

- Tried and Failed to  
- reserve from ALR  
- Day walkers

To: City Council and gathered audience  
Garden City Lands Public Hearing, Council Chambers  
From: Shane McMillan, 7160 Schaefer Ave. Richmond, B.C.

SUBJECT: In opposition to the removal of the 136 acre Garden City  
Lands from the ALR.

*Tues. March 11*  
*150th anniversary of democracy in Canada.*  
Good evening, and thank you for hearing so many of us from the public  
speak here tonight. I am here as a private citizen to oppose the exemption  
of the Garden City Lands from the ALR.

*SSS No. 4 Rd.*  
But before I go into my reasons for upholding the ALR status of the  
Garden City Lands, I want to touch briefly on fairness in the public  
debate, and on the importance of keeping our facts accurate. We have  
heard a lot about this issue over the last three months or so, and public  
debate has been passionate on both sides. At times however, it seems that  
some parties have been trying hard to confuse the issues at hand, or  
perhaps to mislead the public.

*Some*  
I also find it odd that ~~the only~~ *most* people ~~who~~ *add is that many of these people* have been using an “us versus  
them” mentality in this argument. ~~are the proponents of this plan~~ – the very  
people who say they are so happy to be in this partnership. At the  
February 18<sup>th</sup> General Purposes Meeting, the honourable Malcolm Brodie  
himself said, “I don’t want to speak in adversarial terms”, then proceeded  
to do just that! In a March 8<sup>th</sup> Richmond Review editorial, former Mayor  
Greg Halsey-Brandt talks about people who “object to Musqueam  
aspirations that conflict with our vision for Richmond.” Well, I for one do  
have a vision for Richmond, yet I do not see any conflict between “us”  
and “them”.

The Musqueam want social and economic development. They want  
training, and a chance for cultural expression. No one in Richmond would  
deny the Musqueam Band of these things. But is it their aspiration to  
develop more urban sprawl in a city that is already becoming  
overdeveloped? Exactly whose “vision” are we in conflict with?

Some supporters of development have been telling the public that this deal  
is the ONLY way that Richmond can get a piece of this land. That, “half  
of something is better than all of nothing”. What these people fail to  
understand is that for those who want the land to remain in the ALR,  
ownership of the land is of no consequence. We don’t care if the city of  
Richmond owns not a square inch of the lands, we just want the lands to  
remain in the ALR. What matters to us is that the land STAYS in the  
ALR! It doesn’t matter who owns the land – the Musqueam, the city, the  
federal government, or anyone else – as long as the land can not be used  
for large scale development. These questions of ownership and jurisdiction

that have arisen repeatedly only serve to cloud the true issue. What matters most is that we do not erode the ALR, which was established in 1973 by a government that was wise enough to plan for the future.

Another group with an interest in the Garden City Lands is the Richmond Sports Council, which has been asking for more sports fields to support Richmonds growing population for decades. But if the Garden City Lands are removed from the ALR, and divided between the parties, it is highly unlikely that the sports fields will be included. First of all, the M.O.U. states that the city's properties will be "scattered" amongst the development. So there will be no guarantee of any large contiguous open space where sports fields can go.

Secondly, with only between 48 and 68 acres to work with, the city will be forced to contend with a number of competing interests. Given the current climate around food security, and the fact that the city is already committed to community gardens and some kind of urban agriculture, sports fields will likely be displaced. It seems that in this game of rock, paper and scissors development trumps urban agriculture, but urban agriculture trumps sportsfields. So the only way that we can ensure there is enough room for everyone who needs green space is to keep the entire 136 acres in the ALR. This should come as no surprise to the city, since their own predictions show a deficit of 200 acres of green space to account for the projected growth in Richmond's city centre population.

I'd like to talk now about the Kwantlen Proposal. Kwantlen's Institute of Sustainable Horticulture has proposed an Urban Agriculture Research and Education Centre for the city of Richmond. This new centre would provide education for the next generation of farmers, and for the larger community. It would give us a place to find solutions to the problem of meeting our food needs in a changing world. And it would be the only school of its kind in North America. We need to fully support this project. Currently the average age of farmers in Canada is 55. Who will replace these farmers as they retire? Where will they learn how to farm?

It is also worth noting that the city of Coquitlam is watching what happens with this proposal VERY closely. If it does not work out with Richmond, the centre will likely go to Coquitlam's Colony Farm, and this would be an enormous loss for the city of Richmond.

The CLC Lawyer told us last night that the Garden City Lands had already been offered to and turned down by every federal department. But that was sometime before the Musqueam came to the negotiating table in the fall of 2004. He also cited a letter from the Treasury Board dated December 4, 2007 stating that they have no policy for the land to revert back to the crown, and this could only be done if they needed to run a

