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Next election will be a fight over trade and infrastructure

Written by Carlo Dade and John Jaw

In the coming federal election, headlines over pipelines, the environment, building bridges to Detroit, selling goods to Korea, China and Europe and the state of our economy will dominate. These are matters of immediate concern for every Canadian because they translate into jobs. But they are subtexts of the real story.

The issues all connect back to one thing – the state of our trade infrastructure. That's really what the next election will be about.

From lobster fishermen in New Brunswick to farmers who rely on the Port of Metro Vancouver to Ontario auto parts manufacturers trucking goods across a bridge to the U.S., our ability to prosper as a nation, to fund our health care and education and social programs, depends on having a reliable, affordable and efficient way of getting goods to market. And yet at our own peril, an internal debate is raging over whether we should even allow some goods to be delivered at all.

We have become a country that is at war with itself.

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In This Edition:

The struggles include the fight to block the Keystone XL pipeline, the conflicts over the Building Canada stimulus program, the ability for farmers to deliver grain to a hungry world, and of course the constant confrontations on Northern Gateway, Energy East and liquified natural gas (LNG) in B.C. Each of these stories is about our infrastructure.

The internal war is quietly impoverishing the nation. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce estimates that our inability to build pipelines costs us $50 million a day in lost revenue. Canadian farmers lost an estimated $7.2-$8.3 billion because they were unable to fully move last fall's record crop to market. If LNG terminals are blocked in British Columbia, it will mean an estimated $4-$8 billion in revenue for that cash-starved province. Meanwhile, waiting charges in B.C. ports averaged $750,000 a day last winter – money out of the pockets of Canadian grain companies and farmers.

Canada is, and has always been, an export nation. From beaver pelts in the earliest days to grain and now energy resources, we have made our living by supplying the world with the products they need and want.

Thirty cents of every dollar in our economy and one in five jobs is tied to exports. The quality of life that we enjoy, our ability to afford health care, education, all comes from our ability to move products to foreign markets.

And increasingly what is driving our trade is the movement of commodities. Although prices will always fluctuate, structural certainty of long-term demand is there. The rising global middle class, primarily in Asia, will grow from 1.8 billion consumers today to close to five billion over the coming decades.

Where we should see opportunity, instead there is conflict: between rail companies and farmers, between commodity producers and environmentalists, between those living in communities and those seeking to build in or near them. The resultant paralysis is costing us dearly.

A healthier conversation would be about how to move products in ways that minimize risk to the environment and provide the greatest public safety, and that do so efficiently, so our farmers, fishermen and other producers can compete in the world. To do so, industry, environmentalists, farmers and rail companies have to be on the same page.

Some of that has already started to happen. Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne hosted a summit on infrastructure in August. This fall, the premiers of B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan – the New West Partnership – brought together stakeholders from western Canada, including farmers and railroads. The federal government has also been active.

These first steps will help drive a national debate that gives direction to governments. And that is the next election, where platforms can be laid out, debated and mandated or rejected.

In 2013, Australia had a similar debate in its pursuit of prosperity through trade with Asia. It now has its first self-proclaimed infrastructure government led by a prime minister who proudly calls himself the country's first Infrastructure PM.

An election has already been fought over infrastructure elsewhere; now it's our turn.

Carlo Dade is the Director of Trade & Investment Policy at the Canada West Foundation. www.cwf.ca

John Law is President of Lawmark International, an infrastructure, logistics and supply management company. He is former CEO of the Saskatchewan's Global Transportation Hub.

