



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Report highlights cement industry's toxic toll *Findings support call for assessment of Ontario Lafarge proposal*

TORONTO – The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) released its annual Taking Stock report today, chronicling the release of millions of tonnes of toxic chemicals in North America each year. This year's report highlights the environmental impact of North America's cement manufacturing industry, an industry that releases 5% of global man-made carbon dioxide emissions and vast quantities of toxic substances such as mercury and dioxins. The report outlines serious concerns regarding lax regulation and reporting issues among Canada's cement facilities.

"The CEC's report contrasts the regulatory frameworks in the US and Mexico, where there are strict legal emission limits for air contaminants from cement kilns, and Canada, which has no enforceable national standards," said Sierra Legal Senior Scientists Dr. Elaine MacDonald. "This lax regulation of one of the country's largest polluting industries is truly appalling."

The CEC's comparison of pollutant reporting from cement plants in Canada and the US also highlights strange inconsistencies raising concerns of unchecked underreporting in Canada. American cement plants reported on a total of 79 pollutants while Canadian facilities reported on only 25. Furthermore, American cement plants are reporting more pollution overall than Canadian plants, 13 times more, even though cement plants in both countries are largely owned and operated by the same multinationals.

The report comes as cement manufacturers in several jurisdictions are proposing the burning of 'alternative fuels' such as tires, municipal waste and plastics in addition to traditional fuels such as coal in their cement kilns to cut fuel costs and raise revenues from waste tipping fees. The move may offer some minor reductions in greenhouse gas emissions but the 'trade off' will be increases in toxic air contaminants leading to serious damage to the local environment and public health.

"Here's a global industry transforming itself into a major player in the hazardous waste trade. Are we going to stand by and let them use Canada as a pollution haven through inadequate regulation and reporting? It's time for Environment Canada to aggressively regulate the 16 cement facilities here," said Beatrice Olivastri, CEO of Friends of the Earth Canada. "

Concerns regarding the use of alternative fuels at cement kilns have been raised in Ontario over a proposal to burn massive amounts of tires, trash, plastics and animal rendering waste in Lafarge Canada's antiquated cement kiln in the community of Bath. On behalf of the Loyalist Environmental Coalition, in March, Sierra Legal Defence Fund filed a formal request with Ontario's Ministry of the Environment for an independent and public environmental assessment of Lafarge's proposal.

"The CEC's findings clearly support our argument that the Lafarge Bath proposal needs a full environmental assessment," said Martin Hauschild of the Loyalist Environmental Coalition. "The lack of National emission standards, under-reporting of emissions, increased toxic emissions with alternative fuel use and alarmingly weak regulatory oversight, are not glowing endorsements of the status quo. The proposal by Lafarge to burn a range of wastes from municipal wastes to animal renderings to tires, sets a major precedent in Canada and an environmental assessment is a matter of urgent public policy. Governments at all levels must show leadership on this important issue."

-30-

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