

Journal urges Ottawa to stop muzzling scientists

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"It is time for the [Canadian government](#) to set its scientists free," *Nature* said in a rebuke of a "gradual tightening of media protocols for federal scientists" since Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives won power in 2006.

The editorial described a "confused and Byzantine approach to the press" by the Harper government, "prioritizing message control and

showing little understanding of the importance of the free flow of [scientific knowledge](#)."

"Researchers who once would have felt comfortable responding freely and promptly to [journalists](#) are now required to direct inquiries to a media relations office, which demands written questions in advance, and might not permit scientists to speak," it said.

"Prominent researchers have been prevented from discussing published, peer-reviewed literature."

Nature called on Ottawa to heed complaints from the Canadian Science Writers' Association and other groups critical of the "muzzling of publicly funded scientists."

These were outlined in a letter to Harper sent mid-February, which lists examples such as Environment Canada's David Tarasick being prevented from speaking to the press about his [ozone layer](#) research.

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