



**CANADA-IN-ASIA
CONFÉRENCE
CANADA-EN-ASIE**
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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Canada's Asia-facing infrastructure

Canada's west coast infrastructure is central to the country's trade diversification strategy. Airports, ports, railways, and pipelines are not only transportation assets, but strategic national infrastructure essential to Canada's economic sovereignty and Indo-Pacific engagement.

Infrastructure approvals and timelines

Speakers repeatedly contrasted Canada's lengthy approval timelines with Asia's rapid infrastructure delivery models. Examples from Hong Kong, China, and Cambodia illustrated how streamlined regulation and long-term planning can dramatically reduce costs and construction timelines. The panel argued that Canada's competitiveness would benefit from more agile infrastructure project delivery systems.

Canada's west coast air gateway

The Vancouver International Airport (YVR) positioned itself as a ready-made gateway for expanded Canada-Asia trade. With a strong financial position, scalable runway infrastructure, and growing cargo operations, YVR demonstrated how airports can become integrated logistics and trade hubs supporting both passenger mobility and high-value exports across the Indo-Pacific.

Partnerships with First Nations

Indigenous partnerships emerged as one of the clearest examples of the evolution of Canadian infrastructure best practice. Panellists shared how structured agreements with First Nations improve certainty, accelerate project execution, and strengthen economic reconciliation through revenue-sharing, procurement opportunities, and joint ventures.

Importance of energy infrastructure

Energy infrastructure will be a cornerstone of Canada's economic future, particularly in Asian markets where long-term oil and petrochemical demand remains strong. Trans Mountain's expansion was highlighted as a strategic national asset that has increased Canada's export capacity and strengthened access to Indo-Pacific energy customers while generating interest and dividends for the federal government.

Attracting investment from Asia into Canada's export-enabling infrastructure

Panellists stressed that attracting long-term Asian investment will depend on Canada demonstrating reliability, predictability, and execution capability. Investors need confidence that projects can move from concept to construction within globally competitive timelines. The newly established Major Projects Office was widely welcomed as an important step toward accelerating approvals and restoring investor confidence in Canada's infrastructure ecosystem.

FEBRUARY 10-11, 2026 | SINGAPORE

Where Canada and Asia Meet:

Ideas, Investment, Impact



Investing in Canadian Infrastructure for Transpacific Trade

01

SPEAKERS

Moderator



Vincent Joli-Coeur

Chairman Asia Pacific,
National Bank of Canada,
Hong Kong-based



Mark Maki

CEO, Trans Mountain,
Canada-based



Tamara Vrooman

President & CEO,
Vancouver International
Airport, Canada-based



Peter Xotta,

President & CEO,
Vancouver Fraser Port
Authority, Canada-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The panel "Investing in Canadian Infrastructure for Transpacific Trade" explored how Canada can enhance its trade-oriented infrastructure by accelerating investment in ports, airports, pipelines, rail corridors, and logistics systems tied to Asia Pacific markets. Moderated by Vincent Joli-Coeur of the National Bank of Canada, the discussion brought together CEOs from the Vancouver International Airport, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, and Trans Mountain to examine how Canada can build "big, bold and fast" again in an era of geopolitical uncertainty and shifting global trade patterns.

Speakers emphasized that Canada's west coast infrastructure is already delivering record trade volumes and is uniquely positioned to support Prime Minister Mark Carney's goal of doubling non-U.S. exports over the next decade. Tamara Vrooman, CEO of Vancouver International Airport, highlighted its readiness to expand passenger and cargo connectivity with Asia, noting that long-haul aviation routes are increasingly critical for trade diversification and high-value exports such as seafood, medical equipment, and technology products. Meanwhile, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's CEO, Peter Xotta, underscored the urgency of expanding container and rail capacity, particularly through the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project, to deepen Canada's competitiveness in North American supply chains. Mark Maki, CEO of Trans Mountain, framed energy infrastructure as central to Canadian economic sovereignty, pointing to the pipeline's centrality in connecting Canadian oil exports to Asian markets.

Panellists stressed that reducing permitting delays and creating more efficient project approval pathways would help speed final investment decisions. Each identified the recently established Major Projects Office as a potentially game-changing initiative. A recurring theme was that Indigenous partnerships are not obstacles to development, but essential drivers of successful, timely, and socially sustainable infrastructure projects. The discussion presented a vision of Canada as a trusted, reliable, and strategically connected transpacific partner capable of attracting long-term Asian investment and strengthening national resilience through infrastructure-led growth.



"The highest value goods go in the belly of aircraft... and there are great opportunities for Canadian exporters in the Asia Pacific in these goods: seafood, high value produce, high value high tech marine parts... medical equipment and time sensitive isotopes and vaccines... by the time we get to 2040, we'll need to make other investments in order to ensure that the trade doubles, quadruples, in order to facilitate the opportunity that's here."

