Signal49
RESEARCH

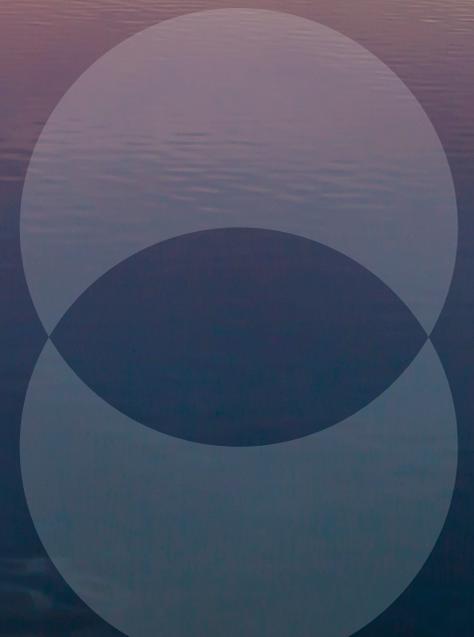# Bold Ideas for Canada

Toronto | February 4–5, 2026

A Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity Initiative

Contents

A message from Susan Black

Canada's next chapter starts now

Canada has strong foundations. We are resourceful, internationally engaged, and home to talented people. Yet many Canadians are feeling strain. Costs are rising, services are under pressure, and rapid global change is testing our readiness. This moment calls for clarity, practical thinking, and coordinated action to shape what comes next.

To help spark that action we hosted two events at George Brown Polytechnic's Waterfront Campus in Toronto. These gatherings were part of Bold Ideas for Canada, the flagship convening series of our Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity, which brings Canadians together to turn ideas into action through constructive dialogue. These gatherings were also our first in-person events under our new name, Signal49 Research.

Leaders from business, government, civil society, Indigenous communities, and the academy came together with a shared purpose. Through open and practical discussion, participants explored where Canada must be more ambitious, where systems must evolve, and where partnerships must be strengthened to secure long-term prosperity.

A clear message emerged. Canada has the capacity to lead in a rapidly changing world if we are prepared to think bigger and act with urgency. As Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney noted in his January 2026 speech in Davos, Switzerland, middle powers that move early and move together can help shape what comes next. Canada is well positioned to be one of those countries. However, we cannot afford small thinking.

The pages that follow capture the ideas, insights, and practical pathways shared during these two events. They reflect thoughtful debate, ambitious thinking, and a strong desire to move from discussion to implementation.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed their time and perspective. We hope these ideas inspire continued collaboration and decisive action for Canada's future.

Susan Black
President and CEO, Signal49 Research

The meaning behind our name

- **Signal** represents clarity and insight, cutting through noise to illuminate what matters.
- **49** reflects the 49th parallel, symbolizing our deeply Canadian perspective.

We are inspired by **Signal Hill** in Newfoundland and Labrador, where the first transatlantic wireless message connected continents and made the impossible possible. That spirit of innovation and connection drives everything we do.

Learn more about Signal49 Research.

What we did

Each evening began with a fireside chat moderated by Dr. Alex Ryan, CEO of Syntheikos (with the Honourable Bob Rae on February 4 and with AJ Tibando, CEO of Shift Canada, on February 5) designed to spark bold thinking among participants about Canada's future and the opportunities ahead.

The events then moved into interactive sessions led by Dr. Ryan, the lead facilitator, who invited participants to respond to the evening's Big Question: What is your boldest idea to create a better future for Canada? Participants generated a wide range of ideas and, as a group, chose the ones they felt held the greatest potential (see Appendix A for details on the methodology). Each night participants identified 10 top ideas.

Next, participants shifted into an interactive open space session. Each top idea became the focus of its own discussion station, equipped with a flip chart and guided by a facilitator. Participants moved freely, choosing the station or stations most important to them. This approach encouraged participants to build on one another's contributions, exploring the conditions needed to turn each idea into action as well as the barriers and key considerations that could shape its success.

The result was a set of early-stage, community-driven ideas that not only highlight what action could look like, but also point to how such action could be realized—through the right partnerships, enabling conditions, and pathways for implementation. By capturing both the vision and the practical steps, these discussions created a foundation that can be carried forward to inform policy, guide investment, and inspire collaboration toward a stronger, more prosperous Canada.

Agenda summary

- **Fireside chat** to spark dialogue and set the stage for the conversation.

- **Facilitated interactive session** during which participants generated bold ideas on how to make Canada more prosperous and then collectively identified the strongest ones.

- **Open space facilitation** with each top idea assigned to a station, allowing participants to move between stations and explore how to translate ideas into action.

- **Recap plenary** during which facilitators delivered 60-second summaries capturing the essence of the discussions.

Watch the recap video.

Setting the stage: Fireside chat

A braver, more inclusive Canada

The Honourable Bob Rae | February 4, 2026

"Embrace failure. Nothing great happens without risk."

The Honourable Bob Rae spoke about the kind of courage Canada needs now—the courage to try new approaches, to accept missteps, and to keep moving forward with purpose.

He challenged the instinct to avoid failure. Progress often comes from experimentation and learning from mistakes. When individuals and institutions fear getting things wrong, they limit what they are willing to attempt. A country that wants to innovate must create space for thoughtful risk-taking and see failure as part of growth. But risk-taking alone is not enough.

He emphasized that Canada's strength depends on who is invited to participate, and who has access to the education and opportunity that allow them to do so. A society cannot be bold if many feel excluded from opportunity or unheard in decision-making. Diverse perspectives are essential to developing stronger ideas and more durable solutions. Inclusion and education are sources of national resilience.

He encouraged participants to reflect on where systems, habits, and barriers still limit participation and prevent people from contributing fully. Confronting these limitations is necessary to build a confident, adaptable country. Canada has the talent and diversity to lead, if we are braver in how we think, more open in how we learn, and more determined in how we act together.

Creating space to imagine, build, and lead
AJ Tibando, CEO, Shift Canada | February 5, 2026

"We need to think bigger than we've ever dreamed possible."

AJ Tibando spoke about the remarkable opportunity in front of Canada. She described a country uniquely positioned to become a beacon for talent, creativity, and possibility in a rapidly changing world.

