



@NewsroomGC tweet (maximum of 255 characters): The Government of Canada strengthens the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* to safeguard Canadians and their environment. [\(link to NR\)](#)

Government of Canada delivers on commitment to strengthen the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* and proposes to recognize a right to a healthy environment

From: [Environment and Climate Change Canada](#) and [Health Canada](#)

News release

April 13, 2021 – Ottawa, Ontario

Canadians need a stronger environmental protection law that confronts 21st-century dangers with 21st-century science. All Canadians should be able to live their lives free from the effects of harmful chemicals and pollutants. That is why today, the Government of Canada is delivering on its commitment to modernize the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA) and is recognizing Canadians' right to a healthy environment.

CEPA is Canada's cornerstone environmental protection law that has been used to reduce air pollution from industry and vehicles, ban asbestos and keep microbeads out of our water. And it is through CEPA that the Government is moving to ban harmful single-use plastics.

Over the past several decades, the science around the risks associated with harmful chemicals and pollutants has evolved. In order for CEPA to continue to protect Canadians and their environment from harmful substances, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, and the Minister of Health, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, announced today that the Government of Canada is taking steps to strengthen CEPA in line with the science, including through recognizing Canadians' right to a healthy environment.

The changes will strengthen protections for Canadians and the environment by:

- **Recognizing a right to a healthy environment** for every individual in Canada as provided for under CEPA – a first in a federal statute in Canada – providing continued support for strong environmental and health standards now and in the future.
- **Assessing real life exposure** based on the cumulative effects of a substance in combination with exposure to other substances, and better protecting populations most at risk due to greater susceptibility or potential exposure to harmful substances.
- **Implementing a new regime for toxic substances that pose the highest risk.** The new regime will prioritize the prohibition of uses and releases of substances toxic under CEPA that meet criteria set out in regulations to be considered of the highest risk.
- **Supporting the shift to less harmful chemicals** through the establishment of a Watch List of substances capable of meeting the criteria in CEPA to be considered at risk if, for example, there should be an increase in exposure. The amendments would require the Ministers to publish and maintain a list of substances that are capable of becoming toxic.



- **Creating a new Plan of Chemicals Management Priorities.** The Bill provides for public input on the development of a Plan of Chemicals Management Priorities, which will set out an integrated plan for the assessment and management of substances as well as supporting activities such as research, monitoring, information-gathering and risk communication.
- **Amending the *Food and Drugs Act (FDA)*** to provide the ability to develop a regulatory framework under the FDA to assess and manage the environmental risks of new drugs. This would remove the requirement to notify and assess new drugs under both the FDA and CEPA, providing a more efficient and effective approach to managing the risks of drugs in Canada.

In addition to these amendments to CEPA, the Government will take action to improve information for supply chain managers and to enhance mandatory labelling for certain consumer products, giving Canadians greater access to information about the substances to which they are exposed.

Today's proposed amendments represent the first major reform to CEPA since it was updated more than 20 years ago. They will enable the Government of Canada to deliver on its commitment to modernize CEPA and to continuously improve its initiatives to protect human health and the environment.

Quotes

"Our proposal to strengthen CEPA helps us make further progress in the priorities our Government articulated in the 2020 Speech from the Throne. The environment will be better protected, a right to a healthy environment will be recognized as provided for under the Act, and industry will benefit from a strong and predictable framework that encourages it to produce and use safe substances. This will contribute to a healthier environment and a healthier Canada for everyone."

– The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

"Protecting the health of Canadians and their environment are key priorities for our Government. The legislation introduced today will strengthen CEPA to better protect Canadians, and our most vulnerable in particular, from environmental and health risks. By taking into account vulnerable populations and cumulative effects, we will also be better placed to make science-based decisions that keep all Canadians safe and healthy."

– The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health

Quick facts

- CEPA became a law in 1988 and was last updated more than 20 years ago.
- CEPA is one of the main federal laws to prevent and control pollution. It allows the Government to protect Canadians and the environment from the environmental and human health impacts of a wide range of pollution sources, such as chemicals, animate products of biotechnology, vehicles, engines, equipment, hazardous waste and environmental emergencies.
- CEPA offers tools to identify and address these risks.



- The Minister of Environment and Climate Change is responsible for CEPA and shares some of the responsibilities under the Act with the Minister of Health.
- Over the years, actions under CEPA have
 - helped reduce air pollutants causing smog and acid rain;
 - prevented the release of plastic microbeads from toiletries that wash down household drains and contribute to plastic pollution in oceans, rivers and lakes;
 - set strict requirements for the import and export of hazardous waste;
 - assessed over 4,000 existing substances and over 10,000 notifications for new chemicals, polymers and living organisms proposed for use in Canada;
 - developed measures to manage identified risks for close to 500 of those substances;
 - set stringent limits on greenhouse gas emissions from engines and vehicles;
 - established the first regulated phase-out of coal-fired electricity in the world; and
 - banned asbestos and products containing asbestos, as exposure to asbestos fibres is known to cause cancer and other diseases.

Related products

- Backgrounder on proposed amendments to CEPA [\[Events to add link\]](#)

Associated links

- [CEPA Bill: C-28 – Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act](#) (to be available in the afternoon on April 13)
- [CEPA Bill Summary](#)

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