



Community-based Feedback on the Right to a Healthy Environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF SHAKE UP THE
ESTABLISHMENT (SUTE), THE WOMEN'S
HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS NETWORK (WHEN),
AND FINANCE ENGAGE SUSTAIN (FES)

FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
CANADA AND HEALTH CANADA

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Purpose of this Report

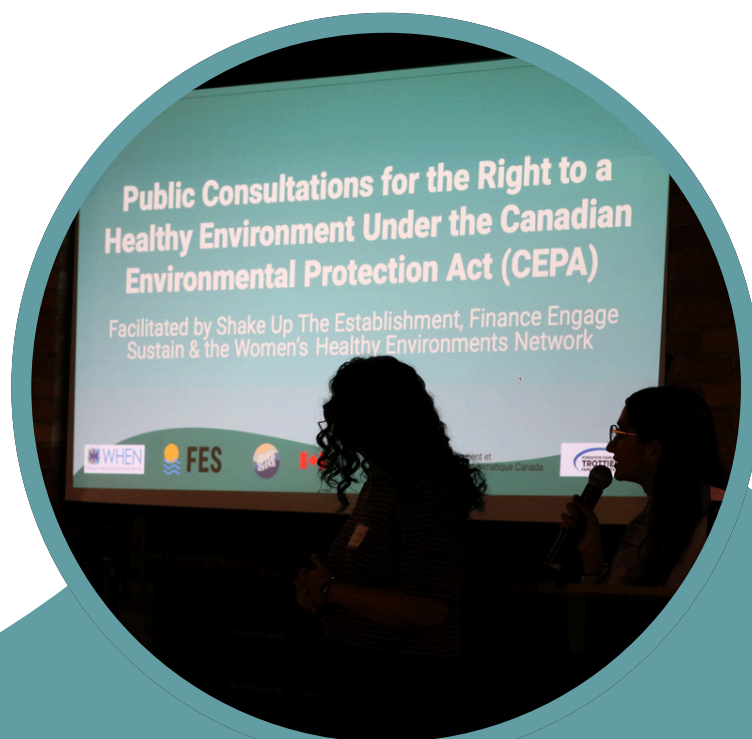


This is the second of two reports that our organizations have written to summarize feedback for Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada regarding the Draft Implementation Framework on the Right to a Healthy Environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). Report 1 contains our organizations' technical feedback, whereas this report summarizes the perspectives of youth from across Canada, which we collected from November 2 – December 2nd, 2024 via an online survey, two virtual events (one team session for members of our organization, and one public-facing session) and five in-person consultation events hosted in Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, Montréal and Halifax. The data we collected was incredibly extensive, so while this report serves to summarize the lived experiences of our participants, we wanted to be sure that our community members who participated know that we provided our more-comprehensive data analysis documents to the federal government to allow for them to have access to detailed insights from our participants.



Our hopes are that collectively, our actions in conducting this work will help to shape the design of the Implementation Framework on the Right to a Healthy Environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is set to be released in June 2025. Importantly however, given that a significant portion of the feedback collected from these consultations extends beyond the scope of the Draft Framework under CEPA, our organizations are committed to amplifying the perspectives shared by our participants within other relevant policy processes, such as the forthcoming National Environmental Justice Strategy public consultations process.

If you would like to learn more about this work, or have any questions, you can reach out to info@shakeuptheestab.org.



Executive Summary

Key Themes

- Youth are reeling from the mental, physical, and community health impacts of harmful environmental exposures and climate change.
- Youth are concerned about, and demand meaningful actions to address health inequities experienced by minoritized and marginalized groups who are disproportionately exposed to environmental health risks.
- Investing in community-based solutions will help build stronger, more resilient communities, but currently there is a lack of dedicated, sustainable funding initiatives.
- Community members lack the knowledge to confidently navigate how to protect their health from harmful chemicals, toxins and pollutants.
- There is insufficient communication by government agencies on potential environmental hazards, alongside inconsistent, absent or unenforceable environmental health regulations.
- We heard a universal cry for an improved definition of intergenerational equity throughout all of our events.
- Key concerns about the use of neutral language throughout the Draft Framework were brought forward, and were seen as particularly harmful in the context of intergenerational equity.
- Participants felt that the Draft Framework, as well as other government communications and reports use too much technical language, and should be available in more accessible mediums (e.g., podcast, short videos, or shared in town halls directly with community members in different languages).
- The government needs to better communicate when and how consultations are happening with the public, particularly with the communities that are being directly impacted by the issues and legislation being consulted upon.





- There is a need for expanded scopes of research that can be used to shape the Right, to ensure that the government is fully comprehending the intersectional, compounding impacts of environmental harms on different communities.
- Across the country, there is a deep distrust of government agencies and the information and services that they are providing.
- Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening corporate accountability in the context of environmental damage, to prioritize human and environmental health needs over profit.
- There is a strong consensus among the participants that investing in public reporting and public-facing communication platforms is critical to ensure accountability and transparency in environmental governance efforts.
- Addressing ongoing environmental injustices imposed upon Indigenous communities, alongside making meaningful progress towards the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls-to-action are seen as top priorities.
- Participants took issue with the Right being unenforceable, and were concerned about its applicability across different levels of government, alongside its ability to withstand governmental changes.
- Many want the government to acknowledge the large role that the continued use of fossil fuels plays in causing environmental exposures and harms, and would like to see strategies implemented to phase them out in a 'Just Transition'.



Recommendations



1

Increase investments in programs to support youth mental health initiatives, particularly ones which help to strengthen connections between individuals, their communities and natural spaces around them.

2

Ensure that environmental justice is advanced throughout all of this work in tangible ways, with there being accountability to make meaningful progress, alongside mechanisms for the public to provide feedback on an ongoing basis to continue to help collaboratively design policies that meet the health needs of minoritized, marginalized and structurally-vulnerable populations.

3

Provide reliable and accessible communications to the public to inform them of environmental health risks and mitigation strategies, and continue to work on proactive regulations to protect their health upstream.

4

Provide reparations as part of remediation processes for communities exposed to environmental hazards, and increase financial investments into community-led solutions to build agency and climate resiliency.

9

Increase support for citizen science initiatives, community-led data collection and ownership, and the collection of environmental health data that factors in the impacts of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sex, disability and immigration status to help make transparent critical gaps in environmental & health policies and services.

10

Increase public access to trustworthy sources of information, and work on broader initiatives to increase trust in government initiatives, programs and services.

11

Implement further measures to ensure polluters and corporations are held responsible for environmental harm.

12

Develop, define and enforce clear accountability measures for the government to uphold environmental commitments.



13

Center Indigenous decision-making and address injustices faced by underserved communities in environmental governance.

14

In the next revision cycle, work to expand the Right beyond CEPA, to apply to other federal policies, as well as clarify the impacts upon provincial, territorial, and municipal mandates for the development of politics in their jurisdictions.

15



Phase out fossil fuels to ensure that the Right is upheld, and take a whole-of-government approach to align Canada's environmental justice and climate action strategies, frameworks and commitments to advance health equity.



About Us

Our Organizations

Shake Up The Establishment (SUTE)



Shake Up The Establishment (SUTE) is a national youth-led registered not-for-profit organization (#1190975-4) that focuses on promoting climate justice within the geographical confines of what is currently known as "Canada." We use an intersectional approach to promote non-partisan political advocacy, craft accessible evidence-informed educational resources to improve climate and environmental literacy and work to collaborate directly with underserved and structurally vulnerable communities to address injustices. Although we are a national organization with team members from across what is currently Canada, our founders dreamt up, organized and registered this organization upon Treaty 3 lands, belonging to the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas Peoples. We acknowledge that our actions as an organization and the work that we put out have an impact on these lands and upon all that call it home. We are humbled to be able to follow the lead of Indigenous-led efforts towards the protection and stewardship of this environment since time immemorial across these lands we currently call 'Canada.'

We honour the contributions of Indigenous, Black and other racialized peoples within the climate justice space and recognize their resiliency in the face of systemic oppression imposed by the settler colonial state. We aim to incorporate joy, rest and dreaming of futures throughout our work, particularly for racialized and/or Indigenous Peoples, women and gender-diverse peoples, low-income, neurodiverse, and (dis)abled youth, to help craft a more sustainable movement. We want to make space for people to react on their relationship to lands they live, work and thrive upon, and encourage all to show up responsibly and in solidarity with Indigenous communities to care for and nourish each other and these lands accordingly. You can read SUTE's submission on the Discussion Document on the Right to a Healthy Environment under CEPA [here](#).





Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN)



WHEN is located on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples that is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. WHEN is a non-profit charitable organization focused on advancing intersectional environmental justice and health equity for women, BIPOC communities and other vulnerable populations. We aim to educate the public and decision-makers about environmental health as a key determinant of public health, and advocate for the prevention of toxic substance exposures and related health effects. WHEN engages in law and policy reform, hosts community events, and is a member of the Coalition for Environmental Rights, the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice, and the Urban Economy Forum's Secretariat on Women and Urban Sustainable Development Goals. You can read WHEN's submission on the Discussion Document on the Right to a Healthy Environment under CEPA [here](#).





Finance Engage Sustain (FES) FES

Finance Engage Sustain (FES) is a youth-led, youth-serving not-for-profit corporation and registered Canadian charity that empowers youth for a more inclusive, fair, prosperous, and sustainable future. FES is a place of support, convening, and collaboration for youth-led organizations, projects, and groups in what is currently known as “Canada”. We’re committed to supporting youth-led work that makes a difference in the face of the climate crisis by providing flexible, trust-based support in the form of financial and technical assistance. We believe that youth are the best agents of change, and that’s why we seek to support and invest in innovative youth work that takes bold climate action and supports communities most deeply affected by the climate crisis. Right now, we operate in a system where finances determine power – but we know that young people are working to dismantle this. By working to give funding directly to youth-led programs, we can level the playing field.

Beyond just funding initiatives through our several granting streams/programs, FES plays an essential role in showcasing these projects to the world. FES amplifies and shares the stories, challenges, triumphs, and impacts of these youth-led projects to drive social and cultural change. FES acts as a crucial facilitator, connecting young climate leaders with the support they need through our various services and networks. FES is more than just a charitable organization; it is a platform that bridges youthful vigour and innovation with the resources necessary for impactful climate action.

FES operates all throughout Turtle Island and is headquartered in the traditional territories of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.



Authorship Team

Anna Huschka (she/her) – Director of Policy, Shake Up The Establishment

An avid policy enthusiast, Anna graduated in 2022 from the University of Guelph with a BSCH, majoring in Biological Science and minoring in Political Science, in which she was able to obtain not only a scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change, but also a political understanding of how decisions and policies are being developed, in order to identify the best points at which change can occur. As a cis-gendered white woman, she aims to use her privilege and platform to amplify and support the work of community-based efforts that have developed out of necessity of addressing the issues of climate justice. As Director of Policy Research, Anna was one of the authors on SUTE's feedback report submitted on the Discussion Document for the RTHE under CEPA.



Megan Devoe (she/her) – Policy Researcher, Shake Up The Establishment

Megan is an activist-scholar currently living on the unceded territories of the Mi'kma'ki people in what is colonially known as Halifax, Nova Scotia. She is a white settler with mixed Mi'kmaw and European heritage. Megan's work, at SUTE and beyond, are inspired by the disconnect she feels between the environment and humanity. She is currently a PhD candidate in the Labour Studies department at McMaster University. Her research focuses on the perceptions and experiences of just transition policies among workers and communities in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia who depend on fossil fuel extraction for economic survival, but at a distance through patterns of long-distance commuting. Megan also holds a BA in Environmental Studies from Toronto Metropolitan University and an MA in Globalization and the Human Condition from McMaster University.

Manvi Bhalla (she/her) – Executive Director & Co-Founder, Shake Up The Establishment

An activist-scholar with extensive intersectional community organizing experience, Manvi is recognized as one of Canada's 'Top 25 Under 25' environmentalists, 'Top 30 Under 30' sustainability leaders and was honoured with the 'Youth Eco-Hero of the Year' award in 2022. She co-founded Shake Up The Establishment, a national nonprofit dedicated to climate justice & political advocacy, alongside missINFORMED, a nonprofit focused on health promotion for women and gender-diverse peoples. She serves on numerous advisory committees and has recently served as executive producer on a mini-documentary on conservation of the Greenbelt, as well as co-editor/author of the new book, *Practicing Rest, Recovery, Resistance*. Alongside her advocacy work, Manvi is a published health researcher, frequent public speaker and guest lecturer who works to centre anti-colonial approaches. During her MSc, she investigated barriers towards climate action within the public health sector. Presently, she is a PhD student at University of British Columbia with SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship funding. For her doctoral research, Manvi will be looking into how we can be more meaningfully inclusive of racially, ethnically and gender-minoritized peoples' knowledges and expertise in environmental health policy-making.



Given that these populations are amongst the most disproportionately burdened with negative health impacts as a result of exposure to environmental hazards, pollutants and toxins, this research aims to use an intersectional, anti-colonial environmental justice approach to explore and honor pluralistic epistemologies and ontologies as it concerns these populations' conceptualizes of and embodied experiences with environmental health risk. Methods being exploring for this work include critical policy analyses (as it concerns reforms to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act), as well as qualitative interviews and arts-based participatory action research methods to co-imagine environmentally just futures with members of the study populations of interest, with a particular focus on South Asian communities in Toronto and Vancouver, which Manvi personally belongs to.

