



An update from the West's think tank

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Your support sustained a year of work for the West

With the financial support of our donors, the Canada West Foundation made a difference in 2015 on issues that affect westerners' lives. Media reach more than doubled, research reports captured the attention of policy-makers and we convened the right people to talk about ideas that drive change.



Take a look at this [snapshot of some of our recent achievements](#). They include our voice on the carbon conversation, changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program that were unfairly burdening the West and encouraging investment on trade infrastructure to help our economies thrive.

This year, our work continues on these and other files. To access the three research centres' plans, [click here](#). Work includes:

- getting our products to market
- renewing public trust in resource development
- giving our workforce the skills they need for the evolving economy

The voice of nonpartisan think tank devoted to the West's issue is as great today as ever. With your going help, we will continue to the research, commentary and convening that creates sound public policy.

Edmonton dinner tackles the resiliency conundrum

More than 70 engaged members of government, industry and civil society gathered at Madison's Grill in downtown Edmonton on February 22nd to talk about economic challenges facing Alberta and the entire West.



What support is needed for all natural resources sectors? And what public policy would make the western Canadian economy more resilient?

Four key themes emerged from the evening:

- **Mission:** We need to articulate a vision for the natural resources sector that is broader than the sector itself.
- **Certainty:** Investment decisions can only be made when there is improved confidence in the decision-making processes.
- **Competitiveness:** Challenges here are holding back the innovation we need to more broadly diversify the economy.
- **Diversification:** Let's shift the conversation from finding jobs to creating them.

Although there was consensus on the need to act, there was a spectrum of views from attendees representing all four western provinces on how best to take action.

Comments from the evening have been captured and will help inform the Foundation's research.

Provincial budgets all about smart fiscal choices

Budget season is in full swing across the country. The Foundation will be continuing its work assessing each government's long-term strategic vision and value for tax dollars spent.

B.C.'s budget was out first. The province produced its fourth balanced budget in a row – no easy task at a time of low commodity prices and LNG challenges. The province, however, could have gone further in supporting private investment. See [our thoughts on the budget, here](#).

In Alberta, the government has acknowledged that the province is on track to record a \$10.4-billion deficit. Senior economist Janice Plumstead provided analysis on the fiscal choices Alberta faces, and the questions many Albertans are likely to ask government: Will you raise my taxes? Cut services? Help me find a job?

You can [listen to her interview on Calgary's CBC Homestretch program here](#).

Getting heard on a Canadian climate plan

Prime Minister Trudeau, premiers from all 13 provinces and territories, and indigenous leaders are working to find common ground for a pan-Canadian climate policy framework.

Commentary from Trevor McLeod, director of the Centre for Natural Resources, urges those leaders to keep the competitiveness question in the conversation.

See his speech on [Avoiding a Canadian climate hammer](#). He agrees Canada needs to do more to reduce emissions. If goal is to reduce global emissions, however, we cannot pretend Canada is the only place that matters.

Trevor picks up that theme in this economic analysis submission for Maclean's online.

See [What meeting Canada's climate targets means for the Prairies](#). The work on this issue continues.



Blog becoming go-to place for policy chatter

The big thinkers at the Canada West Foundation have been busy on our blog. It's a place where we test research ideas, dig deeper into news of the day, create interactive charts and, yes, sometimes indulge our wonky side on policy topics. You can [find all our posts here](#). Here are a few of our latest hits:

- What can Canada learn about its emissions targets from TV political thriller *Occupied*? Policy analyst Shafak Sajid wondered what it would take to bring Canada's emissions

targets – and global commitments – back to reality. She [does the math – and raises some questions – in this post](#).

- The job situation in Alberta is grim, but there's a longer term employment crisis looming for the country. Find out more about the Fourth Industrial Revolution – characterized by the emergency of cyber–physical systems such as self–driving cars – and why this coming job shift is promising major disruption. [Retraining and upskilling will be at the heart of preparing our economy to adapt](#), writes Human Capital Policy Centre's Janet Lane.
- Which citizens trust their governments the most: Canadians, Russians, Indonesians or Indians? If you guessed Canada, you are wrong. In fact, Canadians are the least trusting of the lot. Shafak looks at what public trust has to do with the recovery of Canada's national economy in a blog post [examining the concept of trust in public institutions](#).

Poll: Does a carbon price makes sense for the West?

Take our [one–click poll here](#).

Last month, we asked whether you thought the Trans–Pacific Partnership will be good for the West and Canada. More than 60 per cent of those who responded to our poll agreed that the trade deal will create new opportunities for our economy. One–quarter of you, however, believe it will make life a little more difficult.

Here's what Rolf Mirus CN–Professor of Trade Policy (Emeritus) University of Alberta had to say:

...it is fair to say that some protected industries will face more competition, but overall the opportunities of TPP–passage would create outweigh by far the adjustment costs in parts of the auto sector and the dairy and poultry industry. (Why can New Zealand be a successful exporter of dairy products to China and Canadians cannot?) If Canada does not sign on, we are left out as our major competitors gain preferential access to the world's fast growing markets.

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

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