



ACTION CANCER DU SEIN DU QUÉBEC
BREAST CANCER **ACTION** QUEBEC



Reforming the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999

A Citizens' Toolkit for Effective Participation

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acsqc.ca

—
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2019 Federal Elections

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Preface

Breast Cancer Action Quebec, in collaboration with many other health and environmental groups, is working to tighten regulations on the use of toxic chemicals used in everyday consumer goods and products. From flame retardants in furniture and electronic equipment to phthalates in cosmetics, perfumes, hairsprays, food packaging, shower curtains, these chemicals and many others have serious and proven negative effects on health and the environment.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) is the cornerstone of Canadian environmental regulation. It regulates the use of toxic substances, hazardous waste, air pollution emissions and toxic runoff and marine discharges into our waterways and much, much more.

In 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development published a comprehensive study of CEPA. This study provides a roadmap for the important reforms needed to truly update the law and protect human health and the environment.

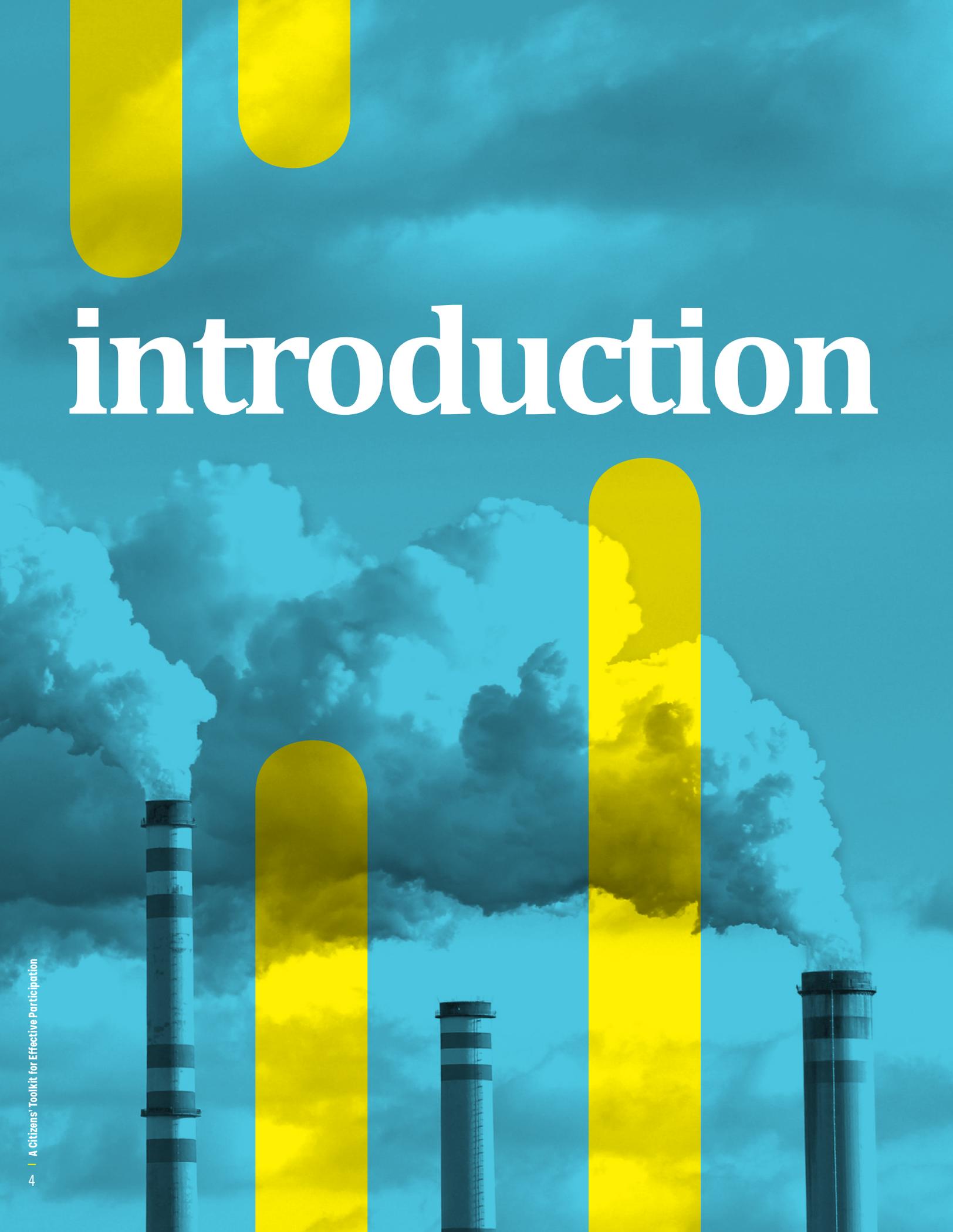
We must make CEPA reform an issue in the 2019 federal election. We know what to do to reform CEPA to protect human health and the environment. Now it is a matter of having the political will to do so.

