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Chemical in Great Lakes

Fishing may be threatened

TORONTO (CP) — Provincial and federal officials said Monday that health threats from the industrial chemical compound PCB may threaten Canadian commercial fishing along the lower Great Lakes.

Dr. G. J. Stopps, senior environmental health adviser to the ministry of health, said the viability of Great Lakes fishing will likely be questioned if the federal health department sets tolerance levels of five parts per million in fish food.

The United States Food and Drug Administration set levels of five parts per million but Canada has no guideline.

Dr. Harold Grice, director of the the bureau of chemical safety in the food and drug directorate of the federal health department, said the federal government will likely try to establish a tolerance level of five parts or less.

Dr. Grice said researchers' new findings show that five parts per million may be too high and a contemplated Canadian guideline may be reduced by a fifth.

He and Dr. W. P. McKinley, director-general of the directorate, said they would not eat any coho salmon caught in Lake Ontario. A public warning was issued by the Ontario government last week not to eat more than one coho salmon meal a week from the Great Lakes.

Pregnant women were advised not to eat any such fish.

Dr. McKinley said health officials do not know enough at the moment to set a level.

Two international conferences being held in the next two months to review PCB knowledge may influence the federal level.

PCBs have shown long-term effects in animals tested, such as liver and kidney ailments and birth defects.

PCB is included in paints, paint thinners, adhesives, plastics, printing and papers.

A similar situation involving a commercial fishing ban occurred in 1972 when fish caught in Lake Erie showed high levels of mercury.

In the lower Great Lakes, testing shows lake trout, pickerel and pike are among species with high PCB levels.

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