



news release

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CANADA RESPONDS TO UNITED STATES INACTION ON ACID RAIN

The Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, and the Minister for Environment, the Honourable Charles Caccia, today officially registered Canada's deep disappointment with the United States Administration's announcement that efforts to combat acid rain would be limited solely to research for the foreseeable future.

A diplomatic note delivered to the USA Administration asks the United States to clarify how it intends to meet its obligations to Canada in the matter of transboundary air pollution. "We are asking our good friends to confirm their willingness, on the basis of undertakings already given, to accept their shared responsibility to protect the North American environment and move immediately towards mutually acceptable programs to combat acid rain," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

At least half of the acid rain falling in Canada comes from the USA. "The continued delay in adopting effective abatement measures is not acceptable to Canada. Canada considers that the decision fails to take full account of USA undertakings and ignores principles contained in bilateral treaties directed at protecting the North American environment. The development of complementary control programs will be delayed as a result of the position taken by the Administration," Mr. MacEachen said. "Even if Canadian sulphur dioxide emissions were to cease altogether, we could not alone protect the Canadian environment".

.../2

Mr. MacEachen recalled assurances given by President Reagan during his visit to Canada in 1981 that both countries must cooperate to control air pollution that respects no borders.

Minister Caccia noted that unilateral programs in Canada to reduce acid-causing emissions by twenty-five per cent by 1990 have already been adopted. "Canadian federal and provincial governments are ready to proceed with an additional program of emission reductions which, in conjunction with USA abatement measures, would achieve a target loading for wet sulphate deposition of 20 kilograms per hectare per year (18 pounds per acre per year), the level needed to protect moderately sensitive lakes and streams. The damage already caused by inaction is enormous for both countries and will grow with each postponement of the action," the Minister said. "This damage has been established by clear and convincing evidence."

The Canada-USA Memorandum of Intent signed almost four years ago recognized the already serious problem of acid rain and the urgent need to protect the environment from damage being caused by transboundary air pollution by reducing emissions. The MOI is based on Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration that states have "the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction." It is also consistent with the obligations undertaken by both Canada and the United States under the 1979 ECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution. The long-standing commitment of our two countries not to cause damage to the environment of the other is also enshrined in the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. "Canada had anticipated and expected that control measures could be taken shortly, in view of these commitments", said Mr. MacEachen. "We therefore deeply regret there is no indication in statements by the Administration that these undertakings will be given priority. Acid rain is a grave threat unless both countries reduce their emissions now."

There have already been over 3000 scientific studies on acid rain. The Canadian Government firmly believes that sufficient scientific evidence has already been accumulated by prestigious scientific bodies in

- 3 -

North America and Europe on which to initiate controls programs. "Further scientific studies should be undertaken as part of a program to evaluate and improve abatement efforts and not as a substitute for those efforts," said Mr. Caccia.

Like Canada, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Austria and Switzerland have all agreed, on the basis of the available and overwhelming scientific evidence, to adopt programs to cut back sulphur dioxide emissions. The USA policy does not envisage any control program. The diplomatic note underlines Canada's deep regret at this lack of progress.

- 30 -