



# West at a Glance

OCTOBER 2017



# WEST AT A GLANCE

## Inside this Issue

Provincial Government Developments	Page 3
News and Opinion Highlights	Page 5
Key Economic Indicators	Page 6
Upcoming Events	Page 7

*Please note this will be the last edition for West at a Glance in 2017. A new quarterly newsletter will be launched in January 2018.*



# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENTS

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

- **BC government releases a budget update** – BC's NDP government released a [budget update](#), its first financial plan since taking office in early September. Overall, the government forecasted a surplus of \$246 million while planning to spend \$51.9 billion in the 2017/18 fiscal year. This is almost \$2 billion more than the budget proposed by the BC Liberals in February 2017. According to Finance Minister Carole James, the *Budget 2017 Update* aims to put people first by improving affordability, building better public services, and investing in a strong and innovative economy that creates jobs. Highlights include a 50% cut in Medical Services Plan premiums, a corporate income tax rate increase to 12% from 11%, elimination of tolls on the Port Mann and Golden Ears bridges, and a decrease in the small-business income tax rate to 2% from 2.5%. The budget update acknowledged downside risks that could affect the economy, including the softwood lumber dispute, the future of NAFTA, economic uncertainties in Europe and Asia, the possibility of rising domestic interest rates, recovery from the wildfire damage, and the ongoing opioid and housing crises.
- **State of emergency lifted as BC wildfires season winds down** – On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the BC Government [lifted](#) the provincial state of emergency stemming from the record-setting wildfire season in the province. Earlier in September, the Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee on Federal Recovery Efforts for 2017 BC Wildfires [met to discuss](#) next steps for response initiatives. Members of the BC Government, First Nations community leaders and representatives from the Canadian Red Cross were present. Together they discussed updates on evacuation and re-entry support for affected communities, impacts on First Nation communities; and impacts on businesses, especially in the lumber and agriculture sectors. To date, \$20 million has been pledged through the *2017 Canada-BC Wildfire Recovery Initiative* to aid agricultural producers with recovering their losses.

## ALBERTA

- **Alberta launches a coal diversification fund** – The Government of Alberta announced a [new Coal Community Transition Fund \(CCTF\)](#) to assist municipalities and First Nations affected by the shift away from coal-powered electricity towards natural gas and renewable electricity generation. Funding will be available for projects that focus on regional partnerships and economic diversification. Eligible parties can apply together or individually until November 30. Funding for this initiative has been allocated out of the \$30 million Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES) program. The total amount of available CCTF funding has not been released.
- **Alberta signs a MOU on collaboration with the Northwest Territories** – The Governments of Alberta and the Northwest Territories (NWT) [signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) for Cooperation and Development. The MOU will facilitate collaboration on economic development, environmental stewardship, trade and community development. The MOU also supports existing bilateral agreements between Alberta and the NWT that enable labour mobility, the sharing of education resources, and collaboration on energy issues and market access.

## SASKATCHEWAN

- **Changes to Saskatchewan's provincial cabinet** – Premier Brad Wall has announced [changes to the provincial cabinet](#) in the wake of the departure of five ministers who had announced plans to run for leadership of the Saskatchewan Party. Five ministers are changing portfolios, and five members of the Legislative Assembly are entering cabinet. New cabinet ministers include Steven Bonk as Minister of Economy and Minister responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan, Innovation and Trade and Larry Doke as Minister of Government Relations and Minister responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. Six ministers retained their portfolios, including Lyle Stewart, the Minister of Agriculture. The next leader of the Saskatchewan Party and Premier of Saskatchewan will be selected in a party election on January 27, 2018.
- **Government of Saskatchewan restores medical school funding** – The Minister of Advanced Education announced an additional [\\$20 million in funding for the College of Medicine](#) at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S). The College was facing a projected \$17 million shortfall for the current year, in addition to an accumulated deficit of \$40 million. The announcement will restore \$20 million to the U of S, as the province had previously directed the university to provide the College with \$20 million from its operating grant. In its 2017-18 Budget, the Government of Saskatchewan reduced funding for the U of S by 5.6 per cent.



