# Generation SDG

EMPOWERING CANADIANS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BRIEF

# W|G|S|I

Waterloo Global Science Initiative

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UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

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# WATERLOO GLOBAL SCIENCE INITIATIVE

## Who we are

Waterloo Global Science Initiative (WGSI) has been catalyzing collective action since 2009. The conversations we host bring people with diverse viewpoints together, prompting multi-disciplinary, inclusive collaboration to address sustainable development challenges. By combining the results of these cross-cutting conversations with the science and technology of today, our network takes answers from paper to the real world, addressing the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in sectors such as energy, education and beyond. WGSI proudly takes a generational outlook to problem solving.

WGSI sits at the intersection of two global thought leaders: the University of Waterloo and Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics. WGSI was founded through a partnership between the two institutions, and while WGSI operates independently, they remain key collaborators in our mission.

## What we do

WGSI creates the conditions for collective global action through four main activities: convening Summits, publishing Blueprints, supporting partnerships and facilitating public discourse.

WGSI's cornerstone conversations are our Summits, hosted in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada every two years. Our Summits are not traditional conferences. For each Summit we bring together contributors that include the world's sharpest leaders, ideators and emerging minds to tackle a particular challenge. Of this group of approximately 40 people, half the room is under the age of 30. We believe in the importance of creating a level playing field where people can think outside the box. Through the space we create, we elevate the expertise, lived experiences and ideas of an unlikely group of collaborators. We facilitate open discourse that sparks real progress, and have the freedom to forge a unique mandate that adapts to our ever-changing world.

Our Blueprints support the recommendations made at each Summit by collating relevant research and case studies and by providing a clear roadmap to implementation. We also produce pre-Summit Briefs intended to set the stage for the Summit conversation and Communiqués which are released at each Summit closing to summarize the vision of the contributors.

WGSI generates impact by entering into and facilitating strategic partnerships which result in projects that align with Blueprint recommendations. Our collaborations weave lasting networks that touch every level, from individuals to our local community to global media partnerships.

These partnerships are even more impactful when fused with the potential of science and technology. We create a bridge between academia and real-world, practical solutions. The conversations we facilitate uncover the most effective ways to take meaningful action, bringing a sustainable future closer for people worldwide, from northern Ontario to sub-Saharan Africa.

# UNITED NATIONS' 17
# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**1** NO POVERTY

**2** ZERO HUNGER

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**4** QUALITY EDUCATION

**5** GENDER EQUALITY

**6** CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

**7** AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**9** INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES

**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

**13** CLIMATE ACTION

**14** LIFE BELOW WATER

**15** LIFE ON LAND

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

# THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## Background

In 2015, the 193 Member States of the UN adopted the SDGs. This set of goals, targets and indicators is intended to frame global efforts to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. While the precursor to the SDGs, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), focused on improving lives and livelihoods in developing states, the SDGs are intended for everyone, everywhere – including Canada.[1]

The goals grew out of a high degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration, and efforts to achieve them will too. Collaboration, cooperation and innovation have been highlighted as priorities for the next 15 years, with an emphasis on partnership as an integral driver.

While the SDGs are a powerful call to action on the multifaceted task of eradicating poverty, fighting inequality and tackling climate change, critics have simultaneously claimed that the goals are not ambitious enough and are too sprawling. With 169 targets grouped into 17 goals, the SDGs are a massive expansion of the MDGs and signatory states are in danger of wildly missing their mark without strategic planning.

## The Canadian context

In Canada, while an enormous amount of research has been carried out across the SDGs, there remain many questions and uncertainties about how best to tackle them. A coherent and widely shared national narrative, calls to action and line of sight on clear pathways for collaboration are essential to help catalyze the most impactful and coordinated actions to ensure effective implementation of the SDGs in Canada.

Accelerating solutions that service the SDGs will require unprecedented cross-sectoral collaboration and innovative approaches to a host of issues by an array of state and non-state actors. Critical issues include, but are not limited to, public and private finance, public policy and global business models.

Canada is a self-styled global leader in climate change action, Indigenous reconciliation, sustainable development, human rights, social justice, racial tolerance, and freedom of speech and assembly. A prosperous country with enviable economic and social stability, it is as well positioned as any nation in the world to approach the SDGs in a proactive fashion. At home, implementation of the goals can transform multiple aspects of Canadian society. Abroad, Canada can – through its own examples – help foster the international collaborations necessary to mobilize enabling policy and sustainable finance channels at the global scale.

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1    UN. (2015). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 - 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

# GENERATION SDG ADVISORY WORKSHOP

In November of 2017, WGSI convened a two-day brainstorming session with Canadian representatives from across the academic and broader civil society spectrum.

The objective of this workshop was to identify a series of specific challenges that Canada should urgently address through multi-sectoral collaborations, determine what priority areas will benefit from strategic leadership by Canada at the global frontier and help provide parameters and scope for WGSI's April 2018 Generation SDG Summit.

With the help of a skilled facilitator, workshop participants were encouraged to freely express their opinions and make recommendations concerning Canada's approach to the SDGs. The long-term framing of the discussion (a generational outlook) encouraged new ideas regarding research, collaboration and partnership frameworks, as well as the policy and funding ecosystem needed to realize the opportunities that may arise.

