

Canada builds clean air
into the law of the land.



Environment Canada
Environnement
Canada

Environnement Canada - Région du Québec

1141 Rte de l'Église

C.P. 10,000

Sainte-Foy (Québec)

G1V 4H5

CANADA

The Clean Air Act.

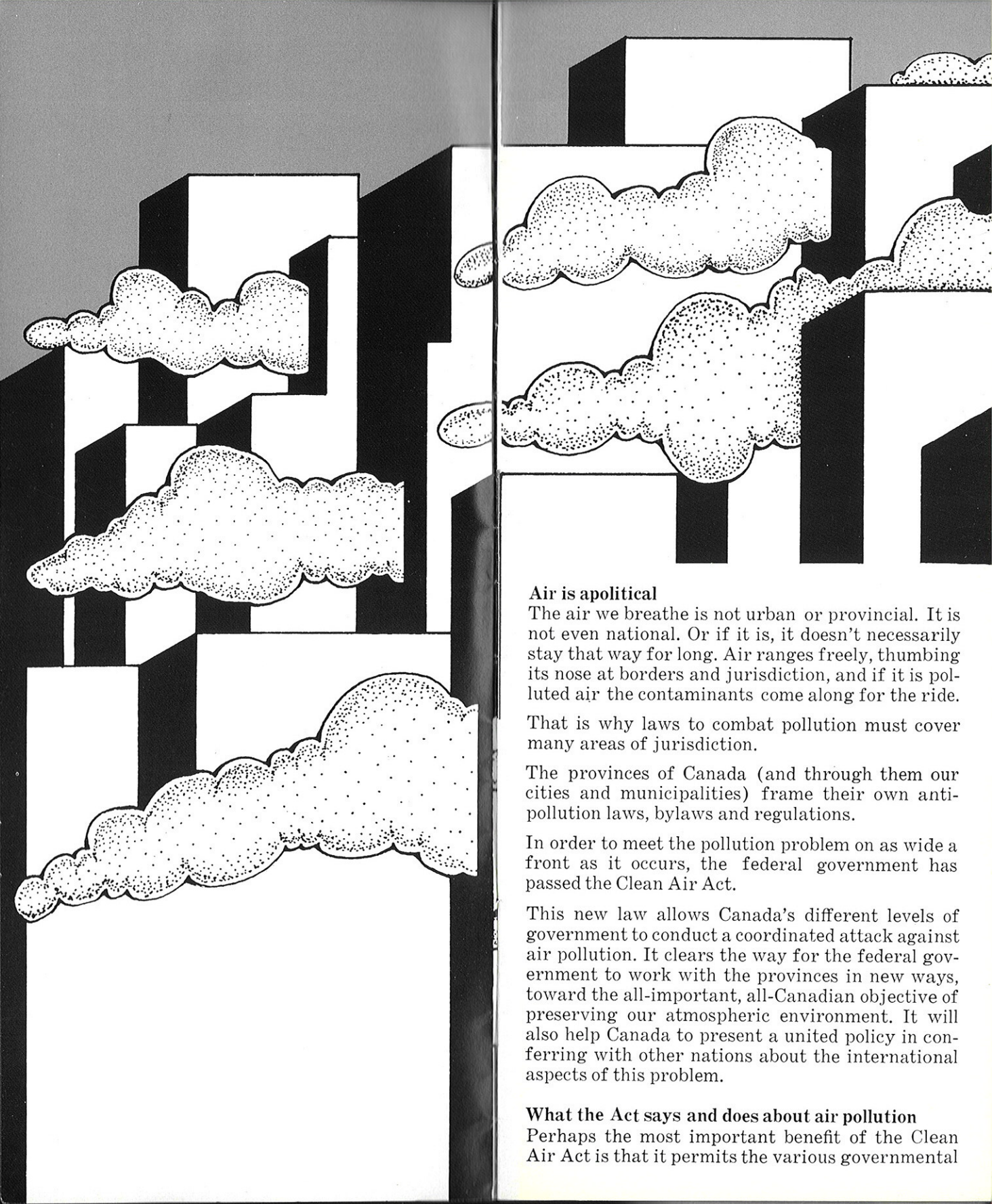


Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada

Environmental
Protection

Protection de
l'environnement



Air is apolitical

The air we breathe is not urban or provincial. It is not even national. Or if it is, it doesn't necessarily stay that way for long. Air ranges freely, thumbing its nose at borders and jurisdiction, and if it is polluted air the contaminants come along for the ride.

