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The CEC's 2008 Operational Plan highlights again CEC's great work and efforts to homogenize the assessment, reporting, and regulation systems across North America, and has to be commended. Hopefully, it will also enhance enforcement capabilities.

The observations I would have are more of a general nature and therefore for eventual consideration in future plans rather than triggering any changes to this one. Also, some might fall beyond CEC's mandate, although the CEC might be a relevant forum for addressing and/or promoting the subjects.

- **water:** as a topic of the "state-of-environment" project and a remarkably important issue, a comprehensive address is needed, including water-related regulations in place, as well as gaps that still need to be covered by regulations or need increased enforcement; determining if water is considered a commodity or resource or if both, then clearly stipulate when is what; harmonization of water pollution regulations and standards at continental level to create legal systems mandatory across the continent; and map pollution sources and impacts to increase enforcement measures and reduce effects (e.g. address environmental impacts of Alberta's tar-sands exploitations) Note: although the pollution subject might fall in the area of the "Monitoring and Assessing Pollutants across North America" project, a special focus on water would be valuable.
- **climate change:** (potentially in the framework of the digital North American Environmental Atlas) assess the most vulnerable areas to the effects of climate change and design and suggest appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies; similarly, vulnerability assessment of highly populated areas to climate change and/or natural disasters possibly triggering mass migration, and suggestion of strategies to overcome eventual "taken by surprise" consequences of social, as well as environmental points of view
- **new technologies:** in the spirit of pro-active rather than reactive policies, improve, accelerate, and harmonize at continental level the assessment of possible environmental and health implications of new technologies such as bio and nanotechnology, and work with experts to suggest standards and regulations to assure continental policy coherence at all stages - from lab research to end use and safety
- **Northwest Passage:** although probably falling beyond the CEC's mandate, CEC might be an appropriate forum for some negotiations that might help put forward possible strategy suggestions to address security, environmental, and sovereignty issues.
- **communications:** in addition to "raise general awareness of CEC activities" and "inform more specialized audiences of project-related information," CEC's mission should also include increasing general public environmental education. In absence of adequate continental and large scale initiatives concerning general public environmental

education and awareness, CEC might consider expanding its programs to reach out as large segments of population as possible, so that educated citizens elect environmentally-concerned politicians to promote more environmentally sound policies.

- **environmental security:** it should be at least mentioned in some context -- in view of many studies that consider environmental issues the most important threat to national (also global and such, North American) security.

A general observation: although the emphasis on bringing Mexican environmental standards to the USA and Canadian levels is understood, the focus on a pan-continental harmonized policy shouldn't be lesser, since the US and Canada still have a long way to go to reach common standards, assessment systems, and agreement on important environment-related issues, and the speed of harmonization should be accelerated.

Concerning the budget, I guess that the numbers will be adjusted to reflect the new exchange rate -- Canadian dollar stronger than the US dollar -- which doesn't seem likely to get reversed any time soon.

Regards