

Institute for Sustainable Finance

isfcanada.org

INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Progress and Impact Report

2025–26

Smith SCHOOL OF BUSINESS Queen's University



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I would like to congratulate the Institute for Sustainable Finance on another highly productive and influential year. ISF has established itself as an indispensable resource and partner for public and private sector leaders working toward a more prosperous and sustainable Canada.

Queen's University holds a deep commitment to social impact and sustainability, a dedication reflected in Queen's ranking first in Canada and fourth globally in the 2026 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.

To me, ISF is an exemplar of that commitment and a model of what a university centre should be. Its research does not sit on a shelf; it is in the hands of financial sector leaders, policy makers, and regulators. By pairing rigorous scholarship with the agility to respond as economic and political conditions shift, ISF produces research that truly delivers impact, directly addressing economies in transition and markets under pressure. That combination is precisely what we strive for at Smith School of Business.

This responsiveness is essential because the very definition of sustainability has evolved. It reaches well beyond climate finance to encompass the broader spectrum of responsible investment undertaken by nations and investors looking to the future in a wide swathe of sectors. For Canada, attracting this capital is a critical national priority, one vital to securing our competitiveness, resilience, and sovereignty.

Business, finance, and government all have vital roles to play in meeting these challenges. ISF's focus is to ensure these stakeholders can act on the best available evidence as they make the investment decisions and policy choices that will shape our future.

I look forward to supporting that vital work in the year ahead, and beyond.

Wim A. Van der Stede, Ph.D.
Dean, Smith School of Business





FROM EXPERTISE TO INFLUENCE

In the past year, ISF has continued building the most credible and robust body of sustainable finance knowledge in Canada, creating a critical resource for public and private sector decision-makers.

With new academic leadership and the growth of ISF's Research Fellows Program, ISF has cornered the market on academic expertise in sustainable finance. As this year's report details, this capacity has resulted in ISF's most productive year for research and events to date, allowing the Institute to have an outsized presence in the most important conversations among market decision makers and policy leaders.

This report covers ISF's key activities and impact from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. ISF's work has been more important than ever as business and government leaders grappled with anti-ESG backlash, trade uncertainty, political turmoil and worsening climate change. Investors remain keenly aware of the material risks and the work continues to prepare Canada's finance system for the low-carbon economy of the future. ISF has been focused on how to build a more resilient and competitive Canada that is a magnet for global capital in uncertain times.



ISF'S MISSION

Housed at Smith School of Business at Queen's University, ISF is the first-ever cross-cutting and collaborative hub in Canada that fuses academia, the private sector and government with the singular focus of increasing Canada's sustainable finance capacity.

The Institute's vision is to be Canada's most trusted source of sustainable finance knowledge, empowering policymakers and organizations to build a prosperous, environmentally and socially responsible future. Through research, education and partnerships, ISF delivers evidence-based solutions that contribute to resilient financial markets, accelerate the transition to a sustainable economy and drive lasting impact.

BY THE NUMBERS

Measuring ISF's contribution to national discussions on sustainable finance over the past year.

10
New Research Fellows appointed from Smith School of Business and leading institutions across Canada.

13
Major publications including research reports, discussion papers, analyses and briefing notes. By far ISF's most productive year for publications.

15
Op-eds published in national outlets.*

15
Impactful events hosted including webinars, round tables and in-person guest speaker events and panels.

55M+
Potential readers of ISF's opinion pieces.**

5,000+
Participants in ISF and partner events including leaders in government, finance and academia.

36,000
Social media followers and 200,000 impressions in the last year.***

74,000
Website views and a newly refreshed website in 2025.

*Including the Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, Postmedia, Corporate Knights and more.
**Metric, total monthly reach of publications. Source: Cision
***Leading 10 close competitors in followers and tied for second in engagement metrics. Source: Linkedin analytics

ADVISORS, SUPPORTERS AND NETWORKS

The work of the Institute would not be possible without the support of Canada's leaders in climate philanthropy, initial financial contributions by Canadian finance sector leaders, particularly the "Big Five" Canadian banks, and the involvement of private sector and academic experts.

