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19 Hosted and Partner Events

Including:
- Pop-up Policy: The United States-Japan agreement: A wake-up call for Canada’s trade ambitions in Asia
- Pop-up Policy: Do we expect too much of environmental assessment?
- Pop-up Policy: Every job is a digital job, but not everyone needs to learn to code
- Roundtable: Hon. James A. Richardson Discovery Roundtable: Bringing energy investment back to Canada
- Roundtable: Hon. James A. Richardson Discovery Roundtable: Canada: Pulling together or drifting apart?
- Pop-up Policy: Truth, facts and how to cut through a divisive discourse to find them | The Economist

90 Speeches/Presentations

Including:
- Presentation to Senate on Bill C-48, Calgary, AB
- Roundtable, Western Economic Diversification, Economic Development, Diversification and Trade and Investment, Calgary, AB
- University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs and Massey College, The future of Canada’s resources, Toronto, ON
- Essential Skills Summit, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) a division of ESDC Symposium, Ottawa, ON
- Agricultural Producers Association of SK, Outlook for Canadian agriculture and agri-food trade in uncertain times, Regina, SK

257 Media Interviews

Including:
- Winnipeg Free Press
- Calgary Herald
- Business in Vancouver
- Western Producer
- CBC
- The Hill Times
- BBC
- Real Agriculture
- National Post
- Globe and Mail
- Wall Street Journal
- Maclean’s

69 Op-Eds

2288 Media Mentions
(broadcast, print, online)

172K Webpage Views
Natural Resources Centre

Getting things built in Canada

What we promised
At the start of 2019, we noted the increasing difficulty in getting major infrastructure built in Canada, and how this threatens our economic prospects for the future.

In our 2019 workplan, we promised to analyze, report on and influence policies – such as Bills C-69 (now the new Impact Assessment Act) and C-48 (now the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act) – that affect whether major infrastructure gets built in the future.

What we delivered

> Throughout 2018 and 2019, we led the charge on Bill C-69 – and were at the forefront of everything from identifying hidden problems to dissecting the amendments. Decision-makers called us for our opinion including premiers, federal and provincial ministers and their staff, senators, the media, consuls general, and leaders across all industry sectors. They relied on our independence, the quality of our work and our credibility. We were also repeatedly commended for our incisive, impartial and in-depth analysis, particularly in those situations where there was a lack of trust for other voices.

> We pushed hard on Bill C-48, helped explain why the judicial rulings on Trans Mountain set important precedents and continued to advocate for policies (like an integrated Western electricity grid) that will support the infrastructure we need for Canada to capitalize on ALL forms of energy.

In total for this project, we produced:

> Eight reports and four policy briefs including – Bill C-69: We read the amendments so you don’t have to; Bill C-69: We lose the jurisprudence we start back at square one; Bill C-69: We can get this right.

> 39 op-eds in publications including the Globe and Mail and Policy Options

> 143 media interviews with national and regional reporters

> 43 speaking engagements

> Hosted six events in Calgary and Vancouver

> Our work was called “an excellent dissection of this issue” and “insightful analysis ... For the good of all Canadians, both present and future, I urge the government to include your suggestions.”

What it means for Canada’s West
These pieces of legislation have substantial implications for the future of the energy industry in Western Canada. By cutting through the rhetoric and grandstanding, we helped government, industry, media, Chambers of Commerce, Indigenous groups, business associations and others clearly understand both the positives and the pitfalls. This will pay dividends in terms of better decision-making around energy infrastructure for the future.

Still to come
Throughout 2020, we will remain focused on the increasingly urgent issue of how to get energy infrastructure built in a way that is both responsible and keeps Canada globally
competitive. The regulations for the new Impact Assessment Act are still being developed, and we will continue to provide suggestions to ensure the Act is implemented in a way that is both effective and functional. We will continue to tell the story of what happens in Canada when major infrastructure is proposed or built, a story that is important to politicians, industry decision-makers, investors and the general public.

