***MEDIA RELEASE*** For Immediate Release

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Attn: Environment, Health, & News Editors

**Toxic Chemicals Found in Canadian Toys & Consumer Products Made of Recycled Plastics:**

**Health and Environmental groups urge immediate action by Canada to withdraw recycling exemption for toxic flame retardants under the Stockholm Convention**

**Ottawa, Canada -** A recent analysis of consumer products sold in Canada made from recycled plastics has revealed toxic flame-retardant contamination in some hair accessories, children's toys, and other plastic products. Canada is one of the few countries that registered a [recycling](http://chm.pops.int/Implementation/Exemptions/SpecificExemptions/HexaBDEHeptaBDERoSE/tabid/5035/Default.aspx) [exemption](http://chm.pops.int/Implementation/Exemptions/SpecificExemptions/TetraBDEandPentaBDERoSE/tabid/5039/Default.aspx) for toxic polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) persistent organic pollutants (POP) after they were banned under the Stockholm Convention in 2004 (7 out of 182 Parties registered these exemptions). The exemption has permitted to recycle materials such as plastics from discarded computers and other products containing PBDEs in the recycling stream for the past ten years and to continue this practice until 2030. Environmental health organizations are urging the Canadian government to end the practice and withdraw the recycling exemptions because the resulting contamination of the recycling stream allows banned chemicals in products and poses a threat to public health, particularly children.

The toxic substances at issue are PBDEs, flame retardants used in plastics, such as casings for electronics. PBDEs disrupt human hormone systems, adversely impacting the development of the nervous system and children's intelligence. They are released from products into household dust, causing exposure.

In 2019 HEJSupport in Canada, in collaboration with the global environmental health network IPEN, conducted product sampling to assess the presence of PBDEs in products made of recycled plastics. Pocket calculators, hair racks, combs, and toy cars on sale in Canada contained toxic flame retardants. Those products are not a fire hazard and are not expected to contain the some of the most toxic substances targeted for global elimination under the Stockholm Convention.

“Canadian consumers should be able to purchase products made of recycled materials without having to worry that they contain substances that are globally banned. This is not the case at the present time,” said Olga Speranskaya, HEJSupport Co-Director and IPEN Senior Advisor. “We hope that Canada will announce its withdrawal of the recycling exemptions for PBDEs at UN Stockholm Convention meeting in Geneva (April 27-May 10).”

The findings, say researchers, should motivate policymakers to close the recycling loophole that is causing globally banned toxic chemicals to appear in consumer products. In a public letter, HEJSupport and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) call on the government of Canada to withdraw its recycling exemption for the toxic class of flame-retardant chemicals.

These findings echo the results of a 2018 analysis of products sampled in 19 European countries in which a quarter of the products tested were contaminated with PBDEs and other brominated flame retardants as a result of recycling practices. The recycling loophole, conclude environmental health advocates, allows toxic chemicals in recycled products that governments around the world have banned because they agreed they are damaging to human health and the environment.

Health and environmental advocates argue that there is no justification for exposing vulnerable populations including children and workers to these toxic chemicals. Environmentally sound solutions for separation of PBDE-contaminated waste and its destruction exist.

“We are facing a troubling situation where the global elimination goal for toxic chemicals set in the Convention are being undermined by exemptions allowing for recycling of plastics containing toxic PBDEs,” said Fe de Leon, researcher and paralegal CELA. “There are a number of relatively low-tech ways, such as floating plastic in a salt water solution, for identifying plastics containing brominated flame retardants and keeping these plastics out of recycling.”

"The principal consequence of the recycling exemption is contamination of products made of recycled plastic or foam," said Jitka Strakova, Arnika’s and IPEN’s researcher specialised in POPs." Consumers should be able to purchase products made of recycled materials without having to worry that they contain substances that are globally banned. Recycling should support environmental health, not undermine it."

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Reporters and editors can view letter from HEJSupport and CELA to Canadian government/Focal points of the Stockholm Convention here <https://hej-support.org/>.

***To arrange a media interview or for more information, contact:***

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**Health and Environment Justice Support (HEJSupport)** is a membership based organization, working to achieve a healthy environment and environmental justice for affected people. It provides long term technical, policy and awareness raising support for harmed communities to enable them to make their problems heard and to strive for solutions. HEJSupport hosts Chemicals in Products and EDCs Groups for IPEN.

**Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)** is an environmental legal clinic based in Toronto**,** Ontario thatworks to protect health and our environment by seeking justice for those harmed by pollution and by working to change laws and policies to prevent such problems in the first place. For almost 50 years. . CELA has used legal tools, undertaken groundbreaking research and advocated for increased environmental protection and to safeguard communities, with a specific mandate to provide assistance to low income people and disadvantaged communities.

[**IPEN**](http://www.ipen.org/) is a global network of more than 500 health and environmental public interest organizations in over 100 countries, working to eliminate the world's most harmful chemicals to create a toxics-free future.

[**Arnika Association**](https://english.arnika.org/) is a Czech non-governmental organisation established in 2001. Its mission is to protect nature and a healthy environment for future generations both at home and abroad. Since its beginnings, Arnika has worked on protection of consumers from chemically hazardous products. Arnika hosts Dioxin, PCB, and Waste Working Group for IPEN.