



April 26, 2021

Members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Sent via email: ENVI@parl.gc.ca

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), respectfully makes the following submission to highlight the importance of passing **Bill C-230: An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism** into law.

Bill C-230 is a mechanism to address the daily and ongoing health impacts of systemic racism stemming from social, geographical, political and economic environments. While the right to a healthy environment is being recognized in the proposed legislation Bill C-28 to reform the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Bill C-230 remains essential to address environmental racism.

As physicians and health care providers, and in the context of leadership of Indigenous colleagues and members of CAPE, we understand that the health of the community is directly connected to the health of the land. We treat people who experience negative health impacts from toxic exposures related to their environments. Environmental racism is a reality for many of our patients, particularly for Black, Indigenous and immigrant communities who bear a disproportionate burden of exposures and illnesses related to their geographic and social locations.

A universal approach to environmental policies will not necessarily benefit communities who are disproportionately impacted, and marginalized through current systems and conditions. We need to be intentional about environmental racism and the health harms for many peoples living in Canada. Indigenous and Black peoples living in Canada should have a say in what happens in their communities, and should have the power over their environment and their

exposures. Bill C-230 addresses these issues and will ultimately benefit everyone.

Dr. Ojistoh Horn, Mohawk family physician, and CAPE Board Member, treats people who live in the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne. At the intersection of international borders and provincial territories on the St. Lawrence River, Akwesasne has been impacted by environmental contaminants from nearby industrial sites. Toxic exposures in the air, land, water and animals in the regions have been documented.

Dr. Horn treats patients with neurological symptoms, diabetes, neuropathy, cancers, and autoimmune diseases. She recognizes that many of these diseases are related to the historical exposures in the community. Among the Indigenous peoples that she treats, Dr. Horn knows that diabetes, immune disorders and more are not simply individual health problems but are environmental health problems based on history, laws, and economic forces that create ill health.¹

The government's commitment to recognizing the right to a healthy environment under C-28 is complementary to Bill C-230's specific focus on environmental racism. Bill C-230 creates a national strategy to redress the harms caused by environmental racism through a legislative mandate that includes regular reporting.

CAPE, with our knowledge and experience of the negative health impacts of environmental racism, reinforces the need to support and move this bill into law. It must be a priority for all parties, and we emphasize to the committee that you should move quickly to approve Bill C-230 without delay.

¹ Webinar: Environmental Racism, a discussion about how the legacy of environmental racism threatens the health of Black and Indigenous communities within Canada. With Dr. Ingrid Waldron and Dr. Ojistoh Horn. Part 1 of Environmental Justice x Health: A 3-part series presented by CAPE-BC and CFMS-HEART <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.youtube.com/watch?v%3D6u9V311Bz8M&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1619454720861000&usg=AOvVaw0FkOAWEWQmIT1tsnRnpKjB>