2026 FALL MEMBER FORUM

Gateway to Growth: Trade, Infrastructure and Canada's New Economy

NOVEMBER 18 & 19
MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE, VANCOUVER

Canada stands at a pivotal moment. Global competition, shifting trade patterns, North American uncertainty and renewed pressure to build major infrastructure are testing Canada's economic ambition. For Western Canada, the opportunity is significant: to strengthen trade corridors, expand access to global markets, improve system performance and turn national priorities into projects that can be delivered.

The 2026 Fall Forum will examine the choices that will shape Canada's next phase of growth. Discussions will explore the economic outlook, the future of CUSMA, Pacific Gateway capacity, major project delivery, and the system constraints limiting transportation performance.

Against a backdrop of increasing global competition and pressure to improve productivity, the Forum will focus on how Canada can move from ambition to execution by accelerating projects, strengthening trade corridors, attracting investment, building durable partnerships and improving the reliability, capacity and resilience of the transportation system.



WESTAC

VENUES

Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue
580 West Hastings St. Tel: (778) 782-5800
Vancouver, BC

Meeting Rooms
All meetings and meals will be held on the main floor or lower concourse unless otherwise noted.

Delta Hotels Vancouver Dowtown Suites

550 West Hastings St. Tel: (604) 689-8188
Vancouver, BC
*Transportation will be provided between the Wosk Centre and tours.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, November 18, 2026

7:15 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast	ICBC Concourse
8:15 am	Opening Remarks	Asia Pacific Hall
8:30 am	Working Sessions begin	
10:00 am	Break	Atrium
10:30 am	Working Sessions (cont.)	
12:00 pm	Lunch	ICBC Concourse
1:00 pm	Working Sessions (cont.)	
2:30 pm	Break	Atrium
3:00 pm	Working Sessions (cont.)	
5:00 pm	Working Sessions end	
5:00 pm	Reception	Atrium

Thursday, November 19, 2026

7:15 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast	ICBC Concourse
8:00 am	Leaders Council [1]	Asia Pacific Hall
11:00am	Break	
11:15 am	Board of Directors Meeting	Room 320 (3rd Floor)
11:30 pm	Lunch for all attendees	ICBC Concourse
12:00 pm	Board Meeting adjourns	
12:30 pm	Tours depart	Atrium

[1] Participation is limited to the most senior representative of member organizations. Sustaining members are allowed two representatives.

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Wednesday, November 18, 2026

7:15 am	**Buffet Breakfast** (open to all attendees)
8:15 am	**Opening Remarks** **Lindsay Kislock,** President and CEO, WESTAC
8:30 am	**Canada's Economic Outlook: Competitiveness, Trade and Growth** As Canada navigates a more complex global economic landscape, understanding the forces shaping growth, investment and trade has never been more important. This session will provide insight into the Canadian and North American economic outlook, with a focus on competitiveness, productivity, trade diversification, labour markets, infrastructure investment and the conditions needed to support long-term growth. **Douglas Porter,** Chief Economist & Managing Director Economics, BMO Economics
9:15 am	**Bright Future: Expanding Canada's Northern Trade Gateway** Prince Rupert is one of the country's fastest-growing trade gateways, with major new investments creating capacity to move more Canadian goods to global markets. As Canada looks to dramatically expand and diversify its trade, the northern gateway has an increasingly important role to play. Kurt Slocombe, President & CEO of the Prince Rupert Port Authority, will discuss the port's growth plans, priority infrastructure investments and opportunities to strengthen supply chains and support Canada's long-term economic competitiveness. Introduction by: **Janet Drysdale,** Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer, CN **Kurt Slocombe,** President & CEO, Prince Rupert Port Authority
10:00 am	**Break**
10:30 am	**CUSMA: What's Next?** With the United States declining to renew the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) in its current form, decisions made over the coming months will shape the future of North American trade, investment and supply chains. Former Ambassador Hillman will share her perspective on the road ahead. She will be joined by Carlo Dade and James Gorman for a discussion on the key issues under review, Canada's priorities and challenges, and the implications for transportation, trade and economic competitiveness in an increasingly uncertain global environment. **Kirsten Hillman,** Former Ambassador to the United States **Carlo Dade,** Director, International Policy and the New North America Initiative, School of Public Policy, University of Calgary **James Gorman,** Senior Vice-President, Corporate Services, West Fraser
12:00 pm	**Lunch**

