



**Business Link**  
Media Group

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# *Celebrating* **Business Link Media Group**

# 20

2003-2023

## **Years in Business**

### **DECEMBER:**

P 06 Business Link Publishes and Promotes the Second Edition of “Made in Niagara”

P 16 Dr. Andrew Huberman’s New Episode with Robert Greene

P 20 Advice for CEOs in 2024

# PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Dear Readers,

As we approach the end of 2023, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this December issue of Business Link, marking a significant milestone for us - 20 years in business since our establishment in 2003. Over the past two decades, Business Link has continually evolved with the ever-changing landscape of emerging technologies, enabling us to provide cutting-edge insights and innovative solutions to our valued clients.

In the recent month of November, Business Link proudly promoted "Made in Niagara" in international markets, garnering substantial attention and sparking numerous inquiries. This initiative not only highlights the exceptional products of our region but also underscores our commitment to fostering global connections for local businesses.

In this issue, we are thrilled to feature Dr. Andrew Huberman's captivating conversations with Robert Greene as a new episode of his insightful podcast. Additionally, we delve into Ryan Li's exploration of the digital dilemma, offering valuable perspectives on navigating Canada's complex digital landscape on Google. Furthermore, we present essential advice for CEOs as they prepare for the opportunities and challenges of 2024, along with insightful real estate perspectives from Michael Sommer.

We are immensely grateful for your unwavering support over the years and look forward to continuing this journey of growth and innovation with you. Here's to celebrating our achievements and embracing the exciting prospects that lie ahead.

Warm regards,

Yours in Business  
Marilyn Tian, M.B.A  
President & Co-Publisher  
Business Link Media Group



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# Business Link Publishes and Promotes the Second Edition of “Made in Niagara”

By Monica Good, Business Link Editor

Business Link recently released the second edition of “Made in Niagara,” a publication that showcases the diverse and vibrant businesses in the Ontario region. This edition aims to highlight the unique products and services that are proudly manufactured in the beautiful Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada. The magazine is distributed within Ontario, providing a platform for local businesses to gain exposure and recognition within their community.

In an exciting development, “Made in Niagara” is set to be promoted internationally at various expos in different countries throughout 2024. Notably, the publication was showcased in China and Japan in November 2023, garnering significant attention and sparking inquiries from overseas. This international promotion demonstrates Business Link’s commitment to expanding the reach of Canadian businesses beyond national borders, opening up new opportunities for collaboration and trade.

Marilyn Tian, the CEO of Business Link, led the promotional trip to China and Japan, where “Made in Niagara” was featured at prominent events such as the Shanghai International Import Expo and the Beijing International Supply Chain Expo. These expos are renowned for their focus on supply chain management, logistics, and related technologies, providing an ideal platform for businesses to showcase their offerings on a global stage.

Other International Businesses

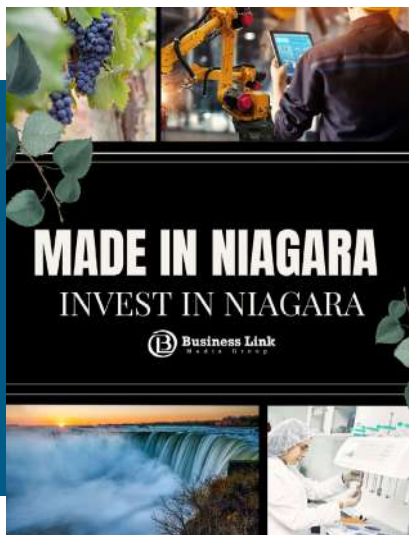


During the trip, Marilyn visited various businesses in multiple cities in China and Japan, fostering valuable connections and generating substantial interest in the products and services represented in “Made in Niagara”. The positive reception and attention received during these international promotions underscore the appeal and quality of the products originating from the Niagara Region and beyond.

Looking ahead, Business Link is dedicated to continuing its efforts to promote businesses not only within Canada but also on an international scale. By actively participating in global expos and trade shows, Business Link is facilitating opportunities for Canadian businesses to access new markets, forge international partnerships, and showcase the excellence of products made in Canada.

