



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON A

WESTERN CANADA GROWTH STRATEGY

WHAT WE HEARD



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A P R I L

Canada



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2018, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) launched a public engagement to seek the views of western Canadians on five questions about their vision and ideas for achieving and sustaining economic growth in the future western Canadian economy. More than 450 individuals and organizations provided comments through in-person or online engagement activities.

The feedback received from engagement participants, combined with WD's research on western Canadian issues, global economic trends, and consultations with federal and other government organizations will assist WD and the federal government to shape the Western Canada Growth Strategy (WCGS) to be issued later in 2019.

What We Heard provides an overview of the main themes and key messages raised by engagement participants. The report captures and synthesizes what WD and the federal government heard in 25 WD hosted roundtables across the West, and online submissions and commentaries. Participants included individuals, business owners, community leaders, Indigenous representatives, and not-for-profit and post-secondary organizations across Western Canada.

Engagement participants across the West have expressed there are challenges to building the western Canadian economy of the future. These include instability in global economic and trade environments. They also include the impacts that economic and industrial growth can have on the environment and climate change.

Participant responses also reflected optimism about the future of the western Canadian economy, and an interest in working with all orders of government, industry, and other stakeholders to achieve long-term growth and economic prosperity in Western Canada.

When asked to describe what a stronger western Canadian economy should look like 10 years from now, responses outlined a vision of a future economy that was:

LEADING EDGE
COMPETITIVE
ENTREPRENEURIAL
INCLUSIVE
RESILIENT

Engagement participants identified the following themes as potential keys to future growth:

- **Diversification:** Diversify Western Canada's industries, workforce, and markets.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Invest in R&D, cluster development, and commercialization.
- **Infrastructure:** Build modern and competitive physical and digital infrastructure.
- **Skills Development and Training:** Create a world-class and inclusive skilled workforce.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Encourage business start-up, expansion, and agility.
- **International Markets:** Secure strong western Canadian presence and reputation.

Engagement participants identified the following themes as potential keys to Indigenous economic growth:

- **Co-development and Collaboration:** Increase collaboration between government, industry, and Indigenous Peoples.
- **Creating New Opportunities:** Create opportunities through partnerships and engagement in major projects.
- **Improving Access to Education:** Provide skills training and access to jobs.
- **Increasing Entrepreneurship:** Increase access to capital, mentorship, and networks.

Engagement participants identified the following themes as potential keys to improving economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups including women, youth, and new immigrants:

- **Access to Opportunities:** Increase opportunities for education, training, and mentoring.
- **Eliminating Barriers:** Eliminate systemic bias and structural disadvantages.
- **Women:** Improve workplace flexibility and access to risk capital.
- **Youth:** Provide funding, training, and connections for first jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **New Immigrants:** Improve foreign credential recognition, and access to programs and services.

Engagement participants identified the following themes as potential keys to how governments, industry, and western Canadians work together to grow the regional economy:

- **Increased Partnership and Collaboration:** Grow industries, communities, and participation.
- **Communication and Clarity of Objectives:** Improve communication and clarity of government plans, programs, and objectives.
- **Creating a Supportive Business Climate:** Ensure competitiveness and ease of doing business.
- **Supporting a Western Canadian Global Presence:** Increase trade, investment, and alliances.
- **WD/Government of Canada as Convenor:** Bring together western leaders and stakeholders.

[What We Heard](#) captures the broad outlines of the rich and informative dialogue of participants in the WD engagement process. Links to additional information and reports summaries are provided.



“

... we need to hear from you because an economic plan baked in Ottawa thousands of kilometers away... won't do the job.

We need to understand the unique traits and opportunities but also the challenges Canadians face here and no one knows that better than *yourselves*.

So by working together we can shape a Western Canada Growth Strategy to the needs of the region and make smart investments for the long-term prosperity of our communities.

*The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development
Western Canada Growth Strategy Launch, September 2018*

CONTEXT FOR ENGAGEMENT

THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

WESTERN CANADA IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Western Canada on average has experienced strong economic performance and growth over the past decade, despite challenges including fluctuating commodity prices. This has been largely driven by strong global demand for our natural resources, which has attracted high levels of private capital investment. This strong economic performance has also contributed to a highly skilled labour force, and growth in many value-added and high technology sectors ranging from agriculture to clean technologies. However, there have been signs suggesting Western Canada's ability to sustain and expand this performance is uncertain. These include:

1. Diminishing private sector investments related to sustainable natural resource development and expansion, as well as taking into account Canada's climate change commitments.
2. Maintaining competitiveness and innovation performance.
3. Ability to attract inclusive, skilled, and entrepreneurial workers for the global economy of the future.

Global instability in trade and investment impacts on our capacity to export, as well as attract foreign capital and business partnerships. This is reflected in reduced prices for many of the commodities that have traditionally driven economic growth and new investment in Western Canada, and in declining markets for many western Canadian products.

Participants identified that new trade agreements such as the Canada-European Trade Agreement (CETA), the United States-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), offer many business and export opportunities.

Participants also highlighted Western Canada's growing research capacity in many emerging industries. Western Canada's world-class research facilities, post-secondary institutions, and researchers provide a strong foundation for Western Canada to participate in the development of new technology driven discoveries, and industries that can support value-added and sustainable growth in natural resource sectors. They also enable Western Canada to be globally competitive in the creation and commercialization of emerging industries. These industries include Artificial Intelligence (AI), medical technologies and precision health, biotechnology, and composite materials.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

THE NEED FOR A WESTERN CANADA GROWTH STRATEGY

The task of developing a strategic framework, such as the Western Canada Growth Strategy, requires a long-term perspective that sets out the vision and objectives concerning what a future western Canadian economy will look like. It also requires a roadmap for action that can serve as a guide for future economic growth and development. Many of the comments made by participants suggest that while there are opportunities to enhance value-added production and productivity in traditional sectors, to be truly transformative, the WCGS needs to position the West to capitalize on the growth prospects linked to Western Canada's diverse communities and new knowledge-based industries and businesses.

An important step in the development of the WCGS is to ensure that it links to the broader federal government economic agenda and priorities. For this reason, when developing the WCGS, it will be important to build on and place in a western Canadian context the recommendations of the [Economic Strategy Tables](#), which includes six signature initiatives to support growth and economic development in Canada:

1. Own the Podium (by building global business leaders in key sectors)
2. Agile Regulations
3. Skills and Talent
4. Technology Adoption
5. Infrastructure (physical and digital)
6. Canada Brand

Aligning the WCGS with other federal economic and development strategies and initiatives will ensure that policies and programs across the federal government work together.

AN OVERVIEW

THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The engagement process took place over a 10-week period between September 11, 2018, and November 16, 2018. It included a combination of in-person and online forums. To support engagement by participants, WD prepared a background document entitled “Towards a Western Canadian Growth Strategy: [Engagement Paper](#)”. This paper provided a brief overview of the context of the engagement, and background information about the economic performance, business structure, and demographic characteristics of Western Canada. It also had links to additional material about the West.

An important goal of the engagement process was to meet people where they were, which helped to reduce barriers to participation. WD employed the following online and in-person techniques:

1. Online: Canadian-based platform PlaceSpeak engaged individuals and organizations online. The platform provided an opportunity for dialogue amongst all participants. The iterative, online space was open from September 11, 2018 to November 16, 2018. In addition, WD invited the public to submit their input and ideas using a variety of methods including mail, e-mail and social media. A total of 54 submissions were received online.

2. In-Person: Western Economic Diversification Canada hosted roundtables across the four western provinces. These in-person sessions provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share and exchange in-depth responses to the questions. WD also provided a discussion guide on its website to encourage stakeholders to hold their own roundtable sessions.

To help focus the engagement input WD asked participants to respond to five questions. These questions provide the structure of the discussion of What We Heard in the next few sections of the report:

- 1. What does a stronger western Canadian economy look like 10 years from now?**
- 2. What are the best ways to spur new growth in Western Canada?**
- 3. What will help the Indigenous economy continue to grow?**
- 4. How can we improve economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups, including women, youth and new immigrants?**
- 5. How can governments, industry and western Canadians work together to grow the regional economy?**

Approximately 450 people from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba participated through both the online and in-person engagement forums. There were 25 roundtable sessions hosted by WD and 14 sessions organized by other organizations.

To assist the design, analysis, and tracking of engagement participation, and to help illuminate the level and type of topics raised under each of the five questions, WD used the services of an independent third-party with expertise in on-line engagement and quantitative analysis. Through their services, WD was able to track the number of participants and the frequency with which participants mentioned specific themes or subjects. A brief description of the methodology for this analysis is provided in [Annex III](#).

WHO WE HEARD FROM

ABB Canada • Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce • Ag-West Bio Inc. • AKI Energy • Alberta Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurs • Alberta Community & Co-Operative Association • Alberta Construction Association • Alberta Enterprise Corporation • Alberta Forest Products Association • Alberta Health Services • Alberta Indian Investment Corporation • Alberta Indigenous Relations • Alberta Innovates • Alberta Women Entrepreneurs • Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association • Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba • Athabasca Basin Development • Axine Water Technologies • Bank of Canada • Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs • BC Council of Forest Industries BC Mining Association • BC Tech Association • Bio Alberta • Bioscience Association • Manitoba Blackline Safety • Business Council of British Columbia • Business Link Buy Social Canada • Calgary Economic Development • Cameco • Canada West Foundation • Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance • Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers • Canadian Federation of Independent Business • Canadian Light Source •

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters • Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters • CEO - Alberta Council of Technologies Society • Chemistry Industry Association of Canada • Chief Little Black Bear First Nation • City of Calgary • City of Calgary's Recreation Management Team • City of Edmonton Administration • City of Prince George • Clarence Campeau Development Fund • Co.Labs • College of New Caledonia • Commissariat aux langues officielles Manitoba/Saskatchewan • Community Futures Boundary • Community Futures British Columbia • Community Futures Crownsnest Pass • Community Futures Highwood • Community Futures North Okanagan • Community Futures Peace Country • Community Futures Prince Albert • Community Futures St Paul - Smoky Lake Region • Community Futures St Paul - Smoky Lake Region - Northeast Food Marketers • Community Futures St Paul - Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Chamber of Commerce/Small Business, Elk Point, AB • Community Futures St Paul - Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Not For Profits/Small Business, St. Paul, AB • Community Futures St Paul - Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Volunteers/Business, St. Paul, AB • Community Futures Stuart Nechako • Community Futures Treaty 7 • Community Futures West Interlake • Conexus Credit Union • Connection Silicon Valley • Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta • Co-operatives First • Creative BC • Creative Destruction Labs - Rockies • Department of Chemical & Materials Engineering, University of Alberta • Des Nedhe Development LP • District of New Hazelton • Economic Developers Alberta • Economic Development Lethbridge • Economic Development Regina • Éco-Ouest • Edmonton Chamber of Commerce • Edmonton Economic Development Corporation • Edmonton Global • Edmonton International Airport • Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board

WHAT WE HEARD

KEY THEMES AND MESSAGES BY QUESTION

The next section of the report summarizes the input received by WD from participants in the engagement process. It is organized by the five major questions posed by WD in the engagement process. For each question an overview of the general tone and substance of the input received is provided, followed by the identification of some of the major discussion themes and issues raised by participants.

At the end of each question summary, a thematic analysis table is provided that identifies the top five themes raised by participants in response to each question, and based on a quantitative analysis assessment tool, the frequency with which each theme was raised.

• Edmonton Screen Industries • EVRAZ • Faculty of mental Sciences, University • Federated Co-operative Power Authority • First Na-Flexahopper Plastics Ltd. • Prairie • GO Productivity • Government of Alberta - Trade • Government of BC Technology • Government novation • Commissioner of Commerce • Greater • Growing Greener Innovation/Business Developer • Indigenous Services Canada • Information and gies Association of Manitoba • ISM Canada • School of Public Policy • watin Career Development Strategic Consulting • Lemerce • Lethbridge College • wanian University • Manitoba • Manitoba Council for International Education • Manitoba Technology Accelerator • Mayor and Council for the Northern Village of Green Lake • Meadow Lake Tribal Council Business Development • Metis Nation of Alberta • Metis Settlement General Council • Mobilisation du Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba • Momentum • Morris Industries Ltd. • Mosaic/Saskatchewan Mining Association • Natural Resources Canada • New Media Manitoba • New North-Sask Association of Northern Communities • North West Communities Wood Products • Northern Alberta Institute of Technology • Office of Randy Boissonnault • Paul First Nations Band • Peraton Canada • Personnel du CDEM • Points Athabasca • Port Alberni Port Authority • Precision ADM • Prince George Airport Authority • Prince Rupert Port Authority • Pro Metal Industries • Projet de gestion des matières ligneuses de la région de la Rivière de Winnipeg • Projet ECA (Échanges commerciaux Canada-Afrique) • Province of Manitoba • Public Service and Procurement Canada • Raytheon Canada • Red River College • Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE Canada) • Réseau en immigration francophone du Manitoba • Rivet Management • Royal Bank of Canada • S.U.C.E.S.S. • Sask Polytech • Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association • Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce • Saskatchewan Co-operative Association • Saskatchewan First Nations Natural Resource Centre of Excellence • Saskatchewan Research Council Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership • Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (SYPE) • Saskatoon Berry Council of Canada • SeedUps Canada • Settlement Investment Corporation • Southern Alberta Institute of Technology • SouthGrow Regional Initiative • Square One • St. Paul, AB • Surrey Board of Trade • Technology Pathfinders • The Centre for Innovation Studies • Toma & Bouma Management Consultants, New West Networks Inc. • Total Containment Inc. • TradeWinds to Success • Translink • Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta • Tribal Chief File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council • Tribal Chiefs Ventures • UNIGLOBE LGI Travel • University College of the North (UCN) • University Hospital Foundation • University of Alberta • University of British Columbia • University of Calgary • University of Lethbridge • University of Northern British Columbia • University of Saskatchewan Department of Physics and Engineering Physics • University of Victoria • Unmanned Systems Canada • Vancouver Economic Commission • Vancouver Fraser Port Authority • VizworX Inc. • WaVv • Westcap Management Ltd. • Western Canadian Defence Industries Association • WestGrid • Women Building Futures • Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc. • Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba - Sector: Business, community • World Trade Centre • Yardstick Software • YMCA Canada



QUESTION #1

WHAT DOES A STRONGER WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

INTRODUCTION

When addressing this question, participants spoke about what they saw as the key components and characteristics of a strong and high-performing western Canadian economy of the future. Participants raised:

- the need for greater diversification in terms of sectors, markets, and inclusive labour force participation;
- the importance of capitalizing on technologies to ensure productive and competitive industries and businesses, and the commercialization of R&D;
- modern and efficient infrastructure;
- a greater attention to growing small businesses into larger businesses; and,
- ensuring that all western Canadians including Indigenous Peoples, women, and other groups with low participation rates benefit from economic growth.