That is why laws to combat pollution must cover many areas of jurisdiction.

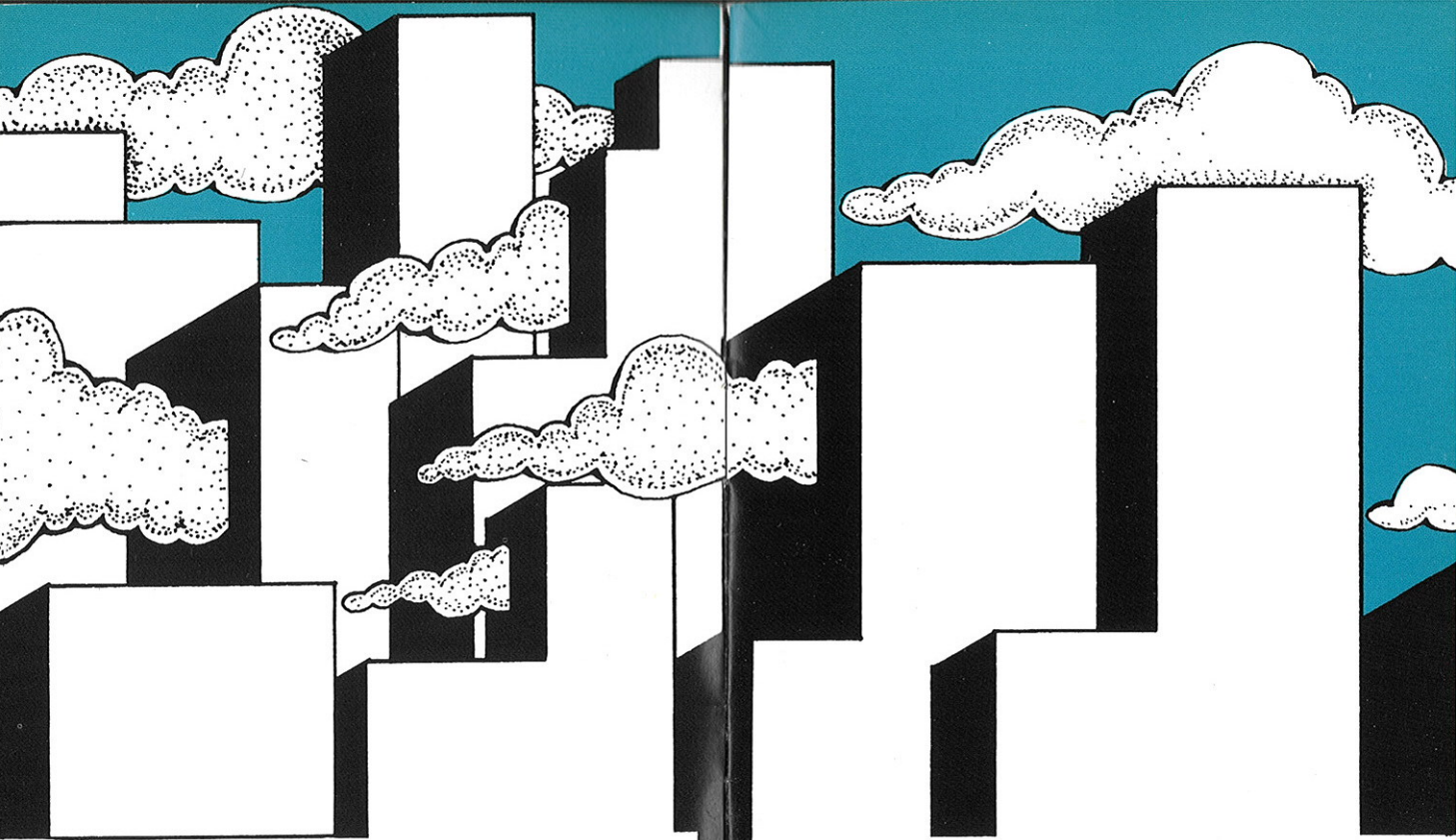
The provinces of Canada (and through them our cities and municipalities) frame their own anti-pollution laws, bylaws and regulations.