Carbon and climate policies

What we promised
Carbon emissions and climate policies have become an intrinsic part of natural resource development in Western Canada. They influence project planning, investment, how companies operate and human capital needs. They present both a risk and an opportunity for existing and prospective businesses, and for society as a whole.

While carbon emissions and climate policies already receive a lot of attention, our 2019 work focused on filling in some important gaps in the conversation – particularly around how these policies interact with broader societal objectives, including economic prosperity, Indigenous reconciliation and comprehensive environmental outcomes. Critically, we also promised to focus on the way in which federal climate legislation interacts with provincial approaches.

What we delivered
→ In 2019, we started analyzing the federal government’s proposed Clean Fuel Standards, a major piece of its climate policy framework. This policy will have implications for fuel suppliers, industry and consumers, but is currently flying below the radar for most people – our analysis fills a critical gap.

→ We also wrote about the way in which Canada is accounting for greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) under the Paris Agreement, and how the current approach influences the choices being made around energy-intensive industries, such as LNG in B.C., Quebec and Nova Scotia.

→ Published 11 op-eds and two policy briefs on carbon and climate policies, as well as participating in 16 speaking engagements and 29 media interviews across the country.

What it means for Canada’s West
As the home to many energy-intensive, high-emissions industries, Western Canada is particularly sensitive to the effects of carbon and climate policies. Our work helps ensure that policy formulated at a national level responds to the different contexts of Canada’s provinces and regions.

Still to come
In 2020, we will continue to pursue projects on carbon and climate policies, as these are increasingly central to the development of all our natural resources – not only energy, but also mining, forestry and all other resources. We will examine the problems of measurement, and how different approaches impact both Canadian economic choices and global emissions reduction.

Getting to ‘Go’
Removing regulatory barriers to energy innovation

What we promised
Innovation is key to Canada’s transition to a cleaner energy sector. But in many cases, regulatory processes are slowing, and sometimes preventing the adoption of innovations that could reduce GHG emissions and lower costs. We are working with a broad range of partners – energy innovators, regulators, technology adopters, accelerators and others – on a major project that identifies barriers and supports, and recommending changes that increase flexibility and adaptability, without sacrificing the environment or well-being.
What we delivered

→ In January, we held a day-long workshop that brought together participants from provincial regulators in Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., small innovative companies, large energy incumbents, business accelerators and others. The workshop produced frank and solution-focused discussions on how the regulatory environment can inhibit or incentivize energy innovation.

→ The results of the workshop were published as a summary report that was commended by regulators and innovators alike. We followed up with an additional session on the same topic at Emission Reduction Alberta’s SPARK conference in Edmonton, AB, in October.

→ We hosted a pop-up policy session in October on emerging energy innovations, and how to commercialize clean energy technologies 10 times faster.

→ Report: Workshop Summary: Getting to ‘Go’: Removing regulatory barriers to energy innovation

→ Report: Changes and Challenges to the Regulatory Compact, which was presented as part of the Public Policy Forum’s Energy Regulator Dialogues.

→ What Now? policy brief: When innovation meets energy regulation

→ We held productive one-on-one conversations with regulators from Alberta, B.C. and Saskatchewan that helped us better understand their challenges and perspectives, allowing us to provide some recommendations that emerged from our work over the year.

→ We started examining the issue of inactive facilities, and how regulations are limiting the ability to re-purpose those sites for new energy uses. We held a half-day workshop on this issue, and also facilitated a session at a one-day workshop hosted in November by CRIN, Innotech Alberta and JWN.

What this means for Canada’s West

As the pace of change in the energy sector continues to accelerate, the West must be prepared on all fronts not only to respond to these changes, but to lead the charge. Innovators must have the tools they need to transform ideas into reality; adopters must be prepared to take risks and break out of the status quo; and all parts of government – including, but not limited to, regulators – have to find a way to protect public wellbeing and the environment while also not quashing our competitive advantage. If all these elements can work together, this will be the magic sauce that maintains Western Canada as a global leader in energy for decades into the future.

