



CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DU DROIT DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

January 19, 2012

The Honorable Lisa P. Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Ariel Rios Building  
Washington, DC 20460

**Transmission by e-mail: [jackson.lisap@epa.gov](mailto:jackson.lisap@epa.gov)**

Dear EPA Administrator Jackson:

**Re: EPA Dioxin Reassessment**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Dioxin Reassessment document is extremely important to the health of the American people and we applaud your efforts to bring this long delayed process to closure.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is a legal-aid clinic based in Toronto, Ontario that specializes in environmental law. We are writing to strongly urge you to finalize the non-cancer dioxin IRIS assessment by the end of January, and expeditiously release the cancer dioxin IRIS assessment as you have pledged to do. The findings of the dioxin reassessment has relevancy beyond the borders of the United States.

CELA has advocated strong environmental laws to manage persistent toxic substances, including dioxins and furans, nationally and internationally. At the national level, dioxins have been identified as toxic under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* with subsequent measures developed to reduce levels of dioxins in the Canadian environment. Dioxins have not been re-assessed in Canada.

At the international level, dioxins have been the focus of several important international agreements including the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), where the goal "to reduce the total releases . . . , and, where feasible, ultimate elimination" have been agreed upon for dioxins and furans. Both Canada and the United States acknowledge the detrimental impacts of dioxins to the environment and human health, particularly to northern communities where impacts of POPs like, dioxins, are being detected. Therefore, Canada, as a Party to the Stockholm Convention, seeks to undertake domestic measures to achieve the obligations set out in the Stockholm Convention on dioxins. Although not yet a Party to the Stockholm Convention, the United States maintains an active role in the negotiations for the effective implementation of the Convention, including those focused on dioxin formation and

release to the environment. The Dioxin Reassessment may provide valuable information to the global efforts for ultimate elimination of dioxins required under the Stockholm Convention.

CELA also places substantial focus on dioxins from a bi-national perspective for the protection of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, the world's largest source of freshwater, that is the shared responsibility of Canada and the United States. Again the impacts of dioxins to Great Lakes wildlife and ecosystem health are well documented. Dioxins is just one group of few persistent toxic substances targeted by the United States and Canada for virtual elimination under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), a vital bi-national agreement between our federal governments to restore and protect the biological, physical and chemical integrity of the Great Lakes. Progress to reduce the levels of dioxins in the Great Lakes ecosystem has been achieved through bi-national efforts, but dioxins are still detected in the ecosystem and the long term impacts on the environment and health have not been eliminated. Again, the Dioxin Reassessment would be valuable to inform the work still required to eliminate dioxins and prevent the impacts on the environment and human health in the Great Lakes basin.

The need to achieve virtual elimination for persistent toxic substances such as dioxins in the Great Lakes has not diminished especially with growing evidence of new chemical threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem. For example, there are new sources of dioxins yet to be fully understood including triclosan, a substance used for its antibacterial properties and found in a wide range of personal care and consumer products. Triclosan is detected in Great Lakes surface waters<sup>1</sup> and may be highly toxic in the aquatic environment. In the presence of sunlight, triclosan in surface waters has been known to form harmful by-products including dioxins. A better understanding of these new sources of dioxins is needed. The Dioxins Reassessment could be a valuable source of information in this regard.

Since 1985, efforts by EPA to assess the risks of dioxin have been delayed time and time again. Scientists at EPA have long concluded dioxin and dioxin-like compounds are highly toxic, but a strong coalition of industries responsible for generating dioxins as a by-product of production and disposal have successfully stalled the completion of this health assessment report. As EPA has continued to work on the Dioxin Reassessment, people in communities across the country are continuing to be exposed to this highly toxic chemical. We are very concerned that industry is attempting to stall the release of this important report yet again.

On August 29, 2011, EPA announced its final plan for completing the Dioxin Reassessment. EPA committed to completing the non-cancer portion of the reanalysis and posting it to the IRIS database by the end of January 2012 and to then complete the cancer portion of the reanalysis "as quickly as possible." EPA stated that once the

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<sup>1</sup> Merih Otker Uslu, Nihar Biswas and Saad Jasim. Chemicals of Emerging Concern in the Great Lakes Region. Undated. Access at <http://www.ijc.org/php/publications/pdf/ID696.pdf>.

Agency completes both the non-cancer and cancer portions of the Reanalysis, the Dioxin Reassessment would be considered final.


We are extremely dismayed that industry trade associations is once again pressuring EPA to further delay the release of this important document.

We believe the public has a right to know about the health consequences of exposure to dioxin, and EPA work to release the findings from the reassessment of dioxin will provide valuable information for the protection of human health in the US and beyond from this harmful class of chemicals.

We urge you to meet your schedule of finalizing the non-cancer portion of the dioxin reassessment by the end of January 2012 followed by the completion of the cancer portion of the reassessment as you have pledged.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for your commitment to protecting health and the environment from impacts of dioxins. We look forward to your response to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fe de Leon", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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cc: The Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment, Environment Canada (email: [Minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@ec.gc.ca))

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, Health Canada (email: [leona.aglukkaq@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:leona.aglukkaq@hc-sc.gc.ca))

Cass Sunstein, Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (email: [cass\\_R.\\_Sunstein@omb.eop.gov](mailto:cass_R._Sunstein@omb.eop.gov))

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