



Office of the Hon. Raymond Chan, P.C., M.P.
Member of Parliament for Richmond

MARCH 18, 2008 – RICHMOND CITY HALL

Your Worship and City Councillors,

Ever since I was first elected to represent our community in 1993, a broad and diverse array of concerned, active citizens and community groups have come to me advocating for the delivery of the Garden City Lands to Richmond. There has always been consistent and intense public pressure on my part to ensure these lands were made available and accessible to the citizens of Richmond.

For this reason, I remain particularly proud of the Memorandum of Understanding which I helped to negotiate in 2005, an agreement between all stakeholders and our community which I consider to be the only viable chance Richmond has to realize the full public potential of this 136-acre piece of land.

We crafted a deal based on the reality of the situation before us and based on a vision of a vibrant future for Richmond's city centre. The Musqueam had been granted an injunction through the courts preventing any transfer or development of the land until their longstanding interests in the land had been satisfactorily recognized. We were and continue to be faced with the possibility that Richmond could lose the land entirely.

Instead, a deal was negotiated that recognized the Musqueam's legitimate claims to the land while at the same time securing very significant benefits for the people of Richmond. In 2005, we crafted a deal on behalf of the people of Richmond, giving 50 per cent of the land to the City of Richmond for much needed park space and public amenities.

The deal also gave 50 per cent to the Canada Lands Company and the Musqueam for a joint-venture development that would ultimately be controlled by the City of Richmond through City zoning bylaws and provincial land use approval processes.

The deal was heralded as a truly unprecedented accomplishment. Allison McNeil, the Senior Policy Analyst for the BC Union of Municipalities, referred to the deal as a “Really innovative agreement” and said “The scale of this project, and the required co-operation, is at a level never seen before. I'm not aware of anything that's been done in recent times on this scale.”

With this land finally in the hands of our community, we will finally be able to open up vast new green space, build and open much needed public amenities, programs, and services. We will be able to work towards solving our community's desperate shortage of affordable housing for seniors, young families, new Canadians and the disabled.

This land, if opened up to our community, could also be home to an arts and cultural centre, a trade and exhibition centre, and even post-secondary education spaces.

I am particularly pleased that the project involves significant opportunities to develop agriculture in Richmond. I strongly support the work that the project partners have engaged in with the Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee and with the \$10 million proposed Agricultural Endowment Fund.

It is my belief that the 2005 agreement is the only way to move forward and prevent the Garden City Lands going back into the law courts, embroiled in a lengthy and expensive court case, which could result in the entire parcel going to the Musqueam.

The first step in realizing the terms of the MOU are to apply to the Agricultural Land Commission to take the lands out of the Agricultural Land Reserve. If the land remains in the ALR, the deal falls through and we are back at square one.

I hope that now, after decades of dashed hopes, failed negotiations, and no public access to such a large space of our land in the very heart and centre of our city, we will now finally be able to move forward by opening up these lands to serve our most important community priorities.

I urge the people of Richmond to participate fully in this important debate and to make our voices heard about this important opportunity for a better future in Richmond.

Sincerely,

The Hon. Raymond Chan, P.C., M.P.