

Are Canada's inland ports up to the challenge?

MHCA's Chris Lorenc a panelist at major inland port conference in Winnipeg

Canada's economy is not bouncing back. In fact, labour force data indicates the post-recession recovery since 2010 has been the slowest seen in the last 60 years. Manitoba has its own economic troubles brewing, specifically with bad news out of The Pas and the turmoil enveloping its northern shipping port at Churchill.

In this environment, trade – specifically global trade – is critical to economic growth.

Trade, commerce and shipping will be hot topics in Winnipeg next week. They are the focus of the 2016 Canadian Inland Ports Conference, at the Fort Garry Hotel on Tuesday and Wednesday. The conference, is organized by Calgary's Van Horne Institute, a public policy organization focusing on transportation and supply-chain logistics.

Canada's economy depends heavily on trade. Inland ports are increasingly the way this country positions itself, through the strategic expediting of goods, to capitalize on shifting global trade patterns and prospects. Moving our goods to market in a tight economy, with increased global competition, pivots on connecting and perfecting the trade links – highways, marine ports and border crossings, railways and airports. Inland ports act as hubs, critical links in those conduits, coordinating them while potentially adding value to shipments.

Winnipeg's own CentrePort Canada, North America's largest inland port, has a huge role to play in the future of this country's trade prospects and, therefore, economic potential. The Inland Ports conference will kick off Tuesday morning with a discussion Manitoba will want to hear, Inland Port Development Around the World: Is Canada Far Behind? What Would it Take for Canada to Catch Up?

On Wednesday, September 21, MHCA President Chris Lorenc joins North American panelists to talk about how inland ports will have to collaborate on an action plan to secure their future. This is topical, as CentrePort Canada moves to attract more development to its lands, and as Manitoba contemplates the future of the Port of Churchill, Canada's only northern Arctic port.

If your business or area of interest deals with transportation, shipping or exports, this is a conference for you.

Details on registration and the program can be found at www.vanhorneinstitute.com