

Canadians slow to curb poisons in their tech products

HEAVY METALS:
Crusade to detox
discarded computers,
cellphones, printers

OTTAWA — Bruce Calder is the first to acknowledge there is something deeply commendatory about his daily life.

Calder, the man behind the successful Ottawa Startup Market, Ageus Solutions, helped lead and forego a major industry campaign by companies exporting to the U.S. to replace computer components made with hazardous materials as the 50th birthday their products to the world's largest

tightly regulated European market. But examine Calder's own imported computer, cellphone or printer and you'll find an A-to-Z of contaminants including antimony, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, lead and mercury.

"It's ironic," the 35-year-old says. "There's nothing restricting equipment with these heavy metals from coming into Canada in finished products. So as a business, we can make it better for everyone else. We can't do much about overseas, but we can do a lot about the components that we export to the U.S. — a large percentage of them are made with hazardous materials." Calder says he's not alone in this. "I see a lot of companies that are doing this."

the Restriction on Hazardous Substances several years ago, after studies on recycling plant workers found their systems had 10,000 times greater than acceptable levels of four heavy metals and two flame retardants.

The EU also pushed onto producers the costs of recycling everything from the equipment itself to its shipping boxes to further control environmental exposure.

Yet equipment manufacturing companies have been slow to adopt the initiative, some see by the U.S. market. Calder says the U.S. market is still slow to adopt the initiative, some see by the U.S. market. Calder says the U.S. market is still slow to adopt the initiative, some see by the U.S. market.

Europe's, and even China's, tighter import controls. Many companies, he says, have two product standards, one for those sold to Europe and another for those sold to countries without restrictions. What's more, according to Statistics Canada, almost all Canadian-designed electronics are exported and thus comply with tight regulations on contaminants, but the vast majority of electronics used by Canadians are imported and do not comply.

Calder says the U.S. market is still slow to adopt the initiative, some see by the U.S. market. Calder says the U.S. market is still slow to adopt the initiative, some see by the U.S. market.

difference due to the lack of restrictions.

But change may come from the manufacturers themselves. Anxious to reduce their bottom line by standardizing production, Calder says companies like Kanata-based Smart Technologies and Montreal's MKI Technologies have voluntarily adopted clean principles.

In some respects, there is a trick to be learned from the manufacturer's side. "The standards to

Schedule 5 to the Minutes of the Public Works and Transportation Committee meeting held on Wednesday, April 22, 2009.