

The Next 150:

A National Conversation on Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals



The Next 150: A National Conversation on Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was a day-long meeting hosted in Toronto on November 17 by Alliance 150, Canadian Council for International Co-Operation (CCIC) and Community Foundations of Canada (CFC). The event brought together the public, private and philanthropic sectors to reflect on what has come out of Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation and what can be done next to advance the country's role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, slated for the year 2030.

With opening remarks from CCIC, CFC and the Canada 150 Federal Secretariat, participants heard about the role of Canada's 150th in uniting Canadian organizations across sectors and the country. Participants were encouraged to contemplate what comes next after Canada's sesquicentennial, and how the SDGs could act as a new unifier for organizations in Canada.

Following the opening remarks, Dr. Joseph Wong gave a keynote presentation on *The SDG Imperative: Leaving No-One Behind*. Dr. Wong stressed the importance of inclusivity around the SDGs, indicating that at both the national and the global level that we must leave no one behind when pursuing these goals.

Dr. Wong was then joined onstage by Kwame McKenzie, CEO of The Wellesley Institute, and Elisa Levi, lead of the Canadian Food Funders Collaborative and Board Chair of the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples. The panel discussed the SDGs in relation to healthcare as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action.

Participants then heard from four organizations who have already begun to integrate the SDGs in their work:

JULIE WRIGHT

Waterloo Global Science Initiative

WGSi creates the conditions for collective global action. Their current focus is convening the Generation SDG Summit in April 2018 to select a handful of specific challenges that Canada should urgently address through multi-sectoral collaborations and determine what priority areas will benefit from strategic leadership by Canada at the global frontier.

www.wgsi.org

MEG FRENCH

UNICEF Canada

UNICEF is a non-profit humanitarian organization focusing on saving children's lives around the globe. Their latest report, Oh Canada! Our Kids Deserve Better, ranks the world's 41 richest countries on how they are achieving the SDGs that focus on children and youth, with Canada ranking at 25 on the index of child and youth well-being and sustainability.

www.unicef.org

STEFAN JUNGCURT

International Institute for Sustainable Development

IISD is an independent think tank championing sustainable solutions to 21st century problems. Their SDG Knowledge Platform provides information and analysis in support of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 SDGs.

www.iisd.org

JOANNES PAULUS YIMBESALU

Youth Ambassador

Joannes is a Queen's Young Leader and co-founder of Hope for Children Cameroon. He is a passionate advocate for the SDGs and works in many related fields, including gender equality, nutrition, education and clean water and sanitation. He spoke to the group about the importance of including young people in the conversation around the SDGs in Canada.



Following a group discussion and lunch, Rohit T. Aggarwala gave a keynote presentation about SDGs and Cities: Observations from New York City's PlaNYC and the importance of being patient and thoughtful when implementing long-term change. Rohit was joined by Sharon Avery, CEO of the Toronto Foundation, and Dr. Paula Robinson from Ryerson University, to discuss the unique considerations of implementing change in Toronto and in cities across Canada.

The day concluded with another group discussion, followed by an informal networking reception.

Discussion Questions



How is your organization working to pursue the SDGs?

- **Information-sharing**

A few participants are developing online platforms to share work around the SDGs completed by organizations across Canada and across sectors.

- **Working on specific goals**

Some participants are focusing their work on one particular goal that aligns with their organizational mandate, such as *zero hunger* and *gender equality*. Other organizations find that working within the SDG framework as a whole is more beneficial for their work.

- **Working with others**

Some participants are using the SDGs as a method to align their work with other organizations in the same field, with the intention of working collectively to address needs gaps.

- **Assessing Outcomes**

Some participants are conducting benchmarking studies to assess where Canada stands on the SDGs internationally and how we should measure collective progress.

- **Engaging Members**

Several participant organizations are working to educate their members on what the SDGs are, and how they align with their organizational mandates.



What would help your organization to boost its efforts?

- **Increased public awareness**

Throughout the day, participants stated that the public is not widely aware of the SDGs, and as a result, the public is not invested in advancing the SDG agenda.

Many participants have been working to increase public awareness of the SDGs, however, there is still more work to be done. There was general consensus that increased public awareness of the SDGs would translate into increased public investment and success.

- **Ways to engage invisible populations**

Reflecting on Dr. Wong's presentation, the participants recognized that there are populations they are not reaching in their work, and that are not reflected in data used to guide activities related to the SDGs.

Methods and tools to engage these populations, whose voices are not often heard in these discussions, would be useful to ensure that no one is left behind when measuring the success of the SDGs.

- **Collaboration**

Participants noted that there is much to be learned from other organizations working within the SDG framework, especially organizations from different sectors. Sharing success stories and challenges can prevent duplication of effort, and allow organizations to progress more quickly.

Several participants recognized that information related to what resonates with the public about the SDGs would be especially useful information to share.



Discussion Questions



Where do you see opportunities to collaborate to advance the SDG agenda?

- **Information-sharing**
Participants agreed that by sharing information between organizations, work done around the SDGs will be more effective and intentional as fewer mistakes are repeated.
- **Work outside of traditional silos**
Participants recognized that the SDGs bring organizations together that may not typically meet. These non-traditional alliances are an opportunity to work with new organizations around the same agenda, often in different sectors.
- **Provide collective focus**
Participants noted that the SDGs are a unifying framework for a variety of organizations, and that they do not silo organizations. The SDGs provide a collective focus for organizations who may not normally collaborate.