- **SaskPower defers hydroelectric project in northern Saskatchewan** – SaskPower announced that development of the proposed Tazi Twé hydroelectric project is being [deferred](#) due to lower than expected demand for power in northern Saskatchewan. The Crown utility has stated it will be able to meet demand with existing infrastructure. The \$630 million project would have produced 50 megawatts of power and provided an estimated \$1.3 billion for Black Lake First Nation over the lifetime of the project. Tazi Twé would have been the first hydroelectric project in the province located entirely on First Nation land.

## MANITOBA

- **Canada and Manitoba invest in environmental projects for the agriculture sector** – The governments of Canada and Manitoba are [investing more than \\$880,000](#) in environmentally focused projects that will help to increase productivity and profitability in the agriculture sector and reduce negative impacts on the environment. Funding will be used to enhance riparian areas, build water retention structures, protect sensitive lands with perennial cover and establish grassed waterway buffers. The funding is provided to Manitoba's conservation districts, who will work with local agricultural producers to complete the projects.
- **Province identifies over 900,000 regulatory requirements** – Manitoba Finance Minister Cameron Friesen recently announced that a total of [906,824 regulatory requirements](#) have been identified in 12,393 documents across the provincial government. The province's new Regulatory Accountability Act requires that a comprehensive baseline count be completed and maintained across government departments, Crown corporations, the Workers Compensation Board, and most government agencies and boards. Minister Friesen noted that the provincial government is committed to improving the quality of public services by creating an effective, efficient and transparent regulatory system.
- **Manitoba Government releases public accounts for 2016-17** – Manitoba's 2016-17 [year-end financial results](#) show a summary deficit of \$764 million, \$147 million lower than the 2016-17 budgeted deficit of \$911 million. Manitoba's debt-servicing costs are projected to increase to \$991 million for the 2017-18 fiscal year, up from \$930 million in 2016-17. Minister Friesen noted debt-servicing costs continue to be a concern in the government's ongoing pursuit of financial recovery.
- **Province invests in local software company** - The Manitoba government is investing [\\$270,000 in skills training](#) at Bold Commerce, a local software company specializing in e-commerce and application development. Bold Commerce is one of Manitoba's fastest-growing tech businesses, with more than 155 employees. The funding will support the hiring and training of 81 new employees and 10 existing employees over two years.



