

This document was created by the Open Government team in collaboration with the Multi-Stakeholder Forum through an analysis of comments from the Phase 1 and 2 public consultations. It contains information on What we heard from Canadians and civil society, as well as international best practices. The document was used to frame the discussions between government and civil society representatives and does not represent the official views of the Government of Canada. Therefore, the Government of Canada does not endorse, approve, or certify these documents and makes no representation or warranty that the information presented is accurate, complete, or correct.

Consultations for the 5th National Action Plan on Open Government

Climate Change and Sustainable Growth – Framing the discussion

Executive Summary

Context: As part of its membership in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international multilateral initiative, the Government of Canada is developing its 5th National Action Plan on Open Government. This Action Plan will apply the principles and tools of open government, such as transparency, accountability, engagement, collaboration, inclusion and open data, to address targeted problems. Creating an action plan in consultation with civil society and the public is a key component of this process.

Topic: Concerns and interest with regards to climate change and sustainable growth were recurrent throughout public consultations during the fall of 2020.

Goal: Apply transparency, accountability and citizen participation principles and tools to Climate Change and Sustainable Growth issues

What we heard from participants who have engaged in our consultations:

- **Communicate environmental science, data and decision-making better** by raising awareness around existing resources; making scientific knowledge accessible and understandable to non-scientists; and by being more transparent about the considerations that go into environmental decision-making.
- **Open environmental data and leverage it to** monitor progress on Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) target and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda; to spur innovation in the private sector; and ensure environmental data interconnections and interoperability with other types of data such as health and socio-economic data.
- **Create partnerships for environmental data management and coordinated action** with provinces, territories, municipalities, academia, regional organizations, and citizens (crowd-sourced science), and marginalized groups such as youth and Indigenous people.

What are international best practices?

The OGP published [A Guide to Open Government and the Coronavirus: Green Transitions – Climate and Environment](#), in which the OGP recommends several open government policy levers, including:

- Establishing and publishing sectoral greenhouse gas reporting and data releases, as well as systematizing and publishing impacts;

- Encouraging transparency and cross-industry open data to allow for economic and environmental accounting across sectors. This would permit comparisons of subsidies between carbon-intensive and non-carbon intensive investments; and
- Ensuring openness of government-sponsored climate research and development.

The OGP also published a report in partnership with the [Open Data Charter](#) and the [World Resources Institute](#) detailing a pilot project in Chile on [Opening up Climate Data](#), which highlights the value open data adds to combating climate change and which identifies a list of priority datasets to be opened. The pilot enabled a mapping of existing climate data to better understand Chile's climate change data ecosystem.

What the civil society members of the Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF) suggest:

Regarding topics raised by consultation participants

On communicating better: Suggestions from the MSF are provided in the additional comments section below.

On leveraging open environmental data: During the public consultation, participants mentioned the desire for more data around GHG emissions from companies (see Annex). An additional consideration might be creating a ranking system (list of companies and NGOs that are doing good work and the list of known polluters). Additional suggestions from the MSF are provided in the additional comments section below

On creating partnerships: Suggestions from the MSF are provided in the additional comments section below

On international best practices: It would be useful to investigate if a similar map to the climate data pilot project in Chile described above has been created for Canada.

Additional comments from the civil society members of the MSF:

- **Nation Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism:** Continue the conversation and include data for mapping current, past and future industrial, natural resource and environmental projects and their proximity and environmental impact on Black and Indigenous communities across Canada. This request includes data variables of exposure to hazards and pollutants, further important demographic information and natural resource changes. In addition, to provide data, mapping and tracking of collaborative sustainable initiatives and solutions to redress this human rights and environmental issue. A few current examples of many communities exposed to and protesting these issues are the [Dakelh community](#) and [Africville](#).
 - **Environmental racism** refers to the disproportionate proximity and exposure of Indigenous and racialized communities to polluting industries, dangerous projects and other environmental hazards, and it has been ignored in Canada for decades ([cela.ca](#)).

