

# Conference Report





Canada



**FUTURE  
OF GOOD**

**INTENT**

# Together|Ensemble 2020 Conference Report

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## TOGETHER|ENSEMBLE 2020

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Session recordings, archived schedule,  
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# Foreword

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 one of the most notable initial impacts in Canada was a cascade of cancelled events, from concerts to classes and conferences. However, at the start of what UN Secretary General António Guterres has called the Decade of Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the pandemic quickly highlighted something else: there is no time to waste.

And so, Together|Ensemble 2020 was re-imagined as an online-only event to meet the need for people across Canada to discuss action on sustainable development with a focus on how to build back better.

TOGETHER|ENSEMBLE 2020 ATTENDED BY OVER

## 1,400 unique users

The virtual conference was attended by over 1,400 unique users from across Canada and around the world. In an increasingly online world, the conference demonstrated the ability to further use digital tools to strengthen and create feelings of belonging. The bilingual event with simultaneous translation leveraged video conferencing technology to host over 100 speakers, from mayors to business leaders and activists, in more than two dozen sessions.

As we'd hoped, Together|Ensemble 2020 was a dynamic national check-in on our collective effort at the start of the Decade of Action. Since Canada's commitment to Agenda 2030 in 2015, a diverse, vibrant and distributed community of

organizations working towards the SDGs has developed across Canada. And, as a result, each conversation at the conference was deeply informed by how the pandemic has strikingly revealed our society's underlying socio-economic inequalities.

This report provides an overview and snapshot of the all-of-society work showcased during Together|Ensemble 2020. It highlights the breadth of SDG activity across Canada, the challenges, and above all the commitment and need for collaborative action with equity at the heart of our work.

As the Together|Ensemble conference series continues, the intent of the organizers is for the event to travel across the country via Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Canada member campuses to broaden representation, track progress, and to keep discussion of the SDGs vibrant and relevant. While an in-person event for Together|Ensemble 2021 seems unlikely as the pandemic continues to gain momentum globally, we look forward to virtually building and strengthening our network from coast to coast to coast.

As we enter the Decade of Action, the pandemic and sweeping social movements have made Canada's SDG community more determined than ever to play a leadership role in building back better, *Together|Ensemble*.

**Dr. Jean Andrey**

*Professor and Dean, Faculty of Environment,  
University of Waterloo*

*Chair, SDSN Canada*

# Together|Ensemble 2020

## Now a YouTube resource

“This conference is occurring at the most extraordinary moment of modern history,” noted Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network in his opening comments to Together|Ensemble 2020. He was referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why he was in his New York office and his presentation was videoconference streamed to hundreds of participants across Canada. As Sachs and colleagues envisioned in their paper *Six transformations to achieve sustainable development* the conference was a dramatic example of what they call “the digital revolution for sustainable development”.<sup>1</sup>

In what may well have been the world’s first fully online SDGs conference, participants experienced an event that was clearly distinct from an in-person gathering. When sessions ended there were no impromptu hallway follow-up conversations—instead participants were still in their basements, bedrooms or home offices living the new pandemic work-at-home reality. When the day ended, no plans for continuing discussions over dinner. Most participants didn’t see one another, only the speakers did.

Yet, as we are all learning as work increasingly moves online, there were virtual benefits. Participants readily shared questions for panelists, links to resources and comments in the Zoom chat. The online engagement was clear in Texas Tech University climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe’s

### FUTURE OF GOOD TWITTER CHAT

**430,000 impressions**  
**94,000 reached**

dynamic presentation when she used live audience polling combined with screen sharing to engage participants and visualize input from across Canada. A Twitter Chat hosted by digital content partner Future of Good was an in-depth and far-reaching conversation on how the pandemic is affecting work on the SDGs in Canada.<sup>2</sup> This virtual conversation had more than 430,000 impressions and a reach of 94,000.

Now, the recorded sessions are a unique, online SDG educational resource and historical record including more than 100 speakers covering topics from equity to economy, culture to collaboration. Together|Ensemble 2020 demonstrated that under challenging conditions, Canada’s SDG community not only came together, but used digital technologies to forge new partnerships and processes that will serve us well as we work towards achieving Agenda 2030. Session recordings, archived schedule, resources and event recaps available at [togetherensemble.ca](https://togetherensemble.ca)

1 Sachs, J. D., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N., & Rockström, J. (2019). Six transformations to achieve the sustainable development goals. *Nature Sustainability*, 2(9), 805-814. Retrieved from: <https://www.unsdsn.org/news/2019/08/26/six-transformations-to-achieve-the-sustainable-development-goals-provide-cross-cutting-framework-for-action>

2 Future of Good #TogetherEnsemble Twitter Chat. (2020). Retrieved from: [https://twitter.com/i/events/1263514004435197952?utm\\_source=Memberful&utm\\_campaign=c62aed49e7-Day+2+Together+Ensemble+Conference&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a2753435bf-c62aed49e7-369407484&mc\\_cid=c62aed49e7&mc\\_eid=5a95492295](https://twitter.com/i/events/1263514004435197952?utm_source=Memberful&utm_campaign=c62aed49e7-Day+2+Together+Ensemble+Conference&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a2753435bf-c62aed49e7-369407484&mc_cid=c62aed49e7&mc_eid=5a95492295)

### History of the Together|Ensemble movement

Together|Ensemble 2020 is the third iteration of a growing all-of-society conversation to track Canada’s commitment to achieving the SDGs. The Together|Ensemble movement has its roots in the vision of Calgary-based sustainability consultant Mel Wilson.<sup>3</sup> From a series of roundtables in Edmonton and Calgary that brought together professionals and students interested in advancing the SDGs in Alberta, Together 2017 emerged. It was convened by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) and was the first multi-stakeholder symposium in Canada dedicated to the SDGs and was followed by Together 2018. Together|Ensemble 2020 builds on this dynamic history.

The 2020 event was organized by Waterloo Global Science Initiative (WGSi), Sustainable Development Solutions Network Canada (SDSN Canada) and Université Laval with the guidance and support of ACGC, Alliance 2030, Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics and the University of Waterloo.

<sup>3</sup> About|À propos. (2020) Together|Ensemble. Retrieved from: <https://togetherensemble.ca/about-apropos/>

# Executive summary

## 100+ speakers 27 sessions

Together|Ensemble 2020 was the third, since 2017, in a series of symposia and conferences of Canada's diverse and growing all-of-society community dedicated to achieving the SDGs. Held during the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was Canada's first online SDG conference. Conversations benefited from an impressive mix of over 100 speakers in more than two dozen sessions and about 1,400 unique attendees. The recorded sessions are now available online.<sup>4</sup>

Discussions at Together|Ensemble 2020 were energized and informed by the pandemic's global scope and the social and economic vulnerabilities it has starkly revealed. At the same time, participants frequently noted that the Canadian and provincial governments' responses have demonstrated how rapid, broad and decisive government action is possible when there's awareness of a common threat. Conference conversations covered all 17 of the SDGs, with eight core themes:

**Use the SDGs to build back better** — Conference participants expressed a sense of opportunity that the SDGs are the perfect framework for guiding us to “build back better” from the widespread social and economic damages of the pandemic.

**Leverage COVID consciousness for climate action** — Many conference participants emphasized the need to harness our awareness of the power of collective action to address the climate emergency and flatten the other curve of greenhouse gas emissions.

**No-one must be left behind** — A week before the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis and the igniting of anti-racism demonstrations around the world, Together|Ensemble 2020 participants discussed the ways that systemic racism and historical injustices remain key areas of challenge to achieving the SDGs.

**Cities are the roots of change** — Conference participants emphasized that Canada's cities are the epicenters of SDG activity and that local action is the process by which the SDGs put down roots. The conference benefited from the input of four current urban mayors.

**Data and evidence-based decision must drive**

**Agenda 2030** — As we head into the Decade of Action, conference participants identified the ways they are using the revolution in data collection, analysis and governance to support Agenda 2030.

**Now is the time for SDG-based economics** — In wide ranging conversations, participants connected the dots between capitalism, decent work, income inequality, sustainable procurement and investing, clean energy, climate change and economic resilience.

**Baking SDGs into K to U education** — Together|Ensemble 2020 speakers and participants shared ways that primary, secondary and post-secondary schools across Canada are playing a critical role in informing students about the SDGs and inspiring them to act in their communities.

**Collaboration is key** — As Canada's SDG community grows and diversifies, collaboration becomes all the more important and powerful. Together|Ensemble 2020 represented the most bilingual and pan-Canadian SDG discussion since the inception of the Together|Ensemble movement, creating the basis for new connections between organizations across Canada.

<sup>4</sup> Together|Ensemble 2020 YouTube Playlists. (2020) Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDfxPlcBG8jhJDy4MMS2xaA/featured?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDfxPlcBG8jhJDy4MMS2xaA/featured?view_as=subscriber)

# COVID-19

## Energizing the Decade of Action

Among the many changes in awareness brought by the coronavirus pandemic has made clear that as we enter the Decade of Action, the future is now. Epidemiologists and science writers had warned of a coming pandemic, yet national governments around the world were caught flat-footed and unprepared.<sup>5</sup> The human cost of this inability to plan for the future has been enormous. By corollary, we will only meet the commitments laid out in Agenda 2030 by believing they are really possible and working today with that future in mind.

COVID-19 IN CANADA AT THE TIME OF CONFERENCE

**88,000 total cases**  
**6,800 deaths**

Together|Ensemble 2020 discussions were energized and deepened by this realization and the tragic scope of the pandemic. At the time of the conference, in Canada there were 88,000 COVID-19 cases and 6,800 related deaths affecting families and communities across the country. Yet for all its devastating health and economic impact, the Canadian and provincial governments' responses demonstrated—for the first time in this generation—how rapid, broad and decisive government action is possible when there's awareness of a common threat.

In response, speakers repeatedly emphasised five key themes that are central to leveraging the experience of the pandemic to energize action towards meeting Canada's Agenda 2030 commitments.

### **We really are in this together**

As global travel is shut-down, national borders closed and we social distance in our communities—or even quarantine at home—the pandemic has dramatically highlighted how we are all connected. Catherine Potvin, the Canada Research Chair in Climate Change Mitigation and Tropical Forest at McGill University, noted that this individual-to-global scale awareness necessitates a holistic response to SDG challenges. “One of my lessons of this crisis is that no-one will be safe if everyone is safe. It's about connectivity. The safety of each one of us depends on the safety of everyone around us. So, it's really a moment to think globally and politically and not leave anyone behind,” said Potvin.

