



*Let's Explore*

Toward a Quality of Life

Strategy for Canada

*By SaskWellbeing*

*July 2021*

# Introducing Canada's Quality of Life Framework

Drawing upon international best practice and evidence, and feedback received from consultations and collaboration to date, the federal government has refined an initial concept for the design of a Quality of Life Framework. This framework represents a first important step on the journey towards better integrating quality of life considerations into the government of Canada's decision-making processes. (P 19)



The PM of Canada mandated the Honourable Mona Fortier, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, to lead work across government to better incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making and budgeting.

(P 3)

This report was created for consultations on the development of a Quality of Life Framework and to seek input into a new approach the federal government is developing to define and measure success and make better use of data and evidence to improve its decision-making. The report:

Outlines the rationale for adopting a quality of life approach to government decision-making;

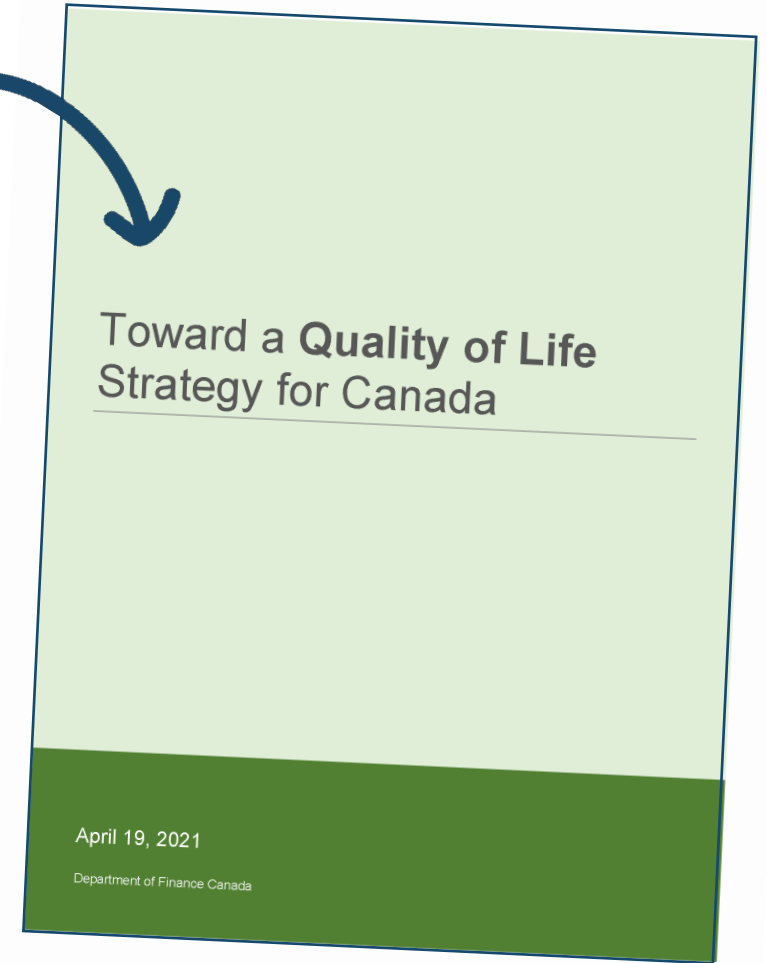
Describes international experiences & best practice;

Discusses key considerations in the design of a quality of life framework;

Summarizes learnings from consultations with experts & Canadians;

Presents a first iteration of a Quality of Life Framework for Canada;

Lays out next steps for ongoing implementation.



# The Core Design Features of the Quality of Life Framework

The framework includes the five broad domains of quality of life which are well-aligned with evidence and the views of Canadians: *Health, Society, Environment, Good Governance, and Prosperity*. The purpose of these domains is to promote holistic thinking about the different determinants of quality of life.

The framework also applies two cross-cutting lenses of *Fairness and Inclusion* and *Sustainability and Resilience* to each of its five domains. (P 19-20)


This lens is intended to promote greater equity and equality by assessing the distribution of all outcomes across different sub-populations.




This lens promotes long-term thinking by considering the trajectory of key indicators associated with each domain in order to identify risks and ensure policy choices today are contributing to a higher quality of life in the future.



**Quality of Life**  
Looking at non-economic factors like health, housing, environment, and safety. **1**



**Equality**  
Looking at the distribution of outcomes and opportunities across places and people. **2**



**Sustainability**  
Looking at whether today's prosperity undermines future living standards. **3**

Monitoring and reporting on a broad set of measurements, rather than just on standard economic ones, aims to better ensure that government actions are coordinated and that decisions are evidence-based, with investments focused on areas that have the greatest impact on Canadians' quality of life. It would also improve policy coherence, transparency and accountability with respect to government priorities, objectives and results.

