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BRIEFING NOTE

Tracking the SDGs in Canadian Cities: SDG 8

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A key indicator for a vibrant city is a strong economy and quality work opportunities for all citizens. Progress toward economic prosperity and employment security is essential for meeting the 2030 Agenda. It also has multiplier effects for outcomes in other areas of community well-being. For example, the social determinants of health include unemployment, working conditions, and income and job security (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

The third brief in this series focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2017). The three primary components of this goal are to: improve employment and provide decent work and social protection for all; support green growth; and encourage sustainable tourism.

Tracking Progress on SDG 8

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Based on recommendations from the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), suggested using 17 indicators to monitor progress on SDG 8. We have identified five indicators that are available from Statistics Canada data for tracking SDG 8 progress for Canadian cities (table 1). These indicators are shown graphically on IISD's SGD Indicator Portal.

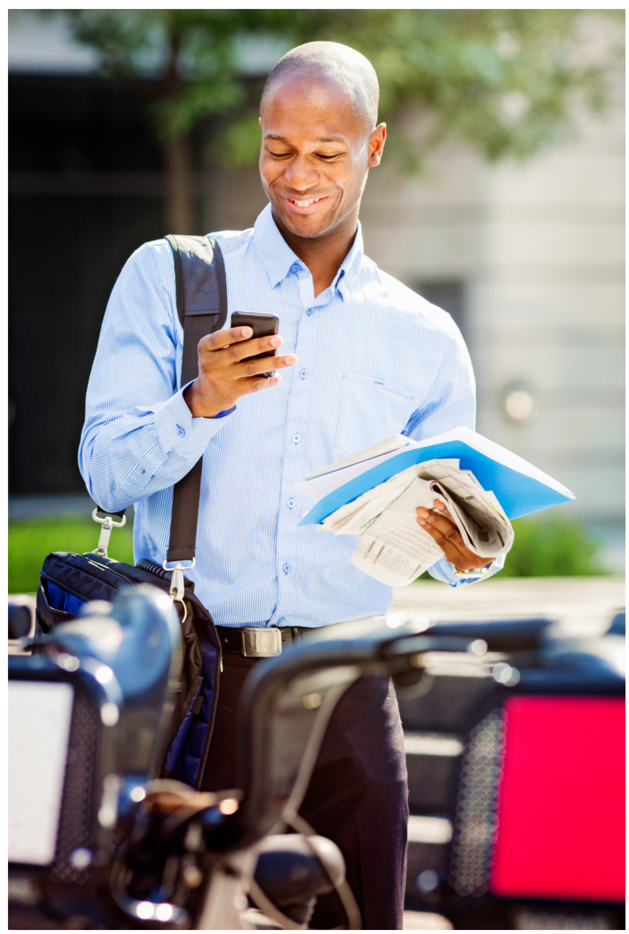
Table 1. Comparison of SDG 8 indicators suggested by the UNSC and their corresponding indicators for Canadian cities

	UN Indicator	Corresponding Indicator for Canadian Cities
8.1.1	Annual growth rate real GDP per capita	GDP per capita
8.2.1	Annual growth rate real GDP per employed person	GDP per employed person
8.5.1	Average hourly earnings of male and female employees by occupation, age and persons with disabilities	Median income of employees in Canadian cities
8.5.2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	Unemployment rate
8.6.1	Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training	Youth unemployment rate

Trends in Achieving SDG 8 in Canadian Cities

HIGHLIGHTS FOR SDG 8 INDICATORS

- 8.1.1 GDP across all Canadian cities has been increasing steadily since 2005.
- 8.2.1 GDP per employed person in Canada rose 26.5 per cent between 2005 and 2013; Saskatoon and Edmonton saw the largest increases during this period—of more than 50 per cent.
- 8.5.1 Between 1992 and 2015, median income increased in all Canadian cities. While women's median wage increased faster than that of men, all cities continue to experience a substantial gender pay gap.
- 8.5.2 Unemployment rates in Vancouver and Victoria decreased between 2002 and 2016, whereas Prairie cities included in this chart experienced increases.
- 8.6.1 Youth unemployment rates for Canada peaked in 2009 and have been declining since; however, only Halifax, Quebec City, Regina, Saskatoon and Victoria have reduced youth unemployment compared to 2001 levels.



