

Environment Ministers tackle waste, adopt Canada-Wide Vision for Water

Kingston, October 29, 2009 – Ministers of Environment from across the country met in Kingston today to discuss numerous issues of key importance to the environment.

Federal, provincial and territorial Ministers approved in principle two major initiatives designed to reduce the amount of waste generated and sent to landfills, and adopted a Canada-Wide vision for water.

“Clearly we need to do much more to reduce waste from the residential, industrial, commercial and institutional sectors across Canada. Committing to Extended Producer Responsibility and launching a Sustainable Packaging Strategy are two critical steps,” said Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen, who chaired the meeting. “I look forward to governments across our country moving even more quickly in the coming years, and to working with industry to make meaningful reductions in packaging.”

The Canada-wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) encourages producers to take responsibility for the life cycle of their product, including the post-consumer stage. EPR shifts the financial and physical burden of waste management away from taxpayers and municipalities and assigns it to individual brand owners, manufacturers or first importers. Ministers also agreed to work to increase public awareness of the impact of the life cycle of products on the environment.

Under the Action Plan, Canadian jurisdictions commit to working towards the development of EPR legislation and/or regulations to allow for action on identified priority products and materials.

The second initiative, the Sustainable Packaging Strategy, outlines a set of short- and long-term measures to help improve packaging sustainability.

In addition, Ministers endorsed a Canada-wide strategic vision for water, which outlines how CCME will help ensure that Canadians have access to clean, safe and sufficient water to meet their needs in ways that also maintain the integrity of ecosystems.

The strategic vision aligns well with CCME work on water-related issues and will be a useful tool in guiding the development of future CCME activities, promoting clarity and transparency in dealings with jurisdictions, partners and stakeholders.

Ministers also supported a Canada-wide water efficiency labeling program, agreed to earlier this year by the Council of the Federation. Water efficiency labeling supports the conservation and wise use of water under CCME’s Strategic Directions for Water by providing consumers with information on the water efficiency of appliances and fixtures such as toilets, shower heads and taps.

Consistent with the Canada-wide strategic vision for water, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further collaborative efforts to address a number of issues including nutrient loading in Canadian waters, the valuation of water-based natural capital, and developing a better understanding of groundwater resources and management.

Ministers reviewed the progress of federal/provincial/territorial work to develop a new comprehensive air management system for Canada and supported further development

of the system. Health and environmental non-government organizations and industry are active partners in this ground-breaking collaborative work.

Ministers affirmed their commitment to reducing federal-provincial duplication in environmental assessment while ensuring high environmental standards are met. They endorsed a CCME report that recommends jurisdictions consider a range of environmental assessment tools and models in their legislation. Ministers also committed to work for advances in the near term, as well as through the five year review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* set to begin in 2010.

Ministers also received a report that helps build common understanding about the use of Regional Strategic Environmental Assessments as a tool for improved planning and decision-making, including its role in addressing cumulative effects.

CCME Ministers are committed to ensuring that jurisdictions are able to measure, track and report progress on the reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG). They agreed to work together to minimize duplication and reduce the reporting burden for industry and governments through the development of a single-window GHG reporting system.

Ministers have agreed to meet in November to discuss preparations for the COP 15 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

CCME is the major intergovernmental forum in Canada for discussion and joint action on environmental issues of national and international concern.

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Backgrounders are available on the following topics:

- CCME Setting Strategic Directions for Water
- A Canada-Wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility
- A Canada-Wide Strategy for Sustainable Packaging
- Environmental Assessment Recommendations

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CCME Setting Strategic Directions for Water

Preamble

Water is an important priority for Canadians.

CCME is actively engaged in Canada-wide water issues, and has built on its commitment to provide leadership on water through the development of a collaborative, strategic Canada-wide vision.

The CCME vision entitled *Setting Strategic Directions for Water*, provides a strategic, forward-looking framework to guide CCME in all future actions and activities related to water. Our vision includes a mission, goals, and rationale. Examples of past, current and potential future initiatives are provided to illustrate how they support and flow from the vision/goals.

CCME

Setting Strategic Directions for Water



VISION:

Canadians have access to clean, safe and sufficient water to meet their needs in ways that also maintain the integrity of ecosystems.

MISSION:

CCME facilitates forward-thinking research and integrated policy, standard and/or guideline development, that contribute to the sustainable management, protection, restoration and conservation of Canada's water.

