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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Current Policies Fail to Protect People and Ecosystem from Toxic Chemicals in the Great Lakes**

*Report Recommends New Pollution Prevention Efforts to Protect Shared Water Resources*

LOWELL, Mass./TORONTO, Ontario – Current chemical regulatory frameworks in Canada and the U.S. are not protecting people from newly detected chemicals in the Great Lakes, says a new report released today.

Known as “chemicals of emerging concern,” substances such as triclosan, flame retardants, siloxanes and musks are a few of the chemicals that are being detected. These contaminants are primarily coming from the use and disposal of everyday products, such as pharmaceuticals, pesticides, cosmetics, personal care and plastic products. Established policies and control mechanisms, such as wastewater treatment plants, were not designed to manage these types of contaminants, and as a result, they are now found in the Great Lakes.

The joint report by the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Canadian Environmental Law Association recommends new regional policies in the United States and Canada that include sustainable solutions for designing and producing products that prevent the chemicals from entering the Great Lakes basin. These solutions include approaches such as pollution prevention, toxics use reduction, alternatives assessment,

safer substitution, and green chemistry that could ultimately eliminate persistent toxic chemicals and other contaminants.

“If governments do not take decisive action now on these contaminants, there is a reasonable chance the Great Lakes will see another catastrophe like that of PCBs at some point in the future,” says Joel Tickner, co-author of the report and associate professor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and project director at the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production.

“The only way we can truly eliminate the emissions of these chemicals is to redesign products so that they do not contain dangerous chemicals.”

The current chemicals management programs continue to struggle to manage persistent toxic chemicals such as PCBs, dioxins and furans, mercury, and lead—all known to be long time threats in the Great Lakes basin. These new “chemicals of emerging concern” add to the burden.

“Our analysis shows that the chemicals regulatory framework on both sides of the border fail to recognize the unique needs of the Great Lakes where 40 million people live and rely on the lakes for drinking water and economic activities,” says Fe de Leon, co-author of the report and researcher with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “We encourage the U.S. and Canadian governments to develop a new framework based on precaution and prevention of toxic threats. Canada’s own national chemicals plan should be refocused to do more on preventing the use of toxic chemicals at the source and require the substitution to safer chemicals and technologies.”

The report provides a comprehensive evaluation of existing policies, identifies gaps and develops a road map to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem and water quality.

The International Joint Commission Work Group on Great Lakes Chemicals of Emerging Concern commissioned the report, “The Challenge of Substances of Emerging Concern in the Great Lakes Basin: A review of chemicals policies and programs in Canada and the United States.” Work group members will present the findings at the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Biennial Meeting in Windsor, Ontario on October 7, 2009 and discuss the issue with the public to help inform the Commission's 15th Biennial Report.

To download the report, visit [www.sustainableproduction.org](http://www.sustainableproduction.org) or [www.cela.ca](http://www.cela.ca)

*The **Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at UMass Lowell** uses rigorous science, collaborative research, and innovative strategies to promote communities, workplaces, and products that are healthy, humane, and respectful of natural systems. The Center is composed of faculty, staff, and graduate students at the University of Massachusetts Lowell who work collaboratively with citizen groups, workers, businesses, institutions, and government agencies to build healthy work environments, thriving communities, and viable businesses that support a more sustainable world. Visit <http://www.sustainableproduction.org>.*

*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. It is also a free legal advisory clinic for the public, and will act at hearings and in courts on behalf of citizens or citizens' groups who are otherwise unable to afford legal assistance. Funded by Legal Aid Ontario, CELA is one of 80 community legal clinics located across Ontario, 20 of which offer services in specialized areas of the law. CELA also undertakes additional educational and law reform projects. Visit [www.cela.ca](http://www.cela.ca).*

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