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## Proving Causality in Cancer

It is one thing to try to avoid something that causes cancer ... it is another thing to figure out what Can ...or May ...or Could cause it. It can take years to figure out what might harm us and what won't. So what do we do in the meantime?

[Listen to Part One: \(Pop-up\)](#)

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### PART ONE

It's Monday, January 3rd.

CBC is launching *Live Right Now*, a comprehensive effort to help Canadians live healthier. And for good reason ... Compared to 30 years ago, Canadians are eating what amounts to an additional meal every single day.

Currently, So our first lesson is about "portion size". And if you can't actually eat less.... just set your plate farther away from you. Trust me, it will look smaller.

This is The Current.

### Proving Causality in Cancer

We started this segment with a clip from Steve Hrudehy. He's a retired professor of environmental and analytical toxicology at the University of Alberta. The community he's talking about is the First Nations community of Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta. It's a couple of hundred kilometres downstream from the oil sands. The community is well known - having reported [unusually high rates of cancer](#).

Steve Hrudehy chaired a Royal Society of Canada panel that looked at all the publicly available data about the environmental and health issues arising from the oil sands and came to the conclusion that there is no evidence of a link between the oil sands and cancer rates in Fort Chipewyan. Despite this conclusion, the report also said that continued monitoring should be done on human exposure to potential carcinogens coming from the oil sands in order to reassure the community.

This story underscores the difficulty of proving causality when it comes to cancer and leaves many people questioning everything from industrial run-off to cell phones. It's a fiendishly long process to prove that something causes cancer ... a point that's well-illustrated in this story from [Siddhartha Mukherjee](#), the [author of \*The Emperor of Maladies: A Biography of Cancer\*](#).

For their thoughts on this causality conundrum in cancer research and policymaking, we were joined by Mario Chevrette. He is a cancer researcher at McGill University and the President of the [Cancer Research Society](#) and the co-chair of the [Canadian Cancer Research Alliance](#) - the organizations that fund cancer research. He was in Montreal. And Gideon Forman is the Executive Director of the [Canadian Association of Physicians for The Environment](#). He was in Toronto.

#### Related Link:

- [Scientists, Fort Chip residents call for more study following Royal Society report by Hanneke Brooymans - Edmonton Journal](#)

#### Other segments from today's show:

- [From the Heart](#)
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