

RCEN ENGO Face-to-Face Meeting on Sector Sustainability Tables
March 2, 2006
Victoria Park Suites – Best Western Hotel, Ottawa

MINUTES

Minutes: RCEN

Facilitator: François Bregha

Participants: Nashina Shariff (Toxics Watch Society of Alberta), Patrick Bonin (Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique), Maria Castro (Beyond Factory Farming Coalition), Hart Haidn (Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides), Paul Senez (Sierra Club of Canada/EcoForestry Institute), Olga Schwartzkopf (Soil and Water Conservation Society BC Chapter), Anna Tilman (Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition), Rachel Plotkin (Sierra Club of Canada), Marlo Reynolds (Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development), David Boyce (Southeast Environmental Assc.), David Coon (Conservation Council of New Brunswick), Susan Farquharson (Eastern Charlotte Waterways), Aftab Erfan (Youth Environmental Network), Marilyn Crawford (Bedford Mining Alert), Randall McQuaker (Resource Conservation Manitoba), Rick Findlay (Pollution Probe), Martha Kostuch (Friends of The Oldman River), Gabrielle Kretzschmar (New Brunswick Partners in Agriculture), Jamie Kneen (Mining Watch Canada), Dev Aujla (Sierra Youth Coalition), David Boehm (Friends of Cathedral Grove), Mary Richardson (Crooked Creek Conservancy), Anne Mitchell (Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy), Sandra Madray (Chemical Sensitivities Manitoba), Cliff Wallis (Friends of the Oldman River), John Bennett (Climate Action Network Canada), Brennain Lloyd (Northwatch), David Daughton (Eastern Co-operative Health Organization), Sue Scott (Atlantic Salmon Federation), Pierre Sadik (David Suzuki Foundation), Brigitte Gagné (RCEN), Suzanne Boileau (RCEN), Olivier Bertin-Mahieux (RCEN), Sarah Heiberg (RCEN), Manon Crêteau (RCEN)

1. **Welcome by Brigitte Gagné**
2. **SST Update by Dean Knudsen (Acting Director General, Competitiveness) from Environment Canada (EC)**

INTRODUCTION

- SSTs are a mechanism to provide advice on how best to achieve the highest level of environmental performance, as well as supporting Canada's long-term competitiveness and the health and well-being of Canada's citizens.
- The present status of the SSTs: 3 tables are currently operational (Energy, Mining and Forestry). Meetings to date have focused on assessing the impacts of these sectors on the state of the environment, and determining priority issues for the SSTs to focus on.
- The impetus is on EC to come up with a comprehensive "environmental scan" of the impacts of the sector, which is a big challenge for EC. At the next energy meeting, EC will be tabling a draft environmental scan.

NEXT STEPS

- The next step will be for each Table to set up working groups on each Table priority. These working groups will develop draft recommendations for the consideration of the Tables who will, in turn, make formal recommendations to the Government and other stakeholders.
- In terms of establishing new tables, EC has begun analyzing the priority sectors across Canada in terms of its impacts on the environment. Based on very early analysis, the

- energy, mining and transportation sectors are some of the sectors that seem to have significant impacts. The financial sector also has the potential to have a significant impact by influencing the actions of others.
- The whole value chain is being considered, as well as the effects of urbanization.
 - EC has created a SST Website (www.sst-tdds.gc.ca), which is an attempt to foster stronger relationships and increase transparency (all final documents produced by the Tables will be available on the website – e.g., records of decisions, agendas, terms of reference, recommendations).
 - The Cross-Cutting Table could have the role of influencing broader policy initiatives by delegating certain tables to address specific components of these broad issues (for example, a Clean Air Strategy would have components that relate to specific sectors that would need to be analyzed by individual Tables).
 - The main focuses of the new government, as per their election platform, include:
 1. Develop a Clean Air Act to legislate smog reductions;
 2. Take a “made in Canada” approach to GHG emissions – Minister has stated that she is against purchase of “Hot Air” [carbon trading system];
 3. Water – banning interbasin transfers; penalties for bilge dumping; and ensuring adequate watershed management;
 4. Clean up of federal contaminated sites;
 5. Requiring 5% average renewable content in Canada’s gasoline and diesel fuel

CONCLUSION

- The SST are a key, but not exclusive, mechanism to address sectoral consultations on environmental issues through multi-stakeholder advice to provide government with input and, as such, Dean strongly encourages ENGOs to continue to engage in the process and lead the direction of the Tables.
- The transformation of EC is still in the defining process and no fixed budget is currently allocated to the SST process. Results-based structures still need to be put in place to push the sectoral approach.
- EC is committed to provide funding for ENGOs and Aboriginal Peoples to continue to participate fully in the Tables and to allocate resources to the Tables to undertake research that will benefit the Tables’ work.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

These are responses to questions from participants:

- If the Tables want to be a mechanism for reducing GHGs to meet the Kyoto reduction quota by 2012, for example, we would evaluate which sectors are primarily responsible for Canada’s GHG emissions, then the Tables could provide recommendations on which technologies and other support would be required to make substantive progress on a national environmental issue in their sector. (i.e., focused on *how* instead of *what*).
- The SST recommendations will be directed to Deputy Ministers that are implicated, and possibly to the appropriate Cabinet Committee responsible for environmental issues, if required. There is currently no body/institution to which the SSTs report their recommendations.

