

SUBSCRIBE

Covering what matters to you since 1912. Covering what matters to you since 1912. *Subscribe now and Save>*

Manage Print Subscription

Sections  Search

VANCOUVER SUN

Subscribe

Sign In

News Sports Opinion Business Arts Life Homes Hot Topics Puzzles Comics Healthing Driving ePa

1



Judge rules against B.C. logging company's request to probe environmentalist...

TRENDING 

2



Vancouver readies 'quick response teams' in case tents return to East...

TRENDING 

3



V

T



News / Local News

# COVID-19: Radio station at SFU temporarily suspends program linked to website with pandemic conspiracy theories

*The Global Research News Hour has been pulled off the air temporarily while staff at the radio station decide whether it fits with their objective to provide different views.*

Tiffany Crawford

Published Mar 13, 2021 • Last updated Mar 17, 2021 • 7 minute read

 Join the conversation






A woman walks past murals painted of Dr. Theresa Tam and Dr. Bonnie Henry on the side of a building in Gastown in Vancouver, BC. Both Henry and Tam have said that the spread of misinformation about the pandemic and vaccines continues to be a major challenge. PHOTO BY RICHARD LAM /PNG

As health officials battle the spread of pandemic misinformation, CJSF-FM radio at Simon Fraser University has temporarily pulled a program off the air by Global Research, a controversial website that posts stories about COVID-19 being a scam.

Global Research News Hour usually runs for an hour on Thursday mornings on CJSF-FM, which is an independent college radio station on campus at SFU. However, it has been replaced with a different program for now while staff at the radio station decide whether it fits with the station's objectives to provide different views.



During the program, host Michael Welch asks for donations for Global Research and suggests listeners check out stories on the group's website.



## Sunrise presented by Vancouver Sun

Start your day with a roundup of B.C.-focused news and opinion delivered straight to your inbox at 7 a.m., Monday to Friday.

Email Address

**Sign Up**

By clicking on the sign up button you consent to receive the above newsletter from Postmedia Network Inc. You may unsubscribe any time by clicking on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of our emails or any newsletter. Postmedia Network Inc. | 365 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4 | 416-383-2300

The website is run by the Montreal-based Centre for Research on Globalization, led by Michel Chossudovsky, an economist and conspiracy theorist, who has stated that COVID-19 is a manufactured pandemic.

The centre posts dozens of conspiracy-theory stories on its website, with some suggesting the pandemic is a hoax designed to cull the population, and others that make baseless claims about microchips in the vaccines. There are inaccurate stories about the coronavirus being used as a U.S. bioweapon to target China, and videos that present false claims that vaccines modify a person's DNA.

In an emailed statement, Welch said he partnered with the Global Research website about eight years ago as a consultant. He said he occasionally consults with Chossudovsky on topics and guests but that he produces the show independently.

Chossudovsky did not return a message asking for information about Global Research and how it is funded.

Welch contends that his coverage has been "fair and within the guidelines of broadcasts and ethical journalism."

"I air the opinions of people who generally do not get heard on more mainstream broadcasts. All of them are assessed as providing views that are relevant," he said.

Postmedia reached out to the radio station after a listener raised concerns that the show may be causing harm by spreading misinformation about the pandemic and vaccines. The website has also come under international scrutiny for helping spread Russian disinformation, [according to a CBC report](#).



## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Have your say. Leave a comment and tell us what you think.

[READ THE COMMENTS](#)

The radio station declined to answer questions, but provided a short emailed statement instead.

“We are aware of a listener’s concern regarding the Global Research News Hour program and continue our close monitor and review of it,” said Robin Eriksson, programming director at CJSF-FM.

Shortly after the complaints were brought to the attention of the radio station, the Global Research News Hour program was replaced with another program.

On Friday, Eriksson told Postmedia they had taken it off the air temporarily so that staff can decide whether the content fit with their mandate.

“To give more staff at the station an opportunity to listen to a wide range of GRNH episodes, I am running another program in it’s place. We will discuss whether or not to reinstitute the program based on our collective assessment, and how it relates to our mandate to provide perspectives that you do not hear elsewhere,” said Eriksson.

Angela Wilson, a spokeswoman for Simon Fraser University, said SFU has shared the listener’s concerns about misinformation with the station and with the Simon Fraser Student Society. CJSF leases space on SFU’s Burnaby campus through the student society. The student society did not return a request for information.

CJSF is an autonomous legal organization registered under the B.C. Societies Act. The university is not involved in CJSF's programming and has "has no jurisdiction over the station," Wilson said.

Health Canada has the lead on monitoring for misinformation about the pandemic and is sending compliance letters for questionable claims such as herbal remedies that claim to prevent or cure COVID-19. When asked about Global Research and some of the bogus claims presented on the website, the federal health ministry deferred all questions to the CRTC.

However, the CRTC doesn't regulate the internet and a spokesperson told Postmedia it was unaware of the Global Research website.

CRTC spokeswoman Patricia Valladao said they have not received any official complaints from the public regarding the Global Research News Hour being broadcast on several college radio stations.

Valladao said they were unaware that the host suggests listeners check out the website, which contains stories about the pandemic being a public health scam.

"The CRTC is not involved in the business decision, management and day-to-day operations of the not-for-profit organization approved to hold a licence," said Valladao.