As part of this discussion, participants also noted the importance of establishing clear measures of performance and outcomes for a Western Canada Growth Strategy and individual government policies and programs. This would allow for the evaluation of progress and success, and for adjustments as needed.

“ *A stronger ... economy will be underpinned by growth in emerging sectors, trade and investment growth, job creation and income growth, and an international brand that speaks to the areas of western Canadian leadership in key sectors and innovation.* ”

KEY THEMES

VISION OF THE WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE

OVERVIEW

THE FUTURE WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY IS:

- Leading Edge
- Entrepreneurial
- Resilient
- Competitive
- Inclusive

LEADING EDGE

Western Canadians want an economy that can fully capitalize on its world-class research and post-secondary institutes. This includes becoming leaders in the discovery and commercialization of technologies and products in emerging knowledge-based industries, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), biotechnology, medical and precision health technologies, and composite materials. For many participants, being on the leading edge of innovation and economic performance also means that western Canadian industries must be leaders in innovation and technology adoption within their sectors, and can anticipate and respond to changing domestic and global environments. Many engagement participants highlighted the potential business and economic opportunities that are emerging in areas such as clean technologies, value-added agriculture, and the film and entertainment industries. Greater investment and engagement in areas of the economy such as these could transform Western Canada into global leaders in sustainable natural resource development and emerging knowledge-based industries in the future.



(A stronger economy looks like) western Canadian companies will be renowned as innovation leaders, with high levels of technology adoption and excellent talent.

COMPETITIVE

A number of comments raised by participants converged around the theme of ensuring that the business environment in the western Canadian economy facilitates the capacity of industries and businesses to compete in the global economy. Competitiveness was seen as essential to access global supply chains, and to attract the investment, talent, partnerships, and market penetration necessary to support growth and expansion. A competitive western Canadian economy and business sector was also linked to a number of different themes or actions identified by participants including: a modern transportation and digital infrastructure connecting all of Western Canada, a supportive and consistent regulatory environment, access to an adaptive and skilled labour-force, and the promotion of western Canadian business and economic capabilities in global markets.

ENTREPRENEURIAL

Participants in all engagement forums placed a clear emphasis on the need to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture in Western Canada as one of the essential features of the future western Canadian economy. Dynamic and agile entrepreneurs with access to the skills, risk capital, and connections to facilitate business start-ups and expansion were viewed by many as essential to growth and development in both urban and rural areas of the West. We also heard that instilling a greater entrepreneurial spirit across the West, supporting women and underrepresented groups to become entrepreneurs, and providing western Canadians with the tools they need to create and grow businesses are important for growing small companies into larger companies across all sectors and groups within the economy.

INCLUSIVE

One of the most frequently heard messages communicated by participants was the need to find ways to ensure that all western Canadians had the opportunities and tools to participate in future economic growth and prosperity. As part of their vision of a stronger western Canadian economy, there was a broad recognition that government, industry, communities, and post-secondary institutions must collaborate effectively to address barriers faced by many individuals, groups and communities. These barriers could limit their participation in, and ability to benefit from, future economic and industrial growth. The inability to take action that can facilitate the inclusion of underrepresented groups into the economic activity of the West, including Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and new immigrants, as well as underrepresented areas of Western Canada including many rural and remote communities was generally viewed by participants as not only a failure of public policy, but as imposing severe constraints on the ability of Western Canada to maximize its economic potential in the future.

RESILIENT

Building a western Canadian economy that is resilient and can adapt to changing economic and broader environmental conditions and trends captures several recurring themes that were raised during the engagement process. What we heard from participants was that the future economy of Western Canada requires an economic and industrial structure that is sufficiently diversified to adjust and continue to grow, in spite of sectoral downturns and external challenges. These challenges include the boom and bust cycles common in the natural resource industries, or that result from the introduction of disruptive technologies in particular sectors of the economy. Participants also spoke of an economy that embraces sustainable development as both a competitive advantage and a source of potential new ideas, technological breakthroughs, and innovative business practices. A greater focus on sustainable development would not only promote future development and growth. It would also provide a source of new job creation and business formation, new opportunities for the export of clean technologies, and the attraction of new investment and skills in the West.

The table below provides a quantitative breakdown of the top five mentions of each economic theme by participants to Question #1. Total number of responses: 578

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Diversification and scale	143
2. Adoption/advancement of new technologies/AI/automation/improved productivity	143
3. Better/modern infrastructure	102
4. More representation of Indigenous Peoples/Improved communities	74
5. Strong natural resources/energy sector/oil prices	65



QUESTION #2

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO SPUR NEW GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA?

INTRODUCTION

Question #2 asked participants to identify the types of initiatives and activities they believed would help achieve the economy of the future and what actions and priorities are required to build the type of economy we want in Western Canada.

Responses reinforced many of the goals and economic priorities mentioned in response to Question #1. Participants that responded to Question #2 identified a broad range of actions that they felt would improve Canadian economic performance and growth.

OVERVIEW

TO ENSURE GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA WE MUST FOCUS ON:

- **Diversification:** Diversify Western Canada's industries, workforce, and markets.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Invest in R&D, cluster development, and commercialization.
- **Infrastructure:** Build modern and competitive physical and digital infrastructure.
- **Skills Development and Training:** Create a world-class and inclusive skilled workforce.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Encourage business start-up, expansion, and agility.
- **International Markets:** Secure strong western Canadian presence and reputation.

KEY THEMES

CREATING AND SUSTAINING FUTURE GROWTH

DIVERSIFICATION

One of the most frequently cited suggestions from participants to achieve long term growth of the western Canadian economy was to continue to diversify the economic and industrial structure of the economy. Participants spoke of diversity in terms of industrial sector, markets, size and nature of businesses, diversity of the products and services we export, and diversity of the people in our workforce. Based on what we heard during the engagement process, it was clear that approaches to promote diversification would need to be tailored to take into account different circumstances within the regions and communities of the West. In major urban centres with strong R&D capacity, post-secondary institutions, and a large business and investment community, diversification efforts may best focus on the creation and commercialization of new technologies and business clusters. These can support the growth and expansion of new, knowledge based industries to complement Western Canada's strength in natural resource production. In smaller urban centres and many rural communities, efforts to diversify may require new investments in infrastructure, attracting anchor businesses, and the attraction and retention of investment, businesses, and skilled employees that will lead to economic and business expansion. In communities close to natural resource production and new major projects, diversification may take the form of increasing opportunities for adjacent communities and individuals to acquire new skills, jobs, and create new businesses that can provide a foundation for future growth and expansion into other sectors of the economy. These sectors include value-added agriculture, tourism, online businesses, and small manufacturing operations.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The importance of technology and innovation as a driver of future growth was identified by a large percentage of participants. This included taking action in a number of areas, such as continuing to make investments in R&D and post-secondary institutions to support the discovery and commercialization of new technologies, products and services. Participants also saw the potential of technology and innovation to increase the competitiveness of many core western Canadian industrial sectors, such as the energy, agriculture, forestry, and mining sectors through the introduction of clean technologies and the adoption of advanced technologies that can increase productivity and lower costs of production.

"We must fully adopt global technology shifts, such as digitization and artificial intelligence. These technologies can also be applied to our energy sector."

Many participants also called for increased investment by the public and private sectors in R&D to support partnerships that would assist commercialization and the development of industry clusters. Some participants noted that the federal government's Innovation Superclusters Initiative model was a good way to help focus and encourage investment and industry formation in existing and potential high growth sectors and regions of Western Canada. Others suggested the need for new and innovative funding models such as a Fund of Funds and a revised R&D tax credit regime to stimulate the development and adoption of new technologies in areas where Western Canada has proven and emerging strengths such as biotechnology, fuel cells, and value-added processing.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants in all engagement forums spoke to the need for better and more geographically dispersed infrastructure as an essential component of future growth. A key point raised by participants in relation to this question concerned the large percentage of the population and natural resource industrial base in the West that is located outside of the major urban centres—often in remote regions.

Engagement participants believe economic participation for many individuals and communities is disproportionately dependent on the creation of modern and efficient infrastructure that connects rural and remote communities and businesses to the dynamic economic and educational environments of major urban centres. This would also improve access to both domestic and foreign markets.

Discussions by participants on this theme spoke of the need to enhance both physical infrastructure and digital infrastructure. The latter related primarily to broadband connectivity in rural areas of the West, a long-standing problem that was seen as both urgent and requiring joint action on the part of governments to address.

The input we received on the subject of physical infrastructure covered a wide variety of possible areas for action such as:

- ensuring Western Canada's rail and road transportation infrastructure allowed efficient and safe overland transport to continental markets;
- putting in place the infrastructure to get our natural resources to international markets including building pipeline and port capacity to move western Canadian energy products efficiently; and,
- capitalizing on new northern trade corridors such as the northern trade corridor to Prince Rupert in British Columbia and the potential for new trade and economic opportunities linked to the Port of Churchill in northern Manitoba.

Many participants also spoke of the barriers that a lack of access to high quality broadband services presented to individuals and communities outside of the major urban centres of Western Canada. Without access to broadband, economic growth in many communities in Western Canada would continue to miss opportunities for business start-up and employment linked to the burgeoning online retail and service sectors. Participants also noted that the impact of this gap in digital infrastructure is felt in many different ways. This includes a lack of access to distance learning and online training, which in terms of creating new opportunities for individuals in many rural and remote communities, including Indigenous communities and rural youth - will perpetuate the inability of a significant portion of western Canadians to fully participate and take advantage of job and growth opportunities in the future.

"Without infrastructure like communication, transportation and reliable power and water, economies decline rather than grow."

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

We heard from participants that a highly skilled and trained workforce is essential for future growth in Western Canada. In addition to broad support for ensuring that access to skills and training is available to all western Canadians, responses from participants emphasized two related aspects of why building this capacity in Western Canada is important.

The first of these is that western Canadians must be provided the opportunity to acquire and continually develop the types of skills demanded by the economy of the future. Participants emphasized the changing nature of work and the skills necessary for an adaptable and productive workforce. They suggested a number of ideas to facilitate this as discussed under Question #3 and #4. The other aspect of this issue concerns the need of western Canadian businesses and industries to be able to access to a highly skilled workforce to compete in a global economy.

In response to this question, some participants noted there is a need for governments, industry, and academic institutions to work together to better understand future labour market demands and to develop a coordinated plan to ensure the educational system is producing the type of skilled graduates and workforce that aligns to the evolving needs of the western Canadian economy. We also heard that given the rapid changes that characterize the modern economy of today, it is important that these stakeholders work together to ensure the opportunities for ongoing skills development and retraining are accessible and appropriately targeted to help employees and employers adjust to emerging trends and changing conditions of the broader economy.



Education will continue to be a critical investment to ensure Western Canada produces graduates with the skills and attributes it takes to continuously learn and adapt to changing conditions. This means that graduating more STEAM [science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics] majors to catch up to our OECD and G20 rivals, but also ensuring that vital business roles like sales, product management, operations, marketing and communication are part of the picture, too.

"There is a need for better training of staff – the future economy will require the retraining of workers constantly."

"We need to develop stronger connections between the business community and... post-secondary institutions to link up graduates with employers looking to fill a need."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The identification and discussion by participants of the importance of creating a more entrepreneurial and risk-taking environment in Western Canada was, in some respects, closely linked to the discussion of the type of skills and training that should be emphasized in the future economy. What we heard on entrepreneurship also included a broader set of ideas and observations about the type of action, policies and programs that are needed in the West to establish an environment in which entrepreneurship can thrive. It was clear that in the view of a large number of engagement participants, strong and coordinated support for entrepreneurship is one of the key ways to spur future economic growth in the West. Participants shared ideas around encouraging and enabling entrepreneurs by increasing access to early stage seed and risk capital for business start-up and expansion through mechanisms such as creating an Entrepreneurship Bank. Other ideas included:

- Providing early exposure of students to training and business start-up opportunities as a way of helping them develop the type of entrepreneurial culture and knowledge base that can support them in the economy; and,

- Facilitating networks and collaboration opportunities through incubators, specialized programs, and awards to support new ventures and acquire the skills necessary to start-up a new business, attract investment, and develop the management and operational skills needed to grow a small company into a larger one.

“It’s time to look at entrepreneurship with a different lens and remove the obstacles that make it difficult for Canadians to just get started.”

“We need to encourage entrepreneurship throughout our whole system of government, healthcare, education, etc.”

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

One of the recurring messages that we heard from participants was the need for Western Canada to increase its level of export activity and enhance the western Canadian “brand” and presence in export markets. Many participants spoke of the importance of increasing international trade and ensuring a strong global presence to future growth in many areas of the western Canadian economy. These comments encompassed a variety of different perspectives. Some participants noted that outside of the natural resource sectors only a small percentage of western Canadian businesses exported to foreign markets and most of these were active only in the U.S. market. In relation to natural resource sectors, particularly oil and gas, many participants from across the West felt that it was essential for sustaining economic growth in the foreseeable future to ensure that western Canadian production and exports can safely and efficiently access export markets such as the Asia-Pacific region. We also heard that more needs to be done to encourage and support western Canadian businesses to gain exposure to and traction in foreign markets—particularly in markets other than the U.S. market—through the development and aggressive promotion of a western Canadian brand and increasing financial support to non-exporters and small businesses to identify and capitalize on specific export opportunities. We heard that western Canadians need to be well positioned to take advantage of trade opportunities stemming from recently negotiated trade agreements such as the Canada-European Trade Agreement (CETA) and the United States-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) agreement and new opportunities that will arise from new trade agreements and arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region. Along with business growth and expansion opportunities arising from increasing exports, it was noted that increasing Western Canada’s exposure and involvement in international markets could generate increased investment from foreign sources and result in partnerships and collaborations that could promote western Canadian research and technology strengths and assist in attracting the type of skilled labour and scientific expertise that can help drive future economic growth and industrial expansion.

The table below provides a quantitative breakdown of the top five mentions of each economic theme by participants to Question #2. Total number of responses: 488

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Infrastructure improvements	88
2. Investments in colleges/universities/training/education	81
3. Entrepreneurship	80
4. Facilitate improvement in economic participation by underrepresented groups	74
5. Free trade/increase trade/make better trade deals	68



QUESTION #3

WHAT WILL HELP THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY CONTINUE TO GROW?

INTRODUCTION

Responses to this question highlighted the importance of formulating growth strategies and action plans that take into account the unique circumstances of Indigenous Peoples and communities in Western Canada. Participants identified several ideas and recommendations to support the growth of the Indigenous economy and increase the access of Indigenous Peoples to jobs and business opportunities. But we also heard that these objectives could not be achieved without addressing a number of other issues that have an impact on Indigenous development and economic participation in the West.

Among these issues was the need to address a lack of basic infrastructure in many Indigenous communities. This includes access to clean water, secure and affordable housing, high quality schools and municipal services upon which economic growth depends. Participants who responded to this question also identified issues related to the need for stronger nation-to-nation relationships, and policies and strategies that take into account the traditional knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. It was also noted that Indigenous Peoples often face a systemic bias that creates barriers to obtaining financing and employment, and that the remoteness of communities, and lack of physical and digital infrastructure are factors that can significantly impair Indigenous economic growth. Another theme raised during the engagement was the need for governments to honour Treaties and Indigenous Rights, and to help build public awareness around Indigenous history as important steps for promoting growth and Indigenous participation in the economy.

OVERVIEW

SUPPORTING GROWTH OF THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY REQUIRES:

- **Co-development and Collaboration:** Increase collaboration between government, industry, and Indigenous Peoples.
- **Creating New Opportunities:** Create opportunities through partnerships and engagement in major projects.
- **Improving Access to Education:** Provide skills training and access to jobs.
- **Increasing Entrepreneurship:** Increase access to capital, mentorship, and networks.

KEY THEMES

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS GROWTH

CO-DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

A key message from participants, especially Indigenous participants, was the importance of government and industry working closely with Indigenous communities to plan and implement growth strategies and initiatives. Whether related to major natural resource projects, industry-Indigenous partnerships, or the development by governments of policies and programs, participants felt that a greater effort must be made to understand and design growth opportunities that respected and addressed the local and broader Indigenous culture and traditions. Participants noted that this requires a greater engagement of, and reliance on, Indigenous community and business leaders to help governments and other stakeholders clearly understand priorities for growth of the Indigenous Peoples in the West. Many highlighted the importance of developing relationships and action plans that are able to both capitalize on the strengths and assets offered by Indigenous Peoples, and address the unique barriers that limit Indigenous growth and development. Participants mentioned that greater attention should be given to building on models of successful collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners such as, the joint ventures between Indigenous groups and [SaskPower](#), [Suncor](#), and [Cameco](#), and the [First Nations Technical Advisory Group](#) model in supporting technical services for Indigenous communities.

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Participants spoke to the importance of increasing economic participation for Indigenous Peoples across a wide variety of sectors. These included resource development projects, traditional and value-added agricultural production, arts, culture and tourism, construction, and infrastructure. It was noted, for example, that opportunities exist to increase Indigenous employment, skills development, and business formation related to the development of major natural resource projects throughout the West. To make this happen, participants emphasized the need for industry and governments to engage with Indigenous Peoples to co-develop strategies and plans that support economic and business growth through supply chains, and encouraging partnerships to attract new investment and job creation. Government procurement was also raised as a way to support the growth of Indigenous businesses in the West, including enhancing the federal Aboriginal Procurement Strategy and exploring ways for all governments to increase Indigenous participation in procurement processes.

"I think our Indigenous communities need to attract investors as well as businesses with good technology to partner with."



Many First Nation communities are located on lands suitable to agriculture, either for crops, for livestock, or both. This provides significant opportunity for those who have yet to engage in agriculture as an economic possibility for their communities.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Participants spoke of the importance of education for Indigenous youth, as well as improving access to education, including online access. Other ideas raised included funding training programs closer to home communities, making education and training more affordable, and approaching First Nation education differently from education for other populations. The importance of the training and education curriculum evolving to encompass new technologies, new skills, entrepreneurship (including education on raising capital), as well as ensuring a broad range of continued education on professional, trades and general skills-based programs was also stressed.

In order to facilitate movement from the classroom to the workplace, participants suggested that a variety of delivery methods tailored specifically to the Indigenous community be employed. These could include, using experienced and successful Indigenous businesses and leaders to provide case studies to educate other bands, and programs that can be delivered to remote communities. Several other ideas were also raised to increase Indigenous participation, including partnering or mentorship arrangements with the private sector and/or government, and the creation of partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations in sectors such as, agriculture, cultural and tourism industries where Indigenous partners can work with established businesses and partners who bring needed resources such as capital and technology to the partnership. Additionally, the importance of multi-party partnerships – for example, between governments, post-secondary institutions and Indigenous communities – was highlighted as a way to support transition to the workplace through mechanisms such as grants to firms to hire student interns and offset training costs, and increased hiring of Indigenous students by government organizations.

A related theme to emerge was to increase opportunities to connect potential non-Indigenous partners with Indigenous businesses to learn about Indigenous business successes and develop growth opportunities. Participants also suggested that more opportunities are needed to showcase success stories and to promote successful Indigenous and non-Indigenous business partnerships to inform both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties.

“Small business creation will need to be fostered within the Indigenous community. New businesses and skills need to emerge. Our training programs will need to support these developments. Our post-secondary institutions will need to be challenged to support these requirements.”



Each Indigenous community is different; there are still basic barriers to employment such as not having a bank account. Skills training needs to be adjusted to reflect this.

INCREASING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Participants raised the importance of supporting entrepreneurship as a way to grow the Indigenous economy. Several actions were identified to promote entrepreneurship including improving access to start-up capital and angel investment, increasing awareness and engagement of role models from other successful and experienced Indigenous companies and bands, building on best practices developed by companies and the Indigenous community, and providing education on entrepreneurship. The idea was also put forward of supporting the development of Indigenous business leaders through mentoring programs and internship opportunities through mechanisms such as the Indigenous intern leadership program offered by [Vancouver Island University](#).

"The Indigenous economy will grow through increased participation in the economy through employment and entrepreneurship... The major issue for entrepreneurship is a lack of start-up capital, limited exposure to entrepreneurial role models, ineffective procurement programs for Indigenous owned companies, and lack of exposure to entrepreneurship in schools."

"We need to offer Indigenous communities some portion of the economic opportunities that flow from large projects. For instance, new oil/gas and national infrastructure projects need to set aside a piece of the work and supply chain for Indigenous communities. A national Indigenous procurement strategy would also help here considerably."

The table below provides a quantitative breakdown of the top five mentions of each economic theme by participants to Question #3. Total number of responses: 343

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Entrepreneurship/access to capital and/or economic participation	98
2. Improve schooling/training/fix education issues	95
3. Mentoring/partnering programs with private sector and/or government	81
4. Better/more effective government support	67
5. Better social/cultural understanding and support	67



QUESTION #4

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH, AND NEW IMMIGRANTS?

INTRODUCTION

Participants highlighted common themes and barriers related to participation faced by the groups identified in the question. Two of the main barriers frequently cited were:

- lack of access to education, skills, training, and mentoring opportunities; and,
- systemic biases and structural disadvantages such as, a lack of work or business experience, lack of access to established networks that could assist individuals in finding employment suitable to their skill level, or to the capital and business supports that would provide a pathway for career and business success.

“Getting the first job is usually the most difficult. Create and support work-integrated learning opportunities such as co-op education, internships, apprenticeships, etc. Include a mentorship component where under-represented groups can be supported through the first few months on the job.”

We also heard that maximizing the contribution these groups can make to future economic growth may require some rethinking of conventional economic and business practices.

Women entrepreneurs are already among the fastest growing and successful creators of new businesses and employment. Youth, particularly those with post-secondary training or trade skills, form a growing segment of entrepreneurs and knowledge-based workers in Western Canada. They are actively engaged in new business start-ups and the source of new innovations in both products and services in many sectors. New immigrants, while often underemployed as a group, provide Western Canada with valuable skills, knowledge, and networks that are essential to future economic growth.

Some of the ideas and recommendations that emerged from participants in response to this question suggest that governments and industry may need to find ways to adapt conventional approaches to economic development and growth to ensure these groups, and western Canadians more broadly, have the tools they need. For example, participants noted that social enterprise funding and the use of cooperative business models may be an effective mechanism to address access to capital issues and to provide seed capital and business support to new entrepreneurs. It was also suggested that in many sectors, ways must be found to better connect industries and businesses with skilled and creative individuals and entrepreneurs from these underrepresented groups. In addition to these common themes, participants also identified additional actions that could be taken to address what they felt were unique challenges faced by each of the underrepresented groups that would improve their participation in the economy.

OVERVIEW

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS CAN BE IMPROVED THROUGH ENHANCED SUPPORT TO:

Address common challenges to the economic participation of underrepresented groups in the West, such as:

- **Access to Opportunities:** Increase opportunities for education, training, and mentoring.
- **Eliminating Barriers:** Eliminate systemic bias and structural disadvantages.

Support for the economic participation of underrepresented groups through enhanced support to:

- **Women:** Improve workplace flexibility and access to risk capital.
- **Youth:** Provide funding, training, and connections for first jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **New Immigrants:** Improve foreign credential recognition and access to programs and services.

KEY THEMES

INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

WOMEN

We heard that women face some unique barriers that prevented them from fully participating in the economy. These included a lack of affordable childcare, the punitive impacts of Employment Insurance on paternity leave, difficulties re-entering the workforce, and a lack of flexibility on the part of many employers to accommodate the needs of working mothers. Some participants suggested that a greater effort be made by government and industry to increase the representation of women on corporate boards and in senior leadership positions, and take steps to expand the pool of women who are being asked to sit on boards.

With respect to supporting women entrepreneurs and businesses, a key message that we heard was, “women don’t require government funding and programs because they are women, but because they are business owners.” But we also heard that new and creative mechanisms need to be considered that address barriers faced by women and encourage the growth and development of women-owned businesses and their entry into leadership positions in the labour force.

YOUTH

In their responses to this question, participants reinforced the importance of creating pathways and bridges for students and graduates into the future western Canadian economy. Ideas for achieving this focused on providing more funding and more opportunities to increase internships, cooperative education programs, and first jobs for youth.

“Work integrated learning (WIL) programs can offer students and small businesses opportunities to connect, providing valuable experience for youth and filling vacancies for small employers.”

Participants also highlighted the need to create the conditions and culture that would make it easier for young people to launch new businesses, and capitalize on the creativity and digital skills that can often provide them with a competitive advantage in the business world. Proposed ideas for achieving this, included greater training in entrepreneurship as part of the education system, and access to sufficient risk capital and business expertise through mentoring to create a vibrant and confident class of young entrepreneurs.

NEW IMMIGRANTS

Participants recognized the important contribution new immigrants can make to future growth and development in Western Canada, and to address the skilled labour shortage in the West. They also noted the cost in terms of unfilled jobs and lower productivity that will result if new immigrants continue to be an underemployed and underutilized segment of the western Canadian economy. Ideas put forward during the engagement process to address this issue included:

- the need for a more aggressive approach within Western Canada for the recognition of foreign credentials and degrees held by new immigrants in the West;
- an expansion of language training, skills testing, and upgrading programs; and,
- the need for more culturally sensitive pathways and support systems developed in partnership with industry, government, and members of immigrant communities to support recruitment, integration, and retention.

“Foreign credential recognition is an on-going barrier that hinders the economic integration of immigrants and refugees. The longer these barriers remain, the more challenging it is for Western Canada to benefit from the high skills and talents of immigrants and refugees.”

The table below provides a quantitative breakdown of the top five mentions of each economic theme by participants to Question #4. Total number of responses: 323

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Formal training/coaching	96
2. Apprenticeship/co-op programs	81
3. Incentive programs	70
4. Networking/collaboration opportunities	56
5. Change legislation/adjust quotas to create change	55



QUESTION #5

HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND WESTERN CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY?

INTRODUCTION

Responses from participants to this question highlighted the importance of strong working relationships between all western Canadian stakeholders for ensuring the future growth. There was an underlying sense of urgency about the need for action on the part of governments and other stakeholders to put in place the policies, programs, and strategies to achieve “a stronger Western Canadian economy 10 years from now” and beyond. We also heard quite clearly the view of many participants that federal government policies and strategies must be well coordinated, and tailored to the priorities of Western Canada and to the needs of individual economic regions, communities, and groups within the West.

OVERVIEW

WORKING TOGETHER TO GROW THE WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY MEANS:

- **Increased Partnership and Collaboration:** Grow industries, communities, and participation.
- **Communication and Clarity of Objectives:** Improve communication and clarity of government plans, programs, and objectives.
- **Creating a Supportive Business Climate:** Ensure competitiveness and ease of doing business.
- **Supporting a Western Canadian Global Presence:** Increase trade, investment, and alliances.
- **WD/Government of Canada as Convenor:** Bring together western leaders and stakeholders.

KEY THEMES

WORKING TOGETHER

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

There was widespread support from participants for greater collaboration and partnerships between governments and non-government stakeholders. A number of areas were identified where inter-jurisdictional collaboration and joint planning by governments would be beneficial for long-term growth. These included better coordination of policies and programs to support Indigenous economic development, improved labour market planning, and closer collaboration on infrastructure development, particularly to support growth in regions outside of major urban centres. Significantly, responses to this question did not focus only on improving collaboration between governments. Many participants, for example, raised the need for more partnerships between the private sector and post-secondary and other research institutions to undertake market-driven R&D that could lead to the commercialization of new products and technologies, and promote the transfer of technologies and skills to industry and businesses.

COMMUNICATION AND CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES

In response to this question, participants frequently raised the importance of better communication by governments. For example, participants noted that it was important that government organizations clearly define and communicate the goals of their economic and business development strategies, how progress and success would be defined and measured, and establish performance targets that would help evaluate the success of specific programs and projects. This could help non-government stakeholders to understand more precisely how they “fit” within the economic strategy, and translate some of the more abstract economic and policy concepts such as productivity and innovation into terms that are more easily understood and actionable.

