



Canadian Council
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des ministres
de l'environnement

Environment Ministers Take Action on Air, Water and Soil Quality

Yellowknife, October 12, 2006 – Federal, provincial and territorial environment ministers today affirmed their commitment to work cooperatively and actively to address climate change and air, soil and water quality. The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) was in Yellowknife as part of a series of meetings bringing together ministers responsible for natural resources and the environment.

“These are issues of paramount importance to Canadians,” Saskatchewan Environment Minister and outgoing CCME President John Nilson said. “We will meet in the near future to continue our work on ensuring an effective national approach.”

CCME plays a strong role in setting common objectives and outcomes for air quality. Ministers adopted a new Canada-wide standard for mercury emissions from coal-fired electric power generation plants. The Canada-wide standard will include provincial and territorial caps on emissions from existing plants and setting more stringent capture rates for new plants. The standards, which come into effect in 2010, will capture a minimum of 60 percent of the mercury emitted from coal-powered plants, which represent the largest single source of mercury emissions in Canada from human activity.

Ministers also expressed their support for the Canada-wide municipal wastewater strategy currently being developed under their guidance. Ministers directed officials to consult with municipalities, Aboriginal communities, system operators, environmental organizations and other interested parties on key elements of the strategy this fall and winter, recognizing that full information on the costs and potential funding mechanisms will develop in tandem with the strategy.

Insufficiently treated municipal wastewater effluent is one of the largest sources of pollution, by volume, discharged to surface water bodies in Canada. The developing strategy is intended to establish discharge limits so Canada’s water bodies are protected, to harmonize regulatory requirements across the country, and to propose sustainable funding mechanisms for its implementation.

“It’s timely to engage our municipal partners and other organizations that have an important stake in the issue,” said Minister Nilson. “We need their ideas so that the strategy is both practical and effective. I’m sure that their expertise will add significant value to the proposal as it develops.”

Ministers agreed to continue to explore opportunities to reduce packaging in Canada. The aim is to address packaging content, the reduction of the amount of packaging and the management of waste packaging, including reuse and recycling.

Ministers also agreed to continue to explore options to improve environmental assessment processes in Canada by developing a streamlined regulatory approach that is delivered in the most efficient manner.

Following the meeting, New Brunswick Minister Roland Haché will take over as President of CCME for 2006/07.

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