



SEP 14 2010

Office of
International and Tribal Affairs

Mr. Jeffrey N. Wennberg
Chairman
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 January 28, 2010 reporting on its October 14-15, 2009 meeting in Burlington, Vermont. Your letter provides valuable recommendations to the United States Government on the Commission on Environmental Cooperation's (CEC) 1) draft governance proposal prepared pursuant to the Denver Ministerial Statement, 2) the Draft Operational Plan for 2010, as well as guidance on community grants and membership. I was sorry that I could not join you in person, and am pleased that Sylvia Correa, Senior Advisor for North America of my staff was able to join you.

I realize that a lot of time has passed since January and a lot has changed on the CEC front. For this reason, I realize that some of these comments might have already been addressed but I feel that it is important to respond to the following items.

We appreciate your thoughtful and comprehensive comments on the Draft CEC Governance Proposal. We appreciate your support for the three new priorities identified by the Ministers and agree wholeheartedly with you that our job now is to carefully translate these priorities into activities and programs with measurable outcomes and finite objectives. We endeavor to do just that and are confident that we will get there with your help. Your idea to explicitly relinquish the Puebla Declaration is very sensible. We have in fact, never before addressed prior commitments and agree that in closing the Puebla chapter we need to move on from the past activities. We will propose this idea in future negotiations.

You also encourage us to limit the number of projects undertaken. This is a much harder thing given the existing needs. Nevertheless, we agree that it is important to focus the work plan in order to make a greater difference in a limited number of areas. We will look to you and the National Advisory Committee to help guide our thinking on this topic. A related point you raised is that the Parties should limit the nature of the projects. This makes perfect sense as we strive to have a greater impact on priority areas. This advice too, will be taken by the U.S. team for adoption by the trilateral Council.

Thank you for your comments related to setting measurable goals for programs, management and staff. We acknowledge the need for Council to articulate clear and measurable goals, identify a structured evaluative review, and the need to institutionalize the process. We will work with our partners in Canada and Mexico to ensure that all these ideas are incorporated in each project description and more generally in the Five-Year Strategic Plan. With respect to your advice regarding the continuity of executive directors, I would point out that the NAAEC specifically calls for three-year terms. Many Executive Director's have been renewed by the parties for an additional term, however, the NAAEC makes two 3-year terms the maximum allowable for any one individual. As you know, the U.S. has been trying to reduce CEC's administrative overhead costs so that all available resources are channeled into on-the-ground, results-oriented activities. Thus, the U.S. does not view the creation of a deputy position with no concrete, project specific duties as warranted at this time.

We appreciate your support of the Council's rejection of the first draft of the 2010 Operational Plan submitted by the Secretariat. The need for including measures of success, clear project endpoints and comprehensive multi-year program reporting in each project undertaken through the annual work plan is something that the Council endorses and which we are working to incorporate. Once again, we will count on your able advice to help ensure that the methods we utilize get us to the appropriate result.

Thank you for your advice regarding the value of two-border perspective. We will continue to hold meetings in both the southern and northern U.S. borders to take advantage of the experience and best practices for dealing with environmental challenges. We are also pleased to inform you that two newly appointed members on your committee are from the U.S. Northwest region.

Thank you once again for your thoughtful and comprehensive advice. Your hard work and concrete knowledge of the business of government serves to inform our decisions and shape the US negotiating efforts.

In addition, I wanted to thank GAC member Carlos Rubinstein for attending the 2010 CEC Council Session in Guanajuato, Mexico. The Administrator and I had a chance to spend some time with him and we appreciated his valuable contributions at the meeting.

Sincerely,



Michelle De Pass
Assistant Administrator
EPA Office of International and Tribal Affairs