Some participants also felt that it would be useful to broaden the discussion of policy priorities and specific actions on many economic policy matters beyond government-industry-academic circles to bring in a more diverse set of players such as, communities, not-for-profit organizations, Indigenous organizations and small business representatives. Participants who spoke to this idea felt that not only could this lead to more effective planning and program development around many economic development issues, but could also serve to inject new and innovative ideas about ways to address particular regional or sectoral issues.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE

Participants across Western Canada spoke about the need for governments to ensure that the business climate of Canada provides a competitive advantage in global markets. Specific ideas and recommendations raised as part of this discussion included regulatory harmonization and consistency between government agencies and between governments. This would ensure that Canada and Western Canada have a competitive tax and regulatory regime to attract the investment, talent, and global partnerships essential for building a strong and competitive western Canadian economy. The need for clear, consistent and supportive policies and rules governing Intellectual Property (IP) was also identified as a priority in order to ensure that innovations developed in Western Canada—and the economic benefits resulting from our innovation investments—would remain in Western Canada. Several participants identified as a priority for action the reduction of interprovincial trade and regulatory barriers as an important way to facilitate growth. There was also an emphasis on streamlining and improving programs and services for business to make it easier for stakeholders to identify the program support they need, and to ensure consistency and cost-effectiveness of government incentives.

SUPPORTING A WESTERN CANADIAN GLOBAL PRESENCE

There was recognition throughout the engagement process of the importance of international markets and a strong global presence for ensuring continued economic growth and prosperity across Western Canada. Participants encouraged a more collaborative and aggressive approach by governments to support western Canadian companies in international markets, particularly small firms that have little exposure to international markets. Strong working relationships and coordination of activities in this area were also seen as important for fostering research and commercial collaborations with international partners, and attracting new investment and talent to the West. As part of the discussion on this topic, some participants endorsed the idea of developing and promoting a “western Canadian brand” as a way to raise the profile of Western Canada on the global stage. Others called for the revitalization of the New West Partnership Agreement between western Canadian provinces as a way to collaborate on international trade and investment promotion and promote interprovincial trade and regulatory consistency.

WD/GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AS CONVENOR

Some participants suggested the federal government, and particularly WD in Western Canada, could play a stronger convener or facilitator role in bringing together western Canadian and other government and non-government stakeholders to identify trends and issues that impact growth and development in the West and identify priorities for action. Within the context of developing and sustaining a western Canadian growth strategy, many of the themes and issues identified by participants were seen as possible areas for more focused discussion. By periodically bringing together appropriate stakeholders, important economic development trends and issues could be discussed. These discussions could assist governments and other stakeholders to collectively identify potential barriers or new opportunities that will have an impact on future growth in the West and to work together to address them.

The table below provides a quantitative breakdown of the top five mentions of each economic theme by participants to Question #5. Total number of responses: 463

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Increased collaboration/dialogue/communication	170
2. Aligned priorities / shared goals and outcomes	121
3. Taxation that stimulates investment	66
4. Less regulation	65
5. More efficient regulation	42



NEXT STEPS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WD, working with our federal counterparts, is using the input received during the engagement process to inform and develop a Western Canada Growth Strategy framework. This input will also help form the basis of future discussions with other federal departments and agencies, Indigenous communities, and western provincial governments and stakeholders. We will share what we heard from western Canadians who participated in the engagement forums, their vision of the future western Canadian economy, and their ideas about the priorities, policies, and actions that can support the achievement of this vision.

We would like to thank all those who took the time and effort to provide feedback during this process. A complete list of organizations that participated in the WD engagement forums is provided in [Annex II](#). Collectively and individually, their responses were invaluable in helping WD and other government leaders to better understand and define the challenges and opportunities that will influence western Canadian and provincial economic, industrial, and business activity and success in the future.

ANNEX I:

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

BRITISH COLUMBIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report captures the main themes that were discussed during BC Region's Western Canada Growth Strategy roundtables. These themes are based on multiple notetakers' data, and are grouped according to the five questions which guided the roundtables. Although the roundtables covered a variety of topics, the issues that resonated the most with participants included the following:

- Measuring economic success.
- Innovation (opportunities in agriculture, precision health, and the film industry).
- Skills, training and talent attraction/retention.
- Connectivity as an enabler of growth in Indigenous communities.
- Women and Indigenous Peoples on corporate boards.
- The importance of developing regional solutions.
- Capitalizing on the northern trade corridor.
- The role of federal government as convener.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Roundtable participants raised a number of recommendations and suggestions for action, which align with the main themes outlined above:

- Need to look at our **definition of economic success** and ensure that it goes beyond the traditional measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It should consider environmental and social elements, as well as inclusiveness.
- The film industry should focus on **developing intellectual property (IP)** in order to remain competitive globally.
- Need to implement a program to **encourage entrepreneurial spirit**, reduce financial burdens to innovation, and remove some of the inherent risk of entrepreneurship.
- Entrepreneurs in BC need to be **outward facing and consider exporting**.
- Need mechanisms to help companies **build/support capacity of senior level management once a firm transitions** from a medium to large size.
- Ensure we have the **best infrastructure (particularly connectivity) in Indigenous communities**, as this is an enabler of growth. You can't build innovative world-class companies without this.
- Continued **support for childcare** would improve economic participation of underrepresented groups.
- If we're looking for movement on women and Indigenous issues, we need **more representation on corporate boards**.
- The government should put incentives in place to **develop a regional solution** to economic development.
- Indigenous Peoples need **better access to training and jobs** in the context of resource extraction projects.
- Need **more collaboration and co-development** between Indigenous Peoples, government, and industry.
- The federal government can **play a convener role** year after year on key issues.
- Government needs to **create the environment to allow young people to stay in smaller centres**.

QUESTION #1:

WHAT DOES A STRONGER WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

Theme #1: Measuring economic success

- Economic success indicators: In one of the BC roundtables, there was considerable discussion about how to define economic success indicators. Participants felt that when we look at economic growth and success, we need to look at our definition and ensure that it goes beyond the traditional measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They felt that this definition should consider environmental and social elements, as well as inclusiveness.
- Examples of well-being measures: There was some discussion about current approaches to measuring well-being. One example was how the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) uses well-being measures that are comparable across countries, but doesn't take into account the richness of sectors or regions. Another example is the BC Government's Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), which is in its early days. The GPI looks at economic, social and environmental progress, and the focus is on how these three agendas move together concurrently.

Theme #2: Innovation

- The need to commercialize innovation in Western Canada: There was discussion about how we do phenomenal work on research and development in universities, but then we are slow to commercialize our innovations. Unless we make things here, we will be buying other peoples' innovations. This is a guiding theme across sectors in Western Canada: you're either a buyer or a seller (and exporter). The more energy we can put towards commercializing our innovations, the better.
- Opportunities in agricultural innovation: Agricultural innovation opportunities will become increasingly viable due to climate change, and could be a game changing sector in the future (e.g. opportunities with legal cannabis). Clean tech in agriculture will be the same model as with coal or lumber - innovative technologies increase efficiencies. The key to advancing this sector will be to find businesses that are able to accelerate these opportunities. We need to engage young people and Indigenous communities, as they are well equipped to participate in and pioneer this.
- Opportunities in precision health: There was considerable discussion in two of the roundtables about the significant opportunities in precision health. Participants noted that it could and should change our health care, but it's not being implemented. Part of the reason for this is we don't have incentives to adopt precision health in the Canadian system, but in the United States, insurance companies have huge incentives to do so. There are opportunities to develop precision health in BC, but in order to move forward, we have to stop seeing health as a cost centre and instead view it as an economic driver.
- Opportunities in the film industry: In one of the roundtables, there was discussion about how the film industry should focus on developing intellectual property (IP) in order to remain competitive globally. The film industry is successful in BC, but the majority of the work is service work, and the IP isn't owned here. We have the skills and talent to produce world-class content, which could be exported globally. We need to consider this as the global market increases, as IP investment opportunities could disappear in the next 10 years.

Theme #3: Skills, training and talent attraction/retention

- Challenges re: skills and training: It was noted that in some sectors in the North, little to no training is done locally, resulting in people leaving their communities to find work and businesses hiring foreign workers. Another challenge in the North is that high wages for general labour creates a disincentive for people to pursue a post-secondary education.
- Challenges re: talent attraction/retention: This was discussed in each of the roundtables. Participants noted the challenge of attracting talent in Metro Vancouver given the high cost of housing. One potential solution could be to examine our transit system and think about Metro Vancouver as one large region rather than 21 sub-regions. Participants were also curious about whether there was a strategy to retain people in their communities once large projects such as LNG were constructed.
- Indigenous intern leadership program: One participant mentioned a good example of how to retain young Indigenous graduates in their communities. Vancouver Island University has launched an Indigenous intern leadership program, under which companies hire Indigenous graduates into roles in the community.

Theme #4: Developing regional solutions/capitalizing on the northern trade corridor

- The problem with developing Vancouver-centric solutions: A lot of effort is going into solving the housing and affordability problems in Vancouver, which creates problems in other areas of BC, including smaller rural cities. It keeps people in Vancouver and draws people away from BC's smaller communities. There was strong consensus on this point.
- Capitalizing on northern trade corridors: During the roundtable in Prince George, there was considerable discussion about taking advantage of how their road and rail networks tie to the port. Participants commented that with their inland ports and expanding rail lines in the North, it is significantly more efficient than using southern ports to reach Asian markets.

QUESTION #2:

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO SPUR NEW GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA?

Theme #1: Difficulty in spurring new growth here

- Challenges with building businesses in BC: Participants commented that it is difficult to build a business in BC. One roundtable participant (an entrepreneur) tells young entrepreneurs to not think about starting a business here because we're not set up as an economy to be big risk-takers (they are encouraged to find early adopters in the US instead). Participants also mentioned that we don't have a competitive cost structure for businesses, resulting in losing firms to other jurisdictions.
- Cost of living in Metro Vancouver: People want to raise their kids in Metro Vancouver but they're struggling. It is difficult to attract employees and managers because as soon as they see the cost of living (e.g. housing, food, taxes), they don't want to work here.

Theme #2: Need to build incentives and promote innovation

- Lack of incentives to innovate: Current incentive models aren't inducing innovation. The innovation adoption rate in Canada is low because wage growth and taxes are low, making it unnecessary to undertake expensive innovations.
- Need to promote innovation: We need to incent people to come here and take risks through removing barriers to innovation.

Theme #3: Connectivity as a tool to attract talent

- Capitalizing on connectivity in smaller regions: There was discussion about how smaller regions could act as remote hubs for Metro Vancouver, which would allow firms to hire from outside. One example is in Rossland, where there is a large number of coders and developers who come into Vancouver only when needed. If we have connectivity and a huge talent pool, this becomes a compelling case for the tech sector to open offices in other places in BC.

Theme #4: Market development

- Need to change mindsets re: market development: Participants discussed how one way to spur growth might entail recognizing regional and domestic opportunities before focusing on international exports. They also noted that entrepreneurs in BC need to be outward facing and consider exporting – such as in the case of Israel, which has a mindset of innovation and exporting. Prince George roundtable participants mentioned that rural areas don't have the population density to support entrepreneurs, resulting in the need to export in order to be sustainable.

Theme #5: Supporting SME scale up

- Challenges in transitioning from medium to large companies: Participants noted that we do little to help companies make the final step to grow from medium size to large, but we do a lot for large international companies. One example is Amazon's decision of where to locate its second headquarters location – governments submitted applications highlighting incentives that they would offer if Amazon decided to locate there, but this doesn't happen for SME's.
- Helping SMEs develop management capacity once they become large companies: There was discussion about how there need to be mechanisms and programs to help companies train/change senior level management once the firm becomes large. Currently, once a start-up reaches a certain point, many CEOs can no longer be at the top of the company because they don't have the skillset to run such large enterprises. At this point, many companies choose to sell their businesses to larger players and exit. One solution to this problem is RevUp, a new program under which the CEO becomes the visionary and others are brought in to take over management roles.

QUESTION #3: WHAT WILL HELP THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY CONTINUE TO GROW?

Theme #1: Issue with WCGS question

- We should stay away from using the current wording on question #3. This is the wrong question. Indigenous communities want to write their own plan.

Theme #2: Defining “success”

- Different versions of “success”: One Indigenous participant noted that everyone wants to have purpose and hope, and this looks different to different communities. We should not impose western definitions of success on Indigenous communities. There is a significant difference in goals, and priorities will differ among Indigenous communities. It would be helpful if projects were local, and Indigenous communities were asked how they would like to be involved in the big picture. Participants noted that it would be helpful to engage with the younger generation when defining success, given that they will be living this.

Theme #3: Connectivity as an enabler of growth in Indigenous communities

- Infrastructure as an enabler of growth: We need to ensure we have the best infrastructure (transportation, connectivity, health care, etc.) as this is an enabler of growth. You can’t build innovative world-class companies without this.
- Affordability of connectivity: We need to have a conversation about the affordability of connectivity in Indigenous communities. Connectivity costs at least \$9-million per year in Indigenous communities, but the government doesn’t cover this cost. This is unfortunate because connectivity has impacts on economic growth in these communities.

Theme #4: Changes to the *Indian Act*

- Challenges with the current *Indian Act*: Regulations around the *Indian Act* are problematic, as they do not allow mobility, ownership, or entrepreneurship. Expecting innovation and economic growth in this sort of system is not possible, and changes to the *Indian Act* will be a step in helping to resolve this.

Theme #5: Representation on corporate boards

- Increased representation on boards as a driver of change: Participants commented that if we’re looking for movement on Indigenous issues, we need more representation on boards. One Indigenous member is not enough, as it is “token” and places too much of a burden on that one person. The corporate world is a closed environment, and learning about the system and its influencers is a long process. We are losing young Indigenous women as board members because they don’t want to have to educate people on Indigenous issues (this is a large responsibility that typically falls on one woman).

QUESTION #4: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH, AND NEW IMMIGRANTS?

Theme #1: Ideas to improve economic participation of underrepresented groups

- Childcare: There is a need for continued support re: childcare, in order to improve economic participation. We need to solve this problem particularly in the tech community.

Theme #2: Investing in youth

- Timing: Participants weren’t sure that we were investing in young people as much as we should, as early as possible. Educators say that you have to reach young people by the time they’re in grade 10. Grade 12 is too late.