If you are concerned about these issues and want your voice to be heard, we have designed this toolkit for you.

It outlines the various ways in which citizens can educate candidates about the importance of CEPA reform (or any other federal issue). Whether it's meeting candidates, sending them letters, organizing a debate or publishing an opinion letter in a local newspaper, we provide the necessary tools to know where to start and what to expect.

We hope you will find this toolkit useful. Feel free to send us your comments or questions. Never forget that the more citizens get involved, the stronger our democracy is. And the cleaner our environment, the healthier we all will be.

The members of the CEPA Committee of Breast Cancer Action Quebec



introduction



This toolkit was created to give citizens and civil society groups the tools they need to actively participate in federal elections on issues that are important to them.

In particular, the toolkit aims to ensure that candidates are aware of the issues involved in the reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) and that they publicly commit to its reform. However, it is intended to be useful for any political issue that concerns a group or individual.

The first section examines what groups can do to play an active role, from meeting with candidates to organizing a letter-writing session to share their concerns with candidates. The second section examines what individuals can do. And the third part deals with getting the message into the media. There are elements in each section that can be useful, whether it is a group or an individual seeking to get involved, so we encourage you to browse all sections for inspiration.

In the annexes, you will find sample questions that candidates can be asked, a CEPA fact sheet that can be sent to candidates

prior to a meeting to inform them of the issues, a sample letter to candidates, a sample press release and other documents that may be useful in raising awareness of the issue.

Remember that the most important thing you can do to support the reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is to talk about it! Send candidates information about this, ask them questions if you meet them at an event, inform the media and show current and future politicians that citizens know there are problems with our environmental regulations and that we want change!

We use the term “candidates”, but remember that you can contact your current MP at any time about these issues. You do not have to wait until the election is called and other candidates have been nominated to start raising awareness of this or other issues.

CEPA reform has been in the shadows for too long. It is time to make sure that it gets the attention it deserves.

Most importantly, as citizens, we have the right to participate fully in democratic processes. And during an election period, candidates will be listening.

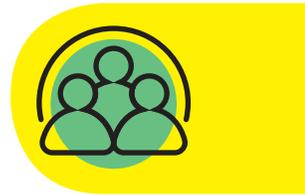


what my group can do



Meeting candidates

Meeting candidates can be intimidating, but our democracy is based on the idea that these people represent us and that we must share with them the issues that are important to us. Don't be shy, the candidates are there to listen to us!



Some tips for meeting candidates

- 01 Make an appointment** with the candidate by email or phone. Give them the subject and amount of time necessary for the exchange. Most often, the meeting will take place at his or her office.
- 02 Send a fact sheet** (see Appendix B) on the topic of interest to you in advance, in this case, the reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, to allow the person to learn about the issues and verify their party's position.
- 03 Prepare a relevant information folder** including the fact sheet and press articles that you can leave with the candidate at the end of your meeting. [Visit the BCAQC website for CEPA documents available for printing.](#)
- 04 Decide who will be part of the group** if you will be several people. It is also necessary to decide whether one person will act as spokesperson or whether you will take turns speaking. It is important not to interrupt your colleagues or contradict each other in front of the candidate.
- 05 Prepare your questions before meeting the candidate.** Check the platform of the party in question to see if the party has an official position. Even if the party has a specific position, be prepared to say why your perspective on the subject is important. Candidates will be sensitive to the concerns of citizens.
- 06** At the beginning of the meeting, **you will have time to express why you are concerned** about CEPA reform. Be relatively concise. The purpose of the meeting is to seek the candidate's position, but also to make him or her aware of your concerns and to make the point that you represent a group of people with the same concerns.
- 07 If you are not satisfied with the answers,** you can rephrase the question by saying that you did not understand the answer.
- 08 If you have any requests,** they should be clear, concise and precise.
- 09 Remember that your objective is to convince and influence** the candidate, not to confront him or her.

