

## **Rail Strike: How did we get here & how do we avoid a repeat?**

*A compendium of Canada West Foundation work on the problems and solutions*

For over a decade, the Canada West Foundation, other think tanks and private sector organizations have been sounding the alarm – and developing solutions for – Canada’s trade infrastructure system, the source of over two-thirds of the country’s GDP.

This work includes long, deep research pieces, shorter policy papers, public testimony and a decade of op-eds.

An annotated compendium of work by CWF and others involved in this effort is presented below.

The approaching economic crisis that will occur if both of Canada’s national rail carriers strike at the same time did not come out of the blue. The immediate crisis began brewing in 2022 when an extension was granted to the expired CN-Teamsters contract, rather than a negotiated new agreement. This decision allowed the contracts of CN and CPKC to both expire at the end of 2023. This alignment of two national railroads on strike at the same time has turned what is normally a crisis into an existential threat.

We will likely see much hand-wringing, finger-pointing and quick fixes followed by a move to put root causes of the problem back on the shelf – a path that will eventually lead back to another crisis.

But there is a solution that is well known and practiced in other countries. It has been supported by the private sector for years and was endorsed by the Premiers at a 2023 Council of the Federation meeting.

The list below highlights the efforts of the Canada West Foundation and other organizations over the last 10 years to bring attention and resolution to Canada’s trade infrastructure challenges:

### **REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFS**

**REPORT | [From Shovel Ready to Shovel Worthy: The Path to a National Trade Infrastructure Plan for the Next Generation of Economic Growth](#). May 2022, Canada West Foundation.**

- This foundational research shows how the lack of national planning is, from a cross-jurisdictional perspective, a root cause of Canada’s trade infrastructure woes. It is the first framing of the solution to the problem, the adaptation of a Canadian system of planning supported by the private sector and the Council of the Federation (Premiers). The research was carried out with the participation of the Business Council of Canada,

the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and support from the Canadian Construction Association and Western Roadbuilders.

*Submission to Infrastructure Canada on the National Infrastructure Assessment.* July 2021.  
Canada West Foundation

*WHAT NOW? Policy Brief | Building a Bridge to Trade Opportunities: A long-term approach to trade infrastructure planning.* October 2019, Canada West Foundation.

- Short policy brief with the main arguments in the Shovel Ready to Shovel Worthy paper.

*Smoother Track for Exports: A framework for Alberta rail policy.* April 2018, Canada West Foundation

## **OTHER WORK**

*Council of the Federation Communiqué: Premiers Focused on Actions to Support Economic Growth and Opportunities.* July 2023.

- The communiqué from Premiers from the 2023 Meeting of the Council of the Federation endorsing the call for national planning put forward by the Canada West Foundation, Business Council of Canada, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Construction Association, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Civil Infrastructure Council Corporation, and the Western Canada Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association.

*Testimony: CWF Director testifies before the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade.* Jan. 2021, Carlo Dade.

*Strategic Trade Infrastructure Roundtable Summary Feb. 2017*

- Roundtable with industry and Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Amarjeet Sohi

## **CWF OP-EDS & NEWSPAPER INTERVIEWS**

*The port strike has ended but larger problems have not: cue the premiers.* Calgary Herald, Aug. 2023.

- Op-ed linking labour strike at Vancouver Port to larger trade infrastructure problems.  
Calgary Herald

*Manitoba takes the lead.* Winnipeg Free Press, May 2023.

- Winnipeg Free Press Op Ed describing the significance of the Council of the Federation call for action.

[Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba sign agreement to spur economic corridors.](#) Edmonton Journal, April 2023.

- Edmonton Journal article on prairie Premiers implementing the basic principles of the Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan

[Indo-Pacific reality check in Tsawwassen. The Importance of trade infrastructure for the nation.](#) Hill Times, Feb. 2023.

[Canada ignores fall in rankings for national trade infrastructure at its peril.](#) Calgary Herald, Jun. 2022.

[Canadian think-tank rings infrastructure alarm bells.](#) Business in Vancouver, Jun. 2022.

[Shovel ready' approach is why Canada's infrastructure rankings are dropping.](#) Financial Post, May 2022.

[Canada's trade is likely to suffer thanks to our infrastructure woes.](#) Globe and Mail, Oct. 2019.

[Next election will be a fight over trade and infrastructure.](#) Globe and Mail, Nov. 2014.

## **WORK FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

[Action. Collaboration. Transformation.](#) August 2024, National Supply Chain task Force

[Supply Chains Council.](#) May 2024, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

[Canadian Construction Association Formal submission for consideration in advance of the 2024 Federal Budget.](#) February 2024, Canadian Construction Association

[Canadian Business in Supply Chains and Global Markets.](#) February 2024, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

[Canadian Trade Infrastructure Plan.](#) 2023, CTIP

[Canadian Chamber Addresses Importance of Large Port Infrastructure Expansion Projects Before House Committee.](#) March 2023, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

[Creating a vision for Canada's national infrastructure investment.](#) March 2022, Canadian Construction Association

[WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR THE PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE 2023 BUDGET.](#) December 2022, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters

[Civil Infrastructure Council plans advocacy for trade gateways, corridors.](#) September 2022, Civil Infrastructure Council Corporation.

[The Infrastructure that Matters Most: The Need for Investment in Canada's Trade Infrastructure.](#) July 2016, Canadian Chamber of Commerce.