



## Broad Diversification: Strengthening Canada-Asia Engagement After COVID-19

### Summary Report

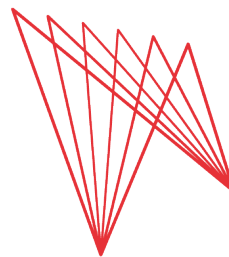


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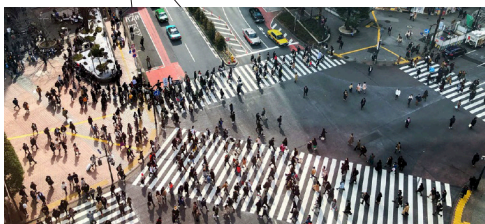
FONDATION  
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# ASIA BUSINESS LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

2021



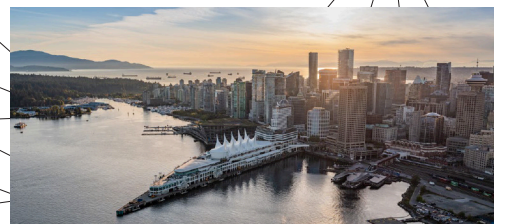
APRIL 8-9, 2021 *(Asia)*



VIRTUAL



APRIL 7-8, 2021 *(Canada)*



# SUPPORTERS



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council \(ABLAC\)](#) held its fifth annual meeting in a virtual setting on April 7-8, 2021 (April 8-9 in Asia). While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented an in-person meeting from occurring, ABLAC 2021 was perhaps the most engaging and critical Council meeting to date, as more than 150 ABLAC members and invited guests convened virtually over the two-day meeting to discuss a number of timely issues related to the overarching meeting theme, “*Broad Diversification – Strengthening Canada-Asia Engagement after COVID-19.*”

As it did globally, the COVID-19 pandemic led to major economic disruption in Asia. But in contrast to other regions, Asian economies weathered the storm better than most. This is not to suggest that Asia escaped economic disruption, but most countries in the region managed the pandemic more effectively than their Western counterparts. While the economic recovery will be uneven in Asia, the region’s GDP is expected to grow at around 8.4 per cent in 2021, with China’s own GDP growth for 2021 projected to be around 7.9 per cent, according to the IMF. Compared with projected EU growth at 3.5 per cent and U.S. growth at 6.4 per cent, Asia will be the fastest-growing region for the short to medium terms.

The key takeaway echoed throughout the ABLAC 2021 meeting, which was held under Chatham House Rule, is that engagement with Asia is as important as ever and will be crucial for Canada’s own post-COVID economic recovery. The various sub-regions within the broader Asia Pacific region will each face their own challenges and present unique opportunities.

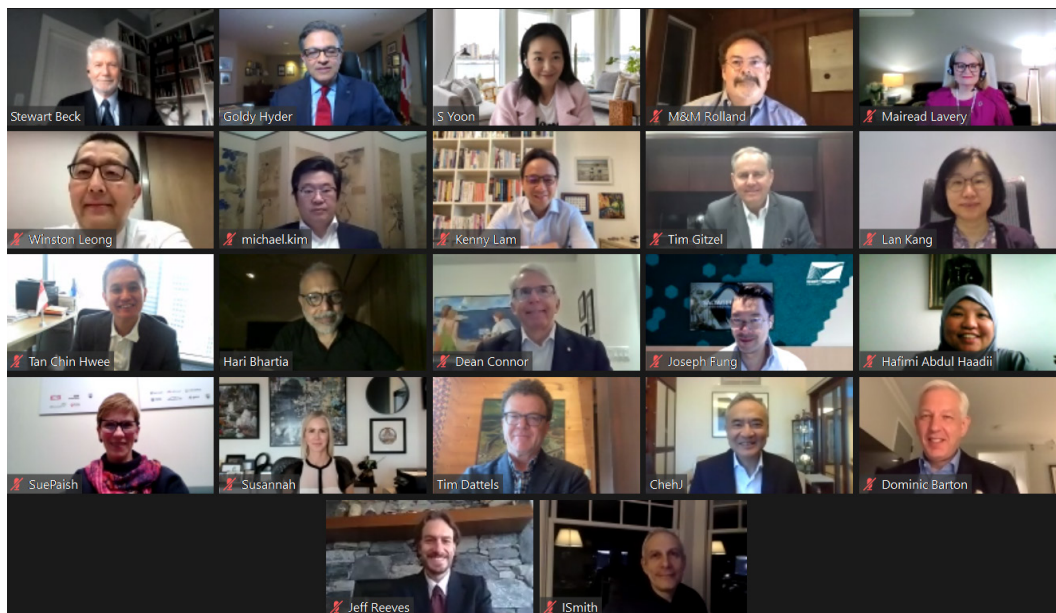
The Opening Plenary Session included prerecorded video remarks from The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Canada, and, The Honourable Seamus O’Regan, Minister of Natural Resources, Canada. Dr. Jeffrey Reeves, Vice-President, Research & Strategy, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, closed the session by providing a “state of the region” overview of the primary political, economic, security, environmental, and technology trends in the Asia Pacific and highlighted some challenges and opportunities for Canada to engage with the region.

Participants were reminded that Canada is a trading nation with international trade accounting for nearly two-thirds of its national economy and providing millions of jobs.

By 2030, the Asia Pacific market is expected to encompass 65 per cent of the world's middle class and by 2050, the region will contain four of the world's 10 largest economies. With this in mind, it is quite clear that trade and investment with the Asia Pacific region will become even more important for Canada, with ample opportunity for our businesses to collaborate, generate growth, and create good jobs that will strengthen the middle class.

The digitalization process currently underway globally, and especially in Asia, is significant and represents an area where Canada can make a contribution. While a lot remains unknown at this point – particularly with regard to what the future of digital payments will look like and if approaches will be developed globally or regionally – it is a significant trend Canadians should be paying attention to, and can potentially benefit from.

Canada and the Asia Pacific region also share common challenges, such as the existential threat posed by climate change. The importance of working with the region to achieve our shared goal of building a clean energy future that powers economic growth, creates good jobs, and dramatically lowers emissions, cannot be overstated.