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1:00 pm	**Building Canada's Future: From Ambition to Action** This conversation will bring together senior federal leaders to discuss the major projects, transportation infrastructure and labour stability needed to support Canada's economic growth and trade ambitions. Michael Vandergrift will discuss the government's transportation infrastructure priorities, including implementation of the Trade Diversification Corridors Fund and investments to strengthen the capacity, resilience and performance of Canada's trade corridors. Rob Wright will provide an update on measures intended to improve labour stability and support the reliable operation of Canada's federally regulated transportation system. The conversation will also explore the role of the Major Projects Office in accelerating major projects, streamlining approvals and attracting investment. Together, the speakers will explore how coordinated action on project delivery, trade infrastructure and labour policy can strengthen Canada's competitiveness, support export diversification and turn national ambitions into results. **Serge Bijimine,** Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Transport Canada **Rob Wright,** Deputy Minister of Labour and Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development, Government of Canada **Peter Feldberg,** Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs, Major Projects Office
2:30 pm	**Break**
3:00 pm	**Driving Diversification at Canada's Largest Port** As Canada's largest port, the Port of Vancouver will continue to play a central role in the country's trade growth and diversification. Peter Xotta, President and CEO of the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, will outline the Government of Canada's Port of Vancouver Gateway Strategy, including the priority projects, infrastructure investments and opportunities to expand capacity, improve reliability and strengthen connections to global markets. **Peter Xotta,** President & CEO, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
3:30 pm	**Optimizing Complex Transportation Systems** This session will explore how Canada can unlock productivity by identifying and removing the constraints that limit transportation system performance. Drawing on the Theory of Constraints and systems thinking, Dr. Barnard will demonstrate why improving flow, rather than optimizing every individual part of the system, is key to increasing capacity, reliability and resilience. **Dr. Alan Barnard,** Entrepreneur, Research Scientist and Author
5:00 pm	**Reception**

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7:15 am **Breakfast**

8:00 am

WESTAC LEADERS' COUNCIL

The Fall Leaders' Council will be focused on the following question, with discussion supported by Dr. Alan Barnard.

If Canada is serious about doubling overseas trade and improving productivity, what is the one system constraint we should collectively focus on removing first?

8:00 am **Opening Remarks**
- Lindsay Kislock, President & CEO, WESTAC
- Dr. Alan Barnard

8:05 am **Discussion**

11:00 am 11:00 am **Meeting concludes**

Additional information:

Participation is limited to the most senior representative of member organizations (Sustaining members are allowed two representatives).

11:15 am **Board of Directors meeting (lunch provided)**

11:30 am **Lunch for all attendees**

12:00 pm **Board meeting adjourns**

12:20 pm **Tours depart**

Shuttle buses have been arranged for tours to the DP World Centerm Terminal and Seaspan Shipyard. Please meet in the atrium of the Wosk Centre by 12:20. Tours will depart promptly at 12:30. The pilotage simulator group will walk to 1130 West Pender St. Please see WESTAC staff if you are unsure of which tour you're participating in.

3:00 pm **Tours return**

Tour lengths will vary. All groups will be returned to the Wosk Centre by 3:00 pm.

GUEST SPEAKERS



DR. ALAN BARNARD

Entrepreneur, Research Scientist and Author

Dr. Alan Barnard is one of the world's leading Decision Scientist and Theory of Constraints' experts. Alan, a serial entrepreneur, is the Founder and CEO of Goldratt Research Labs, a company he co-founded in 2008 together with Dr. Eli Goldratt, creator of Theory of Constraints. There was an immediate connection between Alan and Eli after their first meeting in 1993. Alan and Eli were both curious about understanding why good people make and often repeat bad decisions within their life and in managing organizations. They were also both passionate about applying a robust scientific approach to developing new Thinking & Decision making methods and advanced Technologies to help people make better, faster decisions – decisions that move them closer to their goals.

Today, Alan works as a Strategy advisor, Researcher and Theory of Constraint (TOC) expert and educator, with both Fortune 500 companies as well as NGO's and Government Agencies. His clients include Microsoft, Cargill, Tata Steel, Nike, ABB, BHP, Cisco, South32, SAP, Intel, Penguin Random House, BC Rail, Larsen & Toubro, Premier Foods, Fujitsu, Habitat for Humanity, UNDP, UNWFP and Utah Governor's Office of Management and Budget.



CARLO DADE

Director of International Policy and the New North America Initiative
School of Public Policy, University of Calgary

Mr. Carlo Dade is the Director of International Policy and the New North America Initiative at the School of Public Policy, University of Calgary.

Carlo Dade has an extensive background in international public policy, having most recently served as the founder and Director of Trade and Trade Infrastructure Policy Research Centre at Canada West Foundation. Among other accomplishments, he contributed significantly to the development of a national trade infrastructure plan and the renewal of Canada's trade corridors.

Widely recognized as a leading voice on defending and advancing Western Canadian trade interests, Dade is a frequent media commentator who has played a pivotal role in shaping trade strategies that safeguard economic stability and growth.

His expertise is particularly crucial as the trade relationship between Canada, the United States and China face significant challenges. Prior to the Canada West Foundation, he was executive director of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), Canada's Western Hemisphere think tank.

