Pollution Prevention: An ENGO's Perspective

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&
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- Worked with citizens action groups for over 50 years, helping them organize on toxics issues, waste management issues, and water levels and conservation issues. Much of his work has focused on the North American Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin.
- Much of John's work has been on community right-to-know. This work has included
  - Being on the multi-stakeholder committee that the Canadian government set up to develop its Pollutant Release and Transfer Registry
  - Being on the NPRI advisory committee for the past 33 years
  - Working with citizens' groups to help them use right-to-know provisions to protect their communities from toxic threats.

Pollution Prevention: The Definition Problem

- PP means avoiding contamination of the environment and threats to life by not using or creating toxic substances in the first place by:
  - Redesigning product and processes to not need toxic substances
  - Substituting non-toxic substances for toxic substances
- Reporting in PRTRs usually uses a much broader definition of pollution prevention to include prevention control

Pollution Prevention vs Pollution Control

"*Even after injury has been established, the traditional focus has been on* ***management and control*** *of releases, rather than prevention. …* Pollution control reactively addresses the problem once the substances have been used or generated. Prevention attempts to avoid use or generation in the first place through process change, product reformulation, and raw material substitution."

Source: *A Strategy for Virtual Elimination of Persistent Toxic Substances,* Volume 1, Report of the Virtual Elimination Task Force to the International Joint Commission, August 1993.

Why PP Focus

Pollution prevention plans should target substances that are persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic, developmental-reproductive substances, carcinogens, endocrine disrupting substances and metals because they are particularly damaging to the environment and all life even in very small quantities, and are known to accumulate in the environment and in living bodies overtime.

CHART 1: ANALYSIS OF 2022 ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS: P2 ACTIVITIES/SUBSTANCE

P2 activities and the corresponding techniques reported per substance

Source: Claudia Dias & Juliana Galvis-Amaya, ECCC, Pollution Prevention Overview, October 2023.