Nonetheless, the CRTC can investigate a particular station on its programming and decide whether the licensee meets the objectives of the Broadcasting Act, its regulatory requirements or specific conditions of its licence to operate in Canada.

To investigate, the CRTC needs to receive a formal complaint.

The B.C. Ministry of Health, meantime, would not comment specifically about the website but said misinformation about COVID-19 and vaccines continues to be a challenge faced by B.C. and jurisdictions around the world.

The ministry advises people to access accurate information about COVID-19 from reliable sources including the websites of the Government of B.C. and [B.C. Centre for Disease Control](#).

Last month, [Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam](#), warned Canadians to be vigilant about online misinformation and conspiracy theories, calling the problem "an infodemic."

"Throughout the pandemic we have relied on technology and information-sharing platforms to keep us safe, informed and connected," Tam said.

"At the same time, these platforms have contributed to an overabundance of information — an

infodemic — that worsens the current pandemic by allowing false information to circulate more easily, hampering public health responses, creating confusion and distrust, and ultimately making it more difficult for people to make vital decisions about their health and safety.”

Tam added it is important to distinguish between misinformation, that is not created with the intention of hurting others, and disinformation, an extreme type of misinformation created with the intention of causing harm.

Heidi Tworek, associate professor of history and public policy at UBC, says the spread of misinformation related to the pandemic is a merging of multiple trends.

“Mistaken information, or misinformation, and deliberate disinformation mingles with conspiracy theories which mingle with people trying to profit from the pandemic, and in some cases racism and misogyny, such as with threats against health experts like Dr. Henry, that have been amplified by the pandemic,” said Tworek.

In the fall, B.C.’s top doctor said she had to add security to her home because she has been targeted with death threats, along with abusive letters and phone calls to staff from anti-maskers and other conspiracy theorists.

Dr. Bonnie Henry, who throughout the pandemic has urged people to be calm and act with kindness, was suddenly worried for her own safety.

“I’ve had to have security in my house. I’ve had death threats. How do we deal with that?” Henry told a conference of the B.C. Union of Municipalities.

Tworek said in Canada, as in every other democracy, there is a limit to free speech when it can lead to harm or violence. It is then usually up to the organization to decide whether they continue to allow information. For example, many social media companies will now block false information about vaccines.

“It would come down to questioning why the radio station would continue to host this particular show,” said Tworek.

The problem with many online conspiracy videos, she noted, is that people who are deemed experts are often those who have been discredited by the larger scientific community.

Tworek’s research has compared different responses to the pandemic around the world. It found that the quicker health officials got out information and on different platforms and languages, the fewer searches online there were for conspiracy theories. For example, in Taiwan, where there was a very

successful early response to the pandemic, the government had a “humour over rumour” campaign to dispel misinformation on platforms such as Snapchat and Twitter, using graphics and humour to engage the public.

“If we don’t look at how we get effective, high-quality information out there, we are going to be missing a really big piece of the puzzle,” she said.

The Public Health Agency of Canada said prevalent misleading or false claims often include inaccurate information about COVID-19 cures, vaccine trials and the safety of vaccines, which can put public health at risk.

The agency recommended [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus) as a good place to start with credible information. PHAC has engaged with social media companies and other partners since the onset of this pandemic to help users locate authoritative sources for information on COVID-19.

[ticrawford@postmedia.com](mailto:ticrawford@postmedia.com)

## RECOMMENDED FROM EDITORIAL



**[A year of COVID-19: British Columbians say it's been one of loss and missed hugs, but also resilience and gratitude](#)**

---

*[CLICK HERE](#) to report a typo.*

*Is there more to this story? We’d like to hear from you about this or any other stories you think we should know about. Email [vantips@postmedia.com](mailto:vantips@postmedia.com).*



## COMMENTS

Postmedia is committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion and encourage all readers to share their views on our articles. Comments may take up to an hour for moderation before appearing on the site. We ask you to keep your comments relevant and respectful. We have enabled email notifications—you will now receive an email if you receive a reply to your comment, there is an




update to a comment thread you follow or if a user you follow comments. Visit our [Community Guidelines](#) for more information and details on how to adjust your [email settings](#).

 **JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

---


**TRENDING**

**1**  **Judge rules against B.C. logging company's request to probe environmentalists' social media info**

---

**2**  **Vancouver readies 'quick response teams' in case tents return to East Hastings**

---

**3**  **Vancouver's East Hastings Street, the day after the removal of tent encampments**

---

**4**  **Sold (Bought): Yaletown condo features south-facing panoramic vista**

---

**5**  **B.C. to become first province to set patient ratios for nurses**

**Subscribe**

[News](#) [Sports](#) [Opinion](#) [Business](#) [Arts](#) [Life](#) [Homes](#) [ePaper](#) [Subscribe](#)

---

Follow Vancouver Sun



**[Advertise With Us](#) [Digital Ad Registry](#) [Site Map](#) [Contact](#) [Privacy - Updated](#) [Terms of Use](#) [FAQ](#) [Copyright](#) [My Account](#)  
[Manage My Print Subscription](#) [Manage My Tax Receipt](#)**

**365 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4**

**© 2023 Vancouver Sun, a division of Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.**