RESILIENCE 2026: An International Conference on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)

EHAC · ASEC
Environmental Health Association of Canada
Association pour la santé environnementale du Canada

ASEQ – EHAQ
Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Quebec

Advancing Science, Accessibility, and Policy for Healthy Indoor Environments

Day 2

May 8, 2026
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM EST

Simultaneous translation (English and French), ASL, LSQ, CART Captioning, and Zoom captioning are available in several languages

Location: Zoom (link provided upon registration)

AGENDA

Moderators:

Rohini Peris, President & CEO, the Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Robert Lattanzio, LLB, Lawyer & Executive Director, ARCH Disability Law Center

9:05 AM – 9:30 AM

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome and housekeeping remarks, including accessibility accommodations such as simultaneous translation and live captioning, and introduction of conference materials available to the attendees.

This opening segment re-establishes the conference context and prepares participants for a focus on implementation, systems change, and community impact.

Rohini Peris, President & CEO, the Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Michel Gaudet, Executive Director of the Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Robert Lattanzio, LLB, Lawyer & Executive Director, ARCH Disability Law Center

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Sheridan Baker, PhD, publishing specialist with the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (IJERPH), MDPI

Dr. Baker will provide brief remarks on the role of scholarly publishing in advancing environmental public health research, highlighting IJERPH's scope and opportunities for disseminating emerging work in indoor air quality and related fields.

Riina Bray, BASc, MSc, MD, FCFP, MHSc, Medical Director, Environmental Health Clinic, Women's College Hospital, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto

Dr. Riina Bray, a representative of the Environmental Health Clinic at Women's College Hospital expressing support for the conference and its objectives. The presentation highlights the role of clinical leadership in advancing awareness, care, and advocacy for individuals living with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

Opening Remarks

9:30 AM – 9:35 AM

Leslie Church, Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities)

In this capacity, Leslie plays an important role in the federal government's employment, skills and social policy development.

Prior to her election, Leslie held top leadership roles in both the private sector and public service. She practiced law at Torys LLP in Toronto and has worked extensively in public policy, serving on not-for-profit boards and advising governments on topics including higher education and open government. She held a senior role at Google in Canada, where she worked to promote Canada's technology sector and the success of Canadian innovators. She is a graduate of the University of Alberta, the London School of Economics (MSc), and the University of Toronto Faculty of Law (JD).

9:35 AM – 9:45 AM

Daniel Jean, Director General of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) – (The Office for Persons with Disabilities, Quebec)

Prior to assuming this position, he had served on the Office's board of directors since 2016, representing the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity (MESS).

Mr. Jean has been an associate professor at Senghor University since 2006 and a certified corporate director since 2010. He has also been a lecturer at the École nationale de l'administration publique since 2024, teaching various training courses for managers.

Daniel Jean has nearly 40 years of management experience in the community and government sectors. He has been responsible for various programs serving people with disabilities.

Throughout his career in the public service, he has received numerous awards. These awards recognized his exceptional management work. Notably, in 2019, he received the "Misons sur l'excellence" Award from the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity (MESS). He was honored with this award for implementing a new document production process that facilitates the transfer of expertise and the exchange of ideas.

Global Perspectives and Policy Context

9:45 AM – 10:15 AM

Chemicals Risk Assessment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) and the Chemicals Management Plan (CMP)

Nazem El Husseini, PhD Scientific Evaluator, Existing Substances Risk Assessment Bureau (ESRAB), Health Canada

Dr. El Husseini will present on the general process of chemicals risk assessment within the framework of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) and the Chemicals Management Plan (CMP). He will highlight some of the more recent changes to CEPA and will give an overview of the principles of risk assessment, including a focus on the basics of chemical exposure and hazard assessment. In addition, he will describe some examples of how Health Canada has assessed certain chemicals that were associated with respiratory sensitivity, and end with a discussion on possible means of improving the chemical risk assessment process.

10:15 AM – 10:45 AM

Advancing multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) Internationally: A Collective Journey of Inclusion and Progress

This collaborative video highlights key global milestones and developments from 2025 contributed by leaders and experts working in MCS and related fields. Bringing together diverse perspectives from across regions and disciplines, the video showcases collective progress, shared impact, and a continued commitment to international collaboration and inclusion.

10:45 AM – 11:00 AM

International Perspective (Video): Lived Experience, Public Service, and Advancing Recognition in Mexico

Norma Alejandra Quilantán Castañónent, MSc

Norma Alejandra Quilantán Castañón is a public servant with over 27 years of experience in Mexico's electoral system. She holds a degree in Public Relations and a Master's degree in Administration and Public Policy, along with specialized training in Electoral Law and Human Rights.

She currently works at the National Electoral Institute (INE) in Tamaulipas, where she has developed extensive experience in institutional processes and public service.

She is also a contributing writer for *Axis*, the publication of the Electoral Judicial School of the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF), where she addresses topics related to electoral matters, human rights, and institutional challenges.

In addition, she serves as a Human Rights Promoter with the Regional Institute for the Defense of Human Rights and Research (INREDDHHI), focusing on strategic litigation and advocacy.

Through her personal and professional experience, she has become an advocate for raising awareness about the impact of environmental exposures on health, particularly in workplace settings, contributing to the visibility of conditions that remain largely unrecognized in Mexico.

11:00 AM – 11:15 AM: HEALTH BREAK

11:15 AM – 11:45 AM

Legal Frameworks and Access to Justice

Winning multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) Appeals: Lessons from WSIAT Decisions 953/21 & 954/21

Bruce Zevallos, Paralegal at RCR Legal Services Professional Corporation

This presentation examines two key tribunal decisions demonstrating how claims for MCS and related conditions can be recognized, even without definitive diagnostic tests. The presentation highlights the importance of exposure history, timing of symptoms, and medical evidence, and shares practical insights for supporting complex workplace illness claims, along with emerging scientific perspectives.

