

**BC Council for International Cooperation:
Submission to the Finance Committee's 2018 Pre-Budget Consultation**

August 4, 2017

About BCCIC

The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation is a network of international development and civil society organizations in BC. For over 25 years, our more than 100 members have worked both within Canada and internationally to tackle challenges such as poverty and sustainable development. The Council aims to help its members become more effective agents of change in their global cooperation efforts.

Relevance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 as part of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, an ambitious plan to address pressing global issues from poverty to gender equality to climate action. The 17 SDGs are universal and interconnected – they must be approached as a whole and ensure that “no one is left behind.” Canada committed to the SDGs and thus has an international obligation to implement them both domestically and abroad.

SDGs Ensure Sustainable Growth while Improving Productivity

Canada's push for economic growth and prosperity must be sustainable and inclusive to ensure that it will leave no one behind. A shift toward pro-poor, low-carbon growth will enable Canadians to become more productive, tapping into the potential lost through inadequate and ineffective social systems. Therefore, as Canada looks to strengthen its competitiveness and productivity, it must also actively tackle the UN Sustainable Development Goals on a domestic scale.

In addition to Canada's international commitment to the SDGs and the Goals' contribution to productivity, aspects of the SDGs are included in many of the Prime Minister's mandate letters. For example, the letter to the Minister of International Development explicitly names the *2030 Agenda* as a priority. In the letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Prime Minister emphasizes sustainable economic development. The letter to the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development includes directives to reduce poverty, which fall under SDG 1: No Poverty. The inclusion of sustainable development directives in the Prime Minister's mandate letters implies that the government has an obligation to implement the SDGs. Thus, the Goals should be integrated into all federal budgets moving forward.

Main Recommendations

BCCIC has 3 major recommendations for Canada's implementation of the SDGs. These are:

1. Develop a national SDG Action Plan that includes a national framework of country-specific indicators and collects disaggregated data at the subnational level. (Page 2–3)
2. Officially convene an Interdepartmental Committee on the SDGs coordinated by the Privy Council Office that reports to the Prime Minister and an Advisory Committee that includes civil society. (Page 3)
3. Reaffirm Canada's commitment to overseas development by increasing ODA to meet agreed-upon targets within 10 years. (Page 4)

Recommendation 1: Canada should develop a national SDG Action Plan that includes a national framework of country-specific indicators and collects disaggregated data at the subnational level.

At the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2017, 44 countries reported their progress on the SDGs via Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). Canada was not among those countries, though it plans to put forth its own VNR in the upcoming years. In light of Canada not producing a VNR, BCCIC put together a report from the perspective of civil society tracking Canada's progress on the 7 SDGs that were under review at the 2017 HLPF.

The report, *Where Canada Stands*,¹ highlights progress Canada has made and illustrates where it falls behind, providing recommendations on each of the Goals and the process of implementing the SDGs. *Where Canada Stands* builds off a previous BCCIC report, *Keeping Track*,² that recommends domestically-focused indicators for Canada on each of the SDGs which harmonize upward into the global framework.

At present, Canada measures its progress on the SDGs using the indicators specified by the UN. However, Canada should develop its own set of indicators that are relevant to its national context. To summarize our blog post explaining why:³

- The UN's SDG indicators are not all relevant to Canada: Global minimum thresholds are too low for Canada's context, and some indicators do not apply to wealthy countries like Canada.
- The UN's indicators do not capture all Canadian social and environmental issues, and they leave out some of our country's most marginalized groups.
- The aggregate data sought by the UN does not tell the full story of Canada's vast regional and demographic variation on success on the SDGs.
- The UN indicators do not track progress on Indigenous rights and reconciliation, which are vital to success on the SDGs.

¹ *Where Canada Stands* report: <http://bccic.ca/hlpf2017>

² *Keeping Track* report: <http://bit.ly/29dFRRq>

³ Blog: *Why Canada Needs Country-Specific Indicators for the SDGs*: <http://bit.ly/2uZrihj>

In order to move forward on this strategy, the Government of Canada should deliver a mandate to Statistics Canada to create a set of Canada-specific indicators that they would track in order to produce a VNR for each upcoming HLPF. The government could approach this mandate through the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development at the Office of the Auditor General and coordinate inter-ministerial and -jurisdictional collaboration through the Privy Council Office.

The indicators included in this mandate should include data disaggregated by region and demographic status. They should measure outcomes not only for the general population, but for the most marginalized individuals. The SDG strategy should include interdepartmental collaboration, in line with the principle of interconnectedness that underpins the SDGs. It should also include indicators to measure progress on UNDRIP⁴ and the TRC's Calls to Action.

Recommendation 2: Formalize the Interdepartmental Committee on the SDGs with Privy Council coordination and support from a multi-sector Advisory Council that includes civil society.

The Government of Canada has already established an interdepartmental committee on engaging with the SDGs. However, the committee has yet to be formalized and does not include the voices of stakeholders outside of government. As such, we recommend the establishment of an Advisory Council to co-develop Canada's SDG strategy with the interdepartmental committee.

As BCCIC stated in our Review of the International Assistance Policy,⁵ the role of this council would be "to overview and ensure collaborative management and monitoring of the SDG goals." The Council should fund and maintain at least 12 standing seats, including at least 2 seats for civil society organizations, with at least one seat representing the Executive Director of one of the Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation. Other seats should be designated for youth, Indigenous delegates, academics, private sector representatives, and members of Inter-Cultural Associations to represent diaspora communities.

The review continues, "all the Council seats should be self-selected from among their respective sectors. A primary mandate of this Council would be to provide specific recommendations on areas needing improved policy coherence and national harmonization toward international standards and agreements."

⁴ Indigenous Navigator's indicators for monitoring UNDRIP: <http://bit.ly/2vtsI3G>

⁵ BCCIC's Review of Canada's International Assistance Policy: <http://bit.ly/2woV78m>

Recommendation 3: Reaffirm Canada’s commitment to overseas development by increasing ODA to meet agreed-upon targets within 10 years.

Presently, Canada’s financial commitment to Overseas Development Aid is 0.26% of its GNI. The globally-agreed-upon target for ODA by OECD countries is 0.7% of GNI.

According to AidWatch, in order to put Canada on a 10-year track to meeting the ODA target, “on average the [International Assistance Envelope] will need to grow by 15% annually up to 2021, and 16% thereafter. With this budgetary investment, it is possible to achieve 0.33% by 2020. ODA in 2020 would be \$7.7 billion, up from \$5.3 billion in 2017. Over these four years, a cumulative \$2.5 billion investment of new money in aid will be required.”⁶

In the chapter for SDG 17 in the *Where Canada Stands* report, BCCIC interviewed experts in international development to understand their perspectives on Canada’s role in partnerships for achieving the SDGs.

Financial support to international development is a major avenue in which Canada can contribute to attaining the SDGs on an international scale. In a rapidly globalizing world, a boost in global prosperity also affects the productivity of Canadians. The Goals pave the way for global economic partnerships rooted in the principles of sustainable development.

A Path Forward

A systematic implementation of the SDGs on a domestic scale can move progress toward the goal of ‘leaving no one behind.’ By lifting up the most marginalized members of our society, Canada can improve citizens’ quality of life while increasing their ability to contribute productively to their communities and workplaces.

⁶ AidWatch: Ten Year Plan to Achieve the UN ODA target of 0.7% of Canada’s GNI: <http://bit.ly/2wp6UTZ>