



POSITIVE **ENERGY**

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY  
& INCLUSION (EDI)**

in Canadian Energy Decision-Making

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As is customary, any errors of fact or interpretation are the responsibility of the authors.

Copies of this report and all other studies are available for download on the Positive Energy website.

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## Executive Summary

Canada's energy sector is undergoing a collective learning process as societal expectations around fairness, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion shift rapidly. Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) has become a bit of a buzzword in the energy community. In the context of Canada's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, EDI seems to offer pathways to more representative and trusted decision-making across Canada's energy sector.

This study explores how different decision-makers across Canada's energy community think about EDI and how EDI will (or will not) shape Canada's energy future in an age of climate change. Based on interviews with senior decision-makers from 23 Canadian energy organizations of various types (including policymakers, regulators, civil society organizations, industry, and an Indigenous organization), this study documents the current state of play and actions on EDI in Canada's energy community, identifying definitions of EDI, initiatives, challenges, and opportunities.

Findings indicate that advancing EDI presents a real opportunity for the Canadian energy community. Done right, the principles underpinning EDI can help strengthen public confidence in energy decision-making by making energy organizations more representative of and responsive to the communities they serve.

Nearly all decision-makers who participated in this study agreed that EDI **will** shape Canada's energy future in some form or another. At the same time, many participants said that current initiatives to advance EDI in Canadian energy decision-making, including initiatives to strengthen EDI in hiring and promotion, corporate culture, and across all corporate activities do not go far enough and are slow to show tangible results. EDI is still at risk of becoming an 'empty concept' – lip service rather than a driver of change. The energy community needs a holistic, accepted definition of the concept and tangible, genuine actions.

Decision-makers recognize that without sufficient consideration of EDI in policies and practices, Canada's net zero target becomes much harder to achieve. In other words, EDI and decarbonization of the energy system are mutually reinforcing objectives. And without serious global and domestic effort to attain net zero, current societal inequities will worsen, since already marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Without investing in the implementation of EDI principles, it will be harder for governments to implement durable and balanced net zero policies and for companies to achieve the level of innovation necessary to comply with these policies.

Finally, this study finds that meaningful advancement of EDI principles requires collective learning processes at multiple levels – the individual, the organizational, and the societal. Effectively advancing EDI requires certain skills ('difficult conversations') and professionals with expertise in engagement, outreach, and facilitation (e.g., how to have effective dialogues with people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives). Organizations and Canada need to build and invest in these skills to enable EDI to work as a means of consensus building – rather than another source of disagreement and polarization over energy and climate.





## Introduction

Canada's energy sector is undergoing a collective learning process as societal expectations around fairness, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion shift rapidly. These changes have made decision-makers pay greater attention to the distribution of benefits and harms that arise from their decision-making. For instance, concerns about Just Transition, energy affordability, and representation in board rooms have become mainstream. For some of these considerations the language of EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) or DEI has become a shorthand.

Numerous definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion have been produced by government agencies, academic institutions, and companies from all sectors. For the purpose of this study, we adopt a broad understanding of the terms (adapted from Burnette, 2019). Advancing **equity** means “constantly and consistently recognizing and redistributing power” (Burnette, 2019). **Diversity** refers to the representation of individuals who differ along key aspects of their identity. **Inclusion** requires that everyone's thoughts, ideas and perspectives are heard and valued. In a diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment, individuals can experience a feeling of **belonging** – the opportunity to bring their full selves to work and thereby unleash their full potential.

As governments and organizations around the world adopt the language of ‘net zero by 2050’, EDI seems to offer pathways to more representative and trusted decision-making across Canada's energy sector.

The challenges at the intersection of net zero and EDI are manifold. To begin with, EDI considerations around energy and climate change are diverse. They include:

- Growing demand for greater participation and engagement in energy decision-making (Larkin, 2021; Cleland and Gattinger, 2021).
- The impacts of climate policies on energy affordability and energy poverty.
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment practices that require energy companies to pay attention to governance, of which EDI is often a component.

This study explores how different decision-makers across Canada's energy community think about EDI. Does EDI work as a model of consensus-building? Can it improve public confidence in energy decision-making? This research documents the current state of play and actions around EDI in Canada's energy community. Through the perceptions and views of energy and climate decision-makers, it identifies definitions of EDI, initiatives, challenges and opportunities. Importantly, this study is neither a primer on EDI nor a demographic study of the Canadian energy community.

What is clear from this research is that many decision-makers are in the process of climbing a steep learning curve. We hope this report contributes to this collective learning process. Advancing EDI in Canadian energy decision-making is a crucial imperative. Decision-makers also recognize that without sufficient consideration of EDI, net zero becomes much harder to achieve. And without serious global and domestic effort to attain net zero, current societal inequities will worsen because already marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

## Box 1: Positive Energy's Research on Consensus-Building

The second phase of Positive Energy (2018-2022) aims to address the following question: How can Canada, an energy-intensive federal democracy with a large resource base, build and maintain public confidence in public authorities (federal, provincial, and territorial policymakers and regulators, Indigenous governments, municipal governments, and the courts) making decisions about the country's energy future in an age of climate change?

Three fundamental questions form the research and engagement agenda. How can Canada navigate, address and overcome polarization over its energy future? What are the respective roles and responsibilities among policymakers, regulators, the courts, municipalities, and Indigenous governments, when it comes to decision-making? What are the models of and limits to consensus-building on energy decisions?

Consensus-based, inclusive, and transparent decision-making is a pillar of democratic society and key to building public confidence. But amid partisan polarization, regional differences and a continued lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, it is not always clear how to build consensus. What does consensus mean in the Canadian energy and climate context? What tools and approaches to consensus-building should public authorities use to build public confidence, and what are their limits?

Informed by our work on polarization and roles and responsibilities, projects in the consensus-building research stream address the crucial question: How to decide? We explore this question through the lens of Positive Energy's bedrock principles of Informed Reform and Durable Balance.

