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CANADA REACHES FOREST FIRE FIGHTING ARRANGEMENT WITH USA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, announced today that an agreement has been reached between Canada and the United States authorizing the direct exchange of forest fire fighting resources among participating departments and agencies of the two countries.

The Arrangement was negotiated by the Department of External Affairs on behalf of provincial and federal departments involved in fighting forest fires, and ratified through an exchange of diplomatic notes between the two countries. The Canadian Committee on Forest Fire Control, which includes representatives from federal, provincial, industry and non-government fire control agencies, was instrumental in working out the terms.

Dr. MacGuigan expressed satisfaction that the conclusion of the Arrangement will facilitate the ability of both countries to work together for mutual benefit.

This Arrangement authorizes individual provincial and federal agencies to deal directly with U.S. federal agencies in exchanging fire fighting resources as the need arises without having to go through complicated channels of approval each time.

All provinces are included in the agreement except Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland which have chosen to opt out. These provinces may join at any time. Federal departments involved are Indian and Northern Affairs and Environment Canada.

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Dr. MacGuigan said: "It is appropriate that, during National Forestry Week in Canada, this cooperative Arrangement has been reached which will help both countries to protect their forests from the devastating effects of wildfires."

On the average, the amount of merchantable timber burned annually between 1968-1977 equalled one-quarter of the annual harvest. Canada experienced record fire seasons in 1980 and 1981. The area of commercial timber burned in 1981 actually exceeded the combined area logged in the provinces and territories. The value of Canada's forest products shipments amounted to \$22.1 billion in 1980, an above average fire season, illustrating the great impact of forest fires on our economy.

Fire fighting agencies in Canada and the U.S. are unable to constantly maintain the level of equipment and personnel required during the worst fire seasons. Exchanges under this Arrangement will permit optimum use of resources where and when they are needed.

The Arrangement covers all forms of fire fighting equipment from aircraft, hoses and hand tools to infra-red scanning devices as well as fire fighting personnel.

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