In conclusion, the second edition of “Made in Niagara” represents a significant milestone in promoting the businesses of the Ontario region, both locally and internationally. Through its presence at international expos and events, this publication is contributing to the expansion of opportunities for businesses in Canada, fostering cross-border connections, and showcasing the innovation and quality of products made in Niagara and beyond.

Marilyn Tian, the CEO of Business Link



"Made in Niagara" is an annual publication that has gained momentum since its inaugural edition in 2019, with the second edition released in 2023. This year's edition features an advanced AI-powered chat portal, offering an innovative way to showcase the content within the publication.

Businesses interested in participating in the 2024 edition can reach out to [info@businesslinkmedia.com](mailto:info@businesslinkmedia.com) for more information and opportunities to be featured.





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# TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS WITH **BUSINESS LINK**

## Business Link Chat Portal Demo

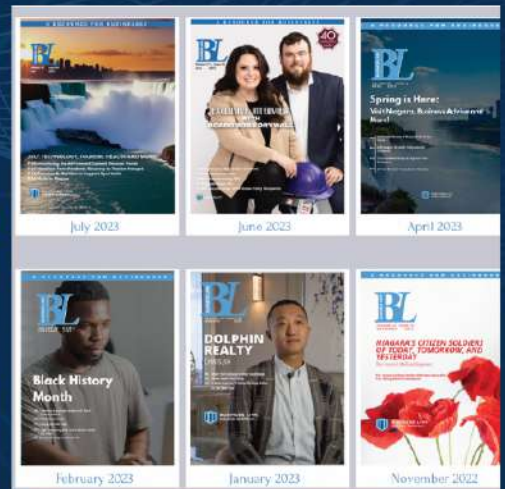
This is a simple demo to showcase the conversational generative AI capabilities that Business Link offers. We can build and deploy a similar chat portal for your business!

AI:  
Hi! Ask me anything about Business Link publications!

You:  
Qual è il posto migliore da visitare a Niagara?

You:  
Potresti dirmi dove visitare in Niagara?

AI:  
Ci sono molti posti interessanti da visitare a Niagara! Alcuni dei luoghi più popolari includono la Cascata del Niagara, la città di Niagara Falls, il centro di Niagara-on-the-Lake e il Canale Welland. Puoi anche esplorare le numerose aziende vinicole della regione o fare una passeggiata lungo il lungomare del Lago Ontario. Se hai interessi specifici, posso fornirti ulteriori informazioni!



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## NEWS BUSINESS LINK FLASH

### McDonald's Plans: 8,800 New Locations, 100 Million Loyalty

McDonald's has outlined plans to open more than 8,800 new locations and increase its loyalty program membership by 100 million by 2027 as part of its global sales growth strategy, focusing on new restaurant expansions and loyalty program enhancements. McDonald's, with 41,198 restaurants globally as of Sept. 30, 2023, aims to reach 50,000 locations worldwide by 2027.

More:

- In 2024, McDonald's expects 4% net new restaurant growth, contributing to systemwide sales, with anticipated capital expenditures of \$2.5B.
- Beyond 2024, McDonald's targets annual restaurant count growth of 4%-5%, with new locations contributing about 2.5% to systemwide sales in constant currency.
- By 2027, McDonald's hopes to have a quarter of a billion active members in its loyalty program, highlighting the program's significant contribution to increasing mobile sales.
- McDonald's announced a collaboration with Google Cloud to improve restaurant operations worldwide with artificial intelligence.

News source: <https://inside.com/business/posts/mcdonald-s-targets-9-000-stores-100m-members-404939>



## Black Friday online sales hit record high

Black Friday achieved a record-breaking \$9.8B in U.S. online sales, experiencing a 7.5% YoY increase as consumers prioritized maximizing discounts through online deal hunting. The growth, bolstered by \$5.3B in mobile shopping, suggests that influenc-

More:

- Customers are price-sensitive, keeping a closer eye on their spending because of rising interest rates and inflation.
- With \$79M in sales, the “Buy Now, Pay Later” flexible payment option was utilized, a 47% increase over the previous year.
- On Black Friday, toys, games, and electronics (including televisions and smartwatches) were the top-selling categories.
- Adobe predicts that online consumers will spend a record \$12B on Cyber Monday and approximately \$10B throughout the weekend, indicating sustained momentum in buying.