The consensus-building research programme includes projects in the following areas:

- Understanding consensus-building
  - [A literature review on models of and limits to consensus-building](#)
- Consensus-building at the national level
  - [Overcoming Limits to Consensus-Building on Energy and Climate: Toxic Partisanship, Us vs. Them, False Polarization](#)
  - [Research and evidence as a tool for consensus-building: a case study of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission to identify 'What Works?'](#)
  - Independent government advisory bodies as a tool for consensus-building: a case study of the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy to identify 'What Works?' (forthcoming)
  - An exploratory study of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles in energy and climate decision-making (this study)
- Consensus-building at the provincial and local levels
  - [Support for a First Nations Major Projects Coalition study examining environmental, social, and governance \(ESG\) investment standards from an Indigenous perspective](#)
  - [Provincial government efforts to build consensus around decarbonizing the electricity sector](#)



## Research objectives and methodology

### Research questions

The overarching question driving this research is: How are EDI considerations shaping decision-making in Canadian energy organizations? How are they, ultimately, influencing Canada's energy future in an age of climate change?

To address this overarching question, this study pursues three research objectives:

1. To identify how Canadian energy decision-makers understand the concept of EDI;
2. To examine the importance of EDI considerations for organizations in Canada's energy community today and why they are (or aren't) perceived as important;
3. To document the actions that Canadian energy organizations are taking on EDI and explore the challenges and opportunities they encounter.

Importantly, this study is not a primer on EDI, nor is it a demographic study of the Canadian energy community. It is purely qualitative in nature and aims to examine the state of play through the perceptions and views of energy and climate decision-makers.

### Methods

This study draws on two key data sources. First, we conducted semi-structured interviews with senior decision-makers from 23 Canadian energy organizations, including industry organizations (companies, associations, networking groups) (8), regulators (6), policymakers (3), civil society organizations (5), and Indigenous organizations (1). Appendix 1 includes a full list of participants, as well as the interview guide that was followed in all conversations.

Interview data was coded thematically to identify key themes in participants' responses.

Second, we conducted documentary research and analysis to learn more about the EDI activities of private companies and public agencies. Specifically, we learned more about the EDI-focused programs and frameworks that were commonly mentioned by participants, including Gender Based Analysis + and the Quality-of-Life Framework.

There are two important methodological caveats for this study. First, the interview data for this study is necessarily incomplete as we only conducted a limited number of interviews. Secondly, it is likely biased. While we aimed for representation across sectors and regions, the ultimate participants in the study are not representative of the Canadian energy community as a whole. However, in identifying common challenges raised in the interviews, we hope to generate findings that are useful to energy organizations in Canada aiming to deepen their understanding of EDI considerations and what types of actions are effective. In addition, we also suspect

a positive selection bias in the list of participants. This means that decision-makers who accepted our interview invitation were probably those who have some background in EDI, think that EDI is important and believe it is worth studying. One group of energy organizations particularly under-represented among study participants are Indigenous organizations. We reached out to 6 Indigenous organizations with interview invitations but were only able to schedule 1 interview.

## How do Canadian energy decision-makers conceptualize EDI?

### Interpretations of EDI

The terms 'equity', 'diversity', and 'inclusion' as well as the acronyms 'EDI' or 'DEI' are now frequently used in Canada's energy discourse, in traditional and social media, and on energy conference agendas. But interviews highlighted that there is no commonly accepted interpretation of what EDI-informed energy decision-making looks like in Canada. Rather, our interviews confirmed that decision-makers from different organizations understand EDI in various ways.

Participants from different types of energy organizations held differing interpretations of the terminology. Our data indicate that EDI tends to be a corporate term, and participants from private organizations often mentioned ESG investing in connection with the advancement of EDI. In contrast, equity-seeking groups (generally understood as anyone who is not white or male) and civil society organizations often use EDI in connection with terms like justice, democratization, or decolonization. As one participant said: "It's not so much equity and inclusion, it is democracy and decision-making and participation. That is the foundation for equity and inclusion."

In particular, the relationship between EDI and Indigenous reconciliation was a common theme. For some participants, Indigenous reconciliation and EDI seem to be closely related, although many noted that these concepts cannot be equated. One participant suggested that the concepts are clearly different, but they can be mutually reinforcing. However, another participant suggested that the EDI discourse is distracting from the work of Indigenous reconciliation, which includes decolonizing the energy sector – shifting power away from governments and large corporations to empower Indigenous people in decision-making. A deeper inquiry into the relationship between Indigenous reconciliation and EDI is important but beyond the scope of this study.

Based on interview data, we identified two broad dimensions of EDI along which participants' interpretations of what EDI means for Canadian energy decision-making differ. The first refers to the kinds of organizational decisions that EDI considerations are shaping. The second refers to the groups that are considered to be equity-seeking.

### The scope of EDI's influence on decision-making

Based on participants' responses, we distinguished three different scopes articulating how EDI shapes decision-making in energy organizations. Many participants referred to all three scopes in their responses, but scopes 2 and 3 were referred to slightly less.

**Scope 1: EDI is shaping staffing decisions.** Almost all participants indicated that EDI principles influence how their organizations think about diverse teams. For instance, interviewees said that EDI considerations require creating equitable opportunities for diverse applicants during recruitment



processes. EDI also applies to how staff advance within their organizations. Several participants noted that hiring decisions are just one component of staffing and promotion and that senior management is often less diverse—particularly in larger organizations.

While this scope is relatively narrow in its interpretation of EDI, it was the most widely shared among participants.

**Scope 2: EDI is shaping (organizational) culture.** This scope refers to the cultural changes within energy organizations and beyond toward placing greater value on equity, diversity, and inclusion. These value changes can occur at the society level, within organizations, and ultimately in each individual.

Within organizations, many participants recognized that promoting EDI principles in corporate structures, policies, and decision-making requires creating an inclusive workplace and an organizational culture that empowers employees to bring their full identity to work. In the words of one participant, “We want to build a sustainable organization where people can bring their whole selves to work. And we really want to be a place that people are proud to work and it truly reflects their own personal values.”

Some participants referred to the wider cultural context within which energy organizations operate. EDI is about the reflection of cultural change and value change in society within organizational culture. Over the past decade, social awareness about systemic discrimination against certain groups has risen, and demand for change has grown.

This scope is expansive and somewhat less tangible than scope 1, as it transcends individual decisions made by organizations to include underlying changes in values and culture. Slightly fewer interviewees mentioned this scope compared to scope 1.

