
2ND CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH REPORT

THEMATIC ANALYSIS



2ND CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ATLANTIC CANADA

FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
ATLANTIC CANADA AND REST OF
THE WORLD



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Executive Summary

The 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada, held from May 15–17, 2025, in Moncton, New Brunswick, brought together over 120 delegates, including government leaders, business executives, scholars, youth representatives, international diplomats, and entrepreneurs from Canada, Africa, Europe, and beyond. Hosted by the City Institute of Higher Learning, the conference aimed to address the economic challenges posed by recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian exports while exploring innovative pathways for sustainable growth, trade diversification, entrepreneurship, and international collaboration.

A focal point of the conference was the escalating trade tensions between Canada and the United States, particularly the imposition of U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods and the subsequent retaliatory measures by Canada. This report delves into the ramifications of these tariffs on the Atlantic Canadian economy, with a concentrated examination of New Brunswick's economic indicators over the past years, including growth rates, demographic trends, investment opportunities, business developments, entrepreneurship platforms, and government support initiatives. Furthermore, it explores diverse strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the tariffs and bolster economic resilience in the region.

Core Themes and Purpose

The conference was framed with five critical economic themes:

- **Impact of U.S. Tariffs on Atlantic Canada**
- **Trade Diversification and International Partnerships**
- **Entrepreneurship, Youth Engagement, and Economic Innovation**
- **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in International Business**
- **Strategic Francophone Economic Partnership in an Era of Global Realignment**

Through three full days, keynote speakers, expert panels, and special guests explored these themes through data-rich presentations, real-world case studies, and strategic planning sessions that culminated in policy recommendations, partnership MoUs, and future action items.

1. Thematic Area 1: Impact of U.S. Tariffs on Atlantic Canada

1.1 Overview

Atlantic Canada has historically relied on the U.S. as its primary trading partner due to geographical proximity, shared infrastructure, and decades of trade alignment. However, recent waves of protectionist trade policies—including increased tariffs on key Canadian exports like softwood lumber, aluminum, and seafood—have deeply disrupted traditional economic patterns. This thematic session brought together economic leaders, trade policy experts, and international diplomats to assess the full implications of these tariffs and to recommend robust, multi-tiered responses.

1.2 Economic Adaptation in New Brunswick

1.2.1 Key Insight from Campbell: David Campbell, renowned economic development strategist, opened the session by calling the tariffs “a wake-up call for economic self-determination.” He presented data showing that New Brunswick’s export-dependent sectors lost over CAD 180 million in potential trade revenues from 2018 to 2024 due to American tariffs.

1.2.2 Sectoral Highlights:

- **Renewal Energy:** A huge investment from the government but is open for massive intra-international partnership.
- **Forestry and Wood Products:** Experienced a 13% reduction in U.S. market share from 2019 to 2023.
- **Seafood Exports:** Shrimp and snow crab processors reported a 20–25% reduction in U.S. orders in 2024.
- **Aluminum Manufacturing:** Smaller producers have reported operational cuts, with over 600 jobs at risk in the Bay of Chaleur region alone.

1.2.3 Resilience Metrics:

Despite these challenges, New Brunswick’s GDP grew by 1.4% in 2024, and its unemployment rate held at 7.2%, buoyed by investments in clean energy, agri-food processing, and logistics infrastructure. Campbell credited this resilience to “diversification in action,” including expanded trade with the rest of the world.

1.3 Tariffs and Labour Market Disruption

1.3.1 Key Insight from Jonathan: Jonathan Duffaud, President of the Economic Council of New Brunswick, stressed that the U.S. tariffs had a disproportionately negative impact on small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and rural employment.

1.3.2 Economic Impacts:

- 2.1% employment decline in export-driven sectors across Atlantic Canada.
- Slowed SME formation: Startup registrations fell by 18% in 2023 compared to 2019 in tariff-affected sectors.
- Labour force disengagement among youth and mid-career workers due to market instability.

1.3.3 Regional Data Snapshot (2024):

- Population: 834,691
- Net Immigration: 10,243 (yearly)
- Labour Force Participation Rate: 61.7%
- Youth Unemployment (ages 18–25): 13.1%

1.3.4 Policy Direction: Duffaud argued for a coordinated Atlantic-wide strategy to mitigate risk exposure, advocating for:

- Incentivizing exports to non-U.S. markets
- Enhancing the resilience of local supply chains
- Expanding interprovincial labour mobility programs

1.4 Economic Culture as Strategic Leverage

1.4.1 Key Insight from Francesco: Francesco Calazzo, Director General for Economic Development in Southeast New Brunswick, provided a cultural-economic perspective. He asserted that the region's bilingual and multicultural identity could be harnessed as a strategic counterweight to U.S. economic dependency.

1.4.2 Data Point: As of 2024, foreign-born residents make up 20% of the population in Southeast New Brunswick, with Francophone immigrants forming the largest subgroup.

1.4.3 Opportunities Highlighted:

- **Francophone Trade Corridors** with West Africa and Europe
- **Bilingual SME Expansion Programs** focused on tourism, e-commerce, and creative industries
- **Intercultural Entrepreneurial Networks** to support immigrant business formation

Calazzo emphasized the importance of creating a Francophone Economic Forum, which would serve as a platform to negotiate trade alliances and promote inclusive economic development rooted in cultural diplomacy.

1.5 Tapping into the EU through CETA

1.5.1 Key Insight from Cahuet: French Consul General Bertrand Cahuet stressed that Canada–EU CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) remains underutilized by Atlantic Canadian businesses. He cited France’s leading global position in pharmaceuticals, agri-food, and green energy sectors as fertile ground for cross-continental trade collaboration.

1.5.2 Proposed Pathways:

- Establishing **EU-certified trade offices** in Halifax and Moncton
- Joint research funding for **clean technology innovation**
- Expansion of the **Atlantic–France R&D and University Exchange Program**

1.6 Africa as a Counterbalance

1.6.1 Key Insight from Cyriaque Kiti: Honorary Consul of Benin and AFREMAC CEO Cyriaque Kodjovi Kiti proposed diversifying trade toward Francophone Africa, where Canadian exports remain competitive and welcome.

1.6.2 Trade Metrics (Canada–Francophone Africa):

- CAD 1.8 billion in bilateral trade (2024)
- 22% growth in trade since 2018
- Top sectors: Renewable energy, ICT, agri-processing, tourism

1.6.3 Strategic Opportunities:

- Direct Canadian investment in solar mini-grid projects in Benin
- Export of Atlantic Canadian value-added seafood and wood products to West Africa
- Collaborations in youth-focused entrepreneurship incubators.

1.7 Detailed Action Plan: Responding to U.S. Tariff Pressures

Action Area	Recommended Measures
Export Market Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leverage CETA with France and the EU- Establish new trade agreements with Ghana, Madagascar, Benin
Sectoral Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reinvest in wood innovation and seafood processing- Scale up clean energy infrastructure
Workforce Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Expand immigration pathways for skilled trades- Launch regional upskilling programs
Trade Diplomacy & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Form Francophone Economic Council- Strengthen diaspora-led trade diplomacy efforts
SME Support Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch Export Resilience Grants- Create shared shipping and distribution hubs

1.8 Conclusions and Next Steps

The speakers concluded that while the economic damage from U.S. tariffs is real and persistent, it has catalyzed a strategic awakening. Atlantic Canada can no longer afford to rely solely on its southern neighbor. Instead, it must now capitalize on:

- its cultural richness,
- natural resource abundance,
- youth-driven entrepreneurship,
- and international goodwill.

2. Thematic Area 2: Trade Diversification and International Partnerships

2.1 Overview

Trade diversification was a prominent theme at the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada. Recognizing the vulnerabilities created by an over-reliance on the U.S. market, especially in light of recent tariff regimes, speakers underscored the urgency of cultivating new economic partnerships with Europe, Africa, and Asia. They emphasized aligning these efforts with local innovation capacity, regional bilingual advantage, and the rich multicultural base of Atlantic Canada. Speakers highlighted the benefits of bilateral agreements, economic diplomacy, and transcontinental collaboration as the foundations for building a more secure and inclusive trade environment.