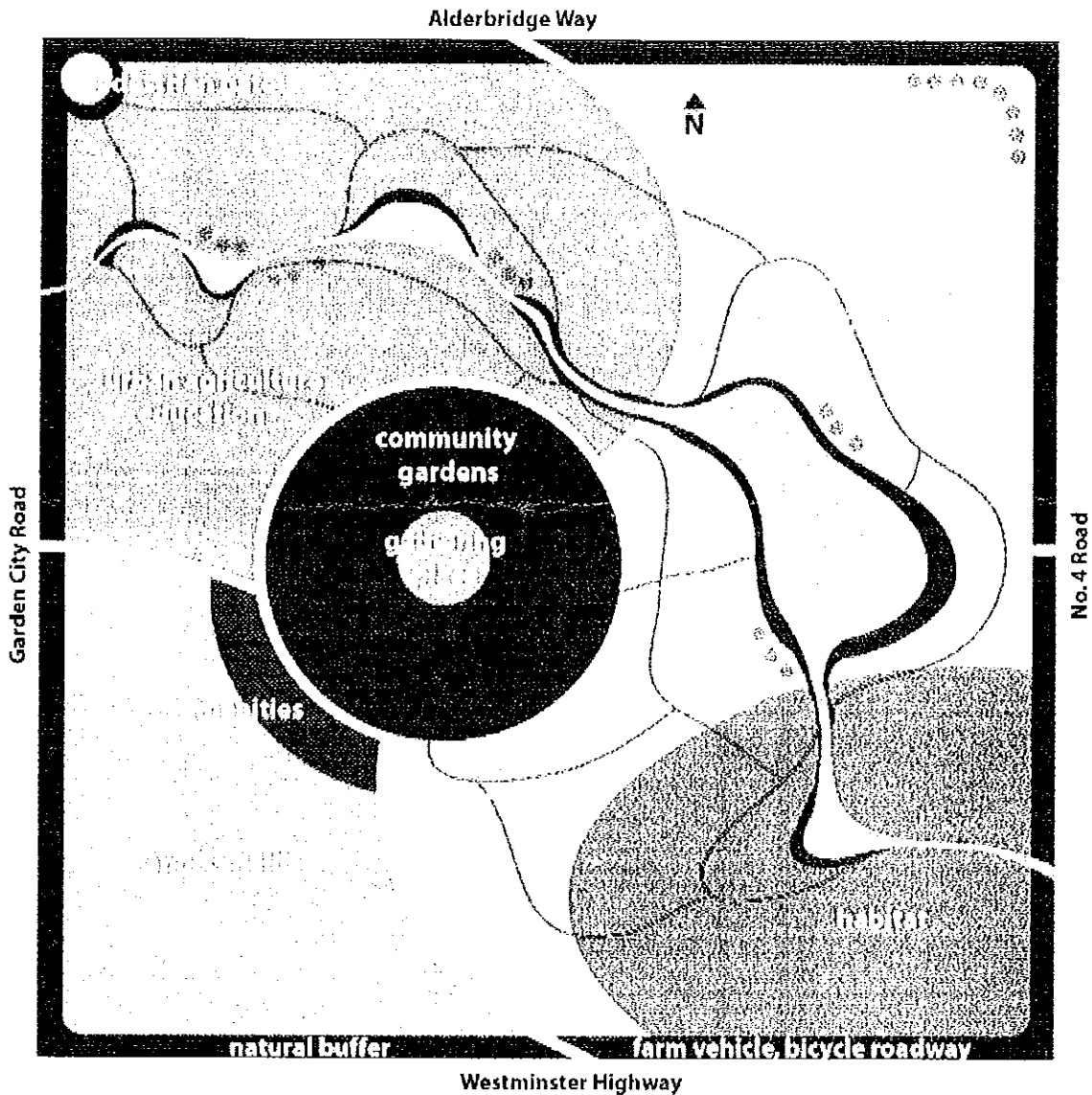
program. Well the Kwantlen proposal provides us with just such a program, and all it takes is demand from citizens and councilors to bring this matter to the attention of the federal ministers. On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 the federal ministers and treasury board would have had no knowledge of the Kwantlen proposal, or the fact that many people in Richmond are interested in keeping the Garden City Lands green.

The Urban Agriculture Research and Education Centre would require about 40 or 50 acres of land. Although the Kwantlen proposal does not specifically ask to be on the Garden City Lands, it really is the only place in Richmond that makes sense. The lands are a five-minute walk to the Richmond Campus, and the only empty chunk of land that directly borders the urban centre.

So again, we see that in order to accommodate all of these needs – the community gardens, the sports fields, the Kwantlen proposal, and so on – we will need the entire 136 acres to be protected from development.

I'd also like to point out that the proposal for a Food Systems Park that has arisen from public input aligns perfectly with the principles of Smart Growth, and also with the Recently published *British Columbia Agriculture Plan, Growing a Healthy Future For B.C. Families*. The plan recognizes that agriculture in B.C. is at a turning point – caught between remaining competitive in the global marketplace, and meeting local demand for fresh, healthy, and locally produced food. The plan outlines 23 strategies within five themes, including:

- Producing Local Food in a Changing World
- Meeting Environmental and Climate Challenges
- Building Innovative and Profitable Family Farm Businesses
- Building First Nations Agricultural Capacity
- and
- Bridging the Urban / Agriculture Divide



By contrast, from what little the partners of the M.O.U. are able to tell us, it is clear that their proposal does not support Smart Growth, or the B.C. Agriculture Plan.

Still, city staff have claimed that the proposed development of the Garden City Lands makes sense from a city planning perspective, with regard to “Smart Growth.” Sadly, this is just not true.

And why would the city build this awesome, sustainable community – according to the Canada Lands Company, a real showcase for the city – why would they build it way out here in the boonies of the urban core? If this is really the best model for a livable, sustainable city, why not do it where you mean it: In the city centre.

Proponents of the M.O.U. boast a ten minute walk to the skytrain station. Hmm... or a 30 second walk to your car and the immediately accessible

freeway? According to the math, option two gives me an extra 9.5 minutes of sleep in the morning right off the bat. I suspect that residents of the new development would come to the same conclusion, and few would opt for the walk.

