



MEDIA RELEASE

June 17, 2014

Launch of the Public Engagement Phase for a Bill of Rights Supporting Children's Environmental Health

FREDERICTON: A ground-breaking initiative is underway in New Brunswick to enhance protections to young children from pollutants and environmental hazards. The idea was spawned by the New Brunswick Children's Environmental Health Collaborative, and has attracted an international celebrity Champion to help spread the word. Bonnie Hamilton Bogart of the Collaborative said, "We are so pleased to have Raffi here to help us celebrate the launch of this Draft Proposed Bill of Rights Supporting Children's Environmental Health. He has been our Champion and a major source of inspiration over these past few years as we worked on this project." Sharon Murphy, also of the Collaborative, added, "Raffi appreciates the significance of this effort – this being the first initiative in Canada to step up to protect children's health from environmental hazards."



The official launch, hosted June 17 by the Fredericton Regional Family Resource Centre, will see supporters gathering to celebrate what they hope to be an historic day. Parents and children of the Resource Centre, as well as people from organizations and government agencies will join in the festivities. Raffi Cavoukian, founder of the Centre for Child Honouring, will speak on the significance of the proposed legislation, linking it to the fundamental principles of child honouring. Gavin Kotze, of the Office of NB Child and Youth Advocate will introduce the Bill, explaining the involvement of key Canadian legal organizations Ecojustice and East Coast Environmental Law in the Bill's development.

"We at The Fredericton Regional Family Resource Centre are excited and honoured to be hosting such an important event and we are ecstatic that Raffi will be joining us. We

believe that children are first and foremost and everything that we do is to strive to make their lives and world better. During the event the children will entertain with a skit, songs and dance. We have children and families from the Resources Centre participating, as well as choir ensembles from the Lintuhtine Choir and Team Kids a group of local children directed by Sharon Murphy," commented Carla Hitchcock, Executive Director of the Centre.

This event marks the beginning of the road toward enactment of the legislation. After the launch today, the Draft Bill will be circulated widely both within the Province and beyond to gather supporters. The New Brunswick Environmental Network (umbrella organization for the Collaborative) has developed a website and a Facebook page in both official languages, to provide an opportunity for people to show their support for the draft Bill of Rights (www.nben.ca). In the fall, post-provincial election, the Children's Environmental Health Collaborative will take the Draft Bill with all its endorsements to the provincial government, requesting enactment.

Hamilton Bogart explained the need of such legislation. "People in New Brunswick are seeing a need for our children to have additional protection to ensure that the environments where they live, learn, play and grow are as healthy as possible. Children are *far* more vulnerable than adults to harm from environmental hazards. Research continues to highlight children's increased vulnerabilities. Exposures can occur both indoors and outdoors and may occur via air, water, soil, food and common consumer products. All of this means that we as a society have to step up to protect children's health from environmental hazards, and make sure they have healthy indoor and outdoor environments".

The evidence is strong and growing that prenatal and / or childhood exposures to environmental hazards are important causes of these chronic diseases in children: asthma, birth defects, brain disorders (including dyslexia, cognitive impairments, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and learning disabilities), leukemia, brain cancer and childhood obesity. These chronic diseases in children are on the rise, and are costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year, in Canada and in countries around the world.

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