

SUMMARY REPORT

ASIA BUSINESS LEADERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DES
HEFS D'ENTREPRISE SUR L'ASIE

2025





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council (ABLAC) held its eighth annual meeting in Singapore from February 18–19, 2025, on the margins of the [Canada-in-Asia Conference 2025](#).

The theme for this year’s Council meeting, held under the Chatham House Rule, was “Thriving in a Complex World: Strengthening Canadian Business and Innovation Through Partnerships in Asia,” underscoring the need to adapt to volatile geoeconomic currents and foster resilient business models.

The meeting’s first session, “**The Shifting Indo-Pacific: Navigating Geopolitics and Impacts on Business**,” explored the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific and their implications for Canadian and Asian businesses. The Council highlighted a growing unease about the direction of globalization and the systems underpinning much of the rules-based international order. The result is the shattering of a benign global outlook and a return to a multipolar world. Canada is grappling with this new world disorder, seeking to tap into its abundance of ‘soft power’ while expanding its relatively meagre ‘hard power,’ or military might.

Due to this geopolitical uncertainty, businesses and governments alike are looking to Asia for investment and trade diversification. A good first step for Canada in this regard is to help raise the ‘ambition level’ of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), expanding the ranks, coverage, and depth of the 12-member trade pact. ABLAC Members also discussed the challenges for Canadian businesses in Asia, ranging from corruption to a lack of support from government agencies.

The second session, “**Business Support Ecosystem & Brand Canada**,” examined ways to strengthen the role of business associations, chambers of commerce, provincial and territorial offices, and other Canadian organizations to support Canadian companies in Asia. The discussion also looked at how to improve Canada’s brand in the Indo-Pacific, including by ‘rebranding’ Canada to a big, ambitious, and confident country — a ‘tone shift’ to which business would likely respond well. Members agreed that Canada should be marketed as not only a stable and friendly market, but a profitable one, and aired a possible new slogan for Canada in Asia: “We’re bigger than you think.”



The Council agreed that Canada's trade engagement in the region has contrasted with the actions of the first and second administrations of U.S. President Donald Trump. Decisions by Trump, for example, to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, disregard the World Trade Organization's dispute-settlement mechanism, and ignore the rules and regulations agreed to in pacts such as the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, have brought Canada's commitment to free trade and inclusive growth into sharp focus. This contrast could bode well for Canada: faced with escalating hostility, protectionism, and instability, Asian economies are likely more open to building ties with stable and predictable trading partners. Members concluded that, as part of being reliable in the region, it is important for government and business to commit to overarching engagement themes and adhere to multi-year engagement plans (e.g. Canada's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy).

The third session, **"Innovation, Future Workforce, and Productivity,"** focused on the role of innovation, immigration, and productivity in generating domestic economic growth. Before 1976, Canada had an average annual productivity growth of about three per cent. That figure has dropped to less than one per cent since 2000. As a result, Canadian companies are now operating at 71 per cent of the productivity level of American firms. Canada's business expenditure on research and development has been falling for years, and is now under one per cent of GDP, ranking in the bottom third of OECD countries.

Members noted an opportunity to bolster long-term prosperity through innovation and exporting value-added products and services to increasingly sophisticated markets in Asia and beyond. But instead of merely supplying raw commodities, Canada must engage in higher-value innovation aligning with the needs of international markets. The Council was optimistic about Canada's potential, citing the country's long history of exceptional research and development, its high-ranking universities and research institutions, and its ability to attract students and scholars from all over the world. The discussion also examined Canadian immigration policy and research and development budgets in Canada and Asia.

A luncheon panel explored how Trump's trade policies could reshape economic ties between the U.S. and Asia. The panel also analyzed Canada-China relations and Canada-U.S. relations. ABLAC Members and Guests agreed that for Canada and countries like Canada, this period of geopolitical uncertainty is an opportunity to lead. Canada should rally other countries that believe in (and stand to gain from) an orderly, rules-based global trading system, and do its best to save it. Canada should consider reducing trade dependencies on the U.S., diversifying trade and economic relations generally, and targeting other regions of the world, namely the Asia Pacific.

The National Bank of Canada also convened a panel that saw academic experts and business leaders share their views **on the dynamics of family and founder-controlled businesses.**

// Members noted an opportunity to bolster long-term prosperity through innovation and exporting value-added products and services to increasingly sophisticated markets in Asia and beyond."

