

AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARING RE FILE 66884

LANGLEY, B.C.

January 23, 2023

COMMISSIONERS:

J. DYSON

CHAIR

R. MUMFORD

MEMBER

I. SMITH

MEMBER

G. ZIMMERMANN

MEMBER

S. GIMSE

MEMBER

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(PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED AT 7:01 P.M.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. What I'm going to do is I'm just going to run through how everything is going to go. We've got a couple of orders of business that we'll deal with first of all.

The Agricultural Land Commission gratefully and respectfully acknowledges our work spans across the ancestral territories of 198 First Nations, as well as 38 Chartered Communities of the Métis Nation of B.C. And this evening we are meeting on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kwantlen, the Katzie, the Semiahmoo and the Matsqui First Nations.

In the event of an emergency, we're going to exit right to my right and we'll muster underneath a lamp. And make sure that every -- look around you, make sure that you know who you're sitting with and we'll all say good night. That's only in the event of an emergency.

Good evening, everyone. This is a great turnout. My name is Jennifer Dyson, I'm the Chair of

1 the Agricultural Land Commission. And what we're
2 going to do this evening is this public hearing is
3 being held and it's a bit of a process. So I'm going
4 to run through the process and we can get underway.

5 This public hearing is being held in
6 accordance with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*
7 in order to consider the Agricultural Land Commission
8 inclusion proposal number 66884 for the properties
9 located in the City of Surrey at 19233 - 40th Avenue,
10 3948 - 192nd Street, 3884 - 192nd Street, 19305 - 36th
11 Avenue, and 19498 - 40th Avenue.

12 I'd like to introduce the Commissioners
13 of the Agricultural Land Commission this evening.
14 Rick Mumford, or Richard Mumford, is the vice chair of
15 our interior panel. Ione Smith is the vice chair of
16 our south coast panel. Gerry Zimmermann is the vice
17 chair of our Okanagan panel. And Susie Gimse is a
18 Commissioner from the south coast.

19 Our front table out in the front we have
20 Nagendra Sharma and Sam Lee have been registering any
21 speakers that want to speak. And our staff here
22 tonight is Nicole Mak. She's our senior land use
23 planner. Kim Grout is our wonderful CEO. And not
24 seated there but over here now is Mike Bandy, and he's
25 our regional land -- regional planner. Sorry, I
26 always want to say "land use planner".

1 The order of business at this public
2 hearing will proceed as follows. What we'll do is
3 we'll introduce the application by the regional
4 planner, and Mike is going to do that for us. And
5 he'll provide a summary or the numbers of the written
6 communication that we've had thus far, followed by a
7 presentation from the public.

8 So those who wish to speak concerning the
9 proposed application should sign that speakers list at
10 the front as you come in at the staff table, if you
11 haven't already.

12 All information submitted during the
13 public hearing process, including a summary of your
14 remarks, anything that we're doing tonight, and any
15 personal information on the speakers list and written
16 comments will form part of the overall evidence that
17 we'll be looking at from the Commission or it's our
18 public record. And that'll all be posted on the
19 Commission's website. You're not required to provide
20 your personal information other than your name and the
21 area in which you reside, which would be just great.

22 In order for everyone to have an
23 opportunity to speak, each person's remarks will be
24 limited to just five minutes. All people wishing to
25 speak will be heard a first time, and we can take
26 supplementary comments which must contain new

1 information, not a rehash of what you've just said.
2 If you wish to speak a second time, you'll need to add
3 your name to the list at the front. So if you didn't
4 get finished and you had some pertinent issues. And
5 that's only when time allows. There's a lot of people
6 and we're cognizant that we want to try to get through
7 this evening as well.

8 The function of the Commission in
9 attendance, our commissioners, is to listen, not to
10 answer and not to debate. This is more like a
11 hearing, a public hearing. In order for comments to
12 be heard impartially, and I know this is going to be
13 difficult, please refrain from any outbursts or
14 applause for or against after each speaker has
15 finished. And after the public hearing has concluded
16 all the information, every single thing that has been
17 recorded here tonight, including the information
18 presented, will be part of a transcript that will be
19 part of the information, and it'll be all posted on
20 our website. As well as the previous or any written
21 submissions that are given to us tonight.

22 Written submissions from potentially
23 affected First Nations, the City of Surrey, and His
24 Majesty the King as a registered owner of the lands
25 will be provided to the full board of the Commission
26 and will be made available on our website as well.

1 After all evidence is heard, the
2 Commission may without further notice make a decision
3 about the proposal and application. Copies of all the
4 correspondence and referrals to date, as well as any
5 other pertinent information, is available for your
6 review at the staff table in the front, and it'll also
7 be available on our website.

8 So, once again, written submissions and
9 presentations made here tonight will be placed in --
10 and anything that you want to drop off in terms of
11 comments, will be placed at the front table. And they
12 need to be there before we adjourn tonight. And
13 that's really important. Material placed in the
14 comment box will again be posted on our website. The
15 Commission has extended deadlines for those written
16 submissions from those potentially affected First
17 Nations, the City of Surrey, and His Majesty the King
18 as registered owner. And those materials as well will
19 be posted on the ALC website once received.

20 If other persons wish to apply to extend
21 the deadline for written submissions, they may make a
22 written request by email and should include the
23 factual basis supporting the request for an extension
24 for time.

25 So what I'm going to do right now is I'm
26 going to hand this over to our regional planner, Mike

1 Bandy. And Mike is going to introduce the proposal
2 being considered.

3 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MIKE BANDY:**

4 Thank you, Chair Dyson. So, acting under
5 section 17(1) of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*,
6 the Commission is initiating a proposal to include a
7 total of 123.6 hectares or 305 acres of land into the
8 provincial Agricultural Land Reserve. The subject
9 land comprises a block of five contiguous parcels
10 located in the Campbell Heights area of the City of
11 Surrey, bounded by 192nd Street to the west, 36th Ave.
12 to the south, and the Township of Langley and
13 municipal boundary to the east.

14 The properties are currently owned by the
15 Federal -- by the Government of Canada and were
16 historically held for federal communication purposes,
17 though the Federal Government is currently considering
18 disposition or sale of the lands as they're no longer
19 needed for federal purposes.

20 The lands have been leased to local
21 producers for agricultural use dating back to the
22 1970s. Currently approximately 89 hectares, or 220
23 acres, of the lands is cleared and cultivated with
24 field vegetable crops.

25 According to the B.C. land inventory
26 classification system, over 90 percent of the subject

1 land is considered as improvable to Class 2 or prime
2 agricultural capability. Class 2 land is capable of
3 producing a wide range of crops with minor soil
4 restrictions that pose no major difficulties in
5 management.

6 The properties are currently zoned for
7 agricultural use under the City of Surrey's zoning
8 bylaw, though the City's official community plan and
9 the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy both
10 contemplate future mixed employment uses on the
11 properties, similar to adjacent lands to the southwest
12 in the Campbell Heights Business Park area. Should
13 the land be included into the Agricultural Land
14 Reserve, the land would then be subject to the
15 *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, which is provincial
16 legislation that restricts most nonagricultural
17 development and subdivision of land unless approved by
18 the Commission.

19 Back to you, Chair.

20 THE CHAIRPERSON: Sorry, I was
21 sidelined there for a moment. Mike, have you got a
22 summary of the written -- how many we've received pro
23 and con?

24 MS. BANDY: Yes. So as of 4:30 this
25 afternoon, the Commission has received a total of 365
26 submissions, 363 of those were generally in favour of

1 the proposal. Two submissions were not in favour and
2 they expressed concerns with jurisdiction and
3 consultation efforts.

4 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Mike.
5 Now, what we're going to be doing is opening the
6 representation to the public. So I'll just sort of
7 lay out the ground rules again. So, remember, whether
8 you're in favour or opposed to any particular position
9 or argument, please be respectful to the Commissioners
10 or our staff, speakers, sometimes people are nervous
11 to speak, and other members of the public. Again,
12 let's not applause or outbursts in order to enable all
13 speakers to freely exercise their right to their
14 views.

15 What I'm going to do is I'm going to call
16 up the speakers in the order that they've been
17 presented. And I'll generally run through the first
18 two so that everyone gets a little bit of a warning.
19 Please state your name when you get up there, in the
20 event that I have not pronounced them properly. That
21 would be very nice.

22 So our first speaker this evening is
23 Murray Driediger. And our second speaker is Rickey,
24 Rickey Yaca, Yada? You'd better say your name then.

25 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MURRAY DRIEDIGER:**

26 Can you hear me okay? Good. First of

1 all, great turnout. I haven't seen this kind of
2 interest in the agricultural land since the Spedfor
3 properties 30, 40 years ago. Fantastic.

4 Madam Chair and Commissioners, thank you
5 for the opportunity to speak to you today on the
6 future of these lands under discussion. My name is
7 Murray Driediger, and I'm the president and CEO of BC
8 Fresh. BC Fresh is a hundred percent owned by 31
9 family farms located throughout the Lower Mainland.
10 In addition to these 31 shareholders, we also market
11 the produce of another 30 farm families located
12 locally. We're the largest marketer of B.C. grown
13 potatoes and vegetables in the province. We sell and
14 distribute approximately 200 million pounds of produce
15 annually, the majority of which is grown within a few
16 kilometres of where we're meeting today. For the past
17 30 years we have been selling the produce that has
18 been grown on these lands and we are in a unique
19 position to attest to their value to our local food
20 supply.

21 BC Fresh is a significant part of the
22 food supply chain in B.C., with sales and marketing
23 programs in place with every major national retailer,
24 food service company and wholesaler operating in
25 western Canada.

26 I would first like to speak to some big

1 picture issues so we can put the importance of these
2 lands in perspective. There's a lot of public
3 discussion in today's world regarding the term "food
4 security". Our company is on the front lines of this
5 challenge and we deal with it daily. There was a time
6 when land in B.C. was plentiful and crop rotation was
7 not an issue. Weather and crop productivity was more
8 reliable and produce from competing regions was
9 available year round, all within a 48-hour delivery
10 window to the B.C. market. That is no longer the
11 case.

12 The world's population, along with our
13 own local population, has continued to grow. At the
14 same time, farmland around the world is being lost at
15 alarming levels. California has been our supplier
16 when B.C. is out of season, and it is clear we can no
17 longer rely on them as we have in the past. Climate
18 change and other world events are wreaking havoc on
19 the food chain supply.

20 These are just not news headlines that we
21 are reading daily and are becoming immune to. These
22 events now affect the very supply that you have come
23 to expect when you shop in your local supermarket. It
24 is affecting us daily. It is very real, and it is
25 driving enormous costs into the food supply chain that
26 is impacting consumers' budgets and we need to wake

1 up.

2 Local land prices have been driven up by
3 investors, speculators and developers, making it
4 beyond the reach of economic food production. Our
5 growers are now buying and leasing land and producing
6 crops in communities like Kamloops, Cache Creek and
7 the Okanagan because there is insufficient land
8 available in the Lower Mainland. We now grow and ship
9 crops from 200 to 400 kilometres away and transport
10 them back to the Lower Mainland to augment our supply.
11 But suitable land in these other areas is also
12 limited.

13 This brings us to the lands at the core
14 of the discussion today. While there's a shortage of
15 farmland in B.C. that is capable of producing outdoor
16 crops economically, there is a severe shortage of land
17 that can produce reliably when faced with a changing
18 climate. The well drained sabulum soils on 192nd can
19 produce most outdoor vegetable crops for almost ten
20 months of the year. This is very rare land that
21 annually produces enough early crops to supply the
22 B.C. and western Canadian market for many commodities
23 and reduce our reliance on imports. Its importance to
24 the local food supply is essential.

25 When the severe rains of September 2010
26 wiped out production throughout the Lower Mainland, we

1 were able to continue harvesting on these lands. When
2 the Sumas floods wiped out the production from
3 Abbotsford to Chilliwack in 2021, we were able to
4 continue harvesting on these lands. No one will argue
5 with developers that there is a shortage of land for
6 warehouses. We're well aware of that and take no
7 issue with their argument. If these lands are allowed
8 to be taken out of food production, within a few short
9 years they will be paved over and lost forever. The
10 same developers will then move on to their next
11 projects, this is what they do, and they're a valuable
12 part of our economy.

13 But surely there is enough collective
14 wisdom and political will left in this province to
15 protect our most valuable farmland and find other
16 unproductive lands on which to construct warehousing
17 and homes. You cannot simply compare the value of
18 agricultural lands against the high value of warehouse
19 zoned property. You cannot put a value on this
20 particular parcel of land as when it comes to food
21 security in B.C. it is priceless. Removing this
22 parcel of highly productive farmland from agriculture
23 production would be a complete travesty. To do so
24 would be shortsighted and it will cause irreparable
25 damage to local food security and the supply of
26 farmland in British Columbia. There have been far too

1 many parcels like this location that have been
2 permanently destroyed to accommodate industrial,
3 commercial and residential interests.

4 THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay, less than 30
5 second left.

6 MR. DRIEDIGER: With droughts, heat
7 domes, floods and climate change creating havoc
8 throughout the food supply chain in North America, we
9 must do everything we can to ensure our highly
10 productive local farmlands remain farming. B.C.'s
11 ongoing reliance on food supply from production areas
12 like California is a dangerous bet as they continue to
13 struggle with an array of production issues and
14 limitations. They too are losing land and farming
15 operations at an alarming rate. We must start
16 thinking long term about our own food security and
17 resist the temptation to remove one more highly
18 valuable piece of farmland.

19 BC Fresh strongly supports maintaining
20 this unique farmland for agriculture so that fresh,
21 nutritious, affordable produce can be grown for B.C.
22 consumers. This land should be placed in the
23 Agricultural Land Reserve and protected for
24 generations to come. Thank you for your time.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Murray.
26 [audience applause]

1 THE CHAIRPERSON: Well, I thought you
2 were all going to behave. Rickey is next. And then
3 after Rickey we have John Aldag. And after that will
4 be Bill Zylman.

5 **PRESENTATION BY MR. RICKEY YADA:**

6 Madam Chair and Commissioners, thank you
7 for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name
8 is Rickey Yada, I'm the dean of the faculty of land
9 and food systems at the University of British
10 Columbia. And I'll first apologize if I slur my
11 words. I took out two teeth eating the most innocuous
12 of products, a plum pit. And so now I have a partial
13 bridge.

14 THE CHAIRPERSON: I hope it was a B.C.
15 plum.

16 MR. YADA: It was a B.C. plum. It was
17 a B.C. plum. So, I apologize for that.

18 We had the opportunity to make our
19 submission prior to the deadline today. I have the
20 opportunity to read our submission. It is brief and
21 short and very similar to the messages that Mr.
22 Driediger had just relayed.

23 So, dear members of the Agricultural Land
24 Commission, we strongly support protecting the
25 federally owned lands in Surrey at 192 and 36th Avenue
26 for future agricultural use by including it in the

1 provincial Agricultural Land Reserve. Personally we
2 are elated this chance is upon us. We can and should
3 take action to preserve this land for agricultural
4 production. This is an opportunity to continue
5 feeding people in western Canada with products that
6 thrive in B.C.'s growing climate produced by locally
7 owned business such as Heppell's Potato Corp.