Still to come

In 2020, we will continue our work on this project and adapt as new opportunities arise. For example, the emergence of the Clean Resource Innovation Network (CRIN) will open new opportunities for collaboration on issues that make a real difference for energy innovators, large and small, across Canada.
Smart Energy

What we promised
Western Canada’s energy picture is extremely complex. It encompasses oil and gas production, renewable energy sources including wind, solar, geothermal and hydroelectricity, and electricity grids to move energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed. It fills both domestic and global needs. It’s also strongly tied to critical societal issues including Indigenous rights and economic opportunity, climate change, economic prosperity and the environment.

Our work in 2019 promised to help Canadians understand the country’s complete energy picture, identify credible sources of information, and recognize the ways in which different choices result in trade-offs.

What we delivered
- We wrote and spoke about the intersection of energy choices and emission targets on a broad scale. We published op-eds in major newspapers including the Globe and Mail, the Hill Times, and regional papers across the western provinces about this topic.
- We commented on the rising anger, frustration and alienation in the West – and the energy policy decisions that are driving it – in numerous op-eds and media interviews around the country, including, critically, in Quebec. We also co-hosted a webinar with the Energy Futures Lab in advance of the provincial and federal elections, on political and government change and what it means for energy policy.
- In June, we hosted an Hon. James A. Richardson Discovery Roundtable on bringing energy investment back to Canada, an invitation-only event that brought together senior leaders – including Alberta’s energy minister – from industry, government, Indigenous groups, major financial institutions and other organizations involved in Western Canada’s energy prosperity.
- We spoke about critical issues, opportunities and options at dozens of events that included the Canadian Energy Dialogues, the Walter Gordon Symposium at the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs and Massey College, the Canadian Transportation Research Forum, the CCRE Energy Leaders Roundtable, the CANWea Spring Forum, and the Max Bell Foundation event on the future of energy in Canada.

What it means for Canada’s West
The prosperity of the West – and indeed, of all of Canada – is closely tied to the fortunes of the energy sector. By ensuring that disparate interests work together to make smart choices will be critical if we are to maintain our relevance globally, and also foster the outcomes that Canadians want to see domestically – including a healthy environment, vibrant communities, a prosperous economy and Indigenous reconciliation.

Still to come
In 2020, we will continue to work on projects that matter and continue to make our voice heard – through balanced and evidence-based analysis, influential speaking engagements and media events. Watch for our upcoming Energy Innovation Brief, a monthly publication that will highlight innovations that will lead to a cleaner, greener and more efficient energy system of tomorrow.
Success in the Making

Effective partnerships between Indigenous communities and resource firms

What we promised

Indigenous communities are increasingly forming alliances with natural resources firms to create economic opportunity and enhance self-sufficiency. However, too often the stories of these alliances remain untold. Canada West Foundation’s Natural Resources and Human Capital Centres are working with Indigenous partners to highlight successful examples. In 2018, we completed a series of roundtables and embarked on deep-dive case studies in Lac La Ronge (SK) and Lax Kw’alaams (BC) to document some of the ways success can arise. In 2019, we planned to continue working with a range of Indigenous groups across the four western provinces to help further economic reconciliation through sharing experiences, expectations and plans for resource development partnerships and projects. We expected to look at how to build the competencies required to achieve those successful alliances.

What we delivered

We experienced persistent difficulties in gathering data through our initial research methods, but remained committed to pursuing the objectives of the project. In 2019, we took advantage of an opportunity to pivot our methodology by partnering with Connect Partnership Group to document the proceedings of two conferences that brought together community and business leaders to discuss and amplify examples of Indigenous economic engagement and success.

The first conference, Forward Summit, held in Calgary, AB, in February, was co-chaired by J.P. Gladu, then President and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, and Chief Charles Weaselhead, Former Blood Tribe Treaty 7 Grand Chief. The three-day, Indigenous-led conference showcased some of the many Indigenous economic advances that have been made in recent years while making clear that there were still barriers to economic success for many Indigenous communities.