The sessions generated six recommendations, included below.

ABLAC 2025 was supported in part by funding from Sun Life Financial, Golden Equator, Export Development Canada, and Invest in Canada.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To capitalize on the immense growth of innovation in Asia, **Canada should adopt a longer-term approach to innovation**, including revising policies on intellectual property, government procurement, and industry partnerships. Compared to the current short-term, electoral-cycle-driven approach, this will ensure that Canadian-developed technologies enhance productivity and spur domestic economic growth to position Canada as a hub for global innovation. Canada also needs to be clearer in creating policy and financial incentives for Canadian businesses to invest in innovation, shifting away from its heavy reliance on tax credits.
- 2 Although Canada's reputation as a benign, humble, and friendly country can be helpful in Asia, Canada should **consider rebranding itself as an ambitious, confident country to attract further business and investment** — and **promote specific sectoral strengths in Asia**, including agriculture, artificial intelligence and quantum, health and ocean sciences, higher education, financial services, mining and energy, pension-fund investing, nuclear, and trade. On trade, Canada should continue to differentiate itself from the U.S., safeguarding rules-based trade in the face of rising protectionism and unpredictability. Asian partners will appreciate a stable, predictable country like Canada.
- 3 While there are multiple approaches Canada can take to strengthen economic engagement with Asia, ABLAC members recommend that Canada **build export infrastructure for willing customers in northeast Asia, provide advice and, where appropriate, support to companies who want to do business with countries such as China and India, and champion the CPTPP.**
- 4 Canadian companies and government agencies in Asia **should share information, be it due diligence reports or economic analysis, about local markets.** Canadian government entities need to clarify what they can do to support Canadian businesses eyeing the Asian market; members noted that Canadian companies — especially smaller Canadian companies — like the idea of the CPTPP but find on-the-ground support from government lacking.
- 5 **Canadian businesses that want to expand to Asia (or strengthen pre-existing ties) must have a significant 'CEO presence' in Asia.** As one ABLAC Participant noted, "you can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up." In Asia, businesspeople tend to build relationships from the 'top down,' rather than from the 'bottom up.' To make meaningful connections with Asian counterparts or investors, Government of Canada initiatives such as Team Canada Trade Missions and APF Canada initiatives such as the Canada-in-Asia conferences are crucial.
- 6 **Government and universities should work together to send more students to Asia** and highlight the achievements of alumni of Canadian universities working in Asia.



OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

SESSION I:

The Shifting Indo-Pacific: Navigating Geopolitics and Impacts on Business

A NEW WORLD DISORDER

There is growing unease about the direction of globalization and the systems underpinning much of the rules-based international order. Populism and discontent are on the rise; [democracy is on the back foot](#). China and the U.S. have turned from competitors to adversaries. And institutions such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the World Trade Organization face historic challenges.

The result is the shattering of a benign global outlook and a return to a multipolar world, one in which

common interests, rather than common norms, underpin geopolitics for many actors. Canada is grappling with this new world disorder, seeking to tap into its abundance of ‘soft power’ — the ability to influence hearts and minds without resorting to force — while expanding its relatively meagre ‘hard power,’ or military might.

One speaker referenced Japan as an example of a country that, over the last 15 years, has stepped up its political, economic, and military leadership to an extent previously unimaginable. These policy shifts were not

accidental but spurred by an uncomfortable realization that the country — challenged (and occasionally antagonized) by China, North Korea, and Russia — may be more alone in the world than its policymakers hoped. Canada, facing hostility from the U.S. and a lack of public support from other traditional allies, can learn from Japan's actions in reinforcing its sovereignty and adjusting foreign policy accordingly.

ABLAC Members asserted that, due to this geopolitical uncertainty, businesses and governments are looking to Asia for investment and trade diversification. Asia is brimming with opportunity and innovation: it is home to half of the world's population, 60 per cent of global economic growth, and an estimated 70 per cent of global intellectual property filings. Canada boasts a “wonderful reputation” in the Indo-Pacific — regarded as a benign, positive, trusted partner — but there are still too few Canadian businesses established in the region.

TRADE, TECH, AND RESEARCH: CANADA'S STRENGTHS IN ASIA

Canada's expertise in artificial intelligence and quantum are not well understood in Asia, nor are Canada's strengths in infrastructure and pension-fund investing. Combining — and drawing attention to — these capabilities would give Canada an advantage in the region, as would further co-operation with the Asian Development Bank.

