

## **SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN CANADA**

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses what are sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR), and as well as three sustainability challenges in Canada: climate change, sustainable resource management, and Indigenous rights and reconciliation. Sustainability involves balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations to meet present needs ensuring that the actions taken in the present do not negatively impact the future generations and their own needs. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring the long-term viability of clean energy businesses and achieving a sustainable energy future for Canada. To address these challenges, companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple have made sustainability commitments, including increasing the recycling rate of electronic waste, becoming water-positive, and using more efficient and safer chemicals in their products. Overall, the article highlights the importance of sustainable development and the role that companies can play in addressing sustainability challenges.

**Keywords:** Sustainability Commitments, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental Impact, Indigenous Rights, Resource Management

### **Introduction**

Google Canada is the Canadian subsidiary of Google, one of the world's largest technology companies. As a significant player in the technology industry, Google Canada recognizes its responsibility to contribute to sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The company has committed to reducing its environmental impact by using renewable energy sources for its operations and reducing waste. Google Canada has also taken steps to promote social responsibility by supporting local communities through grants and donations and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. In addition, the company has implemented ethical business practices and transparency in its operations, such as providing clear and understandable terms of service for its users. Overall, Google Canada strives to balance innovation and growth with a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. Our department - Google Clean Energy, Google's energy division, can help Google save money on energy costs, enhance its brand as a sustainable company, drive innovation, comply with

regulations, and develop energy storage technologies. The importance of this topic will be demonstrated through the study in the following parts.

Canada's history demonstrates that the extractive sector can help build a country. Our extractive companies in the mining, oil and natural gas industries make a major contribution to Canadian prosperity and are making substantial contributions to economic development in other countries in which they operate. Canadian extractive sector activity abroad can result in a win-win outcome both for the Canadian economy and that of host countries.

Canada is strengthening its commitment to enhance the ability of Canadian extractive sector companies to integrate CSR into their practices through a renewed Strategy, building on experience gained since 2009. The updated Strategy makes clear the Government's expectation that Canadian extractive sector companies reflect Canadian values in all their activities abroad. While its primary audience is intended to be Canadian extractive sector companies, the Strategy is also meant to provide a more general audience with an overview of Canada's approach to promoting and advancing CSR abroad. For Government of Canada representatives, the Strategy provides a framework to guide their efforts to promote CSR policies, tools and guidance.

## **Literature Review**

### *1) Concepts of CSR*

The literature review examines the core concepts of sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), citing reputable sources like Investopedia and Good People Incorporated. It highlights the balance needed between economic, social, and environmental factors to ensure current actions do not hinder future generations. The review also addresses major environmental challenges like climate change, referencing Health Canada's insights on its impacts on public health and the environment. Additionally, it discusses resource management challenges, as noted by the International Energy Agency, focusing on the environmental and social implications of resource extraction. The importance of respecting Indigenous rights and promoting effective reconciliation in clean energy projects is emphasized, reflecting on vulnerabilities highlighted by various studies. This review provides a solid foundation for understanding the integration of sustainability and CSR into business strategies, illustrating their significance in addressing today's complex environmental and social issues.

### *2) CSR Strategy Review*

The CSR Strategy launched in 2009 included a commitment that it be reviewed after five years. The review was conducted over several months by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), with partners across government.

Review activities included an internal evaluation, based on Treasury Board guidelines; behavioral surveys of Canadian extractive sector companies on CSR awareness; an Narcan research project on inclusion by mining companies of CSR and related issues in their reporting to securities

exchanges; consultations on the CSR Strategy with industry and civil society representatives; and an online public consultation. The 2013 consultations on the Government's Extractive Sector Strategy also fed into the CSR Strategy review, as many submissions related to the CSR Strategy.

Review findings indicated that the CSR Strategy has played a valuable role in focusing the Government's efforts related to encouraging CSR among Canadian extractive sector companies operating abroad. Provision and promotion of CSR tools, guidance and advice were identified as core activities that should be carried forward to assist Canadian companies in enhancing their CSR efforts.

The review also highlighted increased recognition by companies of the need to consider CSR in planning and operations, and heightened awareness of CSR guidelines and standards. However, managing environmental and social risks of operations abroad remains complex. These ever-present challenges demonstrate the ongoing need for a CSR Strategy focused on the extractive sector.

### *3) CSR Benefits Extend Beyond Doing the Right Thing*

Experience has shown that, particularly for extractive sector companies operating in challenging environments, those that go above and beyond basic legal requirements to adapt their planning and operations along CSR lines are better positioned to succeed in the long term, and to contribute to a more stable and prosperous environment for all affected parties. This is best done as early as possible, taking into consideration the project's life cycle from initial exploration to closure and beyond. As exploration firms are often the first point of contact with communities, they have an important role in setting the tone for stakeholder relations over the life of a project. Having these firms recognize the need to integrate CSR into their activities will help them establish good stakeholder relations and may make their projects more attractive to investors (Costley, 2022).