## Relevant research

Several key reports were considered by the workshop attendees – a mixture of efforts to quantify where Canada stands more than two years after signing onto the SDGs as well as consideration of what policies and initiatives can help to accelerate this undertaking:

**Who and What Gets Left Behind? Assessing Canada's domestic status on the Sustainable Development Goals[2]**
This October 2017 working paper, authored by John McArthur and Krista Rasmussen of the Brookings Institution, stands as the most comprehensive effort to benchmark Canada's SDG performance thus far. The working paper narrowed down the complete list of 169 SDG indicators into 61 Canada-specific targets measuring a total of 73 indicators. Each of these

indicators were tied to hitting sub-targets within each of the first 16 SDGs.

Progress on each indicator was projected out until 2030, and then placed in one of four categories: moving backwards, breakthrough needed (less than 50 per cent towards goal by 2030), acceleration needed (over 50 per cent but less than 100 per cent towards goal by 2030) and on track.

The researchers found Canada moving backwards on 18 indicators, needing a breakthrough for 26, requiring acceleration on 12 and on track for the final 17. Other studies have demonstrated Canada's relatively impressive standing on the SDGs from an international perspective (the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network placed Canada 17th in 2016), but the Brookings research finds Canada on track to meet none of the first 16 SDG targets in their entirety.

McArthur highlighted several additional points in a presentation to the November 2017 Generation SDG Advisory Workshop contributors. While none of the 18 indicators where Canada is losing ground were themselves surprising, when taken together they act as a significant wake-up call for Canadians. Many of these categories involve indicators where Canada has achieved near-universality (eg: access to clean water), but is falling behind from this position of relative strength.

He also described the research as solely a methodological exercise to identify the numerous data gaps that currently exist. This discrepancy grows more pronounced when it comes to measuring the various indicators at the sub-national level, an essential step for incorporating the principle of equity into Canada's SDG approach.

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2    McArthur, J.W & Rasmussen, K. (2017). Who and what gets left behind? Assessing Canada's domestic status on the Sustainable Development Goals. Brookings Institution. Retrieved from: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/working-paper_assessing-canadas-domestic-status-on-the-sdgs1.pdf

Of **73** Canada-specific indicators, we are

# MOVING BACKWARDS ON **18**
# NEED A BREAKTHROUGH ON **26**
# REQUIRE ACCELERATION ON **12**
# ON TRACK FOR **17**

Two relevant reports by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) combine benchmarking efforts with a series of policy recommendations.

**Where Canada Stands: A Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report[3]**
The first report, Where Canada Stands, focuses on the seven SDGs that were under review at the 2017 United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) : 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. Findings were collected through a mixture of national data analysis and interviews with 15 Canadian civil society leaders in a variety of fields.

Published in July 2017, the report applauds recent actions taken at the federal level to integrate the SDG framework into a broader Canadian agenda for achieving the global goals. This list includes initiatives such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and Canada's National Food Policy as examples of this leadership.

Along with a series of indicator-specific policy recommendations, BCCIC repeatedly urges all levels of government to shape policy-making around the principles of equity and inclusiveness. Most notably, the report calls for an expansion of measurement tools to capture a more holistic picture of progress on sustainable development across Canada.

Additional quantitative indicators should be added to include marginalized groups left out of the original SDGs, such as members of the LGBTQ2+ community. The report also

suggests a series of qualitative indicators that help to capture diverse experiences. Similar to the Brookings working paper, BCCIC advises that data-gathering efforts be targeted at the community level to ensure the country's geographic and demographic diversity be properly accounted for.

Further resources should be allocated to gather data on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities throughout the country, particularly those located in more remote locations. Tied into this would be new indicators monitoring progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action[4] and the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).[5]

**Keeping Score: UN Sustainable Development Goals[6]**
Each of the 17 SDGs is broken down into four components: the local, national and international context for Canada, an attempt to quantify how the country is performing on the SDG, the country's potential and a series of policy recommendations.

Several years after it was first published, this document remains more relevant than ever for its detailed list of policy prescriptions. Of particular note in both BCCIC reports is the strong focus on Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals. In *Keeping Score*, BCCIC makes a special plea to include youth when developing, overseeing and monitoring the implementation of SDG policy over the next 15 years. This is a recommendation that WGSI will build upon during the Generation SDG Summit.

3   BCCIC. (2017). Where Canada stands: A Sustainable Development Goals progress report. Retreived from: https://bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/HLPF-Report-Online-Version-v3-24072017.pdf

4   Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Calls to action. Retrieved from: http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

5   United Nations. (2008). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

6   BCCIC. (2015). Keeping score: UN Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: https://bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SDG_Report_FINAL_WEB_v6-1.pdf

# 11%

## OF CANADIAN ADULTS WERE AWARE OF THE SDGs

## Workshop insights

### A pan-Canadian approach

Participants agreed that over the past several years, the federal government has expressed a growing interest in addressing many of the issues holding Canada back from reaching its 2030 SDG targets. Both domestic and foreign policy initiatives have attempted – with varied degrees of success – to integrate the SDGs into the decision-making process.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in a speech to the UN General Assembly last September, explicitly endorsed the SDGs. "You see, the Sustainable Development Goals are as meaningful in Canada as they are everywhere else in the world, and we are committed to implementing them at home while we also work with our international partners to achieve them around the world."[7]

What is needed is the creation of a Canada-wide network focused on the SDGs, able to break through disciplinary silos and be replicated or scaled throughout the country. Indicators are beginning to emerge at the community level, including work being conducted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and other partners.[8]

A sub-national framework would be a critical tool of this network, allowing for resource sharing and the creation and monitoring of comparable datasets. A common front creates the opportunity to cut through the noise at the federal level, which is already busy enacting a complex and ambitious policy agenda, to enable provincial and municipal agendas. Canada rarely convenes the three levels of government together, but will need to in order to tackle such systemic issues.

Civil society will play a vital role ensuring that there is enough public support and momentum regarding the SDGs to overcome less-favourable political and economic environments down the road. Yet awareness of the SDGs among the general public remains limited, further hamstrung by a set of goals that can be difficult to summarize.

An Abacus survey commissioned by the United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC) in 2017 concluded that only 11 per cent of Canadian adults were aware of the SDGs. Broad support was expressed once the goals were explained to the respondents, including 72 per cent who thought they were achievable.[9] Similarly, public consultations by the BCCIC concluded that the SDGs provided a "common language" for connecting local issues to larger issues facing both British Columbia and Canada.[10]

This latent support among the general public opens up an incredible opportunity for media partnerships to help place these domestic benchmarking efforts into their proper context. The role of education systems across Canada is also vital to this effort, from primary to post-secondary institutions. Other jurisdictions have taken this approach – including a recent audit conducted on the Netherlands' level of SDG preparedness, which used the education curriculum as a direct proxy for evaluating efforts to raise public awareness of the goals.[11]

7   Office of the Prime minister of Canada. (2017). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's address to the 72th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Retrieved from: https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/09/21/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-address-72th-session-united-nations-general-assembly

8   IISD. (N.d). Peg. Retrieved from: http://www.iisd.org/project/peg

9   UNAC. (N.d.) Canadians as effectively engaged Global Citizens, Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://unac.org/canadians-as-effectively-engaged-global-citizens-sustainable-development-goals/

10  BCCIC. (2016) The invisible mosaic: BC and the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Invisible-Mosaic-BC-and-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals.pdf

11  Netherlands Court of Audit. (2017). The Dutch government's preparations aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/downloads/1_about_us/SDGs_and_SAIs/id782_SDGs_Netherlands.pdf

*"The Sustainable Development Goals are as meaningful in Canada as they are everywhere else in the world, and we are committed to implementing them at home while we also work with our international partners to achieve them around the world."* – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

## Taking the conversation deeper

### Elevating strategic research opportunities

- **The Protein Innovations Canada Supercluster**, the only agriculture and agri-food proposal chosen in February 2018 under the Federal government's Innovation Superclusters Initiative, aims to turn the Canadian prairies into one of the top sources of carbon-neutral plant proteins and other food ingredients.[12] One unresolved concern with the supercluster model is whether this is the best structure for bridging the "commerce paradigm" and successfully commercializing numerous projects that have both positive economic and societal impacts.[13]

- **Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land, and Energy (FABLE)** is an international initiative to develop consistent global and national pathways towards sustainable land use and food systems by 2050. From FABLE's perspective, success hinges on establishing "a shared understanding of how to meet the integrated objectives of preserving biodiversity, achieving net negative emissions from land use and producing sufficient nutritious food through sustainable agriculture."[14]

  Led by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the EAT Foundation, FABLE is working to knit together a global network of relevant research institutions to address three major shortcomings with the current approaches: a lack of shared global targets and roadmaps ahead, poor translation of these targets to the national level and an inability to distinguish between short-term strategies and longer-term pathways.

- The **Global Water Futures** program based out of the University of Saskatchewan also holds much promise, first founded in 2016 through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund.[15] It is dedicated to becoming a global leader in water science for the world's cold regions, a partner of choice for transdisciplinary water research and a provider for Canada and the world of strategic tools to manage water futures.

- The University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment was recently selected as the host of the **SDSN National Network for Canada**, with an official launch scheduled for May 2018. The SDSN Canada Network will activate research, collaborate with United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector, and other post-secondary institutions to help promote integrated approaches to sustainable development both domestically and abroad.

12    AB Food Cluster. (2017). What is Protein Innovations Canada? Retrieved from: http://abfoodcluster.ca/docs/Protein-Innovations-Canada.pdf

13    Crelinsten, J. (2017). Why superclusters may be doomed to failure. The Globe and Mail - Opinion. Retrieved from: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/why-the-supercluster-initiative-may-be-doomed-to-failure/article36230524/

14    SDSN. (2017). The Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land and Energy Project: Pathways for sustainable land use. Retrieved from: http://unsdsn.org/news/2017/05/03/the-food-agriculture-biodiversity-land-and-energy-project-pathways-for-sustainable-land-use/

15    Global Water Futures. (N.d). About us. Retrieved from: https://gwf.usask.ca/

## Mobilizing the necessary financial resources

An additional $5-7 trillion (U.S.) increase in annual expenditures will be required for the world to reach their 2030 targets, according to estimates by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).[16] Determining the overall increase of funding needed for Canada is a difficult task, but will certainly require the redirection of existing expenditures, as well as new sources of funding.

