

What should Canada focus on in a national strategy to advance the SDG 2030 Agenda?

SUMMARY

Please find enclosed input to the Government of Canada's engagement process to develop a National Strategy to advance the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda. This input responds specifically to the question included in the Government of Canada's Discussion Guide: "What should Canada focus on in a national strategy to advance the SDG 2030 Agenda?" This input represents the views of 22 students from grades 8 and 9 (all female). Top priorities for action included SDGs 4 Quality Education; 13 Climate Action; 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; and 17 Partnerships for the Goals. It is the students views that the SDGs set out ambitious goals for 2030: there is a role for youth to be empowered to advocate their realization locally and globally.

CONTEXT

From 6 to 10 May 2019, 22 students in grades 8 and 9 from 19 schools across Ottawa and Gatineau took part in the University of Ottawa Enrichment Mini-Course entitled "Youth Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: An Introduction to Sustainable Development and Child Rights". The students – all girls – represented a diversity of backgrounds, though they quickly came together as a strong and cohesive group (and sub-working groups).

The week-long mini-course is part of the Enrichment Mini-Courses Program offered at the University of Ottawa. "Youth Thinking Globally, Acting Locally" introduced concepts in international affairs, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) and included a focus on children's rights and youth engagement. This included an overview of the history of the UNSDGs and children's rights. The mini-course covered key topics such as the definitions of poverty, inequality, and child labour. It examined current affairs based on individual student interests (climate change; education; peace and security; and partnership for sustainable development). These topics were covered by the instructor plus guest speakers including a youth leader. Research, writing and advocacy skills were developed through group work and friendly discussions.

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INPUT

The input below has been organized to give voice to each of the students. Each students provided their individual point of view on "What should Canada focus on in a national strategy to advance the SDG 2030 Agenda?"

I think that the government should focus more on listening to children [and youth] and what they are saying. When children protest and stand up for their rights, they have done their research and know what they are talking about. The government needs to listen to what they are saying and take action. I don't think that the government should take these issues lightly. I also believe that children should not have to be left to talk about current issues, as the adults should be taking more action. Children are not responsible for talking about these problems and advocating for their rights. We are doing this because it seems as if nobody else will. Change must happen soon, before it is too late.

I think that education is important but it is useless unless you do something with it like taking action. A lot of people are aware of all the bad things in the world but don't do anything about it.

I think that the Canadian government should focus on spreading awareness about the SDGs, considering that very few people know that they exist and what they are. In agreement with the Auditor General's report from 2018, the Canadian government hasn't done enough to pursue the SDGs and should organize themselves to pursue and spread awareness about the SDGs.

I think that all political parties should come to upcoming federal election with a structured plan on how they are going to combat climate change. They can't just be basic about their climate change rhetoric and say that they will do something. They should have better climate change plans and platforms so that they follow through on their policy platform promises. They should not just say things and not do anything.

In a National Strategy, I think that the government should prioritize action against major issues, not just negotiate and take small steps – as Greta Thunberg said – to attain or come close to achieving the SDGs.

- Promote the SDGs, spread awareness of the goals to the public;
- Kick-start climate change education, awareness and at least review the unprecedented changes needed to mitigate climate change.

Schools should be doing more to education children especially about climate change issues. Many people don't know the full extent of what is happening or what they can do. More would probably get done if children were more educated.

I think that Canada should try harder to ban or reduce single use plastics. We are not a country in severe poverty. Single use plastics would decrease pollution in water. We have enough resources to create new replacements. We also need to take people with disabilities into consideration.

- Incorporate a way to bring awareness to social change through the education system for kids of all ages to know what is happening to their planet and how they can help;
- Spread public awareness for climate change and encourage simple lifestyle changes that can make a difference.
- Focus on proper disposal of waste created by us.
- We can't encourage other countries to slow down and stop climate change unless Canada takes action first. We – Canada as a country – all need to understand what needs to be done, and what can happen if we don't.
- Let the children be heard! They are taking action for their future.

