SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA™

PROFESSIONALS ADVANCING THE FUTURE™

ISSUE 3 2025

10 Years of *Supply Chain Canada* – A Future Built Together

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FROM PAGE ONE TO YEAR 10

A JOURNEY OF TRUST AND CONNECTION

This year, we celebrate a very special milestone: the 10th anniversary of *Supply Chain Canada* magazine. When the very first issue was published back in 2015, none of us could have imagined just how much this magazine would grow or how deeply it would become woven into the fabric of Canada's supply chain community. Looking back on a decade of issues, I feel nothing but pride and gratitude.

From the beginning, this publication has been about more than pages and print. It has been about people: the professionals who make supply chain work, the thought leaders who have shared their insights and the community that has supported us every step of the way. For me, one of the great joys of publishing this magazine has been seeing how it has become a trusted platform for ideas, inspiration and connection.

I will never forget that 10 years ago, when The Davis Media Company was just getting started, Supply Chain Canada put their trust in us to publish their magazine. That trust helped set the foundation for our company's early success and for that, I will always be thankful.

I also want to extend heartfelt thanks to the many advertising partners who have supported this magazine over the years. Your investment in this publication has ensured we could continue to deliver a magazine of quality and impact. To everyone who has partnered with us along the way – thank you for believing in this work and in the value of sharing the supply chain story.

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Sean Davis
President and Publisher,
The Davis Media Company

Most of all, I want to recognize the incredible team that brings this magazine to life. Our managing editor, Naomi Lakritz, has guided our editorial direction with professionalism and insight, issue after issue. Kara Di Paolo, our vice-president of sales and marketing, has been the driving force behind building partnerships and opportunities for growth. And to the rest of our staff at The Davis Media Company, whose creativity, care and hard work have shaped every edition – this milestone belongs to you as much as anyone.

As we celebrate this 10-year anniversary, I feel both grateful for where we've been and excited for where we're going. Supply chain has never been more visible, more vital or more inspiring, and I know this magazine will continue to play a central role in telling that story. Thank you for reading, for supporting us and for being part of this journey.

Here's to the past 10 years – and to the next decade of celebrating, connecting and advancing the profession together.

Sean Davis
President & Publisher,
The Davis Media Company

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Message from the President and CEO

Dylan Bartlett
President and CEO,
Supply Chain Canada

A DECADE OF CONVERSATION, A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITY

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF *SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA* MAGAZINE

This year marks an important milestone: the 10th anniversary of *Supply Chain Canada* magazine. When I think back to its first issue in 2015, I see how far we've come, not only as an association, but as a profession. In those 10 years, supply chain has gone from operating quietly in the background to being recognized across the country as one of the most critical forces shaping our economy.

A Collective Voice

The magazine has been part of that journey. For me, it has always been more than just a publication. It's been a place for us to share ideas, showcase solutions and amplify the voices of the people who make supply chain work. Every article, every interview, every feature has been built on a simple truth: our members are the experts and their stories are worth telling. Over the past decade, the magazine has grown into a collective voice – a mirror of our profession's challenges and a catalyst for its progress.

What's Next

But anniversaries are not just about looking back. They are about setting the stage for what comes next. As we celebrate this milestone, we're also focused on the future. We are in the midst of redeveloping the SCMP designation to ensure it continues to be the gold standard for Canadian supply chain professionals. We're planning our next national conference in Quebec City in 2026, where I know the same energy we saw in Calgary will shine even brighter. And we're committed to deepening our engagement with members, making sure communication is not one-way, but a constant dialogue that strengthens our community.

Moving Forward Together

The next 10 years will bring new challenges, no doubt. But they will also bring new opportunities. Our magazine will continue to play a critical role: connecting you with ideas, solutions and with each other. My commitment, and our association's commitment, is to make sure you feel heard, supported and inspired to lead.

As we mark this 10-year milestone, I want to thank every member, contributor and reader who has made the magazine what it is today. This is your platform. This is your voice. And together, we will shape not only the next decade of this publication, but the future of supply chain in Canada.

Together, we are Professionals Advancing the Future™.

Message du président et chef de la direction

All Languages Translators & Interpreters

Dylan Bartlett
président et chef de la direction,
Chaîne d'approvisionnement Canada

UNE DÉCENNIE DE CONVERSATIONS, UN AVENIR DE POSSIBILITÉS

CÉLÉBRATION DES 10 ANS DE LA REVUE *SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA*

Cette année marque une étape importante, avec le 10e anniversaire de la revue *Supply Chain Canada*. Quand je repense à son premier numéro en 2015, je vois à quel point nous avons progressé, non seulement en tant qu'association, mais aussi en tant que profession. Au cours de ces 10 années, la chaîne d'approvisionnement est passée d'un fonctionnement discret en arrière-plan à une reconnaissance partout au pays comme l'une des forces les plus importantes qui façonnent notre économie.

Une voix collective

La revue a fait partie de ce parcours. Pour moi, elle a toujours été plus qu'une simple publication. C'est un espace où nous pouvons partager des idées, présenter des solutions et amplifier les voix des personnes qui font fonctionner la chaîne d'approvisionnement. Chaque article, chaque entrevue, chaque reportage a été construit en fonction d'une vérité simple : nos membres sont des experts et leurs histoires valent la peine d'être racontées. Au cours de la dernière décennie, la revue est devenue une voix collective – un reflet des défis de notre profession et un catalyseur de son progrès.

Et ensuite

Mais les anniversaires ne consistent pas seulement à regarder en arrière. Il s'agit de préparer le terrain pour ce qui s'en vient. Alors que nous célébrons cette étape importante, nous gardons aussi un œil sur l'avenir. Nous sommes en train de redévelopper le titre de p.g.c.a. afin de nous assurer qu'il reste la référence pour les professionnels canadiens de la chaîne d'approvisionnement. Nous planifions notre prochaine conférence nationale à Québec en 2026, où je sais que la même énergie que nous avons vue à Calgary brillera encore plus fort. Et nous nous engageons à approfondir notre engagement avec les membres, en veillant à ce que la communication ne soit pas unidirectionnelle, mais bien un dialogue constant qui renforce notre communauté.

Avancer ensemble

Les dix prochaines années apporteront sans aucun doute de nouveaux défis. Mais ils apporteront aussi de nouvelles possibilités. Notre revue continuera de jouer un rôle crucial pour vous connecter avec des idées, avec des solutions et entre vous. Mon engagement, et celui de notre association, est de m'assurer que vous vous sentez écouté, soutenu et inspiré à diriger.

