



Muzzled scientist hires lawyer while supporters raise funds

By Andrew MacLeod December 8, 2008 04:00 pm

A farm scientist under attack from her professional organization has hired a high-powered lawyer while her supporters are raising money to defend her and other agrologists.

Last month Wendy Holm became the subject of a B.C. Institute of Agrologists [ethics complaint](#) after she spoke to the Tyee about the [“muzzling”](#) of one of her colleagues.

Holm has hired [Joseph Arvay](#), a lawyer known for his civil and human rights work, to represent her.

Meanwhile members of the [Farmland Defence League](#) are preparing to raise money to help defend Holm and other agrologists, said organizer Herb Barbolet.

“It's just ludicrous and highly offensive to anyone who believes in justice and democracy,” said Barbolet. “It's much akin to a SLAPP suit. It's shutting down what should be a transparent and open process.”

Holm is one of several agrologists who have been targeted with BCIA complaints, he said. Some of the others work for consultants or the government, making it all the more difficult for them to speak publicly about their cases.

The silencing of agrologists is part of a larger pattern of farm land being removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve, Barbolet added, and needs to be resisted. “What I'm hoping will happen is this will be part of a larger Farmland Defence League initiative.”

For several years the Agricultural Land Commission has been allowing land on Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland and Okanagan and to be removed from the ALR while balancing the removals by adding less fertile land in the Interior and the North, he said. But the [latest statistics](#) show a net loss of farm land in the province.

“The commission is acting against its mandate and doing it consistently,” said Barbolet. The BCIA's “muffling” of scientists who criticize exclusions of farmland from the ALR is part of that “larger scandal” and needs more attention, he said.

Andrew MacLeod is The Tyee's Legislative Bureau Chief in Victoria. Reach him [here](#).

Filed in

- [Environment](#)
- [Rights + Justice](#)

- [BC Politics](#)
- [Food + Farming](#)

[Back to Muzzled scientist hires lawyer while supporters raise funds](#)