

March 14, 2011 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson and Environment Minister Peter Kent marked the 20th anniversary of the U.S. - Canada Air Quality Agreement today, an agreement that has significantly reduced acid rain and smog.

"Protecting public health and safeguarding the environment are EPA's top priorities. Thanks to the cooperation between our nations over the last 20 years, Canada and the United States have made great strides in the ongoing effort to reduce harmful air pollution and prevent serious health challenges for our people," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "Our joint efforts to clean up the air we breathe have saved lives and protected American and Canadian families from asthma and other respiratory illness, removed acid from rain and smog from air, and set the foundation for continued work together on our shared challenges."

"When Canada and the United States signed the Air Quality Agreement in 1991, transboundary movement of air pollution from industrial activities on both sides of border resulted in acid rain causing serious damage to our environment and in smog posing a serious threat in the air we breathe. After twenty years of cooperation, emissions causing acid rain have been cut in half and emissions causing smog have been cut by one-third in the region covered under this agreement," said Minister Kent.

In the United States, since the signing of the Air Quality Agreement, national and regional programs have dramatically reduced emissions of pollutants that contribute to the formation of acid rain, smog, and fine particle pollution. As of 2010, the U.S. national Acid Rain Program has reduced emissions of sulfur dioxide by 67 percent from 1990 levels. Power plant emissions of nitrogen oxides have decreased by over two-thirds from 1990 to 2010 under the U.S. Acid Rain Program and other regional programs.

These reductions have contributed to significant improvements in air quality on both sides of the border. Reductions in fine particle levels resulting from the U.S. Acid Rain Program are estimated to yield significant human health benefits including 20,000-50,000 lives saved each year.

In Canada, emissions of the key pollutants that contribute to smog, acid rain and poor air quality have seen significant declines since 1990. Emissions of sulfur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>) declined by about 54%, mainly due to reductions from base metal smelters which were down 72% and fossil fuel-fired electricity generating utilities which decreased by 45%.

Since the addition of the Ozone Annex to the agreement in 2000, Canada has been able to reduce nitrogen oxides emissions by a third in the southern and central Ontario and southern Quebec transboundary region defined under the agreement.

The combination of these initiatives has also resulted in particulate matter emission reductions of 34 percent. Particulate matter is a major contributor to human health affects and has been linked to respiratory illnesses such as chronic bronchitis and asthma, to cardiac illness, and to premature death.

The U.S.-Canada Air Quality Agreement provides an example of successful bilateral cooperation that has achieved tangible progress in improving the environment.