*Select ABLAC Members engaged in one of many discussions over the two-day virtual meeting.*

ABLAC Members and special guests were invited to engage in three smaller, dedicated panel discussions addressing different regional topics of importance to Canada, including: opportunities for digital collaboration with Southeast Asia; opportunities related to the environment and carbon commitments in Northeast Asia; and, the growing importance of trade and investment with South Asia in Canada's broad diversification efforts. The objective of these sessions was to examine how Canada can excel in engagement with specific regions of interest in Asia, and to generate recommendations for presentation at the Closing Plenary and for this ABLAC 2021 Summary Report.

All participants convened virtually for the Closing Plenary Session to listen to a prerecorded address to the Council by The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada. This was followed by an engaging keynote address by Mark Carney, Vice Chair and Head of ESG and Impact Fund Investing, Brookfield Asset Management; Former Governor of the Bank of England; and, Former Governor of the Bank of Canada. Ambassador Dominic Barton, ABLAC Honorary Chair and Ambassador of Canada to China, joined Mr. Carney following the keynote address to moderate a lively virtual fireside chat.

ABLAC 2021 was supported in part by the following organizations: Air Canada, the Business Council of Canada, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, CPP Investments, Export Development Canada, Invest in Canada, and Sun Life Financial.



*The Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada, addressed Council Members and guests in a prerecorded video message.*



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Broad Diversification is Key

The importance of international trade for the Canadian economy was underscored in each ABLAC 2021 session. And amid the lingering COVID-19 pandemic and current global uncertainties, more than ever before Canada needs to accelerate its diversification efforts and establish new markets to exports its products, services, resources, and capital. Opportunities exist in Canada's traditional export markets, but other countries are growing exponentially and represent long-term opportunities for Canada. South and Southeast Asia are two significant markets where Canadian investment and exports have been minimal, yet tremendous opportunities exist. Canada's lacklustre engagement in these two dynamic regions is in part due to a poor understanding of these markets by Canadian businesses and a lack of awareness of what Canada has to offer. The Council recommends Canadian trade and investment promotion agencies double their efforts in promoting these underexplored markets, as well as Canada's unique value propositions. The Council also strongly supports the negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA) with both ASEAN and India. This recommendation is further supported by APF Canada's 2020 survey of business leaders in Asia, which revealed, for example, that 76 per cent of companies in India and 48 per cent of companies in Vietnam not currently doing business in Canada say they are either considering or planning to enter the Canadian market.

## 2. Going Digital, But Doing it Right

The ability to digitize information continues to open up new global trade possibilities. While digitalization worldwide has been in motion for some time now, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the trend. The ability to digitize information and the proliferation of e-commerce have not only created opportunities to trade new kinds of products and services, they have also affected the way companies do business. Digitalization is progressing faster in Asia than in other parts of the world, and Canada needs to ensure it doesn't miss out on the opportunities this transformation presents. The penetration of e-commerce in retail is already about 33 per cent higher in China than in the United States. While e-commerce adaptation is lower in the rest of Asia, it is catching up quickly. To support Canada's digital trade diversification strategy, in the coming year APF Canada plans to conduct two deep-dive surveys about economic engagement with, and opportunities for Canada in, two particularly high-potential Asian markets: Indonesia and Singapore.



While broad in scope, the survey will include a focus on sub-sectors, including e-commerce, digital innovation, AI, and digital governance. With the ‘Pacific Century’ also set to become the ‘Digital Century,’ the Council recommends that Canadian government and business leaders work hand-in-hand to develop good practices, rules and regulations, and standards that will create an environment where they are empowered and able to succeed.

### 3. Investing in Carbon Neutrality

The green transition around the world, and especially in Northeast Asia, represents an immense opportunity for large Canadian investors, such as pension funds. Countries worldwide, including China, Japan, and South Korea, recently took significant pledges to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050/2060. In order to achieve net-zero emissions, de-carbonization will need to take place across all sectors, from transportation to electricity and heat, and investment will be required in carbon removal solutions. Asia represents over 60 per cent of GHG emissions, with China, Japan, and South Korea contributing about one-third of global GHG emissions. Given Canada’s considerable expertise in global investment acumen, the Council recommends that the Canadian government, at the federal and provincial levels, work with Canadian pension funds and asset managers to facilitate opportunities to help finance the climate transition in Northeast Asia.

### 4. Investing in Canadian Skills and Asia Competency

Canada’s businesses are falling short when it comes to the intercultural skills required to work effectively in Asian markets. The Council recommends to further invest in helping Canadian educational institutions across the country adapt their curricula to better reflect the fundamental and long-term shifts happening globally and in Asia. This adaptation should begin at the primary and secondary school levels, namely, by placing a stronger emphasis on teaching about Asian cultures, histories, economies, and political systems. According to APF Canada’s most recent National Opinion Poll (2020), solid (and growing) majorities of the Canadian public in every region of the country support such an initiative. These efforts need to continue at the post-secondary level, with a renewed (post-pandemic) focus on the need to give more young Canadians the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in Asia through study abroad and internship programs. Such an investment would also contribute to a longer-term solution to the recent rise in anti-Asian sentiment seen across the country.

## 5. The Power of People-to-People Connections

Immigration from Asia not only enriches Canada's diversity, but Canadians of Asian heritage also present a unique opportunity to improve Canada's overall engagement in the region. People-to-people linkages between Canada and Asia are strong, and effectively leveraging Canada's dynamic and diverse diaspora communities would create new economic opportunities on both sides of the Pacific. According to Canada's 2016 census, approximately 15 per cent of Canada's population is of Asian origin (Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia). These Canadians of Asia heritage, with their language skills, international connections, and cultural awareness, are the ideal 'ambassadors' to facilitate exchanges between Canada and their home countries. Research reports have highlighted the positive impact that these individuals can have on Canada's engagement with Asian countries. But Canada's diaspora communities remain an underutilized resource that the Council recommends should be better supported and deeper engaged by government and industry. The Council further supports Canadian immigration policies to make Canada an international talent hub.