8 Food security has been top of mind since
9 the pandemic started. A fundamental step towards
10 achieving a food secure future in B.C. is to start
11 growing food locally. This will help us withstand
12 pandemics, political events and climate change
13 fallout. We can no longer take for granted that fresh
14 fruit and vegetables can be shipped from California,
15 Florida and Mexico as these regions are experiencing
16 weather extremes more and more often.

17 Last year we saw unprecedented price
18 increases which made everyday fruit and vegetables out
19 of the reach for many families. In the foreseeable
20 future, the countries we rely on for imports may need
21 to keep their products to feed their own citizens.
22 Here in B.C. we've seen our own weather disastrophies
23 that have blocked the transport of goods to and from
24 the Lower Mainland.

25 This region under discussion in Surrey is
26 strategically placed with easy access to the majority

1 of the population in the province should our highways
2 be affected by a weather event. At this time we need
3 to be supporting and expanding our local production.
4 This starts with the protection of our most basic and
5 essential resources, our land and food. Respectfully
6 submitted by Sean Smukler, who's the director of our
7 centre for sustainable food systems at the UBC farm
8 and myself. Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Rickey,
10 much appreciated.

11 John Aldag next, and then we will have
12 Bill Zylman. And I'm just going to do a reminder,
13 we've got a little bit of a red folder over here
14 that'll go up when you've just got one minute left.
15 So if we can tear our eyes away. Please.

16 **PRESENTATION BY MR. JOHN ALDAG:**

17 Good evening. My name is John Aldag and
18 I'm the member of Parliament for Cloverdale-Langley
19 City. I would like to point out that the lands are
20 not in the riding that I represent in Ottawa, they're
21 in White Rock-South Surrey. But I have been involved
22 in this file for over seven years in both my first
23 term in 2015 to 2019, and then upon re-election in
24 2021. I also want to point out that I'm not here as
25 an official representative of the government. I'm not
26 speaking on behalf of the Minister, but I am here to

1 provide some of my thoughts based on seven or so years
2 with involvement with the lands. But also to raise
3 some questions.

4 First of all, I think we've already heard
5 how important these lands are. I've been told that
6 they may be within the top 1 percent of agricultural
7 lands in Canada, which is --
8 [*microphone feedback*]

9 MR. ALDAG: And I hope it's not my
10 personality that's causing that. Do you want me try
11 to talk over it or do you want to --

12 FEMALE VOICE: We need to turn their
13 mic down.

14 MR. ALDAG: All right.

15 THE CHAIRPERSON: Look at him.

16 MR. ALDAG: Continue?

17 THE CHAIRPERSON: Please.

18 MR. ALDAG: So, these lands are very
19 important. And I have worked back during my first
20 term, the lease was going to expire and the department
21 at the time, industry, science and economic
22 development, was doing to let the lands go fallow.
23 And so I, working with Heppell Farms, was able to have
24 the lease renewed for five years. And now it's on a
25 year-by-year lease as the process for disposition is
26 sorted out.

1 Recently I was able to table a petition
2 in Parliament calling for having exactly what's
3 happening in these lands protected for agricultural
4 purposes. And the government's response was just
5 tabled publicly, so that is available, indicating that
6 based on current discussions that are happening the
7 disposition process has been paused. So it hasn't
8 been stopped but it is in a bit of a break right now
9 as the Minister and Cabinet regroup.

10 And so that's why I'm here in large part
11 this evening is to hear the conversation. I've been
12 working with Tako van Popta the member for Langley-
13 Aldergrove as well, a neighbouring riding, and Kerry-
14 Lynne Findlay, Ken Hardie from Fleetwood-Port Kells,
15 on trying to determine how we can best administer
16 these lands.

17 And so a few questions that I have, and I
18 note this isn't about a debate but I just raise them
19 for your deliberations when it comes to you. There is
20 a federal disposition process. And so if it is
21 resumed it is very clearly laid out, it's a long-
22 standing process, that requires as the first step
23 Indigenous consultations. And it can require that
24 lands be transferred to the Nations who have a strong
25 right to claim or compensation can be provided. And
26 so I do wonder if there was to be a designation by the

1 ALC how that might prejudice or be preemptive, a
2 preemptive move, related to that federal disposal
3 process. That's why I think it is something that
4 needs to be really clearly considered.

5 There are also, along with the
6 consultations, it would go through a process to First
7 Nations, to the province, to the municipalities for
8 consideration before going to private sectors. So
9 there's a whole bunch of steps that need to be
10 followed.

11 And questions that I've had, I've met
12 with the provincial agricultural Minister, the federal
13 agricultural Minister, and others, trying to
14 understand even if these lands were to be designated
15 in the ALR, does that actually keep them in active
16 food production? And so it's -- you know, or can they
17 be converted to other uses for export and which
18 wouldn't deal with the food sustainability issue that
19 we've heard this evening.

20 And so I think it's we want to find the
21 right tool and we need to go through the right process
22 to get to a decision on these. And so I really
23 commend you for taking your part, for listening to the
24 community who will be affected. But I also wonder how
25 it fits within the federal process that will be
26 followed, because that's the way it works. And then

1 how -- what is the right mechanism to make sure that
2 if they are retained for agricultural purposes that
3 they do remain for food productivity and as opposed to
4 for things like export and other uses, greenhouses and
5 other such things. And it's a judgment against any of
6 those other uses, please, but it's like what do we
7 want them to do. And so those are types of questions
8 that we're asking the Minister so that when a decision
9 is ultimately made we get it right or as close to
10 right as possible.

11 So that's my comments. Thank you for the
12 opportunity to speak this evening.

13 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much,
14 John.

15 Bill Zylman. And after Bill, Debra
16 Henderson.

17 **PRESENTATION BY MR. BILL ZYLMANS:**

18 Thank you, historical colleagues, Madam
19 Chair. My name is Bill Zylmans, I'm the chair of the
20 B.C. Potato and Veg group. Tonight I am reading you a
21 letter from BCAC on their behalf, as none of their
22 directors or chair could make it this evening. I may
23 fill in a bit of my own perspective if I have the
24 ability at the end, but to start I will deal with
25 BCAC's submission at this time.

26 The proposed ALR inclusion in the federal

1 lands in the City of Surrey. Thank you for the
2 opportunity to provide you a statement of support to
3 protect the farmland, prioritize the resilience of the
4 food supply in western Canada. B.C. Agricultural
5 Council is the leading industrial advocate for key
6 sector wide priorities in British Columbia. We
7 deliver the collective voice for agricultural sectors
8 of 28 unique commodity associations that we represent
9 throughout the province of British Columbia.

10 In turn, our membership association
11 represent approximately 96 percent of the provincial
12 farmgate sales for agriculture. The protection,
13 production of farmland is vital to the future success
14 and sustainability of agriculture in British Columbia.
15 Without land dedicated to agriculture production in
16 this province, we will be difficult to ensure access
17 to safe, affordable food for our British Columbian
18 people.

19 It is apparent that the subject land in
20 Surrey is unique and some of Canada's best farmland in
21 the country, farmed by the Heppell farming family for
22 potatoes, carrots, onions and other commodities for
23 more than three generations. The potential threat to
24 this land being included in the Campbell Height
25 industrial plan for development is deeply concerning.
26 Most importantly, we would like to express our support

1 to protect this farmland by halting any such plans for
2 development and allowing it to be placed in the ALR in
3 British Columbia.

4 When agriculture land is most -- is lost
5 to developers, it is never recovered. The potential
6 loss of this area would equal a clear deterioration of
7 regional food security in Canada and resilience for
8 western Canada food system. Adding to this comment,
9 this land provided consistency to regional food supply
10 throughout its natural features after heavy rains.
11 Harvesting activities are impossible in other early
12 fields in British Columbia, yet due to the land's
13 exceptional drainage capacity our food security can
14 rely on this land to maintain supply, as was done in
15 1920 -- or 2021, the flood in Sumas Prairie highly
16 impacted a lot of agriculture production. Where this
17 land still shone and cleared some of the bottleneck
18 for fresh produce. A challenge amidst of extreme
19 weather events and the disaster conditions.

20 BCAC, British Columbia Agricultural
21 Council, supports the efforts to see this vital piece
22 of productive farmland recognized as part of the
23 Agricultural Land Reserve and stay in the ALR for
24 future generations as the Heppell family hopes to
25 continue to produce on this land. Graciously
26 submitted by the executive director, Danielle Synotte.

1 On a more personal note, I've been
2 involved with delivering seed potatoes to the Heppell
3 family since the mid '70s to produce crops on this
4 land. And as a farmer in Richmond, Delta, this land
5 is some of the most superior land that we have in
6 Canada. It's the earliest piece of ground that can
7 produce crops in Canada. We're not just talking
8 British Columbia here, this is Canada. No other crop
9 can be planted anywhere else in Canada in February and
10 harvested in June. Something that is so unique for
11 British Columbia and so unique for agriculture. Land
12 based soil, the Warba nugget potatoes, the first
13 potato on the market, primarily comes from this piece
14 of ground, something really unique for British
15 Columbia.

16 As I've concluded, I think I've stated
17 the points that are really recognizable and I thank
18 you for the time. Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRPERSON: Bill, thank you.

20 Debra Henderson. And after Debra, I hope
21 I'm saying it properly, but Raini, Renee Prasnel.
22 There you go.

23 **PRESENTATION BY MS. DEBRA HENDERSON:**

24 Hello. I'm Debra Henderson, director of
25 the Institute of Sustainable Horticulture at KPU,
26 right on this campus. Thank you for this opportunity

1 to speak to the importance of this tract of land to
2 agriculture in our province.

3 I support adding this land to the
4 Agricultural Land Reserve and my reasons are as
5 follows.

6 First, our food system is already
7 tenuous. Only 4 percent of B.C.'s land is arable, and
8 we all live on it. The Fraser Valley produces 68
9 percent of all field vegetables and 94 percent of the
10 greenhouse vegetables, among many other crops. This
11 valley is our food basket. Population by 2041 is
12 projected to reach 6.1 million from the 5.1 it is
13 today. This will increase our need for food. At the
14 same time, global demographic, economic and diet
15 trends will demand more agricultural exports putting
16 further pressure on our food system.

17 Secondly, we import most of our
18 vegetables and fruit. Overall, we produce 34 percent
19 of our own food. At the high end of self-sufficiency
20 are the supply managed commodities such as poultry,
21 eggs and dairy. At the low end we import 63 percent
22 of the vegetables we consume and 79 percent of the
23 fruit. Most imported produce, as we know, comes from
24 California but this may not continue. By the end of
25 the century, the Sierra Nevada snow pack could be 70
26 percent less than it is now. Low river levels will

1 lead to heavier reliance on group water resources in
2 California, which are already stretched. Yields will
3 drop along with exports and prices will rise.

4 Another point, climate change is not
5 going away and its impacts are accelerating. We are
6 at peril if we rely on others to produce our food.
7 Climate change will hit areas of peak food production
8 harder than us. I see a day when the countries we
9 import from now can no longer grow enough to export
10 and look to us to produce food for them.

11 Our own experience with climate disasters
12 in B.C. bears witness to this acceleration. In 2002
13 climate disasters cost B.C. an average of \$10 million
14 a year. By 2005 the average was 86 million a year.
15 And in June '21 the heat dome alone, the deadliest
16 weather event ever in Canada, cost between 200 and 328
17 million in damage. In the same year the floods caused
18 at least 285 million more dollars in damage to
19 agriculture alone. And these are only the short-term
20 impacts. Extreme weather events are not going away.

21 So, depending on low elevation flood
22 plain agriculture for us is risky. Our most
23 productive agricultural land is on river plains, and
24 the coastal lowlands is highly exposed to climate
25 change impacts, as we saw in the past year. Risks
26 include sea level rising and ground water salination,

1 high winter stream flow added to rainfall to increase
2 erosion, warming temperatures causing earlier spring
3 melts and reduced ground water recharge needed for the
4 droughts of summer, and invasive pests and diseases
5 for both animals and crops.

6 The lands in question are not low level,
7 not low elevation. Last spring when weather delayed
8 planting in most of the valley, this land was dry. It
9 was almost the only source of early local vegetables.
10 Urban agriculture will not replace this land. The
11 urban heat island effect and severe water use
12 restrictions will limit urban gardening. Ozone levels
13 related to high temperatures will further limit food
14 production in cities. And our global food supply
15 chain is also tenuous, as we've heard. We literally
16 depend on an open border and rapid truck delivery to
17 receive imported produce. Climate and natural
18 disasters can shut down these food delivery routes
19 instantly. Furthermore, geopolitical instability will
20 limit our options for imports. The war in Ukraine
21 taught us this when it disrupted global grain supplies
22 this year.

23 The solution is to strengthen local
24 agriculture (inaudible). We face the spectre of an
25 unpredictable food supply in future. To change this,
26 we must firmly establish local supply to meet local

1 food security. We've done it before in supply managed
2 sectors despite international criticism. Preserving
3 and expanding local vegetable and fruit capacity is
4 good policy. This will serve as a hedge, particularly
5 for poor and less health British Columbians against
6 higher food prices. Preserving this land now will
7 contribute significantly to future food security for
8 B.C. and is in keeping with the concerns that Surrey
9 voiced so long ago as 2010 about keeping -- how can
10 they improve food security and prevent loss of our
11 land.

12 So, in my opinion this land should not be
13 taken out of the Agricultural Land Reserve -- or out
14 of agricultural production. Thank you. It should be
15 put in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

16 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Renee
17 Prasad, and Linda Annis will be next.

18 **PRESENTATION BY MS. RENEE PRASAD:**

19 Good evening. My name is Renee Prasad.

20 THE CHAIRPERSON: Beautiful.

21 MR. PRASAD: Okay. So I'm an
22 associate prof and department head in the agricultural
23 technology department at University of Fraser Valley.
24 And it's my pleasure to be asked to speak here by the
25 Heppell family. And I'm going to tell you many
26 similar points that have already been made and will

1 continue to be made through the evening. But I think
2 there is strength and power in that repetition.

3 So, as you have already heard and will
4 continue to hear, the land in question plays an
5 important and significant role in local food security.
6 Agricultural activity on these lands has contributed
7 to the local food -- local supply of field vegetables
8 for the past 50 years. The agricultural lands
9 throughout the Fraser Valley are unique. As you move
10 Delta -- from Delta eastward to Chilliwack, there is
11 diversity in soil structure, composition and drainage.
12 The land in question is unique as it has excellent
13 drainage and is accessible at both ends of the field
14 season, both in the spring and the fall, when fields
15 in other parts of the valley are not.

16 This is because, in this case, over the
17 -- this is the case over the course of relatively
18 normal field seasons and when extreme events happen.
19 So, as mentioned earlier by Murray, the heavy rains in
20 September through October 2010 resulted in heavy
21 losses in the potato crop in Delta but not in fields
22 we are talking about today. Similarly, as we all
23 remember, the unprecedented floods in November 2021
24 resulted in heavy losses in late harvest crops in the
25 Sumas Prairie, but, again, not in these fields. With
26 climate change we can expect fewer and fewer normal

1 field seasons, and already we're saying what's normal.
2 And we will continue to see more extremes at either
3 end in the field season.

