

Agricultural Land Commission
133-4940 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC
V5G 4K6

August 8, 2008

To whom it may concern:

**Re: The Richmond Garden City Lands
ALC Exemption Application**

I am writing today to **oppose the City of Richmond's application** for the removal of the Garden City Lands (GCL) from the BC Agricultural Land Reserve. As a long time resident, I would like to offer an historical perspective.

I understand one of the premises the City is using is that that this river delta land that has "never been farmed." In reviewing the historical ownership of the GCL I note the Federal government had the land since the 1900's and used it for national defense purposes, so farming was not one of their priorities. Prior to this, Lulu Island settlers and First Nations peoples used the land for berry picking. In the very early days, Richmond was not like it is today. It was a series of islands, requiring residents to row or canoe from one homestead to another. The GCL was (and still is) a raised bog that comprises a unique ecosystem.

Further, I can offer a personal perspective about other Richmond lands that had "never been farmed." Many people may not be aware that the Fantasy Gardens land at No. 5 Road and Steveston Highway was once a community allotment garden, sponsored by the BC Agriculture ministry in the early to mid 1970's. The land had never been farmed. It was a Hydro right-of-way filled with the same vegetation growing in the Garden City Lands today.

Fresh out of university with my degree, it was my job as the coordinator of the community allotment garden to prepare the site and ready the soil for gardening. Preparing the site was simple; we removed the bushes and reeds and constructed a metre-wide ditch in the middle that drained to the No. 5 Road ditch. Readyng the soil was equally simple; we tilled the soil and then applied tons and tons of lime to sweeten the soil.

This "unfarmed" parcel of land produced vegetables, fruits and flowers for over 300 gardeners. Seniors bussed in from their apartments and took home their own fresh food. Young families worked the soil and taught their children how to plant and harvest carrots and beans. Children learned where food came from. Students extended their meager earnings by growing fresh produce. Although producing food was the initial goal, this community garden also produced "community," because people began to care about one another.

People didn't use herbicides or pesticides because they respected the health of their neighbouring gardeners who were on-site day and evening. It was labour intensive and people were always around so we didn't experience much theft. The equipment we used was not industrial-farm sized; it was people-sized. People enjoyed the comings and goings of numerous birds and animals. It was a wonderful project that lasted for many years.

Later the government of the time sold the land to a private owner who built Bota Gardens, a display garden charging admission. In time it was sold to Bill Vander Zalm and became Fantasy Gardens, a beautiful garden that produced many unusual specimens, Bill and Lil among them!

I know the Garden City Lands can be used as productive farmland. We are sitting in a river delta, one of the most productive areas in North America. Anything we plant in our home gardens grows like crazy.

I also know there would be a market for fresh organic produce. We are next to the third largest city in Canada with the most food conscious residents and the best restaurants in the land.

I know this could also be a tourist attraction. We are called "Rich-mond," Rich Land for goodness sakes! The land is on "Garden City" Road! What more do we need to convince people to come, visit, taste, rave and return!

For these reasons, I believe Richmond's community needs would be much better served if the Garden City Lands remains in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Sincerely

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