## 6. New Mindset on China

Confronting international partners on behaviour at odds with Canadian values and interests is necessary, but Canada needs to avoid an all-or-nothing approach. Indeed, Canada needs to better understand the current power transition globally and consider gains in relative, instead of absolute, terms. Canada wins when its international partners also do well economically. Demonizing China will accomplish nothing more than further harden public opinion and eventually restrict avenues for future co-operation. Effective engagement with China requires that we understand China's viewpoints, but understanding China's views and incorporating them into our thinking are vastly different. Better understanding the broader context behind contentious issues that arise in the relationship enables Canada to be more flexible and effective in its engagement and interactions with China. With that in mind, the Council strongly supports efforts that would help fill the gaps in Canadians' collective knowledge about China's history, culture, current conditions, and perspectives.



*Mark Carney, Former Governor of the Bank of England and the Bank of Canada, made a keynote address to ABLAC participants. The candid talk was followed by a fireside chat moderated by Ambassador Dominic Barton, ABLAC Honorary Chair and Ambassador of Canada to China.*

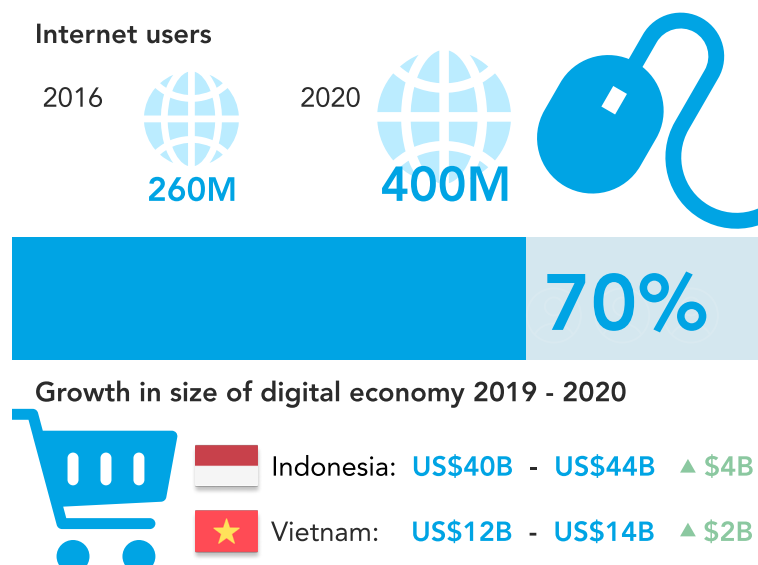
# OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL SESSIONS

## Session I. Integrating Southeast Asia's Digital Sector

This session was moderated by Dean Connor, Chief Executive Officer of Sun Life Financial, who opened the conversation by highlighting the importance of digitalization in this century and the opportunities for Canada in Southeast Asia's digital sector. Mr. Connor was joined by panellists Hafimi Abdul Haadii, Executive Director of LVK Group of Companies in Brunei Darussalam, Sue Paish, Chief Executive Officer of Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster, and Chin Hwee Tan, Asia-Pacific Chief Executive Officer of Trafigura.

### Southeast Asia in the Era of the Digital Pacific Century

The panel started by recognizing the growth potential of the Southeast Asian region and its digital market. First, the region is young and tech-savvy. For instance, Brunei has a 95 per cent internet connectivity rate and a 130 per cent mobile subscription rate, and 95 per cent of Bruneians have signed up for their COVID-19 mobile application. In the Philippines, 25 per cent of the population (110 million) is under the age of 25, most of whom have English language skills. Also, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of digitalization for Southeast Asian governments, which have in turn given more space and trust for their private sectors to innovate. One panellist emphasized that, "digitalization is at the heart of what ASEAN does."



Panellists then highlighted more opportunities specific to Canada. For instance, one of the speakers noted that Southeast Asia is a diverse region with more than 600 million people living with a wide range of resources and capabilities, which means that there are different types of opportunities for Canada. One of the speakers noted that the challenges that ASEAN and Southeast Asian economies face with large geographical diversity mirror Canada's experiences governing a large, diverse country that stretches from coast to coast to coast, and that Ottawa's governance know-how has a strong appeal and respect in the region. Also, another speaker highlighted that most Southeast Asian unicorns are B2Cs (business-to-consumer), which means that Canadian companies that specialize in the B2B (business-to-business) services could find their niche in the region without having to compete with these unicorns.

## Canada's Superclusters as the Linchpin for Collaboration

Panellists highlighted that Canada has a "humility" problem in that its companies have not been deliberate about working together ("hunting as a pack"), nor have they been vocal enough in showcasing Canada's strengths on the international stage. This point was acknowledged by both Canadian and Southeast Asian participants. Here, panellists agreed that Canada's Superclusters can help address this problem and play the role of linchpin for collaboration with Southeast Asian partners, and highlighted talent development, agriculture, health, and environment as priority areas for future engagement in the region.

Speakers highlighted that there are 65 live projects in Canada's Digital Supercluster alone, some already engaged with stakeholders in Southeast Asia. For instance, Spectrum Mobile Health has developed a platform that allows health professionals to collaboratively build clinical guidelines in a pandemic, and it would have engaged more than 900 health professionals in Myanmar if the political crisis hadn't erupted. Vancouver-based Terramera's use of computational biology to eliminate the need for chemical pesticides, and MDA's AI-based tool to detect illegal fishing activities were also highlighted as technologies that could address pressing needs in Southeast Asia.

The panel also highlighted the Superclusters' outcome-oriented approach, which is aligned with the pragmatism that is valued by Southeast Asian industry leaders. Superclusters deviate from the previous Canadian approach of "babysitting" MSMEs centred around government funding. Now, Superclusters bring together competitive Canadian firms as an ecosystem to take them abroad, allowing MSMEs to gain know-how and competitiveness by working alongside larger firms. Panellists agreed that Superclusters could play the role of a catalyst between Canada and Southeast Asia, and one of them noted that the model has been adopted by Brunei. One of the Canadian panellists said, "[Canadians] are still very polite. We're still very nice. We've still got humility, but it is not an excuse for not being ambitious," and described the Superclusters initiative as a sign that Canada will play a more active role in the international market.