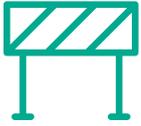


What role should cities and city champions play in advancing the SDG agenda?

- **Public educators**
Participants agreed that greater public awareness of the SDGs will result in public investment in the success of the SDG agenda. Cities and city champions should work to increase public awareness and resulting investment in the SDG agenda. A few participants defined 'city champions' as local media, politicians, and academics. These three groups of people inform a wide variety of citizens, and can greatly increase public awareness of the SDGs.
- **Include the voices of people with lived experiences**
Cities, with their large and diverse populations, should bring the voices of lived experiences into the SDG conversation. Cities should also ensure that those with lived experiences are not only heard, but are involved in designing solutions to the problems they have experienced first-hand.
- **Long-term planners**
Local politicians were described by some participants as more non-partisan than their provincial or federal counterparts. This neutrality could be used to execute long-term plans around the SDGs that are avoided by provincial and federal governments who may lose power before they can see their plans through.
- **Unifiers**
Participants recognized that cities connect people on a micro and macro level, through neighbourhoods, cities, and globally with other cities and countries.
- **Progress trackers**
Cities, along with other levels of government, can track progress around the SDGs across sectors.



Discussion Questions



What are the greatest barriers in Canada to realizing the SDGs by 2030?

- **Reality of inclusivity**

Several participants noted that Canada should confront its mythology about being truly inclusive. Invisible populations that are not captured by data must be identified, and organizations should work to include these populations in conversation.

- **Lack of awareness**

Participants recognized that most Canadians are not familiar with the SDG framework. A few participants also mentioned a similar lack of awareness among politicians. This lack of awareness results in a lack of interest in the public and political sphere in advancing the SDGs.

- **Political impact**

Participants described a reluctance in multiple levels of governments to engage in long-term planning that would last beyond typical political terms. A few participants also recognized that there is a hesitation for politicians to work across party lines, which prevents collaborative efforts towards advancing the SDGs.

- **Geography**

Participants remarked that the size of Canada, along with multiple levels of government that do not often interact, was a barrier to collective efforts to advance the SDG agenda.



How can our collective work around Canada's 150th inform the development of an effective network to support the SDGs?

- **Learn from past efforts**

Participants recognized that an effective network will share both success stories and challenges from organizations across all sectors. An effective network will also connect organizations outside of their silos to encourage collaboration and avoid experiencing the same challenges.

- **Governmental involvement**

Participants recognized that the federal government could play a substantial role in public awareness, funding, and cross-sector collaboration. The network could be used as a tool to demonstrate to the government that nationwide interest in the SDGs is present.

- **Connection**

Participants noted that an effective network will capture momentum across sectors, and unify efforts towards the same goals within the SDG framework.

- **Include Indigenous voices**

Participants agreed that an effective network will work to consider and include voices from Indigenous communities in conversations around the SDGs.





Resources

[SDG Knowledge Hub](#)

Compiles international news, commentary and events on the SDGs.

[Geneva 2030 Ecosystem](#)

Mobilizes knowledge, capacity, skills and experiences of organizations in and around Geneva for SDG implementation.

[SDG Indicator Portal](#)

Provides data on the SDG indicators used by countries for their Voluntary National Review reporting to High Level Political Forums and Canadian cities.

[The Peg](#)

The Winnipeg community indicator system allows detailed tracking of progress regarding SDGs and other community objectives.

[City Sustainability](#)

Provides ‘sustainability assessments’ for the world’s cities - those urban regions with more than 5 million residents.

[MY World 2030](#)

An adaptable platform for citizen-generated data and engagement with the SDGs.

Attendees

Alberta Council for Global Cooperation
Alliance 150
Audacious Futures
BC Council for International Cooperation
Canadian Council for International Co-operation
Canadian Urban Institute
Canadian Women’s Foundation
Capacity Canada
CCEDNET
Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network
Certo Creative
Community Foundations of Canada
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Evergreen
Fermata Inc.
Food Secure Canada
Foundation for Environmental Stewardship
Global Affairs Canada
Impact Hub Ottawa
International Institute for Sustainable Development
Lawson Foundation
MASS LBP

McConnell Foundation
Ontario Council for International Cooperation
Ontario Nonprofit Network
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Passport 2017
Pathways to Education Canada
Philanthropic Foundations Canada
Ryerson University
Social Innovation Generation
St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto
Strategic Content Labs
Sustainability Network
Tides Canada
Toronto Foundation
Trans Canada Trail
UNICEF Canada
Université Laval
Virgin Unite
Waterloo Global Science Initiative
Women Deliver
YMCA Canada
Youth and Philanthropy Initiative Canada



What next?

- We will collectively explore the potential for pivoting to an “Alliance 2030” that looks ahead to Canada’s future and its advancement of the SDGs. You can help us by completing this [short survey](#).
- We will continue to host similar conversations across the country in the new year.
- We have launched a [Sustainable Development Goals Newsletter](#) which will provide occasional news, updates and event information related to the SDGs in Canada.