

Reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada

Report 6

Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies—Healthy Coasts and Oceans, Pristine Lakes and Rivers, and Sustainable Food



Independent Reviewer's Report | 2021



Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Bureau du vérificateur général du Canada



2021

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Introduction

Background

Departmental sustainable development strategies

6.1 The Government of Canada has committed to sustainable development. The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy covers a 3-year period and establishes government-wide environmental and sustainable development goals, targets, and actions.

6.2 In addition, the *Federal Sustainable Development Act* requires certain departments and agencies (see the Appendix) to

- prepare their own sustainable development strategies
- ensure that these strategies comply with and support the federal strategy (Exhibit 6.1)

Exhibit 6.1—How departmental strategies are intended to support the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy



6.3 Under the *Auditor General Act*, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has a duty to monitor and report on progress made by federal departments and agencies that are subject to the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*. In particular, the Commissioner monitors and reports on

- the extent to which these organizations have contributed to meeting the targets in the federal strategy
- how well these organizations have met the objectives and implemented the plans in their departmental strategies

6.4 In fall 2019, we began reporting on whether federal departments and agencies supported specific goals in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:

- In 2019, we reported that it was not clear how progress reporting by 7 organizations contributed to meeting the goal of sustainably managed lands and forests.
- In 2020, we reported that progress reporting by 12 departments and agencies on the goal of safe and healthy communities was often unclear or incomplete, making it difficult to get a clear sense of overall progress against the goal.

6.5 Our 2021 review is our third and last progress report against the 2016–2019 federal strategy. In this review, we assessed the contribution of 12 departments and agencies to the following 3 goals (Exhibit 6.2):




- healthy coasts and oceans
- pristine lakes and rivers
- sustainable food

Our assessment of these organizations' contributions is based on individual departmental strategies and progress reporting.

**United Nations'
Sustainable
Development Goals**

6.6 In September 2015, Canada adopted the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, in its guidance, asked departments and agencies to report links, when they exist, between their sustainable development actions and the targets associated with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In our 2021 review, we looked at whether departmental progress reporting included such links, related to the federal strategy's goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food.

Exhibit 6.2—The 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy’s goals selected for this review

	<p>Healthy coasts and oceans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Coasts and oceans support healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems. <p>This goal supports, among other things, conserving coastal and ocean areas to help address environmental challenges and preserve and expand marine protected areas.</p> <p>This goal contributes to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, including the goal of life below water (Goal 14).</p>
	<p>Pristine lakes and rivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Clean and healthy lakes and rivers support economic prosperity and the well-being of Canadians. <p>This goal aims to measure progress on reducing nutrient pollution in lakes and rivers and to restore lake and river ecosystems.</p> <p>This goal contributes to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, including the goal of clean water and sanitation (Goal 6).</p>
	<p>Sustainable food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Innovation and ingenuity contribute to a world-leading agricultural sector and food economy for the benefit of all Canadians. <p>To ensure safe, sustainable, and secure food, this goal aims to, for example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect food systems from threats to animal health and plant resources, such as diseases, pests, and invasive alien species • ensure that all Canadians—including those in isolated northern communities—have access to nutritious food <p>This goal contributes to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, including the goal of zero hunger (Goal 2).</p>

Source: Adapted from the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy

Focus of the review

6.7 This review focused on whether federal departments and agencies contributed to meeting the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy’s goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each organization.

6.8 Certain federal departments and agencies need to state in their departmental sustainable development strategies what actions they are taking to support the goals in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. These organizations are expected to report their progress on these actions annually to Parliament in the supplementary tables of their departmental results reports.

6.9 In our review, we examined the 2017–20 departmental sustainable development strategies of 12 federal departments and agencies. We reviewed their reported departmental actions that contributed to the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each organization. We also reviewed the progress on these 3 federal goals that these organizations reported in the supplementary tables of their 2019–20 departmental results reports. These 12 federal departments and agencies are as follows:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Health Canada
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Natural Resources Canada
- Parks Canada
- Public Services and Procurement Canada
- Transport Canada

6.10 This review is important because departmental results reports are intended to inform Canadians and parliamentarians about how departments and agencies performed against their departmental strategies. These reports can help Canadians and parliamentarians understand progress toward the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food.

6.11 More details about the review objective, scope, approach, and criteria are in **About the Review** at the end of this report (see pages 11–13).