---

## NEWS AND OPINION HIGHLIGHTS

- **New partnerships to advance the Cascadia Innovation Corridor** – During the second annual Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference, which took place in Seattle this year, technology and innovation leaders from Washington State and BC [announced a number of new initiatives](#) focused on improving connectivity, strengthening innovation and generating economic opportunity. The announcements included: a Memorandum of Understanding between British Columbia Institute of Technology, Lake Washington Institute of Technology and Oregon Institute of Technology; expansion of the University of Washington's Global Innovation Exchange (GIX) to include the University of British Columbia; a Seattle-Vancouver Financial Innovation Network; a new BC Trade and Investment Office in Seattle to provide BC-based companies with greater access to US markets and investors; and a new cross-border start-up accelerator partnership between BC, Washington and Oregon.
- **Fortinet expansion will bring 1,000 jobs to Burnaby, BC** – Fortinet, a provider of cybersecurity solutions, have announced the expansion of their threat intelligence and research and development (R&D) operations in Burnaby, BC. The [expanded facilities](#) will house 1,000 new technology jobs to staff a data centre and enhance Fortinet's FortiGuard Threat Intelligence and R&D centres. Fortinet opened its first threat intelligence and R&D centre in Burnaby 17 years ago, the company currently employs nearly 700 people in British Columbia and approximately 1,000 total employees in Canada.
- **University of Calgary discovers spill-resistant bitumen technology** – The University of Calgary (U of C) is working with Innovate Calgary to commercialize a [new spill-resistant bitumen technology](#). The pill-sized bitumen pellets have a liquid core and super-viscous skin that significantly reduces the chance of a damaging spill or environmental incident. Originally discovered by accident, the patented technology has been refined to allow the pellets to be produced at varying sizes right at the wellhead. The pellets would allow bitumen to be transported by rail without the need for heated railcars, after reaching their destination the pellets can then be refined like regular bitumen. Innovate Calgary is helping the U of C to connect with potential industry partners and customers to help advance the technology to a field trial.
- **Partnership to enhance sustainability-focused oil sands innovation** – Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance (COSIA) is [leading](#) a new public-private partnership that aims to accelerate sustainability-focused innovation among oil sands producers. The project is seeded by a \$2.5 million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The partnership includes three academic institutions (the Ivey Business School in Ontario, the University of Alberta and the University of Quebec at Montreal), three COSIA member companies (Canadian Natural, Suncor and Cenovus), and Alberta Innovates and Natural Resources Canada. The research team will map the companies' innovation processes. It will also help industry and government understand how new technologies and processes are brought to market, the key factors in determining which investments succeed, and how to accelerate the deployment of new technologies across sectors.
- **University of Saskatchewan professor named to United States expert panel on water** – Howard Wheeler, the Director of the Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan and Canada Excellence Research Chair in Water Security, has been [named to an expert panel](#) which will be advising the United States Government on water-related issues, including droughts, floods and water quality. The panel hopes to deliver a report to the National Academy of the United States by November 2018.
- **PotashCorp announces temporary cuts to production** – Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan announced [temporary cuts](#) to production at two of its mines in Saskatchewan. Beginning November 19, the company will be reducing production at its Allan mine for 10 weeks, and starting December 3, it will reduce production at its Lanigan mine for eight weeks. PotashCorp indicated that limiting production at these locations will help it match its supply to market demand, and maximize output from its Rocanville facility, which is its lowest-cost operation. The number of employees who will be temporarily laid off due to the cuts has not yet been determined.
- **Winnipeg company receives Chinese investment** – Winnipeg-based business incubator Manitoba Technology Accelerator has [partnered](#) with the Chinese city of Hefei's High-tech Industrial Zone (HHZT) to invest \$1 million in Winnipeg company Arterial Stiffness (ASI). The funding will provide resources and infrastructure to further develop ASI's technology and launch it into the Chinese market. This is the first Canadian collaboration for HHZT.



# KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	 British Columbia	 Alberta	 Saskatchewan	 Manitoba	 Canada	Last Update
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>						
Real GDP <sup>1</sup> (2007 \$billions, forecast)	\$225	\$301	\$60	\$58	\$1,726	2017
% ch. from year earlier	2.7%	4.3%	2.7%	2.8%	2.9%	
<b>Labour Market</b>						
Employment (SA, thousands)	2,473	2,279	568	644	18,454	Sep-17
Change from previous month	-6.7	-7.8	0.0	-5.5	10	
% ch. from previous month	-0.3%	-0.3%	0.0%	-0.8%	0.1%	
% ch. from year earlier	3.6%	0.6%	-0.2%	1.9%	1.8%	
Unemployment Rate (SA,%)	4.9%	7.9%	6.2%	5.5%	6.2%	Sep-17
percentage points from previous month	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	0.6	0	
percentage points from year earlier	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7	-0.9	-0.8	
Regular EI beneficiaries (SA)	50,980	71,460	18,140	17,450	536,550	Jul-17
Change from previous month	740	130	-550	1,840	6,750	
% ch. from previous month	1.5%	0.2%	-2.9%	11.8%	1.3%	
% ch. from previous year	-8.8%	-33.5%	-14.1%	13.1%	-8.7%	
Average weekly earnings	\$941.26	\$1,125.07	\$1,003.02	\$909.02	\$970.47	Jul-17
Change from previous year	\$29.72	\$1.14	\$18.29	\$23.23	\$17.45	
<b>Prices</b>						
CPI (y/y)	2.0%	1.1%	1.7%	0.9%	1.4%	Aug-17
CPI (y/y) previous month	1.9%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	Jul-17
<b>Consumers and Business</b>						
Retail Sales (SA, \$millions)	\$7,199	\$6,763	\$1,660	\$1,633	\$49,130	Jul-17
% ch. from previous month	0.7%	-0.6%	1.3%	0.2%	0.4%	
% ch. from previous year	12.3%	9.5%	5.9%	3.7%	7.8%	
Manufacturing Sales (SA, \$millions)	\$4,186	\$5,765	\$1,267	\$1,539	\$52,511	Jul-17
% ch. from previous month	-1.6%	-3.4%	1.2%	-2.4%	-2.6%	
% ch. from previous year	7.0%	9.7%	13.5%	11.9%	3.4%	
Building Permits (SA, \$millions)	\$1,245	\$1,102	\$184	\$193	\$7,543	Aug-17
% ch. from previous month	-9.9%	6.2%	24.4%	-18.8%	-5.5%	
% ch. from previous year	5.7%	0.7%	17.5%	-25.1%	0.6%	
Housing Starts (SAAR, thousands)	40	30	4	6	217	Sep-17
% ch. from previous month	6.3%	12.7%	-45.6%	-13.3%	-3.9%	
% ch. from previous year	-17.1%	2.0%	-20.5%	23.7%	-0.8%	
<b>International Trade</b>						
Merchandise Exports (\$millions)	\$3,600	\$8,143	\$2,044	\$1,058	\$39,825	Aug-17
% ch. from previous month	5.0%	6.5%	-3.7%	1.3%	6.9%	
% ch. from previous year	4.0%	15.2%	9.3%	2.6%	0.2%	
Merchandise Imports (\$millions)	\$4,524	\$2,290	\$974	\$1,776	\$47,937	Aug-17
% ch. from previous month	0.3%	3.8%	3.0%	9.6%	8.6%	
% ch. from previous year	5.0%	17.8%	42.3%	5.5%	3.3%	
<b>Demographics</b>						
Population (estimate)	4,817,160	4,286,134	1,163,925	1,338,109	36,708,083	Q3 2017
% ch. from previous year	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%	1.5%	1.2%	
Largest Cities (CMAs)	Vancouver (2,463,431)	Calgary (1,392,609)	Saskatoon (295,095)	Winnipeg* (778,489)		2016
	Victoria* (367,770)	Edmonton* (1,321,426)	Regina* (236,481)			

