

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

Report warns of death by air pollutants

Up to 16,000 Canadians die from air pollution each year, Suzuki Foundation says

BY JAMIE WOODS

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Up to 16,000 Canadians die prematurely from air pollution every year, a recent study by the David Suzuki Foundation reports. But the group says Ottawa's only response so far has been a lot of hot air.

Two weeks prior to the Joint Ministers' of Energy and Environment meeting last week in Halifax, the environmental foundation released its 50-page report detailing the growing impact of air pollution and climate change on Canadians' health.

Entitled *Taking Our Breath Away*, the report projects a 50-percent growth in emissions of particulate, one of the most hazardous air pollutants, by 2020, and a rise of 20 percent in greenhouse gases by the same year.

The report, which was co-authored by two epidemiologists and an air pollution expert, also indicated that Canada is the second highest per capita emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. Canadians also use as much coal, gas, and oil per year as the 750 million people living in Africa.

Using federal government figures, the report estimates \$10-

billion a year could be saved if smog is reduced in Canada's major cities.

Dr John Last, a co-author of the report and epidemiology professor at the University of Ottawa, says while 16,000 deaths seems like a high number, it's minute compared to the number of those who have contracted other health problems from pollution.

"I feel vaguely uncomfortable about dramatizing that kind of number because it's trivial when

pollution causes asthma, it's beyond doubt that air pollution exacerbates the problem.

At last week's joint ministers' meeting, federal and provincial ministers signed the Canada-Wide Acid Rain Strategy, an agreement that commits governments, after the year 2000, to establish targets for the reduction of sulphur-dioxide emissions.

They also discussed reducing

greenhouse gases through international emissions trading, where low polluting nations would be rewarded with cash from high polluting nations.

But the problem, says Suzuki Foundation outreach co-ordinator Alex Boston, is that Ottawa hasn't implemented any mechanisms to directly address the problem here in Canada.

"It would permit Canada to

increase or maintain current emissions," he said of the agreement. "It basically allows Canada to not clean up its backyard and pay for the right to do so."

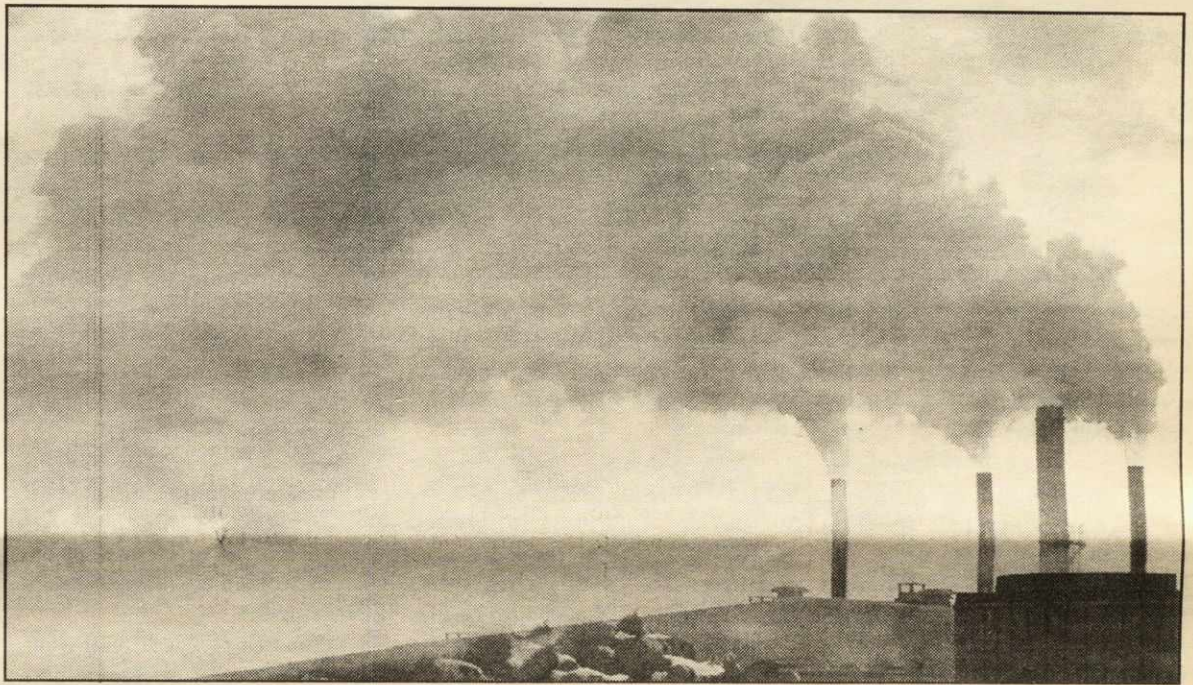
International emissions trade is expected to top the agenda of the Conference of the Parties summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina next month. Canada is sending a delegation to the summit, which will run from Nov. 2 to Nov. 11.

