

Smog Workshop

Sponsored by the Transboundary Air Issues Branch of Environment Canada

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The purpose of this workshop was to share and discuss ideas on the critical elements and needs of a system to link, integrate and harmonize national air quality data. The workshop kicked-off with presentations from representatives of various interest groups.

Government and industry were heavily represented at the workshop. Out of a group of 53 participants, there were five NGO's - namely Bruce Walker from STOP, Philippe Belley from GRAME, Ron Neilson from Pollution Probe, Shang Lui from York University and Alison Howells, NB Lung Association.

The main points stressed by the NGO groups were the need for accurate and timely information that is presented in a format that can be easily accessed and understood by the general public, The NGO's also emphasized the underlying need for such a tracking system is for the protection of human health and the environment.

The following is a summary of some of the main ideas brought forward by the working groups on what an ideal AQIT/MS might consist of:

- develop a process to address contentious issues;
- linkages between databases, programs, policy making and public information/education;
- standardized approach to data collection and a flexible system to allow for special needs;
- a one window approach for single point collection to avoid duplication;
- simple and accessible jargon and data for the public;
- inclusion of health and environmental impacts; and
- quality assurance and control of data.

One of the issues which needs to be resolved was whether the system should be led by private or government agencies.

With such a large group of participants, it was difficult for this workshop to come to any hard and fast conclusions or decisions. What was concluded, however, was that focus needs to be placed on bringing existing information/data together - making it more productive through linkages and standardization, rather than scraping what exists (warts and all) for a new system. It was also decided that the points raised at this workshop

would act as a basis for a smaller working group to develop into recommendations for provincial environment ministers.