### **Seeing and addressing institutionalized inequalities**

Sean Geobey, Assistant Professor in social innovation, at the University of Waterloo's School of Environment, Enterprise and Development observed that the pandemic has laid bare many of the institutionalized inequalities in our socio-economic system. “The phrase *essential worker* has been on the tip of everyone's tongue and it's quite revealing for many people to see that the workers who in times of crisis are most essential or often ones who are most marginally employed and underpaid often in very unsafe working conditions,” said Geobey.

<sup>5</sup> Bruni, F. (2020, May). She Predicted the Coronavirus. What Does She Foresee Next? New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/02/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-prediction-laurie-garrett.html>

**"Governments  
don't create  
change;  
they respond  
to change."**

Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director,  
First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

### **Interdependence is real**

Many speakers addressed the need to use the experience gained from the pandemic to reinforce the building of bridges between the SDGs. « On ne peut pas répondre à un objectif des objectifs développements durables si on n'attaque pas tous les objectifs et pas juste en silo, mais on doit le faire de façon transversale et une manière d'y arriver est d'avoir des groupes intersectoriels, » said Cathy Vaillancourt, *Directrice, Réseau intersectoriel de recherche en santé de l'Université du Québec*.

### **Collaboration is the key to success**

Many of the failures in government and institutional responses to the pandemic have been the result of a lack of collaboration, such as governments competing to buy personal protective equipment. In contrast, successes have largely been built on unprecedented collaborations, notably in the business-government-university teams racing to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.

When it comes to the SDGs, participants noted that the pandemic has spotlighted the fact that success is only possible with broad collaboration, whether between individuals or governments. "This [global pandemic] experience is bringing us closer together in interesting ways," shared Amy Bosche, Education Program Coordinator, Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation. "What I've seen is a group of educators coming together and collaborating in ways that they have never before. I'm working with educators from all over the world right now and sharing their resources with my network and vice versa which is something we just didn't do four months ago."

### **Citizen action to overcome historical inertia**

Although Together|Ensemble 2020 ended three days before the death of George Floyd in police custody, in retrospect it will be impossible to dissociate the conference conversations from the global Black Lives Matter and anti-racist movement sparked by Floyd's murder. In her presentation, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society had noted that in the United States it is Indigenous peoples who, among all racialized groups, are most likely to be killed in interactions with police. In what would soon ring true for all watching the citizen-led anti-racism protests Blackstock noted: "Governments don't create change; they respond to change."

# Build back better

The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by the breakdown, or the awareness of the potential for breakdown, of our vital socio-economic systems—the ones at the heart of the SDGs. This has ranged from concerns over food supply chains to failures of public health; the vast and disproportionate economic impact of lockdowns on women, people of colour and the lowest paid, to the importance and vulnerability of our education systems. This social and economic breakdown is personal: from relatives unable to be with dying loved ones because of pandemic restrictions to laid-off workers afraid of losing not just their livelihoods but their homes.

Throughout Together|Ensemble 2020 sessions, participants echoed the perspective of the UN Special Envoy for financing Agenda 2030 that the SDGs are the perfect framework for guiding us to “build back better” from the current pandemic-caused global economic recession.<sup>6</sup> Across Canada there’s been a groundswell of voices calling for a clean, green and just economic recovery, one in large part driven by public money through SDG-driven stimulus spending.<sup>7</sup> And Canadians expect big changes: two weeks before the conference EKOS pollsters found that 73% expect “a broad transformation of our society” in the post-pandemic world.<sup>8</sup>

Conference participants expressed a sense of opportunity but one that will only be achieved with energetic advocacy, vision and a willingness to take decisive government action. “The Sustainable Development Goals envision a world that does not exist yet. In order to be a society we have never been before, we should expect to do things we haven’t done before,” said S.S. Ahmad, Founder and CEO, Green Beacon, a social enterprise dedicated to localizing the SDGs.

There were also voices of concern that the pandemic could in fact have a negative impact on the Decade of Action as governments pull back from Agenda 2030 commitments, visionary action and spending in the face of massive, post-pandemic public debts. Participants discussed the collaborative action it will take to ensure that we capture this opportunity to build back better, including:

## Imagining a better world? Engage youth leaders

Several speakers emphasized the importance of the role of young people in imagining and advocating for the kinds of transformative change required to meet Agenda 2030. “You hear a lot that youth are leaders of tomorrow which I think pays a disservice to the crucial role they’re actually playing in their communities. A lot of the youth we work with have the skills and have the knowledge to be making impacts in their communities but often what’s actually lacking is the tools to navigate the systems that are set up,” said Rachel Morgan, Youth Programs Manager, Atlantic Council for International Cooperation. The group is empowering diverse and underrepresented youth, from remote Labrador towns to rural and urban Nova Scotia, through SDG education and funding for their community projects. Maxime Lakat, Founder & Chair, Canadian Business Youth Council for Sustainable Development added that “the 2030 Agenda is about intergenerational equity, valuing the present and the future generations, and to do so youth must be at the table to achieve that goal.”

6 Avery, H. (2020, April). UN's Mohieldin says SDGs are a framework for response and recovery. Euromoney.com Retrieved from: <https://www.euromoney.com/article/b1l8r82xbnq8fh/uns-mohieldin-says-sdgs-are-a-framework-for-response-and-recovery>

7 Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, Oxford University. (2020) Building back better: A net-zero emissions recovery. Retrieved from: <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/news/articles/200505-building-back-better-net-zero-emissions-recovery.html>

8 EKOS Politics. (2020, May). A Future History of the COVID-19 Crisis. Retrieved from: <http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2020/05/a-future-history-of-the-covid-19-crisis/>

### Build back with virtuous cascades of change

Tipping points are usually thought of as negative events, such as the emergence of COVID-19 and the ensuing cascade shocks, the domino-like changes in social, political and economic systems. But Thomas Homer-Dixon told participants that in thinking about building back better it's critical to identify positive tipping points: "We want to identify opportunities for positive cascades, rather than just negative ones [...] The idea here is to understand the systems around us—the belief, institutional and ecological systems—well enough that we can see their tipping point possibilities may be when if we push things a little bit in one direction we might be able to create a virtuous cascade of change that would benefit large numbers of people," said Homer-Dixon. He recently founded the B.C.-based Cascade Institute where researchers apply complexity science to identify and help implement high-leverage interventions that could rapidly shift humanity's course towards fair and sustainable prosperity.

### Getting on target for Agenda 2030

One of the keys to a green, just post-pandemic recovery is having a clear framework to follow. "There are some possibilities for upsides even though it's a very difficult situation. There's a broad awareness of the interface between natural systems and human systems right now; so that's an opportunity," said John McArthur, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution. During the Day 2 Twitter Chat he shared his new report *Classifying Sustainable Development Goal trajectories: A country-level methodology for identifying which issues and people are getting left behind*.<sup>9</sup> The harmonized methodology translates SDG targets into an empirical framework relevant to a country's challenges. Of 169 SDG targets, 35 include quantified and measurable country-level outcomes; 43 are assessable through proxy targets, and the diagnostic framework can distinguish between policies that are succeeding and those meriting a new approach.

### Environment + health + economy = one

Many speakers emphasized the point that COVID-19 has profoundly opened our eyes to the intrinsic interconnectedness of our health, economies and environments—and the power of data to guide evidence-based decision making. "Let's capture this moment [...] so that the economic reopening will be data driven so that nobody

will be left behind. We have to guarantee the health of the environment to guarantee the health of the population," said Céline Campagna, a researcher on climate and health at the Institut national de santé publique du Québec.

### Preventing build back turning into a step back

Speakers also voiced concerns about the potential for post-COVID-19 cuts to social and health services as federal and provincial governments face the reality of massive, generational deficits. Mélanie Busby of the *Front commun pour la transition énergétique* noted the need to stay focused on the fundamentals of the SDGs-driven decision making process to avoid a situation of economic growth at any cost: « On va viser la croissance économique: on va donc viser à rétablir des emplois – ce qui est super – mais aussi à augmenter les activités de consommation et de production, peu importe leur nature, ce qui augmentera notre impact sur l'environnement, ce qui nous empêchera d'atteindre un développement durable. Donc ça va être important de revoir nos outils de décisions pour aborder cette question là, » she said.

## "I think COVID is an opportunity to reinvent Canadian cities and return them to people."

Lisa Helps, City of Victoria Mayor

### A post-pandemic greening of cities

"I think COVID is an opportunity to reinvent Canadian cities and return them to people," said City of Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. On weekends during the pandemic, the City of Victoria closed its largest public greenspace, Victoria Park, to vehicle traffic to provide space for walking and cycling with social distancing. Given the high usage, the city decided to extend this practice 24/7 all summer long. Mayor Helps told the conference the city received "backlash" (even from people who don't live in Victoria), but that she believes that in the long-run this decisive action will be widely viewed as a positive, and necessary, transformation—one that may well shape Victoria's and other cities future plans.

<sup>9</sup> McArthur, J. W. & Rasmussen, K. (2019). *Classifying Sustainable Development Goal trajectories: A country-level methodology for identifying which issues and people are getting left behind*. World development, 123, 104608. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X19301846>

# Climate action

## Flattening the other curve

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented global economic impact, in terms of global health, the environment, and economics, many conference participants noted the ongoing, broader global crisis facing humanity: skyrocketing greenhouse gas emissions.

As of December 2019, about 500 Canadian municipalities had declared a climate emergency.<sup>10</sup> It's a stark recognition that climate change isn't a future concern, but an immediate threat. As Saskatoon's 2019 *Low Emissions Community Plan* states: "The impacts of climate change are being felt now in our community. Our urban forest is under threat due to the heat, our infrastructure is being strained in the cold, and homes and businesses are flooding with more extreme storms."<sup>11</sup>

Yet in its most recent assessment the Auditor General of Canada found that we're not on target to meet the federal government's 2030 targets for reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>12</sup> Added to this dire context was the COVID-19 pandemic and cratered oil prices. If there was a sign of hope, it came in the fact that the greatly reduced fossil fuel emissions resulted in blue skies over many cities otherwise clouded in smog. Many speakers argued that now is the time to pivot the awareness raised by the pandemic and turn into climate change action.

### COVID-19 and resilience thinking

"It's important to remember that climate change is also a health hazard," said Catherine Potvin, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Climate Change Mitigation and Tropical Forest at McGill University. She noted that in 2003, 70,000 people died in a heat wave in Europe and that in the summer of 2010, Moscow had a heat wave that killed 10,000 people

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ESTIMATES

# 250,000 premature deaths

PER YEAR BECAUSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

in two weeks. The World Health Organization estimates there are about 250,000 premature deaths per year because of climate change.<sup>13</sup> Potvin told participants that seeing a society weakened by the pandemic can support the desire to increase our resilience to avoid the impacts of climate change. "[So] how can we use the lessons from COVID-19 to make our populations better equipped to withstand the [as-dangerous-as-COVID] impacts of climate change," asked Potvin.

