



Commission for Environmental Cooperation

North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) Project

Summary of Responses to the User's Survey on the *Taking Stock* Report

November 2000

1. Introduction

In February 2000, a series of questions seeking input on the CEC's annual *Taking Stock: North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers* report were distributed to over 200 people. A copy of the survey form is attached as Annex A.

The goal of this survey was to learn more about reader's opinions on the format and content of the *Taking Stock* report, in order to inform future improvements to the report to better meet users' needs. The CEC thanks all those who took the time and effort to respond to the survey.

2. Responses

Responses were received from 29 people from among the approximately 200 who received it, a response rate of 14 percent. Annex B provides a list of the people who responded to the survey. Copies of the surveys received are available upon request from the CEC. The responses were from a broad spectrum of sectors and all three countries as outlined below:

Responses	USA	Canada	Mexico	Total
Government	1	3	3	7
NGO/citizens	3	7	2	12
Industry	1	7	2	10
Total	5	17	7	29

Almost three-quarters of the people responding to the survey had attended a consultative meeting on the *Taking Stock* report (21 of 29 responses). This indicates a high level of participation in the development of the *Taking Stock* report among survey respondents.

Of the 29 people responding to the survey, five had not received the *Taking Stock* report.

3. Survey Results

Following is a summary of the input and comments received.

Uses of the Report

The survey indicated that people make use of the *Taking Stock* report in a number of ways and for various purposes, including:

- learning about PRTR programs in the three countries;
- comparing releases and transfers across countries and by sector;
- comparing facilities with similar facilities elsewhere;
- understanding the significance of emission trends and policies and actions needed to address emissions;
- assisting communities in understanding releases and transfers from facilities;
- planning for future air modeling.

Two respondents did not use the report, and two respondents felt that the report was too complex, not user friendly and that the analysis methodology was questionable. They also noted that the presentation of aggregated data could not be used by industry to assess its performance.

Report Sections

The survey posed a series of questions asking people to identify which sections of the *Taking Stock* report they found most useful or least useful.

Sections of the report that at least two-thirds of the respondents found *most useful* are:

- the executive summary and key findings sections at the start of each chapter;
- general overview of pollutant releases and transfers registers (PRTRs);
- descriptions of the national PRTR programs in Canada, the United States and Mexico;
- data on North American pollutants and facilities;
- analyses of chemicals released and/or transferred;
- analyses of specific chemical categories (carcinogens and metals);
- comparison of U.S. and Canadian data;
- trends over time for chemicals and facilities;
- analyses of specific industry sectors;
- PRTR data in corporate environmental reports;
- analyses of carcinogens;
- analyses of metals.

There were two sections of the report that half to two-thirds of the users found *most useful* and half to one-third of the respondents found *least useful*:

- Analyses of facilities releasing and or transferring chemicals;
- Analyses of releases and transfers in border regions.

A section of the report that at least two-thirds of the respondents found *least useful* was the analyses of facilities by parent company.

Many people also provided comments including:

- The report needs more context.
- The background information describing the pollutant inventories is not only useful, it is critical to put the information in proper context.
- The report needs less emphasis on comparison and more on achievement and reductions for a positive rather than negative approach.
- Comparison of environmental performance of U.S. and Canadian facilities is of major value.
- The lack of Mexican data is a continuing and frustrating problem.
- The focus on total quantities is of little value without understanding the health and environmental effects of the release and transfers. The analysis of facility or company data is incomplete and misleading.
- The key point is to analyze comparable data and to show trends over time, especially with projections.
- The report needs more interpretation of data and less information.
- The information that is included is quite good – but we are concerned about the information that is missing, such as the limitations and incompleteness of emission inventories.
- Make a greater effort to separate releases and transfers.
- Non-point sources need to be included in the report to have a more complete picture.
- Releases and transfers should be related to environmental issues such as climate change, ozone depletion etc.

Report format

The survey asked a series of questions about the format of the *Taking Stock* report, focussing on the text, tables, length and technical content of the report.

Most users found the text easy to understand (7 responses) or acceptable as is (17 responses). Only 5 users found the report difficult to understand.

Most users (13 responses) found the tables in the report acceptable, and 10 users felt the report had too many tables. No users thought that the report had too few tables.