She invited participants to think beyond current constraints. Canada's potential, she suggested, is limited less by resources and more by imagination. When we allow ourselves to envision what could be, rather than what has always been, new pathways for growth and prosperity begin to emerge.

She stressed the role of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), in unlocking that potential. Used thoughtfully, these tools can help us work more productively and efficiently. But the real opportunity is not simply to do more. It is to create the space for people to do the work that fuels creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. Technology, in this view, is not a threat to human contribution. It is a means of amplifying it.

She encouraged participants to see Canada as a place where ambition, openness, and adaptability can combine to shape a future that others look to for inspiration. By embracing new tools and new thinking, Canada can create an environment where individuals and organizations alike are empowered to imagine, build, and lead.

What we heard from Canadians

From ideas to national priorities

To reflect the conversations that unfolded, we organized the 20 ideas into three distinct but connected priorities.

- **Protect and grow Canada's prosperity** focuses on sovereignty, economic strength, and resilience through defence, food security, smart tax policy, trade, and procurement that accelerates Canadian innovation.
- **Prepare Canadians for a changing world** focuses on readiness through education, AI literacy, financial knowledge, and a Canada Corps dedicated to national service.
- **Improve everyday life for Canadians** focuses on reliable transit, equitable healthcare and pharmacare, the elimination of wait times, fair incomes, Indigenous leadership, access to nature, and better work structures.

Together, these ideas sketch a country that is thinking more deliberately about its future. They reflect a desire to move beyond patchwork solutions and toward coordinated action that aligns economic policy, education, public services, and quality of life.

These contributions were grounded in lived experience. Participants spoke about rising pressures on public systems, uneven access to opportunity, and a sense that Canada must adapt more quickly to global change. At the same time, there was a collective strong belief that the country has the talent, creativity, and institutional capacity to respond with confidence if efforts are aligned and purposeful.

Across the discussions, several undercurrents were clear. People want a country that is secure in its sovereignty, confident in its economic direction, and committed to fairness in how opportunity is distributed. They want systems that function reliably and a society where innovation and wellbeing reinforce one another.

Viewed together, the ideas point toward a Canada that is more resilient, more prepared, and better positioned to support the people who live here, now and into the future.

Top ideas

Protect and grow Canada's prosperity

- Secure the Arctic through smarter defence policy.
- Create a national food security strategy.
- Enable business growth and hiring through smart tax policy.
- Power innovation through public procurement.
- Leverage internal free trade to drive economic growth.
- Design tax policy that rewards innovation.

Prepare Canadians for a changing world

- Deliver pan-Canadian AI literacy education.
- Establish a Canada Corps for post-secondary service.
- Equip students with future-ready skills.
- Make financial literacy universal.
- Require tax education in high school.

Improve everyday life for Canadians

- Deliver safe, reliable public transit.
- Ensure equitable access to healthcare.
- Implement pharmacare for all Canadians.
- Eliminate wait times across essential services.
- Increase Indigenous representation in political leadership.
- Ensure equal access to nature.
- Adopt a four-day work week.
- Guarantee a minimum income for all Canadians.
- End poverty through living wages.

These ideas focus on Canada's security, economic strength, and long-term resilience.

These ideas focus on skills, literacy, and preparing Canadians for the future of work and society.

These ideas focus on wellbeing, inclusion, and improving how Canadians live every day.

Protect and grow Canada's prosperity

Secure the Arctic through smarter defence policy

Canada's Arctic is becoming more accessible, more contested, and more consequential, but participants questioned whether the country's current approach reflects the realities of the region. Rather than seeing the Arctic solely through a military lens, the discussion emphasized presence, credibility, and long-term commitment. Arctic sovereignty was framed as something demonstrated through sustained investment, partnership, and stewardship, not episodic deployments. A smarter defence strategy would align security objectives with economic development, reconciliation, and environmental responsibility, ensuring Canada's presence in the North is trusted, durable, and fit for a changing Arctic.

Why it matters now

- Climate change is increasing access and strategic interest.
- Canada lacks sufficient defence infrastructure and industrial capacity in the North.
- There is uncertainty about the nature and scale of potential threats.

A vision of success

- Canada is recognized as a trusted Arctic leader and security partner.
- Defence strategy supports economic development and job creation in the North.
- Indigenous leadership is embedded in decision-making.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal leadership with sustained, long-term investment beyond political cycles.
- Collaboration with Arctic allies and Nordic partners.
- Indigenous communities as full partners in strategy, design, and implementation.

Challenges to overcome

- Limited infrastructure and challenging logistics in the Arctic.
- Slow procurement and regulatory processes.
- Balancing security objectives with reconciliation and community impacts.

For more insights on this topic

Defence modernization and investment in advanced technologies

Create a national food security strategy

The strain placed on health, education, and community systems when nourishment is uncertain shaped how participants viewed food security. When dependable access to food falters, pressures intensify in people's daily lives. Participants saw food security not as a narrow household concern but as a national condition that shapes resilience in periods of disruption. Viewing it through this lens shifts policy priorities, because the benefits of reliability extend far beyond the kitchen table. A shared approach signals that nourishment is a collective responsibility and a basic platform for participation, dignity, and planning for the future, regardless of where people live or how much they earn.

Why it matters now

- Food insecurity exacerbates health, economic, and social vulnerabilities.
- Canada's food system is fragmented and lacks coordination across policy areas.
- Rising costs and access gaps are widening inequities.

A vision of success

- All Canadians have reliable access to healthy, affordable food.
- Producers are fairly compensated and domestic capacity is maintained.
- Food policy aligns with housing, health, and environmental objectives.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal leadership coordinating across agriculture, health, and social policy sectors.
- Provinces, municipalities, and community organizations delivering locally.
- Producers, retailers, and small businesses contributing practical solutions.

Challenges to overcome

- Income barriers and unequal access to healthy options.
- Market concentration in food production and distribution.
- Perceptions of government overreach and competing policy priorities.

