

Canada-Wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization Status Report

In January 1998, Environment Ministers from across Canada, except Quebec, signed the Canada-Wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization as well as three sub-agreements on inspections, environmental assessment and environmental standards. At the same time Ministers agreed to develop four new sub-agreements on monitoring and reporting, research and development, environmental emergencies, and enforcement. They also directed officials to develop an annex to the Accord elaborating on stakeholder participation, aboriginal involvement and public accountability. Detail on the progress of each of these items is elaborated below.

ANNEX TO THE ACCORD

Development of each of the three components of the annex is being co-led at the Deputy Minister level: public accountability by Canada/Nova Scotia/Prince Edward Island; aboriginal involvement by Canada/Northwest Territories; and accountability by Canada/British Columbia.

Currently, it is expected that drafts of, or reports on all three components to the annex will be made to the Council of Ministers at their meeting in September. As well, draft text dealing with accountability and with stakeholder participation will be available for their review.

NEW SUB-AGREEMENTS

In July, Deputy Ministers had an initial discussion on the possible scope of the four new sub-agreements. Negotiations are expected to begin this fall and to conclude by fall 1999.

Negotiations of the new sub-agreements will be co-led at the Deputy Minister level: enforcement by Canada/Manitoba; monitoring and reporting by Canada/New Brunswick; research and development by Canada/Nova Scotia; and emergencies by Canada/Saskatchewan.

EXISTING SUB-AGREEMENTS

Canada-Wide Standards

Work is underway on the six initial priorities for Canada-Wide Standards announced by Environment Ministers in January: particulate matter, ground-level ozone, benzene, mercury, dioxins and furans, and petroleum hydrocarbons.

Information on each of the Canada-wide standards is included below. This information is preliminary and some of it may change as the development of standards continues.

A champion jurisdiction has been designated for each of the priorities for the development of Canada-wide standards and an official from that jurisdiction has been named to lead the process. The champion's role is to move the project ahead; assemble a team representing the appropriate disciplines; integrate the scientific, socio-economic, and technological inputs in standards development; and lead the preparation and conduct of consultations. The appropriate

development process may vary across standards. (For example, development of some Canada-wide standards may be able to take advantage of existing groups or processes; in other instances, the champion may need to initiate a new process.)

It is anticipated that the annex to the Accord dealing with stakeholder participation and aboriginal involvement will provide useful guidance to the champions and promote consistency of approach in these areas. Given the importance of engaging stakeholders early in the process, a number of consultation mechanisms have already been set in process. In what follows "consultation" refers to current plans for national consultation events. Individual jurisdictions may also choose to hold their own consultations, particularly in respect to the implementation phase. Other forms of communication, information sharing and feedback will also be utilized. A more comprehensive and accessible package on the Canada-wide standards will be placed on the CCME website shortly, providing interested persons with much more information than is currently the case, as well as the ability to register on a listserv for updates on areas of specific interest.

A chart summarizing CCME workplans on Canada-wide standards for the 1998/1999 fiscal year is attached for your information.

A group led by Nova Scotia is developing a framework to promote consistency in the use of risk-based approaches in the setting of Canada-wide standards. The framework will be posted on the CCME website shortly. The group plans to use consultation opportunities from other groups (e.g., the Canada-wide standard for mercury or petroleum hydrocarbons) to ensure broad review of their product.

Particulate Matter (PM 10 and 2.5) in air and ground-level ozone

- Champion: David Egar, Environment Canada
- Proposed delivery date of Canada-wide standard to Council: Fall 1999
- Consultation: a core advisory group has been established; consultation planned for Fall 1998; formation of a multi-stakeholder Workshop Planning Committee
- Other: building on science and health assessments done under the CEPA Federal-Provincial Advisory Committee

Benzene Releases to Air

- Champion: Bill Howard, Environment Canada
- Proposed delivery date of Canada-wide standard to Council: Fall 2000
- Consultation: planned to begin Fall 1998
- Other: targeting emissions reductions from key sources and sectors; building on sector plans developed through the Strategic Options Process under CEPA and on regional action plans

Mercury

- Champion: Jim Smith, Ontario Ministry of the Environment
- Proposed delivery date of Canada-wide standard to Council: Fall 1999
- Consultation: draft consultation strategy under development; advisory group to be established
- Other: targeting emissions reductions from key sources and sectors and possibly products

Dioxins and Furans

- Champion: Bruce Morgan, British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
- Proposed delivery date of Canada-wide standard to Council: Spring 2000
- Consultation: planned to begin Fall 1998
- Other: developing ambient standards for water, sediment, soil, and tissue residue, as well as controlling releases of substances slated for virtual elimination; working in collaboration with the Dioxins and Furans Task Force under the CEPA Federal-Provincial Advisory Committee.

Petroleum Hydrocarbons in soil

- Champion: George Murphy, Alberta Environmental Protection
- Proposed delivery date of Canada-wide standard to Council: Spring 2000
- Consultation: first public workshop October 1997; three technical advisory groups established, second public workshop planned for March 1999
- Other: developing ambient standards and an analytical methodology

Inspections

The Inspections Sub-Agreement will be implemented through subsequent bilateral or multilateral implementation agreements. These agreements are not expected immediately, given their close linkage to the enforcement issue for which negotiations to create a new sub-agreement are just now beginning

Environmental Assessment

The Environmental Assessment Sub-Agreement can only be implemented through bilateral implementation agreements to be negotiated between Canada and individual provinces. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency recently initiated discussions with Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to develop the bilateral arrangements. Included in these discussions is means to consult stakeholders early in the process. Discussions with the Atlantic provinces are expected to begin in early 1999.