Public Meeting of the North American PRTR Project

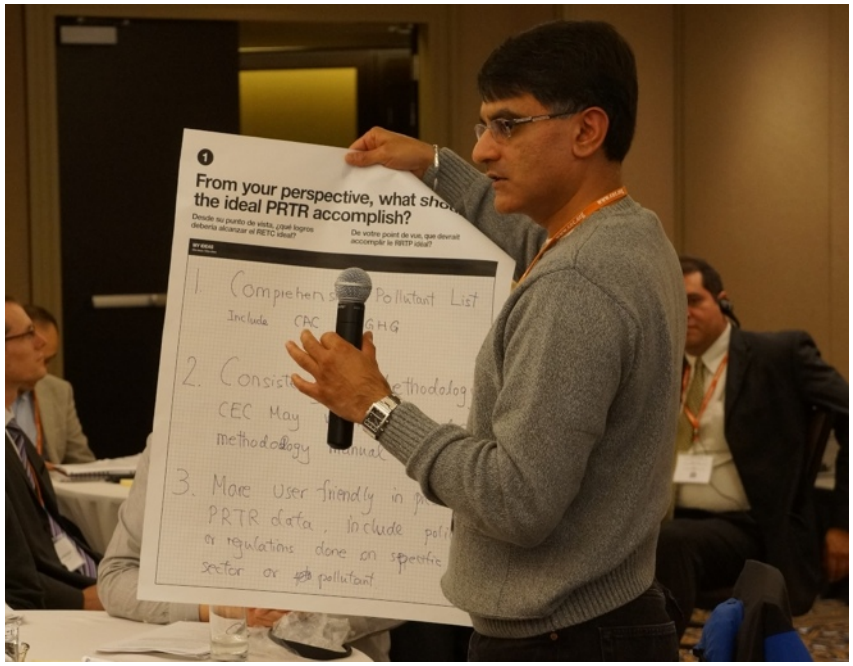
Documentation from the CEC's annual public meeting of the North American PRTR Project, which focused on developing recommendations for an updated *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers* (PRTRs) *in North America*

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Oct. 30-31, 2012

Event hosted by:
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
www.cec.org

Collaborative process and report document designed by:
The Moment
www.TheMoment.is


BEYOND
REPORTING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2. Consist ethodolog
CEC May
methodology
3. More user friendly in
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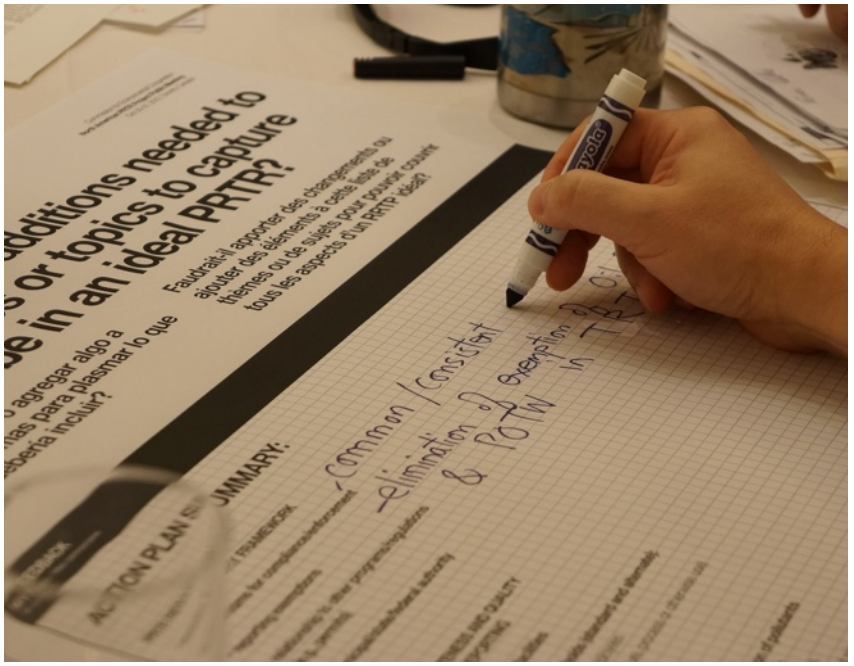
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CEC's North American PRTR (Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers) Project

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation's (CEC) North American PRTR (NAPRTR) project promotes public access to PRTR data to improve understanding of the sources and management of pollutants of common concern. It also promotes use of the data for priority-setting and decision making to protect the health of North American communities and ecosystems, support chemicals management, and reduce pollution.

North America has taken the lead in gathering and publishing PRTR data. Through a CEC-coordinated effort begun in 1995—which led to the creation of Mexico's mandatory PRTR program in 2004—North American PRTR work has become a model for regional cooperation.

The NAPRTR project compiles and disseminates data reported by facilities to the three national PRTRs. Efforts are focused on adding value to the data through their integration, analysis and dissemination via the Taking Stock report and website. Incorporating information about the context of PRTR reporting, such as differences among the three programs, facilitates data use and interpretation.

PRTR Multi-stakeholder Consultative Group

This group provides guidance on the PRTR work of the CEC and contributes to the activities developed to enhance comparability of North American PRTR data, as described in Council Resolution 97-04.

The group is open to anyone interested in North American environmental pollution and is composed of diverse stakeholders from throughout the region, including:

- Industry associations and industrial facilities
- Environmental non-governmental associations
- Academia
- Individuals
- Governments, including the 3 national PRTR programs

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation facilitates collaboration and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade, and social links among Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

View video highlights

About the Meeting

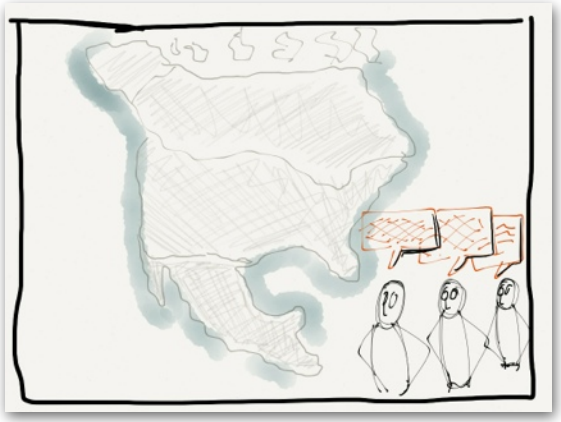
What was the experience?

On 30-31 October 2012, 50 people from across North America gathered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada for the CEC's annual public meeting of the North American PRTR Project.

The meeting serves as a forum for citizens and representatives of communities, industry, academia, governments and non-governmental organizations concerned with North American environmental pollution to share knowledge and ideas relating to PRTRs and access to public information. Input from participants also serves to guide the development of the *Taking Stock* report and website. The focus of this year's meeting was to obtain comments and suggestions relative to updating the *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of PRTRs in North America*.

The meeting was a highly participatory workshop experience that combined the sharing of program knowledge by experts with the collaborative generation of ideas around key PRTR challenges. This document captures highlights of the process and outcomes.