Report: Forward Together: Key learnings from Forward Summit on empowering Indigenous economies. Organized the lessons from the keynote sessions, panel discussions and workshops into the major themes, such as people, resources and skills and successful relationships, successful partnerships.

The second conference, Forward Together, in October 2019, was one full day devoted to issues of workforce inclusion for Indigenous peoples.

Report: Workforce Forward: Indigenous employment and inclusion. Offers accounts of how much progress has been made in improving labour force attachment for Indigenous workers, and how much still needs to be accomplished. Importantly, it also includes some of the predominantly Indigenous speakers’ recommendations of how to proceed.

Also published: Compendium of Programs and Policies to Narrow Economic Gaps for Western Canada’s Indigenous Peoples.

A report for the Government of Alberta on international examples of own-source revenue that analyzed opportunities in the context of national legislation for Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia was not released publicly.

What it means for Canada’s West

Great strides have been made in Indigenous economic engagement and success, including the lowering of some barriers to entry into the workforce for Indigenous workers. However, much is left to be done. Our work with this project has helped to illuminate the issues and some of the potential ways to further progress on these issues.

Still to come

This project has been completed.

Note: This project was conducted in partnership with the Human Capital Centre.
China’s relationship with Canada’s West

What we promised
Continuing to build capacity on China and developing western-based and focused expertise is critical given the rising trade relationship and its complications. We set out to identify new areas of comparative advantage and potential investment conflicts for Western Canada in Made in China 2025 (MIC2025), China’s nation-wide industrial policy and to draw lessons for Canada from other counties’ experience in dealing with non-tariff barriers to agricultural trade with China. The bi-weekly publication of the China Brief newsletter has continued and it has become the go-to source for building knowledge of China in the west and sharing issues of western concern with domestic and foreign policy makers.

What we delivered
In 2019, we focused on deep, longer-term research to build capacity and lay the foundation for future work. Our insight and independence has made us a go-to source of information for Canadian and foreign press on Western Canada’s relationship with China.

On MIC2025:

- What Now? policy brief: Strong Signals: China’s changing trade direction and what it means for Canada, which was turned into a YouTube video, What is Made in China 2025?

On Canada’s agricultural exports:

- With support from the agricultural producer associations we began an analysis of the experience of Australia, Brazil and New Zealand to understand and draw lessons from their history of engagement with China on non-tariff barrier issues.


On the China Brief:

- Published 20 issues of the China Brief with as many as 1,800 readers of any one issue.

On dissemination of our work:

- Published six op-eds in 11 different national and regional papers, including How Canada can cope with Chinese market access roadblocks to agriculture published in The Hill Times on March 20, 2019 and Trade lessons – the benefits and costs of having options was published in the Star Phoenix, Leader Post and the Province on July 4, 2019.

- Gave 50 media interviews (an average of almost one per week), including The House with Chris Hall on CBC on the canola issue.

- Six presentations primarily on agriculture trade issues including the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan and the Peace River Economic Development Alliance.

- Testified to the Alberta legislature’s agriculture committee about Alberta’s agriculture and the new NAFTA deal, USMCA.
What it means for Canada’s West
Trade tensions between Canada and China show signs of increasing instead of abating, yet knowledge and capacity in Western Canada on China, on the trade relationship and new factors like China’s belt and road initiative, have not kept pace with the rise in complexity and importance of the relationship. Our capacity, knowledge and networks fill an acute gap for Western Canada to manage the growing trade relationship with the West’s second largest trade partner.

Still to come
In 2020, we will share our research on resolving agricultural non-tariff barrier issues with China with key stakeholders, including lessons from the US-China phase one agreement. Publication of the China Brief will continue as will the high intensity of dissemination activities. Significant resources will continue to be devoted to increasing knowledge, capacity and building networks to expand our reach and competence on China issues.