Members also noted that the Asia Pacific is more ‘tech-positive’ than most of the world, but is looking to avoid excessive regulation of new technologies such as artificial intelligence. Some Asian firms worry about complying

with relevant laws in, for example, Canada, Australia, and the European Union, discouraging investment.

Canada's involvement in the CPTPP, a 12-member trade pact of mostly Asian economies, is another strength. Now more than ever, Members suggested, is the time to raise the ‘ambition level’ of the CPTPP, expanding the membership, coverage, and depth of the agreement. It was noted that Canadian companies — especially smaller Canadian companies — like the idea of the CPTPP but find on-the-ground support from government lacking.

Canada is also globally renowned for its higher-education system, creating an opportunity for Canadian universities and businesses to assist younger, rapidly developing economies such as Vietnam and Indonesia in improving the quality of their workforces.

Members encouraged Canadian businesses and institutions to invest more in Asia but acknowledged that issues such as corruption could discourage smaller Canadian businesses from coming to Asia. Members suggested that Canadian companies and government agencies in Asia can do a better job of sharing information — be it due diligence reports or economic analysis — about local markets. Canadian government entities in particular need to clarify what they can do to support Canadian businesses eyeing the Asian market, and Ottawa itself should consider adopting a ‘pro-business’ mindset.

The Council concluded that a more unpredictable business environment in the U.S. makes doing business in Asia increasingly attractive.



SESSION II:

Business Support Ecosystem & Brand Canada

This session explored ways to strengthen and co-ordinate the critical role of business associations, chambers of commerce, the Trade Commissioner Service, provincial and territorial offices and other Canadian organizations to support Canadian companies in global markets. The discussion also examined how to refine Canada's brand to enhance coherence and presence in key markets in the Indo-Pacific.

STRING OF SUCCESSES BODES WELL FOR CANADA

Canada has diplomatic challenges with several key players in Asia but has warm relations with important regional economies such as Japan, the Philippines,

South Korea, Taiwan, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Before Ottawa's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), released in November 2022, Canada was not sufficiently visible in the region. The IPS was a watershed moment for Canada's engagement in Asia, funding new positions, offices, and initiatives, including a Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific and an Indo-Pacific Trade Representative, cyber and military attachés and regional cleantech experts, and more trade commissioners.

Canada also established a new Indo-Pacific Agriculture and Agri-Food Office in 2024 and new Export Development Canada offices in Jakarta, Tokyo, Seoul,

Manila, and Ho Chi Minh City. FinDev Canada also opened its first regional office in Singapore earlier in 2025. Meanwhile, provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, and Saskatchewan have expanded their presence in the region.

Canada's brand in the Asia Pacific has never been clearer or stronger. The successes of the IPS — including the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, the Canada-Taiwan Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Arrangement, and ongoing negotiations towards a Canada-ASEAN trade agreement — paired with consistent ministerial engagement and Canada's recent chairing of the CPTPP commission have all improved Canada's standing as a solid, reliable partner in the region. These initiatives have sent a strong signal to Asian economies about Canada's intentions regarding free trade, liberalization, and business engagement.

Canada's trade engagement in the region has contrasted with the actions of the first and second Trump administrations. Decisions by Trump, for example, to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, disregard the WTO's dispute-settlement mechanism, and ignore the rules and regulations agreed to in agreements such as the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, have brought Canada's commitment to free trade and inclusive growth into sharp focus.

Canada was seen previously as a “friend of convenience,” darting in and out of the region and resisting meaningful commitment. To seize the moment, Canada must act, including by, for example, building export infrastructure for willing customers in northeast Asia, providing advice and, where appropriate, support to companies who want to do business with countries such as China and India, and championing the CPTPP. The Council also drew attention to Canada's capabilities and

expertise in nuclear energy, encompassing educators, operators, agencies, and entrepreneurs, as a potential avenue of co-operation with Asian partners. Members noted that, for government and business alike, overarching themes are important, as are multi-year engagement plans (e.g. Canada's IPS).

THE INFLUENCE OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

ABLAC Members noted the importance of more frequent conversations between governments and binational chambers of commerce and applauded the commissioning by Global Affairs Canada of a “playbook” — in development at the time of discussion — of best practices for Canadian chambers of commerce operating in the region.

Members were encouraged by evolving discussions between Global Affairs Canada, the Canada-ASEAN Business Council, the Canada China Business Council, and the Canada India Business Council on better co-ordinating in the region to foster community, enhance Brand Canada, and support Canadian businesses.