Infrastructure in the rich world

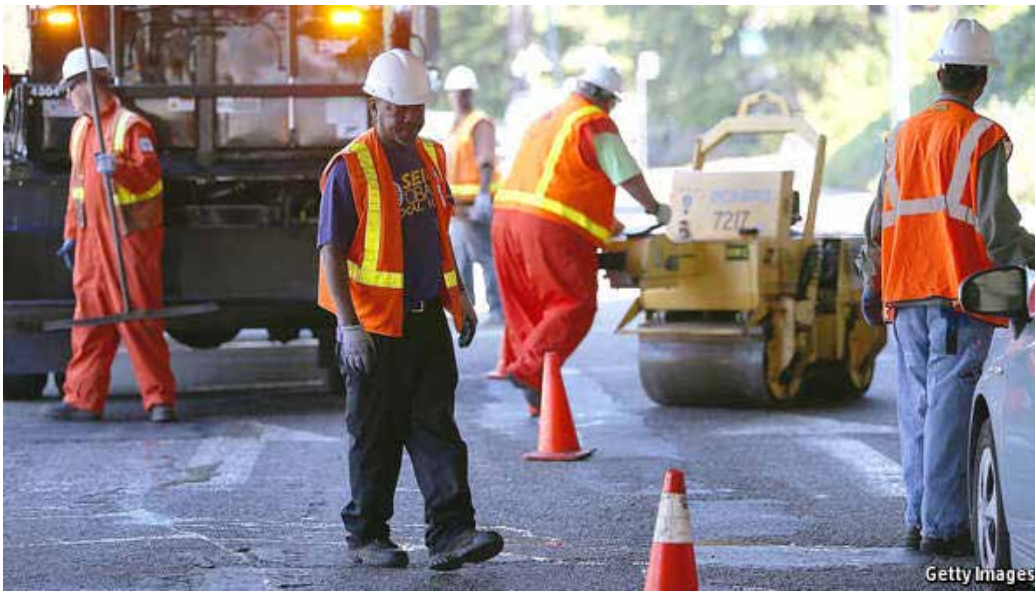
Originally published by The Economist and featured in the CCA Weekly

Canadian Construction Association

IT IS hard to exaggerate the decrepitude of infrastructure in much of the rich world. One in three railway bridges in Germany is over 100 years old, as are half of London's water mains. In America the average bridge is 42 years old and the average dam 52. The American Society of Civil Engineers rates around 14,000 of the country's dams as "high hazard" and 151,238 of its bridges as "deficient". This crumbling infrastructure is both dangerous and expensive: traffic jams on urban highways cost America over $100 billion in wasted time and fuel each year; congestion at airports costs $22 billion and another $150 billion is lost to power outages.

The B20, the business arm of the G20, a club of big economies, estimates that the global backlog of spending needed to bring infrastructure up to scratch will reach $15 trillion-20 trillion by 2030. McKinsey, a consultancy, reckons that in 2007-12 investment in infrastructure in rich countries was about 2.5% of GDP a year when it should have been 3.5%. If anything, the problem is becoming more acute as some governments whose finances have been racked by the crisis cut back.

In 2013 in the euro zone, general government investment—of which infrastructure constitutes a large part—was around 15% below its pre-crisis peak of €3 trillion ($4 trillion), according to the European Commission, with drops as high as 25% in Italy, 39% in Ireland and 64% in Greece. In the same year government spending on infrastructure in America, at 1.7% of GDP, was at a 20-year low.



This is a missed opportunity. Over the past six years, the cost of repairing old infrastructure or building new projects has been much cheaper than normal, thanks both to rock-bottom interest rates and ample spare capacity in the construction industry. Simon Rawlinson of Arcadis, an infrastructure consultancy, reckons building costs in Britain, for example, were 20% lower in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The market upheaval of recent weeks may delay the first post-crisis interest-rate rise in America by a few months, but construction costs have been rising in America and Britain, among other places, as their economies have strengthened and unemployment has fallen.

Investment in infrastructure can provide a tremendous boost to an economy. The most striking examples are in emerging markets: paving roads has helped double school attendance by girls in Morocco; improved sanitation has helped reduce child mortality in India by over 50%. But the impact in rich countries is also great. Standard & Poor's, a rating agency, reckons that the activity spurred by increasing government spending on infrastructure by 1% of GDP would leave the economy 1.7% bigger after three years in America, 2.5% bigger in Britain and 1.4% in the euro zone.

A few countries have stepped up spending: investment in infrastructure in Canada rose from 2.5% of GDP a year in 2000-06 to 3.3% in 2007-12. State governments in Australia have made their money go further by leading the early, riskier stages of projects and then privatising them once operational, freeing up capital for the next scheme. (As an extra incentive the federal government now even tops up states' proceeds from asset sales by 15% if they are reinvested in infrastructure.) In 2012, for example, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Hastings, a fund manager, bought a 50-year lease on a recently completed desalination plant near Sydney from the government of New South Wales.

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But many other governments have failed to follow suit. The so-called "Juncker Plan", which is supposed to mobilise €315 billion of mostly private investment in infrastructure in Europe, was announced with great fanfare last November; the website listing possible projects has yet to be launched. Planning constraints play their part: it takes four years just to get the permits for the average European power project, according to McKinsey. Crossrail, a new train line running under London, was first mooted in 1974 but is not due to be completed until 2018. Despite the risk of white elephants such as Ciudad Real Central Airport in Spain, which closed only a few years after opening, politicians still tend to prioritise eye-catching schemes over duller but more practical ones. America's post-crisis stimulus package dedicated $8 billion to high-speed rail, but only $1.5 billion to small, worthwhile projects nominated by state governments.

