

Why the Proposed Canada-Wide Standards Fail to Protect Health and Environment

Analysis from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy

June 2000

Proposed 'Canada-Wide' Standards for Mercury, Benzene, Ground-Level Ozone and Particulate matter are being considered by Canada's Environment Ministers at the June 5 and 6 meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. The proposed 'standards' suffer from major weaknesses, and will not improve the protection of the health and environment of Canadians.

Mercury

- fails to establish any standard at all for the coal-fired electricity generation sector, even though it is the second largest source of mercury emissions after metal smelting.
- does not establish a cap on total emissions from metal smelting or incineration sectors, rather has employs a production (g/tonne or production) or volume (g/Rm3) based standard, meaning emissions can rise with production.
- implementation stretches for base metal smelting to 2008.
- does not phase out or virtually eliminate mercury even though it is a persistent, bioaccumulative toxic substance, specifically targetted for virtual elimination through the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.
- implementation commitments non-existent or vague to point of meaningless for most jurisdictions (Alberta and Manitoba refer to regulatory or non-regulatory processes for implementation), BC (one MSW incineration facility) and Ontario are most concrete, but Ontario is responsible for lack of any standard for coal-fired generating plants.

Benzene - Phase 1

- only commitment is to 30% reduction in releases by 2000 from 1995 base year. This is

for a substance which is CEPA 'Toxic' a known carcinogen and smog-precursor.

- no implementation actions beyond existing federal fuels regulations and voluntary measures.
- no plan for beyond 2000.

Particulate Matter and Ground-Level Ozone

- *zone standard weaker than existing federal standard. CWS is 65ppm over 8hr period, while current federal standard is 82 ppb over 1hr. (CWS works out to 87 ppb or 1 hr).
- PM2.5 to be achieved by 2010
- ozone to be achieved by 2015.
- no specific implementation commitments to require reductions from industrial sources by federal or provincial governments.
- no specific implementation commitments to require reductions from mobile sources by federal or provincial governments, except anti-tampering measures.
- only concrete measure to directly reduce or control emissions is development of a "national" regulation for new, clean burning residential wood heating appliances.
- non-binding code of practice and model by-law for demolition sector - no timeframe for development and no requirement for adoption.
- vague commitment on alternative energy models.
- essentially no standard at all. No specific commitments to do anything of any consequence.