

Thank you, David, for the introduction. Good morning, everyone, I am delighted to join you in beautiful British Columbia.

And thank you Cynthia for opening today's session with a land acknowledgement. It is important that we acknowledge that the land we are on today - and the land on which we live and work across the country - is the land of the First Peoples. Acknowledging the land in this way shows respect for the Indigenous Peoples who first inhabited the land and keeps us aware of the historical and ongoing impact of colonization. It is one step of the many we must take in our journey toward reconciliation.

[short pause]

I'm honoured to be here today kicking off your 'deep dive into disruption'.

Make no mistake, I consider myself a disruptor.

From my earliest days, as a young woman living in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, I chose change. I can still clearly recall those cool East Coast mornings, milking cows on our family farm, and just knowing, as much as I loved getting my hands dirty, that I was not going to do this for the rest of my life. I began to dream bigger and made choices that went against the norm, choices that were not expected of a young woman in rural Cape Breton.

I CHOSE change. And that's my challenge to you today: to choose change and, more importantly, make it happen.

Because I assure you change is not optional in today's world. It is a necessity.

Canada is moving toward ambitious net-zero goals. Last June, our Federal Government committed Canada to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 with the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*. That transition to a cleaner, stronger economy will require nonstop focus and ongoing innovation.

Businesses are already on board. Corporate social responsibility, or CSR, and environmental, social and governance, or ESG, criteria are not just corporate buzz words. Today, CSR and ESG are top of mind for executives. They are hot topics around boardroom tables and fundamental to corporate strategies and operations. Not a day goes by without another company announcing commitments to hit net-zero. ESG and CSR are increasingly how companies are being evaluated. There is a true paradigm shift happening across corporate Canada.

And consumers are fully on board too. More and more, consumers are expecting companies and governments to make socially, and environmentally responsible decisions and it influences their buying choices. A November 2021 [Ipsos Poll](#) showed that two-thirds of Canadians consider ESG important when deciding on an investment purchase. This has led other sectors – retail, banking, telecommunications – to change their practices and services to meet consumer

expectations. It's no surprise to see it trickle over into the public utility and energy sector as well.

Consumers are demanding greater choice and control over their utilities and service providers. As a result, new technologies and approaches to our electricity, water, gas, and pipelines services are emerging at rapid speed. And, as a 2021 [Deloitte report](#) noted, companies that do not strengthen their customer relationships will be more vulnerable to disruption by these new market entrants. Of course, consumers also expect price moderation, but today there is an understanding of where we need to go, and no longer is the simple metric of lowest cost the winner.

The world around us is changing at a pace we've never seen and trust me I've seen a lot of change over my career. And, as regulators, you have a real opportunity – dare I say an obligation – to drive that change.

Now, I understand part of the challenge is inherent in the work you do as regulators. Just the word *regulations* is defined as a set of rules to be followed, monitored, and enforced. The concept of regulations is to create boundaries, often working to stop an organization from doing the wrong things. Unfortunately, those boundaries can also stop us from doing the right thing.

This issue was highlighted in a recent news release from Electricity Canada and the Canadian Natural Gas Association. The release noted that energy utilities around the world are working to re-imagine the services they offer consumers as part of efforts to meet legislated emissions reduction targets, but a critical barrier to those efforts in Canada is our utility legislation. They acknowledged that, as currently designed, our legislation restricts Canadian utilities' ability to deliver on Net Zero by 2050 and changes are required if utilities are to make progress toward our environmental targets.

Frankly, the systems you work within push regulators to do things the way we have always done them.

But imagine how our systems could look if regulators were encouraged, or even expected, to embrace change and find innovative ways of doing things instead of 'just sticking to your knitting'? What if we created regulations based on the end state and used them to chart a path forward, rather than to maintain a status quo that's out of sync with what the system actually needs, what the climate emergency demands, and what ratepayers want? I know that many of you are already trying to move in this direction.

One thing that might be different today if the systems you worked within were more open to charting a new path alongside business is that we might have a battery storage facility, jointly owned by First Nations and private sector partners, already up and running in Ontario.

The Oneida Energy Storage Project is a 50/50 joint venture between my company, NRStor Inc., and Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation. It will provide clean, reliable

power capacity by drawing and storing renewable energy during off-peak periods and releasing it to the Ontario grid when energy demand is at its peak. The facility will reduce the need and cost associated with using gas-fired power plants during times of peak demand. It will also help reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 4.1 million tonnes, the equivalent of taking 40,000 cars off the road every year. On top of that, it will create internship, training and employment opportunities for Six Nations community members.

