

East Coast Environmental Law Association
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SENT VIA EMAIL
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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2 justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6 ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca

March 15, 2021

Dear Prime Minister and Minister Wilkinson,

Re: Bill C-230: An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism

East Coast Environmental Law is a regional environmental law charity based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, that provides public-interest environmental law services throughout Atlantic Canada. Our mission is to promote the development and fair application of innovative and effective environmental laws, and we engage actively in federal and provincial efforts to create more responsive and progressive environmental law and policy regimes.

We are writing to you today to request that you support the passage of Bill C-230, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism. As a Private Member's Bill tabled by NDP Member of Parliament Lenore Zann, the Bill is unlikely to pass without strong support from Cabinet and Liberal Party MPs.

Bill C-230 is a worthy, non-partisan initiative that deserves all-party support. Throughout Canada, Indigenous and racialized communities suffer disproportionately heavy burdens of environmental harms. Environmentally hazardous sites such as landfills and polluting industries are situated in or near Indigenous and racialized communities more frequently than in white communities, and our existing environmental protection and impact assessment regimes fail to recognize and prevent this environmental racism.

Research by social scientists, health professionals, community advocates, and others throughout Canada makes it clear that systemic environmental racism has shaped this country's settlement and industrial and economic development for generations. In Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities are disproportionately burdened by the effects of environmentally hazardous sites, and we know that the patterns visible here are visible throughout all of Canada. We fear that such patterns will continue unless the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments across the country take action to end them now.

The passage of Bill C-230 would send a powerful message that environmental racism will no longer be tolerated in Canada. The Government of Canada has repeatedly committed to seeking reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in this country and has publicly supported anti-racist social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter. To have meaning, these public commitments and gestures must be accompanied by determined actions to make change.

Please act collaboratively to pass Bill C-230 and commit the Government of Canada to preparing a national strategy to redress environmental racism.

Sincerely,



Lisa Mitchell
Executive Director & Senior Lawyer



Mike Kofahl
Staff Lawyer



Kostantina Northrup
Staff Lawyer