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Report Recommends Phasing Out Use of PCBs

Ottawa: The phasing out of all uses of highly persistent polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Canada is recommended in a 170-page Task Force Report on PCBs released today by Environment Canada and the Department of Health and Welfare.

Currently PCBs are used primarily in the manufacture of electrical capacitors and transformers. The task force recommends that initial regulations should restrict use of PCBs in new goods to dielectric insulating oils and that research should be instituted to discover less hazardous substances to use as substitutes. This action would involve consultation with industry, the provinces and the United States before specific regulations could be brought in.

The investigators found that the Great Lakes and associated regions are the most PCB-contaminated areas so far identified in Canada. Eels from Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River are the only commercial species which routinely exceed the temporary guideline of 2 parts per million of PCBs set by the Health Protection Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare. There is no problem of PCB-contamination with sea-caught fish. MONS 060846

A continuous monitoring and sampling program by the Fisheries Inspection Branch ensures that no fish containing PCBs or other hazardous substances in excess of established guidelines reaches the consumer.

This information was released to the wire services on the date indicated. Despite the delay, some releases and speeches are mailed to out-of-town media because the content is not time dependent or because it will be useful for background info.

Cette information a été transmise aux agences de presse à la date indiquée. Malgré le retard, certains communiqués et discours sont expédiés aux médias de l'extérieur, parce que leur contenu n'est pas relié au temps ou parce qu'ils peuvent servir comme documents

"It is clear that Canadian control efforts alone will be insufficient to reduce the environmental levels of PCBs in the Great Lakes to tolerable levels" the report adds. "Effective action will also be necessary in the U.S. portions of the Great Lakes basin."

Ministers of the two departments concerned are now studying the Task Force report and are expected to announce a decision on the recommendations shortly. Any regulatory measures would be introduced under the recently-proclaimed Environmental Contaminants Act.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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36/6/3/76