

*New substances
substances nouvelles*

Finding Common Ground: An International Strategy for Canada's New Substances Program (Chemicals and Polymers)

Environment Canada and Health Canada

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Disclaimer

This document was prepared by Environment Canada and
Health Canada, and has been reviewed by stakeholders.

This document is based on the final recommendations resulting
from the multistakeholder consultations on the CEPA New
Substances Notification Regulations and New Substances
Program. The publication of this document does not necessarily
signify that all of the recommendations described herein will be
implemented.

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1. PREFACE

This document is entitled "Finding Common Ground" because it sets out a strategy whereby Canada works with other countries to find common ways of doing business that will improve decision-making about new chemicals and polymers¹ in Canada and internationally. Regulatory cooperation with other international jurisdictions in the area of new substances will remain on our agenda for years to come, as it is not in the public interest to duplicate the efforts of other agencies.

The New Substances Program (NSP) is responsible for administering the *New Substances Notification Regulations (NSNR)* of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA, 1999)*. During 1999 and 2000, the New Substances Program engaged stakeholders in extensive discussions about regulatory opportunities and challenges related to the Program. The Final Report on these consultations included the following recommendation:

"Environment Canada and Health Canada should develop and implement a strategic plan covering the next five years that positions Canada to play a leadership role relating to New Substances Notification (NSN) in international initiatives aimed at promoting high standards in the protection of human health and the environment in a way that permits better use of industry and government resources."

Environment Canada and Health Canada responded, as follows:

"Environment Canada and Health Canada will initiate, by the end of 2002, a process to develop the plan envisaged by the Table. At the same time, the Departments will continue their efforts within OECD and through bilateral arrangements with other countries, such as the United States and Australia, and will seek other opportunities relating to this subject. For example, the Departments will examine the possibility of introducing a foreign scheme into the NS Program's framework based on the progress made through bilateral arrangements with other countries and through OECD work. By the middle of 2003, the Departments intend

to seek stakeholder perspectives on the draft plan, to amend the plan as appropriate and to make it public. The Departments will review progress on implementation of the plan and will release a report by the end of 2005."

This strategy presents the vision, guiding principles, objectives and strategies and expected results from the New Substances Program's involvement in international activities. It also describes some of the challenges and opportunities associated with international activities.

Environment Canada and Health Canada would like to express their appreciation to Ann Hewitt of Anacapa Consulting Services Inc., for her expertise and contribution to the development of this strategy.

1 This New Substances Program is responsible for new chemical and polymers and animate products of biotechnology. This International Strategy is limited for now to the chemicals and polymers portion of the New Substances Program. For ease of reading, this document will use the term "new chemicals" to refer to the larger grouping of chemicals and polymers.

2. SETTING THE STAGE

2.1 Strategic Direction

This document outlines the direction and scope for international initiatives to be undertaken by Environment Canada and Health Canada for the period 2003 – 2009, in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the New Substances Program.

Setting the broad strategic direction for New Substances Program international initiatives over the next 5 years will help guide the Program's decision-making and priority-setting activities related to international involvement, and will facilitate a continuing partnership with industry in international fora. Clear communication of the program's objectives and strategies will foster greater understanding about the role international activities play in Canada's new chemicals program.

There are considerable benefits to be realized by the New Substances Program through involvement in international activities. The document *Consultations on the CEPA New Substances Notification Regulations: Final Report of the Multistakeholder Consultations* documents the consensus among stakeholders about the value of that involvement. Expected results from involvement in international activities include a contribution to more effective and efficient decision-making, cost savings for government and industry, and greater opportunities for trade.

Despite scientific, policy and legal challenges posed by efforts aimed at international convergence, international cooperation has the potential to raise health and environmental protection standards in Canada and elsewhere and minimize duplicative efforts. Playing an active role in international efforts can lead to validation and strengthening of risk assessment and management processes and capacity, cost savings and improved efficiencies for both government and industry.