GOAL 1

Aquatic ecosystems are protected on a sustainable watershed basis

GOAL 2

The conservation and wise use of water is promoted

GOAL 3

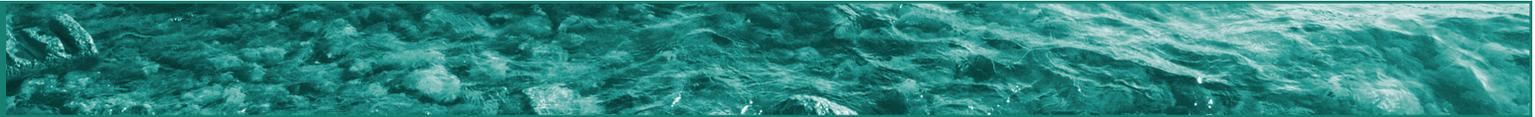
Water quality and water quantity management is improved, benefitting human and ecosystem health

GOAL 4

Climate change impacts are reduced through adaptive strategies

GOAL 5

Knowledge about the state of Canada's water is developed and shared



Goal	Rationale	Examples of CCME Deliverables	Past/ Current	Potential Future
1. Aquatic ecosystems are protected on a sustainable watershed basis.	Enhance understanding and application of Integrated Water Resource Management to improve ecosystem health.	Guidance documents on tools and governance mechanisms for integrated community-based watershed management.		✓
2. The conservation and wise use of water is promoted	Improve understanding of the full value of water to achieve behavioural change.	Water valuation guidance document and future pilot projects.	✓	✓
		Report on the use of social marketing techniques to promote positive behavioural changes.		✓
		Study on linkages between climate change impacts on water conservation and scarcity in Canada.	✓	
3. Water quality and water quantity management is improved, benefiting human and ecosystem health	Promote nationally consistent approaches to water quality and quantity monitoring, guidelines and multi-jurisdictional public reporting.	Report on transboundary areas with nutrient concerns and best management practices for collaboration.	✓	
		Continue to develop Canadian Water Quality Guidelines, indexes, monitoring and reporting tools.	✓	✓
	Encourage research and networks to enhance knowledge and understanding of ground and surface waters.	Overview document on groundwater resources, management, knowledge and collaborative models.		✓
		Workshop and recommendations for a path forward for sustainable groundwater management in Canada.	✓	
		Develop and implement a Canada-wide strategy for the management of Municipal Wastewater Effluent.	✓	✓
4. Climate change impacts are reduced through adaptive strategies	Enhance water quality and quantity monitoring networks to support water and adaptation needs.	Overview reports on water monitoring networks for climate change detection, watershed vulnerability assessment, prioritization and adaptation planning.	✓	✓
5. Knowledge about the state of Canada's water is developed and shared.	Will help to spearhead value added information on water quality and quantity by supporting jurisdictional reporting efforts to Canadians in a systematic and consistent fashion.	Develop activities for enhanced transparency, external engagement and public reporting.		✓

BACKGROUNDER

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

In October 2006 the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) agreed to explore options to improve environmental assessment (EA) delivery in Canada. In September 2007 ministers agreed to address a broad range of issues associated with environmental assessments in Canada. These issues range from process inefficiencies, and overlapping mandates and responsibilities to lack of timeliness, differing criteria triggering EAs, and a need to look to broad strategic regional EAs. The desired outcome for CCME's work in EA is that *decisions on environmental assessments for projects are made in a certain, predictable, efficient and timely fashion, while safeguarding the environment.*

The Environmental Assessment Task Group (EATG), formed for this exercise, publicly consulted on draft recommendations for a one project-one assessment approach and a draft Regional Strategic EA framework and methodology.

Recommendations

1. One Project-One Assessment Approaches to Environmental Assessment

The key goal of a "one project-one assessment approach" is a single, consistently applied EA process led or conducted by the best-placed jurisdiction and enabling each order of government to make its decisions in a certain, predictable and timely fashion. In order to achieve an effective, high quality EA that contributes to environmentally-sound decision-making and sustainable development, a "one project-one assessment" process should be timely and predictable for participants, flexible to accommodate a range of projects, involve public participation where appropriate, fulfill the duty to consult Aboriginal peoples, and define clear lines of accountability.

