New Research Project on

Water Ethics and Environmental Policy

A SSHRC-funded project led by Principal Investigator Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto. Full Graduate Member, School of the Environment, University of Toronto and Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, University of Toronto Scarborough.

An Insight Development grant, awarded in June 2013 through Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, will fund a two year research project to explore the role of the humanities in public policy development.

Specifically, the project centres on the case of water policy at both the provincial and federal levels. The availability of clean water has been identified as a key indicator for sustainable development by the 1997 United Nations Conference on Basic Social Services for All. A recent GlobeScan survey ranked Canada as second only to Mexico in terms of the degree to which citizens themselves identified fresh water problems as "very serious" (Pentland and Goucher, 2010). Certainly, Canadians themselves are beginning to recognize water as a key public policy challenge.

Yet, the role of the discipline of philosophy in responding to this challenge as yet remains unclear.

The research will include preparation of a detailed bibliography of writings that currently define the areas of water ethics and public policy. A workshop will then bring together experts in these areas, with the intent of producing a volume of collected works at the conclusion of this project. The book will specifically address areas of intersection between ethics, policy development and decision making in Canada. The workshop will also invite researchers to assist in developing a preliminary rubric to identify best practices and optimal research opportunities for future philosophical collaboration on water policy issues.

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