2.2 About the New Substances Program (Chemicals and Polymers Portion)

As an integral part of the federal government's focus on pollution prevention, the goal of the New Substances Program under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA) is to ensure no new substance is introduced into the Canadian marketplace on a commercial scale prior to an assessment of its potential risk to the environment and human health. Environment Canada is responsible for the administration of the program, the assessment of potential risks to the environment, development and implementation of risk management measures², compliance promotion and enforcement. Health Canada carries out the assessment of potential risks to human health and collaborates in the development of risk management measures. The reader is referred to the Program's website at <http://www.ec.gc.ca/substances>.

The New Substances Program is responsible for managing a sector that is becoming increasingly global³; in 1995, the chemicals industry accounted for about 7% of global income and 9% of international trade (more than twice the size of the world market for telecommunications).⁴ With increasing trade in chemicals, the New Substances Program is faced with the challenges of decision-making that incorporates knowledge about other governments' science, regulations and policies (see Appendix A – Chemicals Industry Context).

2.3 Scope and Limitations

This strategy will guide Canada's international activities associated with the notification, assessment and management of new chemicals and polymers under the New Substances Program. It will not address the animate or inanimate products of biotechnology portion of the New Substances Program or new substances in products regulated under the *Food and Drugs Act*.

2 Management measures are implemented under s.84 of CEPA 1999 for substances that are suspected of being toxic or capable of becoming toxic.

3 Appendix "A" provides an overview of the chemical industry in Canada and globally.

4 OECD Environmental Outlook for the Chemicals Industry, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 2001

3. THE NEW SUBSTANCES PROGRAM AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3.1 Our Vision

International activities are undertaken within the New Substances Program to support effective and efficient decision-making about human health and the environment by seeking common ground in international efforts. Such initiatives further the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act's* principles of pollution prevention and sustainable development. Environment Canada and Health Canada envision a world where Canada leads and implements the long term goal of mutual acceptance of notifications (MAN), by seeking commonly held high standards in the notification, assessment and management of new substances. Appendix B explains the concept of MAN.

3.2 Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the international activities of the New Substances Program:

- Canada will continue to promote high standards in the protection of human health and the environment;
- Canada will retain the sovereign right to make decisions regarding the introduction of new chemicals;
- International activities must provide a “return on investment” that supports the activities of the domestic program, allowing better use of industry and government resources; and
- The ability of Canadian industry to compete in a global marketplace will be supported.

4. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

4.1 Overview

The diagram on this page summarizes the New Substances Program's international Strategy.

The objectives of the New Substances Program's international activities are to:

- *Share scientific workload* with other national jurisdictions;
- *Simplify processes* for the notification and assessment of new substances; and
- *Contribute to creating a sustainable world⁵*, where Canadian industry is able to compete globally while the environment and health of Canadians continue to be protected.

Through international *scientific, regulatory and policy* cooperation, the New Substances Program will:

- Create and support international partnerships
- Access the policies, tools and processes used by other governments and incorporate where effective into New Substances Program decision-making, and
- Influence the policies, tools and processes used by other governments.

