



Fall 2020

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

### Independent Reviewer's Report

#### REPORT 2

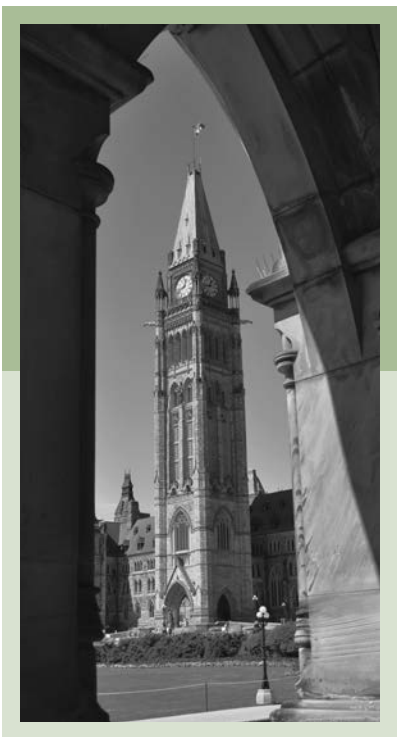
Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies—Safe and Healthy Communities



Office of the  
Auditor General  
of Canada

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du Canada





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The report is available on our website at [www.oag-bvg.gc.ca](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca).

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# Introduction

## Background

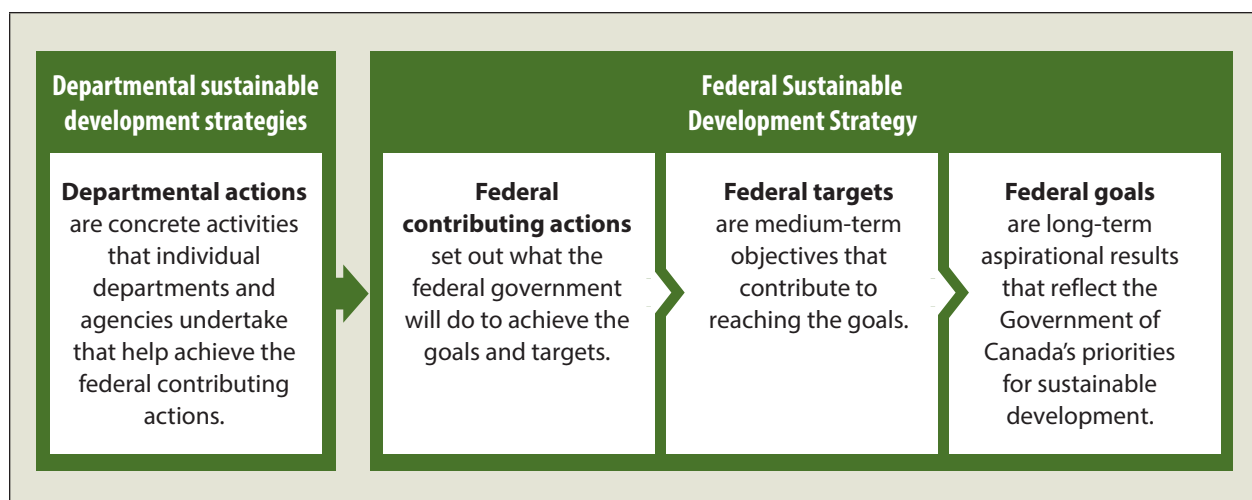
### Departmental sustainable development strategies

2.1 The Government of Canada has committed to sustainable development. Every 3 years, the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy provides a government-wide perspective on environmental and sustainable development goals, targets, and actions.

2.2 In addition, the *Federal Sustainable Development Act* requires certain departments and agencies to

- prepare their own sustainable development strategies
- ensure that these strategies comply with and support the federal strategy (Exhibit 2.1)

**Exhibit 2.1** How departmental strategies intend to support the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy



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

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

2.4 In fall 2019, we began reporting on whether federal departments and agencies supported a specific goal in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. This year, we are reporting on the strategy's goal of safe and healthy communities. This goal includes

- improving air quality
- protecting Canadians from harmful substances
- preventing environmental emergencies or mitigating their impacts

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

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#### United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

2.5 In September 2015, Canada adopted the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, in its guidance, asked departments and agencies to report links, when they exist, between their sustainable development actions and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and targets. In our review this year, we looked at whether departmental progress reporting included such links to the federal strategy goal of safe and healthy communities.