Zeina Seaifan (she/her) – Policy Researcher, Shake Up The Establishment

Zeina (she/her) is an activist-scholar currently based in Tiohtià:ke or what is colonially known as Montreal, Quebec. Zeina completed her HBS and her MES at the University of Toronto where she specialized in environmental sustainability and diaspora transnational studies. Building on her MES research findings, Zeina is presently pursuing a PhD in Sociology at McGill University. Her doctoral research interrogates the relationship between the Lebanese-Canadian diaspora and questions of environmentalism in the homeland. As a Lebanese-Canadian woman from a displaced community that has, in turn, contributed to the colonial displacement of another, Zeina is incredibly passionate about intersectional and decolonial environmental justice work. Zeina aims to contribute her unique perspective as an Arab youth and extensive experience around community organizing to advance this work.



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We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in our consultations. We're so grateful to have had the opportunity to hear from you all, to learn from your experiences and to be trusted by you to capture and share your priorities with decision makers.

We would also like to thank the following members of our organizational teams for their contributions to this work, helping in the coordination and hosting of events, note-taking and collecting feedback. Most, if not all people, went above and beyond any paid hours that were budgeted for this project. The scale and scope of this community-serving work necessitated most of our team members volunteering their time and labour. Many also managed to support this work over the busy fall months whilst juggling school and full-time jobs. Everyone worked hard to pull together the survey, consultations and an accompanying educational and awareness-raising communications campaign with barely one month's notice from the start date. We have learned so much from this experience, but above all, we are beyond grateful to have had the opportunity to collaborate on such an impactful, first-of-its-kind initiative.



Shake Up The Establishment:

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Jessica LeBlanc (she/her) – Program Director, N:OW for Net-Zero
Julie Dunleavy (she/her) – Program & Grants Manager, The Youth Harbour

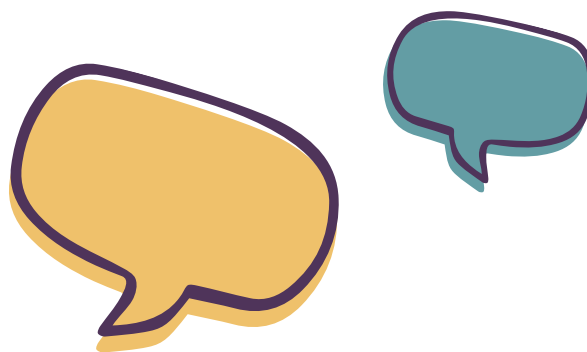
Methods

Objectives

The primary objective of the campaign was to collect feedback from youth aged 18–35 to inform the development of an Implementation Framework on the Right to a Healthy Environment, under CEPA through a community-based participatory action approach.

Secondary objectives included creating a safe and accessible space for youth to tell the government what a healthy environment means to them, as well as demonstrating how they, and other youth, can engage in future consultation processes. Attendees were also able to use our events as networking opportunities, which can strengthen grassroots-based efforts, increase their sense of community and improve knowledge of environmental and climate action issues and solutions occurring local to them.

As a tertiary objective, we had hoped that participation in our events and survey would help to teach more people about CEPA, so they could continue to help with public efforts to monitor and hold the government and industry accountable for upholding and implementing the Right, and CEPA regulations, in their communities.



Design of Consultation Campaign



Communications Campaign to Increase Public Engagement

Our goal was to ensure anyone could engage in this process, no matter their background. As such, we designed a communications campaign informed by our previous experiences engaging youth on environmental justice topics to maximize not only participation in consultation events and survey, but to bring attention to this emergent policy opportunity more broadly.

We developed a social media outreach strategy with a focus on accessible and educational video content, including a heavy focus on the use of short lay-language videos shared on Instagram reels and TikToks. By the end of our campaign, posts from our social media outreach effort had 39,100 views and 399 shares across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok over the course of October, November, and December 2024.

We also created lay summary backgrounder web articles which we shared on SUTE's and WHEN's websites, and circulated on socials as a means to offer easy-to-understand information and easy-access links to the Draft Implementation framework.



A complete list of the articles released as part of this campaign include:

- [Youth-led Environmental Organizations Hosting Public Consultations to Help Inform Canada's Approach to Upholding Right to a Healthy Environment in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act](#)
- [The Right to a Healthy Environment: Get Informed, Get Involved, Have Your Say](#)
- [Youth-led Environmental Organizations Submitted Technical Feedback on the Draft Implementation Framework for the Right to a Healthy Environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act](#)
- [Shaping the Right to a Healthy Environment: Feedback on Canada's Draft Framework](#)

Survey



We opened an online survey in order to engage participants asynchronously, and encouraged participants to engage directly with the government as alternative methods of providing feedback. We designed the questions to be similar to the consultation events, and thus analyzed these responses with those as part of our data analysis process.

Event Recruitment

Our eligibility criteria for the consultation events required participants to be aged 18–35 and be living in Canada. Age eligibility to participate in the survey was extended to be open to participants under the age of 18, with parental permission, and over the age of 35 in order to provide opportunities for other members of our audiences to contribute feedback on the Right. We did targeted email and newsletter outreach to our network and shared an amplification kit with other organizations to reach wider audiences. We also launched our communications campaign on social media to recruit participants for the consultation events and survey, as well as to generally increase public engagement in this work more broadly.



Consultation Events



We hosted 5 in-person consultations in Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, Halifax, and Montréal, as well as a virtual consultation event to connect with youth not located in these other cities. In order to prepare for these consultation events, we hosted a virtual session with members of our organizational teams who are part of the target audience, in order to work out how the events flow, the effectiveness of questions, and additional considerations. After each consultation event, we would collect feedback from members of our team in attendance as facilitators, note-takers, and support staff, to get a better understanding of what was working well and what needed changes, in order to improve our approach for the organization and facilitation of consequent events.

Pre-Event Prep

Prior to the consultation events, we provided participants with background materials in English and French to give them important context about CEPA, the Right, and the Draft Implementation Framework. We got the Right to a Healthy Environment team at Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada to review, revise and help finalize these resources to ensure their accuracy. They were also given a copy of our community guidelines prior to their event, as well as presented at the start of each event to ensure that our events were safe spaces for contributors to share stories about their lived experiences in the face of environmental harms. We provided attendees with options for consent for being captured in photography and videography at the events, as well as the option to have a culturally-appropriate pseudonym they could choose for themselves to be used during the events and/or in our report.

Supporting Accessibility Needs



As a part of the campaign's funding, we had an accessibility fund, in order to provide participants with additional financial support to ensure they could attend the events, including costs for transportation and other accessibility needs as identified by participants. This was successfully used by numerous participants and did significantly improve the accessibility of our events.



At the Event



At each consultation event, following the screening of our overview video about the Draft Implementation Framework, we facilitated a question and answer period with participants to help identify key knowledge gaps about the Framework and CEPA more broadly, and address them ahead of the discussions. This helped to ensure that the discussions were more within the scope of the Right, and the Framework design. Attendees of in-person events were provided with food, inclusive of their dietary needs, which we asked about prior to the event. Participants were also given multiple ways to share their contributions, through the use of handouts that we collected at the end of the events, as well as having a chance to further contextualize or check their captured contributions via chart papers upon which we were collecting major themes throughout the event.

Honoraria & Feedback

Participants were given an honoraria (\$100 for in-person events, \$75 for online event) to compensate them for the time and effort they took to contribute to our consultation events.

We also sent them a survey after their events, which we used to collect feedback about the agenda, effectiveness, and accessibility of the consultation events.





Figure 1. As part of our outreach and communications strategy, members of our team filmed informative reels, provided participants with a written document of background information, and showed event attendees a video breaking down the Draft Implementation Framework.

Data Analysis



Following all of the events, we compiled the transcripts, note-taker sheets, handouts, and chart papers (Fig. 2), and digitized them. We open-coded and analyzed the data thematically.

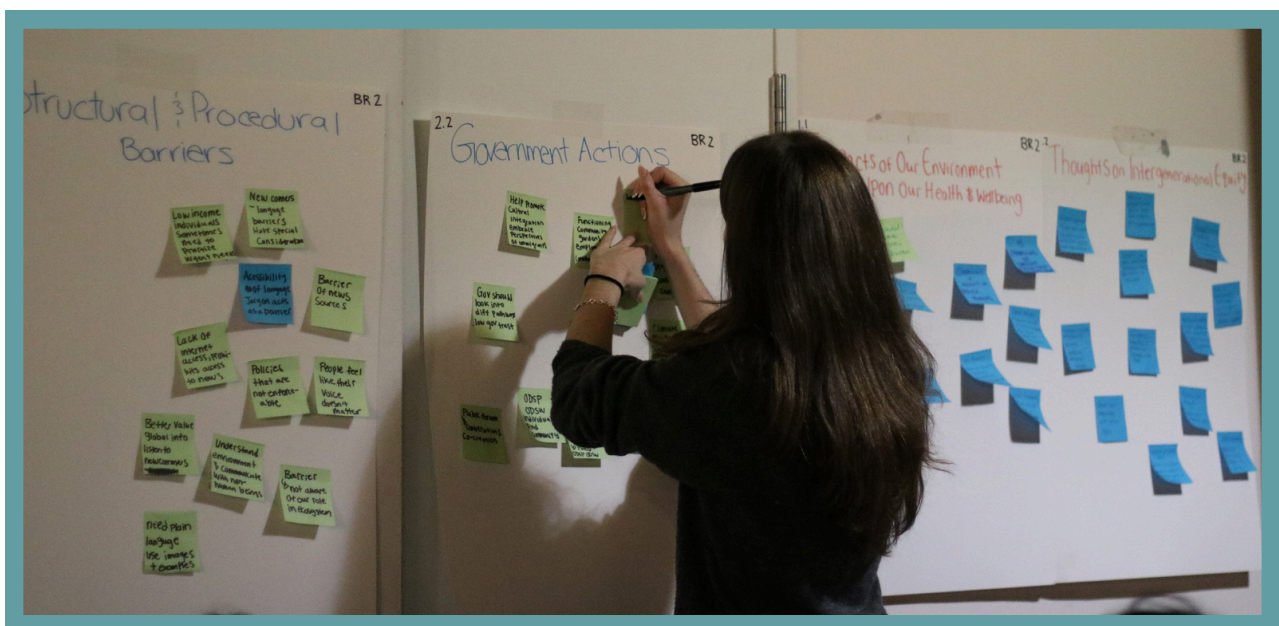


Figure 2. We used chart papers as well as handouts at each event to capture the key themes of participants during the in-person consultation events.

Results

Survey Engagement

We had 29 respondents to our survey, 23 were under the age of 35, and 6 were over the age of 35. The inputs from those over the age of 35 were shared with the government, but are not included in this report summary in an effort to centre youth perspectives throughout the design of the recommendations. Event participants were also invited to provide further contributions via the survey, though only a few did meaning most of the respondents were unique to the events.



Event Engagement

In total, we received 303 applications from prospective event participants. Using the demographic, personal and professional background information collected for each applicant within the application, the FES and WHEN teams selected a diverse array of participants to partake in each event. They used a distributive equity approach to ensure that we had representation from diverse perspectives, and worked to ensure that there was adequate representation from individuals across different personal and professional backgrounds.





At our public-facing events, we engaged 114 youth across the country. You can see the breakdown of the total number of participants per public-facing event below:

- **Calgary:** 20
- **Vancouver:** 18
- **Toronto:** 20
- **Montreal:** 18
- **Halifax:** 19
- **Virtual Public Event:** 19

Our event application form was successfully able to reach youth between the ages of 23 and 26. We also successfully reached women, as 202 of our event applicants identified as women. We received applications from 1 Inuit youth, 6 Métis youth, 15 First Nations youth, and 9 youth who have Indigenous origins outside of what is presently Canada. Over 200 respondents to our application shared the major environmental concerns that are impacting their communities.

We also hosted a separate virtual event, where we consulted 15 individuals pooled from our three organizational teams. Since all members of our teams are under the age of 30, this meant that our teams were also within the eligibility criteria for our consultations, and served as a great audience to practice our facilitation approach for these events with to help to fine-tune our interview guide.



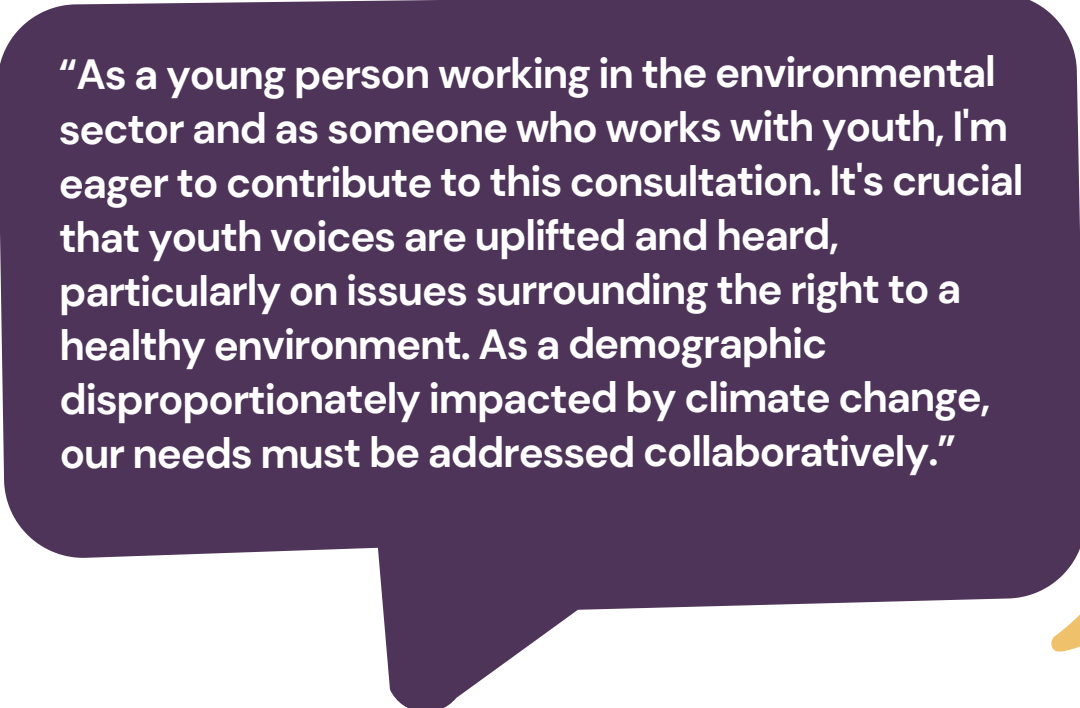
Overall, bringing together our survey participants, team virtual session, public-facing virtual event and five in-person events, our consultations directly engaged 158 participants, 152 of whom were under the age of 35.