For more insights on this topic

Closing the infrastructure gap to deliver clean water and equity

Inuit hunting and community food access

Enable business growth and hiring through smart tax policy

Canada's tax system has gradually shifted away from enabling business growth toward managing redistribution and compliance. Participants noted that frequent policy changes and narrow definitions are creating hesitation among entrepreneurs and investors, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Rather than supporting long-term investment and hiring, the current approach often discourages firms from scaling up domestically. A growth-oriented tax framework that is both clear and predictable was seen as essential to restoring confidence and strengthening Canada's capacity to create jobs and sustain economic growth.

Why it matters now

- Frequent tax changes create uncertainty for business planning.
- Eligibility rules exclude many firms from accessing business funding.
- Talent and investment are shifting to more predictable jurisdictions.

A vision of success

- Stable tax policy supports long-term investment and hiring.
- More firms scale up and remain headquartered in Canada.
- Incentives favour sustained growth over short-term labour needs.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal leadership and the Canada Revenue Agency prioritize growth-focused tax design.
- Business, investor, and economic expertise informs reform.
- International models guide competitive policy choices.

Challenges to overcome

- Low tolerance for structural reform.
- Pressure for exemptions and carve outs.
- Difficulty building consensus for system wide change.

For more insights on this topic

Canadian business productivity trends and solutions

Power innovation through public procurement

Government purchasing not only delivers what public programs need; it also signals which solutions deserve investment and scale. Participants saw procurement as a way to prove the value of promising ideas in real world settings. That influence disappears when purchasing is treated purely as compliance. Framing procurement as strategic demand helps new ideas earn credibility, move from lab to use, and build capacity around real problems. The focus is on learning while buying, so public value is paired with opportunities for firms to refine and validate their innovations. Clear intent and transparent rules allow governments to steward risk while advancing practical innovation.

Why it matters now

- Smaller and incubator stage companies have limited access to public procurement.
- Risk aversion in system design discourages experimentation and first-of-kind solutions.
- Innovation pathways often stall before commercialization and scaling-up can take place.

A vision of success

- Procurement supports the journey from idea to prototype to market-ready product.
- Early contracts help validate innovations and then attract investment.
- Canada develops a reputation for backing home-grown innovation through demand.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal and provincial governments redesign procurement frameworks.
- Innovation agencies and procurement leaders pilot low-risk entry points.
- Private sector partners act as early adopters and validators.

Challenges to overcome

- Lengthy peer review and approval processes.
- Limited tolerance for risk in public decision-making.
- Need for sustained government support beyond funding alone.

For more insights on this topic

Procurement policy for strategic industry growth

Aligning procurement with value in healthcare

The case for value-based procurement reform

Understanding value-based procurement across Canada

Leverage internal free trade to drive economic growth

Internal trade is a measure of Canada's economic cohesion. Prosperity depends on how easily people, companies, and ideas can circulate within the country, not only on the international stage. When movement is smooth, regional strengths complement one another and productivity improves. Participants argued that aligning the basics at home helps the country perform better abroad, because domestic markets become deeper and more predictable. Treating internal trade as nation-building economics reframes the conversation from technical rules to shared opportunity, which strengthens competition, choice, and growth across regions.

Why it matters now

- Labour shortages persist while mobility barriers prevent talent from moving where it is needed.
- Businesses face inconsistent licensing and standards across provinces.
- Underemployment of skilled immigrants limits productivity and economic contribution.

A vision of success

- Canada functions as one integrated economy while respecting regional strengths.
- Labour shortages decline as credentials and licences are recognized nationally.
- Businesses expand more easily across provinces, which strengthens domestic trade.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal and provincial governments align on priority sectors for early action.
- Industry leaders and business associations build a national coalition for reform.
- Bridging programs and credential recognition bodies support skilled newcomers.

Challenges to overcome

- Provincial reluctance to cede control over standards and licensing.
- Fear of reduced quality or a perceived race to the bottom.
- Political inertia and limited public understanding of the economic stakes.

For more insights on this topic

Deepening Canada-Ireland trade and investment

Tariffs and Canada's trade challenges

Future Canadian trade infrastructure needs

Design tax policy that rewards innovation

Participants described innovation as a direct reflection of national priorities. Tax rules communicate priorities by signalling which behaviours are welcomed and which are discouraged. When signals are cautious or ambiguous, expectations shift and ambition fades. A clearer stance that visibly recognizes experimentation, reinvestment, and successful scaling-up can influence choices across the system. Participants saw this not as a single instrument change, but as a coherent posture that tells founders, researchers, and investors that building here is valued. Predictable recognition of value creation helps strengthen confidence and aligns private initiatives with national economic goals.
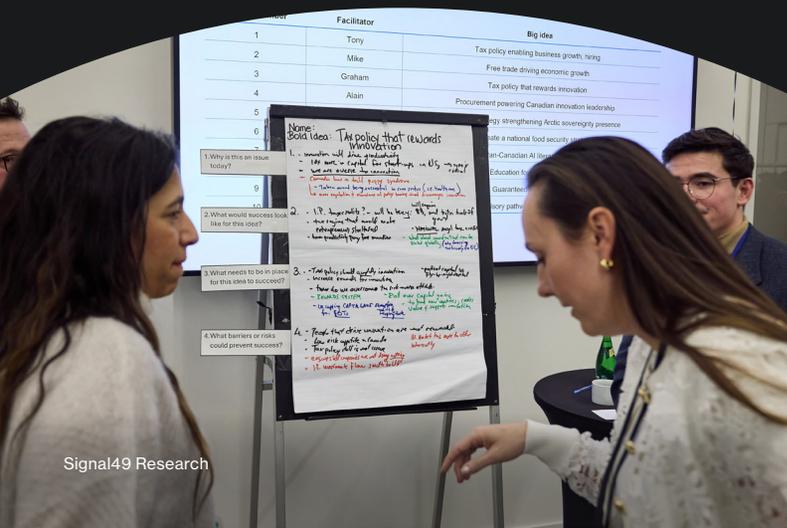
Why it matters now
- Productivity growth depends on sustained innovation and commercialization.
- Canadian start ups face significantly less access to capital than their United States counterparts.
- Policy barriers reinforce risk aversion and slow growth.

