



THE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY



THE NORTH AMERICAN PROCESS: STEPS TOWARD STRONGER PARTNERSHIP

A WORKING SYMPOSIUM

MARCH 30-31, 2016
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The third iteration of the North American Process symposium was held March 30–31, 2016 in Phoenix, Arizona. Business leaders, government officials and academic experts from Canada, Mexico and the United States discussed and developed practical proposals to increase North American economic integration and competitiveness.

The conference addressed the theme of how to create a trilateral process that would help bridge the gap between government and business to ensure that practical collaboration moves forward among all three countries. More specifically, the discussants analyzed opportunities and strategies for greater efficiencies and closer collaboration in North America’s energy sector, transportation infrastructure and supply-chain dynamics.

Several themes were highlighted during the course of the day. Participants agreed on the need for new ways to push trilateral initiatives forward, with the suggestion that North America will benefit from more functional and results-oriented mechanisms. In the process, several opinions on what options might bring better results were offered. Most discussants agreed that business is far ahead of government in terms of practical integration and that all levels of government — national, state and local — must catch up. In fact, it was recommended that best practices from the business sector be analyzed and utilized much more frequently across all three countries and that a mechanism for closer co-ordination between the private sector and government be established. Fundamentally, senior political leaders from all three countries need to support the private sector in achieving a more efficient, resourceful and competitive North America. Also advanced during discussions was the concept of moving beyond the idea of free trade to that of a North America that acts and operates as a trading and negotiating bloc. Although it was argued that NAFTA is “dull, unpopular and difficult,” North American economic momentum remains strong and NAFTA’s potential is huge, provided that the functional elements of the agreement are fully implemented and updated as needed.

Unique to the 2016 symposium, all attendees moved beyond “talking” to drafting concrete and realistic recommendations of ways to advance the North American vision. Working groups focused on three sectors: North American energy, both electricity and fossil fuels; North American transportation infrastructure, specifically road and rail; and North American supply-chain security. Recommendations generated from the brainstorming sessions include the need for all three countries to examine ways to better co-ordinate and standardize utilities regulations; the trilateral establishment of best practices in fossil fuel extraction; utilizing P3s (public-private partnerships) to build North American infrastructure; and the streamlining and harmonization of customs forms as well as border-crossing modernization and facilitation.

The dialogue and discussions at the symposium validated the need for this forum and its continuity, both as an academic consortium and as a catalyst toward the creation of a trilateral academic institution focused on addressing key issues requiring attention and action. This symposium further highlighted the role of universities, such as those in this partnership, as important catalysts for convening stakeholders from government, industry, the non-profit sector and civil society to discuss the most important challenges facing North America.

With that goal in mind, the three-way academic partnership of Universidad Anáhuac, the University of Calgary’s School of Public Policy and Arizona State University will continue to expand its efforts in advancing the North American process to strengthen regional relations and North American competitiveness. The next North American Process symposium will take place in the fall of 2017. Please watch the website at: www.northamericanprocess.org.