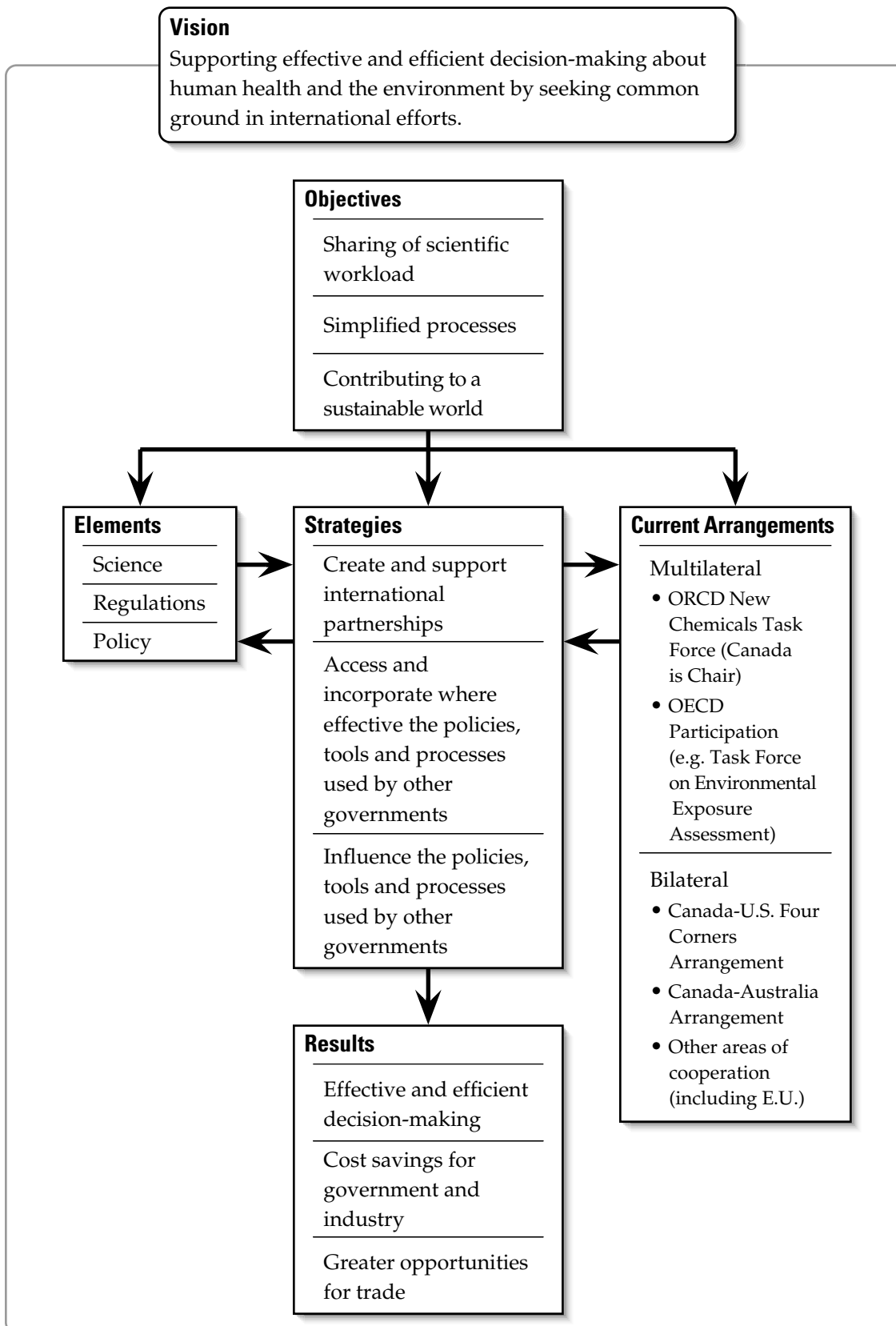
Current multilateral and bilateral arrangements are the main vehicle by which the above objectives and strategies will be implemented. Other arrangements will be evaluated and implemented if they assist in implementing the strategy and further the New Substances Program's science, regulations and policy.

It is expected that the New Substances Program's involvement in international activities will result in:

- Effective and efficient decision-making;
- Cost savings for government and industry; and
- Greater opportunities for trade.

⁵ Environment Canada's definition of sustainable development: Sustainable development is about how to meet the needs of Canadians today, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is not an end point, but an approach to decision making. It recognizes that social, economic, and environmental issues are interconnected, and that decisions must incorporate each of these aspects if they are to be good decisions in the longer term. It is an approach that will help Canadians achieve a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, a high standards of living, and a vibrant and just society for current and future generations.

4.2 Strategic Framework



4.3 Objectives

The objectives of the New Substances Program's international activities are to:

4.3.1 *Share scientific workload with other national jurisdictions*

With the growth of the chemical industry, in Canada and globally, the requirements for governments to maintain "state of the art" scientific methods and notification schemes, and to assess risk and make management decisions about new chemicals are becoming more challenging. Cooperating with other similar programs and sharing information has the potential to result in resource savings. Efforts like those under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Canada's bilateral arrangements are designed to distribute the scientific workload across countries.

4.3.2 *Simplify processes for the notification and assessment of new substances*

Simplified notification processes will mean that some chemicals come to market more quickly and will result in less cost to industry. Simplification also means more efficient processes for the New Substances Program, and has the potential to reduce costs for government as well.

