



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec  
Environmental Health Association of Québec

## Media Release

**Québec, November 10, 2023** - This media release is in response to a recent CBC program on PFAS: [Does your makeup contain 'forever chemicals'? | CBC News](#) as well as the Government of Canada's [Risk management scope for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\) - Canada.ca](#)

The Environmental Health Association of Québec and the Environmental Health Association of Canada both firmly believe that it is imperative for the Canadian government to take prompt and decisive action to address PFAS contamination in consumer products. We advocate for policies and initiatives that prioritize public health, remove barriers to access, and improve environmental sustainability, and ecological justice. We need stronger regulations that safeguard us from all forms of PFAS exposure.

**PFAS:** PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are chemicals that are added to everyday products, such as rugs, carpets, furniture, clothing, fast-food packaging, and cosmetics, namely, to repel oil and fat. These chemicals are highly profitable, but exposure to them can cause serious negative health and environmental effects.

The presence of PFAS in consumer products poses a grave threat to public health, environmental sustainability, and social justice in Canada. PFAS are pervasive chemicals found in various everyday items, including textiles (such as carpets,

### ASEQ-EHAQ

Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec • Environmental Health Association of Québec  
C.P./P.O. # 364, Saint-Sauveur, Québec JOR 1R0  
514-332-4320 • bureau@aseq-ehaq.ca • office@aseq-ehaq.ca  
aseq-ehaq.ca • ecoasisquebec.ca

**Français :** HypersensibiliteEnvironnementale.com  
LaVieEcolo.ca

**English:** Environmentalsensitivities.com  
EcoLivingGuide.ca

furniture, and clothing), food packaging, non-stick kitchenware, cosmetics, vehicles, electronics, and certain firefighting foams. These chemicals, which repel oil and fat, have proven to be impressive technological innovations and very profitable, but come with severe negative health consequences. [Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\) - information sheet - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/environmental-health-assessment/2019/05/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-information-sheet.html)

Private businesses, driven by the goal of maximizing profits, must prioritize the health and safety of consumers when producing and distributing products. It is vital to regulate and monitor the presence of toxic substances to reduce potential health risks and protect the well-being of individuals and communities. Certain private industries have profited from the sale of these chemicals, even when they were aware of the associated health risks. It is unacceptable for companies to manufacture products for profit that cause illness among Canadians and to shift the responsibility of managing these health issues onto the public healthcare system. These companies should be required to contribute financially to address this situation, as the burden cannot be solely shouldered by the general public and the healthcare system.

### **Recommendations and Call to Action:**

Due to the aforementioned risks of PFAS, l'Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec - Environmental Health Association of Québec (ASEQ-EHAQ) and the Environmental Health Association of Canada - Association pour la santé environnementale du Canada (EHAC-ASEC) urge the Canadian government to take the following actions:

**Immediate Ban on PFAS:** Enact legislation and regulations that ban the use, import, and sale of PFAS. This ban should have few exceptions and include a comprehensive range of products such as: textiles, food packaging, cosmetics, kitchenware, and other items where PFAS are commonly used.

Low-income individuals and marginalized communities bear disproportionate risks due to limited choices and reduced access to safer alternatives. Additionally, environmental pollution and exposures disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, women, Indigenous peoples, and racialized groups, perpetuating systemic inequalities.

Addressing PFAS contamination requires regulations and immediate transition strategies that prioritize environmental justice and equitable access to PFAS-free alternatives. People with disabilities, particularly those with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS), are vulnerable to the health impacts of PFAS exposure. Policy development must actively involve disability advocates and ensure accessibility in decision-making processes.

PFAS contamination poses a severe threat to ecosystems, including water bodies and wildlife, compromising ecological integrity. Implementing strict regulations that include clean-up measures of present contamination, assuring health protection for the most vulnerable, and supporting sustainable alternatives are crucial for preserving environmental justice.

**Immediate Recall of PFAS in Existing Products:** Recall products with PFAS from shelves. Include incentives for businesses to transition to safer alternatives. No phase-outs.

**Improved Labelling on Consumer Products:** Improve the labels on products that have PFAS and other dangerous chemicals that can impact our health and environment. These labels should be accessible to all so that product content can be easily identified, and they must include clear health warnings to inform consumers of the risks associated with use. By providing comprehensive information about all hazardous chemicals present in 100% of the product, consumers can make informed decisions on product choices. Some ingredients in products can harm our health, and Canadians have the right to know what they are.

**Implementation of a Robust Regulatory Framework for Evaluating and Reviewing Hazardous Chemical Products:** Establish a robust system for continuous evaluation and review of PFAS-related regulations and policies to ensure their effectiveness and adapt to emerging scientific evidence.

**Enhanced Healthcare Support and Funding:** Establish comprehensive systems to provide assistance to individuals affected by health issues related to these exposures.

**Educational Campaign on PFAS:** Launch an educational campaign that utilizes findings from this report to inform Canadians about the risks associated with PFAS and where they can seek health support. This campaign can be financed by imposing fines or taxes on private industries that profit from the use of PFAS and that have contributed to the harm.

**Removal of PFAS from Drinking Water Supply:** Investment by the government to develop adequate tools to remove PFAS from drinking water supplies in all communities across Canada.

**Improved International Cooperation:** Engage in international partnerships to exchange best practices and establish uniform standards and regulations concerning PFAS and other hazardous chemicals and substances.

**Additional Investment in Research and Monitoring:** Provide more funding for research to learn more about the health risks of PFAS exposure and programs that monitor the prevalence of PFAS in the environment, such as MIREC Canada ([mirec-canada.ca](http://mirec-canada.ca)) and Northern Contaminants Program ([science.gc.ca](http://science.gc.ca)), should be supported. Collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, and health organizations should be encouraged to address this important issue.

**Creating Accountability Mechanisms:** Hold private industries accountable for environmental harm they have caused by shifting the burden and cost of cleanup and health impact back onto them.

**Healthcare Recuperation Fund:** Allocate an initial fund of \$50 million to support Canadians whose health has been negatively impacted by these unsafe products. Open up environmental health clinics across Canada that treat patients with environmentally linked conditions, and train doctors on how to treat these conditions including those developed from exposures to poorly regulated chemicals like PFAS.

**Creation of Provincial Environmental Health Clinics:** We strongly endorse the establishment of provincial Environmental Health Clinics within the public system with a multifaceted mission: educating healthcare professionals about environmental health conditions, including issues related to PFAS exposure,



conducting vital environmental health research, and offering evidence-based training and treatment for affected individuals.

To ensure the long-term viability of these clinics, we propose financial support derived from fines imposed on industries responsible for health issues within the Canadian population. This approach not only promotes comprehensive environmental healthcare but also holds those responsible accountable for contributing to the solution. Furthermore, it would allow for a more efficient redirection of patients from emergency services and walk-in clinics to these specialized facilities, relieving some of the burden on our healthcare system, especially those with chronic illnesses resulting from poorly regulated chemicals, who often seek help from untrained physicians in public settings.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Michel Gaudet

514-332-4320 | [office@aseq-ehaq.ca](mailto:office@aseq-ehaq.ca)

Executive Director / Directeur exécutif

Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec –  
Environmental Health Association of Québec (ASEQ-EHAQ)