\* Provincial Capital

<sup>1</sup>Real GDP at basic prices, forecast (Conference Board of Canada Provincial Outlook Executive Summary: Summer 2017)

SA - Seasonally adjusted

SAAR - Seasonally adjusted at annual rates

Sources: Statistics Canada and Conference Board of Canada



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Description	Location	Date
<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>			
<b>2017 Fastest Growing Companies Reception</b>	Business in Vancouver will host a networking reception to highlight the achievements of companies across BC who have shown remarkable growth over the past five years.	Vancouver, BC	<a href="#">October 11, 2017</a>
<b>4th Annual Greater Vancouver Board of Trade Show</b>	The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade Show offers networking opportunities for businesses and individuals, as well as speeches from industry leaders.	Vancouver, BC	<a href="#">October 24, 2017</a>
<b>Vancouver Island Economic Summit 2017</b>	The Vancouver Island Economic Alliance will host a forum for businesses and stakeholders to understand the state of the island economy.	Nanaimo, BC	<a href="#">October 25-26, 2017</a>
<b>BC Business Summit 2017: Scaling Up British Columbia</b>	The Business Council of British Columbia will host business, First Nations, academia and community leaders, and decision makers from across the province to explore strategies for scaling up the size, talent, competitiveness and influence of businesses in British Columbia.	Vancouver, BC	<a href="#">November 1, 2017</a>
<b>Pacific North West Economic Region (PNWER): 2017 Economic Leadership Forum</b>	The PNWER Economic Leadership Forum will bring together regional legislators and business leaders from Canada and the US to discuss major topics in regional economic development.	Victoria, BC	<a href="#">November 5-7, 2017</a>
<b>Canada's Economic Infrastructure</b>	The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade will host a talk where David Dodge, former Governor of the Bank of Canada, will discuss what lies ahead for the Canadian economy and the infrastructure sector, and what it means for Greater Vancouver and BC.	Vancouver, BC	<a href="#">November 22, 2017</a>
<b>ALBERTA</b>			
<b>2017 Calgary Energy Roundtable</b>	Hosted by The Energy Roundtable, the event brings together industry and government leaders to discuss Canada's energy future.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">October 11, 2017</a>
<b>2017 Economic Partnership Summit</b>	Hosted by Economic Partnership, the summit brings together businesses, leaders and Indigenous people primarily in Treaty 6 Territory to look at best practices and models that work, and build partnerships.	Lloydminster, AB	<a href="#">October 11, 2017</a>
<b>Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI) 2017 Electricity Conference</b>	The conference will discuss the opportunities and challenges to greening the Canadian electricity system.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">October 16-17, 2017</a>
<b>2017 International Aboriginal Tourism Conference</b>	Hosted by the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada, this community-led, industry-driven, international tourism conference will bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal tourism entrepreneurs and community leaders.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">November 7-8, 2017</a>
<b>Spark 2017</b>	Hosted by Emissions Reduction Alberta and Alberta Innovates, the conference connects researchers, innovators, investors, experts and innovation advisors to advance clean technology and bio-industrial solutions toward commercialization.	Edmonton, AB	<a href="#">November 6-8, 2017</a>