– Tamara Vrooman, CEO, Vancouver International Airport

Note: This session took place before the Middle East conflict started on February 28, 2026.



Digital Foundations:

BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A CONNECTED FUTURE

SPEAKERS

Moderator



David Lederhendler
Founder and CEO, Yeji Data Lab; and Board Director, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Canada-based



Mahesh Uttamchandani
Regional Practice Director for Digital and AI, East Asia & Pacific and South Asia, World Bank, Singapore-based



Yoonee Jeong
Senior Digital Technology Specialist (Digital Infrastructure and Economy), Asian Development Bank, Philippines-based



Atulya Bharadwaj
Global Product Head for Network Fabric, Tata Communications, Singapore-based



Tu Vu Anh
Chief Technology Officer, FPT Corporation, Vietnam-based



Jonathan Jackson
Field Chief Information Security Officer, BlackBerry, Australia-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The panel “Digital Foundations: Building the Infrastructure for a Connected Future” examined how digital infrastructure is becoming the backbone of economic growth, innovation, and resilience across Asia and beyond. Bringing together leaders from international development institutions and technology providers who are active in cybersecurity, the discussion highlighted both the tremendous opportunities and growing complexities associated with building the next generation of digital infrastructure on which our contemporary economies rely. Speakers emphasized that digital infrastructure today extends far beyond broadband networks and data centres to include cloud computing, undersea cables, AI compute platforms, cybersecurity systems, satellite connectivity, and digital public infrastructure that enables citizens, businesses, and governments to participate fully in the digital economy.

A recurring theme was the need to bridge persistent digital divides. Despite Asia’s reputation as a highly connected region, panellists noted that billions of people globally remain unconnected or underserved due to infrastructure gaps, affordability barriers, and unequal access to devices and services. Emerging technologies such as low-earth-orbit satellites offer promising solutions for remote and island communities. Speakers stressed that fibre networks, cloud infrastructure, and digital skills remain essential foundations for long-term development.

The conversation also explored the rapid rise of AI and its implications for infrastructure planning. Data centres are evolving into “AI factories,” requiring unprecedented levels of computing

power, energy supply, and specialized talent. At the same time, governments are increasingly focused on data sovereignty, sovereign AI capabilities, and digital resilience in response to geopolitical uncertainty and growing cyber threats. Panellists discussed the escalation of ransomware, online fraud, and state-sponsored cyber activity, making trust, security, and workforce development as important as physical infrastructure itself. Ultimately, the discussion concluded that successful digital transformation will require coordinated public-private co-operation and investment, smarter regulation, stronger regional co-operation, and a renewed focus on talent development. Canada was repeatedly identified as a potential partner in areas such as AI research, cybersecurity, digital governance, inclusive connectivity – and importantly, education – creating significant opportunities for deeper Canada–Asia collaboration.

“ Sovereign AI is an important topic. I see one of the critical gaps we’re seeing at the moment is... who’s going to run all this stuff? Where are you going to find all these people?... I think Canada as a country has an amazing opportunity to invest in talent and technology to bring that to the APAC region.”

– Jonathan Jackson, Field Chief Information Security Officer, BlackBerry

Note: This session took place before the Middle East conflict started on February 28, 2026.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Digital infrastructure is now a strategic economic asset, not simply a technology issue

Future competitiveness will continue to depend on combined connectivity, cloud services, data centres, AI compute, cybersecurity, and digital public services. Governments and businesses should view these systems as critical infrastructure on par with transportation, energy, and trade networks.

Bridging digital inclusion gaps remains one of Asia’s urgent priorities

While advanced economies are focused on AI and quantum computing, many communities still lack reliable connectivity, electricity, or affordable devices. Canada has opportunities to contribute through digital governance expertise, inclusive infrastructure models, and low-cost ‘last mile’ connectivity solutions such as satellite technologies.

AI is reshaping infrastructure planning at unprecedented speed

Panellists described the emergence of “AI factories” and gigawatt-scale data centres that require massive investments in compute capacity, cloud architecture, energy systems, and talent.

Cybersecurity and trust are becoming foundational requirements for digital growth

As organizations and citizens become more connected, different types of cybercrime such as ransomware, fraud, and state-sponsored threats are increasing in sophistication. Building resilient digital economies requires stronger cyber defences, information-sharing mechanisms, public awareness, and international co-operation.

Policy implementation matters as much as policy design

Speakers highlighted that many countries already have strong digital strategies, but execution often lags due to fragmented regulations, outdated procurement systems, inconsistent local implementation, and shortages of skilled personnel. Converting ambitious plans into real-world outcomes remains a critical challenge.

Canada’s greatest opportunity in Asia may be talent, research, and trusted technology partnerships

The discussion highlighted Canada’s strengths in AI research, cybersecurity expertise, higher education, and digital governance. These present promising platforms for expanding Canada–Asia collaboration and strengthening Canadian contributions to digital resilience in Asia.

