**Canada’s response to the Call for input - Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change - “Access to information on climate change and human rights”**

Key questions and types of input or comments sought

The Special Rapporteur would like to invite States, interested individuals and organizations working on issues related to climate change, environmental democracy, business responsibilities, or access to environmental information, to provide input for the preparation of her thematic report. Inputs can be both country-specific or of a general nature. They may contain information on the following subjects:

1. What kind of information should be collected and shared to identify and prevent negative impacts on human rights arising from climate change and climate change response measures? What kind of information can be particularly challenging to access and why?
2. Are existing approaches to collect, share and monitor information on climate change and human rights sufficient for the public to assess the magnitude of actual and potential negative impacts on their human rights, and the adequacy of States’ responses to these risks? How can these approaches be improved?
3. Are there undue barriers to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change that is up to date? (e.g., language and technical accessibility, use of technology, grounds for non-disclosure, other?)
4. Are there examples in which international cooperation effectively supported public access to information on climate change and human rights? What are the challenges in implementing UNFCCC Articles 4 (public access to information) and 6 (public awareness), and Paris Agreement Article 12 (public access to information), and other international instruments and processes that can support/contribute to international cooperation on access to information on climate change and human rights?
5. Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges for business to communicate information on risks, including in different countries, in relation to climate change and human rights? What are the barriers for the rights holders to access to this information and to evaluate the adequacy of an enterprise’s response to these risks? Are there specific examples of State regulation that have significantly improved access to information held by private actors on climate change and human rights?
6. What are the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business? Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges in, collecting and sharing information on disproportionate levels of actual and potential harm from climate change and climate change response measures (disaggregated data on Indigenous Peoples, women, children, local communities, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons living in extreme poverty, others)?

**ECCC - CCB-CCAD response**

**Canada’s Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

Canada’s *Constitution Act[[1]](#endnote-1)* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms[[2]](#endnote-2)* provides the right to life and security of the person, equality rights, and the rights of Indigenous people, amongst others. The Constitution does not mention climate change, but the increasing effects of climate change could pose a threat to the realization of some of these rights.

**Climate change impacts and Canada’s National Adaptation Strategy (NAS)**

Canada is experiencing profound impacts from climate change, as evidenced by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events like wildfires, storms, and floods, alongside slow onset changes such as permafrost thawing and rising sea levels. While climate impacts and vulnerabilities vary from region to region, they affect the safety, health, and quality of life for Canadians across the country and some populations are disproportionately impacted.

In recognition of the need for a more ambitious, strategic, and collaborative approach to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change, the Government of Canada developed Canada’s first National Adaptation Strategy[[3]](#endnote-3) (NAS) to outline a shared vision for a more climate-resilient Canada. It was developed with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments; Indigenous partners; the private sector; non-governmental organizations; adaptation experts; and youth.

Integral to the Strategy is the acknowledgement of the disproportionate impacts of climate change across Canada and the need to advance adaptation in tandem with equity and environmental justice. The Strategy acknowledges the need to develop adaptation actions in line with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and mentions the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* as a key framework to drive inclusive actions. It also includes a monitoring and evaluation framework that recognizes the importance of a robust and diverse evidence base to understand progress and impacts of adaptation action and inform decision making.

**Disproportionate impacts of climate change**

Integral to the Strategy is the fact that climate change affects some people and communities more than others by amplifying existing vulnerabilities and socio-economic inequities and resulting in some populations including Indigenous, Black, Racialized, low-income, 2SLGBTQI+, and women experiencing climate change impacts more severely. The Strategy recognizes that people with health conditions and disabilities, the very young or older adults, or people who experience structural inequity, poverty, isolation, or discrimination are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These populations have limited capacity and resources to prepare for and respond to climate change, and often live in places that experience higher exposure to climate impacts. The situation is particularly acute for populations in Northern Canada, where warming is occurring at three times the global average.