Trade agreements and competitiveness

What we promised
With Canada fighting to defend its interests and open new markets, we promised to continue to provide research, new modelling and evidence-based, non-partisan commentary in media interviews and public engagements in Canada and in key foreign markets, especially in North America and the Pacific Rim.

What we delivered
We shifted resources to provide outputs listed below that were not envisioned when we prepared the 2019 work plan. This was done because it became apparent that certain issues were of larger importance and impact to Western industries.

- Toilet Seats, Trucking and Other Trade Tie-ups: A new solution to the old problem of Canadian internal trade was released on what the federal government can do to accelerate trade liberalization in Canada.
- Draft of the Japan CPTPP opportunities report and detailed results delivered to provincial governments and export promotion agencies.
- Report on lessons from the United States on setting up Investment Attraction agencies delivered to the Alberta government.
- What Now? policy brief: Tweet of Damocles: Even with a new NAFTA, Canada’s biggest trade threat is from below the border.
- Briefings for provincial officials and Calgary Economic Development on the Cascadia Innovation Corridor and an op-ed in Seattle Times.
- Published 11 op-eds in Canada, the U.S., Mexico and Japan promoting Western Canadian interests and investment attraction, North American trade negotiations and other trade issues.
- Gave over 65 interviews in Canada and abroad including the Financial Times, CBC coast to coast radio syndication, the Latin American Advisor and U.S. National Public Radio.
- Hosted two public Pop-up-Policy talks in Calgary.
What it means for Canada’s West
With trade disruptions and market uncertainty becoming defining features of Western Canada’s economic reality, the region has to improve at getting more out of its trade opportunities and in becoming more competitive in attracting foreign investment. Here at the Canada West Foundation we've built the knowledge, networks and capacity to be able to quickly pivot to respond to new challenges and seize opportunities to produce research that provides specific solutions and identifies new opportunities.

Still to come
In 2020, we will continue to play a critical and unique role in filling gaps for governments, business and communities in Western Canada in advocacy and providing advanced warning of trade and investment opportunities and risks.

How to deal with trade disruption
Resources for this project were shifted to Trade and Competitiveness.

Province-state relations in the age of Trump
What we promised
In an era when Washington, D.C. is locked in a stalemate and trade tensions continue to emerge, direct engagement by the provinces with their U.S. counterparts is more critical than ever. We set out to research and convene experts to define areas where sub-national engagement could be most effective and identify ways to make sure this engagement, which started during the negotiations for a new North American trade agreement, is successful and lasting.

What we delivered
Efforts to convene subject matter experts with western provincial government officials was postponed due to inability of government officials to meet. We diverted resources to a group of Canadian academics to win a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant for research on sub-national engagement. Canada West Foundation will be the non-academic partner, and this will lay the basis for deeper and broader research. We also published a What Now? policy brief and carried out extensive advocacy and dissemination activities on the importance of sub-national engagement.

→ Lead speaker at Pacific Northwest Economic Region Summer meeting (PNWER). Briefing on NAFTA impact on Alberta agriculture.

→ We published two op-eds on the importance of sub-national engagement with the U.S., one in the Financial Post and the other ran across the Postmedia chain.

What it means for Canada’s West
As we have argued, the end of negotiations for a new North American trade agreement is not the end of Canada’s struggles in the U.S. market. Key issues remain active, for example, the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) requirements. Resolving and mitigating these issues is as much the responsibility for western provincial governments as it is for Ottawa. To do more with fewer resources in a time of fiscal austerity, the west will have to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its engagement.

Still to come
We will continue to work with our academic partners on research and implementation as well as convening a meeting with provincial government officials from across the West.
Building more and better strategic trade infrastructure

What we promised
We proposed to conclude our work on how to improve trade infrastructure by linking the private sector and its sophisticated logistics, supply and production chain information to government decision-making to get trade infrastructure spending right.

What we delivered
We worked with Canada West Foundation Senior Fellow John Law to refine the evolving research questions in response to changes in federal and provincial policies, and identified a potential funding collaboration to support the work. We devoted considerable resources to a new project to identify potential gaps in Canada’s infrastructure by modelling the impact of the CPTPP agreement on trade.