**Scope 3: EDI is shaping the organization’s core activities – and beyond.** This scope of EDI influence is broader; EDI is seen to shape decisions that go beyond hiring, promotion and organizational culture. Just over half of participants, primarily but not exclusively from policymaking and civil society organizations<sup>1</sup>, explicitly considered EDI to transform every aspect of decision-making across the organization. EDI becomes a decision criterion in all corporate activities. Depending on the type of energy organization, these activities include policy analysis and public policymaking, research, regulatory decision-making, energy production, procurement, investment, etc.

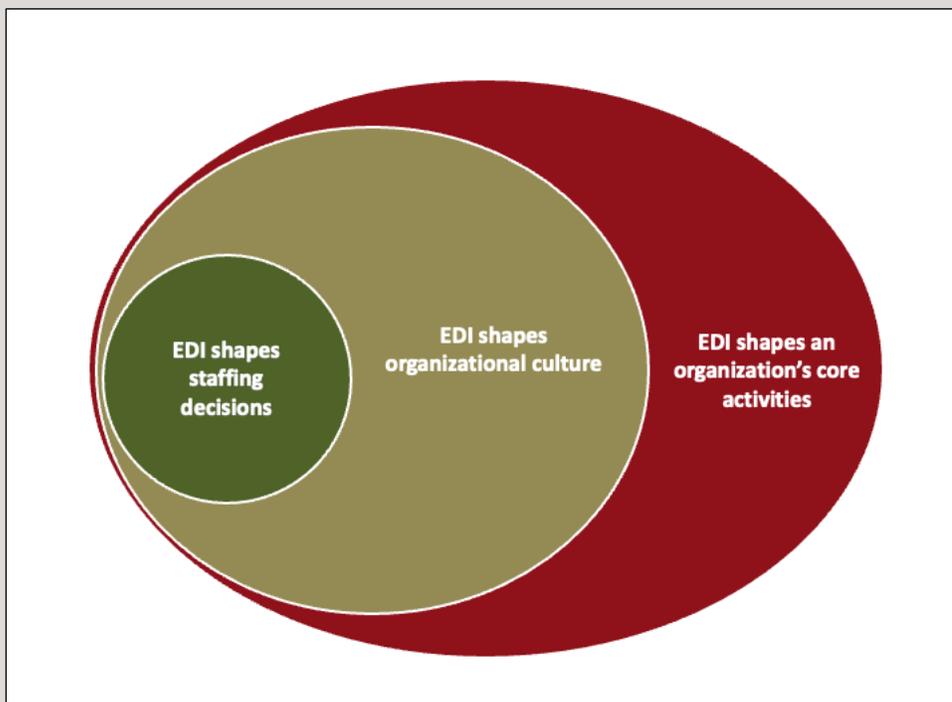
Within this scope, decision-making that takes EDI principles into account may have a large-scale impact on society and Canada’s energy future, for instance, through the implementation of public policies to address energy poverty, through higher degrees of participation and democratization of decision-making processes, or through increasing rates of equity ownership of energy projects for Indigenous communities. Many participants identified public policy decisions on energy and climate change as particularly impactful for EDI and noted a particular responsibility

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that due to the relatively small number of interviewees, their diversity (e.g., their role in the organization) and the diversity of participating organizations (e.g., size) it is generally difficult to identify significant and clear-cut differences between the responses of different types of organizations in Canada’s energy community.

for governments to consider these effects.

This scope reflects a relatively expansive interpretation of how EDI shapes decision-making in Canadian energy organizations.

**Figure 1: The scope of EDI's influence on decision-making in energy organizations**



## Equity-seeking groups

The second dimension of EDI refers to which groups are considered to be equity-seeking.

A few interviewees mentioned the Employment Equity Act as relevant legislation. The Employment Equity Act of 1995 obligates certain employers, through their systems, policies and practices, to identify and eliminate employment barriers against persons in four designated groups:

- women
- Indigenous peoples
- persons with disabilities
- members of visible minorities.

The Act applies to federal Crown corporations, other federal organizations with at least 100 employees, most parts of the federal public service, and organizations in federally regulated industries (including nuclear energy and energy pipelines that cross international or provincial borders).



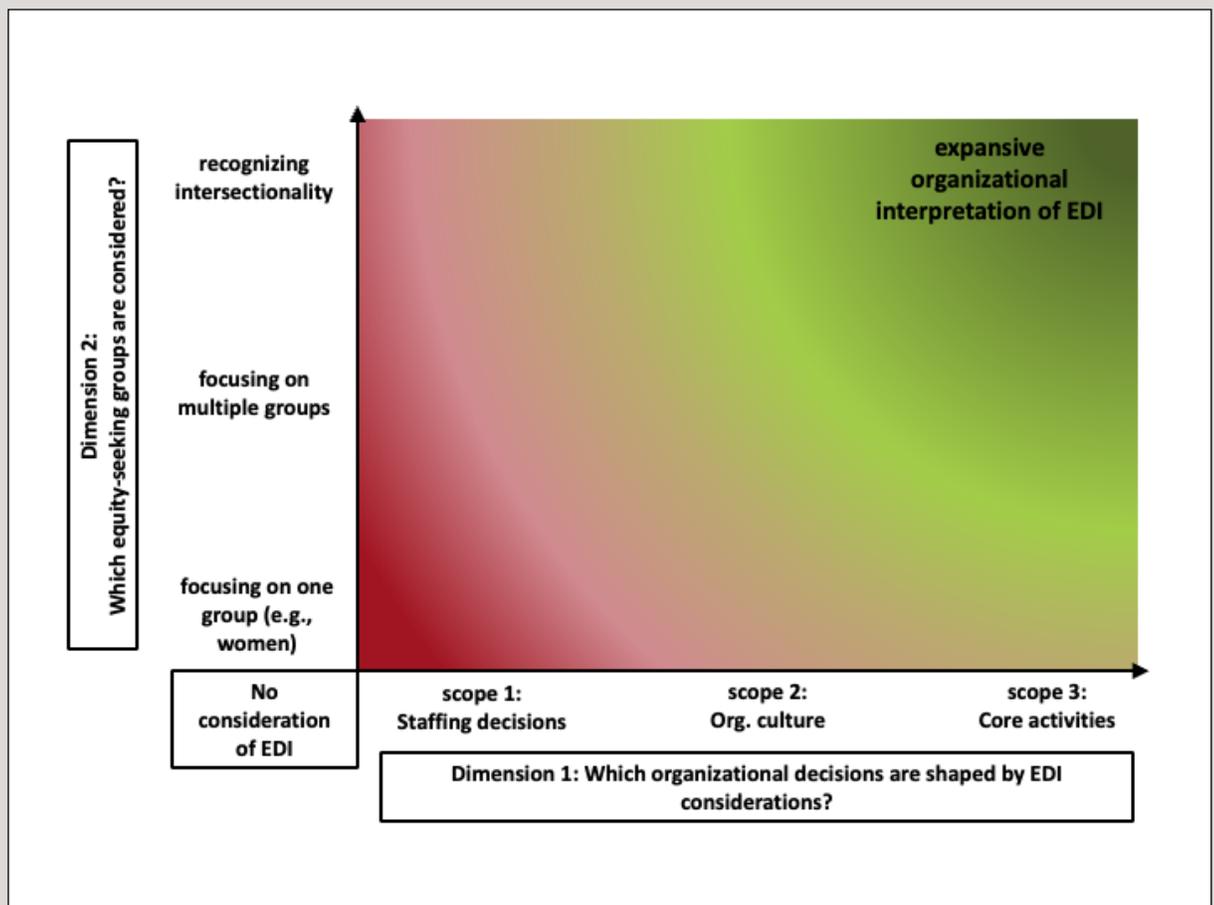
Three of the four groups identified in the Employment Equity Act were broadly aligned with the equity-seeking groups that participants mentioned most often in this study: women, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities.

