

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### **Evaluating the Reliability and Acceptability of Non-polymeric Poly- and Perfluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFAS) Ecotoxicity Data for Aquatic and Terrestrial Species**

**Contaminated Sites Working Group and Water Guidelines Working Group  
Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment**

#### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) is the primary minister-led federal, provincial and territorial intergovernmental forum for action on environmental issues of national and international concern. The 14 member governments work as partners in developing consistent environmental standards and practices.

CCME's Contaminated Sites Working Group (CSWG) and Water Guidelines Working Group (WGWG) develop Canadian Environmental Quality Guidelines (CEQGs) for substances of concern in various media including water and soil. An emerging class of substances of concern is non-polymeric poly- and perfluorinated alkyl substances (hereafter "PFAS") that are highly persistent, ubiquitous anthropogenic chemicals that are widely used and which can be mobile in the environment and/or bioaccumulative. There are over 4,000 individual chemicals in this class. In addition, PFAS can be found in all media as complex mixtures where all individual PFAS are expected to contribute to the overall toxicity of the PFAS mixture.

CSWG and WGWG struck a collaborative PFAS Scoping Project Team (hereafter "the CCME Project Team") to determine an approach for CEQG development to address this large and broad class of chemicals in various media, including soil and water. A critical aspect of this is the analysis of available high-quality ecotoxicity data for PFAS on aquatic and terrestrial species. A literature search was conducted by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) in early 2025 to identify all publicly available ecotoxicity data for apical endpoints in aquatic (fish, amphibians, invertebrates and plants/algae) and soil (invertebrates, plants) organisms. This project builds on ECCC's literature search and will result in an evaluation of the reliability and acceptability of these studies for inclusion in future analyses to help inform a CCME approach to PFAS.

#### **2.0 STATEMENT OF WORK**

The Contractor will evaluate the quality and acceptability of 133 terrestrial and aquatic PFAS ecotoxicity studies and update and correct, as needed, the provided study information spreadsheet.

### 3.0 SCOPE OF WORK

The project will commence no later than June 9, 2026 and will be completed by November 30, 2026.

The Contractor must have expertise in environmental toxicology. The following will be considered assets:

- experience in doing quality evaluations of scientific studies
- knowledge or experience in guideline development.

All deliverables will be provided in English unless specified otherwise and will be written and structured in a clear, concise and user-friendly manner. Information will be presented in a consistent format. The primary audience for the deliverables will be technical experts and guideline developers within federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Draft deliverables will be prepared and submitted with the same content and quality as if they were final, including grammar, tone, logical process flow, proper citations, consistency and technical contents.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be used as part of this contract for the purpose of extracting and compiling basic information from studies. Any results from the use of AI must be confirmed for accuracy by the Contractor. The Contractor is responsible for the final conclusion on study acceptability. Special attention must be given to verifying toxicity endpoints.

If AI will be used, this must be described in the bidder's proposal and the description must include information on:

- what AI tools are proposed for potential use, and for what tasks
- how the bidder will ensure confidentiality and data security requirements are met
- quality assurance and quality control plans.

Robust study summary (RSS) forms, which include a comprehensive set of standard questions and will be used to ensure consistent and uniform evaluation, will be provided to interested bidders upon request.

### 3.1 Tasks

Without limiting the scope of work, the Contractor shall carry out the main items of work as described herein.

#### Task 1: Project Initiation Meeting

The Contractor, Project Authority and Contract Authority will meet via videoconference within a week of the signing of the contract to discuss and agree upon the scope of the project, expectations for deliverables and periodic reports, format of deliverables and expected timelines, as well as the AI approach for this contract, if applicable. The Project Authority will provide an overview of the

RSS forms and quality criteria to meet CCME requirements for study acceptability and will identify two example studies to evaluate using the RSS form in Task 2. The meeting will include discussion about expectations regarding the review and confirmation of values in the study information spreadsheet and updating of information.