2. Economic Engagement through Cultural Diplomacy

2.2.1 Key Insight from Mr. Calazzo: Francesco Calazzo, Director General of Economic Development at the Southeast New Brunswick Regional Service Commission, framed trade diversification as an extension of cultural diplomacy. According to Calazzo, Canada’s bilingual foundation (English and French) presents not only a sociocultural asset but also a strategic economic tool that can unlock new global trade corridors—particularly with Francophone Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Francesco also reiterated: “Our languages are not just modes of communication; they are channels for trust, diplomacy, and trade.”

2.2.2 Statistical Context:

- 28% of New Brunswick’s population speaks both English and French (2024)
- Over 21% of the population in southeastern New Brunswick are foreign-born
- Francophone immigrants make up nearly 45% of new arrivals in Moncton and Dieppe

2.2.3 Strategic Recommendations:

- **Establish a Francophone Economic Forum** as a permanent regional structure to facilitate trade relationships with other Francophone regions.
- **Develop bilingual SME trade accelerators** to help local companies market products and services to international partners.
- **Invest in translation and localization technologies** to remove language barriers in exports and marketing.
- **Launch cultural trade expos** that bring together diplomats, trade ministers, and private sector actors from Europe and Africa.

2.3 Madagascar as a Gateway

2.3.1 Key Insight from Dr. Rodriguez: Representing Madagascar, Dr. Maha Rodriguez Rodolpho Razafimaharo described her country as a resource-rich, investment-ready gateway to African and Indian Ocean markets. With over 80% of the world's vanilla supply, vast mineral reserves, and a rapidly digitizing youthful population, Madagascar was presented as a natural trade partner for Canada.

2.3.2 Opportunities in Madagascar:

- **Sustainable agriculture and agro-processing**
- **Renewable energy**, especially solar and hydropower
- **Rare-earth mining** and clean-tech manufacturing
- **Ecotourism** ventures for Canadian investors

2.3.3 Madagascar's Economic Snapshot (2024):

- Population: 30.3 million (62% under age 25)
- GDP Growth (2024): 4.9%
- Top Exports: Vanilla, nickel, cobalt, textiles, precious stones

Dr. Razafimaharo proposed the creation of a Canada–Madagascar Economic Cooperation Agreement that could streamline investment regulations, reduce double taxation, and create scholarships for Malagasy students to study in Atlantic Canadian universities.

2.4 Ghana as a Hub for Shared Growth

2.4.1 Key Insight from Dr. Acheampong: Dr. Maxwell Acheampong offered an in-depth analysis of Ghana's entrepreneurial ecosystem, citing its pro-business policies, strategic location in West Africa, and status as host to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat.

2.4.2 Trade and Collaboration Opportunities:

- **Agri-business ventures:** leveraging Ghana’s “One District, One Factory” policy
- **Green tech innovation:** co-developing solar-powered irrigation systems
- **Digital financial services:** mobile payments, remittance systems
- **Education exchanges:** knowledge sharing on entrepreneurship and agriculture

2.4.3 Ghana's Economic Performance:

- GDP Growth (2024): 4.6%
- Inflation Rate: 9.8%
- FDI Inflows (2023): USD 3.1 billion
- 70% of businesses are SMEs; majority youth-led

Dr. Acheampong proposed a Canada–Ghana Innovation Exchange Platform, supported by government agencies and universities, to encourage co-investment in sustainable agritech, food value chains, and research partnerships.

2.5 European Union Integration Through CETA

2.5.1 Key Insight from Bertrand Cahuet: Consul General Bertrand Cahuet from France emphasized that the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) remains a critical but underused channel for Atlantic Canada. He cited France’s role as a major EU economy—with advanced sectors in biotech, cosmetics, fashion, and renewable energy as especially synergistic with Atlantic Canada’s innovation and natural resources.

2.5.2 Key Recommendations:

- Prioritize **CETA export readiness programs** in seafood, wood products, and clean tech.
- Expand **French language training for exporters**, targeting EU regulatory systems.
- Fund **academic and industry-based exchanges** in environmental sciences and agriculture.

2.6 Policy Recommendations and Strategic Action Plan

Area	Proposed Action Steps
Trade Infrastructure Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch Canada–Africa Economic Development Forum- Strengthen CETA compliance training
Entrepreneurial Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create the Atlantic Global Entrepreneurship Fund- Fund entrepreneur visa pathways
Bilateral Trade Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Negotiate MOUs with Madagascar and Ghana- Develop Francophone Economic Pacts
Innovation and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Co-invest in Atlantic–African agritech pilot farms- Set up EU–Canada joint R&D labs
Diaspora Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establish diaspora business directories- Launch mentorship programs for youth-led enterprises

2.7 Conclusion

Trade diversification is no longer a future ambition but a present-day necessity for Atlantic Canada. Speakers and workshop participants made it clear that the tools for transformation—language, innovation, diplomacy, and entrepreneurship—already exist within the region. What is now required is political will, institutional leadership, and community mobilization to act on these opportunities.

As global tensions and protectionist policies rise, Atlantic Canada’s success will depend on how well it can cultivate long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships across continents, with trade agreements and diplomatic channels rooted in shared economic goals, cultural exchange, and inclusive innovation.

3. Thematic Area 3: Entrepreneurship, Youth Engagement, and Economic Innovation

3.1 Overview

The 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada reinforced the central role of entrepreneurship and youth engagement in catalyzing economic transformation. In the face of rising trade tensions and demographic shifts, stakeholders emphasized a need to build entrepreneurial ecosystems that are inclusive, innovation-led, and globally connected. Thematic Area 3 explored how Atlantic Canada, in partnership with nations like Ghana and France, can harness young talent, leverage knowledge economies, and create platforms for inclusive business development.

3.2 Key contributions to this theme included:

- **Dr. Maxwell Acheampong**, who connected Ghana’s youth-led innovation to Atlantic Canadian business models
- **Fatoumata Guindo**, who moderated a youth and entrepreneurship panel
- **Francesco Calazzo** and **Jonathan Duffaud**, who both stressed immigrant and youth entrepreneurship as a growth lever
- Insights from workshops and MoU ceremonies that focused on startup ecosystems, cross-border innovation, and institutional support

3.3 Ghana’s Youth-Led Innovation as a Model

3.3.1 Key Highlights from Dr. Maxwell Acheampong: “Youth entrepreneurship is not a side project it is the core business model of emerging economies,” Dr. Acheampong declared in his session. He positioned Ghana’s youth entrepreneurial ecosystem as a living model of resilience, one Atlantic Canada should both learn from and collaborate with.

3.3.2 Key Data (Ghana, 2024):

- 70% of SMEs in Ghana are youth-led
- Agriculture employs 38% of youth entrepreneurs
- Tech-based ventures are the fastest-growing sector in urban Ghana

3.3.3 Acheampong highlighted Ghana's initiatives:

- **One District, One Factory (1D1F):** Over 140 factories have been set up to support agribusiness and local manufacturing
- **NEIP (National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme):** Offering capital, training, and incubation for startups
- **Ghana Startup Bill (pending):** A framework for protecting and scaling startup ventures nationally and internationally

3.3.4 Proposed Collaboration:

- Co-founding youth-led agritech ventures
- Joint tech hubs in Moncton and Accra
- Student exchange programs on entrepreneurship education

3.4 Youth Entrepreneurship Panel – Moderated by Fatoumata Guindo

3.4.1 Panel Overview: Fatoumata Guindo led a high-energy panel discussion with four young entrepreneurs from across Atlantic Canada. Each panelist represented a sector: green innovation, digital education, healthcare, and creative industries.

