

Acid rain measures announced

Environment Minister John Roberts and Fisheries and Oceans Minister Roméo LeBlanc have announced measures aimed at reducing the problem of acid rain.

In releasing the second Canada-U.S. Bilateral Research Consultation Group report on acid rain, Mr. Roberts said that energy alternatives in Canada will be developed in a manner to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment. The report was also released by the Canadian Department of External Affairs and by the United States Department of State in Washington.

The Canada/United States Research Consultation Group was created in 1978 to provide the two governments with a clear statement of the nature of the long-range transport of air pollutants. The second annual report complements the first research consultation group report and is intended to provide a more detailed assessment on the present situation regarding acidic precipitation.

Acidic lakes

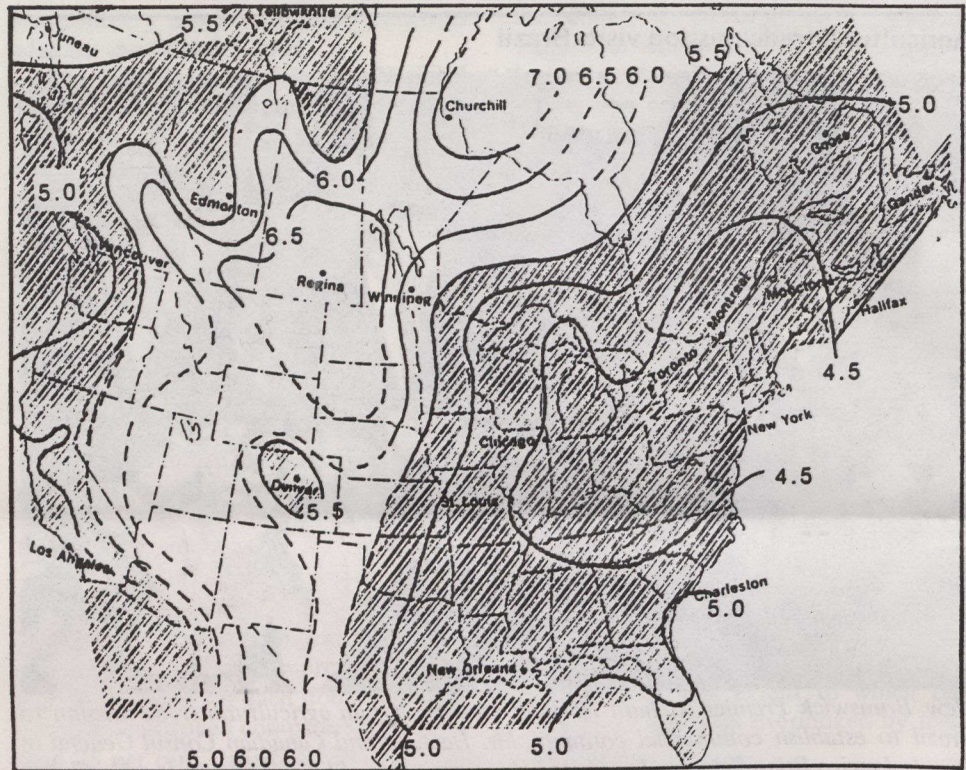
The second report estimates that between 2,000 and 4,000 lakes in Ontario are so acidic that they can no longer sustain desirable fish species.

The report also said that half of the sulphur deposited in eastern Canada originates in the United States and industrial emissions of acid-producing pollution could increase over the next 20 years unless effective control action is taken. Mr. Roberts pledged his support in continuing to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions.

The minister pointed out that Canada faces a similar energy dilemma to that of the United States. "We, like our neighbours to the south, have to achieve energy self-sufficiency," he said. "We too are looking for alternatives to our dependence on foreign oil which will involve increasing our use of domestic coal. However, we are going to develop these alternatives in an environmentally sound manner. The political will to do this in Canada is strong and we must demonstrate this to the United States."

The group's report also shows that the geographic extent of the acid rain problem is increasing in the United States, particularly in the southeast and midwest, with all states east of the Mississippi River affected to some extent.

The impact of acid rain is particularly



Dashed lines indicate where data is sparse and thus only the general pattern is indicated. The shaded area indicates regions in Canada and United States where precipitation is more acid than the normal "clean" rainfall, which has a pH of 5.6.

serious in central and eastern Canada where major emissions of sulphur are associated with the smelting industry and coal-fired power plants. Allowable sulphur emissions in eastern Canada from the smelting industry, which were 2.5 million tons last year, have been reduced to 2.1 million this year and are expected to be further cut to 1.9 million by 1983.

Mr. Roberts expressed his concern with sulphur dioxide emissions produced by the coal-fired power industry, which now accounts for 500,000 tons in eastern Canada. He said that emissions could increase if development does not proceed with adequate controls. The minister said his department would be meeting with provincial counterparts, who are using coal or considering coal conversion, to discuss how acid rain pollutants could be reduced.

New program

Fisheries and Oceans Minister Roméo LeBlanc also announced a \$10-million program that would support measures for controlling acid rain. The four-year program is intended to supplement research by the department into the effects of acid rain on fish.

The new Fisheries and Oceans acid

rain program will include these main area of study:

- compiling a national inventory of the effects of acidification on fish and fish habitats to provide a baseline against which future changes can be compared;
- deliberate acidification of a lake in the department's experimental lakes area, near Kenora, Ontario and whole ecosystem experiments to test the effect of acid deposition on freshwater lakes;
- watershed studies in various parts of eastern Canada to check the rates and mechanisms by which fisheries and fish habitats change in response to acid precipitation;
- intensive fisheries studies on Atlantic salmon at Medway River, Nova Scotia, and on Arctic char at Ungava Bay;
- various laboratory studies on the effects of acid rain on fish in relation to fertilization, hatching, etc.;
- mitigation projects, such as developing technology to reduce acidity by adding lime to an Atlantic salmon river, and the possibility of breeding acid-resistant stocks of fish; and
- assessment of the economic and social costs associated with the deterioration of the fisheries resource attributable to acid rain.