

Development Cooperation and Multilateralism

The Alberta Experience

By **Chris Kukucha**, Assistant Professor, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Alberta's international relations are extensive. The province has a series of international offices, sends delegations to foreign trade negotiations, lobby's Washington on economic issues, signs Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with American states, and promotes a "Made in Alberta" approach to climate change. For the most part, Alberta's interest in foreign affairs is due to economic objectives. For decades, Alberta has aggressively pursued new export markets and protected provincial interests in the negotiation and implementation of international trade agreements. Lingering perceptions of alienation within Canadian federalism, however, also drive provincial initiatives. Alberta regularly accuses the federal government of neglecting its priorities, thereby creating a need for an active and visible international presence. In contrast, Quebec has historically used its external relations as a means of protecting the province's distinct culture and language, often in conjunction with a broader separatist agenda. As a result, Alberta has not pursued official status in international institutions, with the exception of calls for formal provincial representation in international trade negotiations. A relatively new area of interest for the province, however, is international development. In the past two decades, Alberta has participated in projects focusing on public sector reform, teacher training, agriculture, the oil and gas sector. Recent initiatives have also stressed governance issues related to transparency, accountability, and gender discrimination. It is important, however, to keep these efforts in perspective, especially in comparison with Alberta's other international priorities. The province does not directly solicit funding for these projects, and instead responds to requests for participation from the federal government and other successful applicants in the private sector. Alberta also faces challenges related to bureaucratic capacity and tends to focus its involvement on study tours and exchanges for professionals in other countries. Although many of these projects fall under areas of provincial jurisdiction, and have potential economic benefits, it is also clear that Alberta is not interested in becoming an advocate of provincial rights in this policy area. Furthermore, perceptions of marginalization within Canadian federalism are not driving Alberta's involvement in these development programs.

Canadian Provinces and International Relations: Alberta/Quebec Distinctions

In order to understand Alberta's role in international development it is first necessary to outline the historic foreign activity of Canadian provinces. Unlike other federal states, there are no clearly defined constitutional guidelines regarding provincial international relations. In fact, the only explicit reference to foreign affairs in the 1867 British North America Act (BNA) is section 132, which grants the Dominion the authority to

implement treaties negotiated by Great Britain. Over time, however, Canada secured an increasing level of autonomy over its international relations. In the process, it also became clear that many of these initiatives had implications for provincial areas of jurisdiction. For the most part, provincial legitimacy in this policy area was clarified by judicial interpretation of the BNA Act's treaty-making power, trade and commerce power, and its Peace, Order and Good Government (POGG) clause. In the 1937 *Labour Conventions* decision, for example, the United Kingdom's Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) ruled that Ottawa had the power to *negotiate* international treaties but did not have the right to *implement* agreements in areas of provincial jurisdiction. Although the federal government controls trade and commerce under Section 91(2) of the BNA Act, the Supreme Court of Canada has also noted that these issues "must be determined on a careful case-by-case basis" as provinces have jurisdiction over property and civil rights, which includes legal contracts through which international trade is conducted.¹ Decisions by the Supreme Court focusing on POGG, including *Crown Zellerbach* (1988), *Friends of the Oldman River Society* (1992) and *Canada v. Hydro Quebec* (1997), have also cited a need for federal-provincial balance in this policy area. As a result, there is a level of constitutional ambiguity that grants Canadian provinces international legitimacy, especially in terms of foreign trade and environmental policy.² Historically, the province of Quebec most actively sought a prominent role in the international community. These initiatives were designed to highlight the province's cultural and linguistic differences and were primarily focused on other francophone countries.³ Initially, Quebec's efforts were limited to a series of foreign offices. In 1882 the province appointed an agent-general in Paris and in 1911 Quebec opened a "commercial" office in Britain, followed by a provincial posting in Brussels in 1915. Although these offices were subsequently closed the provincial government re-established its presence in Paris by the 1960s. In 1965 Quebec also negotiated its first formal international agreement, an educational exchange with France. Provincial objectives were further clarified in the 1965 Gérin-Lajoie doctrine, which argued that Quebec had the right to pursue international objectives consistent with its cultural identity

¹ Robert G. Richards, "The Canadian Constitution and International Economic Relations," in *Canadian Federalism: Meeting Global Economic Challenges?* eds., Douglas M. Brown and Murray G. Smith (Kingston: Queen's University Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1991), 58-59.