3.4.2 Challenges Identified:

- **Access to Capital:** Traditional banking systems were seen as rigid and risk averse.
- **Mentorship Gaps:** Many young entrepreneurs lack access to seasoned business advisors.
- **Policy Barriers:** Licensing, taxes, and zoning laws are not designed with startups in mind.
- **Market Penetration:** Limited visibility for small businesses outside their province or region.

3.4.3 Opportunities Shared:

- Leveraging immigration entrepreneurship streams to attract skilled founders
- Using municipal procurement to prioritize youth-owned businesses
- Building regional startup competitions to foster business exposure and capital inflow

3.5 Strategic Investment in Innovation

Jonathan Duffaud emphasized innovation as a strategic necessity for navigating economic volatility. He argued that if Atlantic Canada wishes to retain talent, it must not only incubate entrepreneurship but also support scale-up infrastructure for SMEs.

3.5.1 Proposed Action Plan:

- **Create Interprovincial Talent Corridors:** To reduce regional fragmentation and increase entrepreneurial mobility
- **Cybersecurity and Green Tech Zones:** Designed specifically for youth entrepreneurs with R&D potential

Duffaud also noted that small businesses led by individuals under 35 have higher rates of employment generation and are more likely to adopt sustainable, tech-first approaches.

3.6 Leveraging Multiculturalism for Innovation

Calazzo extended the conversation by connecting youth innovation with diversity and immigration. He pointed out that over 40% of immigrant-led businesses in Southeastern New Brunswick are under 5 years old many of which are tech-enabled and digitally scalable.

3.6.1 Strategic Insight:

- Support for Francophone immigrant entrepreneurs is underutilized
- Bilingual and bicultural youth are more likely to scale across national markets
- Cultural diplomacy and entrepreneurship should be integrated in trade missions and innovation strategy

He advocated for co-branded international accelerators, where immigrant and local youth collaborate to build businesses in sectors like green construction, food tech, and Healthcare Projects.

3.7 Strategic Action Plan for Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Priority Area	Proposed Action Items
Startup Capital Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch the Atlantic Youth Innovation Fund (AYIF) for early-stage businesses
Mentorship & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establish Bilingual Incubators with mentorship from immigrant entrepreneurs
Policy & Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advocate for a Youth Entrepreneurial Charter to streamline registration and tax
Technology Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create AI and Clean Tech Hubs for youth-led innovation in Moncton and Halifax
International Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop Atlantic–Africa Youth Innovation Exchange Program
Visibility & Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Host annual Youth-Led Business Expo with partners from Europe and West Africa

3.8 Conclusion

Entrepreneurship and youth innovation are no longer peripheral issues; they are central pillars of economic survival and growth. The 2nd Conference made it abundantly clear that supporting young entrepreneurs—through capital, education, policy reform, and international networking—must become a strategic priority. By investing in youth and empowering a new generation of builders, innovators, and leaders, Atlantic Canada can position itself as not just a region of resilience but one of regeneration.

4. Thematic Area 4: Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in International Business

4.1 Overview

As global trade relationships deepen and diversify, the risk of international business conflicts ranging from contract breaches to intellectual property disputes become more pronounced. Traditional court systems often prove time-consuming, costly, and jurisdictionally complex. At the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada, this thematic area focused on the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a pragmatic, efficient, and equitable method to manage such conflicts. The goal was to integrate ADR into the broader strategy of economic globalization, especially between Atlantic Canada and emerging markets such as Ghana, Madagascar, Benin, and France. Leading this conversation were:

- **Dr. Abigail Acheampong and Dr. Maxwell Acheampong**, legal scholars and ADR practitioners from Ghana
- Several entrepreneurs and policy actors who underscored ADR's importance for SMEs, startups, and cross-border joint ventures
- Institutional support through the MoU signed between the City Institute of Higher Learning (Canada) and ADR Ghana

4.2 Mainstreaming ADR in Global Business

4.2.1 Key Insights from Dr. Acheampong: Dr Acheampong emphasized that: “The rise of cross-border business demands mechanisms that are culturally sensitive, less adversarial, and cost-efficient; ADR offers precisely that.”

The Acheampongs presented a robust overview of ADR, explaining its three main forms:

- **Mediation:** Neutral third-party facilitation of mutually acceptable resolutions
- **Arbitration:** Binding resolution by an agreed-upon third-party expert
- **Negotiation:** Informal discussions directly between parties

They highlighted ADR as a bridge between global legal systems, offering practical benefits in cases where:

- Jurisdictional ambiguity exists
- Parties want to maintain long-term relationships
- Costs and time must be minimized

4.3 Youth and Entrepreneurship Perspective on ADR

Fatoumata Guindo’s youth entrepreneurship panel also touched on the role of ADR in resolving early-stage business conflicts. Young entrepreneurs emphasized the need for:

- Conflict-prevention training as part of startup incubation programs
- Accessible platforms for peer mediation and grievance redress
- Legal literacy, especially for entrepreneurs from immigrant backgrounds navigating multiple legal frameworks

One panelist shared how ADR training through a community legal clinic helped them resolve a trademark dispute with a competitor without litigation—preserving reputation and minimizing costs.

4.4 Global Need for ADR in Modern Trade Ecosystems

As trade becomes more complex and digital, ADR is increasingly relevant in:

- **Intellectual Property (IP) disputes**
- **E-commerce conflicts**
- **Partnership disputes involving multiple jurisdictions**
- **Investor–State Dispute Settlements (ISDS)** in foreign direct investments

4.5 Supporting Data:

- According to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), ADR settlements resolve 78% of cases within 90 days
- SMEs that use ADR report 45% less expenditure on legal conflict annually
- 56% of international trade disputes involve contractual misunderstandings that could be resolved through mediation

4.6 Institutional Collaboration: MoU Between City Institute & ADR Ghana

4.6.1 Introduction

One of the most defining and symbolic moments of the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada was the formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between City Institute of Higher Learning, Canada, represented by its President, Prof. Dieu Hack-Polay, and ADR Ghana, represented by its Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Maxwell Acheampong. The agreement was forged as a strategic partnership to promote knowledge transfer, international cooperation, and the development of conflict resolution mechanisms through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) education and practice between Canada and Ghana.

This collaboration serves as a significant milestone in transatlantic cooperation, particularly in the realm of professional education, business conflict arbitration, and international development. The signing was witnessed by high-level dignitaries, delegates, academia, media representatives, and private sector stakeholders, marking a turning point for both institutions.

4.6.2 Background: The Necessity for International Educational Cooperation

The MoU was born out of ongoing dialogues between City Institute and ADR Ghana, which identified a clear gap in the global understanding and accessibility of ADR as a mechanism for resolving international business disputes. With increasing globalization, particularly between Canada and African nations like Ghana, the frequency of cross-border commercial engagements has risen exponentially. This economic interconnection requires robust, efficient, and culturally sensitive methods to manage disputes without reverting to costly and prolonged litigation.

In the context of the ongoing U.S.–Canada tariff challenges, businesses and academic institutions are actively seeking new partners and avenues for cooperation outside traditional North American boundaries. The MoU was thus aligned with the conference's overarching theme—expanding Atlantic Canada's global economic reach.

4.6.3 Objectives of the MoU

The agreement aims to foster collaboration in the following areas:

- Curriculum Development – Joint design and implementation of ADR-focused academic and professional programs, especially tailored to cross-border commercial and civil disputes.
- Research Exchange – Promotion of collaborative research, publications, and conferences on topics relating to ADR, entrepreneurship, and economic diplomacy.
- Student and Faculty Exchange – Opportunities for cross-cultural education and practice between Ghanaian and Canadian students and faculty.
- Online Learning Platforms – Development of digital infrastructure to deliver high-quality ADR training accessible to students in both countries.
- Capacity Building – Mutual efforts to train mediators, arbitrators, and legal professionals with context-specific and internationally relevant ADR skills.

