

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE, BREAST CANCER ACTION
QUEBEC, CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT, DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION, ECOJUSTICE

Senate passes first major update to Canadian Environmental Protection Act in two decades

Bill S-5 modernizes Canada's cornerstone environmental law on pollution and toxic substances

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ANISHNAABEG PEOPLE - Last night, the Senate approved Bill S-5, the long-awaited legislation to modernize the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA). The bill, which was introduced in the Senate, has yet to pass in the House of Commons. Health and environmental groups call on MPs to prioritize and strengthen the bill when the House resumes sitting in the fall.

Despite efforts from industry lobbyists to undermine and weaken the bill, the Senate made several strengthening amendments to it, led by Senators Rosa Galvez, Mary Jane McCallum, Julie Miville-Dechêne, and Stan Kutcher. The bill, as amended, would finally update Canada's framework for assessing and managing toxic substances. It requires the government to consider the cumulative impacts of toxins on vulnerable populations and the environment, and recognizes the human right to a healthy environment for the first time in federal law.

Environmental and health groups have been pushing for improvements to CEPA to better protect people's health and the environment. The groups are calling for further improvements to the bill in the House of Commons, including amendments to address transparency, mandatory labelling of toxic ingredients and faster regulatory timelines to get rid of dangerous toxic chemicals.

Cassie Barker, Senior Toxics Program Manager, Environmental Defence, said:

"The Senate listened to the thousands of people across Canada who called for stronger laws to protect us against toxic chemicals. They rejected industry attempts to delay and weaken the bill, and made several key improvements to Bill S-5. We hope to see further strengthening of CEPA in the House this fall."

Dr. Elaine MacDonald, Ecojustice Healthy Communities Program Director, said:

"Bill S-5 passing third reading of the Senate is an important milestone in modernizing CEPA, a law that has not been reformed in over two decades. While more needs to be done in the House to strengthen and improve Bill S-5, the Senate made crucial amendments so that the legislation can provide better protect the health and well-being of everyone in Canada."

Jennifer Beeman, Executive Director, Breast Cancer Action Quebec, said:

“This bill is so long overdue, we are pleased to see it moving forward in a strengthened form thanks to the work of the Senate Committee. More needs to be done, but we are closer to our goal of stronger toxics regulations and the right to a healthy environment for Canada that will finally bring us nearer to what the most advanced countries are doing.”

Lisa Gue, David Suzuki Foundation National Policy Manager, said:

“With yesterday’s Senate vote, Canada is one step closer to finally recognizing the human right to a healthy environment, as most other countries already do. A crucial amendment approved by the Senate improves accountability by establishing a clear duty for the environment minister to protect this right, subject to reasonable limits. But Bill S-5 is not yet law. We need the House of Commons to put this at the top of its agenda in the fall and work quickly to further improve and pass this important update to Canada’s environmental protection law.”

Dr. Jane McArthur, CAPE Toxics Program Director, said:

“The vote by the Senate to adopt Bill S-5 at third reading is an important turning point in the steps to get us to a modernized CEPA. When the Bill moves to the House we will still need concerted efforts for more improvements that will lead to a law with better pollution and toxics prevention for health protection and the right to a healthy environment for all people in Canada. As CAPE’s Dr. Horn said in her testimony to the Senate Committee: *‘Let us all work together to fulfill our collective responsibility to the future.’*”

Background:

[Joint submission](#) on Bill S-5

About:

Environmental Defence is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.

Breast Cancer Action Quebec is a feminist, environmental health organization whose mission is the prevention of breast cancer, with a particular focus on environmental factors linked to the disease. Working in collaboration with a wide range of groups, BCAQ educates on toxics and other health issues and works for a clean environment and communities that support the health of their members.

The **Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)** is a physician-directed non-profit organization working to secure human health by protecting the planet. Since its founding in 1993, CAPE’s work has achieved substantial policy victories in collaboration with many partners in the environmental and health

movements. From coast to coast to coast, the organization operates throughout the country with regional committees active in most provinces and all territories.

The **David Suzuki Foundation** (DavidSuzuki.org | @DavidSuzukiFdn) is a leading Canadian environmental non-profit organization, founded in 1990. We operate in English and French, with offices in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. We collaborate with all people in Canada, including First Nations leadership and communities, governments, businesses and individuals to find solutions to create a sustainable Canada through scientific research, traditional ecological knowledge, communications and public engagement, and innovative policy and legal solutions. Our mission is to protect nature's diversity and the well-being of all life, now and for the future. We envision a day where we all act on the understanding that we are one with nature.

Ecojustice uses the power of the law to defend nature, combat climate change and fight for a healthy environment. Its strategic, public interest lawsuits and advocacy lead to precedent-setting court decisions and law and policy that deliver lasting solutions to Canada's most urgent environmental problems. As Canada's largest environmental law charity, Ecojustice operates offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax.

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