In advance of the project initiation meeting, the Contract Authority will provide the Contractor with (1) the study information spreadsheet summarizing data from previously gathered aquatic and terrestrial ecotoxicity studies, including copies of the references and/or hyperlinks to the studies; (2) blank RSS forms (also available to interested bidders upon request), which will be used in Tasks 2, 3 and 6; (3) copies or links to the studies to be examined in this contract; and (4) summaries of the studies in a study information spreadsheet.

### Task 2: Example studies

Study evaluation will be carried out using RSS forms, which are a comprehensive set of standard questions to ensure a consistent and uniform evaluation of study quality and acceptability.

The Contractor will submit filled RSS forms for the two example studies provided in Task 1 to the Project Authority and Contract Authority within two business days of the project initiation meeting. The Project Authority will review the two RSS forms and provide feedback within one business day of receipt.

### Task 3: Draft RSS forms

The Contractor will provide the Project Authority and Contract Authority with draft RSS forms completed for CCME Project Team review according to the following schedule:

- Initial 10 studies by July 3, 2026; to be reviewed by Project Authority only; the Project Authority will provide comments by July 10, 2026
- 55 additional studies by August 19, 2026; the Project Authority will provide CCME Project Team comments by September 2, 2026
- remaining studies by October 14, 2026; the Project Authority will provide CCME Project Team comments by October 28, 2026.

The Contractor will incorporate CCME Project Team comments and provide revised draft RSS forms to the Project Authority and Contract Authority within 10 business days of receiving CCME Project Team comments.

### Task 4: Draft evaluation and update of study information spreadsheet

The Contractor will update and correct, as needed, the study information in the provided study information spreadsheet with information obtained from the studies. This may include, for example, adding information on the taxonomic grouping of the test organism, information on the test media or study parameters, and final acceptability ranking.

The Contractor will provide the Project Authority and Contract Authority with a draft updated study information spreadsheet for CCME Project Team review according to the following schedule:

- 65 studies by August 19, 2026
- Remaining studies by October 14, 2026.

The Project Authority will provide CCME Project Team comments on the draft updated study information spreadsheet within 10 business days of submission by the Contractor (i.e., September 2 and October 28, 2026). The Contractor will incorporate CCME Project Team comments and provide revised draft versions to the Project Authority and Contract Authority within 10 business days of receiving CCME Project Team comments.

#### Task 5: Mid-contract check-in

The Contractor, Project Authority and Contract Authority will meet no later than September 3, 2026, to discuss successes, challenges and opportunities for improvement.

#### Task 6: Final Products.

The Contractor will provide the Project Authority and Contract Authority with a final version of the study information spreadsheet, final versions of all RSS forms, and a report summarizing any use of AI ( if applicable), by November 19, 2026.

#### Task 7: Project Close Meeting

The Contractor, Project Authority and Contract Authority will meet by November 30, 2026 to review the project to identify successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

### **3.2 Payment and Deliverables**

Payments will be based upon the Contractor's completion of tasks and as evidenced by the production of the specified deliverables listed below. Payments will be made only after receipt of such deliverables and acceptance thereof by the Project Authority and the Contract Authority. Except as otherwise specifically provided for herein or in the professional services contract entered into with CCME, CCME will not be required to pay for partially completed tasks or for any additional work that may be required that the Contractor may not have budgeted for in its proposal. CCME shall not be committed to any other basis of payment by virtue of CCME having requested or received information regarding the Contractor's method of determining its bid for the completion of the Project, including, without limitation, any information regarding estimates of time spent and hourly rates of the Contractor's employees, contractors and agents involved in the Project.