4 So my point here is that saving these
5 lands is important not just because all farmland is
6 important to preserve, but it's also important to save
7 a diversity of agricultural land from our limited
8 agricultural land base.

9 I also want to speak to the value of
10 these lands as it relates to work I do as a researcher
11 and educator. My colleagues and I from UFV, Kwantlen,
12 UBC, SFU and also from private industry have worked on
13 many different projects on these lands over the years.
14 These projects are geared towards finding solutions
15 for common pest problems of field vegetables and
16 understanding the population dynamics of pests on
17 field vegetable crops. A challenge for all of us for
18 doing on-farm research is being able to get into
19 fields early enough so that we can generate enough
20 data so that our trials have value. So, again, a
21 unique property of this -- the unique properties of
22 this site mean that not only can the Heppells get in
23 and plant their crops earlier than the rest of Canada
24 but so can us researchers. And so we're able to
25 generate good data sets to support and benefit
26 research not just in Surrey or the Fraser Valley or

1 B.C. but for all of Canada.

2 Future projects include understanding the
3 ecosystem services that can benefit agriculture when
4 forested patches that are along that north edge there
5 are left adjacent to farmland. The benefits of this
6 large patch of forests adjacent to field vegetable are
7 only starting to be explored on this patch. But we
8 know from other regions and from other research that
9 growing crops adjacent to -- or unfarmed or forested
10 areas results in higher activity of beneficial
11 insects, including pollinators and predators of pests
12 in crops.

13 So, undoubtably, these ecosystem services
14 have been occurring, we just haven't been in there to
15 measure them. However, as the pressures of climate
16 change make field vegetable farming more and more
17 challenging, there's an urgency in documenting and
18 understanding these services so that we can mimic the
19 practices on other sites.

20 Finally, I just want to say that it's
21 important to note that these 220 acres that are
22 currently in vegetable production can't be replaced by
23 another 220-acre parcel. And that is because the
24 management that's been done on them over the years has
25 made them unique and well managed, so it's difficult
26 to replace them with an unmanaged piece that would

1 have unpredictable pest levels.

2 So, lastly, I just want to close by
3 saying that including these lands in the Agricultural
4 Land Reserve is consistent with the purpose of the
5 ALR, which is to preserve agricultural land for the
6 futures. Thank you for your time.

7 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Linda
8 Annis is next. And after Linda will be Tristin.

9 **PRESENTATION BY MS. LINDA ANNIS:**

10 Madam Chair and Commissioners, it's a
11 pleasure to be here tonight. My name is Linda Annis
12 and I'm a city councillor for the City of Surrey. I'm
13 here representing my own views tonight but I can tell
14 you that we are so fortunate to have these very
15 fertile lands right here in Surrey, knowing that
16 they're the very, very first crops in Canada to
17 provide us with our root vegetables. And 70 percent
18 of all potatoes are coming from this property, we
19 can't possibly risk losing them here in Surrey.

20 In fact, you know, it's quite remarkable,
21 but last year at Surrey City Council there was a
22 unanimous support to put these lands into the ALR.
23 And I think that absolutely speaks volumes for what
24 the residents of Surrey are thinking and wanting. We
25 want to make sure that our food security is safe, and
26 what better can we have knowing that we've got

1 somewhere between 30 to 50 million servings coming off
2 of that property. We can't afford to lose it. Thank
3 you.

4 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Tristin.
5 And, Tyler, you're up after.

6 **PRESENTATION BY MR. TRISTIN BOUWMAN:**

7 Good evening land commissioners. My name
8 is Tristin Bouwman, I'm the vice president of the
9 Surrey Farmer's Institute and crop manager for
10 Heppell's Potato farm. Thank you for the opportunity
11 to speak on this issue.

12 At a young age I began working in dairy
13 farming and potato farming, so did my grandfather.
14 Only he grew up in the Netherlands and he lived in the
15 poverty of the 1930s and experienced the hunger of the
16 winter of 1945 in the Netherlands during World War II.
17 I first learned from him how privileged we are today
18 with our abundant food supply. But it wasn't till I
19 had studied and worked in some of the world's leading
20 organizations focused on fighting hunger, and after
21 witnessing and studying hunger and food insecurity in
22 some of the world's poorest countries that his lessons
23 really touched me.

24 Commissioners, for most of human
25 existence the pain and humiliation of hunger have only
26 been a few -- have only been an unsuccessful hunt

1 away, a crop failure away, or a few months until
2 storage has run out. Nearly a billion people remain
3 food insecure today, mostly in poorer regions of the
4 world. What a golden age we live in now with our
5 grocery stores almost magically stocked.

6 But the last few years have taught us we
7 cannot take this for granted. Together we have
8 witnessed a global pandemic, disrupted supply chains,
9 empty store shelves and some of the ugliness that
10 ensues, panic buying. We've seen extreme climate
11 events, our vulnerability to flooding, to the closure
12 of transportation corridors, to blockades, political
13 turmoil and rising grocery costs. Who could have
14 predicted this a few years ago. Who knows what the
15 next years will hold, what disruption future
16 generations will experience.

17 What we do know that is that only about 4
18 percent of our beautiful mountainous province is
19 suitable for growing food crops. Much of our produce
20 is grown far to the south, as has already been
21 mentioned this evening. And our reliance on places
22 like California is becoming an increasingly risky bet.
23 Agriculture globally also appears to be in crisis as
24 yields plateau, agricultural lands are degraded and
25 climate change forecasts predict declining yields. As
26 such, the Land Commission's mandate and hard work to

1 protect our local farmland is essential and is an
2 important component for the resiliency that we need
3 when the unexpected occurs.

4 But the decision before the Land
5 Commission tonight is not about any ordinary piece of
6 farmland. We're talking about the core of B.C.'s
7 early food supply. No other parcel in B.C. can
8 produce so much so early. Last year alone an
9 estimated 70 percent of the potatoes produced in B.C.
10 from the months of May till August 1st came from this
11 parcel. Similarly, much of the first carrot, potato
12 -- sorry, carrot, parsnip and cabbage production also
13 came from the piece.

14 What makes this land so special is its
15 superb drainage, it's sandy soil on a hilltop that
16 enables the water to move through and equipment to be
17 able to enter the field at almost any time of the
18 year. It's an irreplaceable geological gift for our
19 domestic food supply. As long as these lands play a
20 vital role in our food supply they should be
21 considered only for food, only for use in food
22 production. Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

24 Tyler. And Ron Heppell is after.

25 **PRESENTATION BY MR. TYLER HEPPELL:**

26 I'm Tyler Heppell. I'm a fifth-

1 generation farmer and I want to give you a bit of my
2 story for context. I grew up working on the farm.
3 From age 5 I started doing manual labour from making
4 boxes to grating potatoes. As I grew older I started
5 working with tractors and would spend my summers
6 weeding, irrigating and working the 192nd land.

7 At age 18 I left the farm thinking I
8 would never come back. You see, I saw how hard it was
9 firsthand. I saw my father lose most of his crop back
10 in 2010 and I saw my grandpa still doing physical
11 labour in his 70s. I wanted a stable job where I
12 could check out at 5:00 p.m. and not take home the
13 stress that comes with putting a million dollars into
14 the ground and hoping that that current growing season
15 was favourable. So I went to university, I graduated,
16 and I got a good job with a big company, never giving
17 farming a second thought.

18 Fast-forward almost five years at my job,
19 I was feeling unsettled. I felt a lack of purpose.
20 Over many long conversations with my father, I decided
21 to return to the family farm at age 28 with a promise
22 to my dad that I would give him one year and then
23 decide if I wanted to continue. Over these last 11
24 months I have found my purpose. I fell in love with
25 not only the satisfaction of a long hard day but
26 having a job that directly feeds Canadians. As I'm

1 sure many farmers in this room have felt this pride.

2 I realized that most farmers do what they
3 do not because of the money but because of the passion
4 that they have for others and their feeling of
5 responsibility to protect food security in this
6 country. There is nothing better than going to the
7 local grocery store and seeing your produce on the
8 shelf and knowing that families across western Canada
9 will be coming together to enjoy the fruits of your
10 hard labour.

11 However, the unfortunate truth is many
12 will never be able to experience this. The average
13 age of the Canadian farmer is 57 years old. And many
14 do not have the next generation's interests in taking
15 over the farm. I mean, why would they? We have seen
16 our parents struggle financially, physically and
17 emotionally. We have seen floods, heat domes, the
18 lack of farmable land, and now the battle to save some
19 of if not our most productive farmland in all of
20 Canada.

21 This is why I am standing here today, to
22 tell every next generational farmer that it is worth
23 it. To encourage the next wave of Canadian farmers
24 that will feed this great nation, whether they have
25 been born yet or not. Our actions and decisions today
26 matter more than ever. This land deserves to be

1 farmed by the next ten generations and stand as our
2 legacy, a legacy that will set the precedent that
3 Canada and the provincial government of B.C. supports
4 its farmers and supports every one of us that are
5 lucky to call ourselves Canadians.

6 This meeting today will stand as a
7 reference point, as a line drawn in the sand that B.C.
8 will step up and protect its most productive farmland
9 and encourage generations to come to take the leap of
10 faith and enjoy the pride and the purpose that comes
11 with farming and providing food security. Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Ron Heppell.

13 **PRESENTATION BY MR. RON HEPPELL:**

14 Madam Chairman and Commissioners, it's a
15 bit of a hard act to follow, isn't it?

16 THE CHAIRPERSON: Indeed.

17 MR. HEPPELL: I'm Ron Heppell. And I
18 guess I'm the reason all of you people are here
19 tonight.

20 THE CHAIRPERSON: You're "grandpa".

21 MR. HEPPELL: I'm grandpa. Anyway,
22 I'm just going to get a little snippet of how we got
23 into this land. We live just a mile and a half away
24 from the land. And my bedroom looked out that way. I
25 was about six years old, probably 1943, and I could
26 see sparks flying in the air. And I thought, what in

1 the world's happening? Saw my dad and I said, "What
2 are they doing?" "Oh," he says, "they're clearing
3 that and they're putting in telecommunication for
4 overseas communication." I said, "I want to see
5 that." And I kept at him so he took me up. When I
6 saw the land and I said, "Dad, this is the best farm.
7 Let's get in here somehow." He says, "No," picked up
8 the soil and he said, "this is mineral soil." He
9 said, "It hasn't got any nutrients like the black muck
10 soil that we were farming." He said, "And there's no
11 water." Oh, okay.

12 Time goes on. My brother and I got into
13 farming together and we went into the Columbia basin
14 in Washington. And we would go in there and we would
15 see sage brush and the next year potatoes'd be growing
16 on that land where sage brush was a year before. What
17 was it? It was nutrients and it was water. So I said
18 to my bother, "I think it's time to look at this."

19 And they were now taking down, this is
20 going forward 35, 40 years, and they were taking down
21 the towers. And so we got in there and we put in the
22 irrigation, we put in clearing land, put in the
23 nutrients into the land. And, you know, it took us a
24 few years but Nigel's sitting here, he was working in
25 the communications there all the time. He saw what we
26 were doing, and they just kept encouraging us to keep

1 on doing what we were doing. So we have never lost a
2 potato or carrot or anything to flood, never once in
3 the 50 -- it's 51 years since I was in there.

4 I don't have anything more to say but I
5 thank you people. I know you have a tough job to do.
6 But whichever way you do it, the Heppell family will
7 have no malice. So, go for it.

8 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much
9 and thank you for saying that.

10 Ian, Ian Paton, you're next. Sorry, I
11 got -- I was blown away by grandpa. And Kevin Bose is
12 next. And after Kevin, Randy Sahota.

13 **PRESENTATION BY MR. IAN PATON:**

14 Thank you, and thank you honourable
15 commissioners of the Agricultural Land Commission and
16 staff. My name is Ian Paton and I'm the MLA for Delta
17 South, and I'm the agriculture critic for the B.C.
18 Liberal party. I'm also a third-generation farmer.
19 And I'm proud to say I'm still living on the farm I
20 was born and raised on in Delta 66 years ago, and I
21 was dairy farmer for many years. And I want to thank
22 such a huge turnout tonight of people here to support
23 agriculture in British Columbia, especially this piece
24 of property we're talking about here tonight.

25 The Government of Canada has determined
26 that the properties are surplus to its needs, and in

1 2017 initiated a process to dispose of the properties
2 in accordance with federal disposition procedures.
3 The potential sale of the properties by the Government
4 of Canada to another agency or owner may render the
5 properties vulnerable to future changes in land use,
6 as local land use plans contemplate mixed employment
7 development on the properties.

8 When we look at the screen right now,
9 unfortunately the grey to the right, ladies and
10 gentlemen, a lot of that used to be farms. Those were
11 dairy farms; those were vegetable farms. Sheep. To
12 the left, all grey. That's Campbell Heights. In my
13 farm auction business, one of the biggest auctions I
14 ever did was for a huge tree seedling replant facility
15 that grew seedlings for our forest industry to the
16 left, which is now Campbell Heights.

17 To be included in the ALR, land must have
18 the capability for agricultural uses based on soils
19 and climate or a combination of both. And before I go
20 any further, I want to just brag that my dad, Ian
21 Paton Sr. who was chair, just like you, Jennifer, of
22 the Agricultural Land Commission back in the late days
23 of the Socreds. And just to let you know how long
24 I've known the Heppell family, I was the ring-bearer
25 at Dave Heppell and Maxine Heppell's wedding in 1963.

26 THE CHAIRPERSON: That's a long time.

1 MR. PATON: Yeah, that's a long time.
2 But I have done my best as a representative
3 representing Delta South in Victoria. I've taken Lana
4 Popham, the Minister of Agriculture, I'm not sure if
5 the new Minister is here tonight, but I've taken Lana
6 to see the property. I've taken my colleague Elenore
7 Sturko from Surrey South. Elenore is going to speak
8 later on tonight. But we've been there, and I've done
9 everything -- I've taken Carla Qualtrough, our Federal
10 MP that represents Delta, she's a Minister in Ottawa,
11 and I've taken Carla there personally to inspect this
12 piece of property as well.

13 It's very, very unique in Canada, and
14 it's been so well explained by all the people that
15 have spoken before me. The quality of this soil, this
16 sandy loam soil that's somewhat higher than the rest
17 of the black muck soils of Cloverdale and Delta, where
18 we have this wonderful drainage. And we have access
19 to some great aquifers, so you've got drainage, you've
20 got sunshine, you've got water. That's what it takes
21 to be productive. And the ability to get onto this
22 piece of land that the Heppells and Canadian Farms,
23 and the Sahota's farm, to be able to get onto that
24 land so early in the year and get these Warba potatoes
25 planted. And the first little new potatoes that are
26 so great with butter and salt and pepper, come from

1 this farm. They come from this farm, and they get
2 planted as early as you'll find any potatoes planted
3 in the entire country of Canada, and they can harvest
4 well into October and early November, where most of
5 the rest of the farmers cannot do that.