4.3.3 *Contribute to creating a sustainable world*

Although the New Substances Program has the primary responsibility for protecting the environment and human health, it, like other federal government programs, is responsible for ensuring that it contributes to sustainable development while not introducing unnecessary barriers to trade. By seeking common ground among large trading partners like the U.S. and the European Union (EU), the program will facilitate trading relationship, ensuring that Canada's domestic industry is in the best position for trade purposes.

4.4 Program Elements

The activities of the New Substances Program fall within three basic program functions or elements: Science, Regulatory Schemes and Policy Development.

- Activities that fall under the **science** element include those related to the scope of assessments, testing, modeling, assessment methodologies, etc. and reflect

the federal government's commitment to science-based decision making.

- Those related to **regulatory** schemes include the administration of the program, including the review of notifications and implementation of risk management measures where warranted.
- **Policy** development includes consultations on regulations, development of this strategy, international leadership and the development of objectives and visions for the program.

4.5 Strategies

The New Substances Program will follow the following three strategies for its international activities:

- Create and support international partnerships;
- Access the policies, tools and processes used by other governments and incorporate where effective into New Substances Program decision-making; and
- Influence the policies, tools and processes used by other governments.

4.5.1 *Create and support international partnerships*

Examples of the activities that relate to this strategy are as follows:

For science:

- Working under the OECD New Chemicals Task Force, lead and actively participate in working groups such as those implementing multilateral or bilateral assessments
- Participation in the OECD Environmental Exposure Assessment Task Force

For regulations:

- Bring parties together that have concerns about Confidential Business Information and facilitate discussions

For policy:

- Chair international fora that will have the end result of improving communication and simplifying international processes (e.g., the New Chemicals Task Force)

- Seek and create new bilateral arrangements and share the results of those arrangements with the OECD New Chemicals Task Force

4.5.2 Access the policies, tools and processes used by other governments and incorporate where effective into New Substances Program decision-making

Examples of the activities that relate to this strategy are as follows:

For science:

- Examination of models used in other jurisdictions' assessments (e.g., Quantitative Structure-Activity Relationships or "QSARs")
- International leadership in the development of assessment/modeling (e.g., Emission Scenario Documents)
- Acceptance of OECD test guidelines and Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) guidance
- Follow guidance on reducing animal testing

For regulations:

- Adoption of an approved foreign scheme, similar to that found in Government of Australia guidelines
- Adoption of the definition for reduced regulatory requirement polymers and other harmonized regulatory definitions
- Adoption of regulatory innovations

For policy:

- Clarifying and expanding adopting of Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) substances into Canada's Non-Domestic Substances List (NDSL)

4.5.3 Influence the policies, tools and processes used by other governments

Examples of the activities that relate to this strategy are as follows:

For science:

- Influencing criteria used by other countries and government bodies in the publication of assessment reports
- Participating in the Four Corners Arrangement with the U.S., and the Canada-Australia Arrangement
- Providing comments to the OECD on test methods

- Developing new test methods and basic research related to human health exposure and endpoints
- Working with other bodies to standardize assessment practices

For regulations:

- Providing information on exemptions and exclusions, and substances with reduced regulatory requirements
- Working with other bodies to standardize notification submissions

For policy:

- Participating in and influence Canada-U.S. discussions regarding Smart Borders
- Working with the European Union to provide assessment and notification tools under the proposed program for Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals (REACH)
- Working through bilateral arrangement and through the OECD to influence scope, methods and scientific rigour of assessments

4.6 Current Arrangements

4.6.1 Internationally Sound Management of Chemicals

In the 1970s, Canada and other countries began establishing national notification and assessment regimes for new chemicals and polymers. Through the OECD, international cooperation existed in a number of other areas related to the assessment and management of chemicals. In the late 1970s and 1980s, countries established inventories of existing substances, like the United States TSCA (Toxic Substances Control Act) Inventory and Canada's Domestic Substances List (DSL). During the 1980s, as the global impact of chemicals emerged as a public concern and as the chemical industry itself globalized, there was a widely expressed need for bilateral and multilateral coordination of management regimes for new and existing substances. International bodies like the United Nations (U.N.) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with the cooperation of business organizations, particularly the Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) worked to increase understanding among member countries. These efforts paralleled other environmental issues, particularly those related to sustainable

development and culminated in the UNCED Conference, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The sound management of chemicals was specifically addressed in Chapter 19 of Agenda 21; the commitment to reducing toxic chemicals in the environment was subsequently renewed in Johannesburg in 2002 and documented in the World Summit on Sustainable Development's Implementation Plan, Chapter 23.⁶

