



Aug 02, 2008

## Ottawa linked to cellphone lobbyists

**Government, business liaisons raise questions on who influences Ottawa on cellphone safety, and how**

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Two senior government officials involved in determining safety standards for cellphone use sit on the health committee of a powerful group that lobbies the federal government on behalf of the telecommunications industry. A spokesperson for Industry Canada – which, with Health Canada, is represented on the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA) committee – says the government official is there to act as a liaison. But such liaisons, coupled with the power of a telecommunications industry whose operating profits topped \$1 billion in Canada for the first time in 2006, raise questions about who influences Ottawa on cellphone safety, and how.

The jury is out on the issue of cellphone safety. The long-standing debate is reflected in recent statements by both health agencies and various governments.

In early July, Toronto Public Health recommended parents limit their children's cellphone use. While there is little research on the health impact on children and teens, the report cited two 2007 studies showing an "association" between adult users of cellphones over 10 years and two forms of brain tumours.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty agreed children should be limited in their cellphone use until research can establish their safety.

Also in July, U.S. cancer specialist Dr. Robert B. Herberman advised his staff to limit time on cellphones. Precautionary policies already have been introduced in France, Russia, Britain and Germany, among other countries.

But Health Canada reiterated the position posted on its website in 2006 that there is no evidence to suggest health concerns for cellphone users.

Robert Bradley, director of Health Canada's consumer and clinical radiation protection bureau – and a member of the CWTA health committee – says his team has found nothing in their own research or in the scientific work of their peers to indicate cellphones are unsafe. Bradley's group provides research used in the publication of standards by Industry Canada.

"I am comfortable and very confident with the advice we provide the regulators," he said in an interview from Ottawa. The 150-member CWTA is one of Ottawa's most influential lobby groups, with heavy hitters from Research in Motion (RIM) to the Canadian headquarters of Sony, Nokia, Sanyo, Motorola and Samsung. It shares Health Canada's position on the issue of cellphone safety.



COLIN O'CONNOR/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

A woman chats on her cell phone near Dundas Square in downtown Toronto, July 11, 2008. Globalive Communications Corp. hopes to build a subscriber base of 3.5 million wireless users across Canada.

Marc Choma, director of communications for the CWTA, says there is no evidence cellphones are unsafe. Asked about the Toronto Public Health report, he said: "We have to make it clear to people these precautionary approaches are not using new scientific evidence that there is a risk ... and they are a little alarmist in nature."

He said the Toronto Public Health report was closely examined by the CWTA health committee, known as the health council, headed by Motorola and composed of 10 industry representatives and the two federal officials.

Dr. David McKeown, Toronto medical officer of health who oversaw the study, won't comment on the position of Health Canada or the CWTA. However, he stressed: "In respect to our (report) we did not involve industry representatives in reviewing the evidence. We choose to look at scientific evidence and review the evidence of others. ... We urge people to be cautious."

Jean-Claude Brien, director of Industry Canada's EMG (Electromagnetic Compatibility) analysis and consultation branch, is also a CWTA health committee member.

Bradley said "one of my interests in being (on the committee) is trying to get a sense of what direction the industry wants to go in terms of their products."

Duff Conacher, co-ordinator of the watchdog agency Democracy Watch, says such liaisons constitute a conflict that favours industry over the concerns of ordinary taxpayers.

"Who's looking out for the interests of Canadians?" asks Conacher. "It's as if the referee were also coach of one of the teams."

Conacher cites Treasury Board's Statement of Public Service and Ethics as a reason officials shouldn't be sitting on industry committees.

To avoid even the appearance of conflicts-of-interests, Treasury Board rules say public servants "should not step out of their official roles to assist private entities or persons in their dealings with the government where this would result in preferential treatment to the entities or persons."

"Let the CWTA make submissions like everybody else," said Conacher. "When you are sitting on an industry association committee as a member, you have stepped out of your official role."

Asked about potential conflict, Bradley replied by email: "I attend the Health Council meeting in a liaison capacity only. I do not have influence on the agenda and do not participate in any decision-making capacity with this group ... . "The question of potential conflict-of-interest was reviewed before I agreed to participate. My participation was approved at the time."

On Brien's behalf, a spokesperson emailed: "Industry Canada (IC) participates in the CWTA health committee as an observer and government liaison only ... . Such participation from IC is in line with the Department's participation in any other industry associations related to radiocommunications in Canada."

A request for an interview with Health Minister Tony Clement was declined.

The CWTA is required by law to submit reports on its lobbying activities – saying which ministries and agencies it's lobbying, the methods used and the specific regulations or other issues involved.

As far back as March 1997, the CWTA's submissions, filed every six months, list Health Canada as a federal department being lobbied (as well as Industry Canada) and note the subject is "health."

However, they give no clue as to the specific nature of the lobbying.

The lobbying act sets out penalties, including jail terms, for "anyone who knowingly makes any false or misleading statement in any return or other document submitted."

A lobbying commission spokesperson said no comment can be made on any submission.

Conacher argues accurate returns are the only way the public can monitor what lobbyists are doing.

The CWTA says its next filing will be submitted Aug. 15.

Choma says his organization is concerned about cellphone use and, for that reason, paid \$1 million to the Canadian part of an ongoing 13-country "Interphone" study to examine the relation – if any – between cellphones and four tumours of the head and neck.