- **Request for Climate Impact Data** and initiatives tracking in regards to National Income Poverty Line ([Climate Watch](#)); Key Hazards Data ([World Bank](#)); Environmental Hazards Locations, Negative Health Outcomes by Community, Data by Race, Socio-Economic Status and Environmental Risk ([Bill C-320](#)); track [Green Budget Coalition](#) recommendations
 - [ODC event on climate change](#) and presenters define **Climate Data** as data beyond emissions and meteorological that is across sectors and includes impacts on human and natural systems
 - [Implement Open Data Strategies for Climate Action](#) - WRI working paper “to promote greater accessibility of climate-related data by building government officials’ and other stakeholders’ understanding of the benefits of open data practices for climate action, potential challenges, and ways to address these challenges while taking steps to ensure that data publication is impactful, responsible, and sustainable” (WRI, Mar 2021)
 - **Classification Terms** - List of classification terms or create a single term to indicate all Climate Data and relevant climate impact data.
- **Make clear in 5th NAP commitments the connection between science and human impact:** Requesting stronger connection between science and human impact with a model in addition to datasets, impact and measure of progress. This will enable an understanding of how things are changing and what to do about it.
- **Data Governance Model:** Design a clear data governance model for this data; with context; approachable applications which are easy for the general public to follow and use; including an atlas with explanatory notes; and with open science contribution and access.
- **Mitigation spending:** How do we find out what is being spent on climate change mitigation efforts as well as towards the support of infrastructure that will mitigate or address what’s coming? (Reference point: Infrastructure Canada (INFC) Smart City submissions and related R&D procurement)
- **Climate change and disability lens:** It is important to recognize that there are unique challenges faced by people with disabilities with regards to climate change and the importance of combating the climate crisis in ways that respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of people with disabilities. Research in this area has already been done here in Canada (for example, a [collaborative initiative](#) led by the Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Health, and the Environment and the Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism based at McGill University)

BACKGROUND

DETAILED BACKGROUND

- Canada must submit its 5th National Action Plan on Open Government to the Open Government Partnership in 2021 to meet its international obligations.
- To design the plan, the Government of Canada consulted Canadians from Fall 2019 to the end of 2020. The consultation included meetings with civil society, informational webinars, online discussion forums, virtual online events and telephone town halls.
- Four broad themes emerged for further discussions, namely Financial and Corporate Transparency, Climate Change and Sustainable Growth, Combating Disinformation and Safeguarding Fair Elections, and Access to Justice.
- Discussions on **Climate Change and Sustainable Growth** included:
 - **Three virtual online sessions** were held during the week of November 23, 2020, in addition to an online discussion forum.
 - **35 participants** attended the events.
 - Representatives from **Environment and Climate Change (ECCC)** provided context to the conversations.

WHY CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH?

1) Continuity: 4th National Action Plan on Open Government

Input from previous consultations

While engaging in Canada's 2018-2020 National Action Plan in 2018, consultation participants told us that the benefits associated with opening access to scientific data and research are far-reaching and have great potential to advance society. They believed the work of government scientists should be open for citizens to better understand the return on investment. Other ideas included the creation of a centralized archive of open publications, strengthening collaboration between government and academia, and ensuring that scientists can speak freely about their work.

Participants also wanted governments to release more, and more granular, foundational geospatial data that can help urban planning and social policy design.

What we committed to in the 4th National Action Plan

As part of the 4th [National Action Plan on Open Government](#), ECCC, the National Research Council Canada (NRC), the Office of the Chief Science Advisor, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) and other science-based departments and agencies (SBDAs) committed to provide public access to science conducted or collected by the federal government, which includes science on the environment and climate change by:

- Developing a Canada Open Science Roadmap;
- Providing a platform for Canadians to find and access publications from federal scientists;
- Raising public awareness of federal scientists' work on open science;
- Promoting open science and soliciting feedback on stakeholder needs; and
- Measuring progress in implementing open science and its benefits.

What we have done so far

- The Open Science Roadmap was released in February 2020 and exploratory work is being conducted for the creation of an open science repository.
- NRCan has also been working on adding geospatial datasets on the Federal Geospatial Platform (FGP), resulting in additional geospatial open datasets on OpenMaps, FGP's public face on the open government portal. Many geospatial datasets are environment related (natural resources, topography, agricultural lands, water/air pollutants, marine protected areas, species at risk).

2) What we heard in 2020 on Environment and Climate Change

The following is a summary of what was heard during consultations and might not necessarily represent government views.

- 1. Communicate better environmental science, data and decision-making**
 - a. Raise awareness.** Participants noted that there is a lack of awareness around existing resources and felt efforts should be put toward improving citizens' awareness and literacy in order to use those resources (e.g. [Canadian Centre for Climate Services, climatedata.ca](https://www.climatedata.ca/); [The Conversation Canada](https://www.conversationcanada.ca/))
 - b. Make scientific knowledge accessible.** Participants stated a need for pertinent and credible information to fight climate-change misinformation. They indicated that it not only includes access to scientific publications (open science), but also a communication plan/framework to make scientific information accessible and understandable to non-scientists. One example they provided was that the government could tailor the information based on the needs of different groups.
 - c. Be more transparent around environmental decision-making.** Improve communication of considerations and evidence informing the decision and providing explanations of when data is not available. Participants felt that this would help citizens better understand how decisions are made.
- 2. Leverage open environmental data to:**
 - a. Reduce barriers to environmental data access.** Participants suggested embedding an open data requirement into government funded science, such as a clause in research grants, and potentially other funding tools (e.g. government contracts). They also wanted to see more open environmental datasets requested by the public, such as GHG emission data from companies, air pollution and air quality in Canada, energy poverty, health assessment of agricultural, pesticide and herbicide products, and floodplains.
 - b. Monitor progress and spur innovation.** Participants noted stakeholders could help monitor progress on government and private sector efforts to protect our environment, fight climate change and ensure sustainable growth (e.g. progress against our GHG emissions and SDGs targets). They also suggested open data could be leveraged by private sector innovation for green tech.
 - c. Ensure data interconnections and interoperability.** Participants feel climate change is more than an environmental issue; that it intertwines with health, social and human rights considerations, to name a few. Therefore, they told us that data from various