INDICATOR 8.1.1: GDP PER CAPITA

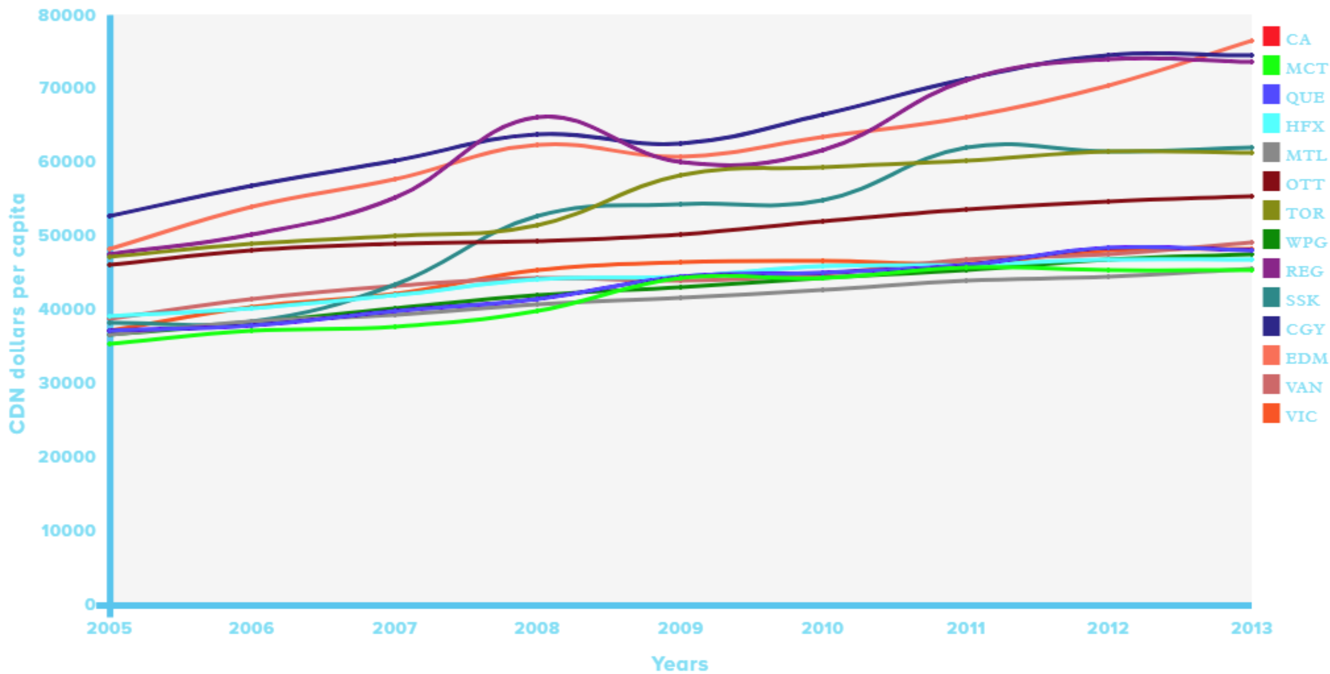


Figure 1. **8.1.1 GDP per capita in Canadian cities**

Source: SDG Indicator Portal, IISD (n.d.)

INDICATOR 8.2.1: GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON

Target 8.2 aims to increase labour productivity as a means to support economic growth. Labour productivity is measured by using annual GDP per employed person, and can help inform and monitor labour market policies. From 2008 to 2009, average GDP per employed person dropped slightly for Canada and the cities of Halifax, Ottawa and Regina. This can be interpreted by stating that, on average, a person working in 2009 contributed less to the GDP than a person in 2008. Except for Ottawa, these cities have since rebounded and GDP per employed person has increased steadily beyond the 2005 rates. Ottawa has yet to recuperate fully but still has a GDP above the Canadian average of CAD 100,458.03.

