Change is never easy. This is true for individuals, for families, for communities and for provinces. However, change is always easier based on a positive vision of the future.

The immigrants who came to Canada, and I count myself among them, saw the country as a land of opportunity, where hard work would lead to a better future for the next generation. Within Canada people migrating from one province to another are usually attracted by a positive future and sometimes forced out by a negative circumstance.

Positive attitudes matter. The people who built Canada’s West and led its development through the early years of the twentieth century in today’s jargon “know no fear”. The visions of what the land could hold knew few bounds. And so, on the grasslands grew communities, railways, hotels, car assembly plants, airports, theatres and a whole society. While too many years may have been hard, there was a positive vision of what the future might become - and often it did.

Without a vision there is no path and you don’t know where you are going. Accordingly you can’t get there. Muddling through may be fine for the short term, but in the longer term others with vision will be further ahead.

Having a positive vision is central to realizing goals. That is not to ignore problems, but it is to keep the end in sight. A preoccupation with negative problems soon translates into "better not even try" and a shift of responsibility from the individual to some outside group.

There are always problems. They are everywhere. When you look for problems you find more of them. It may be easier to avoid problems, set low expectations, rely on entitlements and realize low results. However, this coping strategy is not a sustainable basis for wealth creation. Positive attitudes, vision and tangible success are required.

Knowing the problems and then becoming preoccupied with them are too different things. It is also possible to focus on success. Look for what works, create opportunity, make success. Too many people, however, view success in the economy with disdain, criticizing salaries and profits.

Immigrants who come to new lands can, if they wish, identify many problems in their new society. But for the most part they do not do so. They look for the opportunities and make the most of them. As an immigrant to Canada, I can tell you that my objective was clearly to come to a land of opportunity, and not a land of problems.

In my case, it was the opportunity to provide my children with chances to realize their dreams - a better future for the next generation. Boat people who came from Vietnam came with many problems and burdens from a horrific war, and yet moved quickly to
realize opportunities for themselves in their new homes. They created many businesses at a time when the region was supposedly in economic trouble.

A preoccupation with opportunities and a positive vision is central to creating wealth. Without the individual aspirations to grow, change and develop, even the right development frameworks will not matter. Ultimately, it is individual people and not government who will lead change, make decisions, invest, create jobs in the new society, and form the government where they live. In economic terms this equals more jobs, higher incomes and public revenues to pay for social services. These collective attitudes affect expectations and lead people to assume the responsibility to build their collective futures.

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