The International EMF Project

14th International Advisory Committee Meeting
11-12 June 2009, Geneva, Switzerland
Report on National Activities

Canada

1. Research Activities

Health Canada

- Health Canada carries out internally-funded studies to assess the biological effects of power-frequency (60 Hz) fields and radiofrequency (RF) fields at 1.9 GHz (North American PCS frequency). In the area of exposure assessment, Health Canada is carrying out laboratory tests on the most common brands of compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) to acquire technical data on electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) and UV emissions from them. The data will be used for risk assessment of exposure to EMF and UV emissions in response to media reports that radiation from some CFL bulbs may contribute to “dirty electricity” and cause such health problems as headaches, fatigue, dizziness, eyestrain, nausea and skin irritations. For more information, contact Dr. Art Thansandote at art_thansandote@hc-sc.gc.ca.

University of Ottawa

- University of Ottawa has been collaborating with the International Agency for Research on Cancer on the large-scale epidemiological study on mobile phones (Interphone study). For more information, contact Dr. Daniel Krewski at dkrewski@uottawa.ca.

University of Western Ontario

University of Western Ontario has carried out research in the area of behavioral and biological exposure to magnetic fields and has recently established a centre for bioelectromagnetics research. For more information, contact Dr. Frank Prato at frank.prato@lawsonimaging.ca.

Recent publications in the EMF-health area by scientists at the above organizations:


2. Standards

There have been no new national policies and legislations regarding EMF exposure for the past 12 months.

At the municipal level, the City of Toronto has recommended that a prudent avoidance policy be adopted for siting of telecommunication towers and antennas. Additional information is available at www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-8919.pdf. However, the legislative authority to regulate the siting and installation of telecommunication towers and antennas is a matter of federal jurisdiction, and Industry Canada is the federal agency responsible for regulating these devices. The applicable regulation is known as CPC-2-0-03 - Radiocommunication and Broadcasting Antenna Systems, which is available on the Industry Canada website at www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/smt-gst.nsf/en/sf08777e.html.

3. Public Information

Public information in the area of EMFs and health has recently been updated on the Health Canada website:


There are two pending updates which should appear on the Health Canada website soon:

1. Health Canada public information on the safety of compact fluorescent lamps.

2. Federal-Provincial-Territorial Radiation Protection Committee – Canada Response statement to public concerns regarding electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) from electrical power transmission and distribution lines.

4. Public Concerns

Possible health risks from exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) in living and school environments, arising from electrical power lines and cellular base stations (cell towers) located nearby, continue to be an issue of public concerns in Canada. These concerns appear to arise from periodic media reports and dubious Internet websites which contain inaccurate, unsubstantiated, controversial or contradictory statements regarding EMF-health issues. Also, several outspoken advocates are demanding the application of precautionary measures to EMF exposure. In this regard, the BioInitiative Report and news
articles on the Internet (e.g. Next-up news) are often cited by concerned individuals. The concerns result in widespread public opposition to the proposed construction of high-voltage power lines and cellular base stations. Opposition to such proposals is often influenced by factors other than health issues (e.g. aesthetics and property devaluation).

The most frequent public inquiries are still focused on cell base stations and Wi-Fi. For issues on power lines and ELF fields, the number of inquiries is higher in the spring when more people consider purchasing new homes/properties, some of which are near high voltage transmission lines. These inquiries have originated from several communities across Canada and many of the inquiries were submitted as environmental petitions to the Office of Auditor General of Canada (OAG). Official replies from responsible government departments are then posted on the OAG website. Recent environmental petitions and government responses include the following:

1. Electromagnetic sensitivity (Petition No. 260)

2. Health impact of electromagnetic radiation from telecommunication towers located in close proximity to residential areas (Petition No. 255)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_255_e_31626.html

3. Potential impact on human health of electromagnetic radiation emanating from telecommunication towers on Triangle Mountain, British Columbia ((Petition No. 255B)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_255B_e_32184.html

4. Health concerns related to the construction of a high-voltage power line in Tsawwassen, British Columbia (Petition No. 259)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_259_e_31670.html

5. Environmental and human health effects of compact fluorescent light bulbs (Petition No. 254)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_254_e_31427.html

6. Potential adverse health effects from phones using Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications (Petition No. 253)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_253_e_31629.html

7. Environmental health issues related to a hydroelectric transmission project in Tsawwassen, British Columbia (Petition No. 252)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_252_e_31430.html

8. Environmental health impact of electromagnetic radiation (Petition No. 247)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_247_e_31424.html

9. Follow-up petition on the health risks posed by electromagnetic radiation (Petition No. 235B)
   www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_235B_e_31627.html

10. Health risks posed by electromagnetic radiation exposure from cellular towers (Petition No. 235)
    www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/pet_235_e_30191.html

Compiled by Art Thansandote
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