



April 7, 2016

**Re: STARS Innovation Credit - Letter of Affirmation
The University of Ontario Institute of Technology's (UOIT)
We Grow Trees Staff Challenge**

It is my great pleasure to provide a letter of support for UOIT's innovative We Grow Trees Staff Challenge. The challenge, which was organized by UOIT's Healthy Workplace Committee and Office of Campus Infrastructure and Sustainability (OCIS), uses the simple act of tree planting to make the connection between a healthy lifestyle and a healthy environment.

Launched in November 2015, the challenge guides staff through the entire life cycle of trees – from collecting seeds and acorns in the autumn, fostering them over the winter months, planting and caring for the seeds, nurturing the seedlings and ultimately planting the young trees on the UOIT campus.

The challenge will create an expanded sense of connection between staff and their work environment by evolving theoretical knowledge into the very tangible reality of a living tree. The program combines environmental stewardship, social responsibility and generational awareness. It also encourages UOIT staff to spend time outdoors, which has been proven to improve health and fitness.

UOIT has a large presence with the City of Oshawa and the We Grow Trees Staff Challenge provides a shining example for others to follow. UOIT's innovative efforts with the program should be recognized by STARS and add to their sustainability performance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Elston", is positioned above the printed name.

Suzanne Elston
Senior Environmental Coordinator
selston@oshawa.ca
905-436-3311, ext. 2132