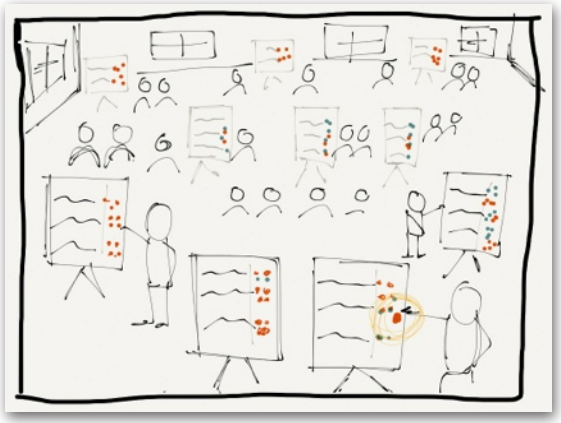
1 Overview of CEC's North American PRTR Activities and a primer on PRTR Concepts



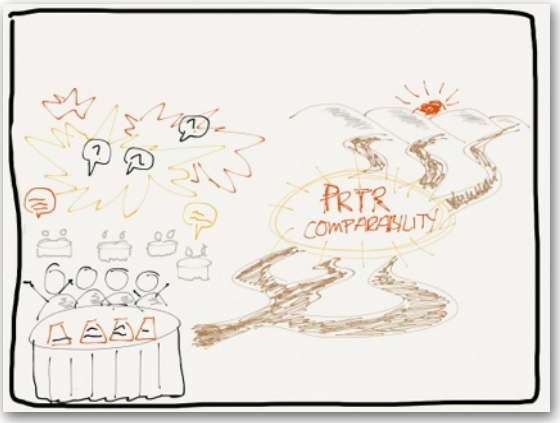
2 Program updates from Canadian, Mexican, and United States PRTR Officials

3 Panel presentations from a diverse range of content experts, followed by discussions

4 Collaborative table exercises by participants to generate ideas on key concepts



5 Collective selection to choose the best ideas to work on together



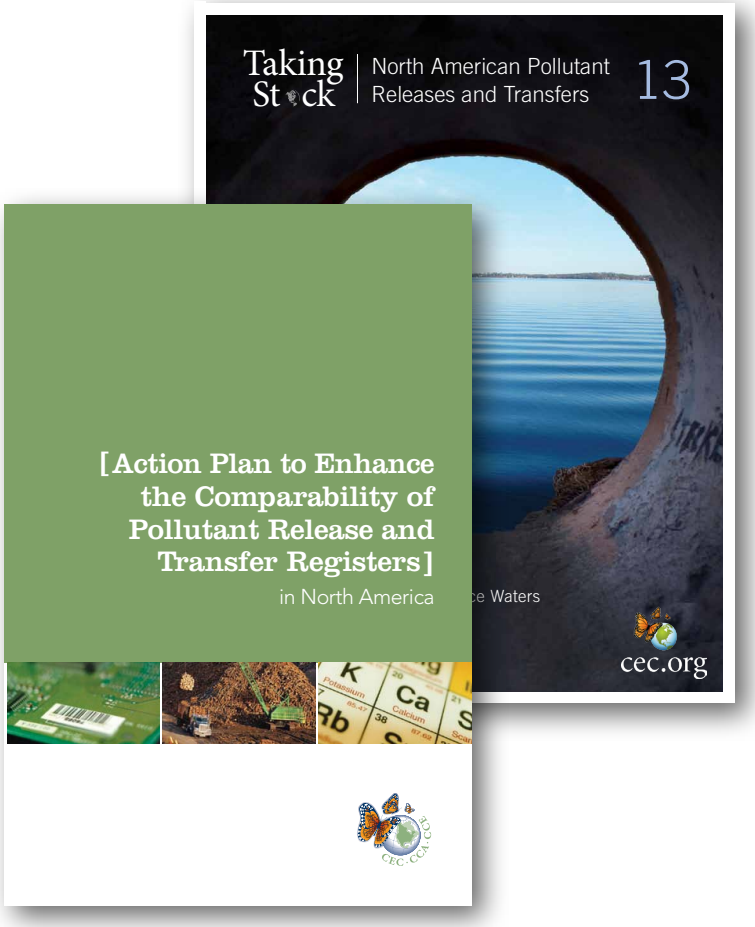
6 Iteration on specific ideas to improve North American PRTR comparability. Participants also made suggestions for special analyses for future Taking Stock reports.

Meeting Objectives

The main objective of this year's meeting was to obtain feedback relative to drafting an updated *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in North America*.

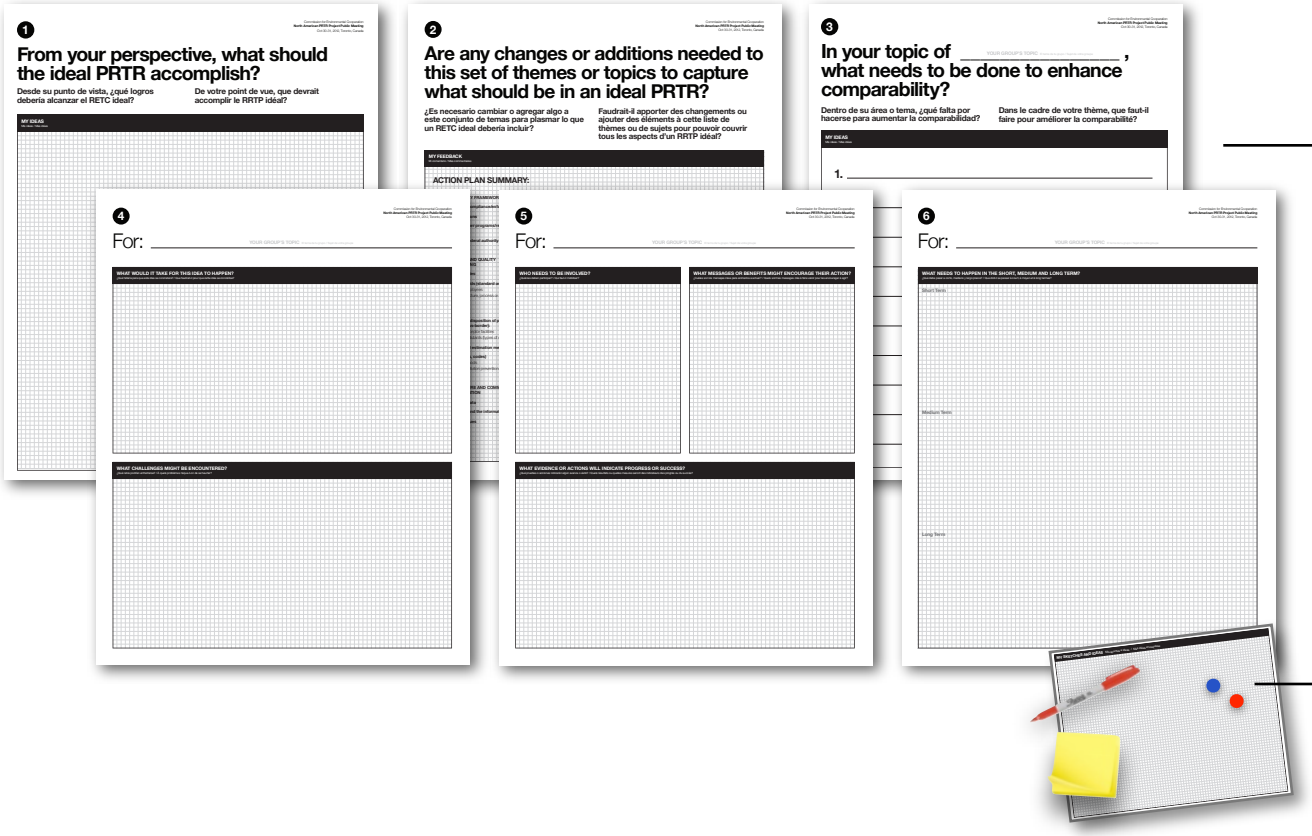
The *Action Plan* was first published in 2002 and updated in 2005. The CEC team prepared a status of the comparability of the 3 PRTR programs to date, and wanted to take advantage of the meeting to develop content for the next version.

The other key objectives of the meeting included sharing information about developments in the CEC's North American PRTR Project, the national PRTR programs and other pertinent activities, and to gather ideas for special analyses for future *Taking Stock* reports.