Hear from our Applicants

"With the current and future political climate, I am extremely excited about the opportunity to deepen my understanding of current climate policies, regulations, and processes, as well as to identify existing gaps within these areas."

"I want to participate in this consultation because the right to a healthy environment is fundamentally intertwined with our future. As youth, it's critical for us to raise our voice and participate in advocacy as this will directly impact our lives and the generations to come. The CEPA amendments mark a pivotal moment in recognizing environmental protection as a legal right, and it's vital that the perspectives of young people are not only heard but also prioritized."


"I want to participate in this consultation because I believe Black people are often left out of environmental policies and climate conversations that take place in Canada. I want them along with other racialized groups to be included in the voices since they are the most affected and this consultation can help change that."



"As a young person working in the environmental sector and as someone who works with youth, I'm eager to contribute to this consultation. It's crucial that youth voices are uplifted and heard, particularly on issues surrounding the right to a healthy environment. As a demographic disproportionately impacted by climate change, our needs must be addressed collaboratively."



"I believe my concerns about the environment and my knowledge and understanding of the issues that affect the environment motivates me to participate in the consultation since it is an opportunity to communicate with people that might have different views, opinions, ideas, and beliefs on the right to a healthy environment, environment, and climate change."



"Participating in this consultation is an avenue for my voice to be heard by a larger group of people and can hopefully enact change."

"I am interested in participating in this consultation because we need meaningful engagement with diverse communities to inform our environmental governance processes and collectively understand what a "healthy environment" means to our society. Similarly, we must work with communities across so-called Canada to take urgent actions that respond to the climate crisis and systemic injustice."

"It is ultimately my passion to ensure that every community has the ability to meet their basic needs and pursue resilience, and the right to a healthy environment is an instrumental lever to ensuring this vision becomes a reality."

"I see this opportunity to lend itself as a merging ground between my past experiences and my deeply rooted passions for ecology and community work, offering a (hopefully) just voice for my communities to ensure future health for neighbours and the surrounding ecosystems. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to share ideas and glean from those of other participants in reflecting upon the needs of local youth."

Demographic Characteristics of Event Participants

We collected demographic information from our five in-person events and one public-facing virtual event. We collected information from all applicants and tried to bring together individuals with diverse personal and professional backgrounds. We have summarized key trends below. Overall, all of our events boasted diverse representation across race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical (dis)ability, and neurodiversity. While we successfully engaged neurodiverse folks in our consultations, 83.3% of event attendees identified that they do not have a physical disability, we will further research how to better engage people with physical disabilities in future consultation opportunities.

For race/ethnicity, participants were able to select as many options as they identified with, from the below self-identification options:

- Métis
- First Nations (status and non-status)
- Inuit
- Indigenous (origins outside of what is presently Canada)
- White (e.g. European descent)
- Black (e.g., African, Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian, African-American)
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean)
- Indo-Caribbean, Indo-African, Indo-Fijian, West-Indian
- Polynesian (e.g., Samoans, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Island Māori, Tahitian Mā'ohi, Hawaiian Mā'oli, Marquesan, New Zealand Māori)
- Latin, South or Central American
- South Asian (e.g., Afghan, Nepali, Tamil, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Sri Lankan, Punjabi)
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Malaysian, Filipino/a, Laotian, Singaporean, Indonesian)
- West Asian (e.g., Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Saudi, Syrian, Yemeni, Armenian, Iranian, Israeli, Turkish)
- Person of Colour (use Other to specify more specifically, if you wish)





Race/Ethnicity

NOTE: Multiple participants identified as mixed race/multiethnic and we wished to account for each selection; this explains the non-whole numbers present in Fig. 3.

At least

65%

Participants were from racialized communities

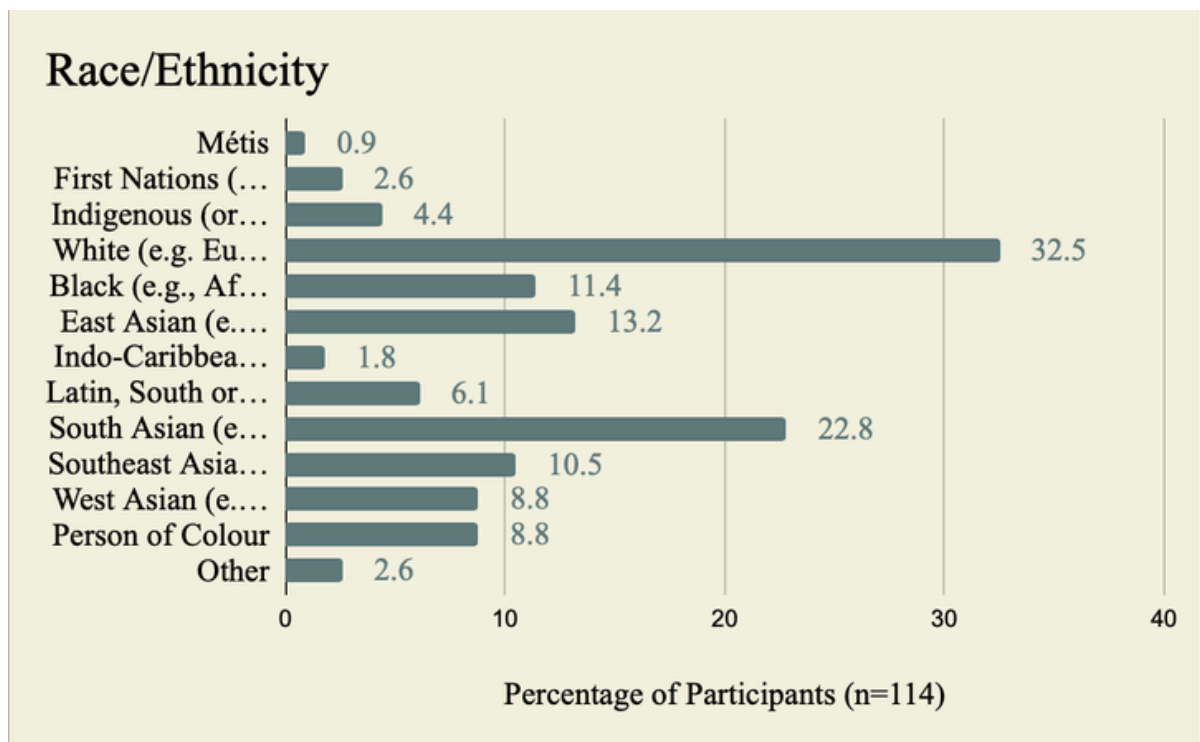


Figure 3. This bar graph shows the breakdown of the race/ethnicity demographic information of the 114 public-facing event attendees.



For gender identity, participants were able to select as many options as they identified with from the below options, as well as being able to not disclose or specifying further:

- Woman
- Man
- Cisgender
- Transgender
- Two-Spirit
- Agender
- Non-binary
- Gender Fluid
- Pangender
- Gender Neutral
- Gender Queer
- Multi-gender



64.9%

Women made up the majority of attendees of event participants

Gender Identity

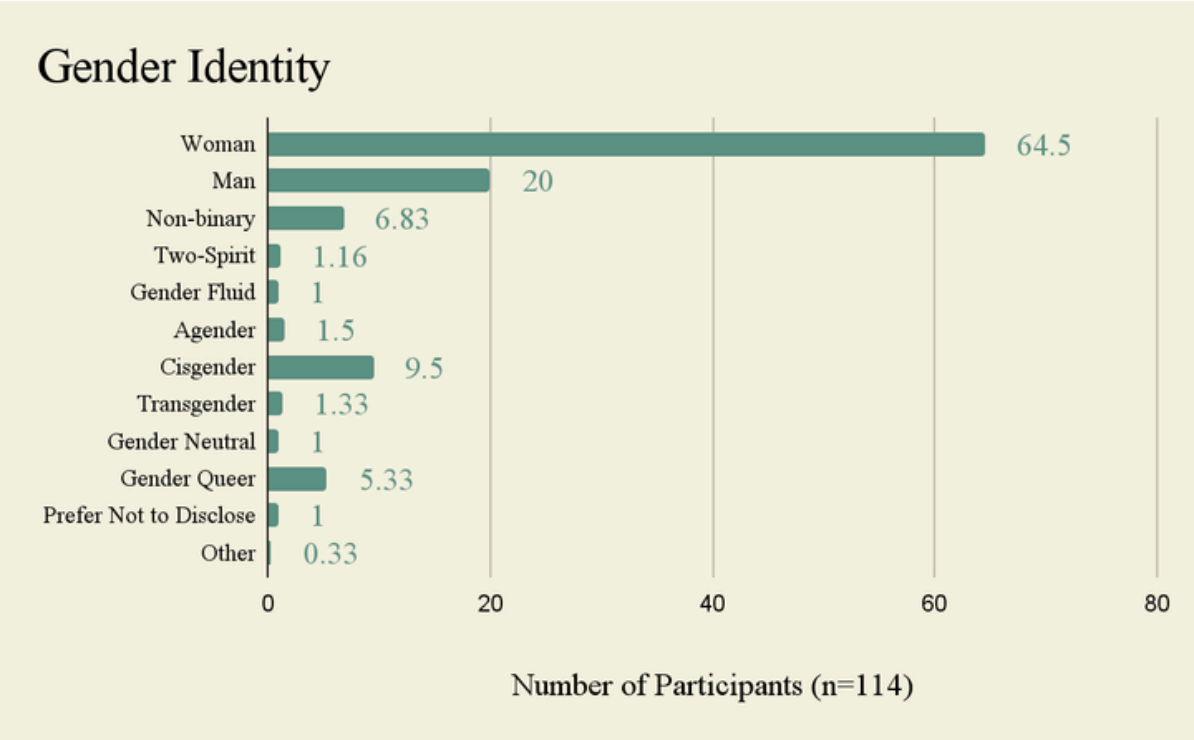
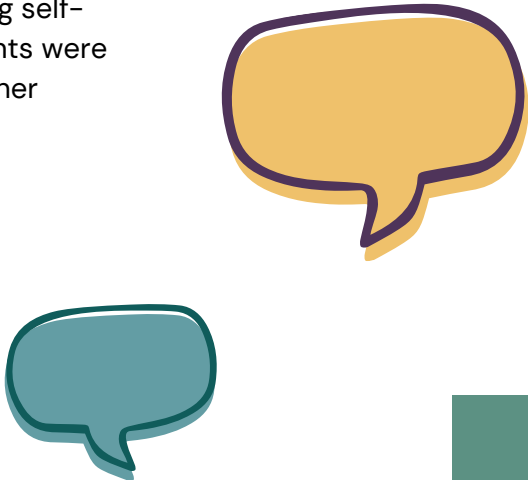


Figure 4. This bar graph contains the information about the gender identity of the 114 public-facing event participants. Participants were able to select as many options as they identified with, in accounting for these selections we have some non-whole numbers as a part of this graph.