² Ian Robinson, "The NAFTA, the Side Deals, and Canadian Federalism: Constitutional Reform by Other Means," in *Canada: The State of the Federation 1993*, eds. Ronald L. Watts and Douglas M. Brown (Kingston: Queen's University Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1993), 214; Gerald Baier, "Judicial Review and Canadian Federalism," in *Canadian Federalism: Performance, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy*, eds. Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27; Peter W. Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada: 1998 Student Edition* (Scarborough: Carswell, 1998), 417; and Christopher J. Kukucha, "From Kyoto to the WTO: Evaluating the Constitutional Legitimacy of the Provinces in Canadian Foreign Trade and Environmental Policy," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 1 (March 2005): 129-152.

³ Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1985), 199-200.

or in constitutionally defined areas of jurisdiction. In February 1968 Gabon, with the encouragement of the French government, directly extended an invitation to Quebec for an international education conference. The following year, Canada was represented by a joint-delegation at francophone conferences in Congo due to a cooperative agreement between Ottawa and Jean-Jacques Bertrand's provincial government. A similar framework was used to allow a federal-provincial delegation to attend a subsequent meeting in Niger.⁴

By the mid-1970s, Alberta was beginning to demonstrate an interest in foreign affairs. The province was especially concerned with export promotion and the fact that several areas of provincial jurisdiction were being negotiated during the Tokyo Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). As a result, Alberta began to expand its bureaucracy to pursue foreign markets, especially in the oil and gas sector, and pushed Ottawa to improve federal-provincial consultation in matters of international trade. In Quebec, however, René Lévesque's Parti Québécois (PQ) separatist government began using foreign policy as a means of generating support for a proposed referendum on Quebec independence. Specifically, the PQ sought diplomatic immunity for its foreign representatives, made statements on human rights issues, such as South African apartheid, and considered an independent defense policy for a sovereign Quebec, including its potential withdrawal from both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Aerospace Command (NORAD).⁵ By the 1980s, however, Quebec's foreign ambitions began to fade, primarily due to the PQ's defeat in the 1980 separatist referendum and a loss of support from the French government. The arrival of Brian Mulroney as prime minister in September 1984, the resignation of Lévesque in October 1985, and the PQ's subsequent defeat in provincial elections the following month, also created a shift in federal-provincial relations. Instead of independence, Quebec returned to the priorities of Gérin-Lajoie, which was reflected in an agreement between Mulroney and the new Liberal government of Robert Bourassa that granted both Quebec and New Brunswick formal representation at the first la Francophonie summit in Paris.⁶

In contrast, Alberta continued to focus on trade promotion and the negotiation and implementation of international trade agreements. It was also during this period that Alberta's sense of alienation within Canadian federalism intensified. Alberta believed the federal government failed to represent provincial interests in both domestic and foreign policy. This was reinforced by Ottawa's decision to implement the National Energy Program (NEP) in 1980. As a result, Alberta became a vocal defender of provincial rights during the next two decades. The return of the PQ government in Quebec in 1994, however, ensured a return to the province's previous approach to international relations. Jacques Parizeau fought proposed la Francophonie reforms that had the potential to weaken Quebec's status in the organization prior to the Marrakech

⁴ Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 3rd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1997), 326; and Louis Bélanger, "The Domestic Politics of Quebec's Quest for External Distinctiveness," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 200.

⁵ Stéphane Roussel and Charles-Alexandre Théorêt, "A 'Distinct Strategy'? The Use of Canadian Strategic Culture by the Sovereigntist Movement in Quebec, 1968-1996," *International Journal* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 564.

⁶ Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 3rd ed., 204-205.