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#### Focus of the review

2.6 This review focused on whether federal departments and agencies contributed to the goal of safe and healthy communities in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

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

2.8 In our review, we examined the 2017–2020 departmental sustainable development strategies of 12 federal departments and agencies that contribute to the goal of safe and healthy communities. We also reviewed the progress these organizations reported in the supplementary tables of their 2018–19 departmental results reports on the federal goal of safe and healthy communities. These 12 federal departments and agencies are as follows:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Health Canada



- Indigenous Services Canada
- National Defence
- Natural Resources Canada
- Parks Canada
- Public Safety Canada
- Public Services and Procurement Canada
- Transport Canada

2.9 This review is important because departmental results reports are intended to inform Parliament about how departments and agencies performed against their departmental strategies. By reviewing progress, we can give assurance to Parliament on the quality of the reports. In turn, these reports can help Parliament and Canadians understand progress toward the goal of safe and healthy communities, which is important for health and well-being. As the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy says, “Canadians need to have clean air to breathe,” and the chemicals that provide many benefits in our everyday lives could be harmful if not properly managed.

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

2.11 More details about the review objective, scope, approach, and criteria are in **About the Review** at the end of this report (see pages 12–14).

## Findings, Recommendations, and Responses

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### Overall message

- 2.12 Overall, the organizations that contribute to the goal of safe and healthy communities reported activities that largely supported the actions set out for this goal in the government’s Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. However, the organizations’ reporting was at times unclear or incomplete, making it difficult for parliamentarians and Canadians to gain a clear sense of overall progress against the goal. For example, no organization stated in its reporting how it intended to address 2 actions related to outdoor air quality. For other actions, organizations omitted to mention key aspects of what they aimed to achieve, such as a performance target, making it challenging or impossible for the reader to grasp the extent of progress made. Clear and complete reporting on progress is important to convey whether departments’ efforts are coming together to support the achievement of Canada’s sustainable development goals.

# Federal sustainable development goal: Safe and healthy communities

## Federal departments and agencies did not completely and clearly report on their contributions to the goal of safe and healthy communities

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### What we found

2.13 We found that departments and agencies collectively reported activities to support a total of 8 of the federal government's 10 contributing actions for the goal of safe and healthy communities. However, 2 of the contributing actions related to outdoor air quality were not reported on by any of the departmental strategies.

2.14 We also found that departments' and agencies' reporting on their actions was often incomplete or unclear. These organizations reported progress on 41 of 50 departmental actions. Of these 41 departmental actions, 8 did not meet the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat guidance on how to report.

2.15 The analysis supporting this finding discusses the following topics:

- Two contributing actions not addressed in departmental strategies
- Flaws in departmental progress reporting
- Departments and agencies identified links between departmental actions and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

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### Why this finding matters

2.16 This finding matters because if departments' and agencies' reporting does not cover all aspects of the federal goal, and if available information on departmental actions is incomplete or unclear, Canadians cannot be certain about the progress made toward the goal of safe and healthy communities.

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### Context

2.17 The 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy sets out 13 long-term goals and 26 medium-term targets. One goal is safe and healthy communities, which aims to have “all Canadians live in clean, sustainable communities that contribute to their health and well-being.”

2.18 To achieve the goal of safe and healthy communities, the strategy lists 10 contributing actions (Exhibit 2.2). Through their departmental actions, the departments and agencies responsible are expected to collectively help achieve all 10 federal contributing actions.

**Exhibit 2.2 Government of Canada’s contributing actions to achieve the goal of safe and healthy communities**

Safe and healthy communities goal
“All Canadians live in clean, sustainable communities that contribute to their health and well-being.”
Targets
<p>The government’s targets to achieve this goal are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Air Quality Management System to decrease the 3-year average of particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compound emissions from regulated and/or targeted sources to below the previous 3-year average.</li> <li>• Implement the Air Quality Management System to increase the percentage of the Canadian population living in areas where measured outdoor concentrations are below the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine particulate matter and ozone compared with the year 2000.</li> <li>• By 2020, address the 4,300 substances identified as priorities for action under the Chemicals Management Plan.</li> </ul>
Contributing actions
<p>The 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy identifies 10 contributing actions to support this goal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate leadership on assessing and remediating contaminated sites.</li> <li>2. Prevent environmental emergencies or mitigate their impacts.</li> <li>3. Better understand air pollutants and harmful substances.</li> <li>4. Provide information to inform action and decision making.</li> <li>5. Use legislation and regulations to address outdoor air pollutant emissions and harmful substances.</li> <li>6. Work with partners on outdoor air quality and chemicals management.</li> <li>7. Support voluntary action to reduce outdoor air pollutant emissions.</li> <li>8. Provide in-kind support and funding to reduce outdoor air pollutants.</li> <li>9. Invest in technologies to improve outdoor air quality.</li> <li>10. Take a leading role in international agreements and collaboration on chemicals management and transboundary air pollution.</li> </ol>
Source: Achieving a Sustainable Future: A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada 2016–2019, Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016