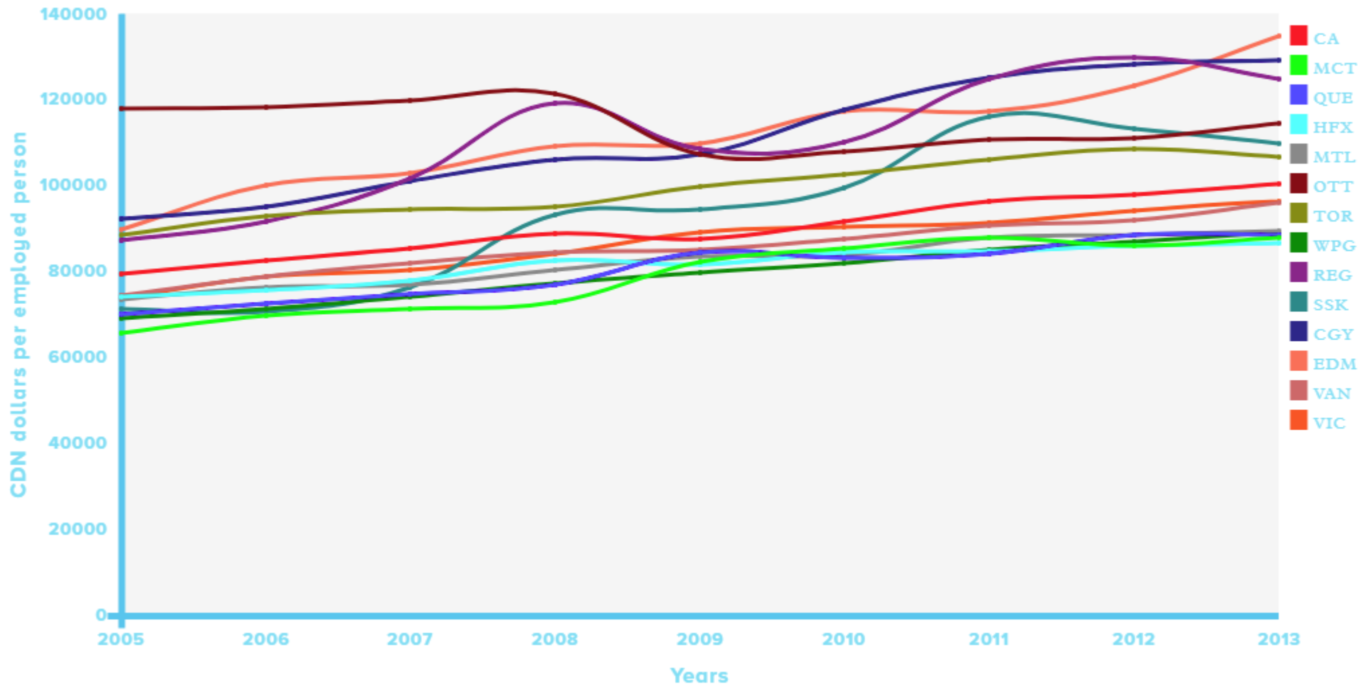


Figure 2. **8.2.1 GDP per employed person in Canadian cities**

Source: SDG Indicator Portal, IISD (n.d.)

TARGET 8.5.1: MEDIAN INCOME OF EMPLOYEES

Target 8.5 addresses the availability of employment and decent work for all groups of society based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Indicator 8.5.1 tracks the median annual income of employees across Canadian cities. Between 1992 and 2015, annual median incomes increased in all Canadian cities (Figure 3). The two Canadian cities that experienced the largest growth rate during this time were Quebec City (65 per cent) and Edmonton (54 per cent).

The availability of gender-disaggregated data allows for a comparison of the incomes of men and women. The gender pay gap represents the ratio of female-to-male median annual income. From 1992 to 2015, the median wages of women across Canada increased 30 per cent, from CAD 21,000 in 1992 to CAD 27,300 in 2015, whereas that of men increased 7.5 per cent from CAD 37,200 to CAD 40,000. Despite the faster increase in women's wages, the median income of females in 2015 was only 68 per cent of the median income of males. In line with the national trend, all Canadian cities reported in the SDG Indicators Portal continued to experience a significant gender pay gap. Among those cities with the greatest gender gap were Calgary and Edmonton, at 61 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively. Even in Vancouver and Montreal, where the gender gap was the smallest, the median income of females was only 77 per cent and 79 per cent of the median income of males.

