



THE U.N. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA 2030

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ABSTRACT

In its endorsement of “progressive” goals, the document makes no reference to the groups apparently viewed as the villains and oppressors – especially Caucasian, heterosexual males; non-indigenous people; multi-generational Canadians; the oil and gas industry; and Canadian business generally. I wonder who is paying for all the programs.

Robert Lyman



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadians may view the federal government's global warming policies as detached from other political and policy objectives, and not part of a broader national or international framework. The 2018 report by Global Affairs Canada containing a "voluntary national review" of Canada's progress in meeting the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development shows that this is not true.

In the paper that follows, I quote extensively from the report in order to give precise examples of the rationale that governs the Federal government's approach and to show that it is part of an integrated whole. For those used to traditional public policy goals, the document is surprising, and in some respects quite alarming

Reports of this kind historically have been dry recitations of programs and expenditures made in keeping with an international commitment. This document, instead, uses language typical of a federal Budget, full of striking, almost bombastic statements about the radical transitions in social, economic and environmental conditions that the government seeks to make. Further, the tone is not consensual, clearly representative of a wide range of viewpoints and regional perspectives in Canada. It is strident and ideological, a bold declaration that "progressive" values and highly interventionist approaches take primary place in the government's thinking. The priorities are strikingly clear - the feminist agenda and the broader LGBTQ2's gender goals, "reconciling" with indigenous people by giving them ever more funds and power, and transforming the Canadian economy towards a "green" version with renewable energy dominating and little role for the hydrocarbons industry. It is, in some senses, a declaration of victory over the more conventional goals and communities within the Canadian political system.

One cannot help but be struck by the range of initiatives underway, many of which have largely escaped media attention in Canada. The spending commitments alone are eye-opening - \$180 billion for infrastructure, of which \$20 billion is for green infrastructure,

\$28.7 billion for public transit, \$25.3 billion for social infrastructure, and \$10.1 billion for trade and transportation infrastructure. The document expresses a profound belief that all this will increase Canada's future prosperity, ignoring the fact that, apart from the trade and transportation investments there is no obvious reason why this should be so.

In its endorsement of "progressive" goals, the document makes no reference to the groups apparently viewed as the villains and oppressors – especially Caucasian, heterosexual males; non-indigenous people; multi-generational Canadians; the oil and gas industry; and Canadian business generally. I wonder who is paying for all the programs.

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THE UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CANADA'S VOLUNTARY REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The concept of sustainable development was brought to international prominence following the release of the report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987. It has since become a major focus of work by the United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development and has led to the publication of a number of important documents seeking to set the objectives for an international agenda. At an early stage, the concept of “sustainable development” was rather vague, and implied a better balancing among economic, social and environmental objectives. Since then, it has taken on far more significant implications as, in effect, the rallying cry for a distinctly “progressive” (i.e. left wing) view of how economic development should be altered to serve the needs of environmental quality and advancement of the interests of less developed countries.



The Canadian public usually hears little about the discussions on sustainable development that take place in international organizations and gets little news about what this means in terms of the Canadian government's priorities. Thus, it is not surprising that the release of a report by Global Affairs Canada in 2018 received almost no media coverage and little commentary. The report was intended to be a “Voluntary National Review” of Canada's progress in meeting the sustainable development objectives. In its coverage and terminology, it implied that, indeed, “sustainable development” is the framework in which almost all federal policies are developed and prioritized. It is thus essential for Canadians to be informed of what the review included.

It can be found here:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20312Canada_ENGLISH_18122_Canadas_Voluntary_National_ReviewENv7.pdf

The following will summarize the highlights of the report, quoting liberally throughout, and then offer some commentary.

Overview

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is described as offering a *“historic opportunity to positively shape how societies of tomorrow grow and develop sustainably and to the shared benefit of all”*. It includes 17 goals. The Canadian government sees *“three million Canadians still struggling to satisfy their basic needs, including indigenous peoples, women, youth, the elderly, the LGBTQ2 community, newcomers to Canada and persons with disabilities”*. The focus of public policy is thus on advancing the interests of these groups. This is being done by concrete action to *“reduce poverty, advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, narrow the socioeconomic gaps that exist between different groups, foster inclusion and celebrate diversity, and improve equality of opportunity for all.”* To this end, in June 2017 Canada announced its Feminist International Assistance Policy. *“Canada firmly believes that promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective way to achieve this goal and drive progress on all sustainable development goals”*.

