



THE VICTORIA FORUM 2024

Building Trust for a Shared Future

Co-hosted By:



University
of Victoria

SENATE



SÉNAT

Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the
ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose
traditional territory the Victoria
Forum 2024 took place, and the
Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ
peoples whose historical
relationships with the land continue
to this day.

Message from the Executive Director

2024 marked a milestone in the development of the Victoria Forum with its first event as an independent organization. Beginning in 2016 as an initiative of the Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria, the Victoria Forum had grown in scope and reputation and reached a point in its evolution where it needed to be more formally established with its own structures and approaches and with more frequent activities. Accordingly, when I stepped down as Dean of the School in 2023, we spun the Victoria Forum off from the University into a separately incorporated non-profit organization.

As part of this renewal, the major Victoria Forum will be held annually with smaller regional and thematic events throughout the year. Our partnership orientation continues and we have retained the strong relationships that we had built over time, along with our action orientation.

The Victoria Forum continues to be co-hosted by the University of Victoria and the Senate of Canada and we are immensely grateful for the support that we receive from both institutions. At the 2024 Forum, held on campus at UVic, we had a contingent of 16 members of the Senate of Canada, contributing to framing the discussions and providing critical input into this year's theme, "Building Trust for a Shared Future."



We are also deeply appreciative of the support from our founding partners, TELUS and the Gustavson School of Business, both of whom continue to support the work of the Victoria Forum, along with other generous supporters: Power Corporation, Coast Capital Savings, the Definity Foundation, the Regenerative Capital Group, the Victoria Foundation, the City of Victoria, the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, Raven Indigenous Impact Foundation, Second Muse, the Transition Accelerator and ACET (Accelerating Community Energy Transformation). Without the ongoing support of our partners we could not continue.

This report on the 2024 Victoria Forum demonstrates both the breadth of the issues we are addressing and their interconnectedness. It also highlights the severity of the challenges we are facing and provides some directions going forward. Trust is the key ingredient in making change happen and we look forward to continuing our engagement with you as we jointly develop ideas for a better world.

Sincerely,
Dr. Saul Klein
Executive Director, Forum de Victoria Forum



Extended Executive Summary

The Victoria Forum 2024 convened at a time of intensifying global disruption, marked by deepening political polarization, rising economic inequality, and escalating environmental crises. Held in Victoria British Columbia, under the theme "Building Trust for a Shared Future," the Forum brought together global leaders, policymakers, business executives, Indigenous leaders, academics, youth, and civil society to address the erosion of public trust and chart pathways toward inclusive, sustainable transformation. What follows is a synthesis of the Forum's most urgent insights, cross-cutting themes, and policy-oriented recommendations drawn from ten core areas of dialogue.

Trust at the Heart of Systemic Change

Trust is the cornerstone of democratic governance, inclusive economies, and resilient societies. The Forum affirmed that rebuilding trust in public institutions, financial systems, and leadership requires more than incremental reform—it demands bold, coordinated, and participatory action across sectors. Transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, and community engagement emerged as recurring imperatives.

Sessions examined declining trust in government, media, and financial institutions, highlighting the corrosive effects of misinformation, perceived institutional failures, and systemic exclusion. Recommendations emphasized open governance, civic education, digital accountability, and inclusive representation as foundational to restoring confidence.

Economic Transformation through Regeneration

Forum discussions made clear that economic systems must shift from extractive, profit-maximizing models toward regenerative frameworks that center human well-being, environmental restoration, and equity. Inclusive growth is not only a moral imperative but a practical necessity in an age of compounding crises.



Participants called for:

- Expanding impact investing and blended finance that prioritize long-term social and environmental returns;
- Supporting SMEs, cooperatives, and Indigenous-led enterprises that create community wealth and resilience;
- Embedding ESG principles into corporate governance and financial decision-making;
- Promoting circular economy and purpose-driven business models aligned with intergenerational sustainability.

Indigenous Sovereignty and Economic Reconciliation

Reconciliation must be economic, political, and cultural. The Forum elevated Indigenous voices and experiences, underscoring the importance of economic self-determination, land stewardship, and Indigenous-controlled capital as pathways to just and durable reconciliation.

Key calls to action included:

- Reforming legal and policy frameworks to uphold Indigenous sovereignty;
- Creating revenue-sharing agreements and procurement reforms that benefit Indigenous communities;
- Investing in Indigenous entrepreneurship and innovation, with specific focus on Indigenous women leaders;
- Embedding Indigenous worldviews into governance and economic systems.

Climate Action and the Blue Economy

Climate resilience and environmental sustainability must be fully integrated into economic planning and governance. The Forum emphasized that climate action cannot be compartmentalized; it must inform investment, infrastructure, education, and trade.

Core insights included:

- Scaling up green finance, carbon pricing, and renewable energy infrastructure;
- Advancing climate equity by ensuring access and support for historically marginalized communities;
- Recognizing and supporting Indigenous environmental stewardship;
- Promoting the Blue Economy as a model for ocean-based economic activity that balances ecological protection with coastal development.



Reimagining Finance for Inclusion and Impact

Finance must evolve to become a driver of equity, resilience, and regeneration. The Forum featured innovative financial instruments such as social bonds, outcomes-based financing, and mission-aligned philanthropy.

Recommendations included:

- Redefining fiduciary duty to incorporate environmental and social goals;
- Establishing regulatory incentives for sustainable finance and impact investing;
- Increasing financial literacy and access to capital for underserved communities;
- Strengthening public-private partnerships to scale systems-level transformation.

Civic Engagement, Governance, and Digital Trust

The future of democracy depends on meaningful civic participation, cross-sector collaboration, and ethical digital governance. The Forum called for renewed efforts to counter misinformation, revitalize political engagement, and rebuild democratic institutions from the ground up.

Key recommendations:

- Expanding civic education, especially among youth;
- Strengthening local governance and participatory mechanisms;
- Regulating digital platforms and AI to combat disinformation;
- Investing in ethical, transparent AI systems that reinforce democratic values.

Housing, Health, and Well-being as Cornerstones of Trust

Sustainable development must begin with foundational human needs. Affordable housing, universal healthcare, and community-based well-being were identified as essential pillars of trust, equity, and resilience.

Participants emphasized:

- Recognizing housing as critical infrastructure, not a market commodity;
- Leveraging non-market housing, social finance, and cooperative models;
- Integrating health equity and climate adaptation into public health policy;
- Expanding mental health services and culturally appropriate care.

Canada's Role in a Divided World

Canada's position as a diplomatic bridge-builder was both affirmed and challenged. To maintain global credibility, Canada must lead by example—deepening its commitments to reconciliation, multilateralism, climate diplomacy, and inclusive governance.

The Forum urged:

- Strengthening global partnerships rooted in equity and sustainability;
- Expanding climate diplomacy and digital governance leadership;
- Supporting youth, migrant, and Indigenous voices in foreign policy;
- Investing in fact-based journalism and democratic resilience at home.

A Call for Transformative Leadership

The Victoria Forum 2024 affirmed that the path to a shared future must be built on trust—earned through inclusive processes, equitable policies, and accountable leadership. Across all themes, the Forum advanced a shared vision: that public trust, sustainable development, and social cohesion are not isolated objectives, but interdependent outcomes of systems designed for dignity, justice, and regeneration.

This report serves as both a record and a roadmap—offering solutions, posing urgent questions, and issuing clear calls to action for governments, businesses, civil society, and communities committed to building a more just and sustainable world.



Contents

Message from the Executive Director	03
Extended Executive Summary	05
Bridging Divides for a Shared Future: The Victoria Forum 2024	11
Bridging Divides for a Shared Future	15
The Conversation	15
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	18
From Erosion to Restoration: Rebuilding Trust in Institutions	20
The Conversation	20
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	21
Conclusion	25
Toward Regenerative Economies: Economic Transformation & Social Inclusion	26
The Conversation	26
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	27
Conclusion	29
Indigenous Sovereignty and Economic Reconciliation	30
The Conversation	30
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	32
Conclusion	34
The Role of Finance in Driving Change	35
The Conversation	35
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	37
Conclusion	39

Contents

Climate Action & Sustainable Development	40
The Conversation	40
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	42
Conclusion	44
Civic Engagement and Governance	45
The Conversation	45
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	47
Conclusion	49
Housing & Urban Resilience	50
The Conversation	50
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	51
Conclusion	53
Health & Well-being	54
The Conversation	54
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	55
Conclusion	57
Digitization, AI & Rebuilding Trust	58
The Conversation	58
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	60
Conclusion	62
Canada's Role in Bridging Divides for a Shared Future	35
The Conversation	63
Key Insights and Pathways to Action	65
Conclusion	67

CHAPTER 1

Bridging Divides for a Shared Future: The Victoria Forum 2024



At a time of rising polarization, economic uncertainty, and environmental crises, the Victoria Forum 2024 convened global leaders, policymakers, business executives, and civil society representatives to engage in a critical dialogue on how to rebuild trust, foster inclusive economic growth, and drive systemic change. Against the backdrop of increasing geopolitical tensions and the urgent need for climate resilience, the Forum served as a catalyst for innovative ideas and collaborative solutions to bridge divides across governance, finance, climate action, and social equity.

The Forum's plenary sessions provided a high-level platform for exploring these pressing issues. Discussions in *Declining Trust in Institutions* analyzed the root causes of public skepticism toward government, media, and financial systems, calling for greater transparency, participatory decision-making, and accountability mechanisms. *Bringing the Economy We Need to Life* addressed the urgent transformation required in economic structures, emphasizing purpose-driven business models, regenerative finance, and equitable wealth distribution. Meanwhile, *Innovative Finance for Regenerative Reconstruction After Conflict* examined how financial tools such as social bonds and blended finance can be leveraged to rebuild war-affected economies.