According to recent (2014-2016) data compiled by Global Canada, Canada ranks last among its global peers in national income committed to international security and assistance programs.[17] The SDGs provide an opportunity to reassess current overseas development assistance (ODA) policy, a process that has already begun through Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and other initiatives. An increase in Canada's ODA ought to be carefully considered, with the potential to accelerate sustainable development across the globe.

Domestic expenditures at all three levels of government will need to be reviewed, with long-term funding increases expected in a number of program areas. Yet public finance should not be considered as the only major source of investment on the SDGs, as private funding and private capital are expected to fill in the rest.

A 2017 report from the Business and Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC) estimates that a renewed focus on the SDGs could open up $12 trillion (U.S.) of market opportunities in four key economic systems: food and agriculture, cities, energy and materials, and health and well-being.[18] Some Canadian corporations such as Nutrien (formerly Agrium) have taken tentative steps to incorporate the SDG framework into their long-term business strategy.[19]

Institutional investors in Canada such as banks, insurance companies and pension funds are beginning to recognize the threat posed by climate change,[20] but have been slower to embrace the opportunities presented by the SDGs. The California Public Employees' Retirement System, with $357 billion (U.S.) under management, is currently studying the possibility of aligning its portfolio with the SDGs.[21] While none of Canada's 17,000 pension funds have considered similar actions thus far, the potential remains to harness the $1.5 trillion they collectively manage.

Innovative financing mechanisms that have emerged in recent decades could play a role in directing some of this private capital towards the SDGs, including different facets of impact investing such as green bonds and social impact bonds.[22] Financial services firms such as UBS are publishing documents explaining how wealth managers can support the SDGs, demonstrating the level of excitement and demand for further action in this space.[23]

Governments have a vital role to play in encouraging private capital to help address the SDGs here in Canada, namely by ensuring long-term stability through regulatory signals and funding commitments. For example, regulators in other jurisdictions around the world have begun to require mandatory carbon disclosure for all publicly-listed companies on stock exchanges.[24]

16    UNCTAD. (2014). "Chapter IV - Investing in the SDGs: An Action Plan for promoting private sector contributions." World Investment Report 2014. Retrieved from: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/wir2014ch4_en.pdf

17    Greenhill, R. (2017). Assessing Canada's global engagement gap. Global Canada & Open Canada. Retrieved from: https://www.opencanada.org/features/canadas-global-engagement-gap/

18    BSDC. (2017). Better business better world. Retrieved from: http://report.businesscommission.org/uploads/BetterBiz-BetterWorld_170215_012417.pdf

19    Alberta Council for Global Cooperation. (N.d.) The role of the agricultural industry in attaining the SDGs - Agrium. Retrieved from: http://together.acgc.ca/agrium/

20    Finance Montréal. (2017). Declaration of Institutional Investors on Climate-Related Financial Risks. Retrieved from: http://www.finance-montreal.com/sites/default/files/publications/declaration_institutional_investors_on_climate_related_financial_risks.pdf

21    Diamond, R. (2018). Calpers examines adopting SDGs. Top 1000 Funds. Retrieved from: https://www.top1000funds.com/news/2018/01/18/calpers-examines-adopting-sdgs/

22    WGSI. (2017). "Fair market." OpenAccess Energy Blueprint. Retrieved from: http://wgsi.org/sites/wgsi-live.pi.local/files/OpenAccess_Energy_Blueprint_WGSI_2017.pdf

23    UBS. (2018). Partnerships for the goals: Achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealth-management/chief-investment-office/key-topics/five-lessons-on-sustainability-un-sdg-wef.html

24    Climate Disclosure Standards Board. (N.d.). UK mandatory GHG and environmental reporting. Retrieved from: https://www.cdsb.net/what-we-do/reporting-policy/uk-mandatory-ghg-reporting-qa

### Using the right lenses

After debating how to catalyze action on the SDGs without breaking them up individually, the group eventually settled on the concept of a series of lenses. These filters create new pathways of thinking that still provide flexibility and interconnectedness within the goals, and are specially tailored to the Canadian context.

1. **Catalytic** – unlocking potential
2. **Urgent and intersectional** – leaving no one behind, existential risks
3. **Global impact** – coastlines, freshwater, other areas where Canada holds disproportionate burden
4. **Canada as a global exemplar** – SDGs 5, 8, 9, 11 – to inspire context-specific reproduction and drive example-driven dialogue[25]

*These lenses are explored in further detail starting on page 17.*

### Concurrent events

A number of key institutions throughout Canadian civil society were busy grappling with these same questions, and held SDG-related events around the same time:

- Alberta Council For Global Cooperation (ACGC)'s multi-stakeholder SDG Symposium Together 2017 (October 23–24, 2017)[26]
- Alliance 2030 (formerly Alliance 150), Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Community Foundations of Canada (CFC)'s The next 150, a national conversation on Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals (June 27, 2017, November 17, 2017 and March 23, 2018) [27]
- Future of Good's two day gathering (November 29–30, 2017) exploring how the UN Sustainable Development Goals can serve as a framework for how to "do good well in the 21st century."[28]

These conversations help to push the SDG discussion forward by convening broad discussions between a series of disparate stakeholders, including representatives from the WGSI. Together 2017, for example, involved high levels of involvement from both provincial government officials and the private sector.

