with the thought leaders who are shaping and will shape public policy in the U.S. as it undergoes a process of generational change.

What practical work of immediate importance will be done?

In addition to the new approaches in policy development and experiential learning for students, the Initiative will engage in traditional research, issuing reports, convening and economic modelling to assist stakeholders to respond to immediate challenges from deterioration of relations with the U.S. The Initiative will facilitate activities and initiatives by stakeholders in Alberta to engage in the U.S. and facilitate U.S. interests to engage with Albertans. In addition, the Initiative will publish a monthly, Western-focused brief on North American affairs, containing concise analysis and forward-looking identification of issues important to stakeholders in Western North America.

Which institutions are part of the Initiative?

Researchers from different institutions will be involved in different aspects of the Initiative's work. Creating a new vision for North America will involve intensive collaboration with U.S. researchers. Responding to challenges in Alberta may involve less, if any, collaboration with U.S. institutions. Other work of the Initiative, such as training students or convening, will involve varying degrees of collaboration with different actors in Alberta, Canada and the U.S.

How does the Initiative differ from other cross-border organizations and Initiatives?

The Initiative's geographic focus on the Mountain and Southwest, and the prairies, or 'from the eastern slope to where the corn and wheat stop growing,' differs from smaller, regionally focused border initiatives and from larger groups focused on the Pacific Northwest.

Is the Initiative separate from other work being done in Canada?

The Initiative will support and cooperate with other North American work in Canada and the United States as needed. By increasing knowledge, capacity and understanding of North American issues in Alberta, the Initiative will enable a stronger, united Canadian approach to engagement with the U.S. The traditional Team Canada approach can only work if it is a team of equals. Other regions of Canada have separate regionally focused engagement organizations with U.S. counterparts to advance unique regional agendas. The Canadian Prairies are the only region in Canada that does not possess such an organizational framework. Although the Initiative is not a formally constituted organization like the Council of the Great Lakes or the Cascadia Corridor, it can nonetheless begin to fill the gap that the Canadian Prairies have compared to the rest of Canada.

Is Mexico part of the Initiative?

The Canada-U.S. relationship exists within the framework of a broader North American institutional architecture, e.g., the CUSMA agreement. As such, Mexico will be involved, as dictated by the research, the sector, and the issue involved, not by a predetermination to insert all three countries into every issue regardless of fit or lack thereof. This is a break with the past, top-down North America work, where the trilateral context was taken and imposed as a given.

Will the Initiative expand to include the other Prairie provinces?

The Initiative is open to and welcomes participation and support from other provinces and U.S. states. The Initiative is starting in Alberta due to the greater number of researchers working on the full range of broader public policy elements of U.S.-Canada and North American relations, and the support from the Alberta Government.

Will the Initiative focus only on Prairie and Western issues?

The Initiative will contribute to national and hemispheric debates and work as needed and invited with others across Canada, the U.S. and Mexico to develop solutions to issues in Canada-U.S. and North American relations. The focus on the Prairies and Mountain West provides a basis upon which to contribute research, build understanding and develop solutions for problems tackled through work with others.