4.6.4 MoU Remarks by Prof. Dieu Hack-Polay

Prof. Hack-Polay highlighted that the MoU is not merely a symbolic agreement but a strategic alliance that carries the potential to transform international relations and education between the two regions. He stated:

“This MoU with ADR Ghana is the first of many that City Institute envisions across the African continent. It is our commitment to expand not just our geographic footprint but to extend knowledge, peace-building, and economic cooperation in practical ways.”

He emphasized that one of the key pillars of the partnership will be to develop practitioners who understand both the legal complexities and the cultural nuances required to resolve disputes amicably and professionally in a global business environment. He also acknowledged that as Atlantic Canada seeks economic diversification, it is vital that the next generation of professionals is globally competent and equipped with tools such as ADR.

4.6.5 MoU Remarks by Dr. Maxwell Acheampong

In his remarks, Dr. Maxwell Acheampong, CEO of ADR Ghana, expressed immense pride in what he described as “a historic educational and diplomatic milestone.” He emphasized that the partnership aims to develop a Pan-Atlantic ADR curriculum that leverages both Canadian and Ghanaian legal traditions while addressing modern business conflicts.

He shared some sobering statistics from Ghana and the wider West African region: about 72% of commercial disputes among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) never reach resolution due to lack of affordable legal channels. ADR, he noted, has already proven to be a cost-effective and time-efficient alternative, especially in sectors like agriculture, import/export, and infrastructure development. By partnering with a reputable Canadian institution, ADR Ghana hopes to standardize practices and scale capacity across Africa.

Dr. Acheampong also reiterated that the partnership goes beyond legal training to include the promotion of ethical entrepreneurship, business leadership, and cultural diplomacy. He invited the City Institute to consider expanding into other areas of professional development such as digital transformation, entrepreneurship, agribusiness, and public administration.

4.7 Importance of ADR in Global Trade

The ceremony and subsequent discussions shed light on the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution as a key enabler of global trade and investment protection. Businesses across the globe lose billions of dollars annually due to unresolved disputes. In contrast, ADR offers a non-adversarial approach that often leads to win-win outcomes.

In today's economic environment—where supply chains are international and partners are increasing culturally and legally diverse—ADR provides a framework for peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and legal certainty. The partnership will also explore hybrid dispute resolution methods that combine arbitration with mediation, specifically tailored for cross-border business engagements in Africa and Canada.

4.8 Educational Innovations Under the MoU

City Institute of Higher Learning, as a leading institution in Atlantic Canada, will spearhead a number of educational initiatives under this MoU:

- **Joint Certification Programs** in ADR, Arbitration Law, International Negotiation, and Conflict Mediation.
- **Annual Atlantic-Africa ADR Conference**, alternating between Canada and Ghana.
- **Virtual Learning Labs** are equipped with simulation tools for mediation and arbitration.
- **Co-publication of Research Journals and Case Studies** on dispute resolution in emerging markets.
- **Internship Programs** with real-life case participation for students in both countries.

This comprehensive educational framework ensures that students, legal practitioners, and policymakers gain practical skills alongside academic knowledge.

4.8.1 Economic Impact and Policy Relevance

Beyond education, the MoU has significant implications for Canada-Africa trade relations, especially in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). By preparing more professionals skilled in ADR, both countries are enhancing trade security, investment protection, and dispute prevention frameworks, thereby making their economies more attractive to global investors.

As highlighted by both Prof. Hack-Polay and Dr. Acheampong, the MoU aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. It also echoes Canada's federal agenda to strengthen ties with African nations as alternative trading partners amid tensions with the United States and China.

4.8.2 Witnesses and Participants

The MoU was co-signed in the presence of notable dignitaries including:

- **Fatoumata Guindo**, Youth Representatives and Economic Strategist
- Delegates from **City Institute's Economic Conference**
- Each expressed support for the initiative and pledged their institutional backing to facilitate smooth implementation and tracking of objectives.

4.8.3 Conclusion

The MoU between City Institute of Higher Learning and ADR Ghana is more than a document—it is a vision for future cooperation, the bedrock of a new Atlantic-Africa partnership that fuses education, legal innovation, and economic diplomacy. By establishing a shared commitment to conflict resolution, cultural education, and business collaboration, both institutions are creating a legacy that will impact generations to come.

This MoU represents not just a partnership between two organizations, but a strategic alignment of two continents, North America and Africa, working together to build a more peaceful, legally stable, and economically prosperous future.

4.9 Action Plan: Mainstreaming ADR in Atlantic Canada’s International Strategy

Area of Focus	Recommended Actions
Legal Education & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch ADR certification programs at colleges and universities▪ Integrate ADR modules into business and trade curriculum
Institutional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provide funding to legal aid clinics for small business ADR services▪ Encourage Chambers of Commerce to offer ADR forums
Cross-Border Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create bilateral ADR frameworks with Ghana, France, Madagascar, and Benin▪ Adopt uniform commercial arbitration rules in Atlantic Canadian trade agreements
Digital ADR Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Invest in AI-enabled dispute resolution platforms▪ - Build online multilingual mediation tools for international entrepreneurs

4.9.1 Recommendations for Stakeholders

- **Entrepreneurs:** Learn the fundamentals of ADR, especially if engaging in international trade or partnerships.
- **Policymakers:** Establish a regional ADR council under the Atlantic Growth Secretariat to handle inter-provincial and international disputes.
- **Educational Institutions:** Embed ADR in MBA, law, and international business programs.

- **Trade Councils & Consulates:** Act as neutral facilitators for ADR in early-stage bilateral disputes.

4.9.2 Conclusion

As Atlantic Canada accelerates its global trade ambitions, conflict resolution must be proactive, not reactive. Alternative Dispute Resolution offers a culturally adaptable, cost-effective, and trust-building approach that aligns well with the region's trade diversification and entrepreneurship goals. The commitment by institutions like the City Institute of Higher Learning and ADR Ghana illustrates a forward-thinking strategy to ensure that growth is not just expansive but also sustainable and equitable.

Incorporating ADR into business frameworks, education, and policy will position Atlantic Canada as a trusted, reliable trade and investment destination, capable of handling the complexities of a rapidly evolving global market.

5. Thematic Area 5: A Strategic Francophone Economic Partnership in an Era of Global Realignment

5.1 Overview

The erosion of U.S.-centric trade dominance due to escalating tariffs and protectionist policies has prompted regions like Atlantic Canada to reassess their economic alliances. One of the most prominent and strategic realignments identified during the conference was the opportunity for Francophone economic partnerships—with France, Francophone Africa, and other members of La Francophonie. This thematic area explored how language, culture, and shared historical ties can act as economic accelerants, enabling new trade corridors, innovation exchanges, and investment opportunities.

The theme was led by:

- **Francesco Calazzo**, Director General of Economic Development, Southeast New Brunswick
- **Bertrand Cahuet**, Consul General of France
- **Cyriaque Kodjovi Kiti**, Honorary Consul of Benin in Moncton

Panel discussions and networking initiatives that emphasized cultural diplomacy, linguistic leverage, and cross-continental trade synergies

5.2 Francophone Identity as Economic Capital

5.2.1 Key Highlights from Francesco Calazzo:

“Our bilingualism is not just a cultural gift—it’s an economic strategy,” Calazzo proclaimed during his keynote. Representing Southeast New Brunswick, one of the most bilingual regions in Canada, he emphasized how French-English duality allows Atlantic Canada to:

- Build robust trade relationships with Francophone Africa and Europe
- Lead in cultural and creative industries
- Develop bilingual entrepreneurship ecosystems

5.2.2 Demographic Insight:

- 32% of New Brunswick residents speak French as a first language
- Moncton is home to over 25,000 Francophone immigrants
- Francophone youth-led startups have grown by 14% between 2019 and 2024

5.2.3 Key Proposals:

- **Francophone Economic Forum** to be held annually in Moncton, bringing together business leaders from Africa, Europe, and Canada
- **Cultural Export Strategy**, where local art, music, cuisine, and digital content can be marketed globally under a Francophone brand
- **Francophone Business Incubators** providing mentorship, legal support, and translation services to young and immigrant entrepreneurs

5.3 France and Atlantic Canada: Unleashing the Potential of CETA

5.3.1 Key Highlights from Bertrand Cahuet:

“France is not just a cultural ally of Canada—it is an economic anchor in the European Union.” Bertrand reiterated during the keynote delivery.