In order to meet the pollution problem on as wide a front as it occurs, the federal government has passed the Clean Air Act.

This new law allows Canada's different levels of government to conduct a coordinated attack against air pollution. It clears the way for the federal government to work with the provinces in new ways, toward the all-important, all-Canadian objective of preserving our atmospheric environment. It will also help Canada to present a united policy in conferring with other nations about the international aspects of this problem.

What the Act says and does about air pollution

Perhaps the most important benefit of the Clean Air Act is that it permits the various governmental



authorities to work as a team in combatting air pollution.

The Act permits the federal government to cooperate with provincial governments in several key areas. Here are some:

Setting the targets "Clean Air" is the name of the Act. But what *is* clean air? What levels of contamination must we guard against? The Act enables the federal government to define targets for air quality. These goals are called National Air Quality Objectives. They fix maximum allowable levels for certain pollutants—gases, particulates and so on. These levels are based on what (according to our present knowledge) the effects these contaminants have on people, animals, vegetation, property, and services.

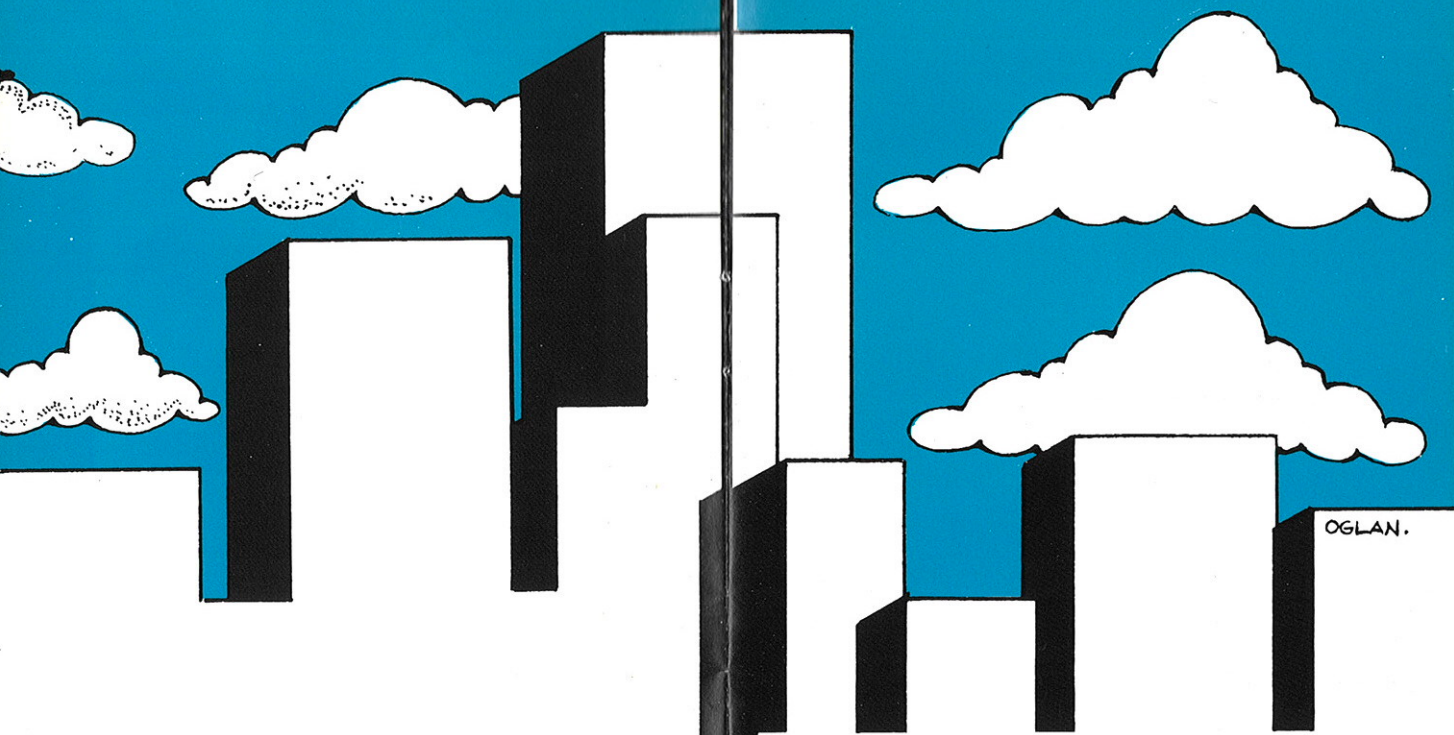
Regulations To assist in reaching these goals, the federal government will issue regulations, enforceable by law, applying to all of Canada. Provincial governments will superimpose additional regulations to cover provincial jurisdiction and local situations when this is necessary. These regulations will apply to sources: to what comes out of the smokestack, or the automobile exhaust, or the tailpipe of the jet.