Theme #3: Women on corporate boards

- Challenges that women face: When women achieve the highest C-suite positions, they don’t enjoy the shareholder support that men have. This means that women need a lot of strength to stay in their position, and they are constantly fighting to stay in their roles and positions of power. Therefore, there is a need to focus on retention and not just placement.
- Quotas: Until we see more women on corporate boards, we need to use models such as quotas. This is something to aspire to. Including women on boards has shown to improve a company’s bottom line.

Theme #4: Acknowledging the impact of extracting resources from Indigenous territories and ensuring equitable opportunity and impact

- Ideas to improve equal opportunities: When resources are extracted from Indigenous lands, Indigenous Peoples need to gain access to the jobs and wealth that are created by resource projects. Indigenous Peoples also need to have equal opportunities for training and education.
- Access to drivers licenses: Increasing access to drivers licences would improve Indigenous Peoples' prospects of employment on resource projects. This access would also provide a mechanism for Indigenous women to leave an unsafe home.

Theme #5: Collaboration and co-development of ideas

- Collaboration: There needs to be more collaboration between Indigenous Peoples, government, and industry. This will give a sense of ownership to Indigenous Peoples. Having a model that specifically does this will encourage equal participation and opportunity.
- Co-developing ideas: Coming to Indigenous Peoples with projects and asking if they are in agreement doesn't work. Rather, coming to them with opportunities for ownership does (e.g. using a Nation-to-Nation approach). This requires more work but it is necessary.

QUESTION #5: HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND WESTERN CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY?

Theme #1: The Government of Canada as convener

- Convening role: This theme came up in two of the roundtables. The Government of Canada can play a convener role year after year on key issues (eg. economy, health care). One participant appreciated the role that WD plays in consultations. Participants noted that we should find fora to develop initiatives together (federal/provincial/municipal governments, together with industry leaders) on a regular basis, for an ongoing dialogue. Canadians are good at collaborating, cooperating and listening, and we need to capitalize on this.

Theme #2: The productivity storyline

- Communicating the productivity storyline effectively: Although the province is doing well economically, GDP growth is starting to show decline. It is incumbent upon public servants and businesses to tell a story that resonates with the public. This productivity storyline needs to be more real for politicians. We need to talk to politicians in terms of "standard of living growth" instead.

Theme #3: Commitment to a regional solution

- Need incentives to develop a regional solution: This theme resonated during the Prince George roundtable. Participants commented that the government should put incentives in place that demonstrate a commitment to a regional solution, and encourage project proponents to ensure that their projects are benefiting the regions that they are working in.

Theme #4: Retaining graduates in the community

- Challenge with retaining graduates in smaller communities: There is a gap in the system after students complete post-secondary education, in that there isn't much incentive to stay in smaller communities. Participants emphasized this unique situation in northern and rural environments. Potential solutions could be to attract companies and satellite offices to smaller communities, or develop co-op opportunities there. Participants noted that the government needs to create the environment to allow young people to stay in smaller centres.

Theme #5: Promoting trade corridors

- Promoting trade corridors: Participants noted that this is very important for getting Canadian products to market and promoting the Canadian brand globally.
- Trade and Export Promotion: Government support to SMEs to attract foreign investment and expand trade networks.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

ALBERTA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In fall 2018, the Government of Canada undertook engagement sessions across Western Canada to support the development of a Western Canada Growth Strategy. The What We Heard – Alberta Roundtable report brings together the comments and thoughts from roundtables that took place within Alberta. The following represents our efforts to summarize the diverse input of provincial stakeholders, including industry, academia, not-for-profits, Indigenous communities and organizations, and different areas of government.

QUESTION #1: WHAT DOES A STRONGER WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

Diversification

Alberta roundtable participants highlighted the importance of economic diversification in order to reduce the volatility of commodity-based boom and bust cycles. A common thread among participants was the need to build on our existing natural resource strengths, engage in value-added opportunities that will help to create stable growth, and to reduce our reliance on commodity price-taking. Additionally, attendees noted the need to invest in areas outside of our traditional strengths, including high-tech sectors like artificial intelligence, cyber security, and robotics, which will continue to add value to traditional industries. Other areas of potential diversification mentioned include: agri-food; clean technology; life sciences and healthcare; and tourism.

There was a strong message that diversification needs to be grounded in a recognition of the economic contribution that Alberta's oil and gas sector makes to the province and the country. Participants commented that resources are the engine of economic growth in Western Canada, and they are also a driver for diversification. We can leverage existing resources in order to meet future global energy demand while transitioning to a lower carbon future. It was emphasized that this can only be achieved if Alberta's resources are able to reach international markets. Similarly, market diversification is critical to ensuring that Western Canada is not reliant on the United States, and that Alberta companies are integrated into global supply chains.

Indigenous participants emphasized the need for Indigenous communities and government to work together in partnership to build fully self-sustaining communities with less reliance on government programming. Some Indigenous roundtable participants stressed the importance of directing natural resources activity, including the development of revenue-sharing agreements that will support economic opportunities. Participants suggested that the designation process for land use under the *Indian Act* is a barrier to economic development. In addition, the need to integrate renewable energy projects into Indigenous community economic development plans, and for communities to take advantage of agriculture value-added opportunities, was also voiced by Indigenous roundtable attendees.

Innovation: According to roundtable participants, creating a more diverse economy requires shifting towards a knowledge-based economy centered on innovation. This shift requires investments in the development of smart technologies, as well as greater adoption of technologies. It also requires us to tap into the pure and applied research potential of our post-secondary institutions, and to turn our inventive capacity into economic value. We need to develop an innovative culture based on continuous learning and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Provide government support for value-added processing activities related to energy and agriculture.

Infrastructure

As a large region with a small population, roundtable attendees told us that a stronger western Canadian economy requires sufficient and efficient infrastructure. Transportation infrastructure enables stronger supply chains, making it easier for us to move goods and people in and out of the province. Digital infrastructure is a particular area of concern for participants, who pointed to broadband infrastructure gaps that disadvantage rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. This lack of infrastructure limits potential economic growth and options for innovation.

Participants noted that Indigenous communities are underserved by transportation and digital infrastructure, but also by basic infrastructure such as housing, water, and sewer services. Indigenous attendees also voiced that their communities need better infrastructure to encourage a healthy livelihood, business opportunities, and to create jobs. It was suggested that improved infrastructure would also motivate young individuals to stay within their communities after completing their post-secondary studies, thereby supporting communities to become autonomous and self-sustaining.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Mandate shared access to broadband infrastructure.
- Update Canada's aging infrastructure.
- Focus on infrastructure needs of rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Education and skills

Roundtable participants view a stronger western economy as one that is prepared for the future, with a workforce that is more inclusive, flexible, and highly skilled. Including underrepresented participants (women, Indigenous Peoples, and immigrants) in the workforce will allow us to take advantage of untapped labour market potential. We need to be flexible in our ability to quickly retrain and redeploy people into knowledge-based industries. Alongside, participants noted that better labour force data will allow us to anticipate future talent needs and ensure alignment between skills demand and supply. All of this is underpinned by an education system that prepares students for the future economy.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Have companies, economic development groups, and government provide tours to schools across the province to increase awareness of economic and career opportunities.
- Launch a campaign similar to 'Canada Heritage Moments' on future career opportunities.
- Expand work integrated learning programs.

Summary

Roundtable attendees see a stronger western economy as one that is diverse, resilient, and knowledge-based. In 10 years, a stronger economy will have the necessary infrastructure to support the growth of the future, including market access, as well as the education and skills that the future economy will require. Innovation will be the underlying foundation of our economy, and governments, educational institutions, and industry will be aligned in their efforts to support business growth and development. Discussions on this topic featured both excitement and energy around the enormous potential that Alberta holds, coupled with some anxiety around making sure that we move quickly enough to avoid being left behind by a future that is rapidly evolving.

QUESTION #2:

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO SPUR NEW GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA?

Business support

According to roundtable participants, spurring new growth will require adequate government support to provide businesses with the tools they need to succeed. Companies require access to capital in order to support their scale-up and technology commercialization, particularly those with a high-growth orientation. Businesses need funding to support training, marketing, and business development. They also need access to advice and mentorship. Efforts should be made to ensure that the same services and funding are available in small, rural, and Indigenous communities. We also need to encourage Alberta companies to think beyond local markets and pursue growth opportunities internationally, recognizing that Alberta has products that the rest of the world wants.

While many good funding supports do exist, participants perceive that they are often too complicated and costly to pursue. In particular, slow government assessment processes are a disincentive. Additionally, companies have difficulty navigating the vast array of programs that exist across multiple levels of government. Participants emphasized that government procurement is a powerful tool that can provide opportunities for local and Indigenous businesses, but many companies report excessive difficulty in acquiring government contracts. Roundtable attendees are also concerned about creating a competitive tax environment and a regulatory system that is efficient, fair, and competitive on an international level. There is a risk that we are over-regulating, which is hindering innovation and restricting growth.

Roundtable attendees voiced that capacity building is critical in helping Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to enhance skill sets and expertise. Supporting skills development in areas such as financial literacy and management will assist communities in negotiating partnerships and setting up businesses in areas that are linked to their natural resources. Further, Indigenous participants expressed the need for access to capital for entrepreneurs and band-owned businesses, including measures such as strengthening support to Indigenous financial institutions and promoting joint venture opportunities.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Create an Entrepreneur Bank, similar to the Infrastructure Bank, to provide early stage loans or grants to businesses.
- Expand aspects of the Alberta Investor Tax Credit on a federal level.
- Create a central source that lists all government programs.
- Provide support for Intellectual Property protection to reduce up-front costs faced by entrepreneurs.
- Adopt a funder of funds model rather than funding business directly.
- Create more open-ended funding with less specific requirements, modeled after the U.S. Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program or the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.
- Contract industry to help in reviewing and assessing government-funding programs.
- Adopt a two-phase application process to allow companies to verify initial project ideas.
- Create a one-stop-shop, integrated with government services, to help shepherd entrepreneurs through the process of establishing a business.
- Strengthen existing Indigenous lending institutions.
- Increase micro-lending to Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- Facilitate joint venture opportunities between the private sector and Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities.

Ecosystem collaboration

Participants also emphasized the need for better coordination within the innovation ecosystem, including government, post-secondary institutions, and industry in order to spur new growth in Western Canada. A focus should be placed on preventing duplication of programs and harmonizing efforts as much as possible. Better collaboration will allow Alberta's post-secondary institutions to collectively produce the talent and research capabilities that are needed by the future economy. A proper ecosystem will also help create receptor capacity, where established companies can then absorb the talent that is produced, thereby ensuring we are able to leverage the economic value of our own creative capacity.

Skills development

According to participants, in order to develop a workforce that is equipped for the future economy, Alberta will need to foster the proper skills to facilitate this transition. Access to skilled workers is already a challenge, and companies have to look internationally to acquire the talent they need. Greater connections between post-secondary institutions and businesses should be fostered so that both parties understand the current training needs, and are able to support those who want to pivot out of traditional industries. At the same time, many participants indicated that Alberta cannot solve all of its talent requirements domestically. Instead, filling skills gaps will require the attraction of high-performing talent from abroad.

Indigenous participants indicated that education continues to be an issue on-reserve and in remote/rural communities. Low levels of funding impact the quality of the education, which discourages students to stay in school and impedes progress on to post-secondary or trades education.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Promote Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) credits in order to attract international talent.
- Create a national competency framework to help address skills mismatches. A framework could enable people to move around geographically and across industries, as well as make it easier for new immigrants to find work.
- Focus our attention on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and arts (STEAM), in particular with women.
- Improve the quality of education and increase skills and trades training for Indigenous communities.

Other

- Providing venues and opportunities for businesses to share their information and experiences with each other fosters greater understanding of the benefits of export and other opportunities, and helps entrepreneurs grow by learning from the experience of others.
- We need to do better at promoting our strengths and showcasing our achievements to the nation and the world.

Summary

Roundtable participants identified that the best ways to spur new growth are to support business scale-up and growth activities, technology commercialization, and export opportunities. Spurring growth requires us to collaborate, to harness the advantages of working collectively rather than in silos. It also requires us to foster and acquire the skills and talent that will enable us to remain competitive in the future economy. Sharing our experiences and promoting ourselves internationally will also help to spur growth in both new and traditional markets. Overarching all of these is the concern from participants that we lack a strong vision and sense of urgency that are instrumental to spurring innovative growth in Western Canada.

QUESTION #3:

WHAT WILL HELP THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY CONTINUE TO GROW?

Cultural understanding

Roundtable participants are aware of cultural differences relating to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. A common response across participants was the need to incorporate Indigenous understanding into all programs and policies that affect Indigenous Peoples. Being sensitive to the different needs of each Indigenous community and avoiding generalizations is important in supporting the economic growth of each Indigenous community, business, or individual.

Another theme discussed was the need for government to honour Treaties and Indigenous Rights, and to help build the public's awareness around Indigenous history. In particular, there is a need to engage, listen, and work collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples to develop approaches that take into consideration Indigenous perspectives. These actions can help address the various forms of racism that are still present today against Indigenous Peoples.

Attendees stated that it is also important to proudly recognize Indigenous success stories and showcase them as role models for younger generations. Supporting leadership from within Indigenous communities and supporting the development of Indigenous leaders is essential to constructing a future without racism and prejudices. Further, participants mentioned that attention should be given to building partnerships and fostering cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities in government, industry, academia, and civil society. Industry and academia should recognize the cultural shocks that Indigenous youth face when entering post-secondary education or the labour force for the first time, and should practice more flexibility with their policies.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Provide cultural competency training for non-Indigenous employees in both the private and public sector.
- Create cultural spaces for Indigenous students in educational institutions.
- Help foster pride in being Indigenous, and encourage knowledge of Indigenous traditions.

Tools for success

Roundtable attendees emphasized the importance of leveling the playing field between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples when supporting economic growth and development opportunities. Government, academia and industry must work closely with Indigenous communities to close the education gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It was mentioned that due to institutional barriers, Indigenous Peoples struggle to acquire traditional bank loans. Increasing funding options for Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses, and providing access to affordable financial literacy programs as well as other capacity building programs, would help them overcome this barrier. As the population with the highest proportion of young people, increasing workforce training opportunities and work experience programs is essential for growing the Indigenous economy. Lastly, participants voiced that procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses from both the private and public sector is an important tool that needs to be strengthened and streamlined for efficiency.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Implement fiscal policies that help ensure that financial barriers do not prevent qualified Indigenous students from attending and completing post-secondary degree programs. Examples of such policies include: targeted scholarships; research and training grants; and additional concessionary lending to students.
- Explore co-operative business approaches for Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs, given the strong emphasis on social integration.
- Provide incentives for equal partnership investments and development opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities.
- Showcase examples of successful partnerships.
- Support Indigenous sporting events, as they boost inclusivity and acceptance amongst citizens and communities.
- Strengthen procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses.

