



Mr. Robert Varney  
Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)  
Commission for Environmental Cooperation  
393 St-Jacques Street West, Suite 200  
Montreal Quebec  
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Dear Mr. Varney:

On behalf of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and the Alternate Representatives, I would like to thank the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) for its Advice 13-04 containing a summary of JPAC-led public discussions on the first 20 years of NAFTA and the NAAEC, and JPAC's recommendations. Council greatly appreciates the thought and attention that went into developing this advice as it has been useful in informing the development of the agenda for the upcoming Council Session in Yellowknife, including our efforts to mark the CEC's 20th anniversary. In forming CEC's Strategic Priorities for 2015-2020, your advice has also been helpful to us to ensure that the CEC remains relevant and effective into the future.

To begin, I would like to highlight the value that Council continues to place on JPAC in its role to reach out to the public on behalf of Council. Thanks to your efforts, we have been able to engage the public on important environmental challenges and initiatives and to promote greater transparency for the activities of the CEC. We will continue to thoughtfully consider all JPAC advice as it is a reflection of this critical public outreach function.

Specific to your recommendations, we agree that many environmental issues are cross-cutting and recognize that our work needs to ensure collaboration across and between our respective governments and with North American communities. Engagement efforts are already in course, and indeed, the new strategic priorities and cross-cutting themes that will be endorsed at the Council Session in Yellowknife demonstrate Council's commitment to work more comprehensively on this front.

Given the high quality and relevance of the CEC's work, we support and encourage efforts that would build a broader public awareness of the CEC. We applaud the CEC's creative use of social networking to tap into a larger public audience. In particular, we believe that the webcasting and social media use at recent JPAC public sessions and at the upcoming CEC Council Session are good examples of how the CEC is using innovative tools to bring more people together from across North America to engage in important dialogue. We also appreciate the CEC's recent promotional efforts to mark



the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization, including the photo contest, as increasing visibility brings greater public awareness and understanding of the CEC's value.

Council shares JPAC's view that the work of the CEC could be further enhanced by meaningful engagement with stakeholders from the business community, academia, Indigenous peoples and local communities. As such, Council members look forward to the public portion of the CEC Council Session when they will engage directly with stakeholders in Yellowknife and with participants connecting in remotely from across North America. In addition to JPAC's important outreach, we will also continue to look for other opportunities to reach out more directly into the heart of our communities to drive grassroots actions as we will continue to do through the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action grant program. We hope that the next Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 will move further in this direction.

JPAC's advice on the CEC's new priorities is representative of the environmental challenges we face today, from climate change and biodiversity issues to tackling our overall ecological footprint. We have taken JPAC's advice seriously on this front, and we believe the CEC's new strategic priorities are a clear reflection of the recommendations provided by the JPAC. As you are aware, the new priorities purposefully maintain links to the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan in recognition of the significant work that has already been accomplished. We look forward to further discussions with JPAC as we elaborate the new Strategic Plan over the coming year.

The Council agrees that local and indigenous traditional knowledge needs to be more integrated into our respective government's work on environmental management. Learning from local and indigenous groups has been incorporated as an integral consideration alongside the CEC's new strategic priorities for 2015-2020. We are pleased that a central focus of CEC Council Session will be on the importance of this issue as it is reflected in the moderated public discussion on traditional ecological knowledge at Council Session. Local Indigenous groups have been invited to participate in the Council Session in Yellowknife and hosts for the webcast hubs are also reaching out to Indigenous groups in their communities to promote participation. This should build on the momentum generated by the discussions from the JPAC's workshop on Building Healthy and Sustainable Homes in Remote Communities, held in Oaxaca, Mexico this past spring.

Since the 2009 Council Session, the Council has demonstrated a sharpened focus on performance measurement. In order to achieve measurable environmental results, Council directed the Secretariat, as well as its own officials, to "enhance accountability, improve transparency of the Secretariat's activities, ensure alignment with Council priorities and set clear performance goals."

Building on their current work in this area, we understand that the Secretariat is developing a performance measurement framework which will be incorporated into the CEC's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan and will be ready for implementation alongside the

next operational plan. We would welcome the JPAC's efforts to review the framework and contribute its collective knowledge to support this endeavor.

Turning to financial issues, Council agrees that the CEC relies on a robust budget to accomplish its mandate. The NAAEC Parties are committed to ensuring that the cooperative work program delivers high impact results and have provided guidance to the CEC Executive Director to maintain the CEC's annual budget at \$9 million by increasing administrative and operating efficiencies and drawing upon the organization's existing surplus. Council is confident that under the leadership of the Executive Director, the CEC will continue to identify efficiencies in its administrative processes, retool its human capital, and find new ways to engage the public using technology and partnerships with organizations and enterprises throughout North America.

While the decision to reduce funding was not taken lightly, it was driven by fiscal adjustments and the Parties' shared commitment of equal contributions to funding the CEC. All Parties and the Secretariat will continue to seek efficiencies on an ongoing basis and invest in environmental priorities that fulfill the CEC's core mission of conserving, protecting and enhancing the North American environment.

Over the coming year, the three Parties, with the support of the JPAC and the Secretariat, will begin developing the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan along with a budget that conforms with prevailing financial realities.

Once again, Council would like to thank the JPAC for its valuable advice regarding the first 20 years of NAFTA and the NAAEC. We look forward to working with JPAC and the CEC Secretariat in finding ways to continue to improve the operational planning process and implement it in ways that best achieve environmental and human health outcomes for the citizens across North America.

The Council looks forward to meeting with the JPAC in Yellowknife.

Sincerely,



*on behalf of*  
Dan McDougall, Alternate Representative for Canada

c.c. Mr. Enrique Lendo, Alternate Representative for Mexico  
Ms. Jane Nishida, Alternate Representative for the United States  
Irasema Coronado, CEC Executive Director  
Marcela Orozco, JPAC Liaison Officer

