

Further study, review, needed on health risks of microwaves, experts say

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OTTAWA—Further study and review is needed of the health risks associated with radiation from wireless devices, Health

Canada and wireless industry officials told Commons health committee Tuesday.

The House Standing Committee on Health is holding hearings on the impact of microwaves on human health emitted by cell towers and wireless devices.

The committee study comes after **Bloc Québécois** MP Luc Malo presented a 1,100-signature petition in Parliament last month, asking the government to “protect the population from microwaves.”

Beth Pieteron, **Health Canada** director general of environmental and radiation health sciences, told the committee that her department has reviewed several studies on the impact of microwaves and has determined there are insufficient grounds to review Canada’s current standards.

“It is the opinion of Health Canada that there are insufficient grounds to revise our views on the electromagnetic frequency health risk assessment at this time,” she said.

But under questioning about a controversial body of evidence on the adverse health risks related to microwaves—pointing to everything from arrhythmia to cancer—Pieteron said Health Canada should take into consideration more studies.

“Numerous scientific studies have failed to make an adequate association between electromagnetic radiation and the effects themselves. The causes of the symptoms themselves are unclear from a scientific point of view ... Yes, there should be more studies,” she said.

Pieteron said Health Canada is currently conducting two studies on microwaves: one on the thermal effects of radiation on the body, and another on its genomic effects.

Bernard Lord, president and CEO of the **Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association** (CWTA), told the committee that while microwaves are safe under current standards, there should be a willingness to conduct further review.

Dr. Magda Havas, associate professor of environmental and resource studies at **Trent University**, told the committee that a central problem is not a lack of willingness to conduct studies, but a lack of willingness from the government to fund independent research.

“If we are going to try to resolve this issue, it’s absolutely essential that we have funding for independent research that is done in North America,” she said.

“Considering our exposure to this microwave radiation from wireless technologies inside our homes, and from wireless technology outside our homes, it’s amazing that we don’t have funding for independent research.”

The principal study under debate at the hearing was the controversial 2007 Bionitiative Report, which Malo and a group called **Save our Children from Microwaves** (SEMO) point to as evidence that electromagnetic fields and radio frequency

radiation are harmful to humans.

The report was self-published by a group of international scientists and recommends reducing exposure limits.

But Lord challenged the study.

“The findings in this report are not supported by the vast majority of other scientific studies on this topic around the

world. The conclusions drawn by the authors of the Bioinitiative Report are not representative of the massive body of

evidence emanating from the international scientific community,” Lord said.

Lord said there are “health benefits” from mobile technology, arguing that more than 50 per cent of phone calls to 911

services in Canada are made using cellular phones.

But François Therrien, SEMO spokesman, said Lord’s response to the study represented a “typical denial” from industry.