Ministerial Conference in 1996. Quebec was also able to expand its standing in la Francophonie at the 1999 summit in Moncton, New Brunswick, to include all ministerial meetings.⁷ Support for Quebec separatism and the province's foreign policy agenda was further bolstered by the success of the Bloc Québécois (BQ) in the 1993 federal election. In fact, in an address to the United Nations in March 1994, Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the BQ, made it clear that separatism was once again at the forefront of Quebec's political agenda. Bouchard continued to embrace issues of sovereignty and international legitimacy after he became premier of Quebec in 1996. Under the current Liberal government of Jean Charest, however, Quebec has returned to its historic Gérin-Lajoie agenda. The province continues to sponsor a series of provincial offices, has called for formal provincial participation in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, and in 2006 negotiated a formal role for itself in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Canada's current prime minister, Stephen Harper, has also openly supported greater autonomy for Canadian provinces in a series of policy areas, including international affairs.

In recent years, Quebec has also placed a greater emphasis on international development initiatives. Specifically, the province has developed an *International Solidarity Program* that targets social issues in Francophone developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. In most cases the province's Ministère des Relations Internationales (MRI) works with provincial private sector organizations and non-governmental groups that are members of the Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI). One area of the solidarity initiative is the *Quebec Without Borders* program, which was created in 1995 to sponsor the participation of Quebec citizens between the ages of 18 and 39 in international development projects. The province's *Public Awareness Program on Development and International Solidarity Issues* also promotes dialogue and citizen engagement on a wide range of international issues. The *Quebec International Development Program* (PQDI), however, works more specifically with international cooperation agencies, such as la Francophonie and UNESCO, and focuses specifically on issues of education, food safety, and health in relation to democracy, the environment, and human rights. For the most part, funding for these projects comes from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) or international organizations, although one per cent of Lotto Quebec net profits are targeted for these programs.⁸ A specific example of Quebec's interest in development was the November 2007 Tripartite Agreement between the governments of Canada, Québec and Haiti. This MOU, which focused on the reform of Haiti's public service, pledged \$5 million in federal funding, with an additional \$1.5 million from the Quebec government in the form of "salaries of the government department and agency employees" engaged in related governance initiatives.⁹

⁷ Bélanger, "The Domestic Politics of Quebec's Quest for External Distinctiveness," 202.

⁸ Quebec Ministère des Relations Internationales, *International Solidarity*, http://www.mri.gouv.qc.ca/en/solidarite_internationale/index.asp (30 September 2008).

⁹ Quebec Ministère des Relations Internationales, *Support for Governance in the Republic of Haiti - Signing of Tripartite Agreement Between the Governments of Canada, Québec and Haiti*, http://www.mri.gouv.qc.ca/en/informer/salle_de_presse/communiqués/textes/2007/2007_11_07.asp (30 September 2008).

Alienation, Provincial Rights, and Alberta's Role in International Development

Many observers viewed the recent election of Harper, a native Albertan, as a shift in the province's fortunes. In fact, several commentators have suggested that Harper, and an expanded Alberta presence in the federal cabinet, represented a "turning point" in federal-provincial relations. Others, such as Harold Jansen, were less optimistic. As Jansen pointed out, "it was under the Mulroney government with 21 MPs from Alberta that the Reform Party formed, and so I don't think that just because there is solid Alberta representation in the government caucus that we can write the obituary for western alienation,"¹⁰ In fact, themes of alienation continue to resonate in Alberta's political culture. This has created a style of provincial politics that highlights the need for officials to establish "anti-Ottawa" positions. The new premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach has repeatedly prioritized Alberta's interests in his dealings with the federal government. Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Guy Boutlier, went a step further in stating that Alberta was one "of the bad boys of Confederation."¹¹