The Opening Plenary set the tone for the Forum, featuring prominent voices such as Hon. Janet Austin (Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia), Indigenous author Dr. Niigaan Sinclair (University of Manitoba), and Hon. John Manley (Former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Canada), with Senator Brent Cotter moderating. This discussion underscored the interconnectedness of reconciliation, governance, and economic transformation, stressing the need for collaborative policymaking that fosters long-term trust and prosperity.

A defining moment of the Forum was *A Conversation Between Rt. Hon. Joe Clark & Hon. Lloyd Axworthy*, where the two statesmen reflected on Canada's evolving role in democracy, peacebuilding, and international engagement. Their discussion highlighted the declining influence of traditional diplomacy, the growing importance of intergenerational leadership, and the urgent need to restore public trust in democratic institutions.

Throughout the Forum, key themes emerged that will shape future policy action. Economic transformation must prioritize regenerative growth, ensuring that Indigenous economic sovereignty, inclusive trade policies, and sustainable finance are embedded in long-term development strategies. Trust in government remains fragile, necessitating institutional reforms that enhance civic engagement, digital governance, and media integrity. Climate action cannot be separated from economic policy, with the Blue Economy playing a crucial role in shaping sustainable coastal and marine economies. Finance must evolve to serve as a driver of systemic change, moving away from short-term profitability toward long-term resilience and social impact.

This report is structured around the key themes and insights explored at the Victoria Forum 2024 and presents policy recommendations and pathways to action based on expert discussions. Each chapter focuses on a critical area of transformation, drawing



- from plenary sessions, expert panels, and roundtable discussions:
- **From Erosion to Restoration: Rebuilding Trust in Institutions:** Examines the global decline in institutional trust and explores strategies to restore public confidence through transparency, civic engagement, and governance reforms.
- **Toward Regenerative Economies: Economic Transformation and Social Inclusion:** Discusses how regenerative economic models, inclusive trade policies, and social enterprises can drive equitable growth, ensuring that economic transformation benefits all communities.
- **Indigenous Sovereignty and Economic Reconciliation:** Highlights the critical role of Indigenous economic self-determination, exploring land stewardship, Indigenous-led businesses, and financial sovereignty as pathways to reconciliation.



- *The Role of Finance in Driving Change:* Investigates the emergence of impact investing, blended finance, and sustainable capital allocation models, emphasizing the responsibility of financial institutions to prioritize long-term social impact.
- *Climate Action and Sustainable Development:* Explores the intersection of economic policy and climate resilience, with a focus on renewable energy, decarbonization, and the Blue Economy as pillars of sustainable growth.
- *Civic Engagement and Governance:* Examines strategies to strengthen democracy, counter disinformation, and foster participatory governance in an era of increasing political polarization.
- *Housing and Urban Resilience:* Investigates how affordable housing, urban planning, and sustainable infrastructure investments can create resilient and inclusive cities.

- *Health and Well-being*: Highlights the social determinants of health, mental health priorities, and climate-related public health challenges, calling for equitable healthcare systems.
- *Digitization, AI and Rebuilding Trust*: Analyzes the opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence, digital governance, and misinformation, underscoring the need for ethical AI policies and digital literacy programs.
- *Canada's Role in Bridging Divides for a Shared Future*: Reflects on Canada's leadership in diplomacy, trade, and democratic governance, emphasizing the nation's responsibility to advance multilateral cooperation and inclusive development.



As the world faces unprecedented challenges, the Victoria Forum 2024 reinforced the necessity of bold, collective action. The Forum's discussions underscored that solutions must be interdisciplinary, participatory and forward-thinking. Whether through public-private collaboration, financial innovation, or inclusive governance, decision-makers must embrace transformative leadership that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and resilience.

The insights from Victoria Forum 2024 set the stage for action. Moving forward, leaders across all sectors must translate these discussions into concrete policies and initiatives that shape a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive global future.

CHAPTER 2

Bridging Divides for a Shared Future

The Conversation



The plenary sessions at the Victoria Forum 2024 provided a platform for high-level discussions on today's most pressing global challenges, featuring perspectives from leading policy-makers, scholars, and civil society leaders. These discussions examined the erosion of trust in institutions, the need for transformative economic models, the role of finance in driving global change, the intersection of climate action and sustainable development, and Canada's evolving role in international diplomacy and governance. The plenaries served as a foundation for deeper dialogue across the Forum, shaping a collective vision for addressing global divides and fostering long-term resilience.

The Opening Plenary brought together Hon. Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, Indigenous author Dr. Niigaan Sinclair from the University of Manitoba, and Hon. John Manley, former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Canada, moderated by Senator Brent Cotter. The conversation underscored the interconnectedness of reconciliation, governance, and economic transformation. Panelists highlighted the importance of fostering dialogue that recognizes multiple



perspectives and embracing collaborative solutions that build lasting trust in democratic institutions.

The plenary on *Declining Trust in Institutions*, featuring Dr. Andrew Parkin, Executive Director of the Environics Institute, and moderated by Senator Donna Dasko, explored the growing skepticism toward government, media, and financial institutions. Misinformation, political polarization, and declining civic participation were identified as critical threats to democratic stability. The ensuing discussion emphasized that improving trust requires transparency, participatory governance, and stronger public accountability mechanisms.

In the presentation *Bringing the Economy We Need to Life – A Roadmap for Transformative Leadership*, Dr. Victoria Hurth, Fellow of the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, and co-lead on the five year effort to create the ISO 37000 standard for good governance in organizations, provided insights into redefining economic structures to prioritize sustainability, equity, and long-term value creation. The discussion with moderator Ilse Treurnicht of TwinRiver Capital, underscored the necessity of shifting toward purpose-driven leadership and corporate accountability, emphasizing investment in regenerative economic models that align with social and environmental objectives.





The plenary on *Innovative Finance for Regenerative Reconstruction After Conflict* brought together global experts, including Oleksandra Matviichuk from the Center for Civil Liberties and Michael Cholod of The Peace Coalition participating from Kiev; David Scheffer, former U.S. Ambassador for War Crimes Issues in Washington, DC, Louise Savell and Peter Nicholas of Social Finance International in London, and Senator Ratna Omidvar and the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy in Victoria. The session, moderated by Ryan Turnbull, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, explored how financial tools such as social bonds, impact investing, and blended finance structures can support economic recovery in post-conflict regions. Panelists highlighted the roles for innovative finance in rebuilding war-affected communities, including hybrid outcomes contracts supporting demonstration projects that integrate social and economic recovery; and the use of seized assets from rogue states and oligarchs. The priority is to finance resilient recovery, and create attractive, long-term sustainable economic opportunities, including for returning citizens who have fled the country.

A Conversation Between Rt. Hon. Joe Clark and Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, moderated by Senator Lucie Moncion, offered a historic reflection on Canada's evolving role in promoting democracy, peace-building, and civic engagement. The discussion examined the declining influence of traditional diplomacy and the growing importance of inter-generational and cross-party leadership in shaping the country's democratic commitments. Speakers emphasized the urgency of restoring institutional trust through greater public engagement, mentorship initiatives, and policies that reinforce the principles of participatory democracy.

Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Across the plenary discussions, a shared theme was the urgent need for trust-building in democratic institutions, governance, and economic systems. Rebuilding trust requires institutional transparency, citizen participation, and proactive governance that prioritizes long-term sustainability over short-term gains. Economic transformation must be centered around purpose-driven models that integrate environmental and social priorities. The role of finance in shaping global resilience was underscored, with a focus on how financial tools can be leveraged to drive economic justice, climate adaptation, and post-conflict reconstruction. Addressing climate change and sustainability demands a systemic approach that aligns economic growth with environmental protection, ensuring that vulnerable communities are not left behind. Canada's leadership in global democracy and peace-building must be strengthened through deeper engagement in multilateralism, renewed diplomatic commitments, and the inclusion of historically marginalized voices in policy development.

Governments should take proactive steps to rebuild trust in institutions through open governance policies, participatory decision-making, and public accountability initiatives. Economic transformation should move beyond profit-driven models to embrace long-term value creation that supports both human well-being and environmental sustainability. Financial innovation should align with social impact objectives, ensuring that capital investments contribute to resilience, equity, and sustainability. Climate policies should be integrated into economic and governance frameworks, with clear commitments to sustainable development goals and inclusive adaptation strategies. Canada's diplomatic and international leadership roles in promoting good governance should be revitalized, with a focus on strengthening multilateral cooperation and reinforcing its role in international peace-building and the promotion of democracy.

The plenary sessions at the Victoria Forum 2024 provided a comprehensive overview of the critical challenges facing global governance, economic transformation, and sustainable development. These discussions reinforced the urgency for collaborative action, trust-building, and systemic reform to bridge divides and create a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable future. Moving forward, leadership at all levels—government, private sector, and civil society—must work collectively to implement the recommendations outlined in these discussions, ensuring that innovation, governance, and financial systems align with the broader goal of shared prosperity and inclusive progress.