Yet none of this should impede spending on maintenance, for which there is also a huge backlog. Mending leaking pipes, filling potholes and painting bridges is unlikely to lead to a popular uprising. There is also lots of scope for modernisation without undue disruption: adding a layer of plastic on top of an asphalt road can increase its lifespan by a third. Investments in technology can make better use of existing infrastructure without adding a brick. New digital monitoring systems, for example, have increased the capacity of Frankfurt Airport from 150,000 passengers a day to 200,000, by providing advance warning of impending bottlenecks.

Such repairs and improvements typically yield higher returns than more grandiose projects. They are also much quicker to initiate. Western politicians searching for a way to pep up growth in light of the current uncertainty about the health of the world economy need look no further.

Infrastructure & economic development: An interview with John Rice

Originally published by McKinsey & Company, written by Bill Wiseman

Since joining GE in 1978, John Rice has worked all over the world in departments as diverse as auditing, power, finance, and transport. Based in Hong Kong, he leads the company's global growth organization, which accounts for more than half of total revenues. In this interview with McKinsey's Bill Wiseman, he talks candidly about the slowness of bureaucracy and the role of the private sector in encouraging sustainable growth.

McKinsey: *What role does infrastructure play in supporting growth in developing markets?*

John Rice: Everybody is looking for "sustainable" or "inclusive" growth—growth that improves quality of life for all. Growth in and of itself is no longer good enough. If you're not creating jobs, you are never going to have sustainable and inclusive growth.

But before you can create jobs, you've got to do a few things. You've got to have electricity. You've got to have healthcare—you can't have sustainable growth if people die when they're 45 or 50. You've got to have the basic building blocks of a society, and then you have to have a combination of financial and human-capital development. Only then do you have a shot at sustainable and inclusive growth.

McKinsey: *Do you find that countries value that way of thinking?*

John Rice: In many democratic countries (and not just developing ones), there is often a short-term focus on the next election cycle. In countries that don't have elections, there might also be a short-term focus on keeping the population happy. Also, when budgets are constrained, you tend to punt the long-term stuff. Infrastructure is long-term stuff.

I think there has been what you might call a "cycle compression" when it comes to how fast governments want investments to pay back. When I meet with senior government officials, they want to know what can be done quickly—temporary power, quick investments in clinics and healthcare—so that they can show visible progress. But those kinds of actions do not necessarily address the broader challenges.

There's no question that social media, and the ability of people to communicate and transfer information and assess their own circumstances, is increasing the pressure on governments. Even people who have very little disposable income are still connected. Expectations are being built up that problems are going to be solved quickly, and governments pick up on that and feel pressure to respond.

McKinsey: *The McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that up to three billion people could join the global middle class by 2030. How will this affect the demand for infrastructure?*

John Rice: The growth of the global middle class is creating another, higher set of expectations. For example, the growth in China's aviation industry over the past several years is evidence that the middle class will want to travel; the roads can't handle the increase in demand, and as a result, you are seeing the government invest in both aviation and rail infrastructure. Across emerging markets, there is broad recognition that problems need to be tackled, that people aren't going to wait forever for the ability to travel, to read at night, to treat their sick child, and so on.

At the same time, I think you also have to remember that something like 1.3 billion people still don't have electricity, most of them in Africa and South Asia. You're not going to get to the middle class if you don't have the basics.

McKinsey: *What is the role of the private sector in developing the human and financial capital needed to help deliver infrastructure?*

John Rice: The private sector is right in the middle of it. In 50 countries where GE is bidding for big projects, we're expected to train and develop people. It's moved beyond just creating jobs, any jobs; we're talking about higher-scale, more sophisticated manufacturing value creation. If GE is not prepared to invest in capacity building, we are going to have fewer opportunities.

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Whether we are building manufacturing facilities in Pune, India, or planning them in places like Calabar, Nigeria, we have to think about and fund capacity building for our own employees and suppliers. This investment can be a multiple of the plant-and-equipment cost and usually involves partnering with local universities.

McKinsey: *How do you scale up that kind of program?*

John Rice: You base it on markets and regions. Our expectation is that the work we do in places like India and Nigeria will support the local and regional market. The fact is, sometimes the volume won't support the investment; programs have to work from a financial perspective.

