Media Release

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Your soap may be toxic when flushed down the drain: New GreenScreen® for Safer Chemicals Tool Identifies Hazardous Chemicals in Common Household Products

(Toronto, Canada) The **Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)** and **Clean Production Action (CPA)** today released a comprehensive assessment of the hazards posed by two chemicals commonly used as antibacterial agents in consumer products ranging from liquid soaps and toothpaste to kitchen cutting boards. **GreenScreen® for Safer Chemicals,** a globally recognized tool for comparative chemical hazard assessment, was used for the first time to assess the environmental and human health profile of triclosan and triclocarban.

The GreenScreen assessment found that triclosan is a Benchmark 1 substance – a chemical to be avoided. Triclocarban is ranked as a Benchmark 2 with very high aquatic toxicity. The groups are seeking a prohibition of these chemicals because of their impact to rivers and lakes.

“What’s particularly alarming is the range of impacts these chemicals are having -- from damaging aquatic ecosystems, including the Great Lakes, to interfering with human endocrine systems. When you realize that 95% of triclosan and the vast majority of triclocarban ends up going down the drain, the fact that both pose a very high toxic hazard to aquatic organisms is very bad news for our lakes and rivers,” noted CELA researcher Fe de Leon.

“In the aquatic environment, we know that triclosan goes on to generate dioxins and other hazardous substances in water,” added de Leon, who commissioned the GreenScreen reports as part of CELA’s Great Lakes research program. “The Canadian government needs to step up and prohibit the use of these unnecessary chemicals in consumer products and we are asking that States and Provinces, particularly around the Great Lakes, take action as well,” she added.

“The advantage of the GreenScreen assessment tool is that it comprehensively looks at the full range of impacts – from human health to environmental harm – of a substance which then allows users and regulators to better understand if a chemical should be avoided, substituted or continued to be used. This is a better alternative to the often siloed approach taken by regulators which can send unclear signals to the market. For example, Health Canada says that triclosan is safe for humans – despite its endocrine system effects -- but Environment Canada considers it toxic and highly damaging to the natural environment. With over 1,600 consumer products containing triclosan and

hundreds more containing triclocarban, consumers are left in the dark about how toxic these antibacterial chemicals are in the environment," says Bev Thorpe, Consulting Co-Director of Clean Production Action, the host organization for GreenScreen.

"Both the Public Health Agency of Canada and the US Food and Drug Administration have stated that soaps with added antibacterial ingredients, such as triclosan, are no more effective than washing with plain soap and water, which makes this environmental and health damage almost entirely preventable," said Kathleen Cooper**,** Senior Researcher at CELA.

In addition, growing concern about antibiotic resistance from the overuse of antibacterials has been expressed by both the Canadian and American Medical Associations and the European Union. Recently some companies including Avon, Proctor and Gamble, and Johnson & Johnson, have publicly declared their intention to phase out triclosan.

In May 2014, Minnesota became the first US state to ban --as of January 2017-- the retail sale of any cleaning or personal care consumer product that contains triclosan. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has given manufacturers until December 2014 to demonstrate "a clinical case" for the use of antibacterial soaps. The Canadian government issued a draft recommendation in 2012 declaring triclosan a toxic chemical, but to date no action has been taken.

"As triclosan comes under increasing scrutiny, it is essential that we do not replace it with another hazardous chemical, like triclocarban. You would think this would be common sense but the recent case of dangerous plastic microbeads in cosmetic products, demonstrate that many manufacturers are still not anticipating the potential harm chemicals may have in the environment" notes Thorpe. "We are calling on companies and regulators to stop the toxic treadmill of ongoing hazardous chemical use by using tools like GreenScreen to better understand the hazards of any chemical *before* it is put into consumer goods."

A summary set of recommendations and complete GreenScreen reports are available at www.cela.ca/triclosan-and-triclocarban.

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CONSUMER PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN TRICLOSAN OR TRICLOCARBAN

- Liquid and hand soaps labelled antibacterial
- eye and face make-up
- body lotion
- body wash/shower gel
- facial cleanser
- face cream/hand cream (barrier cream)
- shampoo
- toothpaste and mouthwash
- fragrance
- shaving preparation
- foot gel
- acne treatment
- body spray
- underarm deodorants
- tanning products
- cutting boards
- non-prescription medication
- detergent
- clothing
- carpet
- paints
- plastic
- toys
- school supplies
- pacifiers
- dishwashing/laundry products
- institutional fabric softeners
- toilet bowl deodorizer
- textiles (including leather)
- synthetic innersoles
- rubber material
- paper
- used as a sanitizing agent in textile mills

Sources:

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