A vision of success
- Tax incentives reward innovation, investment, and successful commercialization.
- Entrepreneurs are better protected as they take risks and build new ventures.
- More Canadian firms scale up globally while remaining anchored in Canada.

Who and what can move it forward
- Federal leadership that prioritizes innovation-focused tax reform.
- Investors, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem partners help identify practical incentives that support innovation.
- Policies that attract foreign direct investment and support domestic scale ups.

Challenges to overcome
- Low tolerance for risk and failure within policy and business culture.
- Capital gains and investment rules that limit long-term incentives.
- Strong pull of larger foreign markets offering faster scale-up and returns.

For more insights on this topic

Benchmarking Canada's global R&D performance

Confronting Canada's risk aversion in innovation

More ideas

Alongside the six ideas we explored in depth, participants offered many other interesting and thought-provoking contributions. We've highlighted a selection of these here to illustrate the breadth and creativity of those shared.

"Mobilize sovereign prosperity by making Canada the global destination of choice for the world's builders."

"Develop a national strategy to ensure accessibility and equity in climate-resilient infrastructure."

"Leverage advanced technology to rapidly and equitably provide mental health and wellness support for all youth to unlock the full potential of the next generation."

"Create a national network of applied innovation labs to strengthen Canada's research and development capacity, build sovereign technologies in areas like AI, quantum, and dual-use applications, and address gaps in the country's innovation supply chain."

"Increase tax credits to support development of low-carbon power infrastructure, including non-crude energy sources."

"Conduct needs assessments to inform federal, provincial, and municipal housing targets by forecasting population growth and demographic change to support sustainable housing and infrastructure planning."

Prepare Canadians for a changing world

Deliver pan-Canadian AI literacy education

Artificial intelligence (AI) was treated as a general force that is shaping everyday life rather than as a niche topic. Understanding how to engage with digital technologies is becoming part of basic citizenship, affecting how people judge information, make choices, and participate in society. A shared foundation helps expectations grow together rather than unevenly across regions or sectors. A common baseline builds confidence and trust while creating space for responsible use. This is less about any single application and more about collective readiness as technologies evolve and become woven into learning, work, and civic life across the country.

Why it matters now

- AI adoption is accelerating faster than education and training systems.
- Educators and learners lack consistent guidance and support.
- Uneven access risks widening existing social and economic gaps.

A vision of success

- AI literacy is embedded across education, workforce training, and lifelong learning.
- Teachers and trainers are confident using and teaching AI tools.
- Canada builds leadership in ethical, human-centred AI development.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal, provincial, and territorial governments aligning on shared principles.
- Educators, teacher training institutions, and subject matter experts developing practical guidance and supports.
- Governments and education leaders coordinating with national AI research organizations.

Challenges to overcome

- Slow policy development in the face of rapid technological change.
- Fear, bias, and misconceptions about AI use.
- Concerns around data security, ethics, and environmental impact.

For more insights on this topic

Adapting Canada's schools for AI

Preparing teachers for an AI future

ChatGPT's impact on work and learning

Establish a Canada Corps for post-secondary service

Participants highlighted that a Canada Corps is a way to renew shared civic purpose at a pivotal life stage. The transition out of post-secondary learning is not only about first jobs; it is also about belonging and contribution. Service experiences help people understand their role in society while strengthening communities that host them. Treating contribution as a visible part of early adulthood communicates national expectations about mutual responsibility. It also signals to young people during this period of their life that helping to meet public needs is valued and formative. Participants also gain perspective from working with others on practical challenges.

Why it matters now

- Young people face growing difficulty accessing entry-level employment.
- Many students feel unprepared or uncertain about post secondary pathways.
- Canada faces capacity gaps in key social and economic sectors.

A vision of success

- Youth participate in structured, paid placements with real-world impact.
- Multiple pathway options allow choice rather than compulsory service.
- Students gain skills, confidence, and clearer direction for future careers.

Who and what can move it forward

- Governments providing funding, coordination, and national frameworks.
- Employers and community organizations hosting placements.
- Schools and instructors supporting reflection and learning integration.

Challenges to overcome

- Ensuring placements benefit both participants and communities.
- Building sufficient infrastructure and partnerships at scale.
- Securing sustainable funding and student buy-in.

For more insights on this topic

Designing inclusive student work placement programs

Equip students with future-ready skills

Future-ready skills were presented as a shift in how learning is understood. Rather than equating education with preparation for a specific role, this lens focuses on the capacity to learn, apply judgment, and contribute in unfamiliar contexts. The point is not to predict every task ahead, but to help people make sense of what they know and how to grow. Treating this orientation as foundational reframes education as preparation for change itself. Participants linked this to confidence and agency over time, so people can sustain their level of contribution as roles, technologies, and workplaces continue to evolve.

Why it matters now

- Employers report persistent skills mismatches and gaps in workplace readiness.
- Technical skills evolve quickly, while durable human skills are underdeveloped.
- Learners often struggle to articulate the competencies they have gained.

A vision of success

- Education systems prioritize adaptability, confidence, and lifelong learning.
- Diverse educational pathways are recognized for the competencies they develop.
- Stronger alignment exists between learning pathways and employment outcomes.

Who and what can move it forward

- Educators and institutions embedding skills development across programs.
- Employers adopting skills-based hiring and clearer competency signals.
- Governments supporting collaboration across education and workforce systems.

Challenges to overcome

- Limited funding and capacity for education reform.
- Academic cultures that undervalue soft and transferable skills.
- Uncertainty about which skills will drive future growth.

For more insights on this topic

AI readiness and practice in Canada

How AI is changing Canada's workforce

Traditional Inuit knowledge in Northern economies

AI, jobs, and skills in Canada

AI talent demand and supply in Canada

Social and emotional learning for critical thinking

Green economy workforce skills demand

Community inclusion as a future skills enabler

Make financial literacy universal

More people are living paycheque to paycheque, and small mistakes compound when budgeting, credit, or investing feel opaque. Misinformation spreads quickly through social channels, while tap payments and "buy now pay later" offers make spending feel invisible. A national push would start earlier, continue into adulthood, and be integrated into existing learning environments. Clear, plain language guidance would help newcomers and youth navigate accounts, risk, and long-term planning in the real world. Education should be accessible across languages and formats and incentivize institutions to teach, not just sell. Confidence grows when people understand choices before the stakes are high.