Again, why not build this amazing example of urban living at Westminster and Three road? Why is it that all I see being built in the rest of the downtown core is densely packed highrises of nearly uniform height and boxiness? Is this what is envisioned for the Garden City Lands? How is this new development going to be any different? But more importantly, why do it here, in the boonies... on top of a peat bog... next to a spooky old forest.

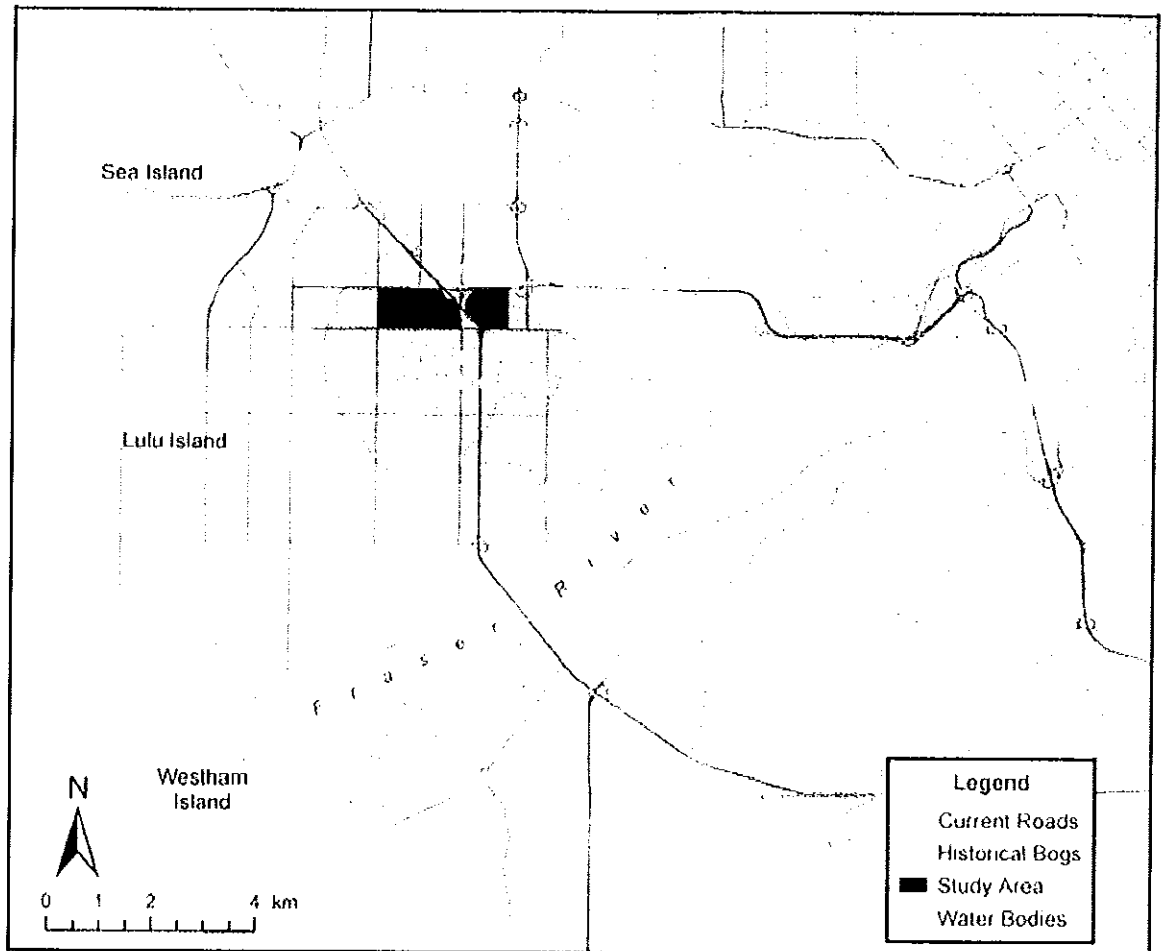
If Richmond actually wants to showcase sustainability and green development, then they would actually abide by the principles of smart growth. This means that ALR land would not be an option for development. It also means that open spaces, natural beauty, and environmentally sensitive areas must be preserved.

It is also worth noting that all of the properties shown by the Canada Lands Company last night were built on brown fields, or previously developed or contaminated sites. None of them were built on open space.

The city and its partners say the lands have limited agricultural viability.

Again, this is not true. As summarized so clearly by Wendy Holme last night, urban agriculture on the Garden City Lands would be viable both agriculturally and economically.

