

# We like to say that we're here to help when science hits the headlines.

The Science Media Centre of Canada (SMCC) is a non-profit, charitable organization formed in 2009 to help Canadian journalists cover science, and to help Canadian scientists communicate their research effectively to the public, policy makers and the media. This includes everything from stories where science *is* the story – such as the confirmation of gravitational waves – to stories where science provides the crucial

factual underpinning – such as extreme weather events.

The world of science encompasses the natural, social and biomedical sciences and also includes topics dealing with technology, engineering, the environment and some aspects of the humanities. These stories pervade today's world and form the basis for major issues we face as a society.



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## The Goal

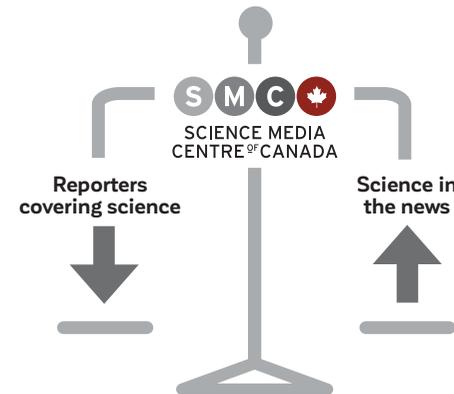
Never has the presentation of facts based on verified and verifiable research been more important.



Fake news. Alternative Facts. Pseudoscience. Post-truth. Data and evidence are being drowned in a sea of misinformation, both deliberate and naïve. That's where the Science Media Centre of Canada steps in. The SMCC strives to increase public engagement with science issues by supporting journalists covering science and enabling scientists to more effectively communicate their work. Media coverage of science that is more informed, more accurate and more incisive will benefit the Canadian public, policy makers and scientists themselves, using the highest quality scientific evidence to inform public discourse.

## The Approach

As more and more mainstream media cut back, downsize, and adapt to the changing media landscape, the number of specialized science beat reporters has decreased dramatically. But that's not because there is less science in the news. In fact, the opposite is true. So that leaves the beleaguered general assignment reporter to cover the daily barrage of science stories that are dominating our news these days: climate change, alternative energy, extreme weather events, GMO's, species at risk, fracking, etc. The SMCC is there to help them. That is why science media centres also exist in Britain, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, with a similar organization having just launched in the USA under a different name. The SMCC co-operates energetically with them but is proudly Canadian.



Science Media Centre of Canada helps to balance organizations' science resources.

## OUR SERVICES

- Weekly Heads-Up Newsletter for Journalists**  
 Every Tuesday morning, we email an embargoed newsletter to more than 400 registered journalists and science writers across the country, summarizing the latest newsworthy peer-reviewed research papers - with a strong emphasis on Canadian authors - as well as news about recent Canadian science and medical research and events.
- Backgrounders on Topical Issues**  
 Another service provided by the SMCC - preparing plain language backgrounders on science topics in the news - is also increasingly in demand. Recently, the SMCC was asked by the federal Government to prepare a series of these background notes for parliamentarians, on topics ranging from *Why Science Matters* to *Evidence-Informed Decision Making*.
- Media briefings (Webinars)**  
 Whether it's a significant, breaking story with a science dimension or a complex, continuing issue, the SMCC can arrange media briefings with top Canadian experts using web-based software, allowing researchers and journalists to take part from their desks. Recent examples include *Strategies for Healthier Cities*, produced in partnership with Health Canada, and *Tracking Climate Change in Canada's North*, produced in collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Canada.
- Training for Scientists**  
 Increasingly, researchers and their employers are recognizing the value of science communication - presenting their work at public hearings, community forums, or directly to journalists, politicians and policy makers. The SMCC offers a menu of workshops, which can be tailored to meet specific needs, to help researchers get key messages across. We most recently worked with the *MITACS Science Policy Fellows*.

## The Users

The SMCC helps all Canadian journalists, including general assignment reporters across all media platforms. In fact, it is often the general assignment reporter - with little or no background, training or experience in science - who needs our help the most. We also provide support and training for scientists, engineers and researchers to help them communicate effectively to journalists, policy makers and the public.