## Action Items:

- Canada should take an “ecosystem” or “hunting-as-a-pack” approach through Superclusters and, backed by pension funds, pursue meaningful partnerships with Southeast Asian economies. The ecosystem approach and backing from pension funds would allow Canadians to compete against well-funded rivals in the region (e.g. Chinese firms).
- Canada should not discount its soft power and experiences governing a diverse federation in its engagement with Southeast Asian economies. There is a lot of shared history and goodwill. For instance, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the fifth grandchild of Singapore’s co-founder, William Farquhar. Canada’s soft power should be leveraged more actively.
- Overall, we need to pay more attention to the ‘human links’ and use them more effectively. There is a generational change with youth-driven growth in Southeast Asia and the emergence of young entrepreneurs playing an increasingly important role. In this context, we need to pay attention and better support academic and professional exchanges, as well as the chambers of commerce in the region and the Canadian Tech Accelerators (CTAs) that could be leveraged further.



*ABLAC 2021 Session 1 Panel on Integrating Southeast Asia’s Digital Sector, featuring moderator Dean Connor, CEO of Sun Life Financial, and featuring (clockwise) panellists Sue Paish, CEO of Canada’s Digital Technology Supercluster, Chin Hwee Tan, Asia-Pacific CEO of Trafigura, and Hafimi Abdul Haadi, Executive Director of LVK Group of Companies.*

## Session II. Carbon Neutrality Commitments in Northeast Asia: Where are the Opportunities for Canada?

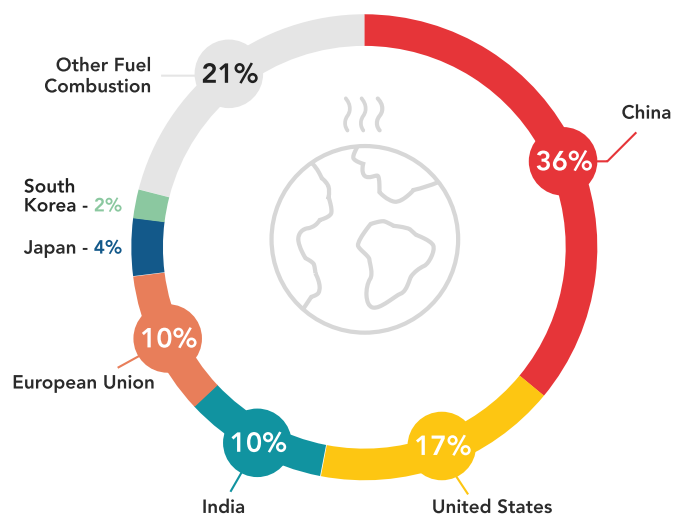
This session was moderated by Susannah Pierce, President & Country Chair, Shell Canada, with panellists Tim Gitzel, President & CEO, Cameco Corporation; Michael ByungJu Kim, Founder & Partner, MBK Partners; Kenny Lam, CEO, Two Sigma Asia Pacific; and, Mark Wiseman, Global Investment Manager.

### Significant Climate Pledges, Equally Significant Opportunities for Canada

The session started with a reminder of the recent climate pledges taken by Northeast Asian countries. As China, Japan, and South Korea recently took significant pledges to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050/2060, the goal of the panel was to discuss and reflect on how Canada can collaborate with Northeast Asian countries in reaching their climate goals and discuss specific challenges and opportunities for Canada, as these markets are invested in transitioning to carbon neutrality. To reach their climate pledges, all three Northeast Asian countries will have to develop strategies and implement new policies, presenting opportunities for Canada as a clean technology and green energy leader.

Together, China, Japan, and South Korea produce nearly one-third of all carbon emissions worldwide. China ranks 1st in carbon output, while Japan and South Korea are the 5th and 8th largest emitters, respectively. In emission per capita, however, South Korea ranks 6th, Japan 8th, and China 13th.

Global GHG Emissions





Panellists noted that after a lull created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the debate over addressing climate change made a comeback with the election of Joe Biden and his administration's cancellation of the Keystone XL and return to the Paris Agreement. Alongside carbon neutrality pledges taken by various countries around the world, this signals the importance that addressing carbon emissions will assume in the coming years, which, as one panellist suggested, will significantly increase the demand for carbon-free electricity around the world, and particularly in Asia. One panellist pointed out that 85 per cent of electricity is currently coming from fossil sources. Generating carbon free electricity will create tremendous opportunities for Canadian companies. Every sector (wind, solar, nuclear) will be needed and Canada has the resources, expertise, and technologies to share and sell.

One panellist emphasized the opportunity that green transition around the world and in Northeast Asia especially is providing Canadian investors, and argued that the current climate transition will be one of the greatest investment opportunities of a generation. The panellist commented, "China is investing quite heavily into cleantech. Currently, it is putting about US\$40 to 50 billion in cleantech every year. It will increase five to tenfold in the next three to five years in electronic vehicles, in wind turbines, and across different types of technology."

Another panellist argued, however, that the climate pledges taken by Asian countries are aspirational and that in reality each has different degrees of commitments toward achieving net-zero, especially China. The panellist explained that China has come a long way economically in the last decades but there is a sense that the country is still developing and will continue prioritizing economic development and only lower GHG emissions in sectors that will not impede economic growth.

The panellist pointed out that some in China consider the carbon neutrality agenda as a Western idea and reminded participants that the first goal for the Chinese government is to become a prosperous middle-class society by the 100th birthday of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in 2049. He suggested Canada focus on more developed markets, such as Japan and South Korea.

## A new mindset for engaging with China

Panellists also discussed how best to engage with China in these troubled times. They highlighted the importance of engaging with China despite the current difficulties in the bilateral relationship and globally, as engaging China will be key for both addressing the climate emergency and ensuring Canada's future prosperity. As a panellist noted, "If we are going to attack climate change around the world, we, by definition, have to attack it in Asia



and in particular, in Northeast Asia, in China specifically.” To better engage with China, panellists discussed the importance of China and the need to develop better expertise and on-the-ground know-how, and the importance of having a presence in China and in other markets where Canada wants to succeed. The success of CPP Investments in Asia is a case in point. CPP Investments opened an office in India in 2015, and showing its commitment to that market, it worked with local teams, leveraged local partners, and developed deep local knowledge and expertise.

