

FOR WHALES' SAKE

By Jackie Hilderling



The work of Dr. Peter Ross (Institute of Ocean Sciences) has proven that BC's iconic killer whales are laden with toxins of human origin. As marine mammals at the top of the food chain, killer whales are indicators of the state

of the marine ecosystem and the repercussions of our consumer and chemical driven lifestyles. But – you can make a difference!

The Western world has banned the use of 12 toxins known as "The Dirty Dozen." These chemicals include the PCBs and 8 pesticides; the Stockholm Convention is geared against them. They are persistent organic pollutants meaning they bioaccumulate in fat and act like hormones impacting reproduction, development and immunity. These chemicals are the product of our great ingenuity but our lack of precaution led to insufficient testing. Only after decades of use did we realize the devastating effects of these chemicals

that never go away. Based on the lessons learned from The Dirty Dozen, one would expect that we would have legislation for the stringent testing of new chemicals. Sadly, this is not the case.



Brominated fire retardants (the PBDEs; polybrominated diphenyl ethers) have been used in abundance since the banning of PCBs and have now also been proven to be toxic, bioaccumulative and persistent. They are found in our furniture, televisions and computers. The PBDEs are so much

Brominated Fire Retardants

part of our environment that they are detectable in house dust and have been found in the blubber of 4-week old seal pups in non-urbanized areas, indicating that they spread; that they are taken into fat; and that they can be downloaded via mother's milk (Dr. Peter Ross).

Many companies have been proactive in switching to alternative fire retardants since there are multiple, safe alternatives. While Canada has banned the use of the less heavy forms of PBDEs (octa and penta), the use of heaviest form (deca) is still tolerated. These chemicals must be banned and we need improved legislation for the testing of new chemicals.

Make a quick stop at www.econauts.org and click "Helping the Whales" for more information and petitions. Your awareness and small lifestyle changes can make . . . a whale of a difference.

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