



Environment and Climate Change Canada
Sustainability Directorate
351 boul. St-Joseph, 4th floor,
Gatineau, Quebec, K1A 0H3

RE: Share your thoughts: 2026-2029 Draft Federal Sustainable Development Strategy

Submitted via email to: SDO-BDD@ec.gc.ca

The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) is the leading voice of the mineral exploration and development industry, representing over 9,000 individual and corporate members in Canada and around the world. PDAC's work centers on supporting a competitive, responsible, and sustainable mineral industry that supports economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.

Canada's minerals industry is a [major economic driver](#), contributing \$156 billion to Canada's GDP, directly and indirectly supporting over 724,000 well-paying jobs nationwide, and serving as the country's leading private sector employers of Indigenous peoples. This contribution is set to grow, as highlighted in [Canada's Critical Minerals Strategy Progress Update](#), "From 2024 to 2034, nearly 140 mining projects are planned or proposed in Canada, representing a combined value of \$117.1 billion, with approximately half focused on critical minerals." These critical minerals are key to clean energy technologies, advanced manufacturing, and protecting Canadian sovereignty.

As both a foundational supplier to the global energy transition and a key contributor to regional and national economic development, Canada's minerals industry is integral to achieving the objectives of the [draft 2026–2029 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#). With effective policy alignment, the sector can accelerate progress on reconciliation, community resilience, and climate goals while maintaining global competitiveness. Please see below for PDAC's comments on the draft 2026–2029 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

Chapter one: Building an inclusive and resilient society

The minerals industry is well-positioned to advance targets related to public trust, Indigenous reconciliation and inclusive economic participation, and community resilience. These are areas where the sector has direct, measurable impact and longstanding engagement. Across Canada, there are over [400 active Indigenous mining agreements](#). The proportion of Indigenous-owned and-operated businesses in the sector is growing rapidly, often rising from strategic partnerships and procurement contracts with proximal exploration and mining projects.

The extractives sector also contributes significantly to transparent governance through comprehensive regulatory disclosure frameworks and compliance standards such as Canada's Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act (ESTMA) that stipulate disclosure requirements regarding payments made to governments, including Indigenous governments, where applicable. Since the implementation of ESTMA reporting in 2015, approximately [\\$171 billion in payments to governments and communities across Canada have been reported](#), demonstrating the industry's capacity to generate economic opportunities while at the same time strengthening accountability, public confidence, and informed decision-making.



From chapter one, PDAC recommends prioritizing:

Target 1.4.2: Reduce the gap between men and women's labour force participation to six percentage points

Target 1.6.1: Reduce the employment rate gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples by 2.1 percentage points.

These targets align closely with the minerals sector's ability to provide high-quality employment and expand workforce participation.

To further strengthen chapter one, PDAC encourages consideration of targets in the following areas:

Community resilience to climate impacts: Ensure high-risk communities (e.g., those vulnerable to wildfires, flooding, or permafrost degradation) have up-to-date climate risk assessments, adaptation strategies and co-developed emergency response plans

Tracking clean jobs: Publicly track and report annual job creation in clean growth sectors, including critical minerals, while establishing measurable targets to increase the share of clean growth jobs in Canada's workforce.

Regional distribution: Report on regional employment gaps, particularly in rural, northern, and remote communities, to better support place-based inclusive growth.

Other underrepresented groups: Establish targets to improve youth access to skills training and education, while increasing workforce participation among early-career professionals and other underrepresented groups.

Streamlining and improving coordination: Simplify and better coordinate federal engagement and consultation processes to reduce duplication, minimize consultation fatigue, and improve accessibility and effectiveness for communities.

When successfully implemented, these measures create compounding benefits across the broader goals of chapter one, including poverty reduction, improved trust in institutions, stronger community well-being, and a more inclusive and resilient Canadian society.

Chapter two: Driving clean growth

Canada occupies one of the most geologically rich and diverse land masses in the world, providing exceptional mineral potential compared to most other countries. In 2024, Canada produced [more than 60 minerals and metals](#), reinforcing its role as one of the world's most diversified and reliable sources of the materials required to drive clean growth. Minerals and metals are the foundational inputs that enable nearly every major sector of the economy. For example, Canada's potash sector is a cornerstone of both domestic agriculture and global food security. Canada is the world's largest potash producer and exporter, accounting for [roughly 32.8% of global production](#).