### How to bring people together to face hard issues?

Three urban Canadian mayors articulated varied views on the how their experience of dealing with the pandemic has shaped their perspective on the nature of local leadership to address the climate emergency.

"[We need] leadership that seeks to find common ground, that isn't afraid to talk about the tensions that are emerging," said Charlie Clark, Mayor of the City of Saskatoon. "Whether it's around the coal and climate change debate in Saskatchewan, engaging on that debate I'm learning that we you have to find a way to talk about it that doesn't play into polarization but it also doesn't shy away from the real intense feelings people have."

10 Climate Emergency Declaration. (2020). Climate emergency declarations in 1,750 jurisdictions and local governments cover 820 million citizens. Retrieved from: <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>

11 City of Saskatoon. (2019). The Low Emissions Community Plan. Retrieved from: [https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/low\\_emissions\\_report-final\\_july25\\_web.pdf](https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/low_emissions_report-final_july25_web.pdf)

12 Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2018). Report 1—Review of the 2018 Progress Report on the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Retrieved from: [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/par\\_cesd\\_201912\\_01\\_e\\_43478.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/par_cesd_201912_01_e_43478.html)

13 World Health Organization. (2018). Climate change and health fact sheet. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

Mayor of the City of Kitchener Berry Vrbanovic noted that there was large diversity in peoples' views on how to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and this extends to other controversial issues such as climate change and requires leaders to adapt their communications approach. "In your messaging you have to make sure that you're talking to the entire community," said Vrbanovic.

However, Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps suggested that what the pandemic has demonstrated to her is the need for decisive leadership in the face of inevitable opposition. "In emergency situations like this one, you sometimes can't have too much dialogue and consultation, you have to act and act courageously and decisively, following the advice of the public health officer. It may create in the interim a little bit of seeming polarization and backlash, but that's where I think decisive action from mayors and councils is necessary," said Helps.

#### **How we frame and discuss climate change**

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe's, director of the Climate Center at Texas Tech University, preference would be to remove SDG 13 from the list of SDGs, instead making it an overarching framework. "I don't actually think that climate change should be on this list at all because the only reason we care about climate change is because it affects every other item on this list. It's a threat multiplier," said Hayhoe in her keynote address to Together|Ensemble 2020. "Ninety-nine times out of a hundred [climate change] is not creating a new problem that didn't exist before it's taking a problem we already have and exacerbating it or making it worse," said Hayhoe.

Noting that COVID-related temporary reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will end after the pandemic, she said that the key is still implementing sustainable changes

to human behaviour, notably energy efficiency, changed behaviours [such as telecommuting] and use or renewable, non-carbon energy sources, with more than a hundred ways listed at Project Drawdown.

Given the ubiquitous impact of climate change, Hayhoe emphasized that there are an equally broad number of reasons that people care about climate change's impacts, whether concern for future generations or an immediate impact on our job prospects. As a result, she noted, we all have the power to be individual change agents by sharing our unique perspectives. "The most important thing we can do is talk about this issue. And how we talk about it is not by banging people upside the head with the science but by talking about why it matters to us and what we can do to fix it. [And] the best person to talk about it is you; [with] people who share your values, friends and family, people who speak a common language. Every single one of us is the best person to have that conversation," said Hayhoe, who specializes in bridging the cultural divides around climate change.

#### **A moment of reckoning and reconfiguring**

Thomas Homer-Dixon, Director of the Cascade Institute, outlined three key ideologies the pandemic is shifting that could make way for more effective climate action in the future: a renewed focus on a transition to renewable energy, after the oil price crash; an increase in our perceived credibility of scientists; and a demonstration that rapid, effective government action is possible.

# The equity lens

## No-one left behind

A week before the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis and the igniting of anti-racism demonstrations around the world, Together|Ensemble 2020 participants discussed the ways that systemic racism and historical injustices remain key areas of challenge to achieving many SDGs. “In my view, next to climate change, how Canadians from coast to coast to coast respond or not to implementing the 94 Calls to Action [in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report] is one of the greatest challenges of our generation,” said Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, a signatory of the new Winnipeg Indigenous Accord.<sup>14</sup>

Participants emphasized that sustainable development starts and depends on social justice issues, including Indigenous reconciliation, addressing environmental racism, and broader social equity issues, for example increasing the representation of women of colour in political leadership roles.

### The moral courage to act for achieving the SDGs

The week before her Together|Ensemble 2020 keynote presentation, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, visited and “spruced-up” the Ottawa burial site of one of her heroes: Peter Henderson Bryce. In 1904, Bryce, in his role as the medical health officer in what was then the Department of Indian Affairs, was one of the first Canadian officials to sound the alarm about the devastating health impacts of Indigenous residential schools—and his career suffered for his moral courage to speak out.

More than a century later, inequitable public services on reserves, particularly for health and child and family welfare, remain a key barrier to reconciliation. As a result, Indigenous people in Canada have poorer health outcomes, and are over-represented the child welfare system and as adults, in prisons. What’s the closest thing we have a “magic bullet” to reduce these social ills? “It’s addressing inequality. There is no excuse for perpetuating racial discrimination as public policy, particularly regarding children,” said Blackstock.

To address this, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society is promoting The Spirit Bear Plan, designed to end inequalities in public services for First Nations children, youth and families.<sup>15</sup> The plan outlines five key changes, the first of which is for the federal government to implement Jordan’s Principle, ensuring First Nations children get the public services they need when they need them free of any discrimination related to their First Nation’s status.



Photo: fncaringociety.com

The Spirit Bear Plan

<sup>14</sup> City of Winnipeg. (2020) Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord. Retrieved from: <https://winnipeg.ca/indigenous/WIA/>

<sup>15</sup> First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. (2017). Spirit Bear Plan. Retrieved from: <https://fncaringociety.com/spirit-bear-plan>

Blackstock emphasized that the challenge we face as a society is the strength to act on what we know. “Moral courage isn’t really a value, it’s an activator of values. As we all know, it’s pretty easy to have values, but the real muster is when they’re tested during times when we have to sacrifice something or get criticized by people we care about. Do we have the moral muster to stand by the values that we hold dear the most? And moral courage is central to reconciliation,” said Blackstock.

## **“The SDGs are failing in just about every Indigenous community in so-called Canada. There is lack of access to clean water, lack of quality education, lack of food sovereignty, lack of infrastructure, health, and social services.”**

Lindsey Bacigal, Communications Director,  
Indigenous Climate Action

### **Time for PACs in Canada?**

Women in minority groups in Canada are less likely to be elected than women of non-minority backgrounds and are underrepresented in public office. How to assist women from minority communities to run for office—and get elected? Several speakers suggested that Canadians look to grassroots American political action committees (PACs), a campaign funding model currently banned in Canada. “While diversity may be present in our schools, workplaces and our communities, it’s not evident in our leadership.... we are here to advocate for PAC-like organizations in Canada that will

support minority and marginalized women to get elected in public office,” said Christina Muia from the Ontario Council for International Cooperation’s Youth Policy Makers Hub.

In the USA, PACs are formed by corporations to support the campaigns of politicians that support their agendas. In 2016, the alternative, community-based PAC Justice Democrats was formed to elect Congressional representatives “that will fight for solutions that match the scale of our many crises: skyrocketing inequality, catastrophic climate change, (and) deepening structural racism.”<sup>16</sup>

In Canada, speakers noted that organizations such as Operation Black Vote Canada and the Canadian Muslim Vote are dedicated to increasing voting and civic leadership roles by members of their respective communities and could be financially supported by PAC-like structures.

### **Disaggregated data**

In order to overcome systemic barriers, speakers called for a greater collection of disaggregated data on women’s participation in politics at all levels, a call echoed in *Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving Representation of Women in Canadian Politics*, a report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, released in April 2019.<sup>17</sup> “In the political sphere, there’s a need to create disaggregated data for minority, Indigenous, disability and queer communities running for public office regardless of whether they win or not,” said Christina Muia from the Ontario Council for International Cooperation’s Youth Policy Makers Hub.

The importance of disaggregated data has been made readily apparent in the COVID-19 pandemic as governments have moved to collect race-based pandemic statistics reflecting the fact that racialized communities have been hit much harder by the pandemic.<sup>18</sup> Notably, the 2019 federal election marked the first time that data was compiled on candidates’ gender identities other than “man” or “woman.”<sup>19</sup> “If we’re failing to capture [data] on some of the most vulnerable populations that many of the SDGs are intended to help then that seems like a glaring gap,” said Catherine McIntyre a reporter for *The Logic* and moderator of the *Data: What’s it good for?* session.

16 About. (2020). Justice Democrats. Retrieved from: <https://www.justicedemocrats.com/about>

17 House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women. (2019). *Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics*. Retrieved at: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/FEW0/Reports/RP10366034/feworp14/feworp14-e.pdf>

18 Zimonjic, P. (2020, June). Trudeau, Ontario health minister say they’re looking at collecting race-based pandemic data. CBC News. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-elliott-covid-19-race-based-data-1.5600824>

### By the numbers: Women in Canadian politics

Canadian women won the right to vote in federal elections in 1918, and the right to run for office as an MP in 1919. The first female MP, Agnes Campbell Macphail, was elected in 1921. In 1970, at the time of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women, there was only one federal MP. In the last federal election (October 2019), women won a record 98 of the 338 seats (29%) in the House of Commons, and for the first time in Canadian history the federal cabinet is gender balanced.<sup>19</sup> Of these women, 14 are women of colour (4% of total MPs),<sup>20</sup> although women of colour represent about 11.5% of Canada's total population<sup>21</sup>.

### Addressing environmental racism through legislative action

Legal and legislative action is an increasingly important tool for addressing environmental racism in Nova Scotia and Canada as a whole. Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Dalhousie University told the conference. Environmental racism is the inequitable and disproportionate placement of toxic facilities and other environmental hazards near communities of colour and the working poor. Environmental racism also refers to the lack of democratic engagement of these communities in decision-making processes about the location of these facilities in these communities.

Since 2012, the Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health (ENRICH) Project has been addressing the health and socio-economic effects of environmental racism in Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities through a wide range of education, partnership and political and legal advocacy. The ENRICH Project has spearheaded the ongoing push for the adaptation of Nova Scotia's Bill 111, initially introduced in 2015 as the Environmental Racism Prevention Act. In February 2020, N.S. MP Lenore Zann, inspired by Dr. Waldron, introduced a bill in Parliament aimed at addressing environmental racism across Canada. The private members' bill, The National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism, Bill C230, is the first at the national scale.<sup>22</sup>



### There's Something in the Water gets big (and home) screen treatment

"You can't talk about environmental justice until you talk about environmental racism, and until we understand why environmental racism manifests in Canada," said Dr. Ingrid Waldron, author of *There's Something in the Water*. Her book about environmental racism has been turned into an eponymous 2019 documentary film directed by Oscar-nominated, Nova Scotia-native Ellen Page. The film is reaching a Canada-wide audience streaming on Netflix.

