

North American Green Purchasing Initiative (NAGPI) Conference Call

Hosted by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), Montreal



Thursday 15 January 2004

14h00 to 15h15 EST

Minutes

1. Welcome to participants and roll call

Aguilar Valadés, Martino
Arnold, Dana
Beaton, Archie
Carpentier, Chantal Line
Case, Scot (chair)
Collie, Neil
Crew, Gregory
Gómez Lafarga, Lorena
Johnson, Brian
Kerr, Robert

Legault, Loretta
Martínez, Luz Aída
Park, Jacob
Plouffe, Madeleine
Régnier, Mathieu
Remolador, Mary Ann
Shannon, Julie
Skinner, Elizabeth
Stephens, Jeff

2. Final reading of NAGPI's mission statement

Approval of the Mission Statement

NAGPI Mission Statement and objectives

NAGPI's mission is to improve, promote, and facilitate the development of green purchasing tools and activities across North America to create markets for environmentally preferable products and services from sustainably managed companies, thereby producing tangible economic, social and environmental benefits.

NAPGPI's objectives are to coordinate and encourage collaboration between all stakeholders involved with green purchasing.

Julie Shannon asked what led to the use of “preferable products” instead of “less polluting products.”

Scot Case pointed out that during the October 2003 conference call it was suggested that the language of the text reflect the evolution in green procurement accomplishments in the last years and the evolution in the work of NAGPI itself.

He recalled that this matter was also discussed during the December 2003 conference call and that it was mentioned that the use of “sustainable purchasing” encompasses all environmental purchasing while leaving the door open to other players.

Robert Kerr pointed out that another issue discussed during the last call was that of “environmentally preferable” which covers more than mere habitat protection.

Julie indicated that “sustainably managed company” may prove difficult to define. Loretta Legault concurred and added that this consideration must be kept in mind.

3. Developments at Semarnat and update on the reshuffling

Chantal Line Carpentier invited Semarnat participants to discuss changes within the ministry. Martino Aguilar Valadés reported that as a result of the reshuffling; José Manuel Medina, Deputy General Director of International Cooperation, will replace Israel Nuñez as liaison with NAGPI.

4. Action items arising from the last conference call

- **Test-driving ECO-S.A.T. and the "Sustainable Communities" Conference (Burlington, VT)**

Chantal Line explained how the CEC intends to test-drive the ECO-S.A.T. before spring. She reminded that Greg Crew of Green Order (purchasing practices within the New York State Education Department) and Semarnat were also planning on using ECO-S.A.T. She invited all participants to use this tool and suggested placing ECO-S.A.T. on the web. It will be made clear that the document is an evolving tool.

ECO-S.A.T will be presented at the “Sustainable Communities” Conference in July. Jacob Park and John Polak already applied to participate. If others are interested in attending this event they should contact Chantal Line for coordination. Information: <<http://www.global-community.org/conference/>>.

Elizabeth Skinner will make a presentation on the certification work performed by Rainforest Alliance. She indicated that it would be interesting to focus on a commodity such as coffee while bringing together individuals who have played different roles in promoting certified coffee—from church groups to fair trade/organic/environmental certifiers to municipal, corporate, and industrial purchasers. She asked whether there were any people within NAGPI who might be interested in participating in a joint presentation. For any further information, she can be reached at: <eskinner@ra.org>.

Jacob Park indicated his willingness to share presentation responsibilities with another member of the Steering Committee or with an individual closely connected to the initiative.

- **Objectives to be listed as part of the Council communiqué and early work on redrafting the leaflet with the identification of some pilot experiences and recommended products**

With regard to the creation of a series of objectives for NAGPI, Brian Johnson clarified that these would not form part of the mission statement but would rather be derived from it. He wants to have the opinion of others. His suggestions are to:

1. Identify up to four product or service categories for recommendation to environment ministries in order to initiate a collaborative and coordinated multinational environmentally preferable purchasing effort.
2. Compile and make publicly available environmentally preferable purchasing policies from governmental and nongovernmental organizations and develop a model policy to assist and encourage program development in organizations seeking to initiate an environmental preferable purchasing program.

Action item:

These points will be referred to the Steering Committee for comments and integrated, along with those arising from an upcoming report from the Center for a New American Dream, into the 2004 Council meeting agenda.

Robert expressed a need for such a list of objectives for the promotion of the Initiative. He hopes we can include the aim of obtaining recognition by government on the need to embrace green procurement practices across all economic sectors and that NAGPI aims at developing a policy model on green procurement.

Brian Johnson suggested that the “institutional structure” of the ECO-S.A.T. be defined. Who will manage the “evolving tool” the ECO-S.A.T. is intended to be?

Scot mentioned that the Center for a New American Dream is preparing a review of the existing green purchasing policies used by institutional purchasers. One goal is to identify common issues, definitions, commodities and trends in existing policies. It will include a review of the commodities most frequently integrated into green purchasing programs. The resulting report will be used by NAGPI to identify commodity areas where NAGPI can focus its efforts.

Scot would like participants to provide him with such policies from Mexico. The underlying goal of the research is the identification of elements necessary in drafting an operative green procurement policy. A more precise question is: what makes a foodstuff-related purchasing policy greener? This could be useful to the CEC in its determination of what credible studies have already been conducted on the assessment of environmental impacts to trade liberalization in the agriculture sector.