Alors que nous soulignons ce cap de 10 ans, je tiens à remercier chaque membre, contributeur et lecteur qui a fait de la revue ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui. C'est votre plateforme. C'est votre voix. Et ensemble, nous façonnerons non seulement la prochaine décennie de cette publication, mais aussi l'avenir de la chaîne d'approvisionnement au Canada.

Ensemble, nous sommes des professionnels qui nous propulsent vers l'avenir[MC]. 🍁

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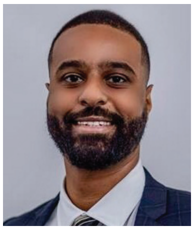

Matt Girma
Procurement Manager,
Color Ad Packaging Ltd.

POLICY, COMPLACENCY AND THE PRODUCTIVITY PARADOX

Statistics Canada's September 3 update on domestic labour productivity performance metrics reflected an eye-watering one-per-cent fall in labour productivity throughout Q2, following an encouraging Q1 revised report reflecting very little change throughout the previous quarter.

The Q1 update was quite encouraging at the time, as up until that point, Canada had been entrenched in a labour productivity cooldown dating back to 2017. Shortly before the COVID-19 black swan event transitorily decimated the global economy, Canada had already faced a series of economic challenges and policy shifts that had reshaped its economic outlook, with one of the most critical drivers of a country's economic performance being its productivity rate per additional labour unit.

The reason this issue should be seen as a material threat to the Canadian economy is that low productivity is a significant pathway to stagnation, as it restricts economic output and wage growth, which can result in declining living standards and public services. It could even lead to one of the most problematic economic outcomes a country can experience – stagflation. Canada has always been a resource-dependent country, and is now prioritizing diversifying its exports beyond the U.S. However, any reduction to output will adversely impact the country's ability to capitalize on new demand opportunities created this year by the U.S.'s assault on its international trade partners and will severely limit Canada's ability to mount its much talked-about economic comeback.

While the federal government's introduction of Bill C-5, designed to streamline infrastructure approvals and reduce internal trade barriers, was certainly an encouraging sign, implementation has been slow. The lack of co-ordinated, unified provincial and federally integrated strategies has hurt the country's recovery efforts, as political gridlock continues to delay critical investment. The passage of Bill C-5 was a step in the right direction, although execution is critical, and without sustained follow-through, its impact will be limited.

How We Got Here

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented contraction in economic activity, with global output falling by a jaw-dropping 5.2 per cent overall in 2020 alone – the steepest decline since the Second World War. Labour productivity initially surged during the early months of the pandemic, although that was largely a byproduct of a materially reduced level of cumulative labour hours; however, this was more of a statistical outlier as opposed to a sign of sustainable growth. Chalk it up to a quirk of the global economy's new post-COVID landscape, where economic data now had to be parsed through a new lens or manually adjusted to account for COVID-related variables and aberrations.

As the Canadian economy reopened in full force back in 2021, Canada's GDP quickly launched its V-shaped recovery, growing 4.6 per cent on pent-up demand and fiscal stimulus, which would have been much too high in the pre-COVID economic environment. This new environment, which organically incentivized expedited growth, led to many organizations over-scaling over a short time. This was a result of the full-steam-ahead fiscal policy the Bank of Canada set forth to stimulate employment, which the pandemic had decimated, and to steer the economy back to a sustainable and healthy annual growth rate capped at around one- to two per cent. This new incentivized spending environment brought a surge in inflation data, peaking at a staggering 6.8 per cent, all within a single year. This inflation threshold was the country's highest CPI growth rate since 1982, when it reached 9.27 per cent extended annually, the result of a massive oil shock caused by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. In the case of Canada's1982 and 2022 surges in inflation data, globalization was at the centre of each issue and its respective severities. The more recent inflation surge was the Canadian economy's reaction to global trade tensions, supply chain disruptions and domestic labour market challenges, all of which are interconnected. When it comes to macroeconomics and its complex interconnected variables, significant market corrections

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typically tend to lead to overcorrections, of which we're currently in the middle.

The root of the Canadian economy's ongoing overcorrection towards the downside was the economy organically shifting and contorting itself as part of its consistent effort to reach equilibrium. Of course, this shift is largely contingent on appropriate fiscal policy measures that incentivize market behaviour to support its desired outcome. The economy has historically functioned almost as if it were a living, breathing organism, with every action having a relatively proportionate reaction to offset it – similar to how the body regulates its temperature when the external environment shifts in either direction. The difference in this case is that an economy's actions and reactions are overseen and influenced by central banks.

Canada's 2021-2023 inflation surge, driven by supply chain bottlenecks, energy shocks and increased consumer spending was the economy's organic reaction to the Bank of Canada's shift towards aggressive, expansionary monetary policy set forth as a part of the country's overall COVID recovery efforts – an example of a correction leading to an overcorrection.

With the central bank's fresh mandate of reining in inflation, its policies began shifting towards aggressive contractionary monetary policy, which of course led to some of the challenges the Canadian economy faces today – stagnating output and wage growth, exacerbated by weakening labour productivity rates. The Bank of Canada's shift in monetary policy was effective in reducing inflation to its target range of around two per cent and mirrored the U.S. Federal Reserve's approach in its effort to support its dual mandate of maximum employment and stable prices.

Where Are We Now?

The Bank of Canada and the Federal Reserve's monetary policy steering committees held their September 17 meetings and the outcome was largely as expected, with both central banks electing to lower their respective overnight interest rates by 25 basis points. The two announcements extended an alignment in policy on both sides of the border for much of 2025 with the message from each institution consistent: patience remains the priority and future policy rate decisions will be contingent on economic data points yet to be released. Meanwhile, policymakers continue to weigh the risk of reigniting inflation against the growing evidence of a cooling labour market, and in the Fed's case, a likely shift in its prioritization of mandates. In Canada, the decision to cut rates reflects the Bank's response to a labour market that continues to soften, with the economy still processing the loss of nearly 41,000 positions over the summer.

South of the border, the Fed echoed a similar tone, acknowledging slower hiring momentum, albeit nowhere near as pronounced as Canada's, after experiencing sharp downward revisions across various Q2 labour data benchmarks over the summer. The risk of upward pricing pressure remains material, as tariff-related premiums and surcharges continue to pass through global supply chains. While these pricing pressure points have yet to fully bake into headline CPI data, the recent spike in Producer Price Index (PPI) data over the summer suggests that higher input costs are beginning to resurface – a development on which neither central bank can afford to take a passive approach as they did in 2021 when both banks insisted inflation was transitory and would resolve itself as supply chain disruptions began to unwind, before inflation became entrenched in the economy. Although the path forward may not yet be clear, the balancing act for both central banks is to stimulate growth without triggering another inflation shock.

