

FINAL REPORT PURSUANT TO THE JULY 8, 1975 REFERENCE  
ON THE STATE OF AIR QUALITY IN THE DETROIT-WINDSOR  
AND PORT HURON-SARNIA AREAS

Since 1975, the International Joint Commission has reported to the Governments of the United States and Canada on specific air pollution problems and associated activities by the jurisdictions in Michigan and Ontario which lie along a transboundary corridor between Port Huron (Michigan) and Sarnia (Ontario) at the northern end and Detroit (Michigan) and Windsor (Ontario) at the southern end. For convenience, this region is called the Michigan-Ontario transboundary region.

The Reference which authorized these activities is one of five in the history of the International Joint Commission which addressed exclusively problems of air pollution. In addition, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978, itself incorporating a Reference to the Commission, considers air pollutants but in the context of their impact on the Great Lakes ecosystem. Thus the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978 tends to consider air borne pollutants to the extent they are precursors of water problems.

The International Joint Commission upon, receipt of the Michigan-Ontario Air Pollution Reference from the Governments, convened an advisory board. The Michigan-Ontario Air Pollution Advisory Board accessed an existing operational entity, called the Michigan-Ontario Transboundary Air Pollution Committee (MOTAP Committee), created by a Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Michigan and the Province of Ontario. MOTAP members included many of the working level air pollution specialists of jurisdictions in the Michigan-Ontario transboundary region who were compiling information and reporting continuously on the development of control strategies and state of compliance of pollution sources with emission limitations. This excellent working level group enabled the Board to assemble and assess rapidly information for the Commission.

Although MOTAP compiled information on many atmospheric pollutant problems, the Michigan-Ontario Air Pollution Advisory Reference referred only to the three pollutants for which firm commitments have been made by Federal, State and Provincial authorities to achieve air quality compatible with the air quality objectives proposed by the Commission in its 1972 Report. These were total suspended particulate matter, sulfur oxides, and odors, and the agreed objectives were incorporated into the Reference for reporting to the Governments by the Commission. The Board has also reported ambient levels and some control information on carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and recently photochemical oxidants, although data and effort on these substances have been limited partly by the nature of the problems. As is indicated below, there are other substances that have not been covered.

During the period from 1976 to 1983, control strategies and technical works have been implemented to bring particulates, SO<sub>2</sub> and odors under control. It is with satisfaction that the Commission can report that more than 90% of the geographical region now complies with the desired objectives of the Parties for control of the sulfur oxides. The problem of odors is only an occasional one. Control of particulates in stationary sources has been accomplished, and the major problems remaining are associated with "fugitive emissions," such as the blowing of particles off dumps and piles. Since control of "fugitive emissions" is mostly a matter of good housekeeping practices rather than major technical innovations, the means to achieve these controls are available and gradually being implemented.

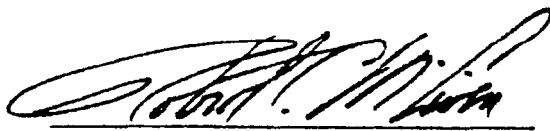
Further, the reduced emission levels of SO<sub>2</sub>, particulates and odors and high state of compliance have been sustained for the past several years. Although the rate of reduction of emissions has slowed considerably in the past three years, there is no evidence from measured and computed emissions inventories that the downward trend in pollutant levels and increased compliance is a statistical aberration. Equally important is that there is no evidence that pollutant levels may be expected to increase in the near future with respect to the substances of interest, thus reversing the established trend.

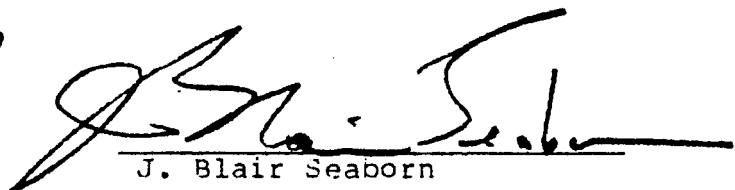
Many of the specific sources of pollution that required control were technically obsolete manufacturing operations that used energy and materials inefficiently compared to more modern operations existing in both countries. Economic problems of the region accelerated the pace of closing or reducing activities at these obsolete facilities. Some of these facilities have been closed as unprofitable or incapable of being modified or retrofitted with control systems to achieve pollutant reduction. Others are being augmented with appropriate pollution control systems to assure pollution reduction and compliance with emission limitations concurrently with plant modernization. As economic conditions improve in the region, the plant modernization activities with existing regulatory requirements offer strong assurance that the current levels of pollution control will be maintained in an expanding economic setting without substantial reversion to previous levels of pollution.

Beyond the notification of the effective completion of the Reference, the Commission wishes to remind the Governments of emerging problems discussed in previous Commission reports which might serve as a focus for an up-to-date and more

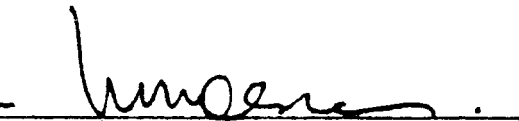
relevant air quality activity in the area. In the Commission's opinion, reporting on trends and programs for the original three pollutants in the Reference does not represent an adequate picture of the state of the atmospheric environment in the Michigan-Ontario transboundary region. Rather, they convey an incomplete picture of environmental quality. Reporting their successful control in isolation suggests that air pollution problems of international concern do not exist in the region. In fact there is a need to direct more attention to a wider range of air pollutants particularly toxic and hazardous substances.

Because of the Commission's confidence that excellent progress to date would be maintained with the traditional pollutants being reported on, and its concern that newer, critical problems are not clearly part of the Reference, the Commission has re-examined the Reference, and concluded that there is very little further progress to be made under the Reference as now framed and that the purpose of the Reference has been achieved.

  
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Dated this 19th of January, 1984 at Washington, D.C.