

Second Wi-Fi panel member's conflicts are problematic

Concerns have flared over possible conflict of interest of a second member of a panel chosen by the Royal Society of Canada to examine safety levels for cell towers, cellphones and wireless devices.

The chair of the panel, Daniel Krewski, resigned in July amidst concerns over conflict of interest following a *CMAJ* report revealing he did not fully disclose details of his government contracts (www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.109-4549).

Now, the Oakville, Ontario-based public interest group Canadians For Safe Technology, reports that a second scientist may also be a problematic choice.

According to the group, John Moulder, professor and director of radiation biology at the Medical College of Wisconsin, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has close industry ties and should be removed.

Moulder has served as “a professional expert witness with a pattern of denying the suspected or identified risks” of electrical radiation, says Frank Clegg, the group's chairman. “Mr. Moulder is an American industry consultant,” Clegg charges. “He has no place influencing Canada's safety review.”

Moulder rejected an interview request regarding the group's charges, citing confidentiality provisions in his agreement with the Royal Society.

The Royal Society of Canada did not respond to an interview request regarding Moulder's industry ties.

Dr. David Carpenter, director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at the University at Albany, New York, agrees the inclusion of Moulder on the panel is troubling, in part because he has taken “public positions discounting the thousands of scientific studies showing effects,” which calls into question “his ability to be objective or independent.”

Olle Johansson of the Department of Neuroscience at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, who organized a panel on Wi-Fi safety in 2009



© 2013 Thinkstock

The Royal Society of Canada's eight-member panel will update the 2009 safety guidelines for human exposure to electromagnetic emissions from wireless devices, which Industry Canada regulates.

in Seletun, Norway, says the Royal Society of Canada should have little trouble identifying panel candidates free from conflict-of-interest concerns.

“There is quite a sufficient number of independent scientific experts without commercial ties,” he notes. “These projects and reviews must be entirely independent of all types of commercial interests.”

The Royal Society of Canada convened its panel, Review of Safety Code 6: Potential Health Risks of Radiofrequency Fields from Wireless

Telecommunications Devices, in March at the behest of Health Canada, which provided \$100 000 in funding. The eight panel members from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands are assessing whether Health Canada should update its 2009 safety guidelines for human exposure to electromagnetic emissions from wireless devices, which Industry Canada regulates. — Paul Christopher Webster, Toronto, Ont.

CMAJ 2013, DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-4565