

Canada's first environmental racism bill closer to becoming law

Groups urge all MPs to support Bill C-230 in final House vote this fall

PRESS RELEASE

OTTAWA/TRADITIONAL, UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE ALGONQUIN ANISHNAABEG PEOPLE [June 22, 2021] – We, a broad and diverse coalition of civil society groups, urge Parliament to move forward with passing an environmental racism law immediately following its summer break. Yesterday, the House of Commons environment committee completed its review of Bill C-230, which mandates the federal government to examine the link between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk. This marked a critical first step toward Canada acknowledging its shameful legacy of environmental racism and ensuring that *all* people in Canada benefit from environment protection policies.

Renamed the *National Strategy Respecting Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Act*, the bill, if passed, would require the federal environment minister to develop a strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice – a Canadian first. Canada is long overdue for this legislation — parallel requirements have been in place in the U.S. since 1994.

It's good to see Canada finally stepping up, but we have no time to lose to ensure this draft legislation actually becomes law. With the House of Commons scheduled to break for the summer later this week and a potential election this fall, we strongly urge all parties to move the bill through the final stages of the legislative process as soon as possible when Parliament resumes sitting following its summer break. Canadians can't afford a delay of this long-awaited legislation.

Additional information on the review of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable development:

- MP Lenore Zann (Cumberland – Colchester) introduced Bill C-230 in February 2020.
- Three of the four parties represented on the committee supported the bill with amendments. An important sub-amendment, proposed by MP Taylor Bachrach (Skeena – Bulkley Valley) and approved by the committee, stipulates that the national strategy must include information and statistics related to the location of environmental hazards, and an examination of the link between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk, as well as health-outcomes. A lack of disaggregated data about environmental hazards and effects on racialized and low-income people in Canada has obscured the problem and hampers efforts to advance environmental justice.
- The committee tabled its [report on Bill C-230](#) in Parliament today.

The National Anti-Environmental Racism Coalition (NAERC) was formed in 2020 by Ingrid Waldron from the ENRICH Project and Naolo Charles from the Black Environmental Initiative to mobilize organizations and individuals for the environmental protection of Black, Indigenous and immigrant communities and for the promotion of environmental justice in Canada. The National

Anti-Environmental Racism Coalition is composed of over 60 organizations working in the social and environmental sector. Our current work is paving the way for the success of a national environmental justice strategy in Canada.

Statement issued by the following groups: Black Environmental Initiative, Breast Cancer Action Quebec, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), Canadian Environmental Law Association, Coalition for Environmental Rights, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, ENRICH Project, Environmental Defence, Équiterre, National Anti-Environmental Racism Coalition, Nature Canada, Prevent Cancer Now, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, West Coast Environmental Law

Please see here for quotes from NAERC groups and individuals supporting Bill C-230

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Environmental racism occurs when environmental policies or practices intentionally or unintentionally result in disproportionate negative impacts on certain individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour, and as well as unequal access to environmental benefits. Examples of environmental racism in Canada have been documented by the ENRICH Project and in a 2020 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights.

For more information or a media interview, please contact:

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