If the candidate cannot see you personally and asks that you meet his or her assistant, treat the assistant with the same respect and courtesy as the candidate, as he or she occupies a position that can advance your cause.

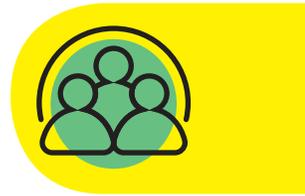


Organizing a letter-writing session to send letters to candidates

Even if you have met with the candidate in your riding, there is nothing to stop you from sending letters to him or her to strengthen your position. In addition to communicating your concerns to your political representatives, organizing a letter-writing session is a way to put pressure on the government to obtain stricter regulation of toxic substances. These letters have more impact than we think, and the more people take part in the event, the greater the chances of success.

You can prepare a model letter that people can use. In terms of the influence that letters can have, there is a principle that the more that people have made an effort with letters to make their ideas known to candidates or the government, the more those letters have political weight and demonstrate that the subject is of public interest.

Some tips for organizing a letter-writing session



Letters to be sent to candidates can take various forms, including electronic or paper letters.

Electronic letters

As far as electronic letters are concerned, as a group you can organize the meeting with the following steps:

- 01 Identify an accessible place where you can hold the event:** organize the space according to the number of people you expect to receive, make sure you have a reliable internet connection.
- 02 Keep people's interest** with reminders of the event with the place, time of day and the need for community members to be involved.
- 03 Plan for the necessary equipment for your event:** computers, desks, mice, chairs, etc.
- 04 Have a sample letter on hand** to inspire people (See Appendix C).

Paper letters

For paper letters, handwritten letters are quite acceptable.

- 01 Identify an accessible place where you can hold the event:** organize the space according to the number of people you expect to come.
- 02 Plan for the necessary equipment for your event:** computers, desks, paper, pencils, erasers, pens, stamps, envelopes, etc.
- 03 Write a short and simple letter** (less than a page) including your concerns and what you are asking the government for.
- 04 Be specific in your requests** and express your arguments in a clear and organized way. For example, "I am asking you to reform the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to include endocrine disruptors as a toxic substance.
- 05 Ask for an answer** to your letter.
- 06 Find the address of your candidates' offices.** Sign and mail your letters. Always include the date and your return address.

Organizing a candidates debate

A debate is an opportunity to bring the candidates face to face to see the approaches and commitments that each one puts forward regarding the concerns and major challenges of their community. Organizing a debate is a good showcase and should be carefully prepared. To avoid scheduling conflicts, it is a good idea to coordinate weeks in advance with each candidate on the organization of a debate. Once the date and location have been determined, the debate should be promoted and the details organized. If possible, seek to partner with other local groups or organizations to create allies and gain visibility.

Some tips for organizing a debate between candidates*

- 01 Find a date that suits all your candidates.** Start your planning several weeks in advance by sending out the invitations.
- 02 Select a moderator to facilitate the debate.** This person will be responsible for ensuring that everyone's speaking times are respected, ensuring that candidates remain focused on the subject, and finally reframing discussions when necessary. The moderator does not participate in the debate itself but will ensure that it runs smoothly. Choose someone who has experience with this kind of facilitation.
- 03 Choose and reserve an appropriate room,** large enough to accommodate candidates and the public.
- 04 Determine the time and length** of the debate (often an hour and a half to two hours). Make sure you allow time for questions from the public (at least 30 to 40 minutes) and, above all, ensure that the time given to each candidate to answer a question is strictly respected.
- 05 Set the context of the debate** and what is expected as a result. Introduce the candidates. Allow about 1 to 2 minutes per candidate to introduce themselves (their political party, who they are, one or two notable facts).
- 06 Consult our sample questions to ask candidates** (See Appendix A). Send your questions in advance to the candidates so that they can prepare for the debate.
- 07 Promote your debate.** Be creative: posters, flyers, email, website, social networks, local newspaper, media, etc.
- 08** Once the event is over, **write a brief resumé** of the debate and share it as a press release or article highlighting key events. Send it to local media and share it on social networks.