Watch the Plenaries:

<p>Opening Plenary (SDG 10, 16,17) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8gulZf0nrk</p>	<p>Hon. Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia Dr. Niigaan Sinclair, Professor, University of Manitoba; Hon. John Manley, former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Canada Moderator: Senator Brent Cotter</p>
<p><i>Declining Trust in Institutions</i> (SDG 16,17) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucEFfUt2U-g</p>	<p>Dr. Andrew Parkin, Executive Director, Environics Institute Moderator: Senator Donna Dasko</p>
<p><i>Bringing the Economy We Need to Life: a Roadmap for Transformative Leadership</i> (SDG 1, 3, 8, 10, 12,13, 14, 15) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSAWuLPpo8o</p>	<p>Dr. Victoria Hurth, Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership Moderator: Ilse Treurnicht, TwinRiver Capital</p>
<p><i>Innovative Finance for Regenerative Reconstruction After Conflict</i> (SDG 9,16) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlxXU_0PQ0c</p>	<p>Oleksandra Matviichuk, The Center for Civil Liberties, 2022 Nobel Laureate; Michael Cholod, The Peace Coalition; Yuliia Darnytska, Chernihiv Municipal Councillor Peter Nicholas, Social Finance International; Geoffery Goodell, University College London David Scheffer, former United States Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Louise Savell, Social Finance International; Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, World Refugee and Migration Council; Senator Ratna Omidvar Moderator: Ryan Turnbull, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister</p>
<p><i>A Conversation Between Rt. Hon. Joe Clark & Hon. Lloyd Axworthy</i> (SDG 16) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vxmx3KasaU</p>	<p>Rt. Hon. Joe Clark Hon. Lloyd Axworthy Moderator: Senator Lucie Moncion</p>

CHAPTER 3

From Erosion to Restoration: Rebuilding Trust in Institutions

The Conversation



There is a significant decline globally in trust in institutions. The decline is driven by economic uncertainty, political polarization, misinformation, and perceived institutional failures. The erosion of confidence in government, media, and public institutions has led to decreased civic engagement and increased scepticism regarding decision-making processes. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

The Victoria Forum 2024 convened multiple sessions to explore both the causes and solutions to declining institutional trust. The *Declining Trust in Institutions* plenary session provided an in-depth analysis of shifting public perceptions and the factors contributing to declining trust. The *Youth Leaders Speaking on Trust* session engaged emerging leaders, including Donneton Brown (Operation Black Vote Canada), Sage Lacerte (Moose Hide Campaign), Divya Sharma (University of Manitoba Students Union), and Rowan Gentleman-Sylvester (CityHive Vancouver), who highlighted the challenges young people face in trusting and engaging with institutions.

Local governance perspectives were central to *Building Trust at the Local Level – Mayors Panel*, featuring Mayor Marianne Alto (Victoria), Mayor Rebecca Alty (Yellowknife), and Mayor Charlie Clark (Saskatoon), moderated by Andrew Petter, President Emeritus of Simon Fraser University. The role of higher education in fostering trust was examined in the *Trust in Post-Secondary Institutions – University Presidents Panel*, with Dr. Patrick Deane (Queen’s University), Dr. Kevin Hall (University of Victoria), and Dr. Joy Johnson (Simon Fraser University), moderated by Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

Addressing the digital landscape, the *Combating Disinformation and Discord* session featured Dr. Mike Ananny (University of Southern California), Emma Gilchrist (The Narwhal), and Dr. Jaigris Hodson (Royal Roads University), moderated by Senator Paula Simons, highlighting the role of misinformation in eroding public trust. Additionally, *Pioneering New Large-Scale Democratic Processes to Solve Key Challenges* examined innovative digital engagement methods as potential solutions to institutional distrust.

Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Discussions at the forum revealed that trust in institutions is cyclical, often declining in response to economic downturns, governance failures, and political instability. Misinformation and political polarization exacerbate distrust, making credibility and accountability imperative for institutions seeking to rebuild confidence. Institutions that fail to engage meaningfully with citizens risk further alienation, particularly among historically marginalized communities and younger generations, who exhibit lower levels of trust due to systemic exclusion from decision-making processes.

To rebuild trust, institutions must embrace open governance practices, strengthen transparency, and prioritize proactive public engagement. Citizens expect decision-making to be evidence-based, publicly communicated, and reflective of diverse perspectives. Strengthening local governance structures provides an accessible pathway to restoring trust, as municipal governments are often perceived as more responsive to community needs. Additionally, media and digital platforms must be held accountable for their role in spreading misinformation, ensuring that credible sources remain accessible and distinguishable from harmful disinformation campaigns.



Technology presents both challenges and opportunities for institutions. While digital platforms have contributed to the rapid dissemination of misinformation, they also hold the potential to facilitate transparency, enhance civic engagement, and strengthen participatory democracy. However, for digital tools to be effective in rebuilding trust, they must be inclusive, accessible, and governed by ethical AI policies that prevent algorithmic bias and manipulation.

Governments and institutions must take immediate and sustained action to restore public trust. Open governance policies, real-time public reporting, and participatory budgeting can help build transparency and strengthen accountability. Strengthening media integrity and addressing the spread of misinformation requires regulation of digital platforms, promotion of fact-based journalism, and expanded media literacy programs.

Inclusive representation must be a priority. Governments and public institutions should ensure that historically marginalized communities are integrated into decision-making structures. Civic education programs must be expanded to equip citizens with the tools necessary to critically evaluate information and engage meaningfully in democratic processes. At the local level, community-led initiatives and municipal governance improvements can provide direct evidence of institutional responsiveness, fostering renewed public confidence in democracy.



Technology must be harnessed as a force for good. Digital engagement tools should be used to enhance accessibility to decision-making and improve government responsiveness. Stronger collaborations between policymakers, civil society, and technology leaders will be required to develop ethical AI regulations that protect public discourse and prevent digital manipulation.

Governments must also implement robust oversight mechanisms to hold institutions accountable for decision-making. Strengthening media literacy and civic education programs will help citizens navigate complex information ecosystems, enabling them to critically assess institutional credibility and misinformation.

Participants have developed key solutions, highlighted pressing open questions, and issued urgent calls to action.

Solutions:

- Enhance transparency and accountability through open governance policies, real-time public reporting, and participatory budgeting.
- Combat misinformation and strengthen media integrity by regulating digital platforms, promoting fact-based journalism, and integrating media literacy into education systems.
- Increase civic education and engagement by expanding democratic literacy programs and participatory decision-making models.
- Foster inclusive representation in leadership by ensuring historically marginalized communities have a voice in decision-making structures.
- Strengthen local governance and community-led initiatives by providing municipalities with resources to engage citizens more effectively and create trust-building initiatives.
- Develop ethical AI and digital governance policies to ensure digital platforms operate transparently and prevent algorithmic bias.
- Reform institutional structures to adapt governance models to societal changes, increasing institutional flexibility and responsiveness.
- Reinforce trust through corporate and institutional social responsibility by requiring organizations to align governance frameworks with social and environmental priorities.



Open Questions:

- How can governments effectively counteract misinformation while protecting freedom of expression?
- What strategies can institutions implement to regain trust from historically marginalized communities?
- How can digital platforms be held accountable for their role in spreading disinformation?
- What policies can ensure that AI and digital decision-making tools operate transparently and ethically?
- How can local governments be better equipped to foster trust at the community level?
- What mechanisms can encourage greater youth participation in democratic processes?
- How can institutions ensure that civic education is widely accessible and reflects diverse perspectives?
- What role should businesses play in restoring public trust in economic and governance structures?
- How can governments balance security concerns with public transparency in governance?
- What are the most effective accountability measures for public institutions that have lost public confidence?

Calls to Action:

- Policymakers must prioritize institutional reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.
- Governments, civil society, and media organizations must collaborate to strengthen media literacy and combat misinformation.
- Digital platforms must implement stronger ethical guidelines and be held accountable for preventing the spread of disinformation.
- Educational institutions should expand civic education programs to promote democratic engagement and critical thinking.
- Public institutions must adopt open governance models that facilitate direct citizen participation in decision-making.
- AI governance frameworks must be developed to ensure digital tools enhance, rather than erode, public trust in institutions.
- Local governments must receive increased resources and support to implement community trust-building initiatives.
- Public-private partnerships must be leveraged to rebuild confidence in democratic governance and corporate responsibility.
- Political leaders must actively engage with diverse communities to address historical and systemic mistrust.
- Governments must establish independent oversight bodies to monitor institutional credibility and ensure accountability.

Conclusion

Restoring trust in institutions requires bold, systemic reforms that prioritize transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance. The Victoria Forum 2024 emphasized the urgency of these reforms, calling for coordinated efforts to bridge divides, strengthen governance, and rebuild public confidence.

Moving forward, institutions must demonstrate integrity, engage meaningfully with citizens, and uphold accountability to restore trust and ensure democratic resilience.



CHAPTER 4

Toward Regenerative Economies: Economic Transformation & Social Inclusion

The Conversation



Economic transformation needs to go beyond incremental change to embrace regenerative approaches that restore ecosystems, empower communities, and create shared prosperity. As global markets grapple with climate change, technological disruption, and economic inequality, the need for a purpose-driven economy that aligns financial systems with long-term well-being has never been greater. The Victoria Forum 2024 examined strategies for fostering inclusive economic growth, sustainable business models, and financial mechanisms that drive equitable opportunities for all — particularly historically marginalized communities.

The Bringing the Economy We Need to Life – A Roadmap for Transformative Leadership plenary session emphasized the importance of rethinking economic frameworks to prioritize social and environmental value. Discussions from *In From the Margins: Economic Policies that Build Trust and Inclusion* explored policy innovations that can bridge economic divides and foster community-centered wealth creation.