Alberta's sense of persistent alienation, however, has little to do with the economic position of the province. In fact, the provincial economy has expanded at a rapid rate, outpacing much of the rest of the country. During the past decade, Alberta's exports of goods and services have tripled, reaching \$87.8 billion. The province also has the highest rate of growth in Canada at 4.3 per cent.¹² The source of this economic growth is the private sector, especially in the oil and gas sector, with corporations such as EnCana adding to record profits. Unfortunately, this economic growth has come with significant environmental costs, with a 51 per cent increase in CO2 emissions between 1990 and 2004. There are also concerns regarding the long-term viability of the Alberta economy due to labour shortages, aging infrastructure, inflation, and rapidly increasing costs of housing. Therefore, it is not surprising that Alberta continues to focus the majority of its foreign activity on economic initiatives. In terms of trade promotion, Alberta has foreign offices in a wide range of cities, usually as part of Canadian consulates, including Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Mexico City and European postings in London and Munich. In matters of trade policy, Alberta continues to push for a formal role in the negotiation of international trade agreements. Alberta's influence is also evident in its impact on Canada's trade policy, and the final legal text of these agreements, especially in terms of energy, agriculture, and services.¹³ Finally, the province has long opposed the Kyoto Protocol and instead promotes a "made in Alberta" solution, which would reduce the rate of growth, rather than the actual level of

¹⁰ Dawn Walton, "Albertans Harboring List of Great Expectations; Even with a PM from a Calgary Riding, 'Tory Glory' May Not Bring Hoped-for Clout," *Globe and Mail*, 24 January, 2006: A20.

¹¹ Jason Fekete. "Alberta Won't Shy Away from a Scrap: 'Bad Boys of Confederation' Are Prepared to Ruffle Feathers, Boutlier Says," *Edmonton Journal*, 6 January, 2007, A14.

¹² Christopher J. Kukucha and Tom Keating, "Of 'Bad Boys' and 'Spoiled Brats': Alberta in Canadian Foreign Policy" in *Canada Among Nations 2007: Room to Manoeuvre*, eds. Jean Daudelin and Daniel Schwanen (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

¹³ Christopher J. Kukucha, *The Provinces and Canadian Foreign Trade Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

greenhouse gases being emitted. Partly in response to this pressure, the Harper government “removed” Canada from its Kyoto commitments, which were ratified during the previous Liberal government of Jean Chrétien.

In contrast, issues of alienation and provincial rights did not drive Alberta’s initial role in international development. In fact, Alberta’s participation in two development projects with Russia in the 1990s was part of larger federal programs run by CIDA. The first, the *Yeltsin Democracy Fellowship Program*, was established following President Boris Yeltsin’s visit to Canada in June of 1992. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of western capitalist states were interested in promoting democratic reforms in Russia. The purpose of this Canadian program was to “assist Russian central and regional governments, private sector mid-level managers and senior decision-makers in the development of public and private sector management skills and mechanisms.”¹⁴ The two-year *Russia-Canada Collaborative Federalism Project*, which started in 1994 with a \$2.7 million budget, had similar objectives. In both cases, however, Alberta was participating in response to CIDA requests. CIDA also secured the funding and organized the overall project. In the case of the *Yeltsin Democracy* program, Alberta arranged a series of study-tours for Russian officials with members of the provincial government and representatives of the province’s private sector. The *Collaborative Federalism Project*, also included issue-specific exchanges focusing on natural resources, fiscal relations, international relations, the environment, and structures and practices of Canadian federalism.¹⁵

When the federal Russia programs were conducted, Alberta did not have a formal International Governance Office (IGO). Instead, responsibility for these projects rested with a small number of officials in the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations (MIIR). This ministry, which became the Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations/Aboriginal Relations ministry (IIAR) in 2006 and is now International and Intergovernmental Relations (IIR), reflected Alberta’s long-term interest in international affairs, especially international trade. In fact, MIIR’s primary focus continued to be trade promotion and the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. In this regard, provincial officials were motivated to participate in the Russian programs due to potential market opportunities in the Russian oil and gas sector.