Tools and Process for Idea Generation and Capture

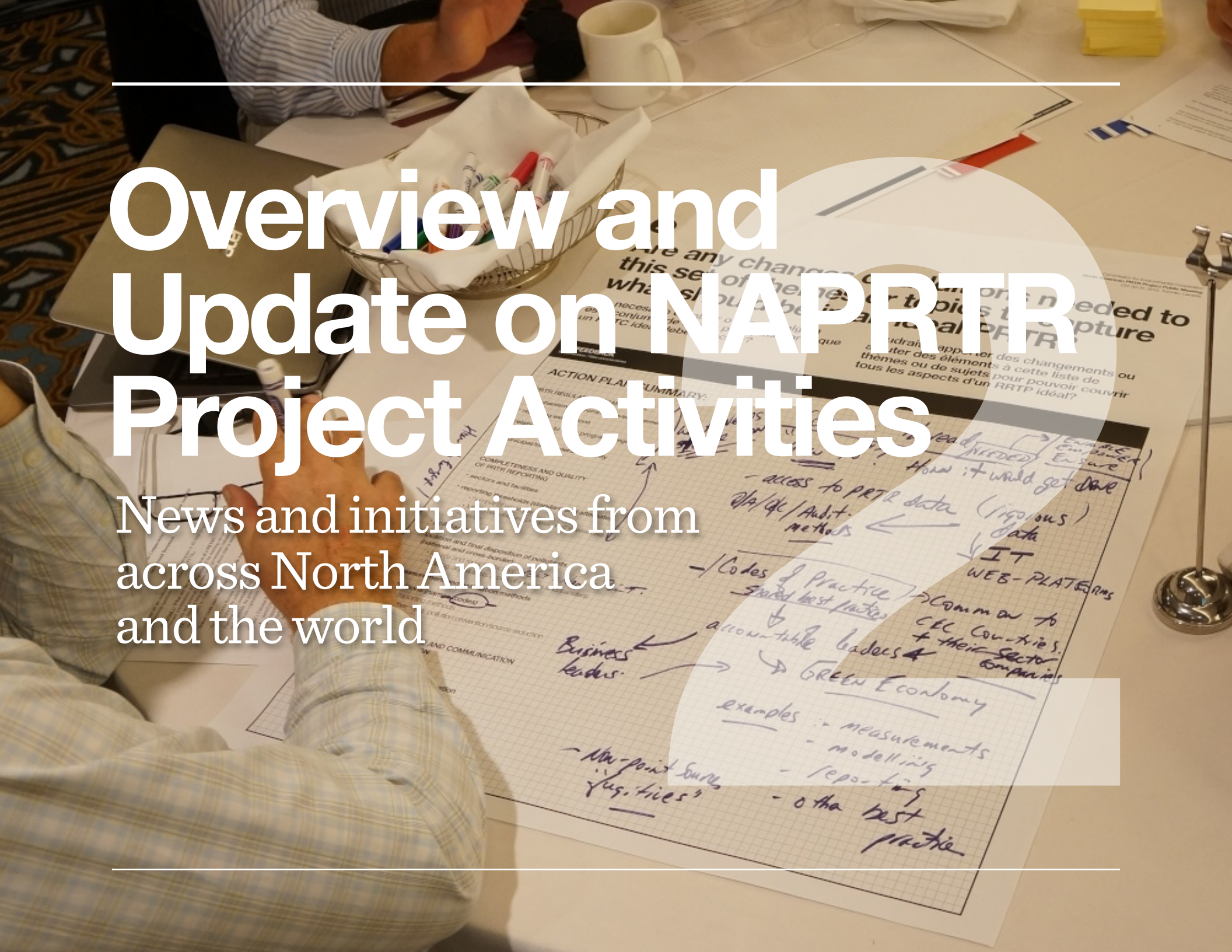
Poster-size templates, sketch paper, markers, sticky notes, dot stickers



IDEATION PROCESS

Participants were asked key questions in order to generate feedback (on these templates) and suggestions about PRTRs. These discussions informed the working group discussions that took place later in the day, relative to enhancing comparability among the three North American PRTR programs.

These ideas were shared back to the full group and then individuals used sticky dots to choose their favorite ideas (colour coded based on a set of defined criteria: highest impact and lowest effort). The ideas with the most dots were refined and prepared for deeper exploration on Day 2 of the meeting.



Overview and Update on NAPRTR Project Activities

News and initiatives from across North America and the world

Overview of the North American PRTR Project

Orlando Cabrera, Program Manager for the CEC's Air Quality/ PRTR Program, presented a brief overview of the North American PRTR Project and its main objectives, which are to:

- Increase access to information, awareness and understanding of the sources and handling of pollutants of common concern across North America
- Improve the comparability of PRTRs in North America
- Support decision-making at all levels (communities, industry, governments) relative to pollution prevention and reduction

He described the activities and some milestones of the NA PRTR Project, including:

- CEC Council resolutions supporting the Project and continued development of PRTRs across the region
- Establishment of Mexico's mandatory PRTR program
- Integrated online North American PRTR dataset and tools
- *Taking Stock* report with analyses addressing North American health and environmental issues
- Outreach and development of relationships with stakeholders
- Tri-lateral collaboration on comparability and consistency: data reporting, collection, and quality assurance; and updating the *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of PRTRs in North America.*

View slides or video

Highlights of PRTR Reporting: Data from 2005-2010

Danielle Vallée, Coordinator for the North American PRTR Project, then provided a preliminary overview and highlights of the data compiled for the next *Taking Stock* report. The report, to be published in the spring of 2013, examines PRTR reporting for the 2005-2010 period, with additional analyses of releases to air and water by two industry sectors common to the three countries: fossil-fuel power plants, and pulp, paper and paperboard mills.

View slides or video

National PRTR Program Updates

News and initiatives from across North America

3

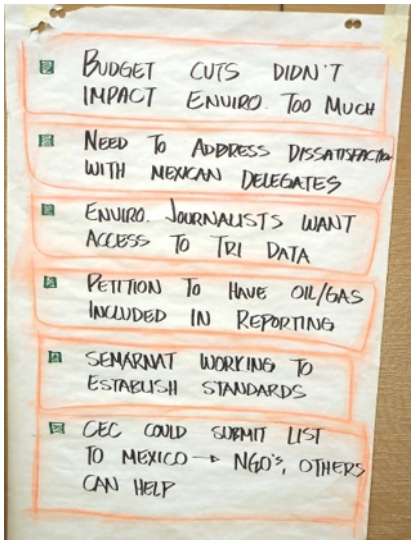
National PRTR Program Updates

Officials from the three national PRTR programs gave updates of their programs. The officials included:

- *United States Toxics Release Inventory (TRI):*
  Steve DeVito, US EPA
  View slides or video

- *Mexico's Registro de Emisiones y Transferencia de Contaminantes (RETC):*
  Maricruz Rodriguez Gallegos, Semarnat
  View slides or video

- *Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI):*
  Jody Rosenberger, Environment Canada
  View slides or video



Among other things, the officials described changes over the last decade in the context of PRTR reporting (e.g., political, regulatory, environmental and social context).

They also shared their insights and experiences relative to their programs and the future of PRTR reporting.