I am proud to say we are nearing the finish line of this incredible project. But it has taken nearly a full decade to get here, starting in 2012 when I founded and began working to change the regulations for energy storage. The Oneida Project itself came about in 2017, as an unsolicited bid that my colleague Matt Jamieson, President and CEO of the Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation, and I - and our respective teams - believed in from the outset. It involves emerging technologies and true Indigenous partnership and ownership and provides a solution to the significant challenge of energy storage in Ontario. Yet, there were so many hurdles in convincing decision-makers that this project was the right move. It was new and innovative and didn't fit the moulds within existing regulatory frameworks.

The Ontario Energy Board has been working with NRStor and the Oneida team since 2017 to develop the regulations that let us advance the project. There have been many times in the past six years where we could've chosen to give up. But Matt and I had the courage to push forward, and we now see the light at the end of a long tunnel. So, while it is fantastic to have worked with the system to get to where we are today, I am also frustrated. It is exceptionally frustrating to know this critical, innovative storage solution could have been advanced faster, to save ratepayers more money sooner, and reduce a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions earlier.

Let me restate that, for clarity, 10 years of effort, at a time when our collective goal of net zero is less than 30 years away.

We as businesses, along with consumers, have to continue challenging the system from the outside, as we have done on Oneida, knowing the system is simply not designed to change on its own. BUT we also need more change agents inside. We need disruptors among YOU. We need people within the industry who are willing to truly drive change and to persevere when it goes against the way we've always done things. As regulators, YOU have the ability to be those change agents so that the external and internal forces are working together.

I can almost hear the wheels turning around the room. Asking "Annette, that's all good to say, but how do we buck the system, a system set up with public interests at its core, a system we've created and that most of us believe in?" To that, I say three things:

First, you must look to the end state. You must have a long-term vision in mind and consider 10-year road maps to achieving it.

Second, you come together at a national level and collectively identify the core challenges facing our country in reaching that desired end state – creating a national heat map.

And third, you must find ways of moving faster, using regulations to govern us today and at the same time advance the science and innovation in what we do.

So, first, it's working toward an end game. We must constantly be future-thinking rather than just developing regulations that fit the moulds of the past.

Consider Canada's pursuit toward net-zero by 2050. It's a formidable global target and though the number of countries committed to achieving it continues to grow, an [IEA report from May 2021](#) shows we're still falling short of what's required to reach it. Knowing that, do we shrug our shoulders and say why bother trying? No, of course not. Instead, we keep innovating to meet the long-term goal and seek support from across Canada - all provinces and territories, cities, businesses, and citizens need to play a role.

The urgency to meet the net-zero goal is exactly why I established the Verschuren Centre for Sustainability in Energy and the Environment in Cape Breton in 2009. We facilitate the commercialization of innovative clean technology, helping companies develop, scale, and adapt clean technologies for the future. The Centre has an established team of experts in key areas to assist companies in advancing IP and accelerating uptake in manufacturing and production industries.

This is where standards and regulations can help accelerate change and support these companies that are trying to make a difference. The traditional way of doing things is no longer the way to plan for the future. Slowing innovative solutions and emerging technologies down because they don't fit the norm, or the current frameworks no longer works. Regulators need to disrupt that current way with a new approach to our regulatory environment so these companies can advance their efforts, quickly.

That new way of doing things has to start from within. We must adopt a long-game mindset and be ready to collectively support the innovation, productivity, and speed required to get to net-zero by 2050. Regulators need to look to 2030, 2040, and 2050 as 10-year blocks and create regulatory environments aligned to those – developing 10-year roadmaps. Roadmaps that consider the opportunities and challenges and plans to advance and overcome them.

Secondly, those roadmaps need to be focused on the biggest risks, the areas that most need to change if Canada is to truly achieve the end goals. This is where the idea of a national heat map comes in. When I was Chair of Risk Management with Liberty Mutual, we regularly identified the top 4-5 biggest risks to our business and created a heat map to monitor those issues, focus our mitigation efforts, drive new approaches, and track progress.

Canada needs regulators to do the same on a national scale, all together and aligned, not as 20 separate exercises. We need you to identify, from a very long list of issues, the top 4-5 areas

where Canada will miss out or fall behind, economically and environmentally, if innovative solutions aren't found and adopted. We must be looking at the end state and dealing with these top priorities on a long-term basis, rather than relying on discrete projects to do so.

