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WHEN

Women's Healthy Environments Network

NEWS RELEASE

Women Can't Wait! Women's Health Groups Denounce the Federal Government's failure to Protect Canadians' Health

Montreal / Toronto, June 29, 2018 –

Women's health organizations are disappointed to learn that the Minister of the Environment will not move forward on much needed reforms to the outdated Canadian Environment Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) in this mandate. The reforms proposed by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development's [report](#) illustrate that women and other vulnerable populations face specific exposures to toxic chemicals that are not being considered by the government.

Under the current law, Canadians are not protected from toxic substances - the exposure to which leads to *thousands of premature deaths each year and millions of preventable diseases*. This fact was highlighted in the Standing Committee's [report](#), which included suggested reforms to update our outdated pollution law and better protect Canadians from toxic health risks. The organizations speaking out on CEPA inaction include Breast Cancer Action Quebec, Women's Healthy Environments Network and six allied women's health groups as part of the newly formed coalition **Canadian Women against Toxic Substances**, which submitted a statement on CEPA to the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change titled [Toxic Substances are a Feminist Issue!](#)

"We are very disappointed that this government is not acting in this mandate to protect our health and our environment from the toxics that wreak havoc on our communities, and will do so for generations to come," says Jennifer Beeman, Executive Director of Breast Cancer Action Quebec (BCAQc).

This failure to take urgent action on pollution and CEPA means that Canadians continue to be exposed to poorly managed carcinogens, hormone disruptors and other toxic chemicals. Patricia Kearns, Research and Networking Advisor at BCAQc states: "This government enjoys calling themselves feminists, yet they are failing women by not doing the work of protecting their health. Women are now forced to wait until after the next elections. We need determined legislative reform of CEPA with substantive measures to protect women, children and vulnerable communities."

A class of chemicals called endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are proven to be tied to increases in hormonally driven cancers such as breast, prostate, testicular and thyroid cancers as well as chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma, neurological disorders such as ADHD and autism as well as both male and female reproductive disorders. However, under our current law, these endocrine disruptors are not classified as toxic.

“While disappointed about the government’s inaction in this mandate, we are encouraged by the outline of meaningful steps forward. Our organizations will continue to be active stakeholders in the reform process. Canada is deplorably behind other jurisdictions on chemical and especially EDC regulations leaving the problem of reducing toxic exposures to individuals, particularly women. We are fed up with bearing this responsibility.” Cassie Barker from WHEN said.

Source: [Breast Cancer Action Quebec](#) and [Women’s Healthy Environments Network](#)

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[Breast Cancer Action Quebec](#) has advocated for breast cancer prevention and the elimination of environmental toxins linked to the disease for over 25 years.

[Women’s Healthy Environments Network](#) Since 1994, WHEN has been educating the general public, media and policy makers that environmental health is a key determinant of public health and has promoted public action for the prevention of environmental health harms.