

Backgrounder

Final Report of the Saskatchewan-Asia Advisory Council

The Saskatchewan-Asia Advisory Council was established in May 2013 to provide advice to the Government of Saskatchewan on realizing the significant trade, investment and talent attraction, and education opportunities in Asia, along with mitigating potential risks associated with those opportunities.

The council consists of eight provincial and national leaders who bring private and public sector expertise on Asian engagement. Their work was done in the context of the long history and rich tradition Saskatchewan enjoys with Asia as a province of traders.

Saskatchewan's trade with Asia was at an all-time high in 2013 with \$6.6 billion worth of exports. Yet the council recognized there was a lot of untapped potential in the relationship and felt that the province could not take its current trade, educational and cultural successes with Asia for granted.

The final report of the council contains 45 recommendations to the government on how it can pivot Saskatchewan's international engagement towards Asia. The recommendations are grouped under five categories: overarching recommendations; trade facilitation and attraction; investment attraction; student recruitment and retention and development of Asian competency; and talent attraction – skilled workers and entrepreneurs.

The overarching recommendations are broad proposals that seek to influence Saskatchewan's relationship with Asia across all areas of interest. The other categories offer specific recommendations to attract Asian trade, investment and talent, and to encourage the Saskatchewan public to become increasingly connected to Asian markets through business relations, work and educational experiences, and travel.

Goals

The final report of the council also contains a number of broad goals under which the recommendations are grouped. These goals are as follows:

- Saskatchewan will be a champion in achieving the transportation infrastructure system required for enhanced trade with Asia;
- Saskatchewan will triple its exports to Asia by nurturing and expanding its network of Asian markets and consumers of Saskatchewan products by 2020;
- Saskatchewan will focus on tripling small and medium enterprise (SME) exports to priority Asian markets by 2020;
- Saskatchewan will revamp its investment attraction approach to substantially increase the share of Asia investment into the province by 2020;

- Saskatchewan will double international post-secondary student recruitment by 2020, with a priority focus on Asian markets;
- Saskatchewan will systematically increase the annual retention of international students;
- Saskatchewan students, government and industry will have access to linguistic and cultural competency programs to achieve success in Asia;
- Saskatchewan will successfully retain a higher percentage of immigrants in the province by becoming the most receptive jurisdiction in Canada for newcomers;
- Saskatchewan will ensure that businesses have the knowledge and tools necessary to successfully attract new immigrants through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) and the federal express entry process; and
- The Government of Saskatchewan will refocus its immigration priorities to attract a greater number of immigrant entrepreneurs to the province.

Members of the Council

The eight members of the council are:

- Grant Kook (Council Co-chair), President and CEO of Westcap Mgt. Ltd.;
- Steve Dechka (Council Co-chair), President and CEO of Canpotex;
- Harold Fast, Founder of FastGenetics;
- Eva Kwok, Chair and CEO of Amara Holdings;
- Kasi Rao, Vice-President and Director, Toronto Office, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada;
- Lionel LaBelle, Past President and CEO of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP);
- Terry Bergan, President and CEO of International Road Dynamics; and
- Doug Moen, Deputy Minister to the Premier.