



## Modernizing the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* — Canada's pollution and toxics law

### Recommendations

- Strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act through the rapid reintroduction of an improved Bill C-28, and make it a legislative priority;
- Move forward, within the first 100 days, with regulations to require labelling of chemicals in consumer products, including cosmetics, cleaners and furniture.

### Background

It has been more than two decades since Parliament passed the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA)*, 1999, and this cornerstone pollution-prevention law needs to be updated to address today's environmental and health threats.

Bill C-28 proposed important amendments to CEPA, but did not progress beyond First Reading in the House. A platform commitment is needed to ensure a strengthened version of this bill is reintroduced, and to move quickly on promised regulations to require labelling of chemicals in consumer products.

Canada's leading environmental and health groups call on all federal parties to support a bill to modernize CEPA without further delay, in line with the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's 2017 report to Parliament. **Exposure to toxics is a public health and environmental justice problem. For example:**

- Inuit pregnant women and children have significantly higher body levels of PFAS, chemicals found to weaken immune systems and vaccine effectiveness.
- Toxics may be contributing to 850,000 cases of asthma in children and ADHD in five per cent of school-age children.
- Hormone disrupting chemicals like BPA contribute to hormonal cancers and lower fertility. More than 25,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually.
- 15,300 Canadians die prematurely from air pollution every year.

- Studies show that lower income Canadians are three times more likely to live within one kilometer of a major source of air pollution than those with a higher income.
- BPA and PFAS are present in the bodies of 80% and 100% of Canadians, respectively.

CEPA has not been significantly amended for more than two decades, yet sources of pollution and our scientific understanding of risks have changed dramatically over this time. CEPA must evolve to adequately protect the health of people in Canada, particularly marginalized people and those in vulnerable situations.

According to a national poll conducted by Gandalf Group, nearly eight in 10 Canadians consider strengthening protections from toxics “very important” (37%) or “somewhat important” (41%) to vote intention in federal elections.

### Key CEPA modernization amendments

A strengthened CEPA is needed as the backbone of a green and just recovery from COVID-19. While Bill C-28 contains many much-needed improvements, the bill must be strengthened to better address issues examined in the 2016-17 House Standing Committee review, and truly deliver a stronger environmental protection law that confronts 21st-century dangers with 21st-century science, including:

- Stronger regulation of toxic substances — including toxics in imported goods — in line with leading international approaches. This must include legal requirements to:
  - Ban highly hazardous substances like carcinogens, reproductive toxins and hormone disruptors such as BPA, phthalates and PFAS.
  - Address cumulative effects of chemicals and require substitution with safer alternatives as toxic substances are restricted.
- Protecting susceptible people and those in vulnerable situations, for example workers, women, children and marginalized communities — including Indigenous communities.
- Meaningful recognition of a human right to a healthy environment.

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