

Does Canada Need Stronger Regulations on its Personal Care Products?

OTTAWA—According to a new report issued by the **David Suzuki Foundation**, Canada needs stronger rules to keep toxic chemicals out of personal care products. The report discusses the findings of an online survey conducted earlier in 2010 in which participants were asked to inspect ingredient lists for 12 sets of potentially harmful chemicals used as ingredients in cosmetics. More than 6,200 Canadians participated in the survey, providing information for 12,500 personal care products. Four out of five of the products entered in the survey contained at least one or more ingredients with suspected links to environmental or health problems—including cancer, reproductive disorders, asthma and severe allergies.

"Our survey results indicate the widespread presence of a dirty dozen ingredients in products that we use on our bodies every day," said Lisa Gue, environmental health policy analyst with the David Suzuki Foundation. "Clearly, we need more effective regulatory action to keep these potentially harmful chemicals out of consumer products."

"Cosmetic manufacturers should be required to specify which chemicals they use as ingredients, and potentially harmful ingredients should be replaced with safer alternatives."

However, many companies have fought against this notion due to the extensiveness of the ingredients used in the making of an ingredient. The ingredient label would be exhausted if the full list was to be disclosed.

The study results also indicate an overwhelming appetite for change—98 percent of survey participants agreed that Canada's laws should be strengthened. Other recommendations in the report include: identifying potentially hazardous ingredients in personal care products with a standardized system of warning labels; allowing public access to ingredient information that cosmetic manufacturers submit to Health Canada; and controlling commercial use of the terms.

Many feel there is a need to regulate personal care and cosmetic label claims, as products are able to claim natural and organic even if only 1 percent of their formulation uses natural or organic ingredients. These claims are confusing to the public and dilute the true weight of those terms.

The use of certain chemicals in personal care products has long been debated. There are two sides to this story: Many advocate for their removal in personal care and cosmetic products, while others deem these ingredients in their products as safe and say their link to ailments such as cancer are bogus or exaggerated.

(Science seems to be one thing and claims by companies supporting the use of these questionable ingredients are quite another)