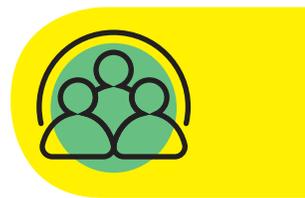
* We would like to thank the Opération Vireauvert for their inspiration for this section.



Using social media

Social media is a good tool for sharing news, promoting events, publishing photos and mobilizing people around CEPA reform.

Facebook



On this site, it is possible to create a profile, a page and/or a group in order to raise awareness, and inform and mobilize people in your web community.

Some tips for using Facebook:

- 01 Make your actions public** on your personal page or Facebook group. Feel free to publish attractive content: photos, images, articles, blogs, podcasts.
- 02 Use Facebook to create interest** around your initiatives.
- 03 “Like” the Facebook page [Action Cancer du sein du Québec/Breast Cancer Action Québec](#)**. Be on the lookout for new publications from Breast Cancer Action Quebec and share them with a single click.

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blog platform on which users post comments, or status updates, called tweets. A tweet is limited to 140 characters. Twitter is therefore an interesting way to share information on events, initiatives or news of public interest related to CEPA.

Some tips for using Twitter:

- 01 Use Twitter to publicize your initiatives or news.**
- 02 Use Twitter to expand your network of allies.**
- 03 Use “Hashtags” (#):** It is helpful to use hashtags regularly if you want to convey information to a wide audience. The hashtags will also allow other people with similar interests to locate you and follow you on Twitter.
- 04 “Like” the [@femmetoxic](#) and [@bcaMontreal](#)** accounts of Breast Cancer Action Quebec. Use Twitter to share BCAQc publications.



what I can do





Participating in a debate

Participation in a debate provides an opportunity to question candidates about CEPA and the fact that it does not prevent the ever increasing presence of toxic substances in our environment. It is an opportunity to ask a question publicly that the candidate will have to answer and position himself/herself.

Some tips for participating in a debate

- 01 Find out where political debates are taking place** by subscribing to the candidates' newsletter in your riding or the political parties' newsletter.
- 02 Consult our sample questions to ask candidates** (see Appendix A). If you are developing your own question, make sure it is relatively short, specific and easy to ask.
- 03 Be courteous and respectful** at all times.

Questioning candidates when opportunities arise

During the election campaign, candidates use several political strategies to reach their constituents, such as **door-to-door** campaigning, **telephone calls** and **public events**. These are golden opportunities for you to engage with them and question them about CEPA reform. This is a simple and effective way to make this issue known to candidates.

Some tips for questioning a candidate

- 01 Remember that politeness and courtesy are always required.** Disrespectful statements are not welcome and can lead to a loss of credibility.
- 02 Remember that you can always refer to our sample questions** (Appendix A).



Sending a message or an electronic letter to your candidates

Simply sending a message is a good starting point to convey your concerns to your political representatives and to seek concrete commitments from candidates. It is also a way for our politicians to assess the public interest in CEPA reform or any other issue. We must never forget that these messages are important and will be recorded in the offices of our elected officials. This aspect works like the section "sending a letter to your candidate" in the first chapter. Standard templates are provided in Appendix C.

Some tips for electronic exchanges with your candidate

- 01 Send a message to your candidate** to emphasize the need for reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.
- 02 Please refer to our sample letter** in Appendix C.
- 03 Send your letter** to your MP's email address.

Calling a candidate

Calling the constituency office is a simple, quick and personalized way for a citizen to express their concerns about poor environmental regulations to their candidates. It is a significant action that allows you to be heard by the person who hopes to represent you.



