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September 5, 2017

Members of Parliament
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Re: *Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA)*

Dear Members of Parliament:

On June 15, 2017 the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development tabled its report on the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* ("CEPA").¹ We are writing in support of the report's recommendations to modernize and strengthen the Act.

CEPA is a cornerstone of the federal legislative framework for environmental protection in Canada, including assessment and management of toxic chemicals. The current Act is nearly two decades old and needs to be upgraded to reflect today's understanding of sources and effects of pollution and international developments in environmental protection law.

Pollution and exposure to toxic substances have a significant impact on Canadians' health, the environment, and our economy. Poor air quality alone results in 7,700 premature deaths in Canada every year.² According to a recent UNICEF report, Canada ranks 25th among rich countries on children's well being, due in part to poor air quality.³

There is growing scientific evidence that cumulative exposures to carcinogens and endocrine-disrupting chemicals in consumer products used by people every day contribute to rising rates of childhood cancers, brain development-related deficiencies, asthma, allergies, diabetes, obesity, and other chronic conditions. The exact economic cost of this cumulative health burden remains unknown, but is estimated to be in the tens of billions.⁴

While all Canadians and ecosystems are at risk from the effects of pollution and toxics, biologically vulnerable populations, such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly, as well as socially

¹ *Healthy Canadians, Healthy Economy: Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*. Tabled June 15, 2017

² International Institute for Sustainable Development, *Costs of Pollution in Canada: Measuring the impacts on families, businesses and governments*, June 2017. <http://www.iisd.org/library/cost-pollution-canada>

³ UNICEF Canada. 2017. UNICEF Report Card 14: Canadian Companion, Oh Canada! Our kids deserve better. UNICEF Canada, Toronto.

⁴ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *Costs of Pollution in Canada: Measuring the impacts on families, businesses and governments*, June 2017. <http://www.iisd.org/library/cost-pollution-canada>

and economically marginalized communities, such as Indigenous communities and low income families, are at greater risk and bear most of the burden of toxic exposure.

The Committee's report recognizes these important issues and provides a strong blueprint for the legislative amendments needed to strengthen our laws for preventing pollution and regulating toxic chemicals.

Canadians understand these are very important issues and want Parliament to approve the legislative changes needed to recognize their right to a healthy environment and strengthen protections from toxic exposures.

Recent polling of Canadians by the Gandalf Group found that:

- Less than half believe Canada has adequate laws to protect human health or the environment when it comes to the presence of toxics in products.
- 89% believe the CEPA review is important (62% believe it is very important).
- 92% agreed that "the government of Canada should recognize the right of Canadians to live in a healthy, non-toxic environment".
- 96% agreed that Canadian laws should ensure that product labels fully and clearly disclose the presence of all ingredients, including toxics, in consumer products.
- 90% agree that if regulations in the United States or Europe have determined a chemical is toxic and harmful enough that its use should not be permitted in certain products, Canadian rules should take the same approach to restricting those chemicals and products.
- 88% agreed that the government should explore safe alternatives to harmful chemicals commonly used in consumer personal care and household products.
- 4 in 10 Canadians consider improving protections from toxic chemicals a very important voting issue. The issue is especially important among Quebecers and women.

Please find attached statements from environmental and health leaders and businesses, indicating broad support for meaningful and substantial improvements of CEPA.

The Committee's report presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve CEPA, including stronger restrictions for cancer-causing and endocrine (or hormone) disrupting chemicals in consumer products, greater protections for vulnerable people (e.g. children) and communities (e.g. low income populations), legal recognition of the human right to a healthy environment, legally-binding national air and water quality standards, and transparent labelling of products containing toxic chemicals.

We urge all MPs to support amending CEPA in line with the recommendations made by the Standing Committee to better protect human health and our environment from toxics exposures.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss our priorities and vision for healthier people and ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Muhannad Malas, Toxics Program Manager
Environmental Defence
mmalas@environmentaldefence.ca; 416-323-9521 x241

Peter Wood, Blue Dot Campaign Manager
David Suzuki Foundation
pwood@davidsuzuki.org; 604-732-4228 x 1286

Elaine MacDonald, Program Director
Ecojustice
emacdonald@ecojustice.ca; 416-368-7533 x 527

Annie Bérubé, Director, Government Relations
Équiterre
aberube@equiterre.org; 613-565-3821

Kim Perrotta, Executive Director
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)
kim@cape.ca; 416-306-2273 ext 2