"[16,000 is] trivial when you compare it to the much, much larger number of people who experience chronic damage to health or short-term episodes of damage like asthma."

you compare it to the much, much larger number of people who experience chronic damage to health or short-term episodes of damage like asthma," Last said, referring to the results of a federal government study.

That study revealed a 28 percent increase in hospitalization for asthma among boys between 1980 and 1990, and 18 percent among girls during the same period.

Last says while there's no conclusive evidence that air



Stinky old stacks doing their level best to kill you.

York gets gift: a piece of rainforest

BY DEREK CHEZZI

TORONTO (CUP) — Environmental Studies students at York University will soon be able to study a rainforest firsthand following a gift of Costa Rican land to the university by a Canadian researcher.

Dr. Woody Fisher, a medical researcher and co-founder of the Canadian Liver Foundation, donated 133 hectares of rainforest land to York last week.

Located near the village of San Isidro, Costa Rica, the land — called Las Nubes — has been virtually untouched by humans.

The \$100,000-valued piece of rainforest will be used by York to study sustainable land development.

Nearly \$26,000 in gifts and pledges have been raised for a fund supporting research at the site for the upcoming year. The money will be used to send students to the site.

Susan Znajda, an environmental studies graduate student who visited the land for two weeks last summer, says the gift will enhance the learning experience for students in the faculty.

"[Las Nubes] gives the opportunity for students to go down and learn more about tropical ecology... to witness firsthand and walk through a tropical rainforest" said Znajda, who will be returning to the site for six months in January.

Nestled on the edge of a forest that sits above the Los Cusingos Bird Sanctuary, Las Nubes is part of the largest undisturbed raw forest in Central America.

An agreement with Costa Rica's Tropical Science Centre will

"A terrorist act is designed to coerce governments into acting. I consider this my act of terrorism."

ensure the land and surrounding forest are protected from being used for cash crops and cattle grazing.

"This gift is the perfect gift" said Peter Victor, dean of York's faculty of Environmental Studies, when the land was presented to York last week.

"It's a gift of vision."

While the Las Nubes site is small with respect to the forest in which it is found, its location near the perimeter is crucial in protecting the wooded land on the other side from further depletion.

And Dr. Woody Fisher, 64, says he hopes the secured property will be a political tool.



"A terrorist act is designed to coerce governments into acting," Fisher said. "I consider this my act of terrorism."

The physician bought the farmland after learning about the deforestation taking place in Costa Rica. He says the government wasn't moving fast enough to protect natural habitats.

"We're fiddling our way into extinction," Fisher said.

"I wanted to see the land preserved. Now it's going to be used to promote education, research and international cooperation. It has matured into something more substantial than I ever dreamed."

THE MARQUEE CLUB

urban beat matinee

Every Sunday From 4-8pm, \$3 Cover

November 8, The Freedom Jazz Band
November 15, AFRO-MUSICA

Hell's Kitchen opens at 3:00pm, check out the Sunday Specials

SWING & LATIN DANCE LESSONS

Every Monday, \$5 per lesson

SWING Lessons, 8-9pm • LATIN Lessons, 9-10pm
With Su Dalton and Andrya Duff

For more information call 423-2072

Stick around until close for
MO' MUSIC • MO' FUN • MO' DANCIN'

Hell's Kitchen opens at 4:00pm