

Canada's 2023 Voluntary National Review

ANNEX A
SPOTLIGHT: PARTNERS
AND STAKEHOLDERS ACTIONS
TO LOCALIZE THE SDGs



This document was prepared by the Government of Canada's Sustainable Development Goals Unit, in collaboration with departments across the federal government along with partners and stakeholders representing the whole of Canadian society.

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Canada's 2023 Voluntary National Review: Annex A – Spotlight: Partners and Stakeholders Actions to Localize the SDGs

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ANNEX A SPOTLIGHT:

Partners and Stakeholders Actions to Localize the SDGs

Canada recognizes that achieving the SDGs requires whole-of-society efforts. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, provinces and territories, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, academia, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, organizations representing various groups in Canadian civil society, have responded to the SDG's call to action. Across Canada, partners and stakeholders are:

- taking ownership of the SDGs;
- integrating the SDGs into their existing work;
- raising awareness on the SDGs through their networks;
- fostering innovative partnerships to drive progress;
- strengthening data to measure progress on the SDGs; and,
- sharing knowledge, best practices and challenges on their respective and collective efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Provincial and territorial governments

Provincial and territorial governments have an important role to play in advancing the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs in Canada given their exclusive or shared jurisdiction in many key policy areas. In addition to the provincial and territorial initiatives contributing to the SDGs that appear elsewhere throughout this VNR, below are some examples focused on their localization efforts.

Government of Yukon

Through innovation, investments and collaborative partnerships, the Government of Yukon has adopted an approach to advance the SDGs by making them meaningful through a localized lens. Many of its initiatives to reduce poverty (SDG 1), promote gender equity (SDG 5) and clean energy (SDG 7) are collaborative and

demonstrates the territorial government's commitment to Indigenous leadership and reconciliation. Yukon is committed to further realizing the SDGs through partnerships across public, private, and civil-society sectors through improving government-to-government relationships with First Nations.

Government of Quebec

Since 2006, the Quebec government has been adopting effective tools to promote sustainable development. The [Sustainable Development Act](#) and the [Government Sustainable Development Strategy \(GSDS\)](#) are the cornerstones of the government's approach. They are accelerating the introduction of innovative practices and solutions aimed at developing a greener, low-carbon and socially responsible province. Since 2015, the 2015–2020 GSDS has been the Quebec government's response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To date, 86% of the GSDS's specific targets have been achieved and 61% of the overall results wanted are on track. The 2023–2028 GSDS is currently under review. It further prioritizes the 2030 Agenda by clearly indicating how Quebec is working to achieve the SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets.



Local governments, communities and civil-society-organizations are collaborating on the SDGs

The engagement of municipal governments is also a key to achieving the 2030 Agenda in Canada, as they have decision-making responsibilities in fields of relevance to the SDGs, such as land use, housing, transport, water and waste management.

Voluntary Local Review (VLR) reports are mechanisms for cities and communities to take stock of the state of SDGs at the local level. They can help communities to understand their progress towards the SDGs and focus action to address identified gaps. They complement the national reporting mechanisms in place in Canada, as sources of additional, local data to track progress on the SDGs through a local lens. Two Canadian communities have already each published a VLR and others are working on integrating the SDG framework into other planning and activities.

Kelowna's Voluntary Local Review

Canada's first VLR was conducted by the community in Kelowna, British Columbia, in partnership with the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation and Global Empowerment Coalition of the Central Okanagan. [Global Goals, Local Action: Kelowna's Voluntary Local Review](#), narrowed down the 169 targets and 232 indicators from the Global Indicator Framework to 28 community-level indicators that are outcomes-based, quantifiable, measurable, and localized to the geographical and cultural context of Kelowna. The report highlights progress on the 17 SDGs and evaluates the community's performance based on a selection of indicators relevant to the community-level context. It highlights challenges and progress being made towards achieving each SDG, the interlinkages among the SDGs, and the multi-jurisdictional nature of the SDGs. The VLR speaks to the importance of identifying barriers that are experienced by different groups to develop better and more inclusive solutions.



Winnipeg's Voluntary Location Review and Community Indicator System

[Peg](#) is Winnipeg's community indicator system that tracks progress on 57 key indicators of well-being. The Peg website is a unique way to improve access to local data. In 2017, Peg engaged in an exercise to localize the SDGs in Winnipeg, cross-listing each indicator on its platform with the 231 SDG indicators under the Global Indicator Framework. Building on this work, the [City of Winnipeg's VLR](#) was released in 2021. Developed in collaboration between the City of Winnipeg, United Way Winnipeg and the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the report shares the City of Winnipeg's progress towards localizing the SDGs and insights into well-being trends, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It reflects on the city's challenges, including gaps between neighbourhoods, while highlighting connections between issues and trends. The report also shares stories from community organizations that work on the frontlines to build a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable city. The VLR noted several challenges and calls to action moving forward, including strengthening data, pursuing cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and setting targets as a community.