Why it matters now

- Many households have weak budgeting supports.
- Widely circulated online finance myths distort decisions and increase risk.
- New payment tools obscure the true cost of spending.

A vision of success

- Learning spans from Grades K–12 through adulthood, with clear milestones.
- Trusted, multilingual resources meet people in everyday channels.
- Financial education is treated as a public good.

Who and what can move it forward

- Governments setting national expectations and accountability.
- Schools, employers, and community organizations delivering education where people already learn.
- Financial institutions and financial technologies (fintechs) supporting unbiased education standards.

Challenges to overcome

- Unclear who is responsible for delivering financial education.
- Conflicted advice that may not serve learners' interests.
- The perception that financial planning is only for those with surplus income.

For more insights on this topic

Indigenous youth access to financial knowledge

Require tax education in high school

Understanding taxes is a basic civic skill, not a specialized or optional form of knowledge. Participants felt strongly that early exposure is a way to normalize conversations about money, government, and public decision-making, reducing stigma and building confidence long before young people encounter taxes in real life. Treating tax education as a graduation requirement signals that financial participation is part of full citizenship. Making tax knowledge visible, relevant, and culturally accessible helps to give young people the confidence to engage more actively in economic and democratic life.

Why it matters now

- Tax rules are complex, especially with multiple or non-traditional income sources.
- Many graduates are unprepared to file taxes or understand public revenue.
- Limited tax knowledge increases vulnerability to scams and civic disengagement.

A vision of success

- Students graduate able to file their own returns and meet basic obligations.
- Young people understand how tax dollars are raised and spent.
- Tax learning supports confident saving and retirement planning.

Who and what can move it forward

- Provinces embed tax education as a graduation requirement.
- Schools and community groups deliver engaging, age-appropriate content.
- Teachers receive training and current curriculum resources.

Challenges to overcome

- Limited teacher capacity and comfort with tax topics.
- Unclear responsibility between government and schools for delivering tax education.
- Keeping content current as laws and policies change.

More ideas

Alongside the five ideas we explored in depth, participants offered many other interesting and thought-provoking contributions. We've highlighted a selection of these here to illustrate the breadth and creativity of those shared.

"Simplify pathways for skilled immigrants to practise their professions in Canada."

"Truly make the trades an attractive career path for the masses."

"Invest in the next generation by establishing a national apprenticeship and co-op program for all post-secondary students."

"Create streamlined pathways for internationally trained doctors to practise in Canada, expanding the healthcare workforce and reducing wait times."

"Make micro-credentials a global education standard to enable efficient learning and faster entry into the workforce."

"Establish accreditation pathways that recognize international experience and help employers access a broader talent pool."

"Create lasting partnerships between businesses and educational institutions to speed pathways from education to employment."

Improve
everyday
life for
Canadians

Deliver safe, reliable public transit

A city only works if people can move easily and safely. Delays, incidents, and patchy coverage undermine daily life, from commutes to caregiving to leisure. Reliability and safety measures must be sensitive to riders' experiences, with clear indicators and transparent progress. Building density, coordinating investments, and pairing infrastructure with social supports are key actions that lead to uptake. Technology and talent help, but they are means, not ends. The standard to aim for is straightforward: transit that is predictable, secure, and fast enough that ridership becomes the rational choice.

Why it matters now

• Service disruptions and limited coverage constrain daily mobility.
• Unreliable travel times reduce productivity.
• Safety concerns suppress ridership.

A vision of success

• Clear performance indicators drive reliability and safety improvements.
• Dense networks outperform car travel for everyday trips.
• Platform protections and prevention measures reduce incidents.

Who and what can move it forward

• Coordinated safety presence and mental health crisis supports.
• AI-supported planning for routes and operations optimization.
• Public–private collaboration around housing-linked hubs.

Challenges to overcome

• Funding constraints and project delays.
• Talent shortages and intergovernmental coordination gaps.
• Over-reliance on technology without social support.

For more insights on this topic

Immigrant retention and public infrastructure capacity

Ensure equitable access to healthcare

Where you live, the language you speak, and how much you earn often determine how quickly you can see a provider. Shortages in primary care and uneven infrastructure send people to crowded emergency rooms, while prevention and early intervention remain underused. Expanding training capacity, recognizing credentials, and sharing data safely can widen access without compromising quality. Equity is a design principle, not an add-on. Services should reach communities, rather than asking communities to reach services. With the right mix of staffing, mobile models, and trustworthy data practices, timely care becomes possible across regions and populations.

Why it matters now

- Remote and rural areas face persistent provider shortages.
- Language and income drive uneven access and outcomes.
- Emergency room congestion reflects gaps in prevention and primary care.

A vision of success

- Education and training expand while affordability is preserved.
- Early warning and intervention reduce hospital demand.
- Targeted programs support residents without workplace benefits.

Who and what can move it forward

- Credential recognition and interprovincial cooperation.
- Sovereign data practices that enable safe AI and data-sharing.
- Mobile and satellite clinics delivering care closer to home.

Challenges to overcome

- Resource shortages and facility capacity limits.
- Data privacy concerns, AI hesitancy, and policy tensions.
- Discontinuity across governments and gaps in cultural safety.

For more insights on this topic

Canada's progress on precision health

Modelling the impact of blood cancer therapies

Canada's urgent health system priorities

Understanding cancer mortality in Canada

Advancing value-based healthcare

Heart health and its benefits in Canada

Access to children's mental healthcare

Increasing Indigenous physicians in Canadian healthcare

Implement pharmacare for all Canadians

Prescription drugs were discussed as an essential part of modern healthcare, yet one that sits outside a coherent national framework. The absence of a common approach creates inefficiencies, misaligned incentives, and uneven responsibility across public and private systems. Participants saw pharmacare as a way to treat medications as a shared health good and simplify how coverage is designed and delivered. A national system can correct today's mismatch, where those paying for medications are often not the ones who benefit from improved health outcomes and lower system costs. This shift could strengthen fairness, improve system coherence, and support long term economic stability.