McKinsey: *The need for infrastructure is huge, but progress has been slow in many places to create public–private partnerships. Why is that?*

John Rice: Part of what slows things down is that bureaucracies don't get paid to move fast or take risks—and this is true in Europe and the US, as well as in developing countries. How do you give governments the confidence that they can make these decisions and not be attacked? And how can you get private capital to invest in a power project in difficult political environments? For that to happen, third-party investors need to have an assurance on the fuel supply and cost; they also need a bankable off-take agreement.

Public opinion is another factor. Many countries subsidize power, which in effect means that the investor return must be subsidized too. The "private" part of the partnership is looking for a risk-adjusted market return, while the "public" side wants local energy prices. The difference becomes a political issue, sometimes leading to accusations of mismanagement and corruption.

McKinsey: *What, if anything, can the private sector do to improve these circumstances?*

John Rice: It would be interesting to combine the efforts of institutions like the World Bank, a couple of export-credit agencies, and a half a dozen companies and say, "OK, we're going to build a model for how to get this stuff done quickly and honestly."

Something's got to give, because governments alone are not going to fix the electricity problem. And they won't attract a lot of third-party capital without certainty around fuel, costs, and off-take arrangements.

McKinsey: *Is there any particular type of infrastructure program or product that is working well?*

John Rice: Distributed power comes to mind, meaning small-scale, often on-site sources of electricity. These are technologies that have been around for a while, but there has only recently been a general recognition that this is an important way to get electricity to those who don't have it. It will take decades to create transmission and distribution networks to carry electrons from big centralized plants to everyone who needs power.

You need smaller power sizes that run on a variety of fuels. It could be liquefied natural gas or biofuels or solar or a lot of different things. This idea is really beginning to capture people's attention, not least because these projects can be done fast.

Distributed power is also a good option for places that today rely on power from generators that run off trucked-in diesel, which is expensive and environmentally awful. Smaller gas turbines that can produce cleaner power at about half the price are a huge step forward; we're seeing a lot more demand for this type of technology.

Canadian Construction Association

MHCA™ MANITOBA HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

Get Involved in the Federal Election

Canada will go to the polls on October 19. Do you know what the leaders of the major political parties think about construction-related issues? Do you know who the candidates are in your riding and whether they are up to speed on construction issues? The Canadian Construction Association (CCA) - of which the MHCA is member - has gathered some tools for you on its election portal.

Visit cca-acc.com/en/information/election-2015 today!

Interviews with the Leaders
Michael Atkinson, CCA President, interviewed the leaders of the major political parties this spring. You can read the interviews with Stephen Harper, Elizabeth May, Thomas Mulcair and Justin Trudeau on the Election 2015 portal.

Is Your Candidate Well-informed?
In every election there are many candidates running for the first time. They, and the incumbents for that matter, may not realize how important construction is to Canada's prosperity. The CCA Election 2015 portal includes a widget that you can use to identify the candidates in your riding and to send them a letter educating them on issues of importance to the Canadian construction industry.

Based on your postal code, the widget shows you the candidates in your riding. You can choose one or several candidates to send the letter that CCA has prepared. The letter focuses on the three areas that are expanded on in the backgrounders posted on the election portal, namely Infrastructure and Prosperity, Education and Labour Force Development, as well as Taxation, Environment and Productivity. By using the election widget, you educate the candidates in your riding about important issues that affect your and other Canadians' livelihood and help CCA lobby for you.

Avoiding Future Fiscal Calamity Tied to Insufficient Infrastructure Funding
The letter recommends that as a country, our goal should be to return annual public investments in infrastructure to approximately 5 per cent of our annual gross domestic product and to commit to a plan that is:

- fiscally responsible and augments existing investments through the use of innovative partnerships between the public and private sectors;
- sustainable yet flexible enough to respond to the specific needs of individual communities; and
- permanent in order to provide all stakeholders with the certainty they require to make the necessary investments in the human and equipment resources they will require to respond to the infrastructure challenge.

Economy's Demands Require Greater Focus on Training
Another area of concern for CCA members is that of skilled labour. With labour shortages widespread in many regions of the country and the industry looking at a shortfall of nearly 300,000 workers by 2024, a greater focus on training will be imperative to ensure that the industry can continue to respond to the demands of our economy. Solutions will require a combination of measures to promote enhanced domestic training, and faster and timelier recruitment of skilled immigrants from abroad.

