

# ***MEDIA RELEASE***

**For Immediate Release**

**December 15, 2008**

## ***Canada's BPA measures not protecting the most vulnerable***

*Health and Environmental Organizations from across the country claim federal proposals will result in ongoing human exposure and environmental damage*

*Toronto* – The federal government's proposal to ban polycarbonate baby bottles containing bisphenol A (BPA) is a necessary step in protecting infants during one stage of their early development. However the government's proposals on BPA fail to prevent exposure to pregnant women and growing children, declared a group of health and environmental organizations today. As part of a comprehensive response to BPA, they are calling for a ban on BPA in food containers and food wrapping, which are sources for BPA migration.

"Protecting infants against BPA is not enough. We need to protect the fetus — and that means protecting the mother," said Barbara McElgunn of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. "Health Canada's review of the research in the screening risk assessment for BPA considered both the pregnant woman/fetus and infant as potentially sensitive subpopulations, but concern for the pregnant woman/fetus did not translate into the risk management proposal. After the government invested so much time and energy to review BPA, and declare it to be toxic, they failed to make the bold changes needed to protect one of the most sensitive groups, and Canadians in general."

Health Canada's own assessment cited research that found BPA can accumulate in the womb, exposing the fetus to levels five times higher than maternal levels. In addition, BPA has been detected in breast milk at levels nearly as high as those found in infant formula. BPA is known to migrate from polycarbonate plastics and food packaging and other products.

To its credit, Canada is the first country to find BPA "toxic" under its federal legislation, to ban the chemical from baby bottles, and to restrict it in infant formula cans. While this proposal and other proposed action to monitor and investigate BPA sources are important steps in protecting infants from direct exposure, the government has not targeted BPA for phase out from many consumer products containing this chemical. Products such as the lining of food and beverage cans, dental sealants, and other consumer products, including some cosmetics, will continue to remain on the market.

"Protecting babies through a BPA ban in plastic baby bottles is essential," states Fe de Leon from the Canadian Environmental Law Association. "However, these measures should be part of a more comprehensive government response that deals with all sources - consumer products and industrial sources. We need protection for pregnant women, the growing fetus and young children from using a variety of consumer products – food packaging and epoxy lining in food cans, which may contain these toxic chemicals. The government proposal is a piecemeal approach to a growing problem as we see reports linking BPA to range of health problems that are increasing in the population – cancer, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and heart disease in the population."

"Consumers beware. Despite the availability of alternatives to BPA in consumer products, the government proposals fail to protect our most vulnerable populations, children, infants, and women of children bearing age," said Sandra Madray from Chemicals Sensitivities Manitoba and Prevent Cancer Now. "In part, there is a gap in

the government proposals which does not fully address the aggregate and cumulative impacts of hormone disrupting chemicals such as BPA.”

Recent research has shown that the identified sources of exposure to BPA cannot fully explain the high circulating blood levels that have been found in the population. “The science suggests Health Canada’s assessment has underestimated Canadians’ overall exposure to BPA,” said Sean Griffin of Toxic Free Canada. “The government should be taking steps wherever possible to reduce exposure to BPA, such as removing polycarbonate water bottles from the market, working with industry to re-formulate can linings and controlling occupational exposures.”

Organizations such as the U.S. National Toxicology Program expert panels and more than 150 peer-reviewed studies have associated low level exposure to BPA with a variety of health problems including obesity, ADHD, breast cancer, and a wide range of developmental problems. In addition to the health impacts from BPA exposure, the Canadian government found significant evidence that BPA is acutely toxic to aquatic organisms at low levels.

BPA has also been found in surface waters, sediment, groundwater, and other areas in the environment. “The government response is inadequate,” said Anna Tilman from STORM Coalition. “Developing measures that address the full life cycle of this chemical, from its use in industrial applications, in products and their disposal is long overdue. BPA has been found in house dust, and in sewage sludge and wastewater.”

To mark the end of the government’s comment period on BPA on December 17, 2008, 22 health and environmental organizations across Canada are calling for additional regulatory measures to phase out BPA from consumer products, particularly the wide array of food and beverage products that contain BPA as well as industrial use and emissions of BPA.

For more detailed information about BPA, see the attached backgrounder.

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**Supporting organizations:**

Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec	Great Lakes United
Breast Cancer Action Montreal	Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment	New Brunswick Partners in Agriculture
Canadian Environmental Law Association	Prevent Cancer <i>Now</i>
Chemical Sensitivities Manitoba	Reach for Unbleached
Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario	Réseau québécois des femmes en environnement
Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca	South Riverdale Community Health Centre
Earth Action	STORM Coalition
Ecojustice	Toxic Free Canada
Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia	York Region Environmental Alliance
The Gaia Group	Women's Healthy Environments Network