

Minutes

NAGPI Conference Call: Tuesday, 6 July 2004, 14:00–15:00 EST

1. Welcome to participants and roll call

Participants

Dana Arnold
Sandra Cannon
Scot Case
Kevin Gallagher
Brian Johnson
Martha King
Robert Kerr
Salem Y. Lakhali

Loretta Legault
Rahumathulla Marikkar
Roger Peniche Sala
Madeleine Plouffe
Mary Ann Remolador
Véronique Robichaud
Jeff Stephens

2. Follow-up on the Council session

The Alternate Representatives met on 21 June but their meeting focused on the ten-year review of the CEC. All proposed action items were thus postponed but will most likely be reviewed without too much delay, as a decision from them is required prior to furthering some elements of the program.

The briefing note (Annex 1) prepared by the NAGPI group was thus resent to the Parties. The Secretariat will transmit the decision to the group as soon as it is known.

3. Committee for the Annual Meeting

Here are the members of the committee who will be in charge of developing the agenda, objectives and invitations:

Scot Case
German Gonzales Davila
Robert Kerr
Luz Aída Martínez
John Polar (chair)

The main output from this meeting will be the 2005 work plan for the NAGPI group. This work plan will be based on the recommendations made to the Parties, and the three priorities set out in the Puebla Declaration: information for decision-making, capacity building, and trade and environment.

In order to have the work plan ready in time to include it into the Secretariat's Operational Plan, it was decided that the meeting will be held on 2 September 2004, in Montreal.

The Secretariat will send to the whole group the Puebla Declaration (Annex 2), the briefing note that was distributed to the Parties (Annex 1), and a reminder about the annual meeting.

4. Other

Kevin Gallagher mentioned work undertaken by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), in conjunction with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on ANSI-Accredited Standards Developers to the topic of Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP). A presentation can be downloaded from:

<http://www.ansi.org/government_affairs/laws_policies/epp.aspx?menuid=6>

What happened with this effort since this presentation was made public remains unclear.

Dana Arnold invited the group to provide comments on four draft purchasing guides published by EPA (see Annex 3 for further information). She also brought to our attention potential recycling issues related to the identification tags that are gaining popularity. For tracking and inventory purposes, a tiny copper transmitter is put on every product, which could then pose problems for recycling as it may be hard to detect and/or take off the recycled material.

5. Next Meeting

Next conference call: Wednesday 11 August, 14:00 EDT.

Annex 1: Briefing Note

Background

Consideration of the environmental and public health attributes of products and services is being included in an increasing number of government procurement bids throughout Canada, Mexico and the United States. This is due to the recognition that there can be substantial and measurable differences in these important attributes between products that serve the same purpose and meet or exceed traditional performance requirements. As with any new movement, the entry of environmentally preferable products and services into the marketplace can be fraught with financial, institutional and perceptual obstacles. NAGPI's efforts, as summarized in this report, address the status, constraints and opportunities related to the advancement of environmentally preferable procurement programs in government.

Current NAGPI Initiative

Greening the procurement process can be accomplished in a variety of ways, ranging from asking suppliers to identify the environmental aspects of their products to requiring suppliers and their products to be certified against environmental leadership standards. NAGPI is promoting a three-level process and has begun with three product categories: cleaning agents, electricity, and office supplies/equipment (paper products and photocopiers/printers).

- (1) At a minimum, institutional purchasers should request that suppliers provide targeted and standardized information that is unique to each specific product. Purchasers can then assess the environmental performance of each product from the perspective of what is most important to the institution. Annex A identifies the key environmental attributes for the three product categories.
- (2) When the institution raises the environmental bar on its purchasing, it adopts environmental leadership criteria and includes them in its purchasing activities. Annex B includes examples of different criteria that are currently being used in North America.
- (3) When the institution raises the environmental bar to the highest notch, thereby ensuring the highest level of credibility and transparency, it requires independent verification against the environmental leadership criteria, or requires "certification." Annex B includes the names and web site addresses of a number of certification bodies in North America that have certified products in the three categories.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The CEC Ministers continue to support the ongoing work of NAGPI; and
2. They assess how effective their own agencies and governments have been in implementing green purchasing. This can be accomplished through their support of OECD's questionnaire and assessment process (to begin in fall 2004) and through NAGPI's ECO-SAT tool.

The NAGPI team stands ready to assist governments as needed and has developed some tools to aid in the evaluation of current purchasing practices.

Annex 2: Puebla Declaration

Puebla, Mexico, 23 June 2004—We, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, members of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC or “the Commission”), met for our annual regular session on 22 and 23 June 2004. The year 2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and the North American Free Trade Agreement and is an occasion to assess our work. We see this as an opportunity to review our progress, re-affirm our commitment to the CEC, and set directions for the future. The report of the independent Ten-year Review and Assessment Committee has provided an important basis for our deliberations.

Looking forward, our vision of the CEC is of an organization that is a catalyst for action by the Parties and others to ensure our air is cleaner, our water purer, and our plant and animal species better conserved and protected, as our countries’ economic relationship grows. We also see the organization as a forum through which we can discuss and facilitate regional action on our common global commitments. Over the next ten years we want the CEC to be known for concrete results and for quality information and analysis, which have policy relevance to the three countries.

We recognize the value of the CEC’s work on environment, economy and trade; biodiversity conservation; pollutants and health; and law and policy. Looking forward, we commit to grounding the CEC’s work program, starting in 2005, in results-oriented strategic plans for three priorities: information for decision-making, capacity building, and trade and environment. These are priorities that the CEC is uniquely positioned to help the three countries address together—and separately—for the benefit of North America. We want the CEC to be an organization recognized for its credible, balanced and timely information on the North American environment, and want to ensure that this information is available and accessible to all interested parties in order to provide governments, the private sector, and citizens alike with information to address the key environmental challenges and opportunities facing the region. We support strengthening the CEC’s information gathering activities, databases, and communications, and making linkages with other information systems, such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems.

