

Subject: Patrick Lagacé's light touch

To the editor of La Presse / Mr. Patrick Lagacé

As an organization that defends the rights of people with disabilities in Quebec, Canada, and internationally, the Confederation of Organizations of People with Disabilities in Quebec (COPHAN) expresses its deep concern regarding the column published in La Presse on September 7, 2025, entitled *"Have you thought about your odor load today?"*

This article is not simply misinformed—it is ill-advised.

In his article, Mr. Lagacé mocks a measure taken by the St-Hyacinthe Regional Passport Office because it enforces a policy aimed at protecting the health of more than 1 million Canadians who are affected by environmental hypersensitivity/multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). Yet, as he himself states, MCS is a recognized disability, both by the medical community and under Canadian law.

By mocking the fragrance-free policy and presenting only a stigmatizing and erroneous point of view, this article, which is more than questionable, contributes to the social exclusion of people with MCS, who are in a situation that deserves respect, understanding, and empathy.

When someone like Mr. Lagacé speaks so lightly about such a sensitive subject, without knowing the consequences of what he writes, it further discredits both those affected and the organizations that represent them, as well as the governments and courts that seek to protect their rights.

We understand that Mr. Lagacé wanted to make people laugh with his article, but for people with MCS, their daily lives are anything but funny.

Yes, freedom of the press is fundamental—and we support it. But it also comes with a responsibility: to report accurately and fairly, especially when it comes to a marginalized population that benefits from recognized legal protections.

Articles like this reinforce prejudices, encourage mockery, and undermine decades of efforts to recognize rights.

COPHAN asks Mr. Lagacé to rectify the situation and invites him to write a properly informed journalistic piece that addresses this issue. We even offer to assist him in his research if necessary.

Sincerely,

Paul-Claude Bérubé
Executive Director, COPHAN

Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (Confederation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Quebec)