Panel Presentations

PRTRs in a Global Context; PRTRs and Environmental Sustainability

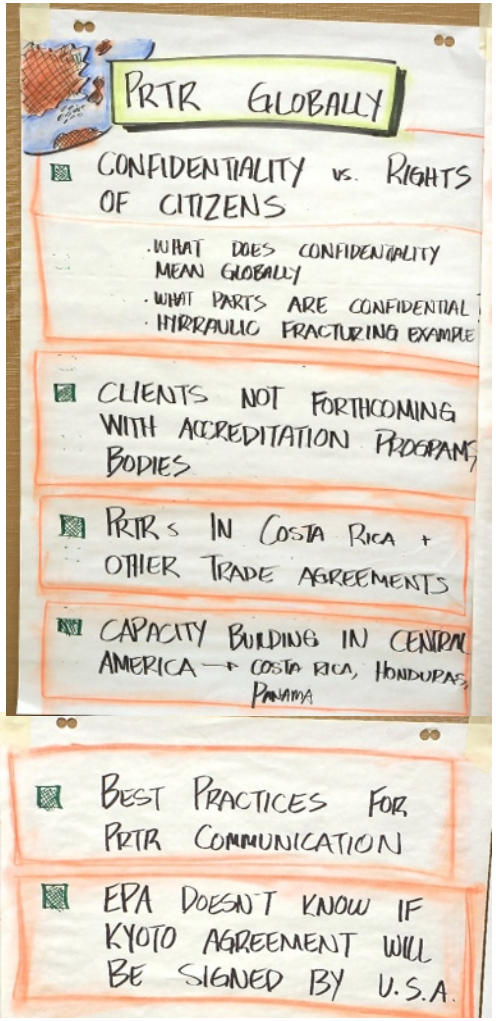
PRTR in a Global Context

Participants heard from 3 panelists:

- *Business Implications of Emissions Reporting (PRTR):*
  Jonathan Nwagbaraocha, Enhesa
  View slides or video

- *Providing PRTR guidance and reporting tools for international agreements on chemical substances:*
  Luís R. Sánchez Cataño, Consultant, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
  View slides or video

- *OECD PRTR Task Force (Global PRTR Initiative):*
  Steve DeVito, US EPA
  View slides or video



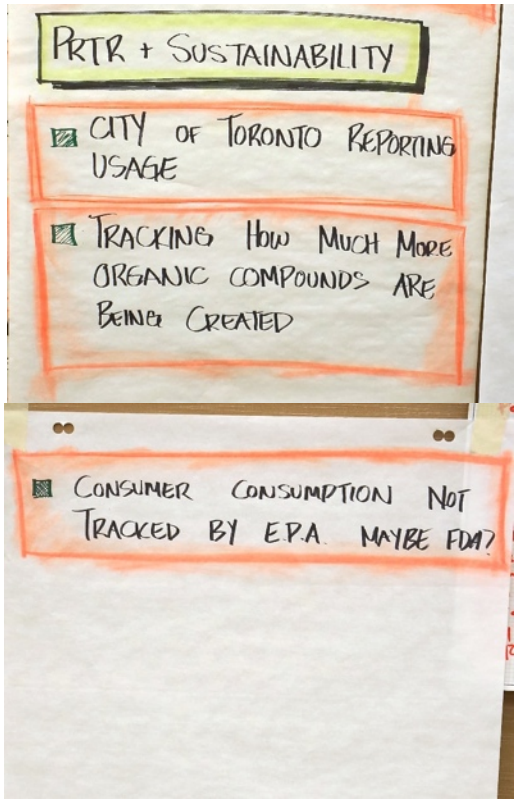
PRTR and Environmental Sustainability

Participants heard from 3 panelists:

- *City of Toronto's ChemTRAC Program: PRTRs, Health and Sustainability*
  Marco Belmont,
  Research Consultant, Toronto Public Health
  View slides or video

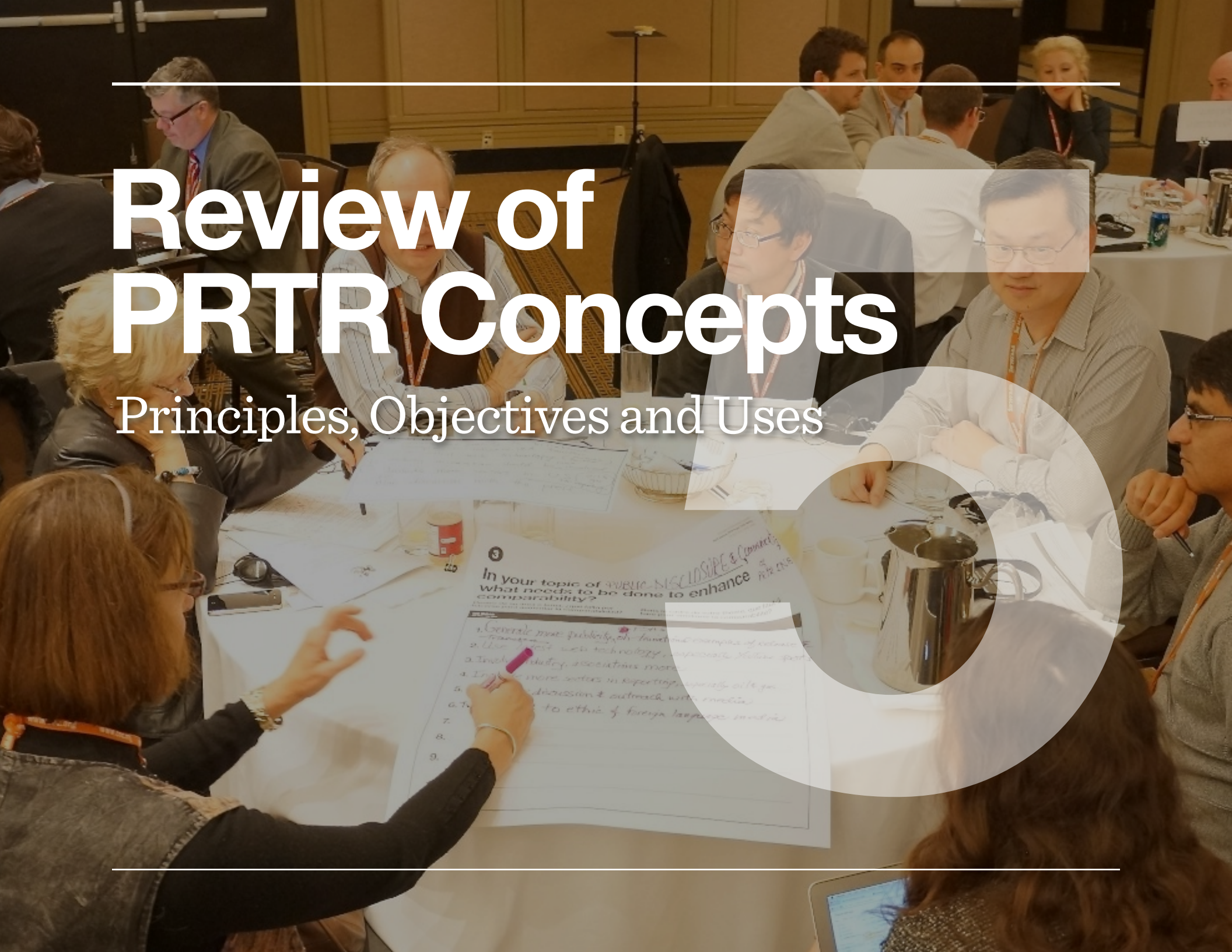
- *PRTR Reporting and the Trans-boundary Movement and Recycling of Spent Lead-Acid Batteries (SLABs) in North America:*
  Marco A. Heredia Fragoso, CEC Program Manager, Environmental Law
  View slides or video

- *Green Chemistry Practices in the Pharmaceutical Industry:*
  Steve DeVito, US EPA
  View slides or video



Review of PRTR Concepts

Principles, Objectives and Uses



Key Background Information

Prior to the meeting, a Background document was circulated to all registered participants. It outlined some core concepts and provided basic information relative to PRTRs, including:

- **Basic principles** underlying the establishment of PRTRs, as enunciated by the OECD;
- The stated **goals and objectives** of the 3 North American PRTR programs; and
- Examples of current and potential **uses of PRTR data** and information.

These core concepts and information items are summarized in the following pages.

Download Background document.

Basic Principles of PRTR Systems

1. PRTR systems should provide data to support the identification and assessment of possible risks to humans and the environment by identifying sources and amounts of potentially harmful releases and transfers to all environmental media.