The role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and cooperative business models was


a key theme in *SME Ownership Transition*, where Senator Tony Loffreda moderated a democracy. Additionally, *Growing the Purpose Economy*, featuring Dr. Victoria Hurth, Mike Rowlands (Canadian Purpose Economy), Jill Schnarr (TELUS), and Maureen Young (Coast Capital Savings), and moderated by Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne, highlighted the integration of ESG principles into corporate decision-making and the rise of businesses driven by purpose beyond profit.

Beyond land-based economies, the Blue Economy emerged as a vital discussion, emphasizing ocean-based industries, marine conservation, and sustainable coastal economies. The Blue Economy session, featuring Dr. Kate Moran (Ocean Networks Canada), Jason Goldsworthy (COAST), and Todd Khozein (Second Muse), and moderated by Andrew Weaver (UVic), explored how technology-driven innovation and responsible marine stewardship can drive economic transformation while protecting biodiversity.

Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Discussions underscored that economic transformation must be regenerative rather than extractive, ensuring that financial systems and policy frameworks restore social and environmental well-being rather than simply mitigating harm. Supporting SMEs, cooperatives, and social enterprises contributes to economic stability and inclusivity, while purpose-driven businesses that integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors demonstrate greater resilience and long-term profitability.

The forum highlighted Indigenous economic innovation as a model for regenerative economies. Indigenous-led enterprises emphasize community-driven development, land stewardship, and sustainable wealth creation, offering a blueprint for economic transformation that prioritizes intergenerational equity and environmental sustainability.



Financial innovation plays a central role in enabling economic transformation. The Advancing Social Change through Outcomes Finance session showcased how outcomes-based financial instruments can channel capital into projects that deliver measurable social and environmental benefits.

Governments and financial institutions must invest in mechanisms that promote inclusive economic growth and regenerative business models. Expanding impact investing, cooperative financing, and outcomes-based funding instruments will direct capital toward businesses aligned with long-term sustainability goals. Strengthening policies that support Indigenous economic sovereignty will create opportunities for self-determined, community-driven economic growth.

Public-private partnerships will be critical in scaling up regenerative economic models, ensuring that community wealth-building replaces extractive systems. Governments must establish incentives for responsible investing, while businesses must embed ESG principles into corporate governance. Expanding financial literacy and business education programs will empower individuals and enterprises to fully participate in purpose-driven markets.

Participants have developed key solutions, highlighted pressing open questions, and issued urgent calls to action.

Solutions:

- Redesigning economic systems to prioritize regeneration over extraction, ensuring wealth creation benefits people and the planet.
- Expanding impact-driven financial models, including social impact bonds, blended finance, and outcomes-based investment strategies.
- Supporting cooperative and community-based enterprises to foster local economic resilience and inclusivity.
- Strengthening policies that support Indigenous economic sovereignty and ensure self-determined economic pathways.
- Promoting circular economy principles that integrate waste reduction, resource efficiency, and sustainability-driven innovation.
- Developing policies that incentivize responsible business practices, ensuring corporations align profit motives with long-term societal benefits.
- Increasing access to capital for underrepresented entrepreneurs, particularly women, Indigenous business leaders, and marginalized communities.
- How can financial institutions and policymakers ensure that economic transformation benefits historically marginalized communities?
- What regulatory frameworks are needed to scale up impact investing and regenerative economic models?

- How can governments and investors incentivize long-term sustainability goals while ensuring economic competitiveness?
- How can the Blue Economy be effectively integrated into broader economic transformation efforts?
- What strategies can be employed to shift corporate governance toward models that prioritize long-term societal impact?
- How can public-private partnerships be designed to ensure equitable and regenerative economic outcomes?
- What role should universities and research institutions play in supporting the shift to regenerative economic frameworks?

Calls to Action:

- Governments, businesses, and civil society must collaborate to develop economic policies that promote inclusivity, sustainability, and community-driven development.
- Public-private partnerships must be strengthened to accelerate the adoption of regenerative economic principles and impact-driven business models.
- Financial institutions must integrate ESG principles into decision-making processes and expand investments into sustainable, long-term economic growth initiatives.
- Investment in marine sustainability and Indigenous-led economic initiatives must increase to support ecosystems and community wealth-building.
- Regulatory bodies must create policy incentives that support regenerative economic models and disincentivize extractive financial practices.
- Education systems must embed regenerative economic principles into business, policy, and finance curricula to prepare future leaders for sustainable transformation.

Conclusion

The transition toward regenerative economies requires systemic change, innovative financial tools, and policies that prioritize resilience over short-term gains. The Victoria Forum 2024 reinforced that economic transformation must be inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in community well-being. Moving forward, stakeholders must work toward scaling purpose-driven business models, embedding sustainability into financial systems, and aligning economic policies with environmental regeneration to create a more resilient and equitable global economy.

CHAPTER 5

Indigenous Sovereignty and Economic Reconciliation

The Conversation



Indigenous sovereignty and economic reconciliation are fundamental to building a just and sustainable future. Recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous communities, strengthening self-determined economic models, and fostering meaningful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders are essential steps toward achieving reconciliation. At the Victoria Forum 2024, discussions centered on supporting Indigenous-led economic initiatives, enhancing legal frameworks for Indigenous sovereignty, and addressing systemic barriers that hinder economic participation.

The Opening Plenary set the stage by emphasizing the importance of trust, partnership, and Indigenous leadership in shaping an inclusive economy. The plenary underscored that reconciliation requires recognizing multiple versions of the same truth, embracing diverse perspectives, and fostering respectful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Speakers highlighted that economic reconciliation cannot be separated from political and cultural sovereignty and stressed the need for policy reforms to ensure equitable participation in economic growth.

These themes were further explored in *Building a Reconciliation Economy*, a session moderated by Christina Clarke (Indigenous Prosperity Centre), where Mark Brajer (Tsartlip Group of Companies), Jeff Cyr (Raven Indigenous Outcomes Funds), Leslie Varley (BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres), and Dana Tizya-Tramm (Small Economy Works) discussed the role of Indigenous-owned businesses, venture capital, and revenue-sharing agreements in fostering economic independence. The forum also examined broader Indigenous economic strategies in *Living in Indigenous Sovereignty*, with Dr. Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara (Laurentian University) and Dawnis Kennedy (University of Winnipeg), who discussed how economic self-determination is integral to cultural preservation and long-term prosperity with moderator Ry Moran (University of Winnipeg). Meanwhile, a session moderated by Senator Marilou McPhedran — *Indigenous Women Economic Innovators* — featured Kim C. Baird (Tsawwassen First Nation), Teara Fraser (Iskwew Air), and Diane Redsky (Shoal Lake 40 First Nation) discussing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous women entrepreneurs in advancing self-sustaining economic initiatives.



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Indigenous communities continue to face systemic economic exclusion due to historical injustices, restrictive policies, and barriers to accessing capital. Self-governance was emphasized as a crucial component of economic empowerment, particularly through land stewardship, revenue-sharing agreements, and community-owned enterprises. When communities gain direct control over their resources, long-term sustainable development becomes achievable.

Speakers emphasized the need for partnerships based on mutual respect and long-term collaboration, rather than extractive, one-sided economic models. Indigenous leaders stressed that economic reconciliation requires structural reforms that empower Indigenous communities with legal, financial, and governance autonomy. Recognizing multiple perspectives and integrating Indigenous knowledge into economic systems emerged as a recurring discussion point.

Governments and financial institutions must increase Indigenous-led capital by supporting Indigenous-controlled investment funds, cooperative business models, and equitable revenue-sharing agreements. Policymakers need to revise legal and policy frameworks to uphold Indigenous sovereignty, ensuring that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities retain control over their economic futures. Governments should implement procurement policies that prioritize Indigenous businesses and create sustainable funding models for Indigenous entrepreneurship. Protecting Indigenous intellectual property and cultural assets must remain a priority to prevent misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge.

Public and private sector partnerships must be redefined to reflect true collaboration, integrating Indigenous voices at the decision-making table. Expanding education and training programs will help support Indigenous entrepreneurs and professionals, enabling them to navigate complex economic landscapes and build sustainable enterprises.



Participants have outlined key solutions, highlighted pressing open questions, and issued urgent calls to action.

- Recognizing Indigenous sovereignty through strengthened legal and policy frameworks to ensure economic reconciliation.
- Investing in self-determined economic models, such as Indigenous-led investment funds and community-owned enterprises, to foster long-term economic independence.
- Developing equitable revenue-sharing agreements so Indigenous communities benefit directly from resource development.
- Supporting Indigenous women entrepreneurs as key drivers of inclusive economic growth within Indigenous economies.
- Integrating Indigenous worldviews into governance and business structures to ensure long-term reconciliation and economic empowerment.

Open Questions:

- How can financial institutions remove systemic barriers preventing Indigenous access to capital?
- What role can non-Indigenous businesses play in supporting Indigenous-led economic initiatives without perpetuating extractive models?
- How can federal and provincial governments accelerate Indigenous economic self-determination through policy reforms?
- What strategies can be developed to better integrate Indigenous knowledge into mainstream economic and governance structures?
- How can public and private partnerships be structured to ensure they are truly equitable and beneficial for Indigenous communities?

Calls to Action:

- Policymakers, financial institutions, and corporate leaders must work collaboratively to remove systemic barriers and support Indigenous self-determination in economic development.
- Governments must commit to procurement reforms that prioritize Indigenous-led businesses, ensuring greater participation in national and regional economies.
- Investment in Indigenous entrepreneurship and training programs must be expanded to enhance business capacity and economic resilience.
- Public and private partnerships must shift from transactional to relational models, embedding Indigenous leadership into economic decision-making processes.

