

Michael Keating
Environment Writer and Consultant
Canada
Email: michael@mikeating.com
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Dear members of the JPAC,

I would like to provide some comments on the CEC's first 20 years.

During NAFTA negotiations I participated in discussions, especially about water issues. During the late 1990s, I worked for the CEC as a communications advisor.

I feel that the CEC is the only organization that provides a continental view of our environment. It has done this through such projects as pollution reports, state of the environment reports and the environmental atlas. These give us a much broader understanding of how many transboundary environmental issues play out.

The CEC's operations, including its secretariat, council, JPAC and public meetings and projects provide important fora for people from the three countries to meet, exchange ideas and learn from each other. As a Canadian, I learned a great deal about Mexico's environment. I saw a number of important projects on environmental information and technology sharing that improved environmental capacity.

When I was working for the CEC, I observed tension between the CEC secretariat and the three governments over what the secretariat would investigate and produce in terms of reports. This tension is understandable given that governments always want to exercise control. At the time, the secretariat was able to produce strong, independent reports.

I can only urge the governments to give the CEC the freedom of action to investigate and report on North American environmental issues. This will benefit public understanding and informed debate.

I hope these brief comments are of some help, and want to wish the CEC another 20 years of work.

Regards,