With this support and engagement, ISF convenes Canada's brightest thinkers and players in the field of sustainability and finance. ISF's Advisory Board includes high-profile individuals from academia, finance, insurance and civil society. Its members drive the Institute's mission, advise on industry priorities, and foster private sector collaboration. ISF's Research Advisory Council is comprised of leading practitioners and academics, and helps to shape the Institute's research agenda.

The Institute also benefits from collaboration with academic experts at Canadian and global post-secondary institutions through the Canadian Sustainable Finance Network (CSFN) which was founded by ISF. CSFN is essential to sharing learnings and pursuing promising new areas of academic inquiry.

As well, through ISF's Research Fellows Program, a select group of academic experts works with the Institute's research team to bridge the divide between academia and industry with timely, impactful and decision-useful research and commentary.

The Institute for Sustainable Finance has received financial support from several partners.

Founding Contributors

- BMO
- CIBC
- RBC
- Scotiabank
- TD Bank Group

Supporters

- Ivey Foundation (inaugural supporter)
- Chisholm Thomson Family Foundation
- Trottier Family Foundation

Founding sponsors

ISF thrives on collaborations with others in the sustainable finance ecosystem. To learn more about co-hosting or sponsorship opportunities, or supporting ISF, please reach out to ISF Director Maya Saryyeva.



BUILDING CANADA'S SUSTAINABLE FINANCE BRAIN TRUST

In the face of escalating climate risks and the growing need for a stable financial system, it has never been more important to integrate academic research with business and finance sector-led initiatives. ISF made major strides in building its academic capacity in 2025-26.



Dr. Yrjö Koskinen was appointed Director of Research. A respected academic with decades of experience at the forefront of sustainable finance, Dr. Koskinen has played a key role in shaping ISF's research agenda and expanding collaborations with contributing academics.



As well, Dr. **Thomas Walker**, a finance professor with a wealth of sustainable finance publications to his name has joined ISF as Special Projects Lead. Dr. Walker oversees major grant applications and works to open up new areas of inquiry for ISF.

THE RESEARCH FELLOWS PROGRAM

The ISF Research Fellows Program fosters collaboration between leading academics and industry experts to generate practical, real-world solutions to environmental challenges. Fellows produce high-impact work on pressing topics such as climate-related financial risk, green investment strategies, fiduciary responsibility in a changing regulatory landscape, and corporate governance.

This initiative helps translate cutting-edge academic knowledge into actionable strategies, ensuring that Canada remains at the forefront of the global sustainable finance movement. In the past year, the Research Fellows have unlocked more research output, a broader range of subjects and a stronger pipeline of commentary on pressing sustainable finance news and events, as detailed in the Research With Impact section below.



Paul Calluzzo
Associate Professor & Toller Family Fellow of Finance, Smith School of Business, Queen's University



Pierre Chaigneau
Associate Professor & Commerce '77 Fellow of Finance, Smith School of Business, Queen's University



Alison Taylor
Assistant Professor of Finance at Smith School of Business, Queen's University



Sean Geobey
Associate Professor, University of Waterloo School of Environment, Enterprise and Development



Hongping Tan
Professor of Accounting, Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University



Sean Cleary
Professor of Finance at Smith School of Business, Queen's University



Fabio Moneta
Full Professor, RBC Financial Group Fellowship in Finance, and Co-Director, Microprogram Capital Markets, at Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa



Olaf Weber
Professor and CIBC Chair in Sustainable Finance, and Director of the Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CoErb) at Schulich School of Business, York University



Julie Bernard
Assistant Professor of Sustainable Finance at the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED), University of Waterloo



In a video for Smith Business Insight, ISF Research Fellow and Smith School of Business Professor Alison Taylor explains her work on climate risk and financial stability.

