

Gwich'in Council International Lindane Task Force Trip Report

Traveler

Evon Peter

Funding

GCI

Dates

February 11th-13th, 2004

Purpose of Trip

To provide representation and inquire for GCI at public session of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)– Lindane Task Force meetings in Anchorage, Alaska, Feb. 12th, 2004.

Background Information

The CEC has a Working Group called the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC). Lindane and the alpha and beta isomers of hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH) have been targeted for a North American Regional Action Plan by the three North American countries; Mexico, US, and Canada. The Lindane Task Force gathers and discusses research, interventions (statements), and other information on Lindane in relation to use, sales, and impacts in the northern countries. They will report their findings through the chairperson of SMOC to the CEC for suggested actions by the northern countries. Lindane (gamma-HCH) and the alpha & beta isomers of HCH are both pesticides and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP's) that are currently registered and used in all three northern countries.

Uses of Lindane

Agricultural Use – Seed treatment of corn and wheat, among other crops. Also used on cattle and pigs for flea, tick, and fly larvae treatment.

Public Health Use – Approved for treatment of lice and scabies on humans.

Issues

Lindane is a highly toxic pesticide that is known to have severe neurological impacts on humans and cause death in some cases after only one use. It is also a POP's chemical which migrates through the air and water towards the Arctic where it settles. This gets into our food chain and eventually ends up in our peoples bodies. For our people, I think we should put out a notice that it is not recommended to use lice or scabies shampoos or treatments that contain Lindane. Canada has already taken measures to eliminate the use of Lindane with livestock and crops, but they have done nothing with the use of Lindane for public health. The US is adding more stringent warning labels to products that contain Lindane, but no major actions have been taken to eliminate its use. Mexico is still in the process of researching Lindane use and potential market impacts.

Lindane Task Force next steps

The Task Force appears to be in agreement that Lindane is a harmful chemical that needs to be restricted if not phased out of use in North America, although they have not yet put forward their recommendations. Their discussion is focusing on how to put forward a realistic recommendation, taking into consideration the role that Lindane plays in agriculture, public health, and business. They are seeking to evaluate alternatives that they may provide as a part of their recommendations. Also on their agenda is Outreach and Education and Capacity Building within the nations.

Task Force Contact Information

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