



SPRING CELEBRATIONS AND FOOD SECURITY

As we have been watching the signs of spring blossom around us over the last weeks, we are reminded of the cycles of the year, and the celebration of growth. Our springtime festivals like Spring Equinox, Passover, Ramadan, Vaisakhi, and Easter remind of rebirth and hope and are usually accompanied by special foods! As we dig into gardens this spring, I'd like to share recent legislation that boosts local and healthy food production. This MLA update provides info on the development of food sustainability and agriculture, and the creation of systems that will feed all our spring celebrations long into the future.



\$200 Million investment for food sustainability

As we have seen in the last years, having an uninterrupted supply of nutritious food, requires systems of movement, a robust local food supply, and at prices that are affordable. New funding for food sustainability will bolster food supply locally so we can help people afford their grocery bills, keep our farmers and food processors profitable, while making sure no one goes hungry. At the beginning of March, the Ministries of Agriculture and Food and Social Development and Poverty Reduction made an announcement of an historic \$200 million investment towards food security for British Columbians. The investment will:

- strengthen farm, food processing and supply chain resiliency across British Columbia
- increase the production and availability of fresh local food in remote areas and Indigenous communities;
- help people, including those with lower incomes, access more fresh, nutritious food; and;
- strengthen the infrastructure of local food banks and create more community food hubs

Food Coupons at the CV Farmers' Market



buy local · Comox Valley · eat local
FARMERS' MARKET

I received some great updates from the BC Association of Farmers' Markets that I would like to share. The BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program provides Farmers' market coupons to lower-income families and seniors to get fresh, local food into bellies. The Province of BC, and The BC Association of Farmers' Market together deliver the program with local partners like CV Family Services -Healthy Families Program, MIKI'SIW Metis Association and UIWONA. In 2022, through increased funding, the program was expanded to more seniors and elders and the weekly allocation was increased from \$21 to \$27. In total, \$69,648 in coupons were redeemed at the CV Farmers' Market, meaning that 181 people received fresh, healthy, local food from our farmers market last year.

Local Food



LUSH VALLEY

The Province of BC is supporting not-for-profits with capital projects funding including our very own LUSH Valley. To help continue their great food program work, LUSH Valley recently received \$52,036 to for the renovation for a new home-style kitchen and accessible washroom. Throughout the province, the Community Gaming Grants program is providing a total of \$5.3 million to 49 not-for-profit groups for capital projects in 2023.

New carbon tax exemption improves greenhouse grower cash flow

Eligible B.C. greenhouse growers will soon be able to obtain a point-of-sale carbon tax reduction to help them preserve their cash flow and continue growing local vegetables and plants. The new exemption means that an 80% carbon tax reduction on propane or natural gas sales will happen at the point-of-sale, which allows a smoother cash flow for growers, instead of recouping those expenses later. Supporting BC producers!

AgriStability

B.C. farmers and producers can still participate in AgriStability for the 2022 farming year and have until June 30, 2023, to pay their fees and secure coverage under the program.

AgriStability is a federal-provincial-territorial program that provides support to growers with large financial declines caused by production losses, disease outbreak and increased costs or declining market conditions.

Farmers, ranchers, processors supported by new Canada-B.C. partnership

B.C. farmers and food processors will receive increased food security support over the next five years through a new agreement between the governments of Canada and British Columbia. The program is called Sustainable CAP (Canadian Agricultural Partnership) and more than \$140 million will be invested in strategic initiatives.



Jobs and Food Security through Agritech Innovation

Four B.C. businesses that are developing solutions to help ensure the province's food systems remain secure, resilient, and sustainable are the first to receive funding through the recently launched B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation (BCCAI). Working toward resiliency, these companies are receiving a total investment of \$540,000, including \$122,500 from BCCAI (B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation)



New centre for tourism, culinary arts

New Food/Tourism Education Program

Great food is not only healthy, but it also enhances our quality of life as we enjoy a meal well cooked! There is now a new Learning Centre in BC that amalgamates love of food, wine and tourism. The Centre for Food, Wine and Tourism will open at the Okanagan College Kelowna. The Province is providing Okanagan College with \$44.8 million for the new Centre for Food, Wine and Tourism, which will include modern teaching spaces, food labs, beverage research and development facilities, and common spaces. It will also be home to the Okanagan Chef School and the college's fully functioning, student-staffed restaurant, Infusion. Bringing the love of food to new levels!

Thinking About Animals

B.C. protects farms from animal disease

The Province is investing \$5 million to help protect B.C. farms from animal diseases, including avian influenza, swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease, to help support a resilient food supply for British Columbians. The funding will help B.C. farmers plan, prepare, prevent, and mitigate for animal diseases on their farms and ranches and provide co-ordinated emergency planning and training for the livestock and poultry sector.



More Vet spots for BC at UofS

The Province of BC is permanently doubling the number of subsidized seats for B.C. veterinary students attending the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) at the University of Saskatchewan. This investment is part of StrongerBC's Future Ready plan, which works to remove barriers and open more opportunities for post-secondary education and skills training, so people can get the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in high-demand, good-paying jobs and support and grow the economy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Would you like to lend your voice on important topics in BC? There are many topics on which the government of BC would like to hear from you. Take some time to lend your voice: [Click here](#)

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

Is someone in your life, your workplace, or your church celebrating a Milestone birthday or anniversary? Make sure to put in a request for a letter from your MLA. [Requests are made online here.](#)

Get in touch

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about any provincial issue, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help you. My office can be reached at 250.703.2410 or Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca Our Office hours are Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm. If the door is locked, simply knock or call 250.703.2410 to get our attention. Fridays are by appointment only.

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