



Media Release

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E-Waste Program Delayed as Toxin Levels Grow

Is part of that old computer you tossed last year now in your salmon sashimi? Could well be according to a recent a Hites' Laboratory study published August 10th by journal Environmental Science and Technology.

The study shows that West Coast farmed and wild salmon have elevated levels of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), a toxic flame retardant commonly used in computers and electronic products.

A potential source of these toxins is e-waste leachate from landfills into waterways. More than 2000 tractor-trailer loads of e-waste went to BC landfills last year. But with the stroke of a pen, that toxic material wouldn't be in the solid waste stream at all.

Last October, the Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection announced that an industry stewardship program for computers and other electronic products would be in place as early as Spring 2004. To that end, Electronic Product Stewardship Canada, the organization formed by brand owners to tackle e-waste, submitted a stewardship program plan for BC.

That program would run much like current stewardship programs: managed by industry and funded by consumers through an advanced disposal fee at the point of retail. Problem solved.

However, that solution appears to now be on hold under a cabinet review. But as the Hites' study points out, toxins from e-waste have already entered the food chain. Why is the provincial government delaying implementation of an industry-managed program that would offer a solution to this growing and obvious problem? That question needs to be answered.