



Society of Environmental Journalists

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Feb. 14, 2008

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The Honourable John Baird
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
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Honourable Mr. Baird:

Greetings from the Society of Environmental Journalists. We hope that you share our strong interest in raising public awareness of the ministry's work and that you will take steps to enhance understanding of your agencies' efforts during your second year in office.

The Society of Environmental Journalists is the world's largest and oldest organization of individual working journalists covering environmental issues. Founded in 1990, we have a membership of more than 1,400 journalists, educators and students in Canada, the United States and 24 other countries, who are dedicated to improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting. Working through our First Amendment Task Force and Watch Dog Program, the society addresses freedom of information, right-to-know, and other news-gathering issues of concern to journalists reporting on environmental topics.

We recently learned of an Environment Canada policy change limiting its scientists' liberty to answer media questions directly. We would like to know the details about the substance of that change because we are very concerned that it may hinder journalists' efforts to adequately cover environmental issues and the ministry.

Improving the Quality, Accuracy and Visibility of Environmental Reporting



Given that some 60 percent of the ministry's workforce and 80 percent of its budget are devoted to science and technology, we consider restricting scientists' freedom to communicate with us a major threat to performing our job of distributing information and analysis in a timely manner to decision makers and the rest of the public.

For us to respond effectively to Environment Canada's public information dictates, it would be helpful to have the previous and the current official written policies on media communication, as well as the dates they took effect.

Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to collaborating with you to heighten comprehension of your ministry's very important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy B. Wheeler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy B. Wheeler
President

TBW:l