Findings, Recommendation, and Responses

Overall message

6.12 Most of the departments and agencies that contributed to any of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy’s goals we reviewed this year—healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food—reported departmental actions that supported the actions provided in the federal strategy. However, we found that, overall, progress reporting on these actions was poorly performed. For example,

departmental actions were often missing a performance indicator, or the performance indicators were missing important information to be able to report on progress. As a result, these organizations did not report results for almost half of the actions presented in their sustainable development strategies.

Federal sustainable development goals: Healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food

Federal departments and agencies did not completely and clearly report on the results of the actions presented in their sustainable development strategies

What we found

6.13 In their sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies need to describe their own actions and to show how they align with the federal actions and targets for the goals. We found that for the most part, departmental actions were aligned with federal ones for the organizations we examined. However, we found that about half of the departmental actions were not linked to the federal targets for any of the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food.

6.14 We found that many of the departments and agencies did not follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidance on how to report. This included missing performance indicators for departmental actions or performance indicators that were missing important information, such as a starting point from which to measure progress or a target to be reached over the period covered by the departmental strategy. For almost half of the actions, departments and agencies did not report results on the actions presented in their sustainable development strategies.

6.15 The analysis supporting this finding discusses the following topics:

- Incomplete and unclear contributions to meeting federal targets
- Flaws in departmental progress reporting
- Links not always identified between departmental actions and the targets associated with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Why this finding matters

6.16 This finding matters because, if available information on departmental actions is incomplete or unclear, Canadians and

parliamentarians cannot be certain about the progress made toward any of the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food.

Context

6.17 The 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy sets out 13 long-term goals and 26 medium-term targets. The 3 goals selected for this review are

- healthy coasts and oceans
- pristine lakes and rivers
- sustainable food

6.18 To achieve these 3 goals, the strategy lists 9 targets and 15 federal contributing actions. The individual departments and agencies responsible for any of the 3 goals are expected, through their actions, to collectively contribute to achieving the 3 goals and underlying targets.

Recommendation

6.19 Our recommendation in this area of examination appears at paragraph 6.28.

Analysis to support this finding

Incomplete and unclear contributions to meeting federal targets

6.20 For the 3 goals we examined this year, we assessed the contribution of a total of 52 departmental actions to the 3 goals. We assessed whether

- the departments and agencies involved had identified actions in their departmental sustainable development strategies to achieve the 3 goals
- the departmental actions provided an explicit link to the federal contributing actions and targets they were intended to contribute to

6.21 To report meaningfully on progress toward long-term sustainable development goals, it is important to show a clear link between departmental actions and a goal's targets.

6.22 We found that most departmental contributing actions were connected to the federal contributing actions. However, about half of the departmental actions were not linked explicitly to the federal targets.

In particular, when we examined the 52 departmental actions from the 12 departments and agencies involved, we found the following:

- Ten organizations linked 46 of 52 (88%) of their departmental actions to federal contributing actions and provided 1 or more indicators to track progress in their 2017–20 departmental strategies. However, 3 organizations did not link 6 of their actions to the federal ones.
- Four of the 12 organizations, accounting for 24 of 52 (46%) actions, did not follow Environment and Climate Change Canada’s and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s guidance for developing or updating their sustainable development strategies. The organizations did not provide a link for those actions with any of the goals’ targets, as asked by the secretariat’s guidance.

6.23 According to Environment and Climate Change Canada’s and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s guidance, which was in effect for the period covered by our review, departments and agencies needed to identify a clear link between their actions and the targets set out in the federal strategy for the goals. However, we found that to a large extent, departmental actions were missing such links. Some departments and agencies told us that, in their view, in spite of not aligning with a goal’s targets, their actions still contributed in a broader sense to achieving the goal. Further, we found that the guidance available from Environment and Climate Change Canada for future departmental sustainable development strategies allows departments and agencies the flexibility to indicate a target link for their activities “when appropriate.”

6.24 In our view, this approach is concerning. Because the federal strategy’s goals are broad and aspirational in nature, the only way to see the government’s approach to achieving the goals concretely is by referring to the target statements that describe the medium-term outcomes. Without links to these concrete objectives, departmental strategies fall short of the government’s intentions as defined in the federal strategy. In other words, without links to the federal targets, departmental strategies are not so much about how the departments contribute to meeting them, but rather about actions that are not directly related to them.