Canada will therefore align all its policies and priorities with the SDGs. Federal departments and agencies have been tasked to examine how their policies and programs are contributing to the 2030 agenda’s goals and targets. Specifically, *“Canada will maintain a gender-responsive perspective in the implementation of the SDGs, consistent with its emphasis on gender equality as a cross-cutting priority”*.

Principles and Actions – Key Quotes from the Review

Main Themes

The 2030 Agenda is a transformative agenda, rooted in the principles of inclusiveness, diversity and the need for meaningful international partnerships.

Diversity extends beyond race and ethnicity. *It spans language, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, individual ability and economic status. Diversity is a proven path to peace and economic prosperity. But in the Canadian experience, that path has never been easy nor perfect. In particular, Canadians recognize that for indigenous peoples, the Canadian reality is not, and never has been, equitable or fair.*

Indigenous people, non-indigenous Canadians, and the Government of Canada *agree that the situation has long been untenable and must change.” The Government of Canada is ...taking further steps to better align Canada’s laws and policies with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.*

Canadian women *are among the best educated in the world; however, they earn 31% less than men on an annual basis...The Government is leading by example and putting in place measures to address the wage gap by shining a light on pay practices in the federally regulated sector and moving forward with a proactive pay equity regime. It will include strong oversight and enforcement.*

Canada is actively promoting human rights related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression *at home and on the international stage, where Canada is co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition. The Coalition is the first intergovernmental network formed to promote and protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people around the world.*

The Government of Canada is advancing a progressive trade agenda *that seeks to ensure that all segments of society can take advantage of and benefit from the opportunities that flow from trade and investment.*

The Federal Sustainable Development Act (2008) provides the legal framework for the development and implementation of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS).

Canada is focusing its efforts on putting people at the centre of decision making and ensuring our policies and programs respond to the distinct challenges faced by under-represented and marginalized groups – such as women, youth, newcomers to Canada, single parents, seniors, racialized communities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and LGBTQ2 and non-binary individuals – to ensure that everyone can benefit and share in the Canadian economic and social prosperity”.

“The Government of Canada believes that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at home and around the world is central to realizing transformative social and economic outcomes: it is at the heart of the Government of Canada’s approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda.”

Growth

Canada’s newly established Development Finance Institute, branded FinDev Canada, will support sustainable development by providing financial services to the private sector in developing countries to reduce poverty through job creation, advance women’s economic empowerment and act on climate change. With an initial capitalization of \$300 million, FinDev Canada will focus on three priority, high-impact sectors: green growth, agri-business and financial services for small and medium-sized enterprises. On June 9, 2018 FinDev partnered with other G7 development finance institutions to announce the 2X challenge, which aims to mobilize US \$3 billion activities that benefit women in developing countries.

Reconciliation with Aboriginals

Prime Minister Trudeau has made reconciliation with indigenous peoples and the renewal of our nation-to-nation relationship his top priority.

The 2018 federal Budget announced \$5 billion over five years to support indigenous communities and peoples by taking further steps to improve the quality of life for indigenous peoples and to support the recognition and implementation of indigenous rights.

The new Department of Indigenous Services aims to ... facilitate a path to self-determination for all indigenous peoples, allowing them to control service delivery for their respective peoples. The new Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada will ...support the efforts of indigenous peoples to rebuild and reconstitute their nations; and help to enable indigenous peoples to build capacity that supports implementation of their vision of self-determination.

In this vein, the Government of Canada has launched a review and reform process of its laws, policies and operational practices to help ensure it meets its constitutional obligations with respect to indigenous and treaty rights, adheres to international human rights standards, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and effectively implements the 94 Calls to action of the Truth and reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Government of Canada is committed to joint priority-setting, co-development of policy and monitoring progress with indigenous peoples through regular meetings of permanent bilateral mechanisms with the Assembly of First Nations, self-government and land claim agreement holders, the Inuit Kanatami and the four Inuit Nunangat regions, and the Metis National Council and its governing members.

The National Enquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls ...will result in a set of recommendations aimed at ensuring the safety of indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2 and non-binary individuals.

The Feminist International Assistance Policy takes an intersectional, human rights-based approach to reaching the poorest and most vulnerable, including indigenous peoples, to better ensure that no one is left behind.

Canada advocates for meaningful inclusion and enhanced participation of indigenous people in multilateral, regional and national organizations and processes.

Gender equality

The Government is providing a new Parental Sharing Benefit that aims to increase gender equality and promote more equal parental roles.

The Government of Canada has strengthened its implementation of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to make evidence-based policies the foundation for gender-based budgeting.