Summary

Roundtable participants recognized the need to educate the public on the barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples due to racism and the legacy of residential schools and colonialism. Discussions around this topic were coupled with both frustration and optimism over our ability to address the issues facing the western Canadian Indigenous population. Participants feel it is optimal to address these barriers through policies and programs that embrace Indigenous understandings, support the growth of the Indigenous economy and encourage the development of Indigenous leaders. In order to achieve such a goal, essential tools like basic necessities and infrastructure, quality education, broadband internet, and access to capital are critical to the economic growth of Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs.

QUESTION #4: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH, AND NEW IMMIGRANTS?

Culture and education

Many participants pointed to underlying social and cultural issues as a key factor that is holding back the economic participation of underrepresented groups in Alberta. Some discussions had a hopeful tone, noting that significant progress has already been made. However, there was a recognition that our society still has a long way to go. Our unconscious biases make it challenging to acknowledge what we do not see, and that often diversity is simply not on our radar. A shift in mindset is needed in order to make lasting changes, with significant hope placed in a new generation of thinkers who will grow up with different social and cultural influences.

To shape this new generation, participants noted that we need to focus on education as the conduit to instill key values early on. This includes a focus on promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in early education to stimulate interest among children of all genders. We also need to take a comprehensive systemic look at the social norms that might prevent underrepresented groups, particularly women, from participating.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Go beyond the core subjects to provide education on entrepreneurial skills to youth.
- Pay attention to the language used in job advertisements, which may unconsciously push women away from applying.
- Update the Junior Achievement Program.
- Promote success stories.

Funding, support, and incentives

There were diverse opinions on the degree to which government should intervene to support specific underrepresented groups. Some saw the need for greater investment, incentives and opportunities specifically for women in order to address challenges in getting additional capital for growth and expansion. There was an emphasis on program criteria that are broad enough to give women a realistic opportunity to receive funding, yet specific enough to target those that need the support. Others were uncomfortable with the idea of targeted funding programs, citing concerns that such programs make women feel more marginalized and less capable. There was a sense from some participants that women do not require government funding and resources because they are women, but because they are business owners. There was broad support for other measures such as mentorship programs that would provide softer assistance to women business owners and build confidence among underrepresented groups.

Participants also emphasized the need to support youth employment and training programs that provide relevant work experience. There is a sense that businesses often do not recognize the capabilities and value that students and recent graduates bring.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Take a 'farm team' approach to investing in underrepresented groups.
- Provide support for student competitions.
- Provide incentives for diversity.
- Set up a mentorship program to give underrepresented entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn from more experienced and successful industry leaders.
- Create peer advisory boards to give women practical advice on their businesses.
- Promote skills, leadership, and entrepreneurial youth camps (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

Barriers to participation

Participants also highlighted the need to address those specific barriers that hamper greater economic participation. These include things such as workplace flexibility and affordable childcare, as well as normalizing leave to reduce the impact to women's careers when they take parental leave. This is closely linked to deeper cultural issues and the need to create an environment where women feel that they can fully participate.

Indigenous participants cited racism, sexism, and lack of capacity as challenges faced by Indigenous youth and women to economic participation. Integrating traditional knowledge and cultural beliefs into support programs, child care and wrap-around services, and mentorship and skills development services are important to overcoming these barriers.

The need to recognize the qualifications of immigrants, who represent a significant source of highly qualified personnel was emphasized. Using a credential system that evaluates diplomas and degrees does not adequately account for the true competencies and capabilities of immigrants.

Many participants shied away from the use of quotas as a potential mechanism to increase participation of marginalized individuals, citing concerns that merit requirements might be lowered. This could result in more barriers by creating a perception that individuals are not fully qualified.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Implement full-day kindergarten.
- Establish a competency-based assessment process for new immigrants.
- Implement a rewards-based system for businesses and organizations who partner with marginalized groups.
- Use public procurement as a means to encourage diversity by asking businesses how diverse their supplier network is.
- Provide wrap-around services for Indigenous women and youth that are founded in traditional cultural knowledge.

Summary

According to Alberta roundtable participants, we can increase the economic participation of underrepresented groups in the province first by acknowledging and working to address the deeper social, cultural and systemic issues that form the basis of this problem. We can make changes to our education system to shape a new generation of thinkers. We can provide funding, support and incentives to help fast-track these changes, and we can take targeted action to address the barriers that underrepresented groups face. There is some optimism around the progress that has been made to date, but there is also a sense of discouragement at the slow pace at which change seems to occur. Ultimately, a stronger western Canadian economy is one that includes all participants in the economy.

QUESTION #5: HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND WESTERN CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY?

Communication and collaboration

Roundtable input indicated that collaboration needs to take place more broadly and with diverse groups beyond the 'usual suspects' (government, academia, and industry) when it comes to economic development. Today's changing economic landscape requires enhanced communication and collaboration between all levels of government, Indigenous organizations, post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit associations, industry, and civil society. Through convening opportunities and partnership building, trust will build between partners to strengthen the western Canadian ecosystem.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Government should play a convenor role for key players to gather and share information and experiences, create trust, and better understand how they can collaborate
- Break down the interprovincial barriers to collaboration to allow the West to operate as a unit on the international stage.
- Ensure government funding criteria encourages partnerships, particularly with underrepresented groups.

Business environment

Participants indicated that the government should take a supporting role to economic development by taking measures to create an environment where businesses can thrive. The need to create a more efficient and streamlined regulatory system was emphasized, as was stimulating growth through tax relief and incentives. Frustration was expressed about the duplication that occurs within and between the provincial and federal levels of government. Government needs to understand and support the 'speed of business' to allow industry to access opportunities as they emerge. Often regulations put in place in the past cause unnecessary burdens and delayed timelines.

Key barriers to regional economic growth identified by participants include: Interprovincial trade barriers; lack of government collaboration; archaic bureaucratic practices and regulations; and policies subject to election cycles.

Privatization was raised as tool to assist with streamlining and decreasing regulatory burden within government. It was suggested that Canada could learn from international examples of using privatization to allow greater growth and creation of intellectual property. Cycles of government with changing mandates and periods of inactivity for elections were also discussed. Government needs to smooth out these adjustments to decrease the negative impact on business.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Review regulatory regimes and adjust to reduce and streamline the burden placed on industry.
- Explore what no longer needs to be undertaken by government (due to technological advancements) and could be better done by the private sector.
- Simplify tax credits such as SR&ED.

Branding

Participants identified the need to be more vocal about the strengths and examples of success that are in Alberta and across the West. Marketing our expertise nationally and internationally will assist businesses in developing new markets, for example in our strength in artificial intelligence. In the bureaucratic, political, and industrial arenas, leaders need to advocate cooperatively for Western Canada. A shared vision to promote Western Canada would strengthen our image internationally.

Suggested Future Actions:

- Create awareness of the strengths of Alberta and the West through branding and marketing.
- Inform diplomatic staff abroad about Alberta and the West's strengths and capabilities, in order to help sell our country better.
- Take a 'team' approach to achieving shared goals and meeting with national and international partners.

Summary

Participants identified that collaboration and communication were cornerstones for creating the economy of the future. Government can assist by convening and decreasing barriers for collaboration. The legacies of regulations and outdated practices need to be examined and updated. Government needs to react quickly to create environments that are supportive of business development and competitiveness. More needs to be done to tell our story to the world and to build global recognition of regional strengths.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

SASKATCHEWAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report makes an attempt to amalgamate the participant feedback from the Western Canada Growth Strategy Saskatchewan engagement sessions. The session notes for each question posed from the engagement sessions were reviewed, and then compiled within each question. Participant feedback varied tremendously for each question, and therefore the synopsis that follows is not a comprehensive portrait. The impetus of this report was to construct a more qualitative narrative around the participants' feedback. The participant feedback presented in this executive summary is that which was most commonly communicated throughout the engagement sessions.

Saskatchewan roundtable participants see a more inclusive economy for Western Canada in the next decade. This inclusive economy has greater Indigenous participation as both employers and employees. They see the active participation of all identified groups in the economy. They see technology further influencing how we work and operate a business. Given this requirement, high-speed internet access (broadband) was cited at each round table. Large transformative projects including defined modern basics for health, well-being and economic activity - water, housing, and roads were mentioned at every session. These projects were stated in addition to pipelines, rail lines and ports to move western Canadian products and goods.

Education, training and workplace understanding were discussed not just for training but also for a more inclusive economy and community. The bar for education is getting higher; we need to continue training in targeted ways. Participants stressed the need to create capacity and pathways and to use entrepreneurial education at a younger age as important to fuel economic growth. Challenges were identified in employability following training and a need to identify future needs to target job training and better utilization of immigrant and Indigenous populations' skills. The youth session identified the need for more training in the digital transformation space.

Access to capital is an on-going issue. The Indigenous representatives want to see a rapid conclusion to several Treaty Land Entitlement claims so these resources can be used to provide needed capital to Indigenous projects.

Red tape and government regulations remain a concern for business establishment, development and job growth. Although the supercluster initiative is highly supported in Saskatchewan, participants asked for more incentives for industry to work with researchers and for the financial support to be used for more innovative, higher-risk, projects.

QUESTION #1: WHAT DOES A STRONGER WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

Saskatchewan respondents' vision for Western Canada in the coming decade stressed a more inclusive heterogeneous membership within the economy and the community. With a young and growing Indigenous population within the province, their vision described stronger relationships between provincial, federal, Indigenous and business leaders.

Education was a frequently discussed topic within the Saskatchewan sessions. The word was used not only in the traditional sense within the education and training system but in understanding the resources, talents and infrastructure the West has to offer the nation and internationally. The word was used in describing the amount of misinformation or complete lack of knowledge on the history of government-Indigenous relationships, and the impact of federal legislation past and pending.

Participants saw a future for the West where western resources and products were easily transported out of the region to national and international markets. They saw more value-added products being produced and sold internationally. These new and/or improved products are still in our areas of strength, which fall within our cluster focus areas.

They saw tremendous changes in work and production throughout the economy, where automation and digitization are within all industrial sectors. This change will further challenge our education and training systems. It will also challenge rural businesses and operations. Further, youth want to know what jobs will be retained within the province with this shift.

Participants recommendations/suggestions for action

Participants were looking for projects, which provided transformational changes to the region. They spoke to the need of rural and remote access to high-speed internet (broadband), large-scale water infrastructure and transportation projects.

They want to see greater emphasis and work on making a more inclusive community and economy. They want the education system to introduce entrepreneurship earlier in the school systems and support it throughout their education including post-secondary.

Summary conclusion

Saskatchewan participants are looking for large-scale projects, which support greater economic activity and participation in local, regional and global markets. They want a better understanding of our local and regional strengths to not only assist them in economic development but in telling their story to others. They believe inclusion not only means working with the individuals in the region but this feeling should be endorsed and reinforced for the West within the nation.

QUESTION #2:

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO SPUR NEW GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA?

Saskatchewan round table participants want to see “transformative” large-scale projects to support new growth. They suggested ensuring access to high-speed internet throughout the province and West, especially rural, northern and remote communities. They cited it as an essential service. Additional large-scale projects include transportation infrastructure of goods and resources. Participants not only want support for pipelines but they want assistance in rail lines, roadways and port development in Canada.

They supported the supercluster initiative and the principles behind its creation and design. The supercluster initiative was positively endorsed because the program placed business as a key component for proceeding. In developing the program, industry needed to put in time, effort and money in creating and developing the vision and implementation plan for the supercluster. As was stated more than once, industry “has skin in the game.” Participants congratulated the federal government for adequately funding the program to make a difference, not just nibble on the edges of innovation and change.

Indigenous leaders highlighted the need for all levels of government to work together. They want to see a more rapid conclusion to Treaty Land Entitlement claims. They view these funds as being able to assist them in overcoming specific financial barriers they face. They want to see a positive conclusion to federal commitments to basic needs like clean water resources and equal funding for education on reserves. All participants who commented on the topic supported these requests. The Indigenous communities and leaders want a stronger commitment to action utilizing government procurement to assist Indigenous businesses to either establish or expand.

Participants recognized the value of entrepreneurship in building the economy. There was recognition that a pipeline of entrepreneurship is needed to support future growth and development. Participants want to see entrepreneurship introduced earlier within the school system and then reinforced throughout a child’s education and programs to assist entrepreneurs and start-ups. They want to see entrepreneurship as part of the inclusion package for all identified groups into the economy. They want to see financial assist for high-risk research and innovation, i.e. cutting edge technology or practices. They also want to see more incentives for business to partner with researchers.

QUESTION #3: WHAT WILL HELP THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY CONTINUE TO GROW?

Participants noted that each Indigenous community is different, and has their own set of needs and concerns. Some individuals face basic barriers to economic participation, such as the difficulty in obtaining a bank account, or not being able to afford necessities. Some communities as a whole face barriers, such the access to clean water, reliable transportation into communities, and broadband internet access to be able to participate in the economy.

Participants also noted that Indigenous businesses needed to be supported in key ways. The inability to leverage real estate in most Indigenous communities prevents Indigenous entrepreneurs from flourishing. In some instances, if treaty land negotiations were concluded, Indigenous bands and individuals could then use their treaty land as leverage, thereby providing capital for various business opportunities. Once Indigenous businesses are established, the cyclical nature of commodity cycles can be a challenge for many Indigenous businesses. This can be offset somewhat by providing greater access to government procurement opportunities, and providing access to capital to help establish Indigenous businesses, on and off reserves.

Many communities lack the skills training and education needed to participate in the economy. Establishing a strong foothold in skills training in northern communities takes a lot of effort and capital. In these communities, programming priorities should focus on education, training, and helping young educated workers find employment. Government policy and priorities should acknowledge the differences needed in regional programming to address skills and education training.

