

**Education and Health
Ontario Provincial Council**

2015.02 Ban Plastic Microbeads in Personal Care Products

- Whereas,** Plastic non-biodegradable microbeads in personal care products have been identified as a source of pollution in waterways; and
- Whereas,** The House of Commons voted to take measures to add microbeads to the List of Toxic Substances in Schedule 1 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*; therefore, be it
- Resolved,** That national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, in 95th annual national convention assembled, urge the federal government to ban plastic microbeads in personal care products; and be it further
- Resolved,** That this resolution be forwarded through the national executive to the other ten provincial councils, encouraging them to become aware of this issue as it pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed necessary/prudent.

BRIEF: Ban the Use of Plastic Microbeads in Personal Care Products

“Microplastics, which include microbeads, have been measured in Canadian waters and sediments” (Canada Gazette). Scientists have identified microplastics as a major source of plastic pollution in the freshwater ecosystems of the Great Lakes (Froklage et al). “Some plastics were tiny beads from personal care products” (ibid). There was also “prevalence and locally high densities of microplastics in St. Lawrence River sediments...” (Castaneda et al).

“Microplastics are plastic debris smaller than 5 mm in diameter” (Froklage et al). “Microbeads are typically used in many personal care products, consumer products and industrial applications in Canada and are defined as synthetic polymer particles that, at the time of their manufacture, are greater than 0.1µm and less than or equal to 5 mm in size” (Canada Gazette). “In Canada, microbeads were reported to be used in personal care product categories of skin care (which include anti-aging creams, moisturizers, cleansers, etc.), bath and body (which include bath/shower gels or soaps, lotions, talcs or balms, nail polishes, etc.), and cosmetic-like products, which include fluoridated toothpastes, acne therapy, etc. (Government of Canada). “A personal care product is defined as a substance or mixture of substances which is generally recognized by the public for use in daily cleansing or grooming. Depending on how the product is represented for sale and its composition, personal care products may fall into one of three regulatory categories in Canada: cosmetics, drugs or natural health products”(ibid).

“When these products are used by consumers and are washed down the drains of sinks and showers, the microbeads end up in wastewater treatment systems. Depending on the type of wastewater treatment, some of the microbeads will be captured in the biosolids, or sewage sludge, but some will make it into the effluent and be discharged to (Minnesota) surface waters. Microbeads may also end up in the soil or groundwater from subsurface (septic) wastewater treatment systems...” (Lohse-Hanson et al).

“Microbeads are mainly made of polyethylene; therefore, they reside in the environment for a long time and are a contributor to plastic litter in the environment” (Canada Gazette). “Once in the environment, microbeads can be ingested by a wide range of organisms, such as fish, seals, and birds” (ibid). Ingestion can also expose organisms to harmful chemicals that are either leached from the plastic or absorbed onto it (Froklage et al).”Therefore, it is possible that microbeads enter the food chain” (Canada Gazette).

“On March 24, 2015, the House of Commons voted unanimously to take immediate measures to add microbeads to the List of Toxic Substances in Schedule 1 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA 1999)”(Canada Gazette).

This resolution urges the federal government to ban the use of plastic microbeads in personal care products so as to reduce their release and to safeguard the environment from the risk they pose. Environmentally friendly alternatives such as biodegradable abrasives could be utilized in personal care products instead of plastic microbeads.

Works Cited

1. "Vol. 149, No. 31 — August 1, 2015." *Government of Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Integrated Services Branch, Canada Gazette*. Web. 14 Aug. 2015. <http://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2015/2015-08-01/html/reg1-eng.php>
2. Castaneda et al. "Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences." *Microplastic Pollution in St. Lawrence River Sediments*. Web. 14 Aug. 2015. <http://www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/abs/10.1139/cjfas-2014-0281#.Vcjj64KzfIV>
3. Froklage, R.; C. Lant; A. Misbah; E. O'Leary; E. Payton. "Assessing and Mitigating Plastic Pollution in Lake Huron". The Lake Huron Centre for Costal Conservation by Hydra Horizons Consulting. April, 2012. Web. <http://lakehuron.ca/index.php?page=plastic-pollution-in-lake-huron>
4. Government of Canada. *Microbeads – A Science Summary*. July 2015. Web. http://www.ec.gc.ca/ese-ees/ADDA4C5F-F397-48D5-AD17-63F989EBD0E5/Microbeads_Science%20Summary_EN.pdf
5. Lohse-Hansen et al. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. *Plastic microbeads in Minnesota – Potential impacts of plastic microbeads, used in many consumer products, on environmental and human health*. December 2014. Web. <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=22038>

Action Plan

1. Write letters to federal/provincial/territorial ministers of health and environment, urging protection of Canada's waterways through legislation banning plastic microbeads from personal care products.
2. Write letters to the manufacturers of personal care products containing microbeads, urging them to switch to biodegradable alternatives.
3. Become knowledgeable about the effects of plastic microbeads on the environment.
4. Avoid purchasing products containing microbeads by checking their list of [avoid polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP), polyethylene terephthalate (PET) or polymethacrylate (PMMA)].
5. Invite a speaker dealing with health and/or environmental issues concerning plastic microbeads.