2. The PRTR data should be used to promote prevention of pollution at source, e.g., by encouraging implementation of cleaner technologies. National governments might use PRTR data to evaluate the progress of environmental policies and to assess to what extent national environmental goals are or can be achieved.

3. In devising PRTR systems, governments should co-operate with affected and interested parties to develop a set of goals and objectives for the system and estimate potential benefits and costs to reporters, government and society as a whole.

4. PRTR systems should include coverage of an appropriate number of substances which may be potentially harmful to humans and/or the environment which are released and or transferred.

5. PRTR systems should involve both the public and private sectors as appropriate and include those facilities which might release and/or transfer substances of interest, as well as diffuse sources, if appropriate.

6. To reduce duplicative reporting, PRTR systems should be integrated to the degree practicable with existing information sources such as licenses or operating permits.

7. Both voluntary and mandatory reporting mechanisms for providing PRTR inputs should be considered with a view as to how best to meet the goals and objectives of the system.

8. The comprehensiveness of any PRTR in helping to meet environmental policy goals should be taken into account, e.g., whether to include releases from diffuse sources ought to be determined by national conditions and the need for such data.

9. The results of a PRTR should be made accessible to all affected and interested parties on a timely and regular basis.

10. Any PRTR system should allow for mid-course evaluation and have the flexibility to be altered by affected and interested parties in response to changing needs.

11. The data handling and management capabilities of the system should allow for verification of inputs and outputs and be capable of identifying geographical distribution of releases and transfers.

12. PRTR systems should allow as far as possible comparison and co-operation with other national PRTR systems and possible harmonization with similar international data bases.

13. A compliance mechanism to best meet the needs of the goals and objectives should be agreed by affected and interested parties.

14. The entire process of establishing the PRTR system and its implementation and operation should be transparent and objective.

Stated Goals and Objectives of the North American PRTRs

The US TRI (Toxics Release Inventory), 1987:

"... to inform the public about the releases and other waste management of Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act section 313 chemicals in their communities and to provide the government with information for research and the development of appropriate regulations."

Canada's NPRI (National Pollutant Release Inventory), 1993:

- identifying pollution prevention priorities;
- supporting the assessment and risk management of chemicals, and air quality modelling;
- helping develop targeted regulations for reducing releases of toxic substances and air pollutants;
- encouraging actions to reduce the release of pollutants into the environment; and
- improving public understanding.

Mexico's RETC (Registro de Emisiones y Transferencia de Contaminantes), 2006:

'The availability of RETC data can support proposals for effective policies to preserve and protect the environment, as well as support the evaluation of international conventions. In addition, national pollutant emissions data enable a better understanding of the country's environmental infrastructure needs. Industrial emitters can assess their performance and identify areas of opportunity to reduce their releases and transfers."
[Translation.]

Examples of Uses of PRTR Data

BY THE PUBLIC

- Outreach and education (including media)
- Engaging facilities to improve their performance
- Lobbying to improve government policies
- Environmental justice, support for legal actions

BY GOVERNMENT

- Development of policies, regulations and programs
- Regulatory compliance and reporting, accountability
- Emergency planning
- Indicators (for program evaluation, risk assessment, sector performance reports)
- Outreach and education

BY INDUSTRY

- Pollution prevention and reduction initiatives
- Cost efficiencies through better tracking of inputs and waste generated
- Compliance with local, national and international regulations
- Communications and public/investor relations
- Emergency planning

IN RESEARCH

- Studies of human health and ecosystem impacts of pollutant releases
- Industry performance/sustainability
- "Green" chemistry

From input from various public meetings of the North American PRTR Project and
http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono(2005)3&doclanguage=en

Status of Comparability of the North American PRTRs

As of Reporting Year 2011

In addition to the above information, participants were given a document that would facilitate discussions about enhancing North American PRTR comparability. The document, Status of Comparability of the North American PRTRs as of Reporting Year 2011, is comprised of 2 parts:

The first part outlined the main reporting elements:

- **Number and types of pollutants** subject to reporting under each PRTR
- **Industrial sectors and activities** subject to reporting under each PRTR
- **Applicable thresholds** (pollutants, employees)
- etc.

The second part provided the terminology and definitions of categories used in each program, as well as some details (e.g., "spills and leaks" are reportable under Releases to water in one PRTR program but not the others).

Download document.

Major PRTR Themes and Topics

Based on the above principles, objectives and uses, a list of the major themes and topics summarizing the various elements of PRTRs was drafted for discussion. Participants were asked for feedback and suggestions on this list.

PRTR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- mechanisms for compliance/enforcement
- reporting exemptions
- relationship to other programs/regulations (e.g., permits)
- municipal/state/federal authority

COMPLETENESS AND QUALITY OF PRTR REPORTING

- sectors and facilities
- reporting thresholds (standard and alternate):
    - number of employees
    - MPO (manufacture, process or otherwise use)
    - release
- pollutants
- location and final disposition of pollutants (national and cross-border):
    - source and receptor facilities
    - handling of pollutants (types of releases and transfers)
- measurement and estimation methods
- definitions (names, codes)
- reporting methods
- other – e.g. pollution prevention/source reduction

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND COMMUNICATION OF PRTR INFORMATION

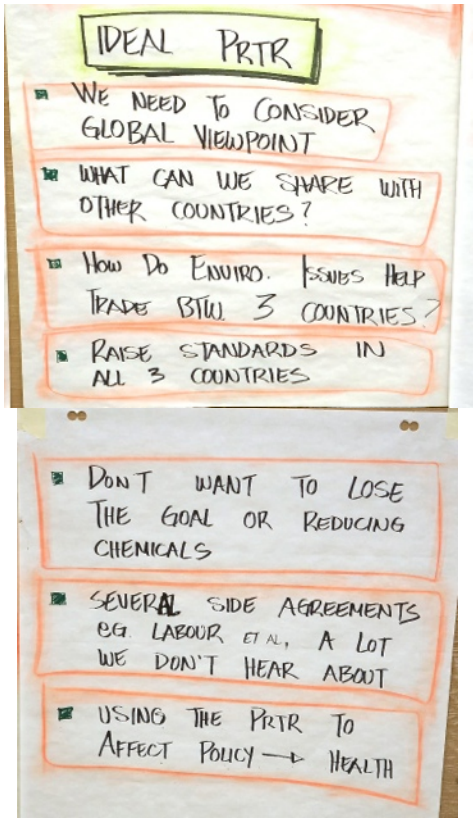
- access to PRTR data
- ability to understand the information
- confidentiality issues