Cahuet focused his presentation on deepening the underutilized potential of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

5.3.2 Key Economic Insights:

- France’s GDP (2024): Over USD 3.2 trillion
- French FDI in Canada (2023): CAD 7.1 billion
- CETA reduces 98% of tariffs between Canada and the EU

5.3.3 Opportunities for Atlantic Canada:

- **Agri-Food Exports:** Atlantic Canadian seafood, berries, maple syrup, and organic produce have strong appeal in French markets.
- **Fashion & Cosmetics Collaboration:** The region’s clean, sustainable branding aligns well with French luxury and ethical beauty sectors.

- **Education and Research:** Joint academic research and student mobility through Francophone universities.

5.3.4 Strategic Recommendation:

- Establish Atlantic Canada–France Innovation Alliance, with shared R&D facilities, cross-border entrepreneurship programs, and co-funded tech incubators

Cahuet also emphasized the need for local policy adjustments in Canada to streamline export licensing and improve branding of Canadian Francophone products for the European market.

5.4 Francophone Africa as a New Trade Partner

5.4.1 Key Highlights from Cyriaque Kodjovi Kiti

“Africa is not a continent of aid it is a continent of opportunity.”

Representing Benin and speaking on behalf of several Francophone West African countries (e.g., Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal), Kodjovi Kiti made a passionate case for a Pan-Francophone Economic Zone involving Atlantic Canada.

5.4.2 Data Highlights:

- Francophone Africa has over 430 million people, with 62% under the age of 25
- GDP growth in countries like Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal has averaged 6.1% annually since 2016
- Benin is investing over USD 2 billion in its “Government Action Program” to expand infrastructure, tourism, and digital services

5.4.3 Strategic Opportunities:

- **Renewable Energy:** Canada’s clean energy firms can co-develop solar and hydro projects in West Africa
- **Tourism Exchange Programs:** Dual-branded eco-tourism packages between Canada and Africa
- **Technology Transfer:** Francophone youth-led startups in Africa seek mentorship, funding, and joint ventures with Canadian companies

5.4.4 Proposed Action Plan:

1. **Canada–Francophone Africa Business Council** with a rotating secretariat between Moncton and Dakar
2. **Joint Trade Missions**, prioritizing SME collaborations
3. **Dual-market Access Funds**, co-sponsored by Canadian and African banks to reduce financing risk for international partnerships

5.5 Cultural Diplomacy and the Economy

Throughout the conference, cultural diplomacy was not treated as an aesthetic add-on but as a powerful economic tool. Panelists and speakers identified how shared language, values, and identity foster trust and long-term business relationships, particularly in emerging markets.

Examples:

- **Francophone festivals and culinary expos** can drive tourism and hospitality revenues
- **Joint media productions** in French, with distribution across Africa, Canada, and France, can grow Atlantic Canada’s creative sector
- **Cultural training in trade programs** helps entrepreneurs better navigate diverse markets

5.6 Policy Recommendations & Strategic Plans

Strategic Priority	Action Points
Francophone Startup Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Expand bilingual incubators in Moncton, Fredericton, and Halifax▪ Provide government-backed French-language entrepreneurship grants
Cultural Export Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create the Francophone Export Accelerator (FEA) for creative industries▪ Partner with Quebec for joint cultural diplomacy trade missions
Africa-Europe-Canada Triangle Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Form trilateral trade corridors focused on logistics, education, and clean energy▪ Use Francophone universities as coordination hubs
Bilateral Agreements and Trade Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sign new MOUs with Francophone countries focusing on dual-language training and innovation▪ Establish annual Moncton-based Francophone Investment Forum
Education and Language Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Introduce mandatory Francophone business modules in trade schools and MBA programs

5.7 Conference Impact

This thematic area produced clear institutional and diplomatic outcomes:

- City Institute of Higher Learning pledged to launch a Francophone Business and Trade Research and Academic Centre
- Discussions began with the French Consulate to host a possible France–Atlantic Canada Business Forum in the near future.
- Delegates from Benin, Senegal, Ivory Coast to initiate a Canada–Africa Francophone SME Platform to map opportunities for small businesses across continents

5.8 Conclusion

In a time when global trade patterns are being redrawn, Francophone identity emerges as a strategic advantage for Atlantic Canada. This cultural-linguistic foundation enables the region to deepen partnerships with Europe and Africa in ways that are both familiar and future-ready. From clean energy to creative industries, from trade diplomacy to educational innovation, the Francophone lens offers a nuanced and enriched path toward sustainable economic growth.

The 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada strongly affirmed that embracing this identity is not just about inclusion, it's about influence, innovation, and international integration.

6. CLOSING REMARKS BY PROF. DIEU HACK-POLAY, PRESIDENT, CITY INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING, ATLANTIC CANADA

6.1 Introduction

The final day of the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada came to a powerful conclusion with a heartfelt and inspiring closing address by Professor Dieu Hack-Polay, President of the City Institute of Higher Learning, Canada. His remarks summarized the vast intellectual, cultural, and economic engagements that had unfolded over three days. More than a ceremonial conclusion, his speech served as a call to action, reminding all participants that the conference was just a starting point toward deeper cooperation and progressive economic development.

Prof. Hack-Polay's address was rich with insights, gratitude, and forward-looking plans. He not only reflected on the presentations and discussions but also synthesized overarching themes and outcomes into a coherent and inspiring conclusion that touched on education, trade, immigration, entrepreneurship, cultural exchange, and dispute resolution.

6.2 Gratitude and Acknowledgements

Prof. Hack-Polay began by expressing sincere gratitude to all the speakers, panelists, moderators, media teams, academic staff, volunteers, international guests, and students who made the event possible. He emphasized that such a successful convening of minds from various continents and disciplines could not have been possible without the collective commitment of stakeholders.

6.3 Key Takeaways from Day 1 to Day 3

Prof. Hack-Polay took the audience on a journey through the thematic essence of each day of the conference:

6.3.1 Day 1: Tariffs and Canadian Resilience

The conference opened with urgent discussions around the economic impact of U.S. tariffs on Canada, particularly Atlantic Canada. Speakers such as David Campbell and Dr. Maxwell Acheampong outlined both the vulnerabilities and resilience of the Canadian economy. Prof. Hack-Polay underscored how Day 1 revealed the importance of economic diversification, identifying new markets and reducing over-reliance on traditional trade partners like the United States.

6.3.2 Day 2: Investment Opportunities and International Cooperation

Day 2 saw presentations from experts like Francesco Calazzo, Jonathan Duffaud, Bertrand Cahuet, and Cyriaque Kodjovi Kiti, who mapped out strategic investment sectors such as IT, renewable energy, health care, cybersecurity, and cultural exchange. Speakers highlighted the importance of bilingualism, particularly French English engagement, and emphasized Canada's unique advantage as a global trade mediator between North America and Francophone Africa and Europe.

Prof. Hack-Polay stressed that this day provided a blueprint for action, especially in establishing economic and cultural links with Francophone nations in Africa and Europe.

6.3.3 Day 3: Youth, Education, and Conflict Resolution

Day 3, which Prof. Hack-Polay called the "strategic human capital day," spotlighted themes like youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, dispute resolution, and international academic cooperation.

He praised the powerful contributions of Dr. Abigail Acheampong and Dr. Maxwell Acheampong on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), stating that the promotion of non-litigious conflict mechanisms is vital for preserving business relationships and encouraging investment.

He also lauded the energetic panel discussion moderated by Fatoumata Guindo, which illuminated the potential of youth and start-ups to uplift the region's economy, even amidst global economic turbulence.

6.4 Strategic Announcements and Institutional Milestones

One of the most significant highlights of Prof. Hack-Polay's address was the announcement of a landmark MoU between the City Institute and ADR Ghana. He proudly declared that this partnership would lead to:

- Co-created ADR training programs and certifications
- Cross-continental student and faculty exchanges
- Annual international dispute resolution conference
- Shared research and publication efforts

He noted that this academic and professional collaboration exemplifies what is possible when institutions look beyond borders to find solutions rooted in mutual respect, innovation, and education.

6.5 The Role of Higher Education in Economic Transformation

In a moment of reflection, Prof. Hack-Polay turned the audience’s attention to the role of education in the economic upliftment of regions like Atlantic Canada. He emphasized that economic growth is not just about GDP numbers or investment volumes, but about people—equipped, empowered, and enlightened people.

He said:

“Economic development without education is like building a house without a foundation. The next generation of Canadian, African, and European leaders must be intellectually prepared to navigate complexity, resolve disputes, and engage diplomatically.”

Prof. Hack-Polay announced new initiatives at the City Institute to deepen its global focus, including:

- Launching a Centre for Business and Entrepreneurial Studies which is first of its kind in Atlantic Canada
- Offering scholarships to students on many courses offered in the Institute
- Creating a joint research fellowship program with partner institutions abroad

6.6 Reflections on Canada’s Economic Future

Prof. Hack-Polay highlighted that Canada must embrace a new global strategy in light of U.S. tariffs and shifting trade alliances. This includes:

- Expanding trade relations with Africa, Latin America, and Europe.
- Enhancing investment in sectors like clean energy, agri-business, and technology.
- Prioritizing human capital development through inclusive education.
- Strengthening cultural and linguistic diplomacy, especially in leveraging bilingual capacities.

- Utilizing institutions like City Institute as think tanks and training grounds for global economic transformation.

He stressed that Atlantic Canada has a unique role to play, thanks to its multicultural communities, strategic seaports, and growing academic infrastructure.

6.7 Call for Proactive Action Plans

In closing, Prof. Hack-Polay issued a powerful call to action for all delegates and stakeholders:

- Governments should invest in Business, Research and ADR frameworks and general education to facilitate trade.
- Business leaders should partner with academic institutions for research and innovation.
- Students and young professionals must seize opportunities to learn, network, and grow.
- African and Canadian entrepreneurs should initiate joint ventures, exchange programs, and mentoring partnerships.

He reminded the audience that economic transformation requires more than speeches—it demands follow-through, partnerships, and shared accountability.

7. Final Closing Remarks

In the most moving part of his address, Prof. Hack-Polay turned personal. He thanked his wife, Mrs. Anna Hack-Polay, for being a source of unwavering support, and the entire team at City Institute who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

He concluded:

“This conference may end today, but the relationships, the ideas, and the visions we have ignited here must live on. Let us be the architects of an economy not based solely on profits, but on purpose. Let us build bridges across oceans, forge alliances across languages, and create solutions that uplift our communities.

He then officially declared the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada closed at 12: 28 in the afternoon, amidst resounding applause and a standing ovation.

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Prof. Dieu Hack-Polay's closing remarks were more than a summary, they were a visionary blueprint, a rallying cry, and a heartfelt thank-you to all who contributed. The conference ended with optimism, clarity of purpose, and a renewed sense of global responsibility.

This final address reminded all in attendance that Atlantic Canada's economic future is global, inclusive, and driven by collaboration, and that education especially through institutions like the City Institute of Higher Learning must be at the center of that future

8. Conclusion

The 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada was not merely a gathering of experts, but a roadmap-setting event. The discussions laid a foundation for international partnerships, youth development, and trade resilience amid global uncertainties. From tariff implications to alternative dispute mechanisms and MoU signings, the conference demonstrated that Atlantic Canada is not only ready to adapt but ready to lead.

The 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada marked a critical milestone in regional transformation. It delivered evidence-based strategies, facilitated international partnerships, and empowered the next generation of leaders. With actionable outcomes and strategic MoUs, it has paved a robust path for sustainable economic collaboration well beyond North American borders. The conference officially closed at exactly 12:28 in the afternoon.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Building Foundations-Understanding Opportunities and Networking

Objective:

Introduce participants to the entrepreneurial landscape in Atlantic Canada, foster cross-border understanding, and initiate networking that sets the stage for future collaboration

Overview

This foundational workshop kicked off Day 1 of the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada with an interactive, hands-on session designed to build participant engagement, establish early connections, and illuminate global market potential. Held in the main conference hall of the City Institute of Higher Learning, the workshop hosted over 40 participants including entrepreneurs, development experts, diplomats, students, researchers, and investors from Canada, West Africa, Europe, and the rest of the world. Structured into three key segments, the workshop moved from orientation and relationship-building to data-driven insights and concluded with collaborative problem-solving and cross-cultural understanding exercises.

Workshop Agenda Breakdown

Welcome & Introduction

Facilitator: Dr. Chrisben Fiifi Daniels, Dr. Clement Appiah Kubi, Mrs. Carmen, Miss Cristal Perez Tapia all of City Institute of Higher Learning

Dr. Chrisben Fiifi Daniels warmly welcomed participants, introduced the workshop objectives, and emphasized the session's role in establishing meaningful connections early in the conference.

He invited attendees to participate in the "Global Investment Ideas" icebreaker, where each participant was asked to:

- Pin their ideas on investment on a cardboard and projected in the hall
- Share one cross-border opportunity they would like to explore

This activity revealed the diversity of participants—ranging from local New Brunswick startups to representatives from Ghana, France, Madagascar, Benin, India and the rest of the world. They laid the foundation for peer learning and global cooperation throughout the conference workshop

Interactive Presentation: Atlantic Canada's Global Potential (5 minutes)

Format: Card-style infographic presentation using visuals, charts, and testimonial quotes

This data-driven session highlighted the untapped global-facing sectors in Atlantic Canada, presented through a vibrant mix of infographics, and speaker reference highlights. Key focus areas included:

Key Sectors Highlighted:

Agribusiness & Seafood Exports: Atlantic Canada exports \$6.7 billion in seafood annually, with lobster, crab, and salmon being the top earners.

Clean Energy Innovation: With tidal, wind, and green hydrogen development underway, NB is a candidate for sustainable energy partnerships.

Information Technology & Cybersecurity: Over 300 startups across Halifax, Moncton, and Saint John have emerged in the last five years, with strong university linkages.

Tourism & Cultural Economy: 12 million tourists annually across the Atlantic region, with growing interest in indigenous and francophone experiences.

Alignment with Keynote Speakers:

This presentation also drew from earlier plenary speeches, including:

David Campbell's emphasis on resource capital and human innovation

Dr. Maxwell Acheampong's insights on entrepreneurial synergies with Ghana

Dr. Maha Rodriguez's call for investment in eco-diverse infrastructure in Madagascar

The presentation concluded with a summary of New Brunswick's

"Top 5 Global Growth Levers":

Skilled Immigrant Workforce

Bilingual Advantage

Resource-Rich Land

R&D Institutions

International Trade Agreements and Pro-Trade Policies

Cultural & Market Snapshot Activity (5 minutes)

Activity Format: Small Group Breakouts (6–8 participants per group)

This experiential learning activity divided attendees into small, international groups, each assigned a market for analysis.

Shared Insights:

The workshop group highlighted youth entrepreneurship, mobile payment systems, and informal networks as key economic drivers, noting trust and relational marketing as essential entry tools.

The workshop group emphasized sustainability regulations, high quality standards, and institutional procurement channels as important success factors.

The workshop group noted infrastructure challenges but emphasized opportunities in agribusiness, ecotourism, and biodiversity research.

The workshop group highlighted its small but open markets, policy transparency, and support programs attractive for international SMEs.