<b>The Walrus Talks: Disruption</b>	Hosted by The Walrus Foundation, the event will feature seven speakers for seven minutes each on how cities are shaped by changes in media, technology, culture and more.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">November 9, 2017</a>
<b>National Summit on Indigenous Youth and Natural Resource Development</b>	Hosted by the Conference Board of Canada, the event will bring the perspectives, needs and aspirations of Indigenous youth to the forefront of Canada's discourse on sustainable natural resource development.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">November 21-22, 2017</a>
<b>2017 Alberta Export Awards</b>	The Alberta Export Awards, presented by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and JWN, recognize the innovative approaches and unique contributions of Alberta-registered export companies across all regions of the province.	Calgary, AB	<a href="#">November 23, 2017</a>

## SASKATCHEWAN

<b>Thought Leadership Series breakfast featuring Jason Langrish, Executive Director for the Canada-Europe Roundtable for Business</b>	The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce is hosting a breakfast discussion with Jason Langrish, Executive Director for the Canada-Europe Roundtable for Business. The event targets Saskatchewan business leaders and entrepreneurs that are (or plan to be) engaged in trade with Europe.	Regina, SK	<a href="#">October 13, 2017</a>
<b>2017 Business to Business Expo</b>	Presented by the Regina Chamber of Commerce, the Business to Business EXPO tradeshow is an opportunity to meet members of Regina's business community and showcase products to a large audience.	Regina, SK	<a href="#">October 19, 2017</a>

## MANITOBA

<b>Southern Manitoba Manufacturers' Summit</b>	This annual event provides a forum for Southern Manitoba manufacturers of all sizes and sub-sectors to explore a balanced approach to long-term social, environmental and economic objectives.	Morden, MB	<a href="#">October 26, 2017</a>
<b>The Hemp Fest Cannabis Expo</b>	The Expo will feature talks and presentations from industry leaders and exhibitors showcasing industry-related products and services, including licensed Producers, Dispensaries, Nutrient companies, Hydroponics Manufacturers, Medical Clinics, and Health and Wellness providers.	Winnipeg, MB	<a href="#">November 4, 2017</a>
<b>Western Business Outlook 2018</b>	The Conference Board of Canada will present its forecast into 2018 and beyond.	Winnipeg, MB	<a href="#">November 7, 2017</a>
<b>Grain World Conference</b>	The conference will feature panelists and expert speakers from the grain industry and provide global networking opportunities with influential delegates in the agricultural sector.	Winnipeg, MB	<a href="#">November 14-15, 2017</a>
<b>Innovating at the Speed of Light</b>	The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce will host a luncheon session featuring Elyse Allan, CEO of GE Canada. The talk will focus on automation of our workplaces, the state of global competitiveness, and what Winnipeg employers and the workforce must learn to thrive in the Digital Revolution.	Winnipeg, MB	<a href="#">November 24, 2017</a>
<b>Western Canada Cleantech Innovation Forum</b>	The forum will feature keynote speakers, plenary sessions, technical concurrent sessions and a special edition of the Green Dragon's Lair.	Winnipeg, MB	<a href="#">November 29-30, 2017</a>



### *Western Economic Diversification Canada*

The role of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is to improve the long-term economic competitiveness of Western Canada by supporting programs and services that enhance innovation, business development, and community economic development. In addition, the department undertakes policy, advocacy, and coordination activities in order to advance the interests of Western Canada in national economic decision-making.