- Education and awareness programs should emphasize the value of Indigenous worldviews and multiple perspectives in economic and governance frameworks.

Conclusion

Indigenous sovereignty and economic reconciliation are cornerstones of a just and sustainable future. The Victoria Forum 2024 underscored the urgency of systemic reforms, emphasizing the need for long-term commitments to Indigenous-led economic models and self-governance. Moving forward, policymakers, businesses, and financial institutions must collaborate with Indigenous communities to enact meaningful economic transformation. True inclusion will only be achieved when Indigenous voices do not merely participate in decision-making processes but actively lead them.



CHAPTER 6

The Role of Finance in Driving Change

The Conversation



Finance serves as a critical tool for shaping sustainable and inclusive economies. As the world grapples with economic inequality, climate change, and social instability, financial systems must evolve to drive meaningful change. The Victoria Forum 2024 examined how impact investing, blended finance, and philanthropic innovations can accelerate sustainable economic transformation. Discussions emphasized the responsibility of financial institutions, policymakers, and investors in aligning capital with long-term social and environmental goals to ensure finance functions as a force for equitable economic development.

The Innovative Finance for Regenerative Reconstruction After Conflict plenary session explored social bond models and impact-driven financing as tools to support economic recovery in crisis-affected regions, emphasizing the role of finance in rebuilding war-torn communities and fostering resilience.

The *Systems Innovation Finance* session highlighted emerging work on structuring investments for broad societal transformation. Speakers included

Alicia Dubois (Boann Social Impact), Raj Kalia (Dark Matter Labs), Kirsten Wright (Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation) and Steve Waddell (Financial Ecosystems for Systems Transformation). The session was moderated by Ilse Treurnicht (TwinRiver Capital). In *The Role of Impact Investors in Shaping Public Policy*, speakers Sarah Kim (Vancouver Foundation), Mathew Mendelsohn (Social Capital Partners), and Allan Northcott (Max Bell Foundation) highlighted how impact investors can influence policymaking by aligning capital flows with sustainability and social equity objectives. In addition, *Advancing Social Change through Outcomes Finance*, featuring Jeff Cyr (Raven Indigenous Outcomes Funds), Janis Dubno (Sorenson Impact Centre), and Teresa Dukes (Social Innovation Office, Manitoba), focused on outcomes-based funding models, demonstrating how investments can be structured to prioritize measurable social and environmental impacts.

The forum also explored *Innovation in Philanthropy & Social Finance*, where Jim Hayhurst (Roy Group) moderated a discussion among Andrew Chunilall (Community Foundations of Canada), Arti Freeman (Definity Insurance Foundation), Dara Parker (Vancouver Foundation), and Graham Singh (Relèven) about how philanthropy can evolve beyond traditional grant-making to integrate conventional grant-making with blended finance instruments to achieve greater impact.



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Speakers emphasized that traditional finance prioritizes short-term profits, often misaligning with long-term sustainability and social impact goals. The emergence of social bonds, green bonds, and impact funds presents an alternative approach, ensuring capital is directed toward solving global challenges rather than exacerbating them.

Public-private partnerships play a critical role in scaling financial innovation, mobilizing capital for regenerative investments and ensuring finance serves the broader public interest. The need to increase financial literacy and capacity-building programs was underscored, ensuring that marginalized communities can access financial opportunities and participate in economic transformation. Additionally, speakers called for modernizing philanthropy, shifting from charitable giving to outcome-driven, impact-focused investments that produce tangible, long-term benefits.

Governments and financial regulators must redefine fiduciary responsibility to incorporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into investment strategies. Policymakers must implement regulatory frameworks that incentivize sustainable finance while mitigating risks associated with impact investing.

Collaboration between financial institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations is essential to developing innovative financial models that drive inclusive and regenerative economic growth. Expanding blended finance mechanisms, which leverage public, private, and philanthropic capital, will be crucial in scaling impact investments and ensuring financial accessibility.

Increasing financial literacy initiatives must be a priority to empower individuals and communities with the tools needed to navigate the financial landscape and access impact-driven capital. Establishing standardized ESG reporting and impact measurement frameworks will increase transparency, accountability, and investor confidence in sustainable finance.

Participants have outlined key solutions, highlighted pressing open questions, and issued urgent calls to action.

Solutions

- Developing financial instruments that prioritize long-term sustainability and social impact, ensuring that capital serves as a driver of systemic change.
- Strengthening collaboration between investors, policymakers, and civil society to align financial strategies with global sustainability goals.
- Expanding impact investing and blended finance models to direct financial capital toward addressing pressing social and environmental challenges.
- Enhancing financial literacy and equitable access to capital to empower marginalized communities to participate in economic transformation.
- Modernizing philanthropy by integrating impact investing and outcome-driven funding models to ensure sustained economic transformation.

Open Questions

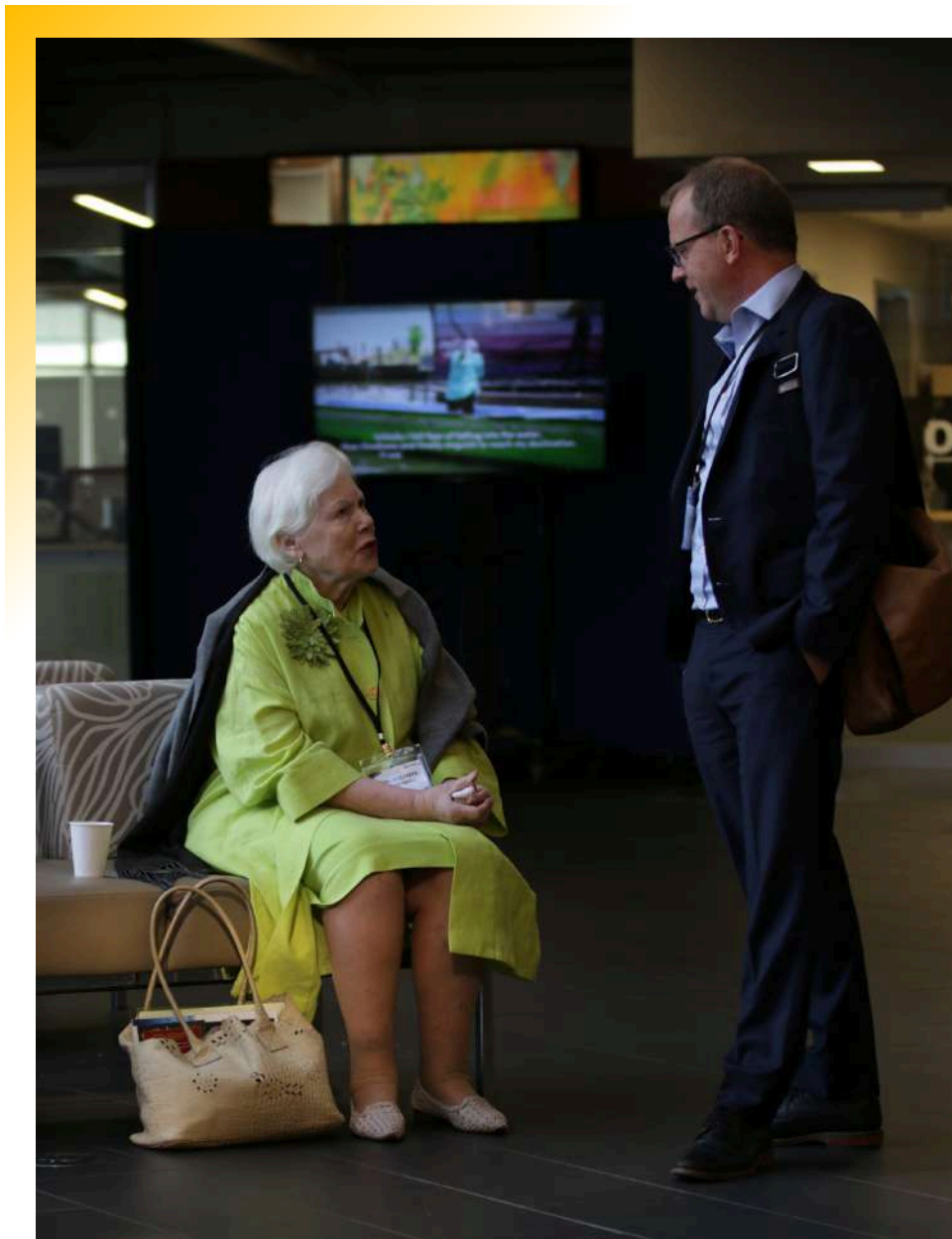
- How can regulatory frameworks be adapted to support sustainable finance without deterring investment?
- What role should central banks and financial regulators play in advancing ESG-aligned financial policies?
- How can impact investing be scaled to ensure capital reaches historically underserved communities?
- How can philanthropy evolve to maximize long-term economic and social impact?
- What strategies can governments implement to incentivize sustainable business practices and disincentivize short-term profit-driven investment models?

Calls to Action

- Financial institutions, policymakers, and investors must embed sustainability into financial decision-making and commit to aligning capital with long-term social and environmental priorities.
- Governments must create policy incentives that promote impact investing and financial transparency in ESG reporting.
- Expanding financial education programs and community investment initiatives will be critical in ensuring financial systems work for all populations.
- Strengthening public-private partnerships will unlock new sources of capital to support large-scale, systemic change.
- Philanthropic organizations must embrace innovative funding mechanisms, such as outcome-based finance and mission-driven investments, to maximize their impact.