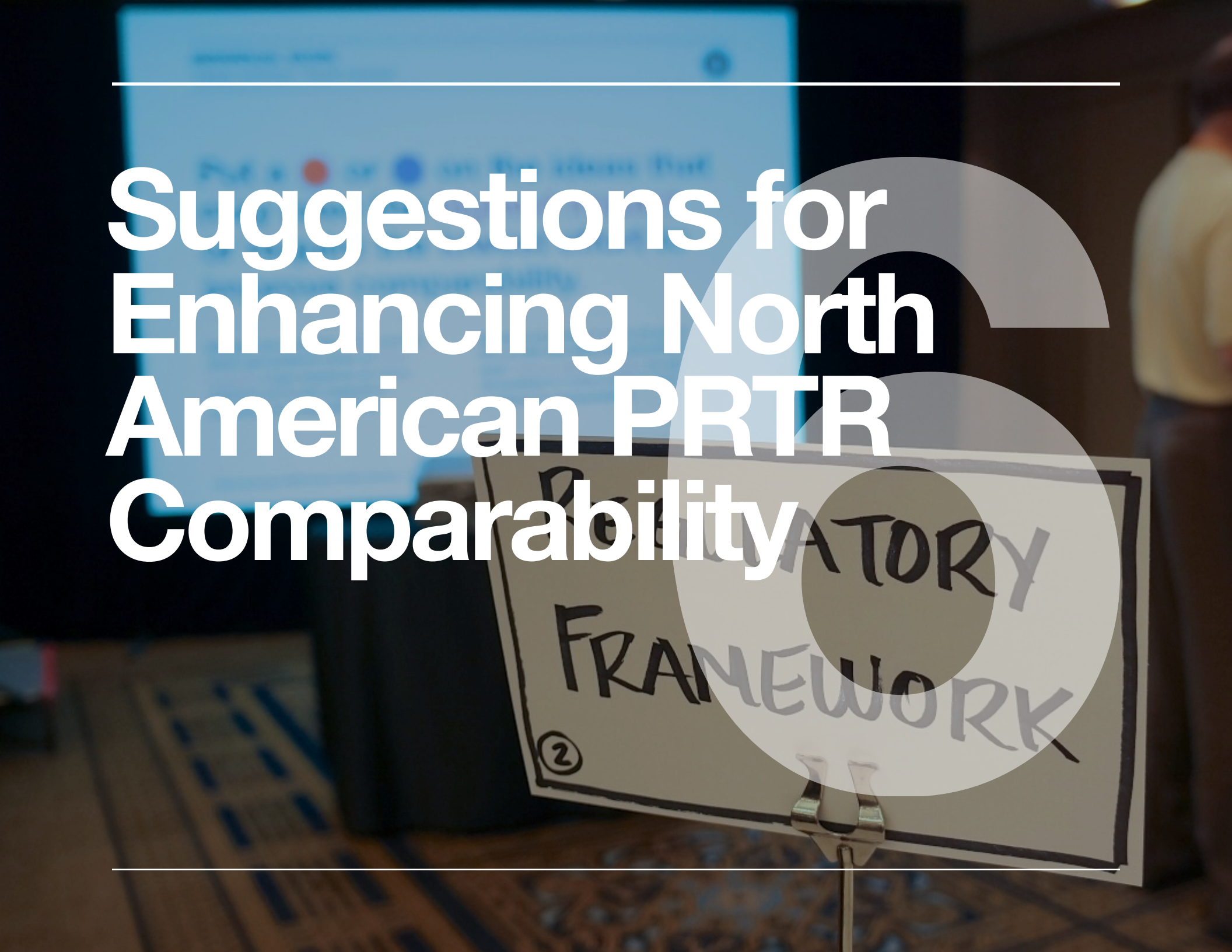
What makes an Ideal PRTR?

Participant discussion on key attributes and themes

There was a great deal of discussion about the list of major PRTR themes and topics related to PRTRs and while many related details emerged, the core list did not change. Participants said that the ideal PRTR would:

- Provide timely, accurate and verifiable information, based on harmonized methods for reporting
- Be an easily understandable and effective tool for use by all stakeholders and communities (available in a variety of formats)
- Accelerate a greener North American economy
- Provide an understandable explanation of reported amounts
- Serve as an indicator of loadings to specific airsheds and watersheds
- Include more sectors (e.g., oil and gas extraction), as well as going beyond point sources of pollution
- Include more types of contaminants, including radionuclides, greenhouse gases, etc.
- Provide a better measure of confidence in estimated or calculated emissions and be consistent, so as to provide the ability for comparisons among regions and for understanding trends in pollution over time
- Support the development and review of public policies and regulations relative to pollution prevention and management, including the phasing-out of toxic substances
- Support the development of international partnerships and trade, as well as international conventions on pollutants.





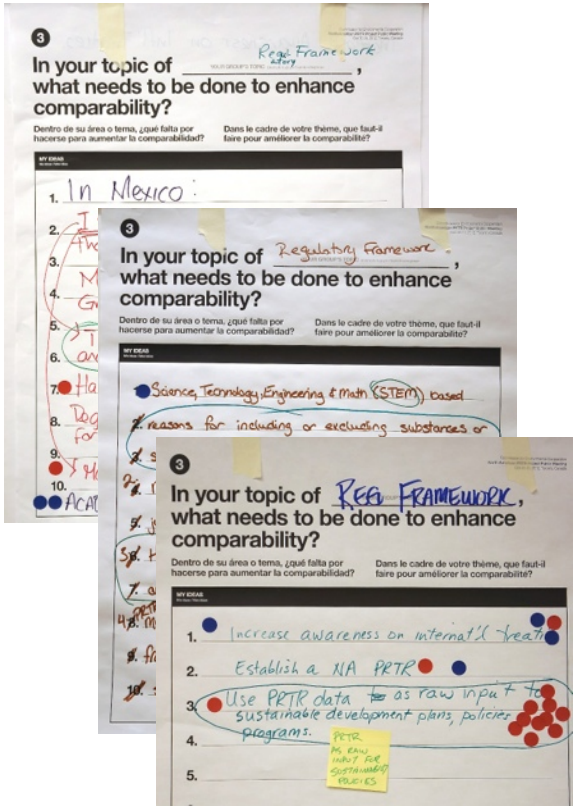
Suggestions for Enhancing North American PRTR Comparability

THEME 1/4

Regulatory Framework

Feedback provided by participants to enhance comparability in this theme:

- Regulations should be Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) based
- Reasons should be given for including or excluding substances or sectors (use ISO as basis)
- There needs to be harmonization between jurisdictions (provincial/state/federal) and PRTR reporting programs
- PRTR multi-stakeholder groups should include participants from other countries to encourage knowledge sharing
- Increase awareness of international treaties
- Establish a North American PRTR reporting system for consistency of reporting
- Use PRTR data as raw input to sustainable development plans, policies, programs
- ISO- to establish best available technologies for facilities obligated to report
- Provide more funding to industry for pollution prevention and for research on green chemistry
- ISO for classification of substances (e.g. greenhouse gases - GHG, criteria air contaminants - CAC) and for monitoring and harmonized calculation and estimation methodologies
- Harmonization of reporting requirements (goal of getting the most info as a result)
- Regulations should limit outsourcing for those facilities obligated to report, as well as claims to confidentiality

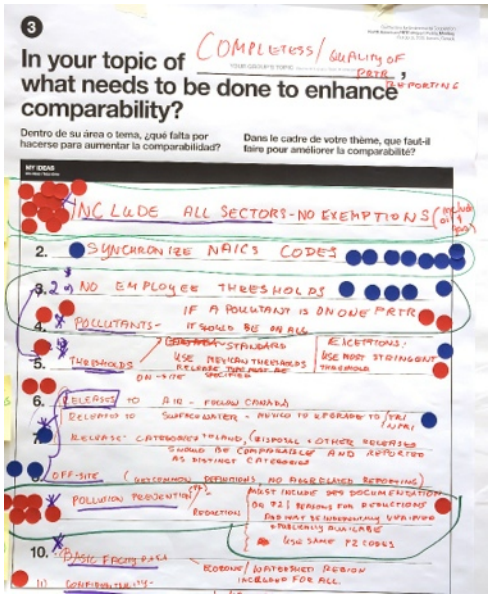


THEME 2/4

Completeness and Quality of PRTR Reporting

Feedback provided by participants to enhance comparability in this theme:

- Include all sectors- no exemptions (include oil and gas)
- Synchronize North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes
- There should be no employee thresholds
- Pollutants: if a pollutant is in one PRTR it should be in all 3; also, pollutants should reflect the industrial make-up of the country
- Thresholds: use lower Mexican thresholds, and/or most stringent threshold
- Releases to air – follow Canadian NPRI for pollutants subject to reporting (e.g. criteria air contaminants)
- Releases to surface water: Mexico should follow the example of TRI, NPRI with regard to details of reporting
- Release categories to land (e.g., disposal & other releases in NPRI) should be comparable and reported as distinct categories
- Off-site categories: use common definitions, no aggregated reporting
- Pollution prevention/ reduction (P2): must include documentation on reasons for reductions; must be independently verified and publicly available.
- Use same P2 codes
- Basic facility data as well as ecozone and watershed region should be included in all 3 PRTRs