Environmental Exposure and Risk Reduction

11:45 AM – 12:15 PM

Leveraging Educational Tools to Reduce Chemical Exposures in Indoor Environments

Caroline Barakat, **PhD,** Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Ontario Tech University

Overview of research examining everyday chemical exposures in indoor environments and their potential health impacts, with particular relevance for individuals with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). The presentation summarizes ongoing systematic reviews and the development of evidence-informed educational toolkits designed to support safer consumer choices and reduce exposure. Early findings suggest that accessible educational resources can help improve awareness and encourage modest behaviour changes, with future work focused on developing more inclusive and supportive tools for reducing chemical exposures in daily life.

12:15 PM – 12:45 PM

Why Not multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)? The Chemical Soup of our Modern World

Brenda J. Buck, PhD, Professor of Medical Geology at the University of Nevada Las Vegas

Overview of the widespread presence of natural and human-made chemicals in today's environment, a global "chemical mixture." The session explores key sources of these substances, their large-scale production, how they accumulate in the environment, pathways of human exposure, and knowledge of health impacts, as well as the roles of economic systems, regulations, and legal frameworks in shaping current exposure conditions.

12:45 PM – 1:45 PM: LUNCH BREAK

Clinical Management and Applied Strategies

1:45 PM – 2:30 PM

Nutrition, Food Intolerances, and Symptom Management in Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)

Jennifer Armstrong, MD, Founder and Medical Director at the Ottawa Environmental Health Clinic

Discussion of co-occurring food intolerances in individuals with MCS and their impact on symptom management and quality of life. The presentation explores common dietary triggers, including gluten, and outlines practical approaches such as elimination and rotation diets to support safe and sustainable dietary management.

From Research to Action and Community Impact

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM

From Evidence to Action: Advancing Research, Accessibility, and Community Empowerment in Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)

Bridging science, lived experience, and systems change

Rohini Peris, President & CEO, Environmental Health Association of Canada, and the Environmental Health Association of Québec.

This presentation highlights the Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec's current research initiatives on MCS, including key projects, emerging findings, and forthcoming peer-reviewed publications.

It will examine how this work is being translated into practical tools and resources to support individuals living with MCS, as well as professionals across healthcare, legal, and public service sectors. Particular emphasis will be placed on the development of plain language materials that bridge the gap between scientific evidence and real-world application.

The session will also explore the broader impact of this work in advancing accessibility and inclusion, and will outline upcoming opportunities for community participation, including a national questionnaire and focus groups designed to inform policy, professional training, and service delivery.

This presentation positions research not only as a source of knowledge, but as a foundation for action—empowering communities and shaping more inclusive systems across Canada.

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Civil Society Panel: Advancing Inclusion, Rights, and Systems Change

A multi-sector panel bringing together leaders from disability, health, and community organizations to discuss systemic barriers, opportunities for reform, and pathways toward more inclusive policies and practices.

Rohini Peris, President and CEO of the Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Michel Gaudet, Executive Director, Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Ginger Major, Person with lived experience of MCS

Valerie Leitch, Person with lived experience of MCS

Shelley Petit, Chair of the New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities

Paul-Claude Bérubé, LLB Executive Director of COPHAN, Former president of Accessibility Standards Canada. Lawyer and popularizer, governance specialist, lecturer and professional trainer

Robert Lattanzio, LLB, Lawyer & Executive Director, ARCH Disability Law Center

Anne Lévesque, co-chair of the Council on Canadians with Disability's Disability Justice Litigation Initiative

Bill Adair, Director of Community Development for Accessibrand and former Executive Director at Spinal Cord Injury Canada

Pierre Essoh, Executive Director of the Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS)

Maureen Haan, President and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW).

Jonathan Lai, Executive Director of Autism Alliance of Canada

Julia McEathron, National Coordinator of the Indigenous Disability Canada (IDC) / B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)

Freda Uwa, National Executive Director of Independent Living Canada

4:30 PM – 4:45 PM

Recognition Ceremony

Bill Adair, Director of Community Development for Accessibrand and former Executive Director at Spinal Cord Injury Canada

A leader in disability inclusion, Bill Adair has advanced community development and accessibility initiatives across Canada, with a longstanding commitment to improving quality of life for people with disabilities. He has been a strong and consistent supporter of advancing recognition and inclusion for individuals living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS).

Maureen Haan, President and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.

As President and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW), Maureen Haan leads national efforts to advance employment inclusion and equitable opportunities for people with disabilities. CCRW has taken important steps to include MCS within workplace disability frameworks, and Maureen has been a strong and consistent supporter of advancing recognition and inclusion for individuals living with MCS.

Valerie Leitch is a dedicated advocate with lived experience of MCS, who continues to raise awareness and push for meaningful change despite significant personal health challenges.

Ginger Major has worked tirelessly within institutions and communities to advance recognition, inclusion, and systemic change for individuals living with MCS.

Shelley Petit, Chair of the New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities

Shelley Petit is a passionate disability rights advocate and Chair of the New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, who brings lived experience of MCS and continues to advocate while navigating serious health challenges.

Conclusion

4:45 PM – 5:00 PM

Reflections on Day 2 and closing of RESILIENCE 2026

Robert Lattanzio, LLB, Lawyer & Executive Director, ARCH Disability Law Center

Michel Gaudet, Executive Director, Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

Rohini Peris, President & CEO, Environmental Health Association of Canada and the Environmental Health Association of Québec

— End of Day 2 —