The dynamics discussed here are all emblematic of the cyclical nature of a developed nation's economy, a constant sequence of actions, reactions, equilibrium points and inevitable, yet unpredictable, course corrections – a kind of economic metronome. If what goes up must come down, then, in time, the reverse must hold true as well.


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DON'T MISS SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA'S 2026 NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN QUEBEC CITY! MAY 27-29, 2026
We're excited to announce that our 2026 National Conference will be held in beautiful Quebec City! Known for its rich history, vibrant culture and stunning architecture, it's the perfect setting for our next big gathering.
Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details, including venue information, our call for speakers and early registration offers. The 2025 event sold out, so be sure to register early to secure your spot!

10 YEARS OF *SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA* MAGAZINE—A FUTURE BUILT TOGETHER

HOW SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA IS SHAPING THE NEXT DECADE OF THE PROFESSION

By Jay Cumming

It started in a warehouse, with a teenager driving a forklift at night to make some money after school. The fluorescent lights hummed overhead, the air was heavy with the scent of cardboard and diesel and the rhythm of moving pallets was all that filled the space. There was no master plan, no clear sense of where the work might lead. There was just the steady repetition of shifts that laid the foundation for a career that would eventually shape the lives of thousands of Canadians working across the supply chain sector.

And that's how Dylan Bartlett, now CEO of Supply Chain Canada, got his start in the industry. What began as a part-time job turned into a lifelong profession that took him

© Ground Picture / shutterstock.com

through operations, procurement, freight forwarding, customs brokerage and, eventually, leadership. His story mirrors the growth of the field itself – expanding from narrow beginnings into one of the most critical professions in the country.

Today, Bartlett has made it his mission to make it easier than ever before for new professionals to find their footing. "When you join Supply Chain Canada now, you get access to resources, education, events, a network," he says. "You can fast-track your career in ways I never could." For him, the forklift is more than just a memory. It's a reminder of how far both he and the profession have come, and how important it is to open doors for those just stepping into the field.

That focus on creating opportunity is at the heart of everything Supply Chain Canada does. The Supply Chain Management Professional designation (SCMP) was introduced in 2009, replacing the old Certified Professional Purchaser designation. From the start, it set a new bar by reflecting the strategic, global and integrated nature of supply chain work. Recognized across the nation as the gold standard in Canada, the professional designation catapults those who achieve it into new heights in their careers. "It's not easy," says Bartlett. "The final exam is tough, the leadership residency is demanding and we have people fail every year. But that's why it means something."

Dylan Bartlett
President & CEO,
Supply Chain Canada

That evolution has also reshaped the association itself. What was once narrowly defined by purchasing has grown into a national voice representing every function of

OVER 100 YEARS OF

ABOUT US

Established in 1919, Supply Chain Canada (SCC) is among the oldest supply chain organizations globally. We now serve members across Canada and internationally, uniting professionals in sourcing, procurement, logistics, inventory, contracts, and sustainability.

The Supply Chain Management Professional (SCMP) designation, offered by Supply Chain Canada, is Canada's leading credential for strategic supply chain leadership. It equips professionals with advanced competencies across key areas such as procurement, logistics, operations, and ethics, enhancing their ability to drive organizational success. Earning the SCMP designation signifies a commitment to excellence and professionalism in the supply chain field.

OUR HISTORY

1910

1919
The United States–based National Association of Purchasing Agents forms its first Canadian chapter.

1920

1921
Canadian chapters of the National Association of Purchasing Agents form the Council of Canadian Purchasing Agents Association, as a direct affiliate of the American association.

1950

1955
Formal independence from the National Association of Purchasing Agents is achieved, and the Council of Canadian Purchasing Agents Association is renamed the Canadian Association of Purchasing Agents.

1960

1966
The first graduates are awarded the national designation.

1969
The Canadian Association of Purchasing Agents is renamed the Purchasing Management Association of Canada (PMAC).

2000

2005
The PMAC redefines its scope to focus on strategic supply chain management.

2009
A new professional designation, the SCMP, is announced to replace the CPP. The new designation represents strategic, global, and integrated thinking.

2010

2013
The Supply Chain Management Association (SCMA) is founded as the result of an amalgamation between the PMAC and the SCL.

2015
The SCMA and the provincial and territorial institutes enter into a new Federation Agreement, and the Federation Council is formed.

SUPPLY CHAIN CANADA™

LOOKING FORWARD

Building a Stronger Community
Connecting members locally and nationally for a stronger, united voice.

Expanding Education
Providing flexible online learning to prepare tomorrow's leaders.

Leading the Conversation
Driving the future of supply chains through advocacy and collaboration.

Driving Innovation
Embracing technology and sustainability to shape a resilient future.

1930

1931
The Council of Canadian Purchasing Agents Association develops its own constitution and by-laws and is granted Letters Patent under the Province of Ontario Corporations Act.

1940

1948
The first Fellowship Award is presented to John Eaton of Montreal.

1980

1981
The Member Code of Ethics is launched.

1990

1995
The National association and the provincial Institutes sign formal Affiliation Agreements.

2018
The SCMA acquires the Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council.

2019
The association celebrates its 100-year anniversary at the national conference in Montreal, Quebec. The organization rebrands from the SCMA to SCC On Sept 12, the new brand and website are launched at the national AGM.

2020

2021
SCC acquires the Centre for Outsourcing Research and Education.

2024
SCC and the provincial and territorial institutes negotiate new individual Affiliation Agreements, which replace the Federation Agreement and disband the Federation Council.

can help each other solve complex challenges. That's where the real value is."

This year also marks the magazine's 10th anniversary. First published in 2015, it has grown alongside the profession, becoming both a reflection of the community and a catalyst for its conversations. For Bartlett, the magazine is a natural extension of the association's philosophy: member-driven, forward-looking and committed to excellence. "It's our platform to showcase the voices of supply chain professionals and the innovations shaping the future," he says.

> **We're a 100-year-old startup, and we're just getting started.**

Canada's supply chain. The centennial rebrand in 2019 signalled more than just a name change. It marked the start of a new era, one focused on relevance, innovation and the future of the profession. "It showed us we could be bold," Bartlett says. "It was about stepping forward with confidence and making sure our profession is seen for the impact it truly has."

What's to Come

Supply Chain Canada, Bartlett says, is best thought of as a 100-year-old startup: an organization grounded in history but relentlessly focused on what's next. "Everything we do has to uplift the profession," he says. "And we have to do it in the way professionals need it, not the way we assume they need it."

Now, the SCMP is being reinvented again. Bartlett wants the program to be more flexible, more interactive and able to meet professionals wherever they are in their careers, whether they're just getting started or aiming for executive-level roles. "Think of it as choose your own adventure," he says. "We've got a great product today, but we want to take it to another level."