The importance of Canadians having the right mindset about engaging with China and Asian countries in general was further emphasized. One panellist made the case for adopting non-zero-sum-game thinking regarding China. How to engage with China is a significant problem for the world and Canada. China is responsible for close to 40 per cent of global emissions and Canada needs to engage with China, not only for its own prosperity but also to address global problems like climate change. The panellist argued that China wants to engage with the world on climate change and other issues, but the current global environment and the U.S.-China confrontation make discussion and collaboration on specific topics more difficult.

While panellists agreed that the polarization of the situation with China presents challenges, they also highlighted the advantage that Canada has and can build on to better facilitate understanding, communication, and trade with Asian countries: our connectivity with the Asian region. “That cultural connectivity that we have in Canada today, people who speak the language, understand the culture, maybe were born in Asia and have grown up in Canada, is a tremendous asset,” one panellist remarked.

### Action Items:

- Given Canada’s considerable expertise in global investment acumen, the Canadian government - at the federal and provincial levels - should work with Canadian pension funds and asset managers to facilitate opportunities to help finance the climate transition in Northeast Asia
- Canada should better leverage its connections with Asian countries. There are a lot of people of Asian descent in Canada, representing an incredible – but underutilized – resource for governments and companies to elevate their engagement in Asia.

- Help Canadians better understand the situation with China, and its perspectives on various issues. Encouraging young Canadians to live, study, and work abroad in Asia will contribute to helping Canada broaden its understanding of the region. We need to reconcile Western and Asian approaches to world affairs and build trust in the relationship. Investing in Canadians' understanding of Asia and Asian competency could go a long way in the future.



*ABLAC 2021 Session 2 Panel on Northeast Asia: Environment, featuring moderator Susannah Pierce, President & Country Chair, Shell Canada, and featuring (clockwise) panellists Tim Gitzel, President & CEO, Cameco Corporation; Mark Wiseman, Global Investment Manager; Kenny Lam, CEO, Two Sigma Asia Pacific; and, Michael ByungJu Kim, Founder & Partner, MBK Partners.*

## Session III. Unlocking India's Significant Trade and Investment Opportunities

Session 3 was moderated by Mairead Lavery, President and CEO of Export Development Canada. Ms. Lavery was joined by panellists Hari Bhartia, Founder and Co-Chairman of Jubilant Bhartia Group; Suyi Kim, Senior Managing Director and Head of Asia Pacific for CPP Investments; Ian McKay, CEO of Invest in Canada; and, NG Subramaniam, COO and Executive Director of Tata Consultancy Services.

The discussion spurred the question, has the right time come for stronger Canada-India trade and investment relations? The panellists highlighted the current state of the Indian economy and its efforts to combat the COVID-19 crisis. They described their experiences operating businesses abroad in Canada, shared deep insights on understanding the trade relationships and seizing the opportunities in one of the largest growing economies, and reflected on what to expect as economies move towards a recovery post COVID-19.

### India's Economy and the Response to COVID-19

Similar to other countries globally, India has been deeply affected by the pandemic, which led to a 10.3 per cent contraction in its economy in 2020. Despite the significant challenges that India is facing with the current second wave, participants agreed that there are some optimistic signs of economic recovery in India, as highlighted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic forecast for 2021, which projected (at the time of the Council meeting) that India's economy would grow by 12.5 per cent.

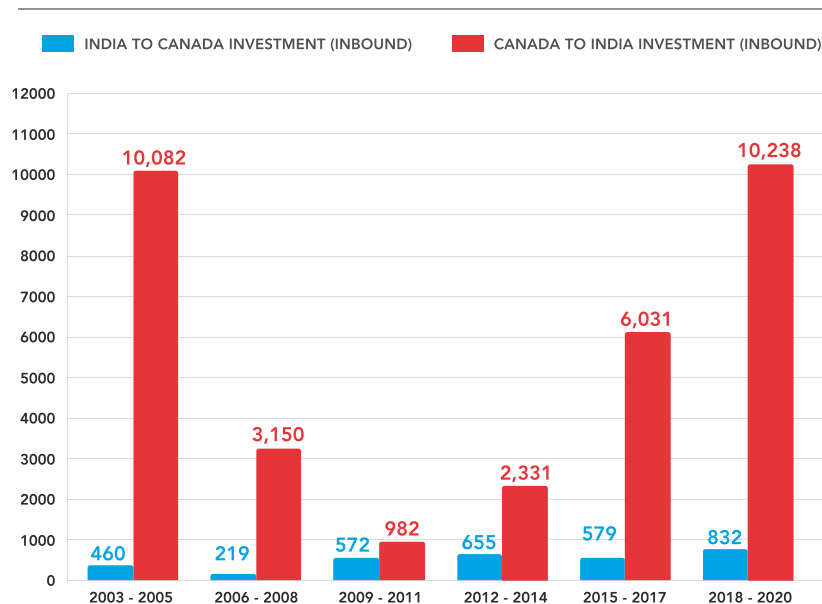
One participant observed that even in these uncertain times, the economic activity of India's second and third-tier cities is returning to normal, prompted by a series of relief measures announced by the Indian government, such as additional spending, temporary direct and indirect tax concessions, credit guarantees, and liquidity enhancement. The panellist further explained that stable and low interest rates should keep inflation under control and that privatization efforts undertaken by the government show the increasing confidence in and efficiency of the private sector. This is expected to attract large investment in the coming years, especially in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, automobiles, and electronics. "Foreign direct investment has been strong and even this year we expect almost \$50 billion worth of FDI coming into India," the panellist remarked. India's demographic advantage will also play in its favour, with India expected to become the most populous country on the planet by 2050, with a young population that will have strong influence on future consumption.