For sexual orientation, participants were able to select as many options as they identified with from the following self-identification options. Participants were also able to not disclose, or further specify by selecting 'other':

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Pansexual
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Heterosexual
- Asexual
- Not Sure



At least
9
Different sexual
orientations represented

Sexual Orientation

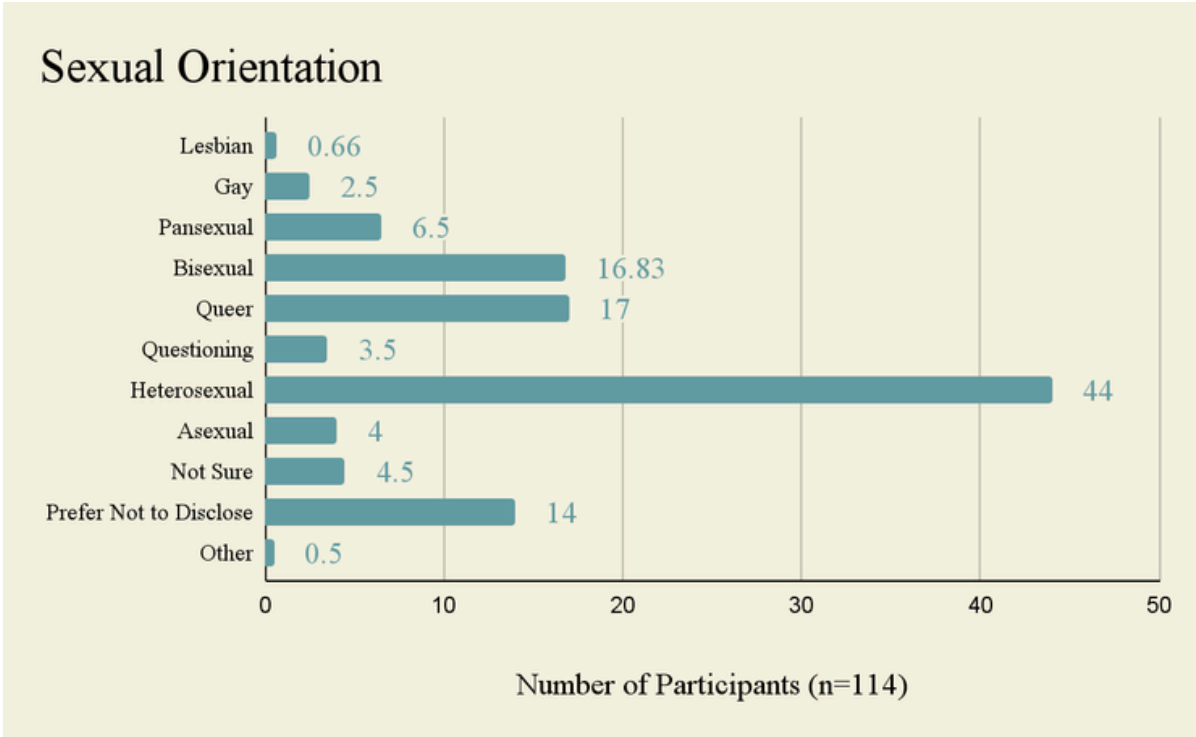


Figure 5. This is a bar graph of the sexual orientation of public-facing event participants. Participants were able to check off all options they identified with, accounting for the non-whole numbers on this graph.

Participants were able to select from the following self-identification options, as well as having the option to not disclose:

- I have a physical disability/some physical disabilities
- I do not have any physical disabilities
- Not Sure
- Participants were able to further specify via Other

**11**

Participants identified they have a physical disability

Physical (Dis)ability

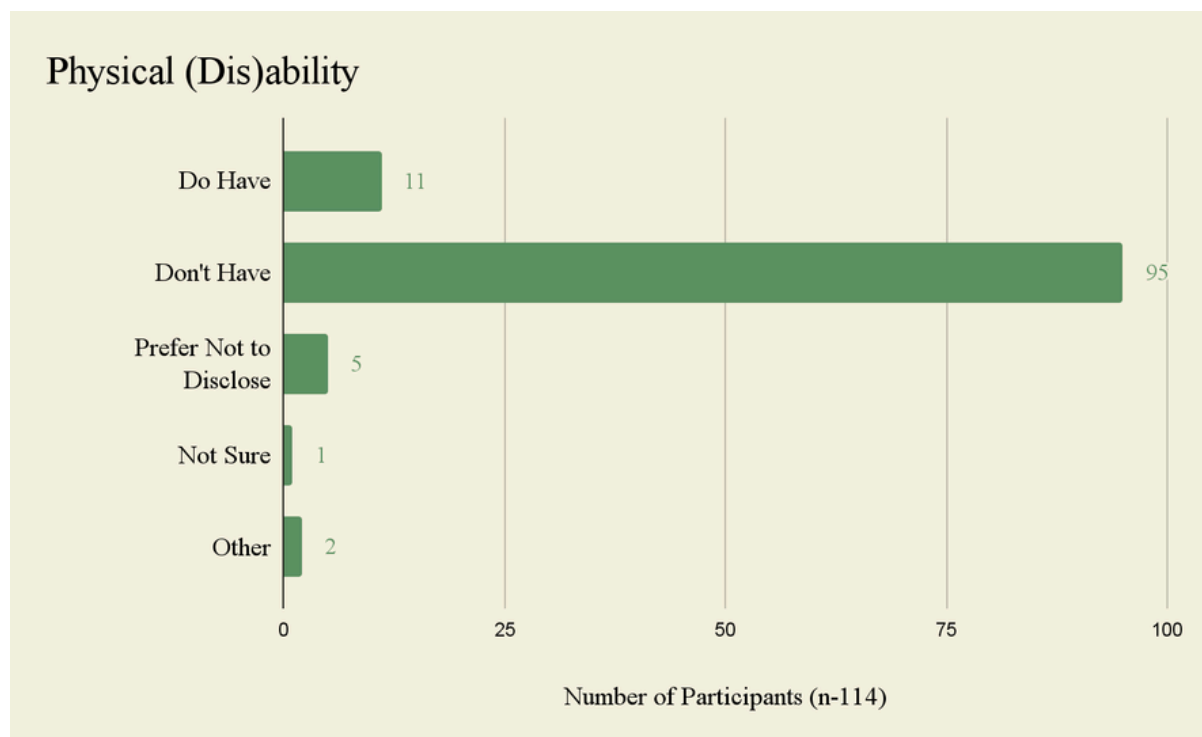


Figure 6. This bar chart features an analysis of the physical (dis)ability of the 114 event participants.

Participants were able to select from the following self-identification, or opt to not disclose:

- Neurotypic
- Neurodiverse
- Not Sure
- Participants were able to further specify via Other



34.2%

Participants were
neurodiverse

Neurodiversity

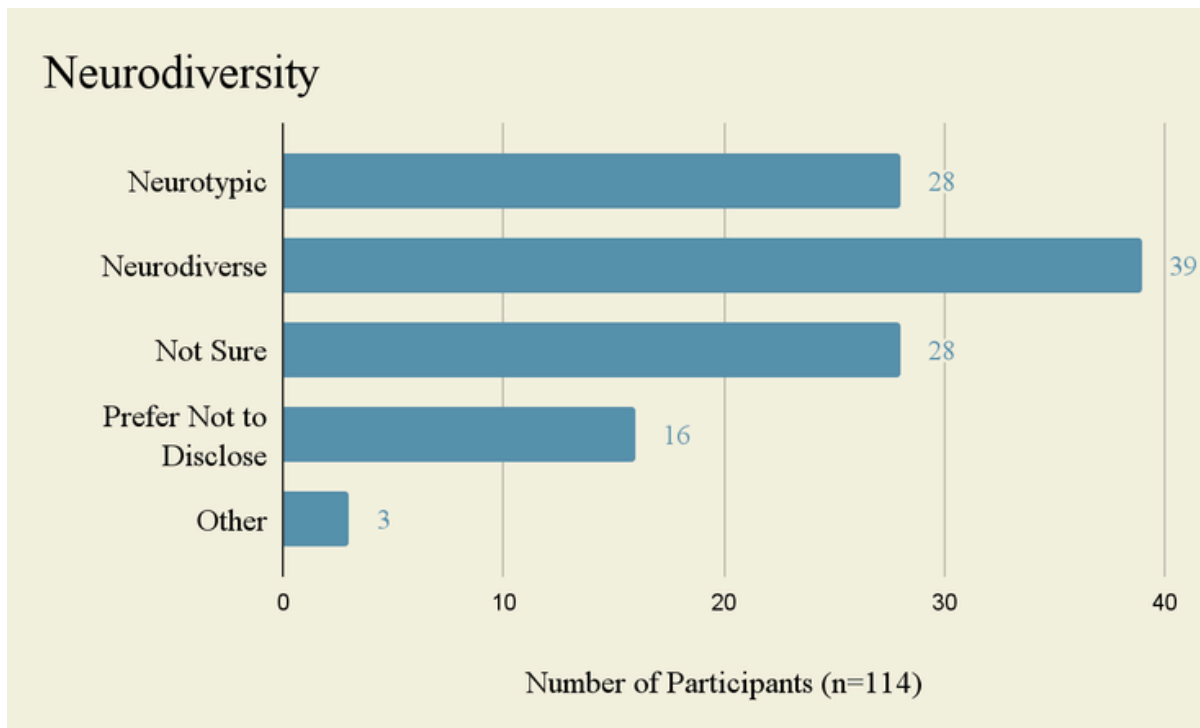


Figure 7. This bar graph contains the breakdown of the neurodiversity of event attendees.

Professional Backgrounds

Attendees came from a wide array of professional, academic, and lived experiences, and their unique expertise was shared throughout our consultations. Areas of expertise of the event participants included:

- **Student** (undergraduate, graduate, and PhD) (n=43)
 - Environmental Science
 - Engineering / Science
 - Health & Wellbeing
- **Non-Profit** (n=25)
 - Climate Justice Advocate
 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion
- **Research & Education** (n=7)
- **Communications, Content, and Art** (n=6)
- **IT/Software, Economics, Consultants** (n=5)
- **Public Policy & Law** (n=3)
- **Public Service and Fulltime Work** (n=3)
- **Planning & Urban Design** (n=2)
- **Business (entrepreneurs)** (n=2)
- **Unemployed** (n=2)
- **Sustainability** (n=2)
- **Community Outreach Worker** (n=1)



Feedback on Design of Events



Some of the biggest limitations to our work were the restricted funding and time constraints of the project. We wanted to ensure that we could cover the accessibility needs for all participants, provide enough space for each participant to be genuinely heard and to contribute at each event, and give an honoraria for each participants' time and contributions to our consultations. These factors meant that there were limitations to how far our funding could go, and thus how many participants we were able to engage in this work. In the end, we were limited in engaging a maximum of 20 people per event, for our 6 public-facing events. Given that we had 303 applicants, this totaled to about 37.6% of those who applied, being able to participate. We did encourage applicants that were not selected for the events to provide feedback via the survey and/or to provide their own feedback directly to the government through the enviroequity.ca portal.

With the limited funding and time capacity to complete the consultations, we hosted events where we could maximize our existing organizational staff and in-kind support (e.g., free location rentals), which resulted in our in-person events being hosted in major urban centres. Most of the in-person event participants were from the city in which the events were being hosted, though we did get folks attending from surrounding areas, including Victoria, British Columbia, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Medicine Hat, Alberta, and Moncton New Brunswick. We supported many participants with accessibility needs to be able to come to the events, including ferries, trains, taxis/ubers and other modes of transport necessary for their engagement.

Our public-facing virtual event as well as our online survey also served as options for those who experienced added accessibility needs, such as participants who were unable to make it in-person to an event due to disabilities that prevented them from travelling and/or lived in rural or remote areas, for example. Through the virtual event, we were able to also successfully engage participants in other provinces where we were unable to host events, including participants from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

8/13

Provinces and territories were engaged in our events



Of the 114 public-facing event attendees:

17

Responded to the post-event survey

94%

Respondents would participate in future policy consultations

82%

Respondents identified that the event was accessible

After the events, we did a feedback survey to learn how we could improve for next time. Overall, our participants expressed great satisfaction with our events. Here's what some of them shared:

"Thank you for this opportunity! It was really cool to see multiple organizations work together to create this space and push for the inclusion of youth voices."

"Thanks for this opportunity, you all created a comfortable and engaging space and I hope to be able to participate again. You did a great job!"

"This event was very accessible – it was really helpful to have the honorarium and food provided as a lot of people who come to these sorts of events are people who do a lot of volunteer work, but we still need to eat and pay rent too!"

"I really liked the approach of a youth organization running the consultation. It was a friendly environment where we felt understood and validated."

"Everyone comes from such a wide variety of backgrounds and that ultimately makes for very insightful and informative discussions! I learned a lot from everyone in the room, which fostered my interest in getting more involved in these youth consultation spaces."



Key Findings

Below, we summarize the key themes and resulting recommendations across all of the feedback we collected from the online and in-person events, as well as the survey. Participants were prompted to provide feedback in direct response to the Draft Implementation Framework for the Right to a Healthy Environment under CEPA, as proposed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada.

The primary purpose of this was to help facilitate increased civic engagement in the public consultations process to help improve aspects of the Draft Framework ahead of the release of the final Implementation Framework in June 2025. However, across all of our events, there were also broader recommendations provided by participants that are useful for environmental health decision-makers; we have included those recommendations within this report to help provide recommendations that support a whole-of-government approach towards upholding and implementing the Right.

For quotes shared below, most individuals chose to be identified by their real name, but a selection of participants chose to be identified by a culturally-appropriate pseudonym of their choosing. All participants consented to having their age and location shared to help further contextualize their views.



Environmental Health Impacts and Remediation



Youth are reeling from the mental, physical, and community health impacts of harmful environmental exposures and climate change.

Participants across all of the events spoke to us about how their mental health is being impacted by bearing witness and living through environmental harms and extreme weather events. Alida, 30, from Squamish Valley spoke to the eco-anxiety being felt by youth, and the impacts that the environmental instability that they are witnessing everyday, has upon their life. Shauna, 24, from Canmore, reflected on the overwhelm of emotion surrounding the news of the Jasper wildfire. She said, “when the photos first started coming out, what it looked like– I was at a bar, having drinks, a casual evening, opened Facebook, and saw that– and like, immediately started crying in this public space. I tried to get through the night.” Another Calgary resident shared how during wildfire season, when it’s very smoky, their eyes start feeling dry and they often struggle with blurry vision for the rest of the day; others in their group commented that it often looks “dystopian outside” during these times. Similarly, Cherry, 31, from Montreal shared smog is “one of the most visceral ways” that she’s felt the climate crisis or pollution. She shared that three summers ago, during a terribly smoky time in Montreal, residents could not go outside for a few days and that it felt like “a physical and real and dystopic” experience.

