ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA
FONDATION ASIE PACIFIQUE DU CANADA

THE ASIA ASK:

Workshopping Canada's Investment Pitch for Asian Investors

EVENT SUMMARY:

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

Asian investors are being approached by multiple Canadian stakeholders in parallel. As Canada cannot afford to approach Asian capital with fragmented or inconsistent messaging at this pivotal moment, APF Canada hosted a roundtable discussion on the margins of the Canada Investment Summit in Toronto to convene key Canadian players in investment attraction to exchange views on how best to take the momentum of the Summit forward in a specifically Asian context. The group defined a shared understanding of key messages and opportunities for investment that should be profiled in Asia, as well as next steps for Canada.

Key Messages for Investors in Asia

Canada has genuinely changed, and this is a long-term commitment, not a reaction.

Under Prime Minister Mark Carney, there is now real, top-down alignment. Every department and every level of government is telling a consistent story, something several participants said they had never seen before.

In addition to the establishment of the Major Projects Office, Canada has implemented numerous regulatory changes such as the Productivity Mega Deduction and the permitting commitment of "one project, one review, one year" that will improve the experience for foreign investors.

We understand that, in the past, Canada's reputation was "trustworthy but slow." We invite Asian investors to re-explore opportunities in Canada, and we are committed to ensuring your experience is different this time around.

Canadian capital believes in Canada. Canadian pension funds and institutional capital have announced funds for major investments in Canada.

Examples include the $50-billion Maple Fund to invest in critical infrastructure and strategic industries, by CPP Investments and Brookfield Asset Management, and announcements from Canada's top banks that commit nearly $325 billion in new financing for Canadian businesses and infrastructure. A full summary is available here.

Not only this, Canadian pension and institutional capital is ready to co-invest with Asian investors.

Canada is a global country with global partners — not simply a market in its own right, and not just a backdoor to the U.S.

By year-end, Canada's anticipated trade agreements will give investors access to additional markets covering roughly 3 billion people on top of the 1.5 billion already covered by our 15 free trade agreements that span 51 countries.

On the U.S. relationship: Canada remains a committed free-trading nation, and diversification strengthens Canada's resilience. The Trump administration has sent mixed messages regarding Canada's diversification initiatives, though it was noted that several American companies and investors are increasing their own exposure to Canada — for example, Meta has committed C$13 billion to build its first Canadian data centre in Alberta. Some roundtable participants felt that investors need not worry that investing in Canada will impact their relationship with the U.S.

A Canada–U.S. deal will be reached and investing in Canada positions investors to take advantage of this deal.

Priority Opportunities for Asian Investors

Trade infrastructure investments in Canada are a direct investment in home-economy supply security.

Ports, pipelines, and LNG terminals are an emerging asset class that may appeal to Asian investors, as these opportunities will transfer benefits from the investment into the investor's home economy through technology transfer or through a reliable supply of energy, minerals, or food.

Energy security is now a buyer's concern globally, and Canada is a strong partner for your energy investments.

The shift from "lowest-cost supplier" to "reliable, secure supplier" plays to Canada's advantage, and we welcome investors to join us in delivering the energy the world needs.

In saying this, Canadian players need to listen to the preferences of each Asian investor and tailor the projects pitched to them accordingly.

Canada's Next Steps

Be ambitious, but prioritize.

Concerns were raised that Canada is trying to advance too many projects at once. We should narrow our pitch to a shortlist of large projects and drive them to completion, rather than spreading investments across too many initiatives.

Based on the conversation, trade-enabling infrastructure and energy projects should be the priorities. Participants agreed that while focusing on a few key projects, Canada should be ambitious overall.

Show results to change the narrative.

Concrete, completed deals matter far more than announced intentions. We need to share results with investors in Asia often — ideally examples that match their own preferences. Several participants urged the active compiling and circulating of concrete, closed success stories, not pipeline announcements. APF Canada has committed to follow through on this demand with new products aimed at key audiences in Asia, led by our new regional office in Singapore.

Fix operational friction for investors and companies on the ground.

Basic issues such as getting business insurance, banking, and proof of local status were cited as real obstacles for foreign companies setting up in Canada. New regulations were cited as helping to fix this, but we need to provide success stories to build trust and update the narrative.

Continue to build and illustrate ‘Team Canada’ alignment.

Consistency across all three levels of government on the same message and items such as incentives was flagged as much improved, but still unfinished business.

Increase Canada’s physical presence and sales capacity in Asia.

Comparisons were drawn to agencies such as Ireland’s IDA, which built large in-market sales teams. Canada was described as under-resourced on this front relative to the ambition being expressed. Prime Minister Carney’s ongoing travel to the region should be leveraged.

Improve Canada’s knowledge of and familiarity with Asia.

Many participants noted that Canadians turn to European partners by default. We need to build awareness and understanding among Canadians about the opportunity for Asian investment. This is a priority area for APF Canada.

APF Canada’s Commitment to Moving the Conversation Forward

Convening in Asia six months after the Canada Investment Summit

The annual meeting of the Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council and the fifth annual Canada-in-Asia Conference (both taking place in Singapore in March 2027) are opportunities to share these key messages, pitch a shortlist of priority projects, and build on the momentum from the Canada Investment Summit.

A Network of Asia-focused ‘Canadian Champions’

APF Canada will continue to convene this conversation among Canadian investment-attraction stakeholders, including those based in Canada and those based in the region. We will help participants stay in touch with each other, plan further sessions, and welcome other investment attraction champions who were not able to participate in our session to join us.

APF Canada is grateful to our member Fasken for providing the meeting venue for our September 16 discussion.

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The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada is Canada's only national public-purpose institution dedicated exclusively to Canada-Asia engagement. Our vision is a prosperous, secure Canada shaping its future through high-impact engagement with Asia, and our mission is to enable Canadians to understand, connect with, and succeed in Asia.

APF Canada is dedicated to strengthening ties between Canada and Asia through its research, education, and convening activities, such as the Canada-in-Asia Conference series, our Women's Business Missions to Asia, and the APEC-Canada Growing Business Partnership project fostering sustainable inclusive growth and poverty reduction. APF Canada also works with business, government, and academic stakeholders to provide Asia Competency training for Canadian organizations and students.

Our research provides high-quality, relevant, and timely information, insights, and perspectives on Canada-Asia relations for Canadians and stakeholders across the Asia Pacific. Our research work also includes regular Insights, Dispatches, Reports & Policy Briefs, Strategic Reflections, Case Studies, Explainers, and a weekly Asia Watch tracking the latest news on Asia that matters to Canada.

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