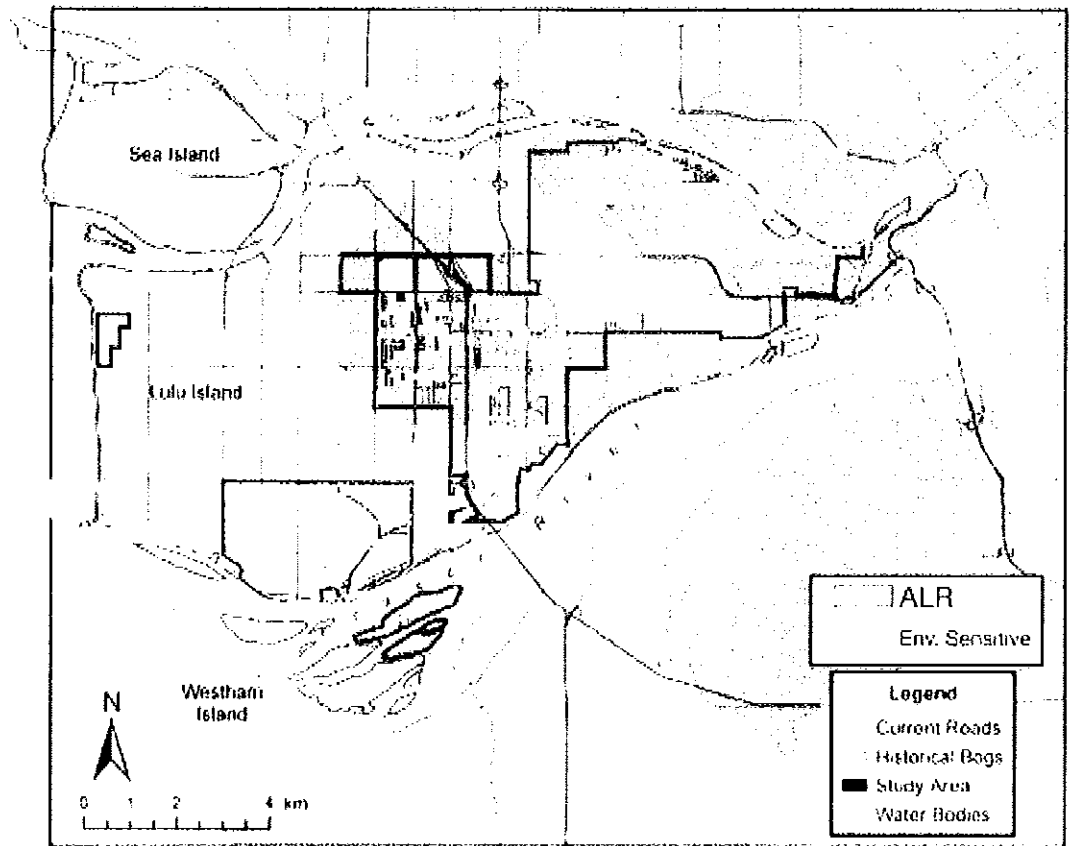
As you can see on this map, the Garden City Lands are a small remnant of the Greater Lulu Island Bog, which used to cover a vast area of Richmond.



Jagger, Bret. 2007. Chapter 7: A Site History of the Lulu Island Bog. IN: Davis, Neil and Rose Klinkenberg (editors). 2007. A Biophysical Inventory and Evaluation of the Lulu Island Bog, Richmond, British Columbia. Ecology Committee, Richmond Nature Park Society, Richmond, BC. Available on-line at <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/richmond/city/inventory2002.htm>.



When we overlay the two maps, we can clearly see that a huge section of Richmond's most productive farmland was once bogland, just like the Garden City Lands are now. So the argument that the lands are low grade, and unfarmable simply does not hold any water.



Map of current ALR land, showing historical bogs.

Richmond boasts one of the best climates and soil profiles for food production in all of Canada. What's more, the close proximity to the urban centre is an advantage to economically viable small-scale agriculture, and to the people in neighbouring areas who will benefit from the fresh, healthy produce available at their doorstep.

In 1968 Garret Hardin wrote a paper called *The Tragedy of the Commons* in which he stated quite accurately the root of many environmental and social problems. The Tragedy of the Commons relates to the conflict between individual interests and the common good over finite resources.



The current situation regarding the Garden City Land is an example of this mentality of, “oh just a little bit here, a little bit there won’t make a difference.” Additionally, the Garden City lands situation is a perfect case in which the personal gains of a few are in direct conflict with the long term good of the many. Essentially, environmental responsibility is thought of as somebody else’s problem.

The argument is made that this land represents less than one percent of Richmond’s total ALR base. But what kind of an example is this council setting for the rest of Richmond, many of whom live on land that is currently designated as ALR. Look at all those people on No. 4 Rd. south of Westminster Hwy. Will they think it’s fair that the city of Richmond and its partners are allowed to benefit from the removal of ALR land, but a citizen of Richmond is not?

What makes this a tragedy is that a little bit here, and a little bit there does add up – especially when it is happening on the global scale.

I have talked with people who believe that we don’t need to grow food here, we can always just import. All we need is money, and with money we can buy whatever we want. These folks usually cite economies of scale. They say that industrial agriculture can best meet the needs of a growing population, via the global economy .

But what these people fail to understand, is that the same pressures face every city in the world right now. In 2007 for the first time in the history of the human race, more people lived in urban areas than in rural areas. And this growth of urban centres is encroaching on farmland at an alarming rate worldwide. This can be seen locally in every community of B.C. In Richmond, Delta, Langley, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Kelowna... And that’s just in British Columbia, where we are lucky enough to have the ALR to protect farmland and create denser cities – not sprawlier ones.

Other parts of the world are not so lucky, and farmland is being lost not only to urban development, but also to massive soil erosion, disappearing or polluted water supplies, the spread of deserts, and the effects of climate change.

With all due respect, I’m a lot younger than the people making this important decision. And the decisions made tonight are going to affect me a lot more than they do you. Some people here tonight have a lot to gain economically in the short term – and I don’t mean the Musqueam Band – it is time that they get the same access to economic development as we all have. I am talking about the developers, the hotel owners, the chamber of commerce, the lawyers... All of these people who are behind the deal...