Some tips for calling a candidate

- 01 Find the telephone number** of the candidate in your riding.
- 02 Be inspired by our sample questions to ask your candidate** (Appendix A).
- 03 Prepare your arguments.** They should be relatively short, precise and clear. It is best to discuss one issue only. It will have more of an impact.
- 04 Contact your candidate and ask to speak to him/her.** Don't be frustrated if the candidate cannot speak to you personally and asks that you speak to an assistant. Treat the assistant with the same respect and courtesy. This person can be in a position to advance your cause.
- 05 Remember to always be courteous and respectful,** even if you do not share the same opinion as the candidate.

During the call:

- 01 Introduce yourself:** first name, last name, city, town, riding, etc.
- 02 Mention that you are calling to discuss CEPA reform.**
- 03 Present information** that explains why the law is no longer adequate and does not protect us enough (see Appendix B).
- 04 Ask about the candidate's position on the subject.**
- 05** At the end of the call, **ask what action and commitments the candidate will take.**
- 06 Don't forget to thank your candidate** for taking the time to speak with you.





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reaching the media



Writing an opinion letter for a newspaper

Writing a letter is an excellent way to share your opinion more broadly and to inform readers about an issue of public interest. Candidates pay attention to letters and opinion pieces in newspapers.

Writing to journalists

Did you know that you can contact journalists directly? Find their personal contact information through their newspaper or TV or radio station website. Always be polite and respectful.



Some tips for writing an opinion letter and reaching journalists

- 01 Choose a title or subject line that is the short and catchy.** These are the first thing journalists will look at, and if it doesn't seem interesting, they may not read your letter.
- 02 Use clear, vivid language,** but not language that is exaggerated or inflammatory.
- 03 Choose only one subject per text.** Your comments should be clear and concise. Give examples and concrete facts. Try not to exceed 150 words.
- 04 Propose solutions.**
- 05** If you have a specific date or event around which you would like your opinion letter to be published, **you should submit the text a few days before that date or event.**
- 06 Use references** (scientific article, statistics, journal article, laws, regulations, etc.) to support your ideas.



Sending a press release to the media

A press release is a concise text that goes straight to the point to describe an event or issue of importance. Writing a press release is a good way to give your initiatives media visibility. Before you start writing your press release, it is important to decide whether it is an invitation or an information press release.

The invitation press release

The purpose of the invitation-type press release is to inform the media of an event. This press release should include the date, time, place and purpose of this event. If there are guests of honour, mention them in the press release. If it is a newspaper or other major media organization, send your invitation 3 to 4 days in advance, while in the case of a local newspaper, allow 1 to 2 weeks instead.

The information press release

The purpose of an information-type press release is to convey a message to the media about an issue or news of public interest. It can be published before or after your event and informs the public about the object of the event. This press release should be written in such a way as to answer basic questions from the media before they are asked.





Some tips for writing a press release

- 01 Choose a short and engaging title.** It should contain the central point of your communication.
- 02** The first paragraph should contain the following information: **why, who, what, where, when, how.**
- 03 Make sure you only have one idea per paragraph.**
- 04 The other paragraphs may contain additional information** on the background, history and people involved. Craft the press release to raise interest and illustrate the potential impact of the news on the target audience.
- 05 Insert quotes from people involved** in your community.
- 06 Take pictures of your event** so you can send them with your press release.
- 07 Try not to exceed one page.**
- 08 Your press release should be written in the 3rd person,** in a clear and concise style.

Here is a template for a press release:
(you will also find an example in Appendix D)

Press release

For immediate release

Title

Place and date

First paragraph

What, who, when, where, how, why.

The following paragraphs

Context, history, people involved, impact on the population, quotations.

-30-

Media contact person

Name and contact details

The convention is that at the end of the text you wish to publish, you should always write "-30-" centered at the bottom of the text. This means that what is below this number is not for publication.



conclusion





The importance of reforming the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is an issue that continues to be marginalized in Quebec and Canada generally. Through this tool, Breast Cancer Action Quebec hopes to motivate other interested individuals and groups to get involved and make people aware of the issues.

We hope the information not only on CEPA itself, but on practical techniques for communicating in groups or individually with future candidates and MPs will give people the confidence and desire to get involved. The greater our citizen participation, the

stronger our democracy will be. But it depends on each of us.