Following discussion, each group nominated one person to present a 5-minute summary of their findings to the room. These snapshots allowed participants to compare similarities, note divergences, and identify real possibilities for collaboration.

Key Outcomes

Market Familiarization: Many of participants reported they learned something new about a regional or global market.

Cross-Cultural Learning: Participants shared ideas that challenged stereotypes and improved readiness for international cooperation.

Networking Foundations: Nearly all attendees identified at least one person from another country with whom they intend to explore a business or research collaboration.

Participant Feedback

Post-session feedback revealed:

Anonymous: "found the workshop engaging and informative"

Anonymous: "felt more confident about potential cross-border engagement"

Attendee testimonials included:

Anonymous: *"This was not just another workshop—it was a gateway to future partnerships."*

Anonymous: *"Understanding culture isn't just nice—it's crucial. This session made that clear."*

Recommendations and Conclusion

This workshop set a strong precedent for how economic dialogue can be paired with practical, immersive activities that generate actionable relationships and real-time insights. Its success was built on diversity, open dialogue, and well-structured facilitation.

Recommendations:

Host a follow-up "Partnership Lab" later in the conference or post-event online

Provide participants with a digital summary of insights and contacts made

Repeat this model at future conferences, potentially themed by region

As the first structured engagement of the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada, this workshop effectively laid the groundwork for the critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation that followed in the days ahead.

Appendix 2: Deepening Engagement—Practical Strategies and Collaborative Action

Objective: To transform initial connections into actionable strategies by exploring innovative tools and collaborative models for international entrepreneurship.

Overview

As a continuation and deepening of Day 1's foundational workshop, this Day 2 session challenged participants to evolve from conceptual understanding to applied strategic thinking. With the theme of “*Collaborative Action*,” this session emphasized cross-border entrepreneurship and aimed to foster a concrete framework for international business planning.

Held in the strategic breakout suite of the City Institute of Higher Learning, the session drew approximately 85 participants who had attended the Day 1 workshop and were now prepared to explore practical pathways for partnership. A special emphasis was placed on participants from Atlantic Canada, Ghana, France, and India—four regions chosen to simulate a realistic multi-national business venture scenario.

Breakdown

Facilitator: Dr. Chrisben Fiifi Daniels, Dr. Clement Appiah Kubi, Mrs. Carmen, Miss Cristal Perez Tapia

Dr. Chrisben Fiifi Daniels opened the workshop with a high-energy recap of Day 1. He reviewed key themes that emerged during the “*Building Foundations*” workshop, such as:

- Atlantic Canada’s value as a trade-friendly, innovation-driven economy
- The importance of cultural understanding in market entry
- Strategic global sectors including agritech, cleantech, tourism, and digital innovation

Goals of the Day:

- Translate regional strengths into actionable business plans
- Apply entrepreneurial frameworks in a global setting
- Build persuasive and realistic investment proposals
- Develop negotiation and collaboration skills in multicultural teams

Core Task: Participants were placed into **four regional teams**—Canada (Atlantic), Ghana, France, and India. Each group was told they were a team of local entrepreneurs have together secured a **\$10 million Canadian dollar international investment** for their country.

They were given a Business Model Canvas (BMC) template, adapted for global collaboration. Each group had to design a compelling business investment model under the following sections:

- **Value Proposition:** What unique solution/product/service will they offer?
- **Market Entry Strategy:** How will they enter and scale within a global marketplace?
- **Partnership Roles:** How would other countries contribute to or benefit from this business?
- **Resource Analysis:** What natural or human capital does the country offer?
- **Funding Plan:** How will the \$10M be used and multiplied?
- **Risks and Mitigation:** What challenges exist, and how will they be managed?

Additional Challenge:

Each team had to pitch their case to a mock panel of “investors” (selected participants and facilitators). Each presentation was strictly limited to **3 minutes**, simulating the high-stakes environment of global business pitches.

Country Team Reports

Team Atlantic Canada

- ❖ **Value Proposition:** Establish a facility for the production and export of green hydrogen to Europe and Asia.
- ❖ **Market Entry:** Leverage CETA and Canada’s global trade agreements; focus on clean energy-hungry markets in the EU and Japan.
- ❖ **Resources:** Vast coastline suitable for wind and tidal energy; skilled engineering graduates; bilingual workforce.
- ❖ **Pitch Highlights:** “Invest in a future powered by Atlantic winds and tides—clean, efficient, and global-ready.”

Team Ghana

- ❖ **Value Proposition:** Build high-tech post-harvest infrastructure to reduce spoilage and add value to raw agricultural goods (e.g., cocoa, cassava, pineapple).
- ❖ **Market Entry:** Sell to both West African domestic markets and European importers.
- ❖ **Resources:** Rich arable land, entrepreneurial youth, trade hubs like Tema Port.
- ❖ **Pitch Highlights:** “Feed Africa, Export to the World—backed by tech, youth, and land.”

Team France

- ❖ **Value Proposition:** Help Atlantic Canadian and African producers refine, brand, and export gourmet and organic products through French culinary standards and access.
- ❖ **Market Entry:** Use France’s access to global high-end markets and its distribution network.
- ❖ **Resources:** R&D in gastronomy, advanced logistics, access to EU culinary markets.
- ❖ **Pitch Highlights:** “Transform local ingredients into global delicacies—Made in France.”

Team India

- **Value Proposition:** Use India’s IT and healthcare innovation to create a multilingual telemedicine network connecting remote communities in Canada, Africa, and India.
- **Market Entry:** Begin in Atlantic Canada and Ghana’s rural clinics; scale across Francophone Africa with local translation AI.
- **Resources:** Leading software engineers, proven frugal innovation methods, large pharmaceutical base.
- **Pitch Highlights:** “One world. One health system. Powered by Indian technology.”

Outcome and Learning Points

Each team's pitch was met with applause and followed by a brief 1-minute feedback session from the "investment panel." The discussion that followed was rich and revealed several strategic insights:

Key Takeaways:

- **Cross-Border Synergies:** Teams that highlighted mutual benefit across countries stood out.
- **Tangible Impact:** Investment in sectors like food, health, and energy felt more compelling due to global relevance.
- **Resource Optimization:** Countries that linked their human and natural resources effectively to their value proposition attracted more investor interest.
- **Clarity and Focus:** Teams with a tightly defined problem and solution were more convincing within the time constraint.

Challenges Observed:

- Some teams struggled to balance ambition with feasibility.
- Others found it hard to condense ideas into a persuasive 3-minute narrative.
- Cultural language barriers slightly affected time management and delivery in one group—but also demonstrated the real need for cross-cultural training in business.

Participant Feedback and Impact

A flash survey completed immediately after the session revealed:

- participants found the workshop “highly engaging and practical”
- felt more confident in pitching cross-border ideas
- wanted access to the Business Model Canvas template for personal use post-conference
- expressed an interest in actually developing the ideas proposed during the workshop into real ventures.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This Day 2 workshop succeeded in fulfilling its objective: transitioning attendees from conceptual learning to strategic planning. By simulating real-world entrepreneurship and investment dynamics, it empowered attendees to co-create and pitch viable business opportunities rooted in their countries' real assets.

Recommendations for Future Events:

- Extend pitch time to allow for deeper Q&A or follow-up rounds
- Include mentorship or coaching ahead of team pitching
- Develop an ongoing innovation challenge based on ideas from the workshop

This session significantly elevated the engagement level of the conference, setting the stage for even more dynamic discussions on Day 3 around conflict resolution, partnership formation, and long-term trade agreements.

Appendix 3: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EXHIBITORS

CCRW | CCRT Moncton

Represented by Ana Katrina Rulona, Wilcady Dume, and Mitzi Espinoza, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) | CCRT Moncton team made a notable contribution at the conference through their interactive booth and the presentation of one of their most innovative tools: WorkSimsVR.

