



Canadian Council of Ministers  
of the Environment      Le Conseil canadien  
des ministres  
de l'environnement

## **SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON CLIMATE ACTION AND AIR QUALITY**

**Vancouver, BC – November 3, 2017** – Federal, provincial and territorial environment ministers discussed progress on climate action and Canada-wide trends in air quality at the annual meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) today.

“Canada is world renowned for its natural splendor, and as Environment Ministers it is our responsibility to ensure effective protections are in place for our land, water and air,” said George Heyman, British Columbia’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, who hosted his colleagues in Vancouver. “The actions we’ve taken reflect the will of Canadians right across our country.”

Ministers reported significant improvements in Canada’s air quality in CCME’s first State of the Air Report, released in the form of a website that is accessible to all Canadians. [Canada’s Air](#) shows that we have made significant reductions in air pollutants, including the main components of smog and acid rain. Air pollutants can adversely affect the health of Canadians, especially small children, the elderly and those with heart and lung conditions. Government actions contributed to a healthier environment and healthier Canadians. The improved air quality in 2011 is estimated by Health Canada to have prevented 4,100 deaths, 2,200 hospital visits and 770,000 asthma events.

By agreeing on new Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) for Nitrogen Dioxide, air quality will continue to improve. “The new standards approved by Ministers will help ensure cleaner air and fewer health challenges, something Canadians rightfully expect and deserve,” said Minister Heyman.

These standards will reduce emissions that are linked to health effects such as decreased lung function, respiratory health problems and environmental impacts. They were developed through a government-led collaborative process that included industry associations, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous organizations.

CAAQS are benchmarks for air quality and are part of the Air Quality Management System (AQMS), a comprehensive and harmonized approach to improve air quality across Canada.

Québec supports the general objectives of the AQMS, but is not taking part in its implementation because it has already implemented its own air quality regulation. However, Québec is collaborating with jurisdictions on developing some elements of the system, notably air zones, airsheds and CAAQS.

“We all agree much more can be accomplished by working together, and this spirit of cooperation was palpable right around the table,” said Minister Heyman.

Ministers devoted a major portion of their meeting to reviewing progress on collaborative actions to implement the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (PCF) adopted by most First Ministers in December 2016. CCME will report on actions under its mandate as part of the annual reporting process on the implementation of the PCF, and contribute to the overall report on PCF implementation for First Ministers this fall.

Ministers directed officials to continue to work on identifying best practices that could be included in a Canada-wide framework for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions offsets. The framework could provide guidance to jurisdictions that wish to develop their own offset systems. It could also support cooperation among jurisdictions that wish to explore collaborative approaches to shared offsets administration.

Governments will continue to review the use of verified carbon credits that can be traded domestically and internationally as a complement to domestic action. This review will inform Canada’s position in the lead-up to COP 24 at the end of 2018, where international rules are expected to be finalized. Trading verified carbon credits could support Canada in meeting its international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Ministers agreed to explore options for achieving greater consistency among GHG emission inventories established within the jurisdiction of each government and the principles of the PCF. This work will assist governments in monitoring progress towards a low carbon future and reducing emissions to meet our climate commitments.

Ministers discussed the importance of communicating action on climate change to Canadians, including identifying the associated economic opportunities.

Ministers discussed other issues of concern, including the ongoing challenges of mercury contamination. Canadian mercury emissions have decreased by over 90% since the 1970s, however 95% of the mercury deposited in Canada comes by air from foreign sources. Through the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Canada and the international community are taking steps to reduce the emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds and protect human health and the environment.

Prior to their meeting, Ministers held discussions with representatives of the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis National Council, sharing ideas and perspectives about opportunities and challenges as Canada moves to a stronger, more resilient, low-carbon economy.

At the end of the meeting, Canada assumed the presidency of CCME, and Minister Catherine McKenna will host the 2018 meeting. “As the incoming chair of the Canadian Council of the Ministers of the Environment, I look forward to hosting my provincial and territorial counterparts in Ottawa next year. At our next meeting, we will continue to tackle the critical issues facing Canadians, including climate change, clean air, clean water and clean growth. We

will also work collaboratively with Indigenous leaders on shared priorities such as climate action. Canadians understand that the environment and the economy go together and that we have the opportunity to grow a cleaner economy, create good jobs and ensure a more sustainable future for our kids and grandkids,” said Minister McKenna.

[State of the Air video](#)

### ***About CCME***

CCME is the primary minister-led intergovernmental forum for collective action on environmental issues of national and international concern. CCME is comprised of the environment ministers from the federal, provincial and territorial governments. It was founded in 1964.

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