



The State of  
Washington



# British Columbia/Washington Environmental Cooperation Council

March 30, 2001

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Governor, State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh  
Premier of British Columbia  
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Governor Locke and Premier Dosanjh:

As co-chairs of the British Columbia/Washington Environmental Cooperation Council, we are pleased to submit this letter as the Council's Annual Report for the year 2000.

The Environmental Cooperation Council (ECC) was established by *the Environmental Cooperation Agreement*, entered into by the Governor of Washington and the Premier of British Columbia on May 7, 1992. In addition to ourselves, the ECC membership includes the Regional Director General of Environment Canada's Pacific-Yukon Region; the Regional Director General of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Pacific Region; and the Regional Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency's Region 10. As well, staff from a number of federal, Tribal, First Nations, state, provincial and local agencies are involved in the work of the ECC and its supporting Task Forces.

## Year 2000 HIGHLIGHTS

ECC members have had a busy year coordinating actions and sharing information on environmental issues of mutual concern. In addition to the many Task Force and staff meetings, two formal Council meetings were held in 2000. Summaries of those meetings – as provided in our newsletter, the *Borderline News* - are attached for your reference and contain detailed information on the work of the Council and its Task Forces.

The May 2000 Council meeting in Spokane focused on environmental issues in the Columbia River Basin. This was the first time the Council has convened in an Eastern/interior location, and it was a highly successful variation from past meetings. The November 2000 Council meeting in Victoria focused on the progress to date in drafting a British Columbia/Washington Memorandum of Understanding for Environmental Assessment, as well as the work of the Council's five Task Forces.

Highlights from the ECC's work in the year 2000 include:

**1. Addressing Dissolved Gases in the Columbia River Basin - A Key Factor Affecting Threatened Fish**

As you know, water quality in the Columbia is a critical factor in restoring threatened fish populations. In the summer of 2000, ECC's Transboundary Gas Group completed *The Framework Plan for Coordinating Activities of the Columbia River Transboundary Gas Group*. This Framework will facilitate planning on both sides of the border and will contribute to broad system-wide efforts to manage dissolved gas problems in major tributaries throughout the Columbia system. The Plan identifies major action items and priorities for 2001/2002.

**2. Protecting the Shared Marine Waters of Puget Sound and the Georgia Basin**

The ECC, through its Puget Sound/Georgia Basin International Task Force, adopted two significant documents in 2000:

- A milestone report highlighting the Task Force's accomplishments titled *Pathways to Our Optimal Future: A Five-Year Review of the Activities of the International Task Force*; and
- A strategic plan aimed at preserving precious coastal ecosystems in our boundary waters prepared by the British Columbia Nearshore Habitat Work Group and titled *A Strategy to Prevent Coastal Habitat Loss and Degradation in the Georgia Basin*. This strategy addresses the highest priority area identified by ECC's Task Force, and reinforces Washington's 1998 *Nearshore Habitat Loss in Puget Sound: Recommendations for Improved Management*.

**3. Protecting the Ground Water Below Sumas and Abbotsford**

The Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer International Task Force brought together agencies, scientists and consultants to share research conducted on the vital and sensitive Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer at a June 2000 technical forum. Over 50 representatives from government, academia and industry attended.

The Washington Department of Ecology and the City of Abbotsford marshaled citizen action to reduce risk to the aquifer. Ecology's Whatcom Watersheds Pledge Program worked successfully with businesses above the aquifer whose operations pose some degree of risk to water quality. This community education and action project helps local citizens and businesses pledge to take actions that will help prevent pollution of the aquifer, streams and rivers in the area. The City of Abbotsford has developed its own pledge program, modeled after the successful Ecology program.

#### **4. Avoiding Flood Damage from the Nooksack River**

Whatcom County has made significant progress in developing the unsteady flow model for the lower Nooksack River, and continues to move forward on implementation of other parts of the Lower Nooksack Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan. The City of Abbotsford and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks have retained an engineering firm to update and recalibrate the unsteady flow model for Sumas Prairie, and to complete a preliminary flood damage survey.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The Province of British Columbia and the State of Washington will continue to work together in 2001 to ensure a high level of environmental quality through joint and coordinated action.

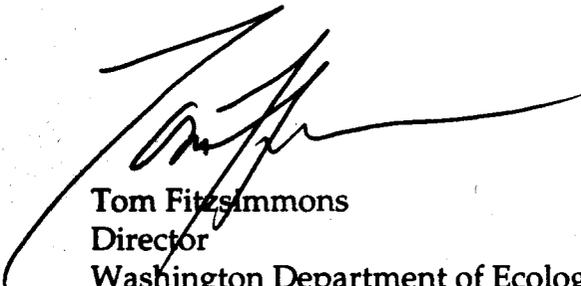
The ECC is striving to finalize the Environmental Assessment MOU in 2001. This is a major goal of the Council for the coming year, and it is our hope that the MOU will provide a valuable mechanism for further environmental cooperation and will serve as a model for the rest of North America in accomplishing regional cooperation on transboundary environmental issues.

With increasing public concern over air quality issues in our shared airshed, there is also a strong desire for federal, state, provincial and local government cooperation on this issue. A February 2001 Transboundary Air Management Forum, jointly hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency and Environment Canada, has renewed the efforts of the ECC and member regulatory agencies to establish a more comprehensive approach to joint transboundary air management.

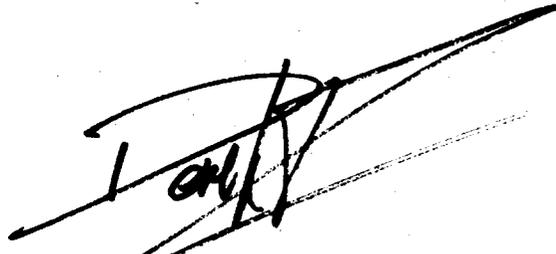
Washington and British Columbia will also continue our efforts to share and coordinate environmental information. Through the Transboundary Environmental Indicators Working Group we are continuing this work and developing several joint environmental indicators which will help us monitor and assess environmental health.

In summary, we believe that the ECC continues to be a significant catalyst to cooperative environmental management. In an era when transboundary environmental issues are growing in importance, the ECC serves as a critical forum to update, share information and collaborate with parties involved in initiatives that impact our respective jurisdictions. We also believe that the continued rotation of meeting locations throughout Washington and British Columbia will assist in diversifying the scope of environmental issues being examined by the ECC and its Task Forces in 2001, and will help ensure the continued importance of this joint venture.

Sincerely,



Tom Fitzsimmons  
Director  
Washington Department of Ecology



Derek Thompson  
Deputy Minister  
British Columbia Ministry of  
Environment, Lands and Parks

cc: Don Fast  
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