



## An update from the West's think tank

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### Report lays out how to build a better workforce

More and more Canadian employers are incorporating competencies into their workforce. Teaching youth these skills – how to do job tasks well – matters to the future prosperity of the country. In the Foundation's latest report, Janet Lane Director of the Centre for Human Capital Policy, and policy analyst Naomi Christensen surveyed all 13 K-12 education systems across the country. They wanted to see how well each is adopting competency-based learning approaches.



The results are mixed, Lane and Christensen write in [Know, Do, Understand](#). Only Quebec has fully incorporated a competency-based approach. In the West, B.C. leads the way, while the three prairie provinces are in the middle of the pack. The competency approach comes with a big payoff: Helping Canada's youngest generation become part of a nimble workforce will keep our country competitive.

## Two provinces spared, two slammed with jobless pain

The federal budget, released in March, revealed changes to the Employment Insurance program aimed at easing the burden on regions hit hardest by the oil price plunge. Much of the job pain is being felt in the West, but the degree to which each region is affected varies.



Senior Economist Janice Plumstead [dug into some of the most recent EI numbers](#), released by Statistics Canada, which show Manitoba and British Columbia are benefiting from the diverse nature of their economies and from an improvement in the manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, Alberta and Saskatchewan are experiencing large increases in joblessness, driving up the rate for the rest of the country.

The changes to the EI program announced in the budget don't go far enough – providing short-term relief to selected jurisdictions rather than making the program fair for everyone, Janice noted in interviews with several outlets including [CBC News](#), [BNN](#) and [Global TV](#).

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## *Branching Out...to D.C.*

Those who witnessed the last round of softwood lumber negotiations recall the challenges of hammering out a deal with the U.S.



Now, we're after a new deal. On March 29, Naomi was in Washington to present at an event initiated by the Canadian embassy in Washington and hosted by the Wilson Center's Canada Institute. Building on the analysis in her report, [Branching Out](#), Naomi spoke to an international trade audience, U.S. government officials, industry groups and academics about the strategic choices Canada must make to grow and diversify its lumber markets.

The event was an opportunity to give an evidence-based overview of the factors that influence the Canada-U.S. trading softwood relationship. Naomi heard feedback from both federal and provincial embassy officials that the call for diversification, as recommended in the report, is absolutely the track Canada should be taking. Read Naomi's [presentation online here](#). You can also [view a webcast here](#).

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After four great years,

## our leader is moving on



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced the appointment of Dylan Jones as the **Deputy Minister of Western Economic**

**Diversification**. This is an outstanding new role

for Dylan, but bittersweet, as well. It means his time as President & CEO of the Canada West Foundation will be coming to an end on May 27th.

Under his leadership, the Foundation's media readership has doubled, our work has been strategic and high impact and our reputation for effective, non-partisan research that makes a difference in the lives of westerners has grown. He leaves behind a team driven to produce top-notch work with impact.

The search for a new leader is underway.

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## Poll: Will EI changes help employment woes in the West?

Take our **one-click poll here**.

**Last month**, we asked whether you thought a carbon price makes sense for the West. Half of you responded, "No," 35 per cent supported the idea, and the remainder had opinions that varied and included a desire for more information.

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## We welcome your comments

Want to talk about anything you read in this newsletter? Have an idea you would like to share? Send your comments to: [feedback@cwf.ca](mailto:feedback@cwf.ca)

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