Another important aspect of the critical minerals opportunity in Canada is the domestic expertise in geology, engineering, project development, and mining finance. Canada is the world's primary listing venue for mining and mineral exploration companies, with nearly 1,100 issuers in January 2026 on TSX/TSXV, accounting for about [40% of global listings](#). Canada possesses a highly developed ecosystem capable of advancing new projects efficiently and responsibly.

From chapter two PDAC would recommend prioritizing:

Target 2.1.1: Over 2026 to 2029, Canada's annual labour productivity growth exceeds the G7 nations' average.

Target 2.1.2: Canada's environmental and clean technology sector accounts for 3% of national gross domestic product.

These targets align with the minerals industry's capacity to drive productivity, support industrial competitiveness, and enable the broader clean growth economy. In practice, this may require the minerals sector to grow ahead of, and in some areas faster than, downstream environmental and clean technology demand. Canada cannot fully benefit from clean technology growth if mineral exploration, permitting, processing, and enabling infrastructure remain bottlenecks.

To further strengthen chapter two, PDAC encourages consideration of goals and targets in the following areas:

Mineral industry-specific goals: While chapter two appropriately prioritizes sectors such as agriculture, housing, energy, and transportation, it does not explicitly recognize critical minerals as foundational enablers of these sectors. Although Canada's Critical Minerals Strategy is referenced within the broader clean growth framework, its priorities are not directly integrated into chapter two's core targets or implementation strategies to the extent warranted by the sector's strategic importance.

Enabling infrastructure: Canada is aiming to make progress in enabling clean infrastructure through initiatives such as the Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund and Arctic Infrastructure Fund. These efforts can be foundational in building a productive low-carbon economy and should be more explicitly captured within the Sustainable Development Strategy to ensure the strategy reflects both the progress already made and the infrastructure still required to fully realize Canada's clean growth ambitions.

Elevate implementation strategy 2.1.2.3: The need to invest in mineral production, processing, and recycling warrants significantly greater emphasis. Mineral projects can retain far greater value within Canada by expanding opportunities across the full resource lifecycle, including refining capacity, downstream industrial development, and the recovery of minerals from recycling, mine waste, and legacy sites. Strengthening focus on these areas would address supply chain vulnerabilities, enhance economic sovereignty, reduce environmental impacts, and better position Canada for long-term clean growth leadership.



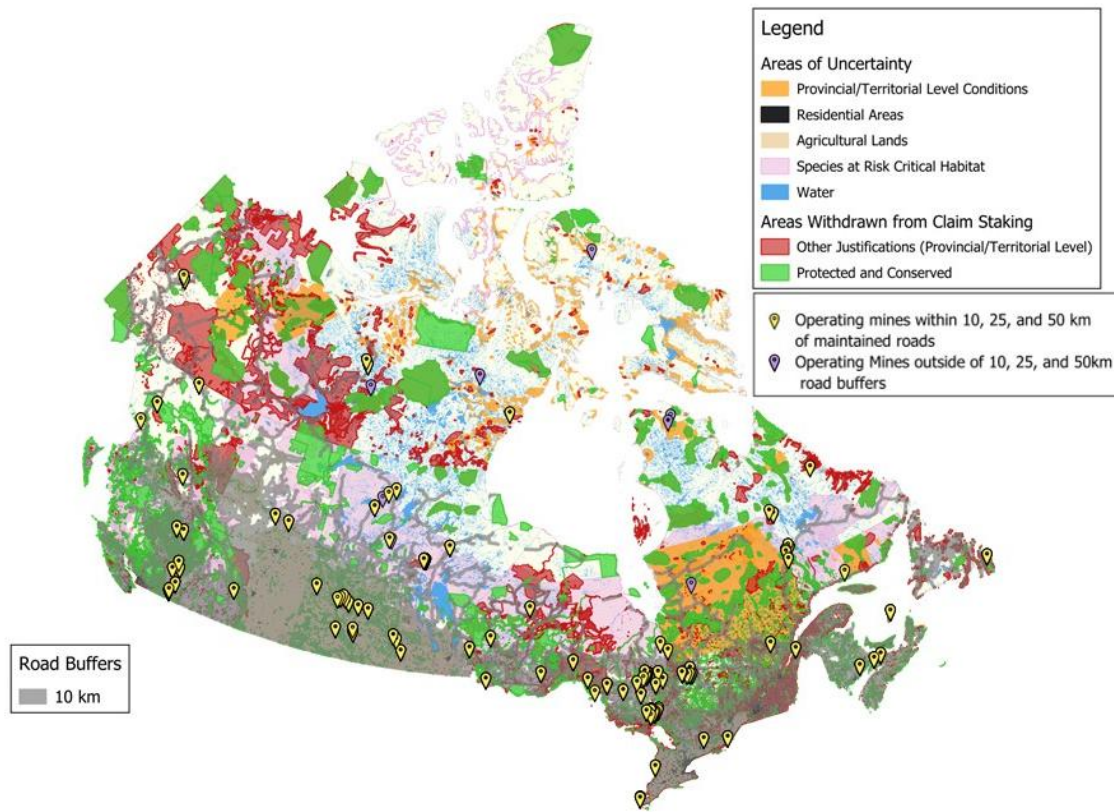
By more explicitly embedding critical minerals development, regional infrastructure, and full value-chain participation into chapter two's goals and implementation strategies, the Sustainable Development Strategy would better reflect Canada's competitive advantages and strengthen the country's ability to achieve productive, resilient, and sustainable clean growth—recognizing that without robust domestic mineral production and integration into Canadian supply chains, true sustainable development is unachievable.

