



Hon. Brad Wall
Premier of Saskatchewan
Legislative Assembly
Regina, SK,

3 October 2011

Dear Premier Wall:

The 2011 progress report on the Canada-wide Acid Rain Strategy published by the Canadian Council of Environment Ministers (CCME) makes the following two statements:

“With the growing population and economy in western Canada, emissions of acidifying pollutants are increasing in certain regions and this is causing concern that the western provinces (some of which have soils that are as susceptible to acid rain damage as in eastern Canada) may soon show signs of acidification comparable to what has been experienced in eastern Canada.”

“These commitments are becoming increasingly important in light of findings that areas of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, namely downwind of major pollution sources, could be receiving levels of acid deposition in excess of critical loads.”

In 2010 Environment Canada published maps showing areas of Canada where total (wet plus dry) modeled sulphur and nitrogen deposition exceeds terrestrial and aquatic critical loads. As you know, critical loads describe the point at which it is predicted that a natural ecosystem will be impacted by acid deposition. These Environment Canada maps suggest that a significant portion of northern Saskatchewan is now or will soon be receiving acid deposition rates in excess of their critical loads. The areas most likely to be seriously impacted are areas west of Flin Flon as well as a large region west of Cree Lake to the Alberta border and north nearly to Lake Athabasca. As you know, northern Saskatchewan, both the Precambrian Shield and the Athabasca Sandstone Formation, are regions judged to be highly susceptible to the negative impacts of acid precipitation.

SES has been encouraging the provincial Ministry of the Environment to expand its acid precipitation monitoring system across northern Saskatchewan, and progress is slowly being made. Equally important is to sample certain water quality parameters in northern lakes and certain nutrient parameters in forest soils while they are still healthy. If we monitor them on a continuous basis, we

should be able to detect early adverse effects of acid precipitation in these northern ecosystems.



However important monitoring is; by itself it is not adequate. Stronger emission standards are needed. We need the governments of Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan to work together to develop and implement stronger emission standards for all industrial sources affecting the North. Because of its scale and anticipated growth, the oil sands operations are particularly important regarding acid-forming emissions. Stronger emission standards would help to accomplish three objectives: (1) improve the design of new oil sand facilities; (2) stimulate the adoption of best practices in mining and refining bitumen, and (3) help to effectively mitigate the impacts of acid precipitation across the North.

SES urges your government to recognize the seriousness of these acid-forming emissions for the future ecological integrity and human health of northern Saskatchewan. We urge you to negotiate stronger standards that will keep acid deposition rates below critical loads across the North.

Progress has been made, but both the acid deposition monitoring system as well as the lake sampling program are not adequately developed. We urge their further development. We believe that if the monitoring system was part of a national or international acid rain network that sampling, analysis and interpretation of its data would be carried out to the highest standards. Can you tell us what commitments will be in place for completing the development of these programs?

We would also like to know, if your party forms the next provincial government, what your government will do to develop stronger industrial emission standards, particularly for the oil sands industries, in order to protect northern Saskatchewan from deleterious air pollution.

The CCME 2011 report makes it clear that there is a threat concerning acid rain across northern Saskatchewan, and these emissions can only be expected to get worse. An effective monitoring program, lake sampling program, and stronger emission standards would be effective ways to help mitigate these serious ecosystem effects.

Thank you for updating SES about these important matters.

Sincerely yours,

J. David Henry, PhD
Researcher



Cc: Hon. Dwain Lingenfelter
Hon. Peter Kent
Hon. Dustin Duncan
Hon. Sandra Morin