Flaws in departmental progress reporting

6.25 We found that of the 52 departmental actions that departments and agencies reported for the 3 goals, 41 (79%) did not follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s guidance on reporting. For example, we found that of the 52 departmental actions reported on,

- 28 (54%) had incomplete information that was missing either a starting point from which to measure progress or a target to be reached

- 8 (15%) were missing a relevant performance indicator to measure progress against their stated aim

6.26 In our view, following the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidance would improve progress reporting. Departments and agencies would provide clear performance indicators together with a target to achieve and a starting point from which to measure progress.

6.27 We also examined whether the departments and agencies reported the extent to which they achieved the actions they committed to in their sustainable development strategies. We found that of the 52 reported actions for the 3 goals,

- 24 (46%) did not report results against the actions, which included 14 actions for which departments did not use the relevant performance indicator to describe the results
- 13 (25%) reported results that showed achieved or exceeded actions
- 14 (27%) reported results that showed partially achieved actions
- 1 (2%) reported results that showed that it did not achieve the action

6.28 **Recommendation.** When reporting on progress, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their sustainable development strategies, using the relevant performance indicators.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's response. *Agreed. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will continue to follow the guidance of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to ensure that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada clearly reports on the progress of departmental actions to meet its sustainable development strategies, according to the relevant performance indicators.*

The Canada Border Services Agency's response. *Agreed. The Canada Border Services Agency has already taken action on this issue by including a performance indicator in the 2020–2023 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy that clearly and succinctly describes its current progress toward its targets. The agency will continue to consider this recommendation in the 2023–2026 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy, which is expected to be tabled in November 2023.*

Environment and Climate Change Canada's response. *Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that, when reporting on their departmental sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their strategies, using the relevant performance indicators. Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure this recommendation is implemented.*

The department's Sustainable Development Office wrote the departmental sustainable development strategy guidance released through the Treasury

Board of Canada Secretariat, as outlined in this report. This guidance is a key part of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy process, resulting in a concerted effort by departments and agencies subject to the federal strategy to improve their reporting, as evidenced by the 2020–23 departmental sustainable development strategies. Environment and Climate Change Canada will continue to work with federal organizations to provide guidance around developing and reporting on departmental sustainable development strategies, so Canadians can see what individual organizations are doing to support the goals and/or targets of the federal strategy.

Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy guidance continues to advise departments and agencies to clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their sustainable development strategies, using relevant performance indicators. The expected completion date is October 2022.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's response. *Agreed. Fisheries and Oceans Canada will ensure that progress reporting on the planned actions established in its departmental sustainable development strategy are clearly reported on annually and will include a description of results achieved using the relevant performance indicator as required.*

By spring 2022, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will review its current sustainable development strategy to ensure that relevant performance indicators are available for all planned actions established within the strategy and will make amendments as required throughout the designated process.

Health Canada's response. *Agreed. Health Canada will follow the appropriate guidance to help ensure that reporting on its sustainable development strategies clearly describes how actions were met, using relevant performance indicators and including targets and timelines to ensure progress can be measured.*

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's response. *Agreed. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada has made strategic revisions to subsequent versions of its departmental sustainable development strategy with the direct intention of positioning the department to more clearly report on the extent to which it has met the actions listed in its strategy through the supplementary information tables of its departmental results report. These revisions are evidenced in both the Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 to 2023 and the "actions taken" section of the 2019–20 supplementary information table in the reporting on the departmental sustainable development strategy.*

Natural Resources Canada's response. *Agreed. Natural Resources Canada agrees that, when reporting on their departmental sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their strategies, using the relevant performance indicators.*

Natural Resources Canada will report accordingly in its 2021–22 departmental sustainable development strategy report, following the revised guidance from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Transport Canada's response. *Agreed. Transport Canada will implement this recommendation and ensure, through strengthened performance indicators, that the department's progress reporting demonstrates the extent to which the department is meeting the actions outlined in its departmental sustainable development strategy.*

Links not always identified between departmental actions and the targets associated with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

6.29 We found that 3 departments and agencies did not follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidance on how to identify a link between some of their departmental actions and the targets associated with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in their departmental strategies or results reports. These actions were related to the federal strategy's goals of healthy coasts and oceans and sustainable food.

