

A Perspective on Intergenerational Equity from Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

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Presentation Outline

- 1 Intergenerational equity in Canada
- 2 Intergenerational equity & sustainable development at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada
- 3 Lessons learned from integrating the sustainable development goals into OAG work
- 4 Challenges and opportunities for integrating intergenerational equity into OAG work



Canada's *Federal Sustainable Development Act* (FSDA):

“the principle of intergenerational equity, which is the principle that it is important to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

This is basically identical to Canada's definition for sustainable development in both the FSDA and the *Auditor General Act*.

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”



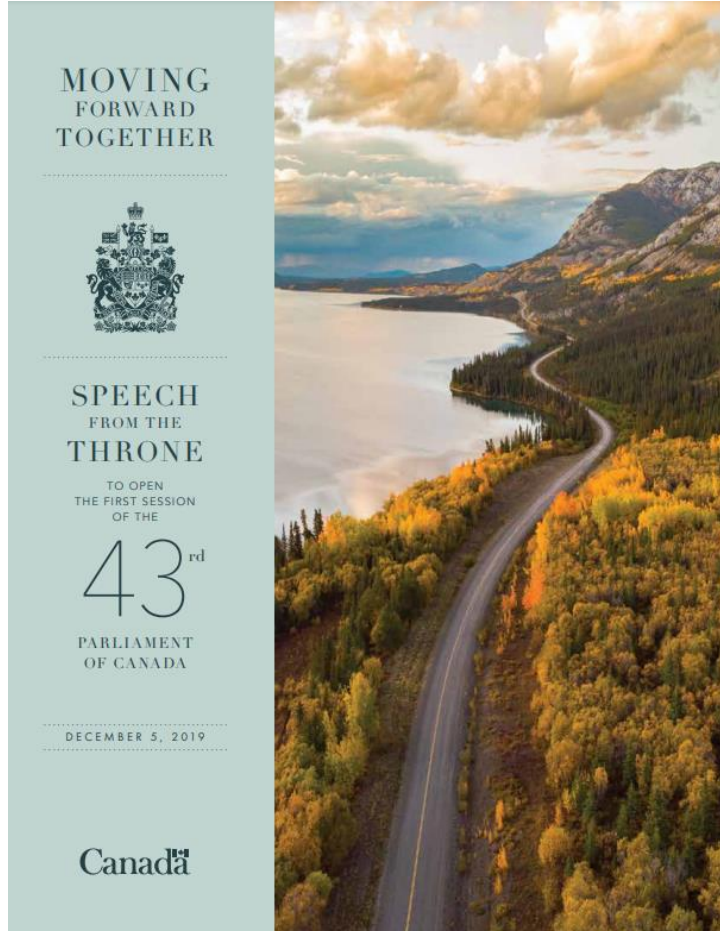
Intergenerational equity in Canadian commitments: 1992

“We must assume our responsibilities to our own peoples, to each other and to history. We are here to commit our government to action. The prevention of global climate change and the preservation of the world’s animal and plant species is on the top of our agenda. As political leaders, our job is to force the pace and stretch out the limits of international cooperation. The nations gathered here today have the human genius to create a world free from deprivation and secure from degradation. What remains is for governments to provide the leadership the world so desperately needs. Let us find that will and marshal it to the task at hand on behalf of the five billion people we represent. Our children, the Rio generation, will be our judges and beneficiaries.”

Canada’s speech to the 1992 Earth Summit



Intergenerational equity in Canadian commitments: 2019



“Canada’s children and grandchildren will judge this generation by its action – or inaction – on the defining challenge of the time: climate change.”