Guidelines will also be established. These are recommended, rather than required limits. They can become enforceable regulations whenever necessary.

Monitoring the air Setting targets is one thing. Knowing whether we are hitting them is another. The Clean Air Act enables the Government of Canada to work with the provinces in a coast-to-coast program of monitoring the air. There are some 125 air monitoring stations in Canada today. The Act allows the federal government to strengthen this network in various ways. A typical example would be the federal government supplying, and installing monitoring instruments needed to monitor sulphur dioxide levels. The equipment would be operated by provincial personnel.

This closely-meshed surveillance network will give Canada an early warning line against air pollution. But its usefulness goes far beyond immediate problems. Over the long term the data will tell us how our air pollution cleanup is progressing. They will also help us to understand pollution problems in their long-term aspects, the changes occurring in the atmosphere over a period of years.

Good...Not so good...Stop! Under the National Air Quality Objectives described earlier, different levels of air pollution are defined. Each defines a



certain concentration of contaminants in the air. As follows:

“Desirable” At this level, our air surveillance reading tells us that there is no problem. Air quality conforms with our maximum targets. “Spot” (at intervals) monitoring continues.

“Acceptable” This is not a danger level. The yellow warning light is on, however, and control action is required when this level is exceeded. Pollution has risen to the point where spot measurements give way to continuous monitoring.

“Tolerable” When this level is exceeded, we definitely have a problem. Immediate control action is required.

Beyond this point we are in the “intolerable” range. When contaminants approach concentrations which create what the Act calls an “imminent and substantial danger”, the federal government intervenes to correct the situation.

The long range goal is to have all of Canada’s air in the “desirable” range.

Stopping it at the Blueprint

Much air pollution can be stopped before it starts.

It may be a matter of changing a fuel, or redesigning a machine or a process.

Under the Clean Air Act, the federal and provincial governments work with industry to “design pollution out” at these stages.

No Havens Here

A very important purpose of the Act is to make sure that the burden of fighting pollution is fairly shared. For instance, with national air quality objectives applied uniformly across the land, no organization can dodge the cost of cutting down pollution simply by moving elsewhere in Canada. There will be no pollution havens in Canada.

©
Information Canada
Ottawa, 1973

Cat. No.: En 42-273

Printed by Hignell Printing Limited

Issued under the authority of the Honourable
Jack Davis, PC, MP, Minister,
Environment Canada

For more detailed information on Canada's air pollution control programs write:

Air Pollution Control Directorate,
Environmental Protection Service,
Department of the Environment,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3