

Scientists march against 'death of evidence' in Canada

July 10 2012

Scientists held a mock funeral march Tuesday marking the "death of evidence" in Canada, accusing the ruling Tories of muzzling government scientists to advance a political agenda that ignores research findings.

The procession of 200 scientists in lab coats lead by pallbearers carrying a coffin winded silently through downtown Ottawa's streets to Parliament, where a mock funeral service was held for scientific programs cut in recent budgets.

"We are here today to commemorate the untimely death of evidence in Canada," rally organizer and [doctoral student](#) in biology Katie Gibbs told a crowd.

Scientists from across Canada gave eulogies in praise of evidence, accusing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives of drawing an "iron curtain between science and society."

Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians said: "What do you do if you want to kill the message? Well, just kill the messenger."

The scientists say the Harper government has denied research results, cut scientific programs and closed labs, effectively slimming climate, water and atmospheric research that produced data that could run counter to its ideologically-based "propaganda."

The government has also legislated changes to environmental standards

with the aim of making it easier to develop natural resources, which activists say put the ozone, lakes and wildlife at greater risk.

Conservative MP Michelle Rempel countered that in trying [economic times](#), the government has actually increased funding for basic and applied research. "We understand the importance of investing in all stages of research," she told AFP.

Canada's research and development expenditures are now higher than any other Group of Seven country, as a percentage of GDP.

Canadian scientists have also published a record number of peer-reviewed studies in the last decade and commercialization of new technologies has ramped up.

"The prime minister has been clear that innovation is a cornerstone of [Canada's](#) long-term prosperity," Rempel said.

The service closed with a dozen scientists paying their respects, placing books into the open coffin, including Darwin's "The Origin of Species" and "Silent Spring."

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