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**Acting Executive Director**

Marcel C. Acosta

April 11, 2008

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee  
National Capital and External  
Territories Department  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

Dear Committee Secretary:

As the acting executive director of the National Capital Authority's (NCA) sister agency in Washington, DC, I respectfully offer my comments to the Joint Standing Committee regarding its inquiry on the role of the NCA. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the federal planning agency in the United States, has had a long-standing relationship with Canberra and the Authority. Like the NCA, we work to preserve the beauty and historic significance of our capital.

As planned national capitals, our cities are designed to function as living municipalities and as symbols of our nation's values and aspirations. To effectively balance the equally important development needs of a vibrant metropolis and a national capital, federal planning organizations must continually collaborate with other federal, local, and civic stakeholders on matters including commemoration, placemaking, architecture, security, and parks and open space.

To carry out this duty effectively, it is important to seek partnerships that benefit both federal and local needs. Our agency strives to maintain a strong relationship with the local government. While we recognize that many of the longer-term interests of the national capital may not always be shared by those of the District of Columbia, both governments share the mutual goal of ensuring that Washington continues to serve as a model for the nation and the world.

In recognition of this important objective, four of our Commission's twelve members represent the interests of the local government. This ensures that the District government is able to provide input on federal projects that have a major impact on the local community due to the large federal presence in the city.

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In addition, the NCPC and the District are currently partnering on several new and significant planning initiatives including a citywide open space plan, a coordinated planning effort for the Center City and a downtown circulator transit system. The joint projects capitalize on the strength of Washington's cultural venues, its architecture and open spaces, its vibrant neighborhoods, world-class transit, and its national and international presence. Since launching these joint efforts, our relationship with the local government has evolved into a fruitful and productive association that makes the most of our similarities and shared goals. It also has helped to minimize when possible the unnecessary duplication of municipal and local planning functions.

In regard to the matter of oversight, NCPC carries out the planning mandates enacted by the U.S. Congress and we report to the Executive Branch of the United States Government. In particular we routinely keep the President's Office of Management and Budget apprised of our ongoing activities. Further, our monthly Commission meetings are held in public and we frequently hold public meetings on key planning initiatives to further our engagement with the local community.

It is my observation that much like NCPC, the NCA seeks to advance Commonwealth interests that contribute to local planning and development objectives. Over the last several years, the NCPC and NCA have sustained a regular, mutually beneficial exchange of ideas on important planning issues. Last year, I personally had the pleasure of visiting with NCA leadership and staff as well as local and territorial planning representatives. It was interesting to discuss our many similarities including the need to balance local and national interests.

My trip to Canberra coincided with the NCA's hosting of the fifth gathering of Capitals Alliance. Launched by Brasilia, Canberra, Ottawa, and Washington in 2001, the Alliance provides a strategic forum for the invaluable exchange of information on critical issues that are unique to capital cities. I was extremely impressed by the expertise, professionalism, and enthusiasm of the NCA staff and our shared interest in making our respective capitals worthy of our nations. I thank you for the opportunity to comment and I invite you to contact me if you think I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Marcel Acosta  
Acting Executive Director