The next decade of both Supply Chain Canada and *Supply Chain Canada* magazine is about innovation, community and a sharper focus on members. "We've got over 50,000 professionals across the country," he says. "I want them to feel like they're part of something bigger, a national community that advocates for the industry and advances the profession."

Supply Chain Canada magazine has become the profession's voice. "We don't want to tell readers what they already know," Bartlett says. "We want to provide solutions, share ideas and connect people who

And that forward-looking perspective is evident in the events Supply Chain Canada brings to life. The national conference in Calgary earlier this year was more than just a sell-out event; it was proof of momentum. Beyond packed booths and sponsorships, the real success was in the energy it created. Delegates left energized, conversations spilled over into new collaborations and the sense of community was palpable. Attendees spoke about leaving with a renewed sense of purpose, with ideas to take back to their workplaces and a stronger pride in being part of Canada's supply chain community. One participant described it as "a reminder that we are not just solving problems for our companies but shaping the future of the Canadian economy."

Bartlett sees that energy as a springboard for Quebec City in

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May 2026. "We'll have phenomenal speakers, great content, and we'll build on the energy we saw this year," he says. "But more importantly, people will leave inspired about the future of our profession." Virtual symposiums each fall will keep that energy alive, bringing interactive programming and national conversations to members across the country.

The Core Philosophy

Community is at the core of Bartlett's vision. He believes communication has to be a two-way street, with members shaping what the association creates. "For too long, associations developed programs and pushed them down to members," he says. "We want to flip that. We want members at the table, co-creating with us." Advisory committees are being expanded, a monthly supply chain report will draw directly from member input and Bartlett himself makes a point of calling members to hear their experiences. "That feedback has to guide us," he says. "The value of Supply Chain Canada comes from the people in it and our job is to make sure their voices are heard."

Bartlett is clear that this philosophy is not just rhetoric. He points to the stories he hears from members – about finding mentorship through the association, building networks that open career doors or drawing on shared expertise to solve complex challenges – as the real measure of success. "When people tell us their involvement changed their career, that's when you know you're doing something that matters," he says. "That's when you see the heart of this profession."

For Bartlett, the next decade is about amplifying impact. He sees Supply Chain Canada as the spark that will inspire professionals to push boundaries, embrace innovation and carry the profession forward with pride. "Our role is to empower people to see themselves as leaders," he says. "The future of supply chain in Canada will be written by the people in this community and our job is to help them realize just how much they can achieve together."

"We're future focused," he says. "We're a 100-year-old startup, and we're just getting started."


Courtesy of Arctic Gateway Group

THE PORT OF CHURCHILL'S ARCTIC ADVANTAGE

SKIP THE U.S. TARIFFS ON A NEW ROUTE TO GLOBAL TRADE

By Linda Slobodian

The Canada-U.S. tariff dispute illustrates the extent to which Canada is "over-indexed and over-reliant" on trade with the U.S., says Chris Avery, president and CEO of Arctic Gateway Group (AGG), which owns the Port of Churchill on Hudson Bay in Manitoba.

"We can all see that we shouldn't be in a position where we are over-reliant on the U.S.," says Avery. "The timing is right for us to think about Churchill and use it as a gateway to global markets, non-U.S. global markets. The port is primed to become a major Canadian trade asset."

Projects backed by the federal and provincial governments are completed or planned to transform the port into a major export and import hub. Investments serve the national interest by "unlocking the trade and transportation potential of Canada's Arctic trade corridor," says Avery.

This "vast resource" offers Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba "a direct and efficient link" to markets in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South America. It provides access to isolated northern central Nunavut. It's the only Arctic seaport connected by land to the rest of North America.

"It provides us with optionality," says Avery, adding that ports in Canada, despite the country's size, have infrastructure that is linear across the U.S. border.

He notes the economic ramifications of rail and highway washouts in 2021 that disrupted access to the Port of Vancouver and labour disputes in Montreal last summer. He predicts there'll be more disruptive forest fires, natural disasters and labour disputes.

Meanwhile, AGG is in discussions with private-sector members about shipping products through the port.

"For the supply chain audiences, as they talk to their customers, it's an opportunity to look to Churchill for our national goals which are to diversify our trade, support Canada in becoming a global energy superpower and to help us assert our sovereignty in the North," says Avery. "We're building trade-enabling infrastructure for the future. This set of northern infrastructure supports all of those national goals."

Modernization projects are planned. Wharf repairs are underway. Good infrastructure, including a new critical minerals storage facility tripling storage capacity, is in place. An airport with a 9,200-foot paved runway is capable of handling any transport aircraft.

By ground, Churchill is only accessible by AGG-owned Hudson Bay Railway.

"The railway is in better condition than it has been for the past 30 years," says Avery. "The Port was sold to an American interest (OmniTRAX) in 1996 that neglected the infrastructure for decades."

Chris Avery
President & CEO,
Arctic Gateway Group

Flooding washed out the railway in 2017, cutting the port off from the rest of Canada and from northern Manitoba communities. "The American company wouldn't fix the railway, so essentially held Canada hostage," Avery says.

AGG purchased the Port of Churchill in 2018. It's now owned by 29 First Nations and northern Manitoba communities.

"Probably our biggest roadblock, and this is very relevant to the supply chain audiences, is the reputational deficit that we're overcoming because for many years infrastructure was neglected. It was rendered pretty much not reliable and not very active. That's what most people think of," says Avery.

"Now we're locally owned. What that means is our ownership lives in the community, so they'll insist that we continue to invest back in the infrastructure. The growth of the infrastructure is very much tied in to the communities, not someone in Denver or even Bay Street. It's also a model of Indigenous economic reconciliation that you don't see anywhere else."

AGG acquired the port and railway, intending to reinvest in infrastructure so it would be self-sufficient and support Canada's economy. "That's what we're doing now. We're about two years into the planning. We're executing it and feeling really good about the direction we're going in," Avery says.

Capacity to transport goods has already increased. For example, last year AGG and Hudbay Minerals carried out a pilot project to export 10,000 tonnes of zinc concentrate to European markets. Exports are expected to double in 2025. Supply vessels are delivering essential equipment and supplies to Nunavut.

AGG is capable of shipping critical minerals, agricultural goods, energy, forestry and other commodities. "We are growing, expanding and very much open for business. We are making up for decades of neglect," Avery says.

The port also provides opportunity for imports to be shipped to Canada.

"Our farmers in the Prairies need phosphates. We import phosphates from the U.S. So now we can, rather than importing from the U.S., import phosphates from North Africa or the Middle East coming across the Atlantic to Churchill and then directly to the farmers in the Prairie provinces."