**Recommendations**

2.19 Our recommendations in this area of examination appear at paragraphs 2.23 and 2.24.

### Two contributing actions not addressed in departmental strategies

2.20 We found that no departments or agencies explicitly stated under the goal of safe and healthy communities in their sustainable development strategies how they would address 3 of the 10 contributing actions. As a result, Canadians do not know what actions, if any, the departments or agencies intend to take in these areas. The 3 contributing actions are all related to outdoor air quality:

- Provide in-kind support and funding to reduce outdoor air pollutants.
- Invest in technologies to improve outdoor air quality.
- Support voluntary action to reduce outdoor air pollutant emissions.

2.21 The first 2 contributing actions were not reported on at all by any departments. The third one, supporting voluntary action to reduce outdoor air pollutant emissions, was indirectly reported on by 1 department, Transport Canada. The department told us that it had 2 departmental actions to reduce air pollutant emissions, which also contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions under the federal strategy goal of effective action on climate change. In other words, Transport Canada reported on those 2 air pollutant actions under a different goal, the climate change goal. We acknowledge that Environment and Climate Change Canada's guidance to departments and agencies on sustainable development strategies allows this practice to avoid duplication of reporting. However, without a cross-reference, a reader would have to read the entire report to know whether a contributing action for one goal was reported on for a different goal.

2.22 For the 7 remaining contributing actions, the departments and agencies involved collectively reported some actions that will help achieve the federal targets and goal.

2.23 **Recommendation.** Departments and agencies responsible for helping achieve the goal of safe and healthy communities should collectively ensure that their departmental sustainable development strategies support all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

***Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's response.** Agreed. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will continue to follow the guidance of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy supports all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that are relevant and appropriate to the department's mandate. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will support collective efforts among the departments and agencies involved when preparing future strategies.*

***Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's response.*** Agreed. Going forward, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada commits to

- *finalizing a 2020–2023 departmental sustainable development strategy that supports the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*
- *working with other departments and agencies, and with Environment and Climate Change Canada as the coordinating department, to ensure that Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's departmental sustainable development strategy supports the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*
- *continuing to include progress on its departmental responsibilities and activities within the departmental sustainable development strategy in the supplementary tables of the departmental results report*

*In relation to the gaps noted for the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy under the goal of safe and healthy communities, specifically regarding contributing actions around outdoor air quality, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada confirms that the departmental activities listed under the 2017–2020 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy for the former Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada were attributed to the correct contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and were not related to any of the 3 actions pertaining to outdoor air quality noted by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's review. While Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada does collect some air quality data at the community level by means of the Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program, this data is included in the current departmental sustainable development strategy under the effective action on climate change goal.*

*In future, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada will ensure that its departmental activities for the goal of safe and healthy communities continue to be aligned with the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.*

***Environment and Climate Change Canada's response.*** Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that all federal organizations contributing to a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goal should collectively address all contributing actions.

*With regard to the 2 unaddressed contributing actions, they did not fall under the mandate of the 12 entities covered in this review. Please refer to the department's response to recommendation 2.24 to support more clarity on reporting against contributing actions.*

*Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure that it continues to report on its own departmental actions supporting those contributing actions that fall within its mandate.*

**Fisheries and Oceans Canada's response.** *Agreed. While Fisheries and Oceans Canada is not involved in the 3 contributing actions related to outdoor air quality that were identified under the safe and healthy communities goal, the department will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, where appropriate.*

**Health Canada's response.** *Agreed. Although Health Canada does not contribute to the contributing actions that were identified as missing under the safe and healthy communities goal, the department will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that the department's mandate supports.*

**Indigenous Services Canada's response.** *Agreed. Indigenous Services Canada is committed to working with other departments and agencies, and with Environment and Climate Change Canada as the coordinating department, to ensure that the departmental sustainable development strategies support all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.*

