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CANADA'S PRODUCTIVITY INITIATIVE

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# What We Heard Report

Highlights from Canada's Productivity Summit 2024



To address productivity challenges that threaten Canada's future economic prosperity, the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy teamed with the Government of Alberta to host Canada's Productivity Summit in October 2024.

The two-day Summit in Calgary had the theme *Investment, Economic Growth and Long-Term Prosperity* and brought together more than 700 experts and key stakeholders—economists, policymakers, business leaders, Indigenous leaders, and community representatives—to better understand the challenge and begin to develop practical policy recommendations.

The **What We Heard** report from the Summit reflects the perspectives from speakers and delegates expressed in the 15 sessions that addressed key issues and sector-specific concerns.

## What We Heard

### Key Takeaways

- Political leadership, and consensus, is essential to overcome historic and efficient ways of doing things; a sense of urgency is critical.
- Ensure regulatory processes and government policies are predictable, stable, and aligned with productivity agenda to support economic growth that can sustain Canada's quality of life, social policies and environmental goals.
- Develop better skills training programs to develop the next generation of workers.
- Emphasize widespread technology adoption over new R&D.
- Enhance government procurement processes to support innovation and improve accessibility for smaller, local firms.
- Improve communications; address real life concerns (AI will take jobs), use platforms that reach key audiences, promote success stories.

# Immediate Priorities: By Issue

## ADVANCING ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION

- Align corporate and Indigenous governance timelines to ensure meaningful consultation and reduce project delays.
- Educate corporate leaders and policymakers on the importance of Indigenous consultation.
- Develop mentorship programs to support Indigenous leaders.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Adopt tax policies that allow full expensing of capital investments to encourage companies to invest in supply chains, modernize facilities, and adopt innovative technologies.
- Invest in smaller airports and sustainable aviation initiatives.
- Fund R&D in hydrogen and other sustainable fuels.

## PARTNERSHIPS, SKILLS, AND TALENT

- Governments be more proactive in adopting new technologies and can serve as role models.
- Expand support for organizations like MITACS that accelerate technology adoption across SMEs and other firms.

## TAX POLICY

- Review Canada's tax system to improve its international competitiveness
- Simplify tax administration; improve operational efficiency of the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Implement permanent and full expensing of capital investments.
- Link tax incentives to retention of intellectual property to ensure innovations developed in Canada remain under domestic control.

## INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

- Provinces should recognize any rule, standard, certification, or credential accepted in another province. Allow businesses or professionals from any other jurisdiction to operate within its borders without additional certification.

## INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

- Expand on targeted investments that have built a strong foundation for innovation.
- Retain talent within Canada with programs such as Alberta's Upper Bound AI conference.
- Leverage Canada's advantage in data-rich industries, particularly healthcare, as a platform for experimentation and AI-driven solutions.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

- Prioritize a cooperative agenda with key trade partners, particularly the U.S. and Mexico.
- Promote Canada's unique strengths in low-carbon industries, such as copper, nickel, and plant-based proteins, as key opportunities in more diverse markets especially in the Global South

## CLIMATE POLICY

- Improve carbon policies by linking provincial industrial pricing systems.
- Market Canada's low-carbon aluminum and steel industries to capitalize on international carbon pricing systems.

## PUBLIC SECTOR

- Implement training programs to improve decision-making capabilities of public servants, to address complex challenges.
- Streamline feedback loops and reduce bureaucratic hurdles to improve decision-making processes.
- Adopt digital tools and platforms to enhance the efficiency, accessibility and responsiveness of government services.

## Immediate Priorities: By Sector

### NATURAL RESOURCES

- Reduce political influence within the regulatory process.
- Develop a more explicit and deliberate effort to balance the economic consequences of regulatory initiatives with broader societal goals.

### CONSTRUCTION

- Leverage existing data platforms to support real-time decision-making.
- Use collaborative contracting models to streamline processes, mitigate risks, and ensure smoother execution of large-scale projects.

### MANUFACTURING

- Expand federal programs that reduce administrative burdens and accelerate adoption of new technologies and improve processes.
- Leverage government procurement as a growth tool for local SMEs and simplify processes and creating more opportunities for participation and foster innovation.
- Foster partnerships between academia, industry and government to accelerate innovation through pooled resources and expertise to bridge the gap between development and application.

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Ease restrictions on foreign investments.

### AGRICULTURE

- Support projects that integrate AI technologies on large and small farms to leverage existing data through platforms to facilitate quick, informed decisions
- Incentivize university students to pursue agriculture-related sciences and business programs.
- Pair academic research with farm-level solutions to pair scientific advancements and practical applications, ensuring innovations have real-world impact.

### Next Steps

Canada's Productivity Initiative was launched as one year initiative during the Summit that will build on **What We Heard** at the conference to develop actionable and impactful recommendations for policymakers.

The School of Public Policy is undertaking research on aspects of productivity and engaging with leading thinkers in business, government and academia across Canada during 2025 in a series of one-day sessions with subject-matter and policy experts.

- Ottawa (Q1 2025): Tax, Fiscal Policy, Competition
- Montreal (Q1 2025): Talent, Skills, Immigration
- Vancouver (Spring 2025): Infrastructure. Transportation.
- Halifax (Spring 2025): Interprovincial trade, regulation.
- Saskatoon (Fall 2025): Agriculture. Energy, Minerals.
- Toronto (Fall 2025): Innovation, technology.

The final report from Canada's Productivity Initiative will be published following these events.