



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02701**

BY: **MRS. SCHULTE (KING-VAUGHAN)**

DATE: **OCTOBER 2, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE CATHERINE MCKENNA**

Response by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Environmental Pollution

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

All Canadians deserve a healthy environment and safe communities. That's why the Government of Canada is working to protect Canadians and their environment from pollution and harmful substances.

Strong environmental laws are vital to protecting nature and keeping Canadians safe. The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* is an essential tool to prevent pollution and manage substances that could put the health of Canadians and our environment at risk. Our government has made important progress in banning toxic substances—such as asbestos and microbeads—under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, and it is committed to doing more.

On June 29, 2018, the Government of Canada provided its Follow-Up Report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*. The Government agrees with many of the Standing Committee's recommendations and is taking action to implement many of these recommendations through improved policy and program activities. For example:

- We are taking action to protect Canadians from exposures to toxic chemicals, such as endocrine disruptors, which can affect how hormones work and lead to long-term health issues. In order to detect the potential

endocrine activity of test chemicals, the Government of Canada will continue to develop and use the internationally accepted test guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development as we prioritize and assess chemicals. We are also reviewing international best practices regarding product labelling and informed substitution in order to ensure that international experience continues to inform Canada's approach to chemicals management.

- We have also taken steps to improve air quality in Canada, consistent with the Standing Committee's recommendations. Last year, the Government published a "State of the Air" report in collaboration with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) which provides a wide range of information about air quality in the country. We also recently updated the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) for sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, and finalized the *Multi-Sector Air Pollutant Regulations* for numerous industrial sources. Moving forward, we are updating standards and developing new instruments to improve air quality and reduce air pollution from various additional industrial sources, including oil refineries and petrochemical facilities.
- We are working to enhance how we protect vulnerable populations, including by developing a policy framework for considering vulnerable populations—such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly—in the assessment and management of chemicals. We are also working to improve the use of biomonitoring and environmental monitoring data to enable consideration of risks to vulnerable populations and geographic "hot spots".

As indicated in the Follow-Up Report to the Standing Committee, recognizing a right to a healthy environment in federal law would represent a significant shift in how the Government of Canada conducts its health and environmental protection operations, and the Government is conducting further study and analysis in order to understand the implications of this recommendation.

In addition to the work already underway, the Government of Canada is also committed to introducing a bill to reform the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* as soon as possible in a future parliament and, in the interim, continues to engage with stakeholders and partners on ways to improve the *Act*, including on issues such as chemicals management.

To this end, the Government of Canada has convened the Chemicals Management Plan (CMP) Post-2020 multi-stakeholder process and is seeking further input on the future of chemicals management, including the need for legislative reforms that might strengthen the *Act* on issues like protecting vulnerable populations, substituting safer alternatives for harmful substances, taking into account cumulative effects, strengthening civil participation, and labelling products.

Industry and civil society have a strong record of close collaboration in providing advice both on the ongoing implementation of programs under *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* and in considering possible legislative reforms. The Government of Canada is encouraged by this continued collaboration between stakeholders and partners as it works towards modernizing the *Act* in a future parliamentary session.