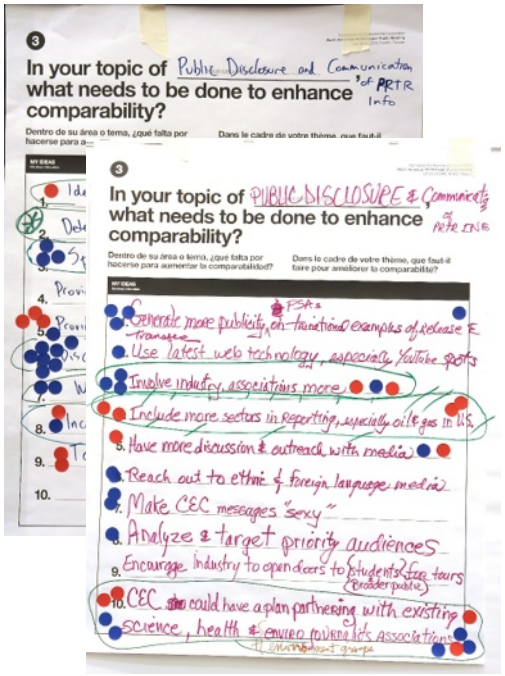


THEME 3/4

Public Disclosure and Communication of PRTR Information

Feedback provided by participants to enhance comparability in this theme:

- Use the latest web technology, especially YouTube videos, for PRTR info – including the CEC's NAPRTR Project
- Engage industry associations more; encourage industry to open its doors to students, the public
- Have more discussion and outreach with media, reach out to ethnic and foreign language media
- Analyze and target priority audiences, determine needs of data users
- CEC could plan partnering with existing science, health, industry and environmental journalists associations
- Present and analyze PRTR trends over time
- Do more spatial representation of data
- Provide data in formats readily used in mash-ups for specific analyses, e.g. map services
- Provide links to case studies that use PRTR data
- Present and analyze gaps and reasons for those gaps
- Do watershed and air shed comparisons
- Incorporate risk modeling characterization
- Target industry- make improvement attractive, e.g. green chemistry

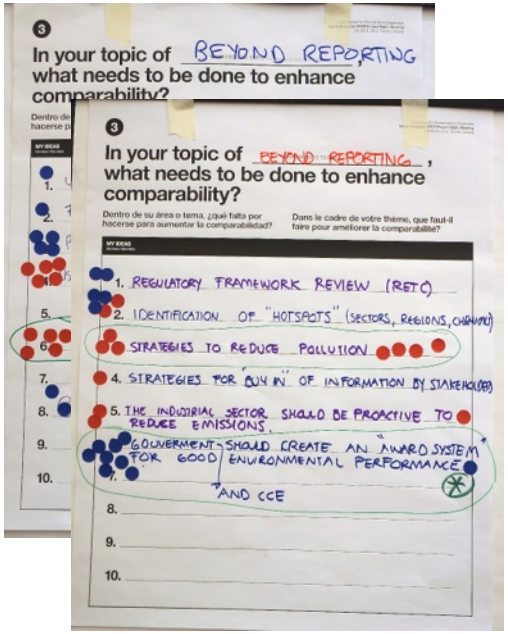


THEME 4/4

Beyond Reporting

This theme was added as a complement to the prior 3.
Feedback provided by participants to enhance comparability in this theme:

- Use PRTR data to prevent pollution and develop strategies and recommendations to reduce pollution
- Frame the data for specific stakeholders (policy makers, industry officials, NGOs, civil society)
- Put information in context relative to other sources of pollution
- Use PRTR data to make people aware of our consumption patterns
- Translate information to environmental and health risk assessments
- Promote alternatives/ give incentives to industry to turn to green chemistry, for example
- Review the regulatory framework
- Use PRTR data to identify pollution "hotspots (sectors, regions, chemicals)
- The industrial sector should be proactive to reduce emissions
- Government and CEC should create an "award system" for good environmental performance



Suggestions for enhancing NA PRTR comparability

After a discussion on the 4 main themes of PRTR reporting, participants generated a list of ideas for enhancing the comparability of the North American PRTR systems. Through collaborative selection, 11 of these ideas were prioritized for further exploration.

1. Shared criteria for the inclusion of **sectors and activities.**
2. Shared **sector definitions and applications** of North American industry classification system (NAICS) codes.
3. Shared criteria for the **inclusion of substances.**
4. Shared definitions of **key reporting terms** such as "release", "pollution prevention", etc.
5. Identify **data users and stories** to support political leadership for PRTR comparability.
6. **Sub-national integration** (local/provincial/state/federal) to support PRTR comparability across North America.
7. **Data quality assurance methodologies and tools** for increased reliability and accuracy of PRTR data.
8. A **North American certification system** with defined criteria for industry champions of reporting and environmental performance.
9. **More accessible and usable data** through spatial representation, added context, and combination with other data.
10. **Increased partnerships** among science, health and environmental journalists, industry associations, etc.
11. **Sustainable development** plans, policies, and programs.

Exploration Questions

Guiding the ideation for each of the 11 selected suggestions

Participants divided into groups per topic and considered the following questions:

- What would it take for this idea to happen?
- What challenges might be encountered?
- Who needs to be involved? What are the key messages or benefits to encourage them to take action?
- What evidence or actions will indicate progress or success?
- What needs to happen in the short, medium and long term?

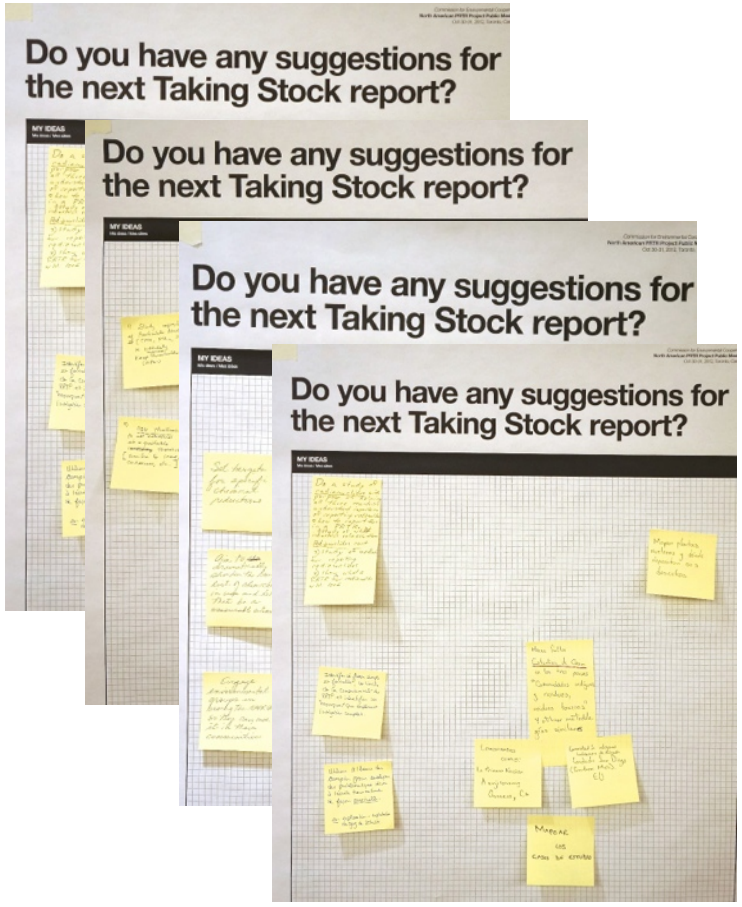
The feedback to these questions forms the basis of a draft Action Plan document that will be circulated to all meeting participants for their review and comments.

