

Caledon Citizen

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Guest Editorial

No protection from the pollution from everyday consumer products

Cosmetics, tile cleaners, insect repellants, shampoos, laundry detergents and prescription drugs are just some of the everyday products containing harmful endocrine-disrupting substances (EDS) that can seriously damage our health. The red flags currently being raised about these EDSs ending up in our water couldn't have come sooner.

We have learned from harrowing stories in the past that exposure to incredibly small amounts of EDSs, such as Thalidomide and the synthetic estrogen diethylstilbestrol, and the timing of the exposure, can cause dramatic birth defects. Developing fetuses are a vulnerable population needing our protection.

It's clear that governments and academia need to set clear priorities for research and put more resources into examining and understanding this issue. Unfortunately, the Harper Government's new Science and Technology Strategy is going in the opposite direction as it hints at privatizing its government research labs.

And in Ontario, the government needs to listen to the Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller's advice and support research into water treatment technologies to remove these substances from our water.

Last year, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) published *There is No AWAY*, a major report on EDSs in our water (available at www.cielap.org) that includes recommendations to the government for handling this problem, specifically, creating policy that would prevent these pollutants from getting into our water in the first place. And when we don't have enough hard proof, precaution and prevention ought to be

the course of action.

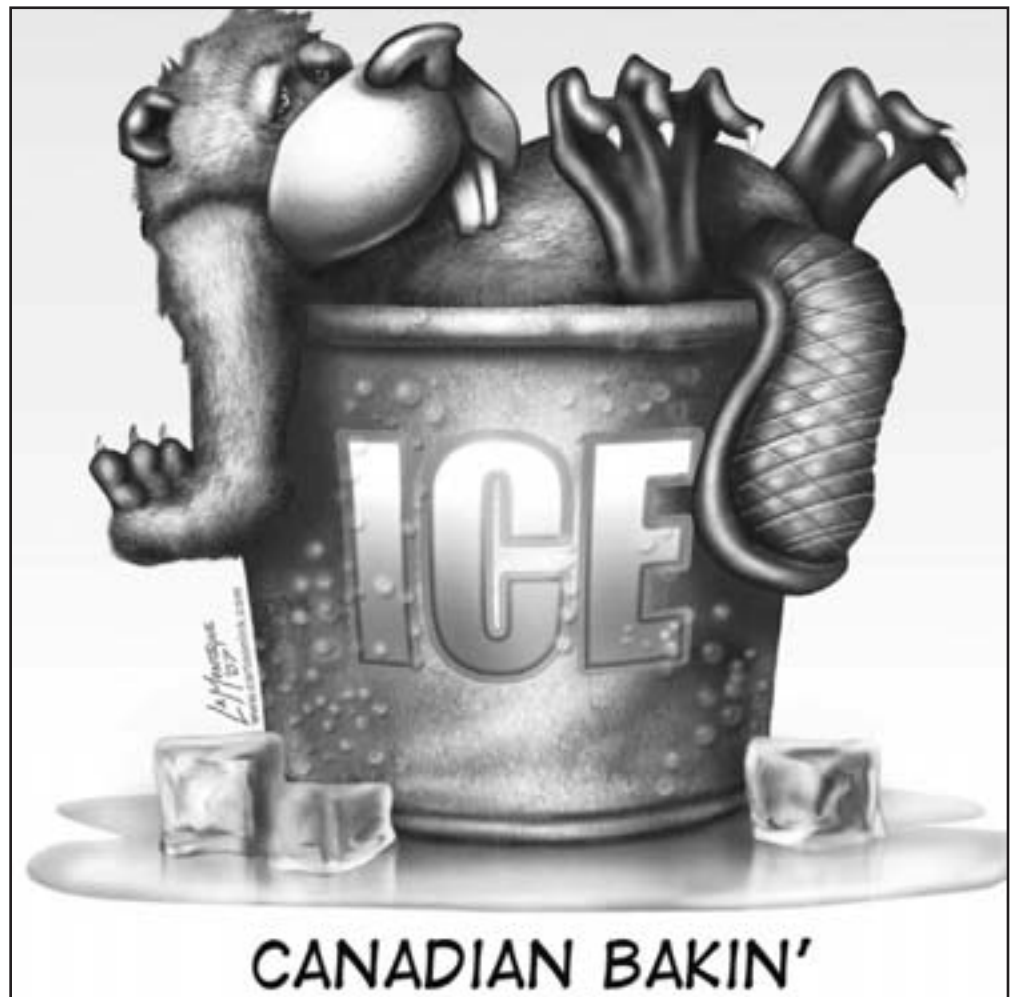
We highlight a number of actions governments can take to curb EDS pollution. They can initiate public and consumer education programs; establish municipal by-laws about avoiding home pesticide use and not discarding drugs down toilets and sewers; develop product standards; and restrict manufacturers from using some substances, or at least limiting the amounts they use.

