



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

August 26, 2022

To all Québec Political Parties sent individually

We, at the Environmental Health Association of Quebec, are writing to inquire about your party's commitments and position regarding the care, support and protection of people with the disability of multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

In Canada, 1,130,800 people have been diagnosed with MCS according to Statistics Canada (CCHS, 2020). Similar data from Québec reports an excess of 250,000 diagnosed cases. This condition has increased over 100% between 2000 to 2020, while the Canadian population has grown over the same period by 24% (Statistics Canada). In this population, there are disproportionately high levels of unemployment, refusal of accommodation for accessibility of the disability, lack of access to healthcare and social services, high levels of isolation, homelessness, low socioeconomic status, and extremely low quality of life. All of these issues result from a lack of accommodation and support for this disability, and particularly from the lack of affordable, healthy and accessible housing, which has contributed to many people applying for medical assistance in dying (MAiD) as the only solution offered for their disability. This reality, is a consequence of this stigmatized and ignored disability.

While this disability is protected by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the inequities continue to persist due to a continued lack of support, accessibility, and awareness about this health condition.

There is no cure for MCS, but best management of the health condition includes the avoidance of triggers including smoke, fragrances, exposure to certain chemicals, mold, and pollution from various sources including heavy traffic, farming, factories, etc.

The solutions that have been identified by stakeholders that work with this community including doctors, researchers, community groups, and people with lived experience are recognition,

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accessibility, which includes fragrance-free and ecological least-toxic product use for all applications, fragrance free healthcare and social services, and especially, the creation of affordable and accessible housing.

We are requesting your response indicating your party's position regarding these issues, and are asking for a commitment to the following:

1. Provide immediate appropriate, affordable housing with a keen focus on indoor air quality, suitable for people who experience this disability.
2. Election spaces must be accessible (fragrance-free with least toxic products being used for cleaning, etc.) so that people disabled with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) have accessible spaces to exercise their right to vote.
3. MCS must be immediately recognized as a physical health condition, and a diagnostic code must be assigned to this condition.
4. MCS must be immediately recognized, as has been done by the government of Ontario, and the government of Canada and a diagnostic code must be created to appropriately categorize this condition.
5. Awareness and education on MCS from a Government of Québec website must be expanded to educate, create awareness and eliminate the severe stigmatization that currently exists. This content must be created with the collaboration of people with MCS and MCS groups given that they have lived experience with MCS. This is crucial in the spirit of the internationally recognized disability slogan, ***Nothing about us, without us!***
6. The Québec Human Rights and the Rights of Youth Commission must offer appropriate protections for all Quebecers. This must be clearly mentioned with clear definitions of all accommodations on the website of the Québec Human Rights and the Rights of Youth Commission.
7. The development of private sector research to develop healthy products must be encouraged and supported so that there are safe products for people experiencing MCS.
8. Healthy products for all applications must be supported and prioritized.
9. Implement legislation to change the use of chemical products legal in Quebec to reduce the growing numbers of people developing MCS. This type of legislation has been created for example, Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals or REACH in Europe which has been in force since 2007. The use of certain chemicals in Québec should be banned.
10. Implement legislation to ensure companies disclose the harmful chemicals such as carcinogens, endocrine disruptors (EDCs), neurotoxins, sensitizers (leading to MCS), contained in their products. This legislation exists in California, titled Proposition 65, and ensures consumers can make informed choices about their chemical exposures.
11. Centers for excellence for MCS funded by the Ministry of Health and Social Services Québec must be established: for health care, research, awareness and education –

making sure to include people with lived experience, MCS groups, and renowned experts on MCS in the process.

12. Expand provincially funded research on MCS – making sure to have people with lived experience, MCS groups, and renowned experts on MCS in the process.
13. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, mandate that all health care in Quebec is fragrance-free. This is an essential and appropriate accommodation in order to ensure access to healthcare facilities for people with MCS.
14. Use only effective, least-toxic solutions during this pandemic and future events, keeping in mind the health condition of MCS.
15. That the work being presently done for accessibility, for people experiencing MCS, under the Accessibility Act, be implemented in all Government of Quebec buildings and introduced in establishments, institutions, including places of learning and worship, and that people and groups with lived experience be actively included in the process of developing appropriate policies.

These changes will not only serve to save the lives of people with disabilities and protect accessibility but will help make these spaces safer for all Quebec residents.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding these positions, and we will be sharing this letter and your responses on our website so that our members are well-informed about these issues.

Sincerely,



Michel Gaudet
Executive Director, ASEQ-EHAQ