Building on these efforts, the Government introduced the Gender Results Framework in 2018: a whole-of-government tool that identifies Government of Canada objectives in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls domestically and internationally, and allows progress against these objectives to be measured.

Canada's feminist foreign policy seeks to apply a feminist lens across all international policies and programs in trade, security and diplomacy, focusing on addressing systematic barriers to gender equality by supporting women and girls as equal decision makers and by amplifying their voices, promoting and protecting their rights and fostering conditions that enable them to have greater access to and control over productive resources.

In addition, a feminist approach is being developed to other key Government of Canada policies and strategies for international engagement... We are now looking at ways to incorporate more gender considerations in our free trade agreements.

Canada recently championed the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Empowerment.

The Government of Canada is highly engaged in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through its participation in bilateral, multilateral and international forums.

Climate and Clean Energy

Achieving a more sustainable future requires tackling climate change, improving the health of the world's oceans and transforming the way we produce, transport and use energy. Canada is committed to advancing action on climate change and clean growth both at home and abroad.

This includes improving energy efficiency, generating more energy from renewable resources, investing in resilient energy systems and infrastructure, and driving new solutions for the sustainable extraction and use of fossil fuels.

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the poorest and most vulnerable populations affected by climate change and has committed \$2.65 billion in climate finance by 2020-2021 to help finance developing countries transition to a lower-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

Women and girls in developing countries are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, which exacerbate existing social inequalities and threaten their health, safety and well-being.

There are clear opportunities for the climate and SDG agendas to support and strengthen one another... Climate change is fast becoming the greatest threat to tackling global poverty, affecting many aspects of development work and worsening existing gender inequality and other injustices.

Canada is making generational investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, as well as introducing policies that will accelerate the transition to renewable sources of energy. At the same time, Canada is working internationally to enhance energy security and fast-track the adoption of clean energy.

Canada will be helping reduce global carbon emissions. At the same time, revenues from oil and gas production will help fund the lower-carbon transition.

Cleaner fuels such as biofuels, hydrogen and natural gas are critical parts of Canada's lower-carbon future.

Canada has the most biomass per capita in the world. To capture that potential, the Government of Canada has developed a strategy aimed at making Canada a leader in the emerging bio-economy.

The Government of Canada has established the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which will invest in green infrastructure projects.

Significant investments are being made to develop a national network of charging and re-fueling stations for alternative fuel vehicles. This infrastructure will enable Canadians to use lower-carbon or zero-emission vehicles.

The Clean Energy, Education and Empowerment (C3E) initiative works to promote gender equality in the clean energy sector.

Canada has also launched the Equal by 30 campaign, which aims to bring together leadership from across the energy sector to find common ground for action to achieve equal pay, equal leadership and equal opportunities by 2030. These initiatives could influence not only gender balance within the energy sector, but also increase employment opportunities and financial independence for women around the world.

Canada is working with its continental partners on the North American Renewable Integration Study (NARIS). By 2019, NARIS is expected to identify the key opportunities and challenges of integrating large amounts of wind, solar and hydro capacity into the North American electricity grid.

Multilaterally, Canada is participating in the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) and Mission Innovation (MI) to share best practices and accelerate the development of clean technologies... Canada also supports the International Energy Agency's Clean Energy Transitions Programme, which helps developing countries enhance their capacity to develop and deploy clean energy technologies.

Canada has announced its intention to join the International Renewable Energy Agency, the largest intergovernmental organization promoting the deployment of renewable energy.

Canada is also active in the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which aims to accelerate clean growth and climate protection by rapidly phasing out traditional coal-fired electricity projects.

Canada is providing \$150 million to the African Renewable Energy Initiative to reduce emissions and improve access to energy by leveraging private sector investment.

The next steps include establishing a federal regulatory framework to open up the offshore to renewable energy development, as well as moving forward on a number of regulatory actions including a clean fuel standard, new standards for coal-fired and natural gas-fired electricity and for appliances and equipment, and new energy codes for new and existing buildings.

The government will implement a Greening Government Strategy, reducing GHG emissions from federal government facilities and fleets by 80% below 2005 levels by 2050; working towards 100% clean electricity by 2025; adopting a new net-zero energy ready building code for federal buildings; and working toward 80% of the administrative fleet being composed of zero-emission vehicles by 2030.

To help advance Canada's efforts to build a clean economy, the Government of Canada's long-term Investing in Canada Plan will provide more than \$180 billion in infrastructure funding. Over the 12 years of the Plan, the Government will more than double existing federal funding to generate long-term economic growth, help improve the resilience of communities, transition to a clean growth economy and improve social inclusion and socio-economic outcomes for all Canadians.