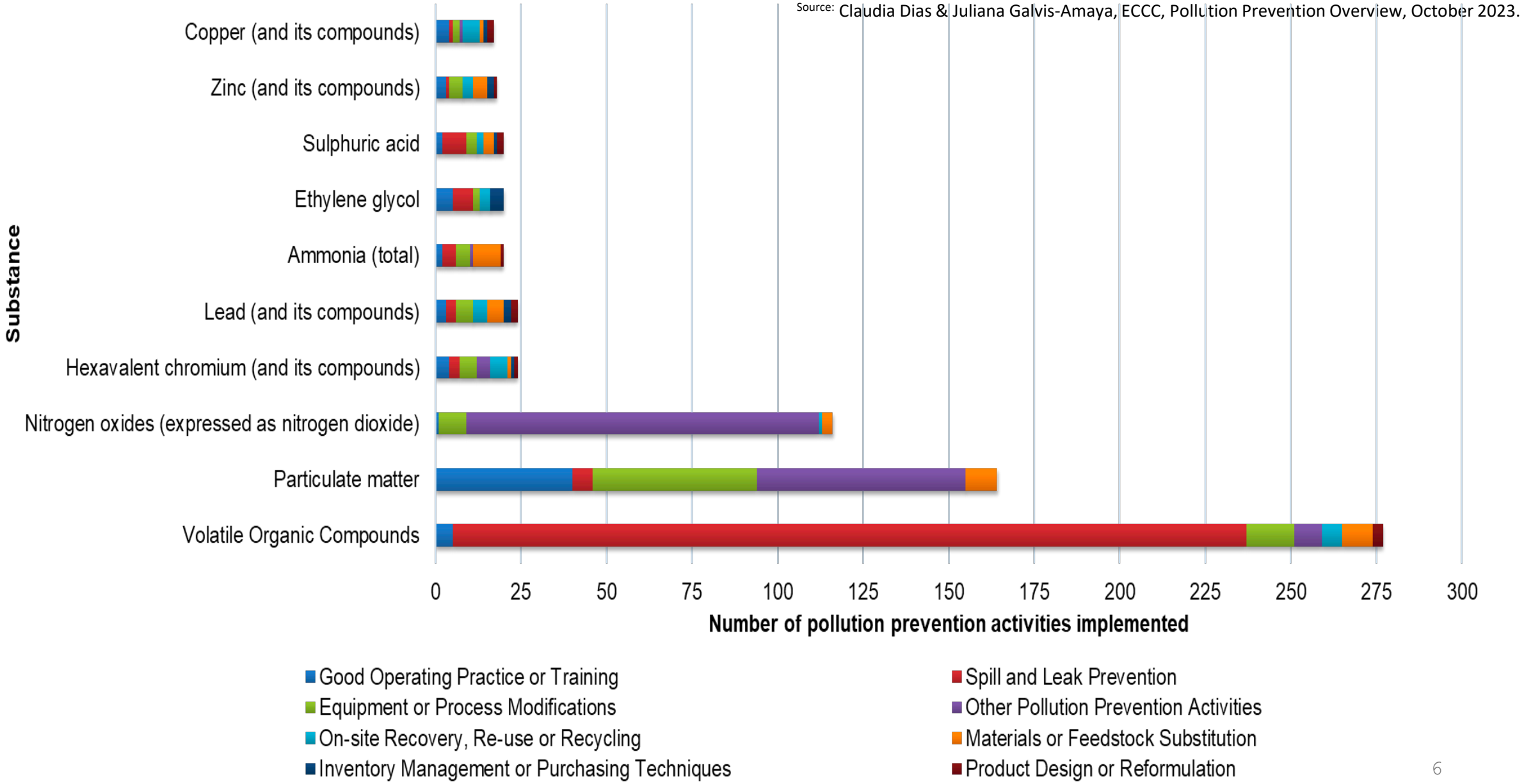
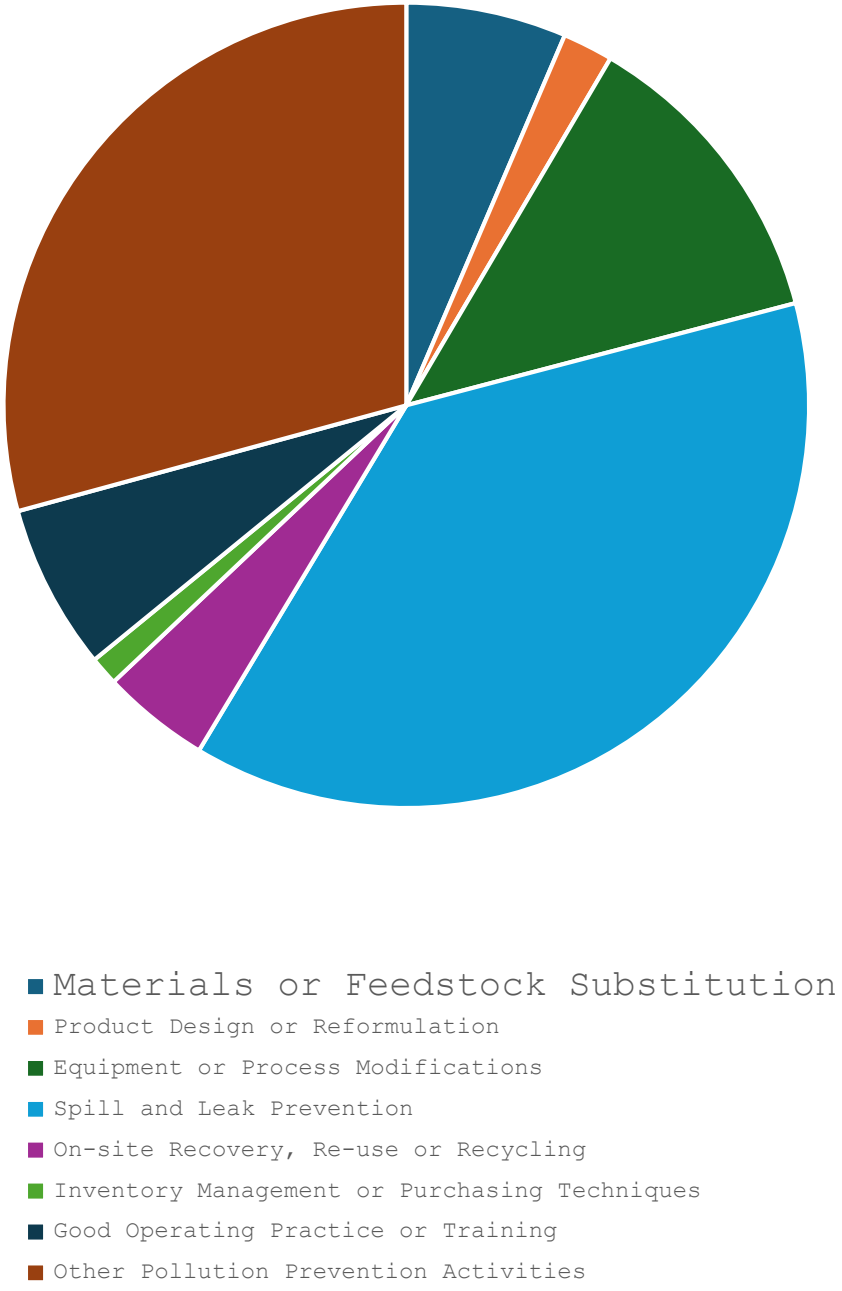