Both WGSI's Advisory Workshop and the upcoming Generation SDG Summit look to add value to this ongoing conversation though smaller gatherings, meant to provide time and space for deeper engagement, reflection and partnership building.

### Supporting public discourse

WGSI supports public engagement and journalistic investigations to improve public discourse in our focus areas.

A new SDG collaboration between Discourse Media and WGSI was unveiled at the Advisory Workshop.[29] Discourse is a media company dedicated to in-depth reporting on complex issues facing Canada and the world. WGSI is contributing funding to support Discourse Media's emerging sustainable development beat led by Alia Dharssi. This beat will critically examine Canada's commitment and contributions to the global SDGs.

Educational public service broadcaster TVO was also announced as a media partner during the Advisory Workshop, beginning with a panel discussion of Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals that aired on November 15, 2017.[30] TVO will continue to air programming addressing the SDGs over the next 12 months, with a particular focus around the Generation SDG Summit in April 2018.

25  Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden. (2017). Towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Retrieved from: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16610Report_to_FfD_Forum_2017_Sweden.pdf

26  ACGC. (2017). Together 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.together2017.ca/

27  CFC. (2018). The next 150: A national conversation on Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://communityfoundations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CFC042_ConferenceSummaryReport_EN_Dec20.pdf

28  Future of Good. (2017). About. Retrieved from: http://futureofgood.co/

29  Lewis, K. (2017). Announcing Discourse Media's new sustainable development reporter. Discourse Media. Retrieved from: http://discoursemedia.org/announcements/new-hire-signals-commitment-to-sustainable-development-reporting

30  TVO. (2017). "Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals. " The Agenda with Steve Paikin. Retrieved from: https://tvo.org/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/canada-and-the-sustainable-development-goals

# GENERATION SDG SUMMIT

## Long-term goals

From April 22-25, 2018, WGSI will convene Generation SDG – a think-tank style summit that focuses on Canada's role in fulfilling the SDGs at home and internationally. The summit's goal is to develop a sub-national framework for action that will enable civil society, the research community, youth, policy-makers and the private sector to link their resources together to achieve transformative impact.

**We are driving toward three outcomes at the Generation SDG Summit:**

1. Identification of new research collaborations that can accelerate solutions to Canada's most urgent gaps

2. Establishing a journalistic reporting network that will bring stories from Canada's communities to the world

3. Enabling Canada's youth to develop highly networked pathways for action on the goals

## Driven by equity

The commitment to leave no one behind has been described by UN deputy secretary-general Jan Eliasso as the "underlying moral code" of the 2030 commitments, and is a foundational principle that appears in almost any discussion of the SDGs.[31] McArthur summarized the three concepts driving the SDGs forward in the November workshop as re-coupling economic growth with broadly-shared wealth accumulation, decoupling economic growth from environmental and other externalities, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Reaching the 2030 goals would be a simpler proposition for Canada and other countries if the focus was solely on improving the country-wide indicators, which is why the principle of no one left behind must be present during every discussion of the SDGs. A look at the subnational and community-level data available in the BCCIC[32] and Brookings reports,[33] though containing data gaps, shows that the gap towards universal access in Canada falls disproportionately along regional and demographic lines.

Nonetheless, the "no one left behind" framing can be viewed as alienating and counter-productive. In particular, it risks blaming marginalized groups for "poor performance," rather than the result of larger structural and other factors at play. Equity-based action is considered by WGSI as a more accurate description of the UN principle.

Improving countrywide performance on a specific SDG would not, in itself, eliminate the geographic and demographic gaps that currently exist within Canada. As BCCIC argues, "all governments in Canada must implement policies and programs developed to ensure equitable outcomes, not only equality of access.[34] Emphasizing equity-based actions for Canadians could also serve as a useful tool for building more domestic awareness and support for the SDGs, as it would challenge assumptions about the existence of a level playing field for all citizens.

Attendees at the Generation SDG Summit will be asked to consider, as identified by Kishk Anaquot Health Research, "the multiplicity of perspectives and priorities in measuring the quality of life" in Indigenous communities as well as in other marginalized communities. Successful communities cannot be solely identified by health status or wealth rankings. Measurement strategies that assess the quality of relationships within the community, institutional strength and completeness and leadership can provide a more holistic view of a particular community's status.[35]

The First Nations Information Governance Centre's Regional Health Survey, for example, collects information about on reserve and northern First Nations communities based on both Western and traditional understandings of health and

31  UN News Centre. (2016). 'No-one left behind' is ethical imperative of new development agenda – UN deputy chief. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52992#.Wldz9ZM-f-Y

32  BCCIC. (2017). Where Canada stands: A Sustainable Development Goals progress report. Retreived from: https://bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/HLPF-Report-Online-Version-v3-24072017.pdf

33  McArthur, J.W & Rasmussen, K. (2017). Who and what gets left behind? Assessing Canada's domestic status on the Sustainable Development Goals. Brookings Institution. Retrieved from: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/working-paper_assessing-canadas-domestic-status-on-the-sdgs1.pdf

