



September 16, 2022

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

E-mail: ENVI@parl.gc.ca

Dear Members of the House Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development,

**Re. Bill C-226, An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy to Assess, Prevent and Address Environmental Racism and To Advance Environmental Justice**

The undersigned civil society organizations – advocates for social justice and equity, environmental protection, and public health – urge you to prioritize and expedite the committee’s consideration of Bill C-226, Canada’s first environmental racism law.

As you know, ENVI already studied this bill in the previous parliament. Bill C-226 incorporates the committee’s amendments and is identical to the bill approved more than a year ago by three of the four parties represented on ENVI.

**We therefore ask you to move quickly to report Bill C-226 as soon as possible when Parliament resumes sitting this fall.** It is time to pass the bill and begin the long-overdue work to develop and implement a national strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice.

The United States’ program on environmental justice was established with an executive order nearly three decades ago, in 1994. 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.*<sup>1</sup>

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 legacy of environmental racism in Canada is well-documented<sup>2</sup> and can no longer be ignored. As the UN Special Rapporteur on toxics observed in a 2020 report to the Human Rights Council, “There exists a pattern in Canada where marginalized 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.”<sup>3</sup>

Canada urgently needs a national strategy and accountability mechanisms to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and advance environmental justice, as proposed by bill C-226.

We are encouraged that MPs from multiple parties – including the Prime Minister – have expressed their support for Bill C-226. We look forward to it becoming law.

**Please do not let another year go by before passing Canada’s first environmental racism law. We ask you to prioritize and expedite Bill C-226 on the committee’s agenda this fall.**

Avoiding further delay will allow the important work of examining the link between racialization, socio-economic status and environmental risk, and developing a national strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice to begin.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Waldron  
Co-Founder and Co-Director  
Canadian Coalition for Environmental and  
Climate Justice,  
Executive Director  
The ENRICH Project

Jessica Clogg  
Executive Director  
West Coast Environmental Law

Severn Cullis-Suzuki  
Executive Director  
David Suzuki Foundation

Aisha Francis  
Executive Director  
KAIROS

Tim Gray  
Executive Director  
Environmental Defence

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

<sup>2</sup> See for example: <https://www.enrichproject.org/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.srtoxics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Canada-HRC-45\\_AUV.pdf](http://www.srtoxics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Canada-HRC-45_AUV.pdf)

Elaine MacDonald  
Director, Healthy Communities Program  
Ecojustice

Ellen Sweeney  
Board Member  
Prevent Cancer NOW!

Raissa Marks  
Interim Executive Director  
Canadian Association of Physicians for the  
Environment

Kathrin Winkler  
Steering Committee Member  
Nova Scotia Voices of Women for Peace

Theresa McLenaghan  
Executive Director  
Canadian Environmental Law Association

Graham Saul  
Executive Director  
Nature Cana

*C.c. Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Ms. Elizabeth May, GPC Parliamentary Leader*