CANADIAN SUSTAINABLE FINANCE NETWORK

Established by ISF, the Canadian Sustainable Finance Network is an independent formal research and educational network that has grown to 140+ members at universities across Canada. CSFN has been essential to sharing learnings and opening the door to future research topics, as well as creating partnerships with other entities from across Canada and globally. This year's CSFN Conference was hosted by the University of Alberta in June.





CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

In the past year, ISF demonstrated the power of bringing together key decision makers with the relevant research to guide policy and inform market actors. Building on the success of the Sustainable Finance Forum in past years, ISF has partnered with MP Ryan Turnbull on a series of Parliament Hill Round Tables with senior leaders in industry, finance, government and academia. These Chatham House Rule sessions have been well received as a forum for a candid exchange of views, and for getting practical work done to advance sustainable finance in Canada. The sessions demonstrated ISF's unique value proposition of making academic literature relevant and accessible to decision makers.

PARLIAMENT HILL ROUND TABLE SERIES:



- Session 1 (Oct. 28, 2025): **Competing for the Future: Why a Strong Sustainable Finance Infrastructure Matters for Canada Now**. This session worked toward completing Canada's sustainable finance framework with effective policies covering anti-greenwashing legislation, a sustainable finance taxonomy and mandatory climate related financial disclosures.
- Session 2 (April15, 2026): **The Strategic Value of Globally Aligned Sustainability Disclosures**. This session brought together investors, issuers, regulators and policy makers for a deep dive on the costs and benefits of mandating sustainability disclosures aligned with the leading global standard set by the International Sustainability Standards Board. Read the report.
- Session 3 (June 2, 2026): **Energy and Investment Dialogue: Financing the Future while meeting the moment**. This session, co-hosted with Transition Accelerator examined the opportunities and risks for investment in Canada's energy sector. It was intended to inform the work of the federal government to both meet the current moment of global turmoil and shifting markets, and finance the competitive Canadian energy economy of the future. Read the report.







The federal government "is working closely with provinces and territories to support the uptake of internationally aligned climate disclosure standards across the economy. Roundtables that bring together investors, issuers of climate disclosures, academics and other experts provide valuable feedback to inform this work and help to ensure a broad range of perspectives is considered."

Finance Canada statement quoted by Corporate Knights

For more detail on the impact of ISF's engagements see the Policy Progress section below.



ISF'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In 2025, ISF convened Canada's sustainable finance community at SmithToronto to mark the fifth anniversary of the Institute. It was an opportunity to come together with friends, supporters and partners to reflect on past achievements, grapple with new challenges, and set a course for the next half-decade of sustainable finance leadership. The panel discussion, titled "Power, Planet, Profit" brought the political and economic challenges facing sustainable finance into focus, and charted an optimistic course for the future powered by private sector leadership.









RUN LIKE A GIRL: AN AFTERNOON WITH CATHERINE MCKENNA, JAN 21, 2026

In January, ISF and the Smith School of Business Research Office hosted former Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna in Conversation with Interim Dean Lynnette Purda before a packed audience of students, staff and faculty at Goodes Commons on campus. Catherine shared insights from her global advocacy work and her experiences championing climate action and women's leadership. This honest, thought-provoking and often humorous conversation resonated across the Queen's community — especially students who were inspired that they can take risks, believe in themselves and do something impactful with their lives and careers.







A BANNER YEAR FOR ISF EVENTS

In 2025-26, ISF and partners hosted 5 webinars, 2 panel events at SmithToronto, the Fifth Anniversary Celebration at SmithToronto, 7 round tables and workshops and the McKenna event on campus in Kingston. These conversations covered renewable energy investment, the state of private impact investing, developing sustainable finance regulations and guidelines, and inspiring investors to double down on climate action.



Highlights:

- Designing a Canadian Taxonomy: From Fragmentation to Credible Transition - **Webinar, Apr 28, 2026**. ISF and PRI presented the results of a survey of investors during this webinar panel event, which included a guest appearance by Marlene Puffer, newly appointed chair of Canada's Taxonomy and Transition Planning Council. Investor input is key to ensure Canada's sustainable finance investment guidelines are user-friendly, practical, credible and interoperable with leading global taxonomies.
- Driving Effective Climate Policy Engagement in Canada – **Round Table, March 23, 2026**. ISF collaborated with Volans and PRI to gather a forward-thinking group of investors for an exchange of experiences and ideas on how to engage more effectively on "real economy policy for net zero". This session helped contribute to the Volans report, Time to Get Real.
- Private Impact Investing in Canada: Revealing the current state to support future growth - **In-person panel, SmithToronto, March 9, 2026**. New research by ISF and Rally Assets on the state of private impact investing was presented and discussed by an expert panel on how to scale capital to invest in the social and environmental priorities of Canadians. Read the report.
- Resilient governance: Managing nature risks and gaining a market edge – **Oct. 29, 2025**. This session, hosted by ISF in partnership with the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), the Commonwealth Climate and Law Initiative (CCLI) and CPA Canada, helped board members and their advisors understand how proactive nature governance protects value, mitigates litigation and reputational risks, and positions companies for success in a changing market.

For more events and webinars, see the Events page on the ISF website.



"As investors and economies shift capital to a decarbonized future, businesses and policymakers need research and guidance about how to navigate new disclosure regulations and massive investment opportunities. That's why the Institute for Sustainable Finance is so important right now. Its thinking earns attention. Its convenings attract decision-makers. And its impact will be enduring."

Daniel Tisch, President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce



RESEARCH WITH IMPACT

ISF's research has helped policy makers, standard setters and market participants navigate a constantly shifting landscape around sustainability issues. Thanks to added expertise with new staff and fellows this was by far the most productive year yet for ISF's research with 13 major publications including research reports, discussion papers, research briefs, analyses and primers.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- From U.S. Dependence to Global Capital: The Role of Climate Disclosure - **June 2026**. With the U.S. trade relationship fraying, it is vital for Canada to attract other global sources of capital. New ISF research examines how climate reporting firms benefitted from foreign investment shifts following the Liberation Day tariff shock. The report adds to evidence supporting the positive impact of disclosures on capital markets.
- Sentiment and Sustainability - **December 2025**. This research analyzed language trends in U.S. corporate 10-K filings before and after the 2024 U.S. election, identifying a sharp decline in DEI-related disclosure language while climate and environmental terminology remained comparatively stable. The paper provides insight into how corporations respond to evolving political and regulatory signals and contributes to global discussions on the durability of sustainability commitments.
- Canadian Sustainable Bond Market Report (Second Edition) - **December 2025**. ISF's analysis showed Canadian sustainable bond issuance rebounded strongly in 2024, reaching US$25.08B, representing a 68.5 percent increase year-over-year. The report provides policy and market insights designed to support investor confidence and continued scaling of sustainable capital markets in Canada.
- Canadian Competition, Aussie Rules, **October 2025**. Canada's anti-greenwashing amendments to the Competition Act created uncertainty and litigation risk for firms. ISF's analysis examined how Australia's co-ordinated regulatory approach could provide a model to reduce litigation risk while supporting credible climate disclosure and investment.
- Transition Finance Playbook, **June 2025**. Financing the decarbonization of high-emitting sectors is crucial for meeting Canada's national targets, but significant challenges persist. ISF and Accounting for Sustainability (A4S) collaborated with some of Canada's largest asset managers to develop this practical guide for financial institutions to scale up transition finance, supporting real-world emissions reductions and aligning with their fiduciary duties to create long-term value for beneficiaries and clients.

For more publications, visit the Publications Library on the ISF website.



