

Unsavory Cocktail:Canadian Leaders Tested for Toxins

Environment Minister Rona Ambrose has fewer flame-retardants in her blood than NDP Leader Jack Layton but much higher levels of arsenic. Health Minister Tony Clement carries a burden of polychlorinated biphenyls but less neurotoxic mercury than Liberal environment critic John Godfrey. Results of tests on these four politicians, released by the group Environmental Defence, provide evidence of the extent to which industrial chemicals are building up in Canadians' bodies. The four were found to be carrying a cocktail of unsavory substances — a combined total of 54 carcinogens, 37 hormone disruptors, 16 respiratory toxins, 54 reproductive or developmental toxins, and 33 neurotoxins. "Our tests show that pollution affects everyone," said Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence. "We did this to try and put a face on this issue and personally interest those politicians who are currently discussing the CEPA (Canadian Environmental Protection Act) review." CEPA was intended to curb the proliferation of toxic chemicals in commercial use, but critics say the law has been largely ineffective. It is in the process of being revised.

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