Over the years, both the federal and provincial governments have invested in the port's infrastructure to secure a trade route. Since U.S. President Donald Trump imposed tariffs, a sense of urgency has led to more action.

"The federal government is very much on board. They see the opportunities for Manitoba as a maritime province for the resources in Western Canada," says Avery.

This past spring, Ottawa and Manitoba pledged a combined $80 million to finish work on the railway and the port.

"Churchill presents huge opportunities when it comes to mining, agriculture and energy," said Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew, when he announced a $36.4-million provincial government investment. "These new investments will build up Manitoba's economic strength and open our province to new trading opportunities."

In July, AGG and the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen trade through the port and establish a northern trade corridor.

"Saskatchewan remains committed to strengthening trade across Canada by supporting and developing new transportation corridors," said Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe.

Added Kinew: "Through this agreement with AGG and Saskatchewan, we are going to unlock new opportunities for businesses in Manitoba and Saskatchewan to get their goods to market."

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith also backs the northern port. Like Saskatchewan, Alberta is a major exporter of energy and agricultural commodities.

AGG expects to support 5,500 direct and indirect Canadian jobs. There's optimism that the port could remain open six months a year due to warming temperatures, or almost year-round with icebreakers from the fleet Ottawa is procuring.

"We found ourselves in the national conversation and we're proud that we were part of the national solution," says Avery.

CHAIN REACTION

IT'S TIME TO GIVE YOUR LOGISTICS MODEL A MAKEOVER

By Linda Slobodian

The "pressure has never been higher" on the logistics industry that has been "particularly" disrupted this year by rapid transformation," says Mark Ang, CEO and co-founder of GoBolt, a 3PL and last-mile logistics provider headquartered in Toronto.

"Logistics in Canada specifically, I would describe as generally extremely turbulent. The reason for this is heavily driven due to the fallout that we're seeing as a result of tariffs having an impact on companies that are over-leveraged. I think Canada is being hit harder," says Ang.

The industry struggles to adapt to a changing landscape due to tariffs, rising costs, shifting shipping policies and regulations, evolving policies and shopper demands. Ang says a "staggering" percentage of brands are re-evaluating their logistics models to stay competitive, with cost efficiency being the main priority when choosing 3PL partners.

"The most important message is that tech and innovation are critical drivers. It's really important that 3PL offers that full suite of services," says Ang.

GoBolt surveyed hundreds of supply chain leaders from leading brands to produce its 2025 State of Logistics Report: Trends, Challenges & Opportunities. This deep dive gives direct-to-consumer (DTC) and retail "tools to thrive amidst the disruptions."

"Logistics is undergoing rapid transformation. Our 2025 report offers brands practical strategies to navigate the coming years with confidence," says Ang.

As economic pressure mounts "cost is king," the report says. Its key takeaways zero in on cost efficiency, carrier diversification, last-mile performance, cost analytics and returns management.

Some 65 per cent of those surveyed say diversifying carriers will provide cost reductions and 68 per cent want their 3PLs to invest in carrier diversification. Another 52 per cent cite returns management as a top value-added service. Seventy-seven per cent said last-mile delivery, which is supply chains' most expensive and complex segment, and costs reporting are critical technologies for their operation to grow, and they require these insights from their 3PLs.

Mark Ang
CEO,
GoBolt

The report emphasizes strategic carrier diversification "is not just a trend but a necessity for cost-effective fulfillment in 2025 and beyond."

Returns management continues to be a challenge and "major pain point" for brands striving to minimize costs and increase shopper loyalty. Ang says the industry faces increasing pressure from consumers who "drive a lot of logistics demand." So, it looks to 3PLs offering comprehensive reverse logistics and return processing.

"You and I, day-to-day as a shopper, as a consumer, can call an Uber and have it arrive in a minute or two. We can have someone shop for our groceries delivered in 75 minutes. There's a huge instant gratification. The downstream impact is that shoppers have that same expectation in other areas of their consumption. People expect that same type of experience and precision."

Generally, GoBolt wasn't surprised by the survey results. "What was interesting to unearth were some of the things that warehousing companies are usually considering as critical in making switches. When we think about cost, there's obviously a direct cost to ship. Then there are other indirect costs," Ang says. "What we were seeing is that the indirect costs the warehouse can influence are becoming more and more important."

3PLs must adopt technological solutions to impact indirect costs. Ang says: "Not every 3PL is equipped to deal with that. From a solution perspective, I think it starts with your warehouse department."

Capabilities operationally or technologically must also align with needs. "The first I would say is carrier diversification. You need to work with a 3PL that's got a pretty robust TMS that can rate-shop, that helps you make sure your package shipping is cost effective," Ang says.

"The other side of that is do they have the returns capability and desire to have a robust returns management process for apparel clients? Sometimes, the return rates are as high as 20 per cent, which means that for every five shipments that go out the door, one of them is coming back. Or for every five units, one is coming back. You have a fairly high indirect cost on the return side attached to every order going out to the market."

Inefficiency means "you're losing your revenue potential and you're losing your investment that you already made for it." With 20,00 3PLs in North America, there's no shortage of providers to choose from, says Ang.

"It's really important to be focused on exactly what you need. (It's like) when you're thinking of getting married, you dated, you understand your quirks, you understand and offer each other what you need on both sides because it is a two-way street."

He emphasizes that honesty, transparency and clarity are essential in determining what's needed and what a 3PL can provide.

"We've been involved for the past eight years in a number of different rates. So, often a brand will come and say, 'I'm doing 50,000 orders a month' and in reality, they're doing 10. They think that by committing 50,000 or saying 50,000 they're going to get the best rate," says Ang. "The strategy is not great because you may impair yourself with a 3PL that can only achieve certain economies at that volume. If they can't make your business successful for them, it's not a sustainable relationship."

Meanwhile, several brands have moved to the U.S. from Canada. Ang says: "For a cross-border company like GoBolt, that's fantastic. We uniquely see that in our Canadian warehouse, we have strong domestic demand. Our U.S. demand has now rocket-shot up as a result."

"If there's a 3PL just based in Canada, many have gone out of business already, (with) things like layoffs, default on rents. Brands are left in the lurch. It's happening pretty consistently," he adds.

GoBolt offers eco-conscious warehousing, pick-and-pack fulfillment and last-mile delivery services for brands in both Canada and the U.S.

"We're in a really fortunate position because we can see both sides and GoBolt also has delivery as a service line. We have different tentacles in a number of different areas. Nationally, we're a little more resilient to these types of changes but also, we can see how the demand is shifting," Ang says.