Albert Einstein once said “We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” And the same is true here. The logic that says take this land out of the ALR to develop for profit and benefit as we have in the past is the same kind of thinking that has been destroying the native land since settlers first arrived. Now, after having almost totally wiped out the native culture of Canada, we are making the first nations buy into the very economic system that nearly destroyed them.

We are forcing the Musqueam into an economic system that creates money by destroying the land and resources. By diminishing the Earth's resources more and more, we can get wealthier and wealthier. But there is a problem here, because now we are using more stuff – more raw materials, forests, atmosphere, than the Earth can produce. In fact, we are using a lot more. If everybody on Earth enjoyed the lifestyle of an average Canadian, we would need between 4 and 6 Planets worth of stuff just to keep ourselves going. Unfortunately, we only have just one planet.

Of course, Adam Smith would say that there is no problem at all – This 18<sup>th</sup> century Scotsman considered to be the father of free market economics had some great theories. So great that they persisted for over 200 years and have become the basis of our entire global economy. But like many theories, eventually we find the flaws... eventually the theory no longer holds true.

Smith's biggest failing is that he separated the economic world from the natural world. This was necessary because his system depended entirely on the notion of infinite growth... There is no limit to trade. No limit, whatsoever. Only labour and capital matter – natural resources are not a limit. Of course in nature, nothing is infinite, and there are always limits.

We live in a closed system where for countless millennia everything has been recycled, and life has persisted. Then humans came along like a swarm of termites that just eats and eats... But we eat EVERYthing! Plants, animals, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes. By Consuming and consuming, we grow. Land is used up, resources are consumed, and mountains of toxic trash are left behind. If this kind of wastefulness continues, then we have no hope. We can't play by the old rules anymore.

Fortunately, there is one thing that sets us apart from the termites, and that is our ability to learn from our past mistakes. For hundreds of years we have thought that we are the masters of nature, and now Nature has told us that we are not. Now with this – historic – agreement we have the chance to take a stand for nature. We can make a decision – to follow the status quo and develop high-rises on green space. Or we can make a decision to

say, “enough is enough”, and do the right thing. One path leads to immediate monetary gains but puts our future in peril. The other is an investment, for the future.

Think of our food system as a person – at infancy it only has what is immediately available to it. Then it develops and as a young fit person the food system can travel around the world and eat terrible chemicals, and seem to get along alright – but now it’s getting old – clogged arteries, trouble breathing, all those chemicals over the years. And as it ages, the food system needs to make wiser, healthier decisions. So we can think of ALR land as the retirement savings plan for our food system. This is what we’ll depend on when our international food system doesn’t work anymore. The Garden City Lands are a vital part of Richmond’s savings plan, and it would be foolhardy to cut the initial land investment in half.

So in conclusion – Keep the Garden City Lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve. Ownership is not important, but maintaining the ALR status is. The Musqueam Band deserves to have the economic development, training and business opportunities that they are seeking. I believe that a lot of this can be achieved on the Garden City Lands, within the ALR.

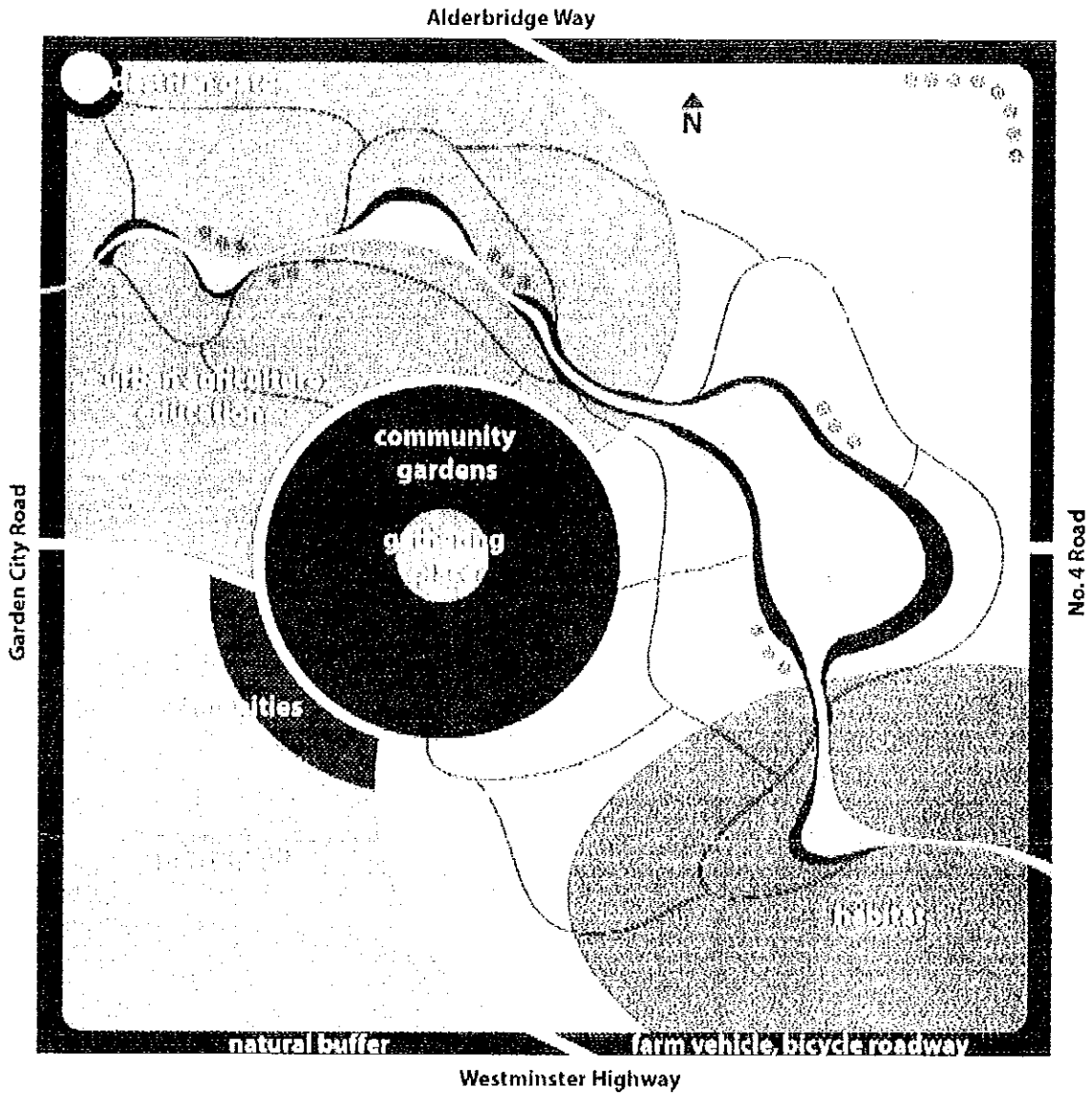
The sports community needs more access to playing fields. Leaving the Garden City Lands in the ALR can make this happen, but removing them will likely not leave space available.