There was a general view among participants that women were the first group to seek representation and inclusion in Canada's energy organizations. While interviewees indicated that awareness of gender equity in hiring decisions is now better-established, there was large agreement that gender equity is still an issue today.

Participants also mentioned that youth are often excluded from Canadian energy decision-making although these decisions heavily impact them (in terms of both climate change impacts and the costs of mitigating GHG emissions in the long term). A few interviewees mentioned socioeconomic status, faith, sexual orientation, and ability as criteria for identifying equity-seeking groups. A few others explicitly mentioned intersectionality across these identities as an important factor.

Figure 2 below brings the two dimensions of EDI together: the scope of EDI on the x-axis; and the breadth of equity-seeking groups on the y-axis. Interpretations of EDI located closer to the intersection of the axes are narrower, while those further away are more expansive.

**Figure 2: Mapping organizations' understanding of EDI**



## How important are EDI considerations for organizations in Canada's energy community today and in the future?

Most interviewees agreed that EDI should be an important driver in energy decision-making in Canada. Some said it should be the most important factor, while others indicated it is one among several important factors. One participant explicitly said that EDI is a second-order consideration: the first-order problem is what Canada is actually building toward (e.g., broad-based economic prosperity, energy security, etc.).

There was general agreement among interviewees that EDI has grown in importance in recent years and that this trend will continue. However, the relative newness of EDI in Canada's energy community was a point of disagreement. Some participants said that EDI considerations are new to Canadian's energy community (emerging in the last 5 to 10 years) while others argued that Canadian energy companies have grappled with many of these issues for a long time, for instance, in their efforts to attract employees into the industry and in their interactions with Indigenous peoples.

Participants identified several reasons why EDI considerations are becoming more important for Canadian energy organizations. Multiple people pointed out that many or all of the drivers below are in play and that they are necessary to effect change.

### **Society demands action on EDI.**

Society's expectations on EDI have been growing in recent years, and organizations, both public and private, are increasingly under pressure to change and adapt. One participant explained: "So I'd say that kind of public hyper focus on the issue is driving what a lot of organizations are doing right now." Most participants pointed out that Canada's energy community is traditionally white and male (see also *Equal by 30* (2021), p. 5). Participants identified this situation as a problem of representation that society has been waking up to and demanding change.

Multiple participants pointed to decades of societal change and growing awareness of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Movements such as *#MeToo* and *Black Lives Matter* have seen extensive coverage in traditional and social media and elevated systemic sexism and racism, respectively, in the public discourse.

A new society-wide reckoning with systemic inequities, exclusion, and discrimination, has empowered many equity-seeking groups to speak up. One participant explained that while equity-seeking groups have long resorted to grassroots activism to have their voices heard, their struggle for equity has been extraordinarily hard and often involved the courts. Civil society organizations have historically contributed to building public awareness and pressure around matters of inclusion and justice, and many now pay explicit attention to EDI in their mandates.

Some participants indicated that taking action on EDI is becoming part of companies' licence to operate, particularly for consumer-facing organizations. The public is starting to hold decision-makers (both private and public) accountable for their track record on EDI matters. A participant suggested the increasing public focus on EDI may make it easier for historically marginalized groups to access decision-making tables in the future, though barriers persist.

In addition to growing pressure from the public, participants pointed out that demands for addressing EDI may also come from other stakeholder groups, including organizations' members (associations), shareholders (private companies), funders and current / future employees.



## **Addressing EDI creates a competitive advantage for organizations.**

Most participants indicated that implementing EDI principles can lead to a ‘win-win’ situation for energy organizations in multiple respects.

First, participants indicated that more diverse teams and an inclusive work culture foster better decision-making, promote creativity, and foster innovation. Innovation is crucial for the competitiveness of individual organizations. At a larger scale, it is also necessary for achieving Canada’s net zero target (see below). One participant said that EDI is essential for Canada’s competitiveness internationally, which in turn is crucial for EDI considerations: Canada will be left behind if we ignore the most vulnerable; and if Canada is left behind, the economic impact will be worse for marginalized groups.

Second, a workplace that is taking EDI seriously is more attractive to a highly engaged and committed workforce in a competitive labour market.

Third, multiple participants explained that addressing EDI is increasingly important for gaining and/or maintaining access to funding. For instance, with the rise of ESG investment practices, a positive track record on EDI is becoming necessary to access private capital (see Box 2). But participants also shared that government contracts and grant applications now regularly require a statement on EDI. At the same time, one participant noted that there is little recognition on the part of governments that smaller organizations in particular may require more time and resources to comply with these new requirements. In the face of tight deadlines, smaller organizations may not be able to assemble their applications.