*In regard to the gaps noted for the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy under the goal of safe and healthy communities, specifically pertaining to contributing actions around outdoor air quality, Indigenous Services Canada has confirmed that its departmental activities listed under the 2017–2020 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy for the former Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada were attributed to the correct contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and were not related to any of the 3 actions pertaining to outdoor air quality that the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's review noted.*

*In future, Indigenous Services Canada will ensure that its departmental activities for the goal of safe and healthy communities continue to be aligned with the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, including through its new 2020–2023 departmental sustainable development strategy, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament in September 2020.*

**National Defence's response.** *Agreed. National Defence agrees that contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy should be fully represented in the collective departmental sustainable development strategies of federal departments and agencies.*

*National Defence will ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy includes all contributing actions that fall within its mandate.*

**Natural Resources Canada's response.** Agreed. Natural Resources Canada will continue to follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's and Environment and Climate Change Canada's guidance to ensure that updates to its departmental sustainable development strategy address all relevant contributing actions of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals that fall within its mandate.

**Parks Canada's response.** Agreed. Although Parks Canada does not contribute to the 3 areas of contributing actions that were identified as missing under the safe and healthy communities goal, the agency will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to the areas of contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that the agency's mandate supports.

**Public Safety Canada's response.** Agreed. Public Safety Canada agrees that departmental sustainable development strategies should address the contributing actions within each federal organization's mandate, so that all federal organizations contributing to a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goal would collectively address all contributing actions.

Public Safety Canada will ensure that it continues to report on its own departmental actions supporting those contributing actions that fall within its mandate.

**Public Services and Procurement Canada's response.** Agreed. Public Services and Procurement Canada will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy supports the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy within the department's mandate, consequently supporting collective efforts among other departments and agencies to achieve the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals and targets. Also, the department will ensure that progress reporting makes clear linkages to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals and contributing actions.

**Transport Canada's response.** Agreed. Transport Canada will continue to follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's and Environment and Climate Change Canada's guidance. The department will also ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy fully represents its contributions to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and that the department's progress reporting makes clear linkages to the contributing actions.

**2.24 Recommendation.** Environment and Climate Change Canada should update its guidance to clarify that in their sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should either report directly under a federal sustainable development goal or provide a reference to where reported activities can be found.



**Environment and Climate Change Canada's response.** *Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that any departmental action that supports contributing actions under more than 1 goal should be referenced under all goals to which they apply. Should a department report these departmental actions under only 1 goal, a clear linkage should be made to the other goals it supports.*

*Environment and Climate Change Canada will update future departmental sustainable development strategy guidance to reflect this recommendation.*

### **Flaws in departmental progress reporting**

2.25 The departments and agencies were supposed to report on their progress on a total of 50 actions to support the federal contributing actions on safe and healthy communities. However, we found that in their 2018–19 departmental results reports, they reported on 41 of those 50 departmental actions. That is because of the following:

- Four actions were not reported on by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada. They chose not to report progress in their 2018–19 supplementary tables because of internal changes resulting from the former department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada splitting into these 2 departments.
- Two actions were not reported on by Public Safety Canada after it realigned its internal functions.
- Three actions by Environment and Climate Change Canada are to be reported on only at a later date.

2.26 We found that of the 41 departmental actions reported on, 8 did not meet the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat guidelines on how to report. Among other things, we found there was incomplete or missing information on performance indicators for the federal actions. For example, some indicators were missing a starting point from which to measure progress, or they were missing a performance target.

2.27 We also noted that some departmental actions were not reported on completely and consistently, which made it difficult to understand. For example, we found the following:

- One performance indicator was stated as a number, but the associated target was a rate expressed as a percentage.
- A system to support environmental emergencies was committed to, without stating any expectations for the system or how it is supposed to help.



2.28 We also examined whether the departments and agencies reported the extent to which they met the objectives in their sustainable development strategies. We found that of the 41 actions reported on, 36 actions had associated progress reporting. Of these actions,

- 23 had achieved or exceeded results
- 11 were partially achieved
- 2 were not achieved

We could not determine the progress made for the remaining 5 actions because the reporting was unclear.

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

### **Departments and agencies identified links between departmental actions and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals**

2.30 We found that for 44 of their 50 departmental actions, departments and agencies reported a link with at least 1 of the targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This is consistent with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidelines on how to report.

2.31 In The Commissioner's Perspective of the fall 2019 reports, the Interim Commissioner stated the need for better coordination between the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and the government's approach for implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The Interim Commissioner stated that both approaches aimed to achieve the same objective and yet had separate strategies, which remain largely uncoordinated and disconnected. We continue to hold this view.

