

February 7, 2003

Summary of Discussions with Four Canadian Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations on the 2002 Progress Report on the Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement

One of the purposes for convening a meeting with environmental non-governmental organizations in Ottawa, ON on February 7, 2003 was to receive comments from participants on the 2002 Progress Report on the 1991 Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement. Chair Gray and IJC staff received the following comments.

2. The participants appreciated the opportunity to meet in an informal session as, in their view, it shows the Commission's interest and raises the profile of the activity on the agendas of such organizations. They agreed that this type of session will likely get a better response than merely sending out a mailer or e-mail. Non governmental organizations are generally swamped with requests for comment and input to various activities and do not have the time to participate in all cases. They see the IJC as being a credible organization with a good history, thus deserving of their attention.

3. Rick Findlay of Pollution Probe said that Pollution Probe endorses the comments submitted by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance and suggested that the Ontario emissions trading and cap are confusing and won't work. He suggested that the Progress Report is lacking in analysis and conclusions and does not address gaps and analyses not being carried out. It also lacks an overview perspective on how the issues fit in the context of larger air quality issues such as climate change. He suggested that PM could benefit from the approach taken for ozone. Mr. Findlay also questioned the lack of public consultation on the second five-year review of the agreement that is included in the report.

3. David Brooks of Friends of the Earth suggested that he saw a dichotomy in that many air quality issues derive from quantities of materials moving through the system. More background would be appropriate on the quantity issue to have a better context for the issues being addressed.

4. Barry Turner of Ducks Unlimited said that technological capabilities for monitoring air are improving and questioned if monitoring programs are keeping up with these improvements. He also suggested that the increasing rates of asthma are a significant indicator of air quality problems.

5. Elizabeth May of the Sierra Club said that Sierra Club's Toronto Office is the main focal point for their air quality issues and that they would appreciate an opportunity to meet with the Commission on this issue. She classed the report as a static document, not forward looking. Although recognizing it as a useful document, she gave the report a neutral grade as the information presented is likely factual, but she suggested that governments have been charitable with respect to real progress. The description of Ontario's Anti-Smog Action Plan on page 15 makes it sound as though they are doing something, when in fact there has been no meeting of the steering committee for over a year. She questioned what is real progress? The report does not deal with increased smog days and the relationship to climate change. Smog is due to emissions and climate change - need a context setting for climate change and ground level ozone. The report gives short shift to mercury and emerging issues.