



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

JULIE WILLIAMS

MA (University of Victoria, 2003)
Bachelor of Laws (Queen's University, 1996)
BA (Queen's University, 1992)

**“Environmental Leadership: Policy Implications for Provincial Governments in
Canada”**

School of Public Administration

Friday, August 14, 2015

1:00PM

Human and Social Development Building
Room A373

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Catherine Althaus, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Lynda Gagne, School of Public Administration, UVic (Member)
Prof. Chris Tollefson, School of Law, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Jennifer Winter, School of Public Policy, University of Calgary

Chair of Oral Examination:

Prof. Lorna Jackson, Department of Writing, UVic

Abstract

This research explores how provincial governments in Canada can foster environmental leadership in business firms, and develops a framework to guide provincial policy and regulatory decisions with respect to environmental leadership. The research question is: *How can provincial governments in Canada support environmental leadership in businesses?* Environmental leadership is defined as voluntary beyond compliance behaviour. In order to answer the research question, what motivates and challenges environmental leadership must also be explored. Three case studies are used in this research: the electronics extended producer responsibility (EPR), marine and agriculture sectors. Data was collected through surveys and interviews with businesses, officials and organizations in each of the case studies. The focus is on British Columbia, although data was also collected from other Canadian provinces.

Results demonstrate that the electronics EPR sector is characterized by compliance and coordination issues: businesses focus on meeting rather than exceeding regulations, and they identified a strong need for improved harmonization and coordination between jurisdictions on EPR regulations. The marine sector is characterized by businesses taking matters into their own hands, due to weak regulations accompanied by strong community pressures. The agriculture sector is characterized as one of contestation and capacity: contestation over what is environmental leadership (whether or not it requires beyond compliance steps such as organic certification), and capacity concerns, due to the high need identified for support, education and training for farmers.

Five themes cut across the three case studies. First, environmental leadership is an ongoing process rather than a relatively fixed category in which businesses can be placed. Second, although social license is important in all three cases, the license comes from different sectors of society: consumers, community or citizens. In the electronics EPR sector, the social license pressures come primarily from customers; in the marine sector, from communities; and in the agriculture sector, from citizens as a whole, comprised of both customers of agricultural products and communities that live near farms. Third, corporate culture or visionary leadership is important in driving environmental leadership. Fourth, a need exists for greater leadership by government, by strategic planning, taking advantage of new markets, resolving conflicts, greater harmonization and coordination of regulations. Fifth, continuous learning within a firm is important in environmental leadership, be it through formal training, sharing of expertise and knowledge, or through ongoing reflection on business practices.

Key policy implications are that provincial governments could make greater use of a mix of regulatory tools: accompanying stringent standards with training and education; support for transition to greener technologies or processes; and public education on the purpose of regulations, how they work, and the role of all sector of society in achieving social goals. Cross government cooperation and harmonization of regulations could be improved, especially in the electronics EPR sector. The results of this research should assist in identifying ways for government to foster environmental leadership in businesses, through new approaches to governance and selection of policy instruments.