ISF White Paper

Sentiment and Sustainability

How the language of U.S. corporate filings reveals divergent paths for management priorities on DEI and Environment

November 2025

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Smith School of Business, Queen's University



The Canadian Sustainable Bond Market Report: Second Edition

2024: A Record Year and a Strong Comeback for Sustainable Bond Issuance

December 2025

isfcanada.org

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The Transition Finance Playbook

A practical guide for financial institutions

June 2025

isfcanada.org accountingforsustainability.org

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DISCUSSION PAPER

From U.S. Dependence to Global Capital: The Role of Climate Disclosure

How reporting firms benefitted from foreign investment shifts following the Liberation Day tariff shock

June 2026



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ANALYSIS

Canadian Competition, Aussie Rules:

A model from Down Under to fight greenwashing, reduce litigation risk and support investment in climate action

October 2025





POLICY PROGRESS

While economic and political turmoil have made prioritizing sustainability a challenge, there has been notable progress on a range of fronts. ISF's research and convening power has had a substantial impact and has emphasized the importance of sustainability to Canada's competitiveness.

POLICY IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Greenwashing legislation reform:** As ISF's analysis showed, Canada's anti-greenwashing Bill C-59 had the important goal of penalizing unfair corporate claims about firms' environmental records, but it was widely criticized by investors for potentially hampering sustainability disclosures and causing litigation chill. In 2026 the government passed reform legislation, Bill C-15, in line with ISF's recommendations to reduce undue risk and clarify standards. ISF's Parliament Hill Round Tables, research and analysis and media commentary positioned the institute to inform the government's policy shift.
- **Progress on made-in-Canada sustainable investment guidelines:** ISF has been involved in the development of a green and transition taxonomy for Canada throughout the current process, serving as Core Knowledge Partner for the Sustainable Finance Action Council's taxonomy work and supporting the development of a credible, practical taxonomy through its research, convening, events and commentary. ISF's partnership in the Sustainable Finance Forum brought together federal policy makers and market leaders and helped generate consensus on the benefits of a taxonomy for Canada. The July 2026 release of the proposed taxonomy methodology cites ISF's work four times and ISF's Yrjö Koskinen serves as on the taxonomy technical advisory group. Implementation of the taxonomy will be instrumental in enabling billions of investment in decarbonization.
- **A Force of Nature strategy cites ISF research:** Canada's new federal strategy to protect and restore nature cites ISF's research on the economic value of wetlands to make the case for private investment in supporting Canada's ambition to protect 30 percent of its lands and waters by 2030. As ISF's work has demonstrated, without nature, there is no economy. We depend on nature services to clean the air we breathe and the water we use every day, to mitigate flooding and fight climate change, irrigate and pollinate crops and much more. ISF's leadership in this field includes convening the Canadian consultation group for the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures which demonstrates to business leaders and investors the importance of understanding nature-related risks and opportunities.



- **Federal ambition on climate-related disclosures:** As described above in the Conversations that Matter section, ISF's round tables have provided the ideal forum for a frank, practical discussion about the potential costs but also the benefits of corporate disclosures for driving climate finance and strengthening capital markets. In announcing new funding for the International Sustainability Standards Board recently in Montreal, MP Ryan Turnbull cited ISF's research on the potential for climate-reporting firms to attract new global investment. And as the federal government moves forward on its promise to work with provincial regulators to adopt mandatory sustainability disclosures for Canadian public firms, ISF's research will inform the rationale for and appropriate design of these standards.
- **Transition bond development:** ISF's work on the sustainable bond market has highlighted the importance of sovereign issuances to build market confidence. The federal government has committed to issuing Canada's first federal transition bond and ISF has an important role to play in gathering supporting data and analysis and informing development of the Canadian taxonomy which will be key to creating a transition bond framework. ISF has proposed that the federal government establish a centralized, publicly accessible national sustainable bond database and support capacity building for smaller bond issuers.
- **Strengthening carbon markets:** The fragmentation of Canada's compliance carbon markets and limited transparency are material barriers to efficient price signals and long-term investment decisions in emissions reductions. ISF has proposed that the federal government sponsor an Alberta-B.C. pilot project to promote effective interprovincial trading and federal support for developing more timely and consistent market data. ISF research has also detailed recommendations for improving the credibility and functionality of voluntary carbon markets. A July 2026 federal-B.C. memorandum of understanding includes reference to a national carbon credit framework. ISF will explore opportunities to support this process as details emerge, and upcoming research will examine the design and functioning of Canada's carbon markets and reforms that could strengthen policy outcomes.