sources (e.g. health data, socio-economic data) need to be interoperable with environmental data.

3. **Create partnerships for environmental data management and coordinated action:**
 - a. **Collaborate with provinces, territories, and municipalities** to develop common data formats and standards as local governments hold a fair volume of environmental data, establish shared targets and goals, and clear accountability on contributions to international commitments. Participants felt that this would allow for a coherent approach in using data for decision-making and accountability.
 - b. **Collaborate beyond governments.** We heard that academia, regional organizations and even citizens own high volumes of environmental data and information and that governments should work with those external actors to share good practices and crowd-source data and information (e.g. crowd-sourced science). Participants also suggested joint decision-making between the private and public sector on what needs to be done to combat climate change.
 - c. **Engage marginalized groups, such as youth and Indigenous people.** We heard that governments should leverage youth communication channels and networks, and indigenous knowledge as part of their policies to fight climate change, protect the environment and ensure sustainable growth.

WHAT ARE INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES?

1) OGP Policy Areas

In August 2020, the OGP published [A Guide to Open Government and the Coronavirus: Green Transitions – Climate and Environment](#), which highlights that recovering from the pandemic would require fostering more resilient economies. This would represent an opportunity to shift toward more sustainable, healthy, and equitable communities. The OGP therefore recommends:

- Establishing and publishing sectoral greenhouse gas reporting and data releases, and systematizing the publication of impacts;
- Encouraging transparency and cross-industry open data to allow for economic and environmental accounting across sectors. This would permit comparisons of subsidies between carbon-intensive and non-carbon intensive investments; and
- Ensuring openness and appropriate privacy protection of government-sponsored climate research and development.

In October 2020, the OGP published a report detailing a pilot project in Chile on [Opening up Climate Data](#), which highlights the value open data adds to combating climate change. The [Open Up Guide](#) for climate action, developed in collaboration with the [Open Data Charter](#) and the [World Resources Institute](#), sweeps a series of relevant data for climate action that respond to the climate change and open data communities, and presents a list of priority data to be opened. The pilot enabled a mapping of existing climate data to better understand Chile's climate change data ecosystem. The project contributed to public access to information and quality climate data for easy visualizations, understanding and reuse as a way to increase public participation and awareness. It also provided better reliability and availability of information for decision-making on climate change.

2) National Action Plans

Over the past 9 years of OGP National Action Plans, there have been a total of [165 environment and climate related commitments](#). Recent examples of member countries who have made concrete commitments on combating climate change with open government include:

[Denmark's Action Plan, which](#) contains two climate change related commitments. One of which is a Climate Atlas, which they describe as being considered a “crystal ball” for the climate that can estimate the state of the climate in the middle and end of the present century, based on data. Furthermore, Denmark’s NAP contains a commitment to a joint public collaboration on terrain, climate, and water data, which collects data from several authorities and actors.

[France's National Action Plan](#) (only available in French) also contains a commitment to leverage the benefits of open government to address the challenges of tackling climate change and energy transition. It does so by engaging citizens in decision-making and environmental impact studies, and opening up environmental data such as geospatial data on compensation measures, starting with the creation of environmental data inventories.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- Since climate change and sustainable growth has been identified as an important issue during the public consultations, the Government of Canada will continue exploring opportunities to leverage open science and open data to combat climate change and ensure sustainable growth.
- Because participants to consultations emphasized that policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation of social, economic, or environmental issues could benefit from open government values, departments and civil society will start thinking about concrete and actionable initiatives that integrate the principles of open government to address climate change and foster sustainable growth, such as:
 - **Collaboration** across the Government of Canada, with provinces, territories and municipalities, and external stakeholders including academia, the non-profit sector, and the private sector is necessary.
 - **Meaningful engagement with stakeholders** to raise awareness and communicate decisions on policies and programs throughout the process, not only as a one-off or an afterthought.
 - Integration of a **diversity, inclusion, and equity** lens into the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs (e.g. applying Gender-Based Analysis Plus - GBA+) to all the development stages of the commitment.