## Challenges and Opportunities in the Canada-India Partnership

After detailing the many ways India is becoming a vibrant, robust, dynamic economy in a region of the world quickly becoming a vital centre of gravity, another panellist highlighted the challenges that Canada faces in attracting investments from India, which the panellist characterized as a proximity issue and a lack of awareness. When Indian investors look West, they consider the United States as the default landing ground from which to also cover Canada, an economy they end up neglecting and conflating with the U.S. market. Indian investors remain unaware of the specificities of the Canadian context and its opportunities for investment. The panellist argued that it is the prerogative of investment promotion companies to build awareness about Canada and what the country can offer to attract investments from important economies such as India. The Canadian governments should do more to sell its competitive attributes to Indian investors. Canada has a lot to offer, such as a super cluster framework involving the digital and protein clusters, various incentives provided to investors by the federal government, and world class research and development facilities.

Another speaker added that Canada is India's 31st largest export partners and that India is Canada's 10th most important trade partner, emphasizing the potential to grow this two-way exchange. In terms of investment, Canada currently invests significantly more in India than the other way.

Canada-India Investments 2003 - 2020

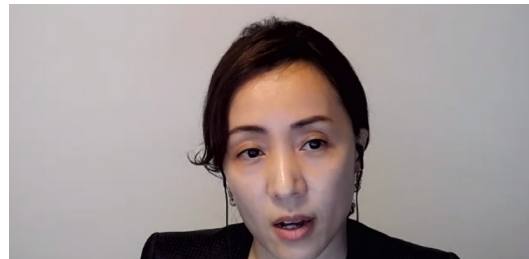


One speaker argued that India is in a unique situation and that almost every sector is likely to grow, as there is huge consumer demand for experiential, quality products and services across the board. In addition, the huge growing middle-income families are transforming India from a savings oriented economy to a spending economy. In addition to export opportunities, it is estimated that there will more than C\$6 trillion of investment opportunity in India by 2025. The panellists highlighted the specific business and investment opportunities in agriculture, addressing sustainability issues, and developing innovation and technology partnerships.

Regarding possibilities for strengthening the Canada-India partnership and helping Canada seize inherent economic and investment opportunities, one panellist stressed the importance of renewing discussions on a bilateral free trade agreement and an investment protection agreement. Various Canadian organizations and services can also be further leveraged, including the Indian Commission of Canada, Trade Commission Services, Export Development Canada, and the Indo-Canada Business Chamber. These organizations can help promote the required awareness about Canada to Indian investors and help exporters navigate the Indian market.

### Action Items:

- Better promote in India the attractiveness of the Canadian market and its consumers. Canada is a unique market, but it lacks visibility in India and is often conflated with the U.S. market. Canadian export promotion agencies need to build the awareness of Canada in India and highlight what the country can offer to attract investments and promote exports.
- Further educate Canadians about the opportunities in the Indian market. As stressed throughout the panel, India presents tremendous opportunities for Canadian exporters and investors. But opportunities in India remain unknown to many Canadian companies and businesses.
- Canada should negotiate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA) with India.



*ABLAC 2021 Session 3 Panel on Canada-India Trade and Investment Opportunities, featuring moderator Mairead Lavery, President and CEO of Export Development Canada, and featuring (clockwise) panellists Hari Bhartia, Founder and Co-Chairman of Jubilant Bhartia Group; Suyi Kim, Senior Managing Director and Head of Asia Pacific for CPP Investments; Ian McKay, CEO of Invest in Canada; and, NG Subramaniam, COO and Executive Director of Tata Consultancy Services.*

# MEETING PROGRAM

**Broad Diversification:**  
*Strengthening Canada-Asia Engagement After COVID-19*

**April 7, 2021**

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Description</b>
5:00pm PDT	<b>ABLAC 2021 Welcome Remarks</b>  <i>Stewart Beck, ABLAC Member and President &amp; CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada</i>
5:05pm PDT	<b>Opening Remarks and Introduction</b>  <i>Dr. Songyee Yoon, ABLAC 2021 Chair and CEO, NCSOFT West</i>
5:15pm PDT	<b>Canadian Ministers' Remarks</b>  <i>The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Canada (video remarks)</i>  <i>The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Natural Resources, Canada (video remarks)</i>
5:35pm PDT	<b>APF Canada Presentation: Setting the Stage for the Regional Sessions</b>  <i>Dr. Jeffrey Reeves, Vice-President, Research &amp; Strategy, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada</i>
5:50pm PDT	<b>Closing Remarks &amp; Transition to Regional Sessions</b>  <i>Stewart Beck, ABLAC Member and President &amp; CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada</i>



Date & Time	Description
6:00pm PDT	<b>Session I: Regional Discussion – Integrating Southeast Asia’s Digital Sector</b>

### How can Canada ride Southeast Asia’s digital wave?

Southeast Asia has been undergoing a rapid digital transformation, driven by rising consumer classes with increased disposable income, a strong startup sector, low-cost and accessible devices, and young and tech-savvy citizens who have embraced social media, e-commerce, and a variety of other online platforms. The pandemic has accelerated digital adoption in Southeast Asia, with its internet economy projected to remain on track to cross the threshold of US\$300 billion in gross merchandise value by 2025.

Home to tech unicorns such as Grab, Traveloka, and Gojek, the region has demonstrated not only its potential, but also its capacity as an innovator. The resilience of its digital sector shown through this pandemic suggests that Southeast Asia will remain a key player in this space, and presents enormous potential for Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs. However, the broader Southeast Asian region is “new” to many Canadians. How can Canada carve a space in Southeast Asia’s incredibly diverse and competitive digital market?

