

The Relevance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to Crime Prevention in Canadian Municipalities

Strategic Overview

In 2015, Canada committed to achieve targets by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs include targets for significant reductions in violence, including homicides and violence against women. The SDGs provide a framework for making municipalities safer.

To achieve these targets, the SDGs require all orders of government to implement more effective ways to stop violence before it occurs. While a large body of research has pointed to effective methods for reducing crime, very little of this evidence has been embraced by decision-makers. The most cost-effective ways to reduce violence include investing upstream in strategies that address social risk factors through comprehensive community safety strategies and employing evidence-based programs in sectors such as youth, schools, health, and policing.

Governments' commitments to the SDGs are creating additional incentives to reinforce the prevention agenda. It is expected that this momentum will accelerate in Canada, particularly as intergovernmental and international events raise awareness and commitment to share bold solutions for preventing and responding to violence.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Habitat, the World Bank, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization have provided vision through "INSPIRE" – seven strategies to end violence, focusing on youth, family, enforcement, and more. These strategies remind decision-makers of the urgency to act due to the significant human and economic costs resulting from violence.

The timeframe for achieving the targets allows municipalities to change their investments, but also foster initiatives with support from other orders of government. An essential step to achieving the targets is the identification of indicators for a baseline measure of violence rates and associated costs; this baseline will enable progress to be measured over time and inform decision makers as to whether adjustments are needed in order to achieve the goals.

Actions for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Organize public workshops to discuss the importance and ways of achieving the violence reduction targets of the SDGs;
2. Establish indicators for victimization surveys relating to street and gender-based violence as well as a timetable for their measurement now and in 2030;
3. Foster the financial and technical support needed from other orders of government to invest in the upstream effective and cost-effective strategies to achieve the SDG targets;
4. Place the achievement of the violence reduction targets in the context of the achievement of all the SDGs.



Canada is Committed to Significant Reductions in Violence By 2030

In 2015, Canada along with the leaders of the Global North agreed to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030¹. The commitment to the SDGs is an engagement to achieve targets that include significant reductions in drug abuse (SDG 3), decreases of violence against women, girls (SDG 5), and homicides (SDG 16) as well as making cities safer (SDG 11). Governments are committed to transforming their actions so that they achieve these targets through a significant shift in their strategies relating to investment, capacity development, partnerships, and evidence-based action as set out in SDG 17.

Sustainable Development Goals	Targets include...
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.
SDG 5: Gender equality	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities	By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.
SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals	Investment, capacity building, multi-stakeholder partnerships, data, monitoring, and accountability.

Furthermore, the SDGs' emphasis on identifying priorities, setting targets, collecting data, and measuring outcomes is consistent with the 2015 Canadian government mandate letters to its ministers stating that government resources must "be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from

Canadians" and that we should "direct our resources where they can have the greatest impact on Canadians".

The Relevance of SDGs to the Role of Canadian Municipalities

Local crime prevention strategies are necessary to plan and coordinate efforts to reduce violence and improve well-being at the local level. A comprehensive community safety strategy (CCSS) embraces some ways of mobilizing more of the services that can successfully tackle risk factors that lead to crime and violence (AB2017.1 and .2).

The emphasis lies on securing more investments upstream before violence occurs,

rather than reacting to crimes already committed (AB 2016.1). In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets, UN Habitat's program on safer cities repeatedly calls for a coordinated, multidisciplinary effort to address the multiple root causes of delinquency, violence, and insecurity (Guidelines on Safer Cities, 2015).

World Health Organization Sets Out Strategy to Achieve Targets

The World Health Organization (WHO) has brought together a partnership of major organizations to identify strategies to end violence against children and youth called INSPIRE. WHO, UNODC, UNICEF, World Bank, and others are supporting this roadmap as a way to achieve these targets by 2030.

Urgency to Act

INSPIRE highlights the devastating consequences of violence for the lives of young people and their families in both the short and long term. Achieving the targets for SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions) will not only prevent lives of children, men, and women

¹Sustainable Development Goals, UN General Assembly, 2015

from being ruined, it will also lessen the significant harms caused to those who care about the victims and perpetrators.

Violence against children is not only traumatic and painful, it leads to substantial long-term health consequences, including mental health problems, delayed cognitive development, poor school performance, and dropout (WHO, 2016). Some of these consequences are risk factors that lead to perpetrating and being victims of violence.

Preventing violence against children and youth before it occurs has the potential to reduce costs of law enforcement in municipalities as well as related health and social services costs. The economic impact of violence against children is not known for Canada, but estimates for the USA were a staggering US \$124 billion in 2008 (Fang et al., 2012). These represent considerable resources that could be used more effectively in upstream prevention.