Quality of life data and evidence are powerful tools that can help achieve this goal in a coherent way. A Quality of Life Framework would put a more holistic and comprehensive evidence base at the centre of government decision-making, both now and over the longer term. (P 3)

# Benefits of a Quality of Life Strategy

<b>Better Outcomes</b>	Re-focusing policy efforts on what really matters to peoples' quality of life can lead to better outcomes for Canadians	<b>Horizontal Alignment</b>	Facilitating co-ordination across federal agencies and departments towards a common set of strategic objectives, as well as across all sectors of society
<b>Better Decisions</b>	Clearly defining and measuring quality of life, along with granular data on the diversity of Canadians' experiences, can provide a stronger evidence base to inform government decisions	<b>Continual Improvement</b>	Applying across the federal government could improve the quality and consistency of policy development, impact monitoring and evaluation
<b>Long-term Perspective</b>	Supporting the systematic consideration of sustainability issues to ensure that today's progress is not being achieved at the expense of future generations	<b>Stronger Democracy</b>	Improving transparency and accountability on the government's priorities and results with regular monitoring and reporting



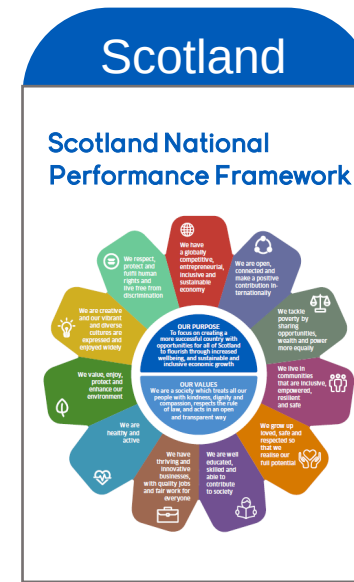
# International Experience Applying Quality of Life Measures to Decision-making

In recent years, many countries have formally embraced a quality of life and wellbeing approach to evidence-based decision making. In most cases, governments have focused on establishing a national quality of life measurement framework as a means of articulating their overall policy objectives and tracking their progress over time.

Although specific frameworks vary from country to country, most include a broadly similar set of indicators, reflecting a broad scientific consensus on the key determinants of quality of life. (P 6-7)

This consistency also reflects the influence of the [OECD's Well-Being Framework](#) as a tool for benchmarking progress globally and the decision of many countries to use metrics that allow for international comparison and capture progress towards meeting the [United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), a plan to tackle major global challenges spanning all dimensions of wellbeing.

Minister Fortier and officials from the Department of Finance have begun engaging with international leaders in quality of life measurement from Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Wales and the OECD in order to learn from their experiences in applying quality of life measurement to decision-making. (P 7-8)