- **Terms of Reference for Steering Committee members**

Robert offered to prepare a draft of these TORs. Chantal Line provided an update on the reason TORs were included as an agenda item. She referred to the last discussion on that topic and stated that the TORs would help in identifying the role of Steering Committee members while clarifying the distinction between Steering Committee members and plain NAGPI members.

Mathieu Régnier asked whether a reflection on the information to be sent via the listserve is warranted. Some of the information might not be of interest to all. Chantal Line replied that the goal of NAGPI is to be as transparent as possible and that this was made clear at the time of its creation.

5. Early thoughts on what is to be done prior to the Council session (June 2004)

Chantal Line explained the necessity of determining at an early stage what the next steps should be in preparation for the next Council session in June 2004. The session is the forum where strategic decisions are taken on the work of the CEC based on a review of activities undertaken during the preceding year.

Brian Johnson asked if the CEC would remain the driver within NAGPI since it is the organization best suited to be coordinating the initiative. Other participants concurred that the CEC should keep its coordinating role. No other organization possesses the span of the CEC in North America.

At the tenth session of the CEC Council in June 2003, the participating ministers directed the Secretariat to work with the Parties and NAGPI towards the development of a green purchasing action plan, consistent with national and international obligations. As part of that plan, the Secretariat should work with the parties and NAGPI to identify tools, priorities, and best practices to facilitate green purchasing and to identify product categories for possible priority attention in the 2004 work program. Chantal Line suggested building on that premise and that this should first be done in collaboration with governmental officials who are members of NAGPI.

Chantal Line added that if green procurement is an item all Parties want to see on the CEC agenda, a presentation of NAGPI's achievements and projects must be prepared early. Identifying products or services on which the three countries could concentrate policy efforts, as well as a study on what policies could encourage these products to enter the market, should be important agenda items in 2004.

Chantal Line referred to the help provided last year by Julie Shannon, Dana Arnold and Loretta Legault in representing the interests of NAGPI within their respective governments. Despite the fact that important parts of the CEC budget were cut recently, NAGPI remains on the agenda and this is due in part to the assistance provided by these individuals. It is important that this commitment continues and that governments stay on board.

Scot indicated that there would be many interesting 2003–2004 deliverables to present; from the ECO-S.A.T. to the “Green Procurement, Good Environmental Stories for North Americans” report.

It was stated that this would be another good reason to revamp the CEC leaflet with, for instance, the inclusion of a new series of good stories. The example of the environmentally positive impacts of trade in green products would fit very well in the context of the tenth year review of NAFTA. Chantal Line indicated that the communiqué could be built around such elements.

Brian Johnson suggested that a working group could list other items that could be presented to the Council. Chantal Line agreed and indicated that it should be finalized by mid-May.

Action item:

Chantal Line and Mathieu will soon submit a timeline leading NAGPI to the Council meeting.

Action item:

Dana, Julie, Loretta, Mexican government officials and Chantal Line undertook to work jointly on this project. The Secretariat will organize a meeting in February to develop and define a language to share with the parties.

Chantal Line expressed the view that individual provinces should participate in NAGPI. She called participants to provide names of individuals NAGPI could approach in that regard.

Action item:

Scot suggested that participants make a “top-ten” list of commodities that are bought by green purchasers.

6. What type of message could Robert Kerr communicate to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Conference on 4–7 February?

Elected officials will attend the FCM as well as civil officials from various government levels. Scot mentioned that an important point to emphasize is that we have environmental advocates from three countries ready to push the agenda forward. Loretta wondered if there should be a direct request addressed to municipalities to determine if additional ones would want to join NAGPI.

7. Varia

A) Scot mentioned that Japan has an organization equivalent to NAGPI. Information:

<<http://eco.goo.ne.jp/gpn/index.html>>.

A conference will be held in Japan shortly: the First International Conference on Green Purchasing, Sendai, Japan (6–7 October 2004). Intended outcomes are: 1) pronouncement of a manifesto for green purchasing collaboration across the globe; 2) formation of an international green purchasing network.

B) The Center for a New American Dream “green purchasing” video can be used to promote the initiative.

C) Dana mentioned that the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE) has been promoting the idea of "green purchasing," consisting of several components, rather than separate programs for buying recycled content, energy efficient, biobased, and environmentally preferable products. She mentioned that purchasing is controlled by different government agencies in the US OFEE is developing an online green purchasing training program that will be hosted on the US Office of Personnel Management's GoLearn e-training web site. Training materials created by OFEE, EPA, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Defense form the basis of the new training. It should be available around Earth Day (22 April 2004).

D) Loretta mentioned that the government of Canada is developing a study on green procurement and its impacts on trade laws. Dana offered her help; they did the equivalent in the US.

E) Brian Johnson announced that the City of Santa Monica recently switched to 100 percent post-consumer copying paper and other paper products. Information will be shared via the listserv.

F) Archie Beaton announced the upcoming Sustainable Paper summit. It could be interesting for NAGPI to present its work at that meeting.

G) Scot mentioned that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is preparing a video and that they would find the Santa Monica example interesting.

8. Next meeting

Next conference call: 17 February 2004, 14h00 EST.

Meeting adjourned: 15h15