And, if you'll allow me to suggest a few of those issues for consideration. One issue I believe we can tackle is duplicate regulations. I can tell you from my time as the head of Home Depot that different standards in 10 provinces does not enhance productivity or efficiency and does very little to attract business investment in this country. The reality is different regulations for electrical and plumbing, or doors and windows, from province to province, or that BC was the only province with an eco-tax on paint, made business that much more difficult. These differences are a cost to businesses that could be mitigated by more universal approaches across the country. And the differences rarely, if ever, enhance the outcomes that those regulations are purportedly there to address.

My time leading Home Depot was a business experience that has critically shaped my views of change. I had an expansion plan that took 11 years to achieve, growing the company from 19 stores and about \$600 million in sales to 179 stores \$6 billion in sales. It meant continually evaluating and evolving our mission, vision and values and my leadership approach. Yet, I also learned that it all comes back to having that long-term vision, knowing your priorities and challenges, getting the resources and building your team, and introducing the right policies and procedures to grow your company.

In my current roles as chairs of Sustainable Development Technology Canada and of MaRs Discovery District, I have the privilege of a front-row seat to the work many young companies and individuals are doing to tackle today's biggest challenges in the health, energy, environment, education, and business sectors. Their innovative solutions will help grow our economy and have an even greater societal impact. The ventures that SDTC and MaRs incubates involve cutting-edge research, but the future depends upon our ability to grow global demand for these products and ensuring that we find opportunities to launch made-in-Canada companies that can succeed and become global leaders.

I believe this is an issue that you as regulators can come together and resolve. You can identify, develop and adopt shared and unified standards that cut across jurisdictions, facilitate business, consumer, and societal adoption of cleaner, greener options. Rather than a province-by-province approach that leads to overregulation and different standards for businesses that operate nationally.

Perhaps the 10-year roadmap toward a set of shared national standards starts with a plan for regional alignment. Take Atlantic Canada as an example. There are four similar provinces with a combined population of just 2.3 million residents, yet we have four different sets of regulations. If we don't streamline these, that region loses its competitive advantage as a place for investment, economic growth, research, and employment opportunities.

The reality is that, if Canada continues to be seen as too overregulated, the investments required to update our infrastructures will go offshore to other jurisdictions. This is not something we simply cannot afford.

Another key issue for national regulatory focus is getting ahead of the game on electric vehicles. The [Government of Canada has committed to having 50%](#) of all new light-duty vehicles sold by 2030 as zero emission. This is an interim target in the longer-term plan of having 100% of these vehicles being green by 2035. 2030 is just eight years away folks. 2035 is just over a decade from now. We don't have time to waste.

As we've all experienced during the pandemic, whether personally or professionally, supply chain is a crucial driver of success in Canada and the lack of standardization across our regulatory frameworks is already hindering a secure path to net zero, to say nothing of access to critical minerals and other materials. We need to build the safest, fastest, most robust supply chain and infrastructure quickly, supported with streamlined national regulations, if Canada is to achieve this target. Not only do I believe this is an attainable goal, but it is a crucial one when it comes to our climate change goals.

Another issue that's top of mind for me as the head of a trailblazing energy company is changing our approach to consultation and engagement with Indigenous communities. I assure you from my work across multiple sectors that the way we've engaged in the past is not the way forward. Companies, governments, and regulators must truly change how we approach our Indigenous partnerships. If our intent is to build respectful, effective relationships with Indigenous communities, we must foster a culture of mutual respect, with equity, inclusion, and the history and impacts of colonization always at the forefront.

We have committed to these meaningful, true Indigenous partnerships in several of NRStor's projects, including the Oneida Energy Storage project. Oneida will be one of the biggest battery storage projects in North America, quite frankly one of the biggest in the world, and the thought behind this project was bigger than the critical need for innovative energy storage solutions. The thought started with wanting to build this project with true Indigenous partnership, and my colleague Matt Jamieson is one of the best Indigenous business leaders in our country. In fact, SNGRDC was recognized by Deloitte as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies in 2021. Matt and I started working together in 2017 with the idea to build a large energy storage facility as 50/50 partners and have developed the project together from the beginning, not the end and not mid-way through.

We must all be committed to addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and, in particular, the Call to Action #92 – Business and Reconciliation. I come from a Mi'kmaq community. I grew up with Chief Terry Paul of Membertou and Leroy Denny of Eskasoni First Nation, and I really admire the long-term perspective that Indigenous Peoples of our country take. We have a lot to learn from the diversity of Indigenous knowledge systems, practices, and worldviews.