Consumers also need a better system to be able to identify safer personal care and cleaning products. We need our government to initiate a system for mandatory labeling that allows and promotes consumer choice. It's absurd that consumers have no reliable way to tell whether the soaps, deodorants, and cleaners they buy - to put on their skin and use in their homes - contain potentially harmful substances.

In the long-term, however, people's safety shouldn't be left to consumer choice. As we learn more about EDSs and the risks they present to human health, problem ingredients should be banned.

We must act now to educate citizens and provide them with the tools they need to make informed decisions for their health and the health of their environments. A labeling program, which would let consumers better understand and choose the chemicals they consume, would be a good start.

By *Anne Mitchell, executive director, Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP). Founded in 1970, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) is an independent environmental law and policy research and education organization.*



Our Readers Write

Referendum is important

I'm writing in about Claire Hoy's recent article - "Voter education more important than system."

He gets it right when he says that "No system is perfect," but the referendum Oct. 10 is about which system is **better**. Under our current system, a party that wins 40 per cent of all votes can get 60 per cent of the seats and 100 per cent of the power. Wouldn't it make more sense for a party that wins 40 per cent of the votes to get 40 per cent of the seats? That's what MMP will do.

Claire thinks that party lists will be a haven for party hacks. But if you asked any **MMP is not for me!**

Reading letters written by supporters of the proposed new voting system, it seems to me there is an urgent need to point out a few things before the rot spreads too far.

The one sentence that surely condemns the whole thing has to be: "The only difference in MMP is that the public would vote for a group of representatives, **instead of for an individual.**" So much for a thousand years of development of parliamentary government! No longer do we listen to what a candidate has to say, evaluate his sincerity, his platform and his past record, then make up our minds. We are expected to vote for some "group," chosen by the who-cares-what method.

If that is their idea of a reasonable system, it isn't mine.

Also, contrary to the tone of most of the letters, both Mr. Hoy and myself have read **and understood** the proposals, and have made up our minds accordingly. It would therefore be appreciated if supporters of the proposed new system would drop this line of attack and concentrate on the technicalities, as I have attempted to do.

John C. Tysoe
Cheltenham

party representative in Ontario whether they would nominate their lists undemocratically, they would respond "of course not!" They know that voters would punish them for this sort of behaviour.

Another interesting prediction is that our government will be in forever deadlocked, or that we'll have elections every 1.5 years. But Germany, a country which uses a variant of the proposed voting system, has had just as many elections as we have in the past 60 years and their parliament is at least as functional as ours.

The people of Ontario are smart. They can see that a system that gives them more choice, fairer results and stronger representation is clearly the better system. They know that Mixed Member Proportional serves the voters' interests better than First-Past-The-Post and puts the power firmly in the hands of the electorate. On Oct. 10, vote for MMP.

Derek Kraan
Waterloo

Looking for winners

We're looking for anyone whose child won a Grand Prize in the Life's Precious Moments Baby Photo Contest in 1989.

Fifteen university scholarships were awarded across Canada and our daughter was one of the lucky winners in Ontario.

It is 18 years later and she will be entering university in the fall. We'd really like to how your children are faring.

We had no information on any of the other winning entries so we are writing to every newspaper across this country in hopes that we may connect with the other 14 winners. Our goal is to find every winner. If your child is one of them, please contact us at valerie_luttrell@yahoo.com. Thank you.

Valerie Luttrell
Newmarket

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