Agreements reached in 1992 and afterwards to implement policies to address chemicals issues at the national, regional and global levels have led to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), both of which have been important and influential in developing and implementing chemicals policies.

4.6.2 *Multilateral Arrangements*

Canada's efforts with respect to new chemicals and polymers occur primarily within the broader context of the OECD. Recognizing the global nature of chemicals management, the OECD Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Committee and Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology established a New Industrial Chemicals Task Force (NICTF) in 1999 and approved a work programme designed to increase cooperation among governments and, where appropriate, reduce notification requirements for companies wishing to conduct business on a global basis. Members on the task force represent Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, the European Commission, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Slovak Republic, the U.K., the U.S. and industry, represented by the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD. The Task Force has established five working groups and one special project area:

- The Bilateral/Multilateral Arrangements Work Element utilizes bilateral and multilateral

arrangements between governments with new chemical schemes to learn from each other and to maximise opportunities to enhance information sharing and work sharing.

- The Standardised Notification Form Work Element is preparing a standardised notification form for OECD countries to reduce the cost for companies submitting notifications and to facilitate the sharing of information.
- The Standardised Formats for Assessment and Reports; Common Elements for Hazard Assessment Work Element is developing definitions and formats to facilitate the sharing of assessment reports among jurisdictions.
- The Low Concern/Exempt Chemicals Work Element is identifying opportunities to increase consistency in notification requirements across Member countries for low regulatory requirement or exempt chemicals. This should lead to greater transparency of country requirements and reduced new chemical notification resource needs without reducing protection of humans and the environment.
- The Confidential Business Information (CBI)/ Proprietary Information Work Element is examining how countries can share information related to assessments under current provisions to protect confidential business information (e.g., proprietary or business-sensitive information).
- An expert group on MAN, working towards implementation of a pilot project for MAN notifications.

There are other OECD groups doing work related to new chemicals, including the Task Force on Environmental Exposure Assessment (established in 1995), the Working Group of National Coordinators of Test Guidelines Programs (WNT) and the Working Group on Good Laboratory Practice (GLP). The latter two groups support the Council decision on Mutual

⁶ Chapter 23 states: Renew the commitment, as advanced in Agenda 21, to sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous wastes for sustainable development as well as for the protection of human health and the environment, inter alia, aiming to achieve, by 2020, that **chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, using transparent science-based risk assessment procedures and science-based risk management procedures, taking into account the precautionary approach**, as set out in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and support developing countries in strengthening their capacity for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes by providing technical and financial assistance. [emphasis added]

Acceptance of Data (MAD). Although it is not a major international focus, Canada's New Substances Program has also participated in conferences and worked with the United Nations to assist developing countries in their regulatory schemes.

4.6.3 Bilateral Arrangements

4.6.3.1 Canada and the United States

Lists of substances in commerce play an important part in Canada's new substances management regime. The United States was one of the first countries in the OECD to establish a new substances notification program. The Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA) established a notification and assessment regime based on controlling new substances that represented "unreasonable risk". It also established a master list of substances that were in commerce in the United States. Canada subsequently established two lists:

- the Domestic Substances List (DSL) containing approximately 23,000 substances in commerce in Canada during the mid-1980s, and
- the Non-Domestic Substances List (NDSL) that included substances contained on the U.S. TSCA Inventory of substances but that were not known to be in Canadian commerce at the time the DSL was established.

These two lists, and the chemicals on them, are important for companies doing business in Canada and wishing to manufacture or import chemicals or polymers since they are the foundation for a tiered notification process. Substances that do not appear on either list are subject to full notification requirements; those requirements are reduced for substances on the NDSL. Finally, substances listed on Canada's DSL can be manufactured or imported without notification.