## **Conclusion**

2.32 We concluded that, on the basis of the progress they reported in their 2018–19 departmental results reports, the departments and agencies we examined contributed to meeting the goal of safe and healthy communities in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. However, the departments and agencies did not report any actions of their own to implement 2 of the 10 federal strategy contributing actions. In addition, departments and agencies did not completely and often did not clearly report on how they supported the federal goal and related targets and contributing actions.

## About the Review

This independent limited assurance report was prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on the contribution of departmental sustainable development strategies to Goal 13 of the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy: safe and healthy communities. Our responsibility was to provide objective information, advice, and assurance to assist Parliament in its scrutiny of the government's management of resources and programs, and to conclude on whether the departmental sustainable development strategies complied in all significant respects with the applicable criteria.

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

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

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

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

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

### Review objective

The objective of this review was to determine whether departments and agencies contributed to meeting the goal of safe and healthy communities in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

## Scope and approach

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

The federal departments and agencies that contribute to the goal of safe and healthy communities included in this review are as follows:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Health Canada
- Indigenous Services Canada
- National Defence
- Natural Resources Canada
- Parks Canada
- Public Safety Canada
- Public Services and Procurement Canada
- Transport Canada

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

We reviewed whether the 12 responsible departments and agencies, in their 2017–2020 departmental sustainable development strategies and their 2018–19 departmental results reports, did the following:

- established departmental actions that contributed to the federal goal of safe and healthy communities
- followed the guidance for reporting provided by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

We also reviewed whether the results reported by departments and agencies in the supplementary tables of their 2018–19 departmental results reports contributed to the federal goal of safe and healthy communities.

This engagement is a limited assurance direct engagement. Evidence was gathered through document review and analysis, interviews with department and agency officials, and data analysis from the organizations contributing to the safe and healthy communities goal of the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

## Criteria

Criteria	Sources
<b>We used the following criteria to determine whether departments and agencies contributed to meeting the goal of safe and healthy communities in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:</b>	
Departments and agencies prepare departmental sustainable development strategies that contribute to meeting the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy's targets and contributing actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i></li> <li>• <i>Achieving a Sustainable Future: A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada 2016–2019</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016</li> <li>• <i>Guidance for the Preparation of Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies (DSDS)</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada, May 2017</li> </ul>
Departments' and agencies' progress, as presented in the supplementary tables of their 2018–19 departmental results reports, complies with results reporting requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i></li> <li>• <i>Auditor General Act</i></li> <li>• <i>Achieving a Sustainable Future: A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada 2016–2019</i>, Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016</li> <li>• <i>Guide to Preparing Supplementary Information Tables: 2018–19 Departmental Results Report</i>, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</li> <li>• <i>Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy</i>, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019</li> <li>• <i>Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>, United Nations, 2015</li> </ul>
Departments and agencies report the extent to which they met the objectives set out in their departmental sustainable development strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Auditor General Act</i></li> </ul>

## Period covered by the review

The review covered the period from 6 October 2017 to 26 February 2020.

## Date of the report

We obtained sufficient and appropriate evidence on which to base our conclusion on 23 July 2020, in Ottawa, Canada.

## Review team

Principal: Heather Miller  
Director: David Normand

Hélène Charest  
Stacey O'Malley

# List of Recommendations

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

Recommendation	Response
<b>Federal sustainable development goal: Safe and healthy communities</b>	
<p><b>2.23</b> Departments and agencies responsible for helping achieve the goal of safe and healthy communities should collectively ensure that their departmental sustainable development strategies support all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. (2.20–2.22)</p>	<p><b>Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will continue to follow the guidance of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy supports all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that are relevant and appropriate to the department’s mandate. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will support collective efforts among the departments and agencies involved when preparing future strategies.</p> <p><b>Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Going forward, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada commits to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finalizing a 2020–2023 departmental sustainable development strategy that supports the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy</li> <li>• working with other departments and agencies, and with Environment and Climate Change Canada as the coordinating department, to ensure that Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada’s departmental sustainable development strategy supports the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy</li> <li>• continuing to include progress on its departmental responsibilities and activities within the departmental sustainable development strategy in the supplementary tables of the departmental results report</li> </ul> <p>In relation to the gaps noted for the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy under the goal of safe and healthy communities, specifically regarding contributing actions around outdoor air quality, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada confirms that the departmental activities listed under the 2017–2020 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy for the former Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada were attributed to the correct contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and were not related to any of the 3 actions pertaining to outdoor air quality noted by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development’s review. While Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada does collect some air quality data at the community level by means of the Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program, this data is included in the current departmental sustainable development strategy under the effective action on climate change goal.</p> <p>In future, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada will ensure that its departmental activities for the goal of safe and healthy communities continue to be aligned with the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.</p>