The science of prevention in relation to violence is solid. If Government agencies are not applying that science they should be challenged to explain why. It's public money! It's public safety! It's science!

– John Carnochan, Founder of the Glasgow Violence Reduction strategy

INSPIRE highlights knowledge and examples of effective solutions to prevent violence against girls and boys. INSPIRE highlights proven programs such as Green Dot, the 4th R, the Cardiff Model, Cure Violence, and Nurse-Family Partnerships that have already been shared with municipal decision makers (see AB 2016.3). It organizes these around seven areas for action.

Effective Solutions Are Known

Implementation strategies to achieve the SDG targets

Strategy	Description
1. Implementation and enforcement of laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers or other caregivers • Laws criminalizing sexual abuse and exploitation of children • Laws that prevent alcohol misuse
2. Norms and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing adherence to restrictive and harmful gender and social norms • Community mobilization programs • Bystander interventions
3. Safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing violence by addressing "hotspots" • Interrupting the spread of violence • Improving the built environment
4. Parent and caregiver support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered through home visits • Delivered in groups in community settings • Delivered through comprehensive programmes
5. Income and economic strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group saving and loans combined with gender equity training • Microfinance combined with gender norm training
6. Response and support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening combined with interventions • Treatment programs for juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system • Foster care interventions involving social welfare services
7. Education and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enrolment in pre-school, primary and secondary schools • Establish a safe and enabling school environment • Improve children's knowledge about sexual abuse and how to protect themselves against it • Life and social skills training • Adolescent intimate partner violence prevention programs

How to Plan and Mobilize

In accordance with SDG 17, the INSPIRE framework emphasizes the importance of determining the elements of a national action plan. This involves selecting goals, objectives and targets, and defining appropriate indicators to monitor program implementation.

Measuring Outcomes

The INSPIRE framework also affirms the importance of including mechanisms to facilitate monitoring through ongoing data collection and analysis.

“Monitoring should be an ongoing process of collecting and analyzing information about implementation of the INSPIRE package. It should involve regular assessment of whether and how activities are being carried out as planned so that problems can be discussed and addressed.

Monitoring should follow the progress of planned activities, identify problems, provide feedback to managers and staff, and solve problems before they cause delays. Data should be processed and analyzed promptly. Results of analysis should be passed to those in a position to take action” (WHO, 2016: 90).

Monitoring and evaluating the actions to achieve the SDGs is crucial. Municipalities need to measure their current rates of violence and monitor implementation of violence prevention efforts every 5 years in order to evaluate the achievement of violence reduction targets by 2030.

Canada has annual police administrative data and a victimization survey completed every five years. In 2018, Canada will implement a survey on intimate partner and sexual violence, which will be repeated in 2023. Large municipalities should consider developing their own indicators for their cities.

It is important to note, however, that violence cannot solely be measured with statistics that

capture prevalence. Being a victim of violence is a tragedy that causes significant pain and loss of health and quality of life – these qualitative consequences must be included in the measurement process of violence indicators.

SDG 16+: Roadmap for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies

Another important roadmap for achieving the SDGs is SDG 16+. A group of UN member states, international organizations, global partnerships, and other partners agreed to the Roadmap for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies. The roadmap, also known as SDG 16+, focuses on the next five years and covers all targets from the 2030 agenda that aim for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. While Canada is not yet a pathfinder or leading supporter, it has provided some support. SDG 16+ calls for the implementation of strategies that will lead not only to change, but also to the radical transformation needed to turn violence reduction targets into reality. This includes eliminating gender-based violence, street violence, and violence against children.

Actions to undertake in order to achieve the envisioned transformation include scaling up violence prevention for women, children, and for vulnerable groups; building safe, inclusive, and resilient cities; targeted prevention for countries and communities; increasing justice and legal empowerment; empowering people as agents of change; respecting all human rights; and promoting gender equality.

The roadmap highlights the importance of increased investments in the knowledge, data, and evidence that are needed to inform decision-making. Delivery of the SDG targets for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies also requires financing from national, international, public, and private sources.

In order to achieve SDG 16+ targets, the roadmap recommends aiming higher by working with political champions, re-committing to INSPIRE, investing in the implementation of globally agreed strategies, and engaging multiple sectors such as justice, education, and health.

SDG 17

INSPIRE and SDG 16+ highlight the actions that can lead to transformations and that facilitate the achievement of the targets for violence reductions. The underlying challenge is developing an approach to implement possible solutions. SDG 17 accentuates the importance of developing human capacity and training, partnerships, investment, use of evidence, as well as monitoring and evaluation to ensure rigorous implementation of specific strategies.

The evidence used in this action brief are based on the list of resources available on www.safercities.ca which also provides the full references for abbreviated citations.

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