

**Sports**

*Team in turmoil as Wallaceburg beats hapless Sarnia Pacers*

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# Children 'poisoned,' group says

## NEW STUDY ON TOXIC CHEMICALS RELEASED

By CATHY DOBSON  
The Observer

New study results released in Ottawa this morning reflect the federal government's poor track record of protecting Canadians from toxic chemicals, an environmental activist says.

The results also prove the need for a comprehensive health study of the general population in Sarnia-Lambton, said Wilson Plain Sr., a lifelong Aamjiwnaang resident who participated in the study.

"This is dramatic evidence that our children are being poisoned because of government inaction and lack of regulations," said Rick Smith, a biologist with Environmental Defence, which co-ordinated the study.

His non-profit group tested 13 people across Canada, including three from the same Aamjiwnaang First Nation family, and found toxins in the blood and urine of each one.

The study — entitled Polluted Children, Toxic Nation — tested five families for 68 chemicals ranging from heavy metals and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), to pesticides and insecticides. Many are proven carcinogens, while others have been linked with reproductive disorders, neurological problems and respiratory conditions.

On average, 32 chemicals were detected in each parent volunteer and 23 chemicals were found in each child.

Although PCBs and pesticides like DDT were banned before the children in the study

were born, they were detected in all the children and all the parents.

However, the children had lower concentrations of PCBs, which shows that government action to eliminate toxic chemicals can be effective, Smith said.

He criticized the government for not doing biomonitoring of its own so Canadians are more aware of what their bodies are absorbing.

"All Canadians should take this study seriously and find out what's in their own bodies," said Wilson Plain Sr., 66, who retired after working at several industrial sites in Sarnia-Lambton. His son, Wilson Plain Jr., 44, and Jessie, his 14-year-old granddaughter, also participated in the study to see if chemical accumulation is occurring among Canadian youth to the same degree as older generations.

In several cases, the children were more contaminated than their parents. In the Plain family, Jessie had a lower than average number of chemicals in her samples.

Of all the test subjects, Plain Sr. had the highest concentration of perfluorinated chemicals, linked to cancer and commonly found in microwave popcorn bags and fire extinguishing foam.

Plain Sr. also tested positive for 12 of 16 PCBs.

"I was angry when I found out," he told The Observer. "We don't know what it all means and we need to get some answers. We need the government to be a lot more involved."



Plain Sr.

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# Thousands to be checked for chemicals

By CATHY DOBSON  
The Observer

The first-ever national bio-monitoring survey by the Canadian government will start next winter, says a Health Canada spokesman, responding to criticism levelled today by Environmental Defence.

Five thousands Canadians aged six to 79 years will be tested for about 70 environmental chemicals such as lead, mercury, phthalates and pesticides, said Health Canada's Carolyn Sexauer.

"This survey will produce statistically valid data on Canadians' exposure to environmental chemicals," she said. "The government of Canada takes very seriously the exposure of Canadians to environmental chemicals, the extent to which these substances are ending up in our bodies, and the risks they pose to our health."

The federal government was taken to task today by Environmental Defence, a non-profit advocacy group that released the results of a bio-monitoring study it conducted this year.

Only 13 people participated in Environmental Defence's study, not enough to be statistically significant but enough to demonstrate that Canadians, young and old, carry hundreds of different pollutants, said Rick Smith, a biologist and executive director of the Toronto-based group.

"It doesn't matter where you live, how old you are, it doesn't matter how clean living you are or if you eat organic food, we all are accumulating these things," he said.

He called on parents to urge the government to insist on better safety standards before chemical products are allowed on the market and to ban others.

In Environmental Defence's study, children as young as 10 harbored toxic chemicals in

"We need to aggressively demand immediate action on the worst cancer-causing chemicals like flame-retardants and phthalates (chemicals that make plastic soft)," Smith said. "Other countries have already banned them or are on their way to banning them."

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) that are used in flame retardants are not found in high levels in the environment but there are signs they are increasing in our bodies and are slow to break down, Sexauer said.

So, while the government doesn't acknowledge PBDEs pose a human health risk, it's taking a "preventive approach," she said. That includes a possible ban and steps to ensure the "sound disposal" of existing waste containing these chemicals.

"At least one major manufacturer has recently stopped production of some PBDEs," Sexauer said without naming which one.

No final regulatory decision has been made yet, but Environment Canada and Health Canada are doing a review.

The government has a new chemicals program, according to Sexauer, that requires all chemicals to be assessed prior to their use in Canada.

While Smith said Canada has a "dismal" safety standard when it comes to chemicals, Sexauer said Canada's existing chemicals program is one of the most advanced in the world.

New chemicals on the market have to meet more stringent standards, Smith agreed. "But what about all the ones that have been on the market since the 60s?"

"There's thousands of those out there that were never tested."

That's why the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is up for parliamentary review, said Sexauer.