



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

Saint-Sauveur, Québec
September 8, 2025

Dear Ms. Grammond, Mr. Cardinal, and Mr. Legacé,

Discrimination against Canadians living with MCS in Patrick Lagacé's column

To: Editor-in-Chief, La Presse

We are writing on behalf of the Environmental Health Association of Canada to express our deep outrage at the column published on September 7, 2025, in *La Presse*, entitled "*Have you thought about your odor load today?*" by Patrick Lagacé.

This column mocks a public health issue and a recognized disability—environmental hypersensitivity/multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)—protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

To suggest that people with MCS should wear N95 masks rather than have access to accommodations is an unacceptable reversal of the concept of universal accessibility. It is not up to people with disabilities to protect themselves from others, but up to society to guarantee them equal and safe access to public services.

The idea that fragrance-free signage would be absurd reflects a serious misunderstanding of the law. Canada has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and has even acceded to its implementing protocol, which requires states to ensure accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and protection from discrimination. The Canadian Human Rights Commission also recognizes MCS as a disability requiring accommodation. These are not "preferences" — they are legal standards and fundamental rights.



The author's comparison of fragrance sensitivity to supposed "*cultural hypersensitivity*" is not objective journalism; it is institutional ableism disguised as satire. It amounts to delegitimizing a state-recognized disability and encouraging public mockery of a medically and legally validated population.

In June 2025, the American Medical Association (AMA) recognized that sensitivity to fragrances, MCS, is a disability that can severely limit activities of daily living, and adopted a policy supporting fragrance-free environments and full disclosure of ingredients.

What Service Canada has done—implementing a fragrance-free policy—is an example of respect for rights, public health, and equity. It is not absurd; it is responsible.

Your column stigmatizes a vulnerable group already excluded from healthcare, housing, employment, and public life.

We demand an immediate public apology and an editorial retraction to repair the harm caused.

Sincerely,

Rohini Peris

President, EHAC-ASEC

Environmental Health Association of Canada