The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Environment and Climate Change

200, Sacré-Coeur Blvd.

Gatineau, Quebec

K1A 0H3

Dear Minister,

I recently met with my local fire fighters who are members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), which represents over 26,000 professional full-time fire fighters in Canada. They continue to have serious concerns over toxic chemical flame retardants in upholstered furniture and flammability testing standards for consumer products.

Toxic chemicals are commonly used as flame retardants in a wide variety of household products such as upholstered furniture. They threaten the environment, coastal marine life and affect the human body, causing numerous health problems such as cancer, immune disorders, reproductive problems and low IQ in children.

Fire fighters should be included in the classification of vulnerable populations when assessing chemical safety. They are at greater risk of harm from chemical flame retardants because they encounter them in a combusted state and accumulate higher levels of exposure over the course of their career. Regulatory and risk management initiatives involving chemical assessments should take into account occupational standards like fire and emergency services when evaluating chemical safety.

The past Chemicals Management Plan acknowledged the health risks posed by select chemical flame retardants and banned their manufacture, sale, import and use. However, banning only certain classes of flame retardants opens the door to loopholes and only facilitates their continued use. I urge you to introduce regulatory measures that will prevent industry from replacing toxic chemicals by other similar chemicals that are just as harmful.

Additionally, there are no regulations under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA) for residential upholstered furniture. This leaves the onus on industry to choose how to meet flammability requirements, and in turn, puts the responsibility on the consumer to decipher product make up. This can be extremely difficult as labelling may not be intuitive to the average consumer.

I support the IAFF’s call to work with the Minister of Health towards a complete ban on the sale, manufacturing, import and use of all chemicals that are used in flame retardants for upholstered furniture, given the toxic effects they have on not just fire fighters, but all Canadians. I also urge you to investigate the concerns about open flame testing while considering the merits of smoulder resistance standards and include the IAFF on any future testing or chemical management consultations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I kindly request that your response be forwarded to the persons copied on this letter to apprise them of your position on this matter.

Sincerely,

c.c. Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health

XXXXXXXXXX, President, Local Name (local e-mail address)

Scott Marks, IAFF Assistant to the General President for Canadian Operations (smarks@iaff.org )