Suggestions for future Taking Stock reports

Do you have any suggestions for the next Taking Stock report?

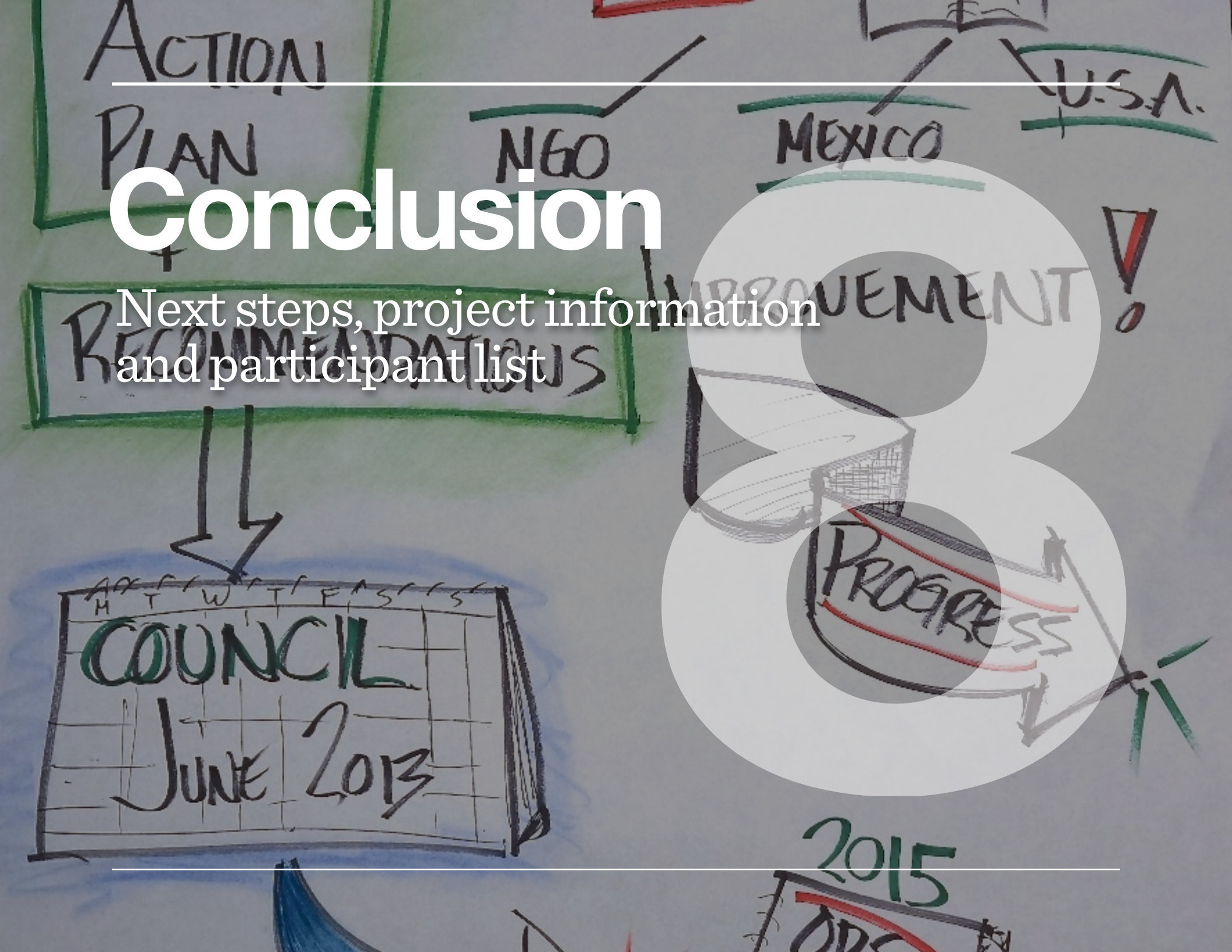
Participants provided the following comments and suggestions for the Taking Stock report:

- Write it in a "friendly" language for all the stakeholders
- Use the data to show if and how green chemistry has reduced the use and/or release of specific substances
- Put life into the NA PRTR Project by showcasing communities and businesses that have used PRTR data to reduce reduce or eliminate pollutant levels at their plant/community
- Provide analyses of specific chemicals that are slated for elimination
- Map case studies.



Conclusion

Next steps, project information and participant list

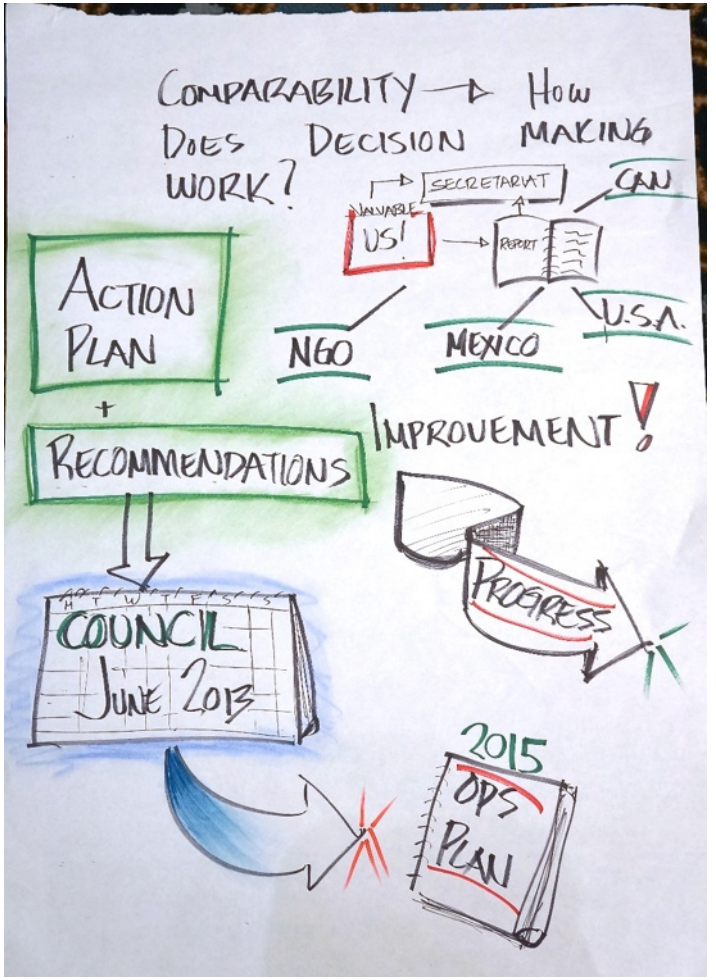


Next Steps

The meeting came to a close with participants discussing the next steps for the Action Plan update

The CEC anticipates the following next steps:

- a draft *Action Plan* document will be circulated to all meeting participants for review and comments
- this feedback will be incorporated into a revised draft *Action Plan* for discussion with the 3 national PRTR programs
- a final *Action Plan* document will be prepared, containing specific actions for consideration by the CEC Council and for implementation via the CEC's Cooperative Work Program.



Project Information

Keep up-to-date on the CEC PRTR project page and social media

CEC PRTR project page:
www.cec.org/PRTR

Meeting page:
http://www.cec.org/Page.asp?PageID=924&SiteNodeID=1192

CEC Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/CECconnect OR /ccaconecta OR /cceconnexion

CEC Twitter page:
https://twitter.com/CECweb

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Public Meeting of the North American PRTR Project

Documentation from the CEC's annual public meeting of the North American PRTR Project, which focused on developing recommendations for an updated *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers* (PRTRs) *in North America*

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Oct. 30-31, 2012

Event hosted by:
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
www.cec.org

Collaborative process and report document designed by:
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