Fourth, many participants pointed out that organizations are generally better able to serve their communities if they reflect community demographics.

In sum, implementing EDI principles in organizations’ decision-making can be good for the organization’s bottom line. As one participant said, “You can talk about EDI in a very generic conceptual context, but what really matters at the end of the day is how you apply it in a business context; i.e., ‘how do I pursue EDI initiatives and results in a way that’s going to drive better business outcomes?’”

## **Addressing EDI is key to achieving Canada’s net zero target.**

Multiple participants directly linked actions on EDI with measures to reduce Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions: “We cannot decouple what we need to do to achieve our objectives on climate change from advancing our goals on EDI. I think they really are intertwined.”

Participants identified multiple ways in which addressing EDI and emissions reductions are mutually reinforcing:

- Driving towards net zero requires significant changes in Canada’s energy system, which creates unique opportunities for Canada to redesign its energy system in a more just and EDI-centred way.
- Certain groups face barriers to participation in energy decision-making and, more specifically, in the energy labour market. There are labour market gaps that need to be filled to achieve energy transition and action on EDI can help fill the gaps.
- The impacts of climate change are most costly for groups that are already

marginalized and disadvantaged (scholarly literature refers to these inequities as ‘environmental racism’).

- Analogously, measures to mitigate emissions typically create both costs and opportunities. How are these costs (e.g., increasing energy prices) and opportunities (e.g., subsidies for electric vehicles) distributed across different groups in society? Are there groups that are systematically advantaged or disadvantaged?
- Implementing EDI principles in the design of net zero policies is likely to increase public confidence in and support for these policies. Multiple interviewees emphasized the need for energy organizations to reflect the communities that they serve and to collaboratively work with these communities. These aspects of advancing EDI can help ensure that decisions reflect the interest of many, which in turn, tends to increase public confidence in and social acceptance of the decisions.

### **It is the right thing to do.**

Ultimately, multiple participants argued that action on EDI is simply a moral imperative and necessary to “correct or course change on some historical wrongs”. Some of these participants evoked the principles of social and environmental justice to support their position.

## **Box 2: Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment practices**

Environmental, Social and Governance (or ESG) refers to a set of indicators measuring an organization’s performance in areas that are typically not taken into consideration by ‘traditional’ financial analysis (FNMPC, 2021). ESG enables investors and other stakeholders to understand an organization’s (adapted from Ibid, p. 9):

- Environmental impacts, including water and air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and land use;
- Social impacts, including the company’s relationships with employees, communities, suppliers, and society at large;
- Corporate governance, including the company’s board composition, management practices, internal oversight mechanisms, and executive pay structure.

These factors are measured to calculate an organization’s ESG score, which may inform investor decisions or lead to requests to implement corrective measures to strengthen ESG performance. As such, ESG indicators give investors the tools to gain a more complete image of the organization’s track record beyond traditional financial metrics. Research has shown that good ESG performance is linked with financial success (Ibid, p.9).

Numerous ESG frameworks have gained prominence in recent years and inform organizations’ ESG measures and performance tracking. Among the most influential are the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure (TCFD), and the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB) (Ibid, p.15).



## What actions are energy organizations taking to advance EDI? What opportunities and challenges do they encounter?

Participants had mixed views on how much action Canadian energy organizations are currently taking on EDI. Several participants said that they see more ‘lip service’ than tangible action: “Well, now at the moment, I think EDI is more of a catchphrase than anything that’s actually being done.” Participants from the private sector tended to have a more positive view of progress to date, while civil society organizations tended to be more critical.

### EDI initiatives in Canada’s energy community

All participants indicated that their organizations have at least intentions to address EDI in some form, and most organizations included in this study have already taken some actions. Multiple interviewees mentioned that their organization established a specific working group or task force focusing on EDI.

The organizations that have been less active so far tend to be smaller in size, and participants mentioned that lack of resources constituted the greatest barrier they face.

There was a general view among interviewees that large organizations can take greater action on EDI because they have more resources, but this opportunity is doubled-edged. On one hand, large organizations have more resources to devote to training, recruitment, retention, and corporate policy; on the other, there are more potential points of resistance in a large organization. Not-for-profit civil society organizations, in contrast, tend to be less hierarchical and therefore potentially better able to organize themselves around a more diverse mandate – for instance, including the prioritization of EDI. Private sector organizations, while often better funded, may have less room to manoeuvre given their obligation to profitability.

Some organizations have formalized their EDI objectives (e.g., an EDI strategy or action plan), while others work with more informal, loose targets (e.g., half of the speakers at events should be female). Quantitative targets enable tracking progress over time, but participants noted that identifying meaningful quantitative targets is very challenging. Some said that the values and intentions behind quantitative targets are more important than meeting specific quotas. To avoid tokenism one participant mentioned the value of organic evolution. “We do try to be mindful of inclusion and diversity of voices in what we do. So, and I think just by doing that, we’re actually able to achieve it, we’re able to achieve good diversity and inclusion, but without having to install arbitrary metrics.”

We asked participants about the kinds of actions their organizations have adopted to advance EDI principles. Participants shared a variety of initiatives:

#### **Innovative hiring / appointment practices.**

Changes in organizations’ hiring practices were among the EDI actions that participants mentioned the most. As noted above, for federal organizations and organizations in federally regulated industries, the Employment Equity Act mandates

the removal of barriers and the creation of an inclusive workplace for the four designated groups. One participant said that their organization had renewed its focus on the Act, going beyond mere compliance to taking seriously the spirit and intent of the legislation.

Specific hiring measures that study participants mentioned included:

- defining staffing targets for members of equity-seeking groups;
- writing job postings that are not inadvertently excluding or favouring certain groups of applicants;
- ensuring that equity-seeking groups are represented among applicants and / or among those invited for interviews;
- using external recruitment specialists; and
- assembling diverse hiring committees.

Relatedly, a few participants pointed to new practices and criteria for the appointment of board members with greater diversity and representation.

### **Creating an inclusive workspace.**

Once hired, some participants explained that organizations need to create an inclusive workplace for new talent to thrive and feel a sense of belonging. Some participants noted that creating an inclusive work environment starts with collecting data on employees' self-identification as a member of certain equity-seeking groups. This data collection can help to track the impacts of EDI initiatives on workforce composition, but employees might have concerns about privacy and confidentiality if it is not done anonymously.