### Monuments to sustainable development

In the month following Together|Ensemble 2020, a broad public debate emerged over public monuments, particularly statues remembering individuals with racist worldviews and who committed racist actions. In the *Sustainability in the cultural sector* session, speakers emphasized that SDG-issues are intrinsically cultural ones and called for a closer alignment between the arts and cultural sectors as a way of embedding these goals in the public consciousness. In particular, the relationship between people and place, said Christophe Rivet, President, International Council on Monuments and Sites, Canada. They also championed Indigenous cultures and the cultural expression of vulnerable groups in the context of cultural sustainability, the maintaining of cultural beliefs, cultural practices, heritage conservation, and culture as its own entity.

<sup>19</sup> Canada's Library of Parliament. (2020). Women in the Parliament of Canada. Retrieved at: <https://hillnotes.ca/2020/01/23/women-in-the-parliament-of-canada/>

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia editors. (2020). List of visible minority politicians in Canada. Retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_visible\\_minority\\_politicians\\_in\\_Canada#House\\_of\\_Commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_visible_minority_politicians_in_Canada#House_of_Commons)

<sup>21</sup> Catalyst. (2019). Quick Take: People of Colour in Canada. Retrieved at: <https://www.catalyst.org/research/people-of-colour-in-canada/>

<sup>22</sup> Gunn, A. (2020, February). Nova Scotia MP's bill targets environmental racism. The Telegram. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetelegram.com/news/canada/nova-scotia-mps-bill-targets-environmental-racism-417068/>

# Local to global

## Cities as the roots of change

The pandemic has exacerbated, revealed and challenged the realities of urban and community life, from local food insecurity to the hunger for green space, and concerns about the sustainability of main street economies. Conference participants emphasized that Canada's cities are the epicenters of SDG activity; this local action is "the process by which the SDGs put down roots," noted Stefan Jungcurt, Lead, SDG Indicators and Data, International Institute for Sustainable Development who moderated the *Localizing the SDGs in your community* session.

The conference benefited from the input of four current urban mayors (Victoria, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Kitchener) and several city councillors. They and others noted that Canadian municipalities are demonstrating leadership and making concrete progress toward achieving the SDGs in areas from planning, to data collection and standards benchmarking. They emphasized that these advances are only meaningful, and ultimately successful if based on deep consultation with local communities, particularly with vulnerable groups. Many discussions focused on new and effective tools for integrating community input with the SDGs.

### Does your city have a science policy advisor?

Rémi Quirion, Québec's Chief Scientist noted that while there's a tradition of scientific policy advice at the federal and provincial levels, there are very few municipalities in Canada that have science advice capacity. We need to increase science policy capacity at the municipal level where much of the SDG activity is taking place, said Quirion.

### A guide for integrating SDGs into local planning

When it comes to grounding the SDGs in individuals' and communities' lived experience, local needs and objectives, "We have to be humble, ready to listen, and to give our power over to people we're consulting, especially people who are most marginalized," said Daniel Forget, Operations Coordinator, Office of the Vice-rector for External, International Affairs and Health, Université Laval. To facilitate this process, he highlighted the value of the *Guide d'intégration des objectifs de développement durable (ODD) dans les plans locaux de développement an extensive*, collaborative toolbox produced by *L'Organisation internationale de la francophonie*.<sup>23</sup>

### Accessibility planning for municipalities

In December 2019, Nova Scotia launched a new *Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities*.<sup>24</sup> This step-by-step resource helps municipalities establish an accessibility committee and build an accessibility plan. "[In ensuring no-one is left behind] persons with disabilities have to be valued as experts in accessibility work and inclusive decision-making is a really big piece of this puzzle, making sure that students with disabilities and their families have the support and the tools to be full active participants in decision making," said Amy Middleton, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

### Providing global and localized benchmarks for SDG municipal standards

The City of Waterloo has turned to the International Standards Organization (ISO) to help identify and meet the SDGs, said Anna Marie Cipriani, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Waterloo. The city is benchmarking its activities,

23 Organisation internationale de la francophonie. (2018). Guide d'intégration des objectifs de développement durable (ODD) dans les plans locaux de développement. Retrieved from: <https://www.francophonie.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Guide%20integration%20ODD%20plan%20dvp%20locaux.pdf>

24 Government of Nova Scotia. (2019). The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities. Retrieved from: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/municipal-toolkit.asp>

include its corporate standing, using *ISO 37120:2018 Sustainable cities and communities – Indicators for city services and quality of life*.<sup>25</sup> One of Waterloo’s official plan goals is to strengthen the city as a diverse and inclusive community, and the ISO process has led the city to measure and report on the number and proportion of women in managerial positions (SDG 5.5.2)—creating momentum for greater equality, said Cipriani.

In nearby London, Ontario, the London Poverty Research Centre (LPRC) undertook a unique community-based process to co-create a city-based SDG indicator set. Through interviews with 69 local leaders, LPRC used a two-way method to localize 232 SDG indicators to produce the *London Ontario SDG Indicators: A City-Based Set of Indicators Localized from the UN Sustainable Development Goal Indicators*.<sup>26</sup>

What the report highlights is that “[T]he question is not how to do more it’s not just about capacity, the question is really how can we do things differently and that requires, cross sector, cross industry, and inter-scalar collaboration [...] we’re looking at the systemic approach,” said report co-author Luis Patricio.

### A new tool for fine-grained tracking of SDGs

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), a regional parallel to the Voluntary National Review (VNR), are an emerging process by which sub-national governments can report on their progress on Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Like the VNR, the goal of the VLR is to share strategies, successes and failures to assist other communities in their pursuit of the SDGs. Working with partners, WGSi is beginning a pilot project that supports Canadian communities in piloting VLRs that use localized indicators.

With communities, WGSi’s pilot project aims to create a collaborative model for data collection, data sharing and co-design of data-informed community action plans to tackle gaps in our progress towards Agenda 2030. The objective is to spur investment in a localized data ecosystem, support capacity within each community to use the data effectively and create Canada’s first VLRs to report on progress toward achieving the SDGs.

### The Winnipeg-way to the SDGs

Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman emphasized the wide-ranging, integrated approach Manitoba’s capital city is taking to meet the SDGs, beginning with My Peg, an online resource that tracks the city’s progress on all 17 SDGs. “What gets measured gets done,” said Mayor Bowman, noting the city’s 2019 benchmarking report *Our City: A Peg Report on Winnipeg and the SDGs*.<sup>27</sup> Along with implementing a variety of low-carbon and affordable transportation initiatives, this year the city is launching its first municipal composting program to aid in waste diversion from landfills. Jessica Espey, Senior Adviser and Director, UN SDSN Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics (TReNDS) noted that they’re collaborating with cities around the world to identify, develop and synchronize, when possible, local, grid-based urban SDG data metrics.

### Urban trees grow the SDGs

During the pandemic, one of the notable differences between individual’s quality of life is whether they have access to green space, producing a renewed recognition of the transformative role of trees in making cities liveable, resilient and sustainable. Planting trees positively influences at least eight SDGs, from health to equity and economics, noted Johanne Elsener in the *Le verdissement urbain ou redonner du vert à la ville* session. The session profiled how the collaborative engagement of more than a half-dozen Quebec City area public and non-profit organizations is a key part of achieving the city’s Tree Vision 2015-2025 which aims to boost overall urban canopy cover.

Elsener, the coordinator of *Ça marche Doc!*, an organization that promotes the health benefits of daily walking, said that physical activity and overall health is tightly linked to green spaces—the reason *Ça marche Doc!* also works to increase urban green space. David Viens, *Coordonnateur de projet en milieux naturels, Le Conseil régional de l’environnement (CRE) – région de la Capitale-Nationale* emphasized that trees are key to a city’s ecological, economic and social resilience—particularly in the context of climate change. Green spaces “flatten the curve” of water run-off, acting as a sponge to absorb water and thus reduce flooding and droughts. « Amener la nature en ville amène de la résilience, » said Viens.

25 International Standards Organization. (2018). ISO 37120:2018 Sustainable cities and communities – Indicators for city services and quality of life. Retrieved from: <https://www.iso.org/standard/68498.html>

26 Courey, M. & Patricio, L. (2020). London Ontario SDG Indicators: A city-based set of indicators localized from the UN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators. Retrieved from: <https://www.povertyresearch.ca/reports-papers/localizing-the-sdg-indicators-2020/>

27 My Peg. (2020). 2019 Our City: A Peg Report on Winnipeg and the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: <https://www.mypeg.ca/2019-our-city-a-peg-report-on-winnipeg-and-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

### Turning asphalt into green space

Creating more green space often goes hand-in-hand with reducing the space devoted to cars, and increasing that for active transportation, noted Antoine Paquet-Moisan, *Le Jour de la Terre Demain la Forêt – Ville de Québec*. For example, in one of Québec City's more densely populated and poorest neighbourhoods, La Cité-Limoilou, there is the city's lowest level of canopy cover, just 17% and very little public or private space to plant trees. Thus, greening such grey neighbourhoods requires reimagining existing land use, notably the large percentage of space devoted to cars.

In 2019, the City of Winnipeg launched the One Million Tree Challenge – a whole community effort to triple the city's arboreal population on public lands as the city grows to a human population of one million in the next 20 years.

Québec City



# Data and evidence-based decision making for the SDGs

During the COVID-19 pandemic Canadians watched daily evidence-based decision making in action as never before. From the initial focus on flattening the curve to debate on data-driven contact tracing, the pandemic highlights the critical importance of data in driving evidence-based decision making, particularly on issues of broad public concern.

Likewise, Canadians have watched health and science advice and policy in action as never before. « On a jamais vu on n’a jamais entendu parler autant de sciences qu’en cette période de pandémie les chercheurs sont présents sur la place publique donnent des avis au gouvernement, » Québec’s Chief Scientist Rémi Quirion told Together|Ensemble 2020. As we head into the Decade of Action, conference participants explored our current state in the revolution in data collection, analysis and governance required to support Agenda 2030.