In developing the strategic plan for information, we will build a knowledge base related to contaminants, the integrity of our ecosystems, and our ability to ensure environmental security at our borders. We will focus on information that is key to providing answers regarding the state of our North American environment, and will develop and use information technologies that will help us access and share this information.

We recognize the different capacities of the Parties and the continuing, urgent need to focus on institutional capacity building in order to sustain targeted results. We acknowledge that this is especially important for Mexico, and want the CEC to assist those concerned in the three countries—governments, the private sector, environmental organizations, academia, indigenous and local communities, and others—in gradually strengthening the capacity for sound environmental management across North America.

In developing a capacity-building strategic plan, we will focus on priorities such as our abilities to assess and manage chemicals of concern, undertake pollution prevention, participate in biodiversity conservation, and improve our enforcement efforts.

We want to build on the CEC's recognized expertise on trade and environmental linkages, and to address specific trade and environmental issues more effectively. We will enhance the positive working relationship that has been developed with our trade counterparts to ensure trade and environment policies are mutually supportive. We will continue our work with the NAFTA Free Trade Commission, under the Article 10(6) Working Group, to develop a strategic plan on trade and environment.

As we work to develop the plan, we will consider, among other priorities, areas which could include: establishing key elements to enhance markets for renewable energy; addressing issues related to trade pathways for invasive species; trade and enforcement of environmental laws, including enforcement of domestic laws that address transboundary trade in environmentally sensitive goods and materials; environmental procurement practices; market-based approaches to connect North American ecoregions; and sharing, as appropriate, information on methodologies for conducting environmental reviews of trade agreements with a view to better assessing the environmental effects of NAFTA.

The NAAEC and the CEC have been a bold ten-year initiative in building a continental framework for trilateral environmental cooperation within the context of increasing trade and economic ties amongst our three countries. We recognize the significant progress accomplished and the invaluable contribution of the Secretariat and the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), as well as the efforts of the CEC's working groups. We know it is critical to streamline the work of the CEC and to focus our work on generating concrete, measurable results that will make a difference to the environment in North America. We recognize that there will be a transition period as we adjust the work program and apply new approaches to achieve our goals.

While we are focusing on the CEC's work around three main themes, it is also important to identify and keep abreast of emerging issues, particularly those which have special relevance for North America. We continue to support the CEC's Article 13 work to identify emerging issues, and to provide recommendations to the Parties for addressing these issues.

We continue to be supportive of the process for submissions on enforcement matters, and commit to exploring ways for each Party to communicate how matters raised in factual records may be addressed over time.

As we move to the next ten years in the life of the CEC, we look to a skilled Secretariat to help us achieve our vision for the organization. We are committed to strengthening the relationship amongst all parts of the CEC—the Council, the Secretariat and JPAC. We seek to grow the constituencies engaged in the work of the CEC by including a broad and balanced spectrum of other levels of government, including local governments, environmental groups, academics, the private sector, indigenous and local communities, civil society, and others.

We envision a strong role for the CEC in promoting partnerships across this spectrum. We will continue to place great value on advice from JPAC, which reflects the diversity and innovative views of its members.

We have important work ahead, and we are confident that our strong commitment to the CEC will contribute to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable North American environment for future generations.

Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez, Government of the United Mexican States

Michael O. Leavitt, Government of the United States of America

Norine Smith, Government of Canada

Annex 3: Public Comment Period

US EPA EPP Program Announces Public Comment Period for 4 Draft Purchasing Guides

Today, June 30th, EPA published a Federal Register notice announcing the availability for public review and comment of four draft Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Guides. These guides provide information to federal procurement officials for making EPP decisions that can help protect human health and the environment. They include the following:

"Greening Your Purchase of Carpet: A Guide For Federal Purchasers"

"Greening Your Meetings and Conferences: A Guide For Federal Purchasers"

"Greening Your Purchase of Cleaning Products: A Guide For Federal Purchasers"

"Greening the Purchase of Your Copiers: A Guide For Federal Purchasers"

EPA is providing a sixty-day public comment period that will end August 30, 2004, so all interested parties can provide their comments and suggestions. Stakeholders can access these documents and submit comments electronically through the EPA internet site for Federal Register Dockets. Interested parties should go to <http://www.epa.gov/edocket/> to submit or view public comments, access the index listing of the contents of the official public docket, and to access those documents in the public docket that are available electronically. The guides are also available on EPA's EPP website at <http://www.epa.gov/epp/documents/pfs.htm>. Stakeholders can read the draft guides on the EPP website but comments must be submitted through the channels described in the Federal Register Notice. To view the complete details of the public comment period for the draft purchasing guides including other ways to submit comments, please see the complete Federal Register Notice at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/06jun20041800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/04-14831.htm>.

EPA would like comments to address the following questions:

1. Is the discussion on the potential environmental impacts of the product categories useful for Federal purchasers?
2. Is there any more recent information that is germane to or would enhance the discussion of these product categories?
3. Can Federal purchasers act easily upon the stated recommendations in the product guides?
4. Is this an approach you would like EPA to take in addressing Environmentally Preferable Purchasing?

Commenting individuals can use the questions as a general guide for comments and feel free to expand on any topic they would like relating to the EPP Program and the purchasing guides.

For more information on these guides, contact Terry Grogan at (202) 564-6317 or grogan.terry@epa.gov. For more information on the review and comment process, contact Jesse Eaves at (202) 564-8867 or eaves.jesse@epa.gov.