



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

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Line Lebeau

I feel inspired by a mission

No longer to keep quiet by suffering in silence...rather to educate, raise awareness and politely ask for reasonable accommodations!

I suffer too much; I can't keep quiet anymore; that was the observation I made a few months ago.

I suffer from MCS. Perfumes/fragrances are major triggers for my symptoms and they are pretty much everywhere I go or need to go. For the first few years, I didn't know that my reactions were symptoms of a disease. And even less that it was recognized as a disability by the Canadian Human Rights Commission.



Over the years, my condition worsened because I had not yet understood the importance of avoiding contact with the products that made me sick. Due to a lack of avoidance, the symptoms would intensify and I would react to smaller and smaller amounts.

Unaware of this fact, I regularly came into contact with perfumes/fragrances when I went to work; when visiting family or friends; when participating in recreational activities; on my way to my youngest child's graduation or to events such as weddings or funerals; or on a more regular basis when going to the grocery store, pharmacy, bank, medical clinic, etc.

Like all of you reading this article, I discovered the existence of the Environmental Health



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Association of Québec (ASEQ-EHAQ). In my humble opinion, it is a great team that has been working hard for so many years to make environmental sensitivities known and recognized. But the road is long and full of pitfalls. If this disease was called "allergy" the pitfalls would be less numerous!



I recently read the form letters that the ASEQ-EHAQ has made available to us; it made me realize that it is possible to do my part to educate, raise awareness and ask for "fragrance-free" policies. And also, take the time to politely ask for reasonable accommodations. So, I wrote to three different organizations suggesting that they institute "fragrance-free" policies. **And it won't stop there!**

The first time, I chose to complete a short online survey which I received via email, about the quality of service at my bank. I took the liberty of including a few quotes from the ASEQ-EHAQ website in the "General Comment" box available at the end of the survey...educate, raise awareness and ask politely!

The second time, I clicked on a link on my Facebook feed. I saw a survey from the Liberal Party of Canada. There were only 4 questions in total; 3 small multiple-choice questions and one last open-ended question with a nice comment box. Well, well, well, here's my chance I thought! I suggested a "fragrance free" policy for all government services and include quotes from the ASEQ-EHAQ website...educate, raise awareness and ask politely!

The third time, I filled out an online form on my local collective health advocacy organization's website. I discovered the existence of Action Santé Outaouais, a non-



political organization that raises awareness on key public health issues in the region. I thought to myself that such an organization must exist in many other regions and that it was a great opportunity for many people suffering from MCS to make the same kind of request in their region!

Proud of these steps, I wanted to share with you my new mission in the hope of convincing every person who suffers from MCS to write even one email to at least one organization or government authority such as: your bank, your deputy, your mayor, your medical clinic, your recreation center, etc. to educate, raise awareness, and ask for "scent free" policies.

In the same vein, don't hesitate to make requests for accommodation and accessibility. We are entitled to it! To help us, the ASEQ-EHAQ has prepared a sample letter that we can print or send via email, in order to obtain an accommodation and accessibility to public spaces and especially for essential services: https://aseq-ehaq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-of-support-EN_Website.pdf

In conclusion, isn't it said that it is by joining forces and combining our strengths that we can succeed? I sincerely believe that **the more of us that raise our hands or type on our keyboards** to educate, raise awareness and ask for "fragrance-free" policies, the more things are likely to move in our favor.

So don't hesitate to take a few moments for "our" cause...the need to have fragrance-free policies in public places so that all Canadians are free to leave their homes without too much risk of aggravating this disabling medical condition...get to your keyboards 😊

If you lack inspiration or suffer from cognitive brain function, also known as 'brain fog', like me, which makes this kind of task rather difficult, here are two examples of messages I sent. You can use them as a draft; all you have to do is adapt them to your reality and send them. [Click here to read my testimonial on 'Your Voice Matters'](#)