



Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)
Comité Consultivo Público Conjunto (CCPC)
Comité consultatif public mixte (CCPM)

23 October 2003

The Honorable David Anderson
Minister of the Environment (Canada)

Ingeniero Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez
Secretary, Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico)

Administrator Marianne L. Horinko
Acting Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency

RE: North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC)

Dear Council Members,

As you are aware, the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) annually provides advice to you concerning the CEC's program plans.

JPAC has recently received the full, proposed CEC Operational Plan for 2004–2006 and will be studying it carefully over the next weeks in order to provide a detailed Advice to Council in areas where we feel it necessary to do so. However, in advance of that, we feel it necessary to bring to your attention our deep concern regarding the CEC Secretariat's suggestion to conclude the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC).

Initiated by the Ministers in 1995 through Council Resolution 95-09, NAFEC recognizes the important role played by community groups in protecting the North American environment. Grants are made to community-based projects that complement the work of the CEC and promote the goals and objectives of the NAAEC, and which meet the criteria of a Call for Proposals focused on specific CEC program issues, for example: conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine protected areas; children's health; and energy.

In 1998, the Independent Four-year Review Committee recommended to Council that:

NAFEC should continue to be a source of community funding, but with a mandate more related to the programs of the CEC. Building on the three-year program cycle, NAFEC should seek to fund projects so as to develop a critical mass of community-based experience on key topics in the CEC work program, in order to help inform the Secretariat and Council in their respective program and decision-making functions.

This suggestion was immediately put into effect and the result is that NAFEC is a prime success story of the CEC. As an evaluation done in 2000 concluded, it has:

- Succeeded to address the cooperation part of the North American Agreement for Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC)

- Succeeded to promote the capacity building of community groups;
- Provided the CEC with a North American public constituency;
- Reported a wide variety of positive effects and impacts in a short time;
- Facilitated information exchange among North American community-based organizations;
- Promoted public participation within the CEC by encouraging grantees to take an active role in CEC activities; and
- Benefited from positive local media coverage.

Since 1996, NAFEC has awarded a total of 196 grants amounting to C\$9.36 million. Moreover, NAFEC projects have leveraged a total of C\$4,592,800, out of which C\$543,400 were in-kind contributions. In fact, every NAFEC dollar brings around C\$2.00 from other sources. In 2003, NAFEC granted 18 projects related to environmental monitoring and assessment related to human health.

In 2000, when the NAFEC budget was reduced, a public campaign was organized to which the Ministers' personally responded the following:

The Council members agreed to maintain funding for NAFEC at its current level and to explore alternatives for additional funding, recognizing that the Fund plays a valuable role in promoting sustainable development at the local level.

Just last year, the Council, in its Resolution 02-12, stated that:

REAFFIRMING, as stated in the Council Resolution 95-09, the importance of supporting programs that have "*local*" significance and impact; and [...] HAVING DIRECTED that funds be used to "engage the energy and imagination of the people of North America in achieving the goals of the NAAEC.

Last year, JPAC recommended that the NAFEC Call for Proposals for 2004 focus on community-based projects related to management of freshwater. It is exactly in accordance with the CEC Ministerial statement of June 2003, by recognizing that:

The management of freshwater is an issue of global concern. [...] We have now asked the Secretariat to collect and facilitate the sharing of case studies that demonstrate national and *local* experiences and best practices on water quality.

I feel it is also important to bring to your attention the likelihood of a very strong adverse reaction from the public. During our 3 October session, when the possibility of reductions to NAFEC were presented by the Secretariat, the public responded with the following:

- Reducing JPAC and NAFEC are shots at public participation. It is these bodies and activities that help build the case that trade is responsible—this is the trademark of the CEC.
- In Mexico, public access is limited. JPAC and NAFEC provide a space. Cutting the budget is the same as closing a door.

In this context, on behalf of JPAC, I strongly recommend that NAFEC remain part of the CEC's program and that you instruct the Secretariat, prior to the meeting of the Alternate Representatives on 20–21 November, to explore other options for meeting our budgetary challenges, for example, addressing the large number of meetings, the travel expenses of government officials covered through the CEC budget and the large number of printed reports.

Finally, JPAC is also concerned by the notion of such a major policy decision being taken prior to the completion of the Ten-year Review.

Sincerely,



Gustavo Alanís-Ortega
JPAC Chair for 2003

c.c. CEC Alternate Representatives
CEC Executive Director
JPAC members
NAC/GAC members