To build on this positive momentum, Canada needs to prioritize constant communication and engagement in the region. Members also emphasized that, for Canadian businesses seeking to expand to Asia or strengthen pre-existing ties, CEO presence matters. As one participant noted at a later session, “You can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up.”

UNIVERSITIES AS SOFT POWER

Successive governments have not done enough to brand Canada as a source of talent in Asia. Canadian universities are world-class, Members said, but they have not been part of Canada's overall brand. This contrasts with countries such as the U.S. and the U.K.,

which derive significant soft power from their top-tier universities (e.g. Harvard University, University of Oxford, etc.)

University students are some of Canada's best brand ambassadors, but they are underutilized. Members also suggested that governments and universities need to continue to work together to significantly increase the number of Canadians studying — either permanently or on exchange — in Asia.

'WE'RE BIGGER THAN YOU THINK'

Panellists noted that while Canada has a positive reputation, it is not necessarily thought of as a place to invest, and a lot of conversations happen without Canadian involvement. Businesses appreciate that Canada is 'nice,' but care more about Canada's value proposition than its set of national values.

Members pitched a bold rethink of Canada's brand abroad, reimagining Canada as a "big, bold" country, rather than a benign, friendly, 'smaller' market. Canada is, in fact, the [10th-largest economy](#) in the world — positioned between Australia and France in terms of GDP — and boasts one of the [best-educated](#) workforces in the world. Canada's strengths in digital and financial services, banking, mining, agriculture, manufacturing, natural resources, and artificial intelligence should not be sheepishly acknowledged but proudly broadcast to the world.

To summarize this type of proposed shift, the Council aired a possible new slogan: "We're bigger than you think." Business would likely respond well to this shift in tone, especially if Canada were marketed as not only a stable and friendly market, but a profitable one.



SPOTLIGHT SESSION:

U.S. Election and Implications for Trade and Supply Chains

This session explored how U.S. President Donald Trump's trade policies could reshape economic ties between the U.S. and Asia. Participants also discussed China's policies and responses to Trump's actions, and Canada-China and Canada-U.S. relations.

ASIA'S VULNERABILITY TO TRUMP

Trump's tariffs represent a sizeable threat to the Asia Pacific. Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam are particularly susceptible to the tariffs, as they all run large merchandise trade surpluses with the U.S. The region is also deeply integrated with China, which could pose problems: Trump sees integration with China as support for China. Any country seen as aiding China to evade sanctions, moreover, should expect a forceful response from the U.S.

Any unravelling of the rules-based trading order would spell disaster for Asia, which owes much of its remarkable economic development to a system in which trade barriers are progressively reduced and everybody follows the same rules.

Members stated that these economies — and Canada, in light of its own trade troubles with the U.S. — should consider reducing dependencies on the U.S., diversifying trade and economic relations, and exploring other regions of the world. These economies should also try to ascertain Trump's "price," or what it is he truly wants from negotiations: meaningful concessions or merely "a political win." Members pointed out that Trump also seems to put a heavy emphasis on "fairness" and righting historical "wrongs" (e.g. ["taking back"](#) the

Panama Canal, [annexing](#) Greenland, and generally not being “[taken advantage of](#)”).

BEIJING LOOKS TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN WESTERN PARTNERS

For China, Trump’s policies — paired with self-inflicted economic wounds — have created a perfect storm. China has never gone through a recession in modern history, but economic mismanagement, persistently high youth unemployment and corporate debt, and its response to COVID-19 have pushed the country in that direction.

Members discussed whether Beijing could benefit, on balance, from Trump’s policies. The brewing trade war between the U.S. and the European Union, for example, could push the EU closer to China, a long-held foreign policy goal for Beijing. But China has also mishandled its relationship with the EU at times (e.g. [assisting Moscow](#) in producing military drones for use against Ukrainian soldiers), making it hard for the EU to fully embrace China. Trade between EU states and China, however, will likely continue to expand, even as Beijing tries to drive a wedge between the EU and the U.S. (and Canada and the U.S.). Trump, for his part, sees the U.S.-China relationship as a leader-level relationship, rendering his ambassador in Beijing less likely to be involved in decision-making.

Participants noted that, under Trump, U.S.-China relations will see an initial spike in conflict: Trump will ratchet up tensions and then look to cut a deal, possibly even a “[Phase Two](#)” [trade agreement](#) between the two countries.

CANADA’S ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA

Beijing has tried of late to cast itself as a stable, reliable power, contrasting with the U.S.’s more erratic actions and occasionally hostile rhetoric. Chinese officials have attempted to charm Europe and Canada recently by,

for example, stressing the country’s openness to trade and investment and taking a more long-term view of bilateral relations. But, at least in Canada, these tactics seem to have fallen flat, contradicted by actions such as counter-tariffs on Canadian goods, the execution of four Canadians on drug-related charges earlier in 2025, and alleged foreign interference.

Canada should look to expand its China competencies. The Council acknowledged that China can be a difficult and complicated market, but it’s an important market nonetheless, and Canada is underinvested there in terms of talent. Guests and ABLAC Members agreed that even if Canadian companies decide against doing business in China, they should make an effort to “know their competition” as some of them will be doing business against China in other parts of the world.

ABLAC Members and Guests agreed that for Canada and countries like Canada, this period of geopolitical uncertainty is an opportunity to lead. Canada should rally other countries that believe in (and stand to gain from) an orderly, rules-based global trading system, and do its best to save it.

FORTRESS NORTH AMERICA

Trump’s ‘shock and awe’ strategy (i.e. “flooding the zone”) is a return to the tactics deployed during his first term (2017-21). This time around, the strategy is working better for Trump as his cabinet appears loyal to him, leaving minimal room for dissent.

The White House is also deliberately creating uncertainty because it regards it as “good for America.” American officials suspect that uncertainty will drive capital into the U.S. as foreign businesses relocate to avoid the threat, or reality, of tariffs. Members emphasized that, to counteract this trend, a focus on “[Fortress North America](#)” could pay dividends for both Canada and Mexico.



GUEST PANEL:

The Dynamics of Family- and Founder-Controlled Businesses

This guest panel, presented by National Bank of Canada, brought together academic experts and business leaders to share their views on the dynamics of family and founder-controlled businesses. Members discussed the common challenges and opportunities faced by multigenerational businesses and explained how sound governance, innovation, and adaptability translate into sustaining family-business performance.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FAMILY-RUN BUSINESSES

Of the top 750 global family businesses by revenue, more than [20 per cent](#) are Asian-based, with a combined revenue of almost US\$2 trillion. Asian families are

investing in Canada (e.g. [record investments](#) by the Widjaja family in Canada's forest sector and [recent investments](#) by Li Ka-Shing in Canadian startups), and Canadian families are investing in Asia, creating momentum in bilateral commercial relations.

This kind of mutually reinforcing success is no accident: National Bank of Canada launched the Canadian Family Index back in 2017 and [found](#) that family firms outperform other companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange, largely due to their focus on long-term sustainability and corporate culture, and effective management practices, including lower debt and employee turnover.

Members suggested that business families, especially in Asia, are champions of sustainability due to their necessarily long-term perspective and focus on longer-term growth, sustained over generations. Governments come and go, but families stick around. Commercial business relationships — typically built up over decades — remain stable.

BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE, 'TOP-DOWN' CONNECTIONS

If choosing to expand into an ASEAN country, Canadian companies should get acquainted with all relevant rules and regulations and determine their 'business case.' Companies should consider engaging local government relations or public relations firms and spend time finding the right local staff and partners.

Members noted that, unlike Canada or the U.S., there is considerable 'fluidity' between government and business in ASEAN countries. Part of the reason for this

fluidity is the relatively small size of the professional upper-middle class: when governments are elected, they draw on people from business. At some times, Members noted, this arrangement can lead to insight and informed policymaking, but at other times, it can lead to corruption.

In Asia, businesspeople tend to build relationships from the 'top down,' rather than from the 'bottom up.' To make meaningful connections with Asian counterparts or investors, ABLAC Members counselled smaller Canadian companies to attend networking events, including meetings organized by the APEC Business Advisory Council and ABLAC.

The Council highlighted that families like dealing with other families. When meeting with Asian family businesses, Members suggested Canadian companies discuss values important to both parties and not simply focus on, for example, their own "Canadian values."



SESSION III:

Innovation, Future Workforce, and Productivity

This session focused on the role of innovation and the future workforce in improving productivity, including how Canada can effectively tap into innovation and talent networks within Asia to help fix its productivity problem. The discussion also focused on the role of international talent acquisition in the context of Canadian immigration policy.

