

January 17, 2013

To whom it may concern,

This letter is written as a reference to identify the innovative characteristics of the Sustainability and Education Policy Network (SEPN). Three characteristics distinguish this project as innovative in the field of education for sustainability.

The establishment of the network may be the first SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) funded Canada-wide research initiative that focuses on establishing an education for sustainability network. While there are provincial, national and international networks that focus on various permutations of environmental and ecological education related issues, and while there has been the recent growth of United Nations Centers of Education for Sustainable Development with its very specific UN "Sustainable Development" focus, there has been no project to bring together various environmental organizations committed to establishing a network to investigate sustainability and education. This project provides a new and distinct framework to understand and advance education for sustainability in the Canadian context.

Even as sustainability policy research and practice expand rapidly across society, sustainability policy in education has remained largely unexplored by researchers. The policy focus of this project is very unique in that it distinguishes itself from the range of organizations, coalitions, networks and initiatives that focus only on separate aspects of education including educational content, strategies, approaches, resources, campaigns and courses; and it distinguishes itself from more academic forums that investigate issues about educational theories as they relate to sustainability as well as about theory of sustainability per se. The refined focus of this network is to attend to questions of policy, policy determinants and policy possibilities as they relate conceptualizations of sustainability and education to one another and to various circumstances "including in relation to educational institutions' approaches to curriculum, research, facilities' operations, governance, and broader engagement with community and place."

Further, the project is innovative in that it brings together both academic and non-academic institutions and organizations in a partnership of inquiry. These non-academic organizations include the David Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Sierra Youth Coalition, AASHE, Learning for a Sustainable Future and others. This inter-sectoral approach acknowledges the need for education for sustainability that transcends the boundaries of traditional and non-traditional education if it is to be successful. This research program is truly unique in its scope and inclusive methodology of engaging multiple communities across primary to tertiary education, regionally and nationally, and via multi-sector consultation and collaboration.

Sincerely,



Robert Regnier
Acting Dean