He said part of that money also goes to the chair of population health risk assessment at the University of Ottawa's McLaughlin Centre. The chair, Dr. Daniel Krewski, heads the Canadian arm of the "Interphone" study and does some cellphone research at the centre.

Conacher points to the "science of influence" theory that says the best way to influence people is to give them something, especially money.

But Choma says CWTA's influence ends when the money has been handed over, adding: "If you don't fund research, the question is why don't you fund it."

Dr. Krewski bristles at the suggestion of a conflict on the Canadian arm of the Interphone study, or at the university, because of CWTA funding. That's the way science works, he said.

"The moment you mention CWTC people start assuming they are calling the shots and that's not true. We have the tightest firewall you could imagine."

## **Comments on this story are moderated** (extract)

### **This explains a lot**

Now I see why Health Canada has a standard allowing Canadians to be exposed to radiation from cell and radio towers at levels 1000s of times higher than many other countries, EVEN CHINA! The lobbyists must pay well.

Submitted by Sleat at 5:00 PM Saturday, August 02 2008

### **Government Lobbyists**

It should be illegal for any Government employee to be a lobbyist. Conditions of employment for a government employee should be immediate termination if caught, with no cash pay out or benefits. No wonder companies fare better than what's right for the majority of citizens when a government allows this type of event. I wonder what type of remuneration these government lobbyists were being provided by the companies they were lobby on behalf. This stinks to high heavens but I'm sure it doesn't smell one bit to our squeaky clean elected officials.

Submitted by Boyd at 2:11 PM Saturday, August 02 2008

### **Scandal or Corruption ?**

Looks like another "Scandal" is brewing. Or just "Corruption" as the rest of the world calls it.

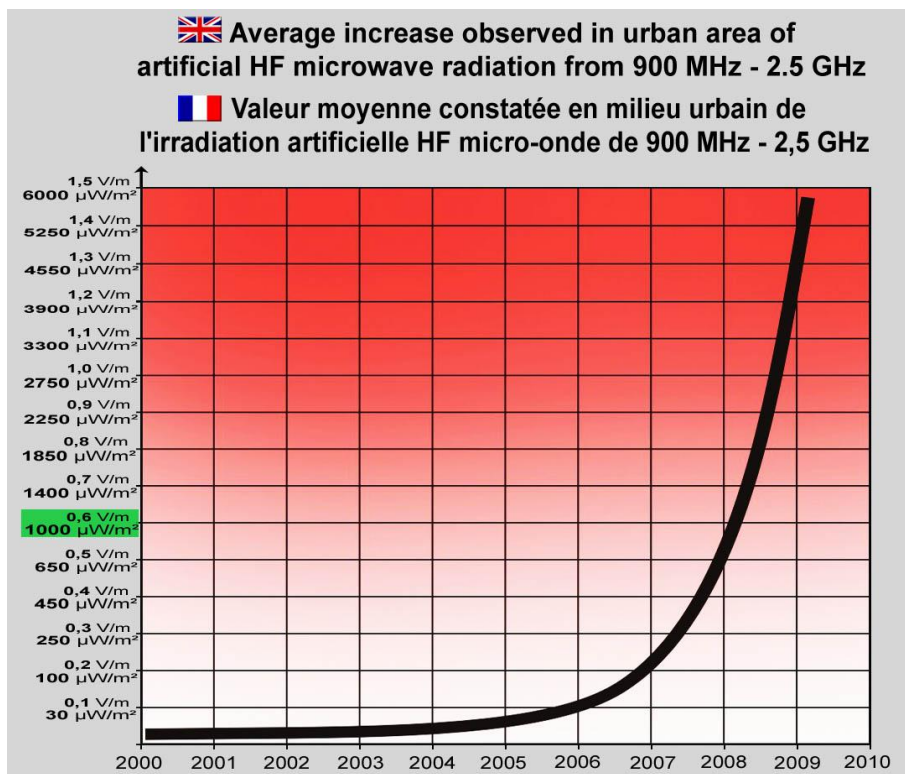
Submitted by starcomment at 12:56 PM Saturday, August 02 2008

### **The Slippery Slope**

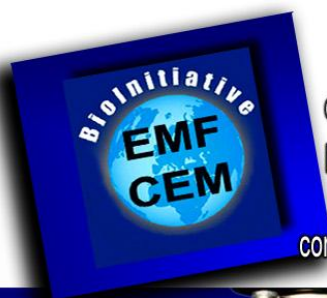
Hmmm, let me see. The tobacco industry claimed for years that not only was it not

dangerous but it was beneficial to our health to smoke. The chemical industry claims that the thousands of toxic chemicals they create then produce in their factories have absolutely no negative effect on our health (cancers and many other diseases have other causes). Pharmaceutical companies claimed for years their products couldn't possibly cause miscarriages, deformities etc (remember thalidomide. Now we are to believe the telecommunications industry that cell phones are totally safe. To add insult to injury, the same government who we elect to protect us appears to be in bed with the industry. Does anyone not see something wrong about this.

Submitted by fisherman at 11:00 AM Saturday, August 02 2008



It is vitally necessary to take effective action to make all the various sources of electrosmog compatible with human health.



Il y a impérieuse nécessité d'aller à l'essentiel en agissant pour rendre toutes les sources d'immixtion de l'électrosmog compatibles avec la santé humaine.



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