



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

Saint-Sauveur, Québec

September 8, 2025

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

Subject: Harmful and inaccurate commentary on the rights of persons with disabilities and the no-perfume policy
To: The editorial board of La Presse

We are writing to express our deep concern and disappointment regarding the column published on September 7, 2025, in *La Presse*, entitled "*Have you thought about your scent load today?*" by Patrick Lagacé.

This column trivializes and ridicules the reality experienced by people with environmental hypersensitivity/multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), a disability recognized by human rights legislation in Quebec and Canada, as well as internationally under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The author's comments—suggesting that MCS is a "cultural trend," that those affected should wear N95 masks rather than receive reasonable accommodations, or that fragrance-free policies are absurd—are deeply offensive, stigmatizing, and discriminatory.

In June 2025, the American Medical Association (AMA) adopted Policy H-135.902, formally recognizing that fragrance sensitivity, MCS, is a disability and can constitute a significant limitation on activities of daily living. This policy supports the implementation of fragrance-free policies, scientific research, and comprehensive ingredient labeling.

ASEQ-EHAQ

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The author attempts to discredit fragrance-free policies by claiming that only "3%" of the population is affected. This claim is both misleading and discriminatory. In reality, 3.5% of Canadians have been diagnosed with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)—these are not mere claims, but medically recognized impairments (AMA, 2025). By comparison, journalists represent less than 0.1% of the Canadian population, yet they rightly enjoy significant professional protections, such as secure spaces, official accreditation, and the right to compensation in the event of harm.

Why then deny the 3.5% of people affected by MCS the most basic accommodation: fragrance-free air in public offices? The protection of minorities is not based on their numbers, but on their rights. We call on La Presse, as a leading media institution, to respect these rights for Canadians with disabilities as seriously as it would for its own members.

Service Canada's signage complies with best practices. It protects the rights of people with MCS, but also those living with asthma, migraines, autism, or other chronic respiratory diseases—which represents well over 3.5% of Canadians.

This column constitutes an unnecessary act of violence against a marginalized community. We believe that the least Mr. Lagacé can do is to rectify the situation and provide accurate information when discussing MCS.

Sincerely,

Michel Gaudet

Executive Director, ASEQ-EHAQ
Environmental Health Association of Québec