Recommendation	Response
	<p><b>Environment and Climate Change Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that all federal organizations contributing to a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goal should collectively address all contributing actions.</p> <p>With regard to the 2 unaddressed contributing actions, they did not fall under the mandate of the 12 entities covered in this review. Please refer to the department’s response to recommendation 2.24 to support more clarity on reporting against contributing actions.</p> <p>Environment and Climate Change Canada will ensure that it continues to report on its own departmental actions supporting those contributing actions that fall within its mandate.</p> <p><b>Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. While Fisheries and Oceans Canada is not involved in the 3 contributing actions related to outdoor air quality that were identified under the safe and healthy communities goal, the department will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, where appropriate.</p> <p><b>Health Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Although Health Canada does not contribute to the contributing actions that were identified as missing under the safe and healthy communities goal, the department will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that the department’s mandate supports.</p> <p><b>Indigenous Services Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Indigenous Services Canada is committed to working with other departments and agencies, and with Environment and Climate Change Canada as the coordinating department, to ensure that the departmental sustainable development strategies support all contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.</p> <p>In regard to the gaps noted for the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy under the goal of safe and healthy communities, specifically pertaining to contributing actions around outdoor air quality, Indigenous Services Canada has confirmed that its departmental activities listed under the 2017–2020 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy for the former Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada were attributed to the correct contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and were not related to any of the 3 actions pertaining to outdoor air quality that the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development’s review noted.</p> <p>In future, Indigenous Services Canada will ensure that its departmental activities for the goal of safe and healthy communities continue to be aligned with the appropriate contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, including through its new 2020–2023 departmental sustainable development strategy, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament in September 2020.</p>

Recommendation	Response
	<p><b>National Defence’s response.</b> Agreed. National Defence agrees that contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy should be fully represented in the collective departmental sustainable development strategies of federal departments and agencies.</p> <p>National Defence will ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy includes all contributing actions that fall within its mandate.</p> <p><b>Natural Resources Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Natural Resources Canada will continue to follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s and Environment and Climate Change Canada’s guidance to ensure that updates to its departmental sustainable development strategy address all relevant contributing actions of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals that fall within its mandate.</p> <p><b>Parks Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Although Parks Canada does not contribute to the 3 areas of contributing actions that were identified as missing under the safe and healthy communities goal, the agency will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy links to the areas of contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that the agency’s mandate supports.</p> <p><b>Public Safety Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Public Safety Canada agrees that departmental sustainable development strategies should address the contributing actions within each federal organization’s mandate, so that all federal organizations contributing to a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goal would collectively address all contributing actions.</p> <p>Public Safety Canada will ensure that it continues to report on its own departmental actions supporting those contributing actions that fall within its mandate.</p> <p><b>Public Services and Procurement Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Public Services and Procurement Canada will continue to ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy supports the contributing actions in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy within the department’s mandate, consequently supporting collective efforts among other departments and agencies to achieve the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals and targets. Also, the department will ensure that progress reporting makes clear linkages to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals and contributing actions.</p> <p><b>Transport Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Transport Canada will continue to follow the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s and Environment and Climate Change Canada’s guidance. The department will also ensure that its departmental sustainable development strategy fully represents its contributions to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and that the department’s progress reporting makes clear linkages to the contributing actions.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p><b>2.24</b> Environment and Climate Change Canada should update its guidance to clarify that in their sustainable development strategies, departments and agencies should either report directly under a federal sustainable development goal or provide a reference to where reported activities can be found. <b>(2.20–2.22)</b></p>	<p><b>Environment and Climate Change Canada’s response.</b> Agreed. Environment and Climate Change Canada agrees that any departmental action that supports contributing actions under more than 1 goal should be referenced under all goals to which they apply. Should a department report these departmental actions under only 1 goal, a clear linkage should be made to the other goals it supports.</p> <p>Environment and Climate Change Canada will update future departmental sustainable development strategy guidance to reflect this recommendation.</p>









Fall 2020

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

1. Follow-up Audit on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods
2. Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies—Safe and Healthy Communities
3. Environmental Petitions Annual Report