News source: <https://inside.com/business/posts/black-friday-online-sales-hit-record-high-403623>



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## VW brand struggles financially

Volkswagen's brand chief acknowledged financial challenges in the VW brand, emphasizing the need for improvement as the company focuses on electric vehicles. Despite high sales, the VW brand faces low productivity and high costs, prompting efforts to enhance its financial performance.

More:

- In 2026, the return on sales for the VW brand is expected to rise from 3.6% to 6.5%, as stated in a presentation given to investors by VW Group.
- As part of a more significant efficiency push for the switch to electric vehicles, the business is in talks with its works council over a cost-cutting plan for the VW brand.
- Staff reductions are part of Volkswagen's \$10.9B savings plan, which aims to take advantage of the "demographic curve" by offering partial or early retirement agreements.
- HR board member Gunnar Kilian urges boldness, honesty, and the elimination of redundant processes and unnecessary elements for improved company outcomes.

News source: <https://inside.com/business/posts/vw-brand-struggles-financially-404181>

## Walmart announces it has stopped advertising on X

Walmart has confirmed that it has stopped advertising on X because it has "found better platforms to reach its customers." The announcement comes as Elon Musk publically lashed out at Disney CEO Bob Iger.

More:

- During the New York Times' DealBook event on Wednesday, Tesla CEO and X owner Elon Musk said that advertisers who have left X "can go f\*\*\* themselves" for trying to "blackmail" him through their advertising money, then called out Disney CEO Bob Iger by name.
- Musk added that he is well aware that X may go bankrupt as a result of the boycott from major advertisers but said that he believes the public would join him in blaming the advertisers.
- X could lose as much as \$75M in advertising revenue due to a boycott from companies such as Airbnb, Coca-Cola, Disney, IBM, and Microsoft.
- This boycott began earlier this month when MediaMatters published a story that X would place ads for these companies next to antisemitic material.
- Musk said that MediaMatters manipulated the algorithm to get its desired result and vowed to sue the organization.
- Musk's vulgar statement galvanized some of his supporters online, who made calls to boycott Disney+, which has nearly 150 million users.

News source: <https://inside.com/business/posts/walmart-announces-it-has-stopped-advertising-on-x-404402>





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# Digital Dilemma: Canada's \$100 Million Gamble on Google

Dissecting Google's Compensation, Controversies, and C-18's Impact on Canadian Media Landscape

*By Ryan Li, Vancouver*

In our September edition, we delved into the repercussions of Bill C-18 and the threat of massive online platforms, including Meta and Google, halting news-providing operations in protest of the bill's compensation requirements for these companies.

By publication, Meta had already ceased providing news to Canadian users on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, and the only unknown factor was how Google would act.

### **"The real question with this legislation is whether [C-18] will affect Google."**

Well, we now know.

Google has agreed to pay \$100 million annually to Canadian publishers and continue to support news agencies on its Canadian servers in exchange for currently unknown amendments to the bill.

However, this controversy is far from over. First, the amount.

Ottawa had hoped that Google would be willing to fork up closer to \$170 million annually to offset the cost of Meta's departure from Canadian news sites. But unsurprisingly, the tech giant was unwilling to pay for the actions of one of its competitors and only agreed to cover its share of the online news market. In addition, the annual \$100 million payments nullify previously existing revenue-sharing agreements between Google and Canadian online news outlets. Consequently, the "new revenue" that the government is collecting is merely breaking even with pre-C-18 levels, leaving Canadians wondering if restricting their choice of online news for a marginal, if not non-existent, financial boost was worth it.

Then comes the issue of who receives Google's money.

Contrary to the government's wish to force Google to pay each online news outlet independently, Google has made the government agree with a single-pay collective model. Under this model, all of Google's money will go into one pot and will necessitate the development of a complicated formula to distribute the money equitably to the thousands of online news platforms across the country. This lack of structure and distribution formula will push the issue of who receives what down the road and will be an interesting story to follow in the coming months.

Even though one phase of C-18's development is over, there is much more uncertainty down the road. Who will get paid? What is the government giving up? What's in it for Google?

