

Researchers call for end to political ‘subverting’ of science

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Margaret Munro, Canwest News Service

VANCOUVER – Prominent Canadian scientists are calling on the country’s political leaders to end what they describe as the “politicization” and “mistreatment” of science.

A letter, released yesterday and signed by 85 researchers, points to “blatant” examples of the Harper government undermining, suppressing and distorting science for political reasons. The list includes the “muzzling” of Environment Canada scientists, the firing of the head of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and misrepresentation of studies done on Insite, a Vancouver-based facility that allows drug users to inject heroin and cocaine under medical supervision.

“While science is not the only factor to be considered in political decision-making, ignoring and subverting science and scientific processes is unacceptable,” the scientists write.

It is the second missive from the country’s researchers this week. On Tuesday, 124 leading climate scientists criticized the Harper government and urged Canadians to vote “strategically” for the environment in the federal election.

Twenty of those scientists also signed yesterday’s letter, including climate change researchers Richard Peltier, Christopher Furgal, Gordon McBean, John Stone and Andrew Weaver, who contributed to the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

“When faced with scientific evidence that was contrary to its ideological position, the Harper government has adopted the deceptive strategy of suggesting that there was scientific uncertainty when, in fact, there was none,” said Dr. Stephen Hwang of St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto and associate professor at the University of Toronto. “These are the kind of tactics used by the tobacco lobby to delay policies to protect people from second-hand smoke.”

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