#### Moderator

**Dean Connor**, ABLAC Member and CEO, Sun Life Financial

#### Panellists

**Hafimi Abdul Haadii**, ABLAC Member and Executive Director, LVK Group of Companies

**Sue Paish**, ABLAC Member and CEO, Digital Technology Supercluster

**Chin Hwee Tan**, ABLAC Member and CEO, Asia-Pacific, Trafigura

Date & Time	Description
	<p data-bbox="557 447 987 474"><b>Suggested Discussion Questions</b></p> <p data-bbox="557 506 1271 569">What are some of the opportunities and challenges for Canadian entrepreneurs?</p> <p data-bbox="557 600 1320 699">What should an effective Canadian strategy in the region look like, considering the diversity and competitiveness of the region?</p> <p data-bbox="557 730 1292 793">What actions can be taken to particularly enable women entrepreneurs?</p> <p data-bbox="557 825 1287 924">How can Canada leverage connections in markets, such as Japan and South Korea, to help Canadian businesses succeed in Southeast Asia’s digital economy?</p> <p data-bbox="557 955 1282 1018">What are some specific action items for Canada (policy-makers and business) in the next year?</p> <p data-bbox="557 1050 959 1077">What are the barriers to entry?</p> <p data-bbox="557 1108 1049 1136">What strengths can Canada build on?</p>

6:00pm PDT

**Session II: Regional Discussion – Northeast Asia: Environment**

**Carbon neutrality commitments in Northeast Asia: Where are the opportunities for Canada?**

There has been a recent surge of carbon neutrality pledges around the world, especially in Northeast Asia. China, Japan, and South Korea all recently made ambitious pledges to slash carbon emissions to zero before 2060. They also released aggressive plans and strategies to help them achieve those goals.

While climate diplomacy and actions to reduce emissions following the Paris Agreement are not seen as being aggressive enough to limit global warming, Northeast Asia’s commitments have been welcomed and may revive global efforts to tackle climate change. This could lead to a re-engineering of the global economy inclusive of eliminating global greenhouse gas emissions, presenting an opportunity for Canada to leverage its strengths and take a leadership role.

Date & Time	Description
	<p><b>Moderator</b>  <b>Susannah Pierce</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and President &amp; Country Chair, Shell Canada</i></p>
	<p><b>Panellists</b>  <b>Tim Gitzel</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and President &amp; CEO, Cameco Corporation</i></p> <p><b>Michael ByungJu Kim</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and Founder &amp; Partner, MBK Partners</i></p> <p><b>Kenny Lam</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and CEO, Two Sigma Asia Pacific</i></p> <p><b>Mark Wiseman</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and Global Investment Manager</i></p>
	<p><b>Suggested Discussion Questions</b></p> <p>How significant are the region’s net-zero emission pledges and how might they impact Canada’s own climate policies and commitments?</p> <p>How can Canada leverage its strengths to help and collaborate with Northeast Asian countries to reach their climate goals?</p> <p>What are the commercial opportunities for Canada in Northeast Asia’s ambitious net-zero greenhouse gas emissions schemes?</p> <p>Can Canada become a global leader in green technologies that will help reduce emissions?</p> <p>What specific opportunities are there for Canada under the Korean New Deal?</p> <p>What actions can be taken to particularly enable women entrepreneurs?</p> <p>How will this change the way we do business?</p>

April 8, 2021

Date & Time

Description

6:00am PDT

Session III: Regional Discussion –  
South Asia/India: Trade & Investment Opportunities

**Has the time come for stronger Canada-India trade and investment relations?**

India is a huge untapped market for Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs. It is poised to become the world's most populous country within the coming decade. And despite experiencing some challenges dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the country is expected to bounce back to 8.8 per cent GDP growth in 2021.

While India is a priority market for Canada, the country also presents challenges. Although Canada and India have a longstanding bilateral relationship, India remains Canada's 10th largest overall trade partner. India has been a challenging market for Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs, but significant improvements are being made in terms of accessibility. Has the time come for stronger Canada-India trade and investment relations?

**Moderator**

**Mairead Lavery**, ABLAC Member and President and CEO,  
Export Development Canada

**Panellists**

**Hari Bhartia**, ABLAC Member and Founder and  
Co-Chairman, Jubilant Bhartia Group

**Suyi Kim**, Senior Managing Director & Head of Asia Pacific,  
CPP Investments

**Ian McKay**, CEO, Invest in Canada

**N Ganapathy (NG) Subramaniam**, ABLAC Member and  
COO & Executive Director, Tata Consultancy Services

Date & Time	Description
	<p data-bbox="548 436 982 478"><b>Suggested Discussion Questions</b></p> <p data-bbox="548 499 1357 573">India is increasingly connected to global supply chains. What challenges and opportunities does this present for Canada?</p> <p data-bbox="548 594 1279 667">How does the current U.S.-China conflict alter Canada's approach to India?</p> <p data-bbox="548 688 1357 762">Should Canada prioritize an FTA with India? What can we do outside of an FTA?</p> <p data-bbox="548 783 1300 856">Do Canada and India need a reset on trade negotiations/ CEPA?</p> <p data-bbox="548 877 1193 919">Is India a suitable market for first-time exporters?</p> <p data-bbox="548 940 1333 1014">Is Canada succeeding in the Indian market? What priorities/ reconsiderations should be made?</p> <p data-bbox="548 1035 1357 1108">How well is Canada doing in the Indian market (market share, networks)?</p> <p data-bbox="548 1129 1258 1203">What resources are available specifically for the Indian market?</p> <p data-bbox="548 1224 1274 1297">What can be done at a sub-national level to drive more region-to-region trade and investment?</p>