Chapter three: Protecting our environment and well-being

Canada's minerals industry strongly supports the environmental protection and community well-being objectives outlined in chapter three. Compared to previous decades, mineral exploration and mining companies are increasingly integrating [environmental stewardship into the earliest stages of project planning](#), recognizing that strong environmental performance is essential to project success. Projects that fail to establish robust environmental stewardship measures early can face significant permitting, financing, and social licence challenges, potentially delaying development timelines by months or even years. This industry-wide evolution reflects rising investor, regulatory, and community expectations, as environmental responsibility is now viewed not only as a compliance requirement, but as a core component of long-term competitiveness and responsible development.

The minerals industry is driving meaningful progress across all of chapter three's priority areas, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening climate adaptation, protecting biodiversity, improving air and water quality, and advancing responsible waste management. While PDAC does not have recommendations for prioritizing specific federal targets within this chapter beyond those already proposed, it emphasizes the importance of ensuring that implementation strategies are balanced, practical, and incorporate the realities of responsible mineral exploration and development within Canada.

Junior explorers are responsible for the vast majority of Canada's mineral discoveries. Many face inherent challenges of geologic uncertainty, workforce constraints, and dwindling access to land and capital. As illustrated in the map below, approximately 20% of Canada's surface area is currently withdrawn from mineral claim staking, and there are large areas of uncertainty. Of the land that remains available, only about 24% lies within 10 kilometres of a maintained roadway, significantly constraining accessible exploration opportunities. Within that accessible portion, not all lands will meet the geological, infrastructure, or logistical conditions required for successful exploration. As a result, Canada's effective exploration land base is far more limited than land-availability statistics suggest.



Although mineral exploration requires access to broad land areas due to the uncertain and dispersed nature of mineral deposits, early-stage exploration typically has a relatively low environmental footprint. Activities such as mapping, geophysical surveys, geochemical sampling, and targeted drilling are generally temporary, localized, and low-impact when conducted under responsible exploration practices.

As Canada advances conservation and land-use priorities under chapter three, it is important that policy frameworks distinguish between low-impact exploration and more intensive forms of land use or development. Broad land withdrawals or restrictive access policies that do not account for exploration's comparatively limited environmental impact risk unnecessarily constrain Canada's ability to discover the critical minerals and other resources needed to support clean growth, energy security, and economic sovereignty. PDAC encourages a balanced, evidence-based approach to land use planning that protects ecologically and culturally significant areas while preserving responsible access to prospective lands, ensuring Canada can continue to meet both its environmental objectives and long-term resource development needs.



PDAC appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the draft 2026–2029 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) and supports the Government of Canada’s commitment to advancing inclusive growth, clean economic development, and environmental stewardship. Canada’s minerals industry is uniquely positioned to contribute to these objectives by responsibly supplying the materials required for clean growth while strengthening economic resilience, community prosperity, and national sovereignty.

By ensuring the FSDS more fully recognizes the enabling role of critical minerals, responsible land access, domestic value chains, and practical implementation pathways, Canada can better align sustainable development objectives with long-term economic competitiveness and resource security. PDAC looks forward to continued collaboration in supporting a sustainable, productive, and resilient future for Canada.