34  BCCIC. (2017). Where Canada stands: A Sustainable Development Goals progress report. Retrieved from: https://bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/HLPF-Report-Online-Version-v3-24072017.pdf

35  Kish Anaquot Health Research. (2008). Taking a 'pulse' on the quality of Indigenous community life. Retrieved from (requires log in with a free account): https://fnbc.info/resource/taking-pulse-quality-indigenous-community-life

"All governments in Canada must implement policies and programs developed to ensure equitable outcomes, not only equality of access." – BCCIC

well-being. It operates within a code of research ethics that acknowledges and respects the rights of communities to self-determine how they engage in the research process and choose to use the outcomes.[36] These principles ensure that ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP Principles) are all accounted for in the process of collecting data.[37]

## Developing a sub-national focus

As the SDGs were negotiated and agreed to by representatives of national governments from around the world, they can be considered the most accountable for implementation of the goals domestically. Yet accelerating solutions that serve the SDGs will require unprecedented cross-sectoral collaboration and innovative approaches at different jurisdictional levels. This is particularly true in a country as vast and diverse as Canada, with a federal structure that grants substantial authority to the provinces and territories.

The Federal government will make its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2018, a process that signals its intent and ability to measure the country's performance over the coming decade. In anticipation of this report, the Office of the Auditor General will release its own analysis on the government's preparedness for implementing the SDGs in April 2018.

To truly realize the transformative potential of the 2030 agenda, Canada must establish a sub-national framework that enables implementation of the goals at the community level. This work will rely on an ecosystem of actors that can coordinate their actions across jurisdictions and share what they've learned both vertically and horizontally.

Other jurisdictions around the world are also in the midst of crafting SDG strategies, with Australia joining Canada in presenting its first VNR in July. Australia originally considered prioritizing individual SDGs to make the task more "manageable," beginning with those where the country performs the worst, where obvious funding gaps exist and prioritizing those SDGs which have a higher social and economic return on investment.[38] Lately, the government's focus has shifted closer to a whole government approach, with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet directing both SDG implementation and VNR efforts.[39] This will also include coordinating with state, territorial and local governments, as well as consultations with civil society and the private sector.

Japan's approach to the SDGs provides another reference point for Canadian stakeholders looking for guiding principles and frameworks for implementation. Building off Agenda 2030's five P's (planet, people, prosperity, peace, partnership), Japan then clustered eight cross-cutting priority areas underneath. "The eight priority areas outline what areas among the goals and targets of the SDGs Japan should focus on, in light of the national context," states Japan's Implementation Guiding Principles (see table, page 16).[40]

The Netherlands is the only country thus far to have completed a preparedness audit, which largely served to highlight how rapidly the national government has begun preparations for SDG implementation.[41] One conclusion that the auditors reached was that municipalities demonstrated a greater understanding of the challenges faced by poorer members of society, including barriers to affordable housing and steady forms of employment.

36   FNIGC. (N.d). About RHS. Retrieved from: http://fnigc.ca/our-work/regional-health-survey/about-rhs.html
37   FNIGC. (N.d.). OCAP. Retrieved from: http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html
38   Australian Council for International Development, Australian Council of Social Service, Global Compact Network Australia & UN SDSN Australia/Pacific. (2016). Australian SDGs Summit Outcomes report. Retrieved from: http://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/FINAL-Australian-SDGs-Summit-Outcomes-Document.pdf
39   Cornish, L. (2018). Australian senate inquiry asks what is takes to implement the SDGs. Devex. Retrieved from: https://www.devex.com/news/australian-senate-inquiry-asks-what-it-takes-to-implement-the-sdgs-91872
40   Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan. (2017). Japan: the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles. Retrieved from: http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000252819.pdf
41   Netherlands Court of Audit. (2017). The Dutch government's preparations aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/downloads/1_about_us/SDGs_and_SAIs/id782_SDGs_Netherlands.pdf

Japan's eight priority areas for achieving the SDGs[40]

**PEOPLE**

1. Empowerment of all people
2. Achievement of good health and longevity

**PROSPERITY**

3. Creating growth markets, revitalization of rural areas, and promoting science, technology and innovation
4. Sustainable and resilient land use, promoting quality infrastructure

**PLANET**

5. Energy conservation, renewable energy, climate change countermeasures and sound material-cycle society
6. Conservation of environment, including biodiversity, forests and the oceans

**PEACE**

7. Achieving peaceful, safe and secure societies

**PARTNERSHIP**

8. Strengthening the means and frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

## A Canadian strategy

When confronted with the vast scope of the SDGs, the tendency is to begin breaking down individual goals into their various component parts to avoid feeling overwhelmed. This risks breaking the SDGs apart and reverting to the ways of engaging with these issues that are more familiar. It is these methods, however, that have not succeeded in generating the type of breakthroughs necessary.