Conclusion

Finance must evolve to serve as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable economic transformation. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions reinforced the urgency for financial stakeholders to take a leadership role in shaping a fair and resilient economic system that prioritizes long-term social well-being over short-term profits. Moving forward, coordinated efforts between financial institutions, policymakers, and civil society will be essential in ensuring that finance contributes meaningfully to social and environmental progress. The integration of impact-driven philanthropy, blended finance, and ESG-aligned investment strategies will be fundamental in scaling meaningful change within the global financial system.



CHAPTER 7

Climate Action & Sustainable Development

The Conversation



Climate change poses an existential threat to global stability, necessitating urgent action to mitigate environmental degradation while fostering sustainable development. The Victoria Forum 2024 provided a platform to explore solutions that integrate climate resilience, renewable energy transitions, responsible resource management, and sustainable marine economies. Discussions highlighted the need for systemic shifts in governance, finance, and industry practices to align economic growth with ecological sustainability.

The *Opening Plenary, Bringing the Economy We Need to Life*, with Victoria Hurth (Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership), and moderated by Ilse Treurnicht (TwinRiver Capital), underscored the critical need for cross-sector collaboration in advancing climate policies that balance economic development and environmental responsibility. The *Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Accelerating Decarbonization* session, moderated by Basma Majerbi (UVic), brought together Sen. Rosa Galvez; Raj Kalia (Dark Matter Labs); Thomas Marois (McMaster University); and

Graham Day (Spring Impact Capital) to discuss innovative ways that private capital and public policy can be applied to decarbonization at multiple scales. The *Accelerating Regional Decarbonization* session addressed policy frameworks for advancing clean energy transitions and industrial transformation, with Stephanie Cairns (Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions) moderating an exchange among George Benson (Zero Emissions Innovation Centre), Curran Crawford (Accelerating Community Energy Transition), Dan Wicklum (The Transition Accelerator), and Mark Zacharias (Clean Energy Canada). The complementary *Enabling the Energy Transition – Industry Perspectives* session explored corporate commitments to reducing carbon footprints, integrating circular economy models, and investing in clean technology. Mark Zacharias (Clean Energy Canada) moderated this discussion among Monika Freyman (Addenda Capital), Jason Wolfe (Fortis BC), Colleen Giroux-Schmidt (Innergex), and Dan Wicklum (Transition Accelerator).

Additionally, the *Blue Economy* session emphasized the importance of marine conservation, ocean-based economic models, and coastal resilience as part of a broader sustainability agenda. Speakers discussed how responsible ocean governance and sustainable fisheries must be integrated into global climate strategies.



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Climate action must be embedded within broader economic and social policies to ensure sustainability goals do not come at the cost of equity. Financial instruments such as green bonds and climate funds provide essential capital for decarbonization, yet access to these resources remains uneven. The transition to renewable energy should consider workforce impacts, necessitating retraining programs and job creation in green industries. Strengthening public-private partnerships will be key to driving innovation in clean technologies, circular economies, and sustainable supply chains.

The Blue Economy was highlighted as a critical pillar of sustainable development, with a focus on marine biodiversity conservation, blue carbon initiatives, and the economic potential of ocean-based industries. Discussions reinforced the need for integrated ocean governance to manage marine resources responsibly while ensuring economic viability for coastal communities.

Discussions also highlighted the role of Indigenous leadership in environmental governance. Indigenous knowledge and stewardship practices can offer sustainable models for land and resource management, reinforcing that climate action must be inclusive and community driven.

Governments must commit to ambitious climate targets while creating regulatory environments that support green investments. Financial institutions should expand funding mechanisms that facilitate climate adaptation and resilience projects. Industry leaders should prioritize net-zero emissions strategies, integrating sustainability into supply chain management and corporate governance.

Indigenous leadership in environmental governance should be strengthened, with policies that uphold Indigenous land rights, resource stewardship, and self-determined climate solutions. Additionally, education and community engagement initiatives should be expanded to promote climate literacy and civic participation in sustainability efforts.

Investment in ocean-based economic models, blue carbon projects, and sustainable fisheries is essential for coastal and marine conservation efforts, ensuring the Blue Economy contributes to both climate resilience and economic prosperity.

Participants have outlined key solutions, highlighted pressing open questions, and issued urgent calls to action.

Solutions

- Integrating climate policies into economic frameworks ensures long-term resilience and prosperity.
- Scaling up renewable energy infrastructure, promoting circular economy principles, and strengthening regulatory commitments will accelerate sustainable development.
- Expanding green finance and carbon pricing mechanisms will provide financial incentives for businesses and governments to adopt sustainable practices.
- Supporting Indigenous-led climate initiatives and recognizing traditional environmental knowledge will strengthen climate resilience.
- Investing in ocean conservation, blue economy initiatives, and sustainable fisheries will drive sustainable economic opportunities in coastal regions.

Open Questions

- How can financial incentives be structured to drive widespread adoption of sustainable practices?
- What are the most effective strategies for ensuring climate policies are socially just and inclusive?
- How can emerging technologies be leveraged to enhance environmental sustainability while maintaining economic competitiveness?
- How can international partnerships and agreements support global climate commitments and accelerate net-zero targets?
- What governance frameworks are needed to manage marine ecosystems sustainably while ensuring economic benefits for coastal communities?

Calls to Action

- Governments, businesses, and civil society must collaborate to drive climate resilience and decarbonization.
- Expanding investment in green finance and enforcing sustainability regulations will be essential in addressing the global climate crisis.
- Prioritizing equitable access to climate solutions ensures that historically marginalized communities benefit from sustainability efforts.

Conclusion

Achieving sustainable development requires collective action across sectors to integrate environmental responsibility with economic growth. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions emphasized the urgency of transitioning towards climate-resilient economies, calling for systemic change and collaborative leadership to mitigate climate risks while ensuring a just and inclusive future. Moving forward, climate policies must prioritize equity, Indigenous leadership, sustainable marine economies, and long-term environmental resilience to create a flourishing and regenerative global economy.



CHAPTER 8

Civic Engagement and Governance

The Conversation



Democratic governance depends on active civic engagement, where citizens participate in decision-making processes that shape their communities. However, growing political polarization, misinformation, and declining trust in public institutions have led to reduced civic participation in many parts of the world. The Victoria Forum 2024 convened experts, policymakers, and civil society leaders to explore strategies for reinvigorating public engagement and strengthening democratic governance.

The Opening Plenary emphasized the importance of rebuilding trust in democratic institutions by fostering inclusive policymaking and ensuring that governance reflects the diversity of society. Additionally, the *Conversation Between Rt. Hon. Joe Clark & Hon. Lloyd Axworthy* provided a historic reflection on Canada's role in democracy-building, civic engagement, and political leadership. Moderated by Senator Lucie Moncion, this session explored challenges to democratic resilience, declining political engagement, and the role of public trust in government. The discussion underscored that civic engagement

is not just about voting but also about active participation in shaping public policy, fostering civic education, and encouraging multi-sector collaboration.

Key sessions included *Countering Polarization: Identifying Key Factors to Building Greater Cohesion Amongst Canadians*, with Senator Andrew Cardozo in conversation with Anjali Appadurai (Climate Emergency Unit), Thomas Homer-Dixon (Cascade Institute), and Shauna Sylvester (Urban Climate Leadership).

The *Cross-Sector Collaboration as a Key to Societal Transition* session emphasized the role of partnerships between government, business, and civil society in fostering good governance. The session featured Danya Pastuszek (Tamarack Institute), Dallas Gislason (South Island Prosperity Partnership), and Lesley Woo (CivicAction), and was moderated by Sen. Ratna Omidvar.

Additionally, the session *Could the Global Tide Be Turning in Favour of Democracy?* analyzed global trends in democracy and citizen participation, with insights from members of the Canadian International Council Victoria chapter: Chris Kilford, Marc Lortie, David Malone, and Reeta Tremblay, moderated by Francesca Guetchev (MOSAIC/CIC).



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Inclusive governance requires proactive efforts to engage historically marginalized communities and ensure equitable representation in policymaking. Digital democracy tools, such as participatory budgeting and online citizen engagement platforms, offer new ways to involve people in governance but require safeguards against misinformation.

Effective civic engagement is built on transparency, accountability, and trust between citizens and institutions. Strengthening local governance and community-led initiatives can provide citizens with tangible avenues for participation, making democracy more accessible and responsive. Discussions emphasized that digital platforms can enhance engagement but must be regulated to prevent misinformation and ensure inclusivity.

The discussions in Plenary 5 highlighted that declining trust in institutions has led to reduced voter engagement, skepticism towards political leadership, and the need for renewed democratic participation. Joe Clark and Lloyd Axworthy called for greater inter-generational political engagement, mentorship programs for emerging leaders, and a shift toward participatory democracy models that reflect contemporary challenges.

Governments must implement policies that enhance public participation in decision-making, including strengthening open government initiatives and expanding participatory democracy mechanisms. Investing in media literacy and public education programs will equip citizens with the skills needed to critically assess information and participate in governance effectively. Civil society organizations should facilitate community dialogues and collaborative policymaking to build trust between institutions and citizens.

Public-private partnerships can play a critical role in supporting civic engagement by fostering innovation in governance and improving service delivery. Discussions underscored that restoring trust in democratic institutions requires both structural reforms and sustained engagement efforts.