Payment will be made by CCME via electronic funds transfer (TelPay is CCME’s current provider) to the Contractor according to the following schedule, subject to the deliverables listed below having been received and accepted by the Project Authority and the Contract Authority, and invoices having been submitted by the Contractor, and approved by the Project Authority and the Contract Authority. The Contractor will provide all necessary information to enable electronic funds transfers before initiating work on the project. If the electronic payment information provided by the contractor is incorrect and results in a returned payment, the Contractor will be responsible for reimbursing CCME for the service fees charged by CCME’s electronic funds transfer provider.

<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Payment Amount</b> (% of contract value, inclusive of all applicable taxes)	<b>Target Date</b>
Project initiation meeting (Task 1), complete and revise 65 draft RSS forms (Tasks 2 & 3), update 65 study information spreadsheet (Task 4), and mid-contract check-in (Task 5).	40%	September 3, 2026
Complete and revise RSS forms (Task 3), update of study information spreadsheet for remaining PFAS studies (Task 4), completion of all final deliverables (Task 6), and project close meeting (Task 7).	60%	November 30, 2026

The Contractor agrees to initiate work on the project by June 9, 2026.

The Contractor must provide all deliverables in electronic format to the Project Authority and Contract Authority no later than the dates specified above. All records, including but not limited to documents, reports, briefing notes and correspondence, generated by the contractor during the course of this project must be prepared and provided in English using *Microsoft Word* for word processing, *Microsoft Excel* for data management, and *Microsoft PowerPoint* for presentations and other graphics.

All deliverables are the property of CCME and CCME reserves the right to publish them. The copyright in all materials produced as a product of the services shall belong exclusively to CCME. The Contractor shall waive all moral rights to all materials produced as a product of the services. The Contractor must advise the Project Authority of any information provided by a third party on a confidential basis for the purpose of the study and is to transmit the original documents containing any such information to the Contract Authority and Project Authority under separate cover.

All discussion papers, reports and correspondence produced by the Contractor are subject to review by people designated by the Project Authority. The Contractor must perform all work to the satisfaction of the Project Authority and the CCME Project Team.

Sufficient flexibility is required of the Contractor to respond to changing schedules and developments.

### 3.3 Budget

The maximum budget for this project is \$36,000 Canadian, inclusive of all fees, expenses and applicable taxes; proposals in excess of the maximum budget will not be considered. Proposed professional fees must be inclusive of all office and administrative costs. Project-specific expenses such as travel costs, where required, must be estimated and included in the total estimated cost of the project. These project-specific expenses may be billed on an “as incurred” (or monthly) basis and payment will be made after written confirmation from the Project Authority that the expenses were authorized and approved. The Contractor must supply reasonable and adequate documentation to support the expense claims. Travel-related expenses must follow *CCME Guidelines for Reimbursement of Expenses*.

Bidders from HST jurisdictions are advised that CCME’s office is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba and accordingly only GST should be applied.

## 4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 The proposal shall not exceed a maximum of 10 pages in length, excluding appendices. The proposal must:

- Provide an outline of the intended approach including basic tasks, schedule of activities, and budget.
- Describe the personnel of the contract team, areas of responsibility, time allotted and charge out rates.
- Document contingent procedures and personnel to be used if key team members become unavailable.
- Provide a brief description of any similar projects undertaken. Include the timeframe that the work was undertaken and key individuals involved in its completion.
- Include the names and contact information of three references.
- Include as an appendix *curricula vitae* and contact information of key team members.
- Include as an appendix:
  - the bidder’s legal name and mailing address
  - the name and contact information of the bidder’s authorized signing officer
  - the name and contact information for the bidder’s administrator of the contract if different from the signing officer
  - the bidder’s GST registration number or if exempt, proof of exempt status.

4.2 Personal information requested above is required to enable CCME to evaluate the proposal. All individuals noted in the proposal should be advised of and approve the release of personal information for the purpose of the proposal and the bidder is responsible for obtaining such approval.

