



# Raising Canada's global profile through trade infrastructure



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Canada's reputation as a trading nation is in steep decline. In just 10 years the country has fallen from 10th position to 32nd in terms of global confidence in its trade transportation infrastructure – just below Azerbaijan and ahead of Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

While 65% of Canada's GDP relies on trade, the federal government is only investing 0.9% of it – \$21 billion annually – in transport infrastructure. This lack of investment is putting our nation at serious economic risk.

A recent report by the Canada West Foundation, funded in part by the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) and our partners at the Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association, looks at the importance of scaling up Canada's trade infrastructure to fuel economic growth and improve the everyday lives of Canadians.

From shovel ready to shovel worthy: The path to a national trade infrastructure plan identifies how the lack of coordinated and strategic infrastructure planning and investments has threatened Canada's status as a trusted global trading partner.

We need a long-term investment plan. It is vital that we move from quick fixes to a strategy that focuses on long-term solutions and value for Canadians. The Western Canada Trade Gateway & Corridor Initiative (WCTG&CI) has been sounding the same alarm. Scaling up our trade-enabling infrastructure – our roads, marine and inland ports, railways, airports and bridges – will build supply chain capacity, create transformational jobs and fuel our global competitiveness.

The report charts a path forward that includes identifying Canada's key trade gateways and corridors and establishing a national body to ensure key partners, including industry, are consulted so that all possible angles and expertise are considered when making future investments.

More investment is needed for Canada to remain globally competitive, expand into new and emerging markets, attract investors, and boost employment. We need to show Canada can deliver the goods to market through a strategic trade infrastructure program.

The federal government's current National Infrastructure Assessment is an opportunity to etch a trade infrastructure plan into Canada's long-term vision. A growth economy needs to include safe, sustainable and reliable transport infrastructure. These structures and facilities link resources to

industry, people to jobs and products to market.

Unfortunately, there has been little concrete action to come out of the Assessment; meanwhile, other countries are building back from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Building with resilience in the face of climate risks and enhancing our trade-enabling infrastructure will position us for long-term growth.

Future investments must also be coherent, long-term, and guided by an independent body that can align federal, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous needs. Programs like the Investing in Canada Plan have fallen short of their targets because of the disconnect between federal priorities and provincial needs. Procurement methods must also be streamlined and modernized through the engagement of industry experts.

The 2022 Federal Budget made some modest investments to improve supply-chain infrastructure and support the existing National Trade Corridors Fund, but it is not enough. Just to match the UK on a proportionate basis, we would require an additional \$13 billion annually.

Investing in trade transportation infrastructure is about getting goods to and from our domestic and overseas markets.

But it's also about ensuring the standard of living Canadians enjoy will continue, through the economic returns – including revenues to government – that spin off from those investments.

Building for today's communities and tomorrow's Canada requires long-term planning and a well-developed trade infrastructure plan. That will pay dividends in return by accelerating economic recovery, increasing jobs and the diversity of opportunities available in the sector, combatting climate change, and supporting a strong supply chain.

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