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# EPIC

# electromagnetic pollution illnesses Canada foundation

October 25, 2018

**To**: Bryan May, Chair Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), Email: Bryan.May@parl.gc.ca;

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), Email: HUMA@parl.gc.ca;

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Email: Carla.Qualtrough@parl.gc.ca

**Subject: BILL C-81**

**An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada. Inclusion of electromagnetic (hyper)sensitivity (EHS) considerations in the legislation.**

Dear Committee Chair MP May, Minister Qualtrough, Members of the Committee,

I would like to thank both Minister Qualtrough for being Sponsor of this Bill and the Committee for this opportunity to submit a brief in support of modern legislation important for inclusive accessibility in Canada. Also, I appreciate the directional change in the wording to “Accessibility” for the name of the Minister’s portfolio.

On behalf of EPIC, I would be pleased to accept an invitation, if offered, to appear before the HUMA Committee.

I also would like to have the opportunity to provide input on the subject of “episodic disabilities,” a motion passed at HUMA Meeting 113 (October 4, 2018). Further information on how to go about doing that would be appreciated.

Electromagnetic Pollution Illnesses Canada Foundation (EPIC) makes three recommendations on page two.

Generally, in Canada, persons who are mildly, moderately, or severely disabled by electromagnetic injury face discrimination, marginalization, and impaired quality of life--very often, one or more of those are severe. Plus, it is not unusual that individuals disabled by electromagnetic (hyper)sensitivities (EHS) are involuntarily subjected to inhumane and/or unsafe degrees of isolation in order to survive day-to-day.

Although in recent years there have seemed to be a few glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel--such as the Recommendations brought in 2015 and 2016 by Parliament’s HESA

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Committee--most persons who know the experience of EHS still see the train headed towards them, not away, and picking up speed. Struggling to halt a speeding train, especially when already disabled and ill, is more than a significant barrier; the person is derailed, not the train.

EHS disability is an excellent example of why such legislation as this Bill proposes, along with various individuals’ and organizations’ recommendations for improving the Bill, is so vital for everyone in Canada, so that barriers to inclusivity and accessibility--including attitudinal barriers--are understood and actively reduced, removed, avoided, and prevented.

Recommendation 1

**EPIC recommends the Committee support and adopt recommendations expressed in submissions by these organizations:**

- **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Alliance (AODAA)**

- **Canadians For Safe Technology (C4ST)**

- **Barrier-Free Canada**

**insofar as there can always be ways to ongoing appropriately accommodate any persons’ needs (or combination of needs), as well as the need for ongoing awareness, cooperation, insights, and innovations**. You have already read and heard many briefs and witnesses, and we support the many salient points and recommendations expressed by them to improve the Bill. [The above list does not at all intend disregard of the contents of others’ submissions.]

Recommendation 2

In further support of aspects in all submitters’ expressed recommendations, I would take this moment to respectfully **recommend this reminder to everyone along the path this legislation will take: the *full* name of the proposed *Act* is “An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada.”** [It is not “An Act to discuss a barrier-free Canada.”]

Recommendation 3

**EPIC recommends that a member of our Accommodation & Accessibility Working Group be invited by the Government of Canada to inform various discussions and stages of the legislation development process so that the process will adequately anticipate and resolve an extraordinary type of gap with which EPIC has extensive current experience**. We hope any and all stakeholders will contact us to make that happen. Our experience is that in Canada there is a high incidence of disability due to electromagnetic (hyper)sensitivity (EHS) and other illness/injury related to electromagnetic fields. That fact is not well known by manufacturers, service providers, workplaces and other venues, caregivers, essential services providers, government officials/staff, citizens, etc. Certainly, it is evident that this legislation must be robust--for those it serves, those required to adhere to it, and regulators/enforcers. Although many other disabilities are ‘invisible’ or not well understood, many do not experience this extraordinary gap: in our modern era, for most other disabilities whether or not barrier-free access is achieved, the norm is usually at least the existence of an expressed desire (whether or not sincere) to provide those persons with barrier-free access; whereas that is not at all the norm regarding EHS disability. Instead, regarding EHS the usual norm is the existence of a tendency for others to express disregard, or contempt, for both needs and known reasonable solutions (even in situations where there would be literally zero cost nor other imposition on other persons or a venue)!

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As a volunteer-based not-for-profit organization, Electromagnetic Pollution Illnesses Canada Foundation (EPIC) provides support and services to persons affected by electromagnetic pollution, provides information to the public about electromagnetic pollution and its impacts on health and wellbeing, and promotes the creation of healthy environments.

Thank you for considering much needed progress for Canada and Canadians regarding this issue. We welcome your questions and ideas.

Sincerely,

Barbara Payne

President

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