**4.3** The Contractor shall not, without written consent of CCME, subcontract any obligation of the Contractor.

## **5.0 CONDITIONS**

**5.1** CCME reserves the right in its sole discretion to consider or reject any and all proposals. CCME reserves the further right to extend the deadline for proposals and to add, delete and/or change the terms of this Request for Proposals (RFP) and issue corrections and amendments to it. CCME has made every effort to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the information contained in this RFP. CCME shall not be liable for any errors or omissions or responsible for any bidder interpretations or conclusions regarding the information contained in this RFP. Contractors who submit proposals will not acquire any legal or equitable rights or privileges whatsoever until a contract is signed with CCME. CCME will not pay any compensation for the preparation of the proposal and all proposals become the property of CCME.

**5.2** The successful bidder is required to agree to a professional services contract with CCME. A sample CCME professional services contract is posted with this RFP. Bidders must identify in their proposals any changes requested to CCME's sample professional services contract and CCME reserves the right in its sole discretion to consider, accept, reject or amend such requested changes. CCME further reserves the right to revoke any offer to enter into a professional services contract. As part of a commitment to environmentally-sound business practice, it is CCME's practice to prepare, sign and transmit contracts electronically.

### **5.3 Proposal Deadline**

The Contract Authority must receive proposals no later than 12:00 noon Central Daylight Time, May 19, 2026; proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. The time stamp on CCME's email server shall be deemed to be conclusive evidence of time of receipt.

### **5.4 Method of Submission**

Bidders must submit proposals by email to the Contract Authority in an unsecured electronic format, file size to be no larger than 5.0 MB, compatible with *Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat*.

### **5.5 Ineligible Bidders**

The following organizations and individuals, and organizations proposing such individuals as part of a contract team, are ineligible to bid on this project:

- 5.5.1 Federal, provincial and territorial governments and all their departments and ministries and Crown corporations, boards, commissions and agencies and any officials and employees of them.
- 5.5.2 Members of the House of Commons and provincial and territorial legislative assemblies.

- 5.5.3 Persons providing administrative and related services to the CCME group responsible for the project.
- 5.5.4 Members and participants of CCME committees and groups, and for a period of six months after such membership ends.

## 6.0 CONTACTS

Prospective bidders should direct questions to the Contract Authority.

### 6.1 Contract Authority

Megan Krohn  
Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment  
123 Main Street, Suite 360  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1A3  
Tel: (204) 793-6373  
Email: mkrohn@ccme.ca

### 6.2 Project Authority

Janet Cermak  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
351 St. Joseph Boulevard, Gatineau, QC, K1A 0H3  
Tel: (819) 805-5124  
Email: janet.cermak@ec.gc.ca

## 7.0 PROPOSAL EVALUATION

All assessments and weighting of criteria is at the sole discretion of CCME. The CCME Project Team will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

### Technical and Management Proposal Evaluation Criteria

<b>TECHNICAL PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Score</b>
Demonstrated understanding of the project scope and objectives	10
Technical approach and methodology to meet project objectives, including information on how and where artificial intelligence will be used, managed, quality assurance and quality control processes, previous experience	10
Work plan feasibility and organization	10
Recognition of possible problems, proposed solutions and additional innovative suggestions	10

<b>MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL</b>	
Experience and qualifications of Program/Project Manager	10
Experience and qualifications of contract team members, and alternate team members in case of unforeseen availability:	20
(a) qualifications of team members	
(b) depth and breadth of the team’s experience	
(c) depth and breadth of individual team members experience in similar assignments	
Experience of organization in similar assignments	10
Value for money	10
<b>COMPLETENESS OF PROPOSAL</b>	
All information described in section 4.1 has been provided	10

**8.0 AWARD OF CONTRACT**

The CCME Project Team will determine award of the contract by June 5, 2026. The lowest or any bid will not necessarily be accepted.

Upon award, the work must proceed on a timely basis as outlined in the table of deliverables. The successful proponent must not commence work until a contract is in place.

Contractors can view the status of this project on the CCME website, [www.ccme.ca](http://www.ccme.ca), on the What’s New page.