It is also important to note that other branches of the Alberta government were responsible for monitoring potential international opportunities during this period. Specifically, the International Financial Institutions (IFI) branch, at that time located in Alberta Economic Development, was responsible for reviewing investment and export opportunities for the province’s private sector in programs sponsored by institutions such as the World Bank. In the early post-Cold War period IFI noted a shift in the funding criteria for these international projects. In the past, most foreign aid concentrated on

¹⁴ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Yeltsin Democracy Fellowship Program*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/637.cfm> (7 September 2008).

¹⁵ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Russia-Canada Collaborative Federalism Project (1994-96)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/599.cfm> (7 September 2008).

infrastructure, and for Alberta this meant opportunities in construction, engineering, and the oil and gas industry. In the late 1990s, however, governance initiatives became significantly more important, and IFI began to stress Alberta's expertise in areas such as royalty structures, land tenures, and management opportunities. Although the Russian programs were not IFI initiatives, it does reflect a shift in thinking that was also present in CIDA. To be successful in securing international funding CIDA now had to address governance considerations. In areas of federalism, and especially in programs focusing on provincial areas of jurisdiction in Canada, such as natural resources and education, it would require the participation and expertise of the provinces. Alberta's historic interest in international affairs, and the bureaucratic presence of MIIR and IFI, made the province an obvious partner for CIDA.¹⁶

International development opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa also prioritized governance objectives. In 1993, CIDA funded a program designed to build capacity in South African provinces in order to improve the delivery of government services. To achieve this goal, CIDA encouraged Canadian provinces to twin with sub-federal governments in South Africa.¹⁷ Alberta, one of six provincial governments to participate in the *Canada-South Africa Provincial Twinning Project*, was partnered with the Province of Mpumalanga in 1996. For the most part, Alberta's involvement was again limited to professional exchanges focusing on issues such as economic development, financial management, communications, and legislative operations. In June 2000, CIDA provided \$3.2 million for Phase II of the program and Alberta renewed its twinning agreement with Mpumalanga in 2002. During the four years of Phase II, Alberta worked with officials from the South African province on communications and media planning, accounting practices, budget management, and small enterprise assistance.¹⁸ Although Phase II ended in 2004, Alberta has extended its twinning arrangement with Mpumalanga until 2010. In this case, however, South Africa, and to a lesser degree CIDA, provide funding for ongoing exchanges. Recent bilateral initiatives have also focused on the delivery of social programs related to women, children, and people with disabilities.¹⁹

Prior to Phase II of the *Provincial Twinning Project*, CIDA also secured funding to assist South Africa in the re-organization of its education system. The goal of the *South Africa Teacher Development Project* was to support the central government's National Department of Education in improving teaching skills and knowledge in specific issue areas in the provinces of Gauteng, Free State, and Mpumalanga. In this case, Alberta's Department of Education worked with CIDA and facilitated the involvement of the

¹⁶ Personal interview, 29 August 2008. The provincial officials interviewed for this project spoke on the condition of anonymity with the understanding there would be no direct quotations without permission. Future references will cite only the date of these meetings. Locations are excluded, given the small number of bureaucrats working in this policy area (to best ensure confidentiality).

¹⁷ Alberta also has twinning agreements with 14 different partners throughout the world, including Mexico, Japan, and South Korea.

¹⁸ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Canada-South Africa Provincial Twinning Project*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/639.cfm> (7 September 2008).

¹⁹ Personal interview, 29 August 2008.

University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. Public school boards, and other relevant stakeholder groups also provided specific technical expertise. Once again, the *South Africa Teacher Development Project* highlights the province's willingness to engage CIDA governance projects not directly tied to economic development. It also reinforces Ottawa's need for provincial expertise when these programs focus on areas of sub-federal jurisdiction.²⁰

