



Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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(OPEN LETTER – Released December 15, 2015)

The Honourable Brian Gallant
Premier of New Brunswick
Centennial Building
P. O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1
Email: premier@gnb.ca

December 14, 2015

Dear Premier:

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) is deeply concerned about the termination of Dr. Eilish Cleary as New Brunswick's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

CAPE is a national organization of health professionals dedicated to the protection of the environment and human health. We believe that Medical Officers of Health have a duty and a responsibility to: investigate issues that may have an adverse impact on human health; assess scientific evidence without bias; and to employ the precautionary principle when ruling on evolving science when the potential for harm is significant. Even the mere suggestion or rumor that a Medical Officer of Health has been dismissed for investigating an issue is of grave concern to our organization.

Justifications for Dr. Cleary's dismissal to date have been vague and superficial. They bring no credit to the government, they undermine the role of the professional civil service, and demonstrate a lack of respect for Dr. Cleary's professional integrity as a public health physician which, we believe, has been proven for many years.

Since she became the Chief Medical Officer of Health for New Brunswick in 2008, Dr. Cleary has distinguished herself with the quality of her public health engagement and her efforts to identify actual or potential environmental causes of ill health affecting the citizens of New Brunswick.

In September 2012, her office produced a seminal report, *Recommendations Concerning Shale Gas Development in New Brunswick*, which advocated, on a solid scientific basis, for the exercise of the precautionary principle in pursuing the development of this resource. The report outlined a number of steps that need to be taken to ensure that any development of shale gas in the province is conducted in a safe and sensible way. She recommended active engagement with the public and, in particular, with First Nations. This report has been used as a reference in public health departments around the country.

At the time of her termination, Dr. Cleary was working on a report about the use and effects of glyphosate, an herbicide that is the active ingredient in Roundup, a preparation widely used in New Brunswick. In 2014, 77,000 kg of the herbicide was sold in the province and used primarily for killing hardwood (deciduous) trees and shrubs to promote the growth of softwood (conifer) lumber used in pulp and paper production. In March, 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, affiliated with the World Health Organization, presented evidence that glyphosate is a “probable carcinogen”. Animal experimentation carried out by Doctor Gilles-Eric S eralini suggests that the herbicide can significantly damage kidney function. There is worldwide epidemiological evidence which suggests that humans may also develop kidney damage in association with glyphosate exposure. In light of this evidence, Dr. Cleary’s examination of Roundup from a public health perspective is more than justified and should be encouraged.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has demonstrated that she has the health of the citizens of New Brunswick at heart. She has worked diligently, and with exemplary scientific rigour, to protect public health. On this basis, CAPE asks that your government reconsider her dismissal.

Yours Truly,



Dr. Warren Bell
CAPE Board Member and Former Founding President

Cc: **Kim Perrotta, Executive Director, CAPE (905-628-9437)**

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