As we noted in September, the full effects of this law are yet to be determined. Nobody can guarantee what will happen, but Canadians can be confident they can continue accessing daily headlines on Google. With the Google dispute out of the way, Canadians are no longer asking where they can access online news, but many will be wondering what the true cost of this ordeal will be.







# NIAGARA UPCOMING Events

## NIAGARA FALLS WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

DATE RANGE: NOV 18TH 2023 TO  
JAN 7TH, 2024, 5:00 PM

📍 6815 STANLEY AVE

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

DATE RANGE: DEC 15TH, 2023 –  
DEC 23, 2023, SHAW FESTIVAL

📍 10 QUEEN'S PARADE

## POINSETTIA SHOW AT THE FLORAL SHOWHOUSE

DATE RANGE: NOV 18, 2023 – JAN 7,  
2024 (CLOSED DEC 25TH), 12:00 PM

📍 7145 NIAGARA RIVER PKWY

## BALLS FALLS WINTER SOLSTICE CONCERT

STARTS ON WEDN, DEC. 20, 2023, 7:00 PM,  
BALL'S FALLS CONSERVATION AREA

📍 3292 SIXTH AVE, LINCOLN

## NIAGARA NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA 2023

STARTS ON SUN, DEC 31, 2023, 7:00 PM  
GREG FREWIN THEATRE

📍 5781 ELLEN AVE





# Robert Greene: A Process for Finding & Achieving Your Unique Purpose

*New Episode Podcast with Dr. Andrew Huberman*

In this episode, my guest is Robert Greene, multiple New York Times bestselling author and expert on human psychology and behavior both at the individual and group levels and in the context of relationships, careers, and society. We discuss how to find, pursue and achieve one's unique life purpose, and how to best learn from good and hard experiences along that journey. We discuss power dynamics in relationships, the different types of human communication and the interplay between seduction and vulnerability. We discuss how to find the right romantic partner, improve healthy self-awareness, the link between anxiety and creativity, and pick ideal mentors and role models. Robert also discusses his recent stroke and what he has learned from his near-death experience about motivation, urgency and appreciation for life. Listeners of all ages will benefit from Robert's insights on navigating the process of building a deeply purposeful life and enhancing one's relationship with the self, others and society.

In a captivating conversation, acclaimed author Robert Greene delves into the intricacies of life, offering profound insights into purpose, relationships, and the resilience required to navigate its challenges. Here's a glimpse into the multifaceted dialogue:

In this section, Andrew Huberman introduces his guest, Robert Greene, and highlights the importance of Greene's books in exploring self-exploration, human interaction, and pursuing one's purpose.

Robert Greene is an author of best-selling books including "The 48 Laws of Power" and "Mastery". Greene's books delve into the psychology of self and human interaction, rooted in history and modern culture. "Mastery" is highly recommended by Huberman as a practical tool for finding and pursuing one's purpose.

## **Influences on Our Unique Purpose:**

Greene explores the intricate dance between nature and nurture in shaping our unique purpose. Drawing on the influences of DNA, experiences, and parental interests, he highlights the myriad orientations sculpted by our distinct genetic makeup and life experiences. Greene emphasizes the complex power dynamics in relationships, stressing the need for influence over overt control.

## **Unveiling Power Dynamics:**

Often overlooked or omitted in discussions, power dynamics play a crucial role in relationships. Greene delves into the neural circuits controlling both sexual and nonsexual mounting behavior in animals, providing a unique perspective on the invisible realm where individuals continually grapple for power.

**Positive Masculinity and Femininity:**

Addressing the confusion surrounding femininity and masculinity, Greene advocates for a cultural shift towards positive traits. Inner strength, emotional control, resilience, and confidence are highlighted as positive

**Convergent Interests in Relationships:**

Beyond superficial preferences, Greene underscores the importance of convergent interests rooted in early delight in successful partnerships. He cites mutual love and respect for animals as a compelling example, expressing his personal aversion to dating someone who doesn't share this crucial convergent interest.

**Recognizing Genuine Connections:**

Greene shares insights on recognizing genuine interest and connection, particularly through facial expressions and eyes. Distinguishing authentic smiles from the facade created by narcissists, he guides listeners on identifying genuine expressions and steering clear of toxic relationships.

