



OCT 06 2017

Ms. Deborah Schulte, M.P.
King – Vaughan
Chair, Standing Committee on Environment
and Sustainable Development
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Schulte:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for its important report entitled “Healthy Environment, Healthy Canadians, Healthy Economy: Strengthening the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*,” which was tabled in the House of Commons on June 15, 2017. Please accept this letter as the Government’s response to the Committee’s report.

The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA) is one of Canada’s core environmental laws, and the Government of Canada uses it to deliver many of its environmental and health protection programs. CEPA allows the federal government to monitor, assess, prevent, manage and respond to a wide range of environmental and health risks. The Government is grateful for the thoughtful insights of Committee members, witnesses, experts and all Canadians who participated in the review of CEPA. Environmental and health risks have evolved since this act was passed in 1999, and the Government agrees with the Committee that changes are needed to modernize and improve CEPA. The Committee’s report, and the views expressed in the supplementary reports of the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party of Canada, will provide helpful input in achieving this goal.

The Government of Canada commits to considering each of this report’s recommendations carefully, and responding by June 2018 with a report on actions taken, and to be taken, in response to the Committee’s proposals. The Government also commits to examining potential amendments to CEPA. It further commits to publishing a detailed report that explains its overall approach to improving the implementation of the Act in order to provide environmental and health protection as effectively as possible.

As well, the Government of Canada is considering regulatory, policy and program changes that respond to some of the Committee’s recommendations. Being largely enabling legislation, much of CEPA’s power derives from how, when and to what extent its authorities are exercised. As such, some of the Committee’s recommendations would be best realized through implementation rather than

statutory change. For example, the Government plans to address some of the recommendations related to public participation and operating in an open and transparent way through improved program delivery. In addition, some of the recommendations related to information gathering and reporting may be best addressed through implementation changes.

Chemicals management is a core function of CEPA and was a main focus of the Committee's review. The Chemicals Management Plan under CEPA was launched in 2006. The Government of Canada is on track to meet the Plan's goal of completing assessments for the 4300 substances in commerce that were identified as needing assessment by the categorization process that finished in 2006. In parallel with the review of CEPA, the Government is consulting a broad range of stakeholders to determine what the focus of chemicals management should be in the post-2020 period. Substantial efforts are being made to address various chemicals-related issues comprehensively and in a preventative manner.

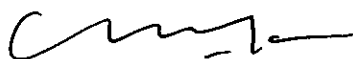
I intend to continue to work with the Minister of Health and our officials to determine how best to address the Committee's recommendations and to improve CEPA. We will also work with our Cabinet colleagues on broader issues that require a whole-of-government approach, and will conduct additional targeted consultations. This includes, for example, engaging with Indigenous Peoples about improvements to authorities in CEPA that may be used to enhance environmental protection on First Nation reserve lands.

As the Committee knows from its review, CEPA is a long and complex piece of legislation that allows the Government of Canada to take action to protect Canadians from the environmental and human health impacts of a wide range of pollution sources (toxic substances and products of biotechnology, to vehicles, fuels, greenhouse gases, air pollution, hazardous wastes, and disposals at sea).

I thank the Members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, their staff, Committee staff and other officials who contributed to the report. This review of CEPA provides us with a unique opportunity to pool our ideas and take a close and careful look at how we can modernize and improve this important legislation.

Please accept my best regards.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P.