

**The Internet as a Public Information Resource,
with a case study on a Canadian controversy
about radio-frequency fields**

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Abstract:

Installations for four of the new digital telecommunications networks for personal communications services (PCS) began in Canada in 1997. These networks utilise the 2 GHz part of the spectrum, whereas the older cellular telephone technologies use frequencies in the 800-900 MHz range. One significant feature of these new networks is that they require numerous roof-top antenna installations. In Canada one federal department, Industry Canada, issues licenses for transmitter and antenna installations, while another, Health Canada, is responsible for the health and safety (risk) regulations, which are published as "Safety Code 6" (issued 1990). Safety Code 6 specifies exposure limits for workers and citizens and covers frequencies ranging from 10 kHz to 300 GHz.

In the summer of 1997 some citizens in Vancouver, British Columbia became aware of the new installations when their community was informed that a local school had been asked to allow the placing of a roof-top antenna on its building. Shortly thereafter, the citizens discovered that another antenna had already been installed inside the steeple of a nearby church; the church hosts a day-care centre in its facilities. Concerns about health risks were raised, public meetings (including meetings with representatives of the two federal departments) have been held, and the controversy has been simmering ever since.