6 Of this 305-acre parcel, the Heppell
7 family has farmed this land on lease for half a
8 century. It is sandy loam soil with exceptional
9 drainage, with ideal climate conditions for growing
10 vegetables as has been proven producer in the last 50
11 years or more of farming this parcel of land.

12 The Sahota family also farms this land,
13 and it grows fabulous, not only potatoes, but carrots,
14 parsnips, cabbage and onions as well.

15 The Government of Canada has determined
16 that the properties are surplus to its needs and in
17 2017 initiated a process to dispose of the lands. It
18 is my point of view regarding from a provincial lands
19 that we need this land in the ALR now more than ever
20 in this province. According to the ALR annual report,
21 the ALR, of which my father was a founding member,
22 started with 4.7 million hectares in 1974, and
23 currently sits at 4.6 million hectares. For the last
24 50 years, for most years, more is taken out of the ALR
25 than added. This trend is a huge problem for future
26 food sovereignty in this province.

1 In '21-'22, there were only seven
2 applications before the ALR to include more land into
3 the ALR with three-times more applications to take it
4 out.

5 And I honour -- I welcome you folks
6 tonight, because being on Delta City Council, I went
7 through many public hearings, and it's probably a kind
8 of a nice feeling tonight that you've got all of these
9 people wanting to put a piece back in, which I'm sure
10 you're happy to see as well.

11 The new Minister of Agriculture has a
12 mandate to prioritize food security in this province
13 through the Food Security Taskforce, and through
14 growing our agricultural capacity through programs
15 like GrowBC, FeedBC and BuyBC. This piece of farmland
16 is a proven producer that meets all of the provincial
17 targets, and I strongly support the inclusion of it
18 into the ALR on these grounds. And as I said, I've
19 tried to promote this piece of land going back into
20 the ALR in British Columbia on radio, on TV, in
21 Victoria, and the future of our ALR in B.C. and our
22 land commission, if we see a piece like this go back
23 into warehousing, we're in big trouble with the future
24 of the ALR in British Columbia. Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Kevin Bose. And Randy
26 Sahota is up next.

1 **PRESENTATION BY MR. KEVIN BOSE:**

2 MR. BOSE: Hi, I'm Kevin Bose. I am
3 current acting president of the Surrey Farmer's
4 Institute, and we are here to advocate for a group to
5 represent agriculture in all forms, to promote,
6 protect stewardship of the land, as well as farming
7 practices.

8 The loss of this land would be
9 detrimental to the fabric of the community, both the
10 food production as well as the environment. Food
11 security has become a big goal in recent years. So,
12 to question why we must fight so hard for a piece of
13 land this far north that can produce close to year-
14 round is unbelievable. Not including this land to
15 ensure that it remains viable farmland would not only
16 be an injustice to the local community, but a social
17 injustice to everyone who depends on local, high
18 quality, and affordable food. Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Kevin.
20 Randy Sahota.

21 **PRESENTATION BY MR. RANDY SAHOTA:**

22 MR. SAHOTA: Thank you, Madam Chair,
23 Commissioners, giving the opportunity to speak on this
24 topic. I might stutter a little just being nervous,
25 I've never done this before, so first-time encounter.

26 I just want to say, I'm a vegetable

1 grower located in Cloverdale, and a generation farmer.
2 How many generation? I don't even know. It's kind of
3 a first passed in family from years to years. And
4 I've had the opportunity to grow on this land on crop-
5 rotation basis with the Heppell family. And I farmed
6 in Cloverdale, I farmed in Langley, I've also farmed
7 in the Sumas Prairie when the floods came, and I also
8 farmed in Kamloops McClure. But I can assure you,
9 that is a unique piece of land. I have grown the
10 earliest carrots on that land, and I've grown the
11 latest carrots on that land. I'm giving you a
12 farmer's perspective.

13 In my 30 years in my profession, I have
14 looked everywhere in B.C. to find a land like that,
15 and I cannot find it anywhere. I was able to lease a
16 land very similar to that where our Honourable Paton,
17 Ian Paton just explained to you was from the forestry.
18 But it was taken out of farming and put into
19 warehousing.

20 So this is a unique piece of land that is
21 in our backyard. It would be a shame not from
22 agricultural perspective, also from food security
23 purposes if this was eliminated.

24 So, I urge, and I plead the
25 Commissioners, and Madam Chair, do the right thing.
26 That's all. Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you so much.
2 Wally Martin, he's up next, and Warner Smith after
3 that.

4 **PRESENTATION BY MR. WALLY MARTIN:**

5 MR. MARTIN: Good evening Madam
6 Chairman.

7 THE CHAIRPERSON: Good evening.

8 MR. MARTIN: And Commissioners. I'm
9 Wally Martin, I live in Langley, I don't have a title,
10 but I do like those potatoes with butter. That's all.

11 I worked on this property in 1970, and I
12 had a backhoe and I dug some trenches there for the
13 Government of Canada. I guess they were upgrading
14 something to do with the telecommunications. So, I
15 guess they had a bit of a -- you're here to correct a
16 mistake. Dave Barrett introduced the land freeze back
17 in 1973, and then subsequently the ALR, and why they
18 didn't include this property at that time was a big
19 boo-boo. So you're just going to have to look back at
20 that and try and repair that error.

21 So, I wanted to just congratulate the
22 Heppells for the amazing job they have done farming
23 this piece of property. It's just amazing, and the
24 fact that they're running on a short-term lease, it
25 just actually -- they really have to be congratulated
26 for their efforts. So, I hope you can see the way to

1 get this into the ALR as soon as possible, forever.

2 Thank you.

3 THE CHAIRPERSON: Warner Smith.

4 **PRESENTATION BY MR. WARNER SMITH:**

5 MR. SMITH: I don't know how my name
6 got on that list, but I can just reiterate Wally's
7 comments and thank everyone here that spoke today.
8 Just a --

9 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

10 Mike Bose? Mike Bose is next.

11 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MIKE BOSE:**

12 MR. BOSE: Thank you, Jennifer, and
13 panel.

14 My name is Mike Bose, councillor for the
15 City of Surrey, former land commissioner, 2007 to
16 2011. I'm going to give you a history lesson, that's
17 what I do. This land isn't in the ALR because when
18 the ALR was created it was going to be an oil
19 refinery. We've already lost 1600 acres in this
20 neighbourhood.

21 Now, Ian Paton's father, Ian Paton Sr.,
22 was one of my mentors, is a good friend of my
23 father's. And before I got on the Commission, I got
24 schooled in the job. You all know your job, I'm not
25 here to tell you your job, but everybody else doesn't.

26 And when you look at land to include, the

1 first question you have to ask yourself as a
2 commissioner; if this land was in the ALR, would I
3 exclude it? Obviously not, from everything we've
4 heard today. The second question is, is it contiguous
5 to the ALR boundary? Obviously it is. So, this land
6 should be in the ALR. Why isn't it? Because it was
7 supposed to be an oil refinery.

8 Surrey developed an exclusion policy, I
9 know it sounds horrible, but it was actually a good
10 policy, because for every acre of land you want out of
11 the ALR in Surrey, you have to include two.

12 When we developed that policy as an Ag
13 advisory committee we were kind of scared of it, but
14 we had identified this as the land that we could go to
15 as an inclusion. The government didn't like that idea
16 because that was the same time that Microsoft was
17 under threat of being broken up by the U.S.
18 Government, this is where they were going to put their
19 compound.

20 This is a very difficult decision to be
21 made by three levels of government. As industrial
22 land it has huge value. As employment land, I would
23 argue today with today's technology, there are
24 probably more jobs created on this land as agriculture
25 than would be if it was commercial or industrial.

26 The difficulty is for government to make

1 that decision, Procurement Canada, their policy is
2 highest and best use. Anybody know what highest and
3 best use means? Biggest cheque. The highest and best
4 use for this land as we've heard so far, and we're
5 going to continue to hear tonight, is that this land's
6 highest and best use is to produce food.

7 Food resiliency can only be achieved
8 here. To recreate this property you would have to go
9 to California. That won't work, they don't have
10 water. This land has drainage, it has water, it has a
11 microclimate, unique to anywhere in Canada, and almost
12 all of North America. As my son said, an absolute
13 injustice to lose this land for food production. We
14 want food resiliency? It will come from this land.

15 Every level of government has a policy on
16 climate change, supply chain, food security, I say
17 food resiliency, and environment. The buzzword today
18 is "ticking boxes". This land ticks every single box.
19 You will not find anybody more passionate than me
20 about protecting land. I have fought for 20 plus
21 years to protect land just like this, including this
22 land and I will continue to fight to protect land for
23 agriculture. Because we have to feed the people of
24 this country.

25 Thank you very much for your time.

26 THE CHAIRPERSON: Ed. And I'm going

1 to mess this, I'm going to say Ed W. And after that
2 we've got Kenneth Jones.

3 **PRESENTATION BY MR. ED WAKARYK:**

4 My name is Ed Wakaryk, commonly known as
5 Mr. Ed the talking horse. It is very important that
6 we keep this, or include this land in the ALR because
7 the land that is being farmed by the Heppells, which
8 I've known for many years, is quality land. And
9 they've produced quality produce for our satisfaction.
10 And also probably that -- I'm not sure, but they
11 probably send produce all over B.C., Alberta, and
12 probably all over Canada. But it would be a shame to
13 see this land go to developers as we're losing our ALR
14 land at a fast rate. And the lands that are in
15 question for the Heppells, they start land farming
16 early in the year and they finish late in the year,
17 which they can probably farm their land for about 10
18 months of the year, which is very important to our
19 food chain.

20 And I would like to see the ALR include
21 this, or see this land included in the ALR because it
22 is very important to produce the quality vegetables
23 that they farm on this land. And to go to other
24 places like California, they're having a lot of
25 trouble producing produce for our satisfaction. Plus
26 the fact there's a lot of diseases in the land that

1 come from California.

2 So it's very important to include this
3 land in the ALR, because it's quality land and they
4 put -- give quality produce for our liking.

5 So I hope that they don't take this out
6 and give it to developers because developers would
7 just throw a bunch of cement on there and lose our
8 valuable land. And their land is not affected by
9 floods or drought, anything like that. It's very
10 quality land. So I'm asking you to include this in
11 the ALR. Thank you very much.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Ed.

13 I have David Dauls. And then Marc
14 Schutzbank.

15 **PRESENTATION BY MR. KEN JONES:**

16 Good evening, Commissioners. It is a
17 real pleasure to be here with so many friends of
18 agriculture. Nice to see you all. My name is Ken
19 Jones and I'm the former MLA for Surrey-Cloverdale,
20 which included this land, from 1991 to 1996. And at
21 that time I was also the Liberal agricultural critic.
22 We've got two of them here.

23 And I'd like to really say that this land
24 is very special. And it's special because of its
25 geology, but it's also special because we have
26 dedicated farmers, like the Heppells, who have done

1 such a fine job of making this land into the land that
2 grows so much of us in Canada.

3 I think that this land must be preserved
4 and needs to be added to the ALC [sic]. It is land
5 that when I was MLA we were trying to get it into the
6 ALC at that time. We need to keep adding land to the
7 land reserve. It's -- there are lots of things like
8 highways and roads and things like that that are
9 taking up agricultural land. We need to utilize the
10 lands that can be converted back into the ALR back
11 into the ALR. It's an essential part of our future.
12 Thank you very much.

13 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much.
14 And now I've got David Dauls and Marc.

15 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MARC SCHUTZBANK:**

16 It's a pretty good pronunciation. My
17 name is Marc Schutzbank and --

18 THE CHAIRPERSON: Ah, thank you.

19 MR. SCHUTZBANK: And thank you to
20 Madam Commissioner and to the Commissioners that are
21 here. And also thank you to the people with more
22 lived experience than I have had for setting such a
23 standard for what it means to give back to your
24 community for so very long.

25 I'm here as a representative of the
26 Vancouver Food Policy Council of 2022, where we first

1 heard about this piece of land. And on behalf of the
2 Vancouver Food Policy I'm just going to briefly read a
3 motion that was passed unanimously.

4 Whereas our productive agricultural land
5 is critical to ensuring a local secure food system for
6 our city, COVID food security challenges have
7 highlighted the fragility of our border crossing food
8 supply chain. Ensuring that Vancouver has a secure
9 food supply is of critical importance to the City of
10 Vancouver. The federal government owns 220 acres of
11 land on 192nd Street in Campbell Heights, Surrey,
12 B.C., which are not in the provincial Agricultural
13 Land Reserve and are designated as mixed employment in
14 the Metro Vancouver regional growth strategy.

15 The Vancouver Heights lands are a
16 critical piece of the region's food system and reduce
17 reliance on food imports, as they have been leased as
18 farmland for oh so many varied years and are some of
19 the most agriculturally productive in the region due
20 to their sandy soil upon a level hilltop. These lands
21 never flood, can be planted or harvested on nearly any
22 day of the year and have a special microclimate suited
23 for early crop production. An estimated 30 to 50
24 million servings of potatoes, carrots, cabbage,
25 parsnips and squash, particularly salted and peppered,
26 are produced from this land annually, enough to put a

1 vegetable serving on every Metro Vancouver resident's
2 dinner plate for two to three weeks.

3 The federal government plans to sell the
4 Campbell Heights lands which could enable them to be
5 redeveloped to non-farm uses by new owners because
6 they are not protected for agriculture by the ALR or
7 the RGS, the regional growth strategy. In the face of
8 climate change, agricultural land is at increasing
9 risk due to flooding, fire and other natural
10 disasters.

11 And just four minutes ago, I checked, a
12 petition that was signed by 75,950 people have signed
13 a petition to protect this farmland.

14 "The Metro Vancouver Agricultural
15 Advisory Board has indicated that there is sincere
16 regret that such a valuable piece of land could be
17 lost to agriculture." They've requested that Metro
18 Vancouver advocate to senior levels of government to
19 protect the lands for agricultural use. They've
20 suggested a swap to be discussed for a parcel of land
21 that would not result in an abrupt halt in food
22 production. The City of Vancouver has a seat at the
23 Metro Vancouver Regional Planning Council and can
24 advocate for increased protection of this farmland.
25 The City of Surry supports maintaining this land as
26 agricultural in nature.

1 Therefore, be it resolved that the
2 Vancouver Food Policy Council recommends that the City
3 of Vancouver advocate for amendments to the Metro
4 Vancouver regional growth strategy to designate the
5 Campbell Heights lands as agricultural. The Vancouver
6 Food Policy Council recommends that the City of
7 Vancouver advocate to the City of Surrey and the
8 province of British Columbia to include the Campbell
9 Heights lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve and
10 take other actions to ensure their agricultural nature
11 is preserved. The Vancouver Food Policy Council
12 recommends that the City of Vancouver advocate to the
13 federal government to ensure that any disbursement of
14 the Campbell Heights lands ensures that their
15 agricultural nature is preserved. It was carried
16 unanimously.