## Building Canada’s federal SDGs data foundation

Since 2015, the federal government has moved from envisioning to implementing a new era of SDG-related data collection and analysis, said Patrice Martineau, Chief of SDG Data, Statistics Canada. The centrepiece is Statistics Canada’s Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub which is responsible for the collection, collation, analysis, presentation and dissemination of data for regular monitoring of Canadian progress against the global indicators.<sup>28</sup> Martineau noted that Statistics Canada is continuing to examine data sources that may be useful for reporting on the SDGs with a focus on finding and assessing “good data”—information that accurately and reliably measures a particular goal.

## Auditor tracking link between SDG words and action

In its 2018 audit of the federal government’s SDG implementation preparedness, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) found that “Canada lacked a federal governance structure and a plan to implement the 2030 Agenda.”<sup>29</sup> This was, in part, remedied months later by the release of *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy*.<sup>30</sup> Now, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD), the part of the OAG responsible for the SDGs, is preparing its next comprehensive audit of government progress in meeting its specific Agenda 2030 commitments, to be published in 2021. CESD reports directly to Parliament and the performance audits are designed to see if “government is doing what it said it would do,” Kimberley Leach, Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, told the conference.

## Technology outpacing laws for data use

Technological advances in data gathering, including crowdsourcing and satellites, are providing a data “infodemic” yet there are numerous data management issues limiting the use of SDG-relevant data, including privacy concerns, said Jessica Espey Senior Adviser and Director, UN SDSN Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics (TReNDS). “The technologists are way ahead of public policy and law. At the moment, the big focus is trying to get national frameworks right so that there are good overarching safety, security, and ethical data use guidelines within which public and private operators have to work,” she said. In Canada’s case the federal government is currently in the process of consultation and planning to update Canada’s Privacy Act to bring it into the digital age.

28 Statistics Canada. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub. Retrieved from: <https://www144.statcan.gc.ca/sdg-odd/index-eng.htm>

29 Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2018). Report 2—Canada’s Preparedness to Implement the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/att\\_\\_e\\_43001.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/att__e_43001.html)

30 Government of Canada. (2019). Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030/national-strategy.html>

### Cultural bridges needed to move SDG data

In his presentation, Rémi Quirion, Chief Scientist of Québec emphasized that decision making to address COVID-19 has revealed, once again, the long-term challenges of functional divides in governments' evidence-based decision-making processes. He noted the need to find ways to diminish silos and develop bridges between government ministries, noting that for large ministries such as a Ministry of Health, there are numerous intra-ministerial silos. He also noted that policy makers and scientists speak different languages, emphasizing different ways of seeing the world, and that there's the ongoing need to create functional "bilingualism" between these groups in order to achieve the SDGs.

### Indigenous data sovereignty

While the SDGs are a good start for conversations, Jonathan Dewar, CEO of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) told Together|Ensemble 2020 that in some cases they aren't a good fit for First Nations communities. "In working through the SDGs [with the federal government], we've been able to identify where they don't work for First Nations, where they fail to capture First Nations world views on issues so there is an adaptation that we see or even the development of new approaches for looking at these issues," said Dewar. For example, while individual rights are a focus in the broader Canadian community over data, in First Nations the discussion also includes collective rights. In its mission that every First Nation achieves data sovereignty in alignment with its distinct world view, in June 2020 FNIGC released Canada's first national strategy on the topic: A First Nations Data Governance Strategy.<sup>31</sup>

### New tool for providing rapid science advice

During the pandemic, science advisors often had had just hours to provide a yes or no answer to policy questions. In response, John Lavis, Founder of the McMaster Health Forum told the conference the Forum has extended its SDG policy support mechanisms by creating an evidence-based rapid response model that can produce reports in just three hours. The model can be used or adapted by other groups that are supporting decision-makers on questions with very short turn-around times.

« En ce moment on est en train de prendre un virage très important à le démocratiser les connaissances en analyse de cycle de vie qui vise à offrir des outils pour la prise de décisions pour les citoyens. »

Cécile Bulle, the International Chair on Life Cycle at CIRAIG at the University of Quebec

### Life cycle facts for sustainable citizen action

Several speakers highlighted the need to increase data access for individual citizens to empower us to make consumer-level evidence-informed decisions, and to engage citizens in discussions about data use and definitions. This ranged from better assessing how citizens define food security to engaging Canadians on issues of data security and sharing. Cécile Bulle, the International Chair on Life Cycle at CIRAIG at the University of Quebec in Montreal told participants that her focus is on getting produce life cycle data to consumers. « En ce moment on est en train de prendre un virage très important à le démocratiser les connaissances en analyse de cycle de vie qui vise à offrir des outils pour la prise de décisions pour les citoyens, » said Bulle. She's the lead author of the 2019 paper *IMPACT World+: A globally regionalized life cycle impact assessment method* which addresses the need for a globally regionalized method for life cycle impact assessment.<sup>32</sup>

### Urban data for all

The City of Winnipeg is a leader in the municipal open-data movement with its City of Winnipeg Open Data Portal, said Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman. Open data can be freely used, shared and built-on by anyone, anywhere, for any purpose. The Portal's extensive data collection – on everything from building permits to bus route – is available for anyone who wants to use it, and the city encourages public input through events such as data hackathons.

31 First Nations Information Governance Centre. (2020). A First Nations Data Governance Strategy. Retrieved from: <https://fnigc.ca/news/introducing-first-nations-data-governance-strategy.html>

32 Bulle, C. et al. (2019). IMPACT World+: a globally regionalized life cycle impact assessment method. *The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment*, 24(9), 1653-1674. Retrieved from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11367-019-01583-0>

# SDGs-based economics

## Now is the time for transformation

Together|Ensemble 2020 participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound economic impact has exposed many of the underlying conditions that threaten our long-term social, environmental and economic health. These range from precarious work to unsustainable supply chains and a stock market disjointed from main street economic realities. In wide ranging conversations, participants connected the dots between decent work, income inequality, sustainable procurement and investing, clean energy, climate change and overall individual and societal economic resilience.

Speakers emphasized that since 2015 a critical mass has emerged from municipal, provincial, federal, private sector and individual citizen level efforts which holds the potential to significantly shift what and how we buy and where we invest and divest. Yet what was clear in conversations is that while there are many new SDG-oriented public and private economic initiatives, we are at a tipping point in terms of turning these into action at the transformative scale required to meet Canada's Agenda 2030 commitments.

### **Sustainable procurement as a double green bottom line**

“One of the keys to helping businesses shift to sustainable procurement is to help them see it as a benefit rather than a burden,” said Jane Zhang, Co-Founder & COO, ETCH Sourcing. “By integrating the SDGs [into procurement practices] as a driver rather than just as a measure, you start to really drive opportunities and impact,” she told Together|Ensemble 2020. Zhang works with business clients to improve their profitability by actively applying an SDG-lens, including reducing waste and resource use and emphasizing a circular economy. She noted that this sustainable reorientation doesn't require high-level expertise and isn't expensive or time-consuming. What it does require are bridging discussions between procurement professionals and sustainability experts, using the SDGs as the bridge.

### **Who's buying what? Getting the procurement data**

“The federal government spends \$20 billion CA annually on goods and services and has the potential to play a much larger role in nurturing a culture of sustainable procurement in Canada,” Bob Willard, a spokesperson for the Sustainable Procurement Barometer 2020, told the conference. “There's a lot of opportunity for businesses to be more engaged with the SDGs than they currently are,” said Willard, and noted that the federal government could do this by strengthening its policy on green procurement. “The federal government... [could] make it a prerequisite for any supplier that wants to do business with [it] to simply disclose how they are doing on the SDGs. This would be a real wake-up call to businesses that the SDGs matter.”

During Together|Ensemble 2020, Barometer 2020 launched the third edition of its Sustainable Procurement Barometer initiative. It's using an online questionnaire between May 25 and August 28, 2020 to engage government ministries and agencies, municipalities, health, social services and education institutions of all sizes and businesses and non-profit organizations with more than 500 employees to evaluate sustainable procurement progress and identify levers for improvement within organizations. The Barometer 2020 results will be made public in October 2020.

### **Developing a sustainable procurement mindset**

One of the hurdles to the federal government driving a sustainable procurement mindset is the political culture in North America in which governments adapt comparatively few public policy measures regulating businesses, noted Anne-Marie Saulnier, *Directrice, Espace de concertation sur les pratiques d'approvisionnement responsable (ECPAR)*, a partner in the Sustainable Procurement Barometer 2020 project. She also noted that governments and businesses have focused primarily on only one pillar of sustainable procurement – the products themselves – and need to place more emphasis on the second pillar, the sustainable practices of the supplier in terms of social and environmental responsibility.

## “Employees want to work for companies that are purposeful. Millennials were increasingly sensitive to how their companies were addressing issues such as income equality, hunger and the environment [...]”

Eric Saarvala, Strategic Account Executive - Employee Engagement & Foundation Solutions, Blackbaud Canada

### Attracting SDG-positive employees

Sustainable procurement isn't just about products and services, it can also have a big impact on a company's ability to attract and retain talent, said Eric Saarvala, Strategic Account Executive in Employee Engagement & Foundation Solutions at Blackbaud Canada. “Employees want to work for companies that are purposeful,” said Saarvala. Citing a recent report, he noted that “Millennials were increasingly sensitive to how their companies were addressing issues such as income equality, hunger and the environment and 88% of Millennials believe that employers should play a vital role in alleviating these concerns. So, this becomes a talent attraction management and development strategy.”

### What's sustainable procurement?

A procurement strategy that uses criteria that are compatible and in favour of the protection of the environment, of social progress and in support of economic development, namely by seeking resource efficiency, improving the quality of products and services and ultimately optimizing costs.<sup>33</sup>

### Business leadership on sustainable procurement

Cynthia Shanks, Director of Sustainability and Communications at Keurig-Dr. Pepper (KDP) Canada mentioned that KDP is the world's largest purchaser of fair-trade coffee. KDP is also a leader in committing to sourcing, producing and distributing its products responsibly with its *Drink Well. Do Good* strategy. This corporate responsibility platform includes efforts around circular packaging, efficient natural resource use and supply chain sustainability. “When we choose the ingredients and materials that go into

our products and packaging, we carefully consider how these decisions affect every step of the journey, from our farmers and suppliers to our partners, employees and communities. In all we do, we are committed to acting responsibly and being a force for positive impact,” said Shanks.

In April 2020, the Canadian Collaboration for Sustainable Procurement (CCSP) released its 2019 Annual Report on the State of Sustainable Public Procurement in Canada: A Roadmap to a New Economy Through Coronavirus Response and Recovery Spending.<sup>34</sup> The report highlights the latest sustainable procurement trends, and benchmarks CCSP municipal members against each other, as well as featuring member success stories.

