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# The Hook. POLITICAL NEWS, FRESHLY CAUGHT. A TYEE BLOG

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### Scientist who complained about colleague's 'muzzling' faces complaint herself

By **Andrew MacLeod** | November 6, 2008 10:30 am | **1** comments

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A farm scientist who told the Tyee last week that she and her colleagues are being “muzzled” from speaking about issues of public interest now herself faces an ethics complaint from a colleague.

Wendy Holm, a past president of the B.C. Institute of Agrologists, said Bob Holtby told her by e-mail he has made a complaint to the institute's conduct and discipline committee about her comments to the Tyee. Holtby chairs that committee, but told Holm he will step aside for an acting chair to be appointed while his complaint is heard.

“I find her characterization of my work and my role as chair as being unprofessional,” said Holtby. “That’s the nature of the complaint.”

The BCIA's **code of ethics** says agrologists must “abstain from undignified or misrepresentative public communication with or about agrologists.” It allows for “direct and honest criticism between professionals.” The code also says agrologists will act in the public interest.

“My complaint is she failed to meet the standard of dealing with me,” Holtby said. “If she had a disagreement about my work or my role as chair, I expected she would deal with it with me. I expected, and still do expect, respect, and I don't feel that I received it.”

In the **Tyee article**, Holm was quoted saying the BCIA was “muzzling” its members and constraining them from making public comments about issues such as the removal of land from the province's Agricultural Land Reserve. The muzzling benefits the agrologists whose reports help developers get land out of the ALR, she said, but is against the public interest.

Holtby is using the BCIA's code of ethics to attack her for criticizing how that same code is applied, she said. “There's an irony there that won't be missed.”

Holm said the issues in the Tyee story needed to be raised in public. “I've been getting a lot of feedback,” she said. “The public is aware there are concerns and they're glad to see agrologists standing up and addressing them.”

She welcomes the BCIA's inquiry into the matter, she added. “I think it's an opportunity to raise all of these issues.”

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

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#### On The Hook: Local elections Nov. 15



Monte Paulsen is editing The Hook this week, as The Tyee reports on local candidates sprinting toward municipal elections on Saturday, Nov. 15.

Paulsen is investigative editor of The Tyee, and reports regularly on Vancouver politics and housing issues.

You can reach him [here](#).

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