Participants recommendations/suggestions for action

Joint ventures and partnerships were highlighted as opportunities to increase Indigenous economic participation. Indigenous bands have the ability to purchase land through a settlement agreement when an opportunity is identified, while joint ventures between Indigenous groups and SaskPower have been successful in the past. Additionally, the First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group model could provide tremendous value in supporting technical services for Indigenous communities, in particular relating to clean energy.

Summary conclusion

Each Indigenous community faces their own particular set of challenges, for individuals, the community at large, and for businesses. Identifying, and dealing with those issues that serve as a constraint on economic growth and opportunity will be important for Indigenous Peoples and communities in Saskatchewan. These kinds of issues identified were basic necessities, such as the cost of living and infrastructure needs. As well, training and educating Indigenous youth, and operating a business in northern communities present their own set of challenges.

QUESTION #4: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH, AND NEW IMMIGRANTS?

As Western Canada pursues economic diversification and prosperity, the inclusion of underrepresented groups is increasingly seen as an important factor in achieving this goal. These groups represent untapped economic potential. As the participants in the engagement sessions noted, each underrepresented group has specialized needs and assistance in order to participate in the economy.

Improving the economic participation of women

Lack of supports available after having a child is making it difficult for women to participate in the economy. Few child day care facilities, especially in rural locations, and few re-entry supports for women to return to work after having a child, are contributing to this problem. When women are able to return to the workforce, there should be more programming support for women in workplaces, such as the challenges women also face when trying to access venture capital funding.

Improving the economic participation of youth

Participants noted the importance of engaging with youth at a young age, by creating educational capacity and pathways through entrepreneurial training. As the bar for education is getting higher, we also need to ensure that we are training our children for the jobs of the future, as well as providing more information and dialogue on the kinds of jobs that will be available in the future. Once youth are of working age, there should be more funding for youth hiring initiatives, and more bridging programs to assist in the transfer to work and entrepreneurial activities.

Improving the economic participation of new immigrants

Participants also noted the difficulty that immigrants have finding jobs for which they are trained, leading to an over-qualified immigrant community in many instances. Canada does not always value their education and work experience in a manner that lets them utilize their skills in Canada. A robust credential transferring program and more support to transfer immigrants to roles that better fit their skill sets. Canadian job experience requirements can get in the way and can act as a form of job protection for established citizens. In turn, this challenges the viability of small towns and the ability of companies to find qualified workers.

Participants recommendations/suggestions for action

Better broadband access across rural communities in Saskatchewan could help to incorporate these underrepresented groups into the economy. Training partnerships with trade schools could also help equip these underrepresented groups for future careers. Organizations, such as economic development associations, Chambers of Commerce, and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association have a role to play in promoting these groups as important pieces for Saskatchewan's economic future.

Summary conclusion

Participant feedback resulted in a different set of goals to help improve the economic participation of each underrepresented group. For women, most comments centered on the need to support the re-entry into the workforce. For youth, it was important to engage with them at a young age to ensure they have entrepreneurship training throughout their education, in order to succeed in the economy. For immigrants, the skills and education they bring into the country needs to be valued in a more systematic fashion.

QUESTION #5: HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND WESTERN CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY?

Participants noted that in Saskatchewan, broadband access is not ubiquitous. Urban areas have reliable high-speed internet, but the infrastructure costs of providing internet across challenging terrains and large land masses remains a problem on the Prairies. High-speed internet provides many opportunities to participate in the economy and access government services. Without reliable access, isolated communities are being left behind.

Regulatory concerns were also raised throughout the stakeholder engagement sessions. Participants noted that government could do more to address the regulatory uncertainty created by some of the environmental bills being considered currently. Additionally, there were concerns the effects of Bill C-69 and the transition to the low carbon economy were having a cumulative effect on the investment decisions of businesses and holding some businesses back. Government could do more to address unnecessary regulatory burdens and red tape.

Among the areas of opportunity were; increased partnerships between private and public stakeholders, as well as the prospect for businesses to participate in government procurement. Building upon the connections and sharing data between industry, government, and economic stakeholders will help to provide opportunities and will allow for increased synergy between these stakeholders. Likewise, enhancing government procurement opportunities for businesses and working more closely with the provincial Crown corporations in supply chain opportunities could help to drive economic development, while also helping to forge closer ties between the private and public sector.

Participants recommendations/suggestions for action

Government agencies need to work together, and streamline programming in order to provide a clearer strategy and provide more opportunities to the public. Further, there will be many challenges that Western Canada faces in the coming years. It would be better to choose those challenges that will be transformative in nature, such as providing internet to rural locations, making sure the economy is inclusive, and providing the basic infrastructure needs for every community.

Summary conclusion

The kinds of challenges and opportunities highlighted in the stakeholder engagements will require increased collaboration between government, industry, and western Canadian stakeholders. Providing broadband access for remote and rural communities, addressing regulatory uncertainty and regulatory burdens, as well as simplifying and expanding government procurement opportunities will all require a coordinated approach in the coming years. The payoff is a more economically diverse and prosperous western Canadian economy.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

MANITOBA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a summary of the responses collected during the roundtables held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Manitoba's roundtable participants communicated the need for stakeholder alignment around broader economic issues and opportunities. In addition to better coordination amongst governments, industry, and academia, participants were interested in growing the number of small business entrepreneurs in Manitoba to increase employment.

Manitoba has the largest Indigenous youth population in Western Canada. Participants were cognizant of this and stressed the need for their inclusion within economic development. Participants also felt that Indigenous entrepreneurship should be encouraged and supported, as well as supporting their post-secondary success. They also communicated the need to strengthen the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Businesses.

Stakeholders also discussed how it was important to keep the various sectors strong by investing in research and high value products. Specifically, there was a focus on technology and the potential to commercialize products to reach new markets.

During the round table sessions, participants emphasized the importance of setting goals, benchmarks, and targets to measure economic development success. They recognized that the goals and economic development approaches should be pan-western so Canada's smaller provincial economies can better compete globally. Participants stressed that creating a unified platform where all Manitobans can come together is fundamental to success.

QUESTION #1:

WHAT DOES A STRONGER WESTERN CANADIAN ECONOMY LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

"A stronger Manitoba economy will be underpinned by growth in emerging sectors, trade and investment growth, job creation and income growth, and an international brand that speaks to the areas of Western Canadian leadership in key sectors and innovation."

A strong, well-diversified, high-tech economy that takes a balanced approach and that requires highly skilled and diverse labour force. An economy that explores renewable energy sources and maximizes the benefits from finite Canadian natural resources by post processing to create high value exports or end products versus raw materials.

Participants identified the need for adoption and integration of technology in traditional sectors like mining and manufacturing, which seem to accelerate at a rate faster than the rest of the country. We would live in a west where automation has re-defined our cities, making them cleaner and more efficient. The population is younger, more diverse and well educated. However, participants pointed out that this scenario will require a long-term vision, especially one with a focus on building a robust talent pipeline.

Western Canada could be at the forefront of biotech R&D and other emerging industries. Instead of falling behind, we should be developing and exporting science and technology to the world.

Reduced regulations

When asked about success in the future, a common theme among stakeholders was a more integrated western economy with reduced regulations. The need for regulations must be balanced with greater economic gain. Western Canada will be viewed as having a presence that is equal to or greater than Ontario or Quebec. While diversity is a goal, we want strong and successful companies.

Stronger international brand for the region

It was argued that in ten years companies should be able to do business across the provinces, and that Western Canada should be considered a hot spot for companies developing new technologies because the West is considered an “easy” place to launch new products.

The vision that was repeated by individuals in Manitoba is that a stronger economy will be underpinned by growth in emerging sectors, trade and investment growth, job creation and income growth, and an international brand that speaks to Western Canadian leadership in key sectors and innovation.

An ideal future would include an increased number of new companies developing internationally marketable solutions that flow from Western Canada’s unique strategic advantages.

Export market diversification

Stakeholders felt strongly that in ten years, an ideal scenario would be that Western Canada has reduced its reliance on the United States and is continuing to increase trade with other countries. There is a need to diversify exports, and to focus more on Asia and decrease our reliance on the United States.

Northern Manitoba

A common theme heard in the Manitoba roundtables was that the federal government cannot and should not forget about the North. The vision articulated for ten years from now was a “strong, engaged rural and northern economy.”

In the future forward discussion, one participant articulated, “I would expect we have resolved the consultation and engagement process with Indigenous Peoples. This in turn, would have resulted in an incredible growth in the resource sector. A revitalized rail connection and deep-sea port at Churchill will create more export opportunities for western Canadian commodities”.

Inclusion

In ten years, participants envisioned that Western Canada would have an economy where people experiencing traditional barriers to employment have access to the labour market. There would be affordable student housing and low living costs to help retain graduates.

Themes

- More integrated western economy with reduced regulations.
- Stronger branding of the West internationally highlighting key sectors.
- Strong, engaged rural and northern economy.
- Resolved the consultation and engagement process with Indigenous Peoples.
- Greater access to the labour market.
- More value-added natural resource products.
- Greater integration of technology into traditional industries.

QUESTION #2:

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO SPUR NEW GROWTH IN WESTERN CANADA?

“We need to develop stronger connections between the business community and Manitoba’s post-secondary institutions to link up graduates with employers looking to fill a need.”

Participants identified focusing on and investing more in regional sector strengths as the best ways to spur new growth in Western Canada. There is a need to increase labour market access for skilled immigrants. Stakeholders identified the need to provide greater supports to entrepreneurs. It is also important to start and retain businesses locally, and to ensure they have the supports, skilled labour, capital and ecosystem to stay. Their view was that since they are less likely to attract new businesses into Manitoba, there is a need to grow talent from within.

Growth is largely stimulated through business confidence. A high level of confidence drives positive decisions in investment, new market pursuits, and job creation. The areas of focus that contribute to increased confidence would include a long-term commitment to a growth strategy, and economic development programs that are aligned with the current and changing needs of industry. As mentioned in other discussions, there is a need to support an international brand for Western Canadian companies, in an environment that allows Western Canadian businesses to compete internationally.

We can spur growth by tapping into talent pipelines and focusing on delivering the best educational experiences possible and by giving current students opportunities to work with organizations in solving real world challenges. Student workplace opportunities were seen as a key to future success.

The West needs a continued focus on competitiveness (both regulatory and taxation). There is also a need to focus on innovation and new technology to help develop new opportunities. Consideration should be given to support key sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, etc.) and to help develop and support value added opportunities and supply chains.

We need to build on our strengths, including our resources, which are the backbone of the Canadian economy. One participant said Churchill's port must be developed, and transportation infrastructure upgraded (road and rail) to support the movement of goods from across Western Canada through the port.

Also, we need to invest in education, with programs and enhanced supports for Indigenous youth.

Themes

- Focus/invest more in regional sector strengths.
- Increase labour market access for skilled immigrants.
- Support entrepreneurs.
- Provide students workplace opportunities.
- Competitiveness, innovation and new technology.
- Develop the port at Churchill.
- Programs and enhanced supports for Indigenous youth.
- Social enterprise solutions using social innovation.
- Invest in the education and training of youth.
- Grow talent pipeline.
- Remove barriers to growth for SMEs.
- Enhance market access.
- Develop Western Canada brand as hub for tech innovation.

Specific recommendations

- Take advantage of emerging industries.
- Keep the manufacturing sector strong by investing in research and development and high value products.
- Focus on developing connections with post-secondary institutions to connect graduates with employers looking to fill a need.
- Encourage smaller rural business development with incentives to innovate.
- Increasing the number of small business owners would result in an increase in employment.
- Supporting emerging technologies would benefit many areas and spread across all sectors.
- It is important to maintain the base economic activities, but pursue higher risk ventures at the same time.
- Promote clusters that enhance areas that regions are already good at. Doing so will attract the best people to the area. Use the example of Montreal's approach to building a world-class A.I. "Silicon Valley."
- Small Indigenous businesses survive on procurement. Strengthen the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business and include Indigenous procurement requirements for contracting.
- Look globally for success stories.
- Entrepreneurs would greatly benefit from access to typically closed networks.

QUESTION #3:

WHAT WILL HELP THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY CONTINUE TO GROW?

"We urgently need to strengthen our Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Businesses in Manitoba. Growing and sustaining Indigenous businesses must be a priority for our Federal Government."

The Indigenous economy will grow through increased participation in the economy via employment and entrepreneurship. Employment issues can be addressed largely through an increase in educational attainment and strong workplace training programs that provide employment supports for both Indigenous employees and employers. Greater awareness in workplaces of Indigenous history and culture, mentorship and greater flexibility for skill levels required for entry level positions are a few key areas for employment. The major issue for entrepreneurship is a lack of start-up capital, limited exposure to entrepreneurial role models, ineffective procurement programs for Indigenous owned companies, and lack of exposure to entrepreneurship in schools.

Highlights

- Manitoba has the largest, youngest Indigenous population in Western Canada. We need to reduce barriers to increase participation in the economy.
- Promote and support Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- Primary and secondary education must be improved because currently, high school completion does not prepare Indigenous students from reserves for university level success.
- Indigenous students face barriers to academic success that must be reduced, such as:
 - Paying for school while working means cutting back on course work and pushing back graduation date.
 - Less family support due to physical distance to educational institutes.
 - Lack of family knowledge to help kids navigate the institutional bureaucracy of university.
- Keep education affordable by creating more post-recruitment grants. Financial support dries up after getting people through the door.
- Educational success can be promoted by enhancing supports for Indigenous students and creating welcoming spaces.
- Employment is the most important metric for Indigenous Peoples.

Themes

- Mentoring, skill development.
- Increased education, employment, healthcare, housing, and entrepreneurship.
- Easier access to capital.
- More initiatives like Churchill.
- Consistency in the application of the Duty to Consult process with Indigenous groups across the West
- Social enterprise.
- Develop broadband infrastructure.

Specific recommendations

Develop a risk and recovery program to support those who want to start businesses or those organizations that are focused on developing solutions, and help to manage some of the financial risk. Build on the work of the First People's Economic Growth Fund in assessing the potential risk versus reward of an idea.

Build on the success of the Churchill rail line work to assist Indigenous communities in developing complementary and aligned regional economic development plans. Identify the key elements and investments needed to make them work.

QUESTION #4: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH, AND NEW IMMIGRANTS?

"Getting the first job is usually the most difficult. Create and support work-integrated learning opportunities such as co-op education, internships, apprenticeships, etc. Include a mentorship component where under-represented groups can be supported through the first few months on the job."