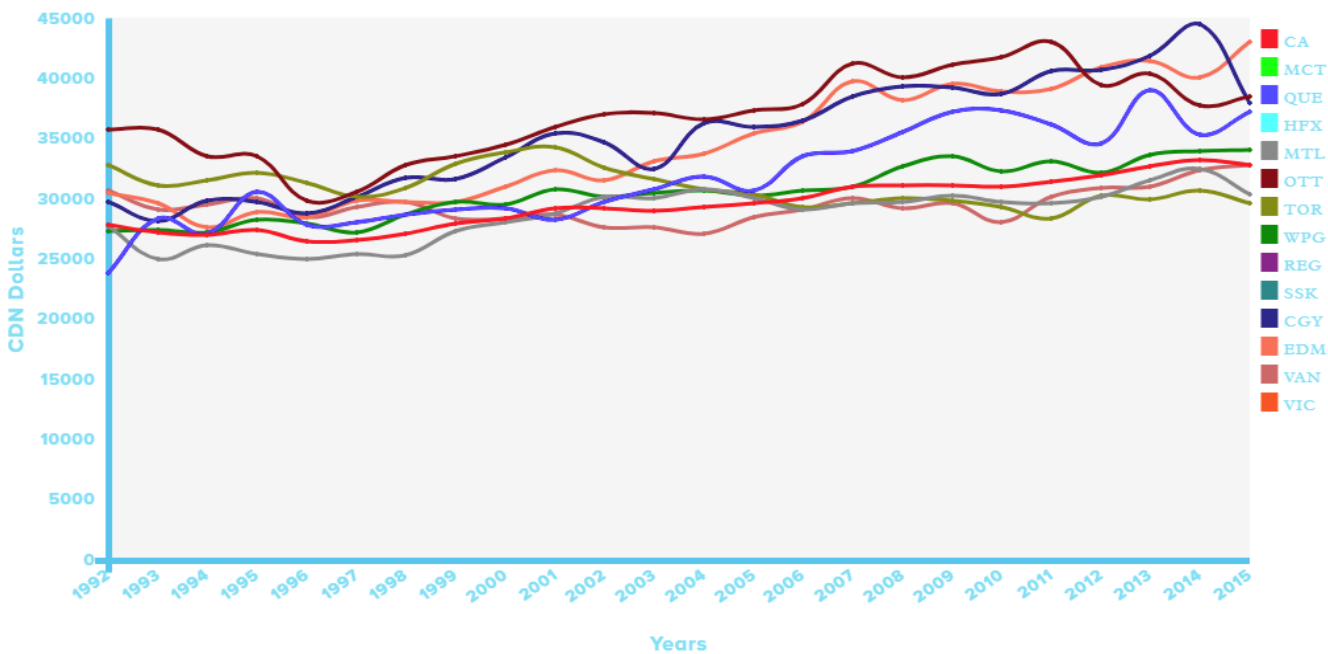


Figure 3. **8.5.1 Median income of employees in Canadian cities**

Source: SDG Indicator Portal, IISD (n.d.)

INDICATOR 8.5.2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The second indicator to track Target 8.5 is the unemployment rate. Unemployment rates vary with the overall state of the economy. Between 2002 and 2016, the Canadian average unemployment rate decreased from 7.7 per cent to 7.0 per cent after recovering from a sharp increase in 2008/2009 in the context of the global financial crisis. Unemployment rates in British Columbia cities have decreased significantly between 2002 and 2016. Vancouver's unemployment rates decreased from 7.9 per cent in 2002 to 5.4 per cent in 2016. Likewise, Victoria's unemployment rates decreased from 7 per cent to 5.2 per cent during this period. However, unemployment rates in the studied Prairie province cities, including Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg have all increased. In 2016, Calgary's unemployment rate was 9.4 per cent, an increase from 5.7 per cent in 2002; the highest city documented on the IISD SDG indicator portal. Quebec City had the lowest unemployment rates, decreasing from 6.5 per cent in 2002 to 4.6 per cent in 2015 (Figure 4). These data show that, while the overall Canadian trend is positive, unemployment in several cities has shown a negative trend reflecting local economic conditions.