### Making sure the positive impact is real

Concordia University graduate student and Vanier scholar Sherif Goubran noted that in his research on sustainable architecture and building, incremental changes are sometimes hyped as transformational, a type of “greenwashing” or “impact washing.” This highlighted the need for programs like the global Impact Management Project which provides businesses and investors who manage environmental, social and governance risks, and who want to contribute positively to global goals, with common, measurable standards for both positive and negative SDG-related impacts.

### Workers as owners and investors—a model for advancing the SDGs

Workers in Canada could have a greater impact on driving positive SDG-related investing through the “capital stewardship” of their pension funds, said Shannon Rohan, Chief Strategy Officer for SHARE. The company provides

33 United Nations Global Marketplace. (2017). What is sustainable procurement? Retrieved from: [https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/PT\\_SUST?utm\\_source=Memberful&utm\\_campaign=c62aed49e7-Day+2+Together+Ensemble+Conference&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a2753435bf-c62aed49e7-369407484&mc\\_cid=c62aed49e7&mc\\_eid=5a95492295](https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/PT_SUST?utm_source=Memberful&utm_campaign=c62aed49e7-Day+2+Together+Ensemble+Conference&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a2753435bf-c62aed49e7-369407484&mc_cid=c62aed49e7&mc_eid=5a95492295)

34 Reeve Consulting. (2019). 2019 Annual Report on the State of Sustainable Public Procurement in Canada. Retrieved from: [https://www.reeveconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Reeve\\_2019\\_State-of-the-Nation-vFIN.pdf](https://www.reeveconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Reeve_2019_State-of-the-Nation-vFIN.pdf)

responsible investing strategies for large organizations, including pension funds, foundations, religious organizations and portfolio managers. She told Together|Ensemble 2020 that in OECD countries there's about \$32 trillion US in workers' capital held in pension funds, with about \$1.5 trillion US in Canada.<sup>35</sup> She suggested that these pension funds need to be at the decision-making table with companies and use their voices and power to discuss systemic issues. This includes "intergenerational equity in terms of pension funds ability to fulfill that fiduciary duty not only to those folks who are retiring now or in ten years but you know for the young beneficiaries who are looking forward to what our system, economy and world are going to look like in 30 years," said Rohan.

Taylor Sekhon, Director of Social Capital Partners said that they see the significant pandemic-related economic shifts as a generational opportunity for Canadian workers to gain greater control of businesses. "We're focused right now on helping business owners that are looking to retire to actually transition their companies to employee ownership. We think it's a great model to help workers build wealth and to sort of address some of the power dynamics [that drive inequality]," he said.

### Capitalism: Can we meet Agenda 2030 with it?

Responsible capitalism, stakeholder capitalism, platform capitalism, donut economics, and regenerative capitalism were all terms heard during Together|Ensemble 2020 as participants discussed the state of work, investing and business leadership in the context of achieving Agenda 2030. Conversations in several sessions highlighted the need to challenge and reform a traditional capitalist economic system based on colonialism, waste, ever increasing consumption, externalized environmental costs and success metrics that ignore the SDGs, such as gross domestic product (GDP).

Raphaële Chappe, Economic Advisor and Founding Partner of the New York-based Predistribution Initiative told the conference that the proportion of GDP that goes to workers has declined steadily in most OECD countries since about 1990, in parallel with an increase in precarious or gig-economy work and increasing industrial concentration and private equity ownership of companies. "One of the lasting consequences of COVID will certainly be even more economic concentration," she said. Concurrent with these changes, there is an ongoing generational attitudinal shift towards the benefits and costs of capitalism. A much reported 2016 Harvard study found that half of Millennials are opposed to capitalism.<sup>36</sup>

"[If we want to meet the SDGs] youth need to act as co-conspirators with one another...the word ally is used a lot, but I prefer co-conspirator in actively dismantling systems of oppression and capitalism. If we want to meet the SDGs, there's no possible way we can while living under capitalist and colonialist governments," said Lindsey Bacigal Communications Director, Indigenous Climate Action.

### What's predistribution?

The term predistribution, was coined by Yale political scientist, Jacob Hacker. Instead of only redistribution, which calls for addressing economic inequalities via taxes, benefits, and philanthropy after the fact, predistribution is the idea that society should try to prevent such inequalities from occurring in the first place.

### SDGs on Canadian business leaders' minds

Former premier of New Brunswick Brian Gallant shared with Together|Ensemble 2020 some of the relevant high-level results from a soon-to-be-published landscape review he's been conducting in his role as Chief Sustainability Officer at Global Canada on the changing relationship between Canadian businesses and the broader society. "In our interview guide we don't mention climate change, we don't mention inequalities, we don't mention the mistrust that we are starting to see and feel and in institutions but yet almost all of those topics come up in every interview," said Gallant of the more than 80 interviews with corner office executives he conducted. "So, what I find really fascinating [is that] those topics are coming up organically which I think is all that much more powerful and leads me to believe that the business community recognize that things are changing. [They see that] these are topics that are not just government and public policy [questions, but ones for] everybody including businesses," said Gallant.

This trend is also present in the finance sector, as was pointed out by Pauline d'Amboise, Secretary General and Vice-President, Governance and Sustainable Development of Desjardins Group. Her organization is part of the international commitment to integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria in financial, banking and insurance entities that wish to become more responsible.

35 OECD. (2020). Pension Funds in Figures. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/pensions/private-pensions/Pension-Funds-in-Figures-2020.pdf>

36 Foroohar, R. (2016, May). American capitalisms great crisis. Time Magazine. Retrieved from: <https://time.com/4327419/american-capitalisms-great-crisis/>

# Baking SDGs into K to U education

With schools across Canada, and around the world, closed due to the pandemic, the importance and precariousness of access to education was top-of-mind to conference participants. Together|Ensemble 2020 heard that primary and secondary schools across Canada are playing a critical role in informing students about the SDGs and inspiring them to take action in their communities. Educators across Canada have developed new, innovative SDG-related classroom-ready curricula and ways to integrate a sense of global citizenship into Canada's diverse education system.

These and other innovations are making Canada's primary, secondary and post-secondary schools hubs of education and leadership on the SDGs through:

**Resource sharing** — Formal and informal educators are creating a powerful web of resources, opportunities and programs.

**Best practices** — SDG educators are developing best practices based on localized experiences.

**New technologies** — Integrating a SDGs lens into the use of new technologies.

## Teaching SDGs in a global pandemic

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, about 90% of students worldwide had in-person schooling disrupted, said Isabelle LeVert-Chiasson, Program Officer, Education, Canadian Commission for UNESCO. In response, the Commission quickly created a free online toolkit for educators with a range of activities and best practices for students of all ages to learn about global citizenship, sustainable development, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

## Coding for change

Having introduced more than 300,000 students and 50,000 teachers to the basics of computer coding and built an enthusiastic nation-wide coding community, Juliet Waters,

Chief Knowledge Officer for Kids Code Jeunesse told conference participants that “This year we took on the challenge of taking all of this enthusiasm and really putting it towards the SDGs in a very formal way.” This includes dedicated programs on coding and climate change action. In addition, their #kids2030 initiative is bringing artificial intelligence, ethics, and global issues to the forefront of kids' education.

## Giving students a global perspective

The lack of ready-to-use SDG resources is a key hurdle for even the most motivated teacher, said Amy Bosche, Education Program Coordinator, Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation. To address this challenge the Council has created four classroom-ready modules to help teachers integrate global citizenship education in their classrooms. Based on Saskatchewan's provincial curriculum guidelines, the free resources are being downloaded by educators across Canada. “In order to move humanity towards sustainable, peaceful solutions to global challenges, schools need to prepare students to become critically informed, motivated, globally competent citizens with social problem-solving skills and a willingness to challenge misinformation and government inaction,” said Bosche.

## Growing sustainability

At *Collège Beaubois* in Montreal the school's greenhouse (*Serre Beaubois*) has become a pivotal site for growing sustainable innovation and consciousness in the school, students' families and the community. This involves everything from Grade 9 students designing and building an automated greenhouse system, to creating seed packets and seedlings for starting home gardens and a community garden—not to mention fruits and vegetables from the greenhouse used in the school cafeteria.

“[With the greenhouse program] young people see that they can have a positive impact on their communities,” said *Collège Beaubois* teacher Lydia Touisi.

ACCORDING TO THE TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY IMPACT RANKINGS,

## Canada has 4 of the world's top 20 universities for SDG education

### An early start on reconciliation

In Quebec's Gaspésie region Project Harmony twinned kindergarten and grade one classes in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to create a more inclusive and integrated community. The program uses play, sharing and learning about one another's languages, families and histories to create strong, healthy bonds of friendship and understanding between students of different backgrounds. The highly successful program has been turned into a case study and implementation guidebook for use in other communities.

« Chaque citoyen a un rôle actif à jouer pour réduire les inégalités et combattre l'exclusion sociale. L'élimination de pratiques discriminatoire passe par l'ouverture, la curiosité, et l'écoute, qui constituent des valeurs inhérentes à l'éducation et facilement transmissibles aux enfants qui sont les leaders de demain, » said CIRADD's Sarah-Jane Parent.

### SDGs at the post-secondary level

Together|Ensemble 2020 heard that students and professors at Canada's post-secondary institutions are developing innovative ways to prepare students for a future of growing complexity, incorporating the SDGs in career education, and embracing social innovation practices in order to work across difference and integrate diverse worldviews into sustainability curricula. This educational leadership is essential to push for the societal, economic, and environmental transformations needed to make progress on the SDGs.

### Canadian universities—world leaders in SDGs education

Canada has four of the world's top 20 universities for SDG education, according to *The Times Higher Education's Global University Impact Rankings*, the only such global assessment.<sup>37</sup>

The 2020 edition included 768 universities from 85 countries. Canada also hosts two of the International Association of Universities SDG clusters, with Education for Sustainable Development at York University and Responsible Consumption at the University of Regina.

Combine this with the fact that Canada has the world's highest rate of citizens with university degrees and the conference heard that there's enormous opportunity to use Canada's post-secondary system as a change agent.<sup>38</sup> “[University graduates] will be the vast majority of decision makers and societal influencers and we really need these leading voices to be committed to sustainable development,” said Katrin Kohl, Executive Chair Coordinator at the UNESCO Chair in reorienting education towards sustainability at York University.

### Renewable assignments

At Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), Professor Candy Ho has transformed the post-university career transitions course she teaches into one that combines personal and global transformation. SDGs are integrated into the entire course's design and content. The course is also pioneering renewable assignments, ones “[T]hat add value to a student's world, and they continue to think about these assignments beyond the course,” said Ho. “[This is] opposed to disposable assignments which likely only the student and instructor will see, and the student will throw it away after the course.” Her work integrating SDGs into her courses is supported by a UN Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Fellowship, linking KPU with Montgomery College (Maryland, USA).