- There is an existing multi-stakeholder processes for air quality issues in the forestry sector that is expected to advance the work of that Table, that does not exist for the other Tables.
- Federal fiscal policy could also be addressed by the SSTs (i.e., the Tables could make specific recommendations to address tax issues to be passed on to the Department of Finance).
- The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has the authority to review policies led by the ministry and could look at the SSTs; Dean aims to have an informal evaluation-audit early on in the process, and a Carleton professor is following the SST process (specifically the Mining SST) could be involved in that process.
- The Tables are focused primarily on environmental performance. However, improving environmental performance has links to both economic and social performance, and therefore must be considered. But the focus needs to remain on providing advice on how to improve environmental performance (in a way that supports long-term competitiveness and the well-being of citizens) to avoid overlap with other existing fora and keeping the SSTs focused.
- It was never intended that other consultations and regulatory mechanisms exclusively go through the SSTs or are replaced by the SSTs. In fact, many don't fit with the concept or focus of SSTs. It was suggested by Dean, that the question, how the SSTs will interface with existing consultation or regulatory mechanisms, like many others involving the SSTs, remains to be resolved at some future point.
- The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) has operated for a decade and had mixed results. The SST process is different from the NRTEE in that it will focus on providing expert advice and non-consensus-based recommendations to the government and other stakeholders.
- According to Dean, the double measure of the SSTs' success will be:
 - that effective recommendations are made by the Tables; and
 - that the Minister and Deputy Ministers find the Tables' recommendations valuable and act upon them.
- ENGOS remarked that the word “competitiveness” has no place in the SSTs; it implies that the SSTs are about deregulation (instead of sustainability, protection, and restoration). According to Dean, environmental performance and competitiveness are intricately related and can lead to “progress” in a holistic sense; however, many ENGOS assert that we need to change the paradigm.
- ENGOS remarked that it is disappointing that the Minister of the Environment, DM Samy Watson and ADM Casey Doyle did not accept the RCEN's invitation to the SST Face-to-face meeting.

3. SST Update from Table Delegates

Energy SST:

- The overall intention in the ESST is to push for sustainability of energy (Involved ENGOS perceive the dialogue advancing on those issues). Government participation has been continuous on the table (DFO, NRCan, etc...).
- ENGOS' single major concern: is there any political buy-in in this process?
- The terms of reference have been completed and the next meeting takes place on at the end of March.
- Two working groups have been formed: Energy Efficiency and National Energy Vision.

Forestry SST:

- ENGOs are asking to address issues with a wider scope, for example to include Sustainable forest management in a discussion on the Boreal forest.
- ENGOs would like to see funding for processes, a greater ENGO presence at the table and more caucus support.

Mining SST:

- ENGOs note a number of organizational problems, including Environment Canada failure to attend meetings where they are key presenters, last-minute distribution of documents, and difficulty in getting comments and commitments reflected in the meeting's record.
- Issue of greatest concern is the context of the Tables, i.e. Smart Regulations; secondly, there is no clarity on what useful purpose the Table might serve
- ENGOs are concerned about the imbalance of the table, industry and the Government are chairing, and several Table representatives appear to not have practical experience of familiarity with the sector
- ENGOs face a lot of work, because they need to follow the whole SST process, not just their own table, which means personal availability is an issue. They see a need for ENGO strategizing to follow all the tables jointly.

4. Plenary Discussion and articulations of a consolidated set of recommendations to Environment Canada**Group 1: Should there be more SSTs? Do ENGOs support the evolution seen in SSTs so far?**

- 1st recommendation: More Sector Tables should not be developed until the current SST process has been evaluated as operational and effective by all stakeholders;
- 2nd recommendation: The SST process needs to be de-linked from the smart regulation agenda for it to provide a meaningful forum for real dialogue among civil society, governments and industry;
- 3rd recommendation: Future ENGO participation at the Tables should be contingent on Environment Canada meeting the original conditions stated in the May and August 2005 RCEN letters to EC.
- 4th recommendation: That an ad-hoc caucus on engagement with the SST process be formed to work with the RCEN SST Consultation Coordinator.

Group 2: Can the operational problems encountered in the SSTs so far be resolved? How?

- 1st recommendation: RCEN should act as strengthening communications body;
- 2nd recommendation: Temporarily withdraw, not resign and ask for a written response to the letter;
- 3rd recommendation: Re-evaluate participation in the SSTs.

Group 3: What do ENGOs wish to achieve through the SST process? What would they like to avoid?

- 1st Recommendation: Create 1-page issue or topic position papers for various issues within the SSTs;
- 2nd Recommendation: Need to make clear that the government should stop choosing private health over public health;
- 3rd Recommendation: RCEN facilitate the members getting together to create a broad vision, with a suggestion to have a separate vision for each table.

Group 4: How can the impact of SSTs on other levels of consultation be best managed?

- 1st Need to analyze the fit and need of SSTs with other advisory bodies, such as Finance and Trade;
- 2nd Adequate resources need to be provided to ENGOs in order to ensure success ;
- 3rd Need to create a collective vision from the ENGOs to present to EC.

Plenary Session – Finding Commonalities:

- ENGOs need to contribute to the definition of timelines and conditions within the SST process;
- Current Negotiations need to move forward;
- Previous recommendations need to be met;
- ENGOs need to obtain a balance in representation of Industry, Government and ENGOs;
- ENGOs need a clarification of the boundaries between Smart Regulations and the SSTs, ENGOs clearly stated their objection to the SST process being driven by Smart Regs and wish for Smart Regs and the SSTs to be de-linked;
- The multi-stakeholder process standards need to be maintained and benchmarks need to set and met;
- Need to improve internal communications between ENGO delegates and other ENGO members.

5. Closing Remarks by Brigitte Gagné

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