Developing an urban agriculture park along with Kwantlen’s research and education centre will bring real community benefit to Richmond, while following the mandate for agriculture set by the provincial government.

Development under the M.O.U. follows an outdated economic system that is still wreaking havoc on our natural world, and is destroying our future for the sake of quick monetary gains. To quote Rachel Carson, “Man is a part of nature, and his war on nature is inevitably a war against himself.”

Under the ALR, all interested parties can work together to find a solution that works. I urge this council not to go ahead with the block application. But if you do, I sincerely hope that the Agricultural Land Commissioners will deny the application once again.

Thank you for listening.



## Proposal for a Sustainable Food Systems Park

## WATER

2. Summarize the evidence Brown provides to support the contention that the world's freshwater resources are over utilized.

Brown tells us that, "the world is incurring a vast water deficit – one that is largely invisible, historically recent, and growing fast." (p41-42) global demand for water, he says, has tripled over the last half century. 70 percent of this water is being used for irrigation. Brown brings forward a great deal of evidence to support his argument:

### OVER\_PUMPING AQUIFERS:

- Over half the world's population lives in countries that are currently overpumping aquifers, notably the world's big three grain producers, China, India, and the United States
  - 2001 - Under the Hebei province in the North China plain, the average level of the deep aquifer was dropping about 3 meters per year, and twice as much in some areas. Wheat farmers must now drill to a depth of 300 to 1000 meters to tap fresh water.
  - between 1998 and 2005 China's grain production fell by 34 million tons – more than the total annual harvest for Canada's wheat industry.
  - China is overpumping three of its main river basins – the Hai, the Yellow, and the Huai. When the Hai is depleted, the grain harvest will drop by 40 million tons.
  - In India there are 21 million wells drilled. In North Gujarat the water tables drops 6 meters per year.
  - Farmers in India use modified oil-drilling technology to drill up to 1000 meters for water.
  - The Ogalalla aquifer, underneath Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, has dropped by 30 meters.
    - In Pakistan too, water tables fall by 1 to 3.5 meters a year. At this rate, Quetta, the capital city, will run dry within 15 years.
    - Iran overpumps its aquifers by an average of 5 billion tons of water per year.
    - In Saudi Arabia water shortages have caused the annual wheat harvest to fall by 71 percent from 1992 to 2005. Farmers are now pumping up to 4,000 feet deep.
    - The Sana'a basin in Yemen provides water for the 2 million people who live in the nation's capital, Sana'a. This basin will be pumped dry by 2010. The Yemeni government has been searching up to 2 km deep for water – and found nothing.
    - Due to severe water shortages, Israel has banned the irrigation of wheat.

### RIVERS RUNNING DRY

- The Colorado river, supplying Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and California, is drained dry before it reaches the Gulf of California.
- The Yellow river, flowing 4,000 kilometers through northern China first ran dry in 1972. Now it rarely reaches the sea.
- The Nile, The Indus and the Ganges are reduced to a mere trickle. The Nile for instance has been reduced from 32 billion cubic meters to 2 billion cubic meters reaching the sea.

### DISAPPEARING LAKES

- Owens Lake, California has disappeared. It used to cover 200 square miles.



- Mono Lake, California has dropped 35 feet since 1941. It is the oldest lake in North America.
- The Sea of Galilee is drying up since the Jordan River that feeds it has been so greatly diminished.
- The water level in the Dead Sea has dropped by 25 meters in the past 40 years, and could disappear entirely by 2050.
- The Aral Sea has lost four fifths of its volume since 1969, destroying a once thriving fishing industry, and salinating massive stretches of crop and grassland.
- In the province of Qinhai, China, 2,000 of its 4,077 lakes have disappeared in the last 20 years.
- Lake Dal, in India's Kashmir Valley has shrunk from 75 to 12 square kilometers.
- Lake Chapala, near Guadalajara, Mexico, has lost 80 percent of its water in volume.