One participant noted that their organization is tracking employee perceptions of EDI performance along multiple metrics.

### **Training and education.**

Some of the organizations included in this study provide mandatory and / or voluntary training for employees on themes like anti-racism, inclusion, and / or Indigenous cultures. Training activities come in various forms, including book clubs, film nights, and speakers series. Importantly, some participants pointed out that organizations need to make the time and resources available for employees to participate in training activities. And it is important for leaders to participate – and be seen to be participating – to signal importance and priority.

### **Use of EDI-centred decision-making frameworks.**

Several participants from the public sector shared that their organizations are using EDI-centred frameworks to inform decisions about funding, program design, and policy development, among others. Frameworks help capture and assess the intended and unintended outcomes of policies and programmes according to EDI-centred criteria.

Within the federal government, frameworks that consider EDI-centred criteria include GBA+ Analysis and the Quality-of-Life framework. Other new policy analysis tools are being developed to foster broader holistic analyses (e.g., Climate Lens).



### Box 3: Analytical frameworks for federal policy development and implementation that include EDI-focused criteria

**Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)** is defined by the Canadian government as an intersectional analytical process that aims to ensure government initiatives consider the various ways in which federal action might impact, positively or negatively, different social groups (Government of Canada, 2022a).

GBA+ analysis seeks meaningful representation of marginalized and vulnerable communities and the creation of an inclusive space or policy direction. However, GBA+ does not focus explicitly on equity, instead stating that its goal is “true equality”, whereby “all genders have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights” (Ibid).

The *Plus* aspect of the framework highlights the fact that an individual’s experience may be shaped by multiple identities simultaneously. Identities may relate to religion, age, disability, gender, geography, culture, income, sexual orientation, education, sex, language, ethnicity or race.

In considering these aspects of identity, GBA+ analysis seeks to ensure that government initiatives help to promote equality and alleviate existing inequalities. The analysis is typically carried out throughout the lifecycle of an initiative or policy.

The federal government provides a step-by-step guide to help organizations apply GBA+ analysis to a policy or initiative (Government of Canada 2022b):

- identify the ways in which the initiative might impact various identities and diversity, as well as the ways in which the initiative fits within the broader social, cultural and economic context, and broader organizational priorities;
- challenge pre-existing beliefs and assumptions about the role / rights of individuals, either personal or institutional;
- keep GBA+ in mind while conducting research and consultation, e.g., collect and use data disaggregated by important identity factors and make consultations as accessible as possible for diverse communities;
- make recommendations and develop options that respond to issues identified in the GBA+ analysis and outline responses to potentially uneven impacts;
- monitor and evaluating initiatives to identify unequal impacts later on.

Throughout this process, clear communication and documentation of the analysis helps build trust and can inform future initiatives (Ibid).

The **Quality-of-Life Framework** emerged from the recognition that traditional metrics used to assess national performance, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), “fail to capture the full breadth of economic and non-economic aspects of quality of life” (Department of Finance Canada, 2021, p. 5). The goal of this framework is to measure more accurately the general well-being of populations.

The framework includes a set of “domains’ – or factors that matter most for [people’s] quality of life in their country” (Ibid, p. 7) and sets of indicators to assess the performance of policies within each domain. The Canadian government identified 5 domains which it deems matter most to Canadians: prosperity, health, environment, society, and good governance (Ibid, p. 11). (*Box 3 continued - next page*)

Furthermore, the framework also includes two “cross-cutting lenses” (Ibid), which are Fairness and Inclusion on one hand, and Sustainability and Resilience, on the other. Their purpose is to encourage “greater equity and equality by assessing the distribution of all outcomes across different sub-populations”, as well as “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” (Ibid).

### **Public EDI statements and commitments.**

Several participants said that their organizations have released corporate statements on EDI or included language on EDI in their public corporate strategy documents. These public commitments to EDI signal support from top management, and they create public accountability for the organization’s commitments.

### **Voluntary mechanisms and certification programs.**

Many participants, particularly from public and larger organizations, indicated they voluntarily signed up for self-governance programs such as Equal by 30, the 50-30 challenge, or the Leadership Accord on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (see Box 4). Others mentioned EDI certification and auditing programs such as DIVERSIO (see Box 4) to assess and track their organization’s EDI performance.

## **Box 4: Voluntary EDI programs and certifications**

The **Equal by 30 Campaign** was launched at the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) in Copenhagen on May 24, 2018 with the objective of promoting gender equality in the energy sector through equal pay, equal leadership and equal opportunities in the sector by the year 2030. The campaign includes commitments by public and private organizations from several countries, including Canada, to work towards that objective.

Participating organizations commit to a set of principles to achieve the stated goals. For the private sector these principles include (adapted from Equal by 30, n.d.):

- integrating equality principles in corporate policies and structures
- committing to supporting women and closing the gender gap
- participating in collective learning activities by sharing experiences with gender diversity programming
- enhancing data collection.

For the public sector, these principles require organizations to (adapted from Equal by 30, n.d.):

- actively foster gender equality
- consider gender in all aspects of their work
- define ambitious goals in the recruitment of women, their support and integration
- report regularly on progress and experience both within the organization and to external audiences. *(Box 4 continued - next page)*



Importantly, as mentioned by Diversio, the Canadian women-led technology company responsible for data collection for the campaign, “While EB30 is predominantly focused on increasing the number of women in energy, it is not possible to advance gender equity without also advancing racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ2+ individuals, persons with a disability and other underrepresented groups” (Equal by 30, 2021, p. 4).

The **50-30 Challenge** is an initiative by the Government of Canada in collaboration with civil society and the private sector to achieve gender parity (the 50 element of the name) and “significant representation” of underrepresented groups (defined as 30%, the other element of the name) in senior management and board level positions in companies across all economic sectors (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2020, p. 2).

The challenge has a bottom-up character, with companies and organizations participating voluntarily. Participants are also given considerable flexibility when it comes to how they achieve the initiative’s goals, recognizing that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is not practical. As of August 15, 2022, 1650 Canadian organizations have joined the challenge (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2022).

