

# Public comment process on assessment documents

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Fact sheet series: Topics in risk assessment of substances under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA)

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## The public comment process

Assessments of chemical substances already in commerce in Canada are conducted under section 68 of CEPA, or through reviews of decisions of other jurisdictions under section 75 of CEPA. Following these assessments, a summary of the scientific considerations and the proposed measure are published in the *Canada Gazette* for a 60-day public comment period. The full assessments are also made available for public comment on the Chemical Substances website. Summaries of other assessment-related documents, including state of the science reports and science approach documents, may also be published in the *Canada Gazette* and may have a 60-day public comment period.

As a result of amendments made to CEPA in June 2023, there are also new obligations concerning certain living organisms. For instance, [public consultation](#) is now mandatory for all New Substances Notifications concerning a vertebrate animal or a prescribed living organism or group of living organisms before the end of the assessment period. When mandatory consultation requirements do not apply, the New Substances Program encourages the notifiers of higher organisms to participate voluntarily in the public consultation.

## The importance of public comments

The public comment period is an important step in the assessment process as it is the opportunity for interested parties to provide feedback on the assessment. Any person may indicate what they think was done well or provide constructive feedback so that the assessment can be strengthened from a scientific or communication perspective. Comments may be provided that identify any inaccuracy in the hazard or exposure

information or that provide input on whether the approaches used and conclusions proposed are considered appropriate. The public comment period is also a critical point in the process to provide new and relevant information that may not have been considered in the draft assessment.

Health Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada carefully review all comments and information received, and changes are made to the assessment during its finalization, as appropriate. For example, if additional environmental monitoring or [human biomonitoring](#) information is provided during the public comment period for a draft assessment, this may inform exposure estimates. This may result in replacing conservative assumptions used in the absence of data. This additional information, for example, could reduce the number of exposure scenarios of concern, or conversely lead to the addition of new scenarios.

## Types of public comments

Comments can span a range of issues related to the assessment, and they can be general or technical in nature. During the 60-day public comment period, any person may self-identify as wishing to be further consulted and engaged and submit any kind of information that is relevant to the substances included and assessed in the risk assessments. Some general comments may include:

- If there is additional or key information that was not included in the assessment that may have an impact on the conclusion
- Whether or not the assessment aligns or doesn't align with decisions made by other international jurisdictions
- Concern about a substance, its potential effects, and whether its use might increase in the future

More technical comments may consider whether:

- Subpopulations who may have greater susceptibility or greater exposure were appropriately identified
- Key sources of exposure and hazard studies were included
- Critical uncertainties were identified
- The risk characterization and possible risk management are appropriate

Providing comments on assessment documents for existing substances that are posted for public comment is done by citing the *Canada Gazette*, Part I, the date of publication of the notice, and sending the submission:

- by email to: [substances@ec.gc.ca](mailto:substances@ec.gc.ca)
- by mail to: Executive Director, Substance Prioritization, Assessment and Coordination Division, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3

Comments may also be submitted to the Minister of the Environment, using the online reporting system available through [Environment and Climate Change Canada's Single Window](#).

## **Publication of public comments and responses**

Once comments are received, they are organized and consolidated. Comments are summarized and responses are prepared in clear, concise, and non-technical language, prior to publication online.

Comments are not directly attributed to the individual that submitted them; however, a list of the stakeholder groups/organizations is typically provided with the summary of public comments and responses. If data or details on studies were submitted, Health Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada acknowledge that the data were provided and that they were considered in finalizing the assessment.

The summary of public comments and responses is published online, simultaneously with the final assessment.