

# Unsafe levels of dioxin found in Lake Ontario fish

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By Rick Haliechuk Toronto Star

For the first time, the deadly chemical dioxin has been found in Lake Ontario fish in amounts above the level considered safe by the federal government, Environment Minister Keith Norton says.

Eleven lake trout collected in the Port Credit area contained amounts of the chemical ranging from 17 to 57 parts per trillion, Norton told the Legislature. The fish contained an average amount of 27.4 parts per trillion of dioxin, the minister said. The federal safety guideline is 20 parts per trillion.

Norton told MPPs government medical specialists have advised the continuation of limited consumption of Port Credit area lake trout, a restriction first imposed last year.

It's recommended women of child-bearing age and children under 15 not eat any of the fish. Adult males should eat only one or two meals of trout a month, Norton said.

Dioxin is known to cause cancer, birth defects and reproductive problems when given in small amounts to

test animals. It also can damage the spleen, liver, lungs, brain and central nervous system.

Samples of lake trout taken at Humber Bay, Port Hope, in the lower Niagara River, in the Grand River near Waterloo and in Lake Superior all had trace amounts of dioxin, Norton said.

"Our scientists are satisfied that the dioxin originated on the New York side of the (Niagara) river as the result of previous disposal practices at sites associated with chemical companies in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls, N.Y., area," the minister said in a statement.

He also maintained that Ontario drinking water remains "safe and of good quality."

Norton said his ministry's latest findings are being sent to federal Environment Minister John Roberts and to Canadian and U.S. environmental groups.

And Premier William Davis will meet Michigan Governor William Millikin on June 11 on Mackinac Island to discuss Great Lake problems.