



## **Education: Truly a Best Practice**

-Water wise decisions for life-



The project we would like to present for your consideration is expanding our current youth education program with Elephant Thoughts. Elephant Thoughts is a charitable organization that brings fun and interactive presentations into classrooms to fill the environmental education gap that may exist in the elementary science curriculum. Our hope is that students leave the day long workshops with a knowledge and respect of our water system, that they take that home and educate their parents, and that they make water wise decisions throughout their lives.

### ***About Elephant Thoughts***

Elephant Thoughts is one of Canada's largest providers of educational workshops and school programs. The organisation is run by teachers (75% of the Elephant Thoughts board is comprised of current or retired educators) and programs are designed to fit into the Ontario elementary curriculum. Elephant Thoughts provides schools with a cost effective solution to expensive field trips.

Attached to this submission you will find electronic copies of the current workbooks for both the Earthkeepers (of which we are a title sponsor) and The Watershed Series workshops. Through hands-on activities students learn about where their water comes from, how it is tested and treated in Collingwood, and discover ways they can conserve water in their school and at home. Students conduct a water audit and gain an appreciation for the important relationship between saving energy and saving water.

The goal of these workshops is to engage students as global citizens and showcase how simple actions in their community can have a huge influence on the future of our planet. We believe that this program is creating socially and environmentally aware leaders of tomorrow.

### ***A Triple Bottom Line Project***

#### Economic vitality

It is impossible to put a price tag on the value of educating our children, and it is hard to determine how much water will be conserved because of what students learn in the workshops. What we do know is that no student will leave the program with the intention of wasting water; great news for our bottom line.

#### Social Equity

In an ideal education system environmental conservation would be a required subject, however until the curriculum changes all efforts must be made to educate our youth on the importance of water conservation any way that we can. The Elephant Thoughts program ensures that all participating students are given the opportunity to learn ways that they can change the way we treat our most valuable natural resource.

#### Environmental Stewardship

For every cubic meter of water conserved green house gas emissions will be reduced by approximately 0.2 kg; this program teaches children the entire conservation process. They learn that by being mindful of water *and* energy conservation they are not only helping the human race but all creatures we share the planet with. A greater understanding of the environment leads to greater respect for the environment.

### ***Education as a best practice***

We acknowledge that not every community has an 'Elephant Thoughts' however, the principle of youth education should be applied as a best practice in every community.

We understand that as water providers, we are knowledgeable but do not necessarily have the skill set required to engage our youth. By partnering with educators we were able to reach our audience in their classrooms and equip them with the knowledge to make water wise decisions for the rest of their lives. This is not a short-term solution to a specific problem; this program is striving to change the mindset of a generation.