

## **FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Canada's National Process for Education for Sustainable Development A Concept Paper to Stimulate Discussion**

for discussion purposes only

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The purpose of this paper is two-fold. One is to provide a brief outline of some of the areas for consideration when establishing Canada's National Process for engagement on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The other is to put forward potential approaches that Canada could take.

Canada has a large potential to contribute to ESD and the DESD. Potential areas for inclusion into Canada's contribution on the domestic and international stages are an area that deserves proper treatment. A brief discussion document (Grounding Education For Sustainable Development) is being produced by POWER that includes potential strands that deserve consideration for Canada's approach to ESD and DESD.

#### **Areas for Consideration:**

1. Based on the work from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the DESD, the following elements should be considered for incorporation into Canada's approach for ESD and the DESD. Within UNESCO's approach for the DESD, partnership plays a pivotal role. Within UNESCO's articulation of an approach for ESD, processes are suggested at the Community, National (includes sub-National), Regional and International levels. While engagement at all levels is important, the focus of this brief report is on possible structure for the Canadian National process. This report also assumes a moderate knowledge of the thrusts and themes identified by UNESCO. For information on thrusts and themes please see [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=23308&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23308&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) and go to the left side topics of Educating for Sustainability (thrusts) and Key Action Themes.
2. The capacity building mechanism for the DESD has been identified as networks and alliances. The rationale for this approach is to develop a structure that seeks to engage all individuals and organized entities to build momentum for ESD. The principles for developing partnerships are distilled into vision, demonstration activities and networking. As such, Canada's approach and process needs to include these three elements. The two main outputs of the partnership are expected to be the National strategy and continued identification and ways to include a widening base of partners.
3. In order to take action that fosters sustainability, it has been recognized by many that local level engagement is necessary. Therefore a fundamental goal of the DESD is to

create the necessary conditions and mechanisms to generate local debate and identify issues of local relevance. As such, a goal for the National process must be the formulation of mechanisms and create resources to foster civil society participation at the community level.

4. National Committees are anticipated to be

- multi-sectorial and inclusive (capacity for all stakeholders)
- reflect a balanced representation of stakeholders to reflect complexity of issues
- include United Nations (UN) agencies present within the country

5. When establishing the National Committee expectations are that

- regard will be given to existing committees for other international initiatives
- links will be made to and strengthened between other UN education initiatives and the Millennium Development Goals

6. The first phase of work for the National Committee is to prepare for the National launch. The International launch is expected to occur between January and February 2005 with National launches being brought forward between April and May 2005. Within this area, UNESCO has articulated that this “Work should be done by a team dedicated to getting regional organizations on board” (Preparation of National Launches of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Paris, 29-30 June 2004. see [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=32356&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=32356&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)). Other key consideration for National launches identified at the Paris meeting include formulating concrete proposals, mobilizing engaged individuals and groups, integrating the different levels (individual/local to international), assessing existing initiatives and preparation of short key messages. For a more detailed overview, please see the document referenced above.

7. Suggestion from UNESCO for the National process for ESD and DESD are to identify actors at the National level to include in the process, as well as focus areas for the collective and individual actors in their respective fields of influence and activity. This information is included here verbatim from the UNESCO website ([http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=23307&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23307&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)).

Actors at national level:

- Education ministry and other relevant ministries;
- NGOs, NGO and civil society networks and alliances;
- Media groups and agencies;
- Private sector companies and trade associations.

Working individually to:

- provide a national policy framework for ESD;
- budget and mobilise resources;
- support sub-national departments;
- foster public awareness on ESD and SD;
- facilitate exchange and information sharing among their members about ESD practices and experiences;

- integrate ESD and SD awareness building into media strategies;
- provide a forum to identify SD challenges they face, and identify necessary learning needs.

Working together as an national ESD task force to:

- debate and recommend ESD policy options which reflect local-level experience and challenges;
- integrate ESD into EFA and UNLD planning in the context of the EFA forum;
- provide a forum for exchange of experience, positive and negative, in ESD;
- identify research issues in ESD and plan cooperative research projects;
- identify capacity-building needs and the actor best placed to meet them;
- develop relevant monitoring indicators for ESD.

8: The above elements are generic expectations and form a map for beginning the Canadian National Process. These elements need to be translated into a Canadian context. Depending on the direction that Canada's National Committee takes, the potential of this integrative process could yield many co-benefits for Canada and Canadians including that of engaging more Canadians around Canada's input into the Commission for Sustainable Development.

**Potential Approaches:**

9: Possible structures for approach

**Water and Sanitation, Energy, Health and Environment, Agriculture, and, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management (WEHAB) Agenda**

Integrate existing Canadian groups/stakeholders and activities into categories of the WEHAB agenda.

**Domestic and Foreign Threads**

Group stakeholders and actors into foreign or domestic activities.

**Hierarchical**

Identify actions and impacts an individual takes from a personal to a global perspective.

**Organizational/Association**

Based on the communities and associations (eg engineers, doctors, planners, environmental biologist, economists, land trusts, municipalities, lawyers, teachers, psychologists, school councils, youth groups, labour, indigenous, artists, naturalists, accountants, etc, etc!)

**Thrust and/or Theme Based**

Ask actors and stakeholders which thrust(s) and/or theme(s) best fits with their organizational focus and mandate.

**Major Group/Caucus**

Stakeholders, actors and agencies engage on ESD and the DESD in a structure that mirrors the UN model of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

**Sector**

View stakeholders and actors as participating in Government, Corporate and Not for Profit ventures.

**Blended**

Collapse and combine the above so that everything is nested within a larger system that allows for horizontal integration and participation.

10: The process of developing Canada's approach to ESD and subsequently the DESD will have different phases. The goal for this first "consultative" phase could be to identify where all people fit (nesting) into the process and identify the champions within the nestings to broaden the network of engagement for the next phase.

11: In considering this first "consultative" phase, the approach should focus on the following:

- identify innovators and early adopters in all sectors/stakeholder groups with these individuals,
  - articulate Canada's vision and approach
    - approach includes what, why, who, where, when, how and analysis (eg strengths, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) and gaps)
  - develop mechanisms for
    - engaging and empowering stakeholder/actors/citizen.
    - establishing indicators.
    - evaluating if efforts are meeting with success.
    - allowing for changes in approach to ensure ESD is gaining momentum and moving forward.

12: The consultative phase could have as an output some type of accord such as the National Sustainability Accord or Canadian Accord for Sustainability.

13: This phase of the process could/should also involve analysis of stakeholders and actors motivations and values around sustainability, actions and existing partnerships and potential synergies.

14: An important element for consideration is the "branding" of the Canadian ESD efforts as the consultative phase ends. It would be fruitful to have these types of skills and expertise involved from the onset. An important consideration could also be to identify where artists, athletes, writers, media, etc fit into the approach. These people are influential actors within our society and can engage a significant portion of the citizenry .