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Canada pledges 50 per cent slash in acid rain emissions

Canada's environment ministers have agreed to cut in half by 1994 the amount of sulphur dioxide this country spews into the air.

Following a recent meeting with provincial environment ministers and senior officials, Environment Minister Charles Caccia announced that they had formed a working group to determine how to meet the goal. Such a commitment is expected to cost between \$10 billion and \$20 billion over two decades. That is a rough estimate of the cost of building, financing and operating new equipment needed to help save Canada's environment from destruction by acid rain.

In a statement following the meeting of environment ministers, Mr. Caccia said, "We will proceed independently from the United States in developing a Canadian solution on the matter of acid rain and we hope that the US will join us at the earliest possible date."

Ministers reaffirmed their agreement on the need to reduce wet sulphate depo-

sition to 20 kilograms *per hectare per year*, the level which lakes and rivers can tolerate without damage occurring. Reaching this level in the sensitive areas of eastern Canada will require emission reductions of up to 50 per cent in Canada and major emission reductions in the United States.

The price tag of such a reduction has a wide spread for a number of reasons, including the need to develop some new industrial processes and the uncertainties of nuclear power costs. Nuclear plants can replace coal-fired plants, which produce air pollution.

The cleanup means cutting sulphur dioxide from major polluters across eastern Canada by up to about 2.2 million tonnes a year by 1994. Most of the bite will come out of the smokestacks of five big smelters.

Canada is basing its promise on the 4.5 million tonnes a year of sulphur dioxide that the polluters were allowed to emit in 1980. Actual pollution was



Ontario's Environment Minister Andrew Brandt (left) states his province's position on acid rain as federal Environment Minister Charles Caccia (centre) listens.



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