"ISF continues to play an integral role in advancing sustainable finance in Canada. Its research has helped advance important conversations on key issues, from taxonomy development to mandatory disclosure, while bringing investors, business leaders, academics, and policymakers together to turn ideas into action. Hard-won milestones, including the momentum behind Canada's Sustainable Finance taxonomy, reflect ISF's leadership and commitment. ISF is an asset to everyone pursuing responsible investment."

Barbara Zvan, President and CEO, University Pension Plan



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Through speaking engagements, media relations, social media and amplification by networks and partners, ISF engaged key audiences with its work and raised the profile of the issues covered.



ISF Director Maya Saryyeva speaks at the 2026 Sustainable Finance Summit.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

- ISF Director **Maya Saryyeva**'s plenary talk at the Sustainable Finance Summit in June 2026 launched ISF's new research on the impact of climate-related disclosures before an audience of 1,500 sustainable finance practitioners and policy makers during Canada's most prestigious sustainable finance conference.
- ISF Director of Research **Yrjö Koskinen** was invited to speak at PRI In-Person 2025, the world's premier sustainable finance conference at Sao Paolo Brazil in November. He joined a panel session bringing together data-led, investor and academic perspectives to explore the evidence base for responsible investment.
- In April, ISF Director of Research **Yrjö Koskinen**, Senior Research Associate **Yingzhi Tang** and Director **Maya Saryyeva** presented to more than 70 Department of Finance staff during a FIN Ideas Hub session. The presentation provided an overview of transition finance concepts and their relevance to policy and capital markets based on ISF's research.

- On March 21, ISF supported the 10th Annual Queen's sustainability conference in an example of the Institute's connection to students and the broader Queen's community. The day brought together students, researchers, and policy practitioners for a timely conversation on how science, energy, and finance must work together at this critical moment for climate action. ISF Research Associate **Apoorva Hegde** joined a panel for a wide-ranging discussion on sustainability, policy, and the role of academic research in driving real-world change.

MEDIA RELATIONS:

- With the added expertise from new staff and fellows, ISF was more productive this year than ever in its public commentary. ISF published 15 op-eds in national media including the Globe and Mail, Financial Post, Corporate Knights, The Hill Times, The Conversation and more. These opinion pieces had a total audience reach of more than 55 million.
- ISF had a sustained presence in the media on current issues including the federal government's creation of a sovereign wealth fund, anti-greenwashing legislation, the state of impact investing, sustainability disclosures, shareholder rights and much more.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL:

- ISF's social media followers reached 36,000 with 200,000 impressions on Linkedin in the past year.
- ISF's website was refreshed in 2025 to create a new, more dynamic, searchable and visually appealing platform where visitors can easily access the most current and relevant ISF work. ISF's website had 74,000 views in the past year.

OFFICIAL SUBMISSIONS:

- **FINA Submission, May 2026**: ISF's pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) makes eight evidence-based recommendations for the federal government to advance sustainable finance in Canada over three priority areas: Scaling the sustainable bond market and issuing transition bonds, mandating climate related disclosures, and strengthening Canada's compliance carbon markets.
- **Comment on Driving Effective Carbon Markets in Canada (ECCC), February 2026**: The potential for Canada's industrial carbon markets to deliver credible incentives for decarbonization while protecting competitiveness is being undermined by market fragmentation and limited transparency. To begin to address these issues, ISF's response to an open consultation held by Environment and Climate Change Canada recommends two steps toward more cohesive and investable carbon markets across Canada: Increase market liquidity via an interprovincial credit trading mechanism, starting with a time-limited Alberta–British Columbia pilot; and enhance transparency through standardized public reporting of carbon market transactions.

OUR TEAM



Yrjö Koskinen, PhD, ICD.D
Director of Research



Maya Saryyeva, MA
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Thomas J. Walker, PhD
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David Watson
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Yingzhi Sarah Tang
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Prateek Sood
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