37 Times Higher Education. (2020) World University Impact Rankings 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2020/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/undefined](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2020/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined)

38 Statistics Canada. (2017). Education in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129a-eng.htm>

### 2021 Summer school for change agents

Montreal-based *Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche en opérationnalisation du développement durable* (CIRODD) is leading the creation of a unique international summer school in societal transformation, to be held in Montreal in 2021. “The goal of the summer school is to pilot the development of a program that is geared to the training of individuals who really aspire to be agents of change and agents of transformation,” said Carolyn Hatch, CIRODD’s coordinator of strategic projects. The school is being developed using a social innovation approach co-creating the pedagogy and curriculum with local stakeholders, including Concordia University and the City of Montreal. It is also integrating the knowledge of sustainability experts with that of those impacted by sustainability issues.

### Intergenerational equity requires youth at the table

“The definition of sustainable development is meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs. So intergenerational equity is fundamental [and means] we must have youth participation in SDG decision-making,” said Beth Eden, National Youth Network Coordinator, SDSN Canada.

### Fostering student SDG action

On campuses across Canada, student leaders are turning their passion for sustainable development into all-campus action. During Together|Ensemble 2020, 36 student leaders representing 18 institutions in six provinces attended a workshop led by SDSN Canada, the University of Calgary’s Sustainable Development Goals Alliance and *l’Alliance étudiante en développement durable de l’Université Laval* aimed at supporting on-campus SDG leadership.

The network developed at this workshop will continue to support the creation of SDG alliances on Canadian post-secondary campuses through ongoing national programming and mentoring. Alliances are created to utilize the already-existing sustainability-focused student clubs and services on campuses to collaborate under the SDGs. Their main goal is to increase collaboration around SDG implementation through various student bodies.

University of Calgary

Université Laval

Photos: ucalgary.ca

Photos: Alliance étudiante en développement durable de l’Université Laval – Facebook page

# Collaboration

During a pandemic when collaboration at every level is at the forefront, from buying groceries for a vulnerable neighbour to unprecedented scientific collaboration to develop a vaccine, collaboration was a key issue woven throughout many of the Together|Ensemble 2020 conversations.

The online gathering represented the most bilingual and pan-Canadian SDG discussion since the inception of the Together|Ensemble movement, creating the basis for new connections between organizations across Canada. Participants heard examples of important new SDG-related collaborations, new ways to collaborate and the absolute necessity of collaboration to achieve the formidable goals of Agenda 2030.

## **Extraordinary and creative collaboration is required**

Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, set the tone at the start of Together|Ensemble 2020 by declaring that “We are going to need extraordinary and creative means of collaboration to mitigate this [COVID-19] calamity.” He noted that while collaboration on SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being is currently the highest priority, local communities, multilateral institutions, and various levels of government must find new ways to form partnerships to drive a more resilient all-of-society recovery. Brookings Institution Senior Fellow John McArthur said that this will require broadening our sense of global cooperation. “We have a mismatch between what the world is willing to do in terms of cooperation and a problem that can’t be solved without cooperation,” he said. “It’s the quintessential public good challenge in which I’m not better unless you’re better.

This is something that will require many new forms of cooperation, and many new forms of multilateralism.”

## **Sustainable funding for success**

Conference digital content partner Future of Good profiled how the response to the COVID-19 pandemic could positively change foundation grant-making, enabling organizations to more nimbly promote action on the SDGs.<sup>39</sup> Most of the organizations involved in advancing Canada’s SDG community are small, not-for-profit NGOs, many of them charities. Much of their program funding, including that enabling partnerships, is from foundations and various levels of government. One core challenge is that most of this funding to date has been programmatic. However, pandemic-period funding changes have demonstrated funders’ and recipients’ ability to use a trust-based unrestricted funding.<sup>40</sup> This enables organizations to allocate resources strategically, quickly and collaboratively, opening the way to innovative new programs and partnerships—rather than spending time envisioning programs and then waiting to see if funding is approved.

## **Benefits of virtual collaboration**

Disability rights activist Farrah Seucharan noted that the pandemic, and the rapid transition to online events has broken a logjam of resistance. “Many people with disabilities have been asking for virtual consultations for years and only saw them come to life when abled-bodied people asked for it due to COVID-19. We will continue to fight for this long after the pandemic ends,” she said.

39 Graham, K. (2020, April). COVID-19 could change foundation grant-making forever. Future of Good. Retrieved from: <https://futureofgood.co/covid-19-could-change-foundation-grant-making-forever/>

40 Harper, T. (2020, April). Relaxed Funding Approaches Provide Crucial Lifeline to Charities Grappling with the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Philanthropist. Retrieved from: <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2020/04/relaxed-funding-approaches-provide-crucial-lifeline-to-charities-grappling-with-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

### Values-based collaboration between governments and businesses

In discussing the need for government leadership on sustainable procurement, Bob Willard, spokesperson for Sustainable Procurement Barometer 2020, argued that it's reasonable and necessary that the federal government take a values-based approach to partnerships. "If the federal government is trying to reach these SDGs there's no way they can do it without help from the business community, so they want to do business with companies that are [also] contributing to Agenda 2030. We need a more resilient society, a more resilient economy a more resilient socio-economic system, and the attributes of that system are defined by the SDGs," he said.

### Partnership for fresh food security

Conference participants heard the inspiring story of how a collaboration in Kawartha Lakes, Ontario turned 30,000 square feet of unused land at the Crayola Canada headquarters into the thriving Edwin Binney Community Garden. The partnership between Crayola, United Way Kawartha Lakes, Fleming College and others bolsters the local, sustainable food system, providing horticultural training for Fleming College students, and a harvest of fresh produce for local food banks and school nutrition programs.

### COVID-lessons on leadership and collaboration

"Going through crisis our job is to help to bring down the anxiety of the system. And so even when you don't know what you're facing and what the next week is going to bring, to find a way to pull people together and to and to work together to get through it," said Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark.



Edwin Binney Community Garden



# Appendix A

## Together|Ensemble 2020 speakers & program

### **Master of Ceremonies**

Ivan Touko

### **Lead Rapporteur**

Jacob Berkowitz

### **Rapporteur Team**

Nnamdi Akubueze

Tatianna Brierley

Muhammed Koya

Lucas Moffitt

Victoria Than

Aniqah Zowmi

### **Interpreter Team**

Jacques Falquet

Anna Fiechter

Luc Gendreau

Carla Koch

Caroline Napier

Karine Rossbach

Caroline Schutze

Lionel Zambeaux

## **May 20, 2020**

### **Orientation & Land Acknowledgment**

Speakers: The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Benoit Charette, Jean Andrey, Sophie D'Amours, Elsa DaCosta, Kimberley Leach

### **After the Pandemic: Building Back Better in the United Nations Decade of Action**

Moderator: Eva Salinas  
Speakers: Jeffrey D. Sachs, John McArthur, Catherine Potvin, Céline Campagna

### **Data: What is it Good For?**

Moderator: Catherine McIntyre  
Speakers: Patrice Martineau, Jessica Espey, Jonathan Dewar

### **Moral Courage & the Spirit Bear Plan**

Speaker: Cindy Blackstock

### **Pandora's Box: Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier**

Speaker: Katharine Hayhoe

### **A World Tipped on its Side: The Pandemic and Cascading Shocks**

Speaker: Thomas Homer-Dixon

### **Business Leadership to Catalyze Positive and Lasting Change**

Moderator: Peter Armstrong  
Speakers: Cynthia Shanks, Brian Gallant, Pauline D'Amboise

### **Cities, Climate & COVID: Managing a Future with Multiple Threats**

Moderator: Rik Logtenberg  
Speakers: Charlie Clark, Lisa Helps, Berry Vrbanovic

### **There's Something in the Water: Lessons from Nova Scotia's ENRICH Project**

Speaker: Ingrid Waldron

### **Creative Writing Workshop with Webster**

Speaker: Aly Ndiaye aka Webster

## May 21, 2020

### **Our Future, Our Time**

Moderator: Laveza Khan  
Speakers: Sherif Goubran,  
Maxime Lakat, Danielle Hartung,  
Lindsey Bacigal

### **How evidence-informed policy making can accelerate the SDGs**

Moderator: Luce Beaulieu  
Speakers: Rémi Quirion,  
Philippe Gachon, Cécile Bulle,  
Mélanie Busby, John Lavis,  
Cathy Vaillancourt

### **Leaving No One Behind: Addressing Inequality Across Sectors in Atlantic Canada**

Moderator: Jennifer Sloom  
Speakers: Amy Middleton,  
Ashley Copage, Rachel Morgan

### **Localizing the SDGs in Your Community**

Moderator: Stefan Jungcurt  
Speakers: Daniel Forget, Brian  
Bowman, S.S. Ahmad, Anna Marie  
Cipriani, Luis Patricio

### **Partnerships Catalyze Sustainable Food Production and Banking Seed for Our Future: Living Labs for Food and Seed & Their Impacts**

Moderator: Marcy Palmer  
Speakers: Penny Barton Dyke,  
France Tremblay, Brett Goodwin,  
Elly Millington

### **Pathways Toward Decent Work and Economic Resilience**

Moderator: Sean Geobey  
Speakers: Shannon Rohan,  
Raphaële Chappe, Taylor Sekhon

### **The SDGs and K-12 Education**

Moderator: Isabelle LeVert-Chiasson  
Speakers: Juliet Waters, Amy Bosche,  
Lydia Touisi, Sarah-Jane Parent

### **Solution Spotlight: UNESCO Biosphere Reserves**

Speakers: Julie Servant, Kate Potter,  
Thomas Johnson

### **Elect Her: Womxn's Political Participation as a Conduit for Achieving the SDGs**

Moderator: Lesley Tetteh  
Speakers: Anam Rashid, Christina  
Muia, Farrah Seucharan, Jess Notwell

### **Urban Greening or Greening the City: The Underestimated Benefits**

Moderator: Pauline Robert  
Speakers: Johanne Elsener,  
David Viens, Antoine Paquet-Moisan

### **Pathways to Sustainable Land-Use in Canada**

Speakers: Hisham Zerriffi,  
Sophia Murphy, Dominik Roeser

### **Sustainability in the Cultural Sector**

Moderator: Katharine Turvey  
Speakers: Claude Schryer, Christophe  
Rivet, Cody Groat, Ivana Otasevic

### **The SDGs and Higher Education**

Moderator: Katrin Kohl  
Speakers: Candy Ho, Carolyn Hatch,  
Beth Eden

### **The SDGs and Sustainable Procurement**

Moderators: Eric Saarvala  
Speakers: Bob Willard,  
Anne-Marie Saulnier, Jane Zhang

## May 22, 2020

### **Unveiling of Consortium Accélérer 2030 pour le Québec**

### **2020 Sustainable Procurement Barometer Project Launch**

### **Alliance 2030 Workshop**

### **SDSN Canada Membership Workshop**

### **SDG Leaders for Campus Action Workshop**

### **Frameworks for Change with Climate Caucus**

# Appendix B

## Online event considerations

Based on government directives for social distancing, the Together|Ensemble 2020 organizing team decided to pivot to an online event on March 13, 2020. This gave us about ten weeks to design and host an online conference (May 20–22, 2020) that could accommodate French and English speakers and span five time zones.