Sustainable Peterborough

Sustainable Peterborough is a regional partnership comprised of community groups, businesses, educational institutions, local governments and First Nations, jointly funded and overseen by the City of Peterborough and Peterborough County. It has aligned its [Future Ready Regional Economic Development Strategy](#) with the SDGs and identified five priority SDGs for the region to achieve the vision of seeing Peterborough & the Kawarthas become a more sustainable and innovative community. Sustainable Peterborough speaks to the importance of highlighting and celebrating local examples of how communities or municipalities are helping advance the SDGs, whether by creating VLRs or creatively tracking and reframing already occurring efforts within the SDG framework. The partnership is also looking into implementing and tracking progress towards the SDGs in its new Sustainable Peterborough Plan.



City of Toronto

Since 2021, the City of Toronto has issued an annual [Environmental, Social and Governance \(ESG\) report](#). These reports outline how the City is focused on ESG-related opportunities, investments, and risks across strategic priorities and sustainable finance while focused on socioeconomic outcomes. The City is committed to incorporating the 17 SDGs when making investment decisions. The reports highlight the alignment between the City's strategies and the SDGs.

For example, as stated in the City's [2023 ESG Performance Report](#), the City's climate action strategy, TransformTO, has the goal of achieving net-zero GHG emissions in Toronto by 2040 while improving climate resilience, health, social equity and economic prosperity. In addition, the City's efforts to transition Toronto to a circular economy aims to maximize resources and reduce waste, while building a more resilient, inclusive, and green city. Both of these two portfolios are aligned with achieving environmental SDGs. The report also showcases many achievements made in partnerships with communities and stakeholders across Toronto, such as the Sustainable Energy Plan Finance and the Energy Retrofit Loan programs. These programs provide City Divisions, Agencies and Corporations, community organizations, and the private sector with access to low-interest loans to facilitate projects that improve energy performance and reduce GHG emissions in buildings. The Energy Retrofit Loan Program supports energy efficiency and decarbonisation retrofit projects in existing buildings through access to low-interest financing. From 2017 to 2021, the programs have provided more than \$93 million in loans that have enabled more than \$174 million in projects across Toronto by leveraging co-investments and partnerships.

Civil society and not-for-profit organizations are achieving results

Civil society organizations and not-for profit actors across Canada are taking action to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda. They are creating resources and tools for localizing the SDGs and sharing good practices to report on progress. They are also undertaking initiatives supporting the advancement of specific SDGs.

- The International Institute for Sustainable Development developed a [VLR Handbook for Canadian Communities](#). It highlights the benefits of localizing the SDGs and creating VLRs, shares resources, tools and best practice examples for local SDG implementation in Canada.

- Since 2016, Cooperation Canada has presented ‘Progressing National SDGs Implementation’, an independent analysis of the VNRs, at the annual UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. The [Seventh Edition of Progressing National SDGs Implementation](#) was released in early 2023 and provides useful insights and recommendations on the VNRs presented at the HLPF, in order to inform discussions on SDG delivery and help guide improved implementation and reporting on the 2030 Agenda. The report discusses the importance of SDG localization, including VLRs as drivers of local action to achieve the SDGs. The organization also developed a series of [working papers and policy briefs on the SDGs](#), in collaboration with the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation, which gather best practices and communicate them to Canadian and international audiences.
- The Tamarack Institute launched [Community Climate Transitions](#) in 2021 to support communities across Canada on their journeys to advance the SDGs with a particular focus on those pertaining to climate, poverty and equity. Since it launched, the network has offered intensive support to 50 communities and reached over 250 individuals. Located in eight provinces, these communities share a common desire to advance a just and equitable climate transition locally through a multi-sector, resident-led approach that makes space for everyone. The initiative provides supports such as communities of practices, peer learning opportunities, coaching, webinars, events, toolkits, case studies and other publications. In addition, the Tamarack Institute and Sustainable Development Solutions Network launched a [Community of Practice on SDG Localization](#) in 2021, which meets on a monthly basis and gathers over 220 participants. The group discusses topics such as localizing SDG indicators, community engagement and awareness building around the SDGs, municipal-civil society partnerships, the role of academia in advancing the SDGs and much more. Numerous publications were developed to support communities on their journeys to advance the SDGs, including a [10—A Guide for Advancing the SDGs in Your Community](#) that has been viewed over 2,700 times to date.
- Social Innovation Canada connects social innovation practitioners in Canada. Its [Adopting Common Measures program](#) provides Social Purpose Organizations (SPOs) with the support they need to align their work to the SDGs, map out their strategies and track their social impacts. The program helps organizations choose key performance indicators that speak to their local context and provides a platform that allows for these local SDG indicators to be rolled up to a regional and national level so that data can be aggregated and compared in a meaningful way for governments, policy forums, research institutions, and community organizations. Among other objectives, the program aims to identify and address gaps in knowledge and resource needed to help support SPOs working on the SDGs, and strengthen the ability of SPOs to track their impact and alignment of measures towards SDGs.
- The Martha Justice Ministry and the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish have been involved in implementing the SDGs since 2015. Major outcomes of their work include education and advocacy initiatives, events, policy briefs, educational resource development, reports, network and coalition development, organizational alignment with the SDGs, and social media engagement. They advance the SDGs through many ways, including as members of the Basic Income Atlantic Canada coalition (SDG 1, No Poverty) and through their [New Growers program](#), which is a farm apprenticeship program mentoring young farmers in organic farming and local food access, now in its 10th year (SDG 2, Zero Hunger). They also advocate for social and ecological justice (SDG13, Climate Action) and protection of land (SDG 15, Life on Land) and water (SDG 14, Life below Water).

