Canada’s Voluntary National Review Main Messages

Canada is making significant progress in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) evaluates progress since 2018 and focuses on efforts to advance five national priorities: SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The remaining SDGs are reviewed in summary. The VNR was developed in consultation with governments at all levels, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, academia, and individual Canadians. It is underpinned by data and reflects whole-of-society actions, achievements, and challenges.

By fostering partnerships and collaboration, Canada is advancing the SDGs to build a more prosperous, healthy and sustainable future. It is working to accelerate progress for those left furthest behind, including Indigenous Peoples, racialized and religious minorities, 2S/LGBTQI+ people, those with a disability, official language minority communities, and other groups in vulnerable situations.

Significant progress has been made on reducing poverty (SDG 1). Canada has met its interim target of a 20% reduction in poverty. However, recent data reflect the emergence of new challenges, including the end of COVID-19 emergency benefits and high inflation. Still, Canada remains well-positioned to achieve a 50% decrease in poverty by 2030, based on 2015 levels. Canada contributes to global efforts to eradicate poverty and increased its total international assistance resources to $8.4 billion in 2021-2022.

Ensuring access to quality education (SDG 4) is an important measure to tackle poverty. Canadian educational outcomes are among the highest in the world. Provinces and territories are working to support students, parents, and education staff with academic assistance and ensure student well-being. The Government of Canada made an historic five year, $30 billion investment to build a Canada-wide, affordable, high quality and inclusive early learning and child care system. Canada continues to demonstrate global leadership in investing in and ensuring access to quality education.

Canada has a longstanding commitment to gender equality (SDG 5) and is taking concrete action to support women, girls and the 2S/LGBTQI+ community. This includes ensuring equal pay for work of equal value in federally-regulated workplaces. The National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence helps those affected access reliable and timely protection and services. Globally, Canada is the top OECD ranked donor for the share of aid supporting gender equality, and is among the top-ranked for investments supporting women’s rights organizations.

Canada is taking bold action on climate change (SDG 13), as it works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by forty to forty-five percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and reduce carbon pollution to net zero by 2050. In 2022, Canada launched the most comprehensive emissions reduction plan in its history. The Government of Canada has also invested more than $8B in adaptation and disaster response to protect communities and build resilience to climate change impacts. In 2021, Canada committed $5.3 billion in climate financing to help low and middle-income countries transition to sustainable and climate resilient development.

Partnerships (SDG 17) are at the heart of advancing the 2030 Agenda. The Government of Canada committed up to $60M to support whole-of-society stakeholders advance the SDGs. Canada plays a leading international role on the development of global indicators as part of the United Nations Inter-Agency Expert group on SDG indicators. Canada also mobilized $33B through its Total Official Support for Sustainable Development abroad from 2018 to 2021. These investments are matched by Canada’s
high-level commitment to global action, with Prime Minister Trudeau currently serving as co-chair of the United Nations Secretary General’s SDG Advocates Group with Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados.

Canada’s international assistance continues to improve the lives of millions of people around the world by supporting programs that tackle hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2), invest in quality education (SDG 4), advance human rights (SDG 16), enhance global health (SDG 3) and promote gender equality (SDG 5). Canada’s assistance has reached more than 4 million girls and women globally and over 900 women’s rights organizations.

Canada has made good progress to achieve the SDGs. More remains to be done. Canada continues to note health inequalities for many populations, including gaps in health outcomes of Indigenous Peoples. Data continues to point to the scale and impact of gender inequality and disability status on the realization of many other SDGs. Many Canadians face growing food insecurity and housing affordability challenges as rising prices outpace income growth, exacerbating existing lower socio-economic outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Yet, Canada remains steadfast in its commitment to enabling and accelerating progress to achieve the SDGs in an inclusive, whole-of-society approach to ensure no one is left behind.