By the end of 2025-2026, the Government of Canada aims to invest \$20 billion in funding for green infrastructure initiatives that reduce GHG emissions and improve climate resilience and environmental quality.

In support of the objective to double the number of women-owned businesses by 2025, Canada's recently announced Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy will help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses.

The Investing in Canada Plan will make long-term investments in five priority investment streams: public transit (\$28.7 billion); social infrastructure (\$25.3 billion); infrastructure for rural and northern communities (\$2 billion) and trade and transportation infrastructure (\$10.1 billion).

When the policies and programs within the Pan-Canadian Framework are fully implemented, the Framework will not only allow Canada to meet its 2030 target in full, but it will also position Canada to set and achieve deeper reductions beyond 2030. The federal government and the provinces and territories have committed through the Pan-Canadian Framework to report on progress and take stock of results in order to be more ambitious over time.

In December 2017, Canada joined Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and two U.S. states to establish the Declaration on Carbon Markets in the Americas, to enhance promotion and collaboration on carbon pricing.

Canada also committed to the Arctic Council's first aspirational, collective goal to cut black carbon by 25% to 33% by 2025.

As part of its \$2.65 billion climate finance commitment, Canada will provide:

- *\$1.8 billion to help mobilize private-sector funding for climate action;*
- *\$300 million to the Green Climate Fund, the primary global fund aimed at addressing climate challenges in developing countries;*
- *\$30 million to the Least Developed Countries Fund, administered by the Global Environment Facility;*
- *\$50 million to the G7 initiative on Climate Risk Insurance;*
- *\$200 million for the Canadian Climate Fund for the Private Sector in Asia, administered by the Asian Development Bank;*
- *\$150 million to the G7 Africa renewable Energy Initiative; and*
- *\$1.2 million to Cowater International to support sustainable energy and economic growth in Burkino Faso.*

Commentary

The Global Affairs “**Voluntary Review of Progress**” is a remarkable document in several ways. Reports of this kind historically have been dry recitations of the programs and expenditures that the federal government has made in keeping with an international commitment. This document, instead, uses language typical of a federal Budget, full of striking, almost bombastic statements about the radical transitions in social, economic and environmental conditions that the government seeks to make. Further, the tone is not consensual, clearly representative of a wide range of viewpoints and regional perspectives in Canada. It is strident and ideological, a bold declaration that “progressive” values and highly interventionist approaches take primary place in the government’s thinking. The priorities are strikingly clear - the feminist agenda and the broader LGBTQ2’s gender goals, “reconciling” with indigenous people by giving them ever more funds and power and

transforming the Canadian economy towards a “green” version with renewable energy dominating and little role for the hydrocarbons industry. It is, in some senses, a declaration of victory over the more conventional goals and communities within the Canadian political system.

The document seems to draw little or no distinction between the “sustainable development” goals within Canada and the rest of the world. Recent immigrants are treated as though they share common status with other “disadvantaged” minorities like women, youth or the disabled. Gender issues cross boundaries. Canada supports the demands of indigenous people everywhere. The expenditure of billions of dollars to reduce Canada’s GHG emissions is automatically assumed to lead to lower global emissions and is paralleled by a long list of international measures to finance emissions reductions in developing countries. We are the world, as far as the government is concerned. Nationalism, or distinguishing Canada’s interests from those of other countries, has no place in the vision.

One cannot help but be struck by the range of initiatives underway, many of which have largely escaped media attention in Canada. The spending commitments alone are eye-opening - \$180 billion for infrastructure, of which \$20 billion is for green infrastructure, \$28.7 billion for public transit, \$25.3 billion for social infrastructure, and \$10.1 billion for trade and transportation infrastructure. The document expresses a profound belief that all this will increase Canada’s future prosperity, ignoring the fact that, apart from the trade and transportation investments there is no obvious reason why this should be so.

I would hope that this summary will encourage others to read the document and to delve into its consequences.





About the Author

Robert Lyman is an Ottawa energy policy consultant, former public servant of 27 years and a diplomat for 10 years prior to that.

Friends of Science Society is an independent group of earth, atmospheric and solar scientists, engineers, and citizens who are celebrating its 16th year of offering climate science insights. After a thorough review of a broad spectrum of literature on climate change, Friends of Science Society has concluded that the sun is the main driver of climate change, not carbon dioxide (CO₂).

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