**Assessing Consensus**

In thinking about your question and the **principles regarding Consensus calls**, I first referred to the Working Group Guidelines, which state that they are “'best practice' materials that [the organization chartering the working group] may consider and/or utilize as appropriate, in … guiding a Working Group.” So, they are *guidelines*, which provides us (with our peculiar set of circumstances) some degree of discretion, limited by what our Charter says. In addition, the Chair is given discretion regarding the designation or labelling of Recommendations as having “Full Consensus,” “Consensus,” “Strong Support but Significant Opposition” or “Divergence,” as included in the Charter and the Working Group Guidelines, subject always to “acceptance” by the Working Group, as stated in the Charter.

With regard to the timing and the formality of the Consensus calls, I wish to avoid, where possible, additional processing steps (i.e., an additional reconsideration of apparently settled issues where we have strict deadlines and have completed significant discussion). That wish must be considered against the need to have the proper amount of reflection proceeding a request to deliver a final position of your “Group” (i.e, GAC, ALAC, SSAC, RSSAC, RysG, RrSG, NCSG, IPC, BC, or ISPCP, as applicable).

I understand that there might be instances where an EPDP member is obligated to consult with their Group prior to registering support for a Recommendation. But I hope that each member has continually consulted with their Group along the way so that this step is not a continual necessity.

For the **mechanics of a Consensus Ca**ll I am again guided by the Working Group Guidelines and the Charter, which state that Full Consensus is determined, “when no one in the group speaks against the recommendation in its last readings.” So, for Full Consensus, silence can be assent (or at least, non-objection). (But as outlined below, we will make it very clear if that is the case.)

The specific process might also depend on the degree of contention regarding that Recommendation. Take the ten or so Recommendations where the small groups last week came to agreements on whether the wording should remain the same or be edited. These might be handled in a way that reduces processing time but respects the import of the designation.

As the plenary considers the small group findings for adoption. we will likely find ourselves in agreement on many of them. We will reach a stage where there are no more comments to calls for differing opinions. For these types of issues, could we not have a Consensus Call at that point in Toronto and, so to speak, put them on the shelf? In this case, and in accordance with the Working Group guidelines, I would publish the precise Recommendation for consideration and clearly signal that there is a sense of agreement and the next call for opposing comments would be for determining the degree of Consensus.

If parties were reticent to commit to supporting a recommendation at this stage without going back to their Group, that would be permitted. We would then follow-up with an email affirmation or schedule the Consensus Call for the following meeting. In that case, the level of support for each recommendation will be published following the meeting to allow all groups to review the Team’s agreements and indicate agreement for the purpose of the Consensus Call or any disagreement.

For more controversial topics, we would provide additional time for Group consultations.

There will also be a Consensus Call on the final package of Recommendation in order to provide the opportunity for a balancing of all the Recommendations.

In determining the **degree of “Consensus**,” I am guided by the EPDP Charter that states, "for the purpose of assessing level of consensus, Members are required to represent the formal position of their SG/C or SO/AC, not individual views or positions.” I.e., the level of support will be assessed based on the positions expressed by each Group, not individual positions. There are a couple of ways to adopt this guideline.

In assessing the level of Consensus, we would have each Constituency, Stakeholder Group and Advisory Committee (as applicable) registering support (or lack thereof) for a Recommendation. Full Consensus is, of course, unanimous, while Consensus is “a position where only a small minority disagrees, but most agree.” I think I would find it difficult to describe a Recommendation as having “Consensus” support if there is more than one Group indicating non-support.

More likely and based on our experience to date, if any Groups register non-support, that position will be adopted by more than one Group. In that case, I would find it very difficult to describe that Recommendation as having Consensus Support. This is based in the reality that even if we labelled such a result as having Consensus Support, the Recommendation would likely be rejected at the Council level.

It is our objective to achieve Consensus or Full Consensus on as many recommendations as possible. Therefore, an iterative process might occur for several rounds so those recommendations that did not achieve consensus can be deliberated and amended.

In cases where there is disagreement registered by any Constituency, Stakeholder Group, Stakeholder Organization or Advisory Committee to a Recommendation that is published, that Group will be afforded the opportunity to include a written comment in the Final Report as a “Minority View.”