Chart 2, Activity Reports 2022



[1] Claudia Dias & Juliana Galvis-Amaya, ECCC, Pollution Prevention Overview, October 2023.

P2 Activities -Substances	Percentage
Materials or Feedstock Substitution	6
Product Design or Reformulation	2
Equipment or Process Modifications	12
Spill and Leak Prevention	38
On-site Recovery, Re-use or Recycling	4
Inventory Management or Purchasing Techniques	1
Good Operating Practice or Training	7
Other Pollution Prevention Activities	29

- P2 Activities based on substances for 2022
- Based on P2 activities for substances in 2022, Materials or Feedstock Substitution, Product Design or Reformulation Equipment or maybe Process Modifications account for **20% of the so-called "P2" activities on substances, while almost 80% would be considered pollution control methods.**

Recommendation

- Pollution Prevention and Pollution Control should be reported to the PRTR separately, with the Pollution Prevention definition being kept very strictly focused on methods that attempt to eliminate the use and generation of toxic substances.
- The reporting form should put Pollution Prevention and Pollution Control into separate questions with each question beginning with a clear definition of what fits into each category. Also, the facilities' reporting form should require that all activities that the reporter completed should be reported separately under the Pollution Prevention and the Pollution Control questions.

Why Public Wants to Know PP

- Being able to see how PP activities in a facility in your community compare with other facilities in the same sector. Can be very valuable in helping you know what you should ask your local facility to do to better protect your community.
- Knowing how well particular sectors are doing in implementing P2 activities can help you know what kinds of actions should be taken to improve the situation.
- Some, who are focused on the problems created by a particular toxic substance, may want to be able to check to see to what extent facilities are taking P2 activities to solve the problem and what activities they are taking. This can help them be more able to advocate for P2 activities on that substance.

Characteristics Important for Public Right-to-Know

- Is the information easily accessible to the public?
- Is it easy to manipulate the data to carry out analyses and evaluations?
- Can the public obtain the P2 information separately from the pollution control information?
- Does a facility have a P2 Plan?
  - Does the facility provide a link to the P2 plan?
  - Does the facility provide data on progress towards achieving the P2 goals?
  - Does the data show the extent to which the target substances each decreased or increased?

Characteristics Important for Right-to-Know

- For each substance, is the information provided for which P2 activities were used?
- Can you tell from the data which activities had the most impact on achieving the P2 goal?
- If the activity taken was substitution, what substance replaced it?
- If the activity was process changes, what process changes were taken?
- Is the information available separately for each substance?
- Is the information available by each facility?
- Is the information available by each sector?

Characteristics Important for Right-to-Know

- Is the information available cumulatively for all facilities within a community or region?
- Is the information available over the range of years?
- Does the data show the extent to which the target substances each decreased or increased?
- Is it easy to do cross-searches, e.g., a search for all facilities with P2 activities for a specific substance?
- Is it possible to do an overall analysis that shows which P2 activities were most effective for a specific substance and/or in a particular sector?

Recommendations

- All the detailed information listed above should be **required – not encouraged**. This includes for example: naming each substance and detailing implementation plans and activities by substance; specifying the change that was made, including the substance that is replacing the one used before, etc.
- Pollution Prevention and Pollution Control should be **reported separately** to the PRTR.

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To view the full report that this slide show is based on see:

https://cela.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Pollution-Prevention-NPRI-%E2%80%93-ENGO-Assessment.pdf

Prepared by John Jackson with support from Fe de Leon, Canadian Environmental Law Association

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