Why it matters now

- Prescription drugs are increasingly expensive and unevenly covered.
- Access to necessary medications varies by province, income, and employment status.
- Delays and gaps in access can worsen health outcomes and system costs.

A vision of success

- A common national system ensures access to needed medications regardless of cost.
- One national set of coverage and pricing rules streamlines decisions across payers and provinces.
- Pharmacare supports broader economic goals, including attracting life sciences investment.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal and provincial governments aligning priorities and funding.
- Pharmacies and healthcare providers delivering medications efficiently, including in rural areas.
- Pricing and procurement mechanisms that balance affordability and sustainability.

Challenges to overcome

- Ensuring equitable access across rural, remote, and urban communities.
- Addressing concerns that innovation and drug development could be discouraged.
- Navigating fiscal trade offs and provincial resistance to centralized funding.

For more insights on this topic

Canadian drug insurance coverage and gaps

Drug approval to patient access timelines

Eliminate wait times across essential services

Long waits reflect how care is organized, not only the gaps between supply and demand. When entry points are unclear and handoffs break down, wait times multiply and demand piles up in the wrong places. Rethinking the pathway into, through, and out of care is the lever for change. Modernizing delivery, improving coherence across services, and making information flow are all supports that enable a system that responds instead of reacts. Done right, shorter waits become the by-product of better design rather than a series of isolated fixes.

Why it matters now

- Delays in care are contributing to avoidable complications and system pressure.
- Public confidence in health system responsiveness is eroding.
- Demand is rising faster than current delivery models can absorb.

A vision of success

- Nationally comparable wait time benchmarks guide improvement.
- Performance data informs continuous system learning.
- Preventive care reduces avoidable demand over time.

Who and what can move it forward

- Governments setting clear accountability and shared standards.
- Healthcare administrators redesigning patient flow and referral models.
- Clinicians and analysts using evidence to guide prioritization.

Challenges to overcome

- Misaligned incentives across jurisdictions and providers.
- Limited ability to scale up proven practices quickly.
- Governance complexity across public and private actors.

For more insights on this topic

Pediatric surgery wait time impact

Community pharmacy's role in primary care

Physician assistant integration and funding analysis

Retention of healthcare professionals
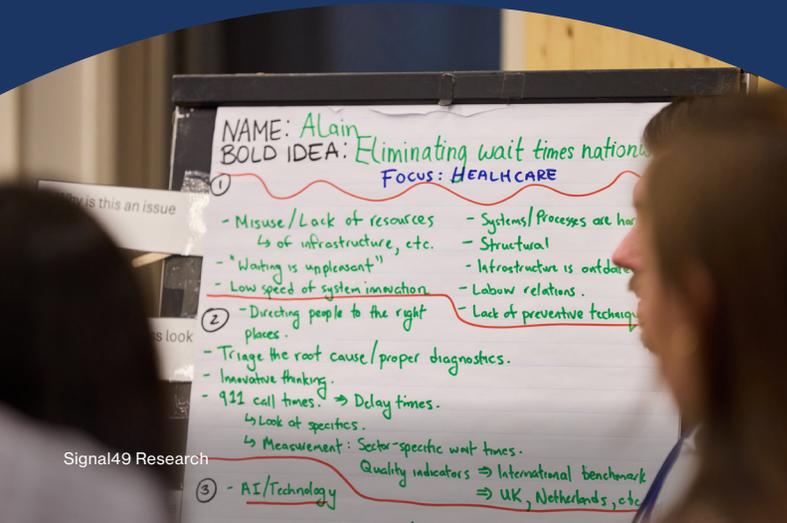
Increase Indigenous representation in political leadership

Reconciliation moves from statement to substance when Indigenous leadership shapes how decisions are made. That begins with recognizing Traditional Knowledge as valued wisdom, not as a footnote to Western metrics. Trust-building, genuine allyship, and space for different power systems create conditions for better policy and shared prosperity. Housing, education, and basic rights are foundational, not optional extras. Transformative change requires funding and governance that enable Indigenous communities to lead in ways that reflect their worldviews and priorities, benefiting everyone in the process.

Why it matters now

- Repairing historic harm is a national responsibility.
- Climate realities increase the need for Indigenous stewardship.
- Unequal access to essentials like clean water and housing persists.

A vision of success

- Indigenous ways of knowing guide policy and programs.
- Allyship is active and accountable, not performative.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action move from plans to implementation.

Who and what can move it forward

- Investments in leadership pathways created by and for communities.
- Systems that remove logistical barriers to authentic engagement.
- Shared responsibility across governments, institutions, and partners.

Challenges to overcome

- Colonial structures that conflict with Indigenous worldviews.
- Token roles that reinforce existing power dynamics.
- Ongoing discrimination and unaddressed biases.

For more insights on this topic

Voices of Indigenous leaders in Canada

Ensure equal access to nature

Access to nature surfaced as a fundamental element of wellbeing, not a luxury shaped by geography, income, or identity. The discussion emphasized that who gets to experience green space often mirrors broader patterns of inequality, with consequences for health, belonging, and environmental stewardship. Disconnection from nature was seen as weakening both individual health and collective motivation to protect natural systems. Ensuring equal access means rethinking how nature is defined, designed, and integrated into everyday life so that connection, care, and responsibility are shared more broadly across communities and generations.

Why it matters now

- Access to nature is uneven across neighbourhoods and populations.
- Being connected to nature enhances physical and mental wellbeing.
- Limited access weakens engagement with environmental protection and climate action.

A vision of success

- Access to nature is treated as a core wellbeing and equity indicator.
- Green and natural spaces are available, safe, and welcoming for diverse needs.
- Stronger connections to nature reinforce education, stewardship, and care.

Who and what can move it forward

- Governments embedding access to nature into planning, health, and education policy.
- Schools, community groups, and Indigenous leaders shaping inclusive access and stewardship.
- Infrastructure and transit investments that connect people to green spaces.