The regulatory environment can be leveraged to create truly equitable and mutually-beneficial partnerships with Indigenous communities as a core component of new projects. This looks beyond consultation to an approach that maximizes Indigenous ownership, ensures Indigenous participation in all development activities, prioritizes working with Indigenous-led/owned companies, and provides local employment opportunities.

Changing our approach to Indigenous consultation and engagement, streamlining regulations on a national scale, and electric vehicle readiness are just three issues that I envision as part of a national regulatory heat map. Three issues for which I believe regulators can develop 10-year roadmaps, long-term national plans focused on real change for Canada. Other issues may include clean water, decarbonization, carbon capture, the future of oil and gas pipelines, national hydrogen and SMR strategies. These issues will continually require that our nation's brightest minds innovate to create and advance underdeveloped solutions for tomorrow.

Lastly, in dealing with these issues and moving forward with long-term roadmaps, I believe regulators need a way to move more quickly on deciding if a project should be advanced. I have a saying I like: 'sometimes you have to go slow to go fast'. But we also need to create space to go faster in Canada. We really do. I've worked with American and Canadian companies and across other global jurisdictions, such as China, and sometimes we just move too slowly here when it comes to the impact of regulations.

If you think again about Oneida and the time it has taken to get from concept to completion. The OEB has been terrific, and we've worked through the permitting processes, but my gosh the time it has taken to advance this project and advance the regulatory frameworks to get here. We can't afford this time or the financial investment on every new project if we're to truly move the needle on net-zero goals.

Regulators need a better way. A faster way. And a way that is highly focused on the truly decisive issues rather than seeking confidence through process and minutia. Instead of looking at whether a project fits current models, maybe it is a phased assessment process where Phase 1 first assesses – quickly - whether a project is even a possibility. The project is assessed against criteria aligned with the end state, the 10-year roadmaps, and the national issues heat map. If it's a yes, great! A company moves forward to the next phase. But if it's no, then so be it. A phased process can be designed to reduce wasted time and enhance productivity. Let's be ok to say yes, and ok to say no, as long as it's based on good innovation, sound science, and the right information - and not solely based on existing regulatory frameworks that are not designed for the solutions of tomorrow.

We are at a pivotal moment. I genuinely believe the people in this room and your colleagues across the country can create the pathway to Canadian growth. You can lead this change. Let's not regulate to hold back, but to build forward. And let's do that smartly, using this conference as a starting point.

Coming out of this conference, I would love to see a Canadian Advisory Table of regulators who develop national heat map of issues, work on 10-year road maps to advance solutions to those issues, guiding regulators toward common end goals, streamlined standards and faster ways of advancing innovation. Canada has an enormous opportunity right now. We have the resources, the capacity, and brainpower to be a world leader in clean technology, and this is true for all sectors – energy, agriculture, manufacturing, technology, construction.

If this sounds like a call to arms, it is. A call to arms that I believe is possible. I see proof of it already around Canada. I look to Susanna Zagar, the CEO of the Ontario Energy Board, who was named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women in 2021, and Lesley Gallinger, President and CEO of Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator as examples of what's possible. The OEB and IESO are working together on multiple projects designed to eliminate challenges and streamline regulations in the system. This includes recently acknowledged progress made in removing barriers to energy storage integration, ensuring a cohesive regulatory response that advances innovation and gives certainty to the private sector.

I also want to acknowledge Chris Benedetti and the Sussex Strategy team who have been a part of the Oneida journey with me. Chris believed in our vision from the get-go and has been integral to guiding us through the regulatory hurdles, identifying opportunities to overcome them, and bringing Oneida to life.

I know firsthand there are people in the regulatory sandbox who are trying, who are leading change – and it's precisely the kind of change that needs to come from across our regulatory systems.

I chose to pursue innovation in the energy sector precisely because it is a tough sector to enter, a hard place to create new markets, and difficult to drive innovation. But I saw the opportunity and knew I had the proof of my experience disrupting other industries. I take you back to my early days on Cape Breton Island, a place known for its coal mines, and my decision to dream bigger. Having worked with a mining company for nine years, I know it is not easy to be the canary in the coal mine and warn of the dangers if action isn't taken, but I stand before you today as exactly that.

Take it from someone who's gone from farmer's daughter to global innovator, it is time. This world is changing before our eyes. We've been 'fat and happy' for far too long here in Canada. The world is watching us, and Canada needs to wake up to this world, fast. We can no longer rely on doing the same things over and over for the rest of our lives. It is time to embrace new technologies and innovation, and plan for the future. It is time to think bigger. It is time to be disruptive.

Thank you.

Merci.

Miigwech (MEE-gwetch)