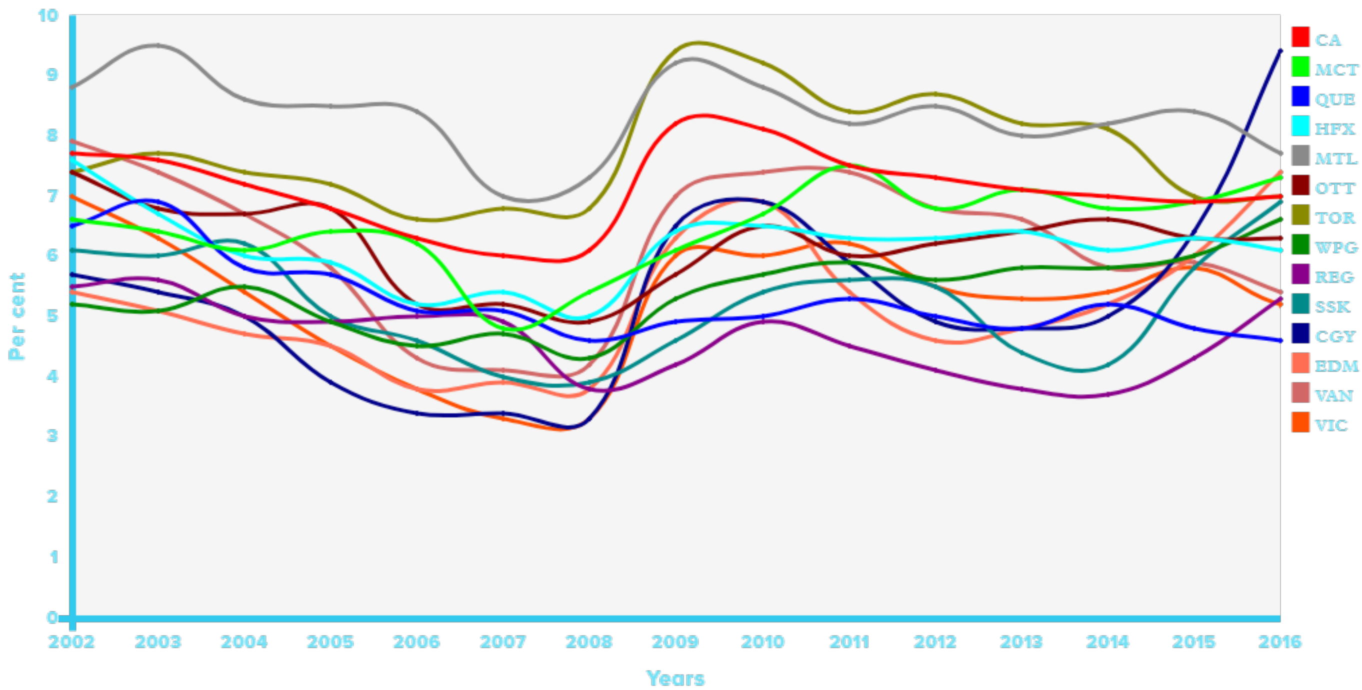


Figure 4. **8.5.2 Unemployment rate in Canadian cities**

Source: SDG Indicator Portal, IISD (n.d.)

INDICATOR 8.6.1. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Target 8.6 requires all countries to substantially reduce the rate of youth unemployment. Indicator 8.6.1 tracks youth unemployment for Canadian cities from 2001 to 2016. During this time, the youth unemployment rate in Canada increased from 12.9 per cent to 13.2 per cent, peaking at 15.4 per cent in 2009 during the financial crisis. Since then, seven cities have experienced a decrease in youth unemployment: Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria. While youth unemployment rates for Canada have been declining since 2009, only five cities have reduced youth unemployment compared to 2001 levels: Halifax, Quebec City, Regina, Saskatoon and Victoria. In 2015, youth unemployment rates in Ottawa and Toronto were the highest of all studied cities, at 15.4 and 15.3 per cent respectively (Figure 5).