17 The last point that I wanted to make,
18 seeing no red cards, is twofold. The first is that
19 city people and rural people must work together to
20 find all tools at our disposal to ensure that these
21 lands and other lands like them are preserved for
22 agricultural use. Making sure that agriculture is
23 here in 2050 when we see increasing effects of climate
24 means that we have to do more than just protect lands,
25 we need to invest in our lands. Making sure that
26 we're part of that discussion and all of us here is an

1 important piece of what we're doing today. This is
2 one step and I look forward to seeing more.

3 The second piece I wanted to bring us is
4 in the City of Vancouver we heard recurring discussion
5 of almost two weeks' notice during COVID for not
6 clarity over what was going to be in grocery stores.
7 When we have land like this, that helps to make sure
8 that we have a long-term access to land. There's a
9 chance that this critical land could stop producing
10 food on demand. Even with this public session and an
11 ALR designation, it may not ensure that this land
12 bears fruit or commodities or tasty roots. The ALC
13 can help protect this land that is heaven sent. And
14 so I urge this Commission to include this parcel and
15 do more to cajole, persuade and marshal everything in
16 its power to ensure the agricultural nature of this
17 land. Thank you.

18 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

19 Do we have a David Dauls, have we missed
20 you, or I'll move on to the next on the list. Deb
21 Jack. Do we have a Deb Jack? There we go. And,
22 Marc, I do recognize your name now.

23 You need a hand? There you go.

24 **PRESENTATION BY MS. DEB JACK:**

25 Deb Jack, president of Surrey
26 Environmental Partners. I apologize, my notes are

1 very rough and very quick and ready. I had a family
2 situation today that took up almost all of my time.

3 Surrey Environmental Partners supports
4 inclusion of these lands in the Agricultural Land
5 Reserve. Extraordinary microclimate site with soil
6 nurtured and maintained for half a century. Nowhere
7 else in the Lower Mainland, in Canada, has the same
8 extraordinary production on which we all depend. Part
9 of this site is a forested area in the north and along
10 the east, rich biodiversity, pollinators and other
11 good things, no doubt enhancing agricultural
12 activities. And we heard this confirmed by the
13 scientist who spoke earlier.

14 We are at a time of biodiversity loss and
15 serious concerns about food production due to the
16 changed and changing climate. It's not just climate
17 change, it has changed and it will never go back to
18 what it was. We cannot afford to ensure maximum
19 protection of this site to continue its present use in
20 the future. We strongly advocate the inclusion in
21 B.C.'s ALR.

22 Indeed, yet another lands in Campbell
23 Heights ought to have been included in the original
24 designations of the ALR. It was ignorance of climate
25 change and biodiversity and species loss. You can
26 give them a mild excuse on that basis. Many

1 successful farms have been sold to speculators. Earth
2 has been scraped clean and concrete buildings and
3 roads planted and erected on the west, the east and
4 the south of this site.

5 We remind the panel that this land is
6 outside of the flood plain. We citizens do not owe
7 speculators through you profits. It's prime land.
8 City of Surrey, the official community plan, and metro
9 plans, were done prior to a thorough understanding
10 about the implications of both biodiversity and
11 species lost and agricultural food production at such
12 great risk as it is. Not just here but worldwide. We
13 have to provide this for the future. Our children,
14 our grandchildren and on and on are at risk.
15 Agricultural land is not reproduceable. It is an
16 absolute loss if it is put at any risk to be covered.

17 We cannot expect in the future that
18 California, China and Mexico, Florida, et cetera, will
19 sell us food and risk rebellion for want of feeding
20 their own citizens. And that's not a foolish
21 statement to make insofar as risk is concerned. We've
22 seen what's been happening in Africa where there are
23 countries that have overall famine.

24 If you cannot keep this or put this in
25 the Agricultural Land Reserve, then where will land be
26 put in the Agricultural Land Reserve of equal quality

1 and equal importance? It's unmatched.

2 Now, perhaps the Feds could keep the land
3 and put it -- I don't know if this is realistic or
4 not, but put a 99- or 500-year lease on it, with the
5 proviso of continued agricultural production unroofed,
6 out in the open, the way it is now. Thus precluding a
7 disposition process.

8 There is so much more that could be said
9 with regards to the issue of the importance of this
10 particular piece of land for its agricultural
11 purposes, but also for its biodiversity. And I
12 imagine in so far as the pollinators are concerned,
13 species conservation as well. Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

15 Sarah Williams? I've got Sarah Williams
16 and then Stacey Langford after that.

17 **PRESENTATION BY MS. SARAH WILLIAMS:**

18 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm super short. So,
19 my name is Sarah Williams, and I am a resident along
20 the eastern border there of the land in question. So,
21 first of all, I want to acknowledge all the speakers
22 that came before me and all of your wonderful
23 statistics on biodiversity and agriculture and food
24 growth and food security, and I can't possibly even
25 come up with any of those stats. But what I can say
26 is that as a neighbourhood, we truly enjoy our farm.

1 We do.

2 There might have been a couple of
3 pumpkins missing. You know, we did stop our kids from
4 doing that after Mr. Heppell swung a bat, but you
5 know. We stopped the kids from doing that.

6 MR. HEPPELL: You pay later.

7 THE CHAIRPERSON: Grandpa's on to you.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. We completely and
9 utterly respect our farm, we love our green space, our
10 walking space. We know that residents often speak up
11 against ALR. They might speak up against the manure
12 smell or whatever. We enjoy that, we love that. And
13 particularly with this area it's two or three times a
14 year.

15 But, when COVID hit, as neighbours we
16 gathered as we could, six feet apart in our
17 neighbourhood, in our driveways, just acknowledging
18 how wonderful it was to have food safety in B.C. It
19 meant so much to us. And that piece of land means a
20 lot. We have all seen that piece on the left start to
21 get developed. And we watch all of the biodiversity
22 that everyone talked about is actually a bunch of
23 owls, a bunch of coyotes, a bunch of deer completely
24 lost as they are pushed out. They have homes there,
25 and they live there, and they live in harmony with the
26 farm. Even the rats, because anytime you concrete

1 something, off come more rats in our neighbourhood.

2 So, we would really love to see that
3 piece of land stay in the ALR, it means a lot.

4 That being said, we'd like you to
5 acknowledge the words of Mr. Aldag, saying that we
6 would like this to remain a vegetable growing crop,
7 not become greenhouse area, and not become a livestock
8 area. It would completely and utterly defeat all of
9 those wonderful statistics on the arability of this
10 land to do that. That remains a vegetable crop, and
11 that that -- and also the words of Ms. Prasad how she
12 said that that farm is so productive because of that
13 greenspace next to it.

14 All of that, those trees, and that farm,
15 and all of the insects and everything that were spoken
16 of in there, give that land its pollination. We would
17 like to see that use put in the ALR under the
18 speculation it stays a vegetable farm. And the
19 greenspace remain intact. Thank you.

20 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

21 Stacey Langford? And James Visscher is
22 after.

23 **PRESENTATION BY MS. STACEY LANGFORD:**

24 MS. LANGFORD: Good evening, thank you
25 so much for the opportunity to speak. My name is
26 Stacey Langford, I am an accidental first-generation

1 farmer and fellow potato lover. I own and operate
2 Coghlan Cottage Farm together with my family in
3 Northeast Langley.

4 My farm is on ALR land, nothing like
5 this. And I think my husband and kids will attest, we
6 would love to have land that is this arable when we
7 are slogging through the mud.

8 I have lived and worked on ALR land now
9 for ten years. And over that time I have watched
10 productive pasture be swallowed by sprawling mansions
11 and tractors be replaced by Tesla. This is land that
12 is still in the ALR, but is not producing food. We
13 are losing our ALR. The numbers that are stated are
14 not reflective of productive land use. This change in
15 our neighbourhoods impacts our real ability to grow
16 food, as folks who live in these lovely mansions
17 object to my "pig smell." And as we are also near the
18 Gloucester industrial park, puts pressure on our
19 ability to safely travel between the parcels that we
20 look after on our tractors.

21 There's already been a lot said about the
22 importance of the food security for this space. My
23 farm sells directly to the public. I hear daily from
24 real people the fear that they have about their
25 ability to continue to put food on the table for their
26 families regardless of how much money they have.

1 As a farmer, as a regenerative farmer, my
2 primary role is a stewardship of the soil. And far
3 too often in these conversations soil is left out of
4 the conversation. It's been hinted to already, but
5 this soil provides a lot more than just food. The
6 soil is mitigating heat dome effect, it is
7 sequestering carbon, it is storing water. It is
8 regenerating ground water stores. It is providing
9 oxygen, habitat, places for pollinators, and joy for
10 the people who live in this neighbourhood.

11 Those things need to be taken into
12 account. Not all food uses are created equal. Soil
13 takes many hundreds of years to be produced in nature.
14 Without it, we will not exist. I do not want to live
15 in a future that involves soylent green and food grown
16 in soil-less, lifeless spaces. The only way that we
17 address that is by saving our soil.

18 And as a mother to two young kids who
19 have an interest in agriculture, I hope that there
20 will still be parcels like this, large parcels that
21 are so precious that should be part of my kids' shared
22 heritage, not for the profit of private corporations.

23 Thank you so much for your time.

24 THE CHAIRPERSON: James Visscher?

25 **PRESENTATION BY MR. JAMES VISSCHER:**

26 MR. VISSCHER: Thank you, members of

1 the committee for allowing me and so many others to
2 make a contribution this evening. I'm just a simple
3 taxpayer in Surrey, but I've been driving past this
4 piece of property for 45 years. And it was always
5 kind of a highlight, and it's even more of a highlight
6 now when its being surrounded now by warehouses along
7 almost every side. As I look at the development of
8 Surrey, I see increased industrialization, some of it
9 is questionable. I look at Morgan Creek and I wonder
10 why some of the adjacent farms disappeared and became
11 big housing projects.

12 I look at other parts of Surrey, even
13 parts of Campbell Heights, and see forest
14 disappearing, and wondering whether there couldn't
15 have been a better land use. And now I hear about
16 this particular parcel of hand being up possibly for
17 sale by the Federal Government, and I'm alarmed. And
18 I don't think I'm the only one alarmed, because I
19 think this turnout tonight illustrates the fact that
20 we are all alarmed and concerned about the future of
21 this particular parcel of property. We're alarmed
22 because of its beauty, because of its productivity,
23 because of its way in which it contributes to our food
24 supply, and it would be a crying shame if it was lost.

25 Somebody has said it's a difficult
26 decision tonight. I don't think it's difficult. I

1 think it's rather simple. Maybe I'm being simplistic.
2 If common sense prevails, and I hope it does prevail,
3 at all levels of government, then this particular
4 piece of land will be designated as agriculture for
5 time to come, who knows how long. That's the
6 designation it deserves to grow crops, to sustain our
7 growing population, and to be a benefit to the
8 community. Warehouses can go elsewhere. We have lots
9 of other scrub land where you can plant warehouses.
10 But you can't plant food everywhere. Thank you and we
11 wish you much wisdom. Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Tako van Popta? And
13 then Jim Foulkes after that.

14 **PRESENTATION BY MR. TAKO VAN POPTA:**

15 MR. VAN POPTA: Hello, Tako van Popta.

16 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

17 MR. VAN POPTA: Member of Parliament
18 for Langley-Aldergrove.

19 So, just to be clear, my riding, the
20 subject land does not fall in my riding, my federal
21 riding. It's in the federal riding called South
22 Surrey-White Rock which my colleague Kerry-Lynne
23 Findlay is the member of Parliament. She would be
24 here tonight as I am to speak in favour of this
25 initiative, but she's tied up with other things.

26 My riding is just to the east of it, 196

1 Street, which is the eastern boundary of the subject
2 land, is the western boundary of my riding. I want to
3 thank the good residents of Brookwood living along
4 196 Street, and one of them spoke already, for drawing
5 this to my attention when I was first elected three
6 years ago.

7 I also want to thank Wes Heppell and
8 others of his team for hosting Kerry-Lynne and me on
9 the farm to have a look at it, firsthand, and in that
10 conversation -- in that meeting I had a conversation
11 with Wes, and I said, you know, land usually goes to
12 the best, highest and best use as my friend Mike Bose
13 has already indicated. But Wes' response to that was,
14 "Well that would be vegetable farming, wouldn't it?"
15 And I would agree with that, so thank you very much
16 for that.

17 One of the -- Mr. Paton also pointed out
18 that there was other land in that area which is now
19 developed which would be very good farmland, and I
20 have firsthand experience with that because my wife
21 and I built a house about a mile and a half east of
22 there, which before it was a subdivision of beautiful
23 homes, it was a vegetable farm as well. Probably
24 still should be a vegetable farm, but it's too late
25 for that; it is not too late for this land. It needs
26 to be preserved.

1 I want to thank you for your initiative
2 in bringing this on, and the fact that there is such a
3 large group of people here today, and not one of them
4 speaking against your proposal speaks volumes.

5 Another thing that speaks volumes is that
6 despite Ottawa and the House of Commons being a very
7 hostile place, there is cross-party cooperation on
8 this. I want to thank my colleague Mr. Aldag from the
9 other side of the house for working on this with us.
10 This is a rare example of cooperation across the party
11 lines. I also wanted to thank Mike Bose and Linda
12 Annis for -- from the City of Surrey Council for the
13 initiative that they have taken on this. And that too
14 should speak volumes. Because if there is anybody who
15 would be interested in this land going to the highest
16 and best use, as that term is defined by land
17 appraisers, it would be the City of Surrey, because
18 they are under immense pressure to open up more land
19 for commercial purposes. The fact that they are here
20 as well speaking in favour of preserving this as
21 farmland, I think says that that is exactly what needs
22 to happen.

23 Thank you for your initiative on this,
24 congratulations.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Tako, thank you.

26 Jim Foulkes, and then Elenore Sturko is

1 after that.

2 **PRESENTATION BY MR. JIM FOULKES:**

3 MR. FOULKES: Thank you, Madam Chair,
4 Commissioners. Mine's going to be shortest words to
5 be spoken tonight, because I've heard unbelievable
6 eloquence from almost unanimous group. And I simply
7 reiterate the idea that this really isn't a big
8 question, is it? It's pretty automatic. We know this
9 is the greatest farmland, and my lifetime in Surrey
10 has said that Agricultura Land Commission was to keep
11 farmlands for our future.

12 So, I would repeat that for my
13 grandchildren and their descendants, we need to keep
14 our food security. And it is not really a difficult
15 question. Thank you very much.

16 **PRESENTATION BY MS. ELENORE STURKO:**

17 MS. STURKO: Hello, my name is Elenore
18 Sturko, and I'm the MLA for Surrey South. And this
19 piece of land that's up for discussion this evening is
20 in my constituency here in the province.

21 I am the newest member of the B.C.
22 Liberal Party to have been elected. I was just
23 elected in a by-election in September.

24 I want to thank the Heppell Family not
25 only for their activism to bring this to our
26 attention, but also for educating me about the

1 importance of this piece of land. I had the
2 opportunity to go and visit. Even before I was
3 elected, I had a chance to eat one of Mr. Sahota's
4 carrots that I pulled right out of the ground. And
5 you know what, it's -- you've heard it from people,
6 community members and experts here tonight that this
7 is -- it's Goldilocks, it's just right for growing
8 food.