A similar pattern of activity is evident with Alberta's involvement in development projects in China. In 1999 CIDA initiated the People's Republic of China, *Public Sector Reform Program* (PSRP). The four year \$3.6 million project had a wide mandate and focused on improving government transparency, service capacity, and consensus-based decision-making. The program provided training for senior public officials and included principles of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and democratic development. The goal of the PSRP was to match Canadian expertise with Chinese needs in specific sub-projects, focusing on agricultural training, livestock waste-management, fiscal reform, WTO preparedness, and central-local relations reform in China. Alberta's role in the PSRP was in the area of central-local relations. MIIR and its new International Governance Office, founded in 2000, managed the cross-Canada exchange and study program, and facilitated the participation of provincial members of the public service. For the most part, these workshops and seminars emphasized fiscal and financial relations within Canadian federalism.²¹ The *Basic Education in Western China Project*, was a subsequent CIDA program in 2001. This five year \$11.8 million project was designed to improve the quality of education in poor western provinces of China. The primary Alberta participants were Alberta Learning, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and Athabasca University. In this case, IGO was responsible for coordinating the activity of consortium members in the province.²²

In addition to China, Alberta also participated in a number of development projects in the Ukraine. The first was the *Canada-Ukraine Legislative Cooperation Project* (CULEG). In 1997 CIDA funded a three-year program to advise senior officials from Ukraine on legislative and technical issues related to oil and gas regulatory systems, fiscal matters, and land registration. In terms of Alberta, CULEG engaged members of the provincial public service and the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies at the University of

²⁰ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *South Africa Teacher Development Project*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/640.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²¹ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *China Public Sector Reform Project*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/635.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²² Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Basic Education in Western China Project*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/634.cfm> (7 September 2008).

Alberta.²³ The *Canada-Ukraine Legislative and Intergovernmental Project* (CULIP) was an extension of CULEG and focused on political and market reforms in the Ukraine. This \$2.75 million CIDA initiative was also supported by the Parliament of Canada, the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine, the Institute for Ukrainian Studies, the Association of Ukrainian Cities, and the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan. The six modules delivered by Alberta explored legislative and policy options regarding mass media and national culture, the banking sector, fiscal federalism, land regulation, patient rights and public health, and improving citizen participation in government.²⁴ Finally, in 2003 CIDA funded the *Facility for Agricultural Reform and Modernization* (FARM) project. This five-year \$6 million initiative was designed to improve agricultural production in Ukraine by providing policy advice to universities and national, oblast, and local levels of government. As with previous programs, there was also an emphasis on improving access for societal groups in the decision-making process. In FARM, Alberta's IGO and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, worked with a wide range of participants from Ukraine, as well as the Canadian federal government and the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.²⁵

IGO involvement in other CIDA funded projects has engaged a slightly more eclectic range of participants and programs. In 2001, Alberta was asked to participate in the *Canada-Malawi Government Assistance Project* (GAP). This five year \$4.8 million CIDA effort provided technical support to the Malawian public sector in terms of health, education, gender equality, and water management. For GAP, IGO facilitated study tours and exchanges for visiting delegations from Malawi and coordinated the involvement of various Alberta ministries.²⁶ CIDA's 2003 *Canada-Russia Governance Advisory and Exchange Program* (GAEP) focused on a number of similar themes with an emphasis on improved democratic institutions and an open market-based economy. For this five-year \$7 million project IGO organized a cross-Canada study tour in 2003.²⁷ The *Vietnam Judicial Development and Grassroots Engagement* (JUDGE) program, on the other hand,

²³ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Canada-Ukraine Legislative Cooperation Project (CULEG)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/643.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²⁴ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Canada-Ukraine Legislative and Intergovernmental Project*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/642.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²⁵ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Facility for Agricultural Reform & Modernization (FARM)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/641.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²⁶ Agriteam Canada, Lilongwe, Malawi, *Canada-Malawi Government Assistance Project: January 2001-March 2009*, <http://www.agriteam.ca/index.php/projects/archive/category/sub-saharan-africa/> (7 September 2008); and Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Malawi Government Assistance Project (GAP)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/644.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²⁷ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Governance Advisory & Exchange Program (GAEP)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/636.cfm> (7 September 2008).

focused on improved training for justice officials, procedural reform, and improved access for non-governmental groups. In this case, IGO organized the participation of the University of Alberta, the province's Attorney General office, and Alberta Justice.²⁸