“You can't go through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

Just one last thing, we would love to receive your comments on our toolbox. Please fill out a very short questionnaire at surveyMonkey.com/r/6GMTZJW to help us improve our work by clicking here. Thank you!



appendix

Appendix B

Sample information sheet for The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, an Important Election Issue

Canadians mobilize for CEPA reform

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) defines what constitutes a toxic substance and establishes, among other things, controls on emissions of air and water pollution and hazardous waste. The law regulates air emissions in relation to greenhouse gases. As such, it aims to prevent pollution and protect the environment and human health. A wide range of federal, provincial and municipal laws and regulations are based on these definitions and controls.

This legislation is outdated and makes it impossible to effectively manage the multitude of new chemical compounds used in our consumer products. Every day, Canadians are exposed to hundreds of toxic substances, many of which are associated with certain types of cancers, reproductive disorders, respiratory diseases and more. As a result, thousands of people die prematurely and millions more suffer from preventable diseases.

The need for CEPA reform

The current law:

- 01** allows the circulation of substances that are hormone-disrupting, carcinogenic, mutagenic, or toxic for reproduction, neurological development or foetal development;
- 02** has limited implementation of the pollution prevention program and as a result, allows for ever increasing amounts of toxic substances to be released into the environment;
- 03** does not establish binding national standards for air quality or drinking water.

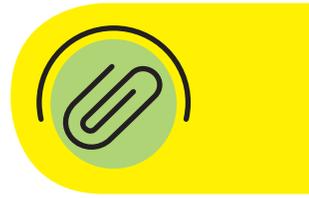
The class of chemicals that are "endocrine disrupting", i. e. hormone-disrupting, has been shown to be associated with an increase in hormone-dependent cancers (such as breast and prostate cancer), chronic diseases (such as diabetes and asthma), neurological disorders (such as ADHD and autism) and reproductive disorders (in both sexes).

All Canadians deserve to live in a healthy and safe environment.

Why support CEPA reform

The Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (ENVI) on CEPA made 87 recommendations in its report to Parliament in 2018. The current government committed to studying them in a future mandate. **We ask that you, as a candidate, once elected, ensure that the reform as proposed by the ENVI Committee is adopted.** There is an urgent need for the Parliament of Canada to act quickly to protect Canadians and the environment.

[Check out the BCAQc website for a range of information sheets on CEPA that are easily downloaded and ready for sharing or printing.](#)



Appendix C

Sample letter to be sent to candidates

DATE

Dear (NAME OF CANDIDATE),

I hope your campaign is going well. As a citizen of your riding, I am writing to express my concern about the lack of action on the reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA). This legislation is the foundation of environmental regulation in Canada and is in great need of reform.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act is to environmental regulation what the Labour Standards Act is to workers' rights. This is the basis on which all other regulations are developed. Just as the Labour Standards Act clearly establishes what constitutes a normal work week, how overtime should be paid, what is paid leave or sick leave, etc., CEPA defines in black and white how toxic substances are defined, how they should be controlled, how marine environments should be protected from land-based pollution, fuel requirements and engine emissions and much more. It provides the nuts and bolts necessary to protect the environment around us.

In 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development released its comprehensive study of CEPA, noting that "exposure to toxic substances causes thousands of premature deaths each year and millions of preventable diseases. The study explains how exposed we are to ever-increasing levels of pollution, and then describes the steps needed to reform CEPA to modernize it to protect human health and the environment in our world.

Even if our most fundamental law for the protection of the environment is outdated, we have the roadmap we need to fix it. Scientists, doctors, health groups and environmental groups agree that we know what needs to be done to reform the law.

Our question for you is whether we can count on your support to reform CEPA in the next Parliament if you are elected?

Our group would like to meet with you to discuss the environment and CEPA reform. We will be happy to come to your office at your convenience. In the meantime, we have attached a CEPA fact sheet that provides more information.

We look forward to meeting you and hearing your views on CEPA reform.

Best regards,

(YOUR NAME)

Appendix D

Sample press release to be sent to journalists and media

PRESS RELEASE

Quebec civil society is taking a stand on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) by calling on the federal government to better protect human health and the environment.

Montreal, March 19, 2018

More than 50 Quebec groups have signed the Declaration, which is being sent today to the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. This alliance represents a wide range of Quebecers, well beyond the traditional ecological movement. These include highly respected research centres, perinatal support groups, women's groups, workers' groups, shelters and anti-violence groups, student groups, literacy groups and cultural groups.

