

Canada scientists bargain for right to speak out

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Protestors accused Canadian government of cutting scientific programs and closing labs in order to reduce the volume of research running counter to its policies

A union representing 15,000 Canadian government scientists said Wednesday their right to speak publicly about their work regardless of what they discover should be addressed in contract negotiations.

The scientists feel they are not allowed to speak freely to the media—especially if findings contradict [government](#) positions—because

of rules requiring them to seek permission first, according to the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

They fear this stifles [public discourse](#) and leads to ideological policies not backed by facts and could harm [public health](#), safety and the environment.

"It's sad, frankly, that it's come to this," said union president Debi Daviau.

"But negotiating provisions in our collective agreements seems to be the only way to get this government's attention and adopt meaningful, enforceable scientific integrity standards."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government has long faced accusations that it turns a blind eye to research results that conflict with its political agenda.

Its alleged anti-science bias even provoked a march on parliament by scientists in laboratory coats in 2012.

The protestors accused the government of cutting scientific programs and closing labs in order to reduce the volume of climate, water and atmospheric research running counter to its policies, in particular its support for Canada's energy and mining sectors.

The government has said it actually increased funding for basic and applied research, and that Canadian scientists have published a record number of peer-reviewed studies in the last decade, while commercialization of new technologies has increased.

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