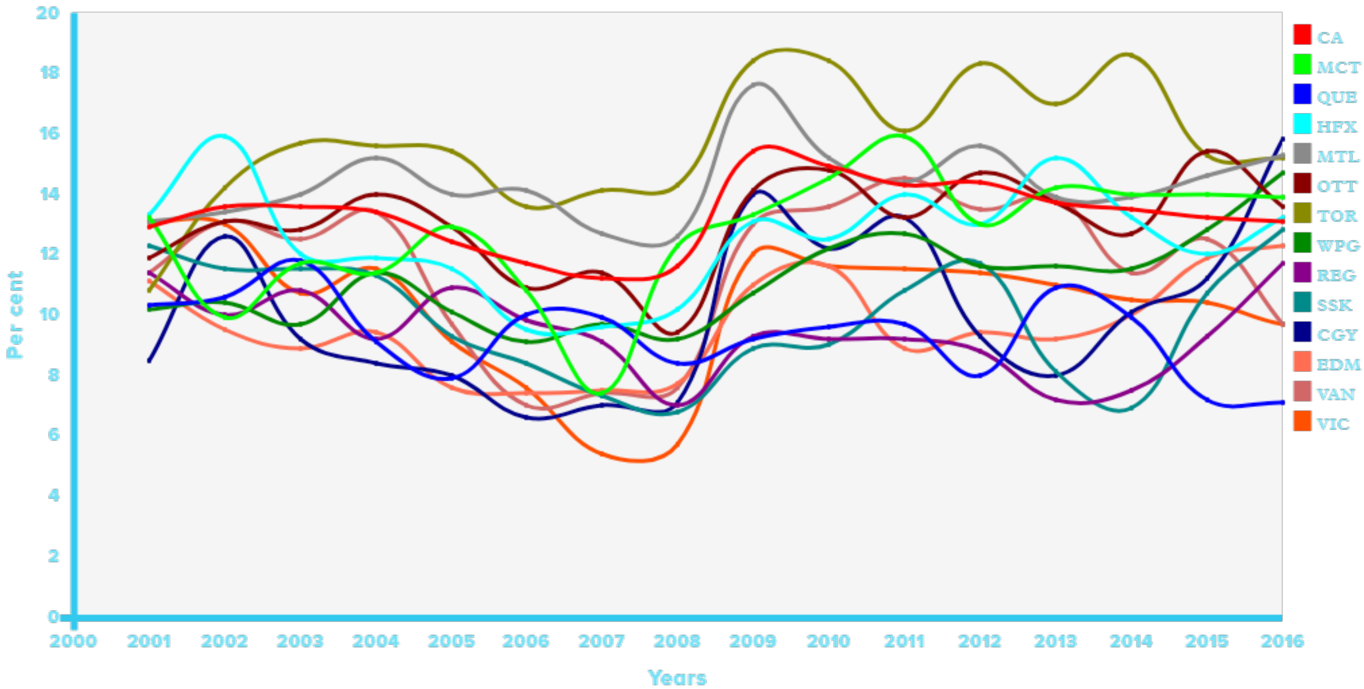


Figure 5. 8.6.1 Youth unemployment rate in Canadian cities

Source: SDG Indicator Portal, IISD (n.d.)

Conclusion

A strong economy and quality work opportunities are important aspects of a vibrant city and are also connected to achieving SDGs on poverty reduction (SDG 1), health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5) and responsible production and consumption (SDG 12). In terms of GDP per capita, Canadian cities have generally grown economically over the last decade. However, the benefits related to this growth have not been equally distributed. Over a 20-year span, although the median annual income of females has increased four times faster across the selected Canadian cities than that of males, women's median wage nonetheless represents only 68 per cent of the median annual income of males. Furthermore, while the unemployment rate has generally decreased, youth unemployment rates have increased in most cities since 1992. By tracking these indicators for Canadian cities, it is possible to determine which challenges are most prominent and to target policy interventions at a local level, in order to leave no one behind in Canada's efforts to achieve SDG 8.

References

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