Electricity Human Resources Canada, a non-profit organization addressing human resources needs in Canada’s electricity industry, developed the **Leadership Accord on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** in 2017 to advance EDI in the sector and make the electricity workforce more representative of Canadian society. Employers, educators, unions, associations, and governments joining the Accord publicly declare their commitment to strengthening EDI principles in their organizational policies, processes, culture, and workplace environment (Electricity Human Resources Canada, n.d.).

Organizations can join the Accord as signatories or advocates (Electricity Human Resources Canada, n.d.). Accord signatories commit to implementing a set of EDI initiatives and reporting on progress. Accord advocates publicly declare their commitment to promoting the Accord’s objectives, which includes encouraging others in their network to join the accord as signatories.

**Diversio** is a Canadian software company that specializes in the AI-assisted collection of data and the development of tools that help organizations implement their EDI commitments (Diversio, n.d.).

Diversio has created an EDI certification program through which organizations can inform “employees, investors, customers, and other HR/DEI professionals that [they treat] inclusion as a key performance driver, and that [they] are ‘walking the talk” (Diversio, n.d.-a). The program includes different types of certification:

- A two-level certification for organizations. The first level requires that the organization has made public commitments to EDI principles, set targets according to certain EDI metrics, and has implemented a program focused on EDI in policy and governance, talent acquisition, employee engagement, and data transparency. The second level signals that the organization’s programs have matured and generated substantial progress according to the metrics.
- A certification for venture capital firms.
- A certification for HR professionals and others who successfully participate in a course to deepen their EDI expertise.

Multiple participants emphasized the message that – whichever specific EDI initiatives an organization implements – “it usually comes down to putting your money where your mouth is”. And yet lack of resources was a frequently mentioned challenge when it comes to the advancement of EDI in Canada’s energy community.

## Challenges to EDI-centred energy decision-making in Canada

All participants acknowledged the complexity of addressing EDI effectively. Energy decision-making in Canada can already be very challenging, and EDI considerations add another layer. In fact, some participants said the scope of the task can seem overwhelming and prevent decision-makers from taking any actions at all. One participant noted that the organizations currently addressing EDI represent a “coalition of the willing”, and that it is revealing to ask, who is not joining now? why not?

One participant pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has been putting additional strain on staff and organizations in Canada’s energy community, making it even harder to dedicate resources to EDI.

Participants identified numerous barriers to EDI in the Canadian energy decision-making system that have slowed change. One participant pointed out that “even despite kind of the will or the efforts, we’re not quite getting there”. Multiple other participants shared this sentiment, indicating that despite growing awareness within the energy community and many new EDI initiatives, impacts are only being felt slowly. Specifically, participants identified several challenges to energy organizations’ efforts on EDI:

### **Lack of time and resources.**

Smaller organizations and non-profit organizations in particular mentioned that their efforts on EDI are hampered by a lack of time and financial resources. Many participants acknowledged that effective action on EDI requires an ‘all-hands-on-deck’ approach, including from top leadership.

Non-profit organizations that rely on grants to support their work may face the challenge of some grants not including EDI activities as eligible expenses.

### **Lack of information, expertise, and education.**

One of the most frequently mentioned challenges was access to knowledge. Participants noted its various aspects.

First, some participants said they are missing trusted information about EDI and how to effectively implement EDI principles in their work.

Related to this, there are currently too few experts on EDI in the Canadian energy community. One participant mentioned that there is a serious lack of outreach and stakeholder engagement experts, and the few who are currently active are in overwhelmingly high demand.

In this context, some participants reflected on how education and training for a career in the energy sector might need to change to meet the growing demand for a new set of skills. Multiple



participants mentioned that the ‘classical’ STEM training of current energy employees does not necessarily prepare people for the ‘difficult conversations’ that go along with effectively addressing challenges related to EDI.

The perceived lack of information, expertise, and education on EDI may increase decision-makers’ fear of ‘getting it wrong’ and thus stymie the implementation of EDI principles.

### **Lack of data, lack of trust.**

Multiple participants indicated that a lack of data and trust creates a hurdle for effective action on EDI. For example, employees might be hesitant to share personal information with their employers (e.g., self-identifying as LGBTQ2A+), even though this would allow the organization to assess and track diversity among its workforce.

### **Society-wide barriers.**

Multiple participants mentioned that sexism, racism, and exclusion are society-wide problems – and that the energy community is grappling with many of the same challenges as other sectors and society at large. Just as society-wide demands for action may motivate EDI initiatives in energy organizations, society-wide barriers to EDI may also hinder and slow actions.

Participants mentioned systemic discrimination and bias in education and training as a specific challenge as it leads to challenges for energy organizations looking to find a diverse pool of qualified candidates.

### **All social change is hard.**

Ultimately, almost all interviewees indicated that taking EDI seriously in Canada’s energy decision-making requires substantive changes in people’s mindsets, behaviours, and choices. Such deep changes are hard and typically take time, for multiple reasons.

Some pointed to fear: a fear of change and a fear of implementing changes too rapidly, which may invite backlash. Addressing EDI is sometimes perceived as a threat because it inherently involves a shift in resources, power and influence to equity-seeking groups.

There is also fear of making mistakes, which can have a chilling effect that stifles action. Some participants explained that advancing EDI starts with personal reflection and individuals’ openness to learning. Without that openness and personal commitment, it is hard to achieve lasting change. As several participants emphasized, addressing EDI issues requires engaging in ‘difficult conversation’ and sometimes “sitting in the awkwardness of it”.

## How to address challenges to EDI-informed energy decision-making

Participants are addressing challenges in a variety of ways:

### **Leadership needs to demonstrate the priority and importance of the issue.**

Nearly all participants said that action from leadership on EDI is key. Leaders need to be involved and publicly show commitment to EDI principles: “Change comes from the top, as we all know, and it’s a domino effect.”

### **Actions need to be authentic, genuine, and value driven.**

Multiple participants said that EDI initiatives cannot be implemented quickly and superficially, or credibility will be lost. There is no ‘quick fix.’

### **Access to training and learning resources is important.**

Many people working in the energy sector have been trained in STEM. As noted previously, training in STEM does not necessarily prepare people well for ‘difficult conversations’ about EDI. These conversations require a different kind of skill set. Multiple participants also pointed out the need for more experts on EDI, outreach, and engagement to support Canadian energy organizations.