3. *What does Brown suggest is the consequence of water scarcity relative to agriculture?*

Brown points out that it requires 1,000 tons of water to produce 1 ton of wheat. By contrast it takes only 14 tons of water to make 1 ton of steel. As city populations grow and cities and industry requires more water, economic policy will likely dictate that agriculture loses out. We can already see this happening, as Chinese Industry gets first claim on water in the Yellow river, leaving farmers in the Shandong province with nothing but a dry river bed. And in the United States growing cities are quickly buying water rights from farmers.

Because it takes 1000 tons of water to produce 1 ton of grain, importing grain is a country's best way of importing water. Many countries already import a great deal of their grain. Algeria, for instance, imports more than half it's grain. The water needed to produce this grain exceeds the total water usage for all purposes in Algeria from domestic sources.

If our water usage continues on current patterns, it cannot be long before we see a global shortage of water and the consequent collapse of agriculture on irrigated lands. Grains, which require the most water, will be hardest hit. In the future wars may be fought not over oil, but water.

## SOIL

3. *What is soil erosion, what are its causes and why is it a significant concern?*

“Erosion is a process by which soil is moved from one area to another.” (A&AFC ch.7, p.1)  
 Soil erosion is a natural process that has been greatly accelerated by human activity in the areas of agriculture, forestry, and urban development. It is a process that removes topsoil, reduces soil organic matter, and breaks down the soil structure, eventually (if left unchecked) leading to desertification.

The main natural forces of erosion are wind and water. Wind picks up small soil particles blowing them many miles. Water runs over the soil, picking up particles along the way and distributing them elsewhere. On bare soil, both forces are far more effective at

picking up particles, hence erosion occurs at a much greater rate. When organic matter is lost, soil structure degrades and is again more prone to erosion.

Soil erosion is a significant concern because all terrestrial life relies on healthy soil – without it we cannot eat.

- Suzuki and Brown both site topsoil loss around the world at 20 to 300 times the rate that it is being replaced.
- Ethiopia, for instance loses an estimated 1 billion tons of topsoil per year.
- In China 3,600 square kilometers of land are lost to desertification annually.
- The United States loses about 1.9 billion tons of soil annually. As erosion destroys millions of hectares annually, our population continues to explode, creating an ever-widening gap between our ability to produce food, and our need for it.

## PEAK OIL

4. Suzuki says that technologically advanced nations “mine” the soil. What does he mean and what does he say are the ramifications of doing this?

By “mining” the soil, we are “removing its organic content without replacing it, thereby compromising its future productivity for the sake of the enormous harvests of today.” (Suzuki, p. 102) In the last 40 years we have lost over 430 million hectares of arable land to soil erosion worldwide. By mining the soil, we are taking soil into the realm of the non-renewable resource. Arable land is finite, and currently “shrinking by more than 10 million hectares a year because of soil degradation.” (Suzuki, p.101)

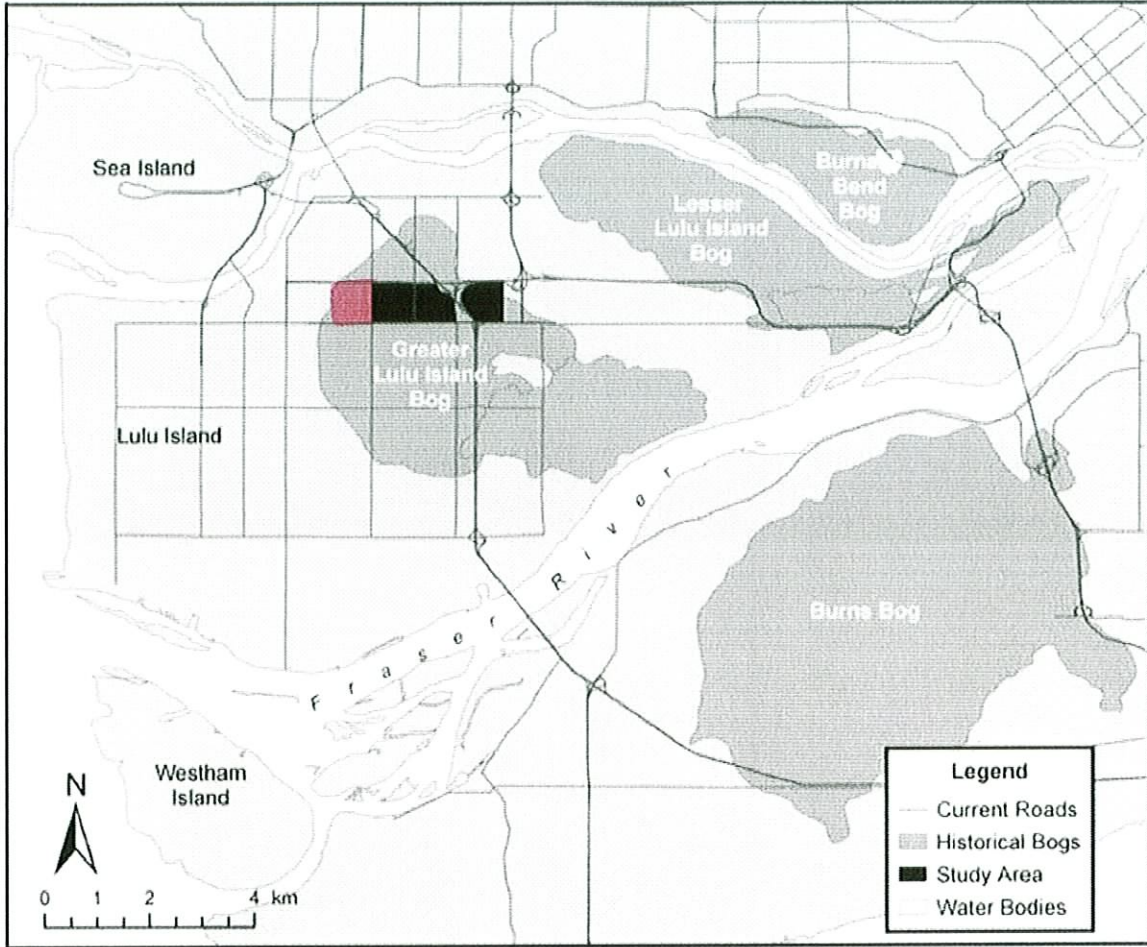
## GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM AND HUNGER