Another key exposure of concern across our events was microplastics. Mallory, 24, from Toronto spoke about their experience with “obsessive thoughts over microplastics, toxins, etc., lack of control, and feeling anxious because I’m at the mercy of my environment.” Mengjia, 25, from Halifax, expressed concerns about plastic presence in food sources.

They shared, “I used to really enjoy oysters and other seafood, but because there is so much plastic pollution everywhere...so I feel like I maybe worry about if there is anything I can eat? Is there anything ethical to eat? Is there anything sustainable to eat and can I afford to eat it?” Mateo, 25, from Vancouver, further highlighted concerns about microplastic presence in consumer products, and how this impacts human health, because “microplastics are in basically everything we consume, that we maybe eat, that we drink, that we buy. It’s like it’s in our bodies right now, like, literally pumping through your veins, through every single organ. Like it’s crazy, like, if you start thinking about it, that your brain is like part plastic in it right now.”



Many participants felt governmental agencies were not sufficiently preparing communities for the realities of the climate crisis, and the impacts that are already being felt are only going to worsen. Chaeyon, 25, from Halifax shared, "I know [the] wind is pretty severe here. And there's more increased hurricanes in Nova Scotia as well. Even stuff like that, I think like emergency preparedness is not something a lot of people are prepared for currently, and it's something that's just going to continue to rise as we go, which again, contributes to our anxiety." Furthermore, attendees often tied their individual mental health experiences to the wider impact upon their communities.

For example, Arif, 21, originally from Toronto spoke about how their experiences visiting Bayfront Park during the summer months were filled with a shared sense of community. They shared, "the water quality was relatively better, and there would be a community spirit. There would be people... there would be children, there would be families together enjoying the park." However, they then pointed out that this changed drastically as the water quality worsened due to algae blooms during the fall and spring. They said, "you can see the entire community spirit go down, and that optimism go down, about nature itself, and how people view their communities." Bringing this all together, the mental health impacts were palpable as part of every conversation during our consultation sessions. Along this vein, Mallory, 24, from Toronto suggested the need to open up "the definition of 'health'" to include mental health and climate anxiety, and called for more research & funding to create programs and expand education on them.



Recommendation 1:

Increase investments in programs to support youth mental health initiatives, particularly ones which help to strengthen connections between individuals, their communities and natural spaces around them.



Youth are concerned about, and demand meaningful actions to address health inequities experienced by minoritized and marginalized groups who are disproportionately exposed to environmental health risks.



Khadija, 26, from Toronto shared that they will often reflect on the health impacts of the “fumes and black stuff” coming out of factories upon Black communities living in her area, particularly because a lot of Black communities live in Rexdale, close to those factories. Margaret, 34, from Peterborough reflected on the local Indigenous communities who reside nearby who lack access to clean water, which she describes as a “huge issue [that] needs to be addressed moving forward.” Katie, 30, from Schomberg expressed concerns about rural communities with building on farmlands, waterways, and the water tables. She said, “we’re continuing to sprawl out and also sprawl inwards, on spaces that are not ready to take on the burden of that, but then are also being damaged or polluted by the effects of things that we just simply do not care enough about.”

Attendees at the Montreal event highlighted how a lack of accessible green space is further perpetuating some of the extreme conditions being faced by communities and physical health impacts as a result of them. At that event, Camille, 26, shared: “Poor neighbourhoods don’t necessarily have access to a lot of green spaces. There aren’t very many trees. Trees will cool your neighbourhood in the summer. So you know, possibly, poor neighbourhoods will have more chances of having... of seeing people experiencing strokes in the summer, if they’re old.” Anika, 26, from Vancouver spoke about having an increased frequency of headaches due to cars honking within her urban environment. Highlighting the intersectional considerations of this noise pollution, Yobie, 26, from Toronto, shared: “I am a person with disabilities where I wear hearing aids and I always have concerns about background noise which negatively affect communicating with people.”



Recommendation 2:

Ensure that environmental justice is advanced throughout all of this work in tangible ways, with there being accountability to make meaningful progress, alongside mechanisms for the public to provide feedback on an ongoing basis to continue to help collaboratively design policies that meet the health needs of minoritized, marginalized and structurally-vulnerable populations.



Investing in community-based solutions will help build stronger, more resilient communities, but currently there is a lack of dedicated, sustainable funding initiatives.

Participants spoke of the need for financial compensation for communities who are harmed by environmental exposures, particularly those who experience compounding racism and other systemic discrimination. Amber, 31, from Vancouver advocated for a need to “provide reparations for communities that have been exposed to environmental hazards.” Cathy, 26, from Richmond recommended that financial supports be provided as interest-free loans or grants, highlighting that the use of rebates assumes that communities have the money up front, but when decision-makers are implementing health-related resources like heat pumps they should be provided for.

It was also highlighted how environmental harms and extreme weather events are impacting the financial security of communities. Rishta, 26, from Moncton spoke about the impacts of natural disasters on workers. They shared, “If you have high winds, or if there’s a storm... we’ll be out of power for at least a few days, and the people, especially working in the mill or in the production— even those people still matter. If you have a family, if you have kids to feed and if you’re living paycheck to paycheck, and you lose even a week of work, that’s going to affect your mental health.” Similarly, Imran, 27, from Calgary, called on the federal government to assist in making provincially-run home insurance more accessible and affordable, highlighting the fact that “insurance rates in Alberta tend to be a lot higher than pretty much everywhere else in the country” particularly because they face wildfires and hailstorms.

Across events, participants identified different programs that could increase the health of their community. Atreyu, 22, from Toronto spoke about how Indigenous people in the city feel that they do not have space for traditional offerings like tobacco, and highlighted the need for better access to cultural foods, land sovereignty learnings, and other cultural supports.

The health of the environment also has a direct impact on the implementation of community-based solutions. Alexis, 24, from Montreal spoke about their experiences working for a community garden project. They said, “the ground was, like, contaminated. So the only way for us to actually grow any vegetable has to, like, have to buy... a pot to actually grow vegetables... It’s sad to think about how we’re all living on contaminated soil, and we cannot actually grow vegetables or fruit, just like it’s very unfortunate.”





In Vancouver, discussions arose about how “there’s a need for better finance and investment in environmental initiatives” as mentioned by Hailey, 29, from North Vancouver. Examples of potential strategies suggested by Sara, 30, from Vancouver, included municipality and local First Nations taxes for industry, and Amber, 31, from Vancouver, recommended that governments start “diverting money from cops to communities.” Participants in Toronto also identified this need for programming that gives communities more agency in determining the health of their environment. Khadija, 26, from Toronto, and Shaniqua, 22, from Toronto both spoke to the influence that functioning community gardens would have on the protection of food systems within their communities. Khadija said, “There’s not much community gardening happening. I find that for people who like, want to grow their own culturally sensitive type of food related to their culture, it’s very difficult to do that. So like a lot of people who are in my like, like around Rexdale community, like, who end up like relying on like for example food banks, they don’t like get their own culture food.” Another programming recommendation, by Atreyu, 22, from Toronto is for funding to be provided for mandatory land stewardship spaces, educators, or knowledge keepers whose job is to push for land stewardship in their communities, reflecting on how a lot of Indigenous communities are told to do this work by Councils, but they lack the resources to make this work sustainable.



Recommendation 3:

Provide reparations as part of remediation processes for communities exposed to environmental hazards, and increase financial investments into community-led solutions to build agency and climate resiliency.



Community members lack the knowledge to confidently navigate how to protect their health from harmful chemicals, toxins and pollutants.

Many participants reflected on their own lack of awareness of some of the environmental issues they have faced, due to how normalized some of these environmental injustices have become within their communities. Emily, 21, from Calgary, reflected on moving to a big city from central Saskatchewan, and learning that being on water advisories their whole life is not normal, emphasizing a need for education about the environmental harms being faced by smaller communities and how policies have different impacts on larger and smaller communities. Furthermore, experiences like these were not limited to individuals living in smaller communities.



“

“Recently, we had a representative from the City [of Montreal] come to our place... I wasn't home, so we missed them, but they're going to test the lead concentrations in our water. And it got me thinking, like, oh, like, I've never had that before. That's weird. And then, like, my roommate and I were researching it, and I guess Montreal is known for having, like, one of the poorest water qualities, and, like, compared to all of our other metropolitan cities in Canada. And then that also got us down like, a tunnel of, like, microplastics. And like, the biggest thing, like, I'm sure you guys saw that article that was, like, recently released... there is no legislation that makes cities, municipalities or governments test for microplastics, but at any given time, like we have them in our bodies. So that was like another thing in terms of like waste chemicals and toxins that were like consuming day to day. So that was like another thing that really hit me. And obviously, like that comes from a place of privilege, because I've never had to think about that.”

Chantel, 28, Montréal

There is insufficient communication by government agencies on potential environmental hazards, alongside inconsistent, absent or unenforceable environmental health regulations.

Concerns and issues with current modes of communication utilized by the government and the accessibility of public sources of information available were also brought up by participants. David, 29, from Montreal shared that a few months ago, they found a map of Montréal which mapped out all of the contamination sites registered in the city to help identify if there's been remediation, and if so what level of remediation has occurred. He went on to share: "there's literally a contaminated site where my building is, and it has no remediation at all. And if you look at the map, it's pretty much all over the City, because it's traditionally industrial, and there's a lot of historical pollution. But yeah, one thing that I would raise too is the lack of awareness that as individual citizens, we can have. Because, okay, now I know I'm in a contaminated site, but I don't know what that means. I don't know what kind of contaminants or pollutants there are. What could the effects be? Are they long term? Will it take me decades to find out? And I think most citizens have some lack of access to the knowledge and awareness of the risks that they're exposed to. I, for example, planted two blueberry trees in the back of the building, because I want to harvest blueberries. But now I'm wondering, should I eat the blueberries that come out of there, or is it going to be contaminated with something?"

At the Toronto event, numerous participants expressed significant concern about exposure to toxins and chemicals through consumer products. Aish, 24, from Toronto highlighted the lack of clarity about the kinds of chemicals present in different products, particularly of "chemicals and toxins in menstrual products." Aish continued to share: "it's hard when going to Shoppers and I'm trying to buy my monthly menstrual products and I'm like which one do I get, because there's so many and they're all like 'all these ones are toxic to us now', and these are 'chemical-free', but are they really?"

And there's so many options out there and a lot of the time the most 'clean' or the most 'chemical-free' options are the most expensive, which makes them inaccessible to neighbourhoods and communities that really do need them." Sergio, 32, from Toronto highlighted that the health impacts of environmental exposures extend beyond human beings. He stated, "if I do not know which chemicals I should stay away from, how can we communicate to other species to stay away from them? We need to contain all this harmful stuff before it becomes our environment." Concerns extended beyond products to what chemicals are being regulated as well. Qijel, 23, from Toronto, brought up the INC4 Plastics discussions, and how "we emphasized the 15 chemicals of concern, so that's phthalates, bisphenols, parabens, mostly found in makeup products and plastic derivatives, so I think it's important for Canada to reinforce those 15 chemicals of concern when drafting rules on managing these chemical."



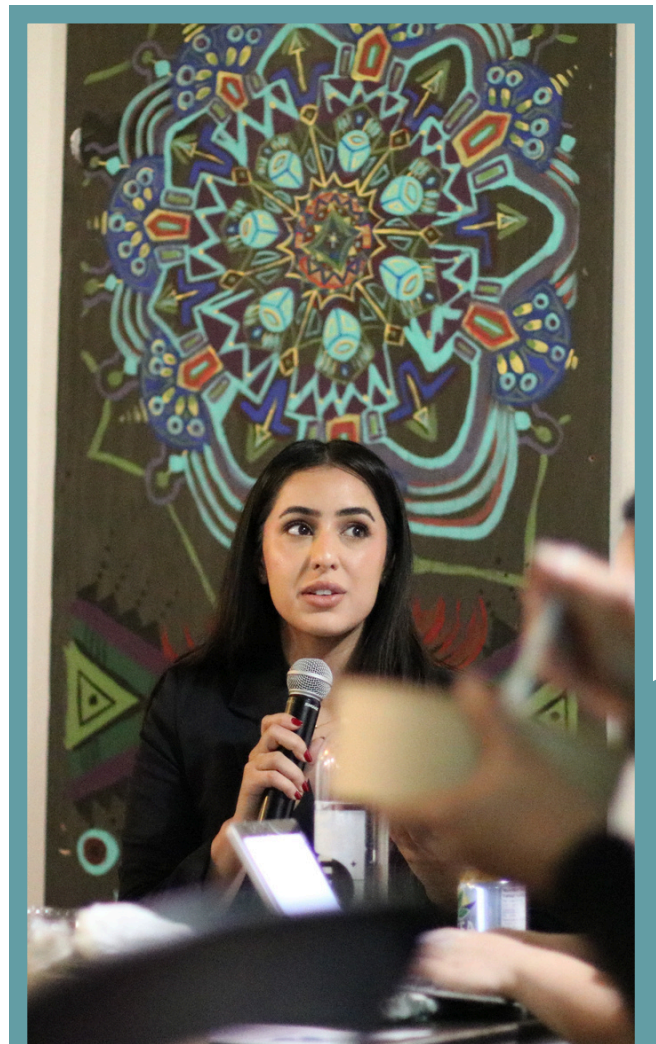


The need for more informed environmental regulations and accountability also came up in discussions. Importantly, Farron, 27, from Vancouver, urged for more focus within the Draft Framework on cumulative effects assessments. They shared that we need to understand the way that previous impacts are compounding with what we are doing today and how this may impact what we want in the future. The inadequacy of fines was also brought up in the context of environmental equity at the Montreal consultation. Megan, 23, Montreal said “I’m thinking more about enforcement and the need for stronger enforcement, because I think when you just allow companies and polluters to pay hefty fines that like fundamentally infringes on intergenerational equity, because fines aren’t going to help the health of the planet for future generations, so more strict enforcement, in the sense that it’s not something that companies and industries can still do and pay a fine for it, but something that should be essentially like prohibited.” Stricter environmental regulations ought to require companies to go beyond fines and focus on long-term environmental restoration and sustainability for the good of future generations.