Canada’s Strategy also acknowledges the unique and serious ways that climate change impacts Indigenous Peoples’ identify and culture. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have deep relationships and cultural connections with the land, water, ice, animals, and plants. They also have long histories of living on the land, adapting to, and stewarding their environments. The Strategy states the importance of Indigenous knowledge Systems as a source of strength and resilience and in positioning Indigenous Peoples as leaders in adapting to climate change.

**Elements of Canada’s National Adaptation Strategy**

The National Adaptation Strategy aims to direct actions across **five interconnected systems** (Disaster Resilience; Health and Well-being; Nature and Biodiversity; Infrastructure; and Economy and Workers) and includes **three foundational elements** that are necessary to underpin effective adaptation (Knowledge and understanding; Tools and resources; and Governance and leadership).

The Knowledge and Understanding element underscores the importance of robust information and an evidence base that is accessible and reflects diverse ways of knowing (including scientific and Indigenous Knowledge Systems), as well as one that is targeted to different users and regions, to inform adaptation action. While Canada has a strong information foundation, the Strategy recognizes that key gaps remain. and sets objectives to help guide actions to fill these gaps.

**Four guiding principles** of the Strategy underscore the importance of *how* Canada reaches its goals and objectives: (1) Respect jurisdictions and upload Indigenous Peoples’ rights; (2) Advance equity and climate and environmental justice; (3) Take proactive, risk-based measures to reduce climate impacts before they occur; and (4) Maximize benefits and avoid maladaptation.

In recognition of the importance of measuring and evaluating progress on climate change adaptation to understand which actions are working and where adjustments should be made, the Strategy includes a **monitoring and evaluation** (M&E) framework. It sets long-term transformational goals, medium-term objectives, and near-term targets and includes an initial set of indicators to help measure progress on adaptation. It commits the federal government to continue to work with partners to refine and update the Strategy’s M&E framework and to progress reporting. The M&E framework is an essential piece to support understanding of the state of adaptation across Canada, transparency, and adjustment.

Work to advance a national M&E framework to support adaptation is highlighting the continued need to collect and grow a robust and disaggregated data set across Canada to guide future action. While this will require commitment, resources, and robust governance structures since climate change affects every aspect of society, it is essential to ensure that adaptation actions are not leaving anyone behind.

**Access to Climate data and Information for every Canadian**

The Government of Canada recognizes that adapting to climate change begins with a good understanding of climate science and data to inform climate-related decision-making. It also recognizes that climate science and information must first be digested and communicated to audiences with various needs in a tailored manner before it can be considered in decision-making.

In 2018, the Canadian Centre for Climate Services (CCCS), within Environment and Climate Change Canada, was created to facilitate access to climate information and provide services to Canadians to help them understand climate change and its impact on their lives and their environment.

The CCCS provides user-driven climate information and services. It conducts outreach and engagement activities to assess the types of data, information and tools required for Canadians to take climate change into account when making decisions. Currently, the Center serves a variety of clients including all levels of government, Indigenous organizations and nations, the business community, researchers and the public.

The CCCS works with domestic partners and stakeholders to develop and deliver information, training, advice and resources to support informed decision-making on climate change. It also works with a national network of regional climate services organizations to increase local capacity, and collaborates with other federal departments dedicated to Indigenous and northern affairs to implement a specific approach to climate services in the North, where climate information is more sparse and capacity appears more limited. The CCCS also collaborates with Indigenous partners to understand their climate data interests, needs and priorities, and to develop relevant products and services (e.g. trainings, community profiles). The CCCS supports online climate data portals, such as ClimateData.ca, where Canadians can access information on future climate projections for various variables, including temperature and precipitation related variables, across the country, and can visualize it on a high-resolution map. It works with Natural Resources Canada to maintain the Map of Adaptation Actions, which is a non-exhaustive list of examples of adaptation to climate change in Canada. Finally, the CCCS provides personalized one-on-one advice to anyone through its support desk.

1. Constitution Act, 1982: [CONST\_TRD.pdf (justice.gc.ca)](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/CONST_TRD.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [The rights and freedoms the Charter protects (justice.gc.ca)](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/rfcp-cdlp.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. [National Adaptation Strategy for Canada - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/climate-plan/national-adaptation-strategy/full-strategy.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)