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Canadian Facilities Lag Behind U.S. in Reducing Air Pollution

New report by Commission for Environmental Cooperation shows more work needs to be done in Canada

Toronto, Ontario – Canadian facilities are still lagging behind their American counterparts in reducing the amount of pollutants emitted to the air, according to a report released today by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

According to the CEC report, *Taking Stock: 2003 North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers*, Canadian facilities reporting to the National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) reduced air pollution by 3% between 1998 and 2003. U.S. facilities reporting to the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) reported a decrease of 23% over the same time period. The findings closely follow those from a recent report by the PollutionWatch partners, which found that Canadian facilities in the Great Lakes emitted 73% more air pollution per facility in 2002 than their U.S. counterparts.

CEC data also states that facilities undertaking pollution prevention activities demonstrate a greater decrease in pollution levels than facilities that do not report pollution prevention. NPRI facilities reporting pollution prevention activities claimed a 4% decrease in pollutant releases and transfers. For NPRI facilities that did not report pollution prevention activities there was a 7% increase in releases and transfers.

“Canadians should be concerned that Canadian facilities’ air emissions are significantly higher than in the U.S., and Canadian reductions of carcinogens are significantly lower than in the U.S.,” said Hugh Benevides, counsel with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “Canadian pollution law and regulation need to be strengthened.”

The CEC timetrend analysis for 1998 to 2003 is based on a matched data set of pollutants reported to the NPRI and TRI. The data set includes 153 matched chemicals reported from manufacturing facilities, electric utilities, hazardous waste management facilities, chemical wholesalers, and coal mines.

Taking Stock also found differences in total on- and off-site releases of suspected and known cancer-causing substances and reproductive toxins. Between 1998 and 2003, NPRI facilities reported a 21% decrease in releases of suspected or known carcinogens, while TRI facilities reported a decrease of 26%. For developmental and reproductive toxicants NPRI facilities decreased levels by 17%, while TRI reported a decrease of 37%.

“Clearly, Canada can learn from the U.S., which has succeeded in significantly reducing releases of pollutants that are harmful to our health,” said Jennifer Foulds, Communications Director, Environmental Defence. “To see real progress in Canada, we need specific timelines for regulated reductions of toxic chemicals, particularly those linked to cancer and developmental harm.”

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The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA), Canada's national pollution law, is going through its legally-required 5-year review. The PollutionWatch partners, Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association, are calling on the federal government to take the lead in significantly reducing pollution across Canada, beginning with:

- virtually eliminating releases of carcinogens and reproductive and developmental toxicants to the air and water;
- mandatory targets and timelines for eliminating persistent toxic substances;
- requiring mandatory pollution prevention activities for all facilities reporting to NPRI; and
- ensuring resources are directed to enhance and expand the NPRI program.

Pollution Watch has recommended these priorities to parliamentarians conducting the CEPA review, and will continue to focus on them during the review.

Previous PollutionWatch reports, focusing on pollution in Canada and the Great Lakes basin, are available to download for free on the PollutionWatch web site: www.PollutionWatch.org.

About PollutionWatch (www.PollutionWatch.org) is a collaborative project of Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association. The web site tracks releases and transfers of pollutants across Canada based on data collected by Environment Canada through the National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI). NPRI does not include data from all pollutants or sources. Visitors to the PollutionWatch web site can identify facilities in their home towns by searching by postal code, access "quick lists" of the facilities reporting the largest releases and transfers of pollutants in the country, get trends from 1995-2003, or create their own ranked lists of facilities by province, industrial sector, or corporation.

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