

# BEST FRIENDS

Alliances across borders in the Pacific  
Northwest

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# Key Points

- Cross-border cooperation in the Pacific Northwest is a role model for other regions in North America and other parts of the world
- Cross-border regional cooperation is yielding tangible results – increasing clout and visibility for regional priorities
- Targeted investment in the region's social capital could significantly increase innovation, wealth and security

# What's special about regional cooperation in the Pacific Northwest?

- Strategic location
- Sustainability
- Structure

# Strategic location

- Gateway between North America and the Asia Pacific region
- Cross-border region bridging two major developed countries (Canada and the United States)
- A core hub (Vancouver-Seattle corridor), linked to high-growth nodes (Calgary, Edmonton, Boise, Portland, Victoria)

# Sustainability

- Focus on economic growth and environmental quality
- Natural resources and high technology/services
- Activists and corporate commitment
- Informed citizens and government resources
- Showcases
  - GLOBE conferences
  - 2010 Winter Olympics

# Structure

- ‘Neural network’ (regional organizations)
  - Pacific North West Economic Region (PNWER)
  - Pacific North West Environmental Directors (PNWED)
  - Pacific North West Regional Economic Conference (PNWREC)
  - Cascadia Mayors’ Conference
- ‘Bones’ (formal cooperation agreements)
  - Bilateral agreements between Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia and Montana
  - Multilateral agreements on firefighting and emergency management
- ‘Muscles’ (sector-specific working groups and issue-specific coalitions)
  - BC/WA Environmental Cooperation Council
  - BC/WA Working Group on border documents
  - BESTT Coalition

# What are the benefits of regional cooperation?

- Increasing prosperity through regulatory cooperation and promoting cross-border trade and investment
- Active role in resolving border issues and trade conflicts
- Enhancing North America's global competitiveness

# Increasing prosperity

- Regulatory cooperation
  - Mutual recognition of professional credentials (e.g. engineers)
  - Trade, investment and labour mobility agreements (e.g. BC-AB TILMA)
  - Increasing regional input to North American Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)
- Promoting cross-border trade and investment
  - Raising profile of Canadian business sectors for investment (e.g. energy, high technology)
  - 2010 Olympics business and procurement opportunities
  - Maintaining and increasing cross-border tourism



# Resolving conflicts

- Participating in regional dialogue has enabled legislators and private sector leaders to:
  - Build trust through regular interaction
  - Understand each other's perspective
  - Strengthen personal ties
  - Let go of suspicion and defensiveness
  - Identify common interests
  - Assess cost/benefits of cooperating (or not)
  - Find solutions
  - Contribute regional perspective to national dialogue
  - Revitalize institutions

# Conflict: Major regional contributions

- Trade disputes
  - Softwood lumber
  - Cattle exports/BSE
- Border security
  - Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (BESTT advocacy)
  - BC-Washington Enhanced Drivers' License pilot project
  - NEXUS uptake
- Transboundary environmental issues
  - Water (Columbia, St Mary/Milk, Flathead)
  - Victoria sewage

# Global competitiveness: Context

- Shift of gravity towards the Asia Pacific region
  - High economic growth in China, India, South East Asia
  - Resurgence of Japanese economy
- New information and communication technologies ('flattening the world')
- Global competition for creative talent

# How can regional cooperation in the Pacific Northwest enhance North America's global competitiveness?

- Increased innovation and wealth creation
- Stronger capacity to respond and recover from emerging challenges
- Renewing and enhancing existing social capital

# Innovation and wealth creation

- ‘Clusters’ lead to higher levels of efficiency, innovation and business start-ups
- Advantage of federal structure: states and provinces as laboratories of public policy innovation and competitiveness
- Canada and the U.S. are complementary (similar and yet different enough to encourage business cross-fertilization and tourism)
- Attracting creative people – key asset in new economy

# Capacity to respond and recover

- Increased information and resource sharing on public health issues (e.g. pandemic preparedness)
- More ability to influence national decision-making on border closure in time of crisis
- Networks are ‘adaptive systems’ generating solutions for local issues and complex global challenges (e.g. climate change)

# Renewing social capital

- “Creative people choose *regions*.” (Richard Florida)
- Magnets for movement: economic opportunities and quality of life
- Creative class attracted to locations with high levels of visible diversity and reputation for tolerance (such as Seattle, Vancouver and other Pacific Northwest locations)
- Proximity to Asia Pacific region and large diaspora communities is a major asset in an increasingly globalized networked world

# The case for increased regional cooperation

- Regional cooperation is reaching a tipping point that can yield significantly higher results with targeted investment
- Measures:
  - Expected economic gains from BC-Alberta trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, and similar discussions between BC and Washington
  - Recognition of PNWER and BESTT coalition in Ottawa and Washington DC as respected voices on border security, critical infrastructure protection and energy issues
  - Increased interest by major corporations (e.g. Microsoft, Trans-Canada) in regional cooperation
  - Cooperative resolution of transboundary environmental conflicts (e.g. Victoria sewage, Flathead)
  - Other global regions want to connect with Pacific Northwest (e.g. Hong Kong/Guangdong, Rotterdam and Dubai)



# What is needed: targeted investment in regional social capital

- Need to increase public awareness and support for regional initiatives
  - Lesson from public disconnect with European integration
- Strengthening infrastructure for cooperative efforts
- Increased synergy through connecting regional groups
- Use 2010 to showcase the region to the world

# Strategic investments

- Increased media exposure for regional champions (elected officials, business leaders and opinion-makers)
- More interactive venues (town halls, new media sites) on topics of regional concern (e.g. border, sustainability)
- Support for third party validators (e.g. cross-border thinktanks, academic policy institutes) to enhance credibility of key regional messages
- ‘Thicker’ networks – greater engagement between regional groups (e.g. enhanced linkages between PNWER and Cascadia Mayors Conference)
- Wider engagement with high profile constituencies (e.g. First Nations, environmental groups)