Conclusion

6.30 We concluded, on the basis of the 2017–20 departmental sustainable development strategies and the 2019–20 departmental results reports, that the departments and agencies we examined contributed to meeting the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. In their departmental sustainable development strategies, most departments and agencies had identified some actions toward the goals. However, in almost half of the cases, their actions failed to explicitly link to the goal's targets, which the departments and agencies should be helping to achieve. In addition, most of the departmental actions that departments and agencies reported on did not follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidance on how to report. They did not report results to show to what extent they met the objectives for almost half of the actions in their sustainable development strategies.

About the Review

This independent limited assurance report was prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on the contribution of departmental sustainable development strategies, as applicable to each organization, to the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy's goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food.

Our responsibility was to provide objective information, advice, and assurance to assist Parliament in its scrutiny of the government's management of resources and programs, and to conclude on whether the departmental sustainable development strategies complied in all significant respects with the applicable criteria.

All the work in this review was performed to a meaningful level of assurance in accordance with the Canadian Standard for Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001—Direct Engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance.

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada applies the Canadian Standard on Quality Control 1 and, accordingly, maintains a comprehensive system of quality control, including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In conducting the review work, we complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the relevant rules of professional conduct applicable to the practice of public accounting in Canada, which are founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

In accordance with our regular review process, we obtained the following from entity management:

- confirmation of management's responsibility for the subject under review
- acknowledgement of the suitability of the criteria used in the review
- confirmation that all known information that has been requested, or that could affect the findings or conclusion, has been provided
- confirmation that the review report is factually accurate

Review objective

The objective of this review was to determine whether departments and agencies contributed to meeting the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each entity.

Scope and approach

The procedures performed in a review engagement vary in nature and timing from those of an audit and are less extensive. Consequently, the level of assurance obtained for this review is substantially lower than that obtained for an audit.

We did not review departments and agencies that were not required to contribute to the strategy under subsection 11(1) of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*.

We reviewed whether the 12 responsible departments and agencies, in their 2017–20 departmental sustainable development strategies and their 2019–20 departmental results reports, did the following:

- established departmental actions that contributed to meeting the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each organization
- followed the 2019–20 guidance for reporting provided by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

This engagement is a limited assurance direct engagement. Evidence was gathered through document review and data analysis from departments and agencies that contributed to meeting the goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, as applicable to each organization.

Criteria

Criteria	Sources
<p>We used the following criteria to determine whether departments and agencies contributed to meeting the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each entity:</p>	
<p>Departments and agencies prepare departmental sustainable development strategies that contribute to meeting the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy’s targets and contributing actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i> • <i>Auditor General Act</i> • <i>Achieving a Sustainable Future: A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada 2016–2019</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada • <i>Guidance for the Preparation of Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies (DSDS)</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2017 • <i>Guide to Preparing Supplementary Information Tables: 2019–20 Departmental Plan</i>, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Criteria	Sources
<p>We used the following criteria to determine whether departments and agencies contributed to meeting the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food, as applicable to each entity:</p>	
<p>Departments and agencies' progress, as presented in the supplementary tables of their 2019–20 departmental results reports, complies with results reporting requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i> • <i>Auditor General Act</i> • <i>Achieving a Sustainable Future: A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada 2016–2019</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada • <i>Guide to Preparing 2019–20 Departmental Results Report: Supplementary Information Tables</i>, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat • <i>Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>, United Nations
<p>Departments and agencies report the extent to which they meet the objectives set out in their departmental sustainable development strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Auditor General Act</i> • <i>Guide to Preparing 2019–20 Departmental Results Report: Supplementary Information Tables</i>, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Period covered by the review

The review for the first criterion covered the 2017–20 departmental sustainable development strategies (or the departmental sustainable development strategies that were in place during the 2019–20 fiscal year).

The review for the second and third criteria covered the supplementary information tables on departmental sustainable development strategies in the 2019–20 departmental results reports.

Date of the report

We obtained sufficient and appropriate evidence on which to base our conclusion on 6 August 2021, in Ottawa, Canada.

Review team

Principal: David Normand
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Mohamed Kaba
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Recommendation

The following table lists the recommendation and responses found in this report. The paragraph number preceding the recommendation indicates the location of the recommendation in the report, and the numbers in parentheses indicate the location of the related discussion.

