



April 23, 2021

Members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Sent via email: ENVI@parl.gc.ca

Dear Members of the Committee,

Re: Submission on Bill C-230

Please consider this letter Nature Canada's submission to the committee highlighting the importance of passing Bill C-230: *An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism* without delay.

Nature Canada is one of the country's oldest conservation charities, representing 100,000 members and supporters and over 900 local nature groups across Canada. We are a leading advocacy organization focused on protecting nature on land and in the ocean, while using nature-based solutions to fight climate change, and working to connect Canadians to nature. Nature Canada is committed to anti-racism and the promotion of racial justice and equality for Indigenous, Black and other racialized peoples. We see achieving racial justice and equality rights as both an ethical imperative and critical for the well-being of nature.

A key component of this is addressing environmental racism in Canada, by which environmental hazards disproportionately impact Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities as well as the systemic discrimination and barriers to these communities in political institutions and decision-making, which constrains their power to fight back or drive more equitable outcomes.

Communities like Grassy Narrows First Nation, Shelburne and Lincolnville in Nova Scotia, and the Chemical Valleys of Ontario and British Columbia, for example, face disproportionate rates of cancer, reproductive diseases, respiratory issues, and other health problems from toxic exposures.¹ These are exposures that would not have been tolerated or allowed to persist in

¹ Bullard, 2002; Fryzk, 1996, Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008; Waldron, 2018

white or affluent communities in Canada. This harm is the result of systemic racism and policy failure, which is incumbent upon elected officials to rectify.

It is critical that the government, and all political parties in Canada, acknowledge the impact environmental racism has had on racialized communities and take meaningful steps to redress these harms.

Bill C-230 would give a legislative mandate for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to develop a strategy on environmental racism, and require the Minister to regularly report. Developing a national strategy is an important step in acknowledging the problem and beginning to redress environmental racism.

Bill C-230 aligns with the government's commitment to tackling system racism and the proposal to recognize the right to a healthy environment in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA) in Bill C-28. Bill C-230, provides the important opportunity to extend beyond CEPA's recognition of this right to examine environmental racism more broadly, and develop a proactive national strategy to redress the harms that includes regular reporting.

Passing Bill C-230 would make history as Canada's first bill to redress environmental racism. Making this bill law would be a tangible first step on the path to reconciling the harms communities have experienced from toxic pollution and environmental hazards. This is an opportunity for all parties to lead and take meaningful action on environmental justice.

Nature Canada urges the members of the committee to pass Bill C-230 without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gauri Sreenivasan", is centered on a light blue background.

Gauri Sreenivasan

Director of Policy and Campaigns