One Project-One Assessment Recommendations:

To establish a "one project-one assessment approach" that does not entail a transfer of decision-making authority between jurisdictions, it is recommended that:

1. All jurisdictions should ensure that their statutory regimes include a range of models including joint process, delegation and substitution. Therefore, each jurisdiction should ensure that their statutory regimes have enough flexibility to address any scenario in which these models may be used.
2. Focused efforts should be made to identify a resolution to the issues associated with diffusion of accountability within the current federal framework through the upcoming *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* statutory review.
3. The EA process should continue to be led by the best placed jurisdiction defined as the "Lead Party".

4. The level of the participation of the Non-Lead Party in the EA process should be based on the consideration of a number of factors, including:
 - Nature and magnitude of the anticipated public concern. High level of public concern in a proposed project is likely to increase expectations that both orders of governments will play an active role in the EA.
 - Nature and magnitude of the anticipated/potential environmental impacts.
 - Ability of Lead Party to deliver on (or address) the Non-Lead Party requirements.
 - Constitutional Aboriginal consultation requirements.
5. In considering the proposed project against these factors, both jurisdictions can decide mutually which model would be most appropriate.

2. Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment (RSEA)

Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process designed to systematically assess the potential environmental effects, including cumulative effects, of strategic policy, plan and program alternatives for a given geographical area or region. CCME has endeavoured to advance the science and practice of regional strategic environmental assessment (RSEA) by developing a Canada-wide understanding of RSEA, including identification of the different models for RSEA and the benefits of those models for Canadians.

Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment Recommendation:

1. CCME has a continuing opportunity to demonstrate leadership in environmental management across Canada and throughout the world by advancing new frameworks and innovative approaches for long-term sustainability. Extending environmental assessment practice to include an RSEA approach, where appropriate, would establish Canada as a world leader. Efforts need to be extended to a broader audience both within and beyond the environment mandate to address implementation challenges and encompass the three pillars of sustainable development – environment, economic and social.

Commitments and Implications of Recommendations

All jurisdictions should consider the need for changes to their existing legal framework in order to incorporate the tools presented in this paper and facilitate environmental assessment harmonization across Canada.

These recommendations will be submitted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Federal Minister of Environment for consideration in the upcoming review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

BACKGROUNDER

A CANADA-WIDE ACTION PLAN FOR EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

CCME Ministers are working toward substantial reductions in the amount of waste generated and sent to landfills by adopting the principle of extended producer responsibility (EPR) as a component of Canada's waste management strategy. EPR gives physical and/or financial responsibility for the life cycle of a product, including the post-consumer stage, to the producer. This approach provides incentives to producers to incorporate environmental considerations into the design of their products, and shifts the historical taxpayer responsibility for part of the waste stream to the individual brand owner, manufacturer or first importer.

Legislation and/or Regulations to Enable EPR

Canadian jurisdictions commit to working towards the development of EPR framework legislation and/or regulations to allow for action on the following identified priority products and materials.

EPR for Specific Product Categories

Phase 1

Jurisdictions commit to working towards managing the following products and materials in operational EPR programs within six (6) years of ministerial concurrence:

- Packaging
- Printed materials
- Mercury containing lamps
- Other mercury-containing products
- Electronics and electrical products
- Household hazardous and special wastes
- Automotive products

Existing product stewardship, non-EPR programs, will be reviewed within six (6) years of ministerial concurrence within the context of this Action Plan.

Jurisdictions will seek within two (2) years of the CAP's adoption to identify a more detailed phased implementation plan for the product categories and products listed in Phase 1.

Phase 2

Jurisdictions commit to working towards managing the following products and materials in operational EPR programs within eight (8) years of ministerial concurrence:

- Construction materials
- Demolition materials
- Furniture
- Textiles and carpet
- Appliances, including ozone-depleting substances (ODS)

- Jurisdictions will seek, within two (2) years of ministerial concurrence, to publish a detailed list of products to be managed through EPR programs for each of the above, Phase 2, product categories.

Territories

Given their unique circumstances of geography, population and infrastructure, it must be recognized that EPR may not be an appropriate instrument for all products or product categories in the northern Territories. EPR programs, stewardship programs or a variety of supporting measures may therefore be necessary to achieve the desired outcomes across all product categories.

Within six (6) years of ministerial concurrence Territorial jurisdictions will review their progress toward the development of EPR frameworks for all product categories and provide an update to CCME which will include a determination of whether EPR will be pursued for each of the remaining Phase 1 and Phase 2 categories.

