epidemiologist from McMaster University, Dr H Shannon, of the scientific evidence on the statement (amongst others) that working with different fibre types leads to different risks of incidence of mesothelioma. He found limited supporting data which can not be said to be established by valid scientific evidence. In my view, scientific research has therefore not answered the subset question yet, either way. And when I look at the reasons I can only conclude that the researches have been affected by all three reasons I just mentioned. Put simply, a complex scientific question has been approached through less than adequate science and the whole has been conditioned by economic and political factors.

Put bluntly, I am saying that the decision makers cannot find the trustworthy scientific evidence they need, and neither can they assume that further research effort will improve things, for the three reasons I stated.

The decision-making about asbestos for decision makers in Québec and elsewhere is greatly complicated by the uncertainty of scientific knowledge. But this cloud of doubt throws its shadow not only over the relative danger of asbestos but also over the relative safety of the asbestos substitutes similar in morphology to the asbestos fibres they are intended to replace. After all, if the science has been too uncertain to categorically settle the issue of blue asbestos, how can it perform any better relative to the asbestos substitutes?

The research community urges the decision makers to command research on an increasing scale, yet scientific research is itself entering an era of increasing skepticism, skepticism on the part of the public towards scientists and scientific research. In the past year or two, the newspapers have carried stories of corruption and scandal in science and, more important, science and scientific research have manifestly failed to produce clear or at least usable answers to public concerns, like asbestos, like low level radiation, like the risks of nuclear power.

It is not hard to persuade people that scientific researchers have to be tactful towards the organizations sponsoring their research. Research funds are running down, and scientists have an anxious time getting the money to keep their