Recommendation	Response
<p>Federal sustainable development goals: Healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, and sustainable food</p> <p>6.28 When reporting on progress, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their sustainable development strategies, using the relevant performance indicators.</p> <p>(6.20–6.27)</p>	<p>Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s response. Agreed. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will continue to follow the guidance of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to ensure that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada clearly reports on the progress of departmental actions to meet its sustainable development strategies, according to the relevant performance indicators.</p> <p>The Canada Border Services Agency’s response. Agreed. The Canada Border Services Agency has already taken action on this issue by including a performance indicator in the 2020–2023 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy that clearly and succinctly describes its current progress toward its targets. The agency will continue to consider this recommendation in the 2023–2026 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy, which is expected to be tabled in November 2023.</p> <p>Environment and Climate Change Canada’s response. Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that, when reporting on their departmental sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their strategies, using the relevant performance indicators. Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure this recommendation is implemented.</p> <p>The department’s Sustainable Development Office wrote the departmental sustainable development strategy guidance released through the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, as outlined in this report. This guidance is a key part of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy process, resulting in a concerted effort by departments and agencies subject to the federal strategy to improve their reporting, as evidenced by the 2020–23 departmental sustainable development strategies. Environment and Climate Change Canada will continue to work with federal</p>

Recommendation	Response
	<p>organizations to provide guidance around developing and reporting on departmental sustainable development strategies, so Canadians can see what individual organizations are doing to support the goals and/or targets of the federal strategy.</p> <p>Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy guidance continues to advise departments and agencies to clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their sustainable development strategies, using relevant performance indicators. The expected completion date is October 2022.</p> <p>Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s response. Agreed. Fisheries and Oceans Canada will ensure that progress reporting on the planned actions established in its departmental sustainable development strategy are clearly reported on annually and will include a description of results achieved using the relevant performance indicator as required.</p> <p>By spring 2022, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will review its current sustainable development strategy to ensure that relevant performance indicators are available for all planned actions established within the strategy and will make amendments as required throughout the designated process.</p> <p>Health Canada’s response. Agreed. Health Canada will follow the appropriate guidance to help ensure that reporting on its sustainable development strategies clearly describes how actions were met, using relevant performance indicators and including targets and timelines to ensure progress can be measured.</p> <p>Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada’s response. Agreed. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada has made strategic revisions to subsequent versions of its departmental sustainable development strategy with the direct intention of positioning the department to more clearly report on the extent to which it has met the actions listed in its strategy through the supplementary information tables of its departmental results report. These revisions are evidenced in both the Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 to 2023 and the “action taken” section of the 2019–20 supplementary information table in the reporting on the departmental sustainable development strategy.</p>

Recommendation	Response
	<p>Natural Resources Canada’s response. Agreed. Natural Resources Canada agrees that, when reporting on their departmental sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should clearly describe the extent to which they met the actions in their strategies, using the relevant performance indicators.</p> <p>Natural Resources Canada will report accordingly in its 2021–22 departmental sustainable development strategy report, following the revised guidance from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Environment and Climate Change Canada.</p> <p>Transport Canada’s response. Agreed. Transport Canada will implement this recommendation and ensure, through strengthened performance indicators, that the department’s progress reporting demonstrates the extent to which the department is meeting the actions outlined in its departmental sustainable development strategy.</p>

Appendix—Organizations Subject to the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*

On 1 December 2020, amendments to *the Federal Sustainable Development Act* came into force. These amendments significantly expanded the number of federal organizations that must contribute to developing the future Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and report on their contributions through their own departmental sustainable development strategies, among other obligations. Section 12.3 of the act also allows Cabinet to further expand the list of federal organizations subject to its application. When this happens, under section 23 of the *Auditor General Act*, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development reports on the exercise of Cabinet’s authority.

Cabinet exercised its authority by making an order that added the following 2 Crown corporations to the list of organizations subject to the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*:

- National Capital Commission
- The Jacques-Cartier and Champlain Bridges Inc.

The order came into effect, alongside the other amendments to the act, on 1 December 2020, such that the total number of organizations subject to the act is now 99. It is the first time Cabinet has exercised this authority, and thus, this is the first reporting of this kind by the Commissioner.

Both of these organizations have, in the past, voluntarily contributed to the development of federal sustainable development strategies and have developed their own strategies or reports concerning sustainable development. As designated entities, however, they are now legally bound by the applicable requirements of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*, including those related to the development of and reporting on their sustainable development strategies. As designated entities, they will also now be subject to the petitions process administered by the Commissioner under the *Auditor General Act*.

The addition of these organizations to the schedule of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act* widened the scope of the act’s application and will promote greater coordination of actions related to sustainable development across the federal government.