Harmonization of EPR Programs

To promote harmonization across Canada, EPR programs will follow these principles:

- Encourage producers to design products to minimize impacts to the environment and human health.
- Transfer end-of-life responsibility for waste product or materials to producers and importers from municipalities and other waste management authorities.
- Give governments the responsibility for setting performance targets, creating a level playing field for producers and importers, and ensuring the public has free and open access.
- Give producers and importers the responsibility for program design, operation and funding.

Tracking Performance

The key performance measure for the Action Plan will be the number of operational EPR programs and product categories in place by the commitment target dates. Progress in implementing EPR programs for Phase 1 and Phase 2 product categories will be reported annually through CCME.

Key performance indicators to measure the performance of the product and material EPR programs will include:

- kilograms per capita captured or recovered,
- dollars per kilogram captured or recovered,
- per cent of waste captured, per cent of waste recovered,
- per cent diverted, and,
- avoided greenhouse gas emissions.

Performance indicators may be adjusted to recognize the unique circumstances of particular products and product categories.

Supportive Policies and Regulations

In a complex and competitive national and global business market signals to producers from a relatively small market like Canada may not be strong enough alone to influence new environmentally conscious product design and supply chain management. The environmental objectives of EPR may therefore need to be supported and reinforced by other measures, such as: eco-labelling; restrictions on toxic substances; recycled content standards and regulations; green procurement policies; environmental performance/voluntary agreements and a variety of other potential standards, bans, guidelines and educational tools.

BACKGROUND

A CANADA-WIDE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING:

CCME Ministers are taking specific action toward reducing packaging waste generated and sent to landfill as part of a broader initiative to incorporate the principle of extended producer responsibility (EPR) as a component of Canada's waste management strategy. The establishment of EPR program requirements is the primary action being undertaken by CCME member governments to address packaging in Canada. However, EPR requirements alone may not be sufficient to drive producers to achieve CCME's broader goals for packaging reduction and sustainability. Based on consultation with stakeholders and the public on proposed strategies to reduce packaging waste in Canada, the Canada-wide Strategy for Sustainable Packaging proposes supporting measures to complement the EPR actions set out under the Canada-wide Action Plan for EPR. These measures are intended to help drive producers and other packaging actors to take further action to improve packaging sustainability and meet CCME's aspirational goal of zero waste.

Supporting Measures

Establish an industry-government working group to guide implementation of EPR and the Strategy's supporting measures.

As EPR programs are developed across the country, a Canada-wide dialogue between industry and government can help to achieve a more consistent approach to EPR program requirements for packaging across jurisdictions. The working group can also provide a forum for collaboration by industry, government and other stakeholders to guide the implementation of the Strategy's supporting measures.

Pursue agreements with industry to reduce packaging and improve its sustainability

Agreements between CCME and specific industry sectors can provide an opportunity to build on the momentum already present among industry leaders in moving towards more sustainable packaging.

Develop Canada-wide standards and certification for compostable packaging

CCME is supporting the development of a Canada-wide standard and certification program by the Bureau du normalisation de Quebec (BNQ), including clear visual identification, for compostable packaging – expected completion March 2010.

Adopt Canada-wide sustainability indicators and metrics that can be used to assess the sustainability of packaging over its entire life cycle.

A uniform, Canada-wide set of sustainability indicators could assist all actors in the packaging life cycle – governments, producers, consumers – in taking consistent actions nationwide.

Explore with industry the potential development of a Canada-wide labelling system for recyclable packaging.

A harmonized Canada-wide approach to recyclability labels would facilitate national consistency in labelling claims and minimize confusion among industry and consumers.

Explore with industry opportunities for industry to implement and expand reuse systems.

Where appropriate, CCME may partner in studies or pilot projects of reuse programs, or undertake regulatory changes to remove barriers or support implementation.

Encourage the development of industry-led educational initiatives, best practices guidance and industry recognition programs that promote sustainable packaging design.

CCME will explore opportunities for government partnership with industry and other stakeholders in the development of education and recognition programs (such as CCME co-sponsorship of a sustainable packaging award, guidance materials for smaller businesses, etc.)

Explore with stakeholders the establishment of an ombudsman to address consumer complaints of excess packaging.

The release of an annual report, and the potential publicity that may result, could be a key tool to influence industry and effect changes in packaging.

Explore with industry the development of an index to measure packaging sustainability across Canada.

A shopping basket index tracks a fixed set of goods (e.g., a representative cross-section of 30 common household goods) over time and assesses how much packaging the shopping basket of goods contains and what types of materials are used.