With a set of goals that are this interconnected, the greatest opportunity lies in designing social, economic and environmental models that break out of our business-as-usual mindset. Instead of cherry-picking individual or thematic groups of SDGs to prioritize, specific lenses can help to prioritize action that is specific to the Canadian context. Attendees at the April summit will be asked to explore the potential role played by these four lenses:

### 1. Catalytic actions

- Pursuing specific avenues that would have enormous knock-on effects on a variety of SDGs.
- Using UNDRIP to set a new baseline for moving forward with Indigenous peoples – research by Indigenous Navigator[42] and others helps identify a vital link between the two.
- Infrastructure – recasting the narrative so we uncover its social value i.e. energy services.[43]

### 2. Equity-based actions

- Poverty is intersectional – what needs to be flagged as urgent.
- Existential threats are intersectional – what are the major threats and how do they leave some more vulnerable than others? Top example is the climate change crisis.

### 3. Canada's global responsibilities

- We have the most coastline in the world[44] and likely more surface freshwater than any other country.[45] We are also home to 25 per cent of the world's intact forest, second only to the Amazon, which stores a minimum of 208 billion tonnes of carbon.[46] Canada's permafrost is massive and degrading, potentially releasing huge amounts of carbon, methane and mercury.[47]
- What are we doing to connect our natural capital to the SDGs? What will it take to assume the outsized global responsibility we bear on certain environmental indicators?

### 4. Canada as a global exemplar

- What can we lead on that will help drive the global agenda? Canadian compliance with the SDGs is officially confined to the domestic sphere, but as an active member of international community it is our responsibility to provide global leadership.
- This could involve sharing best practices for context-based reproduction by other jurisdictions and help drive the dialogue forward in certain areas of expertise. SDGs 5, 8, 9 and 11 are promising areas for early exploration.
- Canadian practitioners and researchers have a unique ability to convene communities of practice on an ongoing basis.

42  Indigenous Navigator. (N.d.) What are Indigenous Peoples' rights in the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: https://indigenousnavigator.org/images/Documents/Tools/Navigator_UNDRIP-SDGs.pdf

43  WGSI. (2017). "Introduction." OpenAccess Energy Blueprint. Retrieved from: http://wgsi.org/sites/wgsi-live.pi.local/files/OpenAccess_Energy_Blueprint_WGSI_2017.pdf

44  Statistics Canada. (2016). Geography. Retrieved from: https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2012000/chap/geo/geo-eng.htm

45  Natural Resources Canada. (2017). Water. Retrieved from: https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography/atlas-canada/selected-thematic-maps/16888

46  Carlson, M., Wells, J. & Roberts, D. (2009). The carbon the world forgot: Conserving the capacity of Canada's boreal forest region to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Canadian Boreal Initiative & Boreal Songbird Initiative. Retrieved from: http://www.borealbirds.org/sites/default/files/pubs/report-full.pdf

47  Mooney, C. (2018). Thaw of Arctic permafrost may release millions of gallons of mercury, scientists say. The Toronto Star. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/02/08/thaw-of-arctic-permafrost-may-release-millions-of-gallons-of-mercury-scientists-say.html

## The SDG ecosystem in Canada

| Communities at work on the SDGs | Key actors and organizations | Goals | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| AWARENESS RAISING | Schools/education systems<br>Plan Canada SDG5 Dialogue series | Understanding the goals<br>Education for sustainable development | |
| RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS | IISD<br>SDSN Canada<br>Future Earth | | |
| NETWORKS AND PLATFORMS | Together 2017 (+)<br>Alliance 2030 | | Increased awareness of SDGs |
| FINANCING | Friends of FFD<br>Community Foundations Canada & McConnell Foundation<br>Tri-Councils<br>Government | Community of collaborative solutions with clusters of activity<br>Canadian implementation plan for the SDGs | Assessments of Canada's progress on the goals<br>Community of collaborative solutions with clusters of activity<br>Canadian implementation plan for the SDGs<br>Canadian VNR at HLPF 2018 |
| GOVERNMENT | Federal departments involved in VNR<br>StatsCan<br>Auditor General<br>Relevant provincial and municipal portfolios | | |
| DATA COLLECTION & BENCHMARKING | BCCIC<br>Brookings Institution<br>Community Foundations of Canada Vital Signs | Assess capacity of Canada to acheive the SDGs<br>Measure progress | |

This map is an attempt to illustrate the current SDG ecosystem in Canada, as we understand it, by identifying key actors and organizations as well as where their goals and outcomes align. We look forward to creating a more fulsome view of this ecosystem through the Summit.

## Enabling thriving ecosystems

How do we create clear, stable signals that de-risk a break from business-as-usual? As the Canadian SDG ecosystem map (page 18) demonstrates, there is already a powerful set of actors working on SDG issues at present, forming an invisible mosaic across Canada.

A strong level of interconnectedness will be necessary for maximizing the opportunity in front of us. WGSI does not look to add value through duplicating efforts of existing organizations, but rather by acting as a "field catalyst" that strengthens current efforts. The *Stanford Social Innovation Review* defines this role as "deploy[ing] different capabilities, quietly influencing and augmenting the field's efforts to achieve population-level change."[48]

**They share four main characteristics:**

- Focus on achieving population-level change, not simply on scaling up an organization or intervention.
- Influence the direct actions of others, rather than acting directly themselves.
- Concentrate on getting things done, not on building consensus.
- Are built to win, not to last.

One nascent organization taking this approach regarding the SDGs is Geneva 2030, co-convened by IISD and the SDG Lab.[49] Despite the Swiss city of Geneva being home to one of the densest networks of NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, private sector entities and UN Agencies in the world, there was a distinct need for an intermediary able to assemble these stakeholder efforts together.