Academia and youth are taking ownership of the SDGs

Academic institutions and youth have recognized the importance of the SDGs in many ways since 2018. Institutions are integrating the SDGs into their own operations and students are building awareness of the SDGs and driving change. There are many examples of academic, research and institutional work to help build knowledge and engage communities to broaden awareness and action toward the 2030 Agenda in Canada and with international partners. These and other institutions are committed to contributing to a sustainable future through research, knowledge dissemination, community services and collaborations and the actions of students and graduates who can help drive change in society and the economy.

Actions at Colleges and Universities

- The Vancouver Island University's Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute explored how sustainable development applied to a post-secondary institution, and how the institution was contributing to the advancement of the SDGs. A [report](#) highlighting the university's contributions to the SDGs, as well as a [video series](#) showing the work across the university in alignment with the SDGs were released. Since the completion of the project, the Vancouver Island University has made further strides supporting the SDGs by incorporating the SDGs in its 2021–2026 Strategic Plan and by establishing the President's Task Force on Climate Action and Sustainability. Throughout 2021, the SDGs continued to be promoted on campus and knowledge to localize the SDGs were disseminated.
- In 2020, York University adopted a university-wide Academic Plan 2020–2025 that includes a focus on elevating action for the SDGs. York University has further implemented institution-wide efforts to enhance equity and inclusion and the core objective to leave no one behind by adopting the following frameworks: Addressing Anti-Black

Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion and a draft Action Plan with a reporting mechanism, The Indigenous Framework for York University: A Guide to Action, A Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-27.

- Starting originally at the University of British Columbia, more than 60 universities and colleges across Canada used the annual [SDG Week Canada](#) in 2023 as a way to increase awareness of and engagement with the SDGs through workshops, panels, and other interactive programming.
- The Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia led a [community consultation process that raised awareness of the SDGs](#) in the context of addressing barriers to affordable and appropriate housing in the province. The Coady Institute also co-designed an initiative running between 2019 and 2025 with partner organizations in Ethiopia, Tanzania, India, Bangladesh and Haiti seeking to advance gender equality and poverty reduction by enhancing women's capacity to participate in the social and economic life of their communities. Along with tangible results at the community level, the project is expected to enable the partner organizations to play an enhanced role in supporting women's leadership.
- Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is the national and international representative of Canada's largest post-secondary system. Its work supports Canada's public colleges, institutes, CEGEPs and polytechnics. In 2019, CICan launched [ImpAct Canada](#), a national initiative to not only support it in the shared values and aspirations of its members, but also to amplify the contribution that the college and institute system makes to social and economic development, community well-being and a sustainable future. Its "Impact" approach to partnership capitalizes on the positive effects of collective action to help Canada meet its national and international commitments to the SDGs. It gives colleges and institutes

and their students a framework to amplify their contributions to social and economic development, community well-being and a sustainable future. In addition, CIGan has engaged its members on the SDG Accord and established the SDG Community of Practice that brings together over 40 colleges. Lastly, under CIGan's leadership, all Canadian colleges are committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. In doing so, 15 new colleges were added to the 20 that had already begun to assess their carbon footprint.