CEPA, which is currently under review by the federal government, is the cornerstone of our environmental regulations. In particular, it defines what a toxic substance is and puts in place measures to control polluting emissions and hazardous waste. Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal laws and regulations are based on this definition and these control measures.

The Declaration states that it is urgent and crucial that the Parliament of Canada review the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 in accordance with the recommendations of the House of Commons ENVI Committee in its report tabled in June 2017.

Allied groups have committed to supporting the Declaration by highlighting important elements of CEPA that need to be reformed, and by lobbying the government to follow the recommendations and bring in reformed legislation. Among other things, the reform must:

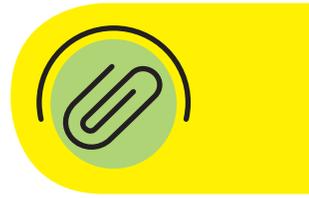
- Revise the definition of "toxic" to include endocrine disrupters.
- Reverse the burden of proof for substances of very high concern such as carcinogens, substances toxic to reproduction and endocrine disrupters.
- Require that risk assessments include overall exposures, cumulative and synergistic effects.
- Take into account vulnerable populations and marginalized communities, including critical vulnerability windows, when conducting risk assessments.
- Require mandatory hazard labelling for all products containing toxic substances.
- Recognize the right to a healthy environment.
- Improve the timelines and requirements for risk management measures for toxic substances.
- Assess and identify substitutes for toxic substances and place the burden on industry to demonstrate that nontoxic substitutes are not available.

CEPA reform is a matter of social justice. Disadvantaged and marginalized populations are more vulnerable to the impacts of toxic substances and suffer more severe cumulative effects. In addition, these issues have a gender dimension, as women assume greater responsibility for the health of their families and the consumption choices that influence their exposure to toxic substances. This broad network of civil society associations and groups from all sectors is concerned about these issues and urges the Canadian government to reform CEPA.

-30-

For information or interviews, contact (name of the person designated to respond for the group), telephone number and email address.

Breast Cancer Action Quebec is the only independent breast cancer organization in Canada whose mission is to work towards the prevention of breast cancer and the elimination of environmental toxic substances related to the disease.



For more information

Government Documents

- 01 [The Canadian Environmental Protection Act](#)
- 02 [Report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development: Healthy Environment, Healthy Canadians, Healthy Economy: Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999](#)

Documents by Breast Cancer Action Quebec

- 01 [Quebec civil society takes a stand on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999: Eighty-two groups signed our declaration calling for the government to strengthen CEPA to protect human health and the environment](#)
- 02 [Toxic Exposures are a Feminist Issue! Canadian Women against Toxic Substances](#)
- 03 [Canadian Environmental Protection Act \(CEPA\): It's the foundation of our environmental regulations and it's up for reform. We're working hard to make sure we get this right](#)
- 04 [Strengthening the Regulation of Toxic Substances for Disease Prevention and Environmental Health Justice. Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development](#)

Newspaper Articles

- 05 [Feds shy away from endorsing regulatory overhaul for 'high-concern' chemicals in CEPA reform](#), The Hill Times, July 9, 2018
- 06 [Will a healthy environment become a right ? Ottawa still mulling overhaul](#), Globe and Mail, June 29, 2018
- 07 [As the oceans rise, so do your risks of breast cancer](#), The Conversation, January 15, 2019

Newspaper articles in French

- 08 [Loi sur l'environnement : pas de modifications avant les prochaines élections](#), La Presse, le 29 juin 2018.
- 09 [Substances toxiques : une réforme de la loi s'impose](#). Gaïa Presse, le 16 juin 2017.
- 10 [Cancer du sein : il est temps de s'attaquer aux causes environnementales](#), La Conversation, 11 février 2019

Other toolkits

- 01 [Vireauvert \(French only\)](#)
- 02 [Activist Toolkit of Breast Cancer Action Québec](#)



ACTION CANCER DU SEIN DU QUÉBEC
BREAST CANCER **ACTION** QUEBEC



Our bodies, **our environment**

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