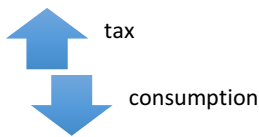
I think that education about the SDGs should be part of the curriculum for all provinces in Canada, so that we (the students) know what issues our planet is facing and what we can do, as individuals, and as a country, to help. I also think that Canada should be a leader in change, and by doing that what we should be bold in what we ask to be in the SDGs. And adults should listen to use because this is our lives.

I think that governments should start thinking outside the box, so we can find some solutions to combat climate change. We can't only keep thinking practically, like on the concept of carbon taxes, but we need to come up with more creative solutions. For example, a group of boys from Monterrey, Mexico created a street paint that absorbs CO₂ to combat air pollution. They thought completely outside the box to improve their city and address air pollution that is everywhere.

I think that before any of the goals are possible to even plan. We need to focus on the last goal, which is the partnerships with other countries because one country can only do so much to save our people and our planet.

The Canadian government should focus more on making sure that kids have more opportunities (e.g. education, food, water, rights) as kids are the future and they will have to deal with the Earth in the future.

- The government needs to inform the public about how bad climate change really is.
- Listen to young people who have ideas to innovate and invent.
- 8 out of the 17 SDGs are about, or relate to, climate change. We need to put more money towards helping the environment.
- Educate kids in school about climate change.
- Add a carbon tax:



if we increase the carbon tax,
then we can lower other taxes.

I think that the government should pay attention to what us, the younger generation, have to say. Many people our age want change and are very passionate about this topic. Also I think that in schools (including history classes), instead of only learning about our past, which is very important, we need to learn more about what is going on rights now to spread awareness.

- Environment courses in high schools and grade schools.
- Education on the SDGs
- Sustainable transportation; make electric cars and busses more accessible and affordable.

In Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries, we could say something like “all marriages (with the exception of child marriages, of course), should be legalized to recognize the LGBTQ+ community.

- Make fighting climate change a priority (SDGs 13, 14, 15):
 - Education everyone about what we can do individually
 - Create more programs / movements to fight our rapidly degrading quality of life
 - Implement more things like carbon taxes.
- Equality of all people (SDGs 5, 8, 10):
 - Have women be paid the same as men;
 - Have job opportunities be more available to LGBTQ+ people.
- Public transportation (SDGs 9, 11)
 - More accessible;
 - Less expensive passes / fares, etc
 - Have roads be more organized to reduce traffic and infrastructure boosting;
- Poverty (SDGs 1, 4, 8)
 - To break the welfare cycle

I think Canada should focus on spreading awareness about climate change. We don't have much time left to act. People should be learning more about [climate change] in class, at work, etc. Children are talking more about it than adults. They should start acting quicker to make changes. We are slowly killing our planet more

by not acting or talking about climate change. Just talking about it, listening to people's ideas on how we could change.

- Focusing on educating everyone about climate change.
- Focusing on child rights.
- Having advocates for child rights.
- Putting environment courses in schools.
- Having presentations about the [current events and] issues happening right now.
- Awareness raising about the SDGs.

I think that Canada's government needs to focus more on hosting big events that promote or help solve climate change. There could be days like "Innovative Day" where people focus on idea that could boost climate action and they could pitch ideas to promote change. There could also be days like "clean up the capital" but more often where people must do something to help. I think that hosting days or events like this could ultimately benefit Canada's water management and promote more action.

I believe that Canada should focus on changing our energy sources all to safer and renewable energy sources. I think we should use less fossil fuels including petroleum, coal, natural gas and Orimulsion. We should change to sola power, wind, energy sources to help with greenhouse gases. I think we should cut down on our usage of electricity altogether and become social in person and love our earth of destroying it. I think more buildings should have large windows and openings so we can use sunlight instead of lights that create pollution.