

Preface

Why this Plan

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is increasingly evident that maintaining a healthy economy and a healthy society will depend on preserving a healthy natural environment. It is equally clear that it will be up to individuals, as well as governments, business, industry, and professionals to be involved in the decision-making that sustains environmental health. Achieving success will require the broad participation of an environmentally educated public.

In this document, Environmental Education Ontario (EEON) presents a first effort to bring together the thinking and the suggestions of representatives from many sectors of Ontario society to improve environmental learning across the province. Within formal education, and across economic sectors and civil society there is a need—and an expressed wish—to become both more knowledgeable and more skilled at making the decisions that will allow for continued prosperity within a framework of ecological sustainability. A national survey, conducted in 2002 by Environics International for EEON, revealed that only 4% of Canadians believed they knew enough to keep the environment healthy. EEON's mandate is to help Ontarians work together to increase the knowledge and capabilities derived from environmental learning. Such learning is applicable to:

- personal lifestyle choices
- resource use
- design and technology
- urban planning and development
- ecosystem protection
- public health
- law and policy making



Goals

Greening the Way Ontario Learns identifies outcomes, needs, and strategies for improved ecological literacy across seventeen core sectors of society. The goals of this public strategic planning project are to:

- 1) **set practical objectives for environmental and sustainability education**
- 2) **improve communication and networking**
- 3) **focus the use of resources**
- 4) **raise the level of awareness and appreciation of the earth's natural systems, and the interdependence between humans and the environment**
- 5) **support and increase learning that leads to a healthy and sustainable future**

In short, the aim of the project is to stimulate a process that will raise the profile of environmental and sustainability education (E&SE) in Ontario to one of more prominent and consistent mainstream support.

EEON has chosen as its role the facilitation of both the planning process and the collaborative implementation of strategies identified in this document. The plan is structured to invite individuals, groups, organizations and agencies, as well as partners across sectors and communities, to advance ecological literacy.

Environmental Education Ontario—A citizens' coalition for an environmentally literate and sustainable future

Humankind has inherited a 3.8 billion-year store of natural capital. At present rates of use and degradation, there will be little left by the end of the next century.

— Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and Hunter Lovins, *Natural Capitalism*

Founded in 2000, Environmental Education Ontario is a citizens' coalition of educational and other professionals. EEON's board of directors and supporters represent educational, governmental, non-governmental, and professional organizations. The impetus for EEON's formation was a common perception of a need to enhance the quality of environmental learning across the province. An initial focus on formal education quickly grew to include a broader range of core societal sectors (see list of seventeen "Audiences for Environmental Sustainability and Education" in the introduction). EEON set as its task the creation of a citizens' forum to gather public input into a central, multi-sector strategy for environmental and sustainability education.

In 2001 EEON incorporated, became a registered charity, and received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for environmental and sustainability education in Ontario. Since its early days, EEON has continued to expand its base of support.

The strategic planning process has included two public consultation events, input via workbooks for those unable to participate in person, and an ongoing public review of the strategy document through the EEON website. The published results of this broad-based, cooperative process are described by EEON as a public strategic plan.

This public strategic plan is intended as a directions document for helping to broaden involvement and stimulate the growth, quality, and base of support for environmental and sustainability education in Ontario.

