Good Neighbours

Canada and the United States have a long history of mutually beneficial cooperation to protect our common environment. The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which created the International Joint Commission (IJC), established the basis for joint management of shared boundary waters. For many years the IJC has been one of the primary mechanisms for bilateral cooperation on environmental issues.

In 1916 Canada and the United States signed a Convention to facilitate the care and preservation of migratory birds.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, signed initially in 1972, provides a framework for dealing with pollution of the Great Lakes. The Agreement was revised in 1978, and again in 1987, to deal with newly emerging pollution problems in the Great Lakes.

In 1982 the two countries signed an Agreement on the Management of Radioactive Waste, and in 1986 they signed a further Agreement on the Transborder Shipment of Hazardous Wastes.

In 1986 Canada and the United States signed the North American Waterfowl Management Agreement to protect and rehabilitate the North American Waterfowl habitat. In 1987 the two countries signed the Porcupine Caribou Herd Management Agreement, which provides for the joint management and conservation of this herd, which migrates annually from Canada into the United States and back to Canada.

Canadian Actions

Canada has launched a substantial emissions control program to reduce both its contribution to acid rain damage in Canada and its export of pollution to the United States. This initiative is in addition to existing, highly successful programs under the Canadian Clean Air Act of 1971 and complementary provincial legislation, which had already established stringent ambient air quality standards in Canadian communities.

Canada's goal is to reduce acid rain deposition to less than 18 pounds an acre each year in all vulnerable areas, a reduction that would, according to scientific assessments, halt the process of acidification and prevent further damage.

The governments of Canada and the seven provinces east of Saskatchewan have signed agreements to reduce SO_2 emissions to 2.3 million tonnes by 1994, a reduction of 50 percent of 1980 allowable levels. The reduction is absolute, requiring offsets in existing sources for any additional emissions from new sources. Canada's control program is working—emissions are already down by almost 40 percent, and it is clear that Canada will achieve its objective of a 50-percent reduction by 1994, or earlier.

The program is designed to let the private sector and provincial utilities choose the most cost-effective means of achieving the required emissions reductions. Experience over the past four years has demonstrated that major reductions are technically and economically feasible. For instance, Ontario Hydro, Canada's largest utility, is forecasting a worst-case electricity rate increase of 2.9 percent. New technology development and demonstration projects have been successfully incorporated into Canada's program without compromising the 1994 deadline for full implementation.

Experience gained since the early 1970s in both Canada and the United States clearly demonstrated the potential for improved energy conservation at relatively low cost. Canadian utilities are using energy productivity improvements as a very cost-effective means of cutting emissions.

Once fully implemented, the Canadian acid rain control program will cost the private sector and provincial utilities about $410 million annually. This is in addition to the (C)$15 billion spent since 1970 to implement Canada's ambient air quality program.

In addition to its sulphur-dioxide control program, Canada's car and truck emission standards are as tough as any national standards in the world and will maintain total national emissions of nitrogen oxides at or below current levels until at least 1995. The federal government has announced its intention to tighten these standards further within the next five years.

Acid Rain, The United States And Canada

Canada's control program is necessary but not, by itself, enough. An American program to reduce the flow of SO_2 emissions into Canada to half the 1980 level, or to about 2 million tonnes per year, is also needed to protect the Canadian environment from further damage by acid rain. Approximately 90 percent

Declining sugar maples in Quebec.

Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Energie et des Ressources