

A ROLE FOR EVERYONE
Canada's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Initiative
A Framework for Domestic Engagement

Prepared by Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources

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Introduction:

The United Nations (UN) has declared the period from 2005 to 2015 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and has placed responsibility for the coordination of the DESD with the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Time and again since Rio in 1992, the role of education in all its variations (formal, nonformal, informal, public awareness and training programmes) has been recognized as a crucial mechanism for moving sustainable development forward. Internationally, Canada has signalled its support for the decade and has begun to formulate what the framework for engagement will look like.

In Canada the UN-DESD is an opportunity to engage all Canadians, in both their professional and individual capacities, in fostering a paradigm shift towards a more balanced consideration of the pillars of sustainability. The Decade offers Canadians a vehicle by which to create a synergistic approach that fosters private sector (Private Sector), governments (Government at all levels), not for profits, indigenous people, youth, faith and ethnic groups and individuals (Civil Society) to work in tandem and through partnerships for sustainability gains. It is through our aggregated efforts in our spheres of influence that Canada can move steadily to wards sustainability.

When thinking through the Canadian National strategy, and specifically the domestic efforts, it is clear that a framework needs to be developed that allows for appropriate government involvement and responsibility at all levels from Local to Federal. This fact is underscored in UNESCO's documents that call for an inclusive multi-stakeholder process that is national in scope yet locally relevant. Canada's National efforts must be a horizontal approach that includes the Federal government if our domestic efforts around the Decade are to be fruitful.

This document expands on "Foundation for Sustainability" produced for the October 2004 meeting. It presents a framework that articulates a partnership approach between Government, Private Sector and Civil Society (**GPC** will be used to denote all three in this text) with some suggestions for roles and responsibilities. While this document will make some suggestions around the need for specific elements, the focus is not on what the strategy, content or products could or will be, but rather on defining a framework for engagement that could be used to engage GPC. Efforts have been made to construct a framework that could be applied at the different operational levels, from the National to the Local or individual scale. It is also important to mention here that until such time as the formalized network is established, it is crucial for the Federal Government, Private Sector and Civil Society to have a defined point of contact between them to ensure work done to date is not lost. Where and with whom this will rest must be identified.

1: Elements Considered

The purpose of this effort is therefore to present the “HOW” or framework for Canada’s efforts for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The “WHAT” that needs to be addressed is only considered indirectly. The decision to focus on the “HOW” was taken as it was felt that the structure of the framework needs to be addressed prior to getting into the details of the “WHAT”.

Within this “HOW”, particular attention has been paid to the Domestic efforts at the National level. A potential co benefit of this proposed approach could be to increase the participation of Canadians in the Canadian input to the Commission on Sustainable Development. It is hoped that whatever the final “Framework of Engagement” looks like, it will be transferable to subsequent lower tier efforts, and perhaps be applicable in the Foreign side of Canada’s efforts. As such, this framework has sought to be transferable and as relevant as possible.

Stakeholders Table/Interests:

The following elements were considered and are incorporated for a **robust approach**:

- UNESCO Materials
- Systems thinking (paying additional attention to points in the system where change occurs)
- A Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability in Canada
- Adaptive Management System

Also considered were existing/past **mechanisms for working cooperatively across stakeholder groups**:

- Round table models
- Agenda 21 approaches (especially the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives model)
- Biosphere Reserve Model
- Ontario Stewardship Model
- Natural Step Framework for engagement
- Knowledge Networks
- Mechanisms used to develop Accords
- Multi –Stakeholder Approaches
- The Canadian Voluntary Sector Initiative

In consideration of the above, a blended framework is suggested one that relies heavily on the Canadian Voluntary Sector Initiative model. It allows for horizontal participation on any number of issues including those that are to be addressed at CSD.

2: Proposed Model: “Partners Forum for Sustainability - A Union to Foster and Increase Change”

Composition: a *Coordinating Council* that includes representation from *Community(ies) of Engagement*, working within *Hubs for Activities and Gains* (with Secretariats for each of the GPC as well as a Coordinating Secretariat).

The **Coordinating Council** would generally:

- be comprised of representation from the GPC
- act as place for integrating issues and actions that are articulated by the Communities of Engagement.
- articulate and adapt Canada's overall vision for ESD.
- formulate an Accord for ESD in Canada.
- develop an approach for Pan Canadian communications, monitoring gains of efforts, and adapting the National approach
- have a rotating chair.

The **Community of Engagement** would generally

- as much as possible have cross representation from GPC.
- focus on issues and actions specific to the community
- consider the community within the broader community.
- develop actions, messages, vehicles for communications and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting
- identify plan for Community of Engagement

Hubs of Activities and Gains would allow for a space for GPC partners to aggregate efforts, issues and actions to

- focus on thrusts and themes articulated by UNESCO
- encourage a widening base of participation
- identify ways to keep ESD in front of mind (WEHAB agenda and Thematic Clusters groups as per CSD)
- foster partnership principles and strategies

The Voluntary Sector Initiative serves as a viable model to engage GPC collectively. An outline of the model can be found in "The Voluntary Sector Initiative Process Evaluation Final Evaluation Report" Audit and Evaluation Directorate Strategic Direction Social Development Canada April 2004 (model on page iv, 14 in document).

url (English copy) is http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/pdf/process_evaluation.pdf

A second document that would give guidance to this effort is entitled An Evaluation of the Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD) Final Evaluation Report. Audit and Evaluation Directorate, Strategic Direction Social Development Canada. March 2004.

url (english copy) is http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/pdf/sidpd_report.pdf