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OPEN LETTER TO AWARD LEADERS

Dear Award Leader,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. My name is Stephen De-Wint and I am the National Executive Director for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award-Canada. I come to this role after nearly 8 years working as the Deputy Secretary General for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation. I chose to make the move to Canada due in large part to the phenomenal amount of unrealized potential for the Award here.

For Award Leaders there is a huge debt of thanks to be recognized - without your voluntary service and dedication the Award would not exist for many young Canadians.

The Duke of Edinburgh firmly believed the Award was predominantly a product for adults, for them to use in helping young people transition from childhood to adulthood. The role of the Award Leader should be a subtle blend of administrator, motivator and mentor. The Award Leader should be someone who already knows the young participant and can successfully challenge them to step out of their comfort zone and learn from new experiences.

Over the last few years the Award in Canada has seen a sharp increase in the number of "independent" participants, a phenomenon that exists nowhere else in the Award world.

We have also seen an increase in the number of young people (and their parents) who bypass their Award Leader, speaking directly to the operating division office where they reside.

Both these scenarios are undermining the quality of the Award as a tool to help guide and recognize the incredible learning and achievements of young Canadians "outside of the classroom". Over the coming year The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award-Canada will be assisting our operating divisions to rollout agreements with as diverse a group of organisations as we can manage. These organisations who wish to use the Award will become known as Award Centres. Central to this will be the roles and responsibilities of Award leaders.

There will be a national training framework put in place to support all the Award's volunteers, with an emphasis on the goal setting and mentoring for which the Award was intended. Award Centres will be given more support and more responsibility to use the Award to the greatest benefit of their young people.

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Some of you may not currently have the support of your organisation in the delivery of the Award therefore undermining your ability to become an Award Centre. Your operating division team wants to hear from you ASAP so we can plan how you might fit into this new emergent structure.

Some of you also use the Award as part of a role within Scouts and Cadets and we are engaging at national level to see how this new structure can best be embedded. We are hoping other potential national partners will join us in these kinds of discussions.

We are about to rollout a new, ambitious strategic plan for the Award across Canada which will give us a new lease of life as a key framework for every adult to use to help every young Canadian. I hope you will take every opportunity to join in and share your views to help shape our future. We want to do everything we can to help and support those who want to use the Award for what it was intended.

If you have thoughts and comments, in particular about what the national or divisional offices must do more of, must stop doing or start doing, I would love to hear from you. Change is vital for the Award if we are to be successful in the twenty-first century, but the changes will be more effective with your input. Comments can be sent to strategy@dukeofed.org.

I thank you for your service to young people and their learning, hope you will continue to use the Award to mentor and motivate young Canadians and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Stephen De-Wint
National Executive Director