

Joint Statement
on
Transboundary Air Quality
by the
Government of Canada
and the
Government of the United States of America

Transboundary air quality has become a matter of increasing concern to people in both the United States and Canada. This issue has many dimensions, including the long range transport of air pollutants and the phenomenon of "acid rain". Both Governments have recognized the need for close and continuing cooperation to protect and enhance transboundary air quality.

Discussions on transboundary air quality were initiated through an Exchange of Notes of November 16 and 17, 1978, in which the United States Department of State proposed that "representatives of the two Governments meet at an early date to discuss informally (a) the negotiation of a cooperative agreement on preserving and enhancing air quality, and (b) other steps which might be taken to reduce or eliminate the undesirable impacts on the two countries resulting from air pollution".

In reply, the Canadian Government indicated that it shared United States concern about the growing problem of transboundary air pollution. In particular, it noted the potential environmental impact, and the transboundary significance, of the long range transport of air pollutants. It therefore welcomed the opening of "informal discussions . . . with a view to developing agreement on principles which recognize our shared responsibility not to cause transboundary environmental damage, and which might lead to cooperative measures to reduce or eliminate environmental damage caused by transboundary air pollution".

Bilateral discussions of an informal nature took place on December 15, 1978, and June 20, 1979, and both Governments have exchanged discussion papers on principles which they believe have relevance to transboundary air pollution. As a result of these discussions it has become clear that Canada and the United States share a growing concern about the actual and potential effects of transboundary air pollution and are prepared to initiate cooperative efforts to address transboundary air pollution problems.

There is already a substantial basis of obligation, commitment and cooperative practice in existing environmental relations between Canada and the United States on which to address problems in this area. Both Governments are mutually obligated through the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to ensure that

"... boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property . . ." (Article IV)