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Environmental groups on new flame retardant prohibitions: One step forward, still a long way to go

Toronto, ON – New [regulations](#) by Environment and Climate Change Canada will broaden restrictions on several toxic flame retardants known to lower children’s IQ. The prohibitions prevent Canadian manufacturers from using PBDEs, or plastics or mixtures containing PBDEs. This move underscores the risk of these types of chemicals to human health and the environment. However, manufactured items, including imported items such as furniture or electronics can still contain these neurotoxic chemicals and further action is needed.

Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) have been [demanding federal action](#) on these toxic chemicals since 2006. The groups applaud the decision to move forward with restrictions to protect the health of Canadians and the environment. However, evidence indicates more needs to be done to prevent further damage to the health of Canadians, especially children and infants.

“While these amendments ensure that Canadian manufacturers must phase out their use of PBDEs, it does nothing to prevent the import of products containing these chemicals, which is where the greatest risk to human health lies,” said Dr. Elaine MacDonald, Senior Staff Scientist, Ecojustice. “Bans and severe restrictions on PBDEs in products have been in place in European countries for several years.”

“What is urgently needed as a next step is prohibition of imported products that contain these substances – such as current measures for other chemicals that do address imported products, such as phthalates in children's products,” said Kathleen Cooper, Senior Researcher, CELA.

“This is a step forward,” said Maggie MacDonald, Toxics Program Manager at Environmental Defence. “When it comes to neurotoxic chemicals like flame retardants that can affect learning outcomes in children, the cost of continued contamination is too great.”

## Background

As of January 2017, HBCD, a toxic flame retardant, will be prohibited from being imported, manufactured, and used in Canada, including major uses such as HPS and XPS foams; products already imported and manufactured prior to that date will still be available for sale.

Existing restrictions on PBDE flame retardants, which have been shown to lower children's IQs following prenatal exposure, have been expanded to prohibit certain uses of DecaPBDEs in resins, polymers and mixtures, and to prevent the import of DecaPBDEs. However, all PBDEs, including DecaPBDEs will still be permitted in imported, manufactured products.

The updated restrictions on potentially cancer-causing perfluorinated compounds (PFCs), which are related to the "non-stick" and "water-repellent" family of chemicals, may allow greater use of these chemicals in firefighting foams. This is problematic as these chemicals have been found to severely contaminate drinking water sources.

About CELA ([www.cela.ca](http://www.cela.ca)): The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is a non-profit, public interest organization established in 1970 to use existing laws to protect the environment and to advocate environmental law reforms.

About ECOJUSTICE ([www.ecojustice.ca](http://www.ecojustice.ca)): Ecojustice goes to court and uses the power of the law to defend nature, slow climate change, and stand up for the health of our communities.

About ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE ([www.environmentaldefence.ca](http://www.environmentaldefence.ca)): Environmental Defence is Canada's most effective environmental action organization. We challenge, and inspire change in government, business and people to ensure a greener, healthier and prosperous life for all.

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