Challenges to overcome

- Physical, safety, and accessibility barriers to natural spaces.
- Tension between development, infrastructure, and environmental protection.
- Insufficient investment in maintaining and protecting natural environments.

Adopt a four-day work week

Pressures on time, caregiving, and daily life are pushing organizations to rethink how work is structured. Rather than a one size fits all Friday off, the idea centres on redesigning schedules so that output, wellbeing, and competitiveness align. Trust becomes a performance asset, not a soft perk, and pilots with clear metrics separate signal from noise. Lessons from other jurisdictions matter, but models should flex by sector and region. The end goal is practical: deliver results, retain people, and use space and technology more intelligently while giving workers back time, which improves health and productivity.

Why it matters now

- Stress and exhaustion are rising, diminishing day-to-day performance.
- Monitoring and rigid returns to work erode confidence between leaders and staff.
- Childcare costs and commuting time intensify pressure on households.

A vision of success

- Firms stay competitive while turnover falls and know-how is retained.
- Health indicators improve alongside quality of work.
- Flexible options help attract and keep talent.

Who and what can move it forward

- Public incentives and evidence from international comparators.
- Sector specific pilots with transparent goals and accountability.
- Municipal and provincial partners planning new uses for office space.

Challenges to overcome

- Inflexible leadership and uneven adoption within teams.
- Generational preferences and different tech comfort levels.
- The need to validate outcomes with robust pilots before scaling up.

For more insights on this topic

Flexible work models and social connection

Guarantee a minimum income for all Canadians

Guaranteed income was reframed as a broader question about the level of certainty a society should provide. Persistent insecurity shapes behaviour long before people engage with formal programs, narrowing options and eroding trust. Establishing a shared income floor was described as a way to make room for planning, contribution, and care for population groups with different levels of vulnerability. The discussion focused on how a guaranteed minimum income could create financial stability for individuals and strengthen communities. The conversation centred on a system that is steady, clear, and able to reflect different realities, with the broader aim of strengthening the social fabric that underpins economic life.
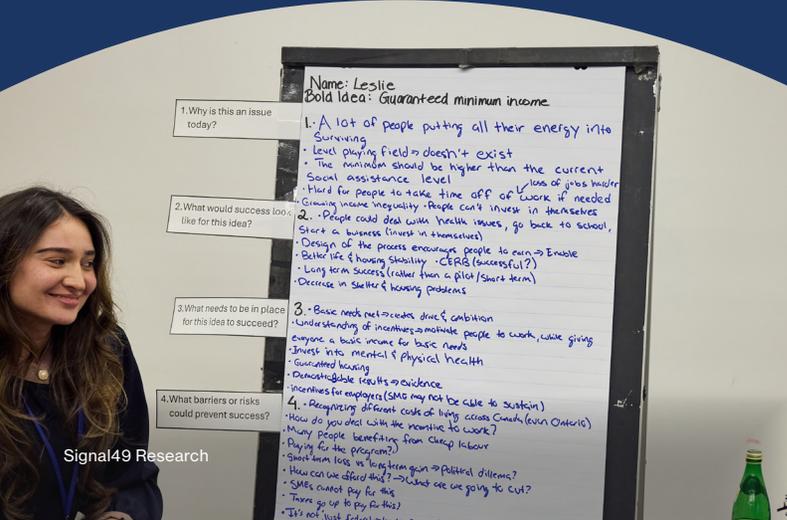
Why it matters now

- Economic volatility and labour market transitions are increasing income insecurity.
- Existing income supports are fragmented and can be difficult to access.
- Financial instability limits people's ability to retrain, work, or care for others.

A vision of success

- All individuals have access to a reliable and predictable income floor.
- Income supports are simpler, more transparent, and easier to navigate.
- People are better positioned to pursue employment, education, and caregiving.

Who and what can move it forward

- Federal and provincial governments coordinating income support reform.
- Researchers and economists evaluating program design and outcomes.
- Community organizations informing implementation and delivery.

Challenges to overcome

- Fiscal concerns and questions about long-term affordability.
- Public perception and political resistance.
- Integration with existing social programs and work incentives.

For more insights on this topic

Minimum wage effects on Canadian labour

End poverty through living wages

Living wages speak to how work is valued in practice. Pay levels shape who can remain in roles, sectors, and communities. they also influence whether experience accumulates or drains away. Participants treated compensation as upstream infrastructure for a healthier labour market, not a detail to fix after hardship appears. Grounding earnings in the practical costs of life communicates what kinds of contributions are respected and sustainable. This lens places responsibility where value is created and aligns performance with community stability, reducing the need for downstream fixes that attempt to manage shortfalls after the fact.

Why it matters now

- The cost of living is rising faster than wages.
- The gap between minimum and living wages is driving precarity and underemployment.
- Economic insecurity is weakening productivity and wellbeing.

A vision of success

- Wages keep pace with inflation and essential costs.
- Housing stability improves as income adequacy increases.
- Workers move more easily into stable, fairly compensated jobs.

Who and what can move it forward

- Governments align labour, housing, and economic policy.
- Employers modernize compensation and hiring practices.
- Community organizations partner on cost-of-living pilots.

Challenges to overcome

- Concentrated market power suppressing wage growth.
- Fragmented policy responses to complex social needs.
- Limited capacity among small businesses to adjust wages.

More ideas

Alongside the nine ideas we explored in depth, participants offered many other interesting and thought-provoking contributions. We've highlighted a selection of these here to illustrate the breadth and creativity of those shared.

"Provide preventative healthcare in schools, including healthy meals, screenings, mental health supports, and daily movement, to reduce future strain on the healthcare system."

"Improve access to family doctors across Canada."

"Establish a national early warning detection program that uses electronic health records and AI to anticipate hospital and ICU needs."

"Design city infrastructure with built-in supports for under-resourced people, including access to mental health services, housing, food, showers, and washrooms."

"Ensure all Canadians have access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing."

"Make health data more accessible and use AI to analyze it for population-level predictions, including chronic disease trends, pandemic preparedness, and resource allocation."

A national conversation

The Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity has started a national conversation about Canada's economic future. Through the Bold Ideas for Canada event series, we are bringing together people from all sectors to share ideas and practical solutions for Canada's long-term growth.