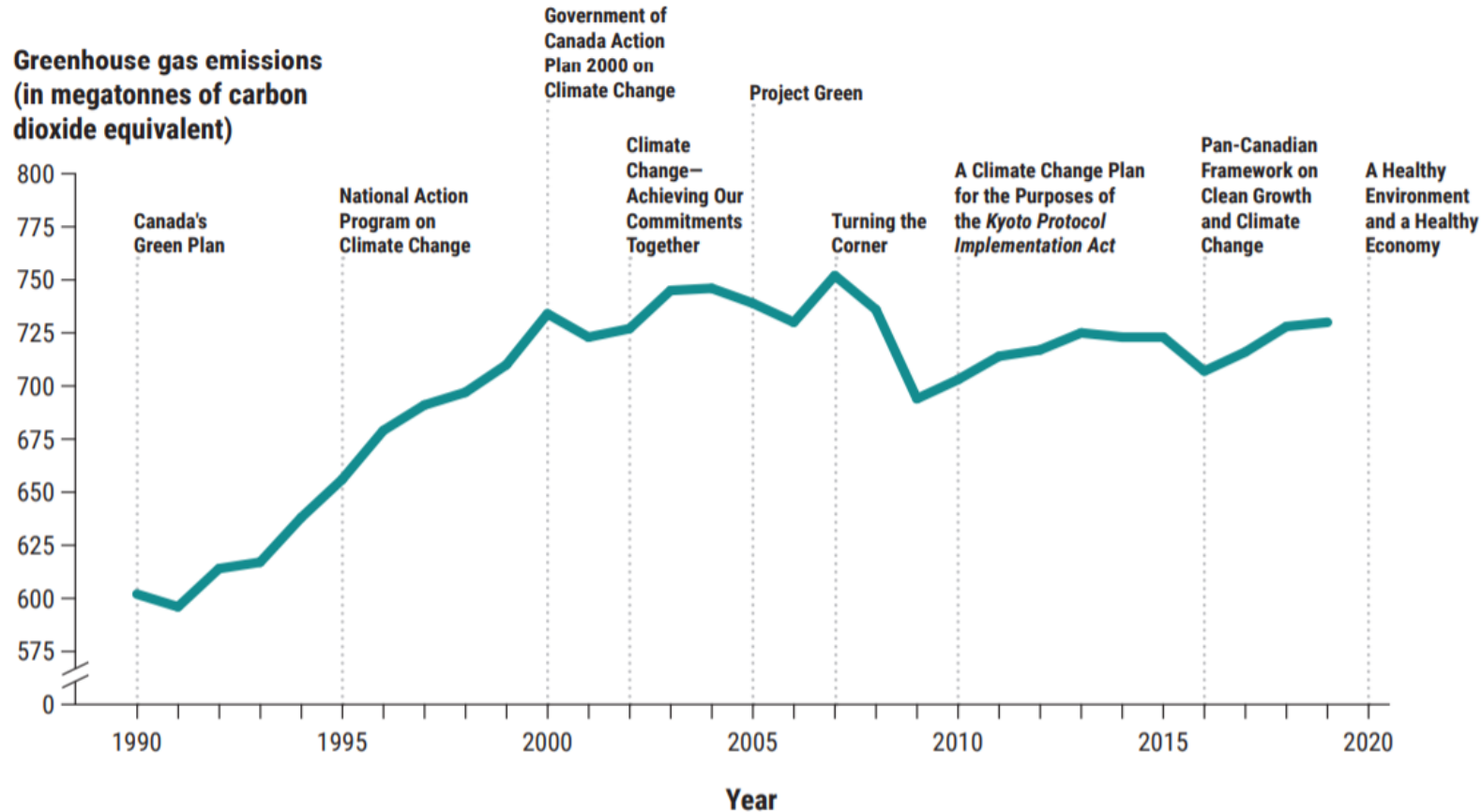
Canada’s 2019 Speech from the Throne



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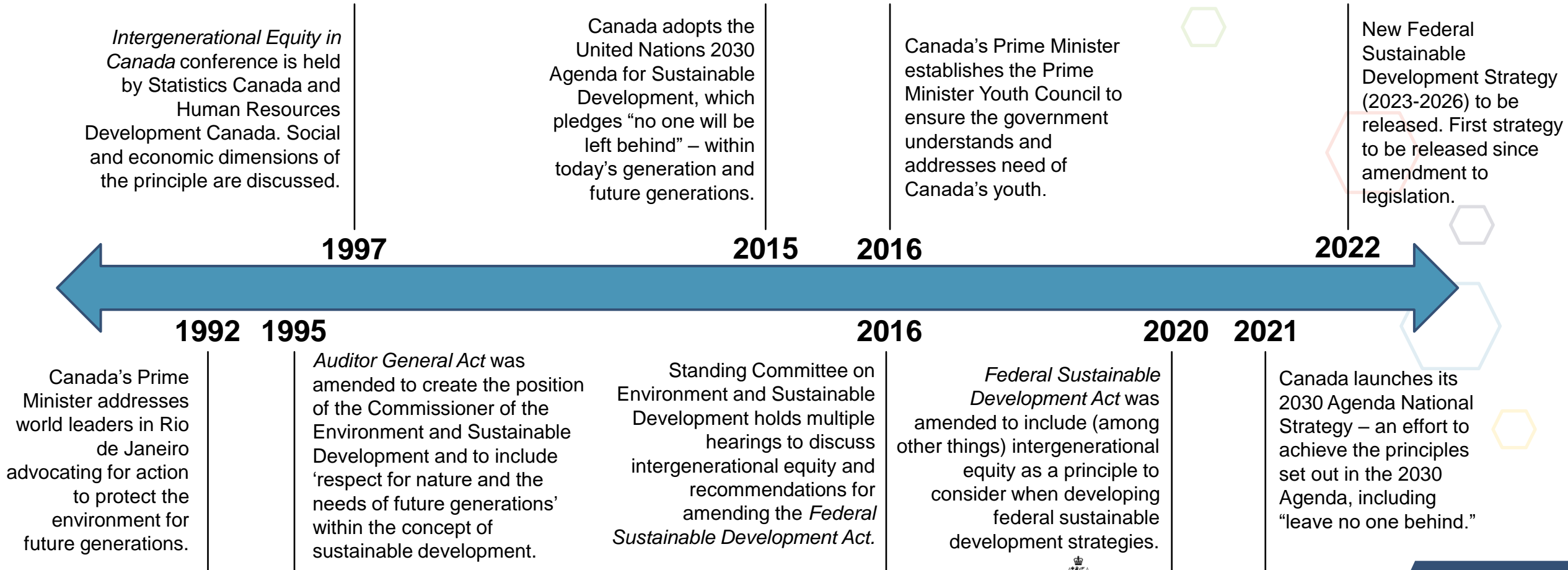
Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have grown despite numerous plans



Source: Based on emission data from Canada's 2021 National Inventory Report

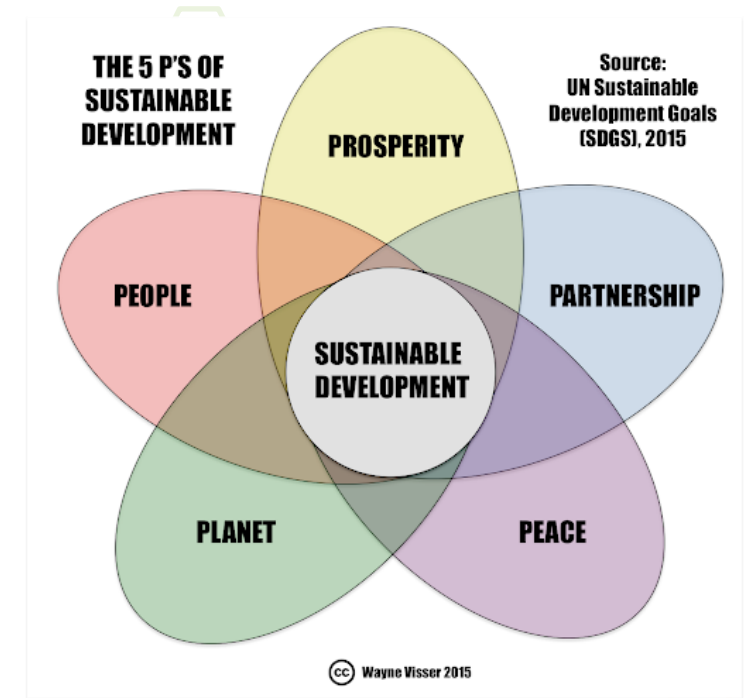


Timeline of intergenerational equity and sustainable development in Canada



The Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals

- The Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) is committed to aligning its audit work with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - ❖ The SDGs are considered in all audit phases (strategic planning, audit planning, examination, reporting)
 - ❖ An internal specialist team is available to provide advice on integrating the SDGs (and now gender-based analysis) into products
 - ❖ The Office has authored “Guidance on Integrating the SDGs in Audits” (draft)



IGE and SD at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada



- The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development:
 - ❖ audits the Government of Canada's preparedness for and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
 - ❖ audits departmental progress in implementing Sustainable Development Strategies;
 - ❖ reviews progress reports on the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy;
 - ❖ reviews and provides comments on new iterations of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy; and
 - ❖ reports on the Government of Canada's implementation of the measures aimed at mitigating climate change



IGE and SD at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada

- The OAG's audit role brings awareness to topics of concern for future generations. When selecting audit topics, audits have been chosen based on their alignment with the SDGs and inclusivity.
- The CESD is currently working / plans to work on audits on several other governmental practices, policies, and legislation that relate to the environment and may have a role in progressing the principle of intergenerational equity.

