

Mayor and Council  
City of Richmond  
6911 No. 3 Road  
Richmond, BC  
V6Y 2C1

18 March 2008

**RE: Public Hearing for the Removal of the Garden City Lands (5555 No. 4 Road, Richmond) from the Agricultural Land Reserve**

Dear Mayor and Council

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some of my concerns about this Development.

I would like to speak to you tonight as a close neighbour in this great Fraser River Estuary; I live on Westham Island just across the Fraser River to the south of you.

Second, as a student of this ecosystem; I have spent much of my life studying components of it and helping groups protect key habitats within the ecosystem especially the farmland and wildlife habitat.

**Process: Why is exclusion of this property being considered?**

With many others, I attended a Public Hearing of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for the exclusion of this property less than two years ago (September 1, 2006) here in Richmond. Laudably, the ALC turned down the application.

As I'm sure you are aware, evidence was presented at that Public Hearing that showed that this land has agricultural capabilities and is suitable for agriculture. As I'm also sure you know the *Purposes of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC)* are:

*(a) to preserve agricultural land;*

*(b) to encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest; and*

*(c) to encourage local governments, first nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies*

THE ALC is an independent Crown Agency who's "*mission is to preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout British Columbia*".

**Q:** Why waste their time asking them to exclude the same piece of farmland that they refused less than two years ago?

### **Community Need**

A recent analysis: *British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve: A Legal Review of the Question of Community Need*, concluded:

- The purpose of the ALR and role of the ALC is to preserve farmland for food production.
- It is neither the role nor responsibility of the ALC to balance competing land uses or to negotiate the use of farmland for non-farm uses.
- The ALC's current consideration of '*community need*' is contrary to its legislated authority.

### **Farmland an Endangered Resource?**

Fertile topsoil only exists because of previous life on earth. There is a very limited supply. Just to illustrate:

- If an apple is the earth, cut it into four, throw out  $\frac{3}{4}$  because that area is covered by water; only  $\frac{1}{4}$  is land.
- Cut this in half because half is mountains, deserts or ice.
- Now cut into 4 slithers, throw away three as these are infertile (rocky, hot, roads, cities) so only  $\frac{1}{32}^{\text{nd}}$  remains.
- The peel of this slither represents the topsoil that must feed the world (people, animals and plants). SO MUCH DEPENDS ON SO LITTLE.

**Q:** Can we afford to loose any more fertile land on this planet?

### **Sustainability of BC's Food Supply and the Food lands of the GVRD**

There are many questions under this heading that require answers before Council makes a decision to exclude any farmland from the ALR in Richmond. For example:

**Q:** Given possible consequences of global warming such as the **loss of 30%** of the world's food lands, and the fact that BC currently is producing **only 50%** of the food we eat, don't members feel that they have a moral obligation to future generations to protect all food lands in Richmond?

**Q:** Do members agree that to have food security we need to protect our farmland in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)? And consequently we need to send a strong message that such farmland close to markets must have a hard edge around all its ALR land to stop losses to speculation?

**Q:** Do members of Council agree that given Richmond's origin as a farming and fishing community, that you have a moral obligation to protect these industries?



**Q:** How can the GVRD be a Sustainable Region if it cannot grow safe, local food to feed its communities?

**Population Growth and Housing and the Greater Vancouver Green Zone**

The primary goal of the GVRD *Livable Region Strategic Plan* (LRSP) is “to help maintain regional livability and protect the environment in the face of anticipated growth”.

**Q:** Are you aware that GVRD planners have just published a report that shows that all the predicted population growth in the Lower Mainland for the next 25 years can be accommodated and “*we don’t have to touch the agricultural land and we don’t have to touch the Green Zone*” (DeMarco, GVRD Division Manager)?

As part of the GVRD’s Sustainable Region Initiative consultations, a Workshop was held on Agriculture one year ago (March 21, 2007). It was stated by an agrologist that “*we need a hard edge around the ALR*” to stop more losses to speculation. In fact Delta’s Mayor and Chair of the GVRD was in attendance and stated “*I would say about 85% of people do not want to use agricultural land for housing*”.

At the regional level, the future sustainability of the GVRD is threatened by destruction of the Green Zone. Close to a third (30%) of the Green Zone is agricultural land. Speculator driven exclusions of valuable food lands are making a mockery of any future *Sustainable Region Initiative*.

Goal #4 of the proposed *Sustainable Region Initiative* is to:

***“Protect and enhance the region’s natural assets:***

***Metro Vancouver will be a region with a natural environment which will continue to provide a wealth of services that residents and visitors enjoy and value.***

***The fertile farmlands of the region will continue to provide fresh local food while our waterways will allow salmon and other species to thrive.***

***Metro Vancouver will sustain these local and global assets for future generations.”***

**Q:** What actions is the City of Richmond going to undertake to help the region achieve this goal?

Respectfully, I recommend that the City of Richmond oppose the removal of the Garden City Lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve and by so doing demonstrate their support for the GVRD’s proposed vision of “*a livable and sustainable region.*”

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Mary J. Taitt