9 One of the other things why I mention
10 that I'm so new being elected is that, I guess I sort
11 of did, you know, form of informal survey in the form
12 of door knocking to be elected, and I can tell you
13 that in a multitude of homes that I knocked on the
14 door and I had conversations with people in this
15 riding, food security, climate change, and even people
16 who are aware of this tract of land, it was a very,
17 very well supported idea that people want to see this
18 piece of land preserved as farmland.

19 We saw firsthand, and it's been mentioned
20 before this evening with the pandemic and with a lot
21 of the supply chain issues that we saw and how they
22 actually have affected food. We have seen prices
23 rising with vegetables, lettuce, many things that are
24 grown here in B.C. And as we struggle to deal with
25 climate change, looking to other jurisdictions where
26 we're flying in produce, bringing produce from vast

1 faraway lands when we have delicious food being grown
2 right here in Surrey. It's hard to imagine that we
3 would let this opportunity to preserve such a valuable
4 piece of land go.

5 The pressure that the Sumas flooding put
6 on our agricultural industry, I think that it goes
7 without question that I'm obviously in support of
8 keeping this land in the ALR and I want you to know
9 that in the experience that I had speaking with people
10 across South Surrey all summer long and into
11 September, that I also heard on the doorsteps a great
12 amount of support.

13 I don't have a formal -- it's not a
14 formal survey, but I did informally hear from many
15 people across Surrey South that they really feel
16 strongly that this is an important piece of land, they
17 love being able to buy local produce. They love being
18 able to have greenspace preserved, particularly
19 because we do have a lot of industrial development in
20 our riding. But agriculture has been something that
21 is part of the heart and soul of Surrey South. It's
22 not just economic.

23 You know, we can't -- you know, Joni
24 Mitchell, "Pave paradise..." right? It's part of who we
25 are as residents of South Surrey and Cloverdale. It's
26 a farming community and I was actually struck by -- in

1 my campaigning with just what a large part of the
2 community farming really is. And I think that if we
3 were to pave over this, or to put up industrial
4 buildings, we would be paving over and putting
5 industrial buildings over part of who we are as a
6 community in Surrey South.

7 So, thank you for the time, thanks to
8 everyone who came out this evening, and I would like
9 to support the initiative to keep this land
10 agricultural for vegetable production, and please
11 include it in the ALR.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

13 Margaret Kunst (inaudible) township of
14 Langley I guess, and Fred is next.

15 **PRESENTATION BY MS. MARGARET KUNST:**

16 MS. KUNST: Hi, my name is Margaret
17 Kunst, I'm a councillor in the Township of Langley. I
18 think my husband and I, when we went to sign we didn't
19 realize that we would be speaking. But as a
20 politician you get an opportunity to speak --

21 THE CHAIRPERSON: You don't have to if
22 you don't want to.

23 MS. KUNST: But I'd like to state just
24 as a private citizen that we are all in support of --
25 well I am in support, and so is my husband, of keeping
26 this in the ALR land. I've known the Heppells for a

1 long, long time. My son actually married into the
2 Heppell family. We share a granddaughter and a great
3 granddaughter, so that's neither here nor there. But
4 I just wanted to say --

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: Too much
6 information.

7 MS. KUNST: Exactly. But you know,
8 we've known the Heppells. They have farmed this land
9 for so many years and been good stewards of the land.
10 And just again, I just want to just support this,
11 thank you very much.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

13 Brad, did you want to speak as well?

14 I've got Anna Dean is next and then after
15 that, Kath Takasaki.

16 It's a long way down.

17 **PRESENTATION BY MS. ANNA DEAN:**

18 MS. DEAN: It's a long way. Good
19 evening. My name is Anna Dean. For 38 years I've
20 lived on my ten-acre farm about a mile away from this
21 property. For all those years I've observed a
22 tremendous amount of food being produced on this
23 property, and I've always been -- I've quite marveled
24 actually at how green the fields were looking every
25 spring when my radishes weren't even coming up.

26 I've also watched over the years a large

1 turkey farm, chicken farms, hobby farms, vegetable
2 farms, and forests be complete destroyed and paved
3 over to make way for warehouses. There is tremendous
4 pressure on what is left of our farmland. Flooding,
5 let us never forget Abbotsford 2021; acres of prime
6 farmland covered in greenhouses, growing cannabis
7 instead of food. Relentless pressure from developers.
8 A lot's been said tonight and said very well. And so
9 I won't repeat, you know, the climate change and
10 everything else that we've heard so much about
11 tonight. I just urge you, please, this is precious
12 land. We can't eat money. Thank you for your time.

13 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

14 Kathy? Is Kathy still here? And then
15 we've got Ken Travis afterwards.

16 **PRESENTATION BY MS. KATHY TAKASAKI:**

17 MS. TAKASAKI: Good evening, I have
18 lived my whole life in South Surrey, so I have seen
19 drastic changes that have happened. As a kid, grew up
20 on five acres and we would grow some of our own food,
21 but nowadays people are expected to stop urban sprawl,
22 live in condominiums, live in townhouses, and these
23 people don't have the ability to produce their own
24 food. So, we need to protect our farmland, to protect
25 our citizens. This is a great piece of property that
26 needs to be protected, and we need to protect so much

1 more, but I really urge you to please, please, add
2 this to the ALR.

3 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

4 MS. TAKASAKI: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: I've got Kevin
6 Travis is next? Is Kevin here? And then after that
7 we've got Al Simon.

8 **PRESENTATION BY MR. KEVIN TRAVIS:**

9 MR. TRAVIS: Madam Commissioner and
10 Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity just to
11 address this panel I support the inclusion of the ALR
12 like Ms. Williams. I'm a neighbour, I live a block
13 away from this fabulous farm. We've been there for 25
14 plus years. My grandparents were prairie farmers.
15 I'm not a farmer, but I know how hard it is to find
16 decent land to farm. And particularly in B.C., being
17 arable land.

18 The one thing I know coming from a family
19 of farmers is it's very capital intensive. And when I
20 heard the young Mr. Heppell say he has to throw a
21 million bucks into the soil and hope for a good crop
22 this year, the fact that this land can grow from
23 February to I think November or October, is extremely
24 unique. The prairies, you know, if you get a crop in
25 early after the frost, you might get two crops a year,
26 maybe get some fallow in the fall.

1 For them to be able to farm from February
2 to October is fantastic. It is not a, I would say, a
3 special land, it's a unique land. It's a crown. It's
4 a jewel, and I think I would implore the Commission to
5 put it into the ALR and have it remain there.

6 The last thing, I don't know about
7 federal disposition of land, but if the ALC has a
8 mandate, perhaps they could go to the federal
9 government and ask that there be a proviso or a
10 condition placed on a disposition that has to remain
11 agricultural land, rather than some other use. If
12 they can make a recommendation to the federal
13 government, that would be great.

14 So, once again, one last point, the
15 potatoes were great this Christmas, mashed potatoes
16 with a little bit of sour cream. Thank you very much.

17 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

18 Al Simon next, and then Bryce Wade after
19 that.

20 **PRESENTATION BY MR. AL SIMON:**

21 MR. SIMON: How many people here are
22 farmers? All right, so you'll know what I'm talking
23 about then.

24 First off, I'm going to say that you know
25 your duty as a commission and I think if there isn't a
26 more relevant example of eminent domain here then I

1 don't know what there is, so this decision should be
2 pretty simple in terms of inclusion. I mean, how are
3 you going to argue to other people who actually are in
4 the ALR that they can't take their land out? Which of
5 course the pressure is on about, right? I mean you
6 have all these people who are like my age, I'm 62, who
7 farmed, and if you don't include this, how are you
8 going to say to them that they can't take theirs out?
9 I mean, the pressure exists for a reason, right?

10 Like we've got 210 acres of Class 1 and
11 Class 2 land. We've had it since '42. Not everybody,
12 you know, can make a living off land like that. And
13 why is that? And what are you going to do when the
14 price of land is what it is? So, you know, I came in
15 here and it's like waist deep in politicians are here
16 for their own personal reasons, so we should, if
17 you're talking about, you know, some 200 acres going
18 to provide food security, you're delusional, right?
19 Who is going to farm it? Everybody's old, right? You
20 can't make a living on it, and there's been comments
21 for years from people who are farmers who have held
22 onto their land like we have, and it's like, how are
23 we going to get the next generation involved? They
24 can't afford the property, there's got to be some sort
25 of political action that's going to beyond -- I mean,
26 I think it's admirable that people are supporting this

1 land, but it's -- you're only halfway there when you
2 keep the land. You've got to find someone to farm it.
3 And if there isn't political action or support from
4 all levels of government, then all this talk about,
5 you know, food security and stuff is pointless.
6 That's all I wanted to say.

7 *[audience applause]*

8 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

9 Bryce Wade? And then Sarah Rush is after
10 that.

11 **PRESENTATION BY MR. BRYCE WADE:**

12 MR. WADE: Good evening everyone. It
13 is a great pleasure that I get to stand here today,
14 because I unfortunately have some very bad news for
15 everybody. So, I'd like to start out first, my name
16 is obviously Bryce Wade. I work as a business
17 consultant for a number of different companies, one of
18 them is a developer.

19 So, I actually have quite an inside
20 knowledge of, you know, how this process works. And
21 I've done so for years actually. So, although I am in
22 support of this, there's a couple of really important
23 things that I think everybody really needs to be aware
24 of.

25 As a quick kind of vote from the
26 audience, I've got two quick questions. Who believes

1 that there is a food crisis right now? Hands up.

2 VOICE: In the world?

3 MR. WADE: Yeah, in the world. World,
4 not us, world. Okay. Probably about half, about
5 half, at least half.

6 Second question and more important for
7 us, as a community. If you could not go to the
8 grocery store tomorrow and buy food, do you have more
9 than 90 days of food that you could survive on? Hands
10 up if you do.

11 That's a very low percentage. So, we
12 import about \$8 billion of food per year. So, there's
13 a couple things that people have mentioned multiple
14 times. Food security, food resiliency. I want to
15 introduce everybody to a very important word. Food
16 sufficiency. If those trucks stop coming, or we have
17 any problem whatsoever where our food is not delivered
18 to us, do we have enough in our community to survive?
19 That is a yes or a no question. And right now it is
20 no. Even though we have some of the best land on the
21 planet, we are not using.

22 So, the gentleman that was just speaking
23 said what about the use of the land, right? We need
24 to be able to use our land for food production. Our
25 government, in its infinite many things is intending
26 to bring 500,000 people per year from elsewhere on the

1 planet. How are we going to house and feed those
2 people?

3 So I said that I work as a business
4 consultant. So, I look for problems, and I look for
5 solutions. So, I'm going to work through some of
6 these with you, okay?

7 When the war started last year, I
8 realized -- the war in Ukraine. I realized that there
9 was a threat to our food security. So, I have a 50
10 square foot garden in my condo with my girlfriend, and
11 I grew some of the best potatoes I've ever had. It
12 was amazing. And with my business partner I turned
13 his backyard into a potato farm. I got about 170
14 pounds of potatoes last year. That was an
15 unimaginable amount of work that I really appreciate
16 anybody here that is a farmer. I very much appreciate
17 how much effort, time, and blood, sweat and tears it
18 takes to create food.

19 So let me give you a couple very
20 important numbers that you should be aware of. Russia
21 and Ukraine account for 33 percent of grain production
22 on the planet. That is obviously not coming to the
23 west for obvious reasons. There are some countries
24 that import upwards of 80 percent of their food from
25 somewhere else on the planet. Luckily we are not
26 among those, but other countries are. Places like

1 Egypt are going to have massive food problems because
2 they get the majority of their food from the Ukraine.

3 Things like this are very, very important
4 for two reasons. Number one, it is local, as I just
5 said. How much food do we produce as a community and
6 is it enough to support our population. This is a
7 mathematical problem. It doesn't -- no other thing
8 matters in this equation. It is math. Do we have
9 enough food for the people that we have in this area,
10 yes or no? Right now, for Canada, unfortunately that
11 is no, because we import.

12 We used to be completely self-sufficient.
13 We did not need to import anything from anyone,
14 anywhere, but globalization changed that, because it
15 made it too cheap to import instead of create here.

16 Now, as I'm sure many of you have
17 noticed, the price of our food has more than doubled.
18 So, whatever idiot thinks that 10 percent inflation or
19 8 percent is ridiculous. Our energy has doubled, our
20 food has doubled. Inflation itself, the cost of our
21 money has gone out of control. And there are many
22 other threats to our food security that I can't even
23 name here. But one of the most important is
24 unfortunately our Prime Minister who decided that 30
25 percent -- that we should have a 30 percent reduction
26 in fertilizer usage, which is insane in a time that

1 our planet is facing starvation. There are so many
2 places on this planet that are facing starvation, food
3 insecurity, and for us in the first world to be one of
4 them, even a possibility is insane.

5 The U.S. just culled last year somewhere
6 in the neighbourhood of 20 to 30 million birds,
7 chickens, because of bird flu. And if you didn't
8 know, eggs in the states are now like a ridiculous
9 amount of money. Almost a dollar an egg. So, the
10 compounding problems that we're facing are not going
11 to get better unless we take serious, significant and
12 immediate action. And I can't stress this enough.

13 So, there is two things I want to end
14 off, okay? Number one is what are we going to do
15 about it? That's not a simple question, but it is the
16 most important question. We're talking about one
17 property of 200 acres. We have in the ALR already
18 more than enough land if it was properly used to feed
19 the people in this community and without. With the
20 rising food costs, nobody tonight has made a business
21 case. I'm going to make a business case, okay?
22 People need food to live, very simple.

23 THE CHAIRPERSON: Going to wrap it.

24 MR. WADE: Yeah, this is the first
25 one, I'll give you the second. We have the ability,
26 technology, people, all that, to produce on this land

1 and export it. Which creates jobs, which creates our
2 own security.

3 And number two, I'll end on this, because
4 this is about as stark as I can make it for everybody.
5 Who remembers the toilet paper shortage of 2020?

6 THE CHAIRPERSON: I think we need to
7 wrap this.

8 MR. WADE: This is my last point.
9 This is or that was, a decision that we all made that
10 there was a shortage. Toilet paper is made here. We
11 have an infinite supply of it. So what do you think
12 is going to happen if people don't have food on the
13 shelves, because that's what we risk.

14 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

15 Sarah Rush. And Anita Huberman is after
16 that.

17 **PRESENTATION BY MS. SARAH RUSH:**

18 MS. RUSH: Good evening, everyone, I'm
19 not quite sure how to follow that one, but I'll try.

20 I'm a registered dietician, I live in
21 South Surrey, I work in South Surrey. So, I'm here to
22 express my full support for the ALC to include this
23 land within the City of Surrey, into the Agricultural
24 Land Reserve.

25 There are many -- two main reasons why
26 this inclusion is not just necessary, but actually

1 critical. Firstly, for the sake of food security and
2 self-sustainability, but the gentleman's gone, of the
3 Lower Mainland and British Columbia.

