



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeffrey N. Wennberg
Chair, U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee
15 Grandview Terrace
Rutland, Vermont 05701

Dear Mr. Wennberg:

On behalf of Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, I would like to thank you for the Governmental Advisory Committee's (GAC) advice of June 4, 2009 reporting on your April 27-28, 2009 meeting and providing valuable recommendations to the United States on possible future realignment within the CEC and identifying opportunities for continued cooperation among the Parties to the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). Administrator Jackson enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and the members of your committee who attended the recent Council Session in Denver.

As you know, the June 2009 CEC Council Session was a great success, thanks in large measure to the helpful past advice, provided by the GAC and the National Advisory Committee (NAC), to open a major portion of the Council Session to the public. As a result, the Council revised the meeting format to promote visibility and public engagement, which truly helped to increase the relevance of the CEC to our audience.

This public portion of the session included presentations about the Council's plan to renew, revitalize and refocus the CEC to conform to a new vision of an effective organization that can better focus on North American priorities, through a coherent agenda with measurable objectives and interim targets that will provide concrete environmental results. It is also our intention to revitalize the Secretariat to better support and implement the Parties' priorities. In the in-camera session, the Council explored two more issues discussed in your advice: the number and nature of the CEC projects and CEC's future options. In both cases, the decision was made to move forward.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank you for the insightful advice offered regarding future options for the Secretariat. Like you, we are convinced that this organization must be flexible and innovative and ready to adapt to new challenges and new priorities. The organization must also be efficient in its use of resources and be effective in building bridges to support those citizens of North America who are most vulnerable. We are currently reviewing all options open to us to determine how to use this 15- year anniversary to achieve these goals.

We agree completely with your advice related to limiting the number of projects that can be undertaken any one year. Moreover, we share the understanding that limiting the total number of projects can be conducive to larger efforts but also leaves room for small, on-the-ground

projects that often serve to bring CEC activities closer to the communities we must serve. We are presently exploring ways to incorporate both larger projects with multi-year reach with a few community-oriented projects and hope to have some proposals to include in the 2010 Operational Plan. Hand in hand with placing a cap on the number of projects, we agree that limiting the nature of projects is also important. We think identification of the three new priorities at the Council Session, Healthy Communities & Ecosystems, Climate Change-Low Carbon Economies and Greening the Economies, will help in that area.

With respect to the advice on the Secretariat options, it is our position that the Parties are presently in a very different place, both individually and as a group, than they were in 1994 when the NAAEC first went into effect. Canada, Mexico and the U.S. have 15 years of cooperation and collaboration experience on issues related to the environment in North America. The three countries participate in the G-8, OECD, CSD, UNEP and countless other international fora where global environmental issues are studied and analyzed, which have provided us with continuing opportunities to look for the best strategies to improve environmental protection. The close working relationship among the experts in the three North American environmental agencies are a testament to our commitment to consensus and mutual support. All these are points that we are examining and upon which the decisions on the future organization of the CEC will be based. In the final analysis we are not wedded to any one particular organizational configuration, but rather to a continued focus on collaboration, innovation and results in protecting and enhancing human health and the environment in North America.

Your recommendations related to transportation are excellent ones. You may have heard that the Secretariat has proposed an Article 13 report on improving the environmental and carbon footprint of freight transportation. The purpose is to examine the environmental implications of freight transportation in North America and how regional action and cooperation on related policies, regulations, incentives and other measures can contribute to an increase the efficiency, competitiveness and environmentally sustainable freight transportation system in North America. I will make sure that your comments reach the appropriate people at the Secretariat so that they can be taken into consideration as it plans the scope of the report. Similarly, your ideas on barriers to further development of renewable energy are good ones and will be shared with our Trade and Environment work group, which has a great deal of interest in this topic, particularly as it relates to trade.

With respect to the advice regarding how to utilize the CEC to promote Green Buildings, we note that Council identified Greening the economy as one of the three strategic priorities for CEC focus for the next five years. As such there will be an opportunity to review and revisit this issue as we make decisions on concrete projects to undertake in the coming years.

As you can see, your guidance continues to be highly valued and useful. We look forward to our continued discussions and to seeing you in the fall.

Sincerely,



Mike Stahl, Director
Office of Regional & Bilateral Affairs

cc: M. Dolores Wesson, Chair, U.S. National Advisory Committee
Members of the U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee