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Potential Impact of Bill C-226 on People with MCS

Bill C-226, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and to advance environmental justice, received royal assent on June 20, 2024. Now a law, it aims to develop a national environmental justice strategy to account for the effects of environmental racism—a systemic issue that results in Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities being affected by environmental hazards more than other communities.

This includes a focus on the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on marginalized communities, which can encompass individuals with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) who are often exposed to harmful chemicals in their environments. Environmental justice requires the consideration of how marginalized people—such as those in poverty or poor housing, workers, seasonal agricultural workers, women, and others—are also disproportionately impacted by environmental issues like unsafe drinking water, pollution, toxic wastes, climate change, lack of green spaces, workplace exposure to risks, and other risks. By requiring the federal government to collaborate with community groups, including those representing people with disabilities, the bill could lead to the creation of more inclusive policies. This would ensure that the unique needs of those with MCS are considered in environmental regulations and public health policies.





Bill C-226 emphasizes the importance of addressing environmental health issues, which directly align with the needs of those with MCS. Improved environmental policies could lead to stricter controls on pollutants and toxic substances, thereby reducing the exposure that triggers MCS symptoms. The national strategy includes provisions for the collection of information and statistics related to environmental hazards and health outcomes. This data can be crucial for understanding the impact of chemical exposures on individuals with MCS and supporting evidence-based policy-making to protect their health. Through the Act, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will develop, within two years, a national strategy to promote efforts across Canada to advance environmental justice and to assess, prevent, and address environmental racism. The strategy could include measures such as possible amendments to federal laws, policies, and programs. The Minister will also report on progress every five years thereafter.

Bill C-226 underscores the commitment to advancing environmental justice and eliminating discrimination, which can benefit people with MCS by recognizing their condition within a broader legal and human rights framework. This can facilitate better legal protections and accommodations in various settings, including workplaces and public spaces. By leveraging the provisions of Bill C-226, advocates can push for more comprehensive recognition and protection for individuals with MCS, ensuring their health and rights are safeguarded through improved environmental and public health policies.

The emphasis on data collection and research within the national strategy will provide valuable insights into the effects of chemical exposures on



individuals with MCS. This data will support the development of evidence-based policies and interventions designed to protect the health of those with MCS. Furthermore, by framing the issue within a legal and human rights context, Bill C-226 helps to advance the rights and protections for individuals with MCS, ensuring that they are not subjected to discrimination and that they receive appropriate accommodations.

Overall, Bill C-226 holds significant promise for individuals with MCS. Through increased awareness, inclusive policy development, improved environmental health and safety measures, robust data collection and research, and a strong legal and human rights framework, the bill provides a broad approach to addressing the challenges faced by those with MCS. This legislation could mark a significant step towards ensuring that the health and rights of individuals with MCS are recognized and protected across Canada.