Each event will generate unique insights—rooted in local realities but connected to national priorities. These ideas will be synthesized to identify common themes, emerging opportunities, and promising actions, then shared widely with decision-makers across government, business, and civil society so they can inform real-world priorities.

Our goal is to move beyond discussion to real collaboration, ensuring that what's learned in each community can help shape a stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient Canada. Through our expertise and national networks, we facilitate conversations that keep attention on the issues that matter, sustain momentum over time, and create the conditions for bold actions to be adopted and implemented.

Stay connected

Stay up to date on the ideas shaping Canada's future. Sign up for our newsletter to get updates, event highlights, and ways to get involved—delivered straight to your inbox.

Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity

Turning potential into prosperity

What we do
Canada has the talent, resources, and potential to be one of the world's most dynamic and inclusive economies. Yet we face persistent challenges—slowing productivity growth, uneven opportunity across regions, and structural barriers that limit our competitiveness. The Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity (CCGP) exists to help close that gap.

The CCGP unites research, convening, and action to identify bold solutions that strengthen Canada's long-term economic performance and quality of life. The Centre focuses on the structural drivers of prosperity and the policies, partnerships, and innovations needed to address them. This means tackling issues such as productivity, investment, skills, and inclusiveness in a coordinated way—bringing together evidence, diverse perspectives, and practical pathways for implementation. By shining a light on these foundational challenges and mobilizing the people and organizations best positioned to act, the Centre will help ensure that Canada not only generates ideas but also has the capacity and commitment to turn them into lasting change.

How we do it

The CCGP advances its mission through three interconnected streams:

1 **Convening and mobilizing** – Hosting national and community-based events, we bring together leaders and citizens from all sectors to surface ideas and explore the practical steps required to implement them.

2 **Curating thought leadership** – We identify, synthesize, and amplify the most promising insights from across the country, ensuring that decision-makers and the public have access to clear, actionable knowledge. We are building a hub that will collate thoughts and research related to CCGP goals from leading sources.

3 **Monitoring and measuring** – We track Canada's progress on the structural drivers of prosperity, shining a light on what's working, where gaps remain, and how to keep attention on critical issues over time through our scorecards and trackers.

Through these streams, the CCGP provides a disciplined, action-focused process that moves ideas from inspiration to implementation.

Be part of the change

The CCGP is made possible through the support of funders, who share a commitment to Canada's long-term prosperity. Their expertise, networks, and investment allow us to advance a practical, solutions-focused agenda that will help Canada thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy.

To learn more or get involved, visit the Centre's webpage.

Our funders

Deloitte.   WESTON   GEORG WESTO LIMITÉ

WES World Education Services

Methodology

This summary draws on data collected from two events held at George Brown Polytechnic in Toronto, Ontario. The events were hosted by Signal49 Research through its Centre for Canadian Growth and Prosperity (CCGP).

Participation

- February 4, 2026: 122 participants (senior leaders)
- February 5, 2026: 178 participants (young professionals)

Idea generation

Following the opening remarks and a fireside chat, participants were each given an index card and pen to record their answer in response to a question: **What is your boldest idea to create a better future for Canada?**

To focus their responses, participants were provided with the following guiding principles.

When writing your idea, aim to make it:

- bold and inspirational
- specific and actionable
- ambitious and achievable

Idea prioritization exercise: The 25/10 Method

Dr. Alex Ryan led participants through the 25/10 Method, a Liberating Structures exercise to surface high-potential ideas in an open, participatory way. Participants exchanged cards multiple times to randomize ideas, then scored the card they held from one to five. This swap-and-score cycle was repeated five times, giving each idea up to 25 possible points. Top-scoring ideas were read aloud, consolidated where they overlapped, and then refined into a set of unique proposals. The process identified 10 top ideas at each event for a total of 20 ideas over the two events.

Open space discussions

The top-ranked ideas were then explored in greater depth through an open space technology facilitation activity. Each idea became the focus of its own discussion station, which was equipped with a facilitator, scribe, and flip chart to capture input. Participants were free to move between stations, choosing the conversation or conversations most meaningful to them.

This flexible format encouraged collaborative problem-solving, allowing participants to build on one another's contributions and refine ideas into actionable directions. Discussions at each station were guided by four questions designed to highlight both the vision and the practical steps required to drive meaningful change:

1. **Why is this an issue today?**
   Clearly define the problem this bold idea would solve.
2. **What would success look like for this idea?**
   Describe the tangible outcomes or changes if this idea succeeds.
3. **What needs to be in place for this idea to succeed?**
   Suggest pathways, enabling conditions, and key partners to advance this idea.
4. **What barriers or risks could prevent success?**
   Identify challenges and how they might be overcome.

The open space discussions were conducted over approximately 30 to 45 minutes so that participants could dive into each idea while keeping the energy high and the focus sharp.

Data capture

Facilitators and scribes documented the discussions in real time on flip charts and sticky notes, capturing participants' words as faithfully as possible without interpretation.

Together, this process yielded a total of 49 pages of flip chart notes and 25 pages (6,071 words) of text in the flip chart transcription:

- February 4, 2026: 23 pages of flip chart notes and 12 pages (2,828 words) of text in the flip chart transcription.
- February 5, 2026: 26 pages of flip chart notes and 13 pages (3,243 words) of text in the flip chart transcription.

All data was anonymized before analysis.

Data analysis

The analysis employed a hybrid approach that combined manual qualitative review with the support of a generative AI tool (operating in non-learning mode). Flip chart images from participants were transcribed using Microsoft 365 Copilot, and all outputs were manually verified by a human for accuracy and completeness. In addition to the transcriptions, a nightly post-event reflections report completed by facilitators—summarizing their observations and participant insights—was used to help synthesize participants' insights and develop themes. This multi-source strategy accelerated thematic coding while preserving the integrity and richness of participants' original contributions.

Limitations

While every effort was made to capture the breadth and depth of the conversations, not all individual contributions could be reflected in this summary. This report presents key themes and representative ideas that emerged most prominently through the process.

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