**5:00pm PDT**

**Governance Session (ABLAC Members Only)**

**Moderated by**  
**Dr. Songyee Yoon**, *ABLAC 2021 Chair and CEO, NCSOFT West*

**5:30pm PDT**

**ABLAC 2021 Closing Introduction**

**Stewart Beck**, *ABLAC Member and President & CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada*

**5:35pm PDT**

**Remarks by The Honourable Marc Garneau**,  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada**

Date & Time	Description
5:40pm PDT	<p data-bbox="537 453 821 485"><b>Keynote Presentation</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 512 1349 646"><b>Mark Carney</b>, <i>Vice Chair and Head of ESG and Impact Fund Investing, Brookfield Asset Management; Former Governor of the Bank of England; and, Former Governor of the Bank of Canada</i></p>
5:50pm PDT	<p data-bbox="537 695 1325 726"><b>Fireside Chat: Mark Carney &amp; Ambassador Dominic Barton</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 753 1349 888"><b>Mark Carney</b>, <i>Vice Chair and Head of ESG and Impact Fund Investing, Brookfield Asset Management; Former Governor of the Bank of England; and, Former Governor of the Bank of Canada</i></p> <p data-bbox="537 915 1284 982"><b>Ambassador Dominic Barton</b>, <i>ABLAC Honorary Chair &amp; Ambassador of Canada to China</i></p>
6:10pm PDT	<p data-bbox="537 1031 1349 1062"><b>Summary of Regional Discussions and Key Recommendations</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 1089 735 1121">Moderated by</p> <p data-bbox="537 1127 1341 1194"><b>Goldy Hyder</b>, <i>ABLAC 2021 Vice-Chair and President &amp; CEO, Business Council of Canada</i></p> <p data-bbox="537 1222 667 1253">Speakers</p> <ul data-bbox="537 1281 1373 1560" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="537 1281 1325 1348">• <b>Session I: Dean Connor</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and CEO, Sun Life Financial</i></li> <li data-bbox="537 1383 1373 1451">• <b>Session II: Susannah Pierce</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and President &amp; Country Chair, Shell Canada</i></li> <li data-bbox="537 1486 1373 1560">• <b>Session III: Mairead Lavery</b>, <i>ABLAC Member and President and CEO, Export Development Canada</i></li> </ul>
6:35pm PDT	<p data-bbox="537 1608 930 1640"><b>Thank You and Final Remarks</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 1667 1317 1728"><b>Dr. Songyee Yoon</b>, <i>ABLAC 2021 Chair and CEO, NCSOFT West</i></p>

## ABOUT

# THE ASIA BUSINESS LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council (ABLAC) is a high-level group of Asian and Canadian business leaders established by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) in 2016.

Convened annually to identify and articulate opportunities for improved Canadian-Asian business engagement, APF Canada established the Asia Business Leaders Advisory Council for two purposes. First, the Council builds a powerful platform for networking and business development that can help catalyze stronger commercial and investment opportunities between Canada and Asia. Second, it provides strategic information, counsel, and advice to a select group of Canada's high-level political representatives from the federal and provincial governments with the aim of strengthening Canada's strategic engagement with the region.

ABLAC is a critical forum to catalyze dialogue and action, with a specific focus on targeted changes to policies and laws that inhibit, or can advance, Canada-Asia engagement.

ABLAC seeks to:

- Affect change in Canadian government attitudes and actions by directly engaging officials on a Canada-Asia strategy;
- Share Canadian government policy and strategic direction with Asian government and private sector leaders, explore perspectives, and test impact;
- Support a co-ordinated and aligned 'broad diversification' approach to Canada's engagement with the region;
- Foster Canada's reputation as a progressive and stable democracy, with high-value products and services, as an attractive business destination for stakeholders in Asia; and,
- Encourage Canada to build the necessary toolkit of trade instruments and 'Asia competent' talent for better integration in Asian markets.



These objectives are more important now than ever before. By nearly all measures, both pre- and post-pandemic, the Asia Pacific is and will remain the world's most dynamic region in terms of economic growth and innovation and home to many of the world's fastest-growing economies, critical resources, capital, key supply chains, and world-leading technologies.

APF Canada has an ambitious vision for our country: to seize the moment and lead Canada to the next level of engagement with Asia. Canada stands to benefit significantly from Asia's growth and innovation, but we need to think strategically and creatively about what we need to do, and how we need to do it. It is imperative that business leaders from across Canada and Asia meet collectively, debate key issues, and sit at the forefront of this discussion.



*ABLAC 2021 Chair, Dr. Songyee Yoon, addressed ABLAC members and guests.*

## ABOUT

# THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) is a not-for-profit organization focused on Canada's relations with Asia. Our mission is to be Canada's catalyst for engagement with Asia and Asia's bridge to Canada. We are dedicated to strengthening ties between Canada and Asia with a focus on seven thematic areas:

- [Business Asia: Trade and Investment](#)
- [Perspectives Asia: Surveys and Polling](#)
- [Strategic Asia: Regional Security](#)
- [Digital Asia: Digital Technologies](#)
- [Engaging Asia: Domestic Networks](#)
- [Sustainable Asia: Sustainable Development](#)
- [Education: Asia Competency](#)

Our research provides high-quality, relevant, and timely information, insights, and perspectives on Canada-Asia relations. Providing policy considerations and business intelligence for stakeholders across the Asia Pacific, our work includes [Reports](#), [Policy Briefs](#), [Case Studies](#), [Dispatches](#), [Digital Media](#), and a regular [Asia Watch](#) newsletter that together support these thematic areas.

## ASIA WATCH

Canada's leading analysis on Asian affairs

*The latest news, issues, and analysis on Asia from our research team*

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## HOW CAN APF CANADA HELP YOU?

APF Canada works with business, government, and academic stakeholders to provide custom research, data, briefings, and Asia Competency training. Through our data-driven research, transpacific networks, and proven convening capabilities, we are uniquely positioned to help you achieve the ‘next level’ of Canada-Asia engagement through enhanced trade, investment, and innovation connectivity.

Our [services](#) include:

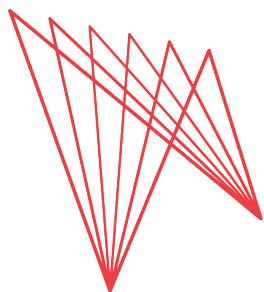
- **Advisory Services**  
Expert briefings, strategy workshops, and tailored research.
- **Data Analysis**  
Actionable, business-relevant, curated data and intelligence designed to inform decision making.
- **Education & Training**  
‘Asia competency’ training for professionals, from the staffroom to the boardroom.
- **Network Facilitation**  
Business acclimatization and networking opportunities between Canada and Asia’s industry groups and corporate stakeholders.

If your company is interested in any of APF Canada’s services, please contact [lauren.chang@asiapacific.ca](mailto:lauren.chang@asiapacific.ca).

We would be pleased to propose a custom solution to meet your needs.

Contact us at [info@asiapacific.ca](mailto:info@asiapacific.ca)

Visit APF Canada at [www.asiapacific.ca](http://www.asiapacific.ca)



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