

May 20, 2021

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez, P.C., M.P.
Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Rodriguez,

As civil society organizations concerned with environment and health, we call on you to place Bill C-28 on the House agenda for debate at the earliest opportunity and to work with the House Leaders of other parties to enable a vote at second reading before World Environment Day, June 5, 2021.

Next month will mark four years since the House Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development of the 42nd Parliament presented to the House its report, *Healthy Environment, Healthy Canadians, Healthy Economy: Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act: Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*. The report followed a comprehensive, year-long review of CEPA. The committee held 28 meetings, heard from 56 witnesses and received 66 written briefs. **All parties agreed that CEPA needs to be modernized.**

Parliament has been slow to act on the committee's core recommendations, and it has now been more than two decades since CEPA entered into force. Pollution sources have shifted and scientific understanding of risks has evolved over this time. CEPA needs to be updated to better protect human health and the environment from current toxic threats. A modernized CEPA is needed as the backbone of a green and just recovery from COVID-19.

Canadians have twice petitioned the House of Commons to act on the committee's 2017 recommendations. [Petition e-1659](#), presented to the House by MP Deb Schulte on October 2, 2018, garnered 11,109 signatures. [Petition e-2758](#), presented to the House by MP Laurel Collins on December 4, 2020, garnered 8,437 signatures. A third petition, [e-2877](#), calling for modernization of Part 6 of CEPA was presented to the House by MP Monique Pauzé on February 4, 2021, and garnered 4,390 signatures. In addition, thousands of Canadians have contacted their MPs directly over the past several years urging action.

Bill C-28, the Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act, at last sets the wheels in motion for CEPA modernization and addresses many of the issues examined in the 2016-17 committee review. However, it has now been five weeks since Bill C-28 was introduced and the House has not yet started to debate it.

We are urging all parties to prioritize Bill C-28 for debate and to co-operate to enable its referral to committee before June 5, 2021.

While the signatories to this letter do not necessarily endorse all elements of Bill C-28 in its current form, we all believe strongly that the bill should advance to committee for consideration this spring. Many of our organizations look forward to sharing with the committee our recommendations for improving the bill.

Recent cross-party co-operation to advance and improve other legislation is encouraging. We urge you to work with your counterparts to ensure that Bill C-28 progresses as well. Please do not allow another four years to go by before Parliament acts on CEPA modernization.

Sincerely,

Ian Bruce
Acting Executive Director
David Suzuki Foundation

Beatrice Olivastrì
Chief Executive Officer
Friends of the Earth Canada

Jennifer Beeman
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Olga Speranskaya
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Barb MacKinnon
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Fe de Leon
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Meg Sears
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Devon Page
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Cassie Barker
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Women's Healthy Environments Network

Tim Gray
Executive Director
Environmental Defence

*c.c. Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P., Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health
M. Gérard Deltell, M.P., House Leader of the Official Opposition
Mr. Dan Albas, M.P., CPP Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change
M. Alain Therrien, M.P., House Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Mme Monique Pauzé, M.P., Bloc Québécois Environment Critic
Mr. Peter Julian, M.P., House Leader of the New Democratic Party
Ms. Laurel Collins, M.P., NDP Critic for Environment and Climate Change
Ms. Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada*