



Press Release

Canadian Disability Groups Demand Public Apology from La Presse

Montréal, Québec, September 8, 2025 — Three leading disability advocacy groups — ASEQ-EHAQ (Québec), EHAC-ASEC (Canada), and la Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) — have issued formal letters to La Presse, denouncing the September 7th column by Patrick Lagacé for its demeaning portrayal of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), a recognized disability.

In March 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) issued its Concluding Observations on Canada. The CRPD's recommendations strongly remind our government that people with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) have the right to equal protection, reasonable accommodation, and accessible environments under international human rights law.

In June 2025, the American Medical Association recognized fragrance sensitivity, MCS, as a disability and as potentially limiting major life activities. The groups demand an immediate correction of this situation that puts people at risk, and offers a free educational workshop to the editorial team.

MCS is a disability like any other disability protected under the law (CHRA, 2007). The Accessible Canada Act, 2019, guarantees accessibility for all disabilities by removing barriers to inclusion. Chemicals in perfumes, perfumed products, and other toxic substances are barriers to inclusion.

Environmental Health Association of Canada-Association pour la santé environnementale du Canada
Environmental Health Association of Québec-Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
PO BOX 364, Saint-Sauveur, Québec J0R 1R1
ehac-asec.ca □ aseq-ehac.ca
514 332 4320



This represents approximately 3.5% of Canadians — more than one million people — with diagnosed MCS. Fragrance-free spaces are not only an accommodation for people with MCS, but also protect those living with asthma, migraines, autism, and other chronic conditions.

The column trivialized fragrance-free policies and compared legitimate accessibility measures to cultural over-sensitivity. This undermines the rights of disabled Canadians and contradicts Canada's obligations under the UN CRPD. Most concerning, it gives permission to refuse accommodation, fosters stigma and discrimination, and increases the deliberate use of barriers which put Canadians with this disability at real risk of harm.

Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of democracy, but with it comes the duty to inform responsibly. Reporting one uninformed perspective while ignoring disability rights organizations fosters misinformation and public hostility.

We demand an immediate retraction of this article and an apology to the more than one million Canadians — 3.5% of the population — diagnosed with MCS. We also renew our invitation to La Presse to meet with our organizations and participate in a free educational workshop on disability rights and accessibility, to ensure accurate, respectful, and inclusive reporting.

-30-

Media Contacts:

ASEQ-EHAQ: office@aseq-ehaq.ca

EHAC-ASEC: office@ehac-asec.ca

COPHAN: direction@cophan.org