4. What is the relationship between export oriented agriculture in developing nations and hunger? Provide examples.

In Moore-Lappe’s words, “export crop production squeezes out basic food production”. (12 Myths, p.2) In most third world countries, hunger has continued or even worsened, while food exports continue to boom. For instance, in 1995 India exported \$625 million worth of wheat and flour, and \$1.3 billion worth of rice, while upwards of 200 million Indians went hungry. Rice and wheat are two staples of the Indian diet. In Brazil we see a similar story – 70 million Brazilians cannot afford enough to eat, yet the country in 1994 exported more than \$13 billion worth of food. Even sub-Saharan Africa continues to export food, despite the suffering of “some 213 million chronically malnourished people” (Moore-Lappe, p 12)

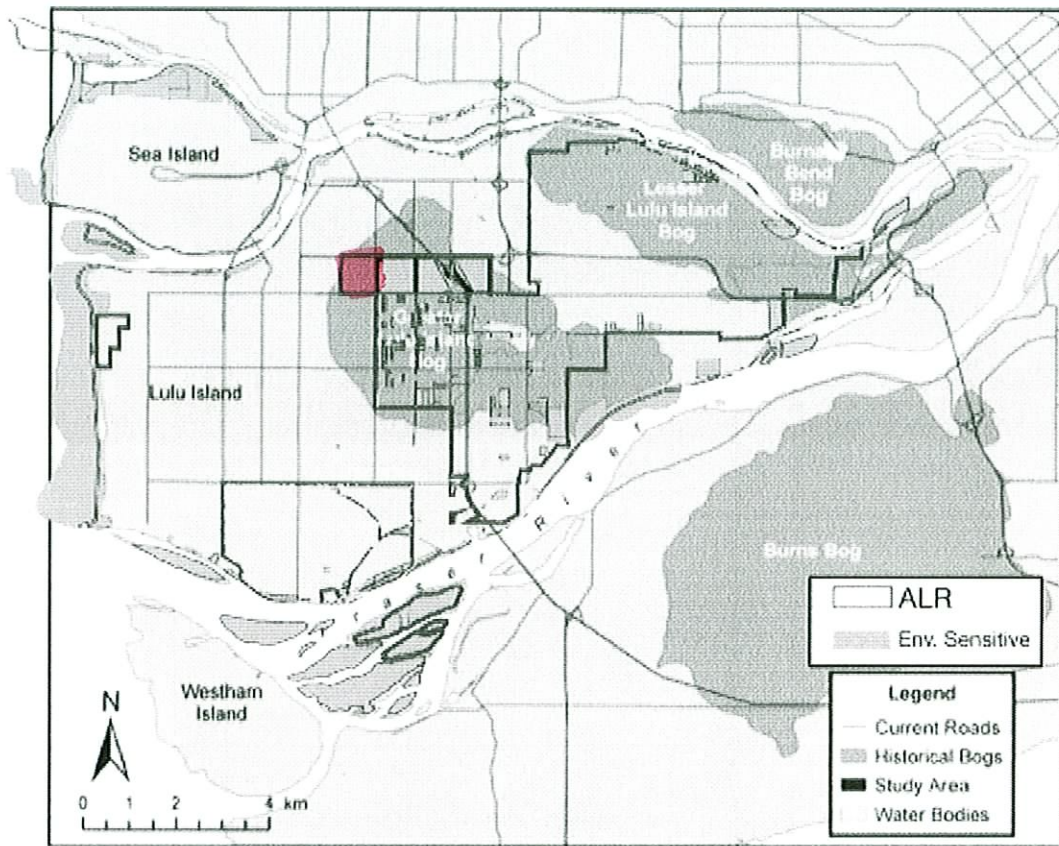
In Africa good land was taken over by the colonizers and is still mostly used for production of high-value export crops. Peasant producers are left to the marginally productive lands, where they receive no aid or assistance for growing food crops like millet, sorghum and root crops. Public resources, research, and foreign aid are all channeled towards expensive, large-scale projects. Meanwhile, developed countries dump food surpluses in African markets at artificially low prices, undercutting local producers. Developed countries also seek low wages to guarantee export profits. Because of these reasons as well as certain domestic policies, local producers have little incentive to produce food for the local market.





**Map of historic bogs of Richmond**





Map of current ALR land, showing historical bogs.

Figure 4 – Environmentally Sensitive Areas Map

