

# Toward an Environmentally Healthy Canada

**A**t first glance, Canada seems an unlikely place to find serious environmental problems. With less than half of one per cent of the world's population scattered across seven per cent of the world's land mass, this country still has the image of being pristine wilderness.

In the north there remains a lot of wild country inhabited by wolf packs, grizzlies and polar bears. In many areas you can drink the water straight from the lakes, and the only sign of humans will be the plume of wood smoke from a campfire.

But Canada, like any modern, industrial nation, is feeling the environmental strains of too much pollution and too-rapid exploitation of natural resources.

These days even great distances are not a shield against such long-range problems as acid rain, toxic-chemical fallout, climate change and the thinning ozone layer. In the more populated regions there are persistent forestry and fishery shortages, and almost all urban areas are having a difficult time disposing of their garbage.

Public opinion polls in recent years consistently show the state of the environment is one of the top concerns with Canadians, who are bombarded by a growing tide of facts, figures and statements from a large number of public-interest groups and university and government researchers. The nation's communications media, which see the environment as big news, feed out a steady stream of stories about the environment every day.

## Environmentally Friendly Products Program Announced



Sygnia

**P**ollution continues to threaten the earth's protective shell.

**E**nvironment Canada has launched a program to identify products that conserve energy, are recycled or recyclable, are biodegradable and are free of ozone-depleting substances.

The new program will enable Canadians to take a more active role in helping to protect the environment by choosing products that cause it the least damage.

The idea for the Canadian labelling program originated with the Conservation and Protection Service of Environment Canada, about four years ago. A similar program

has been in effect in West Germany since 1978. More than 2 000 German products now bear the United Nations' blue-angel symbol attesting to their environmental safety.

The average Canadian family of four disposes of 6 kg of garbage a day — a national total of 9 million t a year. Getting rid of that garbage costs hundreds of millions of dollars every year and contributes to a multitude of environmental problems. Cars and other vehicles emit pollution. Chemicals used around the home and garden can also cause environmental damage.

The federal government, through Environment Canada, is providing both financial and administrative support to launch the Environmentally Friendly Products Program, which is designed to be self-financing by 1990.

Manufacturers or processors applying to use the logo will be required to pay an administrative fee to have their product or process tested for "environmental friendliness." Companies whose products pass the test — and who want to label their products with the special logo — will be required to pay an annual licence fee, based on retail sales.

Product categories and performance criteria for the Environmentally Friendly Products Program will be decided by an advisory panel, established under the authority of the new Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). The multisectoral panel will have members from consumer and environmental interest groups, industry, labour and academics.

