

**Panel Name:** Agents of Innovation: multiple experiences, multiple leverage points

**Panel Organizer**

Jennifer Martin, TELUS Spark

**Abstract:**

The Canadian innovation ecosystem is already strong and healthy, if however rather dissatisfying. As noted by Dan Breznitz\* of the Innovation Policy Lab at the University of Toronto, our public spending on business innovation as a percentage of GDP is higher than Finland, Israel and Germany. Over the past two decades our ability to invent is up from “good” to “excellent” indicating strength in ideas and application, yet we seriously lack in commercialization. And the evidence of global impact from our national innovation capacity is clear, but perhaps too much of that is from Canadians now in the United States.

There is a false narrative of cultural inferiority; that we are too comfortable or complacent to be strong innovators. This is tempered by many policy-related calls to action, which tend to focus on treating the symptoms rather than the “disease”.

Breznitz suggests that what we need to do is strengthen the Canadian “agents” of innovation – the companies and the people who actually do innovate. This panel will focus on examples, practices and priorities for cultivating innovation through our culture. What does innovation look like? How does it feel? How do we support it? Why is it valuable? These are questions that seldom are expressed in the larger dialogue on our innovation ecosystem.

Audrey Mascarenhas and Robert (Bob) Mitchell will highlight the demands on Canadian business, and the missing components of support that allow innovators to scale up their enterprises. Examples will be provided of US support that points to how governments in Canada can provide the leverage needed for success in this country.

Tom Ogaranko will discuss the practical application of innovation management, based on experience with government, private sector and non-profit examples. In particular, how small cities can adopt alternative strategies to expand their innovation capacity and ready themselves for sustainable 21st century opportunities.

Jennifer Martin will discuss innovation fluency in our culture, our schools, and our businesses. Fluency, not merely literacy, ensures the ability to experiment, practice and, build the skills and patterns of mind to innovate. Practical talent fostering approaches have been developed and are being applied to mid-career professionals as well as families. Fostering “innovation capital” in our national culture, our national identity is possible.

\*<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/canadas-innovation-agenda-theres-such-a-thing-as-too-much-consultation/article29722903/>