Launched in December 2023, WorkSimsVR is a pilot program that uses virtual reality technology to offer immersive learning experiences for people with disabilities. This cutting-edge approach helps job seekers build confidence and improve essential employment skills such as job interview techniques, workplace communication, and professional networking.

At the booth, conference attendees were invited to try the VR equipment—headsets and hand-held controllers guided by CCRW staff members. Through these simulations, participants engaged with realistic scenarios where they could practice soft skills in a safe, accessible, and supportive environment. These experiences are designed to remove some of the common barriers people with disabilities face in traditional job preparation settings.

In addition to the VR experience, CCRW's team provided detailed information about the broader scope of their employment services. These include individual and group employment counseling, career exploration and decision-making support, skill development and upskilling, assistance with résumés and cover letters, interview preparation and job search strategies.

These services are available for individuals with physical, sensory, learning disabilities, or Level 1 Autism residing in Southeast New Brunswick.

The presence of CCRW at the conference was more than just a tech demonstration, it was a reflection of their deep commitment to accessibility, equity, and empowerment. Their use of VR in job training exemplifies how inclusive innovation can actively transform lives and create more equitable opportunities in the workforce.

Through initiatives like WorkSimsVR, CCRW continues to lead the way in helping people with disabilities overcome employment barriers and build fulfilling careers.

Tool-Go Inc

At the recent conference, Tool-Go Inc., a technology innovation company based in Moncton, New Brunswick, made a notable contribution through their interactive booth. Represented by Business Development Officer Kischmann Josil, the company introduced attendees to their range of digital solutions aimed at improving event management and community engagement.

Tool-Go Inc. focuses on the research, development, and commercialization of technologies that enable seamless and secure data transfer between devices. Their patented system allows for instant and anonymous exchange of information without requiring prior device pairing or identification. This ensures privacy and ease of use, making their solutions adaptable across various sectors.

One of the key features presented at their booth was ToolgoFlick, a digital signage tool that transforms any regular television into a smart digital display. This system allows users to manage content—such as videos, images, menus, and promotional materials—from the cloud. Without relying on USBs or physical cables, the content can be updated remotely and displayed across one or multiple screens. This is especially useful for businesses like restaurants, clinics, and event venues where up-to-date information and flexibility are crucial.

Tool-Go Inc. also showcased a digital prize draw system that uses QR code-based entry. This system provides real-time results, customizable formats, and an efficient way to run contests during events or exhibitions. It drew the attention of many conference participants, offering an engaging and tech-savvy way to boost audience interaction.

Their participation highlighted not only the company's commitment to innovation but also their support for community development through accessible technology. By offering tools that simplify digital communication and enhance real-time user interaction, Tool-Go Inc. positions itself as a valuable partner for both public and private sector initiatives. Their work contributes significantly to creating more inclusive, efficient, and tech-forward community experiences.

Moncton Cares

At the recent conference, Moncton Cares stood out as a compassionate and impactful presence among the nonprofit exhibitors. Their booth offered attendees a warm and informative look into the vital work they do to support newcomers, immigrants, and refugees in the Greater Moncton Area. The organization's mission revolves around building a more inclusive, welcoming, and resilient community for everyone, regardless of origin.

During the event, Moncton Cares representatives engaged in open and friendly conversations with visitors, explaining the services they offer and the values that guide their work. Their stand served as a hub of information about community integration, cultural sensitivity, and volunteer opportunities. Attendees learned how Moncton Cares connects newcomers with local resources, helping them navigate life in Canada, from securing housing, to learning English, finding employment, or accessing mental health support.

The organization highlighted its role in creating safe spaces for dialogue, social connection, and empowerment. One key point shared with conference participants was their focus on trauma-informed care and equity. They are especially attentive to the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals who have experienced displacement, war, or other crises. This approach has made their programs more accessible and sensitive to the needs of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Moncton Cares also emphasized the importance of collaboration. Through partnerships with schools, local service providers, and government agencies, they ensure that newcomer families receive the support they need to thrive. Their participation in the conference not only allowed them to share their work with a broader audience, but also to create new potential connections with other organizations and individuals interested in inclusion and social support.

Their involvement at the event reaffirmed their dedication to community-driven change and reminded attendees of the ongoing work necessary to ensure all residents, new and old, feel valued, supported, and at home.

Black Business Initiative (BBI)

The Black Business Initiative (BBI) participated in the conference as one of the key nonprofit organizations focused on economic empowerment and community development. Their presence brought attention to the importance of supporting Black entrepreneurs and professionals across New Brunswick and the Atlantic region. The BBI team was approachable and informative, eager to share their mission, programs, and success stories with conference attendees.

At their stand, representatives explained that BBI is dedicated to fostering the growth and sustainability of Black-owned businesses through training, mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to capital. They provide a wide range of services that support both aspiring entrepreneurs and established business owners, including business planning guidance, marketing strategies, and financial literacy workshops.

Throughout the event, BBI's team highlighted the value of diversity in business and the need to address systemic barriers that often limit opportunities for the Black community. They spoke with clarity and conviction about how economic inclusion is not just about business success, but about building stronger, more resilient communities. Their programs also focus on youth engagement, encouraging young people to explore entrepreneurship and leadership from an early age.

The organization emphasized collaboration as a core part of their strategy. They regularly work with other community groups, government bodies, and private sector partners to increase the visibility and impact of Black businesses. Their participation in the conference allowed them to strengthen existing connections and establish new ones with individuals and organizations committed to equity and empowerment.

By the end of the event, it was clear that BBI's involvement had inspired many attendees. Their vision for inclusive economic development and their practical efforts to uplift Black entrepreneurs made a strong impression and demonstrated the crucial role they play in the social and economic fabric of the region.

RDEÉ Canada

At the 2nd Conference on Economic Growth in Atlantic Canada, RDÉE Canada stood out as a central advocate for the economic advancement of Francophone and Acadian communities. Represented by a dynamic and knowledgeable team, the organization showcased its strong commitment to fostering inclusive, bilingual economic development and supporting Francophone immigrants, entrepreneurs, and job seekers across the region.

RDÉE Canada, short for *Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité*, serves as the national coordinating body for a network of provincial and territorial organizations that promote employability and entrepreneurship within Canada's Francophone minority communities. At the Moncton conference, their interactive booth served as a meeting point for attendees interested in understanding how language, culture, and economic growth intersect in Atlantic Canada.

Throughout the event, RDÉE Canada's team shared key insights into their national programs and local initiatives that strengthen community integration and professional success for Francophone newcomers. These include:

- Business development support for Francophone entrepreneurs through coaching, access to funding, and mentorship programs.
- Job placement and career readiness programs that help French-speaking newcomers connect with local employers.
- Youth leadership initiatives, including entrepreneurship camps and innovation challenges that equip the next generation with tools for success.
- Workforce development strategies focused on bilingualism as a competitive advantage in Atlantic Canada's labor market.

One of the most engaging aspects of their booth was the detailed overview of the *Welcoming Francophone Communities* initiative, an IRCC-funded program that encourages rural Francophone communities to become more inclusive and attractive to French-speaking newcomers. The team highlighted how this initiative is being implemented in the Atlantic region through partnerships with schools, municipalities, and local businesses to create sustainable, welcoming environments.

In their conversations with attendees, RDÉE Canada's representatives also emphasized the challenges that Francophone immigrants often face, such as limited access to services in French, underemployment, and lack of representation in leadership roles. However, they were quick to underscore the organization's role in creating systemic solutions, advocating

for policy changes, building bridges between Francophone and Anglophone communities, and creating tangible economic opportunities.

Their participation in the conference reinforced the importance of linguistic duality as a pillar of Canada's identity and economy. By focusing on equitable access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, RDÉE Canada continues to shape a future where French-speaking individuals can fully thrive in all regions of the country.

Ultimately, RDÉE Canada's presence at the conference not only provided practical resources and innovative strategies but also served as a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience of Francophone communities. Their work remains essential to building a more cohesive, diverse, and economically robust Atlantic Canada.