

Mr. Louie Porta
Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
700 Rue de la Gauchetière Ouest Suite 1620
Montreal QC H3B 5M2

Re: Advice to Council 19-01

Dear Mr. Porta,

On behalf of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Council, I would like to thank the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) for its recommendations on building disaster-resilient communities in North America. I understand that this advice is the result of an expert forum that took place in Mexico City on June 24, 2019. The Council appreciates the JPAC's commitment to ensuring public engagement on these important issues facing North America.

Across North America, communities are experiencing firsthand the impacts of extreme weather events as a result of climate change. These effects are not felt equally across the continent, and often it is our most vulnerable communities, whether they be coastal, Indigenous, or from small islands, that are disproportionately impacted by these events.

At the 25th annual CEC Council Session in Oklahoma City, the Council launched the "North American Extreme Events Advisory Group" to bring together experts to identify and share capacities in interdisciplinary research, prediction and response to extreme events, such as drought, wildfires and extreme temperatures. The Advisory Group identified opportunities for collaboration that were approved by the Council as four separate projects related to:

- 1) improving the effectiveness of early warning systems for drought;
- 2) using remote sensing to prepare for and respond to extreme events;
- 3) costing floods and other extreme events; and,
- 4) using volunteer observer networks to monitor precipitation and wildfires.

These projects are currently being implemented under the 2019-2020 CEC Operational Plan. The Council looks forward to monitoring how these projects evolve, and seeing the impacts they will have on our communities.

With respect to the JPAC advice to Council 19-01, the Council has considered the advice and has outlined its response to the three recommendations below.

Recommendation #1: By early 2021, the Council, in coordination with JPAC, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group, and the CEC Secretariat, should complete an Extreme Weather and Climate-Related Disaster Action Plan that clearly addresses the following issues:

The Council acknowledges further action in the region is necessary to ensure North Americans are more resilient to and better prepared for the extreme weather events that result from our rapidly changing climate. Identifying climate change as one of our three priority areas under the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan was an important step forward in bringing resilience onto the CEC agenda, and opened the door for further discussion by the Council at the 2018 Council Session in Oklahoma City and the 2019 Council Session in Mexico City.

As the 2015-2020 CEC Strategic Plan comes to a close, the Council intends to work with the JPAC, the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Expert Group, and the CEC Secretariat to develop a 2021-2025 Strategic Plan that supports the inclusion of community adaptation and resilience in CEC activities.

Recommendation #2: By the end of 2020, Council should provide sufficient resources to the Secretariat to create an interactive, online climate change education portal that builds climate and environmental literacy across society:

The Council recognizes that the CEC plays an important role in disseminating the work of scientists from the three countries and improving access to information. The CEC reports, published on the organization's website, provide the North American public with a unique access to the state of environmental science. They also offer an analysis of the challenges and opportunities that come with increased economic links and continent-wide free trade.

Online education portals also play an important role in disseminating our work and improving access to information. For example, the *North American Environmental Atlas* harmonizes data from Canada, Mexico and the United States to allow for a continental and regional perspective on environmental issues that cross boundaries. Furthermore, the *North American Portal on Climate Pollutants* provides the public with access to trilateral emissions inventory data, and a dictionary of common frameworks.

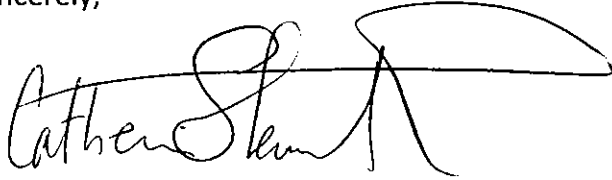
The Council will reflect on how educational portals can be better utilized to increase the public's access to scientific information sharing and to promote the use of Traditional Environmental Knowledge in environmental management and will discuss your proposal at an upcoming meeting of the Council's Alternate Representatives.

Recommendation #3: By the end of 2020, Council should complete a Disaster Resilience Governance Report Card that assesses and compares the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian, Mexican and US legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks in order to define and apply the highest standard possible to disaster response and community resilience.

The Council is grateful for this advice, however we do not consider it to be within the purview of the CEC to evaluate the Parties' domestic regulations, policies and legal frameworks. Nonetheless, we look forward to working to develop improve our collective disaster response and community resilience capacities.

Once again, on behalf of the Council I would like to thank the Joint Public Advisory Committee for this advice, and its ongoing commitment to improve North America's readiness to respond to extreme weather events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Catherine Stewart
Acting Alternate Representative of Canada

- cc. Mr. Chad McIntosh, Alternate Representative of the United States of America
- Dr. Rodolfo Godínez Rosales, Alternate Representative of the United States of Mexico
- Mr. Richard Morgan, CEC Executive Director
- Ms. Marcela Orozco, JPAC Liaison Officer