### **Foster collective learning; create a non-judgmental atmosphere.**

One participant emphasized that their organization had been successful in addressing EDI because leadership created an atmosphere that was almost entrepreneurial in spirit. Employees felt comfortable to experiment and (potentially) make mistakes, which led to rapid learning within the team on EDI issues.

### **Prioritize among EDI objectives.**

A couple of participants said that the size of the EDI task can be overwhelming and that it is difficult to overcome the paralysis some organizations experience when they realize the scope and complexity of addressing EDI. They said that to overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed requires taking small steps, achieving small successes, and thus building momentum and moving on to the next small task.

### **Actions and initiatives need to be effectively communicated and contextualized.**

One interviewee indicated that effective communication is necessary to mitigate people’s fears and prevent backlash.



## Conclusion

This study finds that the application of EDI principles in Canada's energy decision-making is still a relatively novel idea with uneven implementation. Decision-makers' ideas about the various ways in which EDI will shape Canada's energy future differ, but the EDI concept appears to be a common framework of thinking. Individual organizations are finding their own approaches and tools within this framework.

Nearly all decision-makers who participated in this study agreed that EDI **will** shape Canada's energy future in some form or another. Many participants said that achieving Canada's net zero emissions target will require the country to wrestle with EDI – whether that means gender balance in senior management, decision-making that better represents the interests of communities, or ensuring that energy policies do not unfairly burden those already marginalized. Without investing in the implementation of EDI principles across all of these decision venues, it will be harder for governments to implement durable and balanced net zero policies and for companies to achieve the level of innovation necessary to comply with these policies.

Nevertheless, the 'definitional vacuum' puts the EDI terminology at risk of becoming (remaining?) an 'empty' concept if it is not soon supported by a holistic, accepted definition and tangible, genuine actions. Otherwise, there is a risk of EDI becoming yet another polarizing idea rather than an opportunity to foster consensus and trust (Beck, 2018).

We also need greater clarity around the 'edges' of EDI (i.e., what it is NOT), particularly with respect to Indigenous reconciliation. Other frameworks of thinking, such as decolonization, may be more useful here. Importantly, various frameworks and approaches to EDI may be useful for different actors and in different contexts, and they may advance some of the same objectives.

When it comes to the 'how' of implementing EDI principles, this study emphasizes that a lot of learning will be required within and across Canadian energy organizations. Effectively advancing EDI requires certain skills ('difficult conversations') and professionals with expertise in engagement, outreach, and facilitation (e.g., how to have effective dialogues with people from different backgrounds, with different perspectives). Organizations and Canada need to build and invest in these skills to enable EDI to support consensus-building – rather than a source of disagreement and polarization.

In short, advancing EDI presents a real opportunity for the Canadian energy community. Done right, the principles underpinning EDI can help rebuild public confidence in energy decision-making by making energy organizations more representative of and responsive to the communities they serve. However, if EDI actions in Canada's energy community are perceived as empty gestures or disingenuous, further erosion of public confidence seems likely.





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## Appendix 1: Interview guide and list of participants

The interviews conducted for this study were semi-structured, i.e., the interview guide below provided a general structure for each conversation, but there was opportunity to expand beyond the guide in light of interviewee responses. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

### Section 1: EDI and Canada's energy future in an age of climate change

1. In your view, how is EDI shaping Canada's energy future in an age of climate change?
2. What/who is driving the advancement of EDI in Canada's energy sector?

### Section 2: EDI initiatives in Canada's energy community

1. Has your organization defined specific objectives with regards to EDI?
2. What are the motivations for these actions in your organization?
3. In your view, how important is the topic of EDI for Canadian energy organizations today and in the future?

### Section 3: Challenges/opportunities associated with EDI for organizations in the energy sector and Canada more broadly

1. What are some of the challenges and opportunities that your organization has encountered when taking action to address EDI?
  - In your view, what is needed to address these challenges and opportunities?
2. In your view, what are specific challenges and opportunities for Canada's energy sector as a whole with regards to EDI?

We conducted semi-structured interviews with senior decision-makers from 23 Canadian energy organizations: 8 industry organizations (including 3 companies, 2 associations, 2 networking groups), 6 regulators (including 1 association), 3 policymakers, 5 civil society organizations, and one Indigenous organization. 5 participants requested anonymity.

Name	Affiliation*	Title*	Organization type
Tammy Arseneau/ Arlene Strom/ Mavis Ure	Suncor Energy	Vice President Culture and Talent/  Chief Sustainability Officer and General Counsel/  General Manager, Tailings	Industry – company
Meredith Adler	Student Energy	Executive Director	Civil society
Kimberly Border	Ovintiv	Manager, Talent Management, Diversity & Inclusion	Industry – company
Richard Carlson	Pollution Probe	Director, Energy Policy and Energy Exchange	Civil society
Genevieve Carr/ Laurel Sherret	Canada Energy Regulator	Professional Leader, Environment/  Associate General Counsel	Regulator
Cynthia Chaplin	CAMPUT	Executive Director	Regulator – association
Dave Collyer		Corporate Director	Industry
Luisa Da Silva	Iron and Earth	Executive Director	Civil society

Name	Affiliation*	Title*	Organization type
Peter Gurnham	Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board	Chair (until February 2022)	Regulator
Chris Henderson	Indigenous Clean Energy	Executive Director	Indigenous organization
Jacob Irving	Energy Council of Canada	President & Chief Executive Officer	Industry – association
Darek Kogut & Darrin Low	Alberta Utilities Commission	Executive Director, Corporate Services / Director, Human Resources	Regulator
Tonja Leach	QUEST	Executive Director	Civil society
Louis Legault	Régie de l'énergie Québec	Director of legal services	Regulator
Joanna Osawe	Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE)	President & Chief Executive Officer	Industry – networking group
Leigh-Anne Thurber	Natural Resources and Renewables, Nova Scotia	Senior Analyst, Clean Electricity	Policymaker
Julia Turner	Cenovus Energy	Director, Engagement & Experience	Industry – company
Channa S. Perera	Electricity Canada	Vice President, Regulatory and Indigenous Affairs	Industry – association
Anonymous			Regulator
Anonymous			Policymaker
Anonymous			Policymaker
Anonymous			Civil society
Anonymous			Industry – networking group

\*At the time of the interview.

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