

**REGIONAL OFFICE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH PPG1007**  
Information for the Ontario Regional Director General

**DATE:** 16 December 2017

**SUMMARY**

- The collaborative project between the Ontario Regional Office and the University of Toronto PPG1007 course on strategic implementation is an experiment that could provide a model for government-university collaboration in public management.
- The project requires students to develop implementation-focused briefing notes to help the Office meet the government's First Nations drinking water commitment for 17 communities in Ontario currently under boil water advisories, and to develop slide decks suitable for presentation to the Deputy Minister and Minister on implementation strategies on four selected policy issues.
- The student's briefing notes and slide decks will be written with the understanding that the products may be shared with all stakeholders and that they will be made available to the public on the Atlas of Public Management.
- This project is the latest initiative in a decade-long collaboration between the Department and Canadian universities in the provision of experiential learning opportunities for students in public policy and public administration programs.

**BACKGROUND**

Systematic collaboration between the Department and public policy schools began in 2008 with a project to create seven summer internship positions in Audit and Evaluation Sector for University of Toronto students between their first and second years in the Masters of Public Policy program. The initiative was deemed successful by both the Department and the University and evolved into today's Evaluation Internship Program which recruits up to 10 candidates from programs across the country.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

The collaborative project between the Ontario Regional Office and the University of Toronto PPG1007 course on strategic implementation differs from the Evaluation Internship Program in two important respects: 1) students will be working under University auspices, rather than as departmental employees, with their products contributing to their marks in a for-credit course; and 2) students will not be able to devote full time to the project, given that PPG1007 is only one of the four courses they take during in the 12-week term, and PPG1007 involves work outside this project.

The main project challenges relate to value, capacity, resources, and communications.

**Public Value** – How can the collaboration add real value to the students’ ability to become effective public managers and how can first-year graduate students add real value to the Department’s ongoing work on complex and sensitive implementation matters?

There is little doubt about the value to students of working on a real issue with real public servants. It is hoped that the students can bring fresh, scholarly perspectives to the implementation challenges on these files.

**Capacity** – How can students develop the knowledge, skills, and access to information, in time to deliver a valuable product on these matters?

Although the students obviously do not have operational experience comparable to departmental officials, they will have read the latest academic literature pertaining to the issues and have ready access to experts such as the chair of the Expert Panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations and the former Premier of Ontario, now representing many First Nations in the “Ring of Fire” negotiations with Ontario.

**Resources** – How can the students’ work be conducted in a manner that minimizes the demands on Departmental officials’ time?

The students will be aware of this concern and will work with the Departmental Liaison Officer (Rob St. Pierre) to ensure that their questions are coordinated and directed at the right people.

**Communication** – How can the project be conducted in a way that respects confidentiality, respects the roles of the Department and the University, and produces publicly-available analyses that reference only publicly available information?

The Department has substantial experience in commissioning academics and other professionals to do independent work that is subsequently made public. The University (and particularly the course instructor) will be responsible for standards of student work that is placed on the Atlas of Public Management.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. The Departmental Liaison Officer will meet with the Instructor and students on 10 January and the Regional Director General, Departmental Liaison Officer, and Instructor will confer, as required, to review progress.
2. The Regional Director General will meet with the class by teleconference or in person on 31 January, 28 February, and possibly 28 March.

## **PREPARED BY**

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