- The UNESCO Chair at York University launched a [research network](#) linking more than 120 Indigenous and Non-Indigenous partners in more than 40 countries to develop shared research approaches to benefit Indigenous children and youth in their education. This included a research project on how education for sustainable development can help improve the education outcomes of Indigenous children and youth in or from traditional communities. The resulting report identified recommendations such as the need to enable Indigenous children and youth to thrive, the importance of including Indigenous Elders in teaching, and stronger technical and vocational training for revitalizing Indigenous crafts and skills.

Reaching Communities and Youth with Innovative Initiatives

Many universities, colleges and research institutions have responded to the opportunity to bring awareness of the SDGs to Canadians by building on their established expertise in connecting with communities on issues of importance to them.

- Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF) engages students in local sustainable development issues, equips them with skills for action, and empowers them to make change in their communities. This work is linked to ongoing LSF efforts that support school communities in bringing the SDGs into their culture; curriculum, teaching and learning; partnerships, facilities and operations. Through these actions 106,000 educators visited LSF's Resources for Rethinking database and 346 action projects reached almost 125,000 students. In addition, [Our Canada Project](#) is a call to action for youth to share their visions for a more sustainable future and the actions they are taking to achieve their vision. This interactive website hosts over 1,200 sustainability action projects undertaken by youth that align with the SDGs.
- The [Digital2030 project](#) is led by Digital Moment, a charity mobilizing communities to build a better future through digital skills education. It is giving young people access to digital skills education that they can apply with a strong focus on the SDGs. This includes Digital Leaders, which is giving young people the space to reflect and share ideas on issues through interactive roundtables and discussions focused on uses of emerging technology to solve global problems. The Digital2030 Challenges on plastics and on good health and well-being have reached youth in 141 countries, including 800,000 youth and 22,000 educators in Canada.



- Pathways to Education Canada delivers programming to students in low-income communities across Canada, in partnership with local community-based organizations. It has 31 program locations in eight Canadian provinces. It promotes positive youth development by meeting the needs of youth with comprehensive after-school programming during the critical years of high school. Consistent with the 2030 Agenda focus on leaving no one behind, data shows that Pathways increased graduation rates in the communities it serves by an average of 52% in 2021.
- The [Sustainable Development Goals Alliance \(SDGA\)](#) is a student-run, community-centered organization at the University of Calgary in Alberta. The SDGA works closely with students, clubs, and faculty to provide programs, events, and support for the campus community to raise awareness and drive action for the 17 SDGs. In 2022, the SDGA hosted an annual [SDG Summit](#), a full-day training conference to inspire 100 change-makers to innovatively target the SDGs. During International Development Week, SDGA hosted a storytelling event that enabled more than 30 participants to focus on inclusion surrounding gender and sexuality. Through their student project-based mentorship program called [Sustainability Leadership Innovation Program](#), 88 students designed and launched projects to advance 15 of the 17 SDGs across the university campus.
- The [Canada SDG Youth Awards](#) is a national youth-led initiative recognizing the contributions of young people towards achieving the SDGs across Canada. The awards highlight the many ways young people aged 30 and under are taking action and they encourage continued progress towards the SDGs. The first awards were launched in 2022 and were operated by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation. A youth steering committee was formed to co-create and launch the initiative. It awarded 10 youth initiatives under five categories. In 2023, five youth initiatives were awarded in five categories: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action; Community Health and Well-being;

Innovation and Systems Change-making; Social Justice and Inclusivity; Education and Economic Development. In 2022–2023, the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation partnered with Re17, a national community of youth working to reimagine approaches to social, environmental and economic challenges through anti-oppressive, intersectional and interdisciplinary collaboration, to be the steward of the awards going forward.

Lessons learned to improve and expand local level impacts

Many stakeholders have identified challenges in localizing the SDGs based on their experiences. In particular, they point to the need to make clear how the SDGs have impacts at the level of communities and how individuals can take meaningful action for change. Most have outlined that partnerships and collaboration are essential to achieve community engagement.

Stakeholders have also identified the importance of:

- increasing awareness of the SDGs, of ways to localize them and where to report on stakeholder activities and achievements to count towards Canada meeting its SDG targets;
- cross-sectoral collaboration and collaborative spaces to come together and share insights, good practices and challenges;
- intersectionality between the SDGs;
- fostering engagement with teachers and community-based organizations with practical, actionable ways to be part of work on the SDGs;
- gathering existing resources on localization in a centralized hub;
- local data and VLRs as a mean to build a sense of belonging to the SDGs at the community level; and,
- funding to support localization and capacity building at the local level to drive progress on SDGs.