Design and launch of new project to model impact of CPTPP on Canada’s trade infrastructure.

Convened a Trade and Investment Centre Policy Council meeting on trade infrastructure challenges with the Australian High Commissioner to Canada.


Produced two national op-eds.

Presented support for urgent trade infrastructure improvements and an explicit Western Canadian trade corridor to both senior industry stakeholders and provincial, federal and territorial transportation agencies and ministries. This has resulted in the Council of Ministers of Transportation adding the competitiveness of trade corridors as an agenda item to their national meeting, as well as a new national task force at the working level of transportation departments.

Presented to Western transportation deputy ministers working group which has initiated discussions on options to develop a regional strategy for trade corridor and trade infrastructure improvement.

Organized and conducted a series of industry outreach interviews with the ports, railways and terminal operators and others to solicit frontline input on current supply chain priorities and interest in contributing to the development of a long-term plan.

What it means for Canada’s West
The combination of consultations and discussions with stakeholders reestablished trade corridor competitiveness and infrastructure as a priority at national and western provincial agencies. It’s reopened discussions with Transport Canada on a coordinated industry – government long-term plan, because moving products to market is critical. Improving our ability to do this is even more critical given our recent reputational decline.

Still to come
In 2020, we plan to produce a paper based on modelling the impacts of the CPTPP trade agreement on Canada’s trade infrastructure and logistics systems with recommendations for western provincial governments. If funding is confirmed, we will conclude our delayed final report on how to improve Canada’s trade infrastructure performance by including critical private sector input in planning and prioritization, including the Western Transportation Advisory Council.
The path forward for globally competitive plant ingredient processing

What we promised
Since we released our 2017 report Sprouted: The plant ingredient opportunity taking root on the Prairies, the federal government has funded a plant protein supercluster in the Prairies, and foreign investment and interest have increased. Yet questions remain as to whether the Prairie provinces have the necessary capacity, regulatory frameworks and other assets needed to fully realize this opportunity. In 2019, we promised to provide recommendations to create a world-leading plant ingredient processing regulatory system in Canada, with possible implications for broader food processing regulatory reform.

What we delivered
We undertook a two-stage research project that included a cross-jurisdictional analysis of national regulations for producing ingredients and other intermediary, but not final consumer, food processing inputs and interviews with ingredient processors in Canada. The cross-jurisdictional survey and analysis was completed and provided to Protein Industries Canada, Western Economic Diversification, and the Government of Alberta. The interview process was unable to obtain participation by large-scale producers and so, in consultation with Protein Industries Canada and Western Economic Diversification, the project has been suspended. Beyond this specific research, we invested a significant amount of time in service on the boards of Protein Industries Canada and the Plant Protein Alliance of Alberta.

What it means for Canada’s West
The plant protein opportunity is potentially transformative when it comes to economic diversification, and the Prairies are poised to lead. However, this will only happen if government and legislation can move as quickly as the conditions that created this opportunity.

Still to come
We continue to provide the only analysis in the country for media, industry, producers and government decision-makers on the best way forward to take advantage of the plant protein opportunity.

We will continue to work with stakeholders across the Prairies and serve on the board of the Plant Protein Alliance of Alberta.

Two briefings on plant protein for federal and provincial ministers and staff, municipal government officials, foreign investors, Canadian embassy and Alberta foreign office staff in Tokyo. Briefings to Japanese industry included Mitsubishi and Mizuho bank.

Two op-eds appearing in the Postmedia chain and the Winnipeg Free Press.
Six media interviews, including the Western Producer.
Changing world markets, automation and artificial intelligence are combining to make virtually every workplace a hub for change. With this in mind, in 2019, the Human Capital Centre had an ambitious agenda to build on earlier work in two main areas: the implementation of a competency-based approach to workforce development and deployment; and the importance of basic skills to employment for individuals and economic success for the country.