GUEST SPEAKERS



PETER FELDBERG

Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs
Major Projects Office

Peter Feldberg is Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs at Canada's Major Projects Office (MPO), a federal agency established to accelerate projects of national importance. Peter is a Calgary-based lawyer and regulatory expert with more than four decades of experience advising on major energy, utility, infrastructure, and public regulatory matters across Canada.

As a regulatory lawyer, Peter advised and represented governments, Crown corporations and private proponents on some of Western Canada's most significant infrastructure and projects, including electricity generation and transmission projects, pipelines and other resource developments. His practice focused on regulatory hearings, public law, Indigenous matters, dispute resolution, and obtaining approvals for large-scale projects.

Before joining the MPO, Peter spent more than 20 years with Fasken, one of Canada's leading business law firms. He served as the firm's Managing Partner from 2015 to 2023, overseeing its strategic direction, growth, and client service across Canada and internationally.



KIRSTEN HILLMAN

Former Ambassador to the United States

Ambassador Kirsten Hillman is one of Canada's foremost experts on trade, diplomacy and international affairs. Drawing on a 30-year career as a trade lawyer, policy expert and negotiator, she offers an insider's perspective on the forces reshaping global trade and the Canada–U.S. relationship.

From 2020 to 2026, Hillman served as Canada's Ambassador to the United States—the first woman appointed to the role—leading the bilateral relationship through a period of significant volatility and transformation. She has served as a close advisor to three Canadian Prime Ministers and held some of the country's most senior diplomatic and trade policy roles.

Previously, Hillman served as Canada's Deputy Ambassador in Washington and played a central role in the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Working closely with the U.S. Administration, Congress and the business community, she helped secure the successful conclusion and ratification of the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) in 2020.

Hillman also served as Canada's Chief Trade Negotiator, overseeing trade policy and negotiations with major global partners, and as Canada's Chief Negotiator for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Earlier in her career, she was Canada's Senior Legal Advisor to the World Trade Organization.

GUEST SPEAKERS



DOUGLAS PORTER

Chief Economist and Managing Director, Economics
BMO Economics

Douglas Porter brings more than three decades of experience analyzing global economies and financial markets. As Chief Economist at BMO Financial Group and author of the popular Talking Points, he oversees the Bank's macroeconomic and financial market forecasts and co-writes the firm's weekly flagship publication, Focus. Mr. Porter heads a top-performing economics team that has won numerous forecasting awards, including the #1 ranking for Top U.S. Forecaster among 60 global firms in the 2023 Focus Economics Survey, and #1 for Top Canadian Inflation Forecaster among 28 firms. The team has also taken the #1 spot in the StarMine Awards for Most Accurate Forecasters for Canada.

As a respected commentator on economic and financial trends, he is regularly quoted in the national press and often interviewed on radio and television.

Douglas' career began at the Bank of Canada; then, before joining BMO, he held the positions of Economist and Country Risk Analyst with other Canadian financial institutions. He has been a member of C.D. Howe's Monetary Policy Council since 2008 and serves on the Investment Management Committees of the Bank of Montreal's Canada Pension Plan and Western's Endowment Fund.

Douglas Porter, CFA, earned a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Western Ontario.



ROB WRIGHT

Deputy Minister of Labour, and Associate Deputy Minister of Employment & Social Development
Government of Canada

Rob Wright is a seasoned public service leader recognized for delivering complex, high-impact projects and building strong, collaborative relationships. Appointed Deputy Minister of Labour on December 19, 2025, he brings decades of experience spanning national infrastructure, regional leadership, and Indigenous and northern relations.

From January 2024, Rob served as Associate Deputy Minister for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, providing strategic leadership on nation-wide initiatives to advance reconciliation, sustainable economic development, and partnerships with Indigenous and northern communities.

Rob's experience also includes regional leadership as Regional Director General for the Atlantic Region (2012-2015) and earlier roles as Director General of Major Crown Projects and at the Privy Council Office as well as at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, both in the Pacific region and at headquarters, giving him a deep understanding of both local and national priorities.

He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from St. Thomas University and Western University, with studies spanning engineering, history, leadership, and governance.

PARTICIPANTS

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Vice President,
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Dr. Alan Barnard
Entrepreneur, Research
Scientist and Author

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Peter Xotta
President & CEO, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

Cory Young
Vice President, Commercial, Arctic Gateway Group

Dustin Zmetana
Vice President, Business Development and Strategy, Global Transportation Hub

Mitchell Zulinick
Co-Chief Executive Officer & Chief Operating Officer, Arrow Group of Companies

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

WESTAC Spring Member Forum
April 20 & 21, 2027
Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB

WESTAC Fall Member Forum
November 16 & 17, 2027
Sheraton Eau Claire, Calgary, AB