About half the users (14 responses) felt that the report was too long, and about half (13 responses) felt that the length of the report was acceptable as is. In a separate question when users were asked how the report could be improved, 15 users felt that the report could be reduced in length and 4 thought the report should be increased. Users were asked which sections could be left out or added. A number of users (4 responses) suggested leaving out the facility specific rankings, provincial and state rankings. Others suggested increasing the non-point source data, discussion on data limitations, sector specific analyses and information on human health effects.

Most users found the technical content of the report to be acceptable (14 responses). Seven users found the report too technical and two users found the report not technical enough.

Several users also sent comments on the format of the report including:

- Make greater use of graphical presentation the data.
- Round the numbers to 2 significant digits.
- Make more emphasis on achievements and reductions in releases.
- Consider a primer to the report.
- Consider a shorter “policy makers” version with appendices.
- The report is a gold mine of information.
- Format is not easily read, but level of detail is valuable.
- If report continues to include such large amounts of information, then need to publish as volumes.
- Some of the special analyses could be considered as part of an ongoing *Taking Stock* series.
- Consider a summarized version with key findings, which would be simpler and easier to disseminate.

Most users (15 responses) felt that the complexity of the report should be reduced. Many users suggested increasing the context of the report as a way of reducing complexity, and to use of a web site for additional analyses. Other users found the report acceptable as is, and didn't see the need for any changes.

Users were asked whether the report should increase or reduce the rankings of facilities, and what types of rankings could be added/deleted. Fifteen users felt that the facility rankings should be reduced and 2 felt that they should be increased. It was suggested that rankings of facilities with the greatest increases and decreases be eliminated along with rankings based on aggregated quantities. Two new types of rankings were suggested: by parent company and by some type of risk factor.

There were many ways to improve the report that most users agreed on:

- Analyses of transfers should continue to be provided separately from releases (21 responses).
- Additional information should be provided on the sources and uses of the matched chemicals (15 responses).
- Increased information on potential health and environmental impacts of chemicals should be added (18 responses).
- Recognition of company success in reducing releases and transfers in the report should be increased (19 responses).
- Analyses of particular industrial sectors should be increased (14 responses).
- Analyses of particular chemicals or groups of chemicals should be increased (17 responses).
- Analyses of transfers should be increased (12 responses).
- Analyses of parent companies should be decreased (14 responses).

While some people suggested eliminating all analyses involving aggregated releases and transfers, others suggested that the joint analyses of releases and transfers are essential for having a pollution prevention perspective in the report, and that the combined information is extremely

important to community members. Others felt that an expanded analysis of transfers was required.

Some users cautioned against designing some kind of recognition system, others suggested using case studies, reviewing company brochures and asking for submissions.

Users were asked if they would be interested in receiving the *Taking Stock* report on CD-ROM. Most replied (13 responses) that they would be interested in receiving the report on CD-ROM in addition to the hard copy of the report. A large number of users (10 responses) also felt that a CD-ROM version and a printed executive summary of the report would be useful. Three users felt that a CD-ROM would be useful instead of the printed report, and five users felt that a CD-ROM would not be useful at all.

Internet

A series of questions were asked on the availability of Internet access and the usefulness of a web site. Almost all users (28 responses) have access to the Internet. Almost all users (21 responses) indicated that they would find a website with the data from the *Taking Stock* report useful. Many comments were received on the web site, encouraging the development of a site that has searchable databases with the full NPRI and TRI databases; that would allow searches for individual facilities, chemicals, industry sectors and by geographic region; and which would have a user-friendly searching mechanism and a customized query function. Some also mentioned that the site could be used to provide access to the report.

Other comments

One user felt that stakeholders should have the opportunity to review the full draft before public release and should be given a heads-up notification of possible impacts of the report. Another user felt that having a consultative meeting prior to the release of the 1997 data report made discussions more difficult.

Annex A

Users' Survey

Name (optional):

Organization (optional):

Your occupation:

Type of organization (e.g., government, industry, NGO, etc.)

Country:

Have you participated in any of the consultative meetings for the *Taking Stock* reports? Yes

No

Survey Questions:

1. Have you received the 1996 *Taking Stock* report? Yes No
2. Do you use the *Taking Stock* reports? If so, for what purpose(s)?
3. Please review the following list of sections/features of the report and insert a plus sign "+" for those that you find **most** useful and a minus sign "-" for those that you find **least** useful. Please mark as many categories as apply; others may be left blank. Additional comments are welcomed and encouraged.