Building the competency frameworks Canada needs

What we promised
A pan-Canadian competency framework remains a priority for the Human Capital Centre. One way to achieve this goal is to develop the competency profiles of specific jobs in specific sectors and to amalgamate them over time. In 2019, we planned to be involved in documenting the development of competency profiles and related policy implications in at least three sectors.

What we delivered
We continue to follow the development of competency frameworks in the landscaping technology, bio-talent and concrete pumping sectors.

Two presentations to the Executive breakfast series of the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CHPR) Alberta, about the value of competency frameworks and a competency-based approach to the work of HR professionals.

→ A presentation to vice presidents academic from colleges across Canada about competencies, competency-frameworks and competency-based education and assessment.

What it means for Canada’s West
If competency-frameworks are to be useful in the development of improved labour market information, they need to be built using common principles and classification systems. Our documentation of some of the recent work in building competency frameworks will help further that common understanding, in the West and for Canada as a whole.

Still to come
In 2020, a research paper and at least one What Now? policy brief capturing some of the learnings from recent work in building competency frameworks will be published.

The economics of basic skills

What we promised
Literacy Lost: Canada’s basic skills shortfall, published in 2018, discussed the reasons for literacy skill loss and why that is a problem. Recent analysis shows the close link between literacy rates of the adult population and GDP growth and productivity. In 2019, we planned to look at the specific results for Canada, the policy and programming implications and what it means for economic competitiveness.
What we delivered

- Op-ed: *Canada’s shortfall in basic skills costs us all* published in the Globe and Mail.

Janet Lane and T. Scott Murray published four What Now? policy briefs on the importance of literacy to individuals, society and the economy, based on this work and other research:

- *The Literacy Hustle: How learning to learn skills help people survive in the changing workplace*. A discussion of why literacy is the key to learning the way into new and changing jobs.

- *Ready or Not: the need to improve this gen literacy*. Recommendations for solving the problem of too many young people not having adequate skills to succeed in further education or most jobs in the economy.

- *Opportunity Lost*. Exposing the economic cost of not improving the skills of our workforce.

- *Busted: 11 Literacy Myths*. Debunking common ideas about literacy, including the one about everyone being able to read, so literacy cannot be a problem in Canada.

- In November, Janet Lane was interviewed for and quoted extensively in a news story, 50 per cent of Canadians have a literacy problem, in the Journal of Commerce.

Digital skills are becoming increasingly important, not just to the Information Technology (IT) sector, but also to virtually every job in the economy. We delved into digital skills and delivered:

- Presentation at Absolute Combustion Conference: Corporate Culture and Digital Transformation

- Presentation at BILD Alberta Conference: Building a Learning Culture for technological adaptation

- Hosted a Pop-up Policy about how every job is a digital job, but not everyone needs to learn to code, with Doug Junor of 4Rev.


What it means for Canada’s West

Improving literacy scores will mean better economic, health, learning and social outcomes for everyone. As a result, each of our What Now? policy briefs made recommendations about how literacy skills can be improved. Improving digital skills will increase individual and economic productivity and be an important factor in mitigating the loss of jobs as technological advances are incorporated into every workplace.

Still to come

- Op-ed: *14 points that matter about literacy*, about the troubling downward trend in reading scores for our 15-year-old students. Published in January 2020 in six regional newspapers.


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The hierarchy of skills acquisition

What we promised

In Canada, literacy and numeracy are considered essential skills. As jobs change, these skills are more important than ever. So too are soft skills like problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making. Unfortunately, all these skills are in short supply. We promised to look at what policymakers and program designers should know about the best methods for adults to build these skills in adulthood and the most efficient order in which to learn them.

What we delivered

- In May, our report, *The Hierarchy of Skills Acquisition and Application* was submitted to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).
In June, joined the expert panel advising ESDC on the Essential Skills Framework renewal.

In June, we presented to a conference of essential skills experts in Ottawa. We highlighted the relationship between persistence, curiosity and learning to read in children, and that literacy is a prerequisite for higher order cognitive skills such as problem-solving and creativity.


Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee: Budget 2019, the Canada Training Benefit, on how the new budget initiative should be implemented, including the importance of people having the learning to learn skills.

What it means for Canada’s West
ESDC is revising the Essential Skills Framework to include some of the most essential soft skills – adaptability and creativity for example. We will continue to be a member of the panel of experts advising on the revision and the roll out of the new framework over the next 18 months.

Still to come
We have contributed to a paper expected to be released by Public Policy Forum in early 2020. To ensure the validity and reliability of any measurement of the new skills in the framework, further research is required and we will continue to provide our expertise.

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New, different work for laid-off oil and gas workers

What we promised
Laid-off oil and gas workers have developed significant competencies that can be useful in other sectors and occupations – the problem is that neither they nor potential employers may realize it. In 2019, we planned to finish our interpretation and reporting of the findings from earlier research into transferable skills of workers displaced from the oil and gas sector.

What we delivered
Report: Essential Skills in Workers Displaced from the Oil and Gas Sector, was produced for ESDC, the funder of this project. We found a wide variation in skills and skill levels of people who had been employed in the same occupations. A further finding is that while participants had vastly different training and experience than what was demanded by the jobs we profiled in the study, there were a few good matches between participants’ profiles and the listed mandatory competencies for these jobs.

What it means for Canada’s West
The world of work is changing, and the skills demanded most in jobs are often transferable between industries. Many of the thousands of people who were laid off from Canada’s oil patch are now working in different sectors but many more could be if they and employers better understood the transferability of their skills.

Still to come
Using the data collected through this project we will publish a report in early 2020 to show how occupational profiles are changing rapidly.
**A competency approach to economic development**

**What we promised**
Jobs are being displaced through a variety of causes, from lower commodity prices, to automation, to changing policy choices. Often these job losses affect the economies of whole communities or regions. We had planned to undertake at least one major project designed to show that a competency-based approach to economic development is a workable method to attract new jobs to a community or region.

**What we delivered**
Despite interest in this work, we were unable to secure funding to cover the costs of a project of this size and scope.

**What it means for Canada’s West**
This problem is going to become more prevalent over time as automation changes the way we work. This project, if funded, could provide a proactive path for whole towns toward solutions and away from fruitless hand wringing over economic downturns due to a variety of causes, including policy changes.

**Still to come**
If funding becomes available, we would consider reworking the proposal for inclusion of this project in the 2020 work plan.

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**Success in the Making**

**Effective partnerships between Indigenous communities and resource firms**

This project was conducted in partnership with the Natural Resources Centre. Please see page 6.

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**Adaptation**

**Getting ready for the challenges of tomorrow**

At the end of 2018, we decided it would be useful to address the theme of adaptation – the way in which Western Canada was preparing to meet the mega-trends and challenges shaping the world. This includes demographic shifts, technological acceleration and shifts in geopolitics and global economic power. We thought the best way to address these important issues would be to examine these trends, and how communities can adapt to both the negatives and the positives these changes will bring.

However, over the course of 2019, the outcomes of both the federal and provincial elections, a rapidly growing feeling of disenfranchisement in the West, and schisms between provinces and regions have emerged as the key forces that are shaping public opinion now, and for some years to come.

As a result, we decided to pivot to what was most urgently needed: work on the West’s place in Canada today, and how to address those divisions in a way that leads to national – and Western – prosperity. In 2020, look for our work on *The Canada Project*, which will provide the balance and insight desperately needed to ensure a prosperous West in a unified Canada.
We thank our supporters

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*Updated: April 2020*
The Canada West Foundation is an independent, non-partisan public policy think tank that focuses on the policies that shape the West, and by extension, Canada. Through our evidence-based research and commentary, we provide practical solutions to tough public policy challenges facing the West, and Canada as a whole, at home and on the global stage. Our three research centres – Natural Resources Centre, Trade & Investment Centre and Human Capital Centre – focus on the big issues facing the West and Canada today.