The survey also found 34 per cent of brands were in the process of evaluating how they would respond to tariff regulations and changes to U.S. de minimis provisions in Section 321 that businesses had relied on for cost efficiency. Other brands shifted inventory strategies or explored new 3PLs to mitigate cost exposure.

INVENTORY IQ

BEST PRACTICES AND THE PITFALLS TO WATCH FOR

By Mario Toneguzzi

For many entrepreneurs, managing inventory remains one of the most persistent and costly business challenges.

Striking the right balance between meeting customer demand and avoiding overstock that ties up capital is no easy feat. The situation is made worse when companies don't have an accurate picture of what's actually in stock, leading to missed sales, production delays and cash flow issues.

Experts say adopting proper inventory management practices can significantly improve business performance. Core strategies include monitoring inventory levels with specialized software, measuring performance through key metrics like inventory turnover and service level ratios and aligning inventory planning with broader business functions like finance and production. These tools not only provide real-time visibility but also help reduce waste and prevent costly over-ordering.

However, businesses should not treat inventory as a fix for deeper operational issues. Too often, companies use excess stock to mask supplier problems or inefficient processes, say analysts. Instead, they recommend streamlining operations, planning ahead for excess inventory and implementing structured approaches like sales and operations planning (S&OP). By doing so, businesses can improve accuracy, cut costs and boost customer satisfaction without overloading their shelves.


Manuel Gogolin
Senior Business Advisor, BDC

Manuel Gogolin, senior business advisor at BDC, who is based in Vancouver, supports BDC advisory services with consulting, working directly with small and medium-sized enterprises to help them become more productive through operational efficiencies. Inventory management falls into that broad category.

"When I look at organizations and operational efficiencies, one thing we want to focus on is how do we reduce waste? Waste in a business is defined as things that are not adding value to our customers," he says. "We're taking a page out of the lean manufacturing mindset. Waste can be categorized into seven or eight different categories. How do we reduce the amount of inventory that we have to hold but still be able to deliver value for our customers?"

> **How do we reduce the amount of inventory that we have to hold but still be able to deliver value for our customers?**

Holding onto inventory costs money, Gogolin says. "The broad benchmark around how much it costs is about 20 to 30 per cent. So, of the inventory value of $1 million on your balance sheet, you can assume 20 to 30 per cent is going to be the cost of holding that when it comes to warehousing, to moving it around, to handling it, to the insurance. It's really a big cost driver for businesses and that's why we put a lot of emphasis around that."

A recent BDC article identified some do's and don'ts of inventory management.

Do's

1. **Monitor your inventory**
   Good inventory management starts with tracking what you've got. This means having a reliable way of recording how much inventory you have, where each product is located and when you received it.

2. **Measure performance**
   It's important to regularly measure the performance of your inventory management. You should choose performance measures that make the most sense for your business

3. **Align inventory management with other processes**
   Ordering new items should take into account customer demand, sales forecasts, financial considerations, production needs and distribution capabilities.

Don'ts

1. **Use inventory as a Band-Aid**
   Don't use inventory as a Band-Aid for operational or supplier problems. Instead, ask yourself why you have so much inventory and work on solutions.

2. **Dump inventory without a plan**
   If you have a lot of excess or discontinued inventory that's been gathering dust, you may decide to dump or liquidate it. In order to minimize the financial hit, make a plan.

Gogolin says inventory is becoming increasingly more important. For the past few years, supply chains have been disrupted for a variety of reasons, including COVID-19. Businesses have had a massive increase in shipping costs and things took longer to arrive. Businesses then ordered more things so they wouldn't have to worry about getting them on time.

"Holding onto inventory also ties up liquidity and precious working capital in the business. When businesses are cash-constrained, if their money is tied up in inventory, that's not always easy to turn into liquid working capital that quickly," Gogolin says.

So what's the first step to get a company's inventory in line?

"Get your data set up properly. Get a good handle on what's actually going on. To whatever extent you can, get a real picture of how your inventory functions," says Gogolin.

How many SKUs do you have? What's the breakdown of those? Which ones are selling more, which are selling less? The quantity on hand? How much coverage is there for them?

"There's lots of different inventory management modules or solutions out there. Technology plays a huge role in this (with) real-time availability of data and bar code scanners that can track the intake, the receiving of inventory. They can be linked to a system that allows the back-end system to automatically update that inventory value so it reduces the burden of manual counting," explains Gogolin.

The suite of software will support decision making. Gogolin says to think about inventory in the A, B, C classifications. You don't want to treat them all the same. The A class includes the high value, quick moving items. Distinct strategies and distinct management will be needed for them.

"They're going to be more valuable. They're going to be more susceptible to possibly running out. So you have distinct strategies for those A's, those B's and those C's and that way you're not trying to boil the ocean by having a whole bunch of extra work for things that are deemed low value. You want to make sure that you don't have too much of the stuff that's going to sit there for a really long time. But on the flip side, you're going to have the right amount of stuff that the customers want all the time."


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SMART GEAR, SMARTER WAREHOUSES

HOW WEARABLES ARE BOOSTING EFFICIENCY

By Mario Toneguzzi

Warehouse work is entering a new era, thanks to a wave of lightweight, intuitive wearable technologies reshaping how goods move from shelf to shipment.

Startups like Lotwork and industry giants like Amazon are leading this transformation, replacing bulky hand-held devices with ring scanners and smart safety vests that boost productivity while easing physical strain.

At Lotwork, based in Ottawa and Toronto, founder and CEO Lynn Xu says their wearable ring scanner is the lightest on the market. It weighs just 20 grams, with up to 18 hours of battery life and no software installation required.

"It's about ergonomics and retention," explains Xu, who started the company in 2023. "If you make the job more comfortable, people stay longer and perform better."

The scanner, designed to be nearly forgettable on the hand, has found traction in supply chain hubs where speed and accuracy are paramount.

Meanwhile, Amazon has scaled wearable safety vests in all of its robotic fulfillment centres. These vests communicate wirelessly with robots, halting them automatically when a worker is nearby and thus eliminating collision risks on high-speed warehouse floors.

The future of wearable tech in warehouses hinges not just on innovation but on real-world resilience. Devices must survive drops, extreme temperatures and long shifts while integrating seamlessly with warehouse management systems.

"It's not just about the gadget, it's about ROI (return on investment) and operational fit," says supply chain strategist Gary Newbury.

As distribution networks brace for peak-season surges and ongoing labour shortages, the industry's adoption of wearables is shifting from experimental to essential, paving the way for faster fulfillment and safer, more sustainable work.

Lotwork focuses on delivering lightweight, economical work solutions for the supply chain industry.