Remove barriers to women's economic success through policies and legislation that support the attraction, retention, and advancement of women. For example, in the ICT sector, it is vital to stay current with technology as it evolves. Women cannot engage in skills upgrading when they are on parental leave without impacting their eligibility to qualify for EI benefits. Women still carry much of the responsibility for managing the home and family but are often not fully supported if they require flexible hours from their employers. Pay and gender-equity are important. When women feel they are being excluded or dismissed in meetings and/or the boardroom, it is because they are. We have to address these issues from a cultural, societal, and economic perspective.

Themes

- Mentoring, skills development, education, work placement.
- Knowledge awareness of existing programs.
- Social enterprise partnerships.
- Create policy and legislation that remove barriers to women's economic success.
- Increase SME access to Global Skills Strategy.
- Better foreign credentials assessment system.
- Create networks to connect newcomers with employers.

Specific recommendations

- Build up newcomer community groups to support and allow new Canadians to pursue ideas.
- Newcomer programs provide basic skills. The federal government can help fund these program providers.
- Create connection network that helps students to bring ideas to markets:
 - Use networks to target underrepresented demographic groups.

Broader inclusion recommendations

- Enhance broadband infrastructure.
- Increase access to capital.
- Streamline procurement.
- Focus on affordable housing.
- Venture capital almost non-existent for Indigenous businesses, particularly outside of urban areas.
- Lenders are too risk-averse in Manitoba.

QUESTION #5: HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND WESTERN CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY?

“Obvious solutions are to reduce the internal trade barriers that exist between western provinces and also ensure that regulations are as consistent as possible between provinces.”

Participants expressed that we are entering a new era where economics, environmental and other considerations, trade restrictions and a whole host of regulatory and other factors are part of the business development equation. That means a strong strategic focus on partnerships designed to support new business and enterprise development is required. Innovation needs to be encouraged and our post-secondary system needs to be challenged to support new economic growth through research and skills development.

Themes

- Identify and focus and funding for regional/provincial strengths.
- Reduce internal trade barriers.
- Support new business.
- Embrace social enterprise and tools of social innovation.
- More dialogue between industry, academia and government.
- Incentivize investment.
- Capitalize on remote communities by enhancing broadband infrastructure.

Specific recommendations

- The Federal Student Work Experience Program is a good initiative for universities to partner with government to bridge students with permanent employment. Government can remove barriers to apply and make the application process better known.
- The government work application process is tough to penetrate. Have recruitment come through campus programs, student groups, and through professors.
- Government can do a better job of explaining what economic trends mean to a student or job seeker.
- Create a more clear line of how to move from graduation to employment such as government specific career fairs.
- Roundtable participants communicated the need for setting specific goals, benchmarks, and targets to measure success in economic development.
- Employers and businesses need a range that everyone can measure themselves against that is meaningful in a global context.
- Must determine who is responsible for measuring and evaluating performance on agreed upon goals.
- Pan-western versus regional approach discussion:
 - Goals should be pan-western so Canada's smaller provincial economies can compete globally.
 - WD could take a leadership position in such a pan-western strategy.
 - A pan-western approach creates stronger outputs for companies.
 - Pan-western goals can be more difficult for Indigenous entrepreneurs because populations, economies, and access to resources vary by province.
- The focus should be broad across sectors.

Additional comments

- An important indicator for economic success is the average salary per person as well as wage growth.
- The number of highly qualified personnel should be more important than total employment levels for measuring success.
- Most people have become happy with 2 per cent growth and the province's lack of peaks and valleys.
- Manitoba's stable, diversified economy makes businesses feel more comfortable engaging in riskier investments.
- Mentorship, high-quality personnel, and a skilled labour force are all required.
- Winnipeg has a closed-system that is tough for entrepreneurs to break into.
- Manitoba is getting attention/global investment because of its undervalued opportunities.
- Investors are looking at Winnipeg but see very low unemployment. Chronically under-employed segments of labour force must be targeted for training aggressively.

ANNEX II:

LIST OF PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Axine Water Technologies
Bank of Canada
BC Council of Forest Industries
BC Mining Association
BC Tech Association
Business Council of British Columbia
Buy Social Canada
City of Prince George
College of New Caledonia
Community Futures Boundary
Community Futures British Columbia
Community Futures North Okanagan
Community Futures Stuart Nechako
Creative BC
District of New Hazelton
First Nations Technology Council
Government of BC – Ministry of Jobs, Trade, and Technology
Government of BC – Office of the BC Innovation Commissioner
Greater Vancouver Gateway Council
Innovation Central Society
Kim Baird Strategic Consulting
LifeSciences BC
Port Alberni Port Authority
Prince George Airport Authority
Prince Rupert Port Authority
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Surrey Board of Trade
Translink
University of British Columbia
University of Northern British Columbia
University of Victoria
Vancouver Economic Commission
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
WestGrid

ALBERTA

Alberta Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurs
Alberta Community & Co-Operative Association
Alberta Construction Association
Alberta Enterprise Corporation
Alberta Forest Products Association
Alberta Health Services
Alberta Indian Investment Corporation
Alberta Indigenous Relations
Alberta Innovates
Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association
Bio Alberta
Blackline Safety
Business Link
Calgary Economic Development
Canada West Foundation
Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters
CEO - Alberta Council of Technologies Society
City of Calgary
City of Calgary's Recreation Management Team
City of Edmonton Administration
Community Futures Crowsnest Pass
Community Futures Highwood
Community Futures Peace Country
Community Futures St Paul – Smoky Lake Region - Northeast Food Marketers
Community Futures St Paul – Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Chamber of Commerce/Small Business, Elk Point, AB
Community Futures St Paul – Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Not For Profits/Small Business, St. Paul, AB
Community Futures St Paul – Smoky Lake Region - Sector: Volunteers/Business, St. Paul, AB
Community Futures St Paul – Smoky Lake Region - St. Paul, AB
Community Futures Treaty 7
Connection Silicon Valley
Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta
Creative Destruction Labs – Rockies
Department of Chemical & Materials Engineering, University of Alberta
Economic Developers Alberta
Economic Development Lethbridge
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
Edmonton Economic Development Corporation
Edmonton Global
Edmonton International Airport
Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board
Edmonton Screen Industries Office
Faculty of Agriculture, Life & Environmental Sciences, University of Alberta
Farmers Edge
Flexahopper Plastics Ltd.
GO Productivity
Government of Alberta – Economic Development and Trade
Growing Greener Innovations
Independent Community/Business Developer
Indian Business Corporation
Indigenous Services Canada
Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce
Lethbridge College
MacEwan University
Metis Nation of Alberta
Metis Settlement General Council
Momentum
Natural Resources Canada
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Office of Randy Boissonnault
Paul First Nations Band
Peraton Canada
Public Service and Procurement Canada
Raytheon Canada

Rivet Management
Royal Bank of Canada
SeedUps Canada
Settlement Investment Corporation
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
SouthGrow Regional Initiative
Technology Pathfinders
The Centre for Innovation Studies
Toma & Bouma Management Consultants, New West
Networks Inc.
Total Containment Inc.
TradeWinds to Success
Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
Tribal Chiefs Ventures
UNIGLOBE LGI Travel
University Hospital Foundation
University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of Lethbridge
Unmanned Systems Canada
VizworX Inc.
WaVv
Western Canadian Defence Industries Association
Women Building Futures
Yardstick Software

SASKATCHEWAN

Ag-West Bio Inc.
Athabasca Basin Development
Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs
Cameco
Canadian Light Source
Chief Little Black Bear First Nation
Clarence Campeau Development Fund
Co.Labs
Community Futures Prince Albert
Conexus Credit Union
Co-operatives First
Des Nedhe Development LP
Economic Development Regina
EVRAZ
Federated Co-operative Limited
First Nation's Power Authority
Genome Prairie
Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce
ISM Canada
Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
Keewatin Career Development Corporation
Mayor and Council for the Northern Village of Green
Lake
Meadow Lake Tribal Council Business Development
Morris Industries Ltd.
Mosaic/Saskatchewan Mining Association
New North-Sask Association of Northern Communities
North West Communities Wood Products
Points Athabasca Pro Metal Industries
Sask Polytech
Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association
Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce
Saskatchewan Co-operative Association
Saskatchewan First Nations Natural Resource Centre of
Excellence

Saskatchewan Research Council
Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership
Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs
(SYPE)
Saskatoon Berry Council of Canada
Square One
Tribal Chief File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council
University of Saskatchewan Department of Physics and
Engineering Physics
Westcap Management Ltd
Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc.

MANITOBA

Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce
AKI Energy
Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba
Bioscience Association Manitoba
Commissariat aux langues officielles Manitoba/
Saskatchewan
Community Futures West Interlake
Éco-Ouest
EnviroTREC
Francofonds Inc.
Government of Manitoba
Information and Communication Technologies Association
of Manitoba (ICTAM)
Johnston Group
Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
Manitoba Council for International Education
Manitoba Technology Accelerator
Mobilisation du Conseil de développement économique des
municipalités bilingues du Manitoba
New Media Manitoba
Personnel du CDEM
Precision ADM
Projet de gestion des matières ligneuses de la région de la
Rivière de Winnipeg
Projet ECA (Échanges commerciaux Canada-Afrique)
Province of Manitoba
Red River College
Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité
(RDÉE Canada)
Réseau en immigration francophone du Manitoba
University College of the North (UCN)
University of Winnipeg
Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba
World Trade Centre Winnipeg

OTHER

ABB Canada
Canadian Federation of Independent Business
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada
YMCA Canada

ANNEX III:

SYNOPSIS OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Delaney+Associates was commissioned to help plan the engagement and then report on engagement findings. Our approach was to structure a variety of engagement opportunities, both in-person and online, throughout the 10-week active engagement period. Stakeholders were able to provide input during multiple events running from mid-September to end of November, 2018.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the engagement was to listen and learn from western Canadians about their ideas for economic growth to inform the development of a Western Canada Growth Strategy.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the engagement were:

1. To develop descriptions and measures for economic success.
2. To identify opportunities to spur new growth.
3. To gather information on how to help Indigenous economies grow.
4. To gather information on how to improve economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups in the economy.
5. To identify new ways for government and industry to work together.

In addition, participants provided input on other topics, which has also been captured in the findings report.

Five questions were developed in order to collect information required to achieve these objectives. They include:

1. What does a stronger western Canadian economy look like 10 years from now?
2. What are the best ways to spur new growth in Western Canada?
3. What will help the Indigenous economy continue to grow?
4. How can we improve economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups, including women, youth and new immigrants?
5. How can governments, industry and western Canadians work together to grow the regional economy?

These same questions were asked during each engagement regardless of “technique” used. (see Techniques below)

OBJECTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT

When conducting stakeholder engagement in support of strategic planning an indicator of success is the consistency of advice received by a representative sample of stakeholders. Western Economic Diversification Canada was meticulous to identify and directly invite a large number and diversity of their stakeholders into this engagement. The response was better than expected.

Below we assess the extent to which each engagement objective has been achieved to date.

1. *To develop descriptions and measures for economic success*

578 responses were received to question #1 (**What does a stronger western Canadian economy look like 10 years from now?**). From these responses we **identified 25 different indicators of success**. Having said this, the objective was not achieved during the engagement. Information collected from stakeholder responses to the first question, their vision of success, will be used to develop a performance management and reporting framework during the strategy development phase of the project.

2. *To identify opportunities to spur new growth*

488 responses to question #2 (**What are the best ways to spur new growth in Western Canada?**) provided **16 different suggestions** on how to spur new economic growth in Western Canada. It should be noted that many of these suggestions are the product of small group discussions with key stakeholders. As such they are well thought through and will be helpful to develop strategic priorities and action items.

3. *To gather information on how to help Indigenous economies grow*

343 responses to question #3 (**What will help the Indigenous economy continue to grow?**) provided **8 solid suggestions** on how to help Indigenous economies grow. 21 Indigenous organizations were engaged during the Western Economic Diversification Canada roundtable process. First Nations individuals also participated in the in-person engagement sessions not hosted by Western Economic Diversification Canada, although not all participants identified their organizational affiliation.

4. *To gather information on how to improve economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups in the economy*

323 responses to question #4 (**How can we improve economic participation in the West of underrepresented groups, including women, youth and new immigrants?**) yielded **9 unique suggestions** on how to improve participation of underrepresented groups.

5. *To identify new ways for government and industry to work together*

463 responses to question #5 (**How can governments, industry and western Canadians work together to grow the regional economy?**) produced **8 unique suggestions** on how government can work with each other and together with their stakeholders in order to improve economic performance.

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Engagement techniques are well-established best practices for public and stakeholder engagement in support of decision making. Different techniques are combined in a way that best meets the needs of the pending decision (in this case development of the strategy), the decision maker and stakeholders. This engagement process was designed in a way to reduce, as much as possible, barriers to participation.

With this in mind, we suggested Western Economic Diversification Canada host a series of roundtables in order to meet face-to-face with representatives of key stakeholder organizations. For those organizations that could not attend these sessions we assembled a discussion guide that provided step-by-step instructions on how to host and report on a self-organized roundtable meeting. We also suggested that, for those invited stakeholders who could not participate, people respond to the questions in a reply email. There was also an online component to the engagement program. Using a platform called PlaceSpeak individual stakeholders could participate anytime throughout the active engagement period.

ANALYSIS

The results of each engagement were documented in individual reports and later tabulated in a database for analytical purposes. The approach to analysis was to review each individual “response” and tag the different themes “mentioned” in each. For example, one response might mention many themes, so that response would be tagged for each theme mentioned. This is referred to as feedback coding. Once all the responses were coded an analysis of the different themes and frequency of mentions was conducted. At the end of each section above, the most prevalent themes mentioned are shown, along with the number of times each is mentioned across all responses for all techniques.

ANNEX IV:

ADDITIONAL LINKS

THE INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS IMPERATIVE: SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

| [A Report from Canada's Economic Strategy Tables \(PDF\)](#)

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CANADA

| [Website](#)

| [Contact Us](#)

WESTERN CANADA GROWTH STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT

| [Towards a Western Canada Growth Strategy](#)

| [Engagement Paper \(PDF\)](#)

PLACESPEAK | TOWARDS A WESTERN CANADA GROWTH STRATEGY

| [Website](#)

DELANEY+ASSOCIATES

| [Website](#)

PUBLIVATE

| [Website](#)