**Personal Reflections on a Stroke:**

In a deeply personal segment, Greene recounts his experience of a stroke, narrating the strange sensations, altered voice, and appearance. Reflecting on the curiosity and significance of the process of dying, Greene provides a unique perspective on life's fragility and the profound impact of such near-death experiences.

This rich and varied conversation with Robert Greene serves as a compass for those navigating the complexities of life, offering profound wisdom on purpose, relationships, and the resilience needed to face life's uncertainties.

Watch full video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50BZQRT1dAg>

Stay Connected! New episodes of Dr. Andrew Huberman podcast are out each Monday on YouTube and all major podcast platforms.

# Leadership Niagara's Day 2: Blending In-Person and Virtual Workshops for Effective Community Leadership

By Kashif Siraj, Member, Program Advisory Committee



**LEADERSHIP NIAGARA**  
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Leadership Niagara's Program Advisory Committee continued to build upon the strong start made in October to their Community Leadership Development Program unfolding with two impactful half-day workshops for Day 2 of the Program, merging in-person engagement on November 17 with a dynamic virtual session on December 1.

### In-Person Session (November 17):

Participants take part in a "team building" exercise.



The day commenced with participants revisiting the TetraMap exercise, a tool to understand team dynamics. An engaging icebreaker session challenged participants to collaboratively construct marshmallow towers, setting a spirited tone aligned with the overarching theme — "Collaborative Partnerships." Dave Augustyn's session proved illuminating, offering profound insights into the role of Not-for-Profits (NFPs) in Niagara. Attendees delved into the intricacies of NFPs, gaining an understanding of their indispensable role, the challenges they confront, and the interconnectedness of boards, staff, and volunteers. The session also provided a glimpse into potential community projects through thoughtfully curated videos.

Mike Britton, Brian DiSimoni, Ann Harrison and Dave Augustyn (guest Speaker)



### Virtual Session (December 1):

The virtual leg of Day 2 featured guest speaker Michelle Chambers, Chief People, Culture & Strategy Officer at Chambers & Associates. Her presentation equipped participants with practical tools to enhance collaborative skills in addressing NFP challenges. Breakout sessions facilitated direct interactions with Community Partners, offering participants an in-depth understanding of project proposals and the organizations driving them. Following this, participants seamlessly transitioned to collaborative teamwork, employing the provided template to construct Project Charters.

This combined approach, integrating hands-on activities, expert insights, and virtual engagement, provided a comprehensive and enriching experience. Participants were left equipped with not only knowledge and skills but also a tangible connection to potential community projects allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the community. Day 2 epitomized the program's commitment to nurturing and inspiring leaders dedicated to the betterment of Niagara's communities.

# Advice for CEOs in 2024

By Monica Good, Business Link Editor

As we maneuver into 2024, CEOs must be ready to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing business landscape. The continuance of technological and societal trends, amplified by a potential economic downturn, creates a distinct target for visionary CEOs.



## Emerging Business Trends

One major trend is the increasing ubiquity of Generative AI. According to Boston Consulting Group, major companies must have a compelling generative AI strategy today to remain industry leaders by 2024. Generative AI empowers organizations by enhancing customer experiences and automating internal operations.

Apart from tech trends, 2024 will also hint at a rediscovery of humanity. The rise of automation in technical tasks will reinforce the inherent value of soft skills and human touch in business, suggesting CEOs should invest in developing soft skills within their teams.





## Effective Leadership In A Digital Era

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In the human digital era, the leadership paradigm is taking a fresh turn. Ideas of connection and purpose are gaining momentum. As a CEO, fostering an environment encouraging physical, mental, and emotional connection is crucial. The capability to command a team starved for connection will distinguish effective leaders in 2024.

## Balancing Growth And Sustainability

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Sustainability and growth, often considered conflicting, in economic terms holds a crucial place in 2024's CEO agenda. Achieving high living standards without compromising the future generation's well-being would involve prioritizing eco-friendly practices, implementing renewable energy sources, and optimizing resource usage.

## 2024's Risks

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Risks loom large in every sector. For the business beat, geopolitical instability and elevated inflation are notable threats, possibly leading to operating cost hikes and pressurized profit margins. This calls for CEOs to strategize better for risk management.

