



Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers

Le Conseil canadien des ministres des ressources et de l'environnement

14 1986

COMMUNIQUÉ D' INFORMATION RELEASE

October 2, 1986

MEETING OF CANADIAN COUNCIL OF RESOURCE AN ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS CONCLUDES IN BANFF

BANFF -- The 25th Annual Meeting of the the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers (CCREM) ended today with agreement on new water quality guidelines for use by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, meeting Chairman Alberta Environment Minister Ken Kowalski announced.

The guidelines address more than 50 specific substances of concern, including many toxic chemicals, and are designed to harmonize water quality efforts across the country. The guidelines will be used by each jurisdiction to set standards which will, where necessary, recognize local and regional environmental needs and situations. Mr. Kowalski noted that this was an important step forward as it marked the first time that all jurisdictions had cooperated to develop guidelines of this nature and subsequently endorsed them.

In addition, Ministers agreed to adopt interim ambient air and water objectives for PCB's until further scientific work is completed, and to release comprehensive public information on PCB's including a booklet called "The PCB Story". The lack of standards for dioxins was also noted and Ministers agreed to give priority to developing standards that can be implemented consistently in all jurisdictions and to publishing facts on dioxins. Ministers also adopted an action plan on hazardous wastes designed to harmonize legislation, policies and programs and to study the feasibility of a national contingency fund to assure prompt clean up of contamination where there is an imminent danger to human health or the environment.

Ministers were also briefed on the Federal Minister's intention to introduce new legislation which will provide a national framework for the control of toxic substances. Ministers welcomed his commitment to fully consult the jurisdictions on the proposed legislation at all stages in its development, in light of the important role which provincial and territorial governments play in this area.

The Ministers of CCREM adopted the principle of the life-cycle management of chemical products and agreed to study an action plan designed to implement this principle, as well as identify the respective roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government with respect thereof.

Ministers also discussed a number of issues related to water management and agreed to work cooperatively in addressing those areas where one jurisdiction can learn from the experience of another. The Ministers examined the specific problem of groundwater contamination and its effects on drinking water supplies. One particular source of contamination, leaking storage tanks and related facilities, received special attention by the Council. The Ministers agreed to convene a government-industry task force to develop an "environmental code of practice" for storage tanks and related facilities which usually contain petroleum and related products.

The visit of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the findings of the World Conservation Strategy Conference were reviewed. The Council endorsed a proposal to create a special task force, under the Chairmanship of the Minister of the Environment for Manitoba, to develop an action plan for furthering the integration of economic development with environmental quality considerations.

Ministers agreed that billions of dollars in public money will need to be raised in the years to come to provide for new infrastructure and to upgrade Canada's declining municipal infrastructure, especially for potable water and waste water treatment. They agreed that all jurisdictions must act in concert to meet this need through mechanisms appropriate to each. The responsibility extends beyond the mandate of Environment and Resource Ministers; it embraces fiscal implications primarily of the concern of First Ministers and Ministers of Finance. CCREM, therefore, agreed to request their colleagues to consider water infrastructure as an urgent matter, at an early opportunity. For its part, CCREM agreed to pursue the issue of the cost of delivering and treating water, as one aspect of the fiscal dimension of the problem.

In closing the meeting, Mr. Kowalski noted that this year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the CCREM. "We have made considerable progress addressing environmental issues over that period, but much remains to be done in confronting the challenges which lie ahead. Environmental issues are becoming more complex. The cooperative efforts of all governments in Canada will be necessary to ensure that we maintain the healthy environment necessary to sustain our economy."

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Honourable Clifford Lincoln, Minister of the Environment for Quebec assumed the Presidency of the Council and he will host next year's meeting in Quebec.