



## **Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy report released coincident with National Pharmacists Awareness Week (March 6-12)**

Report: *Pharmaceutical, personal care and endocrine disrupting substances – emerging contaminants detected in water* makes recommendations

(Toronto, March 6, 2006) National Pharmacist Awareness week (March 6-12) is an appropriate time to release this report highlighting issues related to increasing environmental contamination by pharmaceuticals and personal care products, such as pills, shampoo and household cleaners. Available at [www.cielap.org](http://www.cielap.org), the report warns that these contaminants that are entering surface, ground and drinking water, can have serious environmental and health consequences.

The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) report *Pharmaceutical, personal care and endocrine disrupting substances – emerging contaminants detected in water*, researched and written by Senior Policy Analyst, Susan Holtz contains recommendations, such as:

- Supporting and enhancing product stewardship programs for returning unused drugs;
- Developing a process to determine endocrine disruptors in sewage and industrial effluents;
- Phasing out the use of antibiotics and hormones as animal growth promoters; and
- Reviewing sewage sludge and animal manure management practices in light of issues related to pharmaceuticals and resistant bacteria in water.

Anne Mitchell, Executive Director of CIELAP, was careful to commend Pharmacists, and identified them as key players in the efforts to keep unused and waste drugs out of our water. Mitchell observed, “The leadership of many pharmacists who initiated regional and in-store programs to capture and properly dispose of these products, ensuring they are not flushed into our water, are local heroes.”

Mitchell went on say, “But the efforts of Pharmacists are not enough. We are now just beginning to learn about the consequences of the contaminants being detected nearly everywhere in surface, ground and drinking water. As more pharmaceuticals and personal care products are used, more contaminants will eventually find their way into our environment, putting us at higher risk of bacteria related illnesses, increasing resistance to antibiotics; and hormonal imbalances due to higher concentrations of endocrine-disrupting substances. A comprehensive, prioritized phase-out strategy is needed now.”

While many contaminants enter the environment through sink and shower drains, flushing old medications down the toilet is a significant contributor. This is in addition to the residual 25 – 90% of active drug ingredients contained in human excrement after pharmaceuticals are ingested. Pets and livestock excrement also contain contaminants when they have been given veterinarian medicines, antibiotics or chemicals used for growth promotion. This excrement can contaminate surface water, running off into aquifers, rivers and lakes, the sources of our drinking water.

Mitchell concluded, “While action on CIELAP’s recommendations for government and industry is crucial. Individuals can help – please don’t flush unneeded drugs down the drain. The Pharmaceutical Association of Canada is committed to the safe disposal of old drugs. Simply return unused medicine to your pharmacy.”