Recommendation 4:

Provide reliable and accessible communications to the public to inform them of environmental health risks and mitigation strategies, and continue to work on proactive regulations to protect their health upstream.



Intergenerational Equity



We heard a universal cry for an improved definition of intergenerational equity throughout all of our events.

Throughout each of our consultations, participants offered suggestions for how to improve the definition and understanding of intergenerational equity. To start, participants emphasized their apprehensions about the use and understanding of the term equity in this context. As Anika, 26, Vancouver mentioned during our virtual consultation, “equity is multifaceted” and “we need to define what is meant by equity in relation to specific power dynamics, as well as wealth and resource distribution.” Mark, 26, from Vancouver emphasized that equity is difficult to quantify in any meaningful way. Furthermore, Nazir, 29, Calgary, asked “if we do not define what equity is, in terms of pollution level, what’s the damage we are causing for future generations and what are the damages that were caused by previous generations?” Across each event participants encouraged more community-based feedback to improve what is meant by equity and how it can be measured within the Draft Framework.

Concerns about understanding what exactly “a generation” constitutes within the Draft Framework was continuously brought up. Mallory, 24, from Toronto highlighted that the definition reads as vague and wondered how “future generations” can be defined more explicitly. The definition of intergenerational equity used in the Draft Framework ought to clarify the “timelines of each generation to add more clarity and nuance” Cathy, 26, from Richmond. Shauna, 24, from Canmore similarly highlighted that it is unclear who is included in the present generation. The definition needs to include the scope of the current generation and future generations. Several participants from across the country brought up the Seven Generations Principles from Indigenous knowledge systems.

Quinn, 19, from Halifax mentioned “for Indigenous peoples, they talk about, like, seven generations into the future, so I just like, I’m not sure how much this definition kind of like was based on those principles. And maybe, like, look into Indigenous wording of that concept.” Multiple participants emphasized that the current definition lacks a connectedness to future generations. Megan, 23, Montreal emphasized how the Seven Generations Principle can help bridge this gap. Michelle, 23, Mississauga also mentioned that the Seven Generations Principle can tie in Indigenous Knowledge and help to avoid future discounting. Evidently, participants did not feel that the meaning of future generations within the Draft Framework was clearly articulated. This ambiguity could be clarified by using a concept like the Seven Generations Principle.



Similarly to concerns about the definition of equity and future generations, we also heard from participants across the country that “needs” ought to be defined within the Draft Framework. During our consultation events in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and online, how the needs of future generations will be measured was specifically expressed as a concern. The use of “needs” in the Draft Framework was critiqued for being very broad and up to interpretation by Aspen, 25, from Montreal and ambiguous, which means it can be easily misconstrued as noted by Alida, 34, from Squamish Valley.

Sergio, 32, from Toronto and Emily T., 24, from Halifax expressed concern that the current use of “needs” in the Draft Framework implies that we already know what future generations will need, but in actuality we have no idea what the world will look like in the future. Emily T., 24, from Halifax went on to say that “it almost sounds to me like it’s saying... the needs of the current generation are what we have going right now and then we have to assure that we can, like, maintain this for next generations. But it’s like, we all know that, like, Western civilization... consumption stuff isn’t.... a sustainable need going forward.” Moreover, Hawwa, 18, from Brampton mentioned that new needs will probably come up in the future as the climate continues to change. We need to ensure that the Right to a Healthy Environment also protects these future rights that may not be clear in the present.



“

“If we do what is just needed for right now, [it] probably won’t suffice for future generations.”

Allena, 26, Vancouver



Importantly, David, 29, from Montreal emphasized that the intergenerational equity definition in the Draft Framework should explicitly state where we want to ensure the needs of future generations are met. Moreover, we need to plan from now to ensure those rights are met in the future. Esther, 27, from Montreal goes further and says that future generations may need legal rights to a healthy environment, thus surpassing the need-based framework entirely.

Participants also critiqued the current use of intergenerational equity for focusing too narrowly on the human experience. Karima, 35, from North Vancouver and Sergio, 32, from Toronto mentioned that the definition is anthropocentric. Where does nature fit in? Karima emphasized the need for a new way that “includes the needs” and mentions “the interconnectedness of the earth’s various ecosystems.” Moreover, Sara, 31, from Montreal noted that the current intergenerational equity definition lacks connections to other species. Similarly to how participants encouraged the use of Indigenous Knowledge in defining generational needs, Indigenous worldviews can lend a hand to incorporating non-human entities into the Draft Framework’s equity definition.



Recommendation 5:

Create a more detailed and quantifiable definition of intergenerational equity, including:

- Explicitly define what each generations’ needs are, and how these are weighed as part of environmental decision-making today;
- Ensure that the needs of future generations are favoured over the needs of the present generation because of the lack of power that future generations have in changing course to prevent the establishment of potential intergenerational environmental health harms; and,
- Broaden the definition of intergenerational equity to include non-human entities.



Key concerns about the use of neutral language throughout the Draft Framework were brought forward, and were seen as particularly harmful in the context of intergenerational equity.

As individuals who are attuned to the urgency of the climate crisis, participants emphasized that there is no room for neutrality within the Right to a Healthy Environment. Karen, 19, from Vancouver stated that neutrality in language should be avoided altogether as it allows for people and corporations to avoid action. In this sense, Karen emphasized, “neutrality can be dangerous.” Furthermore, Isminoz, 21, from Montreal stressed that the current unclear language assumes that people can presently meet their own needs, when “really it should be about building systems that allow people to meet their own needs without continuously having to rely on government subsidies...so you shouldn’t have the government meeting the needs of the people. You should have it by building systems that help people meet their own needs.” Isminoz’s example speaks to how language, if not clear, can be misinterpreted.

Sara, 31, from Montreal gave a concrete example of how the Draft Framework can avoid neutral action. Sara noted that the language should be changed from meeting the needs of future generations to fulfilling the needs of future generations. This makes the definition more actionable and demonstrates a sense of urgency. The current neutral language in the Draft Framework downplays the urgency of the climate crisis.



Recommendation 6:

Avoid neutral or watered-down language across the Framework as it downplays urgency, can be misinterpreted and prevents enforceability and accountability for lack of progress.





Barriers and Enablers Towards Upholding RTHE

There is a need for better communication from the government about remediation options available to affected communities, as well as more bi-directional communication between government agencies and communities at risk of environmental hazards.

Joy, 31, from Vancouver emphasized this issue, stating: “if you’re not educated you just assume there’s nothing wrong with you or your community, it’s just normal... most communities that are living in that environment are not aware that they are in that situation.” In Halifax, participants identified the need for resources and tools that will help citizens identify what they should be reporting to the government as violations of their Right to a healthy environment. Suggested resources include channels to call and report potential violations, providing case studies that show the public what kinds of issues fall under the scope of the right, and a mapping system highlighting hotspots of environmental injustice.

At the virtual event, participants indicated there is a disconnect between the government and citizens when it comes to understanding how government systems actually work. Leena, 28, from Vancouver shared that it took them 2–3 years to comprehend what level of government is responsible for what, and that mandate changes further contribute to this confusion. They emphasized the onus lies on decision-makers to make this information more accessible. This lack of clarity impedes the ability of citizens to engage with the government and get environmental hazards in their community addressed. Many shared that having access to a clearly presented vision, including timelines, of government projects and programs would make their use of them more accessible. Survey results further support this idea as survey respondents indicated that they want more information on how to identify when their rights have been infringed, how to access mechanisms to have these violations addressed, and where they can go for legal assistance.



Participants felt that the Draft Framework, as well as other government communications and reports use too much technical language, and should be available in more accessible mediums (e.g., podcast, short videos, or shared in town halls directly with community members in different languages).



One participant from Vancouver spoke about how they faced difficulties working through the amount of jargon present within the Draft Framework, and also expressed concerns about how this will impact other's ability to be able to engage with these materials as well. "I have a 60 year old immigrant mom at home. She is really interested in environmental stewardship and protecting [the environment]... But if I gave her the document that we read coming up to this there's no way she would be able [to]. It's just so much jargon. Even for me, this is a lot of jargon" Mark, 26, from Vancouver.

Across events it was emphasized that the government needs to be able to 'meet people where they're at' when it comes to drafting communications about the Right and its implementation, so that members of the public don't have to be experts to engage. Chantel, 28, from Montreal, spoke to the fact that a lot of the people they engage with on environmental issues have been able to obtain post-secondary levels of education and how this creates barriers to engagement as "people who didn't study environmental, environmental science or studies, when they try to read, it becomes overwhelming, and it also creates a sense of despair."

To further address jargon concerns, participants across events called for the government to use alternative forms of communication like visuals, videos, podcasts, radio or TV advertisements, newspaper and magazine articles, newsletters in the mail, workshops, and social media content, in accessible language, so the public can more effectively engage with government materials on the right.

In Vancouver and Toronto, many shared about the unfair mental burden placed on newcomer communities to access information about their environment. In Montreal, they spoke about the accessibility issues faced when all government reports and policies, as well as remediation methods like complaint forms, are available predominantly in French and English, which creates barriers for newcomers who don't know either official language.

Ha Nhuan, 23, from Montreal shared that "for me, accessing public services is always a battle between the languages... and then the internal battle... What is my health right now after battling the language barriers?" There is also a generational component to how newcomers are able to participate in government processes because of the language barriers they are currently facing.



In a powerful example, Miha, 26, from North York shared: “My mom just recently came this year from Turkey, and she’s going to a link school full time, but she, like it’s so hard for her outside of her school to interact with, like, official entities or legal entities where she can immediately get information and understand. She needs to get up to date with the language, with the community, volunteer to expand her network, and only then will she have the ability to access these, like high level platforms, as if it’s some sort of like, like a privilege for you to be able to care about climate, only after you pass through the language barrier. So things like this, I think are very humiliating for them, and people just withdraw, they decide not to participate, they decide not to care.”

Similarly, Shatha, 23, from Montreal tied linguistic and systemic barriers back into their concerns about education, reflecting on the “very racist structures around... folks being able to be public servants or teachers around specific communities. So with education being accessible in an ideal world, I’m like envisioning a perfect scenario of educating and outreach. It’s one that meets communities where they are, ..., frequent cultural spaces that folks reach, is accessible in terms of language, and just overall meets people where they’re at, and works with that type of education piece.”

Recommendation 7:

Increase the accessibility of communications to help dedicatedly reach more newcomer communities, seniors, and racially, ethnically and linguistically-minoritized communities.



The government needs to better communicate when and how consultations are happening with the public, particularly with the communities that are being directly impacted by the issues and legislation being consulted upon.



Farron, 27 in Vancouver shared: “to be able to be in any of the decision-making spaces is incredibly hard... and it's also incredibly hard to just be in any of the public forums anyways, like, it's usually obscurely posted somewhere. There's not very much information about it.” The locations chosen for in-person events was also highlighted as a key barrier that not only impacts participation in consultation processes, but the diversity of information collected as well. Emily H, 20, from Halifax, highlighted that feedback collected will vary when collected in urban centres or from rural communities, “when I go into, like, rural Saskatchewan, it's almost like you're in a slightly different dimension.” A participant from the event in Calgary emphasized the need for consultations to meet people where they're at, citing their experience working with high school aged students and hosting events directly at the schools to minimize barriers for these students to access opportunities to participate.

Another big factor of consultation participation that was brought up across events was the importance of compensation. Yeviegr, 30, from Lethbridge, spoke of their gratitude that they were able to obtain compensation for participation in our consultations as they would have been unable to participate without that. Yeviegr also highlighted that “usually underpaid people, the people who have the most struggles, usually the people the system doesn't really favour and we are the most affected.” Meg, 28, from Saskatoon further emphasized this point, expressing their frustration with issues accessing consultation processes, insisting that “community members should be paid well and make it radically accessible – transportation costs, tech equipment, anything that could prevent participation.”

Many participants expressed some concerns with the online portal currently being proposed by the government as a channel for citizens to share issues with the government. Across all events, concerns regarding a reliance on online forms of communication and consultation, as this creates massive barriers for communities that lack access to the internet was indicated. Hailey, 29, from North Vancouver, recommended that the government “have reps in local, municipal, provincial governments whose job is to facilitate this decision-making and approaching communities. Providing in-person and remote opportunities includes people with disabilities.”

In several of our consultations, participants emphasized the importance of including youth and other diverse or underrepresented voices in the implementation processes of the Right to a Healthy Environment. In Calgary and Toronto specifically, thoughtful discussions were had about the inclusion of youth and leaving room for different cultural values in the Draft Framework. Sophia, 28, from Calgary mentioned the concept of youth washing. Youth washing occurs when youth are brought in at the last stage, sometimes too late and often without compensation and after having to prove that they hold important and unique opinions and perspectives. Mallory, 24, from Toronto also recommended that younger people under the age of 18 participate in feedback sessions as one of the future generations the Draft Framework aims to protect. It was reiterated at the Calgary consultation that the implementation process needs to cross generational divides. Hearing from a variety of perspectives, including older and younger generations, allows everyone to say their piece and begin to bridge that divide.