Xu said wearable technology is becoming more important in this space from several perspectives.

"First, it boosts productivity and efficiency. At the same time, it improves working conditions, helping retain talent in the supply chain industry. If you make work more enjoyable and ergonomic, people are happier and output increases. That's why wearables are gaining traction," she says of the technology, which is manufactured in China.

Kanon Yang, solution delivery and support lead at Lotwork, says the company's ring scanner is the smallest and most lightweight on the market, making it environmentally friendly due to lower material and battery usage. It uses just five per cent of the power compared to traditional hand-held or wired scanners.

It connects via Bluetooth and is plug-and-play like a keyboard or mouse. No software installation is needed. It works up to 50 metres from the connected device and includes electrostatic discharge (ESD) protection of up to 300 kilovolts, meaning it's protected against electrical shocks.

"We also put a lot of thought into the design. The ring has two parts: the scanner and the band. The band is curved and made from a special material, not rubber, designed for comfort. The curved shape reduces contact pressure, making it more comfortable for extended wear," Yang says.

"Here's a fun back-story. The 20-gram weight was very intentional. Our team experimented with rings of different weights and materials to find the perfect balance where users forget they're wearing it. This is crucial in warehouses, where workers need both hands and wear the scanner for eight-plus hours. Heavier devices cause fatigue; 20 grams turned out to be optimal. We also offer a centralized charging dock, called the C20, which charges 10 ring scanners simultaneously."

SureshKumar Aruchamy, director of operations for Amazon's Western Canada fulfillment centres, says the company is always innovating and looking for ways to improve associate safety and that's where wearable technology is coming into play now.

"We already have some of the industry's leading safety standards, but we continuously work to operate safer, make jobs easier for associates and improve efficiency. Ultimately, it's all about delivering

Amazon's robots

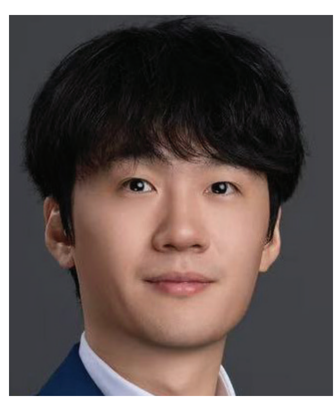
a great customer experience," Aruchamy says.

"We approach safety in three ways. First is structural solutions. We eliminate safety risks through engineering. Second, administrative controls. These involve checklists, forms and process management. Third is manual monitoring, like having someone physically monitor operations. For example, in yard operations, we have a 'spotter' to oversee vehicle movement."

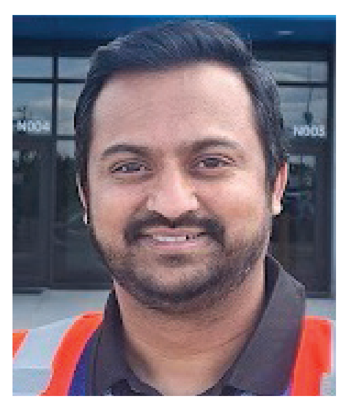
Aruchamy says all Amazon's newer buildings launch with the latest technology and safety measures. The company retrofits older sites with updates.

Lynn Xu
CEO,
Lotwork

Gary Newbury
Supply Chain Strategist



Kanon Yang
Solution Delivery and
Support Lead,
Lotwork



SureshKumar Aruchamy
Director of Operations,
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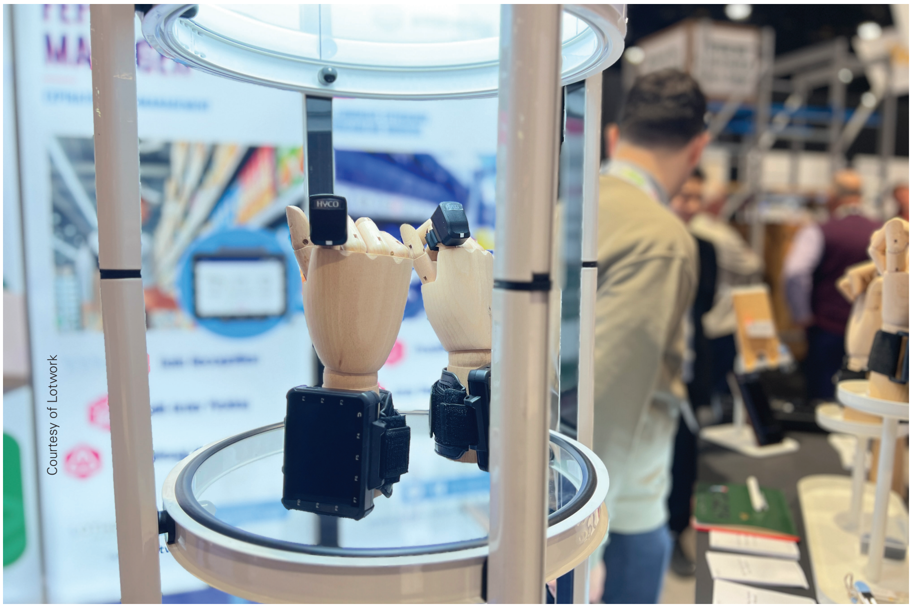

Courtesy of Lotwork

Ring scanner

"Specifically, the safety vests, the wearable tech we use on robotic floors, are deployed in 100 per cent of our robotic fulfillment centres. And whenever there's an upgrade, we roll it out across all sites," he says. "Across North America, we've reduced recordable injuries by over 50 per cent in the past three years and serious injuries by more than 30 per cent."

Aruchamy says the vest is called SRBRS, which stands for Short-Range Broadcast Radio System. It looks like a regular reflective vest, but it's actually a smart device. It's used in the approximately 100 robotic fulfillment centres across North America.

In these centres, inventory is stored on shelves or pods. Robotic drives transport these pods to associates, so associates don't need to walk to pick items. On a typical robotic floor, there are between 1,000 to 2,000 robotic drives moving around.

Normally, no human is allowed on the robotic floor for safety reasons. But sometimes, someone needs to enter to clean up a spill, retrieve a fallen item or fix a broken robot.

"That's where the SRBRS vest comes in. It has Wi-Fi, a radio broadcasting system and an emergency stop. Before entering, the operator uses software to map the safest path to the item. Then, the door to the robotic floor unlocks and the drives along the planned path slow down or freeze," Aruchamy says.

"As the person moves through the floor, the vest communicates with nearby robots, freezing their movement or slowing them down. This creates a safe zone around the associate. In all the buildings I've worked in, I haven't seen a single injury involving a person interacting with the robotic floor while wearing this vest. It's extremely reliable."

