Environment Canada | Environnement Canada

Environmental Protection | Protection de l'Environnement

Ottawa, Ontario.
K1A 0H3

June 29, 1973.

Mr. Al Erdman,
President,
Monsanto Canada Limited,
425 St. Patrick Street,
LaSalle, Quebec.

Dear Mr. Erdman:

You are, of course, aware that the escape into the environment of quantities of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) has led to international concern over the threat of widespread upset of ecological systems. This concern has led the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to recommend joint action by member countries, which include Canada. The recommended actions, detailed in the enclosed Press Release, require that we minimize accidental release of PCBs into the environment and eliminate certain uses of PCBs where control of escape to the environment is not practicable and where substitute materials or other alternatives are available.

The government recognizes that voluntary action initiated by Monsanto some time ago brought about many of the changes now recommended by the OECD, and your company is to be congratulated for the lead it has given. In order that we can fulfill Canada's commitment to the OECD, we need to know the current situation respecting use of PCBs in Canada. Monsanto and members of trade organizations were very cooperative in 1971-72 in supplying federal officials with information on the use of PCBs. We hope to obtain similar data now in order to assess the changes in amounts and manner in which PCBs are used. If the information reveals that, indeed, there still remains a substantial PCB problem, some action will have to be initiated by the government. We would appreciate your suggestions and advice for suitable controls or other measures should it prove necessary to control the irresponsible (or unknowing) activities of a few.

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Specific information that we need includes: the quantities of PCBs being imported, produced or used; the variety of products being manufactured containing PCBs and the amounts of PCBs in them; the types of PCBs, and the amounts of each type, being used; specific actions taken to reduce the usage or escape of PCBs; the alternatives or substitutes for PCBs recently used or planned for the future; uses for which there is no appropriate substitute for PCBs; arrangements made for recovery or disposal of used materials; measures taken to ensure that incineration of waste products effectively decomposes PCBs; and any plans to use distinctive labelling of items containing PCBs.

The federal government has set up a working group to gather the available information and to recommend any further steps that should be taken. If your company will transmit such of the listed information as it can to Dr. M.F. Millson, Environmental Contaminants Control Division, Ecological Protection Branch, Environment Canada, he will arrange for its compilation with other data to form a national picture. Perhaps Monsanto would be prepared to have its representatives meet members of our Working Group for detailed discussions; Dr. Millson (997-3201) will make any necessary arrangements with you by telephone.

Yours sincerely,

for L. Edgeworth,
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Environmental Protection Service.