Related to the inclusion of youth voices, participants acknowledged that individuals should be recognized and compensated for their time in such conversations or consultations. Sophia, 28, from Calgary emphasized that folks need to be compensated for their time in these conversations, either monetarily or otherwise, and this compensation also needs to be intergenerational. Likewise, Rachel, 30, from Toronto said that youth need to be compensated for being involved in the implementation process. A recommendation that came up at multiple public consultations was to establish a CEPA Youth Advisory Council. A youth council could be used to discuss how youth feedback and ideas are being integrated into the management cycle as suggested by Rachel, 30, from Toronto. Alida, 34, from Squamish Valley mentioned both a youth advisory council and an elder advisory council. Meg, 38, from Saskatoon also mentioned how a youth advisory council could give ongoing thoughts on how CEPA is being implemented.

In addition to the inclusion of youth, participants at various consultations noted the importance of including other diverse and underrepresented perspectives. Sophia, 28, from Calgary emphasized the need for more BIPOC inclusion in consultations. Similarly, Nadia, 28, from Calgary mentioned that conversations about intergenerational equity in Canada will, necessarily, be interracial and intercultural. Nadia stressed that the government should be aware of this and be prepared to include diverse cultural perspectives in the Draft Framework. In a similar vein, Miha, 26, from North York recommended that the definition of intergenerational equity ought to be reframed to recognize not only local and national environmental impacts and practices but also their effects on global communities. Hearing from newcomers and people with experiences outside of Canada is important to the implementation process of the Draft Framework.



Recommendation 8:

Increase the number of consultation opportunities, and ensure that they are inclusive of all communities, but that they are made most accessible to those disproportionately impacted to differential/cumulative environmental harms.



There is a need for expanded scopes of research that can be used to shape the right, to ensure that the government is fully comprehending the intersectional, compounding impacts of environmental harms on different communities.



Farron, 27, from Vancouver called on the government to collect “disaggregated data so we can understand impacts to diverse communities eg: women/gender diverse folks, racialized groups, youth, seniors, people experiencing disabilities, etcetera.” Megan, 23, from Montreal, further spoke to the impacts of data disparities, highlighting the lack of awareness and research of the impacts of toxins and contaminants on women’s bodies, calling on the government to provide guidance on how to reduce exposure and understanding how their health is being impacted. Farron also spoke to the necessity of collecting and valuing data from more than just Western science-based sources and methods, that “Indigenous knowledge and community perceptions should be upheld.” When asked in the survey about the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and leadership in the Draft Framework, two First Nations youth had the following contributions: “Indigenous people all over the world are advocating for environmental rights and protections. By including our perspectives whenever possible, we can develop a new framework that prioritizes a sustainable society”, “Indigenous Nations face significant barriers to accessing information and participating in environmental and policy decisions, often due to historical, logistical, and systemic challenges.”

Participants in Toronto also discussed the insights that immigrants hold and how we must work to better incorporate a global lens into the Framework and the implementation of solutions to address environmental hazards and harms. “They have a lot of firsthand experience, perhaps from home, whatever home was and is for them, and that’s for this generation and prior generations. So going back to intergenerational knowledge exchange, that’s so important and well, oftentimes you might think, ‘well those anecdotes may not be applicable to our built environment here.’ I think the onus is on us to think differently and get creative with the way we are approaching solutions and integrating and seeing us as one piece of that universal lens” Inderjit, 26, from Toronto. Bringing impacted communities themselves into data collection processes was a further suggestion. Atreyu, 22, from Toronto recommended the implementation of community and city-level climate justice or public policy censuses so that the government and decision-makers can have access to statistics and actual values on solutions and supports that are needed right now, as well as the communication of the results of these censuses to the community through town halls and other consultation processes.





The necessity of investments, of both financial and non-financial assets (i.e. time) into preventative efforts, as reactionary actions are placing undue burdens on impacted communities to prove their rights are being violated as they are being violated was expressed. Michelle, 23, from Mississauga, spoke specifically of the need for actions stemming from the Implementation Framework to have a focus on climate mitigation and adaptation and implementing direct solutions like cooling centres, carbon emission mitigation, updating flood risk maps, and building resilient communities as it is “not just communicating concerns, but also preemptively addressing them, instead of seeking remediation, which puts the onus on the person who’s been affected and is also just trying to respond to something that’s already been happening that’s negatively impacting you.” There was a call for the government to fund, support, and implement community-led solutions that was echoed across all of the events.

Kira, 23, from Halifax, explained that “there needs to be more funding and support to support community groups and not-for-profit groups to monitor the environment, and because, like they’re the ones that are engaged in that space.” Participants shared how bureaucratic barriers to accessing funding impact their and community-based group’s ability to monitor, maintain and advocate for the health of their environment. From the virtual event, many highlighted the importance of implementing and supporting citizen science opportunities. Taylor, 24, from Winnipeg and Meg, 28, from Saskatoon, both spoke about the disconnect between national policy and local applications, with Taylor highlighting the need for localized leadership and partnerships between the government and grassroots organizations to address these gaps, and Meg spoke to the discomfort of “drop-in science” being performed by the federal government, highlighting the importance of giving some of these monitoring jobs to local community members.



Recommendation 9:

Increase support for citizen science initiatives, community-led data collection and ownership, and the collection of environmental health data that factors in the impacts of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sex, disability and immigration status to help make transparent critical gaps in environmental & health policies and services.



Across the country, there is a deep distrust of government agencies and the information and services that they are providing.



Participants across the country touched on the necessity that the government implement strategies to mend this disconnect between citizens and the government, but the onus must be on the government to implement actions, they cannot blame citizens for their validly felt distrust. Emily T, 24, from Halifax, identified the fact that “the government puts their own barriers in place. Like thinking of land defenders and like they’re doing essentially the work that we’re all like saying is so important, but then you have like, like the RCMP groups that are, like, sent by the government to enforce that and limit their capacity to actually take care of the land.” This inherent distrust is perpetuated by the inaccessibility of being able to actually reach representatives within government, and the lack of speed when progressing through bureaucratic processes. Nazir, 29, from Calgary indicated that the government needs to better communicate the speed at which solutions and processes can be implemented, as in the face of crisis, sometimes these solutions are quite inaccessible due to their slow rate of application, which impacts public perception of the effectiveness of policy.

Participants across events spoke to the presence of misinformation and disinformation campaigns and how this further creates concerns about the trustworthiness of the information that they themselves and their community are exposed to. In Vancouver the example of advertisements on public transit, particularly for LNG was highlighted. Cherry, 31, from Montreal, spoke further about this, saying “at some point, there needs to be some regulation on the government’s part, on who’s allowed to present what information, as what, on public spheres.”

Participants further identified that they have an increased reliance on social media as a news source, and that there is a lack of accountability for the truth of information being spread there. Aspen, 25, from Montreal, expressed their frustration with the Meta news ban, saying, “even I go on social media, and sometimes I’m questioning what is true and what isn’t.” Arif, 21, from Toronto, recommended that a fact-checking program be applied to climate information on social media, similar to what was implemented with information about COVID-19.

Across all the events, it was recommended the government establish a centralized resource hub for the public to be able to more easily access all the relevant information and reports when it comes to maintaining their and their community’s Right to a Healthy Environment. Part of the issue is the fact that people don’t know where to access the information, as highlighted by Fatu, 25, from Halifax, “it’s the lack of a clear line of communication, due to a lot of bureaucracies like access to information. Like sometimes, like the information is not there, but you just don’t know where to go.”





Across the consultations, participants emphasized the importance of accessible and comprehensible, public-facing environmental data which is related to contaminants and pollution. In Montreal, David T., 29, shared his experience accessing technical data on contamination in the Saint Laurent River, a privilege afforded by his work in the environmental sector. “So, you know, for people to be able to uphold the rights of those that need to have the right information, and there is a lot of information out there, but it's not being presented and shared in a way that people find it accessible.” This notion of accessible reporting and robust metrics focused on community was continuously stressed across all consultations. In specific Ha Nhuan, 23, Montreal and David T., 29, Montreal, mention how individuals should be able to easily understand air and water quality in their areas, including updates on contaminants and exposure limits. This information, besides being public-facing, should be packaged in user-friendly formats to empower communities to make well-informed decisions.

Ha Nhuan, 23, Montreal added that simplifying government reports is critical for broader engagement with the Canadian public. “Make it accessible citizen science, so maybe put it required. What is the component in your research that engages citizens in how to make your research assessment, risk assessment evaluations, accessible in what forms?” he suggested, recommending family-friendly and engaging projects such as exhibitions or social media series to communicate findings. For instance, Ha Nhuan recalled an inspiring environmental project at the Montreal Biosphere that broke down water filtration processes in the Saint Laurent River.

This would ensure that scientific data is internalized by diverse communities, including families and students. In this vein, using creative and culturally relevant methods in accessible reporting to bridge the divide between technical data and public comprehension were advocated across the consultations. Breakout groups in Calgary called attention to story-telling as crucial tools for broader outreach. “I want to hear from the community members that were impacted by this and if they're comfortable and willing to share what it was like for them in those spaces”, highlighting the importance of direct stories to build momentum and trust in the government. Meanwhile, Alicia, 32, from Toronto, pushed for interactive infographics, videos, and visuals that distill complex, technical information into layman language and engaging formats. Furthermore, Inderjit, 26, from Toronto suggests multilingual dissemination “across news outlets beyond just the regular Anglophone ones, and even Francophone, because yeah there is a strong presence of that, but equally, we have a lot of diversity in this country, I know my family will still listen to Punjabi news, people deserve to have access to the information in a language in which they could digest it most easily.” In Toronto, Atreyu, 22, from Toronto proposed transforming media coverage to prioritize environmental issues while Arif, 21, Toronto suggested balancing negative news with positive stories to stimulate community optimism.





Furthermore, transparency in reporting environmental data is a recurring demand. Jillian, 26, from St. Johns argued that “I also think within transparent reporting they should specifically comment on whether they’ve achieved non-regression. i.e. not just mentioning good things that have been accomplished that year, but also specifically calling out goals that have not been accomplished in comparison to previous years”, noting that readers shouldn’t have to compare reports across years to identify regressions. Indeed, many participants shared a need for frequent, digestible updates, such as quarterly summaries or monthly report cards depicting key metrics, akin to Statistics Canada’s communication model.

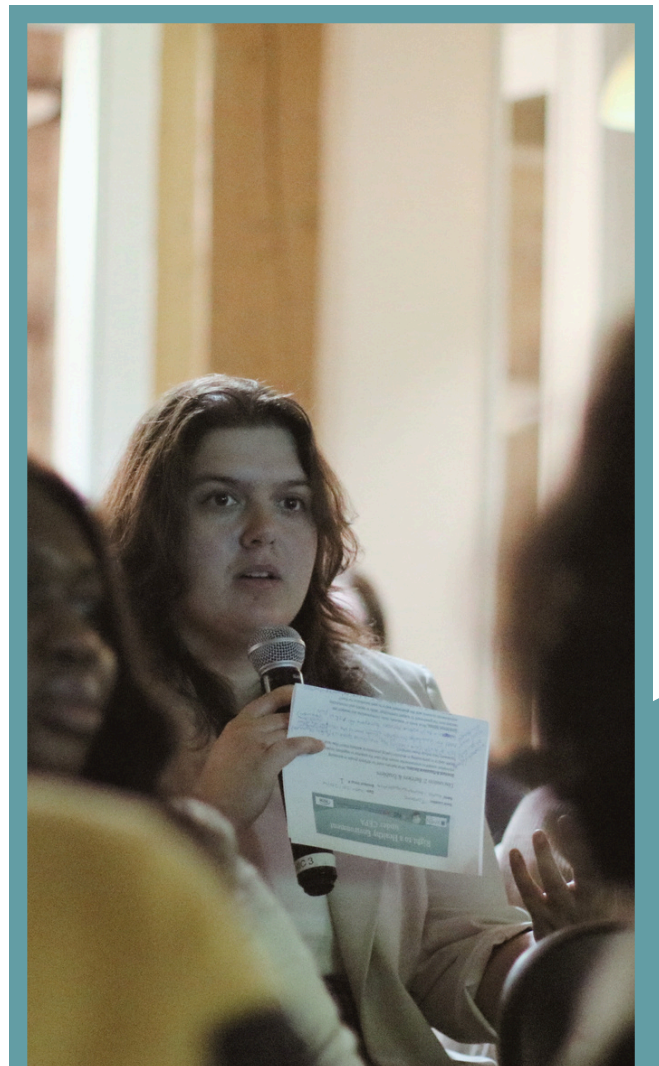
Additionally, robust metrics must prioritize community-specific concerns. During the virtual session, Aish, 29, from Vancouver discussed how “Across the board, robust data sets. Different communities, how do they identify, what are their main concerns and what they’re impacted by, how is the government providing solutions? Health metrics, restoration, adaptation. How are rural communities made more resilient?” Zeinab, 27, from St. Johns and many other participants returned to the need of showing tangible outcomes, such as pollution reduction and the integration of Indigenous knowledge into policies. For instance, Adenike, 29, from Toronto suggested establishing emergency alerts and proactive feedback mechanisms at provincial levels.

