



PRESS RELEASE
June 19, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Groups call for Senate vote on environmental racism bill before summer recess

Advocates and impacted communities concerned bill stalled in the Senate

OTTAWA | TRADITIONAL, UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE ALGONQUIN ANISHNAABEG PEOPLE – Advocates for social justice and equity, environmental protection, and public health are urging the Senate to refer Bill C-226, the *National Strategy on Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Act*, to committee before summer recess. We are near the finish line; this critical legislation must not stall, a coalition of civil society groups say.

The legislation requires the government to examine the links between racialization, socio-economic status, and environmental risks, and develop Canada’s first national strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice. MPs passed the bill in March. Nearly three months later, it has yet to advance in the Senate.

Advocates agree that this legislation is long overdue.

A [2020 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxic Wastes and Human Rights](#) pointed to “a pattern in Canada where marginalised groups, and Indigenous peoples in particular, find themselves on the wrong side of a toxic divide, subject to conditions that would not be acceptable elsewhere in Canada.”

While the United States established an environmental justice program almost three decades ago, Canada has lagged behind in implementing similar requirements. Bill C-226 will begin the work of filling this significant gap by collecting data and acting upon it. The consequences of inaction on environmental racism include ongoing negative impacts on people’s health and well-being, perpetuating systemic inequalities, and compromising the collective progress towards a just and sustainable future.

“We know the stories about where and how environmental racism exists in Canada. The formal data on these realities is incomplete and therefore there is a lack of understanding about how real this problem is,” says Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice (CCECJ).

The national environmental justice strategy mandated by this legislation would be a crucial step towards identifying and rectifying environmental racism and advancing environmental justice for all. It is imperative that the strategy reflects the needs and insights of communities and individuals most

knowledgeable about the impacts of environmental racism and injustice. Their expertise will contribute to a meaningful framework to prevent further injustice and safeguard public health and well-being.

Originally introduced as Bill C-230 by former MP Lenore Zann in the previous session of Parliament, the bill received approval from the House of Commons environment committee in June 2021. Unfortunately, it died on the order paper when Parliament dissolved for elections. On February 2, 2022, MP Elizabeth May reintroduced the legislation as Bill C-226, garnering support from Liberal and NDP MPs, which resulted in its passage in the House of Commons. Senator Mary Jane McCallum introduced the bill in the Senate on March 30, 2023.

The CCECJ, supported by numerous civil society groups, urges the Senate to proceed to a vote on Bill C-226 before the summer recess, to avoid any further delays in beginning the important work of developing a national strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice.

Groups Supporting this Statement

- Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice (CCECJ)
- The Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities and Community Health Project (The ENRICH Project).
- Black Environmental Initiative
- Coalition for Environmental Rights
- Environmental Defence
- Prevent Cancer Now
- Ecojustice
- Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Ontario Canada
- For Our Kids
- Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace
- Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment
- Green Ummah
- West Coast Environmental Law Association
- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
- Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective
- Canadian Climate Challenge
- Canadian Environmental Law Association
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)
- David Suzuki Foundation
- Breast Cancer Action Québec (BCAQ)
- Sierra Club Canada Foundation
- Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN)
- Mount Royal University
- Pan-Canadian Association of Nurses of African Descent
- Rural Water Watch
- Black Planning Project
- Architects Declare (Turtle Island / Canada)
- Black Nurses Association of Nova Scotia

Background information

[Text of Bill C-226](#)

Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate siting of polluting industries and other environmental hazards in Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities, and uneven access to nature and environmental benefits.

The [US EPA](#) defines environmental justice as, “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys: The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.”

More information about environmental racism is available on the [ENRICH Project website](#).

For more information or a media interview, please contact:

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