Canada and the U.S. have entered into a formal scientific and regulatory information-sharing arrangement known as the Four Corners Arrangement (4CA). The arrangement was developed by governments of both countries and is dependent upon the active cooperation of industry. It began as a two year pilot program in 1996 and was confirmed as an ongoing program in 1999. Under the arrangement, the two countries and industry representatives work to enhance their understanding of each others' systems

and have shared assessments and used each others' information on a number of substances. While much of the effort has focused on substances that are on the TSCA Inventory and not on the NDSL, there is a broader policy objective to reduce barriers to cooperation and convergence and the establishment of common goals and priorities. The Four Corners Agreement is currently being renewed, and will take a more global approach with a focus on enhancing documentation of assessments to be shared between the two countries.

4.6.3.2 Canada and Australia

Building upon the progress made under the 4CA, in 1999, Canada and Australia began discussions to implement a similar program. This resulted in the signing of the Cooperative Arrangement on New Industrial Chemicals between Australia and Canada in 2002.

The six areas of cooperation covered by the Agreement are: (1) expanding knowledge and sharing information; (2) scientific and regulatory consultative services; (3) work sharing on co-notifications; (4) advancing scientific tools; (5) staff development and (6) special projects. Australia's National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme – NICNAS operates under legislation that allows for the acceptance of assessment reports from select countries, including Canada.

4.6.3.3 Other Areas of Cooperation

On February 27, 2001, the Commission of the European Communities introduced a White Paper that outlined the strategy for a future chemicals policy in the EU. Consultations on the paper are complete and it is anticipated that the European Parliament will review the proposed legislation in 2004. The proposed law would introduce a single regulatory framework for both existing and new chemicals. Debate about the White Paper has been the policy focal point for the last two years. With respect to new chemicals, the White Paper proposes to place the responsibility for assessing risks on industry. It would increase the volume threshold for some chemicals (i.e., the amount of a chemical being used or manufactured above which notification would be required) and reduce testing requirements for others. It also contains language to encourage cooperation with other countries.

The formal arrangements that Canada has forged with the United States and Australia began with smaller cooperative actions and small-scale projects based on increasing mutual understanding and exploring whether additional and more structured cooperation would be beneficial to Canada's new substances program. This flexibility is an important part of "finding common ground", since it allows for flexibility and "opportunism" where it is appropriate. Canada's involvement in the United Nations and its work with developing countries falls into this category.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Engaging in international activities will present scientific, policy and legal challenges to the New Substances Program, however, the benefits are expected to far outweigh any costs.

The New Substances Program may be impacted as follows:

- Engaging in international activities absorbs a portion of the program's budget that might otherwise have been devoted to domestic activities.
- New influences on decision making will need to be incorporated into the current, time-constrained notification system. By reaching agreement with other countries or bodies to accept the information that they provide as part of the decision-making process, Canada agrees to take new factors into account when it assesses substances and when it makes its decisions about risk management measures.
- By focusing on international activities, the program by necessity reduces the immediate priority of some domestic strategies and activities in favour of international activities that promise to provide domestic benefits in the longer term.

The New Substances Program would benefit from the following opportunities:

- Resources available for assessing and managing chemicals with complex hazard and risk characteristics can be increased if the New Substances Program takes advantage of other countries' decisions about those that are less complex.
- By sharing the scientific workload, Canada can provide leadership and help maintain high international standards of protection in those notification and assessment areas where it has established specific expertise.
- International convergence of notifications and assessments provides opportunities for both government and industry. Industry has demonstrated their commitment to this opportunity through active participation in the OECD and the United Nations Environment Program's (UNEP's) Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

History demonstrates that international cooperation and sharing of information increases environmental and human health standards globally, while providing certainty and predictability for industry.

6. NEXT STEPS

In response to requests made by stakeholders during consultations on the NSNR and the New Substances Program, Environment Canada and Health Canada made a commitment to report on the progress of implementing an international strategy.

Beginning with fiscal year 2004/05, the New Substances Program will make public a list of planned annual activities related to the implementation of its international strategy, and report on progress toward the end of each fiscal year.