## Meaningful youth engagement

Since its inception, the WGSI has structured each summit to place youth at the centre of the discussion. A truly generational outlook requires the participation of the next generation of leaders. The Generation SDG Summit is designed to ensure that 50 per cent of the room (about 20 people) are young leaders between the ages of 18 and 30.

Those engaged in all areas of sustainable development covered by the SDGs were strongly encouraged to apply, with an emphasis on achieving equal gender and geographic representation. Candidates are chosen based on their demonstrated passion for sustainable development issues in Canada, critical thinking capabilities and comfort working in a collaborative environment.

Inviting young voices to the table is a crucial first step, but one that must be paired with effective strategies for ensuring ongoing youth-led engagement on the SDGs. Researchers out of the University of Waterloo have created an effective framework for approaching this question, which documents four major methods of successful youth-led engagement:

1. Socialization
2. Influence
3. Partnership
4. Direct Power

**Socialization** is geared towards raising the profile of an issue, either through public education campaigns and marketing or other actions that help spur on a broader conversation. **Influence** is achieved through similar strategies that indirectly target specific communities, groups, constituencies and sectors to combat a specific social problem.

The latter two techniques, **partnership** and **direct power**, are more tailored towards achieving systemic change in society through intergenerational institutional access. Mutually-beneficial partnerships are formed between disparate groups, "involving youth in … actions that meet genuine needs, with the opportunity for planning/engagement in decision making affecting others … based on an understanding of the interdependent, symbiotic nature [of engagement] … that both youth and adults have something different yet equally valuable to share …" Direct power takes this a step further, by taking over the decision-making role to ensure direct action is taken.[50]

With *enabling Canada's youth to develop highly networked pathways for action on the goals* listed as one of the major summit objectives, attendees will be asked to keep these four principles front of mind when considering how best to form effective intergenerational coalitions around the SDGs.

48   Hussein, T., Plummer, M. & Breen, B. (2018). How field catalysts galvanize social change. Stanford Social Innovation Review Retrieved from: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/field_catalysts

49   IISD & SDG Lab. (N.d). An ecosystem approach. Geneva 2030.  Retrieved from: http://geneva2030.org/en/ecosystem/#geneva-ecosystem

50   Ho, E., Clarke, A., & Dougherty, I. (2015). Youth-led social change: Topics, engagement types, organizational types, strategies and impact. Futures, 67, pp 52-62. Retrieved from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328715000075#!

# NEXT STEPS

This document serves as a summary of WGSI's Generation SDG initiative to date, our understanding of the SDG landscape in Canada, as well as an outline of what to expect during the Generation SDG Summit. We are aware of the following upcoming activities around the SDGs in Canada taking place before the summit:

1. BCCIC convened a meeting for VNR coordination on February 12, 2018;

2. ACGC published its Together 2017 follow-up report[51] in February 2018 and announced that Together 2018 will take place in Edmonton, AB;[52]

3. Alliance 2030 and BCCIC are hosting a national conversation on Canada SDGs on March 23, 2018 in Vancouver, BC;

4. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada will release its report on the Government of Canada's ability to address the SDGs in April 2018.
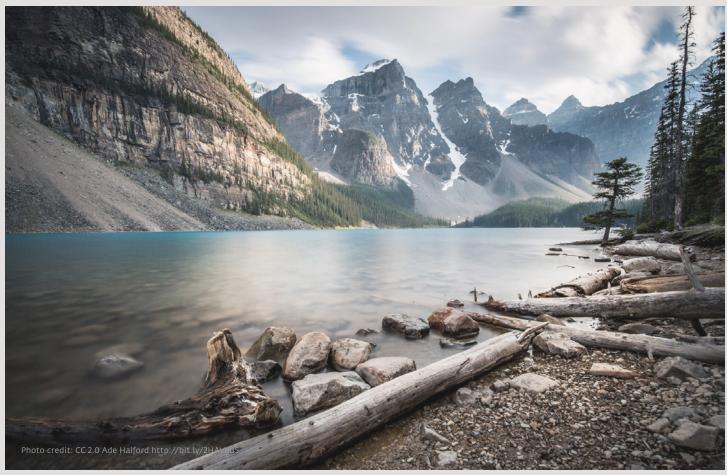
WGSI will be in contact with additional information for each attendee over the next several weeks, including webinars to further address these new additions to the conversation and to clarify the content and format of the summit.

In the meantime, be sure to follow the sustainable development beat over at our media partner Discourse Media (**discoursemedia.org**). Send reporter Alia Dharssi an email at **alia@discoursemedia.org** and let her know what stories you feel aren't being told. You can also get updates on Discourse and Alia's coverage and share feedback by following them on Twitter **@discoursemedia** and **@alia_d** and by liking their Facebook page **@discoursemedia**.

51   ACGC. (2018). Together 2017: Collaboration, innovation, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://acgc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/together2017_web.pdf

52   ACGC. (N.d). Together 2017. Retrieved from http://acgc.ca/get-involved/together2017/

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Photo credit: CC 2.0 Ade Halford http://bit.ly/2HAVguS

# CATALYSTS
# FOR COLLECTIVE
# ACTION