Solutions

- Encouraging open and participatory governance strengthens democracy and civic trust.
- Digital engagement tools, inclusive policy-making, and cross-sector collaboration can bridge gaps between citizens and institutions, making governance more transparent and responsive.
- Strengthening local governance ensures that decision-making is community-driven and reflective of diverse perspectives.
- Investing in media literacy programs will help citizens navigate misinformation and engage meaningfully in democratic processes.
- Revitalizing political engagement through mentorship, leadership programs, and intergenerational dialogue will ensure long-term civic participation.



Open Questions

- How can governments ensure digital engagement platforms are accessible and secure?
- What measures can be taken to rebuild trust in public institutions amidst rising misinformation?
- How can civic education be expanded to encourage lifelong democratic participation?
- What role can technology and AI play in strengthening participatory governance while mitigating risks of disinformation and manipulation?
- How can Canada serve as a global model for civic engagement and participatory governance?

Conclusion

Sustained civic engagement is essential for resilient and inclusive governance. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions highlighted the urgency of expanding democratic participation and ensuring that institutions remain accountable and responsive to the needs of citizens. Moving forward, fostering collaboration, strengthening digital democracy, and reinforcing public trust in governance will be critical to bridging divides and strengthening democratic resilience. Additionally, the insights from Plenary 5 reinforced that active participation in political life, inter-generational dialogue, and stronger civic education programs are essential for rebuilding trust in democracy and ensuring that institutions remain representative and accountable.



CHAPTER 9

Housing & Urban Resilience

The Conversation



Housing and urban resilience are fundamental to sustainable development, influencing economic stability, social cohesion, and overall quality of life. The ongoing housing crisis, exacerbated by affordability challenges, climate change, and rapid urbanization, requires systemic solutions that address equitable access to housing, sustainable urban planning, and community-driven development. The Victoria Forum 2024 explored strategies to create resilient housing systems, emphasizing innovative financing models, urban policy reform, and the integration of housing with social infrastructure.

The *Policy Innovation and Transformative Investment in Non-Market Housing* session featured insights from Kizito Bijyinama Musabimana (Rwandan Canadian Healing Centre), Gregor Craigie (Author, *Our Crumbling Foundation: Solutions to Canada's Housing Crisis*), Teresa Dukes (Social Innovation Office, Manitoba), and Lisa Helps (BC Builds), moderated by Andrea Nemtin (Social Innovation Canada). Discussions focused

on affordable housing strategies, the role of public-private partnerships, and financial mechanisms to increase non-market housing availability.

Key Insights and Pathways to Action

The discussions underscored that housing must be treated as essential infrastructure, requiring long-term investment and multi-sector collaboration. This shift can bridge the gap between market-driven development and community housing needs.

Blended finance models, social impact bonds, and cooperative housing investments were explored as mechanisms to scale up affordable housing projects and reduce reliance on short-term government subsidies.

The intersection of housing, climate change, and urban planning was a key theme. Sustainable housing initiatives must incorporate energy efficiency, climate resilience, and disaster preparedness, particularly in coastal and high-density urban areas.

Housing policies should prioritize marginalized communities, ensuring that solutions address systemic barriers to homeownership and rental security. This includes Indigenous-led housing models, tenant protections, and community land trusts.

Strong partnerships between government, private developers, and community organizations can accelerate the construction of diverse housing types, from supportive housing to affordable homeownership options.

The recommendations include:

- Increase funding for cooperative housing, social housing, and mixed-income developments to create long-term affordability solutions.
- Leverage impact investing, social bonds, and philanthropic capital to fund sustainable housing projects.
- Ensure housing developments include public transit, childcare centers, healthcare services, and community spaces to support holistic urban resilience.
- Implement green building codes, energy-efficient retrofits, and climate-adaptive design standards to enhance the long-term viability of housing projects.
- Expand Indigenous-led housing initiatives to address the unique needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, ensuring self-determined and culturally appropriate housing solutions.

Solutions:

- Recognizing housing as critical infrastructure and embedding it into long-term urban planning and investment strategies.
- Developing financing models that balance affordability, sustainability, and scalability to expand housing options.
- Integrating equity-driven housing policies that prioritize marginalized communities and increase housing stability.
- Enhancing community participation in urban development to ensure projects align with local needs and social sustainability.

Open Questions:

- How can governments and private investors work together to increase affordable housing supply without sacrificing long-term sustainability?
- What financial models can balance market-driven housing development with social housing needs?
- How can climate adaptation strategies be better integrated into urban housing policies?
- What role should municipal and provincial governments play in scaling up non-market housing initiatives?

Calls to Action:

- Policy-makers, financial institutions, and housing advocates must collaborate to create scalable, community-driven housing solutions.
- Public and private capital should be leveraged to expand non-market housing stock and support affordable housing initiatives.
- Urban planning should prioritize social and climate resilience, ensuring that housing developments align with sustainable growth objectives.
- Expand support for Indigenous-led housing solutions, incorporating self-governance and culturally informed design into housing policies.



Conclusion

Addressing the housing crisis requires bold, systemic reforms that prioritize affordability, sustainability, and resilience. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions reinforced that housing is more than shelter—it is foundational to economic stability, social well-being, and urban resilience. Moving forward, a multi-stakeholder approach that aligns housing policies with financial innovation, equity, and climate adaptation will be crucial in bridging divides and ensuring inclusive urban development.



CHAPTER 10

Health & Well-being

The Conversation



Health and well-being are fundamental to sustainable societies, influencing economic productivity, social cohesion, and overall quality of life. However, disparities in healthcare access, the effects of climate change on public health, and systemic inequities continue to challenge global health systems. The Victoria Forum 2024 brought together experts, policymakers, and healthcare leaders to discuss pathways toward equitable health outcomes and holistic well-being.

Two sessions explored the importance of trust in public health institutions and strategies to enhance community engagement in healthcare. *Building Trust, Healing Communities: Strengthening Trust for Transformational Change* was moderated by Sen. Gigi Osler, with Dr. Joss Reimer (Canadian Medical Association), Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass (Black Physicians Canada), and Dr. Nel Weiman (BC First Nations Health Authority). *Adapting Canadian Health Strategies to Enhance Health Outcomes in Afro-descent*

Communities featured Dr. Bukola Salami (University of Calgary), Dr. Ato Sekyi Otu (Black Opportunity Fund Health Task Force), and Dr. Isaac Odame (University of Toronto), with Sen. Marie-Francoise Mégie moderating.

The Planetary Health and a Well-being Society session examined the need for policies that address both ecological and public health challenges.

Peter Singer (formerly with the World Health Organization) moderated a discussion among Dr. Courtney Howard (Global Climate and Health Alliance), Dr. Shannon Waters (Cowichan Valley Health Region), Dr. Trevor Hancock (University of Victoria), and Paul Kershaw (University of British Columbia).



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Health systems must prioritize equity, ensuring that underserved communities receive the care they need. Climate change is an emerging health crisis, increasing the prevalence of respiratory diseases, mental health challenges, and food insecurity. Strengthening community-based healthcare models can improve accessibility and resilience, particularly in marginalized communities. Public trust in health institutions is essential for effective health policies, requiring transparent communication and inclusive decision-making.

Discussions include the need to create a National Black Health Strategies to address health disparities faced by Black communities. Additionally, discussions emphasized the importance of integrating mental health into public health strategies, acknowledging that economic instability and climate-related displacement significantly contribute to rising mental health concerns. Experts called for a whole-system approach to healthcare, combining preventative care, mental health services, and climate adaptation strategies.

Governments should implement policies that integrate health equity into broader economic and social frameworks, ensuring all communities have access to quality care. Expanding funding for community-led health initiatives will empower local organizations to provide culturally appropriate and accessible healthcare services. Strengthening public health communication strategies will be key to rebuilding trust in health systems and combating misinformation.

Climate adaptation policies must incorporate health considerations, ensuring that responses to climate change also address public health vulnerabilities. Public-private partnerships should play a greater role in expanding healthcare access, particularly in rural and Indigenous communities.

The discussions also emphasized the need for cross-sector collaboration, with experts advocating for greater cooperation between healthcare professionals, environmental scientists, and policymakers to develop holistic health policies that address both physical and environmental determinants of well-being.

Solutions:

- Strengthening healthcare accessibility, integrating environmental and health policies, and expanding community-driven health initiatives can improve overall well-being.
- Trust-building efforts within health institutions will ensure better engagement and adherence to public health recommendations.
- Expanding mental health services and integrating them into primary healthcare systems will address growing public health concerns.
- Enhancing emergency preparedness and climate adaptation policies will mitigate climate-induced health risks.

Open Questions:

- How can healthcare systems be redesigned to better serve historically marginalized populations?
- What policies can effectively address the mental health crisis exacerbated by climate change?
- How can cross-sector collaboration enhance health outcomes and make healthcare systems more resilient to global disruptions?
- What role should technology and digital health solutions play in expanding healthcare access and reducing disparities?

Calls to Action:

- Policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders must work together to build resilient health systems.
- Expanding universal healthcare access, investing in mental health services, and prioritizing health literacy campaigns will be critical to fostering a healthier, more equitable future.
- Governments must embed health equity in economic and environmental policies to address social determinants of health.
- Strengthening climate-health policies will ensure that future public health responses account for environmental sustainability and resilience.



Conclusion

Health and well-being must be at the core of sustainable development. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions reinforced the urgency of inclusive and community-driven healthcare solutions, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms to ensure equitable health outcomes for all. Moving forward, integrating public health strategies with broader economic and social policies will be crucial in fostering resilience and well-being in communities worldwide.

