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Health

April 7, 2004

Commission for Environmental Cooperation  
393, rue St.-Jacques Ouest, Bureau 200  
Montreal, Quebec H2Y 1N9  
Fax: (514) 350-4314

Attention: Paul Miller

**Re: Draft Long-Term Strategic Framework for Air-Related Activities of the  
Commission for Environmental Cooperation**

Dear Mr. Miller:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Long-Term Strategic Framework for Air-Related Activities of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

The Region of Peel, situated in the Windsor-Quebec corridor, experiences significant episodes of poor air quality every year. Poor air quality contributes to premature morbidity and mortality. It is estimated, based on the Ontario Medical Association's 2000 report "The Illness Cost of Air Pollution," that poor air quality is responsible for approximately 1,900 premature deaths, 9,800 hospitalizations and 13,000 visits to Ontario emergency rooms yearly.

The Region of Peel is an active participant in the activities of the Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council (GTA CAC). The GTA CAC has engaged all orders of government operational in the GTA, particularly the 29 upper- and lower-tier municipal governments to promote reduction of air pollution emissions and to increase awareness of regional air quality issues. However, it is estimated that 50% of Ontario's air pollution originates in the United States. Therefore, we support initiatives that will assist in dealing with transboundary air quality issues.

We support the six priority areas identified, particularly priority #3 "*quantify impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment, including costs and benefits of emission control options.*" Recognition of the health impacts of poor air quality is growing in the scientific and medical literature. Expanding this knowledge base will assist us in developing health-based policies.

The Long-term Strategic Framework proposes to enhance public access to air-related environmental information through common education tools, facilitation of information dissemination and outreach. Increased availability and reliability of the of air quality information is of particular interest to public health practitioners. The GTA CAC, in cooperation with Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, is establishing Clean Air Online, a one-stop, web-based clearinghouse of public

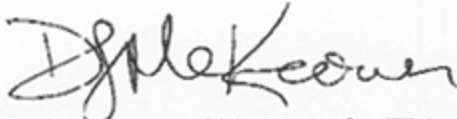
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information on air quality, with links to federal, provincial, regional and municipal government sites as well as to non-governmental organizations. Linking information from the CEC to this website would be an effective way to reach decision-makers and the public in the Greater Toronto Area.

We support the actions of the CEC in improving air quality in North America. These initiatives are an important step forward.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. McKeown', written in a cursive style.

David McKeown, MDCM, MHSic, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health