Finally, as part of an ongoing commitment to involve stakeholders in all aspects of the New Substances Program, Environment Canada and Health Canada will continue to engage stakeholders in discussions on activities to be undertaken and continued in the area of international cooperation, as per the direction provided in the New Substances Program's International Strategy.

APPENDIX A: CHEMICALS INDUSTRY CONTEXT

The World of Chemicals⁷

The global chemicals industry is very diverse, producing, among other products, basic or commodity chemicals; specialty chemicals and consumer care products. Its diversity is reflected in the tens of thousands of substances it produces. Most of the output from chemical companies is used by other chemical companies or other industries (e.g. metal, glass, electronics), and chemicals produced by the chemicals industry are present in countless products used by consumers (e.g. automobiles, toys, paper, clothing). Chemicals are an important part of the world economy with estimated sales in 1998 of US\$1500 billion; the industry accounts for 7% of global income and 9% of international trade, and employs over 10 million people worldwide. Almost 80% of the world's total output is currently being produced by only 16 countries: the U.S., Japan, Germany, China, France, the U.K, Italy, Korea, Brazil, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Switzerland and Russia. Consumption of chemicals is far greater in OECD countries than in non-OECD countries. Similarly, trade in chemicals is currently dominated by OECD regions which have nearly equilibrated trade balances with one another and register trade surpluses with virtually all the other regions of the world.

In its 2001 Environmental Outlook for the Chemicals Industry, the OECD noted the following trends:

- Total production will continue to grow at a faster rate than world population.
- Non-OECD countries will continue to close the gap in the production of chemicals.
- Investment in plants and equipment is expected to grow, with investment from OECD to non-OECD countries growing at the fastest rate.
- Non-OECD countries will increase their share in basic chemicals production.
- Overall volume of trade will continue to increase, with OECD regions having slight negative or slight positive inter-regional trade balances, but there will

be significant negative interregional trade balances in non-OECD countries.

- There will be fewer but larger multinationals.

Canada's Chemical Sector

Canada's chemical industry is the country's fourth largest manufacturing sector, producing over 70,000 different products for the industrial and consumer markets. In 2001, the industry employed 83,000 workers, and registered total sales in excess of \$34 billion or 7% of the manufacturing production in Canada. With over 1,400 chemical firms, the sector has an established global presence, with exports accounting for about \$24 billion or more than two-thirds of total annual production. From 1992 to 2000, shipments for this industrial grouping increased at an average annual rate of 5.71%. Exports during the period grew at an average annual rate of 11%; imports at 12.2%. While Canada's share of the world's exports of chemicals has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years, at 2.5% of total world exports, its share of imports has risen from 2.2 to 3.2% over the same time period.

Canada is a world leader in promoting environmental responsibility within the chemical production process.

⁷ Information in this section is based on the OECD Environmental Outlook for the Chemicals Industry (2001)

APPENDIX B: MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE OF NOTIFICATIONS

The current international situation with respect to new chemicals notifications is that a country wishing to manufacture or use the same chemical in different countries is required to notify each country individually; each country then conducts its own assessment and decision-making process.

The OECD Task Force on New Chemicals established an expert group to develop a draft vision for the mutual acceptance of notifications (MAN). In 2003, the group defined the vision: “We envisage a sustainable world where (a) countries can see and accept each others’ decisions aimed at protecting human health and the environment, (b) companies can submit one notification and then market globally; and (c) countries and companies are more efficient and effective in their activities related to new frameworks. This world will be achieved within an equivalence framework.”

Under the equivalence framework, the MAN process would begin once countries had agreed on the hazard associated with a particular notified chemical, through review of a hazard assessment conducted/ accepted by one of the countries participating in MAN. If the use patterns proposed by the notifier were different than those assessed by the country that accepted the hazard assessment, then the notified country would conduct a risk assessment. If the use patterns were the same and the proposed volumes were the same, then the notified country would accept the risk assessment decision made by the first country. If the volumes were different, then the notified country would conduct a separate, country-specific risk assessment.

The expert group and the Task Force are working towards establishing a parallel process for MAN: notifiers may choose to notify under a MAN process that would operate in parallel to current national notification and assessment programs.