Alberta's International Governance Office – Challenges and Opportunities

Alberta's IGO was created to coordinate the province's role in international development initiatives. This was in response to increasing requests for provincial participation during the 1990s. Initially, IGO continued the work of previous MIIR officials in coordinating the involvement of government officials, provincial universities, and the private sector for specific CIDA programs. IGO also became the clear contact point for other groups seeking a provincial role in already funded initiatives, or in grant applications seeking funding in this policy area. In its early years IGO also encouraged provincial business interests to pursue international contracts that ranged beyond development assistance. Specifically, IGO monitored the MERX Canadian Public Tenders system and provided e-mail updates to Alberta companies. For the most part, MERX focuses on government procurement opportunities available in Canada. It averages 1500 new postings a day from federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as school boards, universities and hospitals. MERX, however, also posts a number of procurement requests from international sources.²⁹ IGO would not formally bid on these projects, but would offer its services to assist in targeting public and private partners for specific applications. Today, however, IGO no longer provides this service. According to one provincial official, "we eventually discovered that most companies bidding on these projects were already monitoring MERX on their own."³⁰

Another factor contributing to IGO's decision to end these updates was bureaucratic capacity. Specifically, the number of provincial officials dedicated to IGO has slowly diminished in recent years. The department currently has one full-time member, down from a high of four in 2000, and its director has a range of responsibilities that extend beyond IGO. There is also a frequent rotation of officials through IGO. The permanent staff position also tends to be filled by a relatively junior member of the public service. As one senior official made clear, these realities have a direct impact on IGO's international engagement. Government expertise in specific issue areas is an obvious criteria but IGO also "has to have the interest and staff to provide these services." The

²⁸ Agriteam Canada, *Vietnam-Judicial Development and Grassroots Engagement (JUDGE) Project (2006-2010)*,

<http://www.agriteam.ca/index.php/projects/profile/judicial-development-and-grassroots-engagement-judge/> (7 September 2008); and Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Vietnam-Judicial Development and Grassroots Engagement (JUDGE) Project (2006-2010)*, <http://www.internationaluat.gov.ab.ca/646.cfm> (7 September 2008).

²⁹ Public Works and Government Services Canada, *MERX: Electronic Tendering Service*, www.canadabusiness.ca/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=CBSC_FE/display&c=Services&cid=1081944203051 (8 September 2008).

³⁰ Personal interview, 29 August 2008.

administrative responsibility of CIDA's extensive paperwork "is another onerous burden for IGO."³¹

Despite these challenges, IGO continues to get numerous enquiries regarding international programs. In some cases, these requests come from interests with a well-established track record with IGO. Agriteam Canada, for example is a Calgary based consulting company established in 1986 that bids on development contracts from a wide range of sources, including CIDA, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other agencies of the United Nations.³² In fact, Agriteam successfully procured CIDA funding for the China, South Africa, Vietnam, and Malawi projects. Universalia is another consulting firm that successfully bid on CIDA's Russian GAEP initiative. Not all bids are successful, however, and it is IGO's task to filter all requests for provincial participation. In one week, for example, IGO vetted and reviewed requests for projects involving India, Russia, and South Africa. In the case of Russia, it was the Russian government that approached CIDA, under its jointly funded Northern Development Partnership Program (NORDEP), to find a partner to work with one of its sub-federal governments on environmental issues. When the project was posted on MERX, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) sent out an expression of interest and contacted Alberta Environment, as well as several universities and colleges. The government's environment ministry then forwarded this request to IGO. Not surprisingly, these requests are time consuming and with limited resources available, IGO partners have recently had limited success in transferring enquiries into specific projects.³³

In the past, IGO also encountered minor pressure from the province's legislative branch regarding specific projects. In the aftermath of the Russia programs, Alberta established a legislative committee to study international development issues. In 2007 this committee had evolved into the new International Development and Governance Advisory Committee (IDGAC), which included representatives from the Alberta legislature and senior bureaucratic representatives from what was then IIAR. The committee, which met four times a year, served in an advisory capacity to IGO and IFI to "improve, engage, and enhance ... programs and activities."³⁴ For the most part, relations between the legislative and bureaucratic members of the committee were cooperative and collegial. Provincial officials also lauded MLA committee members for their willingness to meet with visiting delegations and provide an official government presence, especially when ministers were not available. At the same time, however, there were times when committee members would encourage IGO and IFI to "do more" with existing programs, which was difficult due to staffing issues and the limited export potential of these markets. There was also a period when the committee pushed for

³¹ Ibid.