Executive summary and the "Key Findings" sections at the start of each chapter

General overview of pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs)

Descriptions of the national PRTR programs in Canada, the United States and Mexico

Data on North American pollutants, facilities

Analyses of chemicals released and/or transferred

Analyses of specific chemical categories (e.g. carcinogens and metals)

Analyses of facilities releasing and/or transferring chemicals

Other (please specify)

Comparison of US and Canadian data (comparable Mexican data are not yet available)

Trends over time for chemicals and facilities

Special analyses such as:

Analyses of facilities by parent company

Analyses of releases and transfers in the border regions

Analyses of specific industry sectors (e.g., pulp and paper)

Community case studies

PRTR data in corporate environmental reports

Other features:

Analyses of carcinogens

Analyses of metals

Other (please specify)

Comments:

4. How do you find the format and presentation of the report? (please insert check marks (✓), as appropriate)

Text:	Easy to understand?	Difficult to understand?	Acceptable as is?
Tables:	Too many tables?	Too few tables?	Acceptable as is?
Length:	Too long?	Too short?	Acceptable as is?
Content:	Too technical?	Not technical enough?	Acceptable as is?

Additional comments:

5. Would you be interested in receiving the *Taking Stock* report on CD-ROM?

Yes, I would be interested in receiving a CD-ROM instead of the hard copy (printed) report

Yes, I would be interested in receiving a CD-ROM instead of the hard copy (printed) report

I would be interested in receiving a CD-ROM together with a printed 'executive summary' report

No, a CD-ROM would not be of interest.

6. How could the report be improved? Please provide your feedback on the following list, which is based on suggestions made through the annual public consultations on the *Taking Stock* reports. Please also provide any additional ideas or suggestions you may have. For each proposed improvement, we are particularly interested in your ideas on how such measures could be effectively implemented.

Reduce increase length of report (check one, as appropriate). What could be left out/added?

Reduce increase complexity of report (check one, as appropriate). Please specify.

Reduce increase rankings of facilities (check one, as appropriate). What types of rankings would you propose deleting/adding?

Provide analyses of transfers separately from releases. (Please note that the 1997 report will have separate chapters on releases alone, transfers alone, and releases and transfers combined.)

Provide additional information on the sources and uses of the chemicals addressed in the report.

Increase the information provided on the potential health and environmental impacts of the chemicals.

Reduce increase the recognition of company success in reducing releases and transfers.
Do you have any specific suggestions in this regard?

Increase analyses of particular industrial sectors.

Increase analysis of particular chemicals or groups of chemicals.

Reduce increase analysis of transfers.

Reduce increase analysis of parent companies

Other:

7. Do you have access to the Internet? Yes No

8. Would a web site with the data from the *Taking Stock* report be useful for you?

Yes No

If yes, please specify how you would make use of such a site. Please also indicate any features or functions that you would find particularly useful (e.g. ability to submit customized queries, geographic presentations of the data).

9. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions on the *Taking Stock* reports?

Annex B - List of respondents

Canada

1. Bruce Caswell (Canadian Chemical Producers' Association)
2. Rick Findlay (Pollution Probe)
3. Walter Fraiss (Citizen)
4. Michael Hingston (Nova Scotia Department of the Environment)
5. John Jackson (Citizen's Network)
6. Scott McDougall (Jacques Withford)
7. Robert Redhead (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce)
8. Lynne Robinson-Lewis (Environment Canada)
9. David Slubik (Alberta Environment)
10. Adolfo E. Silva (Canadian Petroleum Products Institute)
11. Yasmin Tarmohamed (Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association)
12. Anna Tilman (STORM)
13. Bruce Walker (STOP)
14. Sandy Willis (Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association)
15. Mark Winfield (CIELAP)
16. Engineer, Canada

Mexico

17. Martha Delgado (Presencia ciudadana)
18. Jose M. Fernandez- Busto (CONIECO)
19. Olinca Marino (Program La Neta)
20. Hilda Martinez (INE)
21. Israel Nuñez (SEMARNAT)
22. Monica Ruiz (CANACINTRA)
23. Victor Valle (PROFEPA)

USA

24. Richard Artz (US Government)
25. Scott Baker (International Copper Association)
26. Carl Bruch (Environmental Law Institute)
27. Glenn Eurick (Barrick Gold Corporation)
28. Jim Solyst (American Chemistry Council)
29. Wilma Subra (LEAN)