



**ADVICE TO COUNCIL: NO. 99-12**

**Re: Methods to Improve the Public Portion of the Council Session**

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC);

IN ACCORDANCE with its mandate to provide advice to Council;

RECALLING Council's request to provide advice on this matter;

HAVING had an opportunity to receive views from the public and to further discuss the matter at JPAC's Regular Session 99-04, held in Montreal, 16–17 September 1999;

JPAC presents the following for Council's consideration:

After listening to the public and participating in discussions with the JPAC members, National Advisory Committees and the United States Governmental Advisory Committee it is clear that the public wants increased interaction with the Ministers. Despite some frustrations with the meetings to date, the public does not want to give up its chance to speak directly to the Ministers on matters it feels are important. This is a highly valued part of the Regular Session of Council.

It is understood that the time that Ministers can dedicate to Regular Sessions of Council is limited and it may not be realistic to call for increasing the time allocated for the public portion of them. The challenge, therefore, is to make maximum use of the time for the benefit both of the public and the Ministers.

JPAC has listened carefully to the public's comments. In summary, the deficiencies of the methods used thus far are that the speaking time is too short, there are too many speakers and topics, and there is minimal exchange and no feedback.

After having considered various possible options, the following outline is recommended:

- The draft *Framework for Public Participation in the CEC's Activities* will be of assistance and should be released and implemented as soon as possible.
- The Parties will select a theme or themes for the Regular Session of Council. The public meeting with Council at the Regular Session could be divided into two portions. On Day 1, workshop(s) would be organized to assist the participants in preparing for the public meeting with Council where they would present their views. This first, public portion of the Council

Session would then follow later the same day, allowing the Ministers to hear contributions from the attendees, first on the selected theme(s), then from individual speakers on any matter within the scope of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). On Day 2, in the second public portion of the Regular Session, Council would respond to the most important topics or contributions, leaving time for an exchange of views. The public should be informed of the rules in advance of the Regular Session and then the process and timing should not be changed subsequently.

JPAC further recommends that the Parties begin their planning very soon for the next Regular Session of Council, to be hosted by the United States in June 2000.

**APPROVED BY THE JPAC MEMBERS**

20 October 1999