Knowing that many organizations will be making the same choice in the coming months as the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions make large, in-person gatherings impossible, we want to share what we learned.

## Big picture lessons

### Let your technology choices guide your programming

- Consider what is feasible with the technology you have available to you.
  - Do you have access to multiple video conferencing accounts to run concurrent sessions?
  - Are you planning to offer live interpretation or closed captioning? Assess which video conferencing tools can support those services.
- Consider whether your audience is more likely to engage via mobile or desktop devices and choose tools accordingly.

### Expect the same financial commitment as an in-person event

- Online events require comparable staffing and though money may be saved on food and travel costs you will encounter additional expenses for the expansion and upgrading of online tools.

### Hosting online events has a high cognitive load

- While many aspects of our lives have shifted online since the start of the pandemic our ability to recognize and manage the stress of a digital life is still catching up. Be sure to plan for breaks for your staff and attendees as you plan and execute your events.

### Scheduling

- We live in a big country with 5 time zones. Determine how long you want your conference day to be and design your programming to accommodate reasonable times from coast to coast.

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## Staffing

### Pre-event

The organizing team had 3 full time staff and 4 part-time staff, as well as access to a network of support working during the pre-event period to accomplish the tasks below:

- Contracts, media releases and honoraria
- Liaising with IT staff
- Liaising with translators and interpreters
- Organizing Day 1 programming and speakers (invited speakers)
- Organizing Day 2 programming and speakers (speakers selected through call for proposals)
- Liaising with Day 3 side event organizers
- Grants and sponsorship
- Conference website management
- Communications planning and programming (social media and email)
- Managing online tools (Eventbrite and Sched)
- Partner and network management
- Logistical support for committee work-flow and decision making
- Generating visual content
- Setting up all Zoom Webinars & Meetings including emailing speaker links

## Event

During the event, sessions were staffed as follows:

	Plenary Sessions	Concurrent Session 1	Concurrent Session 2	Concurrent Session 3	Concurrent Session 4	Concurrent Session 5	Concurrent Session 6	Support
Back-of-house	IT Lead	IT Lead			IT Liaison			IT Liaison
	Background moderator	Background moderator	Background moderator	Background moderator	Background moderator	Background moderator	Background moderator	Social media
	Interpreters (2)	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter
Rapporteur		Rapporteur	Rapporteur	Rapporteur	Rapporteur	Rapporteur	Rapporteur	
Front-of-house	MC	On-screen moderator	Email support					
	Lead Rapporteur & Team	Speakers	Speakers	Speakers	Speakers	Speakers	Speakers	

- The IT Leads set up the Zoom Webinars and Meetings, ran tech checks with the interpreters and speakers, shared their screen with slide content and played ambient music.
- The IT Liaison communicated tech issues and the needs of background moderators and audiences to the IT Lead.
- The background moderator participated in the tech check, talked through issues with speakers, posted essential information in the chat, moderated the chat discussion and Q&A function.
- Interpreters provided live interpretation from English to French and/or French to English.
- Rapporteurs took notes during sessions and reported their findings back during plenary.
- The on-screen moderator was responsible for introducing the session, interacting with the speakers and keeping the session on topic and on time.

## Advice on event roles

### Front-of-house vs. back-of-house

- Divide the tech roles from the on-screen roles.

### IT Lead

- This role is very heavy on technical knowledge and requires a great deal of multi-tasking. We were able to access this expertise through one of our partner organizations.
- Our IT Lead had access to multiple computers to run each concurrent session.

### IT Liaison

- This person is your showrunner, an essential role that requires intimate knowledge of the whole event. This role should be staffed by someone with substantial event experience and who understands the technology being used.
  - This is not a good role for a volunteer being engaged on a short-term basis.
- This role requires strong trust-based relationships, ready access to the IT Lead, background moderators, interpreters and speakers, and an in-depth knowledge of the event schedule.
- The IT Liaison must be part of pre-event tech checks and pre-event communication between event organizers, moderators and interpreters.
- Ensure this role has a clear line of communication to the IT Lead and to the background moderators outside of the video conferencing platform (ex. text message).

### Background moderators

- We suggest having at least 2 background moderators per session.
- Ensure all your background moderators are trained on all the features of your video conferencing tool that you wish to use (ex. Q&A, chat, polls, breakout rooms, etc.).
- Ensure your training covers common scenarios (ex. how can you direct message an attendee or speaker, how do you promote an attendee to a panelist, how to troubleshoot interpreter issues on the fly, etc.) and time for each moderator to practice each skill.
- Have a copy/paste script of content to share uniform messages (ex. covering tech FAQs, directing people to use the Q&A, links to what is coming up next).
- Prepare background moderators to work with interpreters.

### On-camera moderators

- Ensure your on-camera moderators have a clear line of communication to the background moderator to address any tech issues, programming updates, etc.
- Work with your on-screen moderators on time management strategies (ex. using the chat function to manage the flow of conversation or give time warnings, etc.).

### Rapporteurs

- As our event used concurrent sessions, reports from our rapporteur team in the plenary sessions gave our audience insight into what happened in the sessions they missed.
- Rapporteur notes informed our post-conference report.

### Interpreters

- English-to-French and French-to-English interpretation was provided by International Conference Interpreters - <http://www.conferenceinterpreters.ca/>
- Engage interpreters as soon as possible as their insights into technology, scheduling and programming will be valuable to your event design.
  - To manage their cognitive load interpreters, have specific parameters around coverage (i.e., length of shift) and require significant tech run throughs.
- Arrange a pre-event tech run through with interpreters to ensure everyone is comfortable using the technology and to build a rapport with the IT Lead and IT Liaison.
  - The run through should include slides or other assets as well as speech only to interpret to give interpreters a clear understanding of what will be expected during the event
- Pass on session assets (ex. slides, videos, outlines) ahead of time. Being able to review this material ahead of time eases the cognitive load of interpreters as they will know what to expect in each session and can develop an approach to translating acronyms and jargon.
- Encourage all presenters to use headsets for the benefit of the interpreters.
  - Improved audio quality contributes to the overall accuracy of the interpretation.

## Tools

Together|Ensemble 2020 used Zoom Webinars, Zoom Meetings, Eventbrite and Sched as our main event hosting tools.

### Zoom

- The choice to use Zoom was made for two main reasons:
  - We had access to multiple business licenses and IT expertise through one of our partner organizations.
  - Zoom supports an alternative audio track for live interpretation.
- We used a combination of Zoom Webinars and Zoom Meetings
- We had access to 6 Zoom business licenses allowing for large capacity meetings.

### Sched

- We had purchased a Sched license for our in-person event expecting people to use it primarily for creating a personalized schedule on their mobile device.
  - In pivoting to an online event, we focused on providing the schedule and links not on the interactive and social features of Sched. We would do things differently next time to provide attendees with a venue to connect with each other.

- As we were offering concurrent sessions, we chose to password protect the Sched schedule rather than have people register for multiple individual settings through Zoom.
  - Our attendees encountered issues with the password and with locating the Zoom links within each calendar entry.

### Eventbrite

- Attendees registered using Eventbrite and through Eventbrite's email function received updates about the event.
  - We had issues with Eventbrite emails being filtered into spam folders, requiring follow-up with participants to get them important details.
- Consider whether your participants are likely to attend one or multiple events and design the registration experience accordingly.

### Together|Ensemble 2020 audience recommendations

- Through our feedback survey we asked attendees about other online conference tools they have found useful:
  - Whova Virtual Conference Platform - <https://whova.com/>
  - Hopin Online Events Platform - <https://hopin.to/>
  - Full function of Sched Event Schedule & Agenda Builder - <https://sched.com/>

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## Going live

### Scheduling

- Include buffer time (5–10 minutes) between sessions especially if running concurrent session (or anything that requires a new link or shift in technology)
  - We did not have adequate buffers in our schedule.
- Schedule breaks for staff and volunteers.
- We live in a big country with 5 time zones. Determine how long you want your conference day to be and design your programming to accommodate reasonable times from coast to coast.

### Setting expectations

- We posted a “how to e-conference” guide and included it in pre-event emails.
  - We suggest setting up a short event demonstration before your event so attendees can practice with the technology ahead of the event.

### Treat your event like a live broadcast

- Don't go live until you're ready
  - We had speakers join the call 15 minutes beforehand for a tech check.
  - Ensure that anyone not introducing the broadcast is on mute.
- Consider sharing a slideshow or video with conference information (ex. sponsors, hashtags, technology tips, etc.) set to music at the start of your broadcast

### Contingency plan

- In the event of a speaker losing internet connection or having other technical issues our back-up plan was to schedule a redo with the panel which would be recorded and distributed.

## Accessibility

### Improving for 2021+

- We did not provide closed captioning or ASL interpretation in 2020 which we intend to remedy in 2021.
    - Automatic captioning and typed captioning tools that integrate into video conference services are available.
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## Audience

### Attendance

- 2,075 unique individuals registered via Eventbrite
    - Some Day 3 side events had separate registrations
  - Based on Zoom usage reports there were 1,659 session visits over the course of the event from 1,469 unique users
    - 921 session visits on Day 1
    - 439 session visits on Day 2
    - 299 session visits on Day 3
  - 190 of the attendees attended multiple sessions
    - 162 people attended two sessions
    - 22 people attended three sessions
    - Four people attended four sessions
    - One person attended five sessions
    - One person attended six sessions
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### Fees

- We offered our program for free to encourage participation at a time when the pandemic was causing great economic uncertainty.
  - We considered charging nominal cost to prevent attrition (ex. \$25).
  - Our conference costs were covered by a grant.
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## Post-event deliverables

### Recordings

- Recordings of the event were lightly edited for time and consistency and posted to YouTube.
  - Using YouTube Studio our team cleaned up the automatically generated transcript for improved closed captioning.
  - Transcripts will be translated into French.

### Report

- We contracted a writer to write this report summarizing the key themes of the event for online publication.
- The writer managed a support team of rapporteurs.
- The report will be published digitally as an AODA-compliant PDF in both English and French.

Jacques Cartier National Park, Quebec