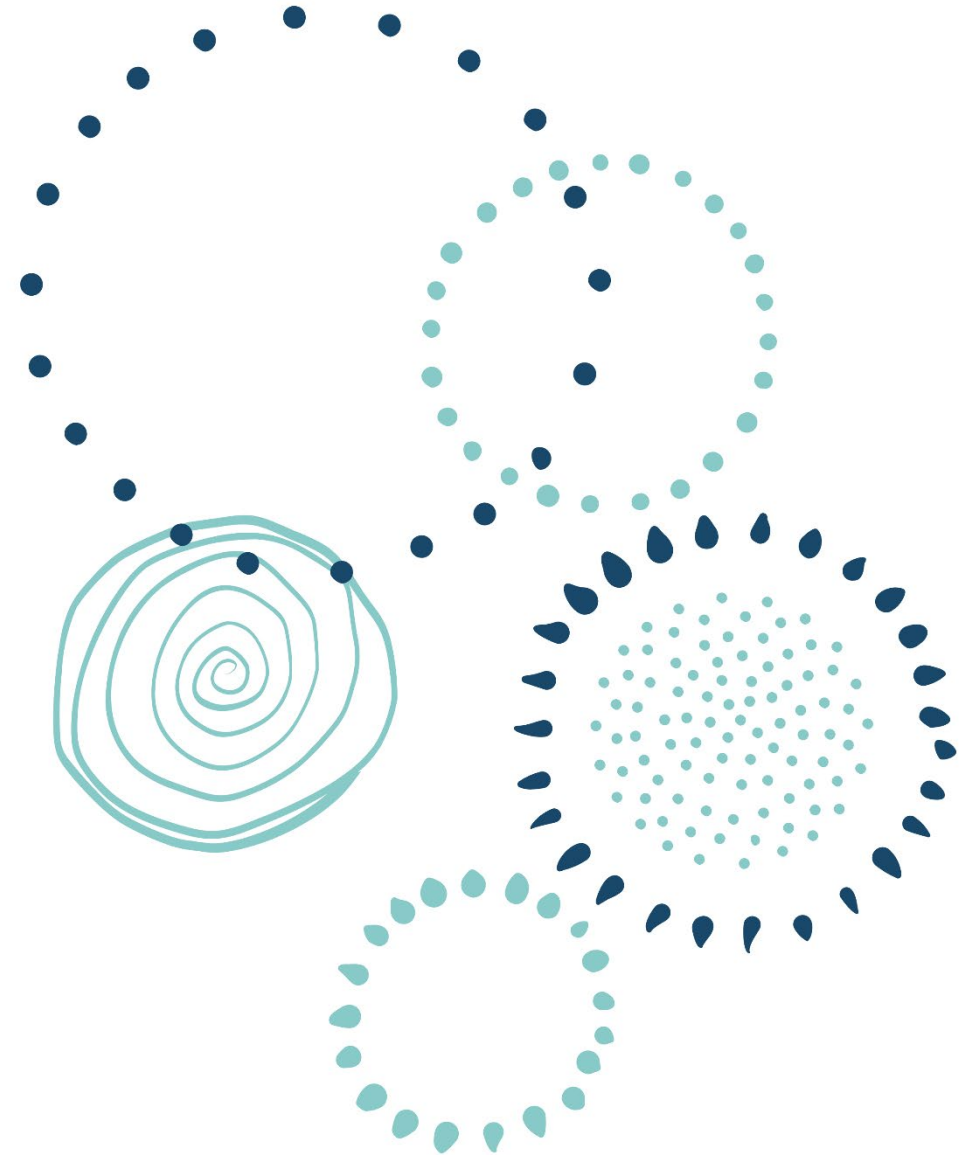


But there is also deep expertise in Canada, and Canadians have made a substantial contribution to the international dialogue about quality of life measurement.

The government has worked over the past year to ensure that quality of life and wellbeing is defined and measured in a way that accurately reflects the diverse views and lived experiences of Canadians, as well as expert advice on the drivers of wellbeing, and will continue to seek input to ensure the framework remains meaningful. (P 3-4)

While the federal government has an important role to play, improving the quality of life of all Canadians will require leadership at all levels, including the provinces and territories, municipalities, national Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous governments. It also requires participation and buy-in from civil society, business, academia and an ongoing dialogue with Canadians.

(P 24)



# SaskWellbeing's Observations on the QoL Strategy

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SaskWellbeing is encouraged by this strategy outlining new approaches to incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making, budgeting, and policy development which extend beyond GDP measurements.

We appreciate that the strategy recognizes the contributions of other Canadian organizations including the [Canadian Index of Wellbeing](#), which has been engaged in quality of life and wellbeing work and is strongly aligned with the proposed framework. It is in working together across sectors, across government departments and focusing upon holistic approaches and long-term strategies, that we can address complex issues.



It's important that government look beyond the public sector and engage with the social enterprise, nonprofit and charitable sectors as essential partners in contributing to quality of life of Canadian citizens. Not only do these organizations contribute to the wellbeing of communities through their work in diverse areas such as social services, justice, mental health, recreation, and culture, they possess deep expertise related to the foundational principles, domains and indicators of the Framework. They can provide insights to policies and approaches to implementation of the Framework that will result in enhanced outcomes.

We support the need to look beyond sectors and address issues from more holistic approaches and were pleased to see this recognized in this report. Most often, as our own research and Index point out, no one issue is specific to one domain, and addressing the complexities will require cross-sectoral approaches.

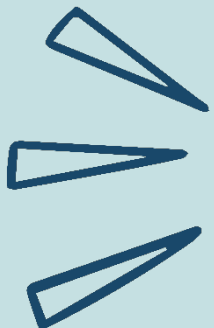
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# Next Steps



The first step towards integrating quality of life measurements into policy making is to complete the development of the [Quality of Life Framework](#) for Canada that will define and measure success and help the government stay on track by monitoring progress and reporting on it to Canadians.

The Government of Canada welcomes comments on the framework and will continue seeking input through engagement with stakeholders, experts on quality of life measurement, and Canadians. At the same time, the government will continue engaging with Indigenous peoples, provincial and territorial governments and international partners to better reflect Indigenous and regional perspectives, to learn from other jurisdictions' experiences, and to advance wellbeing and inclusive growth on the global stage. (P 24)



The Government of Canada invites electronic submissions to [fin.qualityoflife-qualitedevie.fin@canada.ca](mailto:fin.qualityoflife-qualitedevie.fin@canada.ca) with 'Quality of Life Framework Submission' as the subject line.

## Resources:

- [Measuring What Matters: Toward a Quality of Life Strategy for Canada](#)
- [New Zealand: The Wellbeing Budget](#)
- [Government Report on Wellbeing in Germany](#)
- [Iceland Wellbeing Government Economy Project](#)
- [Scotland National Performance Framework](#)
- [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#)
- [United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)
- [Canadian Index of Wellbeing](#)



SaskWellbeing is an initiative that encourages communities and decision-makers to consider all dimensions of wellbeing, and to engage in collaborative multi-sectoral approaches to improve quality of life for all citizens.

[www.saskwellbeing.ca](http://www.saskwellbeing.ca)