CANADA'S PRODUCTIVITY PROBLEM

Productivity is a key driver of economic prosperity because, without sustained productivity growth, businesses can't afford to pay higher wages and standards of living stagnate. That drag deflates societal optimism, affects political attitudes, and even affects how people perceive future opportunities for themselves and their families.

Before 1976, Canada had an average annual productivity growth of about three per cent. That figure has dropped to less than one per cent since 2000. As a result, Canadian companies are now operating at 71 per cent of the productivity level of American firms. Canada's business expenditure on research and development has been falling for years, and is now under one per cent of GDP, ranking in the bottom third of OECD countries.

There is an opportunity to bolster long-term prosperity through innovation and exporting value-added products and services to increasingly sophisticated markets in Asia and beyond. But instead of merely supplying raw commodities, Members argued, Canada has to engage in higher-value innovation aligning with the needs of international markets.

DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH PRODUCTIVITY, INNOVATION, AND IMMIGRATION

Members suggested a number of solutions to Canada's productivity problem. Firstly, Canada has to move beyond short-term, electoral-cycle-driven policy approaches and adopt a longer-term approach to innovation. That includes revising policies on intellectual property, government procurement, and industry partnerships to ensure that Canadian-developed technologies can enhance productivity and spur domestic economic growth. Secondly, Canada needs to be clearer in creating policy and financial incentives for Canadian businesses to invest in innovation, as the country's heavy reliance on ex post facto tax credits is not working. Thirdly, to deepen partnerships with Asian innovation ecosystems, Canada must bring together world-leading researchers, risk-taking entrepreneurs, and bold policymakers. Canada can position itself as a hub for global innovation, but it has to do so systematically. Finally, Canada needs to continue to build its talent pipeline, which includes support for education at all levels. Members encouraged Canadian students to choose Asia for post-secondary education, be it for an entire degree or on exchange.

The Council was optimistic about Canada's potential, citing the country's long history of exceptional research and development, its high-ranking universities and research institutions, and its ability to attract students and scholars from all over the world. Canada does come up short, however, in application: taking the result of that world-class research and developing it into products and services that drive prosperity and productivity for the country. There is an overemphasis on research — sometimes for the sake of research alone — and not enough emphasis on development.

CASE STUDY: A JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

Critical minerals are essential for an energy transition, but the challenge for Canada is that virtually all near-surface critical minerals have already been extracted. Most of the critical minerals that the country needs now are buried up to a kilometre into the earth. But the average return on investment for extracting those critical minerals by traditional methods is -45 per cent.

Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster marshalled a team to solve this problem, culminating in the [launch](#) of the world's first earth X-ray for low-impact mining. The project enables mining exploration companies to "identify density and magnetic anomalies with greater resolution and certainty up to one kilometre beneath the Earth's surface." It involved academia, government, and the private sector, including BHP, the world's largest mining company. Members cited [this project](#) as an example of what's possible when the public and private sectors co-operate and research is conducted to solve a problem, rather than for the sake of research itself.

SPECIFYING — AND MARKETING — OUR STRENGTHS

The Council also emphasized that Canada boasts world-leading research expertise in agriculture, health, oceans, mining, and energy, and suggested matching this specific expertise with the markets in which we want to advance our interests.

Canada also comes up short in celebrating and marketing its innovation accomplishments, leading to a lack of understanding among stakeholders. Canada can learn from economies such as Singapore, which [celebrates](#) homegrown entities such as DBS. ABLAC Members noted that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's Canada-in-Asia Conference and its new regional office in Singapore help to amplify stories of Canadian innovation and entrepreneurial success.



ASIA BUSINESS LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

2025



ABOUT THE ASIA BUSINESS LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council (ABLAC) is a high-level group of Asian and Canadian business leaders convened annually by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada to identify and articulate opportunities for improved Canada-Asia business engagement. Council membership is represented across Canada and more than 10 Asia Pacific economies, and annual meetings are held in cities throughout Canada and Asia. Launched in 2016, ABLAC has emerged as a critical forum to catalyze dialogue and action.

[ABLAC Website ▶](#)



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APF Canada is home to Canada's top thinkers and advisors on Canada-Asia relations.

We provide clear, specific, and actionable policy advice and business intelligence based on sound research and analysis.

Our work includes field and desk research, big data and statistical analysis, surveys and polling, events and networking, timely media commentary, and a regular Asia Watch newsletter — all publicly accessible on our website.

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