

Proposed change to Goal 16(e) of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act

For Law Amendments Committee regarding Bill 57

From Karen McKendry

Goal 16:

"The Government's goals to support business, training and education are:

*(e) to promote and support **climate change education and sustainability through the knowledge and teachings of Netukulimk and environmental stewardship with ongoing curricula renewal, the development of inclusive and accessible resources and professional learning that incorporates diversity and honours Etuaptmumk.**"*

Recommended changes:

1. Change "climate change education" to "**environmental education including climate change education.**"
2. Change "with ongoing curricula renewal" to "**through immediate curriculum changes at all grade levels.**"

What is environmental education (EE)?

- "A process that allows learners to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment" (USEPA)
- "It ensures all students will have many opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, perspectives and practices they need to become environmentally literate citizens." (Ontario MOE)
- "Environmental education raises awareness of issues impacting the environment upon which we all depend, as well as actions we can take to improve and sustain it." (Project Learning Tree)

Why have EE in school curricula?

Some of the well-studied benefits of EE are:

- EE can deeply engage students in their learning, showing them applicability of their knowledge and skills into their everyday lives and communities.

- EE is cross-curricular, and can be part of teaching in many subject areas (e.g., math, language arts, social science, physical education, science).
- EE has been proven to improve test scores.
- EE can be an excellent way to incorporate Indigenous world views and ways of knowing into students' learning journeys.
- EE is the key to addressing the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Where's EE in the Nova Scotia curriculum?

- EE is not officially included in the Nova Scotia curriculum. Currently, interested, resourceful individual teachers work aspects of environmental education into their practice, and ingenious not-for-profits and other groups create "curriculum-linked" resources where they can.
- EE does not go against any of the goals of the [Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Competencies](#). In fact, incorporating EE would be in-line with learner objectives in the framework, and would support current initiatives to include more inquiry-based learning and place-based learning in classrooms (something that EE is well suited to).

What are barriers to adding EE to the curriculum?

- In examinations of barriers for teachers in incorporating EE into their practice, the most common challenges are lack of resources, time constraints and heavy workload, and lack of institutional support. These barriers already have partial solutions in Nova Scotia.
 - There is a wealth of both EE classroom resources, and resource people, available to Nova Scotian teachers already, but many teachers are unaware of these resources at their fingertips.
 - EE can be quite cross-curricular, addressing outcomes across several subject areas through one resource or lesson, thereby reducing preparation workload for integrated curriculum teachers.

Has integrating EE into curriculum been successful in other places?

- Yes! Ontario enacted a policy in 2009 to guide incorporation of EE into *all grades* and in *all subjects*. They crafted a set of Standards for Environmental Education, and incorporated learner expectations for every grade level, and every subject, by 2017.
 - Yes! In 2008, the British Columbia Ministry of Education developed curriculum maps to aid in teaching environmental learning and *environmental experiences* across all grade levels.
 - Both Ontario and BC introduced teachers to networks that support bringing EE into the classroom (Ontario = [OSEE](#) and [BEAN](#), BC = [EEPSA](#)). There are similar networks in other provinces (including Nova Scotia, the [ESEC](#)), and nationally, [EECOM](#)).
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To help create the citizens of tomorrow, who truly understand and strive towards sustainable prosperity, we need to provide young learners with a journey that teaches them about the environment, lets them explore their connections to it, and equips them with the skills take action in favor of sustainability, wherever they go.