4 As far as agricultural land goes, we've
5 heard this is about as good as farmland gets. As a
6 dietician, professional, I encourage everyone not only
7 to eat more fruits and vegetables, but to eat more
8 local produce. The reason for our recommendation is
9 simple. The more fruits and vegetables eaten, the
10 healthier we are. When healthcare costs are spiraling
11 out of control, any strategies to reduce preventable
12 diseases are high on all levels of governments'
13 agendas.

14 So, this is an easy one. Encourage
15 people to eat more locally grown fruits and
16 vegetables, and help costs decrease in the long run,
17 and people are healthier. However, increasing demand
18 for fruits and vegetables requires land available.
19 And land devoted to food production. People can only
20 eat local if local is available.

21 Currently, sadly, only 8 percent of
22 vegetables consumed in Metro Vancouver are grown in
23 the region. That is already a shockingly low number.
24 And unless this land goes into the ALR, it will get
25 lower.

26 But why is local so important? Why can't

1 we just import what we need? Well, you've heard some
2 of the political and the war reasons. But the other
3 reason is, the fresher the produce, the higher the
4 nutrient value. Therefore, local produce which gets
5 to the shop quicker is healthier. It is available at
6 farmer's markets too, often the same day. Local
7 produce needs fewer or no preservative sprays to keep
8 it fresh on its very short journey, and therefore is
9 healthier. More links are being found between
10 chemicals, cancer and diseases.

11 Local produce is better for the
12 environment. Less distance to transport it, less gas,
13 and therefore less pollution. Less greenhouse gases
14 and less negative climate change in fact. Do we
15 really need to fly in Brussels sprout from Mexico?
16 They are a winter crop. We have the capacity to grow
17 them here. Local produce supports a local community.

18 Local produce is much cheaper, and helps
19 people eat better for less. And that's critical at
20 this time with inflation. Soaring food costs are
21 really causing people to struggle, pay rent, eat well.
22 What do they do? They have a dilemma. We shouldn't
23 have that dilemma here in British Columbia, we just
24 shouldn't.

25 We have the good fortune to have some of
26 the most fertile land and the most temperate climate

1 in Canada here in Surrey. Why would we even think
2 about needing to rely on imports in the future?

3 But local produce of course needs local
4 agricultural land. Just as the ALC approves removal
5 of farmland from the ALR, it must also see its duty to
6 add into the ALR land that is currently farmed, highly
7 productive and essential to local food producers, when
8 it has the opportunity to do so. And it has that
9 opportunity right now and here with this land.

10 It is the best land for growing food
11 around. Let's not lose it. Our need for fresh, local
12 produce will go on forever, and the demand for food
13 and land to grow the food on will increase each year.

14 What about 2030, 2040, or 2060? This is
15 not just about today. B.C. has the biggest population
16 growth in Canada, and Surrey is one of the fastest
17 growing areas. We need to plan for that, and make
18 allowances for the future, and be able to grow enough
19 food to feed ourselves.

20 The other part which hasn't been spoken
21 about very much a little bit, is about the natural
22 land drainage that is essential to prevent flooding in
23 other areas of South Surrey and the Hazelmere. As a
24 resident of Hazelmere, relying on water from an
25 aquifer, I can testify and living near the river, I
26 can testify the negative impacts the Campbell Heights

1 development has already had on the area. That affect
2 is without the additional approved 500 acres already.

3 If this land does not end up in the ALR,
4 it will be paved over and its drainage capacity lost.
5 That must not happen. Natural open spaces are
6 important in their own right in mitigating climate
7 change, and irrigating agriculture.

8 So, not only if we don't put this land in
9 the ALR, not only will there be a direct loss of
10 farmland, there will also be a further indirect loss
11 of farmland as a result of changes in water flows in
12 the area, a double loss for agriculture in the Lower
13 Mainland. This land is critical for both food
14 production and natural drainage for a larger
15 surrounding area.

16 It's up to the Agriculture Land
17 Commission to stand up for the future of locally grown
18 food, and keeping produce affordable by preserving
19 productive, agriculture land. Please place this in
20 the ALR. Thank you.

21 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Sarah.
22 Anita. And then Kim Richter.

23 **PRESENTATION BY MS. ANITA HUBERMAN:**

24 MS. HUBERMAN: Good evening, I'm Anita
25 Huberman. I'm president and CEO of the Surrey Board
26 of Trade. And we -- our whole mandate is to support

1 business, bring business into the city. And typically
2 the message from the Board of Trade in our industry
3 would be to support industrial land. But tonight it's
4 a different message from the Surrey Board of Trade.
5 We support keeping this land as food producing land.

6 We're supportive of the need to intensify
7 and create industrial lands, employment lands. But
8 agricultural lands are also employment lands. We need
9 to recognize and appreciate that at the same time we
10 need to harness and sustain local food production.
11 And given the unique nature of this piece of land,
12 using it for anything other than agricultural
13 purposes, for vegetable production, will be an
14 economic and food security disaster for British
15 Columbia.

16 Just some points that I wanted to make,
17 this property owned by the Federal Government, they,
18 as mentioned, have been leased by Surrey's Heppell's
19 Potato farm. The land produces between 30 million and
20 50 million servings of vegetables.

21 Number two, the land is elevated and
22 sandy. It drains very well, allowing farmers to plant
23 and harvest when conditions are rainy and wet, giving
24 residents and businesses the opportunities to enjoy
25 produce when other farms are not able to plant and
26 harvest during our challenging seasons. It's a

1 hilltop location meaning the land is not vulnerable to
2 flooding, and less vulnerable to frost. And it
3 receives more sunshine and less rainfall than
4 Abbotsford and Chilliwack, drains better than low-
5 lying Surrey, Richmond and Delta soils.

6 And number three, as mentioned before,
7 during last year's abnormally cold and wet spring,
8 Heppells was able to plant and harvest potatoes before
9 other farmers were able to get into their fields.
10 Producing a significant, 70 percent of B.C.'s domestic
11 harvest, which we wouldn't have had without this land.

12 Climate change and supply chain issues
13 challenge the availability of imported food. B.C.
14 needs to protect its ability to feed itself.
15 Heppell's is also working with Simon Fraser
16 University, with Kwantlen Polytechnic University to
17 really emblazon the need for the next generation of
18 farmers, to train them on agriculture innovation. To
19 enhance food security and local farm and food
20 partnerships.

21 And Indigenous dialogues have occurred,
22 and they will continue to occur, on the traditional
23 and unceded territories of the which this farmland is
24 on.

25 Canada is the fifth largest food producer
26 in the world. The whole agriculture and agrifood

1 system employed over 2 million people, and provided
2 one in nine jobs in Canada. The agriculture industry
3 generated close to \$135 billion of Canada's GDP. It's
4 a significant economic industry that is a priority for
5 both of B.C. and Federal Government. And even our
6 national chamber of commerce, our Canadian Chamber of
7 Commerce in Ottawa recognizes the importance of this.

8 So, we urge you as the Agricultural Land
9 Commission to ensure that our agriculture and agrifood
10 supply chain needs remain resilient and continue to
11 drive Canada's economy. Thank you very much.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Anita.

13 And we've got Frank --

14 **PRESENTATION BY MS. KIM RICHTER:**

15 MS. RICHTER: Thank you, Madam Chair,
16 and thank you Commissioners. My name is Kim Richter,
17 I don't live in Surrey, I live in Langley Township. I
18 have lived in Langley Township for 36 years now, and
19 24 of those years I've been on Langley Township
20 Council.

21 I want to speak my own personal opinion
22 here today, and my own personal opinion is, please put
23 these lands into the ALR so they can be protected for
24 food production. There has been a lot of talk tonight
25 about how everything is really interrelated. How
26 people produce food, how we need biodiversity, food

1 security, we also need to have water protection, and
2 everything is linked. That's the one thing I've
3 learned in 24 years in municipal politics.

4 But the other thing I've learned is
5 something called political expediency. And that means
6 that decisions are sometimes made on a politically
7 expedient basis, and not necessarily in terms of a
8 long-term basis. And I speak to this from the
9 perspective of having spent the last four years on
10 Metro Vancouver's Regional Board as a representative
11 from the Township of Langley. That whole strip of
12 land in there, the Campbell Heights development,
13 there's that piece that is in question today. The
14 piece underneath it is gone, paved over, with one-
15 storey buildings. Like what a waste of space. And
16 the piece below that, South Campbell Heights, passed
17 Metro Vancouver by three votes. Three votes.

18 The experts came and talked, the
19 scientists talked, everybody who had any kind of
20 scientific knowledge or ability came and talked about
21 why we should not be putting Campbell Heights
22 development type buildings in this area. It affects
23 the aquifers, it affects the biodiversity, it affects
24 food production, and on and on. Three votes.

25 So, you know what, politicians come and
26 go. But we all need food. Please, protect this piece

1 for our food and the future, thank you.

2 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Frank.

3 **PRESENTATION BY MR. FRANK BUCHOLTZ:**

4 MR. BUCHOLTZ: Good evening, Madam
5 Chair, my name is Frank Bucholtz, longtime observer of
6 activities in Surrey and Langley. And I just want to
7 say first off, I support your initiative to put this
8 ALR -- or put this land in the ALR as it should have
9 been way back in 1973.

10 It's very important farmland. Many
11 speakers have made that point, you don't need me to
12 make it again. It's been in production for more than
13 50 years, and the Heppell Family have done a great job
14 in keeping the soil very productive and Ron Heppell
15 outlined some of the things they did back at the
16 beginning to do so.

17 I first became aware of this land when I
18 was a reporter with the *Surrey Leader* 40 years ago.
19 We had major flooding on all the lowlands of the farms
20 in Surrey, primarily in the Cloverdale area. And Ron
21 called me up and said, "Come on out and take a picture
22 at my farm, we're growing potatoes." And of course,
23 because there was no drainage issues. And they had a
24 great crop that year, and I'm sure they did well
25 financially with that, because a lot of other produce
26 wasn't available.

1 The question for me is really, this is
2 the way I look at it, and I hope this is the way the
3 Commission looks at it. How does our generation do
4 our very best to improve food security for those who
5 are coming behind us, for our children, our
6 grandchildren, and the generations yet to come?
7 Particularly as the population of B.C. continues to
8 grow.

9 If the Commission puts this land into the
10 ALR, it's important to realize, and everyone in the
11 audience needs to realize this, this is not the end of
12 the issue. The Federal Government has put this land
13 up for disposition. They want to dispose of it, and
14 in my opinion, if they want to dispose of it, what
15 they should be doing at the federal level is ensuring
16 that the land remains in agriculture production. That
17 should be a fundamental condition of any disposition
18 that takes place.

19 And I think it's important for all of us
20 as citizens, people who live in this area, people who
21 have deep roots here, people who have moved here more
22 recently, that we hold the feet of politicians at the
23 federal, provincial, and municipal level to the fire
24 to make sure that that happens.

25 Thank you.

26 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

1 Myles Lamont? And Martin Robson after
2 that.

3 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MYLES LAMONT:**

4 MR. LAMONT: Good evening, thank you,
5 Madam Chairman. My name is Myles, I'm a small farmer
6 in South Surrey. I have been doing that for the last
7 20-odd years. And I'm here to take a slightly
8 different angle on this one. Rather than convince you
9 the agricultural potential of this site which has been
10 hammered home I think quite clearly, I'm actually here
11 to try to convince you of the ecological values of
12 this site, in addition to its agricultural outputs.

13 Before I get into that, I'd like to point
14 out a quick stat that I came across while doing some
15 research. In 2011 Metro Vancouver created its 2040
16 regional growth strategy. As part of that 2050 vision
17 which was reviewed 10 years later, Metro Vancouver
18 highlighted that there's been a change in land use
19 designation in agricultural use showing a net loss of
20 200 hectares in the last ten years. To put that in
21 context, the inclusion of this piece of land would
22 offset that loss by 65 percent.

23 Now, I know you asked us not to be
24 redundant, but I'd like to repeat that. By a single
25 pen stroke, you can offset the entire loss of
26 agricultural lands on this landscape over the last

1 decade by 65 percent. I think that point alone is
2 enough for you guys to make a decision.

3 Let me get into the other stuff I was
4 hoping to talk about. I'd like to quote part of Metro
5 Vancouver's 2050 vision document. And I quote,

6 "The ongoing production of fresh and local
7 food contributes into a secure food supply
8 and economic resilience and supports other
9 co-benefits such as ecosystem services. Yet
10 land speculation to conflicts between urban
11 and agriculture use and the conversion
12 pressures from other land uses on
13 agriculture lands continue to threaten the
14 resilience of agriculture in the region.
15 Effective growth management policy includes
16 strategies to protect and enhance
17 agricultural lands and support agriculture
18 viability over the long term, while also
19 supporting economic viability of agriculture
20 and recognizing the value of ecosystem
21 services."

22 You may note that verbiage has come up
23 twice now. I'd like to give you an example of
24 ecological services.

25 The forested areas to the north and to
26 the east of this site were pointed out by Professor

1 Prasad before me, in terms of being of significance to
2 this site. I'd like to point out the City of Surrey
3 has recognized these lands already as being part of
4 the green infrastructure network included under the
5 streamside protection areas and are also recognized
6 their green corridors and connectivity hubs. These
7 are critical habitats used by wildlife in an
8 increasingly urbanized landscape for which we are
9 pushing them out of. And these few little green
10 spaces are all they have left in order to move across
11 a very difficult landscape otherwise.

12 The importance of agricultural lands to
13 wildlife is becoming increasingly important as we
14 degrade and change our landscape base. As a bird
15 biologist I have a soft spot for Barn Owls, and I'd
16 like to give you a quick point in terms of ecosystem
17 services a bit more relevant to the farming community.
18 There is federally identified critical habitat for
19 Barn Owl quite literally across the street from this
20 site. Less than 400 metres from here, the Feds have
21 said "ah-ha, this is critical habitat, unfortunately,
22 unless it's on Federally owned lands, in essence the
23 *Species at Risk Act* means absolutely nothing."

24 What I'd like to ask my colleagues in the
25 room from Ottawa, is perhaps during the disposition
26 process, they could consider their own legislation as

1 it relates to land disposition, and perhaps look at
2 this as an opportunity to say, "Here's a chance where
3 we can both benefit the agriculture community, and
4 perhaps also the environmental wildlife one as well."

5 Case in point, Barn Owls are Mother
6 Nature's rodenticide, but without the "cide". A
7 single barn owl nest will eat 1200 rodents per year,
8 and we have quite literally across the street a
9 recognized and documented nest sites.

10 All that to say, I hope the ALC can
11 consider the ecological values as well as the
12 agricultural values that have been so evident and made
13 here tonight and help secure the future of (inaudible)
14 our local agriculture landscapes but also those of the
15 terrestrial and aquatic life who share those
16 landscapes with it as well. Thank you.

17 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

18 Martin Robson?

19 **PRESENTATION BY MR. MARTIN ROBSON:**

20 MR. ROBSON: Good evening, my name is
21 Martin Robson. Thanks very much for the opportunity
22 to come and speak tonight. I'm actually here because
23 my daughter called me and said, "Hey, you know, I saw
24 this stuff on Facebook about Heppells and about the
25 property and about all those kinds of things," and her
26 grandmother actually made this sign back in the early

1 2000s when there was a Mufford Crescent issue here in
2 Langley about taking farmland out of the ALR to build
3 roads in Langley. And that was proceeded by in the
4 '70s when Gloucester Estates was trying to be
5 developed here, also in Milner, along the railway
6 tracks on Glover Road. So, that's a bit of heritage.
7 We grew up here, and I actually, you know, went to
8 Alberta and I was going to be a farmer and farm full
9 time, and I'm 52 years old, and I'm still trying to
10 earn enough money to go be a farmer.