Ultimately, participants advocated for accessible, transparent, and community-focused data dissemination to uphold environmental rights and to strengthen public trust in environmental decision-making.



Recommendation 10:

Increase public access to trustworthy sources of information, and work on broader initiatives to increase trust in government initiatives, programs and services.



Accountability and Enforcement



Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening corporate accountability in the context of environmental damage, to prioritize human & environmental health needs over profit.

In this light, a central point of discussion that was raised is the issue of transparency. In particular, Kira, 23, from Halifax emphasized the importance of access, “If you’re aware of the pollution going into the river, then you can do something about it and complain, or be like, this is a solution that we want, or it’s affecting you this way.” From Calgary, Maria, 29 and Nadia, 28, drew attention to the disproportionate burdens placed on individuals to solve systemic issues exacerbated by corporations. Maria, 29, from Calgary critiqued the incommensurate responsibility individuals currently face under the “polluters pay” framework as “Questionable as individuals have to be responsible for giving up things and giving up all of these different things that we enjoy and have to take a big part of the responsibility when polluters are contributing disproportionately to the problem.” Meanwhile, Nadia, 28, from Calgary, argued for platforms that mitigate and reduce these individualized burdens, “I don’t need to know anything, I just know that this is not right, I go to someone else and then they do it, so the platforms need to be there.”

Beyond transparency, participants discussed the crucial role that financial repercussions played in maintaining accountability among corporations. In Halifax, Emily H., 20, stated that, “They should definitely be fining the people that are polluting” while Jazmine, 26, from Halifax, proposed a more stringent approach, “Why can’t they just shut them down then? Like if you get so many fines, like you’re just done. You’re fired.”

These sentiments paralleled broader frustrations shared by participants, particularly about repeat offenders in mining industries as Emily T., 24, from Halifax, observed during her past experiences. She stressed that accountability must also involve proactive measures, not just reactive penalties, with corporations taking responsibility for preventing rather than relying on environmental restoration from external groups. In a similar vein, Nazir, 29, from Calgary, underscored the need for tailored repercussions for industries causing the most environmental damage by advocating for tailored specific, as opposed to flat, penalties. Crow, 18, from Victoria, added that steep financial penalties should be introduced for polluters causing environmental harm. Zoe, 22, from Montreal proposed public reporting of discrepancies between corporate social responsibility claims and actual practices to ensure accountability.





However, several participants pointed out that fines alone are insufficient. Chaeyon, 25, from Halifax, discussed the importance of financial redress, noting that compensation, whether to individuals or organizations, is a critical step toward accountability. Camille, 26, from Montreal expanded on this by pointing out the interconnectedness of legal, social, and economic factors, “It’s not just a legal thing. It’s really a society thing, an economic thing, and it all just needs to tie together if you want it to actually, like, move forward and if you want to see actual change.” Others, like Sara, 31, from Montreal, advocated for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to shift the burden of environmental damage from consumers to corporations. As she explains, by holding businesses accountable for the full lifecycle of their products—especially in industries like fast fashion—EPR could address overproduction and waste. Furthermore, as Darian, 22, from Halifax noted, financial audits are another tool for accountability but often stir controversy when government organizations fail them. Here, Fatu, 25, from Halifax, suggested that unbiased, volunteer driven auditing bodies, “I think it’d be good to have an auditing body that is not paid in a sense, that have just, you know, like the jury community, sometimes they just, like, send invites to, like, random people to take part in the jury...” akin to jury selection which could remove self-interest and ensure impartial oversight.

The role of lobbying and corporate influence on legislation additionally came under scrutiny. For example, Cherry, 31, from Montreal, called for better disclosure on industry lobbying, “I’ll just say better disclosure of lobbying in industry, which then directly impacts the laws that trickles down to how we’re governed and regulated, because we cannot rely on just market incentive to naturally do this for us.”



Recommendation 11:

Implement further measures to ensure polluters and corporations are held responsible for environmental harm.



There is a strong consensus among the participants that investing in public reporting and public-facing communication platforms is critical to ensure accountability and transparency in environmental governance efforts.



As David T., 29, Montreal, emphasized, “I think there should be an open platform for people to see what’s all the submissions that have been made and what action has been taken on the submissions and should be open to the public and should track every single submission that has been made.” Such a system, as the participants discuss, would not only track every complaint about violations of the Right, but also allow the public to monitor governmental responses. Camille, 26, from Montreal, noted that while some information is technically public, it is often buried on inaccessible platforms such as government websites. In this light, a shift toward modern communication channels is necessary. Furthermore, publicizing lists of environmental offenders, as Cherry, 31, from Montreal, suggested can spotlight both achievements and current challenges. Additionally, Sara, 31, from Montreal, proposed that mandating annual reports with penalties for delays could clarify unmet goals and subsequently contribute a sense of accountability around the governments’ actions. Riya, 21, from Montreal added that this could stimulate engagement and lead to further inspiration around inciting collective action.

The role of grassroots movements and accessible government channels in holding governmental bodies accountable cannot be overstated. One breakout group in Calgary underscored the frustration of receiving generic responses from MPs and the inaccessibility of reaching governmental officials for meaningful dialogue. As Jazmine, 26, from Halifax stated, “I’ve sent letters to my MP and it’s always the same generic stuff.” Here, many of the participants returned to the importance of creating a follow-up process for environmental complaints, including portals to track government actions. As Amin, 31, from Calgary aptly noted, “if it is not legally enforceable, it is simply political branding and communications exercise”, alluding to the need for binding commitments and stakeholder accountability at every implementation phase.

Encouraging inclusive risk assessment via public engagement and transparent decision-making is an additional essential step. Ha Nhuan, 23, from Montreal pointed out that scientific jargon, such as “weight of evidence” and “reasonable limits”, often excludes the public from defining what constitutes environmental risk.” Just because a few groups find that a risk doesn’t mean that it is not worth looking into that you need more evidence like it doesn’t work that way in real life,” Ha Nhuan discussed, drawing attention to the need for diverse, community-driven definitions of risk and prevention measures.

In Vancouver, Cathy, 26, from Richmond similarly raised an important question about accountability and decision-making, “So who gets to be the judge, jury and executioner? One of my concerns is I see a lot of governmental agencies outsourcing a lot of their research and and policy development stuff to like consulting agencies, which are private companies that often have conflicts of interest because they also advise for fossil fuels, and so I like, I think for accountability, the government needs to disclose to the community, first and foremost, and get community input on who’s going to be overseeing their case.”





Cathy crucially noted how when communities assert something as environmentally harmful, those in power often dismiss those claims. She further emphasized that for the sake of accountability, “the government needs to disclose to the community, first and foremost, and get community input on who’s going to be overseeing their case.” Allena, 26, from Vancouver added another critical layer to the discussion, questioning where community involvement begins and ends. She reflected on the personal impact of this disconnect, “How long does it take to prove I am sick? Do I wait while I’m sick for you to decide I am? Do I get help while I wait?” Likewise, David S., 23, from Montreal, underscored the importance of a proactive approach, requiring industries to engage in public consultations before initiating potential polluting practices, “I feel like from a government perspective, if you start forcing that process or regulating that process, I think you can get to a point where you don’t even need to hold anybody accountable.”

In addition, participants stressed the need for the development of a wide array of enforcement mechanisms. During the Toronto consultation, Miha, 26, from North York, emphasized the need for repercussions when goals are not met, drawing attention to how penalties often fall disproportionately on affected communities rather than decision-makers. Sergio, 32, from Toronto added onto this, recommending that penalties for noncompliance beyond fines should be introduced in order to raise awareness about polluters’ impact.



Meanwhile, Atreyu, 22, from Toronto urged the development of mandatory capacity-building programs for government officials across departments to ensure they fully understand environmental concepts, challenges, and news updates. He suggested setting detailed deadlines with clear penalties for non-compliance and incorporating constitutional and human rights into environmental accountability frameworks. Atreyu proposed exploring more innovative approaches, such as making individuals or entities guarantors for environmental policies, akin to how guarantors are used in rental agreements to ensure accountability at every level.

Similarly, Amber, 31, from Vancouver recommended forming governmental committees composed of marginalized groups and experts to oversee environmental policies to ensure inclusive decision-making processes. Indeed, there was a large consensus among participants that there exists a noticeable disconnect between various levels of government that further complicates accountability. Taking note of this, Hailey, 29, from North Vancouver questioned what factors are weighed more heavily than others and what disconnects exist between interests on different governmental levels (e.g. economy over what local people desire).



Recommendation 12:

Develop, define and enforce clear accountability measures for the government to uphold environmental commitments.

Addressing ongoing environmental injustices imposed upon Indigenous communities, alongside making meaningful progress towards the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls-to-action are seen as top priorities.



In Montreal, Chantel, 28, discussed the importance of scrutinizing how environmental health affects marginalized and underserved communities, emphasizing the need for clear metrics to track progress, "Consultation means they'll take your feedback, but they won't act on it. So like, if we did have a report where it was, like...what was the issue? How was it resolved? What communities did they actually act on versus not acting on?" In this manner, Indigenous engagement must go beyond token consultations. Furthermore, this specific point demonstrates how systemic neglect of marginalized voices can manifest, particularly those of Canada in environmental decision-making. Taking this into consideration, Chantel vehemently calls for enforceable measures to ensure that historically underserved communities do not continue to be overlooked in favour of predominantly high-income white neighbourhoods which reinforces the need for public access to tracking reports to drive accountability. Across the consultations, many participants similarly stressed the need for clear accountability and proactive engagement with underserved communities.

In terms of conducting public consultations, Inderjit, 26, from Toronto pointedly notes how "we shouldn't feel as though this is the first and last opportunity for these types of meaningful engagements, and so in fact, actually what that means is we should, the government should plan to incorporate this as a part of their implementation plan and monitoring plan."

Many others such as Lina, 27, from Roxboro strongly share this perspective, clarifying that from her perspective that she would specifically love to see how the Right to the Healthy Environment works to reverse harm done to communities of colour and communities that are most disproportionately affected. Rachel, 30, from Toronto similarly suggested prioritizing Indigenous engagement in progress tracking measures and updates to ensure their perspectives remain integral to environmental progress.

Furthermore, pursuing equitable solutions in upholding a healthy environment also involves enabling access to sustainable practices for all communities. Val, 21, from Montreal highlighted the intersection of agriculture, food security, and sustainability by suggesting workshops to teach newcomers how to utilize local produce effectively. "Imagine a little recipe cookbook for first-timers in Canada," she proposed, pointing out how such initiatives could tie into agro-tourism to blend together community-building and economic benefits.



Recommendation 13:

Center Indigenous decision-making and address injustices faced by underserved communities in environmental governance.



Participants took issue with the Right being unenforceable, and were concerned about its applicability across different levels of government, alongside its ability to withstand governmental changes.

Quite a few concerns about the influence politics will have on the protection and upholding of their Right to a healthy environment was brought up. Participants across events are particularly concerned about how the Right, and any actions or programs stemming from upholding it will be impacted by potential party changes across all levels of government. Nazir, 29, from Calgary expressed that they “would be very concerned about any sorts of policies that would be introduced or withheld as a result of that changing government in Ottawa that would negatively affect what we’re talking about right now, and potentially many other issues as well.” To alleviate these concerns, participants want the government to have this Right enshrined and given constitutional merit, which will allow for it to be applicable to provincial and municipal policies and projects as well.



Recommendation 14:

In the next revision cycle, work to expand the Right beyond CEPA, to apply to other federal policies, as well as clarify the impacts upon provincial, territorial, and municipal mandates for the development of politics in their jurisdictions.

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“If I’m thinking about land use, I want that in my official [building] plan, right? I want the Right to healthy environments in my official plan, I want that enacted, I want it part of zoning. I want it a part of secondary plans. I don’t want to sit here and have to advocate for it, it should already be part of the implementation process for our municipalities.”

Katie, 30, Schomberg

Many want the government to acknowledge the large role that the continued use of fossil fuels plays in causing environmental exposures and harms, and would like to see strategies implemented to phase them out in a 'Just Transition'.



Michelle, 23, from Mississauga, identified that a fossil fuel phase-out as the number one thing we can do to protect our climate and our health. Michelle recommended the implementation of stronger emissions caps, cutting subsidies, and more stringent emissions reductions caps. Their dissatisfaction with current fossil fuel accountability strategies was also expressed. Mallory, 24, from Toronto expressed concerns about greenwashing, particularly the use of private-sector carbon credits as a way for corporations to insist upon their sustainability, and stressed the need for stronger reporting mechanisms.

Yeviegr, 30, from Lethbridge, emphasized that the fossil fuel phase out transition needs to be funded, and workers need to be trained to take on these new roles, to make the renewable energy sector more attractive. A few participants brought up concerns about the effectiveness of fines on super-polluters and larger corporations. David T., 29, from Montreal recommended the implementation of "financial repercussions that are proportional to the annual income of a company, so the bigger the company is, the bigger the fine is... [and] that that the fines increase for repeat offenders."

Chantel, 28, from Montreal, recommended the government go even further, "instead of financial repercussions,... it could be things like, if they're caught contaminating like they have to ... stop operating in that area, or close up shop, or like something that's more, like they can pay a million dollar fine." Rachel, 30, from Toronto recommended accountability mechanisms such that companies be required to publicize on their website or in a physical space, implementing a similar program to health inspections in restaurants, if they are being investigated.



Recommendation 15:

Phase out fossil fuels to ensure that the Right is upheld, and take a whole-of-government approach to align Canada's environmental justice and climate action strategies, frameworks and commitments to advance health equity.