Newbury says wearables in warehousing aren't new. They've just finally become usable and cost-effective. The first real deployments began in the late 1990s with voice-directed picking, allowing workers to follow spoken instructions hands-free. By the early 2000s, wrist-mounted terminals and ring scanners were popping up in high-volume DCs. In the 2010s, smart glasses and intelligent gloves emerged but remained niche due to cost and durability issues.

"Today's devices are lighter, faster and better integrated with cloud-based WMS platforms. And as one consultant put it: 'Wearables sound futuristic, but for warehouse operators, the real question is simple: will this help my team pick, pack and ship faster, safer and with fewer mistakes?'" says Newbury.

Here are a few key considerations Newbury suggests when looking at wearables from a warehouse operations lens:

- Fit for the Floor – Can the device survive a 10-hour shift in a humid pick tower or frigid dock? Is it glove-compatible, drop-resistant and easy to clean? The last thing you want is tech that's more fragile than the cartons being shipped.
- Worker Onboarding – If it takes longer to train someone to use the wearable than it does to teach them the job, it's a problem. The best devices feel intuitive: scan, confirm, move. Period.
- Battery Life vs. Workflow Disruption – If you're running two shifts and need to hot-swap devices mid-day, you're losing time. Warehouse leaders will need to test how battery performance holds up under real-world, back-to-back usage and ensure charging stations are available in appropriate places.
- Integration with Existing Systems – It's not just about the wearable; it's about the data. If your WMS or ERP can't keep up with real-time input from the floor, you've added noise, not clarity.
- ROI and Labour Flexibility – Most warehouse operators aren't swimming in budget surplus. Wearables need to show hard gains: fewer errors, faster cycles or the ability to onboard seasonal or temp workers faster without sacrificing throughput.

STREAMLINING THE SUPPLY CHAIN

PORT OF PRINCE RUPERT TESTS AUTONOMOUS TRUCKS

By Tyler Nyquvest

Since its announcement in May 2025, the decision to test autonomous vehicles on-site for future deployment at the Port of Prince Rupert has been met with divisive opinions. While unions strongly oppose the move, others are praising forward thinking and innovation as the port is set to face a significant increase in cargo traffic, as well as a driver shortage over the next two years.

With trade tensions in constant fluctuation, Canada seeks to diversify its trade partners, increase energy exports and fast-track infrastructure improvements, all of which make the move seem like an inevitable reaction to the shifting economy and the future of labour under technological advancements.

As Canada's third largest port and critical trade gateway, the Prince Rupert Port Authority has remained steadfast as the pilot project commences this year. However, the actions being taken now are merely a test of the technology's potential.

"The autonomous drayage trucking study is taking place in partnership with the Government of BC's Innovate BC Integrated Marketplace initiative, Gat Leedm Logistics and NuPort Robotics to complete proof-of-concept work on autonomous drayage trucking technology," says Olivia Mowatt, senior communications officer, Prince Rupert Port Authority.

"There are no plans to introduce autonomous technology in terminal operations. The only purpose is to test its potential use for drayage trucking services in the future. Autonomous trucks are only being considered to handle the incremental volumes beyond what the current drayage driver pool can move."

Port drayage trucks generally conduct short hauls, shuttling deliveries from the seaport to a nearby location. Specific details about the project, including information about

the trucks themselves, will be released once the pilot project is complete and the data collected.

"The first phase of this study involved testing the equipment on Port of Prince Rupert property and Ray-Mont Logistics terminal. The second phase (took) place this summer, with testing of a truck with chassis at Fairview container terminal. A driver will always be behind the wheel of the autonomous vehicle," Mowatt says.

While the opposition raises innumerable concerns about the impacts of warehouse and port automation, the port is mainly responding to the progress in its own operations. According to the Port Authority, daily truck moves from the DP World container terminal in Prince Rupert will increase from 176 today to 1,322 in 2030.

"To put that into perspective, DP World Prince Rupert Fairview Container Terminal handled a total of 739,315 TEUs in 2024," says Mowatt. TEUs, or 20-foot equivalent units, are a standard unit of measurement for cargo capacity on container ships and at terminals, equivalent to a 20-foot shipping container.

"Two major projects are under construction at the port that will significantly increase capacity for transloading and logistics services and require a notable increase in drayage truck drivers in the next few years," says Mowatt. "The largest is the CANXPORT project, a large-scale rail-to-container transloading facility that will have an annual capacity of 400,000 TEUs for Canadian exports."

CANXPORT will be operated by Ray-Mont Logistics and provide rail-to-container export transloading for multiple agricultural, forestry and plastic resin products, with room to expand to include other cargoes in the future. Drayage trucks will transport containers back and forth from Fairview Terminal to support those operations.

By 2030, our port will need to be able to handle an estimated 1,100 moves per day, which is a seven-fold increase in required capacity.

"The second is the South Kaien Import Logistics Park (SKILP), a joint venture between the Prince Rupert Port Authority and Metlakatla Development Corporation. Phase 1 of the project will feature a 100-door cross-dock facility and offer shippers new flexibility for their cargo. Much like CANXPORT, this project will depend on heavy-duty drayage trucks to move containers between the facility and Fairview Terminal," says Mowatt.

"Currently, about 150 drayage moves are performed each day at the Port of Prince Rupert. By 2030, with both CANXPORT and SKILP in operation, our port will need to be able to handle an estimated 1,100 moves per day, which is a seven-fold increase in required capacity," explains Mowatt.

"There are concerns of potential drayage driver shortages in the future, like situations faced during the Port of Prince Rupert's record volume years in 2019 and 2020. Many options are being explored as potential solutions to augment the labour force, ensuring the Port of Prince Rupert can continue to support an increase in cargo volumes, supporting additional terminal jobs and economic prosperity for the economies connected to the port."

She adds: "This is not the only trucking modernization project we are currently studying. The Prince Rupert Port Authority, Integrated Marketplace and Gat Leedm Logistics are also partnering on the heavy-duty zero-emissions vehicle (HDZEV) project. This testbed will help inform which innovative zero- and low-emissions vehicles are best suited for use in industry across B.C. and is significant for the Prince Rupert Gateway and the broader transportation and logistics sectors."

While environmentalists might praise the move, the sheer volume increase the port is handling is a sign of the times. Exports and imports are growing, as will the carbon footprint to move that cargo, and much like the economy, the environment will continue to be impacted as trade changes worldwide. Nevertheless, the port is moving forward with innovation in uncertain economic times to serve Canada's growth.

"These pilot projects are vital to developing strategies to support port and workforce growth, further decarbonize operations and ensure the future sustainability of supply chains," says Mowatt.

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