11 THE CHAIRPERSON: It's never too late.

12 MR. ROBSON: Yeah, exactly, I'm too
13 late.

14 MR. HEPPELL: Welcome to the club.

15 MR. ROBSON: Yeah, that's right. And
16 here's an example where this land is, is worth
17 millions or hundreds of millions of dollars, not
18 because it's farmland, but because it could be
19 industrial land, and I think you guys obviously see
20 all over the Fraser Valley the value of the land is
21 not related to what it can produce, it's related to
22 how many people want it for the potential of it going
23 up. And if all of you on the board had the authority
24 to say for the next 200 years you can't build a
25 building on this land, I might be able to afford to
26 farm, or my daughter might be able to afford to farm if

1 she could. And it would be very nice if all the
2 politicians here and everybody here would say, you
3 know, a lot like it is in Europe where this land is
4 not going to be developed, you can't build on this
5 land, you can't do anything on this land. All the
6 little places will go way up in value but none of the
7 Heppells can farm five or ten or 20 acres and sell
8 potatoes for a dollar a pound. They would have to
9 sell them for 10 or 20 dollars a pound. And we can't
10 afford to eat at that price.

11 Thank you very much.

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

13 MR. ROBSON: Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRPERSON: Martin. Martin
15 Robson.

16 MALE VOICE: That was Martin.

17 THE CHAIRPERSON: Oh, that was Martin.
18 Oh, I really messed that up.

19 Chris Rush. There we go. And David
20 Davis, you're going to be the last one on the list.
21 Oh, no, sorry, not quite.

22 **PRESENTATION BY MR. CHRIS RUSH:**

23 Thank you, everybody, for this
24 opportunity to speak. As a young Canadian and there's
25 a lot of empty seats but I've waited my turn to
26 express my voice not just on me on behalf of all young

1 Canadians who live in this area and across Canada.
2 And, you know, I came across this issue, my mother,
3 Sarah, and Tyler, I follow him, and I've been to his
4 ugly potato day. And the immense pride of going out
5 and picking up potatoes and bringing it home, and you
6 know, eating on local produce.

7 And this decision is going to, I guess,
8 go up through three levels of government but what the
9 real question is is what it means to be Canadian and
10 what is the right choice here. And I think any
11 millions of people who are watching this or are going
12 to read on the paper that this key agricultural land
13 has been paved over, you know, all I can speak of is
14 the unjust and that's what I'm here to not just
15 represent me. Again, CBC's and CTV or in Global has
16 disappeared but I'm still here. And, yeah, thank you.

17 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

18 David Davis. And Warner Smith is our
19 last one on the list.

20 **PRESENTATION BY MR. DAVID DAVIS:**

21 Thank you very much.

22 THE CHAIRPERSON: Good to see you.

23 MR. DAVIS: Yes, I'm sorry, you called
24 my name as "David Doyle". And I had signed my name
25 right after Ian Paton had and it didn't dawn on me.
26 Anyhow, my name is David Davis, I reside at 21782 -

1 76B Avenue, Milner, in the township of Langley.

2 Before I go on, I have a picture of the
3 last speak, the second to last speaker, with a carrot.
4 Do you remember that, Martin? And the carrot is this
5 big. This big, Heppell. That big.

6 MALE VOICE: We don't grow that big.

7 MR. DAVIS: Anyhow.

8 MALE VOICE: You could kill a rabbit
9 with this one.

10 MR. DAVIS: I am a fourth-generation
11 dairy farmer. Our family has been farming for over
12 120 years in the same original Hudson Bay farmland
13 which that carrot was grown on. We have 500 Holstein
14 cows.

15 THE CHAIRPERSON: Is that carrot envy?

16 MR. DAVIS: Is he being cheeky? This
17 is my time, eh?

18 We have 500 Holstein cows on our farm and
19 we milk about 250 of them and the rest are
20 replacement. We farm about 300 acres. We grow corn
21 silage and grass silage to feed our herd. It is so
22 important that you place this federal surplus land
23 into the ALR. As a food producer, I'm constantly
24 looking for more land to produce more feed to feed my
25 herd due to the pressures in the Fraser Valley of
26 urban sprawl, development, and high land costs and - I

1 don't have it written down here - speculation.

2 We have now had to look outside the
3 Fraser Valley to purchase more feed and land to feed
4 our cows. This is not sustainable and is very cost
5 prohibited due to fuel, labour and trucking costs. I
6 know that -- I know many dairy farmers have boughten
7 ranches outside the Fraser Valley, even out of the
8 province, to produce feed due to a shortage and the
9 cost of land in the Fraser Valley.

10 This 305 acres is a very productive piece
11 of land, as we've heard lots of good things about it
12 tonight. Due to an excellent soil condition, this
13 piece allows for early access in the spring and
14 planting and late access in the fall for harvesting.
15 This land is a net benefit to agriculture. Done. As
16 we have seen with Heppells, from producing, processing
17 and marketing their crops, right here in our own
18 Fraser Valley. This is one of the finest examples of
19 local food production.

20 We don't have to look very far back to
21 remember the flood in Sumas Prairie, provincial
22 highway, railroad closures and of course border
23 shutdowns to see how our food supply chain suffered
24 greatly. During this time dairy farmers in the Fraser
25 Valley were asked to cut the amount of grain they fed
26 to their herds because rail cars could not get through

1 and trucks could not haul grain to farmers. This did
2 not just affect the dairy industry. Poultry, pork,
3 beef also suffered. In fact, the provincial
4 government started to pull grain that was slated for
5 export from the docks and distribute it to food
6 producers in the Fraser Valley and grain mills.

7 No farm -- I'm just about done. No farm,
8 no food. This slogan speaks for itself. We have an
9 opportunity to protect this viable and valuable piece
10 of land right here in the Fraser Valley. Farmland is
11 so important in the chain of food production. It
12 allows us to put it into storage so that we can get
13 through some of the things we talked about tonight.
14 We need to put this 305 acres into the ALR and protect
15 it for the future. Thank you very much.

16 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. And our
17 final -- oh, no, maybe not. Warren Smith.

18 **PRESENTATION BY MR. WARNER SMITH:**

19 Yes, you heard, Warner Smith. Okay, I'm
20 from Langley and I grew up in Langley. I'm 78.
21 Listening to everything tonight, it has been very
22 interesting. We've covered this subject very well.
23 But as Dave Davis just said, he touched on a subject
24 as a very astute gentleman who was talking earlier
25 regarding how hard it is to farm and how expensive it
26 is, and that's why a lot of farmland is laying doing

1 nothing.

2 We have the government giving money out
3 to people who are buying Teslas, for people wanting to
4 buy heat pumps to use up more electricity that we
5 don't have enough of. And yet we can't eat Teslas and
6 we can't eat heat pumps, but we sure need food to eat.
7 In order to have that you've got to have the farms.
8 Why can't the government use their initiative and
9 their brains to realize that if we don't have the
10 farms we can't eat. And subsidize the farmers instead
11 of the other things that get subsidized. I think
12 that's really the utmost thing that should come out of
13 this. Yes, save that land, but also give farmers the
14 initiative to keep farming. Thank you.

15 THE CHAIRPERSON: Sarah Rush, I think
16 we've got you up again.

17 MS. RUSH: I'm in a different
18 capacity.

19 THE CHAIRPERSON: Ah, that's okay.

20 **PRESENTATION BY MS. SARAH RUSH:**

21 Good evening everyone, again. I'm
22 actually chair of a group called the Friends of
23 Hazelmere - Campbell Valley. Many of you -- some of
24 the people here will have got an email from that.
25 We're an organization made up of local groups,
26 environmental groups, individuals, who have gotten

1 together to create a group for the good stewardship --
2 I meant to put my glasses on here. Good stewardship
3 of the area, sustainable growth and protection of the
4 natural assets in the Hazelmere, Campbell Valley area.
5 On behalf of the Friends of Hazelmere - Campbell
6 Valley, I'd like to give our support for the inclusion
7 of this 300 plus acre site into the ALR.

8 This application is a glimmer of hope for
9 us. At last we see a good decision, a forward-
10 thinking idea, being proposed. The inclusion of this
11 land into the ALR would be a good decision by the
12 bucket load, excuse the pun. There have been so many
13 poor, bad decisions in the area over the last decade.
14 The tide of money, development, promise of jobs, talk
15 has drowned out, quite literally, back in November
16 2021, best land practices, causing damage to the land,
17 agricultural lands and damage to the Little Campbell
18 River.

19 Friends of Hazelmere - Campbell Valley
20 continuously tried to bring to the attention of the
21 municipalities in Metro Vancouver the importance of
22 open farmland, natural spaces, on the whole area
23 instead of parcels just being considered by
24 themselves, how critical it is for natural, rural land
25 to have alongside agricultural land to provide
26 pollinators, drainage and the small wildlife. It is

1 so important now that this land is persevered for all
2 of those reasons.

3 It is a bigger decision than it may look
4 on the face of it, but it will make all the difference
5 to the area and particularly to the Little Campbell
6 River, which is struggling. It will allow the natural
7 flow, uncontaminated water flow into the river rather
8 than the torrent of the parking lot runoff that
9 happens when there's severe rains. It may be the
10 difference in the future if this land is saved and
11 kept as agricultural between other farmland in
12 Hazelmere further south flooding or not because of the
13 mismanagement of the water going into the Little
14 Campbell River.

15 We want a good decision based on
16 sustainable land practice, a decision that mitigates
17 climate change. But above all we want a decision that
18 protects this vital potato growing area for future
19 generations to be able to enjoy fresh, local-grown
20 produce. There is no better example of land that
21 needs to be in the ALR than this. And the Friends of
22 Hazelmere would like you to include it. Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

24 And Candace Falkford.

25 **PRESENTATION BY MS. CANDACE FALKFORD:**

26 [*Alternate language spoken*] I say, good

1 evening, I'm very happy to be here and I am from the
2 local Katzie First Nation. So I'm not representing
3 any of my Chief or Council, but I'm representing the
4 seven generations previous to me and the seven
5 generations before me. And I hope I do my former a
6 boss a little bit proud speaking up here and saying
7 that not only are Indigenous voices important today
8 but we have to remember where we started. We're not
9 going to have the natural resources that my ancestors
10 used to have. We will never be able to have the full
11 access to our medicinal plants and our traditional
12 foods in a safe way.

13 But the beginning of our province came at
14 such a pivotal point where both Indigenous people and
15 the non-Indigenous, the newcomers to this land, and we
16 started farming with them. We showed them the ways of
17 which our land worked and we gave them that knowledge
18 and that thousands of years of history of what we
19 should be doing with this land.

20 So, overall, as an Indigenous person, as
21 also a person who is first-generation Canadian on my
22 dad's side, the future of this land is vital. And I
23 have to say, the Heppell farm, Heppell family, you
24 guys are doing an Indigenous person proud that is from
25 this land and this community. [*Alternate language*
26 *spoken*]

1 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. I don't
2 have any further speakers at this -- now. So I think
3 what we're going to look at to do is calling for the
4 final call for public input, including any verbal or
5 written. So, if you've got anything written, please
6 get it to our front table before we adjourn this
7 hearing. All -- hi Dave.

8 MR. MELNYCHUK: Can I stop here? Or
9 do I have to go there first.

10 THE CHAIRPERSON: You can go here.
11 Dave Melnychuk.

12 MR. MELNYCHUK: Are you okay for
13 verbals?

14 VOICE: Just keep it short.

15 **PRESENTATION BY MR. DAVE MELNYCHUK:**

16 MR. MELNYCHUK: Good evening, my name
17 is Dave Melnychuk, and I live in Langley. I live
18 about half a kilometre from this excellent farmland.
19 Thank you for this opportunity, Chair, Member of
20 Council.

21 This has been a fantastic public hearing.
22 Of all -- I've been in agriculture for 45 years in the
23 province, I've been to many hearings, and this is the
24 best because of you folks. You did it. (Inaudible)
25 It is so refreshing. I wasn't going to say anything,
26 but I get so enthused.

1 THE CHAIRPERSON: Oh come on Dave.

2 MR. MELNYCHUK: Listening to everybody
3 for this land. And you folks must be really happy,
4 because everybody is behind you. This whole
5 community. And I would say the province. I know
6 Minister of Agriculture is not here, but I'm sure she
7 would be right behind you what the community wants to
8 do. It wants to support this land, it wants to
9 support the Heppells for what you've done for all
10 these years, and so do I. So, you have an easy job.
11 This is a slam dunk, and we've given you an
12 opportunity to show your stuff with the Feds. You
13 (inaudible) because the community wants this, they're
14 all in favour of it. So, this is really an excellent
15 example.

16 VOICE: Turn off the lights.

17 MR. MELNYCHUK: No, this is democracy
18 at work, the best, because it should be, the decision
19 should be what the community wants, this is the right
20 thing to do. So please, please come through for us.
21 Thank you.

22 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Dave.

23 So, I'm guessing Dave was the last?

24 So, once this hearing is declared
25 adjourned, written submissions will be only accepted
26 for those who have had been granted extra time, such

1 as the affected First Nations, City of Surrey, and His
2 Majesty the King as registered owner of the lands. If
3 you have any questions or comments, if you can direct
4 those to Mike or Kim or Nicole, and we'd be happy to
5 help you in that sense.

6 I'm going to call now for a second time
7 for any further submissions? Come on young lad.

8 MR. RUSH: Yeah, sorry, I got a bit
9 nervous and I cut myself short there a bit. But kind
10 of to harp on what he was saying, you know, there's
11 nothing that has united the community more or united
12 Canadians more than one common purpose, and that's to
13 save the farmlands. Just anyone kind of speaking up
14 against it, I'm not sure if they can call themselves
15 Canadian to be honest. So let's save the farmland.

16 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Chris.

17 And I'm going to call for a third time.
18 And final time, for any further submissions regarding
19 this proposal?

20 I want to thank you all for coming
21 tonight and your heartfelt input. I now adjourn this
22 public hearing. Thank you.

23 **(PROCEEDINGS ADJOURNED AT 9:39 P.M.)**

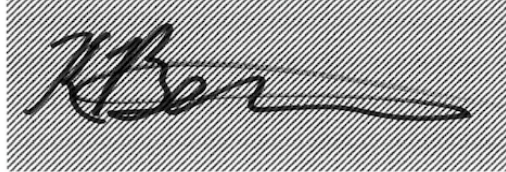
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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FORGOING
is a true and accurate transcript
of the proceedings herein, to the
best of my skill and ability.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'K.A. Bemister'. The background of the box has a fine, diagonal hatched pattern.

K.A. Bemister, BA, CLA Court Reporter
Commissioner for Taking Affidavits 2020-0335

February 1, 2023