2022

Just transition to low carbon economy
Carbon pricing benchmarks
Greening government strategy
Nuclear waste management



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IGE and SD at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada

- The Auditor General of Canada has also released audits with topics related to intergenerational equity. For example, Auditor General has completed reports around:
 - ❖ long-term fiscal sustainability
 - i.e. the Canadian government's capacity to finance its activities and debt obligations in the future without placing an excessive burden on future generations
 - ❖ public sector pension plans
 - including fairness to current and future generations
 - ❖ operations of the Public Sector Pension Investment Board
 - including how the Crown corporation can embed sustainability considerations into their operations



Lessons learned from integrating the SDGs into OAG work

Tone from the Top

Management should set the expectation for auditors to integrate emerging concepts in their audit work

Committing Publically

The OAG should make a public commitment to emerging concepts of importance to the Office

Existing Structures and Systems

Existing structures and systems (i.e. the role of the internal specialist) should be used to smooth transition of emerging concepts into audit work

Involve All Staff

All staff should be involved with the integration of emerging concepts into audit work; an incremental approach should be used to build knowledge of business

Common International Approach

International approaches to integrating emerging concepts into audit work should be used



CHALLENGES

- Currently the definition for intergenerational equity in Canada is not detailed, which makes it difficult to audit whether or not government policies, practices, and legislation are following the FSDA.
- Canada has not set any long-term goals or measures of progress toward intergenerational equity.
- Most Government of Canada policies, practices, and legislation do not have the principle of intergenerational equity embedded within them, making it more challenging for the OAG to audit.

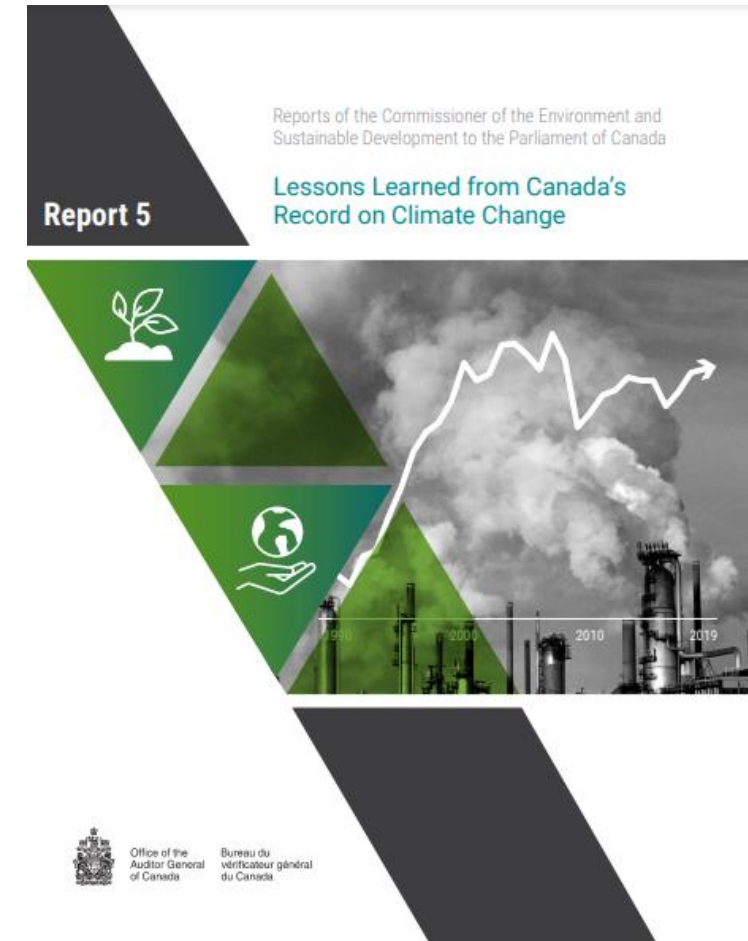
OPPORTUNITIES

- The principle of intergenerational equity can be included in advice provided to audit teams on the SDGs / gender-based analysis plus – specifically the impacts government has on future generations
- Feedback on the new Federal Sustainable Development Strategy is upcoming



Considerations for fostering intergenerational equity in Canada: CESD's latest climate report

- How can the federal government be held to account for solving long-term issues such as climate change?
- How can the federal government ensure that the interests of future generations are included in present decisions?
- How can the principle of intergenerational equity be incorporated into institutional decision making?
- How can the federal government better involve youth in climate policy?



Thank You!



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