## Staying Agile

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Business agility will be of the essence in 2024. Fostering entrepreneurial thinking, encouraging autonomy, and balancing it with responsibility can help better adjust to market changes.

The year 2024 will test CEOs as leaders, strategists, and visionaries. A careful understanding of these aspects can assist in formulating holistic strategies for the year ahead.





## 2023 Real Estate Resilience: A Year of Stability and Adaptability in Niagara, Ontario

*By Michael Sommer*

In 2023, the residential real estate market in the Niagara region of Ontario, Canada retained its robust stance, characterized by resilient housing prices. Despite a marginal dip of less than 1% month year over year, Niagara's housing prices remained notably stable. This subtle adjustment did not deter the market's overall buoyancy, indicating a healthy balance between supply and demand.

The residential real estate market, experienced a dynamic and evolving landscape throughout the calendar year of 2023. A multitude of factors, including economic conditions, government policies, interest rates, and local market trends, shaped the buying and selling behaviours in the region.

## Market Trends and Property Values

The market continued to witness steady demand for housing, with fluctuations in property values depending on the specific locality and property type. In general, the Niagara region sustained its reputation as an attractive destination for homebuyers due to its scenic beauty, proximity to urban centres, and various lifestyle amenities.

## Supply and Demand Dynamics

The supply of housing inventory remained a critical factor influencing the market dynamics. The balance between supply and demand continued to fluctuate, with periods of tight inventory causing increased competition among buyers and driving property values upward. New construction projects and developments played a role in alleviating some of this pressure, yet the pace of construction struggled to match the robust demand.

## Market Affordability and Mortgage Rates

Affordability remained a concern for many prospective buyers as property values trended upward. Mortgage rates, while still relatively low compared to historical averages, experienced slight fluctuations throughout the year, impacting the purchasing power of homebuyers. Government initiatives and lending policies aimed at improving affordability remained in focus, attempting to strike a balance between access to credit and financial stability.

## Impact of External Factors

External factors, such as global economic shifts, geopolitical events, and the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, exerted both direct and indirect influences on the local real estate market. Consumer confidence, employment rates, and migration patterns also played significant roles in shaping buyer behaviours and market trends.

## Emerging Trends and Technologies

Advancements in technology continued to reshape the real estate industry in Niagara. Virtual tours, digital marketing strategies, and data analytics tools gained prominence, offering more efficient ways for buyers to explore properties and for sellers to reach potential buyers.

## Conclusion

The residential real estate market in the Niagara region of Ontario in 2023 demonstrated resilience and adaptability amid changing economic conditions and market forces. While challenges such as affordability and inventory constraints persisted, the region maintained its allure as a desirable place to live, attracting a diverse range of homebuyers seeking the unique lifestyle and amenities the area offers. Let me help you love where you live.

**By being proactive and strategic in your approach to real estate investments, you can navigate the impact of inflation and make informed decisions to protect and optimize your property investments.**

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# Canadian Economic Outlook for 2024: Shifting into Neutral

By BDC Blog



The 2024 economic outlook for Canada suggests that the country's economy will avoid a recession but will experience lower growth. Factors such as high interest rates, global economic slowdown, and geopolitical conflicts could limit growth. Inflation is expected to decline but remain above the target range, with certain items like food and housing experiencing high price increases. The direction of central bank rate policy is expected to become clearer, with the Bank of Canada likely to lower its key rate but still keeping it higher than the past 15 years. Three main risks for the Canadian economy

in 2024 include geopolitical conflict, persistent inflation, and collapsing demand. The economic slowdown will impact provinces and industries differently, with regions more sensitive to interest rates and high debt levels experiencing a greater slowdown. However, commodities-oriented provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan are set to grow above the national average. Entrepreneurs will face challenges but also opportunities, with the economic slowdown making it easier to find workers and technology adoption helping to improve competitiveness.

Click here to read the full article [https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/blog/canadian-economic-outlook-for-2024-shifting-into-neutral?utm\\_campaign=In-Business--2023-12--non-mel-subs--B--EN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Eloqua](https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/blog/canadian-economic-outlook-for-2024-shifting-into-neutral?utm_campaign=In-Business--2023-12--non-mel-subs--B--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua)



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