CHAPTER 11

Digitization, AI and Rebuilding Trust

The Conversation



As digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transform societies, questions about trust, ethics, and governance have become central to the global discourse. While AI and digitization offer immense potential to improve efficiency, enhance public services, and drive innovation, they also introduce significant challenges, including data privacy concerns, algorithmic bias, misinformation, and the erosion of public trust in institutions. The Victoria Forum 2024 explored the intersection of digitization, AI, and trust-building, highlighting the need for responsible technology governance and inclusive digital transformation.

Several sessions underscored the urgency of developing ethical AI governance frameworks to ensure digital innovations align with public trust and democratic values. The *Combating Disinformation and Discord* session examined strategies to rebuild trust in information ecosystems at a time when legacy media are being overcome by social media's dissemination of weaponized disinformation strategies. Sen. Paula Simons moderated a discussion among Emma Gilchrist (The Narwhal), Mike Ananny (University of Southern California), and Jaigris Hodson (Royal Roads University).

The session *Could the Global Tide Be Turning in Favour of Democracy?* described above under Civic Engagement and Governance, also explored how AI and digital platforms can either strengthen or undermine democratic institutions.

Discussions in *Pioneering New Large-Scale Democratic Processes to Solve Key Challenges* emphasized the role of digital democracy tools in enhancing civic engagement and governance. Discussants included John Richardson (Ethelo Decisions), Gordie Hogg (former MLA and MP), Robin Prest (Wosk Centre for Dialogue), and Becky Sasakamoose-Kuffner (City of Saskatoon). The session was moderated by MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith.

AI in Peer Networks: Supercharging Communities of Practice discussed how AI can enhance collaborative problem-solving while mitigating risks. Suzanne C. de Janasz (George Mason University) moderated a conversation among Blaine Cook (OAuth, Earthnet), Vivian Forsman (Royal Roads), and Rik Logtenberg (Climate Caucus, Earthnet).



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

The responsible deployment of AI and digital tools is critical for fostering public trust. Transparent and explainable AI models help mitigate biases and ensure fairness in decision-making processes. Strengthening digital literacy is essential to equip citizens with the skills needed to navigate misinformation and engage critically with AI-generated content.

Public trust in AI depends on strong regulatory frameworks, ethical AI development, and clear mechanisms for accountability. AI-driven innovations in governance, such as digital democracy platforms, can enhance citizen participation and rebuild trust in institutions if implemented inclusively and equitably. Discussions in Plenary 5 further emphasized that AI's impact on democracy and governance must be carefully managed to prevent digital manipulation and safeguard democratic integrity.

Governments and regulatory bodies must establish clear ethical guidelines for AI deployment, ensuring transparency, accountability, and human oversight in decision-making processes. The private sector should commit to responsible AI development by embedding fairness, explainability, and inclusivity into AI models. Expanding digital literacy initiatives will empower citizens to critically assess online information and engage responsibly with AI-driven tools.

Collaborative efforts between governments, academia, and civil society are needed to create governance frameworks that balance innovation with ethical considerations. Investments in AI for public good, such as digital democracy initiatives, must prioritize inclusivity and ensure equitable access to technology. Additionally, journalism and media organizations should be actively involved in fact-checking and countering AI-driven misinformation.

Solutions:

- Establishing ethical AI governance frameworks, enhancing digital literacy, and prioritizing transparency in AI-driven decision-making will help rebuild public trust.
- Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration in AI governance ensures a balanced approach between innovation and ethical responsibility.
- Implementing safeguards against AI-driven misinformation is critical for protecting democratic processes.
- Promoting AI for public good, particularly in digital democracy and citizen engagement initiatives, will help restore confidence in governance.



Open Questions:

- How can governments regulate AI effectively without stifling innovation?
- What measures can be implemented to prevent AI-driven misinformation and digital manipulation?
- How can marginalized communities be included in digital transformation efforts to ensure equitable access to AI technologies?
- What role should international cooperation play in standardizing AI governance and ethical frameworks?

Calls to Action:

- Policymakers, technology developers, and civil society must work together to ensure AI and digital technologies serve the public interest.
- Governments should enact strong policies that promote ethical AI use, while businesses must commit to transparency and fairness in AI deployment.
- Expanding education programs on AI ethics and digital literacy will be crucial in equipping citizens to engage with technology in an informed and empowered manner.
- Media organizations and independent fact-checkers must actively monitor and counter misinformation amplified by AI tools.
- Strengthening democratic safeguards in AI governance will help protect public trust and institutional integrity.

Conclusion

AI and digitization hold great promise for innovation and societal progress, but their success hinges on trust. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions emphasized the need for ethical AI governance, inclusive digital transformation, and collaborative efforts to rebuild trust in the digital age. Moving forward, a multi-stakeholder approach will be essential to ensuring AI technologies align with democratic values, fairness, and societal well-being.

Governments, private sector leaders, and civil society must work together to shape an AI future that is transparent, equitable, and beneficial for all.



CHAPTER 12

Canada's Role in Bridging Divides for a Shared Future

The Conversation



Canada has long positioned itself as a leader in multilateral diplomacy, peacebuilding, and inclusive governance. In an era of increasing global polarization, Canada's ability to build bridges across economic, political, and social divides is more critical than ever. The Victoria Forum 2024 examined how Canada can strengthen its role in fostering equitable global partnerships, promoting sustainable economic development, and reinforcing democratic resilience both domestically and internationally.

Canada's evolving role in international peacebuilding, the necessity of reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and the importance of diplomatic leadership in times of global instability were woven through several sessions. Rt. Hon. Joe Clark and Hon. Lloyd Axworthy explored Canada's historical and contemporary role in peace diplomacy, democratic engagement, and international development. The discussion underscored Canada's potential to serve as a stabilizing force in an increasingly divided world.

The session *Building Trust through Global Connections: Students, Migrants & Expatriates*, explored how cross-cultural mindsets in Canada can foster global collaboration. It was moderated by Sen. Yuen Pau Woo, with speakers Daniel Bernhard (Institute for Canadian Citizenship), Sharmarke Dubow (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Somalia), Jason McBride (Pearson College) and Stacey Fitzsimmons (University of Victoria).

Community Engagement in Systems Transformation, a session moderated by Njoki Mburu (Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement) explored how these principals inform work with marginalized communities in Canada. Speakers included Marcie DeWitt (Aberni Clayoquot Health Network), Anur Mehdic (City of New Westminster), Margaret Wanyoike (Poverty Reduction and Development Association and Danya Pastuszek (Tamarack).



Key Insights and Pathways to Action

Canada's approach to bridging divides is rooted in pluralism, diversity, and reconciliation. The country has the potential to model inclusive governance, especially in addressing Indigenous rights and fostering equitable economic development. As geopolitical instability grows, Canada's commitment to multilateral cooperation and peace diplomacy positions it as a stabilizing force. However, there is a need to address domestic challenges, including reconciliation with Indigenous communities, economic disparities, and political polarization, to reinforce Canada's credibility on the global stage.

The discussions emphasized that Canada's leadership must extend beyond diplomacy to include digital governance, economic equity, and the protection of democratic institutions. Investing in fact-based journalism, countering disinformation, and fostering public engagement in policy-making will be essential to reinforcing trust in governance and institutions.

Canada must expand its leadership in peacebuilding by supporting diplomatic initiatives that promote global stability. Strengthening trade and economic relations with the Global South can create sustainable partnerships that emphasize mutual prosperity. Domestically, accelerating reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities and fostering inclusive economic policies will enhance Canada's ability to lead by example. Additionally, investing in digital diplomacy, countering disinformation, and strengthening democratic institutions will be essential to preserving Canada's role as a trusted global actor.

Canada must also deepen its commitment to climate diplomacy, ensuring that its economic policies align with environmental sustainability and just transitions for impacted communities. Expanding educational and exchange programs that encourage cross-border collaboration in governance, diplomacy, and sustainable development will reinforce Canada's influence as a leader in global engagement.

Solutions:

- Prioritizing multilateral cooperation, inclusive economic policies, and Indigenous reconciliation will strengthen Canada's global leadership.
- Strengthening diplomatic alliances and reinforcing domestic resilience will enhance Canada's ability to bridge divides globally.

- Investing in fact-based journalism, countering digital disinformation and fostering civic engagement will support Canada's efforts to protect democratic institutions.
- Promoting climate diplomacy and environmental justice will ensure Canada remains at the forefront of sustainable international development.



Open Questions:

- How can Canada effectively balance domestic reconciliation efforts while expanding its global leadership?
- What steps should be taken to counteract misinformation and digital threats to democracy?
- How can Canada foster stronger trade and economic partnerships that support equitable global development?
- What role can Canada play in climate diplomacy and environmental resilience on the world stage?

Calls to Action:

- Policymakers, civil society leaders, and the private sector must work together to position Canada as a global leader in peace diplomacy, inclusive governance, and economic sustainability.
- Investments in reconciliation, trade diversification, and democratic resilience will be critical to maintaining Canada's role in bridging divides for a shared future.
- Canada should take a proactive role in strengthening global alliances, reinforcing international cooperation on governance, climate policy, and digital transformation.
- Fostering leadership in digital governance and countering misinformation will ensure Canada remains a trusted voice in global democratic engagement.

Conclusion

Canada has a unique opportunity to lead by example, fostering inclusive governance, economic justice, and multilateral diplomacy in an increasingly divided world. The Victoria Forum 2024 discussions emphasized the importance of continued engagement, strategic partnerships, and domestic renewal to strengthen Canada's global influence and commitment to a shared and sustainable future. Moving forward, Canada should leverage its strengths in diplomacy, trade, and governance to help shape a more equitable and cooperative world order.







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