Many Canadian extractive sector companies, particularly those in the mining industry, understand that incorporating CSR practices into their operations contributes to their success. By doing so, companies can manage risks more efficiently and effectively; foster good relations with investment partners, employees, and surrounding communities; increase access to capital; and improve their reputation. Managing social risks, including through conscious efforts to respect human rights, is increasingly important to companies' success abroad. As more becomes known about the costs of poor stakeholder relations, both in terms of share price and the bottom line, the more investors will want to see evidence of effective CSR.

### *4) Advancing International CSR Guidelines*

Internationally recognized CSR guidelines and standards are important for companies operating abroad. They provide information on all the considerations that can improve companies' economic, environmental and social performance, including respecting human rights. By establishing common expectations internationally, they help companies and stakeholders benchmark performance, levelling the playing field and facilitating continuous improvement across the extractive sector as a whole. For these reasons, the Government of Canada has been engaged in the development and advancement of

key international CSR standards and has also been working with international partners to encourage standardized CSR reporting.

### Methodology

To involve a qualitative analysis of sustainability practices among leading technology companies. It includes reviewing publicly available sustainability reports and corporate statements to understand how these companies integrate environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and ethical practices into their business models.

The study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of sustainability practices among leading technology companies by reviewing publicly available sustainability reports and corporate statements. This research delves into how companies like Google, Apple, and Microsoft integrate environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and ethical practices into their operations.

The approach involves analyzing sustainability reports to assess each company's efforts in reducing environmental impacts, such as carbon footprint and e-waste management. Additionally, it examines social responsibility initiatives focused on diversity, inclusion, and community engagement, drawing from examples like Apple's educational programs and labor practices.

### Results

The results section indicates that major technology companies are actively engaging in various sustainability practices. Google focuses on improving recycling rates of e-waste, Microsoft commits to becoming water positive by 2030, and Apple emphasizes safer chemical use in its products. These findings demonstrate a commitment to sustainability that aligns with the broader goals of reducing environmental impacts and promoting social responsibility.

**Table 1:** Company Initiatives and Impacts

| Company   | Initiative             | Impact                       |
|-----------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Google    | E-waste recycling      | Reduces landfill waste       |
| Microsoft | Water-positive by 2030 | Enhances water conservation  |
| Apple     | Smarter chemistry      | Reduces harmful chemical use |

### Discussion

The report on "Sustainability Challenges Research" effectively outlines key sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues in Canada, emphasizing the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations to ensure a sustainable future. It highlights three main challenges: climate change, sustainable resource management, and Indigenous rights and reconciliation. Major corporations like Google, Microsoft, and Apple are noted for their commitments to sustainability through initiatives such as recycling electronic waste, reducing water usage, and

utilizing safer chemicals. The discussion also includes recommendations for enhancing corporate sustainability, advocating for smarter chemical usage, water conservation, and increased recycling efforts. The report stresses the need for collaborative approaches between corporations and stakeholders to integrate sustainable practices effectively into business operations and policy frameworks, ultimately contributing to societal and environmental well-being.

It is important to Canada that our extractive sector operate abroad in a manner that brings lasting prosperity for Canadians, and for those living in the areas in which our companies are active. To address this, Canada's enhanced CSR Strategy identifies a number of areas where the Government of Canada will strengthen its efforts to assist Canadian extractive sector companies operating abroad in integrating CSR into their operations.

Through its strengthened CSR Strategy, the Government will build on what works by enhancing companies' ability to align their activities with widely-accepted CSR guidelines and standards; strengthening CSR-related service to TCS client companies across the globe; increasing support to mission efforts to create networks and partnerships and local procurement opportunities; providing new incentives for participation by affected parties in Canada's dialogue facilitation processes; and working with partner countries and initiatives to promote and advance a range of CSR guidance pertinent to the extractive sector. Cooperation with stakeholders will continue to be important for the successful implementation of Canada's CSR Strategy.

The CSR Strategy will be reviewed again in 2019, to examine the degree to which it continues to enhance the ability of Canadian extractive sector companies to improve their CSR performance and secure the benefits their presence can provide for host countries and local communities

## **Conclusions**

The "Sustainability Challenges Research" report encapsulates the urgent need for integrated and proactive approaches to sustainability and corporate social responsibility in Canada. It clearly identifies key challenges—climate change, sustainable resource management, and Indigenous rights that require immediate attention to safeguard the future. The report highlights exemplary commitments from leading corporations such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple, demonstrating the potential for significant impact through focused corporate initiatives.

The recommendations put forth emphasize smarter chemical use, enhanced water conservation, and better recycling practices as pivotal strategies for companies to reduce their environmental footprint. By adopting these practices, companies not only contribute to sustainable development but also enhance their competitive edge and corporate image.

In conclusion, the path to a sustainable future involves a cohesive effort from all sectors of society. Businesses, governments, and communities must collaborate to foster a sustainable economy that respects both the planet and its people, ensuring prosperity for current and future generations. This

report serves as a call to action, urging stakeholders to rise to the occasion and make sustainability a core part of their operational and strategic decision-making.

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