³² Agriteam Canada, *About Agriteam Canada*, <http://www.agriteam.ca/index.php/about/> (7 September 2008).

³³ Personal interview (second official), 29 August 2008.

³⁴ Alberta International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations, *Alberta's Gateway to International Financial Institutions: Information to Pursue IFI Funded Projects* (May 2007), 4.

expanded responsibilities, including the right to review all areas of Alberta's international activity. In Alberta, some legislative committees exist at the purview of the minister. Following the 2008 provincial election, Alberta's minister of IIR and Deputy Premier, Ron Stevens, chose not to renew IDGAC's mandate.³⁵

Conclusion: Alberta's International Development Initiatives in Context

It is clear, based on this discussion, that Alberta has an established role in international development initiatives. Initially, these efforts focused on potential economic opportunities for the province. Although these considerations remain relevant, it is also clear that Alberta's current development activity is not solely driven by economic objectives. Alberta's decision to extend its twinning agreement with Mpumalanga, at its own expense, demonstrates a commitment to governance initiatives. The fact that recent exchanges have focused on social issues, gender equality, civic participation, and the delivery of services for poor and disenfranchised citizens in Malawi, China, South Africa, and Vietnam, further reinforces this point. There also appears to be recognition amongst Alberta officials that the province's international activity should extend beyond economic objectives. One official made it clear that Alberta's role in international development was "not just about marketing." There was also an understanding that broader societal objectives were "a positive secondary outcome of Alberta's cost-recovery programs."³⁶

At the same time, however, it is important not to overstate Alberta's international development efforts. First, it is clear that Alberta does not use multilateral institutions to achieve specific objectives in this policy area. The province has no long term agenda related international culture or development and, unlike Quebec, is not seeking formal status in institutions such as UNESCO. Alberta has pursued a greater role in the negotiation of international trade agreements related to the WTO and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) but the federal government has successfully prevented any formal participation by the provinces in direct negotiations. In the area of development assistance, it is also clear that any involvement by Alberta is due to the successful pursuit of funding by CIDA, and the private sector. The exception to this would be Alberta's IFI branch, but these initiatives focus on economic development, and not governance or development issues. Therefore, IGO initiatives in Alberta tend to be and hoc and opportunity driven. They also continue to focus on study tours and exchanges of government officials and other professionals.

Further, there is some question whether Canadian federalism is a defining factor in Alberta's development assistance efforts. In matters of international trade, all provinces have developed some capacity in an effort to protect provincial economic interests. This is due to a federal system that grants Canadian provinces a degree of constitutional legitimacy in this issue area, the high level of expertise that provincial officials provide in matters of trade policy, and the "institutionalized" nature of intergovernmental relations related to international trade. As already noted, Alberta has also traditionally acted as an advocate of provincial rights in terms of Canadian foreign trade policy. In terms of development, Canada's federal system remains relevant, especially as CIDA, and

³⁵ Personal interview, 29 August 2008.

³⁶ Ibid.

contractors from the private sector, seek guidance and participation related to areas of provincial jurisdiction. Having said that, unlike trade policy, Alberta has no interest becoming a leading advocate for an expanded role for Canadian provinces in the area of development assistance. The province is willing to share its expertise in relation to a wide range of social and economic considerations but, ultimately, this is unlikely to extend beyond the training of government officials and the pursuit of available international and domestic funding. There is also little to suggest that IGO initiatives are defined by Alberta's alleged sense of alienation within Canadian federalism.