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Where Canada and Asia Meet:

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Infrastructure is a geopolitical tool as much as an economic one

Energy networks, transportation corridors, data centres, and supply chains are increasingly shaped by the tension between geopolitical influence and national resilience. Investors are evaluating projects through financial metrics and also through geopolitical, security, and supply-chain lenses as global competition intensifies.

Southeast Asia's growth story creates major opportunities for Canadian engagement

Driven by supply-chain diversification, industrial relocation, and rising consumer demand, countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand require massive investments in logistics, energy, and digital infrastructure. Canadian investors can play a meaningful role by aligning capital with long-term structural trends.

Digital infrastructure and AI are reshaping investment priorities

The rapid growth of data centres and computing to support AI is creating unprecedented demand for electricity, fibre connectivity, and supporting infrastructure. Policymakers and investors who can address power constraints, permitting challenges, and digital connectivity requirements will be best positioned to capture the next wave of economic growth.

The energy transition is evolutionary rather than revolutionary

Many Asian economies will continue to rely on conventional energy sources while gradually expanding renewables, storage, and alternative technologies. Successful transition strategies will emphasize affordability, reliability, and energy security, while recognizing that political realities and development needs differ across markets.

Canada's competitive advantage lies in partnership, finance, and de-risking expertise

Beyond capital alone, Canadian institutions can contribute sophisticated project financing, insurance, risk management, and public-private partnership capabilities. Canadian pension funds, insurers, banks, export finance institutions, and development finance can help unlock projects that might otherwise struggle to attract investment.

Trusted local partners are essential to success in Asia

Whether working with governments, infrastructure developers, family-owned conglomerates, or regional investment platforms, long-term relationships remain the foundation of successful projects. Understanding local ecosystems, regulatory environments, and stakeholder dynamics – and connecting with capable in-market partners – is critical for Canadian organizations contributing to successful infrastructure outcomes in Asia.

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Where Canada and Asia Meet:

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Infrastructure as Strategy:

CORRIDORS OF POWER AND THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL ALLIANCES

SPEAKERS

Moderator



Laura Hewitt

Senior Vice President & Head, Global Government Affairs and Public Policy, Sun Life, Canada-based



Jason Ng

CEO & Executive Director, VinaCapital Singapore, Singapore-based



Andrew Tan

Board Director, Keppel Data Centre REIT & Ex-Temasek, Singapore-based



Robert Todd

Managing Director, Energy, Infrastructure & Transition, CIBC Capital Markets, Canada/U.K.-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The panel "Infrastructure as Strategy: Corridors of Power and the New Geopolitical Alliances" explored how infrastructure has evolved from a purely economic asset class into a strategic instrument of geopolitical influence that shapes energy security, digital connectivity, and supply chain resilience across the Indo-Pacific. Moderated by Laura Hewitt of Sun Life Canada, the discussion brought together speakers with a broad range of backgrounds across finance, infrastructure and mining investment, government, and strategic oversight, and highlighted how countries and investors are adapting to an increasingly fragmented global landscape.

Panellists emphasized that Southeast Asia sits at the centre of major global trends, including supply-chain diversification, digitalization, and decarbonization. Countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand are benefiting from "China+1" and "US+1" investment strategies, creating demand for logistics networks, economic corridors, power generation, data centres, and transportation infrastructure. Vietnam was highlighted for its long-term policy consistency, demographic growth, and rising domestic demand that are driving substantial infrastructure requirements and resultant opportunities for international investors. And Singapore was also identified as a hub for international infrastructure investors as it is at the centre of many Southeast Asia- and Asia-wide logistics, transportation, energy, and related financing networks.

A recurring theme was the centrality of energy infrastructure and digital infrastructure amid current uncertainty. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and data centres is dramatically increasing demand for electricity, elevating the strategic value of electricity generation, transmission networks, and renewable energy

deployment. At the same time, panellists stressed that energy transitions must be pragmatic, balancing traditional energy sources with renewables and storage.

“We’re seeing infrastructure as a tool of geopolitics as countries compete for critical minerals, energy, and secure supply chains. All of this comes amid a massive need for infrastructure investment around the world... McKinsey estimates that a cumulative \$106 trillion in investment is going to be needed through 2040 to meet the global infrastructure needs, whether that’s through new, refreshed or updated infrastructure.”

– Laura Hewitt, Senior Vice President & Head, Global Government Affairs and Public Policy, Sun Life

For Canada, the discussion underscored significant opportunities for investors. Canadian pension funds, asset managers, banks, insurers, and infrastructure investors possess expertise, capital, and credibility that are highly valued across Asia. Success will depend on building trusted local partnerships, supporting de-risking mechanisms, and aligning with regional priorities. Successful Canada-Asia co-operation on infrastructure will increasingly be centred on strategic positioning of competitive advantage, long-term collaboration, and smart investment strategies that address both returns for the investor and value for the host jurisdiction.

Note: This session took place before the Middle East conflict started on February 28, 2026.