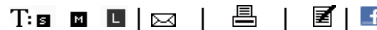


## Furor erupts over farmlands and free speech

By Robert Freeman - Chilliwack Progress - April 16, 2008



The BC Institute of Agrologists came under fire at its AGM last week for “muzzling” an agrologist who publicly opposed an application to remove a property in the land reserve for a housing development in Delta.

But BCIA executive director Don Rugg denied agrologists are being muzzled by the institute, saying “if the individual stays truthful and factual and has done due diligence, there’s nothing to stop them” from taking a public stand.

“It happens all the time, but always using science to do it,” he said in an interview with The Progress.

Rugg said in light of events at the BCIA’s annual general meeting Friday, he will recommend the council re-instate a misconduct charge against the agrologist and take the issue to a public hearing.

“I don’t think council has any option now but issue a notification against the member and go to the public hearing,” he said.

He said details of the misconduct charge were not released before because the member had agreed to undertake remedial action and withdraw the letter that sparked the complaint.

All that changed when the names of both the member and the complainant were made public at the AGM.

“Obviously it’s out in the public now,” Rugg said. “It’s probably all going to have to come out.”

The so-called muzzling is being cited as an example of the further weakening of the province’s agricultural land reserve to political and development pressures.

The ALC recently launched a review of removal approvals made for Chilliwack lands owned by MLA John Les, who resigned his post as B.C. Solicitor General due to a police investigation of his land deals when he was the Chilliwack mayor.

Harold Steves, an agrologist and a Richmond City Councillor who helped pen the 1973 act that created the land reserve, said as long as regional panels are appointed by the government “they can be

**Vancouver Real Estate**  
Search all properties for sale in and around Vancouver Canada.  
[olgalassu.com](http://olgalassu.com)

**I Got Scammed 27 Times**  
Avoid Work At Home Online Scams! I Will Show You The Ones That Work.  
[JamminHomeJobs.com](http://JamminHomeJobs.com)

**Volunteers Needed Abroad**  
Find the Right Volunteering Abroad Placement. 8000+ Past Volunteers  
[www.Volunteer.org.nz](http://www.Volunteer.org.nz)

**Medical Volunteer Africa**  
Volunteer in Clinics and Hospitals Help in Namibia, Zambia or Kenya  
[www.AmanziTravel.co.uk](http://www.AmanziTravel.co.uk)

Ads by Google

Local Work  
Global Impact

Stream  
Exceptional Customer Experience  
[www.stream.com](http://www.stream.com)  
CHILLIWACK

**LINE-X**  
TRADEMASTERS

Chilliwack Community Services  
*Changing lives... for life!*

**Tim Hortons**  
Now Hiring!  
CLICK HERE

WEST COAST farmer  
The voice of the B.C. Farmer

real estate

Snooze U Lose

Hey Canada,  
Get Guaranteed Approval!

Capital One  
New to credit?  
Get started with a guaranteed Capital One® MasterCard®

Capital One Visit [www.capitalone.ca](http://www.capitalone.ca) for details.

influenced, if they want to keep their job.

He said the Agricultural Land Commission Act was written because municipal councils “were vulnerable to pressures from developers,” but now regional panels have been created to approve land-removal applications, thwarting the original intent of the act to keep decision-makers at arms-length from political influence.

Agrologist Richard Bocking agreed the old ALC structure was “better than the regional panels.”

“The idea that we should so easily allow land to come out of the land reserve - as is happening under the regional organization of the ALC - doesn’t seem to be in the provincial interest,” he said.

Local community interests are taking “pride of place” over the broader provincial interest at the regional panels, he said, and “local governments are inevitably influenced by local development forces.”

And restricting professional agrologists from taking a public stand against removing farmland for development when food production is becoming a world-wide concern is “unacceptable,” he said.

“We’re thinking about these issues all the time,” Bocking said. “Society has the right to know what we’re thinking about these things.”

He said the province’s proposed Gateway project will “pave over hundreds of hectares of Lower Mainland farmland to build freeways and container sorting yards ... that must be balanced against food production capacity.”

“To me, it’s not a contest,” he said. “Food production must come first.”

Agrologist Wendy Holm, a past BCIC president, said she was “astounded” that an agrologist who publicly opposed a development could be charged with professional misconduct by another agrologist - who was working for the developer.

Holm said 65 of the 111 applications made to remove farmland from the ALR in the Lower Mainland were approved last year, an “astounding” 60 percent approval rate. On Vancouver Island the removal rate was even higher - 68 percent or 48 of the 71 applications made.

[Email](#) | [Print](#) | [Letter to Editor](#) | [Share on Facebook](#)

- BLOGS**
- [The story of the dead body](#)
  - [Plasma or LCD televisions? What's the Business?](#)
  - [Entertainment still rocks](#)
- [Home News](#)  
[Sports](#)  
[Community](#)  
[Lifestyles](#)  
[Opinion](#)   [Letters](#)

**MOST READ STORIES**

**This week | Last week**


**Most read in your Region**

- [‘I modelled at the sex show’](#)  
*Abbotsford News • Apr-10-2008*
- [Missing children found in Mission](#) 📄 *Abbotsford News • Apr-04-2008*
- [Woman airlifted to hospital: Harris Road accident](#) 📄 *Abbotsford News • Apr-06-2008*
- [Rural Abbotsford home peppered with bullets](#) 📄 *Abbotsford News • Apr-02-2008*
- [Tony digs for Chilliwack Mountain marijuana grow-op](#)  
*Chilliwack Progress • Apr-14-2008*
- [Dog Do](#) 📄 *Chilliwack Progress • Apr-14-2008*
- [Finger-pointing over teen’s](#)

**Most read across BC**



- [Mega-quake risk to rise in April](#) 🗨️ *BC Local News • Mar-26-2008*
- [A 25-year-old woman succumbs to wound](#)  
*Kelowna Capital News • Mar-26-2008*
- [‘I modelled at the sex show’](#)  
*Abbotsford News • Apr-14-2008*
- [Woman's body found in Postill Lake mud bogs](#)  
*Kelowna Capital News • Mar-26-2008*
- [Woman dies on TCH](#)  
*Salmon Arm Observer • Apr-04-2008*
- [Oldest cattle ranch in B.C. sold](#)  
*Williams Lake Tribune • Apr-02-2008*
- [Crack cocaine users](#)

**Taboo attendance** *Abbotsford News* • Apr-10-2008

- **One dead, boy injured in Abbotsford accidents**  *Abbotsford News* • Mar-30-2008
- **Former Rosebank resident says she'll sue if wrongdoing is proven** *Chilliwack Progress* • Apr-09-2008

[more local news from around BC »](#)

**collapsing** *North Island Gazette* • Mar-26-2008

- **Resident of Comox gets military medal** *Comox Valley Record* • Apr-09-2008
- **POLICE EXTRA: Charged with forgery** *Terrace Standard* • Apr-11-2008
- **Missing children found in Mission**  *Abbotsford News* • Apr-04-2008
- **Snowbirds fly back to second home** *Comox Valley Record* • Apr-09-2008
- **Earthquake risk set to rise** *Victoria News* • Apr-04-2008
- **POLICE EXTRA: Police take down armed gang** *Terrace Standard* • Apr-10-2008
- **BUSINESS EXTRA: Airline pulls out of Terrace** *Terrace Standard* • Apr-10-2008
- **Merritt murder suspect collared by man with dog**  *Merritt Herald* • Apr-16-2008
- **Comox base honours workers** *Comox Valley Record* • Apr-11-2008

[About Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Contact Us](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Site Map](#) [RSS](#)

© Copyright  Black Press. All rights reserved.