Expand Use of Tax Incentives to Encourage Productivity
CCA encourages federal public policy makers to expand the use of tax incentives to encourage businesses to invest in productivity enhancements. Incentives such as the use of accelerated depreciation policies (capital cost allowance) for investments in fixed machinery and equipment are helping make Canada's manufacturing sector more competitive. CCA strongly recommends that the federal government extend the benefits of the current Class 29 depreciation rate of 50 per cent declining balance to mobile equipment in machinery in other Classes.

The CCA election portal also features what has been said on the campaign trail as well as summaries of the election debates. We hope that you visit the election portal and find the information useful. It's time to get informed and to get involved!

We encourage you to participate as individuals.

Chris Lorenc, B.A., LL.B.
President
MHCA

CCA 2015/ Get Involved in the Federal Election

Manitoba NewsRelease

August 27, 2015

**PROVINCE ANNOUNCES NEW FUNDING
FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN THE NORTH**

The Manitoba government is investing more than $30 million to support waste and water projects to benefit residents in 18 northern communities including Norway House, Berens River, Waterhen, Wabowden and Gods Lake Narrows, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robinson announced today.

“The Manitoba government is committed to the health of our communities in northern Manitoba,” said Minister Robinson. “This investment in waste and water infrastructure will ensure access to safe, clean drinking water for people in these communities and improve their quality of life for years to come.”

The minister noted the funding includes:

• $11.2 million for water treatment facilities in Cormorant, Bissett, Manigotagan, Pelican Rapids, Sherridon and Thicket Portage including new water and sewer lines and backup generators for the plants; and

• $7 million for new waste-water facilities in Norway House, Cormorant, Matheson Island, Moose Lake, Pelican Rapids and Waterhen.

“New or upgraded waste-water systems help protect our waterways and foster community growth and development,” added Minister Robinson. “This announcement is in keeping with the Manitoba government’s commitment to the development of healthy, safe and sustainable Indigenous and northern communities.”

“On behalf of the Northern Association of Community Councils, I want to acknowledge the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for the capital funding that has been provided to our communities,” said Reg Mead, president of the council. “These resources are essential to our growth and sustainability towards a healthy future. I look forward to our continued partnership in

bridging the gap for northern and Aboriginal Manitobans."

The province has invested close to $29 million for major infrastructure in a number of northern communities over the last five years.

The minister noted waste disposal sites are also being planned for six communities in partnership with surrounding municipalities and First Nations.

A list of projects can be found at:

http://news.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/newslinks/2015/08/RLS-ANA_capital_grants_BG-AN.doc.

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Reporting Workplace Injuries Matters

The goal

Increase awareness that workplace injuries should be reported to the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba (WCB)

What's it about?

This campaign will raise awareness and knowledge of injury reporting responsibilities among employers and workers to ensure workplace injuries are reported so injured workers get the benefits they need

What are the key messages?

- Report workplace injuries – it's your right, and it's the law
- Get the benefits you deserve quickly – coverage of lost wages; a full range of healthcare services; and a timely and safe return to meaningful work
- The WCB provides service that is fast, easy, caring, right and clear
- Injury reporting identifies hazards so they can be prevented in the future

Where will you see it?

TV, radio, billboards, online, transit, doctors' offices

Call to action

If you're injured at work:

1. Tell your supervisor
2. Get healthcare if required
3. Report your injury directly to the WCB – call 204-954-4100 in Winnipeg or toll free 1-855-954-4321

WCB Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Visit wcb.mb.ca for information on injury reporting and return to work in multiple languages

Training Schedule

TO REGISTER, PLEASE CONTACT:
Sarah Higgins
sarah@mhca.mb.ca

September

Flagperson (1/2 day PM)	Sept. 8	MHCA Office
Traffic Control Coordinator	Sept. 10 -11	MHCA Office
COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Sept. 14 - 15	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Sept. 16	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Sept. 17 - 18	MHCA Office
COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Sept. 14 - 15	Rockey View B&B
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Sept. 16	Rockey View B&B
COR™ Auditor	Sept. 17 - 18	Rockey View B&B
COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Sept. 14 - 15	Russell Regional Multiplex
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Sept. 16	Russell Regional Multiplex
COR™ Auditor	Sept. 17 - 18	Russell Regional Multiplex
WHMIS (1/2 day AM)	Sept. 21	MHCA Office
TDG (1/2 day PM)	Sept. 21	MHCA Office
Excavating and Trenching (1/2 day AM)	Sept. 22	MHCA Office
Committee/Representative Training (1/2 day PM)	Sept. 22	MHCA Office
Train the Trainer	Sept. 23 - 24	MHCA Office

October

COR™ Auditor Refresher (1/2 day AM)	Oct. 2	MHCA Office
COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Oct. 5 - 6	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Oct. 7	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Oct. 8 - 9	MHCA Office
Flagperson (1/2 day AM)	Oct. 19	MHCA Office
Committee/Representative Training (1/2 day PM)	Oct. 19	MHCA Office
WHMIS (1/2 day AM)	Oct. 20	MHCA Office
TDG (1/2 day PM)	Oct. 20	MHCA Office

November

COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Nov. 2 -3	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Nov. 4	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Nov. 5 - 6	MHCA Office

December

COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Dec. 7 - 8	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Dec. 9	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Dec. 10 - 11	MHCA Office

For the full calendar of upcoming training schedules, visit www.mhca.mb.ca/worksafely

Left Behind?

By Peter G Hall, Vice President and Chief Economist

There's nothing pleasant about it. From the child in the mall who suddenly realizes that mom's not there, to the disoriented senior citizen, and everyone in between, getting left behind is no fun. Millions of workers were left behind by a global economy that faltered in 2008 and failed to properly recover. Labour force participation rates plunged as year after year, more discouraged job-seekers gave up looking. One of today's puzzles is that, with job growth picking up, participation rates aren't moving from their post-crisis lows. Is a growing economy likely to find some or all of these lost workers, or is activity moving on without them?

The data are shocking, and perhaps nowhere more than in the U.S. In the decade before the Great Recession, the US participation rate hovered in the 66-67 per cent range, and was relatively stable. Crisis saw it plunge almost overnight to 65 per cent, and from there it continued a downward march to just below 63 per cent by mid-2014. All that recent robust job growth has managed to do is stem the collapse, holding things at the sub-63 per cent level. Things were less dramatic in Europe. After a post-unification surge, the EU-19 participation rate fell about a half percentage point, recovered with stimulus, and is now testing new post-crisis lows. Canada's situation is more like the US in pattern, but the magnitude of change is smaller.

So much for the data; what does this mean practically? For starters, seven years is a huge chunk of anyone's working life, and to be out of the picture that long is like an eternity. Then imagine those who were 58 or older in 2008 when crisis hit. Those laid off at that age have a difficult enough time getting re-hired, let alone during the worst economic funk since the Depression. Fast-forward seven years, and these folks are at retirement age. Do they really want to get back into the action, or have they long since decided that the game is up? It's an interesting question, because it turns out that demographically, this cohort is actually quite significant.

Take Western Europe, for example. The aging of its population has been affecting things for a number of years now. Lift the 65-plus group out of its participation rate, and what you get is not a decline, but a significant post-crisis increase in participation, from the 71 to the 72 per cent level. Canada's stats are eye-opening: participation confined to the 15-64 age category has remained very close to previous peak levels, and recently, has been on the rise. The US market is different; estimates reveal that the participation rate for the 16-64 age cohort declines 4.4 per cent compared with almost 6 per cent for the entire labour force. Clearly, displaced American workers are not just in the older categories, and thus are likely in a reviving market to re-enter the workforce.

This has big implications for the economy. If all-in participation rates can still see upward movement, then the labour market is not as tight as the unemployment rate suggests. Although US participation hasn't moved much, it still appears to have the flexibility to accommodate further growth. Things are a bit different in the EU; participation is high, but unemployment rates are still well above normal, so there is room to grow. In Canada, unemployment is getting down to a tight zone, but domestic economic weakening is creating a buffer that will free up labour for the faster-growing parts of the economy.

But even where labour is tight, markets are creative. Higher real wages might be needed to entice skilled workers back into the fray, and for some, on their own terms. The same will result in more creative use of the existing labour force. But tightening is almost a guaranteed precondition, and as such, the US market is likely to iterate between creative employment market responses and tighter monetary conditions before the market settles into a sustained growth trajectory. The adjustment doesn't sound like fun, but remember, it's all because of the return of growth.

The bottom line? Those who are lost for long enough tend over time to be forgotten, presumed missing, or worse. But as the needs of a reviving economy increase, we can expect that the search for missing workers will resume, and with verve. Those left behind may be in for a very positive surprise in the coming months.