

## The Western Innovation Forum: Connecting Businesses with Opportunity

The Harper Government recognizes that innovation is vital to Western Canada's success in the global marketplace. In order to continue creating jobs and growing the economy, we need spur innovation and support our entrepreneurs.



Forum participants network in between panel discussions.

In April 2014, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), in collaboration with [Mitacs](#) and the [Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries \(CADSI\)](#), brought together over 500 business leaders at the Western Innovation Forum. Spanning two days, the Forum provided a unique opportunity for businesses, industry, governments, researchers and suppliers to connect on future opportunities and discuss the key issues facing businesses and innovators in Western Canada.

businesses,” said Minister Rempel. “This forum offers a great opportunity for Western Canada’s business leaders to collaborate and explore the limitless business opportunities across Western Canada.”

Participants took in the first of four moderated panel discussions. These dynamic sessions covered a range of topics, including *Business Models that Work*, *Moving Technologies from the Test Bench to the Marketplace*, and *Leveraging Defence Procurement*.

Participants also had the opportunity to attend keynote addresses by the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Industry and the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Public Works and Government Services. Minister Moore’s address focused on [Digital Canada 150](#), a plan for Canadian businesses and communities to take full advantage of the opportunities presented in the digital age. Minister Finley spoke on the Harper Government’s objective to create jobs and growth in Canada through initiatives under the [Defence Procurement Strategy](#).

WD is pleased to have facilitated more than 140 individual Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Government (B2G) meetings, and several networking breaks, over the two day Forum. These meetings were crucial to enabling participants to gain extremely valuable time with equipment manufacturers and the more than 12 notable international defence and security contractors in attendance. Participants also learned more about the federal and provincial government organizations and

“WD is committed to supporting Western Canadian innovators and helping grow our



Minister Rempel meets with participants at the Western Innovation Forum.

### At a Glance

- 500+ participants
- 4 moderated discussions
- 14 technology demonstrations
- 140+ B2B and B2G meetings
- 12 prime contractors, including Seaspan, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and General Electric

programs that support innovation and technology commercialization.

Most importantly, more than 80 per cent of participants agreed that they were able to establish new connections, and nearly half of the attendees were able to identify prospective business leads.

“Over my career I have attended well over 100 forums and symposiums and found this to be one of the best in which I have ever participated,” said Bob Hastings, PointMan Canada Ltd.

#### **The Western Innovation Forum’s *Innovation Stage***

Over the two-day Forum, participants also had access to the Forum’s Innovation Stage. Hosted by [Mitacs](#), the stage allowed 14 start-up businesses and innovators to showcase their innovations and products to a range of potential investors and partners. The innovative products demonstrated on the stage ranged from Marine Technologies to Unmanned Vehicle Systems, drawing a considerable amount of interest from the audience. Following the demonstrations, audience members had the opportunity to speak with presenters about their new innovations through informative Question and Answer sessions, and networking breaks.

“The Innovation Stage at